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HEIKE PICHLER (ed.). *Discourse-Pragmatic Variation and Change in English: New Methods and Insights*. Cambridge, U.K./New York: Cambridge University Press. 2016. 324 pp. Hb (9781107055766) US\$110.00.

Reviewed by CHLOÉ DISKIN

Discourse-pragmatic variation has been described as '[...] perhaps the least well-studied type of change in quantitative approaches to language variation' (Tagliamonte, Chapter 5, p. 115). This volume, edited by Heike Pichler, brings together ten contributions that all take a quantitative approach to the analysis of discourse-pragmatic features, a heterogeneous category of linguistic items including utterance-final tags, general extenders, quotatives, and discourse particles. Cheshire's Epilogue to the volume describes it as 'a landmark putting discourse-pragmatic variation and change centre stage and demonstrating how it can be accommodated within the variationist framework' (p. 252).

Pichler has already published widely in the field of discourse-pragmatic variation and change (see Pichler 2013) and has long advocated for variationist methods to be applied to the study of discourse-pragmatic features. She is eminently experienced to bring together the state-of-the-art in this burgeoning field, one she argues has been 'dwarfed' by sociophonetic variationist studies (Introduction, p. 2). The volume will be of particular interest to sociolinguists working on variation, language change, (variational) pragmatics, and different varieties of English, such as the Englishes spoken in the U.K., North America, New Zealand, and parts of Asia.

The volume is divided into four parts: Methods, Innovations, Change, and Variation. The particular strengths of this volume lie in its critical and reflective focus on methodology. A number of chapters reflect on issues such as the continuing 'problem' of the principle of accountability and the envelope of variation in investigations of discourse-pragmatic features, which cannot always be viewed as being semantically equivalent, or as 'two ways of saying the same thing' (Labov 1972: 323). It can be difficult to pinpoint where a discourse-

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pragmatic feature, such as the response elicitor *you get me*, for example, could have occurred, but didn't – a criterion that is typically employed in variationist analyses. These challenges are addressed throughout the volume along a variety of innovative pathways.

The first chapter, by Andersen, provides a compelling bridge to his previous work in Andersen (2001) on a corpus of London adolescent speech recorded in 1993. He incorporates two additional corpora, recorded 2005–2008, providing an ample opportunity for a diachronic study of language change in real time. He makes a sound case for using a bottom-up, corpus-driven approach, whereby *N*-gram statistics on multi-word sequences are carried out on a large dataset in order to uncover new trends and innovations (an *N*-gram is a 'word form or a combination of *N* word forms in a corpus', p. 25). He argues that this approach can render an investigation more accountable, as it reveals all the possible variants of a variable, including innovative variants not found previously in the literature. His use of a 'keyness measure', or the degree to which a feature is more or less frequent when compared in two or more corpora, is particularly useful in charting the use of certain features over time. He also reveals a variety of changes or innovations in contemporary London English, such as the rise of the hedge *kind of/kinda*, the construction *at the end of the day*, the interjections *duh* and *rah*, and the vocative *blud* (believed to be of Jamaican English origin).

In Chapter 2, Waters provides an excellent synthesis of the main approaches that have been implemented in the past to the variationist analysis of discourse-pragmatic features – indeed, it is not clear why this overview-style chapter should not have been the first in the volume. She gives a summary of approaches focusing on semantic equivalence, functional equivalence, and the derivational approach, and critically evaluates their strengths and weaknesses. In citing Mair (2004: 123–125), she reminds us that analyses of frequencies alone are not sufficient barometers of language change – a sentiment that is re-iterated throughout this volume. Taking *actually* as a case-in-point, she concludes that there is no one-size-fits-all approach for discourse-pragmatic features, but that a 'bespoke' approach incorporating a variety of different tools and techniques tailored to the particular research questions at hand, is the way forward.

The third chapter by Pichler offers a glimpse into a recent innovation in Multicultural London English: the expansion of the negative-polarity interrogative tag *innit*, canonically found at the right periphery of utterances, to the left periphery. Pichler's in-depth analysis demonstrates how the expansion of *innit* has led it to have phrasal, as well as clausal, scope,

where it can guide the listener at the left periphery ‘to locate tagged referents in common ground and infer them from the discourse context’ (pp. 74–75). Despite a low token number of some 30 left-dislocated *innits*, Pichler argues that she has captured a potential change-in-progress at its very early stages, through a departure from both the frequency-based approach, and the derivational approach she had previously adopted in Pichler and Torgersen (2013), where she looked only at (auxiliary)+(negative clitic)+(pronominal subject) appended to main clauses.

