RiCL Research in Corpus Linguistics

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1. SUMMARY

This volume is part of the John Benjamin *Studies in Corpus Linguistics* series, the second specifically analysing legal language, after the one edited by Laura Mori (2018).

In *Corpus-based Research on Variation in English Legal Discourse* (hereafter abbreviated as *CRVELD*), except for Chapter 1 which outlines the main themes of modern legal discourse research and summarises the other chapters, the volume is divided into two parts, each comprising five chapters. Part One focuses on 'Cross-genre and cross-linguistic variation', while Part Two is concerned with 'Diachronic variation'.

As Teresa Fanego and Paula Rodríguez-Puente, respectively from the University of Santiago de Compostela and the University of Oviedo, point out in the Acknowledgements, the idea for this volume arose when the two editors were involved in compiling the *Corpus of Historical English Law Reports 1535–1999*.

The opening chapter presents an overview of legal discourse studies, starting with Bhatia's (1987) observation about the dramatic rise in the number of studies in legal language. Since then legal discourse studies have grown apace, and the editors offer a fascinating synopsis of the various strands that have evolved, highlighting three relatively innovative areas, i.e. *FASP* (*fiction à substrat specialisé*) which, in the legal sphere, focuses on law-related fiction, including TV series and films; the impact of plain language on legal discourse; and forensic linguistics, another multi-faceted field in rapid expansion.

The authors then turn to the question of register and genre perspectives on legal discourse, underlining the importance of works by Biber (e.g., Biber 1988) and Swales (e.g., Swales 1990) when applied to the legal sphere. It is in this broader context, together with the exponential growth of corpus linguistics, that the explosion of interest in analysing legal English and other specialised domains has to be understood.

Taxonomies of legal text types are briefly explored, again starting with Bhatia (1987, 1993) and his subdivisions of the various types of spoken texts and written texts, later supplemented by Tiersma (1999) and Šarčević (2000). The authors then briefly survey legal discourse and (historical) pragmatics. Although the spoken language of the past cannot be investigated through direct observation, they affirm that methodologies have been refined so that it is now "possible to get an approximate picture of the spoken language of past centuries" (9). The rest of the chapter is devoted to summaries of the contributions making up the rest of the volume, based on Biel's (2010: 4–5) classification of four major 'trajectories': external variation, internal variation, temporal variation, and cross-linguistic variation.

In her chapter "English and Italian land contracts: A cross-linguistic analysis," Giuliana Diani observes how Italian contracts differ from their English counterparts: the recitals section is generally absent in Italian texts; the organisation and layout of the section on operative provisions is different; and there is more punctuation in Italian texts.

Comparing linguistic features, the author highlights the frequency in both corpora of lexical repetition and the paucity of personal pronouns. She remarks that only masculine pronouns are employed in English texts, and that both corpora repeatedly display compound adverbs and anaphoric expressions. She also notes the "abundance of complex prepositions and other idiomatic and semi-idiomatic sequences with the structure preposition + noun + preposition" (33) in both languages.

The author compares binomial and multinomial expressions, observing that English contracts show a greater range and frequency. A further difference concerns the omission in English of the article before nouns denoting the party's functional role (e.g. *Purchaser*, *Vendor*), unlike Italian. She asserts that syntactic complexity and excessive

wordiness are common to both corpora. Passive constructions, Diani notes, are considerably more frequent in the English corpus.

Regarding tense and modality, there is an "enormous disparity in the frequency of deontic modals" (39). Diani hypothesises that Italian contracts adopt a variety of "other deontically-charged devices" (43) such as *obbligare/arsi* or *promettere*. She also observes that deontically-charged nominals such as *diritto* or *facoltà* are frequently used. However, she affirms that possibly the most important deontic device in Italian contracts is the frequency of the simple present indicative and the future form of verbs.

She concludes that although both sets of texts have a shared communicative function, the language of Italian contracts is generally less formulaic and exhibits greater variation.

