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## MULTICULTURAL LONDON ENGLISH AND NEW-DIALECT FORMATION

### INTRODUCTION

Peter Trudgill's influential model of new-dialect formation explains the result of dialect mixing and dialect contact in several different sociolinguistic situations. Some involve contact between dialects that are closely related, such as when an urban dialect comes into contact with rural dialects from the surrounding areas. This happened, for example, in Norwich, England (Trudgill, 1974, 1986, pp. 110–119). Others involve contact between dialects that are more radically distinct, as when people from different regions of a country come together in the formation of a new town. Examples of new towns where research into new-dialect formation has been carried out are Høyanger, Norway (Omdal, 1977, discussed in Trudgill, 1986, pp. 95–99) and Milton Keynes, England (Kerswill & Williams, 2000). Colonial varieties of a language can develop from contact between transplanted dialects in rather similar ways, as Trudgill (2004) explains. New dialects also form in more complex sociolinguistic situations where the contact is between different languages as well as different dialects of the same language, as has happened in the development of colonial Hindi in Trinidad (Trudgill, 1986, pp. 106–107). In these more complex situations, Trudgill argues that language contact, dialect contact, and independent developments may all be involved, so dialect mixing, although important, is “not the whole story” (Trudgill, 1986, p. 107). In all these different sociolinguistic situations several of the processes involved in the formation of the new dialects are the same, and Trudgill therefore suggests that they are likely to be of a widespread or universal type (Trudgill, 1986, p. 191).

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The rapid emergence of Multicultural London English (MLE) during the last thirty or forty years provides an opportunity to examine the extent to which similar processes may be involved in yet another kind of complex sociolinguistic situation, and to consider further evidence, therefore, that some may be of a widespread or universal type. MLE emerged in boroughs of London that have become increasingly multilingual and multicultural as a result of recent large-scale immigration from many different countries across the world. Language contact—both direct and indirect—as well as dialect contact have contributed to its formation, but so have processes typical of second language acquisition. The characteristic MLE features are heard not only from young people whose families are recent immigrants but also from young people whose families have been living in London for many generations and whose parents speak traditional London English. Some features may be transitory or more variable, at present at least, than those typical of regional dialects of English with a longer history, but in those areas of London where it is spoken a core of MLE features has largely displaced those of the traditional London dialects. Londoners from a wide range of ethnic and other social groups now claim to speak MLE (Kircher & Fox, 2019, p. 853), and it is becoming enregistered as a London dialect, albeit in rather complex ways (Gerwin, 2022; Ilbury & Kerswill, forthcoming).

#### THE EMERGENCE OF MULTICULTURAL LONDON ENGLISH

MLE was first attested in two research projects carried out in multilingual areas of inner city London (Kerswill et al., 2004–2007, 2007–2010). In this exploratory and admittedly speculative paper I examine some of the processes involved in the emergence of MLE by synthesising and summarising some relevant results from these projects. The first project, *Linguistic Innovators*, recorded 49 young people aged 16–19 in a working-class area of the east London borough of Hackney and compared their English with that of 8 speakers of traditional London English from the same area, aged over 70, and with that of 49 young people in the outer London borough of Havering, a similarly working class but predominantly monolingual area. In Hackney the young people were categorized as “Anglo” or “non-Anglo”, in order to distinguish speakers of recent immigrant origin (“non-Anglos”) from monolingual “Anglos” whose families were not recent immigrants. The second project, *Multicultural London English*, recorded 120 individuals from neighbouring London boroughs that were just as multilingual as Hackney but where the mix of languages was somewhat different. This time the focus was on the acquisition of MLE by different age groups, so recordings were made of speakers of different ages (4–5, 8–9, 12–13, 16–19, about 25 and about 40), again including both Anglo and non-Anglo

individuals. In most of the analyses there was no attempt to separate non-Anglos into distinct ethnic groups because their many different countries of origin meant that most groups would have consisted of just one or two speakers. The children and adolescents were recorded with at least one of their friends, so large parts of the recordings consist of children speaking to each other, although the fieldworker was also present. In Hackney and the neighbouring boroughs, friends were typically from different ethnic groups. There were also some self-recordings. In this paper I refer to the recordings from both these projects as ‘the MLE corpus’ (though I will not refer to recordings from the Havering adolescents here).

