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Pragmatic Markers in World Englishes: Kind of and Sort of as a Case in Point

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Lucía Loureiro-Porto's *Pragmatic Markers in World Englishes: Kind of and Sort of as a Case in Point* (2024) is a comprehensive study of the pragmatic markers *kind of* and *sort of* across different varieties of English. The book explores their historical evolution, grammaticalization and pragmatic functions, with a particular focus on British English (BrE), American English (AmE), Singapore English (SingE) and Philippine English (PhilE). Through corpus-based research, Loureiro-Porto sheds light on the convergence and divergence of these linguistic elements in selected sociolinguistic contexts.

The study is grounded in the broader field of pragmatics, which examines how language is used in real-world interactions to convey meaning beyond literal interpretation, (Labov 2006; Leech 2014), coinciding with Loureiro-Porto's analysis embedded in its sociolinguistic background to understand its change over the years and its current meaning. Pragmatic markers, such as *kind of* and *sort of*, serve a crucial role in softening statements, expressing uncertainty and hedging opinions. The author explains that these expressions contribute to "the creation of intimacy and affect between interlocutors, including politeness and face-saving strategies" (2024, 15). These functions render them particularly relevant for sociolinguistic research, as they reveal subtle variations in how speakers from different linguistic backgrounds use language to negotiate meaning and maintain social relationships.

One of the key contributions of this book is its cross-varietal analysis, which highlights both universal and localized uses of examined markers. By considering data from multiple English varieties, Loureiro-Porto provides a nuanced perspective on how these markers evolve over time and adapt to different linguistic environments. She states that "pragmatic markers from historical input varieties may take on new functions in outer circle Englishes to accommodate local needs" (2024, 12), illustrating how linguistic adaptation occurs in postcolonial settings.

This volume is particularly relevant in today's globalized world, where English is not a second or foreign language for many. As Loureiro-Porto (2024, 9) notices through the work of Pedersen (1999), some English varieties exhibit a balance between dialect convergence, due to global influences and dialect divergence. The book, therefore, offers valuable insights into language change, contact linguistics, and the ongoing debate about the standardization versus diversification of English worldwide.

The volume is divided into seven chapters, each exploring a different aspect of the study that is presented:

In the first chapter, the author introduces the concept of World Englishes, focusing on whether different varieties of English are converging or diverging. Loureiro-Porto (2024) outlines key theoretical models, such as Kachru's (1985) Concentric Circles Model, which categorizes English varieties into Inner, Outer and Expanding Circles. She highlights that English is both a "killer language" (Eckert et al. 2004), or a 'Tyrannosaurus rex' (Swales 1997)" (2024, 10) and a diverse linguistic entity that continuously evolves. The chapter sets the groundwork for analyzing pragmatic markers in this broad linguistic landscape. She also discusses the role of globalization and its impact on the English language, emphasizing that linguistic diversity is maintained even in the face of increasing communication between speakers of different English varieties.

The second chapter traces the historical development of *Kind of* and *Sort of*, explaining their transition from noun phrases to pragmatic markers. Loureiro-Porto (2024:26) discusses how these markers underwent "reanalysis, metaphor, grammaticalization and pragmaticalization." The author provides evidence from historical texts, such as "I kind of love you, Sal – I vow" (Oxford English Dictionary, 1804), to illustrate early uses of these markers as hedging devices. The chapter argues that the shift from concrete meanings (e.g., "a kind of bread") to abstract, discourse-oriented uses reflects broader patterns of grammaticalization. The analysis is supported by historical corpus data, showing the gradual emergence of these markers in different syntactic contexts.

Chapter three examines the roles of *kind of* and *sort of* in British and American English, functioning mainly as "the role of diminishers, approximators and boosters in their sentences" (Loureiro-Porto 2024, 45). The chapter provides corpus-based examples illustrating how speakers use these markers to convey uncertainty, politeness, or emphasis. For instance, "kind of" and "sort of" often soften statements, helping speakers express nuanced meanings. Additionally, the author explores their frequency in spoken versus written discourse, demonstrating that these markers are more prevalent in informal and conversational speech.

In the fourth chapter pragmatic markers are explored in the context of World Englishes, emphasizing how different English varieties incorporate local influences. Loureiro-Porto discusses how English in Singapore and the Philippines has developed unique pragmatic features. Examples such as "lah" in Singapore English as an indigenous pragmatic marker are provided. The chapter also reviews methodological approaches to studying these variations, highlighting postcolonial pragmatics as a crucial framework. The discussion extends to how social and cultural factors influence the frequency and function of these markers, showing that pragmatic markers serve as indicators of speaker identity and communicative style.

The core and fifth chapter of the volume details the methodology of the research explaining how the syntactic position of *kind of* and *sort of* across different English varieties has been examined. The data reveal that these markers are used differently in Singapore and Philippine English compared to British and American English. For example, in Singapore English, *sort of* appears more frequently in sentence-medial positions, reflecting influence from local languages (Loureiro-Porto 2024). The corpus findings support the argument that English varieties evolve in response to sociocultural and linguistic pressures. The impact of media and digital communication on the spread and standardization of pragmatic markers is also brought to the fore in this chapter.

Chapter six scrutinizes how globalization and Americanization influence linguistic change. Loureiro-Porto notes that the term 'Americanization' is used along 'globalization' to refer to a world-wide cultural homogenization. It is argued that while English varieties may adopt common features due to global media, they also retain local distinctiveness, a phenomenon described as "glocalization." The discussion aligns with debates on whether English is becoming more uniform or maintaining its diversity. She also critiques the assumption that American English is the dominant influence, highlighting that local linguistic features continue to persist despite global pressures.

Finally, the seventh chapter summarizes the findings of the study, emphasizing that *kind of* and *sort of* are not merely fillers but play important roles in discourse. Loureiro-Porto (2024) calls for further research into other pragmatic markers in World Englishes, particularly in underexplored regions such as Africa and the Caribbean. The author concludes that English varieties exhibit both convergence and divergence, shaped by historical, social and cultural factors. The chapter suggests new avenues for research, such as exploring the pragmatic markers of emerging English varieties in non-traditional English-speaking regions.

All in all, *Pragmatic Markers in World Englishes: Kind of and Sort of as a Case in Point* (2024) is a significant contribution to the study of pragmatics and World Englishes, in which Loureiro-Porto's rigorous analysis provides a deeper understanding of how *kind of* and *sort of* function as discourse strategies across different linguistic contexts. One of the book's greatest strengths lies in its meticulous empirical approach. By drawing on extensive corpus data, Loureiro-Porto offers concrete evidence of linguistic trends rather than relying on theoretical assumptions. And, despite the limitations with regard to the number of World English varieties that are explored, the study provides a robust methodological framework for analyzing pragmatic markers in different varieties of English, rendering it a valuable resource for linguists interested in discourse analysis, corpus linguistics and language variation.



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