

Riferimenti bibliografici:

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[Andrea Trovesi]

WATTS, Richard / TRUDGILL, Peter (eds.), *Alternative Histories of English*, Routledge, London 2002, pp. 296, ISBN 0-415-23357-7, £ 17.99.

The editors present this book as an alternative way to look at the diachronic analysis of English. The official tradition usually focuses on the detailed study of Old and Middle English dialects, while afterwards it highlights the dialect conventionally regarded as ‘Standard English’. What the official tradition does not normally take into consideration is that, in fact, non-standard varieties of English have been in continuous, albeit ‘unofficial’, use ever since the late Middle English period.

The editors thus discuss English from 1600 onwards, with particular regard to the following:

1. the history of non-standard varieties of English;
2. the history of varieties of English beyond the UK and the US;
3. the history of communicative and pragmatic aspects of the language;
4. the history of styles and registers other than formal written English;
5. the history of the language as used by speakers and writers other than WASP.

The book, consisting of 12 chapters, has a prologue (chapter 1), an epilogue (chapter 12), and is divided into two sections. Section one (chapters 2-7) is devoted to the history of non-standard varieties of English; section two (chapters 8-11) deals with the history of communicative and pragmatic aspects of English.

James Milroy’s paper, ‘The legitimate language. Giving a History of English’, acts as a prologue and helps readers to familiarize with the traditional diachronic approach to the analysis and codification of the English language.

The second chapter, ‘The history of the lesser-known varieties of English’, written by Peter Trudgill, is actually a brief historical, social and demographic

depiction of the 'lesser-known' regions which were colonised by Britain from the 17th century to the 20th century and were part of the British Empire.

Katie Wales, the author of the third chapter, 'North of the Watford gap – a cultural history of Northern English (from 1700)', describes the contrasting stereotypes by means of which Northern English dialects have been depicted – on the one hand, Romanticism idealized them as the manifestation of the 'pure' and natural 'savage' – on the other, during the Industrial Revolution they were seen as the manifestation of a poverty-stricken working-class society. The author then relates this double nature of Northern English to Standard English and to the ideology, politics and culture that the latter represents.

The fourth chapter is basically a survey of 'The history of the southern hemisphere Englishes', written by Elizabeth Gordon and Andrea Sudbury. Here the authors explore the ways in which the 1800-1876 migratory fluxes toward South Africa, New Zealand and Australia modified, adapted and developed the English language that came into contact with both native and other European languages; the authors point out how these regional varieties have linguistic similarities, notwithstanding their differences.

Shana Poplack, Gerard Van Herk, Dawn Harvie, authors of the fifth chapter ('Deformed in the dialects. An alternative history of non-standard English'), argue that many of the non-standard features of contemporary English, such as those found in African American Vernacular English, are not recent innovations but rather retentions of Early Modern English (or even older) forms.

Rajend Mesthrie's paper, 'Building a New Dialect. South African Indian English and the history of Englishes', offers a clear-cut case of language-shift by examining how the South African Indian variant of English (different from South African English), generated as L2, turned to be L1 in the third generation of Indians living in South Africa.

Dennis R. Preston defines the socio-linguistic grounds (and the xenophobic character) that are at the basis of the definitions of 'good and bad' English in the US given by highest-status speakers of American English.

The second section opens with Richard Watt's paper 'From polite language to educated language. The re-emergence of an ideology', in which he stresses that the ideology of politeness, with its social and political implications, includes the ideology of standard language: 'polite language' came to mean 'standard language' when in the 18th century acquisition of Standard English guaranteed access to the world of politeness – i.e., to the upper classes. This concept can easily be linked to the 20th century idea according to which the acquisition and use of Standard English grants access to the world of education.

Sharon Millar's analysis, 'Eloquence and elegance: ideals of communicative competence in spoken English', takes the 18th century as a starting point to investigate the effects of oral eloquence on the perceptions of 'correct English' as standard language.

Chapter 10, 'Women's writing as evidence for linguistic continuity and change in Early Modern English', by Terttu Nevalainen, explores the differences observed in personal correspondence by male and female writers, and the relationship existing between women's language and the development of alternative styles of English.

Andreas H. Jucker deals with the development of 'Discourse markers in Early Modern English' (chapter 11), focussing on the written forms representing spoken language in plays; in particular, he highlights uses marking communicative interaction between speakers.

The epilogue written by David Crystal, 'Broadcasting the non-standard message', offers a critical analysis not only of all the papers, but also of the linguistic stereotypes and realities forming the socio-political background of writers dealing with the history of the English language. His stated hope is that this book can be the first step towards raising awareness of the existence of many 'Englishes' – the only possibility to overcome and erase those stereotypes.

The bibliography is very rich and includes texts dating from 1695 to 2000, thus offering a really helpful database for anyone interested in the overall history of English.

Although perhaps the tones in the introduction are somewhat too sharp in criticizing the traditional view by means of which English has been diachronically analysed for decades – tones which, incidentally, are mitigated by James Milroy's prologue – the book (with just one typo in page 154) is well worth reading for its full and rich picture of the complexity of the history of the English language.

[Stefania Maria Maci]

VAN LEEUWEN, Charles / WILKINSON, Robert (eds.), *Multilingual Approaches in University Education. Challenges and Practices*, Uitgeverij Valkhof Pers - Universiteit Maastricht, Maastricht 2003, pp. 190, ISBN 90-5625-160-0 [price quoted on demand].

This volume is an important contribution to and a suggestion on how European universities could deal with the multilingual and multicultural societies in which they operate. By offering and describing the example of Maastricht and other 'Northern' universities, the editors outline a path towards a University of Europe. Albeit the building of a University of Europe may appear as a difficult challenge, the papers collected in this book offer a 'practical' report on how the academic world can meet Europe's international requirements.

The rich and interesting opening contributions are followed by eight papers which are the result of both individual investigations and methodological