Global features of English vernaculars[1]

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Dialect regions are traditionally defined by the presence of distinctive features in one place that are absent in contiguous places. The development of variationist studies in the second half of the twentieth century forced a revision of this view, though not a radical revision. The categorical notion that one area had feature F and the neighbouring region lacked it was replaced by the notion that feature F marked the heartland of one region and then occurred with diminishing frequency as one moved into the hinterlands until, at some point, feature F disappeared completely. Drawing a line between the region with feature F and the region without it – that is, drawing an isogloss – was recognized as an abstraction. Borders are fuzzy for dialects as for most categories, linguistic and otherwise, and the notion that two regions are dialectally distinct with respect to feature F can best be determined by contrasting heartlands and ignoring the gradient hinterlands.

In either the traditional or the variationist view, dialect regions are known to be geographically diverse. They can be, at the extremes, as large as a continent or as small as a village. H-Dropping, for instance, is a feature that divides continents. Virtually all rural accents of the United Kingdom delete /h/ in words like *hand, hitch* and *Henry* (Trudgill 1999: 28-29), and virtually no rural accents of North America do. Velar-Stopping, by contrast, is a feature that marks a village. NORMS in Earls Croome, a village in the west Midlands of England, pronounce final velar stop /g/ in words like *among, string* and *wrong,* but people who live a few kilometres away do not (Macaulay 1985: 184).

1. Region-less dialect features

Most of the chapters in this book are concerned with areal features in these contexts – that is, features that distinguish accents and dialects in the

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[1] I am beholden to Cristina Cuervo for the Spanish multiple negatives and especially to Kevin Heffernan for the astounding Maple corpus. I am also happy to thank the editor, Raymond Hickey, for persuading me of the usefulness of discussing non-areal vernacular roots in the study of areal features.

heartland of one region from another, for regions of various sizes. In this chapter, however, I discuss features that are in effect pervasive and unbounded. These features have no heartland but occur everywhere in the English-speaking world; they have no borders, fuzzy or sharp.

The existence of recurring features that span dialect regions is another empirical observation due to variationist dialectology.[2] In my own research, the ubiquity of certain features dawned on me as I was analysing interviews from Prince Edward County, a previously unstudied enclave in southern Ontario (Chambers 2005: 227-228). Among the dialect and accent features that I found were a handful that were already well known to me from studies of English vernaculars in numerous places around the world. Some of those places were more isolated than Prince Edward County such as Tristan da Cunha and Harlem, and others were more cosmopolitan than Prince Edward County such as York, England, and Sidney, Australia. The variables, however, appeared to be exactly the same in all these places. They had the same set of variants, and the variants had the same distribution. Moreover, they had the same constraints, linguistic and social, that determine the occurrence of the variants everywhere. In comparative sociolinguistics (Tagliamonte 2002: 733), they had the same "conditioning factors," including "statistical significance, relative strength and constraint hierarchy." The processes, in other words, are essentially the same in Prince Edward County and Tristan da Cunha and Sidney and any number of places where sociolinguists have carried out careful studies.

Moreover, these global processes occur in well-defined social situations. They are found in vernaculars, that is, in informal colloquial varieties that are not codified. At the opposite pole of the sociolectal continuum, varieties that are codified and formal, that is, literary and standard varieties, either impose complex constraints upon these processes or ban them altogether. In complex societies, there is thus a systematic relationship in the hierarchy of sociolects from the most codified acrolectal varieties to the most vernacular basilectal varieties. Structurally, the difference is also well-defined: acrolects encode more fine-grained phonetic

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[2] I have not been able to find hints in the work of early dialectologists of awareness of global features, even impressionistically. A few developmental linguists like Braine (1974) and Stampe (1969: 443) noticed that children acquire vernacular phonologies, based on "an innate system of phonological processes." The processes resemble global vernacular processes. These ideas came into sociolinguistics via Kroch (1978). For discussion, see Chambers (2009: 258-266).

distinctions in their phonologies and more inflectional markers in their grammars than do vernaculars.

