

Book Review

Markus Schiegg and Judith Huber (eds). 2023. *Intra-Writer Variation in Historical Sociolinguistics*. Peter Lang. ISBN: 9781800797031 (softcover), XXII, 552 pp. £ 55.00 (open access ePUB).

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The publication of the volume *Intra-Writer Variation in Historical Sociolinguistics*, edited by Schiegg and Huber, ushers the field of historical sociolinguistics into its third wave, innovatively demonstrating how the focus on constructionist and speaker-oriented approaches can offer new avenues for research. In doing so, it incorporates the ideas and principles of third-wave sociolinguistics into historical sociolinguistic research. Since the turn of the century, sociolinguists have shifted focus towards how linguistic variation is shaped by communities of practice, in a development characterised by the work of, for example, Eckert (2012). Where once the focus lay on the influences of macro-sociological categories, more recently sociolinguists have sought to foreground constructionist and speaker-oriented approaches (Hernández-Campoy and Cutillas-Espinosa 2012). Linguistic variation, following this view, is harnessed by the speaker to construct a specific identity, based on a social semiotic system in which certain variables are associated with elements of social identity. The study of intra-writer variation, as opposed to inter-writer variation, allows us to foreground the identity construction that language users engage in, and illustrates the social meaning and intended projection behind specific linguistic variables.

Historical sociolinguistics has taken longer to shift away from macrosocial perspectives towards the microsocial ones offered by intra-writer variation (though here, too, there have long been scholars whose work foregrounded linguistic variation at an individual level; see e.g., Auer (2015), Kopaczyk and Jucker (2013), or Tieken-Boon van Ostade (2005)). There are practical reasons for this; García-Vidal (2023) writes that it can be difficult to reconstruct communities of practice and social meaning associated with them in past societies. However, the studies collected in *Intra-Writer Variation in Historical Sociolinguistics* show that it is not only possible, but highly fruitful to apply the microscopic and constructionist lens popularised in third-wave sociolinguistics to historical language, too. Micro-analysis can serve as an essential counterpart and complement to the more traditional macro-analysis, adding nuance and deepening our perspective on historical language variation. To this end, Markus Schiegg and Judith Huber have brought together 22 studies on

historical sociolinguistics which foreground intra-writer variation and the study of microlinguistic practices. With this collection, they seek to illustrate the ways in which this approach can advance the field of historical sociolinguistics, and by sheer variety of topics alone it is already an impressive feat: the open-access volume includes contributions covering a broad range of languages (a welcome quality in a field often dominated by a focus on English) as well as a variety of time periods.

The contributions in this volume are organized into three sections, of which the first focuses on intra-writer variation in letter-writing. Letters, and egodocuments more broadly, have long been a common and rewarding medium for study in historical sociolinguistics; accordingly, this is the longest section of the three. The contributions span a large geographical as well as temporal range, yielding a varied spread of topics and methodologies. In the first contribution, which treats the oldest materials included in this volume, Martina Schmidl studies variation in two near-duplicate letters written on cuneiform tablets in a Babylonian temple in 528 BCE. Differences in the hierarchical relationship between the writer (the royal trustee of the temple) and the recipient of the respective letters shape the discursive practices in each letter. Schmidl shows how the royal trustee is able to negotiate his own identity, his standing in the temple, and his relationship with the two addressees through his use of persuasion tactics. Next, jumping two millennia ahead, Eleonora Serra delves into the correspondence of Michelangelo Buonarroti, specifically his use of discourse-ending formulae across his lifetime. Highlighting several specific formulae along the way, she shows that Michelangelo's use of formulae did not decline over his lifetime, suggesting that they held for him a discursive and social function, rather than serving as a tool to help an inexperienced writer formulate letters with greater ease. In Chapter 4, Juan M. Hernández-Campoy explores themes of hierarchy and Audience Design (Bell 1984, 2001) through his study of the orthographic variants <th> and <þ> in the letters of John Paston I (1421–1466). Paston's orthographic choices demonstrate an audience-design-based pattern of linguistic variation, using the prestige variant <th> when writing to his social superiors with near-uniformity, while using thorn in writings to social inferiors more frequently. Tamara García-Vidal, too, draws on theories of Audience Design as well as Communication Accommodation Theory to analyze the use of comparative adjectives in sixteenth- to eighteenth-century English letters. Her study of five different writers' choices between synthetic or analytic comparatives reflects addressee-based accommodative patterns in their writings, but also highlights the effect of length and origin of adjectives on these choices. In the vein of a recent movement in historical sociolinguistics towards a perspective "from below" (Elspaß 2007), the next contribution by Auer et al. delves into the pauper letters of two women writers in early nineteenth-century England. The authors find high levels of variation in their H-dropping, H-insertion, and the use of long s, where these women show free

