

## Retentionism in contact English varieties

The phenomenon of retentionism or colonial ‘lag’ (in contact varieties of a language) has been investigated in previous research such as Siemund (2004), and Pietsch (2009) as referring to variables that, having been transmitted from the lexifier at the time of contact, are retained intact in the recipient variety without significant change while their counterparts in the lexifier source undergo significant changes or grammaticalization. A well-known example is the medial perfect in Irish English which has been said to at least partially reflect a construction found in 17<sup>th</sup> century mainstream English (Harris 1991, Siemund 2004, Pietsch 2009), and has remained unchanged in Irish English ever since, while its counterpart in its non-contact source varieties is no longer used (see Brinton 1994). Another study (Kuteva et al 2018) reveals that a colonial British English archaism, the discourse particle *what*, was retained in Singapore English but has gone on to grammaticalize further in Singapore English than in the British English source varieties, also illustrating an example of a specific type of development which could not have taken place outside the contact situation (see Thomason (2001: 62), Pietsch (2009: 530). Although such accounts have often been held to question, they mainly deal with features that were present in the pre-contact English source varieties. What is less often researched in new, contact English dialects are features that were *absent* at the time of contact and have only emerged in the source varieties subsequent to contact. Haselow (2016) studies a number of sentence-final discourse elements in British English, such as *really*, *then*, *anyway*, and comment clauses such as *I believe*, *I think* etc, some of which have only recently been introduced into the final position. A case in point is the sentence-final pragmatic particle *though*, an item which was rarely used before the 1990s (Lenker (2010: 201), Traugott (2016: 53)), but is frequent nowadays, e.g.:

- (1) A. oh you know when you were in France did you take any good photographs ... (..)  
B. I took lots of photographs;  
I don't know if they're any good **though**

(Example from the ICE-GB S1A-009), cited in Haselow (2016: 94)

A preliminary investigation of the first 125 files of the ICE-corpora reveals that sentence-final *though* appears to be less frequently used in new, contact varieties of English such as Singapore English and Indian English. On the basis of such findings, it appears to be used one and a half times less frequently in Singapore English than in British English, and 20 times less frequently in Indian English. This raises the question whether the absence of a feature at the time of contact could affect its frequency in the contact dialect at later stages of development.

The present paper will use data from the ICE corpora and historical data from the CLMETS corpus to investigate a number of English sentence-final pragmatic particles (SFPPs) and to suggest a hypothesis of (anti)-retentionism to explain their reduced occurrence in Singapore English and Indian English relative to British English. While a hypothesis of retentionism proposes that a feature present in the pre-contact source language at the time of contact may be conserved in the recipient contact variety long after it has become obsolete in the source language, it stands to reason that a feature that was *absent* from the lexifier source at the time of contact may be less likely to be transferred at later diachronic stages, especially if its absence at the time of contact resulted in a borrowed form as a replacement. A retentionist account should thus not only investigate the conservation of archaisms and relics present in the past history of the lexifier source, but also consider the conservation of former diachronic states of the lexifier source dialect at contact time.

## References

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