

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

I keep going back to look again in this charming book on how words change meanings by narrowing(litter originally referred to any bed) or expanding them (*business* originally was a state of anxiety or busyness upgrading (*meticulous* used to mean fearful or timid) or downgrading them (*silly* originally meant blessed or happy), extending them (*summit* was the top of a hill or mountain), by folk etymology or other means. This can be due to foreign influences, (English borrows so much) or caused as a result of local social, historical, or psychological causes or simply the need for a new name for a new thing. Here you will discover that *aggravate* (to add weight) came to mean irritate, how *ludicrous* went from playful to ridiculous, how a *secretary* originally kept secrets, how *virtual* is related to *virtue*, that a *nightmare* was not originally a dream but a malevolent spirit, and that *horrid* was first just rough or shaggy.

As the former director of Random House Reference, this lexicographer and author of *The Life of Language: The Fascinating Ways Words are Born, Live & Die*, Steinmetz brings a lifetime of lexical research to this amusing and fact filled little book, which will delight all logophiles and present something new to even the most avid and experienced.

Muriel Norde, Bob de Jonge & Cornelius Hasselblatt, eds. *Language Contact: New Perspectives*. Philadelphis &c.: John Benjamins, 2010. Pp. viii, 225 with Indexes. \$149.00.

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Geolinguistics takes a close look at languages in contact and this collection, edited by faculty of the University of Groningen who organized the conference there on Language Contact in Times of Globalization in 2006, allows a group of experts to tell us about a number of specialised topics :ethnolects as a multidimensional phenomenon (with some referemnce to street language, to which geolinguists ought to pay far more attention), detecting shift effects, generational differences in language in a bilingual Spanish situation, Estonian in the US, modern Dutch and Swedish reflecting historical contacts, German's impact on Schliefe Sorbian, contact effects noted in pronunciation, coronal affricates in Japanese loan words, and translating with the UN. There are charts and graphs and all the armamentarium of linguistic specialization, so this is not for the casual reader but it stands as a record of concerned experts meeting to discuss the latest in their field. There is, in fact, a lot more going on in the field of linguistic research and reporting than most linguists or ordinary wordophiles realize.

Bróna Murphy. *Corpus and Sociolinguistics: Investigating Age and Gender in Female Talk*. Philadelphia &c.: John Benjamins, 2010. Pp. xviii, 231 with Index. \$143.00.

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This is another meticulous report on language research, this in the field of corpus linguistics and in a distinguished series from John Benjamins, but is easier for the general reader because the highly informed reporter starts with explaining why we should study adult language and then goes into well organized detail about the speech of adults, somewhat ignored as compared to all the work on initial language learning and the speech of adolescents, in this case “a cohort of ‘healthy’ male and female speakers spanning thee life stages: young adult hood as represented by the twenties group, mid-adulthood as represented by the forties group and elderly adulthood as represented by the seventies and eighties group”. This book reviews the literature and adds significantly to both the methods of collection and transcription and the analysis of information assembled.

The whole is in an Irish English context and something similar could be done on the pattern outlined here for any other such cohort of speakers. We all know that as language changes over time the old and the young speak differently because they see the dynamics of society in different ways and live in somewhat different environments although side by side. The young are more connected in some cultures than in others, never in any culture absolutely eye-to-eye with their elders. Indeed in some modern cultures the old-fashioned domination of the culture by the adults has been severely challenged by a vigorous youth culture. Language can never be “separated from the social, cultural, and historical changes that surround it”.

The differences in the speech of the two sexes and various age groups may be obvious or subtle, have noticeable features or vague markers, but differences are always there. Even basic language taboos shift over time. Language changes more in some areas than in others at any given period. It never exhibits a steady rhythm; change goes along with stops and starts. As in biology, we have interrupted evolution, attributable to environment. The mention of the word *evolution* reminds me to ask you to consider how the coloration of that word has changed in recent years. I am tempted to ask you to what extent you may have noticed how online language differs remarkably from printed language today or perhaps the extent, in your opinion, that the language of politics has become in a very short time in the US extraordinarily crude, combative, partisan and emotional rather than rational. Have you noted the invention of the *snarky* and the widespread use of the word *ironic*, in the old sense or not?

By their words ye shall know them even when, as so often happens in politics, words are used to hide or twist rather than straightforwardly speak the truth. Something really remarkable is happening in the US when the word *rhetoric* comes to be synonymous with the word *lies*, and ladies—if we can still use that term—and others are shocked by how profane and how pornographic daily speech of both sexes and the old as well as the young is in the US today.

Remember that geolinguistics reveals large-scale social dynamics. What a dynamic time we live in! It is as exciting as it is exasperating, blast it! What, as the kids used to say, a *blast* in this era to be alive!

Jean Kommers & Eric Venbrux, eds. *Cultural Styles of Knowledge Transmission: Essays in Honour of Ad Borsboom*. Amsterdam: Askant, 2008. Pp. 166. \$ 27.95.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

This is a neat little *Festschrift* edited by two Dutch scholars for an anthropologist who from 1972 to 2003 was distinguished in the department of Pacific Studies in the University of Nijmegen (The Netherlands). It reflects the wide variety of his interests in essays by his colleagues on the communication of anthropological knowledge, largely related to the Outback of Australia—Boersboom's doctoral thesis of 1978 was about the changes in the *marajiri* [post-funeral] ceremonies of the Maningrida of Arnhem Land in northern Australia and here we learn about mortuary ceremonies of Melville Island, Australia—but also about informants on Islamic law in Rabat, the transmission of teachings about healing in West Papua, Dutch Rif Berbers, intercultural interactions in Batavia, ceremonies of learning and status in Jordan, the modernization of a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) at Al Amien in Indonesia, the learning through song and dance and apprenticeship among the aborigines of Australia regarding not only “what” but “how,” “learning to be white in Guadalupe,” Maori styles of learning, the transmission of knowledge about clans and kinship, fieldwork as dealing with change and exchange in Papua New Guinea, learning by doing as with the pilgrimage to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela, the consequence of the decline of learning and among the Walpiri of Australia, the problems of gaining information about the handing down of knowledge from one generation to the next among the Inuit of Kugarruk, a song in the village of Tawema on Kile'uua Island of The Trobriands, the importance of “old ladies” in Ghana who when dead are consulted as deities, native visions as permitting people to retain or recapture the wisdom of their ancestors, working in cultural tourism and in the classroom, and generally how and what why anthropologists gain from going far from home with an open mind in order to learn with respect and reward about the “wholly Other”.

The essays here are tantalizingly brief and specialized if usually personal but for the geolinguist, interested in communication in the modern world, they serve well to remind us of the connections between sociolinguistics and other sciences such as anthropology and ethnology and that communications between different kinds of people in different societies in the world of today can have deep roots in the traditions of the distant past, that customs as well as words speak to us. These very brief essays also put necessary stress not so much on the content of information transmission as on the various ways in which people's traditions effect communication, with important results in terms of language and identity.

Mention of far places “with strange sounding names” might also remind us that right here in societies with which we are very familiar, and on which geolinguistics has perhaps too much concerned itself to the exclusion of small and very different societies, just as it concentrates on large and related rather than small and isolated languages, there are weird practices and oral communications which we ought not to ignore but examine.

Catherine Prendergast. *Buying into English*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008. Pp. xii, 180 with Index. \$ 60.00 in hardcover, \$ 22.95 in paperback.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

English, as everyone knows, has become the world's preferred second language, even though in finance (as was noted in *Geolinguistics* years ago in my article on French rejecting English words) terms such as *put* and *call* may annoy non-English speakers.

Ms. Prendrgast (Illinois at Urbana-Champaign) shows how English has been taken up by the European Union and indeed globally for economic as well as cultural and political exchange. She also points out that there have been objections and that the road to this wide use has not been as easy as establishing English for international aviation. She concentrates on her teaching of English and field research in Slovakia, where even a communist state found it prudent or necessary to adopt English for some purposes on joining the European Union and getting involved with international communications in the cyberworld and elsewhere. Still she holds fast to the belief that the adoption of English for business purposes by no means guarantees the viability of new states but also, on the other hand, facility in English is widely regarded as a good investment and an assurance that a nation is not backward in the ever-changing modern world. Her book, she says, "reveals the human toll of the worldwide chase to learn English".

