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Elisabeth Bruckmaier, *Getting at GET in World Englishes. A Corpus-Based Semasiological-Syntactic Analysis* (Topics in English Linguistics 95). Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2017. Pp. xvi + 328. ISBN 9783110495997.

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The book by Elisabeth Bruckmaier, which grew out of her PhD thesis, provides a careful and in-depth analysis of 11,663 instances of the verb GET extracted from corpora representing British, Jamaican and Singaporean (written and spoken) English. By looking at all the uses of GET, the study adopts a semasiological-syntactic approach, thus differing from most other studies of GET, which are limited to one use or one aspect of the verb (e.g. Hundt 2009 on the GET-passive or Gronemeyer 1999 on the grammaticalization of GET). It focuses on the variation of GET across time (1961 vs 1991), region (Great Britain vs Jamaica vs Singapore) and style (speech vs writing, combined with a genre analysis) and considers several factors that could account for such variation.

The first chapter is a brief introduction to the book, providing some general information about the verb GET (etymological origin of the word, number of entries in dictionaries, etc.) and outlining the aim of the study and the structure of the book. The second chapter, entitled 'Theoretical and methodological framework', first presents different models proposed in the literature to describe and classify World Englishes. The sociolinguistic situation of Jamaica and Singapore is then briefly examined, with special emphasis on the difficulty of categorizing the use of English in these two countries. The chapter also includes a description of the data used in the study and a discussion of the methodological stance adopted. The data come from the *Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen Corpus* (LOB), the *Freiburg-LOB Corpus* (FLOB), and the British (GB), Jamaican (JA) and Singaporean (SIN) components of the *International Corpus of English* (ICE), with some references to the *British National Corpus* (BNC) and the *Corpus of Global Web-based English* (GloWbE). As for the methodological approach, it is presented as essentially corpus-based, but with some elements of a more corpus-driven approach, and as consisting in a combination of formal and semantic analyses.

In the third chapter, Bruckmaier reviews five factors that could potentially affect the use of GET in the different corpora, namely prescriptivism (the use of GET is sometimes frowned upon because of its vague meaning), degree of formality (GET tends to be marked as colloquial and informal), substrate effects (the use of GET in Jamaican and Singaporean English could be influenced by substrate or local varieties), effects of second language acquisition (universal and L1-independent principles like regularization or simplification) and orientation towards a British English or American English norm.

Chapter 4 is the first of two chapters that present the results of the corpus analysis. It focuses on the "surface forms" of GET, first considering the frequency of the lemma in the different (parts of the) corpora under study, and then distinguishing between the inflected forms of GET. The comparison between LOB and FLOB reveals that there was no major change in the frequency of the verb / verb forms between 1961 (when the LOB data were produced) and 1991 (when the FLOB data were produced). Contrary to the author's expectations, the comparison of the ICE components shows that GET tends to be found less often in Jamaican English and Singaporean English than in British English, with the exception of the (typically American) forms *gotta* and *gotten*, whose use in ICE-JA and ICE-SIN is discussed in some detail. The frequency of GET and the distribution of its inflected forms are also compared across

modes (speech vs writing) and genres. The verb is clearly more commonly used in speech than in writing, and appears to be more associated with certain genres like fiction or letters than with others such as academic writing or student essays and exams. On the whole, stylistic variation appears to be more striking in British English than in Jamaican and Singaporean English.