As an indication of the linguistic diversity of the participants, the caregivers of the sample of adolescent friends recorded for the *Linguistic Innovators* project included first generation immigrants from Bangladesh, China, Colombia, Germany, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Malta, Montserrat, Morocco, Nigeria, Portugal and Spain, as well as Anglos from longstanding London families. The countries of origin of recent immigrants in the second project included, in addition, Albania, the Congo, Cyprus, Kenya, Kosovo, Mauritius, the Philippines, Somalia, Tanzania and Turkey. This diversity reflects that of the population of the boroughs as a whole. It is very relevant, as we will see, that the 2011 Census data for Hackney—the most relevant Census date for the two projects—shows white British participants as outnumbered by residents of other ethnic groups, many of whom can be assumed to be speakers of other languages (for example, those self-identifying as being in the Census categories “Black African”, “Asian Indian”, “Asian Pakistani” or “Asian Bangladeshi”). In fact, Baker and Eversley (2000) recorded 26 different languages as the first language of schoolchildren in Hackney, a figure that underestimated the linguistic diversity of the area since it did not include English-lexifier Creoles, Creole-influenced varieties of English spoken by immigrants from the Caribbean and some African countries, nor postcolonial varieties of English such as Nigerian English or Indian English. Many other areas of London are comparable in their ethnic and linguistic diversity.

For children growing up in these linguistically diverse neighbourhoods the only language they have in common is English, which they typically acquire at a very young age—often when they start to attend nursery school at the age of three or four (Cheshire et al., 2011; Oxbury, 2021). The range of Englishes they encounter is huge. Where English is spoken at home, it may be traditional London English for Anglos and, for non-Anglos, a postcolonial or Creole-influenced variety. If the caregivers are learning English, the home languages may include a learner variety influenced to various degrees by the other languages that are spoken. Other influences on children’s acquisition of English include, of course, their schoolteachers, many of whom speak a non-local variety of English: for example, one teacher of the 4–5-year-olds in the 2007–10 project was from Bangladesh and another from

New Zealand. Elder siblings who have acquired English in the same way as their younger brothers and sisters may be another influential source of English. Standard English was of course part of the wider linguistic environment, but it did not seem to greatly influence the language use of participants in the younger age groups (and, for some speakers, not until the age of 16–19). Note that it makes no sense to try to categorise speakers into native and non-native speakers as the age of onset of acquisition of English is difficult to determine precisely, and so is the extent to which individual children use English and other languages in the home (see further Kerswill & Cheshire, 2013, p. 273).

With little or no formal instruction in the school, those children who acquire English as a second language mainly do so in an unguided way, in informal interactions with their friends. The demographic composition of the community means that these peer group interactions are between speakers of a very wide variety of different Englishes, with speakers of traditional London English in the minority. The lack of a single target variety and the over-riding pressure to use English for everyday communication with friends results in a huge amount of variation in the use of different linguistic features and a great deal of flexibility in linguistic norms, since the main aim for children and adolescents is, quite simply, to communicate with each other.

Cheshire et al. (2011) chose to explain the emergence of MLE in terms of Mufwene's (2008) concept of the feature pool, seeing children and adolescents as surrounded by a rich pool of linguistic forms influenced by the many languages, dialects and learner varieties in the community. As they interact with each other they select combinations of features from the pool, sometimes modifying them into new structures and innovative features. Although some innovations are transitory, the MLE corpus shows that others have become part of a shared repertoire of new forms in all components of language: phonetic, phonological, lexical, grammatical and discourse-pragmatic. It is these innovations that are the defining characteristics of MLE.

I would like to suggest in this article that the emergence of MLE could also be considered in terms of Trudgill's model of new-dialect formation (Trudgill, 1996, 2004, 2018). As in the dialect contact situations Trudgill investigates, there is a mix of mutually intelligible dialects of a single language (English) and a wide range of variable forms. To think of it this way, however, we must stretch the idea of what constitutes a dialect mixture. The mix includes the postcolonial and Creole-influenced varieties mentioned above, as well as the many different and by their nature unstable and dynamic interlanguage varieties of English spoken in the community. These varieties are mutually intelligible, but interlanguage varieties are not conventionally considered to be dialects. Nonetheless, what emerges from the mix fits Trudgill's generally accepted definition of a dialect: MLE is a "particular combination of English words, pronunciations and grammatical forms shared with

other people from the same area and social background” (Trudgill, 2004, p. 2). We are looking, therefore, at the formation of a new dialect, but in a different and more complex sociolinguistic situation than those that have been considered previously.

Even with this stretched idea of what constitutes a dialect, it can be difficult to distinguish between those processes that are typical of language contact and those that are better explained as the result of dialect contact, just as with the contact variety of colonial Hindi mentioned earlier. However, since dialect contact and language contact are often considered to be points on a continuum, the formation of a multiethnolect such as MLE can be seen as a point on that continuum (Kerswill & Torgersen, 2021, p. 258). Those processes typical of new-dialect formation that turn out to be relevant to the formation of MLE, then, are certainly widespread, and good candidates for processes that are universal.