Lisa Mitchell. *Language, Emotion, and Politics in South India: The Making of a Mother Tongue*. Bloomington (IN) &c.: Indiana University Press, 2009. Pp. xx, 279 with Index. \$24.95.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

Ms. Mitchell's book is less anecdotal, more scholarly than Ms. Prendergast's. It is very well researched and equally well written, indeed prize winning (American Institute of Indian Studies).

In 1952 Nehru designated Andhra Padesh (on the southeastern coast) the first linguistically defined state of the newly independent India. Telugu, which at this time has over 70 million speakers, is a Dravidian language. Telegu is one of the 22 official languages of India, for while the disappearance of the British *raj* (dominion) left English behind as a useful unifier and connector to the wider world the long-established, indeed ancient native languages suddenly saw the importance for them in a new place in the sun under a new dispensation.

Telegu is spoken not only in Andhra Padesh, where it is the language of the majority, but also in neighboring states (Karnataka, Madhaya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Orissa) today and it was the court language of the golden age of Vijayanagar rulers of the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries, being then some 1000 years old. Like other Indian languages it has a long history and a rich literature which its devotees had no desire to lose to the convenience of some more widespread European tongue.

When George VI ceased to be Emperor of India (1947) and independence arrived the written and the spoken Telegu differed notably and so did the people, for Telegu speakers existed in Andhra Padesh's multicultural area. Some died in the battle over whether Telegu ought to be made official or not. But it was adopted, Madras State's Telegu-dominated areas were made a new state and Madras remained the capital of one of Britain's rather arbitrary divisions of India into administrative units, and soon the two scripts that had been used up to modern times were replaced by one, based on the language—the largest Dravidian language in use—as spoken. Telegu is South-Central Dravidian (along with Gondi, Konda, Kui, Kuvi, Manda, and Pengo) and there are also South Dravidian, Central Dravidian, and North Dravidian languages still in use. Four years after the uprising that gave the area to the Telegu speakers other speakers of the language in Hyderabad were added and the name Andhra Pradesh was formally adopted.

This book, coping well with problems of transliteration and translation and taking a balanced view of the suicides that made “martyrs of language,” notably explains how an attachment to an ancient language with classical and modern forms and literatures and adherents and modern speakers in sufficient numbers to interject a powerful political factor can produce argument over the definition and official use of a Mother Tongue. In a subcontinent such as India where over time many different languages and the identities they bespoke and supported political division along linguistic (as well as, of course, religious) lines was inevitable and recognition of this fact had to be part of any political setup. The book fascinates as it connects personal and language identity as they relate to the formation of states and although the Telegu experience in one Indian state was unusually vivid and indeed violent the example from India has wider application, especially when independence of a territory calls for the acceptance of some languages as official and the rejection of others in the political compromises and decisions taking place. We see “portraying language as a mother worthy of worship” and *Realpolitik* both in action, with the honoring of tradition and the weeding out of non-local words as foreign in order to create more of a sense of individuality and belonging.

What conditions need to exist in order for someone to die,  
not for a nation, but for a language? How must one think  
and feel about a language for this to be possible?

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effects noted in pronunciation, coronal affricates in Japanese loan words, and translating with the Un. There are charts and graphs and all the armamentarium of linguistic specialization, so this is not for the ordinary reader but stands as a record of concerned experts meeting to discuss the latest in their field.

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Nathan Ensmenger. *The Computer Boys Take Over*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 2010. Pp. x, 320. \$30.00.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

The entrepreneurs with startups and venture capital backing, the computer programmers and systems analysts, the whole data processing business, have changed communication in this generation and have already run through a series of “generations” of a now ubiquitous electronic digital technology which has changed modern life, from China (which has the most people online) and the US and UK and other countries which have contributed to English as the world’s second language, to almost everywhere on earth. The computer boys have, as this expert on the history and sociology of science claims.

He takes into account the historical, political and cultural contexts and goes far beyond regarding computer communication as a simple advance in technology. Moreover, he writes so that the non-expert can follow him, if without the humor of such books as *The Nudist on the Late Shift* or the detailed financial ups and downs histories of the major and minor companies involved. He exactly connects software, hardware and wetware (our human brains). Now we need more wetware, professional knowledge workers in the computing field. He asks where we are going to get the at the rate we graduate engineers for the “comparatively engineer-oriented corporate environment” in the US as compared to, for example, China and India. Is it true that such experts are “born, not made,” and is there anything that we can do with education and recruitment?

Linguistics does not get into the index here but geolinguists will want to think about how language in action at the PC and lap top and online is changing as the technology advances. DUC what I mean?

Peter Lunenfeld. *The Secret War Between Downloading and Uploading: Tales of the Computer as Culture Machine*. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 2011. Pp. xviii, 219 with Index. \$21.95.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

A professor of Design Media Arts at UCLA tells us how there is a shift in communication in the cyberworld, now more than half a century old, from consumption to product, how downloading and uploading create culture and with all sorts of ever more convenient devices.

We seem to care more for convenience than for quality; this can be seen in the production of music and pictures on hand-held devices where the quality is lesser but more convenient than on the larger and more accurate music-players and cameras. “You are the lucky inheritor of a dream come true.” He begins by defining terms:

Downloading means pulling data into a system, and connotes moving information from a main or central source to a peripheral device. Uploading, by contrast, carries associations of moving data not only from a periphery to a core but also from one device to man, flattening out the hierarchy of production, distribution, and reception.

Television is downloading. Lunenfeld calls it “contemporary junk culture” for the most part, dealing what Philip K. Dick presciently called a “bombardment of pseudo-realities”. Computers download faster than television and can upload and can connect to networks at any time for “wants rather than needs” and involving “info-triage” and even more than wanted in freedom and access of information from the “culture machine”.

He speaks entertainingly and informatively about the nature of technology, popular culture, communications, and the big names of the cyberworld in invention and merchandizing, the relationship between artist and audiences (Steve Jobs says that artists ship), and the future of communication. He is well read and very readable. You will enjoy this book.

Cyrus Farivar. *The Internet of Elsewhere: The Emergent Effects of a Wired World*. New Brunswick (NJ): Rutgers University Press, 2011. Pp. xiv, 239 with Index. \$25.95.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

The host of *Spectrum* (a program on science and technology) and a free-lance journalist, Farivar ib his first book of communication history and analysis is right on the geolinguistic track as he explains how the Internet has impacted culture, commerce, and politics not only in the US, where Silicon Valley is so important, but also in foreign countries, some of which have taken things in directions the US so far has not tried. France with Minitel (1982) created a predecessor to the Internet and now owns the largest share of Sonatel. Estonia created Skype and online voting and now houses NATO’s cyberdefense headquarters. Brazil was the first nation to use Intenet voting. Iran was the first country to arrest a blogger (2003). China has contributed a great deal to the Internet, both through Chinese in the US and at home, for China has leapt into cyberspace with both feet, the Chinese being, as a character says in Eric Ambler’s novel *A Cause for Alarm*, “a very difficult race to astonish,” and so China already has more Internet users, and also more widely censored, the Internet, than any other country. In case you did not know, English is no longer the commonest language on the Internet. Switzerland hosted the first World Summit on the Internet Society. South Koa is the most wired country in the world and one of the most censoring of information. Senegal has a low literacy rate and less money per person to

buy the new technology than all or most countries but has used mobile phone to put citizens on the Interest to a degree not found elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Well researched, although *Britain* and *United Kingdom* are both absent from the index, this book warns US geolinguists and indeed everyone concerned with technology's impact on communication that there is a great deal of great importance going on *elsewhere*. The significance of that cannot be exaggerated.