Ironically, acrolectal and basilectal varieties, though polar opposites on the dialect continuum, share a geolinguistic characteristic— both of them encode variables that occur across national or cultural borders. For acrolectal varieties, these are standard features (Chambers 1999, Hickey 2003), which diffuse as prestige features. Hickey calls this process "supraregionalisation," and encapsulates its motivation memorably by pointing out that the adoption of non-regional prestige features "cuts [people] off from the moorings of their linguistic locality and allows them to float upwards on the social scale" (2003: 351). While not all standard features are international – Hickey describes Irish features that spread outward from Dublin but are not adopted in the south of Ireland, let alone farther afield – it is fairly easy to find features that are virtually global. Standard varieties in England, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, for instance, share numerous features. To take a trivial (but incontrovertible) example, all these standard varieties use forms of *be* (*isn't/aren't*) and *have* (*hasn't/haven't*) rather than the syncretic synonym *ain't*. Because *ain't* existed hardily in older varieties, including those that were exported to the colonies, we infer that its elimination from standard dialects was the result of diffusion.

2.   The sociolectal hierarchy

Vernacular features, as I have said, also occur across national borders. There the resemblance ends. They lack prestige. In fact, the relationship between the prestige dialects and the vernacular features is antagonistic. Standard dialects, as I have said, either outlaw vernacular features or impose complex constraints upon their use. Multiple negation is a vernacular feature that is outlawed in standard dialects. It does not occur in contemporary standard grammars in any national variety. Final consonant cluster simplification, sometimes called (CCS), is a vernacular feature that is constrained in standard accents both stylistically and structurally (Chambers 2009: 250-252). Stylistically, it occurs only in casual contexts, and structurally only when the final cluster precedes another consonant (*bes' buy* for *best buy* but not *bes' apple*). In African American Vernacular and other vernacular varieties, neither of these constraints holds – the cluster can be simplified in all social contexts and it can be simplified before vowels as well as consonants.

The systematic relationship between the polar extremes of acrolect and basilect is often (perhaps typically) graded, such that mesolectal varieties introduce intermediary constraints that complicate the varieties below them but are simpler than the ones above them, where complexity is measured by structure-dependent grammatical devices and articulated phonological contrasts. The mesolect thus forms a graded continuum between the poles. Vernacular features, in their most basic (or basilectal) form, occur spontaneously in child language and pidgins. Sometimes (but not always) they occur with structural niceties as we move up the sociolectal continuum into creoles, rural vernaculars and working-class varieties. The basilectal forms, the 'vernacular roots' as they are known, appear to come into being spontaneously. They are not the result of contact or other mechanisms of diffusion. They appear to be primitive rather than learned. Children acquiring standard accents and dialects appear to be engaged in suppressing the vernacular roots and mastering the constraints that are incorporated into the standard variety (see footnote 1).

3.   Sociolectal continuum for subject-verb concord

We are beginning to come to grips with phonological and grammatical gradience in the sociolectal hierarchy. Subject-Verb Concord provides a case that is fairly well documented at several points in the hierarchy (Chambers 2004). Basilectal varieties have no concord rule at all but instead have a single invariant verb form that occurs with all subjects regardless of person and number. The invariant form is almost always the third person singular (in terms of the standard paradigm, though that is hardly relevant when there is no paradigm). In the Tristan Da Cunha sentence, *They was tired out and we was too* (Schreier 2002: 85), the form *was* co-occurs with subject *they* in the first clause and with subject *we* in the second. Schreier's work in Tristan da Cunha is crucial because Schreier documents the emergence of the invariant basilectal form under extreme conditions of immobility and isolation. As he says, those conditions led "to acceleration (or, in extremis, to the completion) of language-inherent changes and to the thriving of 'vernacular roots'" (Schreier 2002: 93).

