

Book Review

Keywords:

centrifugal and centripetal forces; incipient regionalism; endonormativity; vowel shift; econo-language planning

Corresponding author:

Nkonko M. Kamwangamalu
Email: nkamwangamalu@howard.edu

The linguistics of contact and change: A review of *English In Multilingual South Africa*

Raymond Hickey (ed.), *English in Multilingual South Africa: The Linguistics of Contact and Change*

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xxi+420. Hardback, ISBN 978-1-108-42534-6. Paperback, ISBN 978-1-108-44223-7

Nkonko M. Kamwangamalu 

Department of English, Howard University, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

One of the characteristic features of South Africa, which the apartheid system used to legitimate its divide and rule ideology, is linguistic diversity. The country has a multi-racial population of 59.39 million (at 2021) speaking at least some 25 languages divided into three major groups: African languages (e.g., Zulu, Xhosa, etc.), European languages (e.g., English, Afrikaans, Portuguese, etc.), and Asian languages (mostly Chinese languages, e.g., Cantonese and Hakka; and Indian languages, e.g., Hindi, Tamil, etc.). It is within this web of languages that English functions in South Africa. Contact between English and South Africa's other languages has resulted in a wide range of sociolinguistic phenomena that the book under review investigates, among them language variation and change, codeswitching, language shift, and multilingualism. Also, as the editor notes on the back cover, the book investigates 'the challenges that South Africans face as a result of multilingualism and globalization in both education and social interaction.'

The book consists of 18 chapters preceded by front matters and followed by a timeline for South African History (pp. 394–399), a glossary (pp. 400–414), and a subject index (pp. 415–420). The chapters are divided evenly into three sections, each with 6 chapters.

Section 1 – *A Framework for English in South Africa* – offers a historical background to the social and linguistic life of English in South Africa, along with theoretical frameworks against which the language can be studied. This section consists of the following chapters: Chapter 1, *English in South Africa: Contact and Change* (Raymond Hickey, pp. 3–15), presents a review of the history, development, and literature on English in South Africa, along with a brief note on the changes that the language has undergone over time in the polity. Chapter 2, *South Africa in the Linguistic Modeling of World Englishes* (Edgar Schneider, pp. 16–29), reviews earlier literature on South African English (SAfE), highlights attempts at modeling the variety and its subvarieties in the light of World Englishes theories, and identifies some of the issues that need to be addressed to gain a better understanding of SAfE. Chapter 3, *South African English, the Dynamic Model and the Challenge of Afrikaans Influence* (Ian Bekker, pp. 30–51), critiques Schneider's Dynamic Model (DM) in light of the complexity of SAfE. Chapter 4, *The Historical Development of South African English: Semantic Features* (Ronel Wasserman, pp. 52–73), is a microlinguistic study into the development of some semantic features of SAfE over time and across registers. Chapter 5, *Regionality in South African English* (Deon du Plessis, Ian Bekker & Raymond Hickey, pp. 74–100), is also a microlinguistic study into SAfE, but with the focus on regional variation in the realization of various vowels. The last chapter in this section, by Haidee Kotze (pp. 101–126), explores how editing reflects and affects endonormativity and convergence in South Africa's written Englishes.

Section 2 – *Sociolinguistics, Globalization, and Multilingualism* – discusses issues in language contact, language variation, language policy and planning, and decoloniality. In Chapter 7 (pp. 129–150), Tessa Dowling, Kay McCormick, and Charlyn Dyers survey language contact and multilingual practices in Cape Town. They note that despite the

