Book Review

Sandra Jansen & Lucia Siebers (eds.). 2019. *Processes of Change. Studies in Late Modern and Present-Day English* (Studies in Language Variation 21). Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins. ISBN: 9789027204141 (hardback), vii, 263 pp. €105.00/\$158.00.

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<https://doi.org/10.1515/jhsl-2020-0007>

The volume under review serves as a Festschrift in honour of Raymond Hickey on occasion of his 65th birthday. In honouring Hickey's long and productive career thus far, in which he has authored many monographs and edited volumes on the topics of language variation and change (e.g. Hickey 2003), World Englishes (e.g. Hickey 2004), language contact (e.g. Hickey 2010) and multilingualism (e.g. Hickey 2019), this book constitutes a well-edited volume about processes of language change in Late Modern and Present-Day English. It comprises 12 chapters (plus a short introduction by co-editor Sandra Jansen) written by scholars who have collaborated with Hickey on a project or publication.

The volume is organised into two parts: the chapters in Part I (pp. 7–156) investigate language change in Late Modern English, whereas Part II (pp. 159–259) focuses on change in Present-Day English. The reason for dividing the volume in this way, rather than organising it, for example, based on different varieties of English, the application of different methods or the various linguistic levels under scrutiny, is that the editors, Sandra Jansen and Lucia Siebers, intended to address the fact that not many publications combine the investigation of Present-Day English with that of historical periods, despite the fact that “methodological similarities exist between historical and present-day analyses of language change” (p. 2). As such, the purpose of the volume is to “bring together leading scholars studying language change from different sociolinguistic and related perspectives, [...], complementing and enriching the existing literature on language change by providing readers with a kaleidoscopic perspective of aspects of language change in English from around 1700 until the present day” (p. 2).

This “kaleidoscopic perspective” is not only achieved by considering both Late Modern and Present-Day English, but also by the fact that processes of change are scrutinised on multiple linguistic levels (phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, discourse), different sources are used to elicit data (historical corpora, metalinguistic commentaries, ego-documents, dictionaries, spoken language and survey data), and multiple varieties of English are considered (American English, Australian

English, British English, Canadian English, Irish English and South African English). In addition, various (sub)fields and topics in English (historical) (socio-)linguistics are represented in this volume, such as for example prescriptivism vs. descriptivism, reflecting the wide array of fields that Hickey has contributed to over the years.

The Late Modern English section (Part I) starts with a chapter by Joan Beal on ‘Enregisterment and historical sociolinguistics’ (pp. 7–23). In it, Beal convincingly argues for the application of the third-wave sociolinguistic concepts of indexicality and enregisterment (cf. Eckert 2012) to the field of historical sociolinguistics in order to avoid anachronistic interpretations of metalinguistic comments made in the past (see also Montgomery 2012), as well as to help explain why, in nineteenth-century England, “discourse about the immanent death of dialects coincided with a burgeoning awareness of, and pride in, dialectal differences” (p. 20). By building on the work of Silverstein (2003) and Agha (2003, 2007), Beal shifts the focus from communities of practice, arguably the most widely applied third-wave concept in historical sociolinguistics (cf. Kopaczyk and Jucker 2013), to indexicality and enregisterment, and fruitfully applies these concepts to a discussion of both late medieval and early modern comments on the English language by individuals such as Ranulf Higden, John Trevisa and George Puttenham (pp. 11–16), as well as Late Modern English dictionaries and pronunciation guides, most notably those by Thomas Sheridan (1762) and John Walker (1791). She subsequently considers the example of ‘h-dropping’ in a case study (pp. 18–20), regarding which she concludes that, over the course of the nineteenth century, the “variation in the distribution of /h/ was not new, but newly registered” (p. 20). Besides showing how the third-wave concepts of indexicality and enregisterment can be fruitfully applied to historic texts, Beal’s contribution reminds the reader that there are key differences in studying registers from past communities compared to those from the present day, and that one cannot simply apply modern ideological frameworks regarding ‘correct/good’ and ‘incorrect/bad’ language use to historic metalinguistic comments.

