



Review

doi:[10.1017/S1360674324000091](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1360674324000091)

Guyanne Wilson and Michael Westphal (eds.), *New Englishes, new methods* (Varieties of English Around the World G68). Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2023. Pp. viii + 276. ISBN 9789027213686.

Reviewed by Beke Hansen , University of Kiel

The edited volume *New Englishes, New Methods* by Guyanne Wilson and Michael Westphal invites a critical discussion of methods used in the study of New Englishes, a field that has been dominated by corpus-linguistic methods. The eleven chapters of the volume ‘critically explore the gamut of familiar and unfamiliar methods applied in data collection and analysis in order to improve upon old methods and develop new methods for the study of English around the world’ (p. 1). The book is structured into four parts: I Corpora, II Phonetics and phonology, III Language attitudes and IV Ethnography, framed by an introduction and conclusion by the editors.

The introductory chapter stresses the need for a critical discussion of methods in New Englishes (pp. 1–14). While models of New Englishes have been critically reviewed and refined (e.g. Deshors 2018), methods of data collection and analysis in New Englishes have rarely been the centre of attention, even though they ultimately inform modelling. Wilson & Westphal start the chapter by defining and problematising the term ‘New Englishes’ and by applying their definition to the varieties investigated in the volume. These include ‘offline’ and digital Englishes in Asia (Indian English, Pakistani English, Philippine English), Africa (Nigerian English) and the Caribbean (Jamaican English, Trinidadian and Tobagonian English, St Kitts English), but also, maybe rather unexpectedly, Pennsylvania German English spoken by Mennonites in Canada. After applying influential models of World Englishes to the varieties under investigation, the editors make an inventory of existing methods in New Englishes. The upshot of the review is that we often find corpus-linguistic methods but rarely see acoustic and discourse-analytic methods in New Englishes research. Furthermore, studies in the realm of perception are generally rare, as are associated methods. The review of methods smoothly leads to the introduction of individual contributions at the end of the chapter.

The first part, on ‘Corpora’, includes four chapters. The opening chapter is by Axel Bohmann & Adesoji Babalola on ‘Verbal past inflection in Nigerian English: A case for sociolinguistic compound vision’ (pp. 16–41). To achieve a wide viewing angle, they include not only data from ICE-Nigeria but also from sociolinguistic interviews conducted in Warri and Ajegunle. The results of their variationist study indicate marked differences between the datasets, with unmarked forms ranging from 15 per cent in

ICE-Nigeria to 63 per cent in the Ajegunle interviews. Their mixed-effects logistic regression models show that ethnicity, verb semantics and context are significant predictors for the choice of unmarked forms in the three datasets. Morpho-phonological conditioning, however, only plays a role in the sociolinguistic interviews but not in the ICE data. The authors therefore caution against ‘undue generalization’ (p. 37) about New Englishes based on ICE data. The study is convincing given its diversified database and statistical sophistication. Readability could have been enhanced by examples illustrating the complex interactions presented in the results section.

A new dataset is also used in Muhammad Shakir’s ‘Functions of code-switching in online registers of Pakistani English’ (pp. 42–64). Based on a self-compiled corpus of tweets, Facebook posts and blogs, the author performs a thorough functional analysis of 1,811 code-switches from English to Pakistani languages (mostly Urdu). He finds that the largest share (41 per cent) fulfils discourse-pragmatic functions. These are referred to narrowly as ‘tags’ in the study, yet include a wide range of discourse-pragmatic phenomena such as question tags but also idiomatic expressions, discourse markers, interjections, honorifics and religious expressions. The second most frequent category are switches filling a lexical gap in English, followed by quoted speech in indigenous languages. More rarely used categories are emphasis, addressee specification and message qualification. Eleven per cent of code-switches are categorised as ‘free’, a category subsuming switches not easily fitting any other category and seemingly employed mainly for stylistic purposes. The analysis has been conducted with an eye to detail and is informed by the author’s insider knowledge as a member of the respective online communities. Future studies could report the shares of the subcategories that form part of the rather broad and potentially disparate category of ‘tags’.