In Chapter 4, Denis and Tagliamonte provide an analysis of utterance-final tags in Canadian English, and in particular how *right* has taken the place of *you know* among younger speakers, as part of a process of lexical replacement. They also find evidence of a sex-crossover, whereby males instigated the rise in *right*, but then dissociated from it, with a switch to a female lead occurring in the 1980s. They write that in the sociolinguistic literature to date there has been no known case of males dissociating from a change that they themselves instigated.

Denis and Tagliamonte go to great lengths to test a variety of new statistical techniques in variationist analyses, such as zero-inflated Poisson regression for continuous variables. They also address the all-important embedding problem, whereby the frequency of a variant cannot be isolated from the contexts that favour its use, by focusing on the rise of discourse contexts, as well as the rise of the form/variant (*right*, *you know* and *eh*). In doing so, they conclude that the number of discourse contexts for *you know* and *right* has not really changed; rather, *right* has adopted wholesale the contexts traditionally occupied by *you know*. Despite its quantitative strengths, some of the graphs in this chapter (pp. 98, 100) are not reader-friendly, with both probabilities and frequencies plotted on the same graph and impossibly small legends obscuring nuances in shapes that correspond to important speaker information.

In Chapter 5, Tagliamonte tests the claim that general extenders (e.g. *or something like that*; *and stuff*) develop from long forms to short forms along the pathway of grammaticalisation, using apparent time data from ‘conservative British dialects’, with the aim of unearthing the antecedents of contemporary general extenders. The data comes from sociolinguistic interviews with over 100 individuals from the ‘oldest living generation’ in four remote, rural communities in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland in the early 2000s. One criticism that could be made is that the term ‘British dialects’ is used liberally, despite

the fact that the data comes from at least three distinct dialect areas. While the experienced sociolinguist can assume that 'British dialects' was most likely used to simplify the terminology (differences in dialects was not the focus of the analysis after all), this catch-all term could be misleading for readers less familiar with varieties of English in the British Isles.

Tagliamonte finds very few *stuff* variants in these dialects, where the majority of variants are of the *that* type (e.g. *and all that*). She also finds high numbers of short forms (two to three word constructions), which are believed to be a later development. She concludes that there is no evidence of grammaticalisation of the general extender variants she studied, stating that 'there is change in the composition of variants within the general extender system over time but no change in terms of grammatical development' (p. 127). Interestingly, she compares the use of general extenders among the interviewees (in their sixties) with that of the considerably younger interviewers, and finds 'dramatic use of *stuff*-variants' (p. 127) among the younger versus the older cohorts. She suggests that a change occurred in the general extender system in the twentieth century, with the lexical replacement of *thing* with *stuff*. This comparison is particularly welcome, as interviewers' language is often ignored in sociolinguistic work, despite the obvious effect it can have on the interviewees' language, and, in this case, the fact that it can be a valuable source of linguistic data in its own right.

In Chapter 6, Rodríguez-Louro makes an important contribution to the literature on sociolinguistic variation in Australian English. Taking a function-based approach, she investigates variation in the quotative system from a valuable dataset of two corpora, spanning approximately one hundred years of apparent time and fifty years of real time. The novelty of her approach is her focus on changes in tense in Australian English narrative structure. She claims that the incursion of *be like* into the quotative system in Australian English may not simply be a case of lexical replacement, or grammaticalisation, but that changes in narrative structure in Australian English, with an increasing focus on self-revelation in the complicating action, created a gap for *be like* to fill. This gap started to be filled by quotative *go* by speakers in the 1950s and 1960s, but since *go* could only be used for direct speech, gestures or non-lexicalised sounds, *be like* took over, as it can also encode internal thought (taking over from the cognitive verb *think*). An interesting point made in this chapter is that early uses of *something like* $\emptyset$ preceding reported speech and used by speakers

born between 1920 and 1930 could have been a precursor to *be like* in subsequent generations.

Chapter 7 by Levey is excellently written with a number of illuminating conclusions. He makes a sound case for the study of discourse-pragmatic variation among children, which can shed light not only on child language acquisition, but also on its incremental progress as children transition into adolescence and adulthood. He also argues that this kind of analysis can elucidate the status of a variable, as the more stable and salient a variable is in the community, the more likely it is to be rapidly acquired by children. His study, spanning three corpora, shows that quotative *be like* is on the rise in Canadian English, with a 'spectacular' rate of change observed when comparing a corpus from the 1980s and two more recently-recorded corpora.

