

Ship English

Sailors' speech in the early colonial
Caribbean

Sally J. Delgado

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For Mervyn Alleyne 1993-2016

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2 Conclusions and implications

This final chapter will consider the findings of the preceding chapters on sailors' demography, speech communities and linguistic features to respond to the central claim that there is a distinct Ship English that was spoken by British sailors in the early Atlantic colonial period. The first section, Conclusions, will clarify my own position on the distinctiveness, stability and spread of Ship English and address the potential typology of the variety. The second section, Implications, will consider the newly presented baseline data on the linguistic features of Ship English in terms of how this might be integrated into theories and research in dialectology and contact linguistics. Throughout this chapter, I acknowledge the scope of the work that still needs to be done and attempt to clarify some specific areas of study that may hopefully motivate future studies.

2.1 Conclusions

2.1.1 A distinct and stable variety

The central claim of this book is that there is a distinct "Ship English" that was spoken by British sailors in the early colonial context (determined as roughly the period between 1620 and 1750). This claim is substantiated by two chapters dedicated to the socio-historical context of the variety which identify speakers' demographics (Chapter 3) and the characteristics of the speech community (Chapter 4) in addition to three chapters dedicated to linguistic findings which identify salient and repeated markers of sailors' speech during this period in terms of noun phrases (Chapter 5,) verb phrases (Chapter 6,) and clause, sentence, and discourse level phenomena (Chapter 7). The socio-historical data demonstrate that Ship English of the early Atlantic colonial period developed within a unique maritime demographic and socio-linguistic context which promoted the development of new forms and enabled feature transfer via oral traditions. The linguistic data demonstrate that Ship English has distinctive characteristics with regards to morphosyntactic, syntactic and discourse level variation.

It is pertinent at this point to stress that my claim throughout this book is not that Ship English is a dialect with *unique characteristics* but rather with unique

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patterns of frequency and distribution for particular features that marked speakers as members of an extended maritime community. As such, the characteristic features of Ship English here identified are also documented in other varieties of Early Modern English not associated with the maritime community and found in the Early Modern English of authors like Milton, Bunyan, Dryden, Evelyn and Pepys. However, the patterns of frequency in their work are unlikely to correspond consistently with Ship English (unless the author's intention was to represent maritime speech). Dialectologist and specialist in the creation of World Englishes, Edgar Schneider explains that, "frequency shifts are a core property of [the] diffusion process" and that it is not the creation of new forms that indicate the emergence of new World Englishes but changed frequencies that become strengthened by feedback loops and lead to quantitative difference (Schneider2018). Hence, this book presents morphosyntactic features that were salient among sailors and that were likely to have shifted to a higher frequency of distribution than other contemporary dialects. Thus, when these features are considered together, they mark the emergence of a recognizably distinct variety.

The fact that there are recognizable patterns of frequency among sailors, and a high distribution of certain morphosyntactic features mark the variety as distinctive to other contemporary varieties (in ways that can be recognized and reproduced) appear to support Bailey and Ross's claim that there is a distinct type of English that was spoken by sailors during the period of early English colonial expansion (1988: 194) upon which my own central hypothesis is based. As such, the data and discussion presented in the linguistic chapters aim to support the central hypothesis of a distinct maritime dialect by identifying the features with the highest frequency that served as salient markers of Ship English, not to document all the features that either do or do not occur in the variety nor to present a comparative analysis between feature frequencies in Ship English and counterparts in other contemporary varieties. Yet, now that descriptive work is available on the most salient features of Ship English, albeit by no means definitive or necessarily complete, future studies might focus on comparative approaches. However, such work is beyond the scope of this book.

This study builds on and extends the few prior studies into variation in sailors' speech and here briefly re-presents this literature to substantiate the claim that Ship English was a comprehensive variety. The unique lexical characteristics of Ship English have been amply documented in the many dictionaries and wordlists published since Captain John Smith's *Sea Grammar* in 1627; indeed, most work on the subject has been comprised of lexical items that constitute the professional jargon of the crew intended for circulation among maritime professionals

(see Chapter 2: Review of the Literature). Investigations that provide evidence of the unique phonological and morphological characteristics of Ship English are **Matthews1935'** (**Matthews1935**) monograph on sailors' pronunciation in the second half of the seventeenth century and **BaileyRoss1988's** (**BaileyRoss1988**) article on the morphosyntactic features of Ship English.¹ This book now offers the first extended compilation of evidence on the sociolinguistic, syntactic and discourse level features that characterize the variety.² Hence, we now have evidence that Ship English of the early English colonial period around the Atlantic had distinctive lexical, morphological, syntactic, and discourse features that support its status as a distinct historical variety of English.

The evidence supports the view that Ship English was stable and diffused in ways comparable to other varieties of English. Sea shanties record language features of Ship English over time and sea-music historian Stan Hugill explains that this demonstrates that the variety had stability. His analysis of two shanty verses published in 1549 concludes, "the form and language of these early shanties, apart from the fact that the English is Chaucerian, are very much like what our sailors of the sail sang three hundred years later" (**Hugill1969**: 3). Hugill's reference to "Chaucerian" English is most probably an allusion to archaic vocabulary but the "form and language" that he refers to, described as very much like the speech of sailors three hundred years later, shows that Ship English was established enough to be recognized as a distinct variety for three centuries.³ It is possible that the "language" Hugill refers to incorporates (and potentially derives from) the distinct jargon of the maritime profession, yet his reference to a distinctive "form" suggests a variety with syntactic and discourse-level variation that was stable enough to spread and be identified over time. As discussed in Chapter 3, this stability was, in part, motivated by the members of a speech community

¹It should be recognized that Matthews states that his work "should be regarded as a cross-section in the history of pronunciation...[and] It is not pretended that it describes the 'seaman's dialect' of the period" (1935: 196, see full citation in §??). Hence, although I discuss Matthews' work as one of the two previously published studies on Ship English, it is important to note that he himself did not present his research as a study on any distinct "seaman's dialect."

²Given the limited scope of research to date, I do not propose that this study is definitive or that it will not be subject to subsequent revision, modification, and potential correction as we learn more about Ship English. Yet, the baseline data provided can serve as an entry point for scholars to integrate this variety into their work on language history and change; it will also hopefully prompt continued research.

³It is possible that the stability Hugill observes from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries extends even further back with common origins in Mediterranean Lingua Franca (or Sabir) reportedly used since the thirteenth century among sailors traversing the Mediterranean basin (**Parkvall2005**).

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who worked in real and pseudo-kinship groups that regularly included partners, wives and children whose communication was predominantly oral owing, in part, to the high levels of illiteracy among sailors. Shipboard oral cultures were furthermore closely connected and expressed a common identity through oral and performance mediums such as storytelling, music, gaming, and dramatic play as examined in Chapter 4. Owing to the composition of these speech communities, the language features that marked the variety as distinctive, once established, were likely able to spread quickly among those within the community and they were additionally reinforced internally by the oral speech practices and strong affiliations among groups of sailors.⁴

Characteristic features of Ship English were not only diffused and reinforced among the sailors of any one vessel, fleet, or shipping route; they were also transferred to communities on land that were in contact with sailors, e.g., communities of traders in ports and groups of family members and friends in each sailor's country of origin. The effects of language transfer and change might not have been circular as suggested by Johannes Schmidt's 1872 Wave Model (discussed in Chapter 2 §Dialect change and new dialect formation,) instead, transmission would have likely occurred in coastal and estuary locations where recruitment, trade and leisure brought local populations and sailors into close contact.^{5, 6} It is also interesting that many linguistic features associated with Ship English occur in wives' letters to mariner-husbands.⁷ Thus, evidence suggests that salient lin-

⁴It is possible that there were distinctive sub-community features shared among specific groups of sailors speaking Ship English that marked differences in status (e.g., experienced seamen compared to those appointed through family connections, financial necessity, or impressment). Although the research at this stage is not sufficient to support such a claim, this might be a direction for future study.