In her chapter Cristina Lastres-López examines conditionals in spoken courtroom discourse in English, Spanish and French, and conditionals in spoken parliamentary discourse in English and French. In differentiating between courtroom discourse and parliamentary discourse, the author affirms that while "the former clearly qualifies as a 'purely' legal register, the latter represents a more hybrid text type" (57).

Analysing the results relating to courtroom discourse, Lastres-López observes that conditional clauses in English can be introduced by various markers besides *if*, whereas in Romance languages, using "conditionals with markers other than *si* is very marginal" (61). As for metafunctions, ideational conditionals are easily the most common in all three corpora. Interpersonal conditionals are less common, and largely restricted to the English corpus.

In terms of the semantic type of condition, real conditions prevail in all three corpora, followed by potential conditions and unreal conditions. As for modality, in English the most frequent modals are *would*, *may* and *will*, whereas in French and Spanish the meanings expressed by modals "are encoded by verbal endings on the lexical verb" (64).

In investigating conditionals in parliamentary discourse, Lastres-López restricts her inquiry to 500 *if*-clauses and 500 *si*-clauses, observing that both languages exhibit a clear preference for ideational conditionals.

Regarding the semantic type of condition, the results confirm the same sequence as in courtroom discourse, with real conditions dominating in both languages. In terms

of modality, over 67 per cent of conditionals in English occur with modal verbs, whereas in French only 21 per cent of apodoses contain a modal.

Ruth Breeze's chapter "Part-of-speech patterns in legal genres: Text-internal dynamics from a corpus-based perspective" examines four corpora –academic texts, case law, legal documents and legislation– all related to business law. After outlining some methodological issues, the author discusses the results, highlighting "some similarities across all the corpora, particularly concerning the frequency of possessive nouns" (83), and pointing to "a greater tendency to use the Saxon genitive in legal writing overall than in the construct of general English" (84). However, she also finds "some major differences between the four corpora, suggesting that they fall into two groups: Academic and Cases, on the one hand, and Documents and Legislation, on the other" (84).

Breeze then focuses on the key features across the corpora, observing the higher frequency of plural nouns compared with the BNC reference corpus. Regarding singular possessive nouns, the author highlights the striking result of the Legislation corpus where most instances consist of the same word, i.e. *company's*.

The author observes that third person singular present tenses are key in the Academic and Cases corpora. She also notices the salience of "instances where *that* is part of a linking expression with a connecting function" (87).

As for the key features in Documents and Legislation, Breeze remarks on the high keyness of coordinating conjunctions. Another key feature is the frequency of past participles. The author affirms that "[t]he preference for using the passive is the main explanation for the frequency of participles" (94).

Breeze notes the frequency of particular modal verbs in Documents and Legislation, above all *shall*. She affirms that the high frequency of *must* in Legislation provides evidence that drafters "have adopted some of the principles of plain English" (96), whereas legal documents are generally more conservative, "hence their greater tendency to preserve *shall*" (96).

The chapter by Randi Reppen and Meishan Chen "explores variation in spoken courtroom language across time, registers, and varieties using three-word lexical bundles (Biber *et al.* 1999)" (105). Based on Culpeper and Kytö's (2010: 103–141) account of lexical bundles in Early Modern English (EModE) trials (1560–1760) and

Present Day English (PDE) trials (1993), the authors compare the bundles with those in the 1994 O.J. Simpson trial.

Reppen and Chen first describe the corpora and the methodology used: in the O.J. trial this includes a description of the sub-registers. In comparing three-word bundles, they list "the fifty most frequent bundles found in the O.J. Simpson trial along with the bundles that also occurred in the EModE and PDE corpora" (109). 76 per cent of the bundles are specific only to the O.J. trial, often referring to particular places, people, or times. The authors point to the high frequency of bundles in O.J. containing *you*, whereas "the EModE and PDE bundles had a greater use of 'speaker-centered' bundles" (111).

The most frequent bundles common to all three corpora are *at that time*, *what did you*, and *one of the*, which "share the discourse goal of providing information and specifics" (113).

