

**Gisle Andersen** and **Kristin Bech** (eds.). *English corpus linguistics: Variation in time, space and genre. Selected papers from ICAME 32*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi. 2013. 257 pp. ISBN 978-90-420-3679-6. Reviewed by **Hanna Rutkowska**, Adam Mickiewicz University.

The volume *English corpus linguistics: Variation in time, space and genre* is a well-balanced collection of eleven papers selected from the 32nd ICAME conference, held in honour of Stig Johansson and in Oslo in 2011. All the studies included in this book approach variation in English using corpus linguistics methodology. The contributions are divided into three sections, depending on whether their authors view variation from the perspective of time, space or genre (the last of these dimensions seems to cover register and text type alike). To begin with, **Kristin Bech** and **Gisle Andersen** provide the reader with a useful introduction commenting on the recent trends in corpus linguistics, and over-viewing the contents of the book. Additionally, each paper is preceded by an abstract providing a summary of the key findings as well as the corpora and methodology used by particular authors.

**Christian Mair**'s paper opens the first section of the volume, devoted to 'variation in time' and comprising three corpus studies in the history of English. Mair explores the development of specificational cleft constructions of the type *What I did was I called the police*, associated mainly with spoken English. He draws the reader's attention to the earliest, little known real-speech recordings of spoken English, such as those of the *Königlich Preußische Phonographische Kommission*, dating back to 1915, as worth investigating in corpus-linguistic research. Direct sound recordings are precious, because available transcriptions of speech tend to omit syntactically incomplete structures such as the ones investigated by Mair. Nonetheless, since direct evidence of spoken English from before the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century is extremely scarce, the author studies texts belonging to the so-called speech-based genres instead, in order to enhance the diachronic depth of his investigation. He uses several corpora containing historical (literary and non-literary) texts, including Literature Online (LION), the Old Bailey Corpus, and the Corpus of Historical American English (COHA), as well

as corpora with contemporary data, e.g. the Diachronic Corpus of Present-Day Spoken English (DCPSE), the Freiburg Update of the Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus (FLOB) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA). His findings reveal that finite clause complements are recorded, albeit sparsely, already in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and have originated as genuine innovations in spoken syntax. Early instances of this construction can be found more often in literary representations of speech in LION than in the court records in the Old Bailey Corpus. Mair's paper deals with a very important issue of limited availability of direct sources enabling reliable research on previous stages of spoken English, and points to some partial solutions to this crux. Nevertheless, the inclusion of an expanded reference to the set of the *Phonographische Kommission* recordings, which does not seem to include any instance of the construction under consideration, affects the coherence of the paper.

**Lilo Moessner** investigates the writing style of Robert Boyle (1627–1691), in comparison with other writing styles identifiable in medical and natural science texts from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and those from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The corpus under analysis comprises altogether 180,000 words, divided into three roughly equal subcorpora, one part comprising Boyle's writings (further subdivided into medical and natural science texts), another one with documents from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, also subdivided into medical and natural science texts, and an analogical part with the 18<sup>th</sup>-century texts. Moessner conducts a multidimensional (MD) factor analysis (following Biber 1988), calculating mean text dimension scores of the texts belonging to particular subcorpora. The linguistic profiles of the relevant subcorpora established this way show that Boyle's writing style remains distinctive in both types of texts, but differs considerably from that of the other 17<sup>th</sup>-century authors in both medical and natural science texts, appearing more narrative and characterised by explicit rather than situation-dependent reference. Simultaneously, 17<sup>th</sup>-century medical and natural science texts are sufficiently different from each other to be the products of different discourse communities, which indicates that medicine and natural sciences should be treated as separate disciplines already in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Moessner concludes that the 18<sup>th</sup>-century authors of medical texts imitated Boyle's style, mainly its narrativity, but the evidence supporting this view seems very weak as it concerns few linguistic features. Moreover, there is also evidence to the contrary, showing the similarity between the 17<sup>th</sup>-century and 18<sup>th</sup>-century medical texts, concerning the level of informational production, contrasting with Boyle's highly involved style. Since the subcorpora from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries comprise relatively few authors, it would be interesting to see to what degree the inclusion of more texts by other authors changes the findings.

The last paper dealing with variation in time, discusses the potential spelling evidence for the early diphthongisation of ME *ū*, found in *A Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English* (LAEME) and *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Middle English* (LALME). This diphthongisation is considered part of the so-called ‘Great Vowel Shift’ (GVS), whose beginning is traditionally dated to the fifteenth century. **Gjertrud F. Stenbrenden** examines earlier irregular spellings against the background of the orthographic systems in which they appear, concluding that the diphthongisation of ME *ū* could have started as early as the mid-thirteenth century in the West Midlands. Stenbrenden acknowledges that the idea of early diphthongisation was entertained by several linguists already in the twentieth century, but seems to have been neglected by others. She strengthens her point by referring to the 13<sup>th</sup>-century evidence on the raising of ME *ō*, arguing that the latter would not have been possible without the diphthongisation of ME *ū* operating in roughly the same period. Still, an important weakness of Stenbrenden’s hypothesis is the small number of relevant irregular spellings dating to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, found in the ME texts.

