BESPRECHUNGEN

The Handbook of the History of English. Ed. Ans van K e m e n a d e & Bettelou
L o s. Oxford etc.: Blackwell, 2006 (2009), xvi + 655 pp., hb. (2006) £ 100.00/
€ 120.00; pb. (2009) £ 26.99/€ 32.40.

The year 2006 saw the publication of three handbooks of the history of the English
language (ed. Hogg & Denison, ed. Mugglestone and this volume, now published in
paperback and therefore more affordable for individuals). As to the relative merits
of these books, Manfred Görlach – in his review of Hogg & Denison 2006 and
Mugglestone 2006 for *Anglia* (126 [2008]: 404–408) – summarizes that the book
under review here, "being more selective and more theoretical, would not have
offered itself easily for a contrastive review". And, indeed, the title *The Handbook
of the History of English* is a misnomer.

The term "handbook" suggests a comprehensive compendium of information
on the history of the English language and the methods of historical linguistics
by state-of-the-art summaries and their critical discussion, i.e. a book designed
to be easily consulted without assuming much deeper knowledge of the field. I
agree that it is probably "impossible to achieve any degree of exhaustiveness in the
case of a language that is as well studied as that of English" (vii), but the present
650-page "handbook" can only be described as extremely selective: there is no or
only peripheral coverage of the English vocabulary (apart from Bauer's chapter on
derivation), of socio-cultural backgrounds, of the English from the sixteenth to the
nineteenth century, or of different registers (cf. also the rather general main head-
ings and in part strange collocations "Approaches and Issues", "Words: Derivation
and Prosody", "Inflectional Morphology and Syntax", "Pragmatics", "Pre- and
Post-Colonial Varieties", "Standardization and Globalization"). An even more se-
rious problem of the book is that most of the chapters presuppose not only a basic,
but a very profound familiarity with the historical development of English, such as
the periodization of English, the plethora of sound changes from West Germanic
to Present Day English, typological changes as reflected in morphology and syntax
or different layers of loans. To fully understand the opinions discussed, readers
furthermore need to be familiar with various linguistic approaches and their ter-
minology, such as the methodologies of variationist and corpus-driven approaches,
or the differences of conceptualization of language change by structuralism and
several variants of generativism (not even a list of abbreviations is provided!).

Only a few of the 23 chapters are designed in a typical handbook charac-
ter, namely the broader-sweeping accounts of work on Old English dialectology

(Hogg), on the shared features of "Celtic Englishes" and their theoretical relevance (Filppula), or Brinton's account of semantic regularities in the development of pragmatic markers and of different approaches to grammaticalization (although the latter is not clear from the title of Brinton's paper). Another set of papers offers detailed case studies, some of them presented here for the first time, while at the same time also introducing and discussing wider theoretical implications, like Bauer on competition in English word formation, Denison on "gradience" in the determiner system, or Traugott on semantic regularity in the development of focus particles. Some papers introduce and illustrate the projects of the respective authors in some detail, like the account of the *Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English* by Lass & Laing or the chapters on the explanatory value of more recent and current British and American dialect data for the history of English (Poplack, Tagliamonte). Other authors use the design of this handbook to summarize their own (theoretical) approaches, fairly innovative and controversial ones, such as the paper on Old English *þa/þonne* by the editors, or better-known ones, which have been published before in monographs (Lightfoot, Croft) or in a series of articles (Kastovsky, Minkova). Since these authors do not in all cases discuss differing views or counterarguments, readers have to make sure themselves that they put these accounts into the context of other research or consider rival explanations which suggest themselves or have been offered in the literature. This shows that most of the papers do not deliver what the preface promises, i.e. to be "shortcuts of current thinking for those who want to become familiar with subjects that are outside their own areas" (vii). Yet, there is also another intention of the editors which is certainly fulfilled: the authors, all of them leading scholars in their fields, were asked to present their cutting-edge research, with a focus on theoretical, and therefore also often controversial, issues. Given this design, it is, of course, impossible to do justice to every author, approach and suggestion, but I will try to summarize the subject matter of each chapter to justify my final view of this book, i.e. that it is a very interesting compilation, though not for a "handbook audience", but for the very small number of experts in the field of English historical linguistics.