#### MLE AND NEW-DIALECT FORMATION

Put simply, and briefly, Trudgill sees new-dialect formation as beginning in a dialect mixture situation where there is a great deal of inter-speaker and intra-speaker variation in individual lects. As time passes, a more focussed variety gradually emerges through the reduction of some of the variable forms. Reduction takes place through the process of koinéization, which involves the levelling out of marked or minority forms. Simplification may also be involved, for example through the removal of irregular forms or the reduction of contrastive forms (Trudgill, 1986, pp. 103–106). The mechanisms involve the well-known and well-attested process of (convergent) linguistic accommodation, which occurs as people interact with each other.

The emergence of some of the MLE features confirms the role of levelling of minority forms and perhaps also of simplification, as we will see. There is evidence, too, of the role of accommodation between members of the different age groups. In addition, some MLE features illustrate the role of what Trudgill (2004) has considered as “drift”, following Sapir (1921). I will refer mainly to grammatical and discourse-pragmatic innovations in MLE, since these are what I know most about, but I will also mention a few phonetic changes, since it is these that are the most striking characteristics of MLE.

I begin, however, with a brief illustration of dialect mixing—an inevitable precursor of new-dialect formation. Unlike the *tabula rasa* situations investigated in Trudgill (2004), and perhaps unlike the other kinds of sociolinguistic situations considered in Trudgill (1986), the emergence of MLE does not fit neatly into different stages. As Kerswill and Torgersen point out (2021, p. 264), its formation is

not a “once-and-for-all thing, since immigration continues, and so the processes are repeated over and over again”. The MLE corpus contains a great mixture of individual lects typical of the early stages of dialect mixing, from both children and adolescents, but many of the recordings suggest that much of their language use fits with a later stage: the “relatively chaotic period” (Trudgill, 2004, p. 100) when dialect formation is actually happening — stage II in Trudgill’s (2004) model of the formation of new colonial dialects. MLE is still some way from arriving at stage III, the “final stable, relatively uniform outcome of the new-dialect formation process” (Trudgill, 2004, p. 113): it remains extremely variable, and some forms attested in the MLE corpus have already died out, as mentioned earlier (an example is the *this is* +speaker innovative quotative expression analysed by Fox, 2012). Many other forms, however, continue to be attested in later research in London (see for example Ilbury, 2019 and Oxbury, 2021), and some are even attested beyond London (see Drummond, 2018 for Manchester).

#### DIALECT MIXING

I will give three examples of what could (arguably, perhaps) be considered evidence of dialect mixing. The first, in (1), illustrates a form specific to an individual speaker.

- (1) I mean I literally walked past two thugs that **I didn’t not knew** but they just grabbed me by the hood swang me in a alley and had me at knife point and I couldn’t do nothing (Alex)

Alex was aged 16 at the time of the recording. Like all the adolescents and most of the younger children in the corpus, he had acquired the typical variation in traditional London English between multiple negation and standard English negation: note for example the multiple negation in his *I couldn’t do nothing* at the end of (1). However, negative structures such as *I didn’t not knew* do not occur in the speech of any other individual in the entire MLE corpus, and Alex never utters another structure of this kind. There seems to be an interaction between *I didn’t know*, with the clitic negative on auxiliary *did*, and the more emphatic full negative form *not* in *I did not know*. There is also, of course, a double marking of past tense, on both the auxiliary, *did*, and the main verb, *knew*. The cognitive factors involved in the production of the phrase have something in common, perhaps, with those that produce hyperadaptive interdialect forms — forms that occur in none of the contributing dialects (Trudgill,

2004, p. 87). On the other hand, the negative construction could equally be a mere slip of the tongue or performance error.

The *-s* in (2), (3) and (4) below is another potential interdialect form, this time occurring in the speech of more than one speaker, though it can also be explained as an interlanguage form, produced by analogy with the contracted *is* forms used with third person singular subjects (such as *she's thinking about something else*).

- (2) the day when I was wearing my hat it was snowing so **I's** thinking what's the point (Henry)
- (3) did you see that grandad where he goes "I won I won" **they's** so stupid (Louise)
- (4) we had to live with my dad because erm my mum couldn't handle us **we's** so naughty (Lydia)

Henry was 12 years old at the time of the recording, while Lydia and Louise were 8. Although part of the dialect mixture, *-s* for non-third singular BE forms does not persist; older speakers do not use *-s* in this way.

In some cases, however, the outcome of dialect mixing is a new form that has become more established as characteristic of MLE. An example is the new pronoun *man*, described in more detail by Cheshire (2013) and illustrated in (5), where it has first person reference, like *I* (or, perhaps, indefinite reference, like the pronoun *one*). There are just 11 tokens of this pronoun in the MLE corpus, uttered by 6 different male speakers, all in the 16–19 age group.