⁵It is likely that feature transfer was also occurring from the port community into the ships thus giving rise to the possibility of regional variations among the fleets that sourced their crews from specific locations, for example because London-born sailors were most heavily represented in naval vessels, coastal northerners in the merchant service, and coastal southerners and westerners in privateering and piracy, it may be that those maritime communities incorporated more linguistic features from the home-regions of their crew majority. Furthermore, these potential sub-distinctions may have served to identify sailors as belonging to a particular fleet or service.

⁶To illustrate some evidence of such transfer, a joint letter drafted by the residents of one harbor town (presumed to be Edinburgh) in testimony against Lt. Lilburne [SP 42/6 c.1700] includes zero inflection on third person indicative verbs, emphatic use of the auxiliary "do," prepositional "for" with an infinitive complement, possessive pronominal forms without anterior nominal markers, and accusative-case pronouns in genitive phrases—all of which are identified as characteristic features of Ship English.

⁷Examples of Ship English features in wives' letters include the omission of articles [HCA

guistic features associated with Ship English were transferred among port communities and family networks in contact with sailors and these features may have been consciously expressed in order to identify with the sailors or/and subconsciously acquired through regular contact with speakers of the variety.

2.1.2 The typology of Ship English

Having provided detailed evidence for Ship English as a distinct variety in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, the problem remains as to how we intend to classify this variety. Some historical and non-academic publications use the word “language” to refer to Ship English, e.g., Russell’s descriptions of “the language of the sea” (1883: viii,) and “Sailor’s language... compounded of the terms referring to the various parts of ships ...[with] a mass of rough sayings into the forecandle, many of which are sanctified by touches of rude poetry” (Russell1883: ix) and the claim in the introductory comments to Smith’s *Sea Grammar* that the work gives explanations and translations for “the language both of ships and Seas” (Smith1627) Choundas2007 likewise claims that there is a sub-category of this “language of the sea” that could be classified as “a freestanding pirate language” (2007: 2). Furthermore, it appears that writers who describe the “language” of sailors do not intend to imply that their system of communication is distinct enough to be unintelligible to speakers of other varieties of English, for example, but rather to stress the differences in their speech in which “meaning is really so subtle as utterly to defy translation” (Russell1883: xv) and highlight the internal systemic coherence that provides a “uniform way of talking” (Choundas2007: 2). Indeed, the term “Ship English” (coined by Hancock1976: 33) already classifies the variety as a type of English. However, the question remains as to what sub-classification of the English language Ship English comprises. The internal systemic cohesion among speakers disqualifies it as a manifestation of any one individual’s idiolect and the phonological, morphological, syntactic and discourse features attested in the variety show that it is more than professional jargon. The remaining potential typological classifications with which we might classify this variety are as a dialect, a sociolect, or a koine, each of which are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Ship English is a dialect, commonly defined a manner of speech characteristic of a group of people (*Oxford Eng. Dict.* 1989, Vol 4: 599) and more specifically defined by linguists in terms of three classifications: regional dialects, social dialects

1/9/22], the idiomatic post-nominal phrase “last past” as a marker of temporal sequence [HCA 1/14/76], and the use of “that” at the head of an independent clause as a formal discourse marker to index status with no apparent syntactic function [HCA 1/98/118.]

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(sociolects,) and ethnic dialects (ethnolects) (WolframSchilling2016). In addition to describing sailors' speech as a language (discussed above,) Russell1883 also uses the word "dialect" to describe Ship English: "sailor's talk is a dialect...[in which] English words are used, but their signification is utterly remote from the meaning they have in shore parlance." (Russell1883: ix).⁸ The suggestion that there is a "sea dialect" (Russell1883, p xiii) is entirely logical given the general definition of the word as characteristic to group of people and the fact that the variety is characteristic to sailors. Yet Russell's classification was also a product of trends in nineteenth-century London among scholars with an increased interest in dialect studies. Interest in regional and socially stigmatized varieties in the late nineteenth century gave rise to a host of dialect glossaries and motivated comparative studies and dialect theory (Petyt1980: 35-38). Indeed, it was at that time that the term "dialect" came to be explicitly associated with a regional sub-standard variety in comparison to the variety that was championed as the national standard.⁹ Görlach describes how the speech of sailors was stigmatized in a period of increasing standardization, as "the speech of those who cannot do any better" at best (1999: 484,) or "the gibberish of the uneducated" at worst (532). Such commonplace beliefs about the lack of social value associated with sailors and their speech explains how Ship English might have been classified as a dialect in contemporary studies and in popular opinion as this term would have explicitly marked the variety as substandard and stigmatized.

Scholars who have written on sailor's speech accept that each individual sailor would have entered the community with a dialect reflective of the region in which that person was raised. Even though the possibility of babies being born aboard ships is covered in Chapter 4, §Subgroups and Social Cohesion, it is unlikely that the vessel was a permanent home to infants learning their native language. Instead, in Chapter 3 §Age presents data attesting to the fact that most sailors went to sea between the ages of 12 and 16 and would therefore already have established the characteristic speech patterns of their home region.

⁸This citation additionally suggests the possibility of creolization through the process of relexification yet given the wider context of the comments, it is unlikely that this was what the author intended to propose.

⁹Although, by modern standards, regional dialects might be classified as "regiolects" comparable to "sociolects" and "ethnolects," the general term "dialect" was originally associated with regional speech patterns as sociolinguistics and ethnolinguistics had yet to become established fields of study. Furthermore, it is worth noting that modern linguists universally recognize that everyone speaks a dialect and that dialects are not inherently sub-standard although the word "dialect" was traditionally associated with social stigmatization and popular notions of inferiority (WolframSchilling2016: 2-17).

Matthews makes this point explicit in his monograph on sailors' pronunciation in the second half of the seventeenth century. His final comments in the introductory section stress the relevance of regional influence with the assertion that the writers of the logbooks "must have come from almost every shire's end of England" (195) and thus, the findings represent many local dialects. He states "This study, therefore, should be regarded as a cross-section in the history of pronunciation, an account of the various pronunciations in use among the tarpaulin seamen" (196). He goes on to state that "It is not pretended that it describes the 'seaman's dialect' of the period" (196,) thus explicitly foregrounding the variation of dialects aboard ships in contrast to a potential seaman's dialect.¹⁰ The fact that each sailor would have entered the community with an existing regional dialect makes the classification of any potential "seaman's dialect" problematic not only as it implies competition between dialects¹¹ but also because it suggests a process of acquiring native language forms at a young age in a way that did not apply to maritime recruits. Moreover, the historical association of the word "dialect" with regional distinctness is problematic as ships' communities were transient and potentially overlapped with existing geographical dialect areas (but without the suggestion that language forms were necessarily transferred). Further research may even attest to regional variations of Ship English such as Mediterranean, Atlantic, and Pacific Ship English, influenced by specific regional variations of the languages their crews encountered. In short, Ship English is understandably classified as a dialect in general terms given the broad scope of the term to describe a variety characteristic to one group of people coupled with its working-class stigma of inferiority with respect to the standard. However, for linguists, the sub-classification of the variety demands more specific attention.