Three of the chapters in the first section "Approaches and Issues" present different current approaches to language change. April McMahon ("Change for the Better? Optimality Theory versus History", 3–23) evaluates the viability of Optimality Theory for historical work in English phonology by an account of different approaches to the Great Vowel Shift. In addition to surveying the recent debate between Lass and Stockwell & Minkova (who doubt the unity of the sound changes commonly referred to as the Great Vowel Shift), the chapter provides a – very informed – discussion of different types of Optimality Theory since its beginnings in the 1990s. In a very clearly written chapter summarizing his ideas on "grammar change", David W. Lightfoot ("Cuing a New Grammar", 24–44) presents his case of approaching syntactic change from the perspective of the language learner, highlighting the role of grammatical cues in the acquisition of the grammatical rule system by new generations of learners. He illustrates his ideas by detailed accounts of the development of modal auxiliaries and the different natures of the genitive/possessive (by the clitic *s* or *of*). Another view of language change, inspired by functional-typological and variationist approaches to historical linguistics, is presented in William Croft's "Evolutionary Models and Functional-Typological

Theories of Language Change" (68–91). Croft explains the basic terminology and methodology of his model, which is "evolutionary" in that it shows how the generalized analysis of selection is to be applied to the processes of language change. In a chapter misplaced in this theoretical section, Anthony Warner casts new light on the classical problem of the diffusion of periphrastic *do* in Early Modern English ("Variation and the Interpretation of Change in Periphrastic *Do*", 45–67). In a discussion of implications and problems arising from the central studies by Ellegård and other more recent corpus studies, he collects data in a quantitative, corpus-based methodology, which, for example, attests to the dramatic change in the relevance of stylistic considerations for the spread of *do*.

Developments in the prosodic systems in the history of English are discussed in the papers by Minkova ("Old and Middle English Prosody"; 95–124) and Fikkert, Dresher & Lahiri ("Prosodic Preferences: From Old English to Early Modern English", 125–150). Both chapters start from the description of the prosodic patterns in Old English and show that the essential changes in the prosodic system did not appear with French loans in Middle English (which as a rule underwent changes integrating them into the Old English pattern), but with the great number of polysyllabic Latin loans during the Early Modern English period. Yet, the authors do not agree on the importance of syllable weight in Old English (which is denied by Minkova) and on the prosodic patterns of Present Day English. While Fikkert, Dresher & Lahiri advocate for a change of pattern, i.e. a reorientation towards the Romance stress pattern, Minkova argues – like Kastovsky (170) in his chapter on inflectional and derivational morphology – for different stress patterns competing in Present Day English. It is a pity that readers have to find out the similarities and differences between these approaches for themselves, since the editors do not give any help in a substantial introduction to the volume or by cross-references (the only cross-referenced chapters in the volume are the chapter of the editors, and the chapters by Brinton and Traugott).

In the morphology section, Dieter Kastovsky ("Typological Changes in Derivational Morphology", 151–176) summarizes his ideas on typological changes in inflectional and derivational morphology from Indo-European to Present Day English, i.e. the development from a root-based to a stem-based and on to a word-based morphology in Present Day English (which is dominated by a morphology with base-invariancy in inflection and native word formation). Through the detailed analysis of some case studies, such as the rise and fall of the suffix *-ster*, nominalizations in seventeenth-century English or diminutives, Laurie Bauer ("Competition in English Word Formation", 177–198) demonstrates how difficult it is to follow and evaluate the changes in word-formation processes (in contrast to just describing word formation patterns of individual items). The main disrupting influence to English morphological patterns is the impact of borrowing, which introduces the potential for widespread affix-synonymy (see nominalizations in *-ness* vs. *-ity*, *-ancy*, *-ion*): new suffixes seem to receive the communal blessing only when they are sufficiently parallel to established forms.

Changing word order patterns, their causes and consequences, are the main focus of Elena Seoane's chapter (see below, section "Pragmatics") and three generativist chapters in Part III ("Inflectional Morphology and Syntax"). Using two detailed and very clearly presented case studies on double object constructions and