- (5) I don't really mind how my girl looks. it's her personality **man's** looking at (Alex)

New pronouns often originate in nouns referring to people: in Brazilian Portuguese, for example, *a gente* 'people', is now a pronoun, and in French the pronoun *on* derives from *homme* 'man'. English, too, once had an indefinite pronoun, *man*, derived from the Old English noun *mann* 'human being' or 'man'. The English pronoun died out during the fifteenth century but, as we see in (5), it is now returning in MLE. There is evidence in the corpus to suggest that, as elsewhere, it derives from a noun referring to people—in this case to male people.

Adolescents in the MLE corpus use several different plural forms of the noun *man* to refer to more than one person. Unsurprisingly, the forms include *men*, but there are also forms typical of learner varieties of English such as the regularized *mans* and the "double whammy" *mens* (reflecting a strategy rather like that resulting

in Alex's double marking of past tense and negation). MLE speakers also use an invariant plural form, *man*, perhaps by analogy with English nouns that have no plural marking: some of these nouns, such as *people* or *police*, are frequent in the corpus. *Mandem* also occurs, presumably deriving straightforwardly from Jamaican Creole. Younger children use all these forms too, and some of the non-Anglo caregivers use *mans*, but for adolescents, both Anglo and non-Anglo, the most frequent plural form is *man*. *Man* accounts for almost 40 per cent of their plural tokens, compared to 21 per cent for *men*, 27 per cent for *mans* and 9 per cent for *mandem*; the total number of plural tokens is 33 (Cheshire 2013). The different plural forms tend to be used in distinct ways: *men* mainly occurs with a modifier such as *black*, *white*, *big* or a number, while *mandem* usually refers to the speaker's friends and members of the same gang. *Mans* can also refer to the speaker's friends, but it sometimes refers to young men in a different gang to the speaker, or to older drug runners. Plural *man* is different: it can have the general sense of 'people' but, unlike the other plural noun forms, it usually refers to a specific group of people whose identity is clear from the context. Sometimes it is the external context that makes the reference clear (as in *you man are all sick*, directly addressing three of the speaker's friends) and at other times it is the linguistic context (as in *if it's like a big rave the majority of the **man** go together*; meaning most of the people going to the rave travel there together). Importantly, the idea of a group is also relevant to at least 7 of the 11 tokens of the pronoun *man*. The pronoun in (5) is an example; here *man* positions the speaker as a member of a group of like-minded people, so Alex strengthens his argument by suggesting that others would think this way. It can be seen as a rhetorical strategy, allowing the speaker to avoid disagreement and maintain the conversational floor.

The remaining 4 tokens occur when speakers are relating events that for them are emotionally heightened. Presumably they opt for a new way of saying things in order to enhance expressivity and involve their interlocutor, in the way described by Hopper and Traugott for the emergence of new forms and meanings (1993, p. 65).

Cheshire (2013) gives all 11 tokens in their discourse context and discusses the emergence of the new pronoun in more detail. Here I simply want to suggest that the use of the new pronoun in the MLE corpus allows us to witness the way that dialect mixing can lead to a form that was one of many variants with the same grammatical function (marking the plural for the noun *man*) in the dialect mixture becoming established as a new form with a different grammatical function in the new dialect. The *man* pronoun is used by Anglo speakers as well as their bilingual friends: two of the six users of the pronoun are Anglos, each responsible for 1 of the 11 tokens. We do not yet know whether the new pronoun will survive into adult speech or spread to younger speakers, but we do know that it is also used by MLE-speaking adolescents in different areas of both east and west London (Ilbury, 2019; Oxbury,



2021), and it is even attested in Manchester (Drummond, 2018). Of course, it may have emerged independently in these locations, but by tracing its emergence among adolescents in Hackney we can fill out the picture of how a new dialect form can develop from the mixing of individual lects and dialects that occurs in the early stages of new-dialect formation.

### LEVELLING

Trudgill argues that as variation becomes reduced, it is often the less frequent minority variants that are reduced or lost. In several situations, including *tabula rasa* situations, the process is essentially deterministic, resulting from the proportions of different dialect speakers and therefore the relative proportions of linguistic variants present in the community (Trudgill, 2004, pp. 26–27). In contact situations involving native and non-native speakers of the same language, the process may also have a deterministic dimension: Trudgill (2011, pp. 57–58) suggests that when the proportion of non-native speakers becomes close to 50 per cent, the number of face-to-face dialect-contact-type interactions, and therefore potential instances of accommodation, reaches a transfer level, so that some of the non-native features transfer to native speakers. I mentioned earlier the difficulty of categorising non-Anglo speakers into “native” and “non-native” speakers, but it is certainly true that the proportions of non-Anglo speakers relative to Anglos in the inner city London areas where MLE has emerged is close to or higher than 50 per cent. We could expect, therefore, to find examples of levelling in the MLE corpus. I will mention two such examples.