Claudia Claridge. *Hyperbole in English: A Corpus-based Study of Exaggeration*. New York &c.: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. xiv, 301 with Index. \$99.00.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

Irony and figures of speech and some other non-literal language have been much more studied than hyperbole. This book by a professor at Duisburg-Essen fills the gap with quantitative and qualitative examination of spoken and printed texts from Chaucer to Monty Python., connecting also to reception theory, interpretation, speaker-centered and emotive matters, discourse and interactional uptake, and more. It is a key to greater comprehension of literature and propaganda, coinage and language fashions, humor and political agendas. Hyperbole is demonstrated as contributing to language richness and to language change. Here we have discourse analysis based on a variety of approaches including semantics and pragmatics, syntax and rhetoric, historical and current and embracing broadcast, printed, and spoken communication.

Neal R. Norrick in "Hyperbole, Extreme Case Formulation" pp. 1727–1739 in the *Journal of Pragmatics* 36 (2004) said the subject offered "endless avenues for future research" and Ms. Claridge has ventured down some of them quite a distance. The newspapers she consulted for part of the *corpora* are British (and one German newspaper) but the findings surely will hold true for the US use of hyperbole, extreme case formulation, and overstatement, all of them quite common here, indeed average in our conversation in a culture where bigger is better and *great* is attached to so many things and conditions and ideas. A comparison of American with British sources would probably produce very similar results although litotes (understatement) is said to be a British rather than an American habit. "Happen to notice the bombing last night?" "Rather. Bit of a bother. Killed mother."

For further research also of interest to geolinguists, always aware of language's construction of identity, the use of hyperbole in the presentation of self would be of absolutely mind-blowing interest, if not the greatest thing since sliced bread. This would be of greater interest perhaps than more investigation of the use of hyperbole in literature for comic or serious uses or in (say) political argument and sports reporting. Then there is the language of youth, *totally* enamored of hyperbole with "I coulda *died!*" and such all over blogs, tweets, twitters, and—*OMG!*—everything.

Karl Bühler. *Theory of Language*. Philadelphia &c.: John Benjamins, 2011. Pp.xlviii, 518 with Index. \$68.00.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

Karl Bühler (1879–1963) was one of the leading theoreticians of linguistics (the editor here contributes a biography of the author, primarily a developmental psychologist, as sematologist who set up the fundamentals) and his *Sprachtheorie* (first published in 1934) is here translated by Donald Frazer Goodwin in collaboration with Achim Eschbach for a large paperback edition. This deals with “the representational function of language in an extremely precise and detailed way. The table of contents runs to 8 pages from the introductory summary of theories of language and the basic principles of language research, its significative nature , speech action, words and sentences, tothrough sections on the deictic field in origins and operation in various languages, the symbolic field and the naming of words, and syntactic schemata, the makeup of human speech with phonetics and the nature of the article and the conjunction *and*, compounds, metaphors, sentences, anaphora, compound sentences, and more. To this is added 11 dense pages of bibliography, the glossary, and an index. Translations have earlier appeared in Spanish (1967), Italian (1983), Japanese (1983, 1985), Russian (1993), Polish (2004), Chinese (2006), and French (2009). This translation into English will make the scholarship available worldwide and can serve as both a textbook for advanced courses in linguistics or a challenging survey for professional linguists because it is standard.

The work is in four parts, First comes the idea of organon model for the instrumental view of language, followed by other axioms of linguistic science. Part II treats of indexicality in language and d deixis (pointing words). Part III deals with the symbolic field and context, onomatopoeia (suiting the sound to the sense), and the way case functions. Part IV addresses the elements of language such as syllabification, definition of the words, metaphor, anaphora (this is one of the technical words used in the book that the glossary omits), etc. There are prefaces by editor and translator.

One of a number of geolinguistic points that Bühler brings up is his emphasis in connection with language not on the individual speaker but on the community. Another is the developmental outlook, language in action evolving as, in the scholar’s work on child psychology, over time and as a result of both the innate and the circumstantial, the individual and society.

Gerda Hassler, ed. *History of Linguistics 2008*. Philadelphia &c.: John Benjamins, 2011. Pp. xii, 468. \$180.00.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

This expensive hardcover book exhibits a “wide diversity of research topics, research approaches and methods” contained under these rubrics: Methodological Considerations,

Linguistics and Philology; Antiquity; Renaissance Linguistics; Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century; and Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. This last section will be what attracts the geolinguist. The papers are from the XI International Conference on the History of the Language Sciences, Potsdam 28 August – 2 September 2008. Nearly 300 linguists attended but the geolinguistic approach was minimal. Geolinguists might read the paper by Camiel Hamans (European Parliament) which calls for revision of Kloek's theory of Hollandish expansion and the four main areas of Dutch dialects called "An Early Sociolinguistic Approach towards Standardization and Dialect Variation" pp. 369 – 387. Here you see the up to date idea of the theory put forth by Kloek in 1927 and get an idea of how linguists have been viewing ever since then the connection in The Netherlands between geography and dialect. That dialect develops because people are separated from each other is no news.

Jürgen Jaspers, Jan-Ola Östman & Jef Verschueren, eds. *Society and Language Use*. Philadelphia &c.: John Benjamins, 2010. Pp. xiv, 324 with Index. \$59.00.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

Expensive for a paperback but right down the geolinguist's alley, this is one of the 10 volumes of the *Handbook of Pragmatics* series which began to appear in 1995 and is a firm basis for the "cognitive, social, and cultural science of language and communication," an interdisciplinary study. The set has the following titles for volumes: *Key Notions for Pragmatics; Pragmatics and Philosophy: Grammar, Meaning and Pragmatics; Cognition and Pragmatics; Society and Language Use; Culture and Language Use; The Pragmatics of Variation and Change; The Pragmatics of Interaction; Discursive Pragmatics and Pragmatics in Practice*. Each volume has between a dozen and 20 articles by different writers.

Readers of *Geolinguistics* will find much of interest in this paperback on society and language use (Jürgen Jaspers), accommodation theory (Nikolaus Coupland), agency and language (Laura M. Ahearn), authority (John Wilson & Karyn Stapleton), bilingualism and multilingualism (Monica Heller & Aneta Pavlenko), code-switching (Peter Auer & Carol M. Eastman), cognitive sociology (Barry Saferstein), contact (Li Wei), correlational sociolinguistics (Norbert Dittmar), gender (Robin Tolmach Lakoff), Interactional sociolinguistics (Jef Verschueren), language dominance and minorization (Donna Patrick), language ideologies—evolving perspectives (Paul V. Kroškrty), language rights (Tove Skutnabb-Kangas), Marxist linguistics (Niels Helsloot), "other" representation (Nikolaus Coupland), social institutions (Richard J. Watts), speech community (Ben Rampton) and symbolic interactionism (Rod Watson). All this is state-of-the-art scholarly reporting on language in action in the modern world, the subject of this journal and the focus of the American Society of Geolinguistics, which has taken up many of these matters in journal articles and conducted international conferences on many of these topics. Concealed under the general rubrics listed above are such matters as "the other" involving ageism and identity politics as reflected in and using language, suppressing the diversity of groups, national language policies, language and law, etc.

John Edwards. *Minority Languages and Group Identity*. Philadelphia &c.: John Benjamins, 2010. Pp. x, 231 with Index. \$49.95.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

John Edwards (St. Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia) is rather controversial as he organizes and discusses the sometimes touchy interaction of the minorities and authorities when language rights are threatened or denied and minority identities and the health of their languages are in peril. The study of linguistic diversity includes the fact of the possible death of minority languages in the process of social homogenization and the psychological and political implications are of great interest. Small languages meet hard times. Educational programs may produce few who actually use the language daily. But total loss of language undermines the cultural legacy. Scholars can sometimes be activists, and Edwards is one of those.

Here you will find reports on Irish (the number of speakers more or less stable recently), Gaelic in Scotland (with perhaps too many eggs in the revivalist basket, Edwards says) and in Nova Scotia (one linguist says “emphasis on the Gaelic language will bring small returns” and language heritage has to go along with musical tradition, etc.), and Esperanto (with an interesting concluding paragraph on the future of constructed languages).

