Tony McEnery, Richard Xiao & YuKio Tono, *Corpus-based language studies: An advanced resource book*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006. Pp. xix, 386. Pb $33.95.

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Originally associated mainly with work in lexicography and grammar, corpus linguistics has more recently established its relevance for a wide range of linguistic endeavors, including research into register variation and genre analysis, dialectal variation, language change, L2 acquisition, semantics, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, stylistics, and forensic linguistics (all of which are covered in chap. A10 of the book under review). It is not least the proliferation of applications that make McEnery, Xiao & Tono's book a timely and more than welcome addition to the expanding literature on the subject.

The book is one of the latest in Routledge's Applied Linguistics Series, an "Advanced Resource Book" featuring three main sections: "Introduction," covering key theoretical and methodological issues; "Extension," bringing together previously published core readings from the field; and "Exploration," in which six case studies show how different research questions can be tackled using corpus linguistic techniques. The three sections are well integrated, but at the same time it is possible for already initiated readers or those with specific interests to read sections of the book in a nonlinear fashion without the main argument falling apart.

Together, the three sections aim to cover the "how to" as well as the "why." Readers are not only introduced to the theoretical foundations and academic debates that have shaped the field in the past two to three decades, but also are given practical guidance in building their own ("DIY" or do-it-yourself) corpora and in using concordance programs such as Wordsmith and MonoConcPro. In addition, the authors provide a thorough review of the use of existing (or "prêt-à-porter" 'ready-to-wear') corpora, such as the 100-million-word British National Corpus, which can be used separately or for comparative purposes to identify particularities in a DIY corpus. There are a glossary, an extensive bibliography, and an appendix of useful Internet links, including two companion websites for the book.

In keeping with the series' stated aims and intended target audience, this book will be of interest to anyone looking for an introduction to state-of-the-art corpus linguistics, be they upper undergraduate students, postgraduates, teachers, or researchers. As a matter of fact, the breadth and depth of coverage is such that large parts of the book are suitable even for those whose own expertise in the

field has progressed well beyond the introductory stage. For example, the authors' treatment of collocation, semantic prosody, and semantic preference (82–85) – three key concepts in corpus-based lexical analysis (Louw 1993, Partington 2004) – is one of the most compact and yet clearest accounts currently available. Key work in the area is not just referenced and summarized, but also critically engaged with. In doing so, the authors talk TO but not DOWN TO their readers.

Quite possibly, the detailed practical guidance in the "Exploration" section, complete with screenshots and step-by-step instructions, will be lost on readers who do not have the required software up and running. But then, it is hard to imagine anyone reading the book and not wanting to get in on the act as soon as possible.

The case studies are likely to have a different appeal for different readers, depending on what their own field of research is. Two out of the six will be of direct interest to sociolinguists: Case Study 4 on swearing in modern British English – with intriguing insights into the demographics of f-word usage – and Case Study 5 on conversation and speech in American English. Another three contain significant elements that are relevant to sociolinguistic inquiry: collocation analysis in Case Study 1, a corpus-based approach to language variety and language change in Case Study 2, L2 acquisition in Case Study 3.

The authors maintain that "corpus linguistics is . . . a methodology rather than an independent branch of linguistics" (7), a notion that this reviewer, for one, supports. Still, the term "corpus linguistics" is most probably too well established now to be replaced (nor do the authors indicate that it should), and at any rate the eponymous "corpus-based language studies," though clearly more accurate and appropriate, seems rather too unwieldy to catch on.

A key message of the book is that corpus linguistics "can be employed to explore almost any area of linguistic research" (7), a claim then substantiated in the "Extension" and "Exploration" sections. The authors are enthusiastic about the potential of corpus linguistics, but not dogmatic, and they ought to be commended specifically for including a subsection on "what corpora cannot tell us" (A10.15, 120 ff.). Some readers may feel that this section could be slightly longer, and it would not have weakened the authors' overall case if it were, or if corresponding sections on specific limitations had been included in the case studies. On the other hand, there is no reason why corpus linguistics should be more self-conscious and defensive than other approaches about the constraints following quite naturally and inevitably from the underlying theory and method applied. (Indeed, one would wish for the representatives of other schools and methodologies to acknowledge as readily as McEnery, Xiao & Tono do for corpus linguistics, that their approach "is not all powerful" [144]). Referring to an analogy from Stubbs 1999, the authors state, quite rightly, that "it is ridiculous to criticise a telescope for not being a microscope" (121). The theme is taken up again in Unit B2 of the "Extension" section (131–44), which focuses on the debate among Widdowson, Stubbs, and Sinclair about the pros and cons of using corpora. Long-running and at times heated, the now famous controversy is un-

