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SUMMARY

‘Southern English varieties then and now,’ edited by Laura Wright, is a collection of essays focusing on the dialects spoken in the South of England, hitherto relatively neglected in the academic field of English sociolinguistics (both historical and contemporary). The book includes nine chapters, each one dedicated to a specific case-study, preceded by the editor’s short introduction.

In her concise prologue, Wright emphasizes the fact that, although the South of England is the most densely populated part of the country, its linguistic varieties are surprisingly underrepresented in terms of sociolinguistic and/or dialectal studies. Indeed, the southern regions of the UK have generally been dismissed as linguistically homogeneous and uninteresting to the study of language variation. This book aims to counter this unfortunate situation. Wright provides a sketch of the main threads of the book: 1) the process of social transformation in the history of England, 2) the relation of complementarity between traditional sociolinguistic methods of finding informants and the recent investigations of large repositories of data, and 3) the increasing unification of dialectal and sociolinguistic approaches on the one hand and the study of historical and contemporary data on the other. In closing, Wright argues that all the studies included in the book contribute some innovation to the discipline, concerning either theory, methodology, or data source.

Chapter 1, written by Paul Kerswill, is entitled ‘Dialect formation and dialect change in the Industrial Revolution: British vernacular English in the nineteenth century.’ In this contribution, the author does not carry out a linguistic analysis but rather proposes a methodological framework for the investigation of dialect formation in epochs and locations characterized by ongoing demographic and social changes. Kerswill’s approach is based on the notion “that the social forces driving language change in large measure derive from face-

to-face contacts between people using different linguistic features, and that the nature and frequency of those contacts are determinants of the direction and speed of change.” (p. 9). While this perspective is not new, the author applies it to ‘a dialect landscape’ consisting of “a series of geographically distributed but interlinked communities across which a continuum of language varieties is spoken” (p, 12). He argues that, in order to discover the mechanisms of dialect formation and change, it is necessary to know where the migrants came from, the proportions of people from different places and to have some knowledge about the local dialects. Moreover, the author encourages fellow researchers to take long time spans and substantial geographical breadth into consideration in the search for insights on the social and demographic conditions of language change.

In Chapter 2, entitled ‘The dialect of the Isles of Scilly: Exploring the relationship between in language production and language perception in a Southern insular variety,’ Emma Moore and Chris Montgomery outline an empirical linguistic study aimed at verifying the truthfulness of the informal historical descriptions of Scillonian English as remarkably close to Standard English. After providing some information of the Isles and the history of the dialect, the authors proceed to describe the features of this variety as it is spoken today, with the aid of the Isles of Scilly Museum’s Oral History Archive, which contains recordings of 75 people born between 1901 and 1993. The phonological and grammatical features suggest that the resemblance of Scillonian English to Standard English is exaggerated. Then, Moore and Montgomery illustrate two case-studies comparing vowel sounds and diphthongs in Scillonian vs. Standard English, taken into consideration sociolinguistic features such as gender, age, and education of the speaker. These studies show that the Scillonian variety of English is not as standard as expected and, in some aspects, resembles mainland Cornish English (e.g., the patterning of the ‘trap/bath vowels’). Next, the authors present a language perception experiment, where the participants were asked to listen to two samples of speakers from the Isles of Scilly and two distractor samples. They listened to the same speaker in two guises: speaking about farming practices and speaking about Scillonian traditions. The results show that the same speaker was considered to sound less Scillonian in the former condition. Indeed, the ideology of Scillonian purity depicts islanders as educated and refined, and the manual labor of farming does not conform to this picture. The authors then conclude that social meanings associated with language varieties are determined by language ideologies and contextual factors.