One is the use of raised, narrow diphthongs or (near-)monophthongs for vowels that in traditional London English are long diphthongs with lower onsets, most notably in the FACE, PRICE and MOUTH lexical sets (Kerswill et al., 2008). The raised narrow diphthongs are similar to those heard in the English of various immigrant groups that live in the neighbourhood where the MLE corpus was recorded, such as those from the Caribbean, West Africa and the Indian subcontinent (Kerswill et al., 2013, p. 270). Narrow diphthongs are also typical of some learner varieties of English. Speakers of traditional London English are outnumbered in the community, as we saw earlier, so the traditional London diphthongs have become minority forms. Following Trudgill, we can predict that these are the forms that will be lost; and this is exactly what is happening. Children and adolescents of all ages in the MLE corpus use the narrow diphthongs. For the youngest age group only non-Anglo children were recorded, so there is no data from 4–5-year-old Anglo children, but children and adolescents in the older age groups, both Anglos and non-Anglos, use the new diphthong forms.

This suggests that Trudgill's argument that children are vital during new-dialect formation in *tabula rasa* situations applies to other kinds of new-dialect formation. Trudgill points out that in diffuse dialect-contact situations, children are the ones who are forced to react to the plethora of dialect forms with which they are surrounded, in the speech of adults, in the development of their own linguistic varieties (Trudgill, 2004, p. 101). In the case of MLE, though, it is not only the speech of adults that provides a great abundance of different linguistic forms for children: the speech of their own age group also provides a very wide range of different forms. I return to this point in the next section.

A second innovation that confirms the deterministic nature of levelling is the reduction of allophony in the MLE definite and indefinite articles. Jamaican English, learner varieties of English, and contact varieties of English around the world all use *a* ([ə]) and unstressed *the* ([ðə]) before words beginning with a vowel, such as *apple*, as well as before those beginning with a consonant, such as *banana*. *A alley* in the second line of (1) above is an example of invariant *a* before a vowel in adolescent speech. Fox and Torgersen (2018) and Cheshire et al. (2011) report that non-Anglo children and adolescents use invariant forms of the articles more frequently, overall, than Anglos of the same age, presumably because the Anglo children hear prevocalic *an* and stressed *the* from caregivers and other family members who speak traditional London English more often than non-Anglos. Nonetheless, Anglo children and adolescents use the invariant forms too. It is relevant that for this feature (and perhaps others that have been subject to dialect levelling) general properties of the language add to the frequency with which *a* and unstressed *the* are likely to be heard. In spoken English generally, articles in preconsonantal position tend to be more frequent than articles in prevocalic position (Cheshire et al., 2011), making *a* and unstressed *the* even more likely to be the dominant forms in the mix.

Trudgill (1986) predicts that the process of simplification may also be relevant to levelling, though his cautionary note that simplification is “a difficult and perhaps dangerous notion” (p. 103) is important in the MLE examples I have just discussed. Perhaps it is simplistic to suggest that monophthongs are phonetically simpler than diphthongs. They do, however, contain a single vowel realisation whereas the production of a diphthong involves a glide from one realisation to another. Narrow diphthongs have smaller glides than longer ones, so these could also be considered simpler. The use of invariant definite and indefinite articles can similarly be seen as representing simplification, since this results in the elimination of redundancy in the strategies for hiatus resolution in English and the loss of a phonetic contrast in the article system (Britain & Fox, 2009).

There are other MLE innovations that suggest the deterministic nature of the reduction of variants during the levelling process. One is a new pattern for past tense

forms of BE, which can be explained in terms of the greater frequency of one of the variants, *was* (though in this case the outcome is affected by speaker gender and by speakers' different linguistic histories; Cheshire & Fox, 2009). I move on now, though, to a process that is relevant to very many and perhaps all of the features of MLE that have been analysed so far: linguistic accommodation between speakers in face-to-face interactions.

### ACCOMMODATION

Trudgill (1986, 2004) assumes a central role for accommodation in new-dialect formation, observing that it is "an apparently biologically given drive to behave as one's peers do" (Trudgill, 2004, p. 28). There is a great deal of evidence from the analyses conducted so far on the MLE corpus to support the centrality of this process.

A clear example is the emergence of /k/ backing before non-high stressed back vowels in words such as *cut* or *caught* (see Fox & Torgersen 2018). This seems to be an independent development, for its origins are difficult to explain. /k/ backing is not part of traditional London English, nor has it been reported in other varieties of English. Unlike the MLE diphthongs discussed in the previous section it is not a frequent form in the input varieties, nor can it be traced to language contact. Fox and Torgersen's analysis of the distribution of the most backed variant, the uvular stop [q], indicates that it emerged among non-Anglo speakers. Its distribution among the different age groups in the MLE corpus shows that accommodation in peer group interactions is an important factor in explaining its use.