Levey, like many others in this volume, cautions against looking solely at rates or frequencies as the loci of change, and he focuses on four main internal structural factors constraining the use of quotative *be like* in Canadian English. He finds that 11–12 year-olds replicate the constraints found among their older peers, but that 8–9 year-olds only replicate some of them. As the children grow older, *be like* becomes neutralised and grammaticalised, expanding into different contexts. He concludes that 'the acquisition of adult community norms is not complete before the age of eleven' (p. 177), but that the changes observed in the 11–12 year-olds show the extent of the malleability of children's grammars into adolescence.

Chapter 8 by Fuchs and Gut uses new methods to look at variation in intensifiers (e.g. *really*, *very*, *quite*, etc.) using cluster analysis and phenograms, a type of phylogenetic network suitable for looking at large amounts of data and their degree of similarity and difference. They examine forty-seven intensifier variants across twelve registers in what they term 'Asian varieties of English' using three varieties from the International Corpus of English (ICE)-corpora: ICE India, ICE Singapore and ICE Philippines. They compare these varieties to British English (ICE-GB), even though Philippine English has a strong American English influence. They later find that Indian and Singapore English have more in common with each other than originally thought: a fact they speculate could be due to their common British colonial origins, and the more recent presence of Indian English speakers in Singapore. These trends certainly have implications for the study of World Englishes more broadly, and it would be interesting to see the analysis replicated with different types of features.

Evans Wagner, Hesson and Little (Chapter 9) focus on general extenders in American English. Although they find significant differences in the rates of use of general extenders in different contexts, whereby they are used more in situations between unfamiliar, rather than familiar, interlocutors, they argue that frequency differences are not telling the whole story. They go on to control for referential versus non-referential general extenders (whether the general extender is referring to a recognised referent within the discourse, or not), and for personal versus non-personal style, following Labov and Waletzky (1967), whereby more 'personal' styles are those typical of the style used in narratives. However, they find no significant differences for reference or style.

Chapter 9 concludes with calls for future work focusing specifically on non-referential general extenders with an interpersonal function, and for work comparing more contrasting registers, such as in institutional discourse. The discourse context in particular would also appear to be a crucial future consideration here: there may simply be discourse contexts that provide more opportunities for the use of general extenders. For example, the authors mention that general extenders may be more common in contexts where interlocutors 'engage in more explicit listing behaviour as they introduced themselves to one another and searched for common ground' (p. 229). This raises the question of the embedding problem, discussed in Denis and Tagliamonte (Chapter 4), whereby the frequency of a variant cannot be isolated from the contexts that favour its use.

In Chapter 10, Drager makes a case for the examination of style in discourse-pragmatic variation, and reports from her ethnographic study at an all-girls high school in New Zealand. Drager's work is unique in this volume, as it places discourse-pragmatic variation at the intersection of sociophonetic variation, by examining the frequencies, functions and the phonetic realisations of *like*, such as the degree of diphthongisation, and whether the /k/ is released or lenited. She finds that different realisations of *like* are found in stance-taking on an interactional level, as well as more generally by certain individuals enacting a certain style, such as the Geeks in the school who tended to emphasise their orientation towards intelligence and good grades. Those wishing to project a persona of 'intelligent' tended to release the /k/ in 'like' more, which is consistent with other work where release of /t/ is perceived as a mark of intelligence (see Bucholtz 1998).

Overall, the take-home message of this volume is that different methods or a 'bespoke approach' (Waters, Chapter 2) should be employed depending on the goals of the

investigation: a conclusion which, considering the wide variety of features considered to belong to the discourse-pragmatic domain, is a practical one. However, the strength of this claim is also its weakness. Cheshire is not misguided when she writes in her epilogue that '[...] an analytic tool that is made so flexible that its definition can change on different occasions, sometimes quite drastically, is a weaker tool' (p. 264).

Not all contributions to this volume take a variationist approach, such as the contributions of Andersen or Fuchs and Gut; nonetheless they offer a collection of very welcome insights into how the field may go forward, particularly in response to consistent calls in sociolinguistics for analyses of larger datasets. This volume paves the way for new methodological challenges to be taken up in future research, and in particular from a cross-linguistic perspective. The volume, as the title indicates, focuses only on English. There is no doubt that similar research conducted among a wider variety of languages would significantly alter and broaden the scope of its approaches.

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