

Style Contrasts, Migration, and Social Class

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Research on stylisation and language crossing often underlines the agency of speakers, but how do these practices fit into larger systems and structures? Drawing on two substantial datasets, this paper focuses on two pairs of contrasting styles -- posh and Cockney, and Creole and Asian English -- and its account of stylisation connects the ways that British adolescents engaged with these sociolinguistic contrasts to their experience of class, ethnicity and migration. Posh and Cockney were closely tied to class, and adolescent stylisations denaturalised class stratification. The Creole/Asian English binary linked to ethnicity and migration, and here, stylisation domesticated potentially divisive ethno-linguistic imageries circulating more generally in public culture. These reworkings of Creole/Asian English were grounded, though, in a shared working class position, and so although migration and ethnicity mattered a great deal, the structuring processes associated with class were more fundamental. This has wider implications for our understanding of contemporary multilingualisms.

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