Rezensionen

Leitner, Gerhard, 2004. *Australia's Many Voices: Australian English - The National Language*. xiii + 396pp. ISBN 3 11 018194 0, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Leitner, Gerhard, 2004. *Australia's Many Voices: Ethnic Englishes, Indigenous and Migrant Languages, Policy and Education*. xiv + 341pp. ISBN 3-11-018195-9, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

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Two volumes with the same title but different subtitles! Let's refer to them as *2004a* and *2004b*. Together they come to about 800 pages, too much for any publisher to put into just one volume. But clearly it has been written as one work, and indeed the work of a lifetime: "This study brings to some sort of end my research and teaching done over two decades" (Acknowledgements p.viii) The author claims, justifiably, that his work is unique in the field of Australian language studies in its comprehensiveness, and in its viewing the whole story within the overarching concept of "a transformation of a language habitat". His work, he asserts, "will benefit readers in a wide range of disciplines. Australian Studies, English Studies, descriptive and applied linguistics are, of course, the central ones. A particular target is English Studies with its concern with national varieties of English... But it will also interest social and political scientists who look at the ability of language to create social coherence or conflict... Social psychologists will find information on the role of language in shaping individual or group identities, in making standardization and codification acceptable and in reforming the educational sector". (p.44, 2004a) By his use of the "habitat" concept he "casts a language net onto Australia", claiming that the same concept "provides a model for English everywhere, indeed for other habitats, as in New Zealand, South Africa, the USA or Canada". (p.14)

Such a comprehensive approach calls for a similarly comprehensive preparation. The author is professor in the Institute for English Philology in the Free University of Berlin. He spent nearly one year at the University of Sydney and Macquarie U in 1938-84. In 1995 he was awarded a research prize by the Australian Research Council [the author erred in the preface; the prize came from the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, GL], and this led to many visits to Australia and close contact with university departments throughout Australia, with politicians, broadcasting authorities, journalists, publishers, etc. He has attended many linguistics conferences in Australia, and is a familiar figure in the academy. Over the years he has published about twenty academic papers on the languages of Australia, especially Australian English. His reading in this field has been wide and he is one of a trio of scholars who undertook the preparation of a first bibliography of language in Australia and New Zealand, 1788-2001, now published in CD-ROM

form (2005, Mouton de Gruyter). The two books in this review present critical accounts of almost every major study in their respective fields, and many minor ones.

Clearly this has been an ambitious and (partly because of its adopted integrative approach) a complex study. Recognising its complexity the author wonders "Can one do more...than present it in a fairly lucid way?" *(p.8, 2004b)* The presentation is certainly comprehensive and the critical judgments are acute, but the achievement of lucidity is another question. The text could certainly have done with an editor, and there are signs of both haste and fatigue in the writing. Although the style is broadly that expected in an academic treatise, this author has chosen often to take the reader into his confidence about his difficulties in arranging the treatments of inter-related themes. This doesn't always help, especially since references to later passages are always given as chapter, section and subsection, never as page numbers. Since even subsections may be many pages in length, the search for them can become tedious. In books as closely presented and argued as these two, such minor distractions, however well-intentioned, seem to cloud the lucidity the writer tried so hard to preserve for his very complex subject.

The first volume takes Australian English as its theme, with chapters on its British English heritage, its contact with indigenous languages, its internal stratification, its standards, and the attitudes it inspires. But it is not intended to be a history of Australian English. Indeed there has so far been no serious attempt to write such a history, and perhaps there never will be one, for lack of direct evidence. The term "Australian English" is comparatively new, with virtually no usage until the 1940s. Up to that time most Australians believed (and were constantly told) that this local variety of English was an awful distortion of 'standard English', the King's English, Oxford English – called by whatever name this form of British English was still the admired but inaccessible fountainhead which we Australians had sullied in our careless treatment of it. Before 1940 there had been only two serious studies of the English commonly used in Australia. One was a phonetic characterisation by Samuel McBurney in 1877, which showed that by that time a vowel shift had taken the speech of Australians away from any particular British dialect, though to him Cockney was perhaps the source of the shift. The other early study was an Oxford-type dictionary by Edward E. Morris containing "all the new words and new uses of words that have been added to the English language by reason of the fact that those who speak English have taken up their abode in Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand". Subsequent attempts to characterise English in Australia from the evidence of events and movements in the early stages of settlement - the convict system, internal migration, exploration, political and social change, education, and a developing literature - all these have produced only suggestions of a broad linguistic development away from the speech and language of the unhappy first settlers towards what Leitner is now calling "mainstream Australian English".

