Language in the British Isles. David Britain, Ed. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. (xii, 508)

This book is not a second edition but a new version of *Language in the British Isles*, which was published in 1984. The four sections of this outstanding volume discuss the history of English and its varieties, the Celtic languages, multilingualism and the other languages spoken on the isles, and sociolinguistics and language planning. Each article, as one would expect in a work of this scope, provides a very thorough review of literature on its topic while assembling the basic details.

James Milroy, in "The History of English" (9 – 33), discusses with an apt sampling of examples important changes in the sound structure, morphology, syntax, and semantics from the Old English period. He is correct that the development of English during the period of extensive changes from the ninth to thirteenth century is better attributed to multilingualism and accommodation than to creole formation. He cites research that shows that dialects where Norman influence did not extend maintained conservative features, while those regions where Norman French made inroads show greater change. The semantic shifts and bifurcations of Greco-Latin stems that entered the language via French, e.g., *sanus > sane* 'mental health' (32) but also > sanitation 'cleanliness', makes for a fascinating study unto itself. Milroy makes a contribution in his discussion of the social situation of English during its long period of development.

"Standard and non-standard English" (34 – 51), by Paul Kerswill, is a remarkable article that summarizes the situation in Great Britain represented in the epigraph, "'Standard English' and spoken English as opposing norms: a demonstration" with respect to attitudes toward

dialects and accents. He makes a very sound assessment of the challenges to the traditional, upper-class based ideologies and speech varieties.

Paul Foulkes & Gerard Docherty, in Phonological Variation in England (52 – 74), demonstrates the great complexity of phonological variation and changes across the Isles, and the array of approaches that have been developed to study them. The humorous epigraph of the article, "though the people of London are erroneous in the pronunciation of many words, the inhabitants of every other place are erroneous in many more" (John Walker, 1791) paints a vivid picture, given the fact that population shifts to the city had doubled the number who reside in London during 18th century, with a clever wash of social attitudes.

In his article, "Grammatical Variation" (75 – 104), the editor points out regularized paradigmatic features of vernacular varieties, some of which, like *myself*, *yourself*, *hisself*, etc., are shared by many and a number of features, like particular uses of *may*, *shall*, and *will*, that are remarkably local. He cites research showing that the quotative *be like* is not only age specific, but associated primarily with female speakers in the United States but somewhat more with males in Great Britain (80, 93) to make the point that as features diffuse across varietal boundaries, stereotypes associated with them can change.

The fascinating interplay that Paul A. Johnston, Jr., describes between Scottish English and Scotts is the topic of "Scottish English and Scots" (105 – 121). Here is provided an excellent review of the features and literatures of the two varieties, with an inventory of their phonetic resources and phonologies, and an excellent review of their grammar and syntax. The strategy of treating together the two speech varieties, which co-occupy the linguistic space of the region, produces a rewarding comparison.

In Kevin McCafferty, "Northern Irish English" (122 – 134), and Raymond Hickey, "Southern Irish English" (135 – 151), the development of English varieties across Ireland is described. The information about their features helps to illuminate the sources of forms in regional Englishes in North America, such as *yous* 'you pl.' *me* instead of *my*: *all me life* (128), the Northern Subject Rule, *Things grows here that I never did see in England* (131) (note also *did* used with *never*, also heard in Southern dialects in North America), and habitual *be* (129), about which so much is heard in connection with so-called AAE.

The extensive data provided in these chapters offer an excellent opportunity to compare, feature for feature, developments in Southern dialects of English in the United States, where farm workers and plantation managers and agents migrated over a century or more from rural English, Scottish, and Scots-Irish stock. Letters from these immigrants record phonological and grammatical features (see Michael Montgomery, 2007, *Sociolinguistic variation: Theories, methods, and applications* Robert Bayley and Ceil Lucas, Ed., Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press), from which direct comparisons of feature diffusion in the Southern dialects may be made with their geographical sources.