The youngest non-Anglo children use [q] less often than their caregivers, so it is unlikely that they acquired it from them and more likely that they acquired it from each other. Non-Anglo speakers of all ages use the uvular stop more often than Anglo speakers of the same age, confirming that it emerged among non-Anglos, but the frequency of [q] in Anglo speech increases with age, as friendship networks become more diverse. This diversity reaches a peak in the teenage years, and so does the frequency of [q], strongly suggesting that accommodation in peer group interactions is responsible for its spread.

The analysis of MLE diphthongs reported by Cheshire et al. (2008) confirms the importance of friendship networks in the use of innovative forms. Adolescent speakers in the *Linguistic Innovators* part of the MLE corpus were asked about the ethnicity of their close friends, as a way of taking account of the influence of language contact on their speech. They were given a score between 1 and 5, as follows:

- all friends mentioned of same ethnicity as themselves: 1
- up to 20% of friends a different ethnicity from self: 2

up to 40% of friends a different ethnicity from self: 3

up to 60% of friends a different ethnicity from self: 4

up to 80% of friends a different ethnicity from self: 5

Unsurprisingly, since Anglo speakers are in the minority in the neighbourhood and there are a large number of different ethnic groups, no individual was given a score lower than 3. Overall, raised narrow diphthongs were used most often by non-Anglos, as expected, but those Anglo speakers with highly multiethnic friendship groups (those with scores of 4 or 5) used them more often than Anglos with fewer friends from other groups (scores of 3). There is no direct evidence in the recordings of accommodation taking place during specific interactions, but it seems obvious that those Anglo individuals who interact frequently with non-Anglos (who are very likely to use the narrow diphthongs) are more often exposed to them in face-to-face interactions with their friends, and more likely therefore to accommodate to them.

It is relevant, too, that the two Anglo adolescents who use *man* as a pronoun are both members of highly multiethnic friendship groups. Presumably they have accommodated to the way their non-Anglo friends use *man*, both as a plural noun and as a pronoun.

Accommodation is equally relevant in changes that can be attributed to processes typical of language contact. An example is the acquisition of a new topic marking function in MLE for the relativiser *who*, as measured by the number of following clauses that refer to the antecedent. In (6), for example, again from Alex, *my medium brother who moved to Antigua* is referred to in the following four clauses, shown by the bolded pronouns. Here *who* signals that the person referred to will be the topic in the ensuing talk. This contrasts with relative *that*, which in the MLE corpus does not signal topic persistence.

- (6) I've done three things cos of my mum and one thing for my little brother. **my medium brother who moved to Antigua**  
 cos **he**'s got a spinal disorder  
 so **he** grows kinda slow  
 so **he** is kinda short  
 people were swinging **him** about in my area.

During language contact, bilingual speakers often look in their second language for a grammatical category that exists in their first language (Hickey, 2001). English is unusual amongst the languages of the world in having no specific form that marks discourse prominence, but many of the other languages spoken by bilingual adolescents in our London data do have forms with this function. Cheshire et al. (2013) mention several, including the particle *a* in Jamaican Creole, which is used as a fo-

cus marker, and *-to* in Bengali and Sylheti, which marks a topic. Bilingual speakers may well be guided by the existence of forms such as these in their other languages to assign an additional function to *who*, encouraged by the fact that the relativiser system in London English, as in other English dialects, has become reduced to just two forms: young speakers, both Anglo and non-Anglo, do not use *which*, *whose*, or the traditional London relativiser *what*. The default relativiser is *that*, used in both subject and object position with both animate and inanimate antecedents, whereas *who* now occurs almost exclusively as a subject relativiser with animate, mainly human, antecedents. The cognitive links between subjecthood, animacy and topic make *who* a suitable candidate for use as a topicaliser by bilingual speakers looking for an English form with this function. Cheshire et al find a statistically significant correlation between speaking a language other than English and using *who* with a topic marking function, and a significant correlation between increasing use of *who* as a topic marker and an increasingly high multiethnic friendship network score. A similar correlation with friendship network scores exists when Anglo speakers are considered separately. There seems no question, then, that Anglo speakers have begun to use *who* in the same way as their bilingual friends, presumably as a result of accommodation during peer group interactions.

#### DRIFT

Trudgill (2004) describes how certain changes that were already occurring in England were inherited in several Southern Hemisphere colonial Englishes and then continued, often more rapidly than had been the case in Britain. He considers changes of this kind in terms of Sapir's concept of "drift", quoting Sapir (1929, p. 150): "Language moves down time in a current of its own making. It has a drift."