Chapter 3, contributed by David Hornsby, is entitled ‘A new dialect for a new village: Evidence for koinéization in East Kent.’ The focus of the study is the contact variety of the former mining village of Aylesham, which appears to significantly differ from both traditional Kentish and modern south-eastern varieties. The village was established in 1926 to house miners working in the Kent coalfields, in particular, the nearby Snowdown Colliery. Designed for miners originally from other parts of the UK, Aylesham was set apart from neighboring villages. The population of the village was initially made up of migrants and it was linguistically diverse (Goffee 1978). In the beginning, the population was also unstable (due to the high turnover) and relatively fragmented, and it was only in the 1950’s that a proletarian community began to emerge, due to intermarriage and the birth of second- and

third-generation children. On the basis of the judgment sample of 12 informants of different generations, Hornsby provides a description of the phonology of the Aylesham dialect, also discussing some grammatical lexical forms. The author observes that locals use several vocalic forms which significantly diverge from supralocal south-eastern varieties (e.g., the trap/bath vowel split is absent in Aylesham, and words like ‘strut’ are pronounced with a schwa). His findings are compatible with Trudgill’s (2004) claim that the majority variants from the input dialect mix, or ‘compromise’ variants where more than two forms are strongly represented in the mix, which are most likely to prevail in the new variety. With particular regard to second-generation speakers, we are told that intraspeaker variation is between a single local and an RP-like south-eastern variant, while supralocal innovations seem to have failed to take on, probably due to the strength of local networks and the village’s isolation.

In Chapter 4, ‘The clergyman and the dialect speaker: Some Sussex examples of a nineteenth-century research tradition,’ Jonathan Rope describes the data collection practice employed by clergymen in the nineteenth century to collect data about English dialects. Adopting Sussex as a case study, Rope tells us that members of the Diocese of Chichester approached native speakers with the same background as those used by sociolinguists in the following century, namely non-educated rural people but, contrary to what is widely believed, their informants were not limited to older, male individuals. On the contrary, they were rather diverse in terms of gender and age (see Parish 1880), unlike the informants in twentieth-century dialect studies. Indeed, Rope points out that professional linguists often have limited time and encounter few people, who often share a homogeneous background. Long-term residents like clergymen, instead, had the chance to collect their data in the course of their normal duties; moreover, they would know and meet “a wider spectrum of local people, whereas there is an inescapable suspicion that outside researchers are often referred to the same few people, the same locally acknowledged experts or ‘represented villagers’” (p. 127).

Chapter 5, contributed by Peter Trudgill, is entitled ‘I’ll git the milk time you bile the kittle do you oon’t get no tea yit no coffee more oon’t I: Phonetic erosion and grammaticalization in East Anglian conjunction-formation.’ In this study, the author argues that, although phonetic erosion is normally considered an outcome of grammaticalization, the causal relationship between the two phenomena may not always be unidirectional. Indeed, on the basis of an analysis of the historical development of conjunctions out of nouns, verbs, and adverbs in the traditional dialects of East Anglia, Trudgill suggests that phonetic erosion may be a triggering factor of grammaticalization, rather than a consequence. After showing that the East Anglian dialect is extremely stress-timed (a condition which tends to favor phonetic erosion), he proceeds to illustrate a few cases of conjunction-formation which show the process of erosion, either completed (‘time,’ ‘do’) or in progress (‘yet,’ ‘more,’ ‘case’). For instance, in the case of ‘do,’ the author shows a three-step evolution: in the first stage, ‘do’ is used elliptically for ‘if you do’ (e.g., “don’t you walk upstairs yet, do you’ll whitewash the whole stair carpet,” p. 142). At stage 2, the tense agreement is broken and ‘do/don’t’ begin to occur in non-present contexts (e.g., ‘he pinned ahold of her other leg, don’t she’d have been in,’ p. 143). Finally, the positive/negative distinction is lost, with the ‘do/don’t’ distinction

neutralized in favor of ‘do’ (e.g., “keep you them elephants still, do we shan’t half be in a mess,” p. 144). Although the hypothesis that what happened was actually ellipsis rather than phonetic erosion cannot be ruled out, Trudgill claims that the balance of the evidence is in favor of erosion.

