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Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik

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Vorwort des Herausgebers.....3

Artikel:

Andreas Mahler

Liaisons dangereuses? Recto- und Verso-Verknüpfungen bei La Fontaine und Joyce (unter besonderer Berücksichtigung einer Ameise und einer Grille) 5

Johannes Scherling

Focalizing Memory – Synchronicity and Historicity in the Discourse on the *Charlie Hebdo* Attack in UK Media 17

Tamami Shimada

Morphosyntactic Features in Flux: Awareness of “Irishnessness” and “Standard” in Hiberno-English Speakers..... 49

Nick Scott

Academic Writing and Culture:
A Study of Austrian Tertiary-Level EFL Learners..... 75

Joshua Nash

Placenames and Ecolinguistics: Some Considerations for Toponymists..... 99

Nursen Gömceli & Allan James

Hiberno-English and beyond in J.M. Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World*: a Literary Linguistic Analysis of its Dramatic Significance..... 105

Nassim Balestrini

Life Writing in the Internet Age: Miranda July and the Limits of Art as Social Practice..... 127

Walter W. Hölbling

The Power of Visual Discourse: 21st Century US-American Films ‘Against the Grain’ 151

Silke Jandl

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries: Adapting Jane Austen in the Internet Age 167

Maximilian Feldner

Bringing Bloom to the Screen: Challenges and Possibilities of Adapting James Joyce’s *Ulysses* 197

Daniela Wawra	
Digital Communication and Privacy: Is Social Web Use gendered?.....	219
Eva Triebel	
...or not to be. The Strategic and Non-Strategic Use of Negative Identifiers in Online Forums	247

Rezensionen:

Isabel Karremann	
Roland Weidle, <i>Englische Literatur der Frühen Neuzeit. Eine Einführung</i> (<i>Grundlagen der Anglistik und Amerikanistik</i> 37), 2013.	271
Walter Grünzweig	
Iris-Aya Laemmerhirt, <i>Embracing Differences: Transnational Cultural Flows</i> <i>between Japan and the United States</i> , 2013.....	273

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Vorwort des Herausgebers

Liebe Leserinnen und Leser,

Es ist eine große Freude, Ihnen hiermit den 40. Jahrgang unserer anglistisch-amerikanistischen Zeitschrift aus Österreich vorzulegen. Wir durften eine ganze Generation von AnglistInnen und AmerikanistInnen wissenschaftlich anregend begleiten. Ein Privileg. Ich danke von Herzen für das andauernde Interesse an und die kritische Begleitung unserer Zeitschrift.

Die Auswahl guter Beiträge ist der Schlüssel für das Leben dieser Zeitschrift. Ich danke den Mitherausgebern und Gutachtern für ihre sicher nicht leichte Aufgabe. Ich danke dem Redaktionsteam für die oft sehr komplizierte Arbeit an den Beiträgen. Ihr alle erweckt diese Zeitschrift durch euer Mittun zum Leben. Danke.

Ich danke auch dem Verleger, Gunter Narr, für sein Engagement für die Zeitschrift und sein Vertrauen in unsere Arbeit an ihr. Als ich die Zeitschrift 1976 in Graz gründete, war nicht vorauszusehen, dass sie so erfolgreich werden würde. Ich danke deshalb allen, die an diesem Erfolg mitgewirkt haben.

Bernhard Kettemann
Herausgeber

Placenames and Ecolinguistics

Some Considerations for Toponymists

Joshua Nash

Placenames (toponymy) has not received much explicit attention from ecolinguists. An outline of ecolinguistics as relevant to toponymy is given. Using several exemplary toponyms in Norfolk, the language spoken on Norfolk Island, South Pacific, a definition of an ecologically embedded language is put forward.

Ecolinguistics can be broadly divided into two themes. The first deals with environmental discourse analysis, often termed eco-critical discourse analysis, critical ecolinguistics, and the language of ecology and environmentalism. The second deals with interactions between humans, mind, and environment, can be expressed through lexico-grammatical studies of how humans talk about and adapt linguistically to new and foreign environments. This second strand is commonly referred to as language ecology or the ecology of language. I will not be overly concerned with the first.

Since its beginnings in the 1980s and 1990s in Western universities, ecolinguistics has grown into a research field in its own right, although the boundaries of what ecolinguistic analysis is and how one should go about doing ecolinguistic research has not been made explicit by scholars working in the field. The linguistic community has also questioned the relevance of ecolinguistics as a subdiscipline in general and called into question on what theoretical ground ecolinguistics actually stands.¹ There have also been several critical voices concerning specific aspects of ecolinguistic research. Goddard (1996) and Siegel (1997) launched well weighted and justified critiques against some of the key tenets in (Australian) ecolinguistics. Goddard critiqued ecolinguistic work from a se-

¹ For polemical reviews of ecolinguistic work see Edwards (2008) and Ostler (2001).

mantic and universalist perspective; Siegel took a line based in pidgin and creole languages and language documentation in the Pacific. With the exception of some recent reflections on what might constitute ecolinguistic theory and thought (e.g. LeVasseur 2014), scholars and theoreticians have not been overly explicit in stating the theoretical breadth of ecolinguistics and its practical implications for general linguistic theory.

