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A new-dialect formation in an L2 setting: A rudimentary levelling among native speakers of English in Japan

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1. Introduction

The mechanisms of dialect change and new-dialect formation in dialect contact situations have been uncovered by a number of studies that have explored communities of people who are in what Kachru (1985, pp. 12-15) calls the 'Inner Circle', in which English is the primary language (Britain, 1991; Kerswill & Williams, 2000; Sudbury, 2000; Trudgill, 1986, 2004). However, in communities of people who are in the 'Expanding Circle', in which English is not the primary language but is used as a medium of international communication, the mechanisms of dialect change and new-dialect formation have not been fully explored, and little is known of the dialect contacts in such contexts. This paper aims to explore a community of native speakers of English who are in the Expanding Circle, in which there is no established regional dialect and no institutional norm that privileges one dialect of English over another.

This paper also attempts to examine the linguistic changes in relation to the 'founder principle' (Mufwene, 1996) and the 'feature pool' (Mufwene, 2001). In accordance with Mufwene's 'founder principle', Americans are supposed to be a founder population of the Anglophone community that the current study investigates. American English is, therefore, likely the main input variety of English in the 'feature pool' of this community. This paper examines whether there are strong American English effects on linguistic variables used by the native speakers of English.

The process of an early stage of new-dialect formation, namely the process of rudimentary levelling, will be explored and analysed in relation to the founder principle and the feature pool. The informants consist of native speakers of English from England, the United States, and New Zealand, living in Japan. The variation and modification in the informants' pronunciation of two linguistic variables—the intersonorant (t) and non-prevocalic (r)—are observed over a period of one year from arrival in Japan.

2. The Anglophone Community in Japan

An Anglophone community in Japan has been chosen as the target community. Today, more than 150,000 native speakers of English from different parts of the world reside in Japan with the intention of studying or working (National Statistics Center [NSTAC], 2014). As a result, dialect contact occurs through frequent face-to-face interaction between native speakers of English of different varieties and dialects. The Anglophone community in Japan is not at all homogeneous; it consists of a mixture of socially and geographically mobile nationalities. Their relationships are, therefore, often established on a short-term basis, but they are linked with people from a wide range of social contexts.

As far as the number of native speakers of English is concerned, the speakers of American English are notably dominant over speakers of other English varieties in Japan

(Council of Local Authorities for International Relations [CLAIR], 2010; Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MOFA], 2009; NSTAC, 2014). Also, as far as the post-Second World War history of Japan is concerned, the political influence of the United States has been enormous. American English is predominantly used in English education at schools throughout Japan (Takanashi & Omura, 1975, pp. 245–246). The assistant language teachers on the Japan Exchange and Teaching (**JET**) Programme who are teaching at public schools in Japan have always been mainly Americans. They formed 70% of total participants in the JET Programme when the programme was established in 1987 (CLAIR, 2010; MOFA, 2009). Therefore, one would expect that there should be strong American English effects on the linguistic behaviour of the speakers in the Anglophone community.

3. Theoretical Background

3.1 New-Dialect Formation

In dialect contact and dialect mixture situations, a large number of linguistic variants will appear, and interdialect phenomena will begin to occur through the process of accommodation in face-to-face interaction (Trudgill, 1986, pp. 107, 126). As time passes, focussing begins to take place, and the variants present in the mixture begin to be subject to reduction. Trudgill (2004, p. 89) distinguishes between "three different chronological stages in the new-dialect formation process, which also roughly correspond to three successive generations of speakers". In Stage I, rudimentary levelling and interdialect development take place among the first-generation immigrants (p. 89). During Stage II, variability and apparent levelling in new-dialect formation are demonstrated by the second-generation immigrants (p. 101). Stage III represents determinism in new-dialect formation by the third-generation immigrants (p. 113).

The dialect contact situation in this Anglophone community in Japan can be considered to be the beginning stages of Trudgill's (2004, p. 89) Stage I, which involves rudimentary dialect levelling and interdialect development. Levelling is one of the processes of new-dialect formation and "usually consists of getting rid of forms which are used by only a minority of speakers" (Trudgill 2003, p. 79). This means that the majority forms tend to be selected from the feature pool (Mufwene, 2001).