I suggest that some MLE innovations can be seen in a rather similar way, as the result of continuing movement along a well-established trajectory of change in English. I will consider just one example here (see also Cheshire & Kerswill, forthcoming): the emergence of new meanings for utterance-final *still* in MLE. The historical development of the lexeme *still* has been described in terms of movement along a well-known pathway of semantic change, from objective to subjective and then intersubjective meanings (Traugott, 1989). As Traugott (2010, pp. 3, 18) explains, subjective meanings index the speaker's attitude or viewpoint whereas intersubjective meanings express the speaker's awareness of their interlocutor's attitudes or beliefs. In MLE the movement has been more rapid than in other dialects, with the result that *still* has acquired new meanings that, as far as I know, do not currently exist in other English dialects, though they may well emerge at some point in the future history

of English. The existence of a discourse marker *still* in Jamaican Creole, one of the many contributing dialects to the MLE feature pool, may be relevant (Peter Patrick, p.c.), but as far I have been able to discover this does not have the same discourse functions as the MLE form. Utterance-final *still* in MLE is illustrated in (7).

- (7) Fieldworker: did you go to the same school?  
 Roshan: no went different schools **still**  
 Kevin: still.  
 Roshan: you get me

Briefly, *still* had objective meanings of space in Old English, followed by time in the 15th century; it acquired subjective meanings of concession in the 18th century, followed by intersubjective meanings. All these meanings persist today in English generally. They are also heard in the MLE corpus, as shown for the adjective *still* in (8), referring to space (or more precisely, lack of spatial movement) the adverb *still* in (9), referring to time, and the conjunct *still* in (10). In (7) Roshan and William had been comparing their bad behaviour when they were young to their better behaviour today; Roshan's *still* introduces a subjective comment on his attitude towards their changed behaviour (life was good when they were bad), and his friend agrees.

- (8) he was trying to move yeah . but they were holding him **still** and everything  
 (9) there is people that's **still** on the waiting list . and I don't think that's fair  
 (10) Roshan: **still** there's no days like the old days innit

William: exactly

In all these different semantic domains *still* has a core meaning of acknowledging a counter-expectation — a contrast with what might be expected (Lewis, 2020). In (8) *still* marks continuing lack of movement despite the protagonist's efforts, in (9) *still* indicates being on the waiting list for a longer period of time than might be expected, and in (10) the contrast is between life in the past and life today.

The new discourse-pragmatic functions of utterance-final *still* in (7) above can now be understood as having an intersubjective meaning. The fieldworker had been wondering how Roshan and Kevin had come to know the other boys in their gang. Her question presupposes that they may have met at school. Since the boys all live in the same area, this is a reasonable expectation, but it turns out to be incorrect. Roshan's reply makes this clear, and his addition of utterance-final *still* acknowledges his awareness of the contrast between the fieldworker's expectation that the boys had met at school and the reality that they did not. Kevin then uses stand-alone *still* in

the same way, and Roshan's *you get me* draws attention to the shared understanding that he wants to achieve. Here, then, *still* draws attention to the speaker's awareness of their interlocutor's attitudes or beliefs.

I assume that MLE speakers abstract the core meaning of *still* from utterances such as (8) to (10) where, as we have seen, they hear speakers using *still* in a range of different semantic domains. They then use it themselves in a similar way in utterance-final position, but with a more fully intersubjective function—a typical semantic development that Traugott and Dasher (2002, p. 25) attribute to invited inferences during spontaneous interactions. The development is driven both by cognitive factors, relating to information (the content of the lexeme) and by communicative or rhetorical factors.

The communicative aspect of its development in MLE is at least in part motivated by its position as an utterance-final particle. These are increasing in spoken English generally, where they have a range of subjective and intersubjective functions (Haselow, 2012). They can be added to a clause or phrase as soon as it has been uttered, for example if speakers decide they want to modify what they have just said. In the MLE corpus, utterance-final *still* sometimes occurs in polite replies to the fieldworker's question, as in (7), but when it occurs between friends it is usually in potentially face threatening acts such as disagreements or teasing. By deciding to use *still* to explicitly acknowledge their interlocutor's point of view when it differs from their own, or from what may have been expected, speakers can ensure that conversations stay harmonious. This is particularly important for male adolescents in inner city areas of London where it is difficult to avoid being part of a street culture that is violent and dangerous. As Cheshire and Kerswill (forthcoming) point out, when there are rival gangs posing threats it is crucial to maintain and display solidarity with friends in your own group (the *man* pronoun can serve the same function).

There may be a social and cultural reason, then, for *still* to have developed more intersubjective meanings in MLE than in other varieties of English, thereby moving further along the semantic pathway along which it was already travelling. Nonetheless, the development is fostered by the relative lack of prescriptive norms and extreme tolerance of variation in the new sociolinguistic situation where the new dialects emerge, which presumably was also true for those features of Southern Hemisphere postcolonial Englishes that represent the continuation of changes already underway in England.

## CONCLUSION

I will finish by repeating Trudgill's wise comment that in complex sociolinguistic situations involving language contact as well as dialect contact, dialect mixture cannot be the whole story. MLE has a host of innovations other than those I have mentioned here, not all of which can be explained as the result of dialect mixture and dialect contact. Just as Trudgill (1986) noted for colonial Hindi, the formation of MLE includes independent developments and developments of the kind found in contact varieties as well as some typical of dialect contact.

