

New Englishes: A West African Perspective

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Corpus-Approaches to the New English Web: Post-Colonial Diasporic Forums in West Africa and the Caribbean

Christian Mair
University of Freiburg, Germany

Abstract

The present contribution reports on research carried out since November 2011 in the framework of the project 'Cyber-Creole' funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG MA 1652/9). The Cyber-Creole project is complemented by 'RomWeb' (DFG PF 699/4), which is headed by Stefan Pfänder of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Freiburg, Germany. The two projects both use data downloaded from web-based forums, employ identical strategies of data collection and mark-up and have developed a shared search and analysis interface, NCAT (= Net Corpora Administration Tool). The two projects also share a similar general theoretical orientation, being motivated by an interest in how the new media impact on the spread of standard and non-standard varieties of European ex-colonial languages in conditions of economic, political, cultural and media globalisation. In this regard, their work is intended to make a substantial contribution to the emerging research paradigm of the sociolinguistics of globalisation (Blommaert 2010, Coupland, ed. 2010, Mair 2013, Mair and Pfänder (forthcoming)). The present brief survey will introduce the theoretical stance the "English" branch of the project takes in the context of contemporary World Englishes research (section 1). Building on this, I will introduce the analytical tool-kit which we have developed to study computer-mediated communication (CMC) in the diasporas at the centre of our attention (section 2) and describe the sociolinguistic profile of the "Cyber-Jamaican" and "Cyber-Nigerian" developed by two such groups (sections 3 and 4). The conclusion (section 5) will summarise the most important insights and outline perspectives for further work.

Kachru and Nelson, eds. 2009, Kortmann and Schneider, eds. 2004).

Work in this tradition has generally been carried out under two self-imposed and not unreasonable constraints. First, the focus was on the description of varieties of English, which were typically understood to be based in territorial speech communities and generally described as abstract and decontextualised linguistic systems through listing their phonological, morphosyntactic, and lexical features. Questions of discourse, situated language use, or language ideologies held by speakers and outsiders, on the other hand, tended to recede into the background. Second, EWL studies were regarded as an essentially monolingual

1. Mobilising EWL research: new models for new types of data

The study of "varieties of English around the world", the "New Englishes" or "World Englishes" emerged at the intersection of dialectology, sociolinguistics and historical linguistics in the early 1980s and has been among the most vibrant sub-fields of English linguistics ever since. Pioneering works include Bailey and Görlach, eds. (1982) or Trudgill (1982), and the research tradition has achieved provisional culmination recently through the publication of several major handbooks (Kachru,

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