

Usage-based Construction Grammar as the cognitive theory for post-colonial Englishes

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Keywords: Construction Grammar, Dynamic Model, Post-colonial Englishes, productivity

Today, English is spoken all over the world. In addition to British English or its use as a lingua franca, there are many varieties of English that historically arose in colonial settings. These include L1 varieties such as American English or Australian English as well as L2 varieties such as Kenyan English or Hong Kong English. As Schneider (2003, 2007) argues, the evolution of these 'post-colonial' varieties crucially depends on the social interaction of the colonizers (the "settler (STL) strand") and the various indigenous people (the "indigenous (IDG) strand"). He postulates five evolutionary phases that new post-colonial varieties could successively go through and that would be affected by distinct social, historical as well as political conditions:

Phase I ("Foundation") refers to the time when English is first transplanted to a new colony. At this point, communication between the STL and IDG strands is limited, which only leads to the borrowing of a few salient lexical items such as place names into the local variety of English. While the STL strand then gradually adapts to its new home in Phase II ("Exonormative Stabilization"), its (socio-)linguistic identity remains essentially British. During Phase III ("Nativization"), mainly after the political independence of the former colonies, this changes and the settlers accept the colony as their new home. Contact and linguistic negotiation between the two strands then leads to "structural nativization", i.e., large-scale linguistic effects, from lexical borrowing and the development of a local accent to morphological, grammatical and syntactic innovations (Schneider 2007: 71–112). This stage is followed by Phase IV ("Endonormative Stabilization"), in which the novel linguistic norms are "accepted as adequate also in formal usage" (Schneider 2003: 250) and the new variety of English is characterized by great linguistic homogeneity. The final stage of the Dynamic Model is Phase V ("Differentiation"), when the variety differentiates into new regional and social dialects.

The Dynamic Model is a sociolinguistic model that sees linguistic changes as arising from forces related to identity-construction. Recently, Hoffmann (2021) offered a cognitive, usage-based Construction Grammar perspective to this, outlining how the various phases of the Dynamic Model correlate with an increasing schematization of constructions. In this talk, I will show how usage-based Construction Grammar can serve as an explanatory cognitive theory for the Dynamic Model. I will showcase how sociolinguistic as well as cognitive factors interact in the emergence of New Englishes, illustrating the approach with case studies from the lexicon-syntax cline, including, *inter alia*, the *Way* cxn, the *V the Taboo out of cxn*, and the *As ADJ as a(n) N* construction.

References

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