

Raymond Hickey. (2014) *A dictionary of varieties of English*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell. 456 pp., Hardcover USD 124.95.

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I am in awe of those who can see a dictionary project through to completion, as it seems like such a daunting and overwhelming goal. Though it may seem odd to read a dictionary from cover to cover (it is the first time I have ever done it), this book is a rewarding, educational experience. It is less a dictionary in the manner of Allsopp's (1996) *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage* and more in the line of Crystal's fine series of dictionaries/encyclopedias. That is to say, the entries are not lexical items heard in a range of Englishes but entries for specific varieties (e.g. Gullah), concepts (e.g. semantic fields), processes (e.g. metathesis), theory (e.g. diffusion), and fundamental cross-linguistic phenomena, (e.g. antonym). As one might expect, Hickey's masterful work on Irish English is well represented, and while the socio-historical and linguistic entries on specific regional varieties are compendious, they reveal useful data as well.

The entries are arranged alphabetically, with 'æ/ before voiceless fricatives' (p. 9) as the first entry and 'Zurich English Newspaper Corpus' (p. 354) as the last entry. There are also fifteen pages of maps (pp. 1–15), two appendices (one with canonical lexical sets and the other a general guide to phonetic symbols [pp. 355–362]). A 'Reference guide for varieties of English' follows (pp. 363–431) and includes references alluded to in the text broken down by general geographical region (e.g. North America). The Reference Guide is then further subdivided largely by national or regional varieties. The dictionary ends with a listing of the most prominent scholarly journals in the field.

I will focus on observations of interest to readers of JPCL. Terms commonly used in creole studies are usefully and commonly applied across research in dialectology and linguistics in general. The purported 'creole' continuum (as exclusively applied to anglophone communities in the Caribbean) and its associated terms 'basilect', etc., are applied well beyond the Caribbean or traditional areas associated with creole languages. For example, the entry for Singaporean English reveals 'a continuum of varieties found in Singapore, the acrolectal of which is fairly close to general English' (p. 285). There is a 'continuum of Scottish Standard English to Scots, which are very different from forms to the south in England' (p. 52; see also p. 276 and the entry for 'Orkney and Shetland English' as well [p. 225]). Hickey

also writes of 'basilectal English' (p. 170) in regards to varieties spoken in India as well as in the entry for 'Chicano English' (p. 66). (Why the word 'Chicano' has a phonetic transcription next to the entry is unclear; it is a practice inconsistently applied throughout the volume; see also 'genre' [p. 133].) All language communities (and one would be foolish to suggest only communities speaking a variety of English) exhibit variation since all living idiolects/grammars exhibit this quality, which calls into question the idea of the uniqueness of the 'creole' continuum, not the issue of language variation among humans in general. Of course, one could always make the circular claim that Singaporean English must then be a 'creole' (but what about Scots?) and only creoles exhibit variation indicated by the continuum. No matter how easily falsified such a notion would be, it is still common in creole studies to suggest that only 'creole' communities have a continuum of varieties and that somehow the variation heard in creole communities is vaguely, uniquely different from other non-creole communities (however those are defined). The entry for 'continuum' (p. 79) makes no mention of either pidgins or creoles: 'A scale on which one can locate varieties ranging from a strongly vernacular to a near-standard form of a language.'

To further falsify the alleged uniqueness (except in so far as all varieties/languages and their bundle of associated features are somewhat unique) of Caribbean varieties in terms of variation and a continuum, one could cite Hickey:

Varieties of English which are listed individually are not always clearly separated from each other. It is more common for speakers to position themselves on a continuum whose extremes are represented by the most vernacular and the least vernacular forms of their English. Indeed many speakers deliberately move along this continuum depending on the nature or purpose of a specific situation. (p. vii)

Hickey makes clear that the above characterization applies to all varieties in his dictionary, not just so-called 'creoles'. One could easily take his useful generalization one small step further and apply it to all human languages, perhaps especially those in some kind of sustained contact with a literacy-based institutional standard, regardless of whether or not the varieties in question are lexically-related.

Though also not unique to creole-speaking communities (even if relevant to them), the emergence of prescriptive attitudes in Great Britain are revealed in separate entries for early grammars, e.g. Jonathan Swift's 'A proposal for correcting, improving, and ascertaining the English tongue' (pp. 10, 307), whose prescriptive judgments are not commented upon (see below). I refer readers to pages 53, 70, 135, and 138 for other such instances. However, the entries for 'prescriptive' and 'prescriptivism' (p. 248) are unburdened by any explicit mention of the role of institutional literacy in promoting and perpetuating the illusory view that only a single variety (the emerging written standard of a given national entity) is

grammatical (see also 'proscribe' [p. 254]). Related is the entry for 'prestige, overt' (p. 249), which makes no reference to the role of prescriptivism in creating it. However, 'Received Pronunciation' (pp. 263–264) does mention the institutional factor mentioned above, even if literacy isn't specifically mentioned. The 'writing' (p. 349) entry mentions the issues raised here.

