

**Irma Taavitsainen, Merja Kytö, Claudia Claridge and Jeremy Smith** (eds.). *Developments in English: Expanding electronic evidence* (Studies in English Language). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. xxiii + 299 pp. ISBN: 978-1-107-03850-9. Reviewed by **Amelia Joulain-Jay**, Lancaster University.

The volume *Developments in English: Expanding electronic evidence* is a collection of 13 peer-reviewed papers which, the preface clarifies, originated at the 2010 IAUPE (International Association of University Professors in English) conference which took place in Malta. The conference strands of “Corpus Linguistics” and “History of English” having proved so “inspiring and exciting” and “so coherent in their engagement with current debates”, that contributors were asked to “project their thoughts” about “current trends of linguistic study, theoretical approach(es), and recent insights and innovations in the methodologies” onto historical data (p. xxiii). The result is a thematically varied collection which is likely to be of interest to most of ICAME’s audience.

After the editors’ preface, the volume starts with a chapter, also by the editors, which sets the background for the rest of the book. It begins by briefly retracing the development of the uses of electronic corpora in English linguistics from the 1960s and 1970s to the present-day, locating Modern English historical linguistics at a “paradigm shift” (p. 7) where the availability and increasing use of electronic corpora presents promises but also challenges. Replicability, at least in principle, is hence a major advantage of corpus approaches, which promises to set the field of English linguistics on sound empirical foundations. A major challenge, however, is the “double-edged situation” (p. 6) in which corpus users find themselves: on the one hand, they can exercise more theoretical and statistical rigour; on the other hand, they deal with corpus data which ultimately takes the appearance of decontextualized examples, precluding sound interpretations by distancing or masking context.

The volume is presented in four parts, each with its own brief introduction by one of the editors. Part 1, “Linguistic directions and crossroads: mapping the routes” is introduced by **Merja Kytö** and contains three chapters. The first

chapter, by **Charles F. Meyer**, concerns the debate between ‘corpus-based’ and ‘corpus-driven’ linguistics. Meyer argues that the distinction is not useful, because research under both labels is not as different as proponents of the distinction suggest. He illustrates this by discussing Hunston and Francis’ (2000) work on Pattern Grammar (corpus-driven) and Meyer’s (1992) work on apposition (corpus-based): *contra* the corpus-driven objection that corpus-based linguistics is inhibited by a reliance on prior theory, Meyer shows that Hunston and Francis (2000) do not start off entirely theory-independent, and that Meyer (1992) is able to generate insights which go beyond the theory adopted as a starting point. Meyer also discusses separately the objection to corpus annotation. He argues that corpus annotation does represent a particular theoretical standpoint, which it is “perfectly acceptable” (p. 26) to object to, but that giving researchers access to annotated corpora opens the annotation to scrutiny. He hence suggests that making available a corpus annotated according to the findings of Hunston and Francis (2000) would help verify the accuracy of their observations.

Next, **Stefan Th. Gries** argues that all corpus work, including the most qualitative of explorations, involves quantification. He proceeds to discuss “what to count, how to count, and why” (p. 30), warning that working with simple raw frequencies can be misleading, and discussing additional methods of quantification and some of their pitfalls. He formulates and defends eight recommendations, from the importance of always supplementing frequencies with dispersion measures, to the importance of taking into account an extensive amount of (textual) context when attempting to explain a particular construction.

Finally, **Bas Aarts, Sean Wallis** and **Jill Bowie** present an analysis of the development of modal verb phrases in Spoken American and British English between the 1960s and the 1990s. They use a parsed corpus, the *Diachronic Corpus of Present-Day Spoken English*, along with ICECUP III and IV, a software allowing complex searches of parsed corpora. Comparing their results to Leech *et al.* (2009), they report that their spoken data contains approximately 20 per cent more core modals than Leech *et al.*’s (2009) written data, “supporting the claim that modals are more frequent in spoken than in written language” (p. 53). Examining changes in modal verb use according to syntactic patterns rather than simply modal verbs, they report that “the overall decline of core modal usage... is potentially misleading”, and that “changes in modal usage appear to correlate with clause structures” (p. 71). Hence, although declarative usages of core modals decline in their data, there are no significant changes in interrogative usages.

Part 2, “Changing patterns” is introduced by **Claudia Claridge** and contains three chapters. The first, by **Minoji Akimoto**, explores functional changes in uses of *desire*, *hope* and *wish* from Middle English to Present-day English using the *Helsinki Corpus*, *ARCHER*, *F-LOB*, and *Wordbanks Online*. He finds that *desire* was used in multiple constructions as a verb until the Late Modern English period, “but has since reduced its verbal functions considerably” (p. 90), being restricted in Present-day English to the construction ‘desire + NP’. This contrasts with *wish* and *hope* which have both strengthened or expanded their verbal usages. Akimoto suggests that noun uses of *desire* may have displaced verb uses, and that in particular the ‘have + noun’ construction may have played an important role in the functional changes of *desire*; *desire*, he suggests may be part of a pattern of nouns borrowed from Old French, which have a tendency to occur in the *have* composite predicate construction.

Next, **Matti Rissanen** looks at the development of the adverbial connective *considering (that)* from Middle English to Present-day English. He explores a number of corpora, from the *Helsinki Corpus* and the *Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse* to the Brown family of corpora and the *British National Corpus*. He finds that verb uses of *consider* appear earlier than the connective usage, and that the connective usage appears first in official documents, then in other genres with private correspondence helping to spread the new usage. Working with the Invited Inferencing Theory of Semantic Change, he argues that the development of the connective usage may have drawn both from the Old French expression *considerant* and from earlier uses of the borrowed verb *consider*.