Standard varieties are governed by the well-learned rule of school grammars, "A verb must agree with its subject in person and number." Because English morphology is relatively underdifferentiated, the rule applies most obviously with the copula, which requires contrasts between *was* with first and third person singulars (*I was* and *he/she/it was*) and *were* with the other persons and numbers (second person singular *you*, and plural

we, you and they). The standard concord rule thus constitutes a considerable complication from Tristan da Cunha invariant *was*.

In between these poles on the continuum are a number of attested grammars, all of them more complicated than Tristan da Cunha and less complicated than standard varieties. For instance, some varieties use *was* variably in affirmatives and *weren't* in negatives, as in *The boys was interested but Helen weren't interested at all* (Britain 2002: 19). The grammar thus entails distinguishing affirmative and negative contexts in order to insert the appropriate verb form, but distinctions in person and number are not relevant. Further along the continuum, vernacular dialects occur with non-concord more frequent with subject pronouns *you* and *we* than with *they* and plural NP subjects (summarized in Chambers 2004: 137-138). In these varieties, nonconcord and concord are grammatical variants, but concord occurs more frequently with certain subjects. In standard varieties, of course, nonconcord is not an option at all: the verb must agree with its subject in all persons and numbers.

4. Vernacular roots of multiple negation

In this section, I will develop the case for another grammatical variable, multiple negation, as a vernacular universal. I have previously discussed possible cognitive motives for multiple negation as a vernacular universal (2001), but here I will attend more closely to its social and structural properties.

The vernacular status of multiple negatives begins with the simple observation that they occur in all kinds of vernaculars. Mencken (1921) called it "syntactically, perhaps the chief characteristic of vulgar American." He bolstered his opinion with this claim: "Such phrases as 'I see nobody,' 'I could hardly walk,' 'I know nothing about it' are heard so seldom among the masses of the people that they appear to be affectations when encountered; the well-nigh universal forms are 'I *don't* see nobody,' 'I *couldn't* hardly walk,' and 'I *don't* know nothing about it'." Mencken undoubtedly overstated its frequency, perhaps not unexpected for a journalist. He wrote these words some four and a half decades before sociolinguistics came into being, at a time when systematic studies of natural speech were unheard of. Nowadays, we know from empirical studies of working-class and rural vernaculars, presumably what Mencken meant by "vulgar American" spoken by "the masses," that multiple negatives occur as grammatical variants alongside standard (single)

negation. Empirical scoiolinguistic studies also show that in middle-class dialects multiple negatives are almost nonexistent.

The social embedding of multiple negatives has been well understood at least since Feagin's meticulous study of Anniston, Alabama, a small city surrounded by farmland in the southern United States. Figure 1 (based on Feagin 1979: [Table] 8.13, 232) shows proportions of multiple negatives in interviews with three social groups, two of them Working Class (WC), one urban and the other rural, and the other "Upper Class," Feagin's blanket term for managers, owners and other white-collar citizens. The negations counted in the proportions are what Feagin calls "negative concord within the same clause" (1979: 229).[3] These comprise two structural types: those with negated verb and following indeterminate (*We never had nothin'*), and those with negated indeterminate preceding the negated verb (*None of em didn't hit the house*). Figure 1 shows that in both WC groups multiple negation is frequent (74.9 percent and 81.3 percent). It falls short, obviously, of being categorical. By contrast, in the speech of their middle-class neighbours multiple negation is negligible. The miniscule proportion (1.1 percent, four occurrences in 343 negative sentences) is even less salient than it appears because the instances in the Upper Class data all co-occur with *hardly* (as in *We don't hardly go there nowadays*) and, moreover, all occur in the speech of teenagers. The specificity of both the structural and social contexts suggests that there is a grammatical subtlety involving adverb *hardly* that is acquired late by a few middle-class youngsters.