Chapter 5 represents the core of the book, as indicated by the fact that its title ('Semasiological-syntactic analysis of GET in World Englishes') is quite similar to the title of the book. It starts with a section (Section 5.1) that sketches the "verb-complementational profile" of GET in the five main corpora under study, showing its distribution across ten categories, namely monotransitive use, ditransitive use, linking verb, passive auxiliary, existential construction, particle verb, verb of motion, possessive (HAVE) *got*, semi-modal (HAVE) *got to* and catenative verb. These categories are each dealt with in a distinct section (Sections 5.2 to 5.10), with the exception of monotransitive and ditransitive uses, which are both discussed in the same section. A last section in the chapter (Section 5.11) centres around chunks with GET. Most of these ten sections have the same structure, starting with some theoretical background and a presentation of the hypotheses, followed by a description of the results (distinguishing, when relevant, between frequencies, forms, meanings and modes/genres), and ending with a summary of the section. The sections on GET as a linking verb, a verb of motion and a catenative verb are shorter and not further divided into subsections; they do not include any explicit hypotheses either. The findings presented in Chapter 5 mainly have to do with the evolution of the different uses of GET through time, their frequency across varieties, their preference for speech or writing and for certain genres, the presence of innovative/non-standard uses and the spectrum of meanings expressed by specific uses of GET. Among many other findings, it thus appears that possessive HAVE *got* became more common between 1961 and 1991, that particle verbs with GET are less frequent in New Englishes than in British English, that GET-existentials almost never occur in writing, that *got* + bare infinitive is an innovative catenative construction found in Singaporean English, and that the GET-passive expresses adversity more often in Jamaican English than in British and Singaporean English. Some of these results are explained by one or several of the factors outlined in the third chapter of the book.

Chapter 6 is made up of two sections. In the first one, a distinction is made between the lexical and grammatical uses of GET, and the three varieties under study are situated along the lexis-grammar continuum on the basis of the percentage that lexical and grammatical uses represent in each variety. While all three varieties display more lexical than grammatical uses of GET, grammatical functions turn out to be slightly more common in Jamaican and Singaporean English. The second section provides a summary of the main findings of the study, and what these findings can tell us about the factors that arguably play a role in the variation of GET. The last chapter is a short conclusion that highlights the limitations of the study and some avenues for further research. The book also includes a list of abbreviations, figures and tables, as well as a subject index.

This book is extremely rich in content. Not only does it analyse all the occurrences of GET in as many as five different corpora (of about one million words each), but in certain cases it also adopts an onomasiological approach and considers possible alternatives to GET (e.g. other existential constructions such as *there*-existentials, or other modals and semi-modals like *must* or *need to*) in order to establish the proportion with which GET, rather than any other verb or construction, is used to express a given meaning. All in all, it tests almost 40 hypotheses, among which 10 concern particle verbs with GET. Some footnotes show that other types of complementary analyses were carried out, but not described in detail because the results proved

not to be significant (e.g. pp. 164-165 for particle verbs). Considering that the analyses were largely manual (the study of GET-chunks is an exception), one can only imagine the amount of work that all of this must have represented, and the author seems to have put a great deal of effort and thought into the whole process. In this perspective, the occasional errors (e.g. referring to the overuse of monotransitive GET in the fiction sections of ICE on p. 82, while it is actually slightly underused) can easily be forgiven. Certain readers, however, may take issue with some of the methodological choices made by the author (e.g. comparing GET-clusters in the written data from LOB and FLOB with those in the mixed, i.e. written and spoken, data from ICE-GB) or some of her explanations and interpretations, such as the interpretation of differences between LOB and FLOB being due, in the case of monotransitive GET, to the selection of texts included in the two corpora (p. 63) and, in other cases, to a diachronic change (e.g. for GET-passives on p. 101), or the claims about the influence of American English, when no corpus data representing this variety are included in the study (the latter is explicitly mentioned as a limitation of the study, though).