However, the examples discussed in this paper confirm that for each of these types of language change the role of linguistic accommodation in peer group interactions is fundamental. This seems to be the case both for young children and adolescents. The distinctive MLE diphthongs and the reduction of allophony in definite and indefinite articles confirms that levelling is another widespread process in new-dialect formation in a range of sociolinguistic situations. For these frequent features levelling may well be deterministic, reflecting the relative frequencies of the variant forms in the community.

The emergence of new meanings of *still* in MLE suggest that an acceleration of changes already taking place in the language may also be typical of new-dialect formation, though as far as I know this has been noted only for the early stages of the formation of colonial Englishes. It seems likely, though, that this phenomenon would occur in any sociolinguistic situation where there is a great deal of linguistic variability and where prescriptive norms play a minor role.

The different plural forms used for the noun *man* by MLE speakers confirm the extreme linguistic variability found during the process of new-dialect formation, though unlike the formation of new colonial dialects that Trudgill has analysed it is not possible to say that extreme variability is characteristic of any one stage of the formation of MLE. The MLE data analysed here shows how variability of this kind can lead to speakers assigning distinct meanings to some of the plural noun variants and how this may lead to the development of a new grammatical form—the use of *man* as a pronoun. Its emergence at moments when speakers want to strengthen an argument or make some other kind of rhetorical point is typical of many kinds of grammatical change: the point has been made, for example, with respect to grammaticalization (for example, by Haspelmath, 1999, p. 1055) and transfer in language contact (Matras, 2010, p. 81). Changes of this kind may be more frequent and may take place more rapidly in sociolinguistic situations where the relative freedom from normative pressures allows the kind of linguistic flexibility that encourages innovation. It remains to be seen whether this is characteristic of new-dialect formation more generally.



Some of this paper has been conjectural, but I hope it has contributed to the question of whether some of the processes involved in new-dialect formation are widespread or universal. We are fortunate to have Peter Trudgill's body of work on new-dialect formation to inspire future generations of researchers to explore a still wider range of sociolinguistic situations where new dialects have emerged.

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## MULTICULTURAL LONDON ENGLISH AND NEW-DIALECT FORMATION

### Summary

Peter Trudgill has suggested that a number of the processes involved in new-dialect formation may be of a widespread or universal type. Multicultural London English (MLE) is a new dialect that emerged in a different and more complex sociolinguistic situation than those considered previously, so it provides an opportunity to further consider the extent to which the processes are widespread or universal. I argue that the characteristic features of MLE emerged as a result of dialect mixture, including traditional London English, colonial and creole-influenced varieties of English, and many different interlanguage varieties of English. Some MLE features confirm the relevance of the levelling of minority forms, and perhaps also of simplification. There is also evidence of drift. Above all, their emergence confirms the importance of linguistic accommodation in face-to-face interactions. In this, as for so many sociolinguistic issues, Peter Trudgill was right!

**Keywords:** new-dialect formation; Multicultural London English; levelling; drift; accommodation; grammatical variation.

## WIELOKULTUROWA ANGIELSZCZYŻNA LONDYNU A POWSTAWANIE NOWYCH DIALEKTÓW

### Streszczenie

Peter Trudgill stawia tezę, że wiele procesów warunkujących powstawanie nowych dialektów może mieć charakter powszechny lub nawet uniwersalny. Multicultural London English (MLE, wielokulturowa angielszczyzna Londynu) to nowy dialekt, który pojawił się w odmiennej i bardziej złożonej sytuacji socjolingwistycznej niż te omawiane wcześniej w literaturze przedmiotu, a zatem stanowi on okazję do dalszych rozważań na temat stopnia, w jakim procesy dialektalne są powszechne lub uniwersalne. W niniejszym artykule stawiam tezę, że cechy dystynktywne MLE pojawiły się na skutek mieszania się

dialektów, w tym tradycyjnej odmiany języka angielskiego używanej w Londynie (London English), kolonialnych i kreolskich odmian języka angielskiego oraz wielu innych międzyjęzykowych odmian angielszczyzny. Niektóre cechy dialektu MLE potwierdzają fakt oddziaływania procesów niwelacji form mniejszościowych, a być może także uproszczenia dialektu. Można również wskazać dowody na dryf językowy. Przede wszystkim ich pojawienie się potwierdza znaczenie akomodacji językowej w interpersonalnych interakcjach komunikacyjnych. W tej sprawie, jak i w wielu innych kwestiach socjolingwistycznych, Peter Trudgill miał rację!

**Słowa kluczowe:** powstawanie nowych dialektów; Multicultural London English; wielokulturowa angielszczyzna Londynu; niwelacja; dryf językowy; akomodacja; wariacja gramatyczna.

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