3.2 Feature Pool

Mufwene's (2001) notion of 'feature pool' is useful to explain the linguistic behaviour of speakers in dialect contact situations. Mufwene analogises a mixture of linguistic features in a language contact situation as a feature pool. New language and dialect varieties that have evolved out of a contact situation would be made up of features selected from the feature pool. Mufwene (2010) states that:

> The basic idea is that all speakers of a language contribute to a pool of features from which 1) each learner selects a particular subset that will form his/her respective idiolect and 2) a speaker can select new variants as he/she accommodates his/her interlocutors while they interact.

Schneider (2007) adopts Mufwene's idea of feature pool in his model of the evolution of postcolonial Englishes. The model rests upon the assumption that "In

selecting from this pool, speakers keep redefining and expressing their linguistic and social identities, constantly aligning themselves with other individuals and thereby accommodating their speech behaviour to those they wish to associate and be associated with" (Schneider, 2007, p. 21).

A number of linguistic and non-linguistic factors determine the features' relative dominance in the feature pool. New language and dialect varieties would evolve through a competition-and-selection process between features available to speakers in a feature pool of possible linguistic choices.

3.3 Founder Principle

Mufwene (1996, 2001) popularised the term 'founder principle' (or founder population) in the field of linguistics to describe the influence of specific transplanted languages or dialects on the formation of a new language or dialect variety. It applies to mixing situations in which the influence of a specific transplanted dialect by the early settlers is stronger than that of other dialects spoken by the later settlers.

Mufwene's founder principle (1996) would imply that Americans were a founder population of the Anglophone community that the current study is investigating. The main input variety of English has always been American since the mid-twentieth century. It is likely, therefore, that the variants of American English will dominate the feature pool and that American English might have a strong influence on the linguistic behaviour of the members of this community.

4. Methodology

4.1 Informants

The data used for the present study were collected from 15 English, 11 American, and 13 New Zealand informants—a total of 39 native speakers of English as shown in **Table 1**. The majority of those who come to Japan as teachers of English at state schools are participants on the JET Programme, which is sponsored by Japanese ministries (CLAIR, 2010). The informants were aged between 21 and 34 at the time of the first data collection, averaging 25 years of age.

Table 1: *Number of Informants*

Gender	English	American	NZ	Total
Male	5	7	3	15
Female	10	4	10	24
Total	**15**	**11**	**13**	**39**

4.2 Data Collection

The data used for this study were collected on two separate occasions—immediately after the informants' arrival in Japan (2000) and then one year later (2001)—in order to conduct a longitudinal study to trace the course of changes in real time. The present study used a method to elicit naturally occurring conversation from the informants without the presence of an interviewer. In both sessions, casual conversations between two native speakers of English from the same country were recorded for 45 minutes. The data used

for the present study comprised a total of 34 hours of speech. The data were collected in Kyushu Island, mainly in Fukuoka prefecture, and the surrounding prefectures of Kumamoto and Saga.

4.3 Linguistic Variables

For the purposes of this study, the modification of the intersonorant (t), which is often referred as the equivalent variable of intervocalic /t/, and the modification of non-prevocalic (r) were examined.

4.3.1 Intersonorant (t)

The Intersonorant (t) is found in utterances like *bu**t** I, ge**t** it, ge**tt**ing, sor**t**ing, be**tt**er, li**tt**le*. In England, the RP form for the intervocalic /t/ is a voiceless alveolar stop [t]. In word-final position, however, the glottal stop is also used by young RP speakers and speakers in many parts of England (e.g., Docherty & Foulkes, 1999, pp. 50, 54; J. Milroy, L. Milroy, Hartley, & Walshaw, 1994; Tollfree, 1999; Trudgill, 1999, 2002). The flap is sometimes observed in certain casual styles ranging from those employed by RP speakers to those employed by Cockney speakers (Tollfree 1999, 170; Wells 1982, 250). In Standard American English (Kretzschmar, 2004, p. 267) and New Zealand English (Bauer & Warren, 2004, p. 593), the intervocalic /t/ is usually voiced and tapped or flapped.

In the data used for the present study, English informants did use flaps occasionally as shown in examples (1) and (2) and some American informants used glottal stops as shown in examples (3) and (4).