Of the three possible dialect classifications available to modern linguists (i.e., regional dialect, sociolect, and ethnolect) the classification of Ship English as an ethnolect is the least probable given the data presented in Chapter 2 on recruitment practices and sailors' places of origin and associated language abilities. Some linguists might argue that the regional dialect classification is valid given that the data reflects an Atlantic variety of Ship English, yet the transient nature

¹⁰ Although whether Matthews' comments imply that there was a "seaman's dialect" of the period (but that his work did not aim to represent it] or that he does not believe that a "seaman's dialect" existed are uncertain.

¹¹ A modern understanding of diglossia might help a researcher mitigate the suggested conflict between dialects in this context, but this term still carries with it the suggestion that one of the dialects is a standard and the other is a regional dialect or sociolect, whereas in the context of sailors, neither of the two dialects of English were necessarily the standard (indeed, Standard English might have been additionally acquired in a context of pluri-dialectalism).

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of ships' speech communities at sea coupled with the notion that maritime communities in ports span five continents might frustrate efforts to define a unified region that underpins the variety. Furthermore, the regional dialect classification might also be perceived as problematic given the assumption that regional dialects are learned during native language acquisition (ChambersTrudgill1998: 5). This leaves only one other potential classification.

The classification of Ship English as a sociolect, characteristic of a group that shares a social identity rather than an ethnic or regional identity (Trudgill2003) eliminates the problematic associations of ethnic homogeneity and regional unity that are associated with regional dialects and ethnolects and instead promotes focus on the social factors that unified diverse crews. In addition, the problematic suggestion of native language acquisition that a dialect classification implies is also mitigated as sociolects are often acquired after native fluency through conscious choice to demonstrate group affiliation and passive acquisition of group-specific language features (Durrell2004: 200-205).¹² Furthermore, these socially-conditioned varieties of speech often consciously demonstrate social and professional identification, socioeconomic class, age group and/or ethnic and political affiliation. The term "sociolect" is therefore well suited to the classification of Ship English, a variety that is acquired after native fluency among predominantly young working-class men who share a professional context, maritime folklore, and solidarity in the face of hardships at sea. Hancock appears to support a sociolect classification in his definition of "a situation-specific register of English, which I call *Ship English*" (1986: 85, author's italics). Schultz2010 also takes this position, talking about Ship English as a "sociolect" in his unpublished Master's thesis.¹³ Yet, one caveat remains in that the classification of Ship English as a sociolect may suggest social homogeneity among its speakers.¹⁴ This book explicitly aims to dispel the popular stereotype that all British mariners were monolingual, lower-class, Caucasian men in their mid-twenties who performed manual labor and led a profligate single life. Indeed, the data in Chapter 3 demonstrates

¹²It is important to recognize that although certain sociolects can be acquired as an additional variety later in life (e.g., Instant Messenger and Internet varieties,) they can also be coded into native language acquisition, particularly when they are associated with social status derived from economic class divisions regions (e.g., Labov's 1966 research based on the Lower East Side of New York City that showed systemic social stratification).

¹³Hancock served as the academic supervisor on Shultz's committee at the University of Texas at Austin in 2010 and so may have influenced Shultz's position in this respect.

¹⁴Although I accept that some definitions of "sociolect" do not demand social homogeneity as a defining factor of the speech community, most specify that speakers belong to the same social stratum and have comparable ages, incomes, and experiences in addition to frequent contact with one another.

the diversity of maritime communities and this diversity is in danger of being overlooked if their variety of language is classified in such a way as to suggest uniformity in social grouping. Thus, Ship English might reasonably be classified as a sociolect given the general scope of the term to apply to a variety characteristic to a group of people connected by social factors such as age, profession, and ideology, yet this classification should not suggest that all speakers shared social homogeneity.

The problems of assuming social homogeneity if we define Ship English as a sociolect or implying regional origins if we define Ship English as a regional dialect are resolved if we classify Ship English by its process of formation and not the characteristics of its speakers. As such, Ship English might be classified as a koine, defined as a stabilized contact variety that develops when mutually intelligible varieties (either regional dialects or sociolects) come into contact. After a period of interaction or integration among the speakers of these contact varieties, variant linguistic features mix and become levelled among the group (Siegel2001: 175).¹⁵ Trudgill's theory of new dialect formation through koinization in colonial territories (discussed in more detail in Chapter 2) specifies a three-stage process of mixing, leveling and simplification that results in "a single unitary variety" (Trudgill1986: 27). Le Page's theory on linguistic focusing explains how such a process can result from social conformity and group identification; "the emergence of a closeknit group, a sense of solidarity and a feeling of shared territory are all conditions favouring focusing" (Milroy1986: 378). In Chapter 2, I propose that the mixing, leveling, and simplification process of koinization was potentially happening on board international sailing vessels of the Atlantic because of social conformity and group identification among sailors. Schultz2010's Master's thesis on the sociolinguistic context of Ship English similarly claims that the development of a unitary ship's variety of English was made possible by maritime communities of practice, in which "linguistically, strong networks act as a norm enforcement mechanism" (2010: 7-8). The data presented in Chapters 3 and 4 serve to support the claim that koinization was happening in maritime communities by providing evidence of the practices that sailors used to reinforce group identity consequently promoted linguistic focusing. In Chapter 3, the data on sailors illustrates the hardships that likely increased social dependence, in-

¹⁵The term "koine" (or "koiné") is the Greek word for "common," and was originally applied to a common Greek dialect that developed among the regionally-diverse armies of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC (Andriotis1995). The term has been more recently applied in contact linguistics as a levelled variety when mutually intelligible dialects come into contact, it has also been used more specifically in terms of creole genesis theory (Siegel2001) and the phenomena of new regional and immigrant varieties (Trudgill1986, Kerswill2004).

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cluding harsh recruitment measures, lack of pay, high mortality rates, and the dangers of shipboard work, disciplinary action and conflict. This chapter also explains how many lower-ranking sailors and unpaid workers were denied shore leave for fear of desertion, thus forcing their speech communities to become even more insular. The data presented in Chapter 4 regarding speech communities shows how social cohesion among crews was facilitated by kinship bonds in mess groups and that collective agency and resistance were often a form of protection against brutal discipline by tyrannous commanding officers and perpetual subordination. Among sailors, collective activism was a necessity for survival and the ritual consumption of alcohol bound sailors' insular communities in trade, conflict, and times of spiritual distress. Group identity was reinforced through shared beliefs in ancient maritime folklore and expressed orally in these communities, thus providing the context necessary to focus linguistic diversity and derive a single unitary variety that expressed shared experience.