The last two chapters in the part on ‘Corpora’ apply new methods to ‘old’ data: conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis are applied to ICE data. Theresa Neumaier writes about ‘New Englishes and Conversation Analysis: Turn-taking as a factor in explaining syntactic variation’ (pp. 65–83). Her analysis is based on roughly five hours of conversations from ACE (*Asian Corpus of English*) and ICE-Jamaica and ICE-Trinidad and Tobago that were richly annotated following conversation-analytic conventions. Her detailed analysis of turn-taking shows that, while syntactic strategies are the second most common strategy for holding one’s turn in the varieties studied, the types of strategies used differ. Southeast Asian speakers more commonly employ so-called pivot constructions, e.g. *we’re all like two years apart except for the youngest one’s like four years apart* (p. 74). In the Caribbean data, direct requests for the floor and repetitions of parts of the turn are more common. Neumaier mentions that pivot constructions sometimes co-occur with topicalisation and convincingly argues that their appearance in these interactional contexts may be one of the reasons behind their higher frequency in Asian varieties of English. A small point of criticism might be that the prominence topicalisation receives in the chapter’s line of argumentation is not matched in terms of the number of examples illustrating the phenomenon.

The first part closes with Michael Westphal & Guyanne Wilson’s chapter on ‘Creole and power: A Critical Discourse Analysis of legal cross-examinations in ICE Jamaica

and ICE Trinidad and Tobago' (pp. 84–106). The authors identify four main types of linguistic power strategies employed by attorneys in Caribbean legal cross-examinations: the use of Standard English, Creole, questions and reformulations. Attorneys use Standard English as their default code to establish a hierarchy in the courtroom that dissociates them from the witnesses. However, Creole can still be found. Jamaican attorneys use it for quoting witnesses, while Trinidadian attorneys generally use it more often, for longer stretches of speech, and for purposes of accommodation and stylisation. Another prime means for attorneys to exert control is the use of questions and question tags, whose functions differ by their position on the Creole continuum. Finally, attorneys also wield power by asking witnesses to rephrase their statements in Standard English. Given that not all witnesses but all attorneys can easily switch to Standard English, the authors conclude that 'Creole can only be used to do power when combined with English' (p. 101). The study demonstrates the power of critical discourse analysis in World Englishes, which zooms in on specific contexts of language use and takes into account their embeddedness in larger structures of inequality.

The second part, on 'Phonetics and phonology', is devoted to suprasegmental phonology, an area receiving comparatively little attention in World Englishes despite its prominence in laypeople's accounts. It features two studies that apply well-known prosodic methods from L1 varieties to the study of L2 varieties. In the case of Folajimi Oyebola & Warsa Melles' chapter, 'Question intonation patterns in Nigerian English' (pp. 108–31), it is the tone and break indices system (ToBI) that is used to annotate recordings of spoken language from ICE-Nigeria. The authors track the fundamental frequency (F_0) at the initial and final boundary tones in 851 questions and aim to map social variation. They show that questions, irrespective of their type (*wh-* or *yes-no*-question), tend to start with a level tone. Most questions end in a final falling tone, but rising tone can also be found, especially with *yes-no*-questions, and more often in Igbo than in Yoruba and Hausa speakers. In general, the authors aim to encourage more research examining the internal heterogeneity of New Englishes by integrating social factors. From a methodological standpoint, a discussion of the difficulties encountered in applying the ToBI method to the data at hand would have been interesting.

