

Robert McColl Millar. 2016. *Contact. The Interaction of Closely Related Linguistic Varieties and the History of English*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. ix + 210 pp. GBP 75.00.

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The world of English is a world of contact; without an in-depth understanding of contact-induced change mechanisms, there can be no integrative theory of why World Englishes are the way they are – perhaps not even a basic model of how they developed into their presently spoken forms. A contact strand has been running throughout the history of English, shaping the language from its inceptive phase onwards (cf. Schreier and Hundt 2013). So preeminent is the focus on contact that it has been incorporated into recent attempts to model the evolution of English as a world language: Schneider's (2007) dynamic approach, for example, concentrates on interaction between different systems and successfully integrates processes of dialect and language contact.

Of course, one of the complicating factors is that the interaction between linguistic varieties is socially and structurally complex. The processes are far from patterned or clean and they are not chronologically ordered, successively following each other. Indeed, many criteria have to be taken into consideration: the social relationships between speakers, access to a target language and the extent of exposure, along with the motivation to speak another variety. Sociolinguistic and contact-induced processes may co-occur and influence each other, social factors may intervene at all times, interdependent developments are impossible to predict, etc.

McColl Millar's (2016) book is an attempt to tackle some of these challenges and to provide an (admittedly rather selective) overview of this highly dynamic and vibrant field. Its aim is to throw the readership a lifeline so as not to lose the sense of direction, both in present-day and diachronic contact processes that have been operative throughout the history of English (and other languages as well). McColl Millar is well-known for his original, fresh, and innovative thinking, and this distinguishes him from more conventional approaches. As such, his book will be appreciated by contact linguists, even though, strictly speaking, it offers few ground-breaking insights or recent research (many of his findings on the Orkney and Shetland scenarios have been presented previously; McColl Millar 2007).

Chapter 1 is exemplary here. It starts off as an introduction to the intrinsic nature of contact, summarizing the contents of the book. On the very first page already, we find an introduction to Michif and language hybridization, which is

followed by an overview of theoretical models of linguistic contact with special focus on stratal relationships between speakers (superstratal: the putative morphosyntactic impact of Afro-Asiatic languages on the modern Celtic languages, Vennemann 2003; adstratal: contacts between the Franks and Romano-Celtic populations; for some reason, there is no exemplification of substratal influence). This is followed by a discussion of Thomason's (2001) views of contact intensity effects on language change (from casual to intense contact), a discussion of criteria related to separate dialects and languages and concluded with the general aim: "[t]his book will be concerned with language contact but with a particular focus on those occasions where closely related language varieties come into contact" (p. 13).

Notwithstanding the concern with **language** contact in the introductory pages, Chapter 2 looks into new-dialect formation and discusses the most widely adopted models (Schneider's 2007 dynamic model; Trudgill's 2004 determinist approach and its corollary mechanisms: mixing, unmarking, reallocation, accommodation; Mufwene's 2001 founder principle), all illustrated with case studies, mostly from English around the world. While this presentation is rather traditional, the inclusion of Glaswegian Scots, one of the central concerns of McColl Millar's research in the context of urban dialect contact, complements the picture in a thought-provoking way, particularly when it comes to discussing the West Central Scottish dialects that formed the feature pool in Glasgow. The inclusion of written data (Scottish Standard English) is unusual here, yet I am not sure this really fits in, as the methodological challenges are not fully detailed (can contact in written and spoken modalities be compared? I personally would put a question mark here). Unfortunately, the conclusion is rather abrupt and the diagram on p. 55 on the development of Scottish English does not go a long way toward clarifying the complex nature of the processes at hand.

Chapter 3 extends the discussion by focusing on an additional factor: time depth. McColl Millar claims that most approaches "ignore the development of varieties whose historical depth is considerable, but which we can claim went through something like new-dialect formation at a relatively distant point (or points) in the past" (p. 57). This may be somewhat overstated. The idea that the present offers a window of opportunity to study the past has been widely held, so McColl Millar's idea to reconstruct historical processes and juxtapose them with synchronic ones seems promising for contact linguistics in general. However, there is of course a good reason why varieties with long settlement histories (Irish English, early American English) are particularly difficult to do research on, and that is the accessibility and availability of representative data that allow quantitative analysis (cf. Montgomery 1989). Yet this chapter is perhaps of most benefit to readers interested in varieties of English, as the three case studies selected are Shetland and Orkney Scots, Irish English, Ulster Scots and Ulster English (building on earlier work, McColl Millar 2007). The Northern scenarios include Norn, brought to the

Shetlands by Scandinavian settlers from around the 7th century onwards, as well as Scots dialects spoken by Scottish settlers. The Orkney Islands are closer to Scotland and had a comparatively smaller Scandinavian influence, since Scotticization began earlier here. McColl Millar identifies the possible input varieties spoken by the settlement's founders and refers to the Shetland dialect as "something of a conundrum" (p. 64) since it has non-Northern elements, such as *wan* 'one' instead of *een*, and there are "correspondences [...] with the dialects of East central Scotland – Angus, Fife and Lothian" (p. 68). This is a showcase scenario for an investigation of new-dialect formation and language shift – with the additional twist of "contact between the near relatives Scots and Norn in the Northern Isles and its effects upon the development of the Scots dialects of those islands" (p. 57). All in all, this chapter is a good summary of existing research, complete with valuable methodological information and a useful discussion of how to use and interpret historical data. The chapter also has a short yet rather sketchy analysis of Irish English, Ulster Scots and Ulster English, which, however, is not well integrated into the otherwise meticulously presented scenario on the Northern Isles.

