

Variation in the linguistic expression of persuasion across New and Old Englishes

Previous research has extensively explored register variation in a number of languages and their varieties, using Biber's Multidimensional Model (1995). This line of research has also been extended to postcolonial varieties of English, with some studies comparing a large number of varieties (Kruger & Van Rooy, 2016; Xiao, 2009) and others focussing on particular varieties, such as East African English and Australian English (Kruger & Smith, 2018; Van Rooy et al., 2010).

Within this framework, one dimension is particularly relevant for the study of pragmatics, i.e. the overt expression of persuasion. Psychologists define persuasion as the "deliberate attempt to change the thoughts, feelings, or behaviors of others" (Rocklage et al. 2018: 749). Persuasion in this sense is crucial for the management of social relations, a "ubiquitous presence in everyday life" (Humă et al. 2020, 357) and usually realised through language (Blankenship & Craig 2011: 194). Previous research suggests that the linguistic expression of persuasion varies across New Englishes. For example, Xiao (2009) demonstrated that Indian English employs relatively few markers of overt persuasion in formal registers, while Hong Kong English employs comparatively many (see also Bohmann 2019; 2021).

However, previous research has focussed exclusively on a quantitative comparison of register dimensions (e.g. more/less overt expression of persuasion), not on qualitative differences in how these register dimensions are expressed in different varieties. Moreover, previous research is limited in the number of New Englishes considered. Thus, the present study asks (1) *to what extent* and (2) *how persuasion is linguistically expressed across varieties of English, and how such differences can be explained*. Moreover, with 21 national varieties of English, the analysis includes more than twice as many varieties as in previous research. Corpus data is drawn from the International Corpus of English (Greenbaum, 1991) and is investigated with the Multidimensional Analysis Tagger (Nini, 2015).

Results indicate that there is substantial variation in the extent of the overt expression of persuasion, with West African Englishes at the highest end and South Asian Englishes at the lowest end of the scale. While a general ranking of macro regions emerges (Africa > Europe/Oceania > Americas (incl. Caribbean) > Asia), at this level of analysis there is also considerable overlap between regions. In the second part of the analysis, a Multidimensional Scaling analysis of how persuasion is expressed reveals three clusters of varieties: one L1 cluster, one L2 cluster involving Asian and India-influenced varieties, and one L2 cluster involving West African (-influenced) varieties (see Fig. 1). Moreover, this analysis also reveals evidence of founder effects.

To conclude, with its focus on persuasion, this paper explores pragmatic variation in New and Old Englishes in a crucial linguistic mechanism for the management of social relations. Results indicate substantial variation that can, to a certain extent, be explained with reference to geographic and cultural patterns as well as historical settlement patterns.

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