Analysing sub-registers in the O.J. corpus, the authors find that in opening statements bundles are frequently evidential and sensory-related, which "has the effect of guiding the jurors' thoughts" (115). Interrogatives feature repeatedly in direct examination bundles, while cross-examination bundles tend to highlight the challenge to the credibility of witnesses. Surprisingly, the authors provide little analysis of bundles data relating to the fourth sub-register listed, i.e. closing argument.

Stanisław Goźdź-Roszkowski's chapter explores stance construction in legal writing by analysing how the Noun *that*-pattern is used in academic journals and judicial opinions. He observes that most studies on stance in the legal domain to date have focused on judicial discourse, unsurprisingly given the importance of stance or evaluation for judicial argumentation.

The analysis draws on three different datasets: the *Academic Journals Corpus* (AJC), the *Corpus of Judicial Opinions* (CJO) and the *British Law Report Corpus* (BLaRC). Noun Complement structures are investigated where head nouns "take a nominal complement in the form of *that*-clause" (129). The nouns were then classified into three types governing *that*-clauses: epistemic nouns, attitude or perspective nouns and communication (non-factual) nouns.

The author notes that most nouns fall into the category of epistemic nouns, especially those typically associated with certainty or marking likelihood, while those

signalling attitude or perspective or corresponding to the category of communicative nouns are less common. He observes that "there are considerable differences between the three corpora, and particularly between the AJC and the two judicial corpora with regard to epistemic nouns indicating certainty and communication nouns" (130).

Goźdź-Roszkowski then focuses on two nouns –*fact* and *conclusion*– that he considers "particularly revealing in terms of radically different distributions across the three corpora and the various ways in which they are used by legal writers" (133). He observes that *fact that* is especially salient in judicial writing.

The author concludes that while the Noun *that*-pattern is generally used in a similar way in both academic and judicial writing, "academic writing differs from judicial writing in that it sometimes uses nouns with a *that*-clause complement to construct a stance in more neutral ways intended to appear to be objective and impersonal" (143).

Part II on 'Diachronic variation' opens with Douglas Biber and Bethany Gray's paper which considers how far law reports have adopted linguistic innovations discernible in other written registers, concluding that law reports belong to the so-called *uptight* written registers (Hundt and Mair 1999), as distinct from those *agile* registers that have drifted towards a more colloquial style.

The authors observe that, unlike academic prose, law reports have remained relatively constant because they have always been written primarily for specialist readers, and "have maintained their primary communicative purposes of documenting the facts of a legal case" (152) and explaining the grounds for the judgment.

The authors investigate law reports from 1700 to 1999 using the *Corpus of Historical English Law Reports* (CHELAR; see Fanego *et al.* 2017), comparing them with the registers of fiction, newspaper articles, and science research articles. They observe that the patterns of change for law reports are generally more similar to scientific prose than to fiction or newspaper writing. Nevertheless, they assert that law reports have changed in ways that differ from the other three registers.

The authors note a rise in nominalisations in law reports, particularly over the last 50 years, which outpaces the increase found in science articles. As for colloquial features, law reports have generally been more receptive to such developments than newspaper articles and science articles, especially regarding semi-modals. In relation to

clausal complexity features, law reports have evolved in the opposite direction to the other registers considered, with a rise in nearly all types of relative clauses and noun complement clauses. As regards phrasal complexity features, law reports tend to share the upward trend discernible in the other registers.

Biber and Gray conclude that law reports "differ from most academic research writing in that they include extensive discussion of the author's (i.e., the judge) own personal opinions and reasoning, and as a result, they show a greater receptiveness to some colloquial innovations than academic research writing" (167). Overall, however, law reports are relatively resistant to colloquial innovations.

In her chapter "Interpersonality in legal written discourse: A diachronic analysis of personal pronouns in law reports, 1535 to present" Paula Rodríguez-Puente also bases her analysis on CHELAR (Rodríguez-Puente *et al.* 2016). She argues that law reports are 'hybrid' in nature, being "operative in the sense that they contain a judgment or order that constitutes the actual disposition of the case, but they are also expository, since they discuss legal issues, normative facts and prescriptive legislation" (174).