Ecolinguistics provides several conceptual questions. As regards toponymy I am concerned with one major empirical question: How can relationships involving people, language, place, and names be measured in and through using toponyms? Research in linguistics has generally focused on linguistic structure decontextualised from the environment the language is spoken. Sociolinguistic research has contributed significantly to an understanding of language use and language in social context just as ecolinguistics has created awareness of language as an ecological phenomenon (Haugen 1972).

Some ecolinguistic research has focused on more obscure issues, to the extent that some would claim much of what is in the interest range of ecolinguistics does not concern linguistics at all. Regardless, there is a need for contextually sensitive empirical analyses which ask questions about interrelationships concerning language, culture, and the natural environment without being alienated from mainstream linguistics. Broad philosophical analyses of the relationship between lexicon and environmental management are important in their own right. However, it leaves unanswered the question of how to analyse specific aspects of particular linguistic ecologies (e.g. toponyms).

There is a distinct gap in linguistics and toponymy of a method and theory which outlines how along with formal structural analysis the ecological implications of toponyms and their connection to the nexus of place where they develop and exist should be analysed. Such an approach will not only emphasise the efficacy of the structural analysis but will also accentuate the multitude of cultural and ecological parameters necessary to consider when conducting an ecolinguistic analysis of toponyms.

I reflect briefly on elements relevant to an ecolinguistic consideration of toponymy. These reflections are based on my linguistic fieldwork conducted on Norfolk Island, South Pacific where Norfolk is spoken and used in toponymy (Nash 2013). The anthropological linguist Edward Sapir illustrates how history may be reflected in toponyms:

only the student of language history is able to analyse such names as *essex*, *norfolk*, and *sutton* into their component elements as *east saxon*, *north folk*, and *south town*, while to the lay consciousness these names are etymological units as purely as are “*butter*” and “*cheese*”. the contrast between a country inhabited by an historically homogeneous group for a long time, full of etymo-

logically obscure place-names, and a newly settled country with its newtowns, wildwoods, and mill creeks, is apparent. (Sapir 1912: 231)

As one of the early proponents for exploring relationships between language and its bio-cultural environment, Sapir's suggestions about toponymy are still remarkably relevant. In traditional views of linguistic analysis, languages can be studied without any reference to the bio-cultural context in which they are used. They can also be transplanted and replaced by other languages; they are arbitrary codes to express universal cognitive categories. These concepts have been at the heart of the ecolinguistic critique of traditional linguistics.

The idea that linguistic practices are detachable from the world suggests one can distinguish between two prototypical language types: (1) ecologically embedded languages, and (2) disconnected languages. These are idealised types and in reality most languages are a complex mix between being constructed by their environment and constructing their environment (Mühlhäusler 2003: 2). However, such a split between conceptions of what languages are is useful in an empirical analysis. An ecologically embedded language should exhibit the following properties:

1. Words reflect social interaction between humans and their environment, e.g. Moo-oo Stone on Norfolk Island is an offshore rock formation with a large amount of moo-oo, or native Norfolk flax; Dar Fig Valley is the name of a valley where locals used to grow figs; Deep Water is a fishing location on the east coast known for the depth of the water in this area.
2. Lexical and grammatical forms are not regarded as arbitrary, e.g. the toponym Johnny Nigger Bun Et (English: Johnny Nigger Burnt It) as a grammatical unit is a sentence. It expresses an idiosyncratic Norfolk personal name form, i.e. 'Johnny Nigger' remembers the uncontrolled burning of a coastal area by an American whaler who came to live on Norfolk in the 1800s.
3. The same word can be used to describe human and other life forms, e.g. the Norf'k horg (pig, hog) is used to describe animals, humans and even the name of a fishing location. Dar Horg is named after a terrestrial feature which resembles a pig from the sea.
4. The lexicon and grammar of space reflects topography, e.g. Out ar Station is in a distant location on Norfolk; Up in a Stick is topographically 'up' in comparison to the administrative centre of Norfolk which is 'down'.
5. Language is a memory of past interactions between humans and nature, e.g. Gun Pit is a concrete structure on the west coast of Norfolk built during World War II. It is also the name

of the fishing ground Ar Gun Pit which uses Gun Pit in one of its marks. A diachronic approach is of vital importance to the study of synchronic patterns of language use.

An understanding of the interrelated phenomena can be achieved by interacting in real-world situations, with members of the respective speech communities living in the actual ecology where the language is spoken and used every day. Names associated with tourism on Norfolk (Hibiscus Lodge, Daydreamer Holiday Apartments, Fletcher Christian Apartments, Bligh Court) show how history affects and is reinterpreted through place-names. The vision of Norfolk as an island paradise is reflected in these names. This ecocritical (re-)construction of Norfolk is seen in many domains of naming including the reintroduction of Polynesian names and a distinct absence of Australian anthroponyms.

An ecolinguistic point of view considers toponyms as important cultural and environmental artefacts and events. By having access to toponyms and their histories, toponymic maps, and toponymic books or gazetteers, the tapestry of toponymic and topographic contours (names and the world) is revealed (cf. Mark et al.'s 2011 volume *Landscape in Language*). Ecolinguistics provides a basis upon which the analysis of this cross-disciplinary mix of linguistic and environmental relationships can be undertaken. An ecolinguistic investigation gives a philosophical and conceptual framework for what I believe can result in a more accurate and detailed description of toponyms in their historical and ecological contexts.

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