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[3] Feagin also identifies "concord outside the clause," as in "We ain't never had no tornadoes in this area that I don't remember" (where the speaker means none that he *does* remember: 1979: 229). Labov et al. (1968) found structurally similar sentences in Harlem, such as "There wasn't much I couldn't do" (where the speaker means there wasn't much he *could* do). Labov proposed that such constructions occurred uniquely in African American Vernacular, but Feagin's later discovery of it in the speech of Alabama whites refuted that claim. In any dialect, black or white, constructions like these are, as Wolfram and Fasold state, "extremely rare" (1974: 166). I show below that they may contribute to our understanding of the vernacular root underlying multiple negation.

Figure 1.   Multiple negatives used by three social classes in Anniston, Alabama
(based on Feagin 1979: [Table] 8.13, 213)
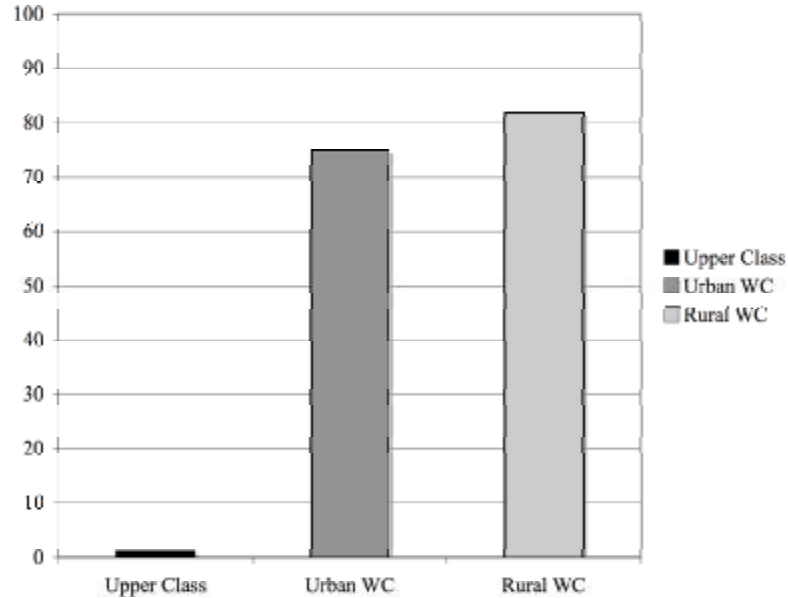
In the highest reaches of the sociolectal continuum, mainstream standard speech illustrated here by Feagin's Upper Class, multiple negatives never occur. In other mainstream dialects, urban and rural working-class speech, they occur as grammatical variants, albeit more often than not in Anniston.

5.   Multiple negation in basilectal varieties

When we look further down the sociolectal hierarchy, however, we find that multiple negatives occur invariably. Bickerton (1981: 65) points out that "in creoles, generally, nondefinite subjects as well as nondefinite VP constituents must be negated, as well as the verb, in negative sentences." By way of illustration, he cites Guyanese Creole: "*Non* dag *na* bait *non* kyat" (no dog not bite no cat = No dog bit any cat). Holm, citing Bickerton, takes his point further by showing negation can also occur on definite NPs as well as the verb (Holm 1988: 172). He cites Bahamian Creole: "They ca*n't* sell that in *no* Haiti." The negation on the definite N *Haiti*, as Holm's context suggests, appears to be a rhetorical device for emphasis.

Bickerton's rule for creoles also holds for child language in the first stages of the emerging grammar. Here are sentences produced by a girl named Maple from 3 years, 6 months to 4 years, 8 months, collected by her father[4] in their Toronto home:

(1)   You don't eat now? You're not eating nothing? (3 yrs 6 months)
          We aren't going nothing today? (3 yrs 6 months)
          I can't talk nothing now. (3 yrs 6 months)
          We're not going nowhere because we have to work. (3 yrs 8 months)
          You have to buy more candy because we don't have no candy. (3 yrs 8 months)
          Daddy, I don't have no soother on me. (3 yrs 8 months)
          I guess I can't have no socks today. (4 yrs 5 months)
          I can't eat it [my cereal] with no milk. (4 yrs 7 months)

Maple was a precocious conversationalist, needless to say, and the grammatical evidence flowed freely. The sentences above are prototypical negatives in which the nondefinite constituents follow the negated verb; in adult grammar, the negative element would obligatorily be replaced by *any* in both simple forms (*we don't have* any *candy*) and compounded ones (any*thing*, any*where*).