variation at both an inter- and intra-writer level, which can likely be ascribed to limited education opportunities and lack of familiarity with print conventions. Following this and sticking with the subject of the English poor, Anne-Christine Gardner shifts focus from the paupers themselves to a nineteenth-century English vicar's petition to a bishop, looking for funds to establish a parochial school for the poor. This writer's petition contains an interesting array of self-corrections, which Gardner analyses through the framework of Coupland (2001)'s Speaker Design, and describes as "identity construction in action" (p. 176). The self-corrections allow her to peel back the curtain on how the vicar establishes and balances his identity at a parochial, diocesan, and national level. Christine Elswailer, in Chapter 8, remains in the domain of requestive strategies with her investigation of two prominent Early Modern Scottish writers. Elswailer, too, draws on frameworks of Audience Design and Speaker Design in her analysis; beginning with a quantitative and macroscopic analysis of the requesting strategies in a larger corpus, she then zooms in on how these writers navigated the existing epistolary conventions and found ways to construct and signal their individual identity in relation to their audiences. In Chapter 9, Lucia Assenzi explores a more formulaic environment still with her study of the letters of the seventeenth-century Prince Ludwig von Anhalt-Köthen. She shows how Ludwig, a man of high metalinguistic awareness who promoted the simplification of language in a move away from its heavily formalized conventions, showed variation in his use of the formulae that he himself criticized, in a way once again best explained through the theory of Speaker Design. In the final contribution of this part, Katharina Gunkler-Frank investigates clitics of German patient letters written in psychiatric hospitals in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Gunkler-Frank shows how these inexperienced writers construct their identities through clitic choices, which are used to highlight aspects of their identity such as linguistic competence and emotionality, while also serving to establish a closer relationship between writer and addressee.

The six chapters of Part II of this volume focus on themes of language contact and migration settings. Within this theme, authors explore questions of language selection as a means of identity construction in itself, as seen in Joshua Brown's study of a fourteenth-century Milanese merchant's letters to members of a Tuscan trade network. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, Brown shows how this merchant adopted Tuscan phonological and morphological forms over his native Milanese ones in order to strengthen his relationship with the Tuscan recipients. As Brown rightly asserts, the case study presented here neatly illustrates the trend towards the adoption of Florentine forms in the language of contemporaneous northern Italian authors. In Chapter 12, Sarah van Eyndhoven presents a methodologically varied and elegant account of how two Scottish politicians navigated the choice between Scottish and English variants in the eighteenth century.

Contrary to the previous cases in this volume where language choice has been used to minimise the distance between authors and recipients, Van Eyndhoven shows how these writers use Scots variants over English ones to emphasise social and political distance between themselves and their addressees. Remaining in the realm of Scotland, Nora Dörnbrack studies the lifetime changes in the writings of a Scottish woman emigrant. Dörnbrack finds various potential influences on this woman's verbal inflection over time, including the effects of prescriptivism, her speech community, and an enduring interest in literature. In Chapter 14, Andreas Krogull et al. study variation in use of Dutch and French in nineteenth-century Dutch family correspondence, analysing them both from a macroscopic and a microscopic perspective. The authors aptly demonstrate the importance of combining quantitative methods with qualitative ones; the latter, they find, can be limited in their representativeness of broader societal trends, but bring crucial nuance and interpretations on a personal level to the macroscopic findings of quantitative studies. Moving to the early twentieth century, Veronika Girininkatè shows how a Russian-Polish writer navigates different languages as well as different scripts in his personal diary, his choices reflecting his own biography and linguistic attitudes. As Girininkatè demonstrates, the writer's codeswitching is used with the purpose of quoting, emphasising, circumventing "taboo" words, and to achieve precision of meaning. Closing Part II, Doris Stolberg continues on the subject of codeswitching and script switching with her study of German-English variation in a diary written in Canada in the late nineteenth century. Stolberg finds that the writer's selection of script largely corresponds to his language choice, but also finds instances of misalignment. Script variation, she demonstrates, can be used to emphasise codeswitches and indicate new information or (un)familiar referents.

