

The linguistic expression of persuasion across varieties of English

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There is a substantial amount of evidence regarding register variation in a number of languages and their varieties that is based on Biber's Multidimensional Model (1988; 1995). This line of research has also been extended to postcolonial varieties of English, with some studies comparing a large number of varieties (Kruger & Van Rooy, 2016; Xiao, 2009) and others focussing on particular varieties, such as East African English and Australian English (Kruger & Smith, 2018; Van Rooy et al., 2010).

Within this framework, one dimension is the overt expression of persuasion, and previous research has demonstrated, for example, that Indian English employs relatively few markers of overt persuasion in formal registers, while Hong Kong English employs comparatively many (factor 4 in Xiao, 2009).

However, previous research has focussed exclusively on a quantitative comparison of register dimensions (e.g. more/less overt expression of persuasion), not on qualitative differences in how these register dimensions are expressed in different varieties. Thus, the present study asks how persuasion is linguistically expressed across varieties of English and how such differences can be explained.

In order to answer this question, data on four L1 and six L2 varieties of English drawn from the International Corpus of English (Greenbaum, 1991) will be investigated with the Multidimensional Analysis Tagger (Nini, 2015). Unlike in previous research, separate analyses will be conducted for all ten varieties in order to reveal potential differences in how persuasion is overtly expressed in these varieties. Preliminary results indicate (1) greater differences between varieties in spoken than in written language and (2) that speakers and writers of L1 varieties use more similar means of overt persuasion than speakers and writers of L2 varieties, suggesting a certain degree of indigenisation (Schneider, 2007) of linguistic markers of overt persuasion in these varieties.

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