The application of modern frameworks that often oversimplify complex issues in the past is also the topic of Kate Burridge’s chapter, ‘The obelisk and the asterisk. Early to Late Modern views on language and change’ (pp. 25–47). By closely scrutinising multiple editions of three dictionaries published between 1650 and 1754 (by Edward Phillips, Nathan Bailey and Benjamin Martin – who were amongst the dictionary makers who adopted the use of symbols such as the obelisk and asterisk to mark certain words), Burridge joins scholars such as Tiekens-Boon van Ostade in recognising that “many scholars from this period were not the embodiment of unadulterated prescription” (p. 26). From the discussion in this chapter, which Burridge points out does not involve an original empirical study on the marked words in the above-mentioned dictionaries as she draws on results from a survey

conducted by Osselton (1958), it becomes clear that the line between prescription and description is not always as clear as one might think, not the least since descriptivists often exhibit similar behaviour to that of prescriptivists, such as relying on value judgements and aesthetics (cf. Severin 2017). Burridge concludes that “most early grammars and dictionaries lay somewhere in the middle ground of prescription and description” (p. 44).

In contrast to the first two contributions, Chapters 4 and 5 by Claudia Claridge and Merja Kytö (pp. 49–71) and Kevin McCafferty and Carolina Amador-Moreno (pp. 73–93) respectively, concern two empirical studies in which specific features from different varieties of English during the late modern period are investigated: *a (great) deal* of constructions in nineteenth-century British and Australian English, and the discourse marker *sure* in Irish English. With regard to the former, Claridge and Kytö address the question of how this fixed phrase fared in the Late Modern English period after “the upsurge of competing complex quantity and degree modifiers” (p. 50). They draw attention to the value of comparing the developments in “the mother country and transplanted varieties” (p. 69) by analysing several ‘*deal* constructions’ in the *Old Bailey Corpus* and the *Corpus of Oz Earlier English* as well as discussing the semantic functions of quantification and degree (the only two meanings attested in the data). Similarly, McCafferty and Amador-Moreno take a diachronic perspective to the origins and development of the discourse marker *sure* in Irish English (*Corpus of Irish English Correspondence [CORIECOR]*, 1760s–1930s) and consider its use in other varieties, most notably American English. Both chapters are excellent examples of the value of combining quantitative and qualitative approaches when discussing under-researched features for specific periods in the history of English.

Returning to the area of dictionaries, in Chapter 6 Marina Dossena discusses ‘Scotland’s contribution to English vocabulary in Late Modern times’ by scrutinising selected sources for new lexical items as well as new meanings as documented in the online edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*. Amongst these sources are well-known literary voices such as Sir Walter Scott (third in the 1,000 most frequently quoted sources in the *OED*) and Robert Burns, Scottish lexicographers such as Andrew Ure and John Jamieson, as well as various Scottish periodicals. After briefly discussing the cultural landscape of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Scotland with regard to ‘correct’ language use and how people at the time were often encouraged to avoid “Scotticisms” (pp. 95–97), Dossena discusses some problems in working with the *OED* in regards to this topic – such as how it does not always clearly indicate whether headwords are closer to Scots or Scottish English – and elaborates on the Scottish roots of the *OED* (pp. 99–101). She subsequently provides the reader with a multitude of examples from the above-mentioned sources (pp. 102–111) and concludes that, apart from the evident popularity and subsequent influence of

Scottish literature on the English language by individuals such as Scott and Burns, there was a clear “recognition of the importance of Scottish lexicography” based on references to Jamieson’s and Ure’s works, and that “periodicals confirm their viability as channels of knowledge dissemination” (p. 112). In line with Burridge’s contribution, Dossena highlights that, even though the late modern period has typically been regarded as characterized by normative trends aimed at ‘ironing out’ variation, “the data provided in the online edition of the *OED* suggests that phenomena ought not to be oversimplified in their representation” (p. 112).