As is typical of studies based on corpora, this one provides detailed quantitative results on the linguistic phenomenon investigated. Readers should not expect very sophisticated statistics, but loads of figures nevertheless. While some readers may at times feel overwhelmed by so many figures, they will be helped by the clear presentation of the results in the form of tables and/or graphs, as well as the useful summaries found at the end of most subsections in Chapter 5. Despite a strong focus on these quantitative results, the book does not just involve number-crunching, as it offers explanations for these results and, especially, for the variation in the use of GET. Among these explanations, those related to substrate influence are particularly worth underlining. In studies of New Englishes, the possible influence of substrate languages is rarely taken seriously. This can be explained by two main reasons: the first one is that corpora of New Englishes often lack rich metadata on the individuals who produced the data, including information on the languages or language varieties that they use besides English; the second reason is that linguists carrying out these studies are mostly specialists in the English language who know very little about the other languages or language varieties used by speakers of New Englishes. While Bruckmaier was presumably confronted with the first problem, she obviously went to great pains to find out more about the substrate or local varieties that Jamaican and Singaporean users of English could have been influenced by, considering counterparts of (certain uses of) GET in Jamaican Creole, Colloquial Singapore, Malay, Hokkien or Cantonese. This effort is praiseworthy and opens up new possibilities in terms of explanation of the results. However, such explanations are merely hypotheses: interference between languages is a very elusive phenomenon, whose existence can only be assumed (not proved) after converging evidence has been gathered (from L2 corpora, from L1 corpora representing the substrate languages/varieties, from individual speakers' linguistic profiles listing the languages/varieties they are familiar with, etc.). The same is true of most of the explanations put forward to account for the results. This is important to bear in mind when one reads rather strong and assertive claims such as "The tokens in ICE-SIN, in contrast, are **clearly** substrate-influenced" (p. 135; emphasis added) or "The innovative use of uninflected possessive *got* in Colloquial Singapore English can **confidently** be added to this list of uses influenced by the substrates" (pp. 205-6; emphasis added). The possible interaction between several factors, while sometimes mentioned (e.g. with respect to possessive (HAVE) *got*), could perhaps have been taken more into account.

The thoroughness of the analysis is reflected in the structure of the book: Chapters 4 and 5, which present the results of the corpus study, take up as many as 260 pages, that is, 80% of the whole book. The remaining pages, however, are not quite enough to offer the more general kind of contribution that one would expect from a monograph – that is, what is left after the

details of the analysis are forgotten. Theoretically speaking, for example, the book lacks a coherent framework that could have brought all the elements of the study together in a unified approach. The author relies on concepts taken from theoretical paradigms such as second language acquisition research or contact linguistics, but without fully embracing any of these paradigms: the notion of non-nativeness, central to second language acquisition research, is only explicitly mentioned a couple of times in the book, and the results of the study do not serve to generalize about the New Englishes under study (in fact, no proper justification is provided for why the Jamaican and Singaporean varieties of English in particular were selected, and their special status among New Englishes is even highlighted, with Singaporean English being used as a first language by many speakers (p. 4) and Jamaican English being more accurately described as a “second dialect” (p. 9) than as a “second language”). Construction Grammar would arguably have been a good candidate for an all-encompassing theoretical approach. Indeed, so many elements in the book seem to point to this framework that it is a wonder that the term “Construction Grammar” is only mentioned two or three times in passing. Not only are the different uses of GET referred to as “constructions”, but the acknowledgement that they “combine form and meaning” (p. 53) reminds one of the Construction Grammar definition of constructions as “form and meaning pairings” (Goldberg 2006: 3). In the analysis, GET-constructions are investigated at different levels of abstraction, and construction alternations such as phrasal verbs with continuous or discontinuous particle placement are briefly explored. In addition, the method which consists in automatically extracting GET-clusters and then manually screening them to only keep those in which “the lexemes functioned as direct objects of monotransitive GET” (p. 76) actually resembles collostructional analysis, the statistical calculations excepted.

What is bound to remain after the book is read, however, is the extreme rigour and systematicity with which the uses of the verb GET, a high-frequency verb that “goes largely unnoticed” (Biber et al. 1999: 376), have been scrutinized. The ten constructions that have been recognized, the multiple levels at which they have been studied (structural, lexical, phraseological, etc.), the many dimensions along which their variation has been examined (diachronic, regional, stylistic) and the range of factors that have been considered to account for this variation definitely make the book true to the announced goal of “providing a comprehensive semasiological-syntactic analysis of GET” (p. 3). It can be read from cover to cover to get the overall picture, or used as a kind of reference book from which individual sections are consulted depending on the GET-construction(s) that one is interested in. In any case, everybody is sure to get something of interest out of this book.

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