The few modern scholars who have published research on Ship English or features of sailors' speech appear to support the interpretation that koinization was happening in maritime communities. **Matthews1935** and **BaileyRoss1988** describe common linguistic features among divergent crews, and both acknowledge the role of professional or social identification although neither use the term koinization or classify the resulting variety as a koine or new dialect. Matthews presents the phonology of sailors as a shared paradigm motivated by the technical jargon of professional association. He explains in his introductory notes, "a craft imposes certain traditional pronunciations upon those who engage in it. For sailors, whatever their early dialect and education, there must have been certain conventions of pronunciation for words used exclusively in the sea-trade" (1935: 193). Matthews falls short of claiming that his findings show a leveled pronunciation system, yet his explanation of how sailors, regardless of their own dialect, were obliged by their craft to observe certain conventions of pronunciation certainly suggests the stages of mixing and leveling that occur in koinization with the motivational force of professional association serving to provide linguistic focusing. **BaileyRoss1988's** (**BaileyRoss1988**) article on morphosyntactic variation of Ship English similarly describes stages of mixing and leveling. In the conclusion to their paper they explain:

variation and change were certainly no greater than in most nonstandard varieties of English, and in the process of its formation Ship English seems to have eliminated the most aberrant features of British dialects, as **Hancock1976** suggested. As a result, it shares many of its morpho-syntactic structures with other British regional and social dialects; in fact, it is not at all clear

that *grammatically* Ship English is a unique sociolect, although its lexical uniqueness is apparent. At least in its morpho-syntax, Ship English represents a kind of ‘levelled’ variety similar to those discussed by Trudgill (1986,) with the most widespread nonstandard features preserved and the most restricted ones apparently lost (BaileyRoss1988: 207, authors’ italics).

The wording of Bailey and Ross’s paper appears to echo Matthews’ suggestion that “whatever their early dialect and education, there must have been certain conventions...used exclusively in the sea-trade” (1935: 193) and might thus be seen as an elaboration of Matthews earlier position that Ship English is a variety resulting from mixing dialects and deriving leveled features as a result of professional association. Thus, both Matthews1935’ (Matthews1935) and BaileyRoss1988 support the interpretation of mixing and leveling with linguistic focusing. My own position may be interpreted as taking their claims one step further by suggesting that the result of the mixing and leveling led to default paradigms (i.e. simplification) and resulted in a shared unitary koine that follows all the stages of Trudgill1986’s (Trudgill1986) theory of koinization. However, although some linguistic features identified in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 attest to linguistic simplification (e.g., zero inflection, default pronominal forms, negative concord, leveling of the present and past tense copula forms, overt auxiliaries in all modalities, multiple functionality of specific lexemes, and the use of coordinating conjunctions to build super-structures regardless of parallelism requirements) other features suggest complexity (e.g., linguistic conditioning of feature omission and placement, subordination marked by present-participle phrases, [non-specific verb + specifying nominal complement] constructions, fronting of intransitive verbs before a noun phrase subject, and swearing to mark realis and imperative modalities).¹⁶ Yet it is important to recognize that the term “simplification” in Trudgill’s framework does not necessarily suggest linguistic simplification, but a determinism of the new dialect formation that is marked by the manifestation of a “final,

¹⁶It is worth noting that some features analysed can be presented as evidence of simplification and as evidence of linguistic complexity, e.g., the verb “to do.” On one hand, “do support” may have been a simplified default in all affirmative verb phrases to aid the process of acquisition for language learners, yet it also potentially functions to mark aspectual and/or subordinating meaning in affirmative clauses in the indicative mood when used in conjunction with preterit forms (see full discussion in Chapter 6 on the auxiliary “to do.”) I have purposely presented both interpretations as I think that they are not mutually exclusive. Instead, the use of “do” may have changed with any individual speaker’s fluency in the language. Learners might have defaulted to a universal use of “do support” without aspectual or subordinating meaning, and native/fluent speakers might have used the verb “do” to mark subtle distinctions in meaning between verb phrases.

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stable, relatively uniform outcome...[when] the new dialect appears as a stable, crystallised variety” (Trudgill2004: 113). The “simplification” is represented in the emergence of default paradigms and not a suggested linguistic simplification that we might associated with pidgin varieties. The data presented on Ship English indicates that there was still significant free variation with respect to certain features (e.g., the omission of articles, the selection of regular weak or unmarked preterit forms, and the placement of adverbial constituents) yet there were also clear default paradigms that marked the variety (e.g., marking genitive case with prepositional phrases rather than nominal inflection, post-nominal placement of present participle phrases, overt use of the auxiliary “to do” in constructions with affirmative indicative modality, fronting verbs if they can function as auxiliaries, and the use of a stative present participle in progressive structures). Therefore, Ship English might be reasonably classified as a koine owing to its formation through a process of mixing and leveling regional dialects and its emergence as a stable uniform variety with default linguistic paradigms determined from a variety of input features, however, this interpretation necessarily also classifies the variety as a new world dialect and therefore alludes back to the problematic assumptions of geographical containment and native language acquisition once the variety achieves a uniform outcome.

In summary, the various potential classifications with which we might categorize Ship English all have their merits, yet none are without problematic assumptions about the nature of the language variety or the people who spoke it. I believe that although the variety was undoubtedly influenced by the idiolects, regional dialects and professional jargon of those within the maritime community, it constitutes a unitary system of morpho-syntactic and discourse variation that extends well beyond individual speakers, occupational lexicon, or the influence of any one regional dialect. Taking into consideration the analysis and opinions of previous researchers working on Ship English and the socio-historical and linguistic evidence presented in these chapters, I believe that although sailors’ speech has been historically associated with a professional jargon and more recently conceptualized as an occupational sociolect, the most appropriate classification we can assign is that Ship English of the early colonial period was a new dialect of English that was formed through the mixing, leveling and simplification processes of koinization. This conclusion is presented in the full knowledge that research into Ship English is in its early stages and further work on the shared linguistic systems of sailors may lead to modifications and amendments of this claim as we learn more about the process of language transfer and the extent of linguistic simplification in the variety. We should also bear in mind that like

any linguistic system, Ship English manifests itself on a continuum of localized and individual variation and there are also likely sub-categories of Ship English according to sailing region, crew composition, and the type of vessel or voyage. Furthermore, I do not propose that there was one type of Ship English as a monolithic variety, but instead that there were core linguistic features that identified speakers as sailors. These linguistic features, like any others, were “transmitted by normal social and cultural forces” (McDavid1979) and were therefore prone to idiolectal and systemic change in addition to adaption and replacement over time.

2.2 Implications

One of the aims of this study was to generate a baseline of linguistic data that describe common features of Ship English with the hope that this variety might be integrated into the discourse, the theories and the research on dialect variation and language contact in the early colonial period. As such, the implications of findings presented in the chapters of this book are discussed in terms of how they relate to our understanding of dialectology in the discipline of historical linguistics and the theories of pidgin and creole genesis in the discipline of contact linguistics. This section on the implications of Ship English also includes some general observations on recovering the agency of sailors and advocating for future work that integrates data on sociolinguistics and emulates the multidisciplinary approaches of Atlantic Studies.

