

Peter L. Patrick, AB Georgia, PhD Pennsylvania (Professor)

He studied History for his first degree, Chinese and Linguistics at graduate level. Before coming to Essex, he taught in the Sociolinguistics programme at Georgetown University. He conducted a sociolinguistic survey of Kingston, Jamaica for his doctoral thesis (1992) and has recently published *Urban Jamaican Creole: Variation in the Mesolect* (Benjamins). He is co-author with John Holm et al. of a series of articles and forthcoming volume on *Comparative Creole Syntax* (Battlebridge). He has published widely in his major areas of interest (language variation and change, pidgin and creole studies, sociolinguistic methods, urban dialectology, and languages of the African diaspora), and applied sociolinguistics to non-academic problems through courtroom testimony and studies of clinical communication.

Topics for possible MA, MPhil and PhD. Theses

1A. African Diaspora language varieties: Urban dialectology

He is especially interested in variationist research into urban speech communities whose modern vernaculars were formed by the historical experience of Atlantic slavery: e.g. British Black English, Atlantic Creoles in overseas metropolitan settings, African American English, etc. Research issues may include: maintenance of distinctive norms and patterns of variability (incl. characteristically 'creole' ones); development of new ethnic varieties; assimilation into majority local and areal sound changes; regional variation among ethnically-unified minority varieties; patterns of community-internal social differentiation and change involving gender, class, family and network variables. Projects generally require recording natural speech but may utilize historical and textual materials; a variationist perspective is expected, as is quantitative analysis.

For example: One ESRC-funded student examined variation in /t/-glottalling and in pronunciation of vowels – features undergoing change and diffusion in many British dialects – by speakers of Caribbean background in Ipswich. Speakers' families were from Barbados; they were either immigrants or British-raised. Glottalling is present in one Caribbean input variety (Bajan) but not others, while Caribbean vowel systems (though under-described) both bear historical resemblances to, and differ distinctively from, contemporary British dialects. Usage of local Anglo residents was established as a baseline for measures of convergence. Methods included computer-aided instrumental acoustic analysis. This PhD was successfully completed in summer term 2006.

1B. African Diaspora language varieties: Settings of institutional power

Another strand of research interests concerns the use of these varieties in situations where language use and evaluation affects access to resources or fair treatment, primarily for healthcare interactions (e.g., doctor- or nurse-to-patient) and legal settings (e.g. courtroom testimony). Proposals require advance planning for data collection, as such materials may be difficult to access; guidance to corpora is available, and some data can be provided. Focus is on close analysis: structure and interpretation of speech, as well as attitudes and evaluation. He does not normally supervise educational research on classroom settings.

For example: He is currently supervising ESRC-funded research analyzing nurse/patient discourse with Anglo and Caribbean-ancestry patients in Essex, by a student of Afro-Caribbean family background with many years of experience as a nurse; the focus is on language outcomes of patient self-management training in an Expert Patient Programme aimed at chronic diseases.

He is also supervising another ESRC-funded project studying doctor/patient communication in a London hospital, with a focus on medical jargon, patient integration, question use and topic control. Both projects required NHS ethical approval, a long and detailed process which must be carefully planned for, and take an interactional discourse analysis perspective.

For example: A currently ESRC-funded research project compares the discourse of police officers and criminal suspects of both Anglo and Caribbean ancestry. The project applies an interactional discourse analysis perspective to recordings of police investigative interviews, and is situated within the field of forensic linguistics, in the context of potential institutionally racist practices. Linguistic focus is on overlaps and functions of questions, including *so*-prefaced questions.

For example: He recently supervised research comparing the discourse of divination (in which spirits are consulted to diagnose illness and advise treatment) with doctor/patient clinical interviews in the Coastal Province of Kenya. Attention is paid to the role of questions and repetition, topic structure, and indicators of evidentiality. (*NB: Untypically, the language, Giriama, is an African one: the student is a native speaker.*) This PhD was successfully completed in Oct 2002.

2. Pidgin and Creole linguistics

Research on the linguistic structure and sociolinguistic patterns of pidgins and Creoles, esp. Caribbean Creoles and English-related varieties. He has particular interests in historical phonology; descriptive phonetics, esp. of vowel space; tense-mood-aspect, esp. variable marking of past-tense morphology; historical development of discourse markers, language styles and registers; sociolinguistic differentiation in Creole speech communities, esp. related to urbanization, gender and social mobility; problems of constraining variability in mesolectal grammars; and the questions of pidgin origins for Atlantic Creoles. Projects may be historical, synchronic, or both (though my interests are primarily contemporary); and should include careful planning for data collection and/or processing (where acquired or native familiarity is esp. helpful). A large corpus of Jamaican Creole materials is available for analysis.

For example: A currently ESRC-funded research project examines the speech of 7-year-old Jamaican children in rural primary school classrooms, taking a socio-phonological and variationist approach to their acquisition of Standard Jamaican English. The research design compares children in three nearby schools of varying classroom size, and has identified up to seven linguistic variables for study, including vowel reduction, rhoticity, interdental fricatives, consonant cluster simplification, monophthongization of ingliding vowels, and H-variation.

3. Language variation & change/Urban dialectology

Other research topics in this area may be considered. Students will typically be expected to study speech communities they have close ties or excellent access to; and may be required to acquire or advance their data-collection and analysis skills through coursework at Essex (even for PhD proposals). Instrumental phonetic analyses of sociolinguistic variables are encouraged for students with prior phonetics training.

For example: He is currently supervising research into phonological variation in Rhode Island (US) English, contrasting traditional/conservative local Anglo and Narragansett Indian speakers with African American and other 20th-century immigrants. Social explanatory variables include ethnicity, age, and gender; linguistic variables include rhoticity and low vowels. Quantitative variationist analysis methods, including VarbRul, are used. The researcher is a native of the speech community.

4. Other topics in sociolinguistics

In principle, he is willing to consider other topics of general sociolinguistic interest. In practice students must be exceptional in terms of advance preparation and knowledge. For example: he has supervised research into language maintenance and shift in Papua New Guinea, contrasting two ethnic groups along lines of geography, attitude and ethnolinguistic vitality. The student has many years of experience conducting sociolinguistic surveys in PNG and gathered most of the data before beginning the PhD.