Under 'African American English, terms for' (p. 19), Hickey writes that there is 'a preference in American society for "African American" rather than "black" as not all members of this ethnic group are the sole descendants of Africans'. While a lack of specific genealogical information frustrates many who are the descendants of slaves in the USA, in my experience and research that explanation sheds little or no insight into the preference of some African Americans for the term 'black American' over 'African American'. This contrast has more to do with the fact that the term African American is an ethnic-based term and as my many African American students have often explained to me, 'I don't know any Africans and I've never been to Africa.' There is often a lack of explicit cultural connections between Africa and its descendants in the Americas and these students (as well as others) prefer the term 'black', which is, of course, a race-based term rooted in the experience of racism, not a valid biological construct (see below). Since most black Americans are explicitly aware of the racist dimension within which they lead their daily lives, the term 'black' better captures for them the reality of how they see themselves or the way others see them. Many non-black Americans prefer the ethnic-based term over the race-based term so that they do not have to engage terms that refer to race (and racism). In either case it has little to do with an awareness of the fact that most African Americans are not solely descended from Africans, which many –if not most– in the community are in fact aware of and yet still prefer the race-based term 'black'.

There is a general lack of information regarding Central American varieties of English even though many have been spoken for a century or more and are fairly well documented in the last 40 years or so. For example, the 'Panamanian' (p. 230) entry reveals two brief sentences despite a good deal of available research, and there is no discrete map of the area, despite varieties being spoken in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Belize as well. One cannot even see Central America on the individual map of the Caribbean region despite the fact that these varieties are related to that areal group (Map 8). 'Table 2' (p. 59) only has one location listed for English in Panama (Colon), while it is also regularly spoken in Panama City and the region of Bocas del Toro as well (Panama is also missing from Table 18 and its list of pidgins and creoles of the anglophone world [p. 242]). This lack of representation for Englishes spoken in nations in Latin America was a general criticism of Allsopp's lexical dictionary (1996), which had broader anglophone Caribbean nationalist/political goals in terms of standardization and so largely ignored speech

communities where the national language of power is a variety of Spanish today. However, Hickey does provide an entry on Puerto Rico, which was ignored entirely by Allsopp (see Aceto 1998), where English varieties have been spoken for at least a century (beginning in 1898). The English-derived variety Kokoy is also absent from the description of Dominica (p. 99). St. Eustatius is only mentioned in passing in the entry for 'Dutch colonialism' (p. 102). The pronoun [aa(l)yu] heard in many Eastern Caribbean locations is absent from 'Table 19: Second person pronouns in varieties of English' (p. 253).

Hickey reports old, even falsified, positions in the field with little or no critical comment: 'Decreolization would then have followed, much as with forms of African American English in North America' (p. 20; see entry under 'Afro-Seminole' as well, p. 21). Though that was a popular attitude in the 1970s and 80s for imagining earlier forms of African American English, my impression is that this view has been roundly falsified by Schneider (1989) as well as Wolfram & Thomas (2002). A book published in 2014 should thus reflect the more current research, especially if the dictionary is to be used by non-specialists. The entry for 'decreolization' (p. 87) at least reports that it is 'one view' as regards 'African American English'. If that view is not representative of the field today, why repeat it with little comment just because research published in 1980 (35 years ago!) suggested it as one possible scenario. Unlike in, for example, literary studies, dates of research are crucial in empirical science and many entries lack dates or general decades suggesting when an older perspective was popular and current or superseded by subsequent research.

It is definitely worth considering whether a dictionary should clear up misinformation or just report general social confusions as if they were empirical fact in a journalistic style, and then let the reader sort through the evidence, e.g. confused notions about 'races' [sic] (p. 32). It is doubtful that largely meaningless terms such as 'Caucasian' (p. 61) have any place in a scholarly work *except* as terms to be critically deconstructed (which is not done here). Furthermore, who still subscribes to the strong relexification argument in the last 20 years that all pidgins and creoles derive from a Portuguese pidgin or Sabir? (See 'common core theory', [p. 73] as well as 'Sabir' [p. 272], which at least mentions 'some linguists' as a qualifier; however, the 'monogenesis' entry [p. 197] makes no such acknowledgment). Yet it is reported as if it were still current in the field. It is an old-fashioned idea that can of course be presented but the decades for its currency should crucially be mentioned as well. In that sense, the entry for 'creolization' (p. 85) reports uncritically the received view in the field that all so-called creoles derive originally from pidgins with no comment. The entry for 'elocution' (p. 107) is also unburdened by any critical analysis and 'correct diction' (emphasis mine) is reported with no comment. Why include this empirically falsified notion at all?

