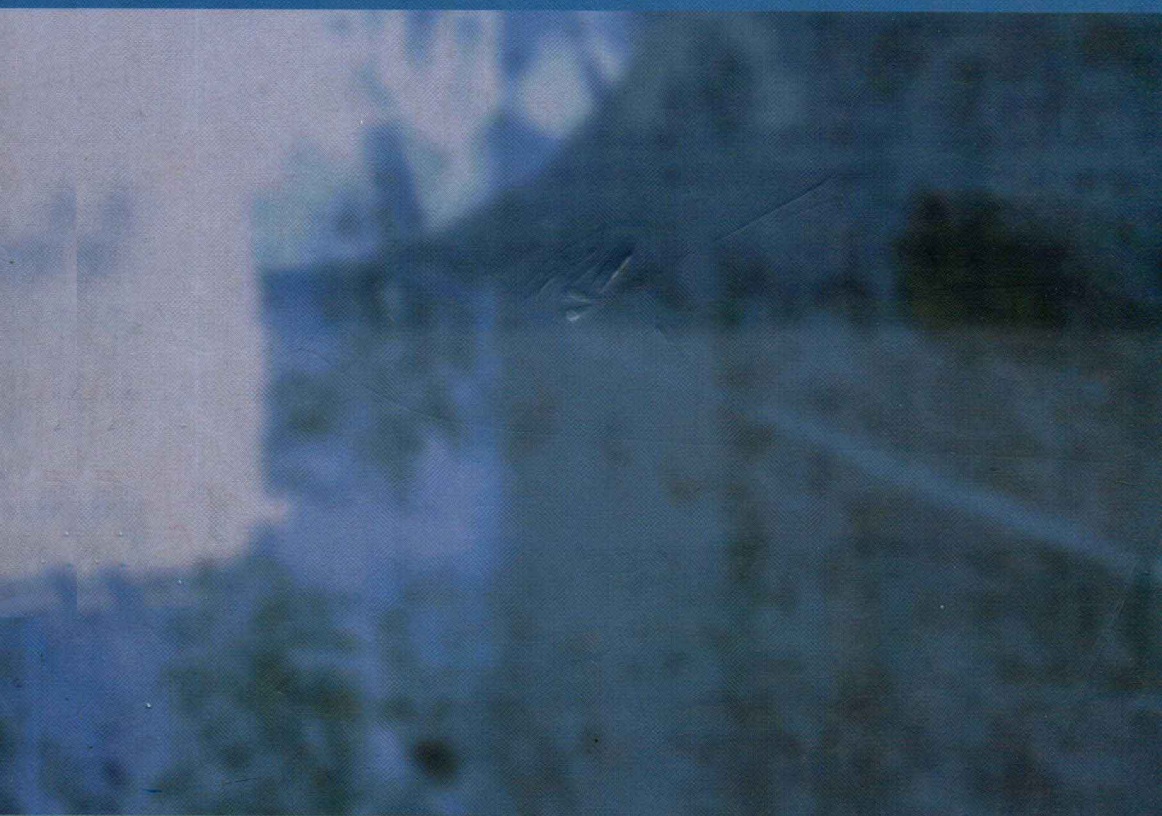


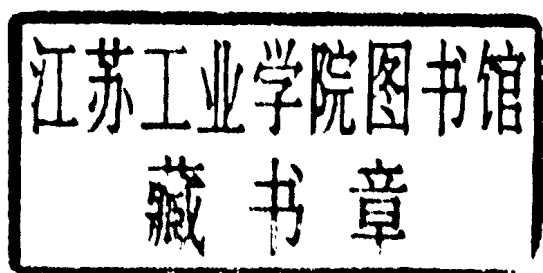
Sociolinguistic Variation and Change



PETER TRUDGILL

SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIATION AND CHANGE

Peter Trudgill



Edinburgh University Press

© Peter Trudgill, 2002

Edinburgh University Press Ltd
22 George Square, Edinburgh

Typeset in Sabon by
Hewer Text Ltd, Edinburgh, and
printed and bound in Great Britain by
MPG Books Ltd, Bodmin, Cornwall