Robert Penhallurick, in "English in Wales," makes the interesting observation that diphthongs beginning with central ə index the earlier arrival of English. The same remark can be made about the English of the Essex District of Baltimore, Maryland, where *home* is realized as [həoʊm]. The data provided here demonstrate remarkable accommodations between the languages in contact.

Manx English, where the Gaelic influence resisted OE and ME phonological processes such as intervocalic voicing, is the subject of "English on the Isle of Man" (171 – 175, by Andrew Hamer. In "English in the Channel Islands" (176 – 182), Heinrich Ramisch provides

data about population migrations vis-à-vis the indigenous population who historically spoke French, which helps account for some of the features present, such as the correspondence of SME ʌ by ɔ, i.e., *bus* is realized as [bɔs], and even the realization of *there is* + plural, *There was no fridges in those days* (181).

These articles that make up Part 1, on the Englishes spoken in the British Isles, with their thorough review of literature and their comprehensive sound inventories, accounts of salient phonological, morphological, and syntax features, provide an excellent picture of English today. Those in Part II Discuss the Celtic Languages. An important develop in the Celtic languages involves preservation and restoration efforts, following the precipitous decline in Celtic language speakers across the societies in regions where they are still spoken.

In "The History of the Celtic Languages in the British Isles" (185 – 199), Paul Russell begins with the importance of Britain entering "the Roman world" in the time of Claudius (185) where it would remain for centuries, and from whence it would continue to feel influence. Russell outlines the influence of Roman and Latin, which were regionally and socially distributed in a diglossic relationship. Structurally Celtic languages are characterized by loss of initial /p/, e.g., **pater* > Gaulish *ater*, in reflexes of IE and the change of /g^w/ to /b/, e.g., **g^wou* > OI *bo* 'cow' (185). The article also offers an exposition on the problem of stress and its effects on the broad effects in the languages.

Kenneth McKinnon's "Gaelic" (200 – 217) traces developments from movements from the Northeast of Ireland to the area of what is now County Antrim and western Argyllshire, to Gaelic's loss of prominence in the 11th century, after the Norman invasion and its eventual retreat into areas that constitute the Scottish Gaidhealtachd 'Gaelic speaking area' (201), where their culture and social structure were negatively perceived by the Scottish and the British

government. Specific raters and contexts for use of the language are provided, along with details of restoration plans.

Paidrig O'Raigain in "Irish" (218 – 236) offers an exposition on the history of Irish after being brought to the island by Celts from southwest Europe and sketches the structural makeup of the language; otherwise the article addresses language policy over the last century. As in other articles in Part II, census data is used to show the proportion of those in the different areas who claim ability to speak the tongue. O'Raigain reports that since the 1920s a continual increase has been noted, and significantly, the highest numbers are reported for the 10 – 19 age group (227). This corresponds to the school ages, during which school pupils are instructed in the language, which to a degree is to be expected, but the continued higher numbers for the older age groups over the period 1926 – 2002 suggests a higher degree of retention and bilingualism. But outside Gaeltcht (Irish speaking) areas, Irish language networks and communities are sparse.

"Welsh" (237 – 253), by Martin Ball, provides an inventory of characteristic structural features of Welsh, including consonant clusters, like *sb*, *gv*, *dn*, etc. (239) and mutations i.e., changes to initial consonants in morphosyntactic contexts, like *p > b*, *mh*, *ph*, or *f*. The morphology retains Masc and Fem in nouns and pronouns, and in numerals 'two' through 'four'. Welsh is VSO in typology, and varieties are noted for contexts of greater and lesser degrees of formality, including the written. Census figures report a decline in the number of Welsh speakers from 1901 to 1991, but an increase is noted in the 2001 census (18.6% to 21.5%), with the age 10 – 15 segment reported at 42% (250, 253).

Preservation and revival efforts that, among other effects, have resulted in the Celtic languages being taught and used in schools are helping to ameliorate the decline and even to

reverse it in some areas, but the fact remains that the other language in the room is English, which offers utilitarian advantages over the indigenous tongues in every respect.

