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German Linguistic Islands

The volume *Studies on German-Language Islands*, edited by Michael T. Putnam, focuses on German-speaking *Sprachinseln* around the world, and is divided into six sections: (1) “Phonetics and Phonology,” (2) “Morphology and Lexical Studies,” (3) “Syntax I–Verb Clusters,” (4) “Syntax II–The Syntax of Cimbrian German,” (5) “Syntax III–The Syntax of Pennsylvania German,” and (6) “Pragmatics and Conversation Analysis.”

This work is valuable in its collection and presentation of German *Sprachinseln* from around the world—that is, this volume does not focus strictly on one approach (for example, “socio- and ethnolinguistic aspects of dialect communities,” p. 1) and/or one geographic region in its treatment of German-language islands. The following review, then, examines all of the sections described above, but focuses on select key contributions to highlight the breadth of topics covered in this volume, which range from phonetics to Conversation Analysis.

Section 1 begins the volume with “Phonetics and Phonology,” and includes articles on Wisconsin Standard German (Renee Remy, “On Final Laryngeal Distinctions in Wisconsin Standard German”) and on past participle formation in the Upper German dialect of Mócheno in Trentino, Italy (“Past Participles in Mócheno: Allomorphy, Alignment and the Distribution of Obstruents” by Birgit Alber).

Remy begins with a discussion of terms used to describe “final laryngeal distinctions” (pp. 13–15). [1] The author examines the perception of final obstruents in Manitowoc (by a speaker with ancestry from Kiel), such

as German underlying final /s/(*alles*), underlying final /z/ (*logs*), underlying final /g/ (*logs*), underlying final /d/ (*Hund*, etc.), underlying final /b/ (*gab*, etc.), and an underlying final /bt/ cluster (*erlaubt*). Remy also examines the perception of final obstruents in Ozaukee (by a speaker with Pomeranian ancestry), examining German underlying final /s/, /z/, /g/, /d/, /b/ (*Klub, glaub*), as well as looking at glottal pulsing in his acoustic analysis (pp. 17–22).

With the examples given by speakers from both regions, Remy shows that Eastern Wisconsin (EWE) English production of final /d/ is almost always devoiced, regardless if preceded by nasal, liquid, or vowel in German (though preceding and following sounds seem to affect American English pronunciation); EWE seems to “have taken its cue from the German speakers in the area” (p. 30) whereby there is also a convergence of English speakers on the German norm and vice-versa (p. 31).

Section 2 (“Morphology and Lexical Studies”) presents articles on gender distribution in Henderson (Nebraska) Plautdietsch (Anna Toeboesch), the morpho-syntactic role of anaphors in Amana German (Michael T. Putnam), the lexicon in Texas German (Hans C. Boas and Marc Pierce), and gender assignment in Pennsylvania German (B. Richard Page).

Boas’ and Pierce’s “Lexical Developments in Texas German” examines the typology of lexical borrowings in Texas German (TxG), a variety that the authors feel will “die out in 30 years” (p. 129). Similar to earlier work on Wisconsin German varieties, Boas and Pierce assert that TxG speakers show differing levels of competency, gen-

erally limited to very specific “domestic” (or “semantic”, p. 147) domains.[2] Furthermore, the language, specifically the lexicon, hasn’t undergone “dramatic” changes in the last forty years—yet dialectal origins of lexical items can be traced to Gilbert’s work on the dialect in the 1960s. TxG is thus “stage 2” in Thomason and Kaufman’s 5-stage borrowing scale (“lexical borrowing and slight structural borrowing in combination with conjunctions and adverbial participles,” pp. 134, 147). The authors discuss the nature of these borrowings, both from English into German and vice versa, but conclude, based on lack of salient changes in their data and Gilbert’s 1960s TxG data, that the lexical changes occurring in TxG are “unsystematic” and not indicative of “lexical erosion” (p. 147). While supported by sound theory for lexical change and borrowing between English and colonial German in the United States, these conclusions may, indeed, make the assumption that languages change and die out in an unordered fashion.