2.2.1 Relevance for dialectology

The recognition of Ship English as a distinct historical dialect of British English prompts a reconceptualization of dialect change and feature transfer in the British Isles. Despite the traditional models of dialect diffusion that emphasize central geographical focal points with concentric waves of influence, this study focuses on a dialect that was formed without a common center and drew influences from various locations that were not regionally adjacent. Rather than being defined by a central geographical focal point with rivers and seas serving only to limit the extent of dialect expansion, the genesis of Ship English refutes assumptions about the obstructive nature of waterways in dialect diffusion and instead encourages scholars to envision rivers as conduits of communication and seas as fertile spaces where new forms of speech could incubate and stabilize. The reconceptualization of waterways as potential spaces for dialect change and expansion is

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perhaps particularly relevant to scholars of historical dialectology, and although maritime communities may have served as agents of language change with respect to English as far back as Anglo-Saxon times, the agency of sailors in dialect change might particularly interest scholars whose research interests coincide with the era of expanding maritime technology, trade and exploration that converted the seas in the early modern period into busy spaces of transit and imperial regulation. Scholars interested in the Early Modern English period of dialect change in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries might particularly focus on the potential internal changes that were driven by increasing coastal transportation services of wheat, cloth, and coal (Willan1967). The sailors who worked in these trades were likely to have acquired and transported dialect features from port to port, particularly as their profession may have carried the type of covert prestige that is often associated with working-class regional speech and occupations associated with masculinity and toughness (Petyt1980: 160). Indeed, their agency may have derived the kind of “pan-variety parallelism” that Tagliamonte2013 claims occurred among northern British regions and crossed the Irish Sea in which “all communities share the same (variable) system in each case and it is only in the subtle weights and constraint of variation that the differences emerge” (2013: 192). If, indeed, maritime workers had an influence in transmitting and leveling dialect features among ports of the British Isles, then this process was also potentially happening on a larger scale given that “[t]he combination of ocean and river routes defined the shape of the Atlantic zone” (Thornton2000: 56). Consequently, it is possible that maritime speech communities also leveled linguistic features around the Atlantic and established the type of supra-regional varieties that are still evident in pan-Caribbean English usage (Allsopp2003).

The data presented here on Ship English and the idea that leveled features composed a stable variety may help to refine what “dialect” implies for the continued effective use of this term in the new information age. To echo a statement from the introduction, we live in a world so interconnected by air travel, media and online networks that we rarely consider the importance of maritime travel or those who depended upon it in an age before we physically and digitally took to the skies. Yet, studying the speech communities of people who sailed the waters that connected the edges of the known world may ironically give us some insight into how supra-regional varieties are formed in a modern world where global networks connect distant places and incubate varieties of language that neither adhere to any standard regional norms nor diffuse via regional adjacency. As Darwin2016 explains in his paper on language and identity in the digital age,

technology has revolutionized the way we communicate; increased travel, mobile communication and online connectivity have blurred the boundaries of space “leading to new identifications, allegiances, and relations” (2016: 523). As a result, new digital technologies necessitate concepts of dialect formation and research methodologies that can trace what **StornaiuoloHall2014** describe as the “echoing of ideas across spaces, people and texts” (2014: 28).

This book likewise attempts to trace the echoing of sailors’ language features across the space, people and texts of the early colonial period. It presents Ship English as a language variety with no regional origin that is defined by its medium of transmission; this definition creates parallels between non-regional, technology-mediated varieties such as Instant Messaging (IM) and texting varieties of English (**WarschauerMatuchniak2010**) in addition to translingual varieties that evolve online (**Canagarajah2013**). Like many of these new varieties emerging via technology, Ship English is not a traditional dialect defined by regional parameters nor is it a sociolect shared by a single stratum of society, instead, it is a poorly-understood variety derived from the mixing and leveling of distinct regional features with influence from other languages. It furthermore demonstrates a type of simplification that facilitates learner acquisition but also permits the complex syntactic variation that enables fluent speakers to express subtlety and complexity in meaning. Thus, perhaps a variety such as Ship English could provide an impetus to refine models of dialect genesis for the digital age in which mediums of communication and high-levels of non-native acquisition are more important than identifying a single geographical origin, social class or ethnic group in which native speakers acquire fluency. In short, if we can re-conceptualize the term “dialect” in a way that especially de-emphasizes its regional restrictions and instead highlights its potential range through the medium by which it is transmitted, then Ship English might help us understand the processes through which newly emerging global varieties are developing.

If we accept that Ship English was formed through a process of dialect mixing, leveling, and simplification in the same way that **Trudgill1986** describes the formation of immigrant koines, then the data on Ship English also serve to expand our understanding of the contexts in which koinization can take place. Since he first proposed his three-stage theory of new dialect formation in 1986, Trudgill envisioned the process of koinization as one connected with language developments in colonial territories where immigrants with different varieties of mutually intelligible regional dialects gathered and their language features blended. **Trudgill2004**’s more recent book published in 2004, *New Dialect Formation: The Inevitability of Colonial Englishes*, explicitly connects the process of

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koinization with immigrant and settler forms of English. However, his evidence on Southern Hemisphere varieties are prefaced by the claim that all colonial varieties derive from a combination of comparable factors: adaptation to a new physical environment, different linguistic changes in the mother country and the colony, language contact with indigenous languages and with other European languages, and internal dialect contact (2004: 1-7). The relevance of these factors become clear when we envision the ship itself as a microcosm of the colonial state, as LinebaughRediker2000 propose in their history of the revolutionary Atlantic (2000). Their chapter entitled “Hydrarchy: Sailors, Pirates, and the Maritime State” explores how the ship itself represented one critical process in which capitalists organized and united the exploitation of human labor. They explain:

The consolidation of the maritime state took place in the 1690s, by which time the Royal Navy had become England’s greatest employer of labor, its greatest consumer of material, and its greatest industrial enterprise...Here were Braithwaite’s “walls of the State,” an enclosure built around a new field of property whose value and appreciation were expressed in a congeries of changes in the 1690s (LinebaughRediker2000: 148).

Rediker continues to explore the idea of the maritime nation state, and specifically the renegade colony of the pirate ship in *Villains of all Nations* (2004). His analogy is made explicit in the chapter entitled “The New Government of the Ship” that explores how pirates established a new social order: “It’s hallmark was a rough, improvised, but effective egalitarianism” (2004: 61). Thus, not only can we envision the ship itself as a microcosm of the colonial state, but also a space in which revolution against colonial control was expressed prior to any American colonial declaration of independence from British control. Given such circumstances, the idea that processes of koinization occurred comparable to the developments in the immigrant communities of colonial territories and concurrent with the establishment of new governments is reasonable. LinebaughRediker2000 acknowledge the likelihood of language change aboard ships in their observation “European imperialism also created the conditions for the circulation of experience within the huge masses of labor that it had set in motion...[and] The circulation of experience depended in part on the fashioning of new languages” (2000: 152). I propose that these “new languages” (i.e., new dialects of English) were forged through the same three-stage process of kionization that Trudgill explains happened in colonial spaces where immigrants worked and lived together, giving their mutually-intelligible language features the opportunity to mix, level

and simplify into a new variety specific to that space. In short, evaluating Ship English as a koine permits scholars in dialectology to expand the scope of koinization and apply Trudgill's theories to varieties of English that develop in transient colonial spaces that are not necessarily defined by geographical parameters or international treaties. Indeed, this interpretation of the term reclaims the transient context of its origins referring to the common Greek dialect spoken among the mobilized armies of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC.