In Chapter 6, entitled ‘Emphatic “yes” and “no” in Eastern English: jearse and dow,’ Stephen Howe addresses the use of ‘jearse’ and ‘dow’ as emphatic forms of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in a large portion of Eastern England, “from the Colne to the Humber, including Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire and part of Essex.’ (p. 148) After providing a brief summary and a historical excursus of the uses and forms of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in English, the author introduces his online survey on the use of ‘jearse’ and ‘dow,’ which was administered both in the UK and the US. The answers provided by the informants show that the use of ‘jearse’ and ‘dow’ is mostly emphatic and that, in the varieties which have both, they mirror each other grammatically and semantically. Moreover, Howe notes that both words begin with [d]: [dʒɪ:əs] and [dɛ:ʊ]/[da:ʊ]. The vast majority of the informants (69%) ticked that these forms are used by the “older generation”, suggesting that ‘jearse’ and ‘dow’ are now obsolescent but were once common. However, they are still to some extent used by people who grew up hearing the traditional dialect. Then, the author turns to the origins of these emphatic forms, proposing that they developed from augmentation of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ by interjectional ‘dear.’ He supports his position with arguments from phonetics (Minkova 2014), syntax, and semantics, showing that his hypothesis is preferable to a range of alternatives.

Chapter 7, contributed by Richard Coates, is entitled ‘Steps towards characterizing Bristolian,’ and introduces the urban variety of English spoken in Bristol, which has been so far been neglected in sociolinguistic studies, despite local salience in Bristolian identity. The author presents a list of lexical items which could be taken as candidates for being considered as typical Bristolian (e.g., ‘fowsty,’ i.e. ‘moldy’; ‘mucker,’ i.e. ‘mate, friend’). Next, he addresses the features typical of Bristolian grammar, such as the non-standard conjugation of the copula (e.g., ‘weem in a right mess now,’ ‘ise goen downtown awlrite?’) and modal verbs (e.g., ‘dost,’ ‘canst’), the use of the third person masculine subject pronoun for the third person neuter, especially when referring to tools or machines, the exchange of subject and object pronouns (e.g., ‘cider I up. Get I a Blackforn,’ ‘why casn’t thee do it?’), the adessive rather than allative use of the preposition ‘to’ (e.g., ‘where’s he to?’), the periphrastic ‘do’ (e.g. ‘they did get a bit reckless now and again’). Finally, Coates discusses the phonology of the Bristolian dialect. Several consonantal phenomena of some interest include namely: /h/-dropping (contrary to the received view), th-fronting, initial fricative voicing, rhoticity, and, above all, the Bristol ‘L.’ The latter is the intrusion of a final [l] either word-finally (e.g., ‘ideal’ for ‘ideal,’ ‘cinemal’ for ‘cinema’) or word-internally (e.g., ‘I gotta-l-ave a drink,’ ‘I found a dead sparra-l-awk’), a phenomenon whose origins are still debated. With regard to vowels, despite falling within the area of lengthening of Middle English /a/ before fricative sounds, in Bristol, the lengthening does not necessarily take place (e.g., /bæθ/). Moreover, the reflex of Middle English /u:/ did not undergo diphthongization in the Bristol area. Furthermore, both reflexes of Middle English /ɛ:/ are found: [e:] and [ei]. Finally, there is an

isogloss separating the reflexes of Middle English /i:/ and /ih/, which both occur as [ɔi] (or [ʌi]) north of Bristol and as [ɔi] to the south.

Chapter 8, contributed by Jonnie Robinson, is entitled “‘I don’t think I have an accent’: Exploring varieties of southern English at the British Library.’ This study provides an overview of the three main collections of dialectal data which can be accessed in the British Library, namely the Survey of English Dialects, the BBC Voices Recordings, and the Evolving English VoiceBank, focusing on the three southernmost regions used for administrative purposes: London, the South East, and the South West. In particular, Robinson looks and finds surviving forms of southern vernacular (e.g. ‘shrammed,’ a form for ‘cold’ used in Gloucestershire, Dorset, and Devon, or ‘ent down,’ i.e. a form for ‘to rain heavily’ recorded in Cornwall), although they often obsolescent. The author provides details on the distribution of these lexical items, also making generous use of quotes from the database, including contributors’ own metalinguistic comments. Moreover, rhyming slang is discussed at some length (e.g., ‘having a bubble,’ i.e. ‘be joking’). Then, Robinson illustrates some features of southern dialect grammar, such as the use of pronoun exchange (e.g., ‘my brother told I,’ ‘us saw he’), which is particularly frequent in tag questions (e.g., ‘we’d wait till it did get dark didn’t us’), to the point that the author hypothesizes a subconscious connection of pronoun exchange with this environment. Another interesting grammatical feature of southern dialects is the retention of Old English accusative singular third person masculine pronoun ‘hine’ (e.g. ‘I used to stop up all night with hine’). Finally, the author discusses the nicknames attributed to southern varieties and the speakers’ attitudes toward their own and other variants.