The most recent attempts to assign and evaluate the steps by which current Australian speech evolved have assumed a division into three varieties: Broad, General, and Cultivated, perhaps developing in that order and certainly all in use throughout Australia now. This tripartite division was itself derived from an extensive sociolinguistic survey of the speech of some 9000 adolescents from all types of secondary schools in all the states of Australia (Mitchell and Delbridge, 1965). All the participating students were 17years or so in age, all in one of their last years of secondary schooling. Each student had a relaxed conversation with one of their teachers, and this was recorded as the primary research material, together with sociological data for each student. The aim was to characterise the speech sounds of the subjects, and to assess the range of variation, especially geographical and sociological. Broadly, the conclusions reached in this study were that there was only one dialect of Australian English, but that there was a range of speech quality, mainly in the vowels, showing substantial but by no means clear-cut differences in the pronunciation of the pupils surveyed. (This study is fully described in Leitner's 2004a, with additional comments on subsequent work and the influence of a changing population due especially to the recent history of immigration from virtually all parts of the world.) The statistics of the study revealed a bell-shaped curve which supported the notion of "a single phonemic segmental structure with a wide range of diaphonic variations that are socially meaningful throughout the continent". (p.87, Mitchell and Delbridge) Within the cline three varieties were identifiable, and their sociological correlates assessed. The conclusions were presented as a sort of snapshot of reasonably well-educated English in Australia in 1965, the year of publication.

But if these varieties existed in 1965, they must have had a period of development up till then. Could it be that this tripartite division of a bell-shaped curve was vital in any attempt to produce a historical account of the stages of development of (if we accept Leitner's name for it) 'mainstream Australian English'? There have recently been a number of such attempts, and Leitner presents one such in his summing up of what he believes happened in the formation of current Australian English. His particular interest is in how and when the Cultivated variety emerged. Granting that Broad came first among the new settlers, not long into the Nineteenth Century, and that General grew out of it, all under the influence of mass migration, he makes a new case for Cultivated having developed not just from individual or group choices, but especially from the influence of a new wave of well-educated, socially conscious immigrants mainly coming from London in the final decades of the 19th century. Following Milroy he argues a case for the acceptance of RP as a world-wide phenomenon, with growing prestige. "Without such an accent in Britain, there could hardly have been a similar one in Australia". (p.320) Education in British-type Public Schools, life here in city clubs, wealth in rural and urban occupations, a sense of social stratification - such were the achievements and attitudes of the new wave of migrants from Britain that produced Cultivated Australian as a new variety of Australian English at that time. "As some educated speakers were fully aware of

class differentiation at home, they may well have supported the conservative elements around RP, and the rise of the Cultivated as an accent close enough to RP". (p.328) This in a country that likes to think it has no class structure!

So here is an interesting contribution to what is becoming a popular debate among Australian linguists. There are still observed aspects of the Cultivated variety in its current form that suggest that class differentiation is not the distinguishing element in its use. The original survey showed that sex showed a stronger association with speech variety than any (other) sociological element: the statistics reveal that for every nine girls using the Cultivated variety there was only one boy. Even in the one family, the daughter Cultivated, the son General or even Broad! There is strong acoustic evidence that the vowels of all varieties of Australian English are more like each other than any of them is like RP. These are arguments for endo- rather than Leitner's preferred exo-normatism. But the ongoing debate will certainly find his view an important contribution to it.

There follow interesting chapters retracing the steps by which in modern times Australian English established itself and was finally accepted by its users as the national language of Australia. In the end there was a political decision. But it came only on the back of decades of (mainly) academic formalising by means of dictionaries, grammars and usage manuals, and also by the rather tardy admission by theatrical producers and by broadcasting managers that it would not be improper to allow Australian actors and broadcasters to use Australian accents in roles that did not positively demand the use of British, American or other dialects. The national decision was announced by the federal Labor government late in the 1980's. The Australian Language and Literacy Policy was enacted, in which literacy meant literacy in English, and English meant "the form of English generally used in Australia, Standard Australian English".