A CIP Record for this book is
available from the British Library

ISBN 0 7486 1515 6 (paperback)

The right of Peter Trudgill
to be identified as author of this work
has been asserted in accordance with
the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIATION AND CHANGE

For Jean

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following people have helped with earlier versions of at least some of the chapters in this book. I am very grateful to all of them for their inspiration, information, suggestions, corrections, and erudition: Sasha Aikhenvald, Lyle Campbell, Andrew Carstairs-McCarthy, Jack Chambers, Sandra Clarke, Grev Corbett, Bill Croft, Alice Davison, R. M. W. Dixon, Malgorzata Fabiszak, Barbara Fennel, Paul Fletcher, George Grace, Michael Greengrass, Jean Hannah, Raymond Hickey, Ernst Håkon Jahr, Adam Jaworski, Marcin Kilarski, Jussi Klemola, Ian Kirby, Miklós Kontra, William Labov, Didier Maillat, Gunnel Melchers, Jim Milroy, Salikoko Mufwene, Frank Palmer, Harold Paddock, Shana Poplack, Dennis Preston, Klára Sándor, Daniel Schreier, John Singler, Janet Smith, Sali Tagliamonte, Milton Tynch, Theo Vennemann, Walt Wolfram and Laura Wright.

In addition I am also very grateful for discussions, many of them reflected in these pages, and assistance over the years, to: Enam Al-Wer, Lars Gunnar Andersson, David Britain, Jenny Cheshire, Donna Christian, Linda Compton, Jan Terje Faarlund, Ralph Fasold, Mike Garman, Elizabeth Gordon, Ian Hancock, Arthur Hughes, Brian Joseph, Mark Janse, Paul Kerswill, Ken Lodge, John Lyons, Lesley Milroy, Michael Montgomery, Terttu Nevalainen, Bengt Nordberg, Andy Pawley, Barbara Seidlhofer, Maria Sifianou, Mats Thelander, Dick Watts, J. C. Wells and Henry Widdowson. Special thanks also to John Laver, who inspired me when I was a student, and who now, thirty-five years later, has inspired me to produce this book.

SOURCES

The contents of this book are mainly derived from already published papers, some of them substantially revised here, as follows.

1. British vernacular dialects in the formation of American English: the case of East Anglian *do*. In: R. Hickey and S. Puppel (eds) *Linguistic History and Linguistic Modelling: a Festschrift for Jacek Fisiak on his 60th Birthday*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 749–58, 1997.
2. ‘Short o’ in East Anglia and New England. In: J. Fisiak (ed.) *Studia anglica Posnaniensia* 33; 445–50. (Festschrift for K. Saajavara).
3. Sociohistorical linguistics and dialect survival: a note on another Nova Scotian enclave. In: M. Ljung (ed.) *Linguistic Structure and Variation*. Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2000.
4. Two hundred years of dedialectalisation: the East Anglian short vowel system. In: M. Thelander (ed.) *Samspel och variation: språkliga studier tillägnade Bengt Nordberg på 60-årsdagen*. Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 1996, pp. 471–8.
5. New-dialect formation and dedialectalisation: embryonic and vestigial variants. *Journal of English Linguistics* 1999; 27; 4, 319–27.
6. Norwich revisited: recent linguistic changes in an English urban dialect. *English World Wide* 1988; 9: 33–49.
7. Dual source pidgins and reverse creoles: northern perspectives on language contact. In: I. Broch and E. H. Jahr (eds) *Language Contact in the Arctic: Northern Pidgins and Contact Languages*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996, pp. 5–14.
8. Language contact and the function of linguistic gender. *Poznan Studies in Contemporary Linguistics* 1999; 35: 133–52.
9. Third-person singular zero: African American vernacular English, East Anglian dialects and Spanish persecution in the Low Countries. *Folia Linguistica Historica* 1998; 18.1–2: 139–48.
10. Language contact and inherent variability: the absence of hypercorrection in East Anglian present-tense verb forms. In: J. Klemola, M. Kytö and M. Rissanen (eds) *Speech Past and Present: Studies in English*

Dialectology in Memory of Ossi Ihalainen. Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996, pp. 412–25.

