

HERNÁNDEZ-CAMPOY, Juan Manuel and J. Camilo CONDE-SILVESTRE eds. 2012: *The Handbook of Historical Sociolinguistics*. Malden and Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell. pp. 674. ISBN: 1-4051-9068-X. £110.



THE RISE OF SOCIOLINGUISTICS AT THE END OF THE twentieth century was not an isolated phenomenon and it brought about major changes and developments in the study of language. As Petyt (1980) remarked, the transition from rural dialectology to urban dialectology marked a new study in the consideration of language and society, and this would show in the field of historical linguistics too. The traditional concerns of philological origin were going to change overnight given the insights provided by the new research which was being carried out in terms of the study of change in progress and the components of the community of speakers, which showed in some inceptive works that would exert a great influence (Trudgill 1974, Hudson 1980).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century the concern with historical sociolinguistics is an accomplished fact. This volume proves the advance taken over in this new discipline, which is the merger of considerations of language and society, and historical synchronies, together with a diachronic survey of linguistic phenomena. The book is a good example of integrative and comprehensive views on the subject and its five parts represent five major perspectives. Part I, the study of “Origins and theoretical assumptions,” contains a clear exposition of the relationship between the study of synchrony and diachrony and the developments of its applications. It is interesting to note the study of variation as a contemporary phenomenon and the micro-linguistic and macro-linguistic approaches. The consideration of social history and linguistic facts is central to an understanding based upon context. This is central to major studies as the recent work on American English by Bailey (2012) shows.

The second part, titled “Methods for the sociolinguistic study of the history of languages,” contains chapters showing a variegated concern. It is outstanding the consideration of the quantitative paradigm with all its intricacies of representativeness and empirical validity, among others (Hernández-Campoy & Schilling, 63–79). The study of the uniformitarian principle by Berg (80–98) deploys a considerable amount of case studies on social class, gender, and social networks. Other chapters address issues related to the study of corpora, letters and diaries, and documents of different registers and they all present a clear methodological approach though in some cases the reader might have liked a more detailed analysis, which is difficult to achieve given the characteristics of the chapters. The chapter on literary sources shows an accurate description of method and application, specially in the discussion of variation and the detailed presentation of varieties of manners of writing “Shakespeare” (Anipa, 170–190). The study of ephemeral genres and historical synchronies is rather illustrative and is a good example of Modern English studies (Percy, 191–210).

It goes without saying that a study of historical sociolinguistics must rely upon a coherent view of speech and speakers, and this is the subject-matter of Part III, “Linguistic and socio-demographic variables.” The study of orthographic variables shows an original method of the analysis of spelling and the consideration of the variable and its variants (Rukowska & Rössler, 213–236). The chapter on phonological variables also provides a strong analysis of the notion and its sociolinguistic application, specially in the contrast between speech and writing and the appropriate illustrations of the varieties of Parisian French and the well-known distinction of Mercian and Kentish vowel sounds, a classic. The reference to the study of Al-Wer on Jordanian women is interesting to exemplify “the role of elegance and prestige.” Auer and Voeste go on to analyse grammatical variables and offer a cogent view of method; besides, their illustrations are clear examples of variation, variant and variables, and change (253–270). Grzegza carries out a most

interesting analysis of lexical-semantic variables based upon a detailed model of processes and forces and a close study of sociocultural forces and sociocultural changes. It is salient the analysis based upon different types of pseudo-loans, and the taxonomy is well explained and accurately applied (271–292). The study of pragmatic variables is a must after the previous considerations and Jucker and Taavitsainen (293–306) tackle this slippery field in a resolute way. This is actually a matter of time, since the study of pragmatics is relatively recent in contrast with the abundance of grammatical studies and its long tradition. The best asset of the chapter is the inclusion of units of analysis (expressions, utterances, conversation and discourse domains) and this attempt really opens a new field. The principles of real time and apparent time analysis are dealt with by Kielwicz-Janowiak (307–331), who addresses the issue in terms of gender and society; her illustrations based upon “ladies’ books” shed light on the complexity of the theoretical issues. Historical sociolinguistics cannot be properly understood without a clear approach to social mobility and the influence of innovation and change, as Conde-Silvestre (332–352) puts it; he stresses the role of early adaptations and the references to the Pastons are quite explanatory. The topic of religion, linked to the concerns with race and ethnicity is aptly expounded by Mesthrie (353–365). This is a complex issue and the author solves it gracefully since religion may pose many a difficulty in terms of information and social networks.

