

Bermudian English: Origins and Typological Affinities

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This paper presents results from a qualitative and quantitative analysis of Bermudian English (BerE), based on sociolinguistic interview data collected as part of a research project on the origins, dialect contact history and typological relationships of this “lesser-known variety of English” (Schreier et al. 2010). In the qualitative analysis, I rate selected morphosyntactic features adapted from Baker and Huber (2001), on the basis of the *electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English* (Kortmann and Lunkenheimer 2011), and compare these ratings to those of other varieties in the wider geographical region. This allows checking for potential donor varieties and ultimately provides a framework for the typological assessment of BerE on morphosyntactic grounds.

The qualitative analysis is complemented by a quantitative analysis of consonant cluster reduction (CCR). Based on a distributional and multivariate statistical analysis, the total frequency of reduction and internal and external constraints rankings for this variable are discussed according to a set of general constraints (linguistic and social factors). The results are compared to similar results established for other English varieties, since CCR is one of the most studied variables in variationist sociolinguistic analysis and has been described as “a particularly diagnostic tool” in differentiating varieties (Schreier 2008: 205). It is thus possible “to contextualize the status of [BerE and] assess the amount and impact of language contact when it formed” (Schreier 2008: 205).

The combination of analyses of a hitherto under-researched variety allows me to anchor BerE within the canon of other varieties in the wider geographical region. Hence, this paper presents insights into the (dialect) contact history, development of this variety and past and present typological affinities, and aims to further our understanding of BerE in highlighting its comparative potential.