11. Ausbau sociolinguistics and the perception of language status in contemporary Europe. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 1992; 2.2: 167–77.

12. The Ausbau sociolinguistics of minority languages in Greece. *Plurilinguismes* 1992; 167–91.

13. Language maintenance and language shift: preservation versus extinction. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 1991; 1.1: 61–9.

15. Standard English: what it isn't. In: T. Bex and R. J. Watts (eds) *Standard English: the Widening Debate*. London: Routledge, 1999, pp. 117–28.

Other material has been taken from: Standard English and the national curriculum, *The European English Messenger* 1996; 5.1: 63–5; Dialect and dialects in the new Europe, *Etudes de lettres* 1997.4: 19–32 (Lausanne: Université de Lausanne, 1998); World English: convergence or divergence? In: H. Lindqvist, S. Klintborg, M. Levin and M. Estling (eds) *The Major Varieties of English*. Växjö University: Acta Wexionensis, 1998, pp. 29–36; Sociolinguistics and sociolinguistics once again. *Sociolinguistica* 2000; 14: 1–5; Language and nationalism in Greece and Turkey. In: S. Barbour (ed.) *Language and Nationalism in Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vii
Sources	ix
General introduction	1
I. Sociohistorical linguistics	
Introduction: Sociohistorical linguistics	7
1. British vernacular dialects in the formation of American English: the case of East Anglian <i>do</i>	9
2. 'Short o' in East Anglia and New England	16
3. Sociohistorical linguistics and dialect survival: a note on another Nova Scotian enclave	21
II. Dialect change	
Introduction: Dialect change	29
4. Two hundred years of dedialectalisation: the East Anglian short vowel system	33
5. New-dialect formation and dedialectalisation: embryonic and vestigial variants	40
6. Norwich revisited: recent linguistic changes in an English urban dialect	48
III. Language contact	
Introduction: Language contact	65
7. Dual-source pidgins and reverse creoloids: northern perspectives on language contact	68
8. Language contact and the function of linguistic gender	76
9. Third-person singular zero: African American vernacular English, East Anglian dialects and Spanish persecution in the Low Countries	93
10. Language contact and inherent variability: the absence of hypercorrection in East Anglian present-tense verb forms	100

Contents

IV. Language creation and language death	
Introduction: Language creation and language death	111
11. Ausbau sociolinguistics and the perception of language status in contemporary Europe	114
12. Ausbau sociolinguistics and identity in modern Greece	125
13. Language maintenance and language shift: preservation versus extinction	137
V. Englishes	
Introduction: Englishes	147
14. English as an endangered language	150
15. Standard English: what it isn't	159
16. The sociolinguistics of modern RP	171
 References	 181
Index	193

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

People often think of me as being the first British sociolinguist. This is of course not at all true, although I was the first to apply Labovian methodology in the British context, even if, astonishingly as it now seems, I did not realise it at the time. There was already a long tradition in Britain, most notably in the work of Firth and Malinowski, of a socially informed linguistics. And the true father of British sociolinguistics in the modern sense is undoubtedly Robert Le Page, who has been enormously influential in the development of the thinking of British and British-based sociolinguists such as Jim Milroy, Lesley Milroy and Suzanne Romaine, as well as myself.

In my early work, it never occurred to me, as I worked my way into this milieu and tradition, that sociolinguistics was anything other than – in the words of William Labov – a way of doing linguistics. Firth was obviously a linguist. So were Le Page and Labov. Their linguistics was socially informed and socially sensitive, but it was linguistics. However, it gradually became clear to me in those early years that there were many other scholars doing what was, in my young opinion, very good work which they referred to as sociolinguistics which, however, seemed to have very little to do with what Le Page or Labov or I were doing.