Gresham’s law in economics has some application to the contest between large and small languages, Darwin’s theory of evolution some connection to languages in contact and conflict, and the realities of both tribal politics and globalization something to say about which small languages survive and which do not.

I note that recently the number of living languages which recently was estimated to be 6000 has in the last year or so grown by almost 1000 in the statements of some scholars but that the complaint that many languages are endangered is still loudly heard if not always heeded. We want to save the snail darter and the whale but we also have financial and political constraints upon us. We want the legacy of old languages but the convenience of a widespread international language. We want to be citizens of the world but still find our own little native ground as the poet says “belovèd over all”. We all have a mother tongue and we cling to it whether it is widely useful or just, as it were, for the family. Off in Asia, he Japanese may wear western suits at business and change into a kimono as soon as they get home from work. They may learn English because their customers seem unable to attempt Japanese. Some of us may live to see hand-held devices capable of translating speech instantly from any living language into any other—or at least deal with the languages of the haves, if not the have-nots, of the modern world.

Annick De Houwer & Antje Wilton, eds. *English in Europe Today*. Philadelphia &c.: John Benjamins, 2011. Pp. xii, 170 with Index. \$128.00.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

Annick De Houwer (Erfurt) and Antje Wilton (Siegen) edit this small, expensive hardcover book on the sociocultural and educational aspects of the teaching and use of English in the UK and the rest of Europe, if the British will permit me to call them Europeans), what one of the editors calls “the dynamics” of English “at home” and on The Continent (as the British say, as if there were only one). This is sort of a *Festschrift* for Karlfried Knapp, founder of the European regional network of the International Association of Applied Linguistics, in an IAAL series from John Benjamins.

Areas in which English is taught and used that are noted here include the Basque region, Britain, Germany, Greece, The Netherlands, and so on, as well as general surveys of the teaching of English as a foreign language and its employment as a *lingua franca* and importance for a multilingual Europe though “Multilingual Europe” does by no means mean that “its citizens are themselves individually multilingual”. Barbara Seidhofer adds: “Far from it”. English does flourish on The Continent in “the media, the internet, advertising, popular youth culture and entertainment”. There seems to be no hope that English, or any other European language, could ever be the sole official language of the European Union although “the predominance of English ...as a language for learning has come to be acknowledged by European institution...”. In the vast majority of European states over 90 percent of pupils in secondary schools are taught English as either an compulsory subject or an elective, and English is used in some universities, but any native English speaker who has spoken with Europeans will have noticed that just because a second language is taught there is no guarantee that students can and will speak it frequently or easily. There are identity and convenience issues and psychology and politics to be considered. There are some unusual situations as well, such as when, for instance, a German from Bavaria may speak with a German from Berlin in English so as to avoid comprehension or status difficulties of dialects. The Continentals are sometimes more likely to attempt so-called Standard English than the minorities do in the British Isles, which themselves are increasingly multiethnic and multicultural. The so-called Received standard is in Britain less “received” than most people imagine.

Many people complain that English is not only tainted with imperialism and colonization but damn hard to learn, but oddly Basic English, which is easy to learn, has never caught on, in Britain or anywhere else. There is some interest in Business English. That is what the British Council has taught far afield. Not, of course, on The Continent, though. There a more ambitious British English has most often been attempted,

British English use may be impacted not only by Britain’s growing minorities but also by the nation’s declining financial status. The latter has forced the BBC to cut out the World Service broadcasts in English along with some other savings. Europeans may be learning more American than British English these days and anti-Americanization may come seriously into play. As often said by me in these pages, the French do not want English (American) in the councils of Europe because with the language comes the mindset. It’s politics, not language purity that is the issue. Language use is affected everywhere by politics and politics is *au fond* all about economics. Indeed in the US we are in great confusion because economic problems are addressed in terms of politics, by politicians, not in terms of sound fiscal policy as outlined by economists. We have Nobel Prize winners but they are not heeded. The economists say that they know what to do but the politicians are fearful of being voted out of office if they suggest

unpleasant, if necessary, financial fixes. Higher taxes and reduced entitlements (read my lips) are Not Vote Getters, When things get bad enough, however, even self-serving and pusillanimous politicians will usually act, even if their actions produce riots in the streets. In democracies, always leading from behind, tacking according to the way the wind blows as the polls indicate, politicians have finally to do what those who happen to vote really want. If they cannot deal with those people they are out of office anyway.

In a democracy, indeed in any government, as in any language in use, the power to change lies always with the people. They can tolerate or overthrow any tyranny if they are willing to pay the cost. The people in the long run get what they deserve. I have quoted elsewhere H. L. Mencken's remark that they deserve to get it "hard and good". The majority does not always choose the best solution. Democracy is not perfect. It is as Churchill observed simply the best of a lot of dangerous choices. In fact in democracies the majority seldom decides; it is the minority composed of those who are willing to put themselves on the line that writes history for everybody.

Adopting or rejecting English in Europe is the activists' decision to make, in the light of what others may offer in protest, and they will have to live with the consequences. Meanwhile, English may be good for business and for avoiding having to translate (say) Maltese into Italian before it is translated into (say) French and for graduate teaching in a country where two languages exist with such hostility that neither can get away with being the sole language of higher education. English as you well know is already the language, for example, of European aviation and the Europeans have accepted that the same way that they have accepted the language of mathematics.

Scott F. Kiesling. *Linguistic Variation and Change*. Edinburg: Edinburg University Press (distributed in US by Columbia University Press), 2011. Pp. xvi, 200 with Index. £22.99.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

Kiesling (Pittsburgh) in the Edinburg series of paperbacks on sociolinguistics, accessible research, gets right to the heart of language in action with this detailed study of language change from above and below and despite the fact that change can complicate communication. Considered carefully are the theory (emphasized) and practice (described) of variations in vocabulary, pronunciation and structure as they affect language perception and personal identity. He describes the scholarship of Labov, Shuy, Trudgill and others and the terminology in both English (including African-American Vernacular English, Cajun English, the English of various US cities, with special attention to the inhabitants of Martha's Vineyard but no Okracoke or Sea Island) and other languages. (such as Brazilian Portuguese and Iberian Portuguese, Indian English of South Africa, Mandarin, Mexican, Montreal French and Quebec French, New Zealand English and the Australian of Sydney, Puerto Rican and other Spanishes, Yoruba, etc.). Some matters that perhaps are not treated enough such as vowel shift and intraspeaker variation and why all speakers of a language do not speak the same way all the time are touched on here. Both meaning and structure are considered as well as class and gender.

“This book is about the study of language and the search for explanations of why languages are spoken the way they are.”

Markus Boeswanger, Heiko Motschenbacher & Suane Mühleosen, eds. *Language in Its Socio-Cultural Context*. New York &c.: Peter Lang, 2010.  
Pp. 253 with Index. \$70.95.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

It is regrettable that this paperback should about “New Explorations in Gendered, Global and Media Uses” should cost so much because the interaction of language and society in the larger picture is what geolinguistics is all about and many geolinguists will never read this dozen of essays edited by experts at three German universities (respectively Flensburg, Frankfurt am Main, and Bayreuth). There is important information here regarding the connections between sociolinguistics and anthropology, language change, and comparative linguistics, with the newly popular emphases on the likes of gender issues, language and cognition, implications for language teaching, language rights, variation in creoles, etc., as individuals live and interact in what Labov called communities with “shared norms”. The extent to which norms are indeed shared these days is much in question and while there are as there always have been a plethora of regional and social dialects and a babel of languages to them has been added what I call the Geek and Latent new languages of technological advance. Many elderly people cannot manage the new devices, or will not learn, and cannot understand the chatter of either the jargon-laden professionals or the careless expression of the young. Something very radical has rather suddenly happened to society, something more impressive and more significant than ordinary change, something that is turning the old world upside down in a way that surpasses the invention of the printing press. A few scholars are trying to sort things out and talk theory.

The introduction makes some pretty obvious statements (“Language does not exist in isolation, but is always connected to the cultural and social context or contexts in which it is used”) but the good is in the details of those who look closely at classrooms and other sites of discourse. Here the essays are full of scholarly findings, whether about, for instance, the details of decisions made or the distancing in creoles from standard speech. Specialists will have to seek the book out and read up on their areas of interest and in fact start to formulate their own explanations of the new communication situation in which “one mind affects another” by one means or another.