Section 3 is devoted to the syntax of verb clusters, featuring contributions on Pennsylvania Dutch (Mark Loudon, “Synchrony and Diachrony of Verb Clusters in Pennsylvania Dutch”) and Mennonite Low German (Göz Kaufmann, “Looking for Order in Chaos: Standard Convergence and Divergence in Mennonite Low German”). Loudon establishes that, in Pennsylvania Dutch (PD), 3-4 verb clusters in subordinate clauses show only one lexical verb within a clause, where additional lexical verbs are to the right of the clause periphery; thus, non-lexical verbs in verb clusters (such as finite auxiliary *hawwe* [to have] and a non-finite modal: [*hawwe* + modal]) form a single syntactic unit (p. 165). Based on examples of possible constructions, he establishes a “Preliminary Verb Cluster Rule: verbal complements containing an infinitive in PD must be located right of the clause periphery” (p. 170).

In light of the synchrony and diachrony of 3-verb clusters in PD subordinate clauses, Loudon shows that verbs that occur in 3-1-2 clusters have decreased since the 1930s and 1940s. To that end, 3-1-2-4 are in fact 2-1 | 3 structures (see ex. 15); thus 3-1-2 clusters are actually 2-1 structures: “2-1 order is preserved in all surface orders, and if the number of lexical verbs within the clause exceeds one, then the most deeply embedded infinitive (“3”) is extraposed” (p. 180).

Sections 4 and 5 are also both devoted to syntax—section 4 on Cimbrian includes articles on areal contact (“Spoken Syntax in Cimbrian of the Linguistic Islands in Northern Italy—and What They (Do Not) Betray about Language Universals and Change under Areal Contact

with Italo-Romance,” by Werner Abraham), grammaticalization in the Cimbrian CP (“Diachronic Clues to Grammaticalization Phenomena in the Cimbrian CP,” by Andrea Padovan), verb second in Cimbrian (“Hidden Verb Second: The case of Cimbrian,” Günther Grendorf and Cecilia Poletto), and the Cimbrian pronominal system (“Revisiting the *Wackernagelposition*: The Evolution of the Cimbrian Pronominal System,” by Ermenegildo Bidese). Section 5 examines syntactic issues in Pennsylvania German (“Changes in Frequency as a Measure of Language Change: Extraposition in Pennsylvania German,” by Gesche Westphal Fitch, and “From Preposition to Purposive to Infinitival Marker: The Pennsylvania German *fer...zu* Construction,” by Kersti Börjars and Kate Burridge).

In investigating the Cimbrian CP, Andrea Padovan looks at the complementizer *ke* and other particles (*az*, Italian loanword and according to the author the “original” Germanic complementizer) that have undergone “diachronic analysis” to show that the “expansion” of loan words does not occur randomly (p. 280). He shows how “speech act elements” (for example, Italian *allora* [then]; pero [yet, but]; Molise Croatian *lor* [since]) can take on the function of a complementizer, especially in the grammar of younger speakers (p. 280).

Padovan shows that, diachronically, Old and Modern Cimbrian differ in that ‘*z* is the “only expletive element and *da* is just a head” (p. 297). ‘*z* is absent from interrogatives and topicalizations; **izta kalt* (where the presence of *da* is “blocked”) does not exist, but weather verbs such as *reng* (to rain) have obligatory ‘*z* in interrogatives (p. 297). *Da* is incorporated into the verb into presentative/existential constructions (see ex. 30c-f), and the relative complementizer *bo* is also incorporated into *boda* (emphasis in original). In light of such possibilities, Padovan proffers a conception of *da* as “a default pronominal clitic in the topic subfield” (p. 298).

Gesche Westphal Fitch’s “Changes in Frequency as a Measure of Language Change” examines extrapositional elements (such as “event-related adverbs,” p. 377), showing that Pennsylvania German (PG) has the highest rate of extraposition (of the three varieties at hand), and that Palatinate dialects (PL) show a higher rate of extraposition than Standard German (SG). Extraposed adverbials are also more represented in PG than in SG or PL (p. 371).

A breakdown of the extraposition of all bracket structures is shown as follows: PG 25.2 percent, PL 18.1 percent, SG 8.2 percent (p. 376). These numbers elucidate how ongoing language change “shares some traits with

Palatinate variants,” which in turn show high rates of extraposition, but low rates of adverb placement in the Mittelfeld (p. 382). The high rate of extraposition in PG may be attributed to “either a natural tendency of its base dialects” or to the “bilingual coexistence of English and German” which could allow for a surface order similar to English; however, the author notes that this is difficult to know without a diachronic analysis (p. 382).

