

The Dynamics of New Englishes: From Identity Construction to Dialect Birth

Edgar W. Schneider

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Thesis

- “Despite all obvious dissimilarities, a fundamentally uniform developmental process, shaped by consistent sociolinguistic and language-contact conditions, has operated in the individual instances of rerooting the English language in another territory”
- English-speaking settlers and an indigenous people and their languages meet: similar contact process which forms a ‘New English’
- Dynamic model: Five phases: Foundation, Exonormative Stabilization, Nativization, Endonormative Stabilization, Differentiation

Strands of communicative perspectives

- Two parties involved, two different identities
- STL strand: settlers/colonizers
- IDG strand: indigenous people
- STL strand and IDG strand become more closely intertwined and their languages grow closer to each other over time

Dynamic model of the evolution of New Englishes

Phase 1: Foundation

STL strand

- Identity: Part of original nation
- Settlers with different dialects of the same language → levelling / focusing / simplification of English :
Koinéization
- Hardly influenced by indigenous language except for toponymic borrowing = place names

Dynamic model of the evolution of New Englishes

Phase 1: Foundation

IDG strand

- Identity: Indigenous
- Some contact with STL → Marginal bilingualism among a minority

Dynamic model of the evolution of New Englishes

Phase 2: Exonormative Stabilization

STL strand

- Identity: outpost of original nation, ‘English-plus-local’
- Contact with IDG expands
- Lexical borrowing: fauna and flora, cultural terms

Dynamic model of the evolution of New Englishes

Phase 2: Exonormative Stabilization

IDG strand

- Identity: elite ‘local-plus-English’
- Spreading bilingualism → elite gets bigger

Dynamic model of the evolution of New Englishes

Phase 3: Nativization

STL strand

- Identity: Permanent resident of English origin
- Innovative and conservative speakers ('complaint tradition')
- Heavy lexical borrowing

Dynamic model of the evolution of New Englishes

Phase 3: Nativization

IDG strand

- Identity: Permanent resident of indigenous origin
- Common bilingualism, toward language shift
- Phonological innovations and structural nativization

Dynamic model of the evolution of New Englishes

Phase 4: Endonormative Stabilization

Both STL strand and IDG strand

- Identity: Member of new nation
- Positive attitude, literary creativity
- Stabilization of new English variety (dictionaries)

Dynamic model of the evolution of New Englishes

Phase 5: Differentiation

Both STL strand and IDG strand

- Identity: Group-specific → subgroups
- New varieties of former new variety
- Dialect birth (ethnic, regional, social)

Conclusion

Model = highly idealized and simplified, very abstract and prototypical

However:

- ‘It shows that linguistic usage is a highly variable phenomenon’
- ‘It testifies to the importance of sociolinguistics and sociocultural perspectives’
- ‘It illustrates the fundamental and shaky balance in human language between uniformity [...] and variability’