

Book Review

Nils Langer, Steffan Davies & Wim Vandenbussche (eds.). 2012. *Language and History, Linguistics and Historiography. Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Studies in Historical Linguistics 9). Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Wien: Peter Lang. ISBN 9783034307611 (paperback), xii, 503 pp. £52.00/€61.70

Reviewed by **Michael Moser**, Institut für Slawistik, Universität Wien, Spitalgasse 2, Hof 3, 1090 Wien, Austria, E-mail: michael.moser@univie.ac.at

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The present volume is arranged in five sections: 1. “Language and History, Linguistics and Historiography: Theoretical Outlook and Methodological Practices” (pp. 1–126), 2. “Standardization and Authenticity” (pp. 127–267), 3. “Demographics and Social Dynamics” (pp. 269–340), 4. “Language History from Below” (pp. 341–406), and 5. “Language and Ideology” (pp. 407–482). In their preface, the three editors develop the convincing idea that “[l]anguage is a primary means of access to the past, and the historian’s primary means of expression” (p. 5). Subsequently, Patrick Honeybone suggests in a general theoretical survey that history and structural historical linguistics are primarily connected through “cognitive reconstruction”. Nicholas M. Wolf, in his examination of the mass-scale switch from Irish to English in Ireland, successfully demonstrates the usefulness of a combination of linguistics and cultural history. In a philosophically oriented essay, Brian D. Joseph discusses the relationship between historical linguistics and modern sociolinguistics, while Nicola McLelland examines the remarkable German debates about root words from Early Modern times onwards, which had an impact on discussions regarding glottogenesis as well as on morphologically oriented principles of German orthography. In the last contribution to this section, Agnete Nesse discusses the various principles underlying the edition of Low German texts in Norway.

Robert Evans opens the section on standardization with his contribution “Official Languages: A Brief Prehistory”, a fine survey of how states have regulated languages. Tomasz Kamusella, in “Classifying the Slavic Languages, or the Politics of Classification”, characterizes the classification of Slavic languages as a primarily politicized process; he argues against the traditional stem tree model, and does not discuss the traditional linguistic criteria of that classification at all. José de Valle (“Linguistic History and the Development of Normative Regimes: The Royal Spanish Academy’s Disputed Transatlantic Authority”) reports on a remarkable chapter from the history of Spanish, when

the political situation of 1950 prevented the Royal Spanish Academy from participating in a language conference in Mexico that was meant to be a milestone regarding the standardization of the Spanish language. In “Colouring Language: Pedro Henríquez Ureña’s Representations of Spanish and Dominican Identity”, Juan R. Valdez demonstrates that the questionable, essentially racist ideology of the renowned linguist Pedro Henríquez Ureña can be traced in his scholarly works on the Spanish language in the Dominican Republic, especially with respect to his attitude toward the Dominican African traditions. Laura Villa, in “‘Because When Governments Speak, They Are Not Always Right’: National Construction and Orthographic Conflicts in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Spain”, analyzes the structure of the debate between conservatives and populists regarding the standardization in nineteenth-century Spain, while Gijsbert Rutten and Rik Vosters (“As Many Norms as There Were Scribes? Language History, Norms and Usage in the Southern Netherlands in the Nineteenth Century”) argue that the traditional opinions suggesting an orthographic chaos in nineteenth-century Flanders are strongly exaggerated. The focus on Belgium is also present in Anneleen Vanden Boer’s empirical study “Language and Nation: The Case of the German-Speaking Minority in Belgium”, in which she confirms that German-speaking Belgians tend to be particularly patriotic and royalist.

Interestingly, the section on “Demographics und Social Dynamics” opens with two contributions devoted to the Middle Ages. In his convincing contribution “The Decline of Bilingual Competence in French in Medieval England: Evidence from the PROME [Parliament Rolls of Medieval England] Database”, Richard Ingham attempts to use gender agreement as evidence to draw conclusions regarding the continuity of Norman French native language command in medieval England following 1066. Rembert Eufe, in “Merovingian Coins and Their Inscriptions: A Challenge to Linguists and Historians,” presents the project of a linguistic analysis of inscriptions on Merovingian coins (unsurprisingly, with a focus on anthroponyms and toponyms), while Remco Knooihuizen, in his analysis titled “The Use of Historical Demography for Historical Sociolinguistics: The Case of Dunkirk”, discusses the interrelation of marriage patterns and the shift to French in Dunkirk.

The section “Language History from Below” is introduced by Judith Nobels und Marijke van der Wal’s discussion of seventeenth-century Dutch private letters. In their interesting paper, they suggest how the authentic authorship of these letters can be established (“Linking Words to Writers: Building a Reliable Corpus for Historical Sociolinguistic Research”). Then, Helmut Graser und B. Ann Tlusty (“Sixteenth-Century Street Songs and Language History ‘From Below’”) analyze street songs that were sung in Early Modern Augsburg from the perspective of

cultural history and, partially, linguistics. In the last contribution to this section, Juan Manuel Hernández-Campoy analyzes fifteenth-century private letters regarding “Mood Distinction in Late Middle English: The End of the Inflectional Subjunctive”. In particular, he is interested in the evolution from “mood distinction” to “mood neutralization” in this specific corpus.

The last section titled “Language and Ideology” largely concentrates on the twentieth century. Following Lisa Carroll-Davis’ “Identifying the Enemy: Using a CDA and Corpus Approach to Analyse Sandinista Strategies of Naming” and Krassimir Stoyanov’s “Ritualized Slogan Lexis in the Bulgarian Press during the Times of Violent Contradiction in Ideologies (1944–1947)”, Kristine Horner and Melanie Wagner present a discussion of the language situation of Luxembourgish (“Remembering World War II and Legitimizing Luxembourgish as the National Language: Consensus or Conflict?”), while Michela Giordano and Federica Falchi present their comparative analysis “John Stuart Mill and Salvatore Morelli: Language as a Social Tool in Nineteenth-Century Britain and Italy”. Information on the authors and an index conclude the volume.

The articles are quite heterogeneous regarding their scholarly approaches. The envisaged regions are Europe and, partially, Latin America. The focus is on English and other Germanic languages, Spanish, and French; two articles from the field of Slavic studies extend beyond that sphere. Perhaps not all articles demonstrate to the same extent what the volume intends to argue for: that precisely a fruitful combination of the studies of language and history probably represents one of the most promising directions in modern historical linguistics. In fact, some texts merely offer quite traditional diachronic studies based on historically interesting materials. This by no means entails that the volume does not deserve full attention.