Maple also produced numerous examples in which the negated constituent precedes the negated verb:

(2)   No one can't see my friends. (3 yrs 9 months)
          These my toys. No one can't play my toys. (3 yrs 9 months)
          No more girls are not like Maple. (=There are not any other girls like me.; 4: 5)
          No one can't do it. (4 yrs 5 months)
          No one is not allowed to do it. (4 yrs 5 months)
          No one can't clean it yet. (4 yrs 5 months)
          You are not the one can't make it. Only mommy can make it. (4 yrs 7 months)
          Nothing won't work. (4 yrs 8 months)
          Nobody don't know what I was doing. (4 yrs 7 months)
          I never never don't do that. (4 yrs 8 months)

Bickerton's descriptive statement for creole multiple negation (1981: 65) works equally well for child language: "generally, nondefinite subjects as well as nondefinite VP constituents must be negated, as well as the verb, in negative sentences." In other words, if a sentence is negated, negation is marked on the verb and on every nondefinite constituent in its domain. This description expresses the vernacular root of multiple negation.

6.   Negative concord beyond the sentence

There is another construction involving multiple negation that represents, clearly, an extreme case, almost an aberration. Extreme cases, as sometimes happens, may shed light on the inner workings of the phenomenon, in this instance on the vernacular root. Feagin calls these constructions "concord outside the clause with a verb" (1979: 229-230) and Labov says they transfer "the negative to preverbal position in a *following* clause" (1972: 149; these constructions are discussed briefly in footnote 2). Here are a couple of examples, the first from Feagin's white Alabama subjects and the second from Labov's Harlem subjects:

(3)   DIANE: I'm not gon stay home when I *ain't* married; me and my
           kids and my husband can go on campin' trips (1979: 229).

       SALES CLERK: When it rained, nobody didn't know it *didn't* (1972:
           150).

For most English speakers, sentences like these seem to mean exactly the opposite of what the speakers intend. Diane, in the first sentence, is saying that she will not stay home precisely because she *is* married, as she indicates in the rest of the sentence about her husband and children. The sales clerk in the second sentence is saying that no one knew that it rained when it did (not when it didn't), as his presupposition or perhaps just common sense (but not the standard grammar) dictates.

       To get these readings, the negative in the lower clause must be a redundant concord marker that spreads from the negated higher clause. Labov (1972: 150) says, "the negative... is copied from the first clause ["nobody don't know"] and has no independent meaning of its own." He goes on to say:

> For almost all speakers of English, this is an impossibility. If a negative appears with a verb in a following clause, it is inevitably interpreted as referring to a second deep structure negative.

Concord beyond the same clause, then, appears to be a straightforward generalization of the basic negative construction in which sentential negation is marked on all possible clausal elements. Labov concedes that it is "relatively rare" for negative concord to spread to the lower clause: "The normal construction in black English vernacular is not to apply the negative concord rule in this environment" (1972: 151). Wolfram and Fasold, who studied African American vernaculars in Detroit and Washington, also consider it "extremely rare" (1974: 166). Perhaps the rarity merely indicates the relative scarcity of embedded clauses under negative matrices in casual conversations. Nevertheless, according to Labov, speakers whose grammar allows multiple negation have no problems whatsoever interpreting sentences in which the negative concord marking spreads to lower clauses; they do so, Labov declares with unqualified confidence, "correctly and automatically" (1972: 152).

That response is only possible in a root grammar in which sentential negation is marked on all possible elements in the scope of the sentential negator.