Mark Balnaves & Michele Willson. *A New Theory of Information & The Internet*. New York &c.: Peter Lang, 2011. Pp. viii, 200 with Index. \$34.95.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

Balnaves & Willson, both of Curtin University, are two of the scholars who try to make sense of the Big Picture of today. This paperback is about how the protocol and the public sphere interact. It tries to tackle what information really is, an ordering, a reduction of uncertainty, a commodity, a resource, a code, a disclosure, cognitions and intentions, or adequate indication. It tries to relate the information society to society and the creation and distribution of information. It is less expensive and of more general interest than the book just mentioned because here the speech community is the popular Internet with all the freedoms and restraints—A. R. Galloway has noticed that the Internet is the most controlled medium every known-- that are so much discussed daily that the medium involves. Moreover the story is the familiar one of a giant leap forward in information gathering, processing, and delivery. This book is all about this wondrous new medium and network sociality. All that is discussed by two experts who insist that (italics theirs) “*information does not exist, only informed people exist*”. They note all the democratic forums and personal networks and all the rest of the new cyberworld and its marvelous new servants—and masters—operating in the public sphere and changing the way most people live and indeed the way most people think. Whether what Habermas sees as a “unilineal development from a politically active public to one withdrawn into a bad privacy,” and whatever the new dispensation is doing to established ideas of personal privacy themselves overthrown, millions upon millions hunched over their delightful and possibly dangerous devices, are going to make the world more peaceful and prosperous and person friendly, or maybe not. Certainly a new era of haves and have nots is being created in terms of access to information. Certainly new ways of communicating are reshaping language *SU cn C*. Certainly the machines are changing some part of what it traditionally has been the way of humans in contact and competition. Certainly more people are reaching out more, blogging. Tweeting, texting, and so on, chattering more to others Out There and at the same time spending more time than ever before tied to machines. They are communicating more and more at a distance and therefore with only emoticons rather than tones of voice and facial expressions and gestures and so they are beginning to get closer and closer to being indistinguishable from robots just as science has reached the point where it is difficult and sometimes impossible to determine if a robot is “talking” to us onscreen or a human being is at the other end of the line of communication.

These and other modern situations demand a serious attempt at a whole new theory of communication. This book makes a move in that direction but by no means is The Answer. It raises as many questions as it settles, probably more. The speed with which technology is moving, in fact, blurs everything. Future things seem harder than ever to predict, in a phrase one hears all too often these days, “down the road”. Another all too common phrase is the “you know” that occurs in every other sentence we hear these days in the US, or so it seems, as annoying as all the *and ahs* and *but ahs* and initial *wells* we hear when people increasingly unaccustomed to speaking face to face are called upon to be articulate. But we do not know, not as much as we used to think we did know, about communication. And we do not know what vast changes in language the new means of communicating are going to make in time to come. It’s like, y’know, sort of one of those known unknowns, y’know what I’m sayin’?

Richard H. R. Harper. ***TEXTure***. Cambridge (MA): MIT Press, 2010. Pp. x, 303 with Index. \$29.95.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

Harper is a professor of Socio-Digital Systems and consultant to Microsoft, combining an academic background and up-to-date technical expertise in information exchange systems both off and on line. He understands exactly how technology has equipped the modern world with previously unheard of speed and breadth in communication and networking. He is also well aware how all that has complicated our daily lives and overloaded us, invaded privacy, complicated diplomacy, etc.

For students of language in action he reports widely held theories and has insights of his own in connection with such matters as mental landscape and personal identity, social interaction and social structure, programming the computers and programming the self. If you want to know how technology has viewed language and how it has changed language, read this book. Modern communications, you know, is reshaping the human mind. One Google official has declared that whenever young people are awake the new technologies keep them communicating. They do that to an extent that that oldsters simply cannot believe. This captivating study is a highly informed personal essay on matters of crucial importance to linguists as well as to other scientists and it is very readable. One assumes because you are reading here you are an oldster, one of the old-fashioned who still read and appreciate messages that consist of more than 140-odd (often very odd) characters. If you happen to define *communication* as merely the exchange of information, you are in for surprises.

Now there are ever more devices and app[lications] but more is not always better. There is such a thing as too much of a good thing. Someone once said, speaking of science fiction, that it was easy to have foreseen the invention of the automobile but not the arrival of gridlock and the many bad aspects affecting our health and our wars due to dependence on oil. Asked about what he thought of what today we might call the fallout of the French Revolution, Zhou En-lai said that it was still too soon to tell. So far we can only discern a few of the earliest effects on human life of the new communication technology, but already it is clear that it will far surpass the huge changes made as a result of the “taking drums” with their two-tone codes and the Morse code with its dots and dashed and the 0 and 1 of the modern world of computers. Chips with everything, as the British used to say about menus. At the moment we find that a diet of french fries has not been healthy and that having turned desert nomads into plutocrats and political forces has its down side. Now we have executives so busy with e-mail and such that they “cannot get any work done” and children communicating so much they find little time for education. We all, young and old, have a murky future, unpredictable. We cannot “see around the corner”—except for combat troops equipped with devices that do just that, at great expense, to improve street fighting in foreign cities.

Lisa Lim & Nikolas Gisborne, eds., *The Typology of Asian Englishes*. Philadelphia &c.: John Benjamins, 2011. Pp. vi, 120 with Index. \$120.00.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

With the notorious inability or unwillingness of English speakers to learn and use Asian languages it is a good thing for international commercial and cultural exchange that Asians learn a number of local varieties of English and even some favored western Englishes. In postcolonial Asia the footprint—to employ a word heard perhaps too often lately—of colonial English remains but just as in politics things have changed inventively and interestingly so the Englishes of the East are well worth examining for their similarities and differences, their structures and uses.

Why and how are new Englishes invented? How are they transmitted to the local populations? How do they affect the native languages and how are they received in the wider global context? Does it matter that, for instance 96 percent of the inhabitants of Hong Kong are Chinese or that a more mixed demography exists in this or that other place? To what extent does it matter that the new English of Hong Kong, for instance, bears all the marks of the colonial oppression? What is special about Singlish? Why do these English seem to western speakers of English to be sung to a different tune, and how puzzled might foreigners be about some of the lexical items that creep into Asian Englishes from native Asian languages?

Edited by Lim (Hong Kong) & Gisborne (Edinburgh) this book presents papers presented at the first International Conference for the Linguistics of English (Freiburg, 2008) in the workshop on the typology of Asian Englishes. The papers were then printed in a special issue (30: 2, 2009) of the journal *English World-Wide*. US \$ 120.00 is quite a price for this slim hardcover book. In it the editors “set the agenda” *re* Asian Englishes, the subject already of journal articles and books on the Englishes of Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, The Philippines, Singapore, and Sri Lanka, and then we have essays by Lim (“Revisiting English Prosody: (Some) New Englishes as Tone Languages”), Gisborne (“Aspects of the Morphosyntactic Typology of Hong Kong English”), and Umberto Ansaldi’s “The Asian Typology of English: Theoretical and Methodological Considerations,” Devyani Sharma’s “Typological Diversity in New Engglishes,” and a group of scholars (Priyankoo Sarmah, Divya Verma Gogoi & Caroline Wilshire) on “Thai English Rhythm and Vowels”.

Not addressed in this book, of course, are the ranking (say) of social dialects or the uses of Asian English in formal and informal communication, in conversation and in journalism, literature, the cinema, and so on. That was not the remit for this conference group any more than they wanted to take up the question of the impact of globalization on native languages or the impact of New Englishes of Asia on commerce, educational and other institutions, and so on.