likely ever to be resolved, so that the most appropriate approach, at least at text-book level, is in fact the one chosen by McEnery, Xiao & Tono: presenting the different viewpoints and allowing readers to make up their own minds (131).

Switching briefly to the more mundane matter of editorial finishing, readers of *Language in Society* will notice with a wry (though surely forgiving) smile that the one typographical error in the table of contents should have occurred in, of all words, "sociolinguistics" ("sociolinguistis"). Another, more unfortunate proofreading error occurred on p. 72 ("version 4 does not has [sic] this limit") – for the facetiously minded perhaps an illustration of the fact that occurrence in a corpus is not per se an indicator of well-formedness. Apart from these slips, though, the book has been impeccably proofread and boasts professional design and appealing layout.

In terms of content, the only notable omission would seem to be the absence of any detailed reference to the Bank of English and its commercially available spin-off, Wordbanks Online. To be sure, John Sinclair's groundbreaking work (which led to the establishment of the Bank of English) is adequately referenced at the appropriate places in the book (e.g., Sinclair 1987, 1991, 2004), and the URL for the Bank of English website is mentioned in the Appendix. But apart from that, the BNC (British National Corpus) is clearly shown to rule the roost. The authors' preference is likely to be due to the greater versatility, more sophisticated features, and better documentation of the software that comes with the BNC compared to that coupled with Wordbanks, but those differences would have been worth spelling out. After all, many readers are likely to have access to the Bank of English at their departments of linguistics, and would probably have appreciated practical advice on it (or a well-made case for switching over to the BNC). Similarly, those still in the process of building up their infrastructure for corpus-based studies will be wondering what the specific advantages and disadvantages of the two packages are.

The book's key merits are the balance between, on the one hand, theoretical reflection and practical applications, and between scholarly discourse and accessible explanation on the other. These are part of the professed series format, it is true, but it is clearly the authors' personal achievement that they have made the format work particularly well for this book. The style of writing is clear and approachable throughout, guiding readers through arguments step by step, without unduly reducing the intellectual rigor of the argument. For sociolinguists it should prove a mine of information, opening up new vistas on quite a few areas of their work, and significantly extending their methodological toolkit. In short, it is the sort of book one can see running to many editions, and deservedly so.

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(Received 27 February 2007)

PETER AUER, FRANS HINSKENS & PAUL KERSWILL (eds.), *Dialect change: Convergence and divergence in European languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp. xv, 415. Hb $75.00.

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One of the most striking findings of the *Atlas of North American English* (Labov, Ash & Boberg 2006:10, 304) was that regional dialects of English in North America continue to diverge, at least on some levels, despite the popular assumption that dialect differences must be disappearing in an age of general education, high mobility, and instant electronic communication. To be sure, there were also some clear cases of convergence, but a rapid and general loss of regional distinctiveness was not found. On the contrary, in some cases change appeared to be driving neighboring dialects in opposite directions. Today, the struggle between forces of convergence and divergence is a central theme of the story of language change, as it always has been; from a comparative perspective, any change in a language or dialect causes either divergence from or convergence with neighboring varieties. These processes account for both the diversification of language families and the loss of diversity. Convergence now demands the greater share of most people's attention, as external developments in the modern world have undoubtedly amplified the pressures favoring convergence and diminished the possibilities for divergence. Indeed, these developments are of interest not just to dialectologists, but also to linguists and cultural historians generally, since the same pressures that lead to the loss of dialects can lead to the loss of entire languages and to some extent the cultures to which they give expression. A book examining these processes in the languages of Europe – a region particularly susceptible to the forces favoring convergence – is therefore a timely and welcome addition to linguistic scholarship.