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**Natalie Braber**, *Lexical variation of an East Midlands mining community*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022. Pp. 192. ISBN 9781474455541.

Reviewed by Rhys J. Sandow , University of York

In 2010, Joan Beal noted that lexis is the ‘Cinderella of sociolinguistics’ (see also Durkin 2012), highlighting both the lack of attention that lexis receives from sociolinguistics and its rich potential to inform our understanding of language and society. Recent years have

seen an uplift in studies of lexical variation in the UK (e.g. Robinson 2010; Pearce 2020; Sandow 2022), and Braber has been a key player in this shift (e.g. Braber 2015, 2018). However, most of these contributions to the sociolinguistic study of lexis have been in article format, with the necessary limitations of detail, depth and scope that article word lengths dictate. Given this context, Braber's latest book, *Lexical Variation of an East Midlands Mining Community*, is a welcome and timely addition to the literature. In particular, Braber showcases the ways in which cultural history can be preserved through the lens of lexical variation.

This volume is the culmination of years of Braber's work in the East Midlands, exploring the lexical diversity of the mining industry, highlighting the ways in which words serve as an index for not just a local identity but a mining identity. Braber provides an accessible yet detailed account of the lexical variation of East Midlands coal mines. While this book is timely given the shifting attention sociolinguists are paying to lexical variation, it is also timely in the fact that the words Braber discusses are associated with an ageing population. Braber's contribution means that despite processes of dialect attrition, these local words, which each tell a story about pit life, will not be lost. The willingness of miners to participate in Braber's research and the media attention it has received is testament to the importance of these words to the local community. More broadly, this highlights the role of language as heritage and the very strong socio-indexical meanings which link the East Midlands coal mines with a specific repertoire of vocabulary.

Throughout the monograph, Braber highlights the ways that a distinct lexical repertoire was used in the pits, meaning that the surface level (i.e. the entrance to the mine) functions as a sort of isogloss boundary between the lexis used below and above ground. This provides a novel way of thinking about space in the context of language variation. While commenting on the distinctiveness of the vocabulary used in East Midlands coal mines, Braber also highlights lexical diversity within and between individuals and pits in the region. Much of this is a result of contact with miners who are from, or who have worked, elsewhere, meaning that these words also tell stories about patterns of migration in the mining industry.

In chapter 1, 'The linguistic heritage of East Midlands mining communities' (pp. 1–22), Braber highlights the importance of coal mining to the East Midlands and the importance of lexis to coal mining identity. Braber outlines the key aim of her research programme: to scrutinise 'pit talk in order to identify, classify and record the words used, and to critically examine the contribution of its usage to regional and local identity' (p. 3). She then proceeds to provide a thorough overview of the broader research context, focusing on language in the East Midlands in general, dialect attrition, lexical variation, industrial languages, and language and heritage. In doing so, Braber contextualises her research thoroughly without burdening the reader with technical and theoretical minutiae. This frames the manuscript as a thoroughly academic publication, but one that is highly accessible.

In chapter 2, 'The history and geography of the East Midlands coalfield' (pp. 23–61), Braber situates her research in geographical, historical and sociocultural context. The level

of detail in this chapter is extensive, but necessary given the complex local dynamics that are relevant in the context of understanding both mining heritage in the East Midlands and the language associated with it. Braber details the development of coal mining in the East Midlands, tracing its history back to the late Middle Ages. She also highlights the centrality of mining to local communities in the East Midlands and of East Midlands pits to the national production of coal. Braber also brings to attention emic social divisions among mining communities in the East Midlands. In particular, she explains the fault lines that divided the community during the strikes of the 1980s from which the community is yet to heal fully, with miners who participated in industrial action still refusing to associate with those who did not, so-called ‘scabs’. In this chapter, Braber also surveys the existing dialectological research which has been conducted on mining language at various levels of granularity, from the East Midlands, to the UK, to the world.

In chapter 3, ‘Methodology’ (pp. 62–82), Braber details a research project which adapted and overcame limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The study employed three main methods: interviews by linguists and heritage specialists using Sense Relation Networks (see Llamas 1999), interviews by a former miner and postal questionnaires. In particular, the use of Sense Relation Networks facilitated not only the elicitation of a range of lexical items, but also served as a springboard for detailed metalinguistic discussions of these words. After all, the miners interviewed by Braber and her team are the experts in their usage. The participants in the study are almost exclusively male; this is not through a lack of trying to recruit female participants, but many were reluctant to participate as mining, and its associated lexis, are perceived to be heavily gendered (male). Braber provides a highly interesting discussion of positionality, with the (non-)participation in strike action by interviewees in the 1980s having implications for the willingness of many ex-miners to participate in the research.