Part III takes up the topics of multilingualism and the 'other' languages that have been brought to the British Isles.

In "Multilingualism' (257 – 275), by Mark Gibson, we are introduced to a report that London is home to residents who represent some 300 languages, however they are allocated. This produces linguistic and orthographic problems of a vast scale in the spheres of pubic health and safety. The 'multi-cultural' movement has made it unfashionable to simply insist that the immigrant population learn to function in English, and much is to be said in favor of language and culture retention. The question must be asked of language and service planners, however, at what point is it no longer feasible or even possible to accommodate every variety of every tongue and orthography.

In the Los Angeles, California area, where in 1997 the Los Angeles Unified School District reported that it served students representing 167 tongues, bilingual education, bilingual health services, and bilingual state and public utility services have been available in only the dominant immigrant languages. This was a compromise between political opportunism and feasibility. Notably, where large heritage language communities are present, English competence lags behind in comparison with immigrants who landed in areas without such large communities. This has great consequences for those who wish to attend universities and professional schools and function in the general society.

"Caribbean Creoles and Black English" (276 – 292), by Mark Sebba, discusses those contact varieties brought to Great Britain by immigrants after independence in their home countries. Sebba documents a fascinating interplay between the creoles and local varieties of

English in the urban areas where those immigrants settled. Among the discoveries he made during his work on Caribbean creoles is the emergence of creole as a heritage tongue among second generation immigrants whose parents were not creole speakers. Observations like these underscore the sociolinguistic situation of immigrant languages in general.

Mike Reynolds & Mahendra Verma, in "Indic Languages" (293 – 307), documents the populations of speakers of Bangla, Gujarati, Hindi, Panjabi, and Urdu, the most represented languages, in various regions in Great Britain.

The picture of Chinese in Great Britain documented by Li Wei in "Chinese" (308 – 324) is that of a remarkably constrained and dispersed group, 99% of which hails from Hong Kong (Cantonese) or Taiwan (predominantly Min) (308). It is remarked that "the majority" work in the food business, i.e., independent restaurants (the Home Affairs Committee 1985 report put this figure at 90%; 313), and therefore maintain tight family and business ties (318), yet, as the Chinese do not consider themselves to be a group that 'sticks close together', they often do not live in close enough proximity to other Chinese that their children may form play communities, and since parents work long hours to secure economic gain, the languages are not transmitted to subsequent generations. This is a great difference from the situation in the United States where in large urban areas, dense communities of both Northern and Southern dialect speakers settle. Samples of language demonstrate L1 interference in the syntax of productions of British born and English speaking Chinese children are typical, as is noted, of the efforts of L2 learners in general.

These errors are only tangential to the focus of the article, but the number of written characters in the dictionary cited, 48,000 (317), is vastly overstated, probably the result of equivocating on the definition of *character*. Words like *youtiao* 油條 (*you* 'oil' + *tiao* 'willow

branch' = 'fried dough stick') are compounds of two *zi* 字'characters'. Most words are compounds. Highly literate persons may be able to handle 16,000 or 17,000 *zi* 'characters'; college graduates between 12,000 and 14,000. And *lai*5 in *lai5baai3jat*1 (320) 禮拜一 is not a classifier, as glossed, but part of the substantive used here for day of the week, i.e., *lai5baai*3 'week' + *jat*1 'one' = Monday.

Penelope Gardener-Chloros reports in "European Immigrant Languages" (325 – 340) the surprising fact that European immigrant languages are the least documented and thus the least understood from a language planning perspective. Part of this is attributed to ambiguity as to what constitutes 'Europe' and part to the reality that English is highly stressed in most European countries. This may not be so "clearly the result of economic and cultural influence from the US" as is stated (327); after all, the British managed an empire on which the sun never set before the rise of American influence, and cultural and economic networks in English were long established which facilitated the expansion of American power and influence.