Predictably, the highest frequencies are found for third person pronouns, followed by first person, with the lowest frequencies for second person, the assumption being that "legal writing is not expected to present features of personal involvement, interpersonality and subjectivity" (179). Rodríguez-Puente observes that third person narration is common in summarising the facts of the case, the singular genitive being particularly frequent. The author points out that the vast majority of pronouns are masculine rather than feminine and that such a predominance "is not a feature specific to legal writing and reflects traditional sex-role biases" (181).

First person pronouns mostly occur in judgments, frequently co-occurring with mental verbs, and are thus "the means by which authors assert their claim to speak as an authority" (186) by projecting their professional identity. Vice versa, second person pronouns are often adopted in the direct transcription of witnesses' testimonies, in direct question-answer exchanges, or in reproducing the judge's exact words when addressing the parties. However, the author observes that first and second person pronouns in law reports are represented "in a significantly different way from parliamentary acts, proclamations and statutes" (190).

Seen from a diachronic perspective, while the (low) frequency of second person pronouns remains constant through time, there is a marked rise in the frequency of first person pronouns, whereas third person pronouns peak in the eighteenth century, after which there is a decline, an indication that law reports "have evolved towards becoming more involved, interpersonal and subjective over time" (192).

The chapter by Nicholas Groom and Jack Grieve provides a corpus-based analysis of 130 British patent specification texts ranging from 1711 to 1860. The authors investigate how the move structure changes over time, advocating "an *evolutionary* interpretation of diachronic changes in the move structure of the patent specification genre" (205). They argue that while genre change tends to happen almost imperceptibly from the user's perspective, it does not explain why change occurs, nor does it account for cases where genre change may even take place very rapidly. The authors suggest that an analogical evolutionary approach –which entails drawing parallels with Darwinian theory– can "easily accommodate the observation of rapid as well as gradual evolutionary change" (206), and it also explains why change occurs. Recognising the major shortcoming of this analogy with biology, Groom and Grieve propose a generalised model premised on the theory that "any process of natural or cultural change can be described as evolutionary if it exhibits three essential properties: variation, replication, and selection" (207).

The authors attempt to provide a clearly defined set of move descriptions, choosing Nasmith's patent of 1711 (the first ever British patent) as their illustrative example. Interestingly, they find that five of the six moves in that text "appear consistently throughout the period, and thus appear in effect to constitute obligatory moves for the patent specification genre for the period under study" (214). They also note an abrupt change occurring in 1852 with new moves appearing while others disappeared, due to the passing of the Patent Law Amendment Act that year.

Groom and Grieve observe that the core moves identified "almost always occur in the same sequence order" (220). However, they also note that their "sequence data exhibit a high level of variability for most of the time period of the analysis" (220).

Anu Lehto's chapter investigates how citizens and the British monarchy were represented in Acts of Parliament in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Using the *Corpus of Late Modern English Statutes*, she analyses collocates associated with these two social groups, focusing on their semantic preferences and semantic prosodies. Lehto

observes that while the Crown is usually addressed respectfully, the role of citizens evolves over time, with acts in the nineteenth century tending to focus on their criminal actions, whereas citizens' rights tend to be highlighted in the twentieth century.

The headword *person* was used to investigate the role of citizens, whereas the role of the monarch was examined by using the headwords *king*, *queen*, *crown*, *sovereign* and *monarch*. Analysing the headword *person*, the author observes that in the nineteenth century the most frequent collocates focused on general legal actions and crime, while in the twentieth century attention shifted to citizens' wellbeing and especially to children and legal documents. As for the Crown, in the nineteenth century "the topics of legal language/processes, legal actors, references to the king or queen and praise prevail, while praise, legal language/processes, and legal actors and actions are most common in the latter century" (252).

The author affirms that developments in the semantic preference and semantic prosody surrounding the headword *person* "reflect the changes made in the status of the social groups through legislation, that is, many acts were enacted in the twentieth century that specifically enhanced the rights of children and women" (255). As for the Crown, Lehto observes that the "authority of the monarch is emphasised, and diachronically the Crown is a much more central figure in the nineteenth-century acts than in the later documents" (256), with formulaic constructions appearing frequently.

