



Raymond Hickey, *Sounds of English Worldwide*. New Jersey: Wiley–Blackwell, 2023. Pp. xxiii + 408. Paperback \$59.95, ISBN: 978-1-119-13127-4; e-book \$48, ISBN: 978-1-119-13129-8

## Book Review

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Hickey's ambitious goals for this volume are not only to describe the sounds of English as it is spoken anywhere in the world, but also to illuminate the historical and social factors involved in the development of English varieties around the world. In addition to providing such vast coverage, it is aimed at two audiences: readers who want to know about varieties of English for practical reasons, and those who are interested in phonological analysis, based on English variation (p. xix); furthermore, the book is meant for readers at two levels, students and scholars (p. xxi). Hickey accomplishes his goals admirably, and although I will point to minor critiques below, they are relatively inconsequential compared with the valuable resources this book offers.

The book is organized into three main parts: Part I Language and Variation (pp. 1–126), Part II The Spread of English (pp. 127–154), and Part III Regions and Countries (pp. 155–298), followed by an Outlook section, appendices, a glossary, and references. Part I focuses on variation in sounds, providing an introduction to variation and change (sociolinguistics), the sound systems of English (phonetics and phonology), and historical sound changes in English (diachronic and contact linguistics); each section includes shorter headed paragraphs defining terms, introducing issues, discussing trends, and offering explanations. Part II includes the history of the spread of English speakers and some discussion of the dialect features they carried with them. Hickey discusses the factors involved in the developments of English around the world, including language contact and shift, the effects of the founders' varieties (Mufwene, 1996) and the process of new dialect formation (Trudgill, 2004). Part III Regions and Countries is the largest section of the book. While Hickey focuses on the varieties of places where English is spoken natively, he also includes parts of Africa, Asia, and the Pacific where English is used as a second or foreign language, plus creoles with an English lexifier as well. Within the description of each region or country there is generally an account of the history of English there, and, when possible, Hickey provides lists of characteristic features of pronunciation associated with the local variety or varieties of English, often in forms enabling comparisons across varieties.

Hickey concludes with a brief Outlook section, in which he foresees only the continued growth of English, especially among users who speak other languages as well, which will provide the potential for more new features and varieties to develop, along with new regional epicenters. Although the future also likely includes the loss of some dialect features, especially from rural British varieties, Hickey provides reason to expect that accents will be less affected than lexis. The book concludes with Appendices, which provide a timeline of varietal development, the history of English and its major sound changes in the past, transcription conventions, and Wells' original lexical sets plus the extensions used in the book. Finally, Hickey provides a thorough glossary of terms (15 pages) and a comprehensive set of references (46 pages), with publication dates ranging from 1684 to still in press.

Overall, the book offers a wealth of information in one place and provides an excellent reference work for the state of the field as of 2023. As the author notes in Part I, many topics are discussed briefly in single-paragraph sections; the result is a bit choppy and the organizing principles are not always clear. However, these topics introduced in Part I are used in Parts II and III, so readers exploring later sections will be able to discover or review any necessary background information by checking Part I or the glossary; the index makes that straightforward. The intended multiple audiences, from advanced undergraduates to researchers in the field, means that the level of discussion ranges from suitable for a generally educated lay person to more technical discussions of interest to specialists, but there is something for everyone. Hickey has done

a great deal to make the material accessible to audiences who might lack one or more parts of the background necessary to understand it, whether that requires explanations of phonetics, phonology, sociolinguistics, historical linguistics, or even history and geography. In addition to the glossary and index, the book also includes numerous maps, both geographical and linguistic, which are essential to following both the historical and the varietal descriptions. A reader who proceeds cover to cover will find some overlap and repetitions, especially in definitions or examples, but this seems to be a feature rather than a bug. Unless you are reviewing the book, reading from beginning to end is not required; readers can dip into the volume at places of interest and follow the discussion without always having to search for explanations elsewhere.

While the coverage in Part III is extensive geographically, the level of depth of the descriptions is uneven, which reflects the current uneven nature of our knowledge about variation. Thus, for example, sections on England (pp. 157–175) and the United States (pp. 195–216) include descriptions of social, ethnic, and geographic variation, while the sections on Orkney and Shetland English (p. 180) and Barbados (pp. 226–227) are little more than a paragraph each, much of it about the history of English in the area with only a few distinguishing sound features. Hickey excels on detail, much of which is segmental, with less on suprasegmentals such as intonation, stress, rhythm, again following strengths and weaknesses of the literature in the field. Any researcher looking for a project might seek out the shorter sections in Part III and find gaps to be filled, because if it is not in this book, it is likely not in the literature. Hickey provides a reference list with each section, and the final bibliography alone is worth the price of the book.

Hickey's discussions of sociolinguistics and history provide overviews and connections among varieties. When it comes to Part III, he is in general more focused on details than on connections, but he does provide some comparisons – for example, the discussion of common features in World Englishes and second-language varieties (pp. 291–298). His additions to the Wells lexical sets for vowels, especially for varieties with splits and mergers, and the additional lexical sets he provides for consonants make comparisons across varieties easier to grasp.

In addition to the extensive historical and linguistic background in Parts I and II, the appendices, and the glossary, the coverage Hickey provides in Part III is not available elsewhere. We have numerous works, both articles and books, that focus on the phonetics and phonology of specific varieties of English (e.g., Deterding, 2010; Wiltshire, 2020); we also have works that cover the linguistic features of a range of varieties but do not focus solely on phonetics and phonology (Melchers, Shaw & Sundkvist, 2019; Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008; Trudgill & Hannah, 2013). However, there has not been such comprehensive coverage of both a range of varieties while focusing only on the sounds and sound system since Schneider et al. (2004). Fortunately, 2023 will bring us another work focused on the sounds of English around the world (Hansen Edwards, forthcoming/2023). Hansen Edwards' book, however, appears

to be organized by structure rather than variety, so it may not be so easy to determine the characteristics of varieties as in Hickey's book, nor does it promise the theoretical and historical background required to understand the development of those characteristics, as Hickey's work does. On the other hand, both Schneider et al. (2004) and Hansen Edwards (forthcoming/2023) include access to sound files to exemplify their descriptions, a feature Hickey's publication lacks which might be useful for those new to the field.

Given the nature of the work, which includes abundant use of the IPA and a great deal of technical terminology, there are remarkably few typos; one of the few that might be confusing is a spectrogram (Fig I.11, p. 56) in which the labels 'nurse' and 'term' appear to be switched. There are also a couple of infelicitous section titles; for example, Appendix A, 'Timeline for Varieties of English', contains sections called 'Northern Hemisphere' and 'Southern Hemisphere', but India, Singapore, and Hong Kong are all listed (counterfactually) in the latter section. Perhaps West and East of the UK would have served as better labels for the intended groupings (apart from the Falklands).

Nevertheless, these are minor points, while Hickey's work is a major accomplishment and a welcome and useful addition to the literature for anyone interested in phonetics, phonology, dialectology or World Englishes. I expect the book will provide resources for both students and researchers interested in advancing our understanding of the variation and development of the sounds of English worldwide for years to come.

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