Next, Robert Fuchs writes about 'Analysing the speech rhythm of New Englishes' (pp. 132–55), presenting 'A guide to researchers and a case study on Pakistani, Philippine, Nigerian, and British English'. The guide outlines debates surrounding methodological decisions and provides recommendations for each step, from data elicitation, segmentation and annotation via the calculation of rhythm metrics to statistical analysis and reporting of results. Its overall aim is to implement a standardised method to enhance comparability between studies. Each step is discussed in reference to a case study performed on Pakistani, Philippine, Nigerian and British English based on reading data from the *Speech Accent Archive*. The case study reveals that two often-used vowel-based metrics, VarcoV and nPVI-V, empirically confirm that the three ESL varieties are more syllable-timed than British English. A third metric, the percentage of the duration of vowels over the whole duration of a phrase (%V), showed

different results, namely that only Pakistani English turned out to be significantly more syllable-timed than the other three varieties. Fuchs provides interesting avenues for further research and proposes concrete ideas for pursuing them. The research community will appreciate that the chapter provides hyperlinks to files in an online repository, including a Praat script that automatically calculates seven rhythm metrics. Unfortunately, the script is not accessible (yet).

The next chapter opens the third part, on 'Language attitudes', shifting the focus from language production to perception. Kingsley Oluchi Ugwuanyi proposes using 'Acceptability Judgment Tasks in New Englishes research' in his study with a 'Focus on acrolectal Nigerian English' (pp. 158–77). His study is based on a written questionnaire that elicits the acceptability ratings of fifteen sentences with grammatical and lexical features of Nigerian English. In forty focus groups of three, student informants from four Nigerian universities had to reach consensus on (un-)acceptability. The quantitative results based on the final group decision indicate that the acceptance of Nigerian forms is generally very high. The qualitative analysis of the focus group discussions reveals that participants often justified their acceptance with their own use, thereby claiming ownership of English. Overall, the study is a convincing plea for conducting more research on language attitudes in New Englishes and for integrating quantitative and qualitative methods. The innovative design of the acceptability judgment task as a group task emphasises the dynamic and interactive process behind acceptability ratings. Two minor quibbles relate to missing definitions of some Nigerian English expressions and the fact that some stimuli sentences include two Nigerian English forms, making it difficult to judge which form was the decisive factor.

Next, Giuliana Regnoli writes about using 'Mixed methods in the mapping of accent perceptions in Indian varieties of English' (pp. 178–200). She combines methods from perceptual dialectology and language attitude research by using map-drawing tasks and verbal guise tests to uncover overt and covert attitudes towards different regional varieties of Indian English. She recruited sixty informants from different states of India who formed a community of practice as temporary students at the University of Heidelberg. Her informants speak a range of different L1s, including languages of the northern Indo-Aryan and the southern Dravidian families. The findings of the map-drawing task reveal that her informants identified seven macro regions of English in India, including Northernmost, Delhi, Northern, North Western, North Eastern, Central and Southern Indian English. Regnoli effectively visualises the regions and their adjectival labels in a sophisticated aggregated map. Her respondents clearly perceive an urban–rural divide in terms of standardness and prestige, and they often describe Southern Indian English in stigmatising terms. The verbal guise test supports the findings of the map-drawing task as southern guises are rated more negatively, especially on status traits, by both northerners and southerners.

The final chapter of the third part also employs the draw-a-map task but complements it with sociolinguistic interviews. In 'Mapping perceptions in New Englishes: A case study from St Kitts' (pp. 201–20), Mirjam Schmalz analyses forty-nine hand-drawn maps and

interviews with twenty-seven informants from St Kitts. The map task findings indicate that the informants perceive the neighbouring island of Nevis as a homogeneous whole, while making detailed perceptual distinctions between different areas of St Kitts. For example, they often circled St Paul's as a village and added stigmatising comments. The village was also often mentioned in the interviews as a place where Creole is frequently spoken. In general, however, in the interviews, informants tended to paint spatial variation with a broader brush, following an urban–rural divide rather than singling out specific places. What is particularly appealing about this study is its interdisciplinary toolkit, drawing on tools from geography, more precisely geo-information systems software, and linguistics. In describing the history of mapping as tools for 'orientation and the perpetuation of knowledge' (p. 202), a comment on the role of maps during colonialism could have been added given the broader context of postcolonial Englishes.