Ship English, here presented as a newly-recognized dialect of English, impacts the field of World Englishes and historical dialectology in the sense that the theories and approaches specific to these disciplines must now incorporate and account for this variety and its speakers in its theories of dialect formation and usage. The fact that Ship English does not fit neatly into any one geographical territory prompts a revision of how we understand internal dialect change in and around the British Isles and compels us to reconsider the scope of what constitutes a global variety of English. It also encourages scholars to advocate for the type of interdisciplinary perspective central to scholars of Atlantic Studies, expressed by the editors of the journal *Atlantic Studies* as a discipline that:

explores transnational, transhistorical, and transdisciplinary intersections, but also addresses global flows and perspectives beyond the Atlantic as a closed or self-contained space...[and] considers the Atlantic as part of wider networks, a space of exchange, and an expanding paradigm beyond the limits of its own geography, moving beyond national, regional, and continental divides by examining entangled histories and cultures...[and therefore] challenges critical orthodoxies that have drawn sharp lines between the experiences and representations of the Atlantic world and its wider global context. (Taylor & Francis Group 2016 *Atlantic Studies* §Aims and Scope)

Embracing interdisciplinary approaches necessarily means embracing complexity in dialect studies, and this only becomes more complex when we aim to centralize the human agency integral to dialect contact. Recovering the human stories that explain dialect change is particularly important to dialect research methodologies in order to challenge trends which produce sterile and monolithic explanations of dialect change in which human stories are either ignored completely or relegated to a footnote. The focus of this book, by foregrounding demographic data, aims to recover the agency of ordinary people who motivated extraordinary change. There is no doubt that ships' communities bred unique language practices because of the unique composition of those who worked within

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them. Therefore, throughout this book, I have attempted to acknowledge and respect the complex realities and the linguistic agency of all the people who lived and worked in maritime communities. Furthermore, I offer the findings presented here as testimony to the undocumented, undervalued, and often unnamed majority of workers aboard sailing vessels of the early colonial period and I encourage other scholars of dialectology and historical linguistics to likewise consider the agency of marginalized people who may have only left behind ambiguous traces on the palimpsest of the official historical record. These marginalized peoples may not have played a major role in imperial history yet they potentially helped shape and direct the incremental changes that characterized their oral cultures. As Daniels expressed so eloquently in the abstract for his paper on the Atlantic marketplace at a conference on the emergence of the maritime nation in England:

If we abandon the idea of centrality of the mother countries, their rulers, and their institutions, we might imagine a grittier and more organic Atlantic world constructed from the strands of individual lives and the repercussions of their actions rather than an Atlantic world engineered from above the heads of constitute parts. (Daniels2015).

Complex, contradictory, and confusing data in dialect studies reflects the realities of the individuals who motivated dialect change and who were driven by self-preservation and pulled by the local and inter-imperial regulation that shaped the spaces in which they lived. This research and the complexities of the data it presents in order to advocate for the recognition of Ship English as a comprehensive dialect is anticipated to contribute to a growing movement in modern scholarship that challenges traditional models of dialect diffusion, embraces interdisciplinary perspectives, and foregrounds the humanity of dialect change in methodological approaches.

2.2.2 Relevance for contact linguistics

One of the aims of this study was to outline the socio-demographics of the maritime communities and examine how variant linguistic features may have developed and spread among these communities. As I explained in the introduction, my principal focus is to present baseline data that substantiates the fundamental claim that Ship English of the early colonial period was a distinct variety. It is not intended to support of any one school of creole linguistics, nor is it intended to present Ship English as a formative variety in creole genesis, however, the

findings relate to contact linguistics and particularly to theories of how pidgins and creoles emerged in colonial regions around the Atlantic. More specifically, the findings substantiate claims by **Reinecke1938** and Hancock (1972; 1976; 1986; 1988) that a potential type of language spoken on ships may have influenced creole development.¹⁷ The central premise of integrating Ship English into creole studies is based on the proposition that seamen are the most logical connection between ports of the Atlantic and the creoles that demonstrate common origins but are spoken over 12,000 nautical miles apart in places such as the Caribbean, Suriname, and the Guinea Coast (**Hancock1976; FarclasEtAl2012**). It is reasonable to suggest that Ship English was the variety of English used for coastal trade and therefore the most logical language in contact, particularly considering sailors' roles in settling and maintaining many of the colonies where creole languages arose (**BaileyRoss1988; Holm1988**). Another possible theory to explain the influence of Ship English during the early colonial period is that the dialect was introduced along the coast of Africa and fed into emerging local varieties which were more functional for coastal trade than any one of the regional African languages. When sailors established domestic relationships with African women in multilingual enclaves of settlement, these local varieties of coastal English then became influenced by African features and conditioned by language universals to form a coastal pidgin continuum. This pidgin was subsequently creolized by the generations born to these multilingual communities who then transmitted their varieties of speech to the slaves they were employed to manage and the regions they were sent to labor in. Future studies that apply such theories can now compare the features of English-lexifier Atlantic Creoles with the features of Ship English to determine if significant similarities support these theoretical claims.

The suggestion that a coastal pidgin developed off the coasts of West Africa has echoes in **Reinecke1938's** (**Reinecke1938**) claim that pidgin English was developed on the colonial plantations from the trade jargon of the ports. Reinecke, like many of his contemporaries, belittled trading pidgins as "makeshift language...[and] mangled little dialects" (**Reinecke1938**) whilst at the same time realizing the importance of mariners' contributions to intercultural communication. More recently, scholars have recognized the importance of pidgin varieties and placed

¹⁷Because of this connection between my own research and Ian Hancock's formative theories on creole genesis, we collaborated on a paper for the Society of Pidgin and Creole Linguistics' conference in January 2017. This paper makes the connections between Hancock's work and my own explicit in a theory of how maritime workers established a coastal English on the Upper Guinea coast that was later transferred to the Caribbean (**DelgadoHancock2017**, January 7).

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more value on the role of maritime communities in the contentious pidgin-creole continuum debate (**Holm1988**) for example: **Hancock1976** has long championed the influence of maritime vocabulary on Krio, a creole of Sierra Leone; **Holm1981** identifies the importance of sailors as the agents of language change in his extensive work on Nicaragua's Miskito Coast Creole; and **Dillard1992** has proposed that the most authentic American varieties of English derived from a pidgin formed from sailors' language. Although scholars such as these have often alluded to the role of a potential pidgin derived from sailors' speech, none have supported a claim that such pidgins were already in use throughout maritime communities. Yet this was also potentially the case, particularly given the extensive international language contact that certain crews regularly experienced, not only as a natural consequence of their trading activities but also because of their international recruitment practices that created multinational crews with high levels of linguistic diversity. Consequently, and given that we now have a more comprehensive idea of what Ship English was owing to the findings presented here, future work can now engage with the question of whether Ship English gave rise to a distinct nautical pidgin on the high seas in addition to potential coastal and plantation pidgins after language contact occurred in colonial contexts.

