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Braj B. Kachru, Yamuna Kachru & Cecil L. Nelson (eds.), *The handbook of World Englishes* (Blackwell Handbooks in Linguistics). Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. Pp. xix + 811.

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Any editor assembling a book, however large, on World Englishes has to accept compromises. To do justice to the practical, theoretical, literary and pedagogic aspects of the varieties of English in even one country might well require 800 pages. To do justice to the multiplicity of Englishes throughout the world would require the entire Blackwell series in which *The handbook of World Englishes* is one volume. Even then, the task would always remain unfinished, partial, because changes – even extremely significant changes – can occur both unexpectedly and with incredible speed. Let me illustrate this point by referring briefly to Northern Ireland. Until the year 2004, a comprehensive description of Northern Ireland English would have shown a conservative, religiously divided society employing a continuum of interinfluencing varieties, including Hiberno-English, Anglo-Irish and Ulster Scots. Three years on, and even a small town in rural Tyrone is also home to people speaking eighteen different languages, not counting mother-tongue or acquired English. Who would have predicted such a seismic shift in such a short time, and how does a brief linguistic study even begin to describe the range and domains in which such new varieties emerge and evolve?

Many people thinking of buying the book under review will probably wonder how it compares with Kortmann & Schneider's *A handbook of varieties of English* (2004). A quick answer is that the two publications are, in many ways, both very different and yet complementary. The Kachru et al. volume, in spite of its title, is not an encyclopedia of World Englishes. Nor is it a volume of structural descriptions of individual Englishes. It is a collection of forty-two thematically-arranged chapters on theoretical aspects of the spread of the English language throughout the world. Many of the chapters are models of clarity but some of them are not for the uninitiated. They rely on a familiarity with currently available descriptions of individual varieties. For people who already own Kortmann & Schneider (2004) and have approximately £100 to spare, the Kachru volume is an ideal follow-up. Most undergraduates, however, will probably prefer the encyclopedic nature of *A handbook of varieties of English* with its comprehensive coverage and its invaluable CD-ROM.

The handbook of World Englishes has an interesting and unusual design. Its chapters are presented in nine 'parts', which vary considerably in size: from two chapters, approximately 32 pages, to fifteen chapters, taking up over 250

pages. Just over half of the parts contain three chapters, with each chapter being around eighteen pages long; part 1, 'The historical context', with its fifteen chapters, is the largest subsection in the book. Each chapter is followed by its own references and further reading, and these additions account for almost 130 pages or approximately 16% of the book. Of course, bibliographical references are useful but if they had been collected together in a comprehensive bibliography, repetitions could have been avoided. For example, most readers will agree that many of Braj Kachru's papers are seminal, but one reference to each work would have sufficed.

Judging by size and position, part 1, 'The historical context' is at least *primus inter pares*. It is subdivided into five sections, 'The beginnings', 'First diaspora', 'Second diaspora', 'Third diaspora' and 'Fourth diaspora'. As we might expect, 'The beginnings' is a straightforward description of how the English language arose and developed into the world's lingua franca. We are given a well-rehearsed account of the contributions made by the Germanic tribes, especially the Angles and the Saxons, by Latin, the Viking dialects and Norman French. As is usually the case, the contribution to the development of the English language by the Celts, who lived in England, is ignored.

The metaphor of 'diaspora' is both valid and helpful. The section entitled 'First diaspora', containing two chapters, deals with English in Wales and Ireland, and English in Scotland. If we discount the bibliographies, we have ten pages for Wales and Ireland and twelve and a half for Scotland. This seems extraordinarily little, especially when we consider the contribution made to the spread of English by emigrants from these countries; but those of us who live in the Celtic fringes fare better than England, which, apart from the ten pages of historical background in 'The beginnings', gets much less coverage than one might expect. Reference to the subject index, for example, reveals that 'England' has fewer than 25 pages devoted to it, whereas 'France' has 7, 'Tanzania' 8 and the 'Philippines' 22. 'Post-empire English' (27–28) is covered in fewer than 400 words, although Edgar W. Schneider's 2007 book, *Postcolonial English*, requires 365 pages to explore a similar area.

When in chapter 2, 'First steps: Wales and Ireland', Robert D. King writes that '[w]hen two languages argue over the same ground, as English and Welsh did in Wales and English and Irish (now the preferred name for the language and not "Gaelic") did in Ireland' (31), one wants to ask two questions: (i) Why anthropomorphise languages? (ii) Preferred by whom? (The identical claim about 'Irish' being preferred to 'Gaelic' is also made on page 21.) It is not clear why Wales and Ireland are regarded as 'the first two conquests' (31) of the English language when we know that there was a variety of Old English in Scotland from the middle of the sixth century, approximately 700 years before the 'earliest recorded use of English in Ireland' (36).

