

VEIP3 Third international workshop on varieties of English in the Indo-Pacific: held at Macquarie University 16-17 February 2017

The third workshop on varieties of English in the Indo-Pacific showcased fresh research on distinctive aspects of new Englishes and their individual habitats. Professor Edgar Schneider (Regensburg U, Germany) launched the event with a wide-ranging paper on the reflections of culture to be found in corpus texts, and in different layers of language and discourse:

- i) culture-as-content, local terms for food, folklore etc.: *hawker centre*
- ii) characteristic dimensions of culture/values, as in *kiasuism*
- iii) preferences for particular linguistic constructions that might be motivated by different cultural perspectives, e.g. impersonal constructions in Asian Englishes embedded in less individualistic cultures

Papers by other workshop participants provided lively illustration of these various kinds of link between culture/society and regional Englishes from research on individual postcolonial habitats.

Colloquialisation The informal characteristic of Australian culture was underscored in the increasing colloquialisation found by Professor Peter Collins (UNSW) in three genres Australian writing during the C20 (fiction, academic and newsreporting). Dr Haidee Kruger (MQ) and Dr Adam Smith (MQ) also found some colloquialisation of style in Australian Hansard records through the same period, counterbalanced in some decades with the conventional nominalisation of institutional style.

Democracy and autocracy Dr Kathleen Ahrens (Hong Kong Polytechnic) showed how the construction of democracy differed in political speeches by the Governors of Hong Kong before the handover in those of the chief executives who came after – with the Governors typically projecting via the metaphor of *building*, while the Chief Executives as an open-ended *journey*. In a second paper on newspaper texts from Greater China (Hong Kong, PRC and Taiwan), E/Professor Pam Peters (MQ), Dr Tobias Bernaisch (Giessen University, Germany) and Dr Ahrens found statistically significant contrasts in the usage of modal verbs, with the PRC making strong use of *will* and little of the more tentative *would*, while the two modals were used almost equally in newspapers from Hong Kong and Taiwan. These findings are suggestive of the more authoritarian voice of the People's Daily in the PRC, and the more exploratory journalism to be found in the other two Chinese states.

Multilingualism and code-switching Singapore's multilingual culture was reflected in the somewhat mixed language used by children, in research by Dr Sarah Buschfeld (Regensburg, Germany). Though English is increasingly their first language, their Chinese or Indian family background emerges in the absence of some features of English syntax, e.g. marking of the subject. More extended code-mixing was found in the Philippine student English discussed by Dr Loy Lising, E/Professor Peters and Dr Adam Smith. Many students code-switched freely between Filipino and English in their online academic discussion, using it for referential and interpersonal purposes, especially to manage disagreement with the previous speaker. Codeswitching in online discussions was also the focus of research by Professor Bertus van Rooy (North West University, South Africa) and Dr Haidee Kruger on South African discussions of popular TV soap operas (mostly by young women). Their code-switching involved elements from other languages within South Africa (Sotho and Nguni), as well as

Nigeria, Jamaica and other “outer circle” Englishes, reflecting the range of popular culture media to which they have access.

Gender expression In a contribution to gender studies, Dr Tobias Bernaisch used corpus data on 16 linguistic hedges, e.g. *maybe, I think*, from four varieties of English (Singaporean, Hong Kong, Philippine and British) to challenge the commonplace that women use more hedges than men. It proved true in Hong Kong and the Philippines, but not in the other two varieties. Factors other than gender, e.g. region conditioned the preferred hedges in the different varieties, as did the individual’s job type – as associated with the humanities or technology.

Varieties in close contact The final paper focused on Englishes in the South Pacific, based on research by Professor Carolin Biewer (Würzburg, Germany) and Professor Kate Burridge (Monash University). It highlighted the number of different types of English to be found there in close proximity, including native- and non-native varieties as well as pidgins and creoles, and the complexity of the interactions and interrelations between them.

VEIP presentations later this year The VEIP3 workshop at Macquarie University was the first of three conferences in 2017 at which VEIP research will be presented. Five papers have been accepted for the forthcoming ICAME conference in Prague (24-28 May); and seven for the World Humanities conference in Liege (6- 12 August) organised by Unesco and CIPSH. The abstracts of these papers and further details about the conferences can be on the VEIP website at <http://www.mq.edu.au/research/veip>