Stephen J. Cowley, ed. *Distributed Language*. Philadelphia &c.: John Benjamins, 2011. Pp. x, 220 with Index. \$128.00.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

The small collection of papers on the typology of Asian English was # 33 in Benjamins Current topics series and this book as # 34 in the series ties in with one of our world's new religions, Ecology. Language is seen as connected to all our thoughts and expression in daily life and as common to us and as essential to us as the air we breathe. With that feel-good basis established the papers collected and edited and briefly introduced by Cowley (University of Hertfordshire) can range over speech and reading, even Shakespeare's "languaging". There your reviewer is on his most familiar scholarly ground and can assure you that the article by Ellen Tribble is trivial regarding expectable changes in the text during presentation of a play. Indeed Sir Tom Stoppard once said he doubted that his *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* has ever been presented in exactly the same way more than once in any given place. Still Ms. Tribble (University of Otago) bats above average for this league. As for whether written language has a bias for language as code, suit yourself, as you will also in reacting to the fact that staging plays is a team sport and the "bending author" at his desk dashing off dialogue and maybe stage directions now and then is only the first link in the chain that connects the work to the individual audience members.

As for the cognitive dynamics and social sense-making and experiential speech and actualizing semiotic affordances (yes, the profs here really do write like that) there is less here than fills the page. As for the emphasis on Ecology, well, I contend that hobbyhorse is here ridden a bit too hard. The basic concept, stripped of the pomposity and persiflage is quite sound but once all the jargonistic trappings are loaded on it just don't rock, if you catch what I mean. We need someone to say *whoa!* to these people and repeat what his brother William James said to Henry James: "Spit it out". If you have a sound idea, a clever insight, a useful conclusion, state it clearly and concretely. Keep it simple. If you are not Shakespeare and you are not writing in an age when the English language is in need of a much larger vocabulary and reaches out eagerly to embrace the 3000 or so words Shakespeare invented as he went along—my favorites are all the *un-somethings* that prove so useful—then it is probably best to stop trying to impress your coterie of colleagues and say what you have to say in what the frank and fearless poet Marianne Moore used to call plain American "which cats and dogs can read".

If an academic these days is writing articles to gain promotion, (s)he need not write to try to baffle the reader with fancy footwork. (S)he should try for a clean knockout punch. Indeed if you cannot tell me in a single sentence what your new big book does that is (a) new and (b) significant, forget it! There is no need to fuzz up writing so that it looks impressive to the reader. The promotions committee and the dean are not readers; they simply try to discover the distinction of an academic journal and count the number of pages with your name on them. They *literally* weigh your publications. (Maybe that is what makes scholars prolix.) Publish or perish! From personal experience this reviewer can tell you that going from instructor to full professor in a decade (making 46 enemies of those I passed over, but they had to be nice to me because then I got to vote on their promotions and might be on their dread committee) was only a matter of publishing more than any committee could find the time or inclination to read. I published poetry, literary history and biography and criticism and translation, military history, folklore studies, popular culture studies, a wide variety of articles here and abroad, numerous reference book entries, textbooks, and etc., etc. etc. as well as reading more papers at conferences each year than all the rest of my huge English department combined. Of course none of this had the

slightest connection, except perhaps the textbooks, to my teaching, and teaching which was after all what I was actually paid to do, not research, or serving as an officer of national organizations, or being collegial on campus and good PR for the college off campus.

Naturally, if you are going to be crystal clear in your prose you will soon be found out if you have nothing to say. Maybe the soft sciences like psychology and sociology and urban studies and the like actually need to hide their intellectual nakedness with what in clothes today is called “layering” but at least in a science like linguistics one must be precise and in English literature one should strive to write fine or at least comprehensible and entertaining prose. Poetry today, admittedly, does not have to be either comprehensible or entertaining. Here seems to be a rule that it must “rich” (puzzling) and then read aloud intoned or fiercely rapped.

I have rabbited on (as the Brits say) here so you will be, let us say, more informed about something than the writers criticized seem to aim at in their prose. It is not that they do not have a good subject but that they express themselves badly. Their few readers will likely be only the worst of literary critics, the sort of people that I think it was Heine describes as wandering through the graveyard of dead ideas looking on the tombstones for opinions that they feel comfortable holding already.

MORAL: Clarity covers a multitude of sins. COROLLARY: If writing does not hold you by the brilliant or at least the amusing, in most communications you fail.

GEOLIGUISTS: You are involved in macrosociolinguistics so write so that the whole society can grasp at once, or cheerfully stay with you as you have explained clearly, what you want to communicate about how language works in the modern world.

Susan Bainbrigge, Joy Charnley & Caroline Verdier, eds. *Francographies: Identité et altérité dans les espaces francophones européens*. New York &c.: Peter Lang, 2010. Pp. x, 417. \$98.95.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

Ms. Bainbrigge directs conferences at the University of Edinburgh, Ms. Verdier is at the University of Strathclyde (Glasgow), and the others contributors to this substantial collection of essays under the sponsorship of the Belgian Francophone Library all offer an unusual contribution to geolinguistics because most work on *francophonie*, as you are aware discuss French not in Europe so much as in Africa and other colonial areas.

Here French in Belgium is particularly under observation but there are also remarks on French in Switzerland, French and immigrant populations, French in feminist circles in Europe as a whole, French in literatures known across the continent, etc. The entire book is for specialists in French and is written in French. I particularly liked the study of Simenon as he is known, in translation almost exclusively, in the US. Though in French the article is by Therese Saint Paul of Murray State University. Noémie Parrat is a PhD from the University of Pittsburgh but her

piece is on Jacques-Etienne Bovard (born 1961), author of *Naines de jardin*. Bovard is one of a number of writers of the Suisse Romande. These are not really known in the US. The emphasis in this whole collection by a wide variety of scholars is on theory and practice related to identity and alterity (a word fashionable critics now have picked up from the French) but generally with a more literary than geolinguistic twist.

E. L. Trask. *Why Do Languages Change?* New York &c.: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. xii, 198 with Index. \$27.99.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

Completely geolinguistic, this paperback by a scholar from the University of Aberdeen who is ready, willing and definitely able to make basics clear to the non-specialist reader, stresses the facts that I raised in the presidential address for the 2010 conference of the American Society of Geolinguistics which militate in terms of living language as inevitably and invariably in flux against any attempts at standardization. Languages in action change all the time not only in terms of the lexicon but also in pronunciation, word order, etc. Trask takes up the way British English and American English have grown apart, how word meanings have changed, how some kinds of words (such as placeenames) are not as open to change as others (*paint* becomes *rouge* expands into *makeup* and advertising comes up with *blusher*).

Experts will find nothing new in the brief discussion here of such things as the incredible spelling systems of the various Englishes, notable holdouts against any kind of standardization. Whether languages that "have beginnings" as Trask puts it (artificial languages, pidgins, creoles, mixed languages in general, as if all languages (though difficult or impossible to trace for most) did not have to start somewhere. Who can say who was the first person to speak English? Indeed unless there is more than one person speaking a language communication seems to put it mildly highly unlikely. There are old languages, not all of them dead, and new languages. Nicaraguan Sign Language dates from 1979. Esperanto is not mentioned but the date of its invention could be looked up. Trask ends by stating that "[t]he overwhelming majority of human languages are, as far as we can tell, of the same age. *None is any older than any other.*" Who can believe that? French is newer on the scene than Greek and the Greek of today goes back through a large number of stages to classical times and people in the area that is now Greece spoke something or other than Greek before what we can identify as the earliest Greek of which we know. American, Barbadian, Canadian, and other Englishes are newer than British English. Not debatable are the facts this book presents that language change is inevitable, universal, and that human beings "lie at the centre of all change". Surely the methods of communication used by other animals, if you want to say the 100 things cats can convey and the 30 things dogs can get across, the noises made by whales and wombats and whippoorwills, have also been languages that have evolved over time.

My favorite sentence in the book warns us students of place names to "resist easy explanations". We must be leery also indeed, so-called learned explanations from all kinds of literature. Those of you who think Lois Lane in Brooklyn must come from *Superman* comics

may be interested to know that the fellow who owns the street named it for his wife, Lois. Her surname if far from the WASP *Lane*. Also to be resisted is the likes of seeing in Azusa (CA) “A to Z in the USA” or the statement often repeated that another CA place name Coalinga is Amerindian in origin when actually it is from the railroad: Coaling A station. Trask has little or no room on his fewer than 200 pages for that kind of what I think of as “raisins in the rice pudding” example but he gets the main points across.