Leitner gives full accounts of the influential language policies and practices of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and its relevant committee, the Standing Committee on Spoken English. This in itself had a codifying influence, but there were others to follow. The Macquarie Dictionary was first published in 1981 and will soon be publishing its fourth edition. Its publisher advertises it as "the national dictionary of Australia", and it is indeed very widely used in the community. Strangely, Leitner makes no mention of the important Australian National Dictionary with a secondary title Australian Words and their Origins (OUP1988), edited by W.S.Ramson, who earlier had been one of the Macquarie editors. Using Oxford historical principles it contains some 6000 Australianisms as main entries, plus subdivisions and copious citations establishing the chronology of each word's use. Also (but too late to be listed in 2004a) was The Cambridge Australian English Style Guide (1995) by Pam Peters, and her subsequent Cambridge Guide to English Usage (2004), which deals with style usage in Britain, America, Canada., South Africa, and Australia, all based on corpus evidence, and judged in review by Sidney Landau to have "an authority unmatched by any other style guide". Such formalising

of usage has given extra force to Leitner's closing chapter (2004a) in which he examines the notion of Australia (pace New Zealand?) as "an epicentre in the Asia-Pacific region".

It was unfortunate that the remainder of what clearly had been intended as a single work had to be transferred, apparently as an afterthought of the author, to a second volume, with the same title but a different subtitle. No doubt a single volume of 800 pages would have been too hard to handle. But so, also, was the act of rewriting parts of the text to establish the continuities, including explanations of the basic metaphor of "habitat" which drives the whole agenda. Who could know if all the purchasers of 2004b would also have bought 2004a? Making the necessary adjustments to the text and the desire to present a camera-ready text to the publisher in these circumstances must have been taxing, and the text is not free of typographical errors.

The second volume turns to Australia's non-English language habitats, starting with those of the indigenous Australians, the Aboriginal people. The continuing relevance of the "habitat" notion is emphasised here by use of the same diagram that appeared in the first volume. There are linguists in Australia who specialise in the study of what are generally called "Australian languages" - the many traditional unwritten languages of the aborigines, their typology, the contact of one language with others and with English, the development of a lingua franca, pidgins and creoles and of Aboriginal English. In Leitner 2004b all of these are presented as aspects of the invasion of an existing language habitat. Leitner gives excellent accounts of the major fields of study, and at the same time touchingly reveals his own determination, while visiting Australia, to speak with Aboriginal people in an attempt to discern their attitudes to their own languages, and the effects on them of contact with English and other Australian languages. His coverage of this topic in 150 pages is full and lively, based on close reading of most of the major scholars in the field, as well as his own contact with Aboriginal people.

Chapter Three deals with the languages of Australians of non-Anglophone background, that is, languages other than English brought into Australia by immigrants, from the colonial period to the present day. More than 100 languages represented in Australia today are of migrant origin (known as LOTEs , or "languages other than English"). Leitner tells the fascinating story of their introduction, growth, attrition, and (for many) loss. Much has been made in Australia of its multilingual, indeed multicultural, ways, and of the space that has been provided in the public domain, and especially in the business sector, but as Leitner comments "there has always been that other side to migration that is crucial to the living in a foreign country, one's new home, viz. the need to know English so that one may participate in public life." (p.102, 2004b) Language maintenance is variable here, and Leitner discusses the factors that promote or hinder it, with particular attention to Asian languages, that are prioritised, especially in education, for economic reasons.

The final chapter of the second volume calls for "a unifying approach to come to grips with the ups and downs of diversity and the dynamics of the nation." (p.273, 2004b) He lists the four main language types as English, indigenous, non-English migrant, and contact languages, and explores the power of the habitat model to underwrite a history of the entire language situation in modern Australia in terms of four periods. Leitner is not the first to conceive the idea of relating language developments with the socio-political history of the continent, but he has done it more extensively than earlier writers like Jupp, Ozolins, Clyne and Mitchell. And he is the first to explore the possibility of treating all the major questions within a single overarching concept. And that makes history!

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