post-head genitives, Cynthia Allen ("Case Syncretism and Word Order Change", 201–223) tests the connection between the levelling of inflectional endings and fixed word order and shows that there is no simple correlation between less inflection and more fixed word order (or the other way round). Rather, the two developments worked hand in hand in that a more fixed word order allowed for less overt case marking, which in turn increased the reliance on word order. The change from predominantly object-verb to categorically verb-object is investigated in Susan Pintzuk's & Ann Taylor's "The Loss of OV Order in the History of English" (249–278). They focus on three types of objects (positive, quantified and negative) and find that their positions are influenced by the same factors (length, clause type, date of composition, and case/thematic role). The fact that the rates of preposing for quantified and negative objects associated with the VO grammar are decreasing at different rates, suggests – in view of Kroch's "constant rate effect" – that the loss of OV order for all types of objects is the final outcome of several long-term changes rather than any single, abrupt change in late Middle English. While these two papers deal with explanations for well-known developments, the chapter written by the editors is very innovative and therefore also controversial. In "Discourse Adverbs and Clausal Syntax in Old and Middle English" (224–248) they look at word order patterns with Old and also Middle English *þa* and *þonne* 'then' and claim that these adverbs (?) should be seen as "focus particles" with a fixed position in the clause structure, with a topic area to the left of the particle and a focus area on the right. They suggest that these syntactic and discourse properties of *þa/þonne* show that the syntactic organization of the clause in Old English is closely interwoven with discourse organization, while the transition to Middle English is one that results in a more strictly syntactic organization of the clause.

In a study contesting the generative assumption of abrupt "grammar change" through language acquisition (again not made explicit, e.g., in the preface), David Denison ("Category Change and Gradience in the Determiner System", 278–304) points out a number of problems with too rigid a categorization of determiners in English, exploring the gradience between adjectives and determiners in the various periods of English. Denison admits the idea of prototypes into morphosyntactic categorization: this allows for degrees of membership ("good/bad adjectives") and gradience within and between the respective categories. The synchronic evidence of fuzzy categories suggests that category change may consist of the stepwise acquisition of properties, rather than the wholesale, simultaneous acquisition of "all-and-only" the definitional properties of a new category.

Regularities in semantic change, as conceptualized in a semantic-pragmatic approach to grammaticalization, are the focus of two papers in the section "Pragmatics". Laurel Brinton ("Pathways in the Development of Pragmatic Markers in English", 307–334) sketches typical pathways of development for pragmatic markers, such as adverb/preposition > conjunction > pragmatic marker (*why*, *like*, *so*, *now*, OE *hwæt*, *þa*) or predicate adverb > sentence adverb > pragmatic marker (*indeed*, *actually*, *after all*, *anyway*, *as far as*, *besides*, *in fact*, *only*, OE *soþlice/witodlice*, *whilom*, etc.) or matrix clause > matrix clause/parenthetical disjunct > pragmatic marker (*I think*, *pray* < *I pray you*, *prithee* < *I pray thee*, ME *Goddot/Goddoth* < *God woot*). Despite this variety of pathways, however, there is a unidirectionality

of development from scope within the proposition, scope over the proposition, scope over the discourse. Complementing Brinton's account of work on regularity in semantic change in pragmatic markers, Elizabeth Closs Traugott ("The Semantic Development of Scalar Focus Modifiers", 335–359) investigates the development of the class of adverbials now often referred to as "degree" or "focus" modifiers, in particular *even* and *barely*. Wider theoretical implications for the study of semantic change are the importance of pragmatic implicatures arising in context for each new meaning coming into being and a preliminary suggestion of "predictable paths" for semantic change (i.e. "concrete > abstract", "less > more subjective", "less > more language-based").

In the third chapter of the section "Pragmatics" Elena Seoane explores the influence of pragmatic parameters on word order change ("Information Structure and Word Order Change: The Passive as an Information-rearranging Strategy in the History of English", 360–391). In her corpus study, Seoane demonstrates that it is syntactic factors, namely the principle of end-weight, and essentially pragmatic factors, namely the distribution of given-new information and of definite and indefinite referents (and not semantic factors such as animacy or agentivity), that determined the increase of the passive, i.e. an argument-reversing device whereby a non-agent can be made subject of the passive (as response to the loss of V2).

Sociolinguistic issues are discussed in the last two sections of the volume. One of the few "handbook chapters" which provides a shortcut of current thinking is Richard Hogg's "Old English Dialectology" (395–416). While Hogg modestly states that he only wants to trace the evolution of the discipline "Old English dialectology", he manages to summarize not only the facts and approaches, but also the methodological issues currently discussed; for instance: are we really talking about territorial varieties or rather scribal habits found in certain manuscripts? Principles, problems and first results of compiling *LAEME*, the *Linguistic Atlas of Early Middle English*, are illustrated in Margaret Laing's & Roger Lass's "Early Middle English Dialectology: Problems and Prospects" (417–451). The very informative account demonstrates the advantages of the corpus methodology for disentangling composite textual traditions and complex dialectal strata and for displaying the diversity of early Middle English spelling systems.