Anne McCabe. *An Introduction to Linguistics and Language Studies*. Oakville (CT): David Brown. Distributor for Equinox Books (UK). Pp. xii, 405 with Index. \$24.95.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

This paperback, with amusing cartoons and other informative illustrations, benefits immensely from the fact that the author is an experienced classroom teacher (St. Louis University in Madrid) who not only teaches linguistics but the pedagogy of linguistics, to both beginners and graduate students. It is a textbook for beginners that will win some devotees for language study and it can serve as a good review for graduate students and even their teachers in linguistics. Neither *geolinguistics* nor *sociolinguistics*, however, appears in the index but then neither does (say) *hyphenation* although there is some mention of terms that are one word made of two, two words or two words joined by a hyphen. It leaves some questions unanswered: in *receive* neither *re* nor *ceive* can stand alone so where is the bound root? I suppose geolinguists will be far more interested in larger questions and may be entertained when languages other than English are turned to for examples and for the exercises that occur throughout this text. There are sentences diagrammed for younger readers than some linguists. Older readers learned to parse and not to diagram.

Dip in for chapters on language change and language variation and you as a geolinguist will be tempted to start at the beginning and read through the entire book. It presents with admirable clarity functional linguistics, discourse and text analysis, and traditional formal approaches to the subject. It is right up to date on cognitive linguistics, computational linguistics, first- and second-language acquisition, and so on; it has a useful description of various schools of linguistics (here is where Jeffrey Reaser of North Carolina State is given a couple of pages to introduce sociolinguistics), a glossary, etc.

This text is a good one for adoption in undergraduate courses in linguistics and communication and even education, and students will appreciate its concise and precise presentations and avoidance of the messy, fuzzy jargon in which, unfortunately, even experts on language far too often write.

Alwin Frank Fill. *The Language Impact: Evolution-System-Discourse*. Oakville (CT): David Brown. Distributor for Equinox Books (UK). Pp. x, 263 with Index. \$27.95.

Also for both beginning and advanced students is this paperback by Fill (Graz, *emeritus*) which is right down the geolinguist’s alley in that it describes the history and the current

operation of the power of language in society. Does how we think shape how we frame and use words? Does thinking have to involve words at all? What happens to what we utter in the minds and lives of those with whom we communicate? To what extent are we all playing Wittgenstein's "language games" and to what extent do those operations impact (a fairly new verb derived from a noun) community, culture, economics, politics and all human activities? In what ways and to what extent does language enable and continually alter society? What does the close examination of language tell us about mind and about preconceptions, prejudices, power plays, etc.? What have thinkers thought over time about the power of language and its bad (sophistry, propaganda, divisiveness, and all the rest) as well as good features? This is a book on the philosophers of language and of language in everyday use. It is a clear statement of what is called impact linguistics. As Wittgenstein said more simply than he usually wrote (for he often lapsed into a style lot less immediately accessible than the one Fill adopts here): "There are countless different ways of suing what we call signs, words, sentences"--and there are crucially important results, profound, inescapable, in all sorts of human interactions, of the ways we do that.

Fill starts with the fact that speech "did not really hit our planet like a meteorite" but evolved. It is mankind's greatest invention and the greatest influence on mankind's progress. It was systemized. It changed. It continues to change everything, at different rates and in different ways in different parts of the world. "Words, so innocent and powerless as they are, as standing in a dictionary," wrote Nathaniel Hawthorne, "how potent for good and evil they become in the hands of one who knows how to combine them." They are a construing force. They shape the way we see reality, anthropocentrically and differently in each and every language and dialect. We use language to deal with all real or imagined realities in the bidirectional interaction of individuals and society. Fill as an expert in ecolinguistics makes that approach significant among all the others, historical and current, scientific and philosophical, he notices. He likewise often very usefully quotes or summarizes views of workers in the field of linguistics and ties in their contributions with his interests in the development of language and the nature and effects of discourse.

As the author of a number of books on onomastics myself, I was particularly interested in how giving a name confers reality and how names manipulate reception. As a geolinguist I found that one of the most admirable aspects of Fill's approach lies in his caution in avoiding blaming language for everything that is wrong with the way we think and act. He knows well the real power of language but is quite aware that that power has real limits.

Jonathan Green. *Green's Dictionary of Slang*. London: Chambers, 2011. Three volumes in hardback. \$625.00.

Reviewed by  
Leonard R. N. Ashley

This is a monumental reference book. Every significant library reference desk must have it. It is a huge contribution to lexicography, and slang is no less important than any other kind of language just because it is usually a child of the non-elite. "Slang," wrote Carl Sandburg, "is a

language that rolls up its sleeves, spits on its hands and goes to work.” Slang is vivid and vital and a lot more than what some lexicographers define as a substitute for more formal, less vulgar words. Some slang is included in regular dictionaries but Green’s is extraordinarily more complete and covers material which has earlier been found in specialized collections of criminal slang (Green produced one of those), slang of various countries (such as Australia, by Leni Johansen), sexual slang (Alan Richter’s *Sexual Slang*, “Bruce Roger”’s *Queen’s Vernacular*), and so on. I have a shelf of slang dictionaries in American (Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner, Robert L. Chapman, Richard A. Spears, and others), British (“Ducange Anglicus,” “Jon Bee” [John Badcock], J. Redding Ware, J. S. Farmer and W. E. Henley, and others), Mexican and Spanish, even *Dictionnaire d’argot fin-de-siècle* (Charles Virmaître, 1894) and more modern French examples, etc. I am one of those nerds who like to read dictionaries of all kinds although when speaking and writing I try to avoid obscure “dictionary words,” the sort of unheard-of-vocabulary that crops up too often and unnecessary annoyingly in some novelists I greatly admire, such as Anthony Burgess. I will sometimes employ slang and wordplay, though of course I have to take care with levels of diction and avoid being as unreadable as *Finnegan’s Wake*, for when dealing in communication one must strive to communicate, to inform, not merely impress. Slang seeks to enliven, not to obfuscate. Is standard *obfuscate* a bit too much for the average reader of today? Who is your target reader? Slang creates a distinct tone and an impact. Once, I suppose, *impact* as a verb could have been called slangy, not just neologism (new word, as one does not have to explain to readers here). It also touches on the personal.

I corresponded with the late Eric Partridge (author of the classic *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, first published in 1937) and I was of some assistance to Paul Beale, who labored long over the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of Partridge, published in 1962. Partridge and Beale included in their vast compilations colloquialism, catch-phrases, solecisms, catechreses, nicknames and vulgarism, and I provided information for Beale’s separate volume on catch-phrases. It was an honor and a privilege to have anything at all to do with the great Eric Partridge’s Herculean achievement. Partridge’s *doorstopper* was long the standard single volume work. Now Green in three volumes with a total of 6,222 double-column pages, plus a select bibliography in three volumes totaling just over 150 pages, has given us this stupendous, daring, erudite, sometimes hilarious, sometimes shocking work of serious scholarship. Truly, the commentator on low language who stated that the mud often yields incredible creatures was stating no more than the truth. Here is the wit and wisdom of the common folk in all its randy and rambunctious glory. Here we see that the public is *common* in more than one sense of the word and that their speech is not merely as pure and precise, and seldom as dull, as what lexicographers used to legislate and today say they report, though they clearly do not report the whole story. Ordinary dictionaries give us a distorted idea of language.