Finally, **Manfred Markus** discusses interjections as a prototypical feature of spoken dialects. He explores the interjections in the *English dialect dictionary*, which covers the period 1700–1900. He argues that interjections deserve more detailed descriptions than conveying “emotionality”, a standard but “fuzzy and unreliable” (p. 118) description. He finds that interjections “do not adhere to any particular pattern of word formation” (p. 126) but are often formed by converting or merging existing words and phrases, and that their meaning depends on usage and “lies in pragmatics” (p. 129).

Part 3, “Pragmatics and discourse” is introduced by **Irma Taavitsainen** and contains three chapters. The first, by **Laurel J. Brinton**, focuses on interjection-based delocutive verbs (such as ‘to farewell’ meaning ‘to say farewell’) from Middle English to Present-day English. She draws on a number of resources, from the *Middle English Dictionary* to the *TIME Magazine Corpus*. She suggests that delocutive verbs are often back-formed from the *-ing* form, and sometimes also arise simply via conversion from the interjection, but that evidence suggests they do not derive from delocutive light verb constructions (such as ‘to

go oops’). She further argues that the delocutives are not strongly lexicalised, and that their formation does not constitute an example of degrammaticalization.

Next, **Andreas H. Jucker** contrasts uses of *uh* and *um* in the *Corpus of Historical American English (COHA)* (1810–2009) and in Present-day Spoken English (based on research such as Fox Tree 2007 and Tottie 2011). He finds that *uh* and *um* are extremely rare in *COHA* compared to reported findings of spoken English, seemingly because they are much more salient in written than in spoken language. Their most important function in *COHA* is hesitation and planning, but authors of fictional texts also rely on widespread negative assessments of them to purposefully portray their protagonists as hesitant or lying.

Finally, **Thomas Kohnen** argues that Christian religious discourse can yield interesting insights into the history of English. He sketches out a systematic classification of religious genres, grouping them into three categories depending on the addressor and addressee (God to the Christian community, the Christian community to God, or the Christian community to the Christian community). Drawing on the *Corpus of English Religious Prose* (1150–1700), still under construction, he finds that some of the functions of religious genres (such as those in the sphere of prayer) have remained fairly stable over time in terms of their uses and distributions across religious genres, whereas others (such as exhortation and exegesis) have not. Much of the discussion also focuses on the difference between core genres (such as sermons and prayers) and associated genres (such as prefaces). Associated genres are found to be consistently different to core genres, but not necessarily more ‘secular’.

The last part, “World Englishes”, is introduced by **Jeremy Smith** and contains four chapters. The first, by **Susan Fitzmaurice**, explores the identity of white Zimbabweans living in or outside of Zimbabwe, and in particular the connection between their pronunciation and the identities of ‘Zimbo’ and ‘Rhodie’. Fitzmaurice draws on interviews with Zimbabweans, and although the chapter is fascinating and will be of interest to readers interested in issues of language and identity, as well as those interested in the history of migration and settlement in Rhodesia, Zimbabwe and South Africa, it is not entirely clear how this chapter relates to the title ‘expanding electronic evidence’ in historical linguistics.

Next, **Andrea Sand** uses WordSmith Tools and SPSS to compare the *Corpus of Singapore Weblogs*, still being compiled, to the Singapore section of the *International Corpus of English (ICE-SIN)*. Although Platt (1987) had previously claimed that use of discourse particles such as *lah* or *lor* borrowed from Bazaar Malay (one of the notable features of Singlish) were used mostly by Chinese speakers, Sand finds no effect for sex, age group, education or home lan-

guage. For quotative *like*, the only significant predictor of use is home language: Chinese speakers are less likely to use it. More broadly, Sand finds that although weblogs are written texts in the public domain, they exhibit features “associated with informal spoken communication” (p. 236).

Next, **Raymond Hickey** presents a survey of mergers with or without phonological loss in varieties of English, from the WHICH-WITCH and HORSE-HOARSE mergers to the FOOT-STRUT split. He discusses explanations for each, arguing that similar phonological tendencies need not be historically connected. The article impresses by its breadth and conciseness, although it does not make mention of the data used to derive its conclusions.

Finally, **William A. Kretzschmar Jr.** closes the book with a discussion of sociolinguistic data gathered during long-term research from Roswell, GA, data which, he argues, cannot easily be accounted for by standard sociolinguistic accounts. The chapter focuses on describing complexity science and its felicitous application to sociolinguistics; Kretzschmar hence argues for example that koinéization does not well describe the emergence of American English(es), since early observers commenting on the existence of American English as a distinct and more homogenous variety than British English in fact already described some differences between local American varieties. These early differences can, in contrast, be accounted for by using a complexity science model of the interaction between early settlers.

Despite what might be expected given the title, methodological reflections on the potential and challenges of using electronic evidence are mostly, if present, confined to the editorial introductions or to a few sentences per chapter. Aside from this, most linguists, whether their focus be on issues of corpus methodology, grammar, genre, pragmatics or identity, will find something of interest in this excellent collection. Users will also be grateful for the list of corpora, along with their websites, provided at the end of the volume, and although the list does not include references to citations of these corpora in the collection, this information can be found under the entry ‘corpus’ in the subject index.

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