7. Multiple negation and the language faculty

Marking negation on all possible sentential constituents appears to be spontaneous and natural. That is why it occurs in creoles in all parts of the world in the absence of contact. Multiple negation did not diffuse from Guyanese Creole into Bahamian Creole, or vice versa, to cite the creoles mentioned by Bickerton and Holm above. Nor did any other creole act as mediator in diffusing the feature to either of them. They developed independently, and we can only conclude that the categorical rule of marking negation on all indefinites arose spontaneously from the language faculty. It may well be, as is occasionally speculated, that these creoles developed in settings where nonstandard English varieties were spoken by planters and bosses, and that these varieties included instances of multiple negation as variants of standard (single) negation. Even so, the coincidence makes an unconvincing cause for linguistic diffusion. Contact between bosses and workers must have been remote or the workers would have spoken the working-class variety of the planters instead of the creole. Moreover, the purported model for categorical creole multiple negation

would have been one of the variants of variable working-class negation, a kind of selectivity that has never been documented in any study of language contact based on empirical reality. The only explanation with any credibility is that multiple negation developed spontaneously in each creole as a categorical feature in all parts of the globe. It did so as a primitive feature of the language faculty.

Its primitive status is simply incontrovertible from its occurrence in child language. Maple, the spectacularly articulate three- and four-year-old, was a veritable cornucopia of multiple negation. The grammar that produced those constructions developed in the complete absence of any kind of stimulus or model. Maple at no time heard anyone utter a sentence with multiple negation— not from her mother or her father or her daycare teachers or her grandparents or anyone else. I have this on the authority of her parents, of course, and there is no reason for doubting them. But suppose Maple's parents were mistaken— suppose one day a plumber came to their house to make a repair and uttered a multiple negative in Maple's presence, or a passing stranger uttered one as she was being strollered through the park one day. They could hardly be models for Maple's dialect. In Canada, middle-class adults never use multiple negatives, and seldom or never hear them. The conclusion is inevitable. Every time Maple uttered a multiple negative, it was the natural efflorescence of her innate language faculty. Every time a middle-class child utters a multiple negative, it issues from the bioprogram within.

Maple, obviously, is representative of millions of English-speaking children all over the world. Middle-class children not only in Canada but also in Britain, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and every other developed nation seldom hear multiple negatives, and never intimately, with the protracted exposure that might stimulate acquisition. And yet they all produce them. If they are precocious conversationalists like Maple, they produce them in profusion. Where do they come from? From the language faculty that is part of the human endowment, where they are evidently grammatical primitives.

8.   Acquiring grammatical adulthood

Acquiring the adult grammar requires revising the primitive grammar with the constraints required for standard negation. The theory that language acquisition proceeds partly by suppressing or constraining primitive tendencies has some currency among developmental linguists; they have

generally applied it to phonological acquisitions but as this case shows it applies equally to grammar (Chambers 2009: 258-266).

The standard constraints constitute what appears to be a learning curve, albeit a systematic one. Starting from the primitive system in which negation is marked on all indeterminates in a negated construction, the first imposition from adult grammar requires replacing the constituent negator with suppletive *any*:

(4)   I don't want none > I don't want any
       He didn't say nothing > He didn't say anything

The suppletion rule is complicated by negative attraction, which requires retaining the negation on subject constituents and removing it from the verb:

(5)   No one can't go > Anyone can't go > No one can go
       No child isn't allowed in the teacher's room > Any child isn't
       allowed... > No child is allowed ....
       No cereal doesn't taste good > Any cereal doesn't taste good >
       No cereal tastes good

It is further complicated by an optional stylistic rule that allows negation to be retained on postverbal constituents if it is removed from the verb:

(6)   He doesn't like anything = He likes nothing
       We are not going anywhere = We are going nowhere

Children appear to master *any* suppletion fairly early, so that constructions that violate the rule (*He didn't say nothing* and the like) pass rapidly and arouse adult correction only momentarily. Constructions with negative attraction are rarer (*Anyone can't go* and the like) and probably persist longer; perhaps for those reasons the stigma associated with them is much milder than for failures of *any* suppletion. The stylistic option obviously develops late and presumably for that reason often connotes a kind of high style in speech if not in writing.