Chapter 9 is contributed by Juhani Klemola. It is entitled ‘The historical geographical distribution of periphrastic DO in southern dialects,’ and represents a study of the distribution of periphrastic ‘do’ based on both the Survey of English Dialects (SED) and the unpublished notebooks of the SED fieldworkers. After providing a summary of previous studies, the author provides a preliminary outline of the distribution of periphrastic ‘do’ based on SED published materials. Then, he turns to the unpublished SED fieldworker notebooks, showing that this grammatical feature is recorded in a significantly larger area. As Klemola points out, “The formal nature of the questionnaire interview situation probably did not encourage the use of features such as periphrastic DO, whereas the incidental material contains utterances that the fieldworkers picked up from their more informal conversations with the informants.” The author then directs attention to the absence of periphrastic ‘do’ from Devon and East Cornwall, while it is present in the remaining Central and Western parts of the South, including West Cornwall. The explanation offered is that periphrastic ‘do’ can be considered as an innovation originating in West Wiltshire/East Somerset and spread from there but did not reach Devon and Cornwall because of the presence of several natural barriers. The reappearance of periphrastic ‘do’ in West Cornwall would be due to the introduction of English into this area as late as the Early Modern English period. Indeed, the English spoken in this area is closer to early Standard English usage than to surrounding dialects (Wakelin 1975). The periphrastic ‘do’ would then be introduced through education. The construction ‘do + uninflected verb’ (e.g., ‘he do go to the cinema every week’) is attested in the eastern

areas of Wales. Finally, Klemola shows that the data support Elworthy's (1886) intuition that periphrastic 'do' was not immediately replaced by the standard English rule, where only third person singular forms receive the present tense marker '-s,' but went through an intermediate stage when the ending was generalized to all persons.

EVALUATION

Overall, "Southern English varieties then and now" represents a valuable collection of contributions to the field of English linguistics, focusing on an area of the UK which is so far underrepresented in terms of sociolinguistic and dialectal studies. Not only does the book provide a significant amount of synchronic as well as diachronic information on the peculiarities of a range of often neglected dialects but, due to the heterogeneous nature of the contributions, it also illustrates a range of perspectives and methods to the study of linguistic varieties. In so doing, the volume strikes a nice balance between traditional and recent approaches, keeping a dialog alive between the past and the present of English sociolinguistics and dialectology. At the same time, a dialog is kept open between the past and the present of the language, as both historical and present-day data are taken into consideration to describe dialectal features. The choice of the topics is also principled as phonology, grammar and the lexicon all receive the due attention. While each chapter can stand as a self-contained contribution, the volume as a whole coheres. For all the above-mentioned reasons, this book represents a valuable addition to the 'Topics in English Linguistics' de Gruyter series.

The inclusion of methodologically and theoretically diverse contributions proves a felicitous choice since it provides the reader with a snapshot of contemporary sociolinguistics and dialectology, illustrating how the field is reacting to what Laura Wright, at the very beginning of her introduction, defines as "the challenge of big data" (p. 1). The label 'big data' is here used broadly speaking to refer to all the large datasets such as census data and the crowdsourced nineteenth and twentieth-century corpora, atlases, surveys (a digital version of which is many cases available, nowadays). The studies contained in this book show that the discipline is appropriating these resources, making extensive use of them to complement the traditional techniques of finding and recording informants, using a variety of methods ranging from personal networks to consulting local authorities. As an example, Moore and Montgomery's study embodies this integration of multiple methods, by investigating databases and carrying out experiments to understand the true nature of Scillonian English (viz. the narrative of 'purity'). Trudgill's tackling of a thorny theoretical issue like the relations between grammaticalization and phonetic erosion with the aid of East Anglian literature and native speaker intuition represents another clear instance of methodological pluralism at work. To some extent, all the chapters integrate different methods and/or perspectives (with the partial exception, perhaps, of Roper's more historiographic contribution).

