



HANS SAUER AND KERSTIN MAJEWSKI. MY FIRST DOOR TO ENGLISH LINGUISTICS: A SHORT COMPANION TO THE STUDY OF ENGLISH.

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This book is an introduction into English linguistics, aimed primarily at students who are just beginning their studies as well as those more advanced, who can use it to revise some of the more basic linguistic concepts, not only pertaining to English linguistics, but also linguistics in general.

The book is divided into 14 chapters, dealing in turn with the most important topics in English linguistics: the history of linguistics, the levels of language and their description, phonetics and phonology, spelling and orthography, morphology, syntax, lexicology and lexicography, text linguistics, pragmatics, standard and varieties, history of the English language, historical (diachronic) linguistics, and, finally, the last chapter introduces the contrastive approach to language, focusing on English and German specifically. These chapters are followed by suggestions for further reading, as well as by some useful appendices and indices.

After a brief introduction, the book begins with an overview of the most important figures and movements in the history of linguistics. The chapter starts in antiquity, mentioning Plato, the naturalists and conventionalists, as well as the Romans. It moves on to the Middle Ages, at which point the narrative begins to focus on Britain. The next section describes the situation in the Early Modern period, characterised by the publication of the first grammars as well as monolingual dictionaries (of the so-called “hard words”). The nineteenth century, the age of comparative and historical linguistics, is discussed next. Finally, the chapter provides a summary of the more recent movements in linguistics, i.e. in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It describes the innovations brought by Ferdinand de Saussure, structuralism and transformational-generative grammar in more detail, mentioning other movements and areas of linguistics only briefly. The chapter is very easy to read and is clearly meant to ease the reader into the topic. All the crucial concepts and terms are written in bold, something that is maintained throughout the rest of the book as well. Many of them appear again in later chapters and are explained in more detail there.

The following chapters aim to introduce the basic areas of linguistic analysis, dedicating a chapter to each. They are more generally linguistic, though the majority of examples are provided from English.

Chapter 3 explains the concept of the levels of language. The authors list phonology, orthography and morphology as the three basic levels and provide definitions of the most fundamental terms, such as the word, phoneme, morpheme and grapheme. The chapter is very short, but provides a good basis for the following three chapters, which deal with each area in turn. Chapter 4 is concerned with phonetics and phonology. It firstly provides more detailed definitions of the basic terms, and then moves on to transcription, the production of sounds, phonotactics, suprasegmental phenomena, and, finally, the English syllable. Chapter 5 tackles spelling and orthography in English, discussing the issue of grapheme-phoneme correspondence, which seems very unreliable in English. The authors, however, provide many examples which show that, frequently, that is not the case. The next chapter focuses on morphology,

giving a more detailed description of the morpheme and its types. Finally, this chapter offers a short overview of language typology.

Though the individual chapters and subsections are very brief, this part of the book does a good job of slowly introducing the most basic concepts and terms in a clear and accessible way.

The subject of chapter 7 is syntax, and it is one of the longest as well as arguably the most challenging chapters in the book. The authors open with a discussion on word classes, acknowledging that these may also be dealt with in the context of morphology. The chapter includes a number of topics: firstly, it introduces the concept of the phrase and its types, followed by sentence constituents (subject, verb, object, complement and adverbial), clauses and sentences. They list the seven types of clauses from the *Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (based on constituents). They continue by listing sentence types: statement, command, question and exclamation. Next, they discuss subordinate clauses (nominal, attributive, adverbial). This introduction into the basic units of syntax is followed by a short paragraph on word order in English and an equally short section on functional sentence perspective. While it is undoubtedly good that they chose to include the topic of FSP, and one would not expect a particularly detailed explanation, the amount of space it is given seems insufficient. I am not convinced that a reader not familiar with the concept would gain a good understanding, especially since the authors only give examples in English. The word order of English does not follow functional sentence perspective primarily, while some other languages do. No examples from such languages are provided, making the concept seem very abstract and not very useful.

The next part of the chapter is dedicated to introducing two specific types of syntactic analysis. Firstly, the authors present a structuralist approach to analysing sentences, the immediate constituents analysis. After that, they show a generative approach — phrase structure grammar, though without Chomsky's later revisions. What follows is a short section on concord and rection, and, finally, the chapter ends with a very brief introduction into Construction Grammar.

