

Accommodation and Social Networks: Grammatical Variation among Expatriate English Speakers

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Using a social network approach (Milroy 1980) among native speakers of English (NSEs) resident in Japan, this real-time study investigates dialect contact and linguistic accommodation in respect of the use of verbs expressing obligation (*must, have got to, have to* and *got to*) (Tagliamonte 2013) and possession (*have got, have, got*) (Tagliamonte 2013). Approximately 500 tokens for obligatory verbs and 1200 for possessive verbs are extracted from the linguistic data of 34 hours of casual conversations among 39 NSEs from England, the US and New Zealand (NZ), recorded in single-nationality dyads, both immediately upon arrival in Japan and after a period of one year. The findings from the two studies, the obligatory and possessive verbs, are contrasted, and the similarities and differences found in the linguistic accommodation (Giles and Powesland 1975) of the two grammatical variables are discussed.

Statistical analysis reveals that there was no dramatic convergence among the speakers of the three national groups in their usage of either variable after one year in Japan. Some noticeable changes are, however, observed. In both studies, the informants from England diverged from the forms typically used by the Americans and used the forms which were strongly associated with British and NZ Englishes. In terms of the verbs of obligation, the English informants use *have to* less and *have got to* more than they used a year earlier, while regarding the verbs of possession, they use *have* less and *have got* more. The US and NZ informants, on the other hand, show some convergence towards each other's variation patterns. Social network analyses with the speaker's shift in the variant choice found some significant correlation in the English and American informants, which demonstrates the importance of social network strength in accounting for the consequences of dialect contact and linguistic accommodation.