The final two chapters in Part I move away from the British Isles and instead focus on English varieties in nineteenth-century Wisconsin and Liberia. In Chapter 7, Samantha Litty, Jennifer Mercer and Joseph Salmons investigate how a “still-emerging variety of English” has been shaped by language contact in Wisconsin, where many German-speaking immigrants settled during the nineteenth century. By considering letters written by selected immigrant families from Germany and their direct descendants, the authors investigate several acoustic features, most notably final obstruent neutralization (FON), i.e. the neutralisation of the distinction between final voiced and voiceless obstruents (cf. Litty 2017). They conclude that a so-called boomerang effect (i.e. a strong initial presence followed by a decline and a re-emergence, cf. Benor 2015) can be discerned when taking into account twentieth-century teaching materials (which reveal an awareness of this feature) as well as recordings from other studies. In their chapter, Litty, Mercer and Salmons show how invaluable migrants’ letters are to furthering our understanding of complex trajectories of changes in past (migrant) communities, as they provide examples of distinctive traces of immigrant influences, some of which have survived to the present day. In Chapter 8, Lucia Siebers also considers a collection of migrant letters, this time from the *Corpus of Older African American English*, written by members of the Skipwith family, a slave family from the United States who migrated to Liberia in 1834. In her contribution, Siebers discusses variation in past and present *be*, most notably levelling to *was* in the past tense, especially in the third person plural and in light of subject type constraints, as well as the use of *-s* in the third person singular and plural. As Siebers points out, her study “is only the first step towards providing a fuller picture into the intra- and intergroup variation of African American English in the Liberian settler community” (p. 154), and while this chapter on its own provides few definitive answers to larger questions concerning processes of change in African American English in the nineteenth century, she presents an interesting case study and makes a good argument for further exploration of African American English varieties in the field of historical sociolinguistics.

Even though Part II concerns processes of change in Present Day English, the chapters contained still have much to offer to a historical (socio)linguistic audience. In Chapter 9, Morana Lukač and Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade investigate

changing attitudes towards so-called flat (or suffixless) adverbs in American and British English by comparing the results from a survey carried out by Mittins et al. (1970) in the late 1960s to their own survey carried out in 2015, as well as in light of present-day usage guides taken from the *Hype Usage Guide of English* database (HUGE). In light of the findings from Biber et al. (1999), who found that by the late 90s *-ly* adverbs occurred the least in informal speech, Lukač and Tieken-Boon van Ostade expect that acceptance of suffixless adverbs has grown over the last 50 years due to “colloquialization” (cf. Leech 2002: 75). By focusing on the flat adverbs (*go*) *slow* (vs. (*go*) *slowly*) and *quicker* (vs. *more quickly*), it appears that compared to the 1960s these “no longer constitute a usage problem to language users and writers of usage guides alike” (p. 178). In addition, Lukač and Tieken-Boon van Ostade include an interesting analysis of present-day attitudes towards *thus* and *thusly*, something which the informants brought up as their ‘linguistic pet peeves’ when filling out the survey. Interestingly, whereas the item was generally much more strongly condemned as ‘incorrect’ by both the informants and usage guides, the younger participants seemed to be the most accepting of *thusly*, indicating that in perhaps 50 years or so it might become a much more accepted form, similar to (*go*) *slow* and *quicker*.

In addition to their analysis and discussion, Lukač and Tieken-Boon van Ostade provide the necessary historical context of each feature under scrutiny, something which Kirk does as well in Chapter 10, ‘The modal auxiliary verb *may* and change in Irish English’ (pp. 183–202). The origins of *may* and its development in the nineteenth century are discussed in detail (pp. 187–191), before Kirk compares data from the *International Corpus of English: Ireland Component* (ICE-Ireland) to data on *may* from both the British equivalent (ICE-GB) and the historical CORIECOR (see also above), taking both a synchronic and diachronic perspective on the development of *may* in Irish English. At the core of this paper lies what Kirk labels the “root-epistemic distinction” (p. 191), which roughly concerns whether to interpret instances of *may* as either expressing a subjective judgement about future events (epistemic) or as an expression of permission (non-epistemic, or ‘root’). After an engaging discussion of the data, Kirk concludes that, based on “this small investigation” (p. 199), the data from ICE-Ireland do not support the increase in epistemic frequency between various contemporaneous corpora as noted in an earlier study by Leech et al. (2009), leaving room for further investigation.

