REVIEWS AND BOOK NOTES

Antoinette Renouf and Andrew Kehoe (eds.). *Corpus Linguistics: Refinements and Reassessments*, Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi, 2009, 462 pp., Hb. € 94 / US$ 136. ISBN: 978-90-420-2597-4

Reviewed by RODICA ALBU

Corpus Linguistics: Refinements and Reassessments is the 69th volume in the series *Language and Computers: Studies in Practical* Linguistics, which started over two decades ago and is currently coordinated by Christian Mair, Charles F. Meyer and Nelleke Oostdijk. Let us remind our readers that the editors of the present volume, Antoinette Renouf and Andrew Kehoe, also collaborated in editing volume 55, *The Changing Face of Corpus Linguistics* (2006), which grouped twenty-two articles by distinguished ICAME (International Computer Archive of Modern and Medieval English) members into five parts[1] meant to reflect "the range and depth of state-of-the-art corpus linguistic research". The titles of both volumes suggest the dynamism of corpus linguistics, which does not only extend its territory in terms of existing corpora and tools; it is increasingly characterisable as "an informed, critical measurement and/or extension of existing analytical orthodoxy and descriptions, in the light of the potential of new data and tools coming on stream" (p.2), as its editors put it.

The 2009 volume appears as a sequel/complement to the 2006 one, this time the twenty-two selected articles being grouped into four thematic sections, namely, 1. Looking more closely at existing boundaries of the discipline; 2. Examination of a known language feature from a new point of view; 3. Evaluation of the potential of a new corpus, tool, model or technique to extend linguistic knowledge; 4. Re-examination of known linguistic phenomenon in light of further/new data, followed by 5. Global English – Global Corpora, which is the summary of a panel discussion that concluded the 28th ICAME conference.

---

[1] These were: 1. Corpus Creation, 2. Diachronic Corpus Study – from past to present. 3. Synchronic Corpus Study – present-day, 4. The Web as a Corpus, 5. Corpus Linguistics and Grammatical Theory. and a concluding section, no. 6. Grammar Discussion Panel (a report on a panel discussion of corpus linguistics. grammar and theory at the 24th ICAME conference).

In the first part, the authors demonstrate how corpus linguistics intersects with, and supports, sociolinguistics and other types of variationist studies, discourse analysis, and historical studies in semantically restricted domains. The demonstration includes: case studies focusing on lexico-grammatical and pragmatic-stylistic phenomena in Jamaican English investigated with the aid of the recently completed Jamaican component of ICE (Christian Mair); the presentation of principles, challenges and steps in the creation of The Newcastle Electronic Corpus of Tyneside English (NECTE), which brings together the materials that were collected for two sociolinguistic projects in the second half of the twentieth century at a distance of 25 years (Joan C. Beal); a discussion of the methodologically uneasy – but not impossible – relationship between corpus linguistics and discourse linguistics (Tija Virtanen); the corpus-based analysis of variation and change in the lexicon that makes overt references to knowledge in English medical writing from the Middle Ages to the Present Day (Tura Hiltunen and Jukka Tyrkkö); and a case study applying nonparametric statistical methods to corpus data in the investigation of the *ity* productivity in 17th-century men's and women's letters (Jukka Suomela).

The way corpus linguistics can help shed a new light on the functions of known language features is illustrated by the three studies of the second part. The first two studies are devoted to the re-analysis of such expressions as *of course* (Karin Aijmer), *you know* and *I think* (Julie Van Bogaert) as "discourse markers" or/and "modal particles" and the third to the functions of expletive interjections in spoken English (Magnus Ljung).

The contributions in the third part focus on: using comparable corpora in order to study how a language evolved over a period (Geoffrey Leech and Nicholas Smith, whose analysis of the way written English evolved in the period 1931-1991 makes use of the "thirty-year interval" approach based on "B-LOB", i.e., the Lanc-31 corpus, as well as LOB and FLOB); the ways in which transferring dictionaries and texts of the past into machine-readable corpora can be helpful for further analysis (Alexander Onysko, Manfred Markus and Reinhard Heuberger) and objective evaluation of their representativeness (Lilo Moesner); applying a multidimensional approach (that of Biber 1988) to corpora of student writing – second language and native – (Bertus van Rooy and Lize Terblanche); and "weaving web data into a diachronic corpus patchwork" (Andrew Kehoe and Matt Gee).

The re-examination of known linguistic phenomena in the light of further or newer data in the fourth part is the most extensive section of this volume, gathering together nine contributions, most of which focus on grammar-related aspects. Established descriptions of generic pronouns are contrasted with the new findings in recent corpora (Elisabetta Adami); the causes of the spread of *going to* are revaluated in a diachronic perspective (Anna Belladelli); the semi-modal *ought to* is tackled from a short-term diachronic perspective (Marta Degani); a longer-term diachronic study is devoted to the use and acceptability of split infinitives from the 17th century to the present (Javier Calle-Martin and Antonio Miranda-Garcia;);

English predicate complementation (Juhani Rudanko) and a complex predicate (Sara Gesanto) are dealt with in a semantic perspective; whereas single invariant tags are studied from a variationist point of view (George Columbus); *BE – like* is examined in a discourse-oriented perspective (Chris Rühlemann); and, finally, the adjectives expressing "awfulness" are analysed from the angle of lexical semantics. The various corpora that have been used provide a wide range of data, illustrating diachronic change, as well as diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic variation.

The final panel of the 28th ICAME Conference brought together Marianne Hundt (chair), Anna Mauranen, Joybrato Mukherjee and Pan Peters, who discussed "the role of corpus linguistics in the study of English as a global language" (p. 451) under the general title "Global English – Global Corpora" in an attempt to "combine theoretical issues concerning 'Global English' with the methodological angle of corpus linguistics" (*ibid*). Such questions as the possibility of describing the "international core of English", the question of "ownership", accommodation, English as a lingua franca (ELF) and norm(s) for teaching leave ample space for further debates. As for the ICE project, despite its wide scope, it has been described as representing a "tiny slice of the range of Englishes spoken and written within the Commonwealth" (p. 461). One way of making up for that is to exploit the world-wide-web for corpus building.

Among the concluding remarks of the panel discussions the chair inserts the warning that "we might have to be somewhat more cautious in our interpretation of results obtained from ICE" (p. 461). What is more important, however, is the fact that the data, methods and tools of corpus linguistics which are available today allow for a wide range of applications in historical linguistics and present-day language studies, in sociolinguistics, discourse linguistics or functional stylistics, in lexical and structural statistics for corpus-driven theoretical studies, dictionaries, grammars and language teaching methodology data. As for this recent volume devoted to corpus linguistics, the range of topics, the variety of approaches, the questions raised in the twenty-two articles and the final discussion fully justify its subtitle – "refinements and reassessments" – and should definitely attract a wide readership in the academia.