In the final chapter, Claudia Claridge investigates how drunkenness was presented between 1720 and 1913 during criminal proceedings in courtroom speech by examining words meaning 'drunk'. The focus is firstly on "who uses drunkenness expressions and who is the referent of the expression" (262), and secondly on the manner of expression, "with attention paid to the forcefulness of expression" (262).

The author affirms that although "alcohol remained a constant fact of life throughout the period, attitudes toward it changed considerably" (263), with a less tolerant view towards it appearing during the Victorian period.

Given that the texts were taken down in shorthand by scribes in the courtroom, the author points out that while they present a reasonably accurate picture of historical speech, "they are nevertheless not an ideal representation of forensic interaction" (265).

The author observes that male voices clearly predominate, accounting for 20 million of the 24 million words. Of the 30 or so expressions relating to drunkenness

found in the corpus, the two most frequently used expressions are *drunk* and *in liquor*: a variety of sometimes colourful terms "also indicate various strength of intoxication" (272). She asserts that "the majority of drunkenness references remains unmodified (67.2%)" (280), while amplification is found in 24.7 per cent of cases and downtoning in 8.1 per cent of cases.

Claridge concludes that, with regard to drinking, judges and defendants

> seem to have conflicting agendas. While defendants keep on using incapacitation through drink as a potential mitigating factor, the court's insistent probing in questions is apparently more in the interest of laying blame (on defendants as well as victims) than on finding excuses. The defendants' misconception of (evolving) legal views is also apparent in their willingness to attribute intoxication to themselves and to even amplify it (283).

A considerable number of specific and general corpora have been used by the authors in this volume in carrying out their research, a reflection of the "corpus-based" nature of the volume itself. The law-related corpora and databases used by the authors are the following:

- the *British Hansard Corpus* (Lastres-López);
- the parallel (English and French) *Canadian Hansard Corpus* (Lastres-López);
- the O.J Simpson trial (see Linder 2017) (Reppen and Chen);
- the *British Law Report Corpus* (see Marín Pérez and Rea Rizzo 2012) (Goźdź-Roszkowski);
- the *American Law Corpus* (Goźdź-Roszkowski);
- CHELAR (see Fanego *et al*. 2017) (Biber and Gray; Rodríguez-Puente);
- the *Corpus of Early Modern English Statutes 1491–1707* (Rodríguez-Puente);
- the historical archive of British patents held at the British Library (Groom and Grieve);
- the *Corpus of Late Modern English Statutes* (Lehto);
- the *Old Bailey Corpus* (Claridge).

The following generic reference corpora were also adopted:

- the *British National Corpus* (Breeze; Reppen and Chen);

- the British component of the *International Corpus of English* (see Nelson *et al*. 2002) (Lastres-López);
- the French and Spanish subcorpora of the *Integrated Reference Corpora for Spoken Romance Languages* (see Cresti and Moneglia 2005) (Lastres-López);
- the *Corpus of English Dialogues* (see Kytö and Walker 2006) (Reppen and Chen);
- the *Helsinki Corpus of English Texts* (see Rissanen *et al*. 1991) (Rodríguez-Puente).

One author (Diani) relied entirely on the corpora she had compiled herself, while in four cases the authors used a combination of corpora together with ones they had compiled themselves (Breeze, Lastres-López, Goźdź-Roszkowski, Biber and Gray).