Though Hickey applies the terms of the so-called 'creole' continuum (i.e. 'basilect', [p. 45], 'mesolect' [p. 192] and 'acrolect' [p. 13]) to case studies well beyond the areas typically associated with what are often labeled creoles (e.g. Scots, Singapore English), his entries for those preceding terms are the standard received definitions in creole studies without any mention of any other 'non-creole' varieties. This seems self-defeating in unifying the study of English dialects and creoles (however the latter is ultimately defined) across the globe. The acrolect definition is the most flawed in which he erroneously asserts that 'the standard form of the language served as the original input' (p. 13). This distortion was a common enough assumption early in creole studies perhaps prior to 1980, but to suggest colonists and indentured servants spoke Standard English (whatever that meant in the 17th and 18th centuries) is clearly askew. This speaks to the old-fashioned issue that was alluded to above. The entry for 'basilect' has a surprising statement, considering the statements alluded to above about variation in all varieties: 'the basilect is represented by Jamaican Creole which is least like standard forms of English spoken there' (p. 45). There is not only a single variety of Jamaican Creole when describing forms that are sufficiently different from the standard.

Other old-fashioned perspectives creep into the text as well. For example, 'Arabian countries' (p. 96) is not synonymous with Arabic-speaking countries, which is what I assume was intended (perhaps countries of the Arabian Peninsula?). The Ogasawara islands do not seem to be 'discovered' (p. 222) by Spanish colonizers, even if they were the first Europeans to record encountering them (it appears the Japanese themselves were aware of their existence). The 'Yinglish' entry refers to 'Yiddish people', which is a phrase sometimes used to refer to Jews of Ashkenazik descent. Even though 'Yiddish' seems to derive from the German word for Jewish, 'Yiddish people' seems confused in the same way some folks use the term 'Spanish people', not to refer to someone from Spain, but to anyone who speaks Spanish – and certainly not all Jews speak Yiddish. The 'split infinitive' entry states, '[r]egarded by purists as poor English style despite its common occurrence' (p. 297). Why not plainly state it is linguistically grammatical? His understated writing suggests the purists may have a point (see also 'tautology' [p. 311] for a similar example) – and they do not, not linguistically speaking, at any rate.

Of interest to fieldworkers are the entries on 'acceptability judgment' and 'acceptable'. Hickey writes: 'The label "acceptable" is preferable to "correct" as it is not evaluative' (p. 12). For me, 'acceptable' still smacks strongly of prescriptivism and there may be no way out of this dead end except to rely on a circumlocution such as 'is this form/structure (whatever consultants are being interviewed about) regularly and commonly heard in your community?' But asking informants whether a form is 'acceptable' without some sort of orientation about the descriptive goals of linguistic science is likely to elicit a presumed prescriptive judgment, especially in

literacy-based cultures where confusion about the standard as the only grammatical variety is still common. Certainly 'acceptable' seems no less prescriptive than 'correct' or Bernstein's terms 'elaborated' and 'restricted', which were extensively criticized in the sociolinguistics literature ('code, elaborated versus restricted' [p. 70]; cf. 'grammatical' [p. 138] which seems much more descriptive and useful).

At other times, descriptivism takes a backseat to prescriptive-tinged writing. For example: There 'has been a pervasive **infiltration** of American words into English in England' (p. 28; emphasis mine). Should a grammatically prohibited distribution of a sound segment in a specific language accurately be labeled 'defective' (p. 98)? Is it linguistically useful to label a regularly occurring form as 'legal' (p. 258)? Are these the clearest and most accurate descriptive terms? (see entry for 'modal verb' as well [p. 196]). Hong Kong English is described as having '**unusual** rhythm and sentence stress' (148; emphasis mine). Compared to what?

Regarding 'Irish English', Hickey writes: 'Word pairs with complementary meanings are often confused' (p. 163). By whom? The speakers themselves? It reads uncomfortably similar to Randolph Quirk's assertion of 'non-native Englishes as deficient' (p. 168). Varieties in England located in terms of features somewhere between Received Pronunciation (RP) and Cockney are described as 'diluted' when compared to RP (p. 183). Is 'imperfectly' an accurate term for describing second language acquisition (p. 278)? What would that even mean in an empirical, descriptive context such as linguistic studies?