A synopsis of extraposition, then, shows that the Nachfeld seems to have “opened up” to adverbs in PG, yet adverb placement in the Mittelfeld is (statistically) low and is similar to PL and different from SG (p. 382). Conversely, the right periphery seems to have “loosened” in PG even though it still maintains V2/1 and OV word order. This syntactic flexibility is attributed to contact with English and shows maintenance of older established syntactic rules of European variants related to the “colonial” variety of PG in America, but may be becoming more flexible as a result of substrate language (German) contact with English (pp. 382–383). [3]

Section 6 (“Pragmatics and Conversation Analysis”) includes contributions by Emma Betz on Siebenbürger Sächsisch (“Word Choice, Turn Construction, and Topic Management in German Conversation: Adverbs That Are Sensitive to Interactional Position”) and Hunter Weilbacher on discourse pragmatics in Texas German (“Texas German Discourse Pragmatics: A Preliminary Study of the English-origin Discourse Markers *Of Course*, *See*, and *Now*”). Betz assesses the relationship of word choice and turn construction in the Romanian German dialect of Siebenbürger Sächsisch. She analyzes *ientz* (now) and *ientzer* (now) as a means of marking a “turn constructional unit” (TCU) or a turn as complete or incomplete. As such, lexical resources are used by interlocutors as “indicators of status of the utterance, topic, and sequence underway” (p. 416). Betz looks at resources for accomplishing this in Colloquial Standard German (p. 416), and shows that the *ientz* and *ientzer* do not exist as such in SG (outside of the “base” token *jetzt*), although Northern Bavarian *eytz* and *eytzat* function similarly (p. 444).

Betz shows that *ientz* and *ientzer* function semantically as temporal adverbs, yet they differ in placement within a turn—*ientzer* is TCU final, *ientz* TCU initial. Additionally, both have the same semantic content, but fulfill different interactional functions and/or show a different structural distribution, that is, are in different syntactic environments (p. 420). She emphasizes that this interplay of semantics and syntax must be taken into ac-

count in understanding the interactional function accomplished by *ientz/ientzer*, *eytz/eytzat*. In this way, these tokens (which can be differentiated from the discourse particle *nau* [dann], [now]) can best be defined “with the understanding that this classification cannot be based on semantics and syntax alone” (p. 448). In addition to her conclusions, it merits mention that Betz makes the data she presents accessible to readers less familiar with CA by including an appendix with an overview of the Jeffersonian transcription conventions used by the majority of North American CA researchers (p. 448).

Overall, this volume presents a great collection of current, relevant contributions to the study of German-language islands from a multitude of generative and structural approaches. As mentioned earlier, this volume is noteworthy for its depth on a number of levels—it presents new work on German dialects spoken in diaspora from around the world (that is, the data presented is not confined to any one region), and is broad in its selection of German-speaking communities and approaches used to interpret the data (from Optimality Theory, to syntax in CA, and obstruent phonology and acoustic phonetics, etc.). In this manner this volume is (according to the editor) the first of its kind to be set up with this sort of “all-encompassing” generative/structuralist approach.

Michael T. Putnam not only constructed and subdivided the volume effectively, but he also contributed an article on the Amana (Iowa) *Sprachinsel* as well as constructive introductory remarks that set up the relevancy of every contribution. Indeed, contributions are generally well structured and they also give valuable and complete bibliographic information, often incorporating not only new research on the topics at hand, but also referring back to older, seminal literature. For a volume of this size (approximately five hundred pages), it also includes an encompassing topical index and a complete list of further compilations in the Studies in Language Companion series. As with any collection of this size and scope, minor infelicities exist (for example, typographic errors such as extra spaces and the inclusion of potentially debatable sociolinguistic concepts such as “prestige”) but these are few and far between. This volume is to be recommended, especially to linguists and Germanists (both professors and advanced graduate students) concerned with the most up-to-date research on varieties as diverse as the speech communities represented in this volume.

Notes

[1]. See Gregory Iverson and Joseph Salmons, “Final Devoicing and Final Laryngeal Neutralization,” in *The*

Blackwell Companion to Phonology, 5 vols., ed. Marc van Oostendorp, Colin J. Ewen, Elizabeth Hume, and Keren Rice (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), vol. 3, 1622-1643.

[2]. Lester W. J. Seifert, "The Problem of Speech Mixture in the German Spoken in Northwestern Dane County, Wisconsin," *Transactions of the Wisconsin*

Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters 39 (1949): 127-139.

[3]. For a related discussion, see Joseph Salmons and Thomas Purnell, "Language Contact and the Development of American English," in *The Handbook of Language Contact*, ed. Raymond Hickey (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), 454-477.

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