Varieties of Present-Day English

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Preface

Variety in English is the subject of the readings contained in this book; among questions addressed in separate essays are these: What has caused this variety? Why does variety persist in spite of standardizing forces in society? How widely do national, local, and social varieties of English differ from one another? How should variety be confronted by the teacher of language use who must formulate teaching strategies and make daily decisions on how to implement them?

For answers to such questions, we have turned mainly to the work of sociolinguists—scholars who have turned from too narrow a concern with abstract theorizing about language structure to a close examination of real talk by real talkers, to an attempt to show how language structure is related to the purposes for which talk is used, to the social settings in which talk occurs, to the dynamics of people using language to interact with other people. It is no accident that linguists have begun to concern themselves with language as a pattern of human activity closely related to other patterns of activity. Other scientists, natural, physical, and social—all impelled in part by challenges to human survival in a threatened world—have become impatient with the consideration of things in isolation, preferring instead ecological studies, those that view phenomena as interrelated, mutually dependent systems of cause and effect. And if need has called forth ecological studies by natural scientists hurrying to cleanse man's air and water before he poisons himself, or to find new sources of food before he starves, so a similar necessity and urgency impel the work of sociolinguists, the ecologists of language. Language is a powerful mechanism to bind and to divide. In a world made small, Babel is as frightening an image as Plague and Famine; in a nation torn by class and racial division, by serious conflicts over national values and aims, linguistic differences may be symptoms and causes of fatal disease. Talk may be cheap, as the old adage says: but to misunderstand how it is used, how it varies in the mouths of human beings, and what that variety signifies about attitudes and loyalties may be very costly indeed.
Varieties of present-day Spanish. It is estimated that around 360 million people speak Spanish as their mother tongue, which places it among the top four languages in the world in terms of numbers of speakers. Less than 12% of Spanish speakers live in Spain, the rest are spread from the United States in the north (where forty million people have Spanish as their native language) to Tierra del Fuego in the south. But many of the differences are hard to explain, as for instance in the following examples. The basic every-day term light bulb in English is bombilla in Spain, but can be foco in Ecuador, Mexico and Peru; bombillo in Central America and Colombia; bombita in the River Plate countries; ampolleta in Chile; and, as another alternative, bujá in Central America. The Present Perfect in Non-native Varieties of English. Jan 2011. J Davydova. Davydova, J. 2011: The Present Perfect in Non-native Varieties of English. Introduction Like a large number of other languages, English has two competing verbal constructions commonly used to refer to past time: the periphrastic present perfect and the synthetic preterite, as in, respectively, (1) I have seen him recently (2) I saw him recently. The distribution of the two constructions varies a great deal between languages, and also within individual languages. For example, German and French can easily have constructions like (3) Ich habe ihn gestern gesehen (4) Je l’ai vu hier. However, the corresponding construction would not seem acceptable in English: (5) I