dominance of standard English in public domains, non-standard English and other languages are widely used and valued in other contexts (e.g., hip-hop and rap clubs) in the city. In Chapter 8 (pp. 151–175), Alida Chevalier delivers a microlinguistic account of vowel shift in SAfE, with the focus on the reverse short front vowel (RVS). Heather Brookes, in Chapter 9 (pp. 176–195), examines the role of English in South African *Tsotsitaals*, language varieties associated mostly with the youth. The next Chapter (pp. 196–215), by Russell Kaschula, raises the question whether Africa can develop economically using former colonial languages (e.g., English, Portuguese, etc.); and what role, if any, Africa's indigenous languages should play in the region's socio-economic development. Kaschula introduces the notion of econo-language planning, defined as “a need to integrate language, identity, and economic realities into a coherent language planning process that takes cognizance of localization (indigenous language and culture) in the face of globalization” (p. 200). Integrating language planning and the economy is the focus of research in language economics, a field of studies that explores ways in which linguistic and economic variables influence one another in the success or failure of language policy, as discussed, in the African context, in Djite (2008) and Kamwangamalu (2016). In their chapter (pp. 216–238), Kathleen Heugh and Christopher Stroud contextualize English within a decolonial perspective of multilingualism in sub-Saharan Africa, with the focus on South Africa. The authors challenge what the American anthropologist and geographer James Blaut (1993) critically calls “the colonizer's model of the world”, also known as “Eurocentric diffusionism” (Blaut, 1993: 10), according to which, inter alia, knowledge is produced in the north and is then consumed in the south. As Blaut puts it, Eurocentric diffusionism is a western-based paradigm, once used to justify colonialism and the repression of indigenous peoples, according to which “all good things, including dominant languages, develop first in the West, and are then ‘diffused’ to the periphery, based on western models” (Blaut, 2000: 11). On the contrary, Heugh and Stroud demonstrate, convincingly, that contemporary debates over multilingualism in South Africa, for example, that now circulate in northern contexts are not new; they do, rather, follow on from African debates some decades ago (p. 231).

The last section in the book – *Language Interfaces* – focuses on the outcomes of contact between English and South Africa's other languages. Some such outcomes include codeswitching, language shift, and linguistic interference. Chapters 12, 13, 15, 16, 17 and 18 all are essentially microlinguistic studies into SAfEs. In Chapter 12 (pp. 241–264) and Chapter 15 (pp. 310–328), Bertus van Rooy and Silvester Simango examine codeswitching between English and Afrikaans and between isiXhosa and English, respectively. In Chapter 13 (pp. 265–287), Raymond Hickey highlights some characteristic features of South African Indian English (pp. 273–280) – a shift variety – and raises the question whether such features qualify shift varieties to be accorded the status of a typological class, that is, as ontologically separate from other varieties. Chapters 16, 17, and 18 are also microlinguistic studies into SAfEs. In Chapter 16 (pp. 329–349), Sabine Zerbian

investigates “aspects of sentence intonation in BSAfE”. Chapter 17 (pp. 350–370), by Carien Wilsenach, studies the development of cognitive-linguistic skills in Sotho-English learners. In Chapter 18 (pp. 371–393), Ella Wehrmeyer discusses linguistic interference in interpreting from English to South African Sign Language, using a corpus of interpreted news broadcast. Chapter 14 (pp. 288–309) by Dorrit Posel and Jochen Zeller is the only chapter (in this section) that does not deal with microlinguistic features of SAfEs. Instead, its main goal is to determine whether there is evidence of language shift from Afrikaans to English in the so-called ‘colored’ communities and whether there are regional differences in language use among those communities.