Part IV, on 'Ethnography', begins with Miriam Neuhausen's 'Insights from ethnographic fieldwork in an Old Order Mennonite community' upon which she builds a framework for 'Understanding, collecting, and presenting data in New Englishes research' (pp. 222–42). Her detailed insights come from a five-month research stay at an Old Order Mennonite community in southern Ontario. She highlights the benefits of conducting ethnographic research to understand sociolinguistic realities, local manifestations of well-known social variables, and to identify locally relevant social variables. With reference to data collection, Neuhausen advocates adopting a wide understanding of who counts as a representative speaker and discusses consequences of implementing the Labovian sociolinguistic interview in a multilingual environment. Concerning data presentation, she encourages researchers to consider their own positionality and power dynamics in the research process, advising them to see themselves as 'learners instead of teachers' (p. 236) and to prioritise community concerns. It is laudable that Neuhausen brings the concept of researcher positionality into the focus of linguistic research. The discussion about the classification of Pennsylvania German English as a 'New English' could have been somewhat more balanced by addressing conceivable counterarguments to the categorisation.

The final thematic chapter is by Theresa Heyd on 'Complicating the *field*: World Englishes and digital ethnography' (pp. 243–62). The author inspires researchers to expand their view to digital Englishes and to engage in digital ethnography. This entails departing from the traditional understanding of varieties as static nation-based entities and subscribing to a dynamic understanding of Englishes as mobile and global resources. Heyd reviews three representative case studies in digital ethnography, including one of her own. These studies feature multilingual practices in instant messages by Polish immigrants in London, in posts by a Mongolian Facebook group and threads by Nigerians on the *Nairaland* forum. Based on her review, she describes best practices in terms of research methodology, for example the collection of 'blended data' (p. 250) integrating online and offline speaker data. The outlook addresses ethical challenges in digital ethnography, to which, according to Heyd, researchers in World Englishes might successfully respond if they transfer their profound insights and

experience from conducting ethical fieldwork on the ground to the digital realm. Heyd's optimistic outlook on how to overcome ethical challenges conforms to her conceptualisation of the blurring of online and offline spaces. It is ultimately through conceptually removing the physical–digital boundary that a fruitful space for discussing ethical challenges opens up.

The chapter 'Conclusion: New Englishes, new methods, new directions' carves out the contribution of the volume with regard to enhancing old methods, developing new methods and applying them in new contexts (pp. 263–74). In terms of enhancing old methods, several chapters made use of the ICE data in novel ways, for phonological analysis (Oyebola & Melles), for conversation analysis (Neumaier) and for critical discourse analysis (Westphal & Wilson). Bohmann & Babalola enriched ICE data with sociolinguistic interviews and Ugwuanyi redesigned the acceptability judgment task as a group task. Schmalz and Regnoli can be credited with bringing new methods from perceptual dialectology into New Englishes. Oyebola & Melles and Fuchs are commended for developing methods for investigating suprasegmental features of New Englishes. Neuhausen and Heyd laid down new principles for ethnography on the ground and online. Finally, old and new methods were also applied in new contexts, including for the investigation of lesser-studied varieties (Shakir; Schmalz; Neuhausen), English in the diaspora (Regnoli) and digital Englishes (Shakir; Heyd). The conclusion ends with a discussion of the methodological future of New Englishes, with the editors envisioning closer collaboration between World Englishes and sociolinguistics that turns the spotlight on speakers of New Englishes and their sociocultural context. On a meta-level, they call for more reflexivity in research on New Englishes.

The editors have successfully compiled a well-edited and formatted volume covering a wide variety of methods for the investigation of different levels of linguistic analysis and including a broad range of varieties. The only missing pieces may be in the part on 'Phonetics and phonology', where methods used for the study of segmental phonology and the application of new methods such as forced alignment to New Englishes could have been added (cf. Meer 2020). The order of the contributions and their assignments to the individual parts is sensible. However, the part on 'Phonetics and phonology' could have been more accurately titled using a method label.