The two chapters in the 'Second diaspora' section concentrate on English in North America and English in Australia and New Zealand. While

acknowledging that it is never easy to be strictly chronological in dealing with the spread of English, it seems odd to unite North America, where early links go back to the beginning of the seventeenth century, with Antipodean varieties that are almost two centuries later. In chapter 4, Edgar W. Schneider's 'English in North America', we read that 'American English began as the first of Britain's colonial (and later postcolonial) offspring' (58). This statement is at variance with claims made in the chapters of the previous section, unless, for some reason, Ireland, for example, is not considered a colony. Certainly, it would appear that one of the contributors, at least, sees Ireland as having much in common with other colonies. In writing on 'Literary creativity in World Englishes' (chapter 23), Edwin Thumboo suggests:

> Moreover, historical parallels arise in the writer's reshaping of English and her material, subject, and themes. There is the case of Anglo-Irish literature, one of whose dominant figures, W. B. Yeats, I see as a Third World poet of a special kind. (415)

The first paragraph of chapter 5, Scott F. Kiesling's 'English in Australia and New Zealand', acknowledges that many people from Australia and New Zealand will not approve of their being treated together in one short chapter. This is perhaps the price the editors have paid for trying to get a gallon into a pint pot.

The 'Third diaspora' section has nine chapters, three on Asia, one on South America, three on Africa, one on the Caribbean and a ninth chapter by Marko Modiano on 'Euro-Englishes'. Much has been written about English in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean but information on Euro-Englishes is less widely disseminated. Most readers will agree with Modiano that the enlarged European Community is becoming so linguistically complex that some form of language rationalisation is inevitable. Will Europeans agree to a three-language solution where English, French and German serve as the main languages? Or will English, possibly in a modified form, become accepted as Europe's lingua franca? These are fascinating questions but the answers are not yet available.

Chapter 6, Ravinder Gargesh's 'South Asian Englishes', reminds the reader that English has been used in parts of India for almost the same length of time that it has been used in America and that India has probably as many speakers of English as England and the U.S.A. put together. What is surprising about this chapter is that it leaves virtually untouched the phenomenon of the outsourcing of call centres. Over the past ten years, hundreds of large firms, including airlines, banks and telecommunication companies, have chosen to transfer work to India because of its high standard of computer-literate graduates and its huge supply of English-using employees.

Chapter 7, 'East Asian Englishes' by Noboyuki Honna, explores the spread of English in China, Japan, Korea and Taiwan. The writer believes that English usage is likely to increase as trade and cultural relations among

the Southeast Asian countries grow. In the short term, this claim is likely to be true, but who would deny the possibility that the language of China, with its large population and growing economic might, could supplant English in these roles within the next half century? Chapter 8 by Maria Lourdes S. Bautista and Andrew B. Gonzalez deals with 'Southeast Asian Englishes'. Because of geographical proximity, a country like Singapore, where English is an official language and is acquired by a growing number as a mother tongue, is juxtaposed with Vietnam, where English is certainly growing in popularity but where it remains a foreign language, still in competition with French and Russian.

'South American Englishes' are dealt with in one chapter (chapter 9) and, although the author, Kanavillil Rajagopalan, tries to be comprehensive, he has to deal with such disparate countries as Guyana, where English is the official language, Brazil, where Portuguese is spoken by approximately 170 million speakers, and Argentina, which has sizeable pockets of native English speakers but also recent memories of a war fought over the Falklands/Malvinas.

Africa does rather better in terms of coverage than South America in that it is accorded three chapters: one on 'South African Englishes' (by Nkonko M. Kamwangamalu), one on 'West African Englishes' (by Tope Omoniyi) and a third on 'East African Englishes' (by Josef Schmied). A desire for symmetry – as well as an interest in Britain's links with the region – might have suggested a further chapter on North African Englishes, but, although a good case could be made for including one, countries like Egypt and Libya do not even appear in the subject index.

The 'Fourth diaspora' section is given over to a comprehensive study of 'World Englishes today' by Kingsley Bolton. Since part 1 deals with the historical context, many readers could – and probably will – wonder why the diasporas are not in chronological order. The 'Second diaspora' section, for example, contains a chapter on 'English in Australia and New Zealand' (both of which arose late in the eighteenth century) rather than on the earlier contact varieties that existed in the Caribbean two centuries earlier. The sections on the third and fourth diasporas have 'Englishes' rather than 'English' in the title of each of the chapters and, in this way, the range and diversity of coverage are clearly indicated. Of course, one might ask if there is any country, including Australia, New Zealand and the British Isles, where 'Englishes' would not be the more appropriate designation.