“Historical dialectology, language contact, change and diffusion” makes up Part IV. The study of language phylogenesis and the explanation of change are issues that require a careful recognition of the passage from actuation to propagation as Roberge argues cogently (369–386). The chapter by Hickey (387–407) offers a very interesting explanation of the changes in Dublin English as well as a complex exposition of internal and external changes in terms of diachrony and historical synchronies. The reflection upon the past is not solely restricted to data but to linguistic thought, as Joseph does in his chapter (408–426). He reviews Neogrammarian

principles and connects them with the study of lexical diffusion and transmission: “the Neogrammarian hypothesis of the regularity of sound change is foundational to so much else in historical linguistic methodology” (422). Ogura (423–450) deals with social networks and lexical diffusion and shows the analysis of computational modelling on different types of social networks. These networks operate in terms of strong or weak ties and the case studies of changes are considered as functionally biased or socially biased. The social locus of innovating individuals is a point of contention for sociolinguists themselves, as Britain explains (451–464). He expounds the positions of Labov and the Milroys and offers his own proposal: wave model, cultural hearth model, and counter-hierarchical model. Britain accounts for the types of influence and innovation in terms of speakers’ change, mobility, expansion and relocation. Meurman-Solin (465–479) and Kehrein (480–500) deal with major issues of dialectology: the former on historical varieties of Scottish English and the latter on the study of linguistic atlases of German. Naturally, the focus cannot be Eurocentric and Toulmin (501–519) studies empirical problems and phylogenesis in South Asia and Fiji. Multilingualism is thoroughly explained by Schendl (520–533) and the samples of the OE period and the late ME period are most relevant to the discussion held. The chapter by Schreier (521–551) discusses the force of migratory movements and studies the formation of a koiné as result of complex social and historical adaptations. No view of variation and change is complete without a serious reflection on convergence and divergence, which is provided by Wright (552–567), with special reference to Latin and Romance languages.

Part V, “Attitudes to language,” comprises five chapters containing the most original approaches. James Milroy (571–584) focuses on ideological view on language: the ideas of prestige and standard language. Milroy gives a solid insight into the problem of prescription and law-like linguistic behaviours and emphasises the social aspect of the history of a language. Richard Watts (585–606)

uses a tunnel and a funnel to explain the traditional conceptions of language history and goes on to debunk the myths developed by several authors from Higden in the *Polychronicon* to Puttenham and other Renaissance writers: purity, correction, barbarians, polite uses, standard uses. His analysis becomes a good instance of linguistic criticism. Langer and Nesse (607–625) provide a deep analysis of linguistic purism and offer a revealing taxonomy of observations on linguistic purism in historical sociolinguistics: the concern with the state of the language, selection of corrupting influence, a prestigious use, the inherent attributions of the language, the identity of “purists.” The reconstruction of prestige patterns is the focus of Sairio and Palander-Collin (626–638). They consider the influence of opinion leaders, the legitimacy of neologisms, the distribution of prestige forms between the sexes, the contempt for corrupt, clownish or “rusticall” speech and the concern with social stigmas. Multilingualism and other related issues make up the core of the study by Peersman (639–654) focusing on Medieval Europe and the change to vernaculars from Latin. It is a remarkable study of traditional philological consideration under the new sociolinguistic approaches including code-switching, and diglossia.

A handbook entails complex editorial plans and is not just a collection of good papers. A handbook is an articulate presentation of the state of the art and its potentialities and this one is a good example for linguistic studies in general, an interesting and resourceful volume full of deep insights and innovative perspectives.

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