Slang is a language of everyday speech. It can work long in common speech before anyone ever writes it down so that lexicographers can find printed citations, enough so that they are convinced that a find is not a word used only once and so thought not worth bothering with, a rule somewhat like the objection to ending a sentence with a preposition. Sometimes a writer will put a word or phrase into quotation marks and this is meant to indicate that it has not yet really arrived in accepted vocabulary but today the fuzzy minded literary critics, who tend to put “beauty,” “message” and other terms into exculpatory quotation marks in order to, like, you know, evade responsibility for word choice, or because they actually do not know what they

mean by “mean,” also sprinkle quotation marks around. So those marks do not reliably contribute to dating slang—but sometimes they show its tenuous relationship to jargon, also difficult to stick on a pin to display. Nonetheless, Green dates the illustrative quotations so that, like the vast *Oxford English Dictionary*, it is lexicography on historical principles. This is a bit of a contribution to a *terminus ab quo* but not exactly a date of origin. Call it a date of first noting, thus far. Green’s dated illustrative examples are much better than most because he seldom or never gives a sentence that uses the word but not in a way that tells you anything useful about its meaning (“It was a whazziz” is of very little and possibly no use at all) and he does not simply invent illustrative sentences (a serious flaw in the gay *Lavender Lexicon*, for example). Even the *OED* examples are sometimes far from perfect in this regard. Best probably is just to define terms and leave it at that, no date, no etymology, no quotation. That is what was done in Wentworth and Flexner’s *Pocket dictionary of American Slang*, the abridgment of their big book. The *OED* tries more but does not always succeed, or indeed meet a need.

The *OED* began by a learned linguist recruiting and employing an army mostly of volunteers, retired colonels, little old ladies, superannuated clergymen, people from many leisurely walks of Victorian life who would read and copy out sentences with interesting words, even a logophile who (it was eventually discovered) was writing from an insane asylum. The latest version of the *OED*, which is online and can easily be updated, is a superb product of professionals, among them an American, the English dictionary earlier having been under the direction of a Scotsman and an Australian. This *OED* contains as the *OEDs* have always contained a good deal of slang and even obscenities, but not nearly as much as the industrious Green has assembled, defines and illustrated with gobbets from literature, Internet postings, news from all over.

Of course no one can search all texts but computers can perform wonders. No computer and no person can be certain of each and every word origin, nor can anyone say definitively when a word or combination of words was first uttered. That may have been long before anyone wrote it down or anyone printed it, one must reiterate. The late Allen Walker Read spent years tracing *OK* nearly back in written sources but at any moment now someone may find *OK* in print at some earlier, perhaps much earlier, date. The average person may wonder why linguists want to spend so much time trying to determine precisely when this or that word or expression came into general use. Even if you find 10 citations in print you can never prove that a dozen or more persons ever used the word, that it was more or less in general use. With obscene and otherwise taboo material the life of a word or expression is suppressed in general use and it may be some time before it gets into print or even (as with the *f-word*) someone as daring as Kenneth Tynan actually utters it on the BBC. We cannot even date *fug* (which Norman Mailer did not invent for *The Naked and the Dead*) or *friggin’* and so on. Those and offshoots (*n-word* and the rest) were from a class of evasive slang which includes *gee whiz*, *jeepers creepers*, *Jiminy Cricket* and other plays on *Jesus Christ*, as well as *gar*, *gawd*, *gee*, *golly* and the rest. All those words were on thousands of lips long before they appeared on any page. I have never contemplated trying to date sex slang and have not demanded as I pile up my 3x5 slips that a word be found in print, for slang is a spoken language to a very great extent. In fact the more a word or expression is considered dirty the less it is considered fit to print, however much one may hear it in the street or on late-night television or in rap performances or movies, etc. Geolinguists know or should know all about the differences between *parole* and *langue*, or the way language actually is and

the way some people think it ought to be. US geolinguists ought to concentrate on the language actually most in use—and one might well say that slanguage is the native language of the American majority.

Green includes odd spellings of familiar word. *Flwesie* I had never seen before, for instance. He does not provide pronunciation guides, a fact that those of us who reside in one of the five boroughs of Noo YAWK (Man’A’an, BRON-ix, BROOK-uh-lin, QUEENTZ and STA-din I-lin) can readily appreciate. He recognizes trademarks and copyright material. He seems to have consulted an astounding number of literary sources but I do not think that he has read enough about sports or gambling or for example the slang of doctors (*PPP=piss-poor protoplasm* for a *gomer*, Get Out Of My Emergency Room) and other medical personnel, but there are specialized books elsewhere for that stuff. He may not have read everything but he has God’s plenty.

Of course, to take for example not iatric but more common sex slang (a dictionary of which this reviewer has been working on for decades), one may well not see the gems of purest ray serene in the dark, unfathomed caves of pornographic magazines or the most obscure cheap pulp fiction, let alone hear the dirty words in cable entertainments, and so on. I had never seen *maytag* in print to mean a punk in prison who is forced to do the laundry for more macho convicts nor *talking* to describe lesbians conducting an affair in jail, but I encountered them and put them into a novel as well as into a learned journal. In a series of articles on fringe vocabulary, the more or less private language of closed groups of various sorts, published in Reinhold Aman’s bold journal *Maladicta* I got words from perversion (now called *alternate lifestyle*) into print, as far as I know for the first time, but serious lexicographers at the *OED* and so on demand more than a couple of citations before they will even think of including a word in their dictionaries. Two examples of use is not enough, especially if from a single author. All Green’s entries are even if supported by only a single quotation presumably well attested.

Green’s dictionary is also precisely, correctly written, a nice surprise in a world in which too few English speakers and writers know where to put that *only*.

One can strive for grammatical correctness, even in the world of *It is me*, but one can never get what scientists call a complete universe of data when it comes to what the French call the equivalent of “green language,” or indeed any language. That is because language is like verdure forever dying and coming to be born. *Jailbreak* as a verb and adjective with a new meaning has very recently come into computerspeak, too recently for Green to include it. At the moment you read this sentence some nerd (I consider *nerd* now standard) somewhere is putting a brand new word into a blog. It may or may not get used ever again. There are in a slang dictionary as in any dictionary words that you never have used or ever will use, though not the basically useless Latinate garbage in the *OED*’s medical and other terminology. Who knows or needs *adermatoglyphia*? Moreover, there are words to be marked *obs.*, like *potato finger* and *roll in her ivories*. But really no word ever invented can be guaranteed a long run or securely stated to be defunct, for anyone at any time can speak or write it and, refreshed, it rises from the grave like Dracula, to delight or discombobulate. You may be astonished in Green to discover a real oldie in use today and you will be shocked to see sometimes that what you think of as certain modern slang terms are actually to be found in (say) Chaucer or Shakespeare. Green

seems to have missed a couple of Shakespearean slang words for *phallus* (originally a slang word in Latin) that Partridge mentions in *Shakespeare's Bawdy*. I hate to nit-pick at omissions, though you see I have fallen prey to temptation. Indeed that is how dictionaries are usually reviewed, most egregiously by the critics who read hundreds of pages, find a typographical or other error, and delighted pounce on that in order to show off. Green's work is so overwhelmingly impressive, so majestic, that no critic, it seems to me, can afford to try to *showboat*. Green's work is, to bring back a phrase long gone, the bee's knees. *Green's Dictionary of Slang* is first-rate, *primo*. It is a doozy (from the elegant car of yore made by Duesenberg). Those are two slang etymologies of which I feel pretty confident.

Diarmaid Ó Muirithe. *From the Viking Word Hoard*.... Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011. Pp. xxxvii, 301. \$70.00.

Reviewed by  
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Distributed in the US by International Specialized Book Services this is indeed a specialized book extensively examining and presenting in a dictionary of Scandinavian words in the languages of Britain and Ireland. There is a long and scholarly introduction of borrowings over more than 1000 years in standard language (*lemming* is from Norwegian) and dialect (in northern England, for instance, for is *moke* and in the Shetlands a molar tooth is *yackle*). *Wick* in place names comes from a Scandinavian word for a corner, a hollow, an angle (of land). *Troll* is from Scandinavian folklore. The small-print bibliography runs over fifty pages.

Linda Boyden. *Giveaways: An ABC Book of Loanwords from the Americas*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011. Unpaged. \$17.95

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At the opposite extreme is a very slight, pretty, illustrated children's book that deals with a small selection of borrowed words in American English, from *abalone* to *zopilote* with "fun facts" instead of a bibliography. This may interest a child in words such as *iguana* (from the Taino Indians, with a full-page picture).