As one can see, it is easy to find entries with which to quibble when a work has such compendious breadth (see above) and occasionally an entry is confusing, incomplete or just inaccurate. To my knowledge, there are three auxiliary verbs in English: *to be*, *to have*, and *to do* (e.g., *she didn't finish her work, she did the work*) and not just the first two (p. 42). Sometimes largely synonymous terms are not co-referenced (e.g. 'alphabetism' [p. 24] and 'initialism' [p. 157] even though both entries use the same examples). Why there is a generic entry for 'dictionary' is lost on me. The entry for 'Downeast accent' (p. 100) should mention that the term is not only applied to coastal Maine but coastal North Carolina as well (but usually spelled 'Down East'). Hickey states 'most varieties of American, Canadian, Scottish and Irish English, do not have intrusive /r/' (p. 261). I am uncertain how 'most' was determined when millions of speakers of a range of American English dialects regularly say, for example, 'wa(r)sh', 'idea(r)' and 'soda(r)'. Surprisingly the 'slang' entry (p. 286) provides the folk definition only ('a non-linguistic term for colloquial speech') and yet, while the term is in fact confusingly used as such by many non-linguists, Hickey provides no clarification as to what slang actually is as a linguistic concept. The entry on 'taboo' states they are words or topics 'generally thought should be avoided' (p. 309). By whom? Topics such as sex, death, politics, and religion are generally avoided except when 'restricted to areas

of intimate behavior'? Taboo topics are those restricted or controlled according to audience, context, and goals but certainly not avoided except as an individual choice. What a 'fudged dialect' (p. 129) is, even after (re-)reading the entry, I cannot grasp. Regarding the entry for 'gap', he writes: 'English does not have a special personal pronoun for the second person plural' (p. 131). What Hickey intends, I imagine, is that Standard (written) English(es) lack this pronoun, not 'English' because nearly all vernacular varieties have a discrete pronoun. The entry on 'Hispanics' seems to suggest Mexico is part of Central America instead of North America (p. 146). An 'interloper' is described as one 'who participates in two speech communities', (p. 158), yet it seems any/every person familiar with the standard associated with institutional literacy participates in at least two speech communities negotiating between two varieties: the institutional standard and a more community-based, naturally-occurring variety. The difference between the entries 'morph' and 'morpheme' (p. 198) is lost on me. The entry on 'pronunciation' (p. 254) states curiously, '[p]ronunciation is a matter of phonetics rather than phonology', but it seems to me that phonology determines phonetics, which in turn influences pronunciation. The 'Sapir-Whorf hypothesis' entry states: 'While few linguists nowadays accept this strict link [this is the type of qualifier I had hoped would occur more frequently], there would seem to be some truth to the views of the two American scholars (p. 273)'. Nothing more: no references to any further research are included. The entry for 'anymore, positive' should include Philadelphia as a location of its usage (Salvucci 2006: 91). On a lighter note, one may go the rest of one's life and never encounter the words 'otiose' (p. 142) and 'paucal' (p. 220) again.

When Aceto & Williams (2003) (see entry under 'Eastern Caribbean', p. 105) was undergoing review, one reviewer of the manuscript objected strenuously to the word 'anglophone' in the proposed title, insisting there was no such word. Under pressure from the editor we changed the title unfortunately, but I was pleased to note that in the present volume it has its own entry in exactly the same meaning we had intended (pp. 31, 292).

There are relatively few typos considering the length and breadth of the work. However, see entries for 'BBC English' (p. 46), 'Table 3' (p. 60), the 'perfective, immediate' (p. 234) and 'West Midlands' (p. 346).

Why are books like this important specifically to creole studies? (They are transparently important to linguistics and dialect studies on the whole.) This volume shows that there are very few if any concepts used commonly in creole studies that cannot be accurately applied to specific languages studies anywhere in the world. This makes the field more vital and influential, to my mind, not less so. Until dialect studies and creole studies are harmonized with each other, creole studies will tend to always be a marginal field. Bakker et al. (2011) insists that so-called



creoles are typologically distinct ('typologically similar' would probably be uncontroversial), yet its conclusions seem unfalsifiable under any circumstances, at least in the usual Popperian sense. The authors admit 'it is not possible to specify which individual features are responsible for the clusterings' (p. 19). Viewing 'dialects' and 'creoles' as separate conceptual entities, though perhaps a necessary first step in scientific inquiry, does not seem to my mind to enhance the field, though it does make it more rarified (and the 'cult of uniqueness' in academia is very seductive and pervasive; see Aceto 2010). The book under review brings so much data and information from both fields together in one source that it readily enhances any reader's understanding of the English varieties and concomitant phenomena under examination.

## References

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