This did not seem to me to be a particularly problematical matter, except insofar as it did seem to be giving rise to misunderstandings, not least on the part of the growing number of students who were being attracted to courses in sociolinguistics. The point was that the work of all the people who were carrying out research under the rubric of ‘sociolinguistics’ was valuable and insightful, but it seemed that not everybody involved was clear about the fact that scholars were working with different, sometimes very different, objectives. They were engaged in two – perhaps more – totally different enterprises which could interact in ways that were mutually beneficial but, I felt, it was as well to point out that they were different. The umbrella term ‘sociolinguistics’ had become at least potentially confusing.

I therefore gave a short presentation at the 1977 International Congress of Linguists in Vienna on this topic. I had been invited to contribute to a panel discussion following a paper by the leading ethnomethodologist Aaron Cicourel, and this seemed an appropriate moment. I simply suggested, rather nervously to the 3000 or so people present, that it was as well to be clear about the fact that some sociolinguistics, like Labov's, was aimed at answering questions which were, quite legitimately, of no professional concern to Aaron Cicourel, such as why are human languages like they are, how and why do languages change, and so on. Other people, such as Cicourel himself, were doing research which was aimed at answering questions which were, quite legitimately, of no professional concern to me (though as a human being I might be very interested), such as why are human societies like they are, and why is human social interaction like it is. I also pointed out that some work had mixed objectives – to find out more simultaneously about both language and society and their interrelationships and interactions, and to consider, for example, the effects of human interaction on the nature of human language.

This point was immediately misunderstood. I was accused of disparaging work in applied sociolinguistics, that is, work in the application of the results of sociolinguistic research to the solution of real-world (educational, political, social) problems. This was not what I meant at all. I had always believed, without articulating it to myself very clearly, that sociolinguists had a duty to help solve whatever social problems they could. I was therefore very grateful to another British linguist who was doing sociolinguistics well before me, Michael Halliday, for, in his turn, standing up in Vienna and pointing out that what I had said was quite valid and that both types of academic sociolinguistic work had applications in the non-academic world; and that to point out that social-scientifically oriented sociolinguistics was different from linguistically oriented sociolinguistics was in no way to argue against the social mobilisation of sociolinguistic research findings.

A longer version of my presentation subsequently appeared as the editorial introduction to my book *Sociolinguistic Patterns in British English* (1978). This introduction was somewhat facetiously but, I thought, relevantly entitled 'Sociolinguistics and sociolinguistics'. This was understood by the publishers and the other contributors as being modelled on the well-known English expression 'There's x and then there's x', implying in this case that sociolinguistics came in (at least) two different forms. Some people have professed to find this title 'strange' and, more seriously, have misunderstood my position and taken my argument to imply that I believe linguistically motivated sociolinguistics to be more important than social-scientifically motivated sociolinguistics. However, I wrote specifically in that introduction that it did not matter what an academic activity was called, that one activity was as valid and important as another, and that,

following Hymes, I believed that there should be no demarcation disputes among scholars.

It is, however, perfectly true that I personally favour – which means ‘prefer’, not ‘rate as superior’ – linguistically motivated sociolinguistics. It is what I am interested in and it is what I do. I am a sociolinguist who is basically a linguist. The chapters that follow in this book are therefore studies in sociolinguistics as linguistics.

As to the applications of the findings of sociolinguistic research, I would additionally like to point out that people working in sociolinguistics are, sadly, familiar enough with the phenomenon of lay people ignoring what they have to say about linguistic variation and linguistic diversity. Much more regrettable, however, and much more disturbing, is the lack of awareness on the part of some of our non-sociolinguistic colleagues within general linguistics about these issues. I am here not referring to academic problems, although it is distressing enough to find colleagues supervising theoretical syntax theses on Standard Arabic in the belief that the student concerned is a native speaker, or to find scholars concerned with the latest syntactic theories enthusing about ‘recent’ discoveries of variability. Much worse, however, are pronouncements by linguists – and here I am concerned in particular about European linguists, including in some cases sociolinguists – which signal a woeful ignorance on their part about linguistic variability, the value of linguistic diversity, and the preservation of languages and dialects, as well as an unwillingness to fight for linguistically democratic and egalitarian issues which most sociolinguists have long taken for granted, following pleas for accountability on the part of linguists to the communities from which we have obtained data (for example, by prominent sociolinguists such as Labov and Wolfram – see Chapter 13).