**Christopher Koch’s** and **Tobias Bernaisch’s** contribution is among the five papers in the volume which are devoted to ‘variation in space’. On the basis of the recently compiled SAVE corpus, containing newspaper archives comprising texts from the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Koch and Bernaisch investigate verb complementation in six South Asian varieties of English, including those spoken in Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Additionally, the newspaper section of the British National Corpus (BNC) is consulted for comparison. The study shows that ‘new’ ditransitives (NDTs) constitute productive structures in the South Asian varieties of English under consideration, but the frequencies of occurrence of individual NDTs are largely variety-specific. As admitted by the authors of the paper, some NDT constructions could have been influenced by American or Australian English, but the comparison with these varieties is not part of Koch and Bernaisch’s study.

Another synchronic study is offered by **Xinyue Yao** and **Peter Collins**. It focuses on the distribution and function of the present perfect construction (PP) in British (BrE), American (AmE), Australian (AusE), and New Zealand English (NZE) of the early 1990s, with considerable attention paid to variation across registers, including conversation, news reportage, academic writing, and fiction. The authors make use of selected sections of the International Corpus of English (ICE) as well as the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English (SBC) and the Freiburg-Brown Corpus of American English (Frown). As regards regional differences, contrary to expectations, AusE turns out to be more

similar to AmE, whereas NZE shows more resemblance to BrE. This differentiation is most marked in news reportage. Yao and Collins also analyse the distribution of continuative, resultative, and experiential PPs across the varieties of English and across registers. However, the principles of semantic classification of PPs in this paper may sometimes be considered debatable, as in the case of the rule that “[n]egative perfects are continuative by default” (p. 99; cf. the classification of a negative PP as resultative in another paper, on p. 165, in the same volume).

In the following contribution, on the basis of selected linguistic variables, **Johan Elsness** studies cultural differences between British, American, Australian and New Zealand speakers of English, concerning, for instance, gender equality. Additionally, with regard to AmE and BrE, he tries to identify the cultural changes which took place between the 1960s and the 1990s. He uses the data from several corpora, including the Brown Corpus, the Frown Corpus, LOB, FLOB, the Australian Corpus of English (ACE), the Wellington Written Corpus (WWC), the BNC, COCA, the *Time Magazine* Corpus (TIME), ICE, and SBC. Elsness finds out that the picture of the US in the early 1960s as representing a masculine, militaristic and dynamic culture (Leech and Fallon 1992) had been largely attenuated by the 1990s. The changes include, among others, the decrease of the HE/SHE pronoun ratio, the increase in the frequency of the feminine pronoun in subject position, and a lower frequency of cultural terms such as *army*, *enemy* and *war*, contrasting with a much higher frequency of lexical items such as *sex*, *sexual(ly)*, and *sexuality*. However, the number of cultural terms taken into account by Elsness seems rather low, which may affect the precision of the findings concerning cultural changes. The ratios of particular linguistic features in AusE are close to those in BrE, and NZE resembles AmE (cf. the findings concerning the distribution of PPs in Yao and Collins’s paper, pp. 91–111). Elsness concludes that the data testify to a strong trend towards cultural convergence among the speakers of the varieties of English analysed here.

**Kathrin Luckmann de Lopez** reports her findings concerning clause-final *man* in Tyneside English. Her study is based on a corpus comprising three episodes from two TV series, *Auf Wiedersehen*, *Pet* (1983) and selected examples from *Geordie Shore* (2011). She shows that *man*, usually classified as a vocative, fulfils mainly textual and interpersonal functions, which are not typically associated with vocatives. The characteristic features of *man* include its clause-final position and its predominant use in local Tyneside intonation patterns. Also, it is used by both men and women to address one person or more people of either sex. Thus, it can be considered an inclusive in-group marker indexing

Geordie working-class identity. What raises some concern is a rather small corpus forming the basis of this study.

The paper by **Cristina Suárez-Gómez** and **Elena Seoane** closes the second section of the volume. Its authors investigate the variation in the forms expressing the present perfect meaning in constructions containing the adverbs *yet*, *(n)ever*, and *just* in English in Hong Kong, Singapore, the Philippines, and India, as compared to British English, using the data from the ICE Corpus. The authors find out that the present perfect meaning in Asian English varieties is less often expressed by means of the canonical periphrasis *have* + past participle than in British English, especially in the spoken mode. The alternative structures, among which the preterite as well as *(have* +) base form are the most conspicuous, have partly permeated to the written mode, which testifies to their consolidation as variants. Furthermore, the study reveals statistically significant differences among and within particular varieties of English. Some aspects discussed only briefly in the paper, such as text type variation and problems with semantic classification, deserve more attention in further studies.