Of the final three chapters of the volume, Chapters 11 and 13 have something to offer to a historical (socio)linguistic audience, both by discussing the social and sociolinguistic histories of the geographical locations under scrutiny (Maryport in West Cumbria and the Canada-United States border respectively), and by suggesting different perspectives on existing frameworks or concepts that might be equally applied to past communities. In Chapter 11 (pp. 203–226),

Sandra Jansen shows that, in order to better understand supralocal changes, case studies on peripheral communities can be of great value. By closely scrutinising the levelling in the use of prevocalic /r/ in light of social changes in Maryport, she not only adds to the relatively limited research into this feature in the north of England (cf. Watt et al. 2014), but also reveals interesting intra- and interspeaker variation, as well as the linguistic reallocation of taps in intervocalic environments, something also reported on in studies on other communities (p. 222). In Chapter 13, Jack Chambers discusses borders and language, and as such touches on a wide variety of concepts and topics, most notably dialect continuums and bilingual zones. By focusing on three places along the Canada–United States border (the Niagara Frontier, the New Brunswick–Maine border and the Quebec–Vermont border) with regard to lexical and pronunciation differences from the *Dialect Topography of Canada* (Chambers 2007), Chambers argues that “cultural differences, in this case different nationalities, outweigh physical differences in disrupting the continuum”, as well as that “communities right on the borders sometimes maximize their differentness” (p. 249), a concept that Chambers calls ‘bastion mentality’. As Chambers himself acknowledges, these points might seem straightforward, but have not been extensively researched in the existing literature. Finally, Chapter 12 by Rajend Mesthrie and Simone Wills concerns a detailed study on the fronting of /u:/ (the GOOSE vowel) in five different South African cities, with special reference to coloured communities. After an extensive discussion on GOOSE-fronting in post-1994 sociolinguistics (pp. 229–231), Mesthrie and Wills consider the issue of ‘Coloured English’, and carefully argue that they would “lose a depth of sociolinguistic life” if they were to ignore this possible category as a result of racio-political correctness (p. 234). Using data from Mesthrie’s fieldwork between 2006 and 2010, Mesthrie and Wills set out to investigate whether local ‘GOOSE norms’ would either be similar or dissimilar across different cities, but conclude that “neither possibility holds in this strong form” (p. 241), and that the variation they find is not socially salient but is instead governed by phonetic environment and sex. They conclude their chapter by comparing their results to other studies, leaving open different avenues for future research.

To return to the angle that the editors of this volume took with their presentation of the contributions, i.e. combining the investigation of Present-Day English with that of historical periods, the volume as a whole showcases the strength of this combination as it reaffirms that methodological similarities between historical and present-day analyses of language change exist and that contemporary methodologies should be considered for historical periods and vice-versa, even though only some chapters achieve this within themselves (most notably 7, 9 and 10). The downside in taking this approach with such a wide variety of topics and

methodologies in one volume, however, can be that – leaving the big picture aside for a moment – the individual papers do not overlap enough to speak to everyone working on, or interested in, aspects of the English language in either or both the late modern period and the present day.

When it comes to those working in the field of historical sociolinguistics (which includes myself), it comes as no surprise that the chapters in Part I have most to offer when considering them as individual papers (although not all contributions in this section discuss the socio-historical aspect(s) in as much detail as others, such as Chapters 4 and 5). However, since many of the chapters in Part II not only give the relevant (socio-)historical context pertaining to their respective topics/features under scrutiny (e.g. Chapter 10) but also take a diachronic approach by comparing their results from the present day to past studies (e.g. Chapter 9), they too have something to offer to a historical (socio)linguistic audience.

All in all, this volume is a collection of high-quality papers that all in some way celebrate the work of Raymond Hickey, and as such contribute to the various (sub) fields that he has worked in, most notably language variation and change, language contact, multilingualism and World Englishes, from both a diachronic and a synchronic perspective. As such, the “kaleidoscopic perspective of aspects of language change in English from around 1700 until the present day” (2) that Jansen and Siebers set out to present with this volume is definitely provided.

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