

BOOK REVIEWS

analysis model. Maybe using fewer texts as examples with more explanation of the analysis performed could make them more accessible to the unfamiliar reader.

Genre relations is a unique introduction to the investigation of language in culture, providing theoretical and analytic tools to contribute to the understanding of language as social practice. One of the best aspects of the book is the way it integrates description and theory and links them to social practice and intervention. The authors are able to demonstrate that there need not be distinctions between contributions to theory and practice because their work has importance for both.

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RAJEND MESTHRIE & RAKESH M. BHATT, *World Englishes: The study of new linguistic varieties*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. xvii, 276. Pb. \$33.

Reviewed by DEVYANI SHARMA
Linguistics, Queen Mary University of London
London E14NS, UK
d.sharma@qmul.ac.uk

Mesthrie and Bhatt's *World Englishes* follows several publications with similar titles in recent years. The authors' distinctive goal is to achieve "a synthesis of the

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increasing body of research in the area; to identify gaps in the field; and—most importantly—to emphasise perspectives from other branches of Linguistics” (2). They include within their scope “the history of the spread of English, the ideology that promulgated that spread, the structure of the manifold Englishes of the world, the contexts in which these varieties emerged, their status, and the educational and social issues that surround them” (2). Their main focus, however, is on “the linguistic forms characteristic of new varieties of English and on ways of describing and understanding them” (3). There has so far been no introductory text that situates World Englishes (WEs) within mainstream theoretical linguistics; this book is a timely and important contribution, identifying and advancing new theoretical perspectives on structures in WEs.

The book begins with a historical overview in Ch. 1. The authors first disentangle various overlapping terms used in the field, including “indigenized,” “nativized,” “new English,” and “world English,” and suggest a less ambiguous phrase—the English Language Complex—as a superordinate term. In the historical portion of the chapter, Mesthrie and Bhatt demystify WEs by identifying processes such as bilingual contact, creolization, and koineization even within the earliest phases of English. The chapter then offers a concise, informative review of the subsequent spread of English and factors influencing its development in different regions. In keeping with the book’s overall approach, Mesthrie and Bhatt’s review is not limited to separate regional histories, but rather strives to generalize across the development of Englishes. The chapter ends with a summary of several models of WEs together with a measured evaluation of each.

Chs. 2 and 3 turn to the core interest of the book: syntactic structure. The two chapters divide this subject broadly between morphology and phrasal syntax (Ch. 2) and inter-clausal phenomena (Ch. 3), which breaks the topic down coherently, despite an inevitably fuzzy boundary (e.g. adjectives of comparison are discussed under cross-clausal syntax, conjunctions under phrasal syntax, and copular *be* under both). These chapters offer a refreshing change from regionally organized descriptions of WEs, structuring the discussion instead around syntactic traits and processes. This raises exciting new questions for further study, such as which semantic properties underlie systematic shifts in the use of phrasal verbs (71–72). Mesthrie and Bhatt are careful to warn that certain generalizations have yet to be confirmed statistically. This is an essential step in the description of WEs: Although they are now recognised as dialects, standard methodologies of intuition and judgments are not always applicable to less-focused second-language varieties, where features may not yet be stable. It is therefore appropriate that among their two detailed illustrations of theoretically based analysis Mesthrie and Bhatt include an example of a quantitative study (Ho and Platt’s 1993 multivariate analysis of Singaporean English copula omission, pp. 92–96), complementing a more standard qualitative syntax study (Bhatt’s 2000 Optimality Theoretic (OT) analysis of Indian English inversion and pro-drop, pp. 96–107). Simultaneous publication dates unfortunately mean that Hilbert’s (2008) excellent alternative analysis of inversion in WEs is not cited.

The arrangement according to linguistic traits is innovative, but inevitably obscures other interesting patterns. The highly systematic TMA (tense-mood-aspect) system of colloquial Singaporean English, for instance, lends itself to a unified description as a typologically distinct subsystem deriving from strong substrate reinforcement, rather than a series of unrelated constructions grouped with other varieties. In a few cases, generalizations are perhaps too broad, for instance, “a deletion-undeletion continuum can characterise different WEs” (92). Certainly features may conspire to create a broadly ‘deleting’ variety, but in typological terms this is largely epiphenomenal: Any deletion-undeletion continua are more likely to derive from individual syntactic processes (e.g. redundancy reduction), features, or subsystems (e.g. TMA marking or syllable structure, potentially sensitive to substrate typology), not whole varieties. These are minor differences in emphasis and presentation, however, and Mesthrie and Bhatt do make a consistent effort not to overemphasize the generality of traits, frequently noting subtle substrate and lexifier effects.