Part 2, labelled 'Variational contexts', devotes a full chapter as well as sections of the others to pidgins and creoles. Since Michael Aceto's 'Caribbean Englishes' (chapter 13), although in part 1, is also essentially a study of creoles, it is striking – and indeed appropriate – that these once-marginalised languages have been given such large coverage.

Part 3, 'Acculturation', has three chapters: two dealing, in part, with written, as well as spoken, varieties, and a third, which aims to clarify such

terms as 'genre' and 'style' as they have been used in discussions on World Englishes. Each of these essays provides food for thought even if it is not easy to decide why they are classified together or separated from the three in part 4, 'Crossing borders'. Part 4 includes Edwin Thumboo's essay on 'Literary creativity in World Englishes', a subject that could, and perhaps should, have been expanded when we consider the value of emerging literatures in contributing to world culture as well as World Englishes.

Part 5, 'Grammar wars and standards', could conceivably have been included in part 1, 'The historical context', especially since its first chapter deals with grammar wars in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Linda C. Mitchell's, 'Grammar wars: 17th and 18th century England' is, however, a fascinating account and one that has more relevance to current discussions of literacy problems than might, at first, be expected.

Part 6, 'Ideology, identity, and constructs', is concerned with the challenges and possibilities offered by a world lingua franca. It explores a number of the cultural, ideological and gender dimensions of World Englishes and suggests further avenues for research.

Part 7, 'World Englishes and globalization', is devoted to an analytic survey of English in the discourse of the media, in advertising and in global commerce. All three chapters in this part offer rewarding insights in spite of dealing with such heterogeneous material in an ever-increasing range of contexts worldwide.

Part 8, 'World Englishes and applied theory', will be of value to anyone interested in language policies and planning, teaching models, curriculum design and the construction of tests. What is particularly useful is that attention is paid to the teaching of English in a wide range of contexts and to the informed discussion of communicative competence. One problem with this part is a recurrent problem throughout the book: the writers simply do not have the space to explore their topics as fully as their knowledge and insights warrant.

Part 9, 'Resources on World Englishes', has two chapters, on 'World Englishes and corpora studies' (by Gerald Nelson) and 'Comparing World Englishes: A research guide' (by Helen Fallon). It would have been useful if Nelson's chapter had been expanded so that the writer could have devoted more space to the problems and the potential benefits of harmonising methodologies for comparing different corpora. Fallon's chapter also leaves the reader wanting more. What we are given is less than two pages of introductory prose, followed by some six pages of select bibliographical references, a little more than two pages on journals and just over half a page on electronic resources.

The handbook of World Englishes is a very big, heavy book but it is beautifully produced and printed. The dust jacket is especially attractive and the selected painting is ideally suited to the notion of ever-widening circles of English usage. There are, as one would expect, some typos, such as

**Taosieach* for *Taoiseach* (39) and a rather more serious one on page 90, where we are advised:

> Estimates of the number of speakers of English in India alone vary from 333 million (estimate basis **3–5** percent, as per B. Kachru, 1986: 54; see B. Kachru, 2005: 15) to 200 million (estimate basis 20%, as per Encyclopedia Britannica, 2002: 796…) in a population of over a billion people.

Clearly, the '3–5 percent' should be approximately 33–35%.

The handbook of World Englishes is, however, quite expensive and certainly beyond the means of most students. I have reservations about the title, which is not, in my opinion, an apt description of the contents. Admittedly, it is not easy to think of a suitable term for a resource volume on World Englishes that has not already been used, but the definite article in the title suggests a comprehensiveness that the volume does not even aim to supply, and 'handbook' suggests reader-friendly guidance and, perhaps, size. In a way, it may seem churlish to criticize the volume's lack of comprehensiveness when so many of the chapters are impressively scholarly. However, on the very first page, the volume promises that its forty-two contributions 'represent and articulate visions from the major varieties of World Englishes' (1), but a brief examination of the subject index prompts this reader to ask why so many parts of Africa are left out of the discussion. One looks in vain for Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Egypt, Lesotho, Libya, Mozambique or Namibia, and yet English has and had a significant profile in each of these countries. One also looks in vain for references to English usage in Israel, Lebanon, Syria or Cyprus, and yet these are countries where many of the theoretical and ideological perspectives that are expounded in the volume could be tested and explored.

The editors of *The handbook of World Englishes* had a difficult task. They seem to have set their sights on producing a volume that would be different from Kortmann & Schneider's *A handbook of varieties of English* and yet would appeal to essentially the same readership. They have used many of the same scholars, including Michael Aceto, Rajend Mesthrie, Salikoko Mufwene, Edgar Schneider, Josef Schmied and Walt Wolfram, and, at about one quarter of the price, they have produced a book that is, certainly, a milestone in the study of World Englishes. Overall, though, it seems to me to be less revelatory and revolutionary than Kortmann & Schneider's achievement.

REFERENCES

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