**Daniel Lees Fryer**'s pilot study, starting the last group of papers in the volume, is devoted to variation in English for Specific Purposes, which can likewise be referred to as 'variation in genre'. It is based on a corpus comprising 23 high-impact medical research articles (RAs), covering c. 164,000 words. Applying the systemic-functional framework of Appraisal, Fryer examines the way in which the authors of these RAs engage with their audience. He finds out that this engagement is heteroglossic, involving a variety of rhetorical devices (e.g. finite modal verbs and selected adverbs as well as clauses). Resources such as modality, hedging and evidentiality, belonging to the feature (or system) named 'entertain', turn out to be the most common. Moreover, the findings indicate that the authors of RAs try to maintain the balance between engagement and self-promotion. Interestingly, the distribution of the features designed to meet these two aims varies across article sections (Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion), and within these sections. As pointed out by Fryer, his findings may have implications for programmes designed to teach academic writing skills. The texts used in this study constitute approximately one fourth of the final corpus used in the project, so Fryer's conclusions are likely to become even more relevant to educators who design academic writing courses once the project has been completed, especially if it takes into consideration not only Engagement, but also Attitude and Graduation, i.e. all the categories of the tripartite system of Appraisal.

**Matteo Fuoli**, like Fryer, uses the Appraisal Theory in his study. He conducts a comparative analysis of BP's and IKEA's 2009 corporate social reports,

trying to identify in what way the two companies build their corporate identity through the use of evaluative language and modality, and how they develop their relationship with the audience. Fuoli focuses on Attitude and Engagement, two Appraisal subsystems. The author discovers that the two reports differ significantly with regard to the use of Appraisal resources, which translates into the differences in emphasis on selected characteristics of their corporate images. For example, within the Attitude system, evaluative resources typical of positive Judgement are more frequent in BP's report (stressing technological strengths and expertise), whereas resources characteristic of positive Affect are recorded more often in IKEA's report (building empathy with the audience). The resulting corporate images depict BP as a reliable and authoritative expert, and IKEA as a caring and progressive company. Fuoli admits that his study is limited in scope and depth – it examines only two reports and analyses selected features of the Appraisal system. In spite of these limitations, it offers important insights into the interpersonal discourse semantics of the relatively new genre of corporate social reports.

In the last contribution **Natassia Schutz** investigates the distribution of all the academic verbs found in business, linguistics and medical research articles in the Louvain Corpus of Research Articles (LOCRA). Her main aim is to distinguish the verbs which are shared by all the three disciplines, and can be considered part of 'English for General Academic Purposes' (EGAP), from the ones specific to a particular discipline, and thus belonging to 'English for Specific Academic Purposes' (ESAP). For the extraction of relevant vocabulary from the corpus, Schutz combines two methods, namely the keyness analysis and the analysis of relative frequencies, which – especially from the methodological point of view – turn out to be complementary. The study shows that general academic verbs represent a considerable proportion of all the academic verbs used in the corpus, amounting to 50 per cent of the types and 54 per cent of the tokens, and that the linguistics subcorpus contains more high-frequency academic verbs than the subcorpora comprising the articles from the other two disciplines, i.e. business and medical research. An additional qualitative analysis of the verbs shared by all the three disciplines (classified by Schutz as general academic verbs) indicates that, for teaching purposes, they need to be presented in context to enhance the description of their academic uses. Similarly to the results reported in Fryer's paper, also these discussed in Schutz's study can influence the content of courses teaching academic writing.

All the contributions to this volume offer quantitative analyses, but many authors combine them with qualitative considerations. In some cases, the authors' perspectives on variation overlap. For instance, apart from variation in

time, Moessner analyses variation in genre. Yao and Collins examine not only variation in space, but also according to text type. Moreover, Elsness's study, though it focuses on spatial variation, includes elements of diachronic analysis and analyses variation according to genre. The authors of the studies discussed above use corpora which vary in terms of size, type, specificity and purpose, and employ a variety of theoretical frameworks and tools. This diversity testifies to the importance of corpus linguistics methods for the progress in different fields of linguistic study as well as in other social science disciplines, including historical linguistics, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, cultural studies, and education. The papers in the volume edited by Gisle Andersen and Kristin Bech provide valuable insights into the recent developments in all these areas. Therefore this book should prove to be of great interest not only to linguists investigating various aspects of contemporary and earlier English, but also to experts in related disciplines.

### **References**

- Biber, Douglas. 1988. *Variation across speech and writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Leech, Geoffrey and Roger Fallon. 1992. Computer corpora – what do they tell us about culture? *ICAME Journal* 16: 29–50.