The inclusion of "Sign Languages" (341 – 357), by Bencie Wall & Rachel Sutton-Spence is most welcome. The picture is complicated by the fact that British Sign Language is used in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland Protestant signers, while Irish Sign Language is used in the Republic of Ireland and by Catholics in Northern Ireland. For those not versed in sign languages, it needs to be stated that these are language systems in their own right, not reductions or signed versions of English or Irish. They offer the resources to communicate about anything that any other language can communicate about. Regional variations are observed, as in any other 'natural language'. It is notable that American Sign Language and SLs from East and South Asia are also found in the British Isles, complicating the picture further. For those born without hearing, English and Irish are second languages; a SL user writing in English is writing in a

foreign language. It has been said that the 'best' SL – English interpreters are hearing children born of deaf parents, i.e., they acquired the family SL as their native tongue, and acquired English naturally from peers and at school.

"Channel Islands French" (358 – 364), by Mari C. Jones, is a wonderful article that depicts the linguistic and social picture of CI French alongside English in a French speaking archipelago politically aligned with Great Britain since 1204 (358). One sees no reason to challenge her pessimism about the prospects for French there.

Peter Bakker & Donald Kenrick, in "Angloroman" (368 – 374) discuss one of the least understood speech communities in Great Britain, the itinerant Gypsies '*Rom*a', who have been documented to have been on the European continent since about 1200 (368). The language is described as a Romani word stock merged with the grammatical system of English (369). Elements of the social and historical situation of the language discussed include the use of the language as a variety of solidarity, and the risks involved in ascertaining it.

The articles in Part IV address language planning and policy issues in public contexts and in education. Dennis Ager, in "Language Policy and Planning" (377 – 400) focuses on a dozen examples of language policy and planning between 1975 and 2000 in Great Britain. An emblem for controversies on this topic involve the disputation about whether to insist on Standard English in the schools, or to repudiate the standard 'middle class' speech in favor of a multicultural approach that favored home languages and dialects. Since the motivation and justification for pubic education was the conscious promotion of social welfare through a higher standard of living, resulting from higher levels of individual capacity and productivity, a society made up of individuals who can use a common tongue, in speech and in literacy, at an acceptable level is the common sense goal for language planning.

In "Non-standard English and Education" (410 – 435), Ann Williams visits a question that has been contended on both sides of the Atlantic over the last 30 years or so. If the goal of public education is to improve the productivity of individuals and therefore the standard of living of the society, a strong argument can be made for acquiring competence, spoken and writtten, in a standard common tongue. It could be pointed out that in the United States, almost no one speaks as a vernacular the variety that in more formal speech and written contexts is regarded as Standard American English. That same statement is an absolute reality in the People's Republic of China, where *putonghua* 'common speech' is prescriptively taught in schools and spoken in broadcasting, yet education is not inhibited in the least thereby, and as a product, high school and college graduates, at least with respect to language preparation, can go anywhere in the country and function at any level in business and the professions.

Much literature documents the manifold failures of pedagogical approaches based on 'error correction', yet efforts to remove grammar and spelling from the curriculum "in the belief that it might induce boredom and damage creativity" (403) has produced generations of school children too many of whom, upon completion, knew little, were unaccustomed to thinking, and lacked the resources to learn. What has been missing is a usable pedagogical theory and approach to teaching in nonstandard vernacular environments that is transmittable within the context of normal university teacher training curricula.

Ben Rampton, Roxy Harris, and Constant Leung, in "Education and Speakers of Languages other than English" (417 – 435) outlines the dearth of government interest in Great Britain in the question of linguistic and ethnic diversity of education since the Swann Report in 1985, while linguistic research marched forward, and discusses how Local Education Authorities developed their programs through a process of persuasion and dispute involving local interests.

The authors suggest that should central planning again become a reality in Great Britain, a great deal of empirical research is available to guide it.

This volume is essential reading and reference for those interested in variation studies, sociolinguistics, languages in contact, and the sociology of language and language planning. It does justice to its topic, the most powerful language in the world, as it lives up to the first version.

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