Part III presents studies on intra-writer variation in different text types (i.e., texts other than the letters and diaries that form the traditional object of study in this field). Many of these studies highlight novel and perhaps unintuitive text types for historical sociolinguistic purposes, but convincingly illustrate the value these texts can have for researchers. This is the case, for instance, in Theodore Markopoulos' study of audience effects on intra-writer variation in legal texts in Chapter 17, focusing on a notary's writings in sixteenth-century Greece. To circumvent problems of authorship – whether the language is the notary's or that of a person dictating is hard to say – Markopoulos focuses on formulaic elements in the openers and closers of these works, using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods that demonstrate an influence of audience design on the level of vernacularity and archaism in these phrases. In Chapter 18, Laura Linzmeier turns to the topic of eighteenth-century French navigation journals and logbooks, another text type that has remained largely unexplored until now due to its professional and formal nature. Nonetheless, Linzmeier finds high degrees of stylistic variation in

these texts, brought about by both practical reasons and varying communicative goals. Next, Oxel Uribe-Etxebarria investigates spelling variation in early nineteenth-century Basque religious texts, at a time when Basque orthography was not yet standardized and undergoing large-scale changes and innovations. Uribe-Etxebarria finds that the writer of these texts becomes increasingly consistent in his orthography, favoring a more standardized Basque orthography in order to make his writing more accessible to his readers. The next two chapters focus on spelling variation in the textual transmission of medieval scribes, which poses a problem to historical sociolinguists due to the uncertainty regarding which of the linguistic features found in their texts are the scribes' own and which ones they copied from the original text. In Chapter 20, Christine Wallis investigates the manuscripts of an eleventh-century English monk, Hemming of Worcester, who shows signs of both faithful transcription and influence of his own style on his writing. By comparing his writings to those of other scribes' work on the same document, Wallis identifies which features and idiosyncrasies occur across these documents (therefore likely transcribed literally) and which appear to be this monk's own. Yoko Iyeiri in the next contribution deals with a similar question in her study of the spelling of WOMAN throughout one Middle English manuscript. Iyeiri shows that while the scribe initially transcribed the original spelling of the word faithfully, his own preferred usage shines through more and more, in a case of "progressive translation" caused by the scribe's awareness of his own linguistic patterning and the effect of language shifting "from above". In Chapter 22, Phil Beier et al. analyse the construction of instructions in psalm texts from the late fourteenth century in Old High German and Old Swedish. The authors investigate the effect of social role relations (SRRs) on the choice for imperatives, subjunctives, and modal verbs. This SRR framework constitutes a useful and quantifiable situational-functional variable; both hierarchy and the presence of Latin influence whether subjunctives and modals occur in the texts. Finally, concluding the volume, Oliver Currie takes historical sociolinguistic methods and applies them to a literary text in order to study translation choices in two sixteenth-century Welsh Bible translations, from Biblical Hebrew and Greek prose respectively. Currie analyses the occurrence of absolute initial verb order in these translations and theorizes that its use could have served to heighten the poeticism of these translations. Currie convincingly and innovatively shows how third-wave sociolinguistics can be an excellent match for literary studies, and pushes the boundaries of the field to broaden the scope of research possibilities about intra-writer variation.

The studies presented in this volume represent, on the whole, exciting steps for the field of historical sociolinguistics, and show how the incorporation of constructionist and speaker-oriented approaches into this field can offer new avenues for research and great potential for broadening the field's scope. While occasionally the

strong focus on microscopic approaches can run the risk of neglecting to situate a study in its broader historical linguistic context, the added value of an intra-writer variation perspective is convincingly illustrated throughout this volume. The majority of these studies expertly showcase the new insights that can be derived from combining macroscopic with microscopic methods in order to ground studies in their historical linguistic context while adding nuance and a careful consideration of how individual circumstances and personal contexts also influence the linguistic choices of their subjects. Moreover, the selection of previously un- or underexplored data presented in this volume – from patient letters to legal texts and logbooks – fits in with the latest developments in historical sociolinguistics towards a broader scope and more focus on underrepresented voices, which helps the volume feel both topical and timely. Overall, this volume brings together an exciting and often highly innovative selection of studies, approaches and ideas within the field of historical sociolinguistics, and can be recommended wholeheartedly to researchers and students alike.

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