On a different note, the book also provides a cross-section of the varieties of English spoken in the South of England, contradicting to some extent the received view of the area as linguistically homogeneous and of little interest for dialectal study. Instead, taking into consideration southern England past and present, a more complex and fascinating story emerges. While it remains true that, overall, the dialects of the North and the Midlands probably present more ‘deviant’ features compared to standard English than southern dialects, the South of England represents a linguistically multifaceted entity. A densely inhabited, dynamic, diverse, and rich in history, southern counties retain their linguistic and cultural peculiarities, which deserve to be explored both synchronically and diachronically. The chapters included in this volume represent significant steps in this direction: a wide range of data are available, as are the methods to analyze them. The chapters which make up ‘Southern English varieties then and now’ have only touched upon a few issues regarding (some) dialects spoken in the South of England, but they have the potential to pave the way to more in-depth investigations into these hitherto understudied varieties.

With regard to formal matters, all chapters are easy to read and understand, engaging and accessible for a general audience with basic linguistic training. All contributors generously provide examples to illustrate the phenomena under discussion and clarify their point, but wisely avoid overusing them, circumventing the risk of becoming tedious. The use of tables and maps to illustrate both quantitative and qualitative evidence effectively facilitates the reader’s understanding. Finally, all chapters are roughly uniform in length and structure, contributing to the general elegance and cohesion of the volume. The presence of a few typos does not seriously impact the readability of the contributions and certainly does not undermine the value of the chapters. For these reasons, the book is also an ideal resource for undergraduate and master’s dissertations.

While my assessment of ‘Southern English varieties then and now’ is overall very positive, I will now point out a couple of shortcomings of the book. First of all, the absence of a concluding chapter is, to some extent, disappointing. While it is understandable that the editor had a limited amount of space and thus awarded priority to the case-studies, I still believe that book would have benefitted from including a brief concluding chapter, tying in with the introduction, restating the goals of the book and, suggesting directions for future developments. Indeed, since the previous nine chapters go a long way toward challenging the stereotype of a linguistically homogeneous South a short concluding chapter could effectively and elegantly wrap up the contents of the book. While this is no fundamental flaw, the absence of a concluding chapter may leave the reader with a sense of incompleteness.

A further less than ideal property of the book regards the occasional sloppiness in the presentation of either data or methods. Admittedly, this issue is not particularly serious, but I will provide a couple of examples just to illustrate the point. In Chapter 1, Kerswill writes, “In my discussion, I will focus on the whole of Britain. When dealing with the first part of the nineteenth century, the case studies will be from northern England, primarily because industrialization in its most all-encompassing form took place there. For the second half of the century, my focus will move gradually to the south, particularly London and the counties surrounding it.” The problem with this quote is that it cuts Scotland off Britain: if the study

does not deal with Scotland, then the use of the expression ‘the whole of Britain’ is incorrect. If Scotland is instead included in the study, then it is inaccurate to make it fall within England. To reiterate this is just a slip-of-the-tongue which does not seriously undermine Kerswill’s contribution. The second example is from Chapter 3. While Hornsby’s study is overall well-structured and very informative, the selection of informants for his pilot study is only vaguely illustrated. Hornsby writes, “[f]or the pilot study, a judgement sample of 12 informants (7 males, 5 females) were selected. Aged between 45 and 82, all but one were either born and raised in Aylesham or came to the village before the age of 5, and were educated there.” (p. 86) This is legitimate, but it would have been useful if the rationale of the selection had been made explicit, just to let the reader know if these participants were somehow considered as more ‘prototypical Ayleshamers’ than other potential candidates or the selection was made randomly (either option is perfectly defensible).

Despite the minor liabilities listed above, I believe this book represents a valuable contribution to the field, which has the great merit of presenting a challenge to a well-entrenched stereotype about the dialects of the most populated part of the UK. The studies which make up this book may be followed by more comprehensive studies of these (and other) southern English varieties, in order to explore in-depth their features and shed more light on their relations with each other as well as with Standard English and the dialects of other parts of the country.

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