Unacknowledged inheritances in 'non-standard' and 'marginal' grammatical features

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While recent lists have catalogued the presence or apparent absence of grammatical features in varieties of English, including in Australian English (e.g. eWAVE, Kortmann & Lunkenheimer, 2011), much more needs to be documented to appreciate their place in contemporary Australia: their histories, usage, evaluations and the ideological forces behind these.

In this paper, we outline a program of study which aims to investigate under-documented grammatical features sociolinguistically. We focus on those features which have received less attention, often 'non-standard' (stigmatised) and not inherited from south-eastern English English. Building on the methodology of earlier work on final particle but (e.g. Mulder, Thompson & Penry Williams, 2009) and using features such as embellished clippings (e.g. –o and –ie, sunnies), youse, possessive 'me' and non-reflexive -self forms, we demonstrate our approach in which features are examined for their historical origins, functions in discourse, and contemporary uses in novels, film and television. The analysis further draws on folklinguistic comment and uses which suggest particular social meanings. We seek to explicate how some language forms come to be stigmatised in a new context and identify the relevant ideas and histories through which local linguistic prejudices are formed. Employing this type of combined approach allows for a fuller understanding of the position of such features in contemporary Australian English and insights into Australian cultures.

References


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