The new data on Ship English and the emerging possibility that we can linguistically support a claim that sailors spoke a nautical pidgin owing to their trade and recruitment practices around the Atlantic might have a major impact in theories of creole genesis. Scholars who advocate for a theory of creole genesis in which the new stabilized creoles developed when earlier pidgin forms were expanded for the use of native speakers (**Holm1988**) could now consider the possibility of a potential Ship Pidgin as one of the pre-existing forms that were available to the transported workers of plantation and port speech communities. Scholars who support a monogenesis theory, in which - in its most radical interpretation - all creoles have a single proto-pidgin that developed out of Portuguese contact in the West African gold trade in the 15th century, might now consider the possibility that this proto-pidgin developed in a nautical context. This idea is additionally plausible if we consider the role of the slave trade as an industry that motivated language contact situations and remember the key role of maritime traffic in this trade and thus the potential of mariners as agents of language change. Scholars who argue for founder theories and processes of competition and selection (**Mufwene1996**) could now consider Ship English (or a related Ship Pidgin) as potential sources of features that competed for selection in new regional forms. The likelihood of Ship English influencing regional

language developments would be significant in a theory in which “structural features of creoles have been predetermined to a large extent (but not exclusively) by characteristics of the vernaculars spoken by the populations that founded the colonies in which they developed” (Mufwene1996: 84). If we consider sailors as one of the “populations that founded the colonies” then this theory of language ecology not only incorporates Ship English, but also prompts debate about the very nature of what scholars perceive to be the prestigious superstrate varieties available in the colonial setting. In short, scholars who subscribe to theories of pidgin-creole genesis, monogenesis theory, and founder principles of competition and selection might begin to work in new directions given this new linguistic data on Ship English that provides a baseline for comparison with regional creoles and motivates the potential for future research on Ship Pidgins.

The suggestion that the existence of Ship English might prompt debate about the nature of the superstrate is explicit in BaileyRoss1988’ (BaileyRoss1988)article on “The Shape of the Superstrate: Morphosyntactic Features of Ship English.”¹⁸ Nearly thirty years after their article was published, this book now presents substantial data on the syntactic features of Ship English and permits scholars to revisit and revise concepts of the superstrate with the advantage of access to new empirical data. If the syntactic features of certain creoles compare with Ship English, then the data presented here may prompt revision of the simplified binary model of African substrates (with phonological, syntactic, and semantic influences) opposed to a unitary European superstrate (with lexical influence).¹⁹ Furthermore, the over-simplification that all varieties of English were prestigious in dichotomy with West African languages fails to acknowledge the stigmatized varieties spoken by people from low socio-economic backgrounds who were exported to work in the early colonial system, living in outcast communities, or escaping political hegemony in the British Isles. Dismissive of such complexity, the use of “substrate” and “superstrate” alludes to the origins of the terms in Romance linguistics as referents of power yet also suggests their linguistic contribution to creoles as a direct result of the imbalance of power in language contact situations. For example, Holm explains how superstrates contribute lexical features because, “usually those with less power (speakers of *substrate* languages)

sometimes
you use
Ross’s,
some-
times
Ross’

¹⁸Bailey and Ross propose that Ship English should be recognized as the proto-typical variety of the superstrate, illustrated in their description of “what seems to be the earliest component of the superstrate—the ‘Ship English’ spoken by British sailors during the 16th 17th, and 18th centuries” (1988: 194-195).

¹⁹The lesser-used term “adstrate” refers to a language that is considered (reflecting the status of its speakers) to be neither superior nor subordinate, but present in the contact situation as a potential source of feature transfer or borrowing.

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are more accommodating and use words from the language of those with more power (the *superstrate*)” (1988: 5, author’s italics). The substrate-superstrate binary model is perpetuated in creole theories even though “the concepts are still largely used intuitively” (Selbach2008) and “there has been no satisfactory answer to the perennial question of the degree to which the structure of superstrate and substrate languages influence that of creoles” (Holm2009: 218). Yet equating the status of the speaker to the influence of their language in an emerging creole context might prove to be overly deterministic as we learn more about the subtleties of language contact and the complexities of feature transfer. This determinism is compounded by the term “lexifier” which is used synonymously with “superstrate” and has no equivalent form that pairs with the term “substrate” to signify phonological, syntactic, and semantic contributions. Scholars who cross-match the social referent “substrate” with the functional referent “lexifier” as though they refer to the same paradigm compound this confusion, for example, McWhorter2005’s *Defining Creole* (2005) that explains the “traditional emphasis in creole studies on transfer from *substrate* languages rather than *lexifier*” (85, my italics).²⁰ The effect is to suggest that a substrate language cannot *be* the lexifier although it has been demonstrated that substrate lexical transfer has played a key role in the configuration of many creole grammars (Kihm1989; Migge1998). The parallel assumption that prestigious superstrates determine the lexical features of creole languages has been challenged by scholars such as Selbach2008 in her paper, “The Superstrate is not always the Lexifier” (2008). Yet these presumptions will continue if the terms “superstrate” and “lexifier” continue to be treated as synonyms referring to both social status and lexical contribution. Challenging these presumptions in a way that permits us to approach the processes of language change in contact situations without prejudgment will happen as more scholars appreciate the potential contributions (beyond lexicon) of non-standard varieties such as Ship English. In short, the syntactic focus of this study offers a baseline of data that might be used in comparative studies to investigate the potential syntactic influence of Ship English in the creoles that developed around the colonial territories of the Atlantic region and thus challenge any restrictive assumptions that prestigious superstrates contributed only lexical features and syntactic variation can be entirely explained by substrate influence.

²⁰ Although here criticized for his equivalency of the terms “substrate” and “lexifier,” McWhorter also acknowledges that simplified interpretations of a unitary and prestigious superstrate are flawed. He states, “*superstratists* have rightly criticized the tendency to compare creoles with standard varieties of their lexifiers, calling attention to the models for creole constructions in now-obscure regional dialects spoken by the white colonists” (2005: 143).

2.3 Summary

The data presented in the chapters of this book support the central claim that there is a distinct Ship English that was spoken by British sailors in the early colonial context with a unique socio-historical context and characteristic linguistic features. The sociolinguistic, syntactic and discourse-level features presented in this study add to the existing data on lexicon, phonology and morphosyntax attested to in prior scholarship to provide a comprehensive baseline of data for this newly-recognized historical variety of English. Furthermore, we can assert that Ship English stabilized and spread in maritime communities through predominantly oral speech practices and strong affiliations among groups of sailors. The variety was also transferred to port communities and sailors' home regions through regular contact with speakers, a process that was also potentially intensified by covert prestige. The variety was not monolithic, however, and its features likely existed on a continuum of localized and individual variation that were prone to idiolectal and systemic change in addition to adaption and replacement over time just like the features of any other variety.

Ship English was a historical dialect of English and although varied linguistic sub-classifications of this dialect are possible, none are without problematic assumptions about the nature of the variety or its speakers. The classification of the dialect as an ethnolect is the least probable given the data available on global recruitment practices. The classification of Ship English as a regional dialect has validity in that it indexes contemporary assumptions about substandard and stigmatized usage and acknowledges that the variety was used in specific geographical regions, specifically Atlantic trade routes and the trading ports of their coastal zones. Yet, this classification is problematic as it suggests geographical unity and transmission through either geographical adjacency or generational language acquisition. The most convincing classification of Ship English is that it was a sociolect that was formed through the mixing, leveling and simplification processes of koinization. This classification is furthermore supported by the implicit recognition of mixing, leveling, and simplification processes in the limited scholarship on the variety.

The recognition of Ship English as a distinct historical dialect of British English challenges traditional models of dialect diffusion and prompts a reconceptualization of dialect change and feature transfer in the British Isles by specifically recognizing the potential of supra-regional varieties formed by the leveling of mutually intelligible linguistic features. It also serves to expand our understanding of the contexts in which koinization can take place. Consequently, it prompts

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us to re-conceptualize the term “dialect” in a way that de-emphasizes its traditional regional restrictions and instead highlights its potential range through the medium by which it is transmitted. Such approaches might influence thinking on language change in the new information age and prompt us to reevaluate what we consider a native, a secondary and a world variety of English. My own methodology and approach also advocate for interdisciplinary perspectives and the recovery of the complex human stories critical to understanding linguistic change.