Here are some examples of what I mean. In a recent issue of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, under the general editorship of Joshua Fishman, in a discussion of linguistic minorities in Bulgaria, the prominent Bulgarian sociolinguist Michail Videnov writes (1999) in connection with suggestions by the large Turkish-speaking minority in Bulgaria that Turkish be granted some recognition in Turkish-speaking areas:

Well aware of the significant role of language as means of national integration or disintegration, the Bulgarian government refrained from granting Standard Turkish the status of a regular school subject . . . Bulgarian sociolinguists have had a number of opportunities to express their views on the language situation in Bulgaria and to broach the hot issues of the regions with mixed populations. The conclusion we have arrived at is that general sociolinguistics should not be involved in the formulation of universal principles for the solution of problems of this kind.

Similarly, the Greek linguist Angelopoulos wrote (1979), apparently without any trace of irony, that 'Greece represents, in Europe, a country with practically ideal ethnic, linguistic and religious homogeneity and unity'. Similarly, the Hungarian linguistics professor László Deme argues (1998) against a particular Hungarian ongoing syntactic change (which is analogous to the English *Hopefully John will avoid further injury*) which research shows as being accepted by 50 per cent of Hungarians as 'correct', and which is produced by 25 per cent of informants in an oral sentence-completion task, by writing that it *must* be stopped because it is illogical and shows confused thinking. If, say, over half the population have caught cholera, he argues, should we bury the healthy? Similarly, Stein and Quirk recently wrote (1995), with considerable sociolinguistic naivety, that Standard English is not a social class dialect because the British tabloid *Sun* newspaper 'is written in Standard English'.

I would personally hope in future to see no more such abject failures of nerve, no more such failures to attempt to defend the rights of linguistic minorities, and no more such sociolinguistic sophistry. It is bad enough to have to fight battles about the legitimacy of linguistic variation with non-linguists; how much more distressing it is then to find academic linguists who have to be combatted in the same way. In the spirit of accepting the admonitions of Labov and Wolfram, and of counteracting sociolinguistic sophistry, this book also, then, contains studies in the applications of linguistic sociolinguistics to the solution of real-world problems.

I. SOCIOHISTORICAL LINGUISTICS

INTRODUCTION: SOCIOHISTORICAL LINGUISTICS

Histories of the first thousand years or so of the English language obviously have to have a rather narrow geographical focus. Four hundred years ago, in 1600, English did not have a very important role as a foreign or second language anywhere, and was spoken as a native language in a very small area of the globe indeed: it was the native language of the indigenous population in most of England, and in the south and east of Scotland. It was, however, absent from much of Cornwall and from Welsh-speaking parts of Shropshire and Herefordshire; most of Ireland was Irish-speaking; nearly all of Wales was still Welsh-speaking; the Highlands and Hebridean islands of Scotland spoke Gaelic; Orkney and Shetland spoke Scandinavian Norn; the Isle of Man was Manx-speaking; and the Channel Islands were still French-speaking.

During the course of the 1600s this situation changed dramatically. English arrived, as a result of colonisation, as a native language in Ireland, in what is now the United States, and in Bermuda, Newfoundland, the Bahamas, and the Turks and Caicos Islands. It also spread during this time into many island and mainland areas of the Caribbean: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, the Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, the British Virgin Islands, the American Virgin Islands, and the mainland areas of Guyana and Belize. And it is not widely known that areas other than these – in modern times cricket-playing Commonwealth – countries were also settled by anglophones: eastern coastal and island areas of Honduras, Nicaragua and Colombia remain English-speaking to this day (see Chapter 14). The Dutch island colonies of Saba, St Maarten and St Eustatius have also been English-speaking since the early 1600s; and the mainly Papiamentu-speaking Dutch colony of Bonaire has a sizeable number of indigenous anglophones too.

During the eighteenth century, English began its expansion into Wales and north-western Scotland, and into mainland and maritime Canada. In the nineteenth century, again as a result of colonisation, English expanded to Hawaii, and into the southern hemisphere – not only to Australia, New