

Rezensionen

Bernd Kortmann & Edgar Schneider (ed.): A Handbook of Varieties of English, together with Kate Burridge, Rajend Mesthrie, and Clive Upton. 2 vols. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. 2394 Seiten und CD-ROM.

HOLGER DIESEL

The *Handbook of Varieties of English* is a tremendous new research tool. It provides the most comprehensive and systematic overview of the varieties of the English language to date. Comprising contributions from many well-known scholars, the handbook provides more than 60 descriptions of different varieties of English, including regional varieties, ethnic and social varieties, English-based pidgins and creoles, and a wide range of second-language varieties spoken in some of the former British colonies. The book concentrates on the description and documentation of structural features and is divided into two volumes: Volume 1, edited by Edgar Schneider, is concerned with phonetic and phonological features, and Volume 2, edited by Bernd Kortmann, deals with morphological and syntactic features. Volume 1 also provides some information on the historical and sociolinguistic background of individual varieties, but the focus of both volumes is on structure. The handbook is accompanied by a CD-ROM illustrating the descriptions in the printed volumes and providing additional materials.

Each volume is divided into four sections, including between 11 and 18 chapters of different varieties from a particular world region: 1. The British Isles (edited by Kortmann & Upton), 2. the Americas and the Caribbean (edited by Schneider), 3. the Pacific and Australia (edited by Burridge & Kortmann), and 4. Africa, South and Southeast Asia (edited by Mesthrie). With a few exceptions, all varieties are described in both volumes, often by different authors with expertise in phonology or morphosyntax. Each section includes an introduction and a synopsis (written by the section editor) and both volumes include a general introduction (by Kortmann & Schneider) and two global synopses (by Schneider Vol. 1 and Kortmann & Szmrecsanyi Vol. 2). In addition, there is a

comprehensive bibliography divided into “general references” and “selected references” for a particular variety.

While most chapters can draw on information from previous research, a few chapters present the first systematic description of a particular variety. For instance, Mühlhäusler’s articles on the phonology and morphosyntax of Norfolk Island-Pitcairn English provide the first comprehensive description of this variety. Many chapters include printed maps of the area in which the variety is spoken (e. g. Huber, Ghanaian English) and some chapters provide quantitative information from corpus data (e. g. Hundt, Hay & Gordon, New Zealand English). The descriptions concentrate on non-standard spoken varieties of English, but the first volume also includes a chapter on British Received Pronunciation (Upton) and Standard American English pronunciation (Kretzschmar, Jr.), which are commonly seen as the two standard pronunciations of English.

In order to ensure a certain degree of comparability, the authors were asked to provide information on a predetermined set of phonological and morphosyntactic features. The phonological features concern the phonetic quality of a predetermined set of vowels and consonants, phonotactic constraints on particular speech sounds, the occurrence of specific phonological processes, the lexical distribution of particular speech sounds, and the occurrence of particular prosodic and intonational features. In order to provide this information, the authors were given a word list (based on Wells 1982) and were encouraged to collect and analyse a standard reading passage and/or free conversation (see below). The morphosyntactic features concern the occurrence of particular grammatical constructions and/or grammatical morphemes from the following domains: pronominal systems, the noun phrase, the verb phrase, modal verbs, verbal morphology, adverbs, negation, agreement, relativization, complementation, and the occurrence of particular discourse-pragmatic constructions including particular word orders. While the presentation and discussion of these features varies across chapters, it is remarkable that most authors were able to provide information on the bulk of these features making it possible to compare and generalize across the individual descriptions (see below).

One of the most striking aspects of this handbook is the inclusion of second language varieties and English-based pidgins and creoles. Most of the varieties in Britain and North America are regional or ethnic varieties, but in the Caribbean English-based pidgins and creoles are dominant and in Africa and Asia second language varieties of English are very frequent. The description of the two latter varieties involves particular difficulties. Creoles, and extended pidgins, vary along a continuum ranging from the acrolect, which occurs in formal situations and

is most similar to standard English, to the basilect, which occurs in informal contexts and is most distinct from standard English. For the purpose of this handbook, the chapters on creole languages have concentrated on the mesolect, i. e. “the middle ranges which in most creole-speaking societies are used most widely” (Kortmann & Schneider, Vol I: 3). The description of second language varieties faces similar difficulties. Like creoles, second language varieties vary along a continuum of different speech styles, but in this case the selection of a particular style is not determined by the social situation but by the linguistic ability of second language speakers: “At one end of the New English continuum are varieties characteristic of beginning L2 learners or learners who have fossilised at an early stage and evince no need or desire to progress further in their interlanguage variety. [...] At the other end are speakers who, by virtue of their education, motivation, life-styles and contacts with L1 and educated L2 speakers of English may well become so fluent as to be near-native [...] speakers of English.” (Mesthrie, Vol. I: 807). Like the chapters on English-based creoles, the chapters on second language varieties have concentrated on the middle range.

The two volumes are accompanied by a multimedia CD-ROM, which allows the handbook user to compare particular linguistic features across varieties. The CD-ROM consists of two basic components: audio samples and interactive maps. In addition, it provides a comprehensive bibliography supplementing the reference sections in the printed volumes. The audio samples consist of new sound materials for most of the varieties described in the handbook. Three different types of sound files are available: 1st isolated words from a predetermined word list (available for 38 varieties), 2nd a reading passage of a short text that was given to the authors (available for 36 varieties), and 3rd a recording of free conversation that in many cases, but not in all, is accompanied by a transcription (available for 39 varieties). The interactive maps display the world-wide distribution of 179 phonological features and 76 morphosyntactic features. The distribution of these features is marked by three coloured dots indicating the occurrence and frequency of a particular feature. A red dot indicates the widespread occurrence of the selected feature, a yellow dot indicates the occasional occurrence of the selected feature, and a grey dot indicates the absence of the feature. The maps are accompanied by a set of graphs providing a score for the occurrence of a particular feature across varieties and a language index indicating the number of non-standard linguistic features in a particular variety. In addition, there is an interactive sound map that allows the handbook user to directly compare the pronunciation of 34 words produced by 80 speakers of different varieties.

The handbook marks a milestone in the field of English linguistics. The coverage of the book is amazing and the degree of standardization is impressive. What one might criticize is the emphasis on linguistic regions, as reflected in the overall structure of the book, the discussions in the introductions and synopses, and the organization of the interactive maps. While geographical features are important, they may have been given too much prominence compared to other features; notably, the distinction between L1 varieties, L2 varieties, and pidgins and creoles may be even more important for the structural features discussed throughout the book than the division into regions (see Kortmann & Szymreksanyi's global synopsis). However, that does not diminish the overall value of this book. There can be no doubt, the handbook will become a standard reference tool for all scholars of the English language and materials from the two volumes and the CD-ROM will be used widely in seminars and lectures on English varieties, dialectology, and pidgin and creole studies.

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Literatur

Wells, John C. (1982). *Accents of English*. 3 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.