Chapter 8, the longest chapter, is concerned with lexicology and lexicography. It introduces semantics and its central concepts and approaches, such as the linguistic sign (Saussure's model, Ogden and Richards' Semiotic Triangle and Bühler's Organon Model), semantic features, meaning, meaning relationships (polysemy, homonymy, synonymy, antonymy) and semantic fields. It then shifts focus to word-formation, analysing it on the levels of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Some more advanced concepts are introduced, such as lexicalisation, productivity, recursivity, etc. Idioms and phrases are also briefly discussed. The final section is dedicated to lexicography, dictionaries and language corpora.

The following chapter focuses on text linguistics. The authors present the seven standards of textuality according to Beaugrande and Dressler (1981): cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality. All are only briefly described. Overall, this is one of the shortest chapters in the book. Chapter 10, which introduces pragmatics, is even more brief — it only mentions speech acts and their types, the concept of presuppositions, and, finally, Grice's (1975) four conversational maxims.





Chapter 11 shifts the book's focus to the concept of standard and varieties of language. As one might expect, this chapter is much more English-centric than the previous ones, which focused more on general linguistic concepts. Regional, social and stylistic varieties are mentioned, as well as idiolects. A short section is devoted to the historical development of the standard and dialects. The next section introduces a specific variety of English, namely Cockney. What follows is a fairly detailed comparison of British and American English as regards pronunciation, orthography, morphology and syntax, and the lexicon. Some regional and social varieties of English are also mentioned. The last section briefly discusses pidgins and creoles.

While all the previous chapters have been almost entirely synchronic in nature (apart from a few exceptions), the following two chapters are diachronically oriented. Chapter 12 provides an account of the history of English, starting from Indo-European all the way to Modern English. Some concepts important for the earlier stages of the language are introduced, such as ablaut, accent and sound change (namely Grimm's and Verner's law). The sections discussing the later stages are more detailed and provide the historical context as well as a description of how the language itself developed on the phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical levels. Chapter 13 focuses on historical (diachronic) linguistics. The reasons for language change are discussed first, listing contact with other languages, language-internal reasons (e.g. phonological ones) and social reasons. The following sections deal with historical phonology, orthography, morphology and syntax, semantics, and, finally, word-formation. Each section introduces some new terms and concepts, providing examples from English. What was surprising is that there is no mention of grammaticalization, which is a rather fundamental process of language change. While complex, grammaticalization is not so advanced to not even be mentioned in a book aiming to provide an introduction to both synchronic and diachronic English linguistics. A brief section mentioning its basic principles would have made the chapter on historical linguistics more complete.

The main body of the book ends with a chapter on the contrastive approach. Specifically, the authors compare English and German in their phonology, orthography and semantics.

The next section provides suggestions for further reading, firstly listing some other introductory texts, dictionaries and encyclopaedias, and then presenting a selection of texts for each topic discussed in the book. A few of the recommended texts are in German, but the majority are in English. The authors tried to include more recent texts primarily, some being published as late as 2018, though they include older influential works as well. They list more introductory texts as well as more advanced books, noting briefly what specifically they deal with. The number of recommended texts seems adequate to provide a good starting point — it is most certainly not an exhaustive list of all relevant literature, but rather a carefully chosen selection of basic texts.

The appendix contains a table of the phonetic symbols for English, complete with examples and notes, and also examples of dictionary entries which were discussed in Chapter 8. There is also an index of all persons and books mentioned, an index of words and morphemes, and, finally, an index of all terms, places and languages.

This book was clearly put together with care and with the student in mind. The authors do their best to make the reading experience as clear and convenient as possible. They introduce new concepts gradually and practically every single one is illustrated by examples. The definitions are usually clear and unambiguous. One may read the book from start to finish, but one may also choose to read specific chapters without risking too much confusion — the more basic concepts are either explained again or can be looked up in the index at the end of the book. As the authors mention in the acknowledgements, it began as a chapter in a larger volume published in German, which they then decided to translate and expand. Given how vast the range of potential topics is, the authors did a good job of identifying the most important ones. Sacrifices had to be made, though as mentioned, there were some topics that either deserved a little more space or were not mentioned at all, despite being fairly fundamental. While this is certainly not a comprehensive account of all things connected with English linguistics, it is a very good place to start, as well as a great way for a more advanced student to reinforce what they have already learned.

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