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The Use of Stance Markers in West African Englishes

This talk presents a study in the area of variational pragmatics that aims to contribute to the description of variation across varieties of English. In particular, it investigates the extent of similarity in the use of stance markers in two national varieties of West African English, Nigerian English and Ghanaian English, and compares them to British English. The frequency and stylistic variability of four semantic groups of stance markers (markers of certainty, doubt/possibility, attitude/perspective and epistemic stance markers) were examined in the ICE-Nigeria and ICE-Ghana corpora and compared with ICE-Great Britain. The results demonstrate an overall lower frequency of stance marker use in the two West African varieties compared to British English, a smaller repertoire of different markers as well as distinct preference patterns. However, the speakers of the two West African English varieties do not demonstrate lower stylistic variability in the use of stance markers across different text types. In addition, there are systematic differences in stance marker usage between the two West African English varieties, thus not supporting the hypothesis of the emergence of a pan-West African English variety.