2. Discussion

Over the last 20 years or so, the exponential growth of corpora and databases in the legal sphere has radically transformed the way people approach law-related matters, opening up new horizons that are both exciting and overawing. Accessing enacted legislation and court judgments online has become routine for today's legal professionals. In the academic sphere, this digital revolution has produced a rich variety of corpora on legal discourse, both synchronic and diachronic, in many cases compiled by linguists (for an overview up to 2012, see Pontrandolfo 2012). Notable instances of legal corpora have been created, for example, in the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, Germany and Poland. The linguistic study of legal corpora is sometimes referred to as 'legal corpus linguistics' (see, e.g., Hamann and Vogel 2017: 101; Dale 2018). Computer-Assisted Legal Linguistics (CAL) is a new subfield denoting the research carried out by the interdisciplinary group whose members explore "the fabric of language and law" (Hamann and Vogel 2017: 101). Law and Corpus Linguistics (LCL) tends to refer above all to the research carried out by scholars involved in the Law and Corpus Linguistics conferences held at Brigham Young University (several of whom are also part of the CAL project) where Mark Davies and his team have compiled numerous large corpora, both generic and specialised.

In the United States, judges and scholars are debating whether corpus linguistics should be used as a "tool in legal interpretation" (Solan and Gales 2017: 1311) in court cases, for example when the "ordinary meaning" (Lee and Mouritsen 2018: 788) of a word or expression needs to be established. The first case of corpus linguistics being used in the US Supreme Court dates back to 2011 (Zimmer 2011). However, in ways that are slightly analogous to the ongoing debate about whether plain language should be used in legally binding texts (see Williams 2011), there are also judges and scholars who warn against the pitfalls of using corpus linguistics in court cases (see, e.g., Ehrett 2019; United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit 2019: 23-26).

In academia, on the other hand, corpora are widely accepted as a valuable tool for analysing linguistic phenomena in general, including legal discourse. Indeed, using corpora has become a mainstream activity among linguists rather than a niche area as was the case, say, thirty years ago. Besides (or instead of) making use of the corpora available online, many researchers create their own corpora which can be tailor-made to highlight the particular aspect of research they wish to investigate. Scholars of legal corpora are generally interested in exploring one or more of the following fields: legal translation and interpreting, the teaching of law-related matters (particularly legal language), and the linguistic features of legal discourse.

CRVELD comes within the latter strand of research, and is a very welcome addition to the field for reasons I will shortly outline. It is no coincidence that the two co-editors themselves were part of the team that compiled CHELAR. Under the guidance of Teresa Fanego, scholars belonging to the *Research Unit for Variation, Linguistic Change and Grammaticalization*, originally set up in the 1990s at the University of Santiago de Compostela, have predominantly focused on diachronic linguistic phenomena, and in recent years this has included research on legal discourse. The Research Unit is also part of an international consortium of universities involved in expanding and tagging ARCHER, the diachronic corpus of British and American English registers originally compiled by Douglas Biber and Edward Finegan in the early 1990s.

Although corpus-based research on legal discourse has so far spawned little more than a handful of monographic works (e.g., Archer 2005; Heffer 2005; Torikai 2006; Goźdź-Roszkowski 2011; Kopaczyk 2013; Larner 2014; Lehto 2015), it has given rise to a vast array of articles and book chapters, many appearing in academic journals, or in

edited volumes either on legal discourse or on corpus studies. That said, there are relatively few edited volumes devoted to corpus-based studies on legal discourse. Exceptions include Mori (2018) where eleven EU languages ('Eurolects') are analysed, Goźdź-Roszkowski and Pontrandolfo (2017) which focuses on phraseology in a variety of legal and institutional settings, and the special issue of *Brigham Young University Law Review* on law and corpus linguistics (2017) which essentially examines whether and how corpora can be used in legal interpretation, particularly in the USA but also in Germany.

As we have seen, *CRVELD* focuses on two theme areas: 'Cross-genre and cross-linguistic variation' and 'Diachronic variation'. The first half, therefore, has some elements in common with the volume edited by Goźdź-Roszkowski and Pontrandolfo (2017), notably the two chapters with a phraseological orientation, respectively by Reppen and Chen and Goźdź-Roszkowski. However, given the key role of analysing phraseology (lexical bundles) in corpus linguistics in general, and the vastness of the universe known as legal discourse, there is room for a considerable number of studies on the subject without the risk of redundancy. As for the other three chapters in Part One of *CRVELD*, respectively by Diani, Lastres-López, and Breeze, the first two propose a cross-linguistic analysis, which again is one of the major themes in Goźdź-Roszkowski and Pontrandolfo (2017) though seen here from a different (i.e. non-phraseological) perspective, while Breeze examines parts-of-speech patterns.