In terms of content, the volume is a very valuable addition to the field that fills a gap in the critical discussion of methods in New Englishes. The individual chapters differ in how much they add to the discussion, given that reflections about methods are not equally central to all. Nevertheless, they are all refreshing as they show that methods in New Englishes are clearly not restricted to quantitative corpus-based research on ICE that compares specific features across a variety of New Englishes against the yardstick of British and American English.

The contributions in the volume seem to herald a new area of qualitative ethnographic, postcolonial and critical methods in New Englishes. Several contributions indicate that the pendulum that has been swinging in the direction of quantitative methods in World Englishes for decades might be swinging back to more qualitative methods that zoom in on speakers and their contexts (e.g. Neumaier; Westphal & Wilson; Neuhausen; Heyd).

The focus on speakers of New Englishes also conforms to the postcolonial agenda of several contributions as they give voice to speakers by including their utterances and acknowledging their perceptions. They thereby flatten hierarchies established in the research process and elevate speakers from the status of informants to knowledge co-constructors (e.g. Regnoli; Schmalz; Neuhausen). The decidedly postcolonial perspective also becomes visible in the chapters that scrutinise the internal heterogeneity of New Englishes instead of viewing New Englishes as homogeneous entities (e.g. Bohmann & Babalola; Oyebola & Melles). Rather than working with a one-dimensional view of New Englishes as defined by differences to British and American English, several studies try to arrive at a multidimensional perspective by adopting different angles through mixing various methods (e.g. Regnoli; Schmalz).

Moreover, the volume lays out a critical perspective on World Englishes (cf. also Saraceni 2015). It addresses questions of power that become relevant in the research process (e.g. Westphal & Wilson; Neuhausen) and the World Englishes paradigm more generally (Westphal & Wilson, conclusion). This includes questions about the researcher–informant relationship and about who is in the position to study and hence describe New Englishes. This reflexivity is much needed in the field to avoid perpetuating colonial ways of thinking in research design by defining New Englishes against British and American English, by viewing them as homogeneous entities that may lead to ‘Othering’ and stereotyping, and by gate-keeping who can study New Englishes and how. It is noteworthy that the volume itself includes quite a diversity of scholars. In general, the critical points raised in the volume may initiate important discussions about the implementation of future practices in World Englishes such as a critical audit of scholars and references included in future publications (cf. D’Ignazio & Klein 2020).

I would like to end my review with an analogy that may make the impact of the volume more tangible. The way in which Schmalz described how her respondents from St Kitts perceived the neighbouring island of Nevis as a homogeneous entity (p. 210) is strikingly reminiscent of some insights from ‘traditional’ research on New Englishes. From a distance and for outsiders to the island, Nevis looks like a monolithic entity without internal differentiation. Yet closer inspection and collaboration with speakers as proposed in the volume will likely reveal more and more fine-grained layers and this will bring researchers in New Englishes closer to a full picture of a specific variety. Furthermore, this change of perspective will help researchers to fulfil their social responsibility by gearing research towards community needs while exploring the potential of a more ethnographic, postcolonial and critical approach to World Englishes.

Reviewer’s address:

English Department

University of Kiel

Leibnizstrasse 10

24118 Kiel

Germany

hansen@anglistik.uni-kiel.de

References

- Deshors, Sandra C. (ed.). 2018. *Modeling World Englishes: Assessing the interplay of emancipation and globalization of ESL varieties*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- D'Ignazio, Catherine & Lauren F. Klein. 2020. *Data feminism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Meer, Philipp. 2020. Automatic alignment for New Englishes: Applying state-of-the-art aligners to Trinidadian English. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 147(4), 2283–94.
- Saraceni, Mario. 2015. *World Englishes: A critical analysis*. London: Bloomsbury.

(Received 15 March 2024)