Data on Ship English is necessarily relevant to contact linguistics and specifically theories on pidgins and creoles because maritime workers connected the diverse ports around the Atlantic and helped to found and settle the regions that developed creoles. New data on Ship English provide a baseline for comparison with regional creoles and motivate the potential for future research on Ship Pidgins which, in turn, impact theories of pidgin-creole genesis, monogenesis theory, and founder principles of competition and selection in regions that saw the emergence of creole languages. Furthermore, the recognition of a stigmatized variety of English prevalent in the contact situation of the early colonial Atlantic prompts discourse about the nature of the superstrate and challenges our assumptions relating to the lexical, phonological, syntactic, and semantic influences of different languages and varieties in the contact situation. Although the data presented have clear implications in the field of contact linguistics, there is still considerable work to be done to verify its significance in historical dialectology. It is my hope that future research might compare the Ship English features identified here to the features of contemporary varieties used in the Early Modern English period to clarify the extent to which these features were marked in sailors’ speech. Future studies might also explore the possibilities of parallel developments in the languages of other sea-going nations to determine if levelled nautical varieties commonly developed in situations comparable to the speech communities that derived Ship English. Studies might also explore the potential variation between Mediterranean, Atlantic, and Pacific varieties of Ship English. Such work might help us achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the linguistic processes that occurred during times of rapid colonial expansion and may also shed light on how levelled varieties develop among transient communities.

Appendix A: Archival sources

The following codes and abbreviations relating to primary archival sources in England form most of the corpus. The abbreviations used throughout the main text are here collated with date ranges and descriptions.

Table 2.1: Merseyside Maritime Museum Archives & Library (MMM,) Liverpool, England

Collection	Batch Identifier ^a	Date Range	Description
n/a	1045.f.3/1/10	1729	Dampier, A voyage to New Holland
n/a	1417c 21	1710	Lurting, T. The fighting sailor turn'd peaceable christian: Manifested in the convincement and conversion of Thomas Lurting a Quaker with a short relation of many great dangers, and wonderful deliverances, he met withall. London: J. Sowle.
n/a	445f.1	1667	Angelo, M. & De Carli, D. A curious and exact account of a voyage to Congo in the Years of 1666 and 1667.
AC WO	16-16/8-16	1675-1732	Misc. Letters from Jamaica including accounts of the Eldridge estate
Arentis	361	1678	The Six Voyages
BL	74/816/m/11/36	1690	Correspondance of William Wilkinson, Royal African Co. Trade
BL/Egerton	2395/0007, 2395/0003,	1660 1675	Proposal of the Merchants, planters, & traders to the island of Antigua, Abstract of a Journall of the conquest of Jamaica
BL/J	8223/e/4/27	1709	Correspondence of the Royal African Co. Trade
DDB6	8/4	1687-1754	Journal of mariner & merchant Bryan Blundell
D/Earle	1/1-2, 2/1, & 3/1	1667-1759	Earle Family and Business Archive, including instructions to attorneys in Jamaica, letters relating to trading, slaving, and privateer voyages
Information Sheets	3, 10, 24, 50, 52, & 73	n/a	Liverpool and the Atlantic slave trade, Child emigration, Smuggling, Liverpool Ship Registers, Lloyds Marine Insurance Records, History of Rummage
T	70/1212, 1215-1216	1677-1682	Logbooks of the Carlyle, journey from Angola to Jamaica; The Norwich & Ann, and The Arthur, and Trading records from Africa and the West Indies submitted by the Company of Royal Adventurers

^aIndividual documents are identified at document code level and groupings are identified at the sub-collection level. Each dash represents a subordinate stage of document batch coding.

Table 2.2: The National Archives (TNA,) Kew, England

Collection	Batch Identifier	Date Range	Description
ADM	51/ 3797-4322	1669-1853	Mixed Captains' Logs and multi-volume series of logs for the Crowne, Dreadnought, Neptune, Prudence. Swallow, and Ruby.
ADM	52/1-2	1688-1703	Masters' Journals
ADM	53/3/1-13	1688-1698	Masters' Journals
ADM	106/288-300	1673-4	Misc. Letters [ADMiralty] addressed to the principal officers / commissioners of the navy of his majesty's navy office in Marte Lane, London.
ASSI	45/4/1/135	1651	Court depositions
C	22/1004/28	1703	last will and testament of Edmund Gregory seaman
C	22/709/37	1687-89	"seaman v seaman" (elder and younger)
C	22/710/50	1684-6	"seaman v seaman" (elder and younger)
CO	5/1411	1696-1700	Council in assembly, trials of pirates, all from Virginia, Journal of the house of Burgesses, Assembled in James City. A Transcript of certain letters orders etc relating to pyrats in these American plantations Anno Dom: 1699
E	134/34Chas2/Mich36	n.d.	Venice, Italy and London. Depositions against Nicholas Reymer, commander of the ship Lucy for losses. Examined at 'Legorne'.
HCA	1/9-14	1660-1684	Indictments and subsequent proceedings (New England and Jamaica)
HCA	1/46-48	1601 - 1620	Depositions, Examinations of pirates and other criminals
HCA	1/50-53	1634-1710	Examinations in Criminal Matters
HCA	1/98	1699-1701	Papers relating to Cptn. Samuel Burgess hanged as a pirate
HCA	1/99	1722-1738	Colonial trails (Jamaica, Barbados, Bahama Island, Philadelphia, Bombay, Corso Castle) also the Log Book (Pideaux 1732) and The American: Weekly Mercury No.617-618
HCA	1/101	1500-1776	Misc. papers and interrogations
HCA	49/98/1069	1593-1875	Letters
SP	42/6	1700	Misc. papers, records of trials and depositions
SP	89/25-34	1717-1727	Depositions of mariners

Ship English

In this thoroughly researched and brilliantly written volume, Sally Delgado opens up vitally important new avenues for the study of the role of marginalized peoples such as sailors and convicts in the emergence of creole languages and other contact varieties of the colonial era. Since the ground-breaking work of Ian Hancock some decades ago, we have been waiting for a coherent and comprehensive work such as this to establish a framework and data base for making the systematic investigation of Ship English a reality. (Nicholas Faraclas, University of Puerto Rico)

The historiography of creole languages has long included frequent references to maritime English with only sketchy indication of just what this kind of speech was like. Sally Delgado has at last provided a comprehensive survey of a dialect that emerged on shipboard among sailors, which became one element in the new Englishes that emerged worldwide amidst the transatlantic slave trade and beyond. Anyone interested in creole languages, as well as those who would like their acquaintance with sailors' speech in the past to get beyond the likes of "Aye, matey", should consult this new volume. (John H McWhorter, Columbia University)

While classes on "World English" are increasingly being included in university curricula, they provide little on how that language left the shores of Britain in the first place, and what it was like; until now, research in dialect studies on what was spoken on board ship during the early colonial period has been minimal. Dr. Delgado's book is the first full-length study to address this; in addition to examining the distinctive characteristics of Ship English as an occupational register, it proposes that as the earliest contact variety, it provided the input in the formation of the Atlantic English-lexifier creoles. A groundbreaking study, essential reading for dialectologist and creolist alike. (Ian Hancock, The University of Texas)