Evaluation

This book is a welcome addition to the vast body of literature on English in South Africa (e.g., Lass 1995; Silva 1998; Smit 1998; Kamwangamalu 2002, 2003; Naidoo 2012; Bekker 2013; Mesthrie, 2010, 2017; Van der Walt and Van den Berg 2014; etc.). The contributors to the book are experts in the field and offer new perspectives from which various facets of English in South Africa can be investigated (see, for instance, Chapters 1 & 2 on Schneider's dynamic model; Chapter 8 on vowel shift in South African English; Chapter 10 & 11 on language planning in South Africa; Chapter 17 on the development of cognitive-linguistic skills in multilingual learners; to name but a few). The collection is well written and is readily accessible to the reader. Nonetheless, a short introduction to each of the three sections as well as a short abstract for each of the chapters would make the collection even more reader-friendly than it is in its current form. I found all the chapters in this collection, regardless of their focus, whether microlinguistic or macrolinguistic, to be theoretically well grounded. However, the division of the chapters into three sections appears to be random. For example, there is no rationale for placing Chapter 5, *Regionality in South African English* (pp. 74–100) and Chapter 8, *Internal Push, External Pull: The Reverse Short Front Vowel Shift in South African English* (pp. 151–175), in Section 1 (*A Framework for English in South Africa*) and Section 2 (*Sociolinguistics, Globalization, and Multilingualism*), respectively. Both chapters are microlinguistic studies into SAfE and should, normally, be placed in Section 3 (*Language Interfaces*), where five of the six chapters (except Chapter 14, pp. 288–309) also examine microlinguistic features of SAfE. Other than this remark, which has more to do with the organization rather than the contents of the book, researchers and students in the field of World Englishes will find in this collection a wealth of resources on English in multilingual South Africa, especially on the impact, both linguistic and socio-political, of contact between English and South Africa's other languages.

References

- Bekker, I. 2013. “The Formation of South African English.” *English Today* 29 (1): 3–9.

- Blaut, J. M. 1993. *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Blaut, J. M. 2000. *Eight Eurocentric Historians*. New York: Guilford.
- Djite, P. 2008. *The Sociolinguistics of Development in Africa*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Kamwangamalu, N. M. (ed.) 2002. "English in South Africa. A Special Issue." *World Englishes* 21 (1). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kamwangamalu, N. M. 2003. "When 2 + 9 = 1: English and the Politics of Language Planning in a Multilingual Society: South Africa." In *The Politics of English as a World Language*, edited by C. Mair, 235–246. New York, NY: Rodopi B.V.
- Kamwangamalu, N. M. 2016. *Language Policy and Economics: The Language Question in Africa*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lass, R. 1995. "South African English." In *Language and Social History: Studies in South African Sociolinguistics*, edited by R. Mesthrie, 68–88. Cape Town: David Philip.
- Mesthrie, R. 2010. "Socio-Phonetics and Social Change: Deracialization of the GOOSE Vowel in South African English." *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 14 (1): 3–33.
- Mesthrie, R. 2017. "Class, Gender, and Substrate Erasure in Sociolinguistic Change: A Sociophonetic Study of Schwa in Deracializing South African English." *Language* 93 (2): 314–346.
- Naidoo, J. 2012. "The Hegemonic Position of English as a Medium of Instruction at Primary School Level in Kwazulu-Natal, and its Impact on Parents' Preferences of Schooling for their Children." PhD diss., KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa: Durban University of Technology.
- Silva, P. 1998. "South African English: Oppressor or Liberator." *The Major Varieties of English, Papers from MAVEN 97. ACTA WEXIONENSIA Humaniora/Humanities* 1: 69–78.
- Smit, U. 1998. "South African English Lexemes for South Africans – a Case in Point for a Developing Multicultural Standard of English." *The Major Varieties of English, Papers from MAVEN 97. ACTA WEXIONENSIA Humaniora/Humanities* 1: 79–92.
- Van der Walt, U., and Van den Berg, B. 2014. "English Medium of Instruction: A Situation Analysis." *South African Journal of Education* 27 (1): 69–82.



NKONKO M. KAMWANGAMALU, PhD (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign), is a Distinguished Research Faculty and Outstanding Full Professor of Linguistics in the Department of English at Howard University. He has taught at the National University of Singapore, the University of Swaziland, and the University of Natal in Durban, South

Africa. His areas of research interest include codeswitching, multilingualism, language policy and planning, World Englishes, and African linguistics. He has published 12 books and over 120 articles in peer-refereed journals and edited collections. His latest book is *Language Policy and Economics* (Palgrave, 2016). His scholarly articles have appeared in *Multilingua*, *Sociolinguistics*, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *Language Problems and Language Planning*, *TESOL Quarterly*, *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *World Englishes*, *Chicago Linguistic Society*, *Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics*, to list some. Email: nkamwangamalu@Howard.edu