Moreover, Part One of *CRVELD* displays internal coherence in terms of adhering to two of Biel's (2010) four trajectories, the first two chapters corresponding to Trajectory 4 (cross-linguistic variation), while the latter three come within Trajectory 2 (internal variation).

Where *CRVELD* diverges most markedly from other edited volumes on legal corpus linguistics to date is in the five chapters devoted to diachronic variation, the area the two co-editors have explored extensively in their academic research. In my opinion, two of these chapters in particular deserve further comment, respectively the ones by Biber and Gray and Groom and Grieve. Both chapters are dense in terms of the information and analyses they present and cannot be read hurriedly. However, the effort involved is rewarded by the fact that in both cases the authors manage to go beyond the mere presentation of data (a weakness, it has to be said, of some corpus-based research, though not in this particular volume) and contextualise the results in ways that are

original and thought-provoking. In the former case, this is done by affording a nuanced view as to exactly how law reports may differ over time, very often (but not always) by resisting change, with respect to other genres. In the latter case, by applying evolutionary theory to the study of genre change, the authors provide an engaging narrative by highlighting in detail the ways in which the genre of patents adapted to changing historical circumstances between 1711 and 1860.

This is in no way to belittle the other contributions in this volume, all of which provide intriguing and original analyses of the topics selected. The chapters by Breeze, Goźdź-Roszkowski, and Rodríguez-Puente, for example, all stand out as carefully thought-out pieces of scholarship on highly technical issues. Although several of the topics in the volume are indeed quite complex, they are all presented in a coherent and attractive way so that the reader can follow the line of reasoning of each chapter without undue difficulty. As Xin and Wang (2019: 131-132) rightly point out, the readability of *CRVELD* "is enhanced with clearly illustrated tables, diagrams and figures, as well as with updates on technical innovations in corpus linguistics."

Taken as a whole, then, *CRVELD* represents a step forward in terms of our knowledge of legal corpus linguistics. This applies not only to the insights offered by scholars in Part One on cross-genre and cross-linguistic variation but in particular to Part Two of the volume devoted to diachronic variation. Of course, individual articles and papers on the historical dimension of legal corpus linguistics are available in numerous journals and edited volumes, but having five chapters together on the topic gives added depth to this area of study. In this respect I disagree with Xin and Wang (2019: 132) when lamenting the volume's "lack of phonetic, phonological, multimodal or multilingual analysis." In my view, restricting the range of topics of an edited volume endows it with greater internal coherence. Indeed, I would hope that future edited volumes on legal corpus linguistics will focus on increasingly limited areas of this rapidly evolving field of inquiry.

All of the contributors to *CRVELD* are linguists, ranging from scholars of international renown to postdoctoral researchers, thus representing a heterogeneous mixture, also in terms of geographical provenance and linguistic backgrounds. However, also in the light of the recent interest of judges, law scholars and legal experts in using corpora in the courts in the world's major English-speaking nation, as is highlighted in *Brigham Young University Law Review* (2017) which contains papers

from linguists and law scholars in roughly equal measure, another suggestion for future edited volumes on legal corpus linguistics might be to make them truly interdisciplinary by involving linguists (including computational linguists), law scholars and legal professionals, among others, so as to offer a plurality of insights into the same theme area.

While *CRVELD* will be of particular interest to scholars of legal corpus linguistics, in my view it has the requisites to arouse the curiosity of corpus linguists approaching legal discourse for the first time, and also of legal scholars who have so far shied away from corpora. Rather than attempting to read the book from cover to cover (how often do we actually complete that endeavour these days, especially with edited volumes?), I would suggest starting with the excellent introductory chapter by Teresa Fanego and Paula Rodríguez-Puente and then choosing a chapter (or two) that appeals most to one's individual taste and research interests, and taking it from there. Readers will not be disappointed.

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