The relevance of recent dialect data for the history of English is discussed by Shana Poplack ("How English Became African American English", 452–476) and Sali A. Tagliamonte ("Historical Change in Synchronic Perspective: The Legacy of British Dialects", 477–506). Poplack summarizes the key findings of her project on the history of African American Vernacular English, which reveal that many of the features stereotypically associated with AAVE (and English-based creoles), such as the variable expression of (simple) past and present temporal reference, in fact have a robust precedent in the history of English: many of the features today were retained from an older stage of English, and not created, as would be expected if they had resulted from prior creolization of incomplete language acquisition. Similarly, Tagliamonte considers the value of synchronic dialect variation for the study of language change in English through case studies on deontic modality (expressed by *must*, *have to*, *have got to*), possessive *have* and *have got*, relativization and zero form adverbs.

The historical background of the spread of English to Celtic-speaking areas and the linguistic outcomes of the contacts between English and Celtic in these areas is surveyed by Markku Filppula in "The Making of Hiberno-English and Other 'Celtic Englishes'" (507–536). Filppula does not only list the major phonological and syntactical parallels (such as rhoticity, the prominence of the definite specification of nouns, free use of the "expanded forms" of verbs, prepositional usage, expressions of thematic prominence and emphasis), which may – but need not in all cases – be direct or reinforcing Celtic influences. Yet, he finds clear enough evidence that the Celtic substrate languages have had a significant moulding effect on the varieties of English spoken in Ireland, Wales, and (some parts of) Scotland, which legitimises the use of the – sometimes contested – term "Celtic Englishes".

As an expert on early English grammars, and in particular the work of Robert Lowth, Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade ("Eighteenth-century Prescriptivism and the Norm of Correctness", 539–557) discusses the aims and intentions of the normative grammarians of the eighteenth century. She surveys Lowth's personal background and his social networks, and – in a comparison of Lowth's rules with his own writings – finds that the norm he put forward in his grammar was one which represented neither his own language nor that of his peers, but that of classes higher up on the social scale. Lowth's grammar, then, was so popular because it gave readers who were as socially ambitious as Lowth himself a respected norm to imitate.

In a chapter which would have been better placed in section I "Approaches and Issues", Terttu Nevalainen ("Historical Sociolinguistics and Language Change", 558–588) introduces the material and methods used to study the changing English language in its social context and illustrates some basic historical sociolinguistic issues such as gender differentiation in language change (corroborating the "Sex/Prestige pattern", which states that if both sexes have the same access to standard-language forms, women use them more, for the time period 1500 to 1680) or the status of English "vernacular universals" such as *was/were* variation or negative concord.

Finally, Suzanne Romaine's chapter "Global English: From Island Tongue to World Language" (589–608) draws on current figures and statements (mainly by non-linguists) when discussing the transition of English from a local to a global language, from being English in the singular to Englishes in the plural. She further detects shifting centres of gravity (from British to American English?) as well as the influence of new media and immigration into the U.S., making the U.S. less of a monolingual society than it used to be. This in her opinion casts doubt on the idea that the "future is English-speaking".

All chapters of the volume are well-informed accounts, yielding important insights into the methods and findings of current English historical linguistics. All authors are eminent scholars in their fields and they present summaries of their cutting-edge research, discussing numerous theoretical considerations on language change and offering new, often speculative, starting points. Consequently, the result is certainly not a "handbook" in the traditional sense, giving the facts and most important literature, but is – as intended by the editors – theoretical, and therefore necessarily often controversial, in concept. A much more appropriate title for the volume might thus have been "New Directions in Studying the History

of English". Yet, even then one would wonder about the intended audience of such a book. Reading the book, I found myself imagining a scenario where this general design could be fruitful: in a symposium, perhaps, where these experts present and illustrate their own cutting-edge research (or perhaps even more profitably, the research of others), which could then be discussed. The problem of the book is that there is very little discussion or critical debate. Instead of a being a handbook, the volume could rather be characterized as a "discussion plane" of and for experts on the history of English and English historical linguistics. Those who know the field in detail will be able to make the comparisons themselves and will find it useful to have these approaches, with which they are familiar from conferences or earlier publication, in one volume. Those who look for "shortcuts of current thinking" or "who want to become familiar with subjects that are outside their own areas" by being taken through the essential facts and methodologies and the most important literature are referred to one of the other handbooks published in 2006 or to *A Companion to the History of the English Language* (ed. Momma 2008), another publication by Wiley-Blackwell.

Works Cited

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EICHSTÄTT   URSULA LENKER