(1) En: I have … done qui**t**e a bit this morning (B&R2, R11)
[ɾ]

(2) En: the shower which was pre**tt**y expensive (B&R2, R396)
[ɾ]

(3) Am: bu**t** I thought it said seven … (T&A2, A354)
[ʔ] [ʔ]

(4) Am: yeah so I was like … wai**t**ing around at seven (T&A2, A356)
[ʔ]

4.3.2 Non-Prevocalic (r)

The non-prevocalic (r) is found in words like *ca**r**, su**re**, nu**r**se*, and *sho**r**t*. It is not pronounced in RP and New Zealand English as they are non-rhotic (Hay, Maclagan, & Gordon, 2008, p. 18; Trudgill, 2004, p. 67; Wells, 1982, pp. 125, 218, 490). However, rhotic accents are still found in the southwest and north of England (Altendorf & Watt, 2004, pp. 200–201; Beal, 2004, p. 129; Trudgill, 1999, p. 53) and in the far south of the South Island in NZ (E. Gordon & Maclagan, 2004, p. 172; Trudgill & Hannah, 2008, p. 30). The non-prevocalic (r) is pronounced in Standard American Englsih as it is rhotic, but there are non-rhotic areas still remaining in the United States (M. Gordon, 2004, p. 288; Labov, Ash, & Boberg, 2006, pp. 47–48; Nagy & Roberts, 2004, p. 279; Thomas, 2004, pp. 317–318; Tillery & Bailey, 2004, p. 334; Wells, 1982, pp. 505–508, 520–522, 542–545).

In the second dataset for this study, however, some of the English and NZ informants were occasionally rhotic as shown in examples (5) and (6) respectively. An example of an American informant being non-rhotic is shown in (7).

(5) En: that's the ha**r**d pa**r**t … emm (N&T2, T1438)
[r] [r]

(6) NZ: a millionai**r**e … I don't have to wo**r**k … what I'll do … I'd get bo**r**ed
[r] [r] [r]
(K&G2, G1127)

(7) Am: so you graduated you came over … sta**r**ted the Jet programme?
Ø (J&D2, J223)

4.4 Number of Tokens

The study involves a total of 10,458 intersonorant (t)s and 12,755 non-prevocalic (r)s as shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2: *Number of Tokens*

Variables	Data	English informants	American informants	NZ informants	Total	Per person
intersonorant (t)	1st dataset	2250	1403	1700	5353	137
	2nd dataset	2251	1303	1551	5105	131
	Total	**4501**	**2706**	**3251**	**10458**	**268**
non-prevocalic (r)	1st dataset	2763	1922	1861	6546	168
	2nd dataset	2581	1938	1690	6209	159
	Total	**5344**	**3860**	**3551**	**12755**	**327**

4.5 Auditory Analysis

All tokens were auditorily analysed to determine how the informants had pronounced each target segment. Impressionistic judgment was used. The phonetic realisations of intersonorant (t)s were categorised into three variants: flap [ɾ]; glottal stop [ʔ]; and alveolar stop [t]. The phonetic realisations of non-prevocalic (r)s were categorised into two variants: rhotic and non-rhotic.

4.6 Statistical Analysis

SPSS version 18, a software package for statistical analysis, was used to analyse the results of the auditory data.

5. Results

5.1 Intersonorant (t)

Table 3 shows the mean percentage use of flaps, glottal stops, and alveolar stops for the intersonorant (t) by the informants from England, the United States, and NZ, immediately after arrival in Japan (1st dataset) and one year later (2nd dataset). The mean percentage

use of each variant was calculated from the percentage use by individual informants instead of the raw frequencies for each variant. An asterisk indicates that the change after a year is statistically significant in the paired-samples *t*-test.

Table 3: *Mean Percentage Use of Each Variant of Intersonorant (t)*

Informants	Data	Flap	Glottal stop	Alveolar stop
English	1st dataset	**13.3**	54.5	32.3
	2nd dataset	**16.3**	53.3	30.4
American	1st dataset	**89.8**	**8.9**	1.4
	2nd dataset	**84.3***	**14.2***	1.6
NZ	1st dataset	**69.3**	13.5	17.2
	2nd dataset	**73.4**	13.9	12.7
Total	1st dataset	53.5	28.0	**18.5**
	2nd dataset	54.5	29.1	**16.4***

1st dataset: immediately after arrival; 2nd dataset: one year after arrival.
Paired-samples *t*-test (2-tailed): *significant at $P < .05$.