Then the line of argument becomes more challenging. The title of the book promises a scrutiny of closely-related varieties in the history of English, so it comes as a surprise that there should now follow a second theoretical chapter, Chapter 4, on the outcome of **language** contact, i.e. where varieties in contact are **not** typologically or systemically related. Though McColl Millar discusses English examples, his focus now shifts to unrelated contact patterns, exemplified by Tok Pisin, Bonin (Ogasawara) English, Norfuk, and this presents a break in the book's argumentative structure and its overall scope. As theoretically challenging the status of so-called "creoloids" is (pp. 109–116), it is not clear to me why a discussion on Afrikaans should be included in a book on contact between "near relatives" (other languages involved in this context are simply not closely related) or why a presentation of pidginization in Papua New Guinea and the (rather uncritical) presentation of the post-creole continuum in the Caribbean should be discussed alongside koinéization in Fiji Hindi. Pidginization does not entail contact between similar varieties, so why give it prominence here? One would expect this in a general book on contact linguistics, certainly. Here, this contradiction is difficult to explain.

Chapter 5 returns to the original aims again and examines sources of contact-induced change in English, particularly the tendency to move from synthetic to analytical typology, which is compared with parallel developments in other Germanic languages. McColl Millar throws in the concept of "language drift" (pp. 141–143) and does not neglect mentioning the criticism it has met with in recent discussions on new-dialect formation (following Trudgill 2004). The thought-provoking point made here is that contact-induced change may accelerate when dialects are

transported at long distance and become extra-territorial varieties (Lass 1987), which certainly raises important issues for diffusion. Yet again (for me at least), this is not in line with what has been promised to be central here: “[i]t is the argument of this book that language contact is a primary means by which this acceleration can be explained” (p. 143). Why engage in a discussion of contact between Old English and Celtic languages and the return to the Celtic hypothesis in the “language contact and the early history of English” section (p. 149)? English and Celtic were not closely related, so they should not be included here at all (as interesting as the question is for the evolution of Old English, of course).

Chapter 6 provides some conclusions and comes to the final assessment that “a combination of the founder principle, swamping and many of Trudgill’s views can produce a preliminary archeology of a dialect’s development” (pp. 172–173). McColl Millar hopes to have somewhat redressed what he calls the “apparent blind spot some scholars have in seeing the different types of near-relative contact not as representing a continuum across the supposed dialect-language divide but rather as entirely different states and ecologies to be analysed using different theoretical paradigms” (p. 177). I am not sure I would agree entirely here, but bringing together research on dialect and language contact under the roof of contact linguistics is a huge challenge, particularly as the two more often than not go hand in hand (Schneider 2007; Schreier 2008).

All in all, McColl Millar is an original and independent scholar. I have always enjoyed reading his work, as he manages to bring different strands together in unexpected and often surprising ways. Yet this particular book, admittedly “painted with a broad brush” (p. 5), suffers somewhat due to the fact that the scope is re-adjusted quite liberally at times. Sometimes, readers may be left wondering where McColl Millar’s road is taking them. In my case, it was simply not clear why these varieties were selected, as they so obviously are not in line with the book’s main aims. By the same token, I was surprised to find a discussion on contact between distantly related languages and asked myself why there was such an extensive discussion of time depth in Chapter 3 (almost as if it was an independent variable), which however was not brought up more prominently in the final discussion. But perhaps my main point of criticism is that there was no attempt to define “near relatives” structurally or typologically. The efforts to measure the degree of relatedness here are half-hearted at best. Did Scots and Norn meet this criterion, for instance, or Spanish and Portuguese in *Fronterizo* (p. 117)? McColl Millar does not really provide an answer. If so, perhaps the really intriguing question is whether contact between “distantly-related” dialects (say Southern American English and working-class Glaswegian) should give rise to different processes than contact between “near-related” languages spoken in areas where there are stable multilingual

communities and great time depth (e.g. in South America; cf. Lipsky's 2006 discussion of Portunhol), which means that principles of dialect typology are included more rigorously. This is the real challenge for contact linguistics.

To summarize my general impression of this book: I do not at all mind leaving trodden paths and venturing into unexpected territory; however, I would appreciate a good machete to help me find my way.

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