Lexis and phonology are covered in Ch. 4. As in Ch. 1, the discussion of lexis emphasizes continuity with processes already common in native varieties: borrowing, coinages, register shifts, clipping, widening, and narrowing. Interesting examples illustrate a wealth of semantic and lexical innovation in WEs. Mesthrie and Bhatt note that fewer studies exist for WEs phonology, and the phonology section relies mainly on Schneider et al.’s (2004) description of vowel and consonant systems. As before, the discussion emphasizes shared features rather than regions, listing, for instance, all varieties that adopt the variant [e] for the diphthong [eɪ] together. There is much less coverage of sources of features here, however, leading to the ambiguous conclusion that “L2 varieties of English in Africa and Asia share a large number of phonological similarities” (129). This statement excludes extensive phonetic differences and also leaves unaddressed possible explanations for similarities, whether accidental substrate congruence (e.g. lack of stress-timing, lack of diphthongs), emergence of unmarked systems, or founder effects. In an OT analysis of Indian Englishes with different L1s, Wiltshire (2006) distinguishes substrate effects from genuine emergence of the unmarked (e.g. use of voiceless obstruents where the substrate disallows word-final obstruents). Founder effects have also been noted in WEs, for example, the retention of an archaic British lexical set for [ɔ:] in Indian English (Coelho 1997). The minimal coverage of sources for forms is surprising, given their direct relevance to phonological and markedness theory. Interesting prosodic features are discussed concisely in the chapter, and tone receives a tantalizingly brief mention, possibly because detailed work on tone in WEs is only now emerging (e.g. Lim 2009).

Ch. 5 offers a diverse and engaging treatment of pragmatics and discourse in WEs, covering pragmatically sensitive syntactic forms, discourse particles, speech acts, discourse structure (in speech and writing), style-shifting, and code-switching. Each section is replete with well-chosen examples and careful analysis. In a nice instance of the book’s theoretical orientation, Mesthrie and Bhatt apply Algeo’s (1988)

typology of English tag questions to WEs usage (133). The code-switching section relies on somewhat conservative examples of cultural terminology switches rather than “smooth” or unmarked conversational switching (Poplack & Sankoff 1988). Mesthrie and Bhatt note elsewhere (6) that informal mixed-code styles such as Hinglish are now common among urban youth; these should not be overlooked as rich sites of innovation and important conduits of structural change in WEs.

Ch. 6, like Chs. 2 and 3, is a meaty chapter, applying theoretical models of contact and acquisition to WEs. Once again, the theoretical orientation of the book comes to the fore, shifting from the practice of describing WEs (e.g. Kachru’s circles model, developed specifically for English) to that of engaging with mainstream principles of language contact and acquisition. Mesthrie and Bhatt assess the importance of these areas for the study of WEs, paying particular attention to important themes in second language acquisition (SLA) research such as processing, transfer, universals, development, and economy/expressivity. This is a welcome inclusion, particularly because, as Mesthrie and Bhatt note, WEs constitute a robust critique of the empirical skewing in SLA studies towards classroom foreign language acquisition. Naturally space considerations prevent a full coverage of the vast area of SLA in the chapter. For instance, the recent interest in input sensitivity in L1 and L2 acquisition, particularly at the syntax-pragmatics interface (Sorace 2003), could also further our understanding of divergence in WEs. It imposes a third dimension on the polarized transfer-universal debate, suggesting that the influence of both forces may depend on how much contextualized exposure a feature requires for acquisition (e.g. modals are more pragmatically sensitive than agreement in English, and so may need more exposure for acquisition and thus have more potential for stable divergence). Mesthrie and Bhatt do draw attention to the question of input informally at many relevant points, and this promises to be an exciting new avenue of research. Comparisons between creoles and WEs are expertly outlined in the chapter, alongside attempts, once more, at broader generalizations, such as “a Creole involves increasingly imperfect replication over time; whereas the indigenised variety involves decreasingly imperfect replication over time” (177). The subclaims here are interesting though potentially controversial: certainly early evidence exists for a basilect (Butler English), mesolect (Babu English), and acrolect (elite) in Indian English dating back through the nineteenth century, suggesting that the three may have developed in parallel under independent social conditions. Ch. 6 ends with a particularly good discussion of historical retentions in WEs.

In the concluding chapter, Mesthrie and Bhatt offer a creative mix of case studies to highlight important issues in the use of English globally. The main themes covered include competing ideologies surrounding English in post-colonial education contexts, English use in Kachru’s ‘expanding circle’ (global English—illustrated with the case of airline communication—and English in Europe), contact among different Englishes in metropolitan contexts, and concerns about the spread of English.

Overall, this is an expert overview of WEs, offering a skilled and timely reorientation towards linguistic theory while maintaining a crisp, accessible style throughout.

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Well-chosen study questions designed to support the theoretical focus of the book accompany each chapter, and the detailed glossary is an excellent resource. The authors' complementary areas of expertise allow the book to range from subtle structural analysis to fine explorations of sociohistorical processes. To a much greater extent than previous introductory texts, this book contextualizes WE structures within two theoretical domains in particular—formal linguistic theory and language contact theory. The field of WEs is in fact ripe for mutual engagement with further areas of linguistic theory, in particular language typology and variationist sociolinguistic theory (mainly cited as a methodology in the present volume).

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Reviewed by VALENTINA PAGLIAI
Anthropology, CUNY Queens College
Flushing, NY 11367
valentina.pagliai@qc.cuny.edu

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