English informants use glottal stops most of the time and alveolar stops about one third of the time. They already used flaps when they arrived in Japan and noticeably increased their use of them after a year in Japan. American informants use flaps to a large extent, and hardly ever use alveolar stops. They were already using glottal stops when they came to Japan. The use of flaps significantly decreases and, inversely, the use of glottal stops significantly increases after a year. NZ informants mostly use flaps, and occasionally glottal stops and alveolar stops. The use of flaps increases noticeably after a year.

Since most speakers from North America, Australia, and New Zealand typically use flaps, the flap is most likely to be the majority form within the feature pool created in the Anglophone community in Japan. The flap was also already available in the native accent of all English and NZ informants when they arrived in Japan. It is, therefore, quite reasonable and explicable for both English and NZ informants to increase their use of flaps after a year. American informants, however, showed a significant increase in the use of the glottal stop, which is supposed to be a minority form in the feature pool in their community. They seem to accommodate a variety of English that is not necessarily the majority variety.

5.2 Non-Prevocalic (r)

Table 4 shows the mean percentage use of each variant of the non-prevocalic (r) in informants from three countries. All English informants, with the exception of one, are from the non-rhotic dialect areas and seldom use rhoticity. One female speaker from Cornwall, which is a rhotic area, was occasionally rhotic at the time of the second data collection, but she was, in fact, not at all rhotic at the time of the first data collection. All American informants are rhotic speakers, but some of the non-prevocalic (r)s were not pronounced in both the first and second datasets. None of the NZ informants is rhotic. Some of the NZ informants, however, used rhoticity occasionally.

Table 4 : *Mean % Use of Each Variant of Non-Prevocalic (r)*

Informants	Data	Rhotic	Non-rhotic
English	1st dataset	0.4	99.6
	2nd dataset	0.8	99.2
American	1st dataset	**93.7**	**6.3**
	2nd dataset	**90.8**	**9.2**
NZ	1st dataset	2.1	97.9
	2nd dataset	1.6	98.4
Total	1st dataset	27.3	72.7
	2nd dataset	26.4	73.6

1st dataset: immediately after arrival; 2nd dataset: a year after arrival.
K-S statistics indicate that English scores are not normally distributed.

Rhoticity is supposed to be the majority form in their community since the population of residents from North America exceeds that of the remaining English-speaking countries. However, neither English nor NZ informants showed any increase in their use of rhoticity. Although the non-prevocalic /r/ is a salient feature of American English, as Trudgill (1986, p. 16) states, the phonotactic constraint might be preventing them from accommodating American English. Interestingly, American informants noticeably decreased their use of rhoticity after a year in Japan, although the change is not statistically significant.

6. Discussion

This paper demonstrated some linguistic changes that might support the idea that the Anglophone community in the Expanding Circle in which English is not the primary language is in the first stage of new-dialect formation. The results of this paper suggest that a rudimentary levelling seems to be taking place in this community. New-dialect formation, however, could not possibly be achieved in this community, because the members are constantly replaced by new arrivals.

For both linguistic variables investigated for the present study, American speakers seem to accommodate minority forms in the feature pool of the Anglophone community. This indicates that majority forms are not always chosen from the feature pool in their community. In fact, Hirano's studies (2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012) revealed evidence that the speaker's linguistic behaviour and change are strongly correlated to his or her social network in the dialect contact situation of the Anglophone community in Japan. As Schneider (2007, p. 21) states, speakers tend to accommodate "their speech behaviour to those they wish to associate and be associated with".

Since the Second World War, Americans have always constituted the majority of native speakers of English and the majority of JET participants since the establishment of the programme in 1987 (CLAIR, 2010; MOFA, 2009). As the main founder population of the Anglophone community in Japan, Americans were likely to have a strong influence on the linguistic behaviour of members of the community. Regarding the effect of the founder principle (Mufwene, 1996), however, the status of Americans as the founder population and the high percentage of Americans within the community are not necessarily reflected in the linguistic changes and new dialect formation in the community in Japan where English is not the primary language.

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