

Sally Dixon (University of New England, Australia): *Untangling structural patterns in multilingual repertoires: a novel application of the variationist framework to grammars in contact.*

Since British colonial invasion, English has been inserted into the already rich linguistic landscape of Australia. Contact between English speakers and those of various Australian languages has seeded many new English-lexified varieties such as creoles (e.g. Schultze-Berndt, Meakins & Angelo 2013; Shnukal 1991), mixed languages (e.g. Meakins 2015; O'Shannessy 2013), Aboriginal Englishes (Eades, 2014), and still others (e.g. Disbray 2008; Dixon 2017).

One of the key, under-explored, issues in the study of contact Englishes in Australia is that of the relationship between individual and community multilingualism. Both speakers of contact varieties and the varieties themselves have been said to exist on a 'continuum', from acrolectal to basilectal. Basilectal varieties bear stronger influence of substrate (Australian) languages while acrolectal varieties are more similar to English. For example, speakers may shift between *hojij* and *hosis* 'horse(s)' (Nicholls 2009). Speakers of these varieties also tend to have multilingual repertoires, with all the kinds of linguistic dexterity that that entails: code-switching (Mushin 2010), borrowing (Meakins 2011), multiparty cross-linguistic interaction (McConvell 2001).

In this context, how can we best capture the linguistic patterns of multilinguals 1) whose repertoires consist of multiple varieties that share linguistic forms (and, to some degree, structures) and 2) whose language practises often include making full use of this repertoire inside the one interactional context? How do we establish what is 'standard' in the contact language and what is 'standard' in their English? And, how does the analyst focus on only one variety (in order to describe it) and yet still capture 'natural' language use?

To explore these questions, we travel to a remote Aboriginal community in Central Australia and draw upon a corpus of 50+ hours of naturalistic video recordings, set in a range of home and school contexts. The recordings centre on six focus children, aged 5-8 years-old, whose language repertoires consist of Alyawarr English (a previously undocumented English-lexified contact variety), Standardised Australian English, and Alyawarr (an Australian language of the Arandic sub-group). The focus in this study is the relationship between the children's Alyawarr English and Standardised Australian English. Specifically, are these two varieties distinguishable as separate codes, or is it better to conceive of them as a continuum of usage, per the previous research noted above?

In this presentation I will describe the methodological process I applied to the analysis of this unique data set. The first important step was to create a valid sample of the children's repertoires. I used contextual criteria to sort the recorded utterances into two sub-corpora, reasoning that the children were most likely to use something closer to Alyawarr English when they are at home talking to fellow Alyawarr people, so utterances made in this context formed the HOME data set. Likewise, the children were most likely to use something closer to Australian English when talking to non-Alyawarr people at school, so utterances made in this context formed the SCHOOL data set. Clauses not fitting these two extremes – such as utterances that occurred in the classroom but to another child – were excluded from the analysis. In short, each language (Alyawarr English and Standardised Australian English) was operationalised as a set of clause tokens fitting a set of contextual constraints.

I then selected three variable components of the children's grammar: tense-aspect morphology

(specifically variation between V, V-ing and V-bat forms), transitive marking (variation between verbs (un)marked with -im) and subject pronominals (1sg forms /ʌ/ vs. /ʌm/; and 3sg forms /ɪ/ and /ɪm/). I compared usage in the HOME and SCHOOL environments by applying an adapted form of the Comparative Variationist Method (Poplack & Tagliamonte 2001). Separate multivariate analyses were conducted in Goldvarb Lion (Sankoff, Tagliamonte & Smith 2012) and compared against a set of criteria developed for evaluating creole:substrate/superstrate relationships (Meyerhoff 2009). Through a detailed examination of the findings, this presentation will provide an account of the utility of this adapted Comparative Variationist Method in capturing 'non-standard' grammars in contact.

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