Standard negation is clearly an intricate refinement from the vernacular root. Little wonder, perhaps, that speakers of mainstream varieties immediately below the middle-class standard in the social hierarchy, that is, working-class and rural vernaculars, acquire the intricacies as variants on the base system and apply them, in some sense, as the occasion demands.

9.   **Vernacular roots beyond English**

If the vernacular root is embedded in the innate language faculty, then the grammatical impetus that gives rise to multiple negation cannot be an English attribute only. In fact, all languages appear to include constructions in which negation on the verb is then marked on all indefinite constituents in the grammatical domain. Confidence in the uhe universality of this claim is less secure than it might be because we know relatively little about vernaculars in languages other than English. However, we know that many languages mark standard negation according to the vernacular rule. In these languages, unlike English, negative concord is standard.

Many languages, especially European ones, constrain negative concord or avoid it in the standard grammar. In those languages, multiple negatives occur in violation of the standard rules as vernacular variants. Here are some examples from Spanish varieties in Guarani and Basque regions (courtesy of Cristina Cuervo):

(7) a. <u>nadie no</u> abrió la carta   'Nobody opened the letter'
          nobody not opened the letter

     b. ... <u>nunca no</u> nos pasó <u>nada</u>   '...nothing ever happened to us'
          ... never no to-us happened nothing

     c. <u>tampoco no</u> tengo plata para poner un negocio…
          'I don't have money to start
          neither not I-have money to start a business
          a business either'

     d. <u>ni</u> yo misma a veces <u>no</u> puedo creer
          'Even I sometimes am unable to believe'
          not-even I myself sometimes not can believe

The standard equivalents in Spanish eliminate one of the underlined negative markers. There is no grammatical equivalent to *any* suppletion in Spanish but Spanish vernaculars, exemplified above, mark negation on any indefinites in the scope of the negated verb. The vernacular rule appears to be exactly the same as in English. That is hardly surprising if the vernaculars originate in the language faculty that is part of the cognitive equipment of all normal human beings.

10.   Areal features and vernacular roots

The discussion of dialect and accent features that emanate from vernacular roots appears to have carried us some distance from English areal features. In a real sense, however, we have never really left the topic. All English-speaking regions will include variables involving multiple negation and subject-verb nonconcord as well as other apparently primitive features scarcely mentioned here such as conjugation regularization, copula deletion and consonant cluster simplification (Chambers 2009: 258-59). Because these variables occur in all regions, they are not areal markers in the strictest sense.

Occurrences of features that emanate from vernacular roots might differ regionally but not in terms of their presence or absence. Because they are embedded socially in predictable patterns, the variable structure can differ sociolinguistically in revealing ways. So, for example, subject-verb agreement occurred for a time in Tristan da Cunha as invariant nonconcord (Schreier 2002), whereas in Anniston, Alabama, it runs the gamut from invariant nonconcord through variable concord correlated with the subject hierarchy to standard concord that is categorical except with expletive *there* (Feagin 1979). Varieties between these two poles also occur (Chambers 2004). What makes these variations noteworthy is the correlation with social complexity that is mirrored so precisely and predictably by grammatical complexity.

Unlike areal features with vernacular roots, most areal features, including most of those discussed elsewhere in this book, are to some extent *sui generis*. They are areal identifiers, like the final velar stop [˜´] in Earls Croome. Distinguishing between features with and without vernacular roots has interesting implications for sociolinguistics and dialectology. In theory, there must be two sources for dialect features: one based on primitive tendencies, as Braine (1974: 285) calls them, and the other specific to the dialect region, in Braine's term "learned" (Chambers 2009: 263). The latter group bears witness to the breadth of invention that human beings exercise in staking out their territory and marking their identity. The other features, those that arise from primitive tendencies, are richly represented in vernaculars everywhere and reveal gradient structured departures up the sociolectal hierarchy all the way to the standard dialect. The standard dialect, by definition, is the one that places the most stringent constraints on those primitives, obscuring them sometimes to the point of invisibility.

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