In chapter 4, ‘Analysis’ (pp. 83–148), Braber provides detailed descriptions of the lexical items, and variation between them, attested in her East Midlands data. The chapter is structured conceptually, beginning with payment and shift patterns, then dangerous conditions, tools, job titles and levels of management, coal seams and pieces of coal, coal containers and safety devices for such containers, shafts and roadways, equipment and structures, locations above and below ground, and finally other words. Braber collates the metalinguistic testimony from the miners in the study to provide a coherent narrative of mining lexis. She highlights the origins of many of these words, such as *mortek*, a particular type of hammer, from Polish *młotek* ‘hammer’, which was initially used by Eastern European miners in the East Midlands pits, before being adopted more widely. Braber highlights that the lexical diversity that she observes is not evenly distributed, with some objects lexicalised relatively homogeneously, while others exhibit high degrees of heterogeneity. In particular, there are many lexical items for safety items which were used under wheels to stop movement. Braber hypothesises that as many of these objects were made in a bespoke manner, they may lack uniform or ‘official’ names, making them more conducive to lexical variation. The chapter’s prose is punctuated by a number of images of mining equipment and processes, which serve to visualise and to reify the objects of discussion, particularly for readers who lack a

mining background. Ultimately, in this chapter, Braber presents a large quantity of East Midlands mining words and phrases, from eating habits, such as *snap time*, to technical descriptions of the process of extracting coal and the equipment used, such as a PICK being referred to as a *tadge*, to words used for other miners, including detailed descriptions of words used for those who worked particularly hard, such as a *slogger piece*, and those who did not, such as *being idler than Ludlam's dog*. In doing so, Braber tells stories of pit life through the lexical repertoires of the miners.

In the final chapter, 'Conclusion: Preserving pit talk' (pp. 149–67), Braber summarises her key findings and provides detailed recommendations relating to policy and practice for language as heritage, and finally makes a series of recommendations to develop our understanding of mining language further. Braber discusses variation in the lexical usage patterns of East Midlands miners, in terms of geographical variation across space, including across individual pits, and in terms of duration of time spent as a miner, with those who mined for longer exhibiting a greater mining-related lexical repertoire. Braber is not hopeful that mining lexis is, or is likely to be, protected through legislation. Thus, she calls for more bottom-up efforts to preserve pit talk, and other similar varieties. Specifically, Braber highlights the importance of public engagement by encouraging learning, conservation and participation in local lects, which will serve to give them greater vitality. Next, Braber calls for research similar to her own to be conducted across other localities in the UK in order to enable regional comparisons as well as comparisons with older dialect surveys, in order to provide a broader perspective of synchronic and diachronic usage patterns of mining lexis. Finally, Braber ends the volume by reinforcing the centrality of mining to the East Midlands and its history and, more specifically, the centrality of language to the identity of many miners.

To conclude, Braber's monograph is one that should appeal to linguists, particularly those of dialectological or sociolinguistic persuasions, and to those interested in East Midlands heritage, or mining heritage more generally. In the volume, Braber frames words as artefacts which each serve to tell a specific part of the story of the lived experiences of the miners that Braber and her team interviewed. In doing so, by using vocabulary as a gateway, the volume serves to provide a rich history of mining to the uninitiated. Ultimately, Braber has highlighted the value of exploring occupational lects and has provided detailed methodological descriptions of how to engage in such work, particularly in relation to positionality. I am sure that this volume will be widely cited in years to come, but, more than this, it will serve as a key text, particularly to those working in the area of language as heritage.

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**Lisa Jansen**, *English rock and pop performances: A sociolinguistic investigation of British and American language perceptions and attitudes* (IMPACT: Studies in Language, Culture and Society 51). Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2022. Pp. ix + 188. ISBN 9789027257895 (e-Book).

Reviewed by Monika Konert-Panek , University of Warsaw

Singing accent stylisation in popular music has recently become an extensively studied topic, with its beginnings marked by the seminal study by Trudgill (1983), focused on the Americanisation of the British singing accent. Throughout the following period of about forty years, the characteristics of singing accents have been investigated from a variety of angles and theoretical standpoints, including acts of identity, the language-ideological perspective, referee design or usage-based phonology. In particular, this research area contributed from and flourished within the third wave of sociolinguistic studies (Eckert 2018) and is now perceived as part of an emerging research subfield of pop cultural linguistics (Werner 2022).

Yet some aspects regarding the exact mechanisms involved in this sociolinguistic phenomenon call for further research, one of them being a thorough account of the audience’s perception of language performance. The reviewed volume aims at filling