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REFERENCES

David Crystal

The Cambridge Encyclopedia of English Language. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2019. ISBN: 978-1-108-42359-5, Price: 36 €, 506 pages

- 1 This comprehensive encyclopedia is 506 pages long, includes a preface, an introductory chapter and 24 more chapters distributed in six parts concerning different topics: the history of English, its vocabulary, grammar, spoken and written varieties, use and language acquisition. It is completed by a useful webography and by an essential section on further readings for each section of the book, which allows to deepen any of the subjects. Besides, it contains three indexes about linguistic items, authors and topics respectively.
- 2 The book constitutes a unique reference work on the current knowledge on the English language, and includes a presentation of different aspects of each subfield, together with illustrations, data tables, maps, diagrams and separated panels, which include anecdotal or specific cases that exemplify and provide deeper insight on the topic in question. Some chapters even include exercises with answers in the side page, which adds an interactive component to the work.
- 3 Almost every page of the 25 chapters contains at least one of these items, which ensures the pedagogical aim of this ambitious work. This regular distribution of theoretical content, case studies and anecdotal articles make the work comprehensive and easy to understand. As the authors puts it in the preface, he strived for “a balance

between talking about the language and letting the language talk for itself”, following the model of his preceding work *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Language*.

- 4 The pedagogical nature of this book makes it suitable for different kinds of reader. Students of the English language, English linguistics or general linguistics will find a unified account of the numerous topics that are included in the study of language in general, and the English language in particular. Besides, thanks to its structured account and the combination of scientific information with illustrations and small independent articles, non-academic readers interested in the English language will also find useful insights on any aspect of the subject, either in the form of particular information or illustrative examples.
- 5 The first chapter “Modelling English” consists of a short introductory diagram showing the relationships between the different aspects of the study of language that are exposed in the body of the work, following the classical dichotomy: structure vs. use. The following chapters are grouped in the aforementioned six thematic parts, each part containing a variable number of chapters between two and six, all dealing with the main areas of study of a particular subfield. These six chapters also differ in length: 120 pages are devoted to Part 1 (*The History of English*), and 178 to Part 5 (*Using English*), with the remaining parts ranging from 30 to 75 pages.
- 6 The first part, “The history of English”, presents the first seven chapters in chronological order: “The origins of English”, “Old English”, “Middle English”, “Early Modern English”, “Modern English” and, lastly, “World English”, which enlarges this traditional classification. For each chapter, the author offers an account of basic axes of synchronic description: spelling, sounds, grammar and vocabulary, as well as other aspects like existing corpora and major milestones in the history of the language for each period, like *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Chaucer, Shakespeare, etc.
- 7 As we mentioned, Crystal’s work is useful and delightful for both students in linguistics and people interested in the English language. Nevertheless, some parts of the work are more accessible than others, as a consequence of the subject treated. For instance, Part 1 contains a large quantity of data, from which a part (like the description of Old English) is somehow specialised, which makes it less accessible for those lacking linguistic background. In contrast, Part 2, deals with a more familiar subject for the reader not acquainted with linguistics: vocabulary, and it is therefore more accessible for readers without prior knowledge in linguistics.
- 8 Grammar being the subject of Part 3, the account is necessarily incomplete. It presents a selection of salient topics, with the advantage of not using any technical terminology. In this way, this part is almost entirely composed of panels containing examples of grammatical features. Part 4 offers a description of two technical aspects in the description of English: phonetics and writing. As a consequence, it is composed of fewer illustrations, anecdotes and examples, and is therefore less educational, but it succeeds in presenting a schematic account of the basis of English phonology, phonetics and writing in a few pages. To conclude the work, Part 5 adds some topics on English language acquisition and study. Only a small number of phenomena are presented, but they are precisely illustrated with corpus data and charts.
- 9 Having considered these contents, one can wonder the interest of grouping the history of English in a single volume (Part 2), its grammar (Parts 3 and 4) and its acquisition and study (Parts 5). The inclusion of a diachronic description (Part 2) and a synchronic one (Parts 3 and 4), seems ambitious but logical in an encyclopedic work of this kind.

However, the last part breaks its thematic coherence, since it addresses topics that are not related to the English language itself, but with its learning. Still, this part undoubtedly enriches the account of the description of English with new parameters of analysis; it would be a pity to omit the data on the language acquisition and on the properties of English put forward by corpus studies. This is a characteristic of Crystal's work: it aims to include basic references to every sub-field in the study of English, including the most recent trends.

- 10 Chapter 2, "The origins of English", is a short introduction presenting the mythical and historical origin of English that precedes Chapter 3 about Old English. Together with the basic account of the language, this chapter addresses a number of questions: runes, early literature and its devices, phonetic changes, different sources of vocabulary like Latin and Old Norse, Scandinavian influence and the emergence of dialects. Another valuable asset of the chapter is the number of illustrated examples of early writing samples, often accompanied by their transcription and translation, which can be particularly useful for both students and dilettantes. Likewise, the presence of maps is essential for understanding the birth of Old English dialects.
- 11 Chapter 4, on Middle English, presents the continuity of the English language through the historical events and their effect on the transformation of the language, and discusses topics such as the change and continuity of literary tradition, the Chaucerian work, the Norman and French influence and changes in the different aspects of the language: sound system, spelling, grammar, morphology and vocabulary. Special attention is also drawn to the development of Middle English dialects and the origins of the standard variety. All these contents are presented in a clear and summarised fashion. As in the preceding chapter, the panels' contents are of great value: pictures of various literary works are accompanied by their transcription, and the use of maps and diagrams constitute an essential contribution for understanding Crystal's account.
- 12 Chapter 5 presents a synchronic description of Early Modern English, roughly between 1400 and 1800 AD, and focuses on a number of subjects: the emergence of printing in England, main texts such as the various versions of the Bible, authors like Shakespeare, changes in grammar and sound, the stabilisation of the language (influenced by the regularisation of spelling or punctuation), and the publication of Johnson's dictionary. Again, illustrations allow to have a visual image of the protagonists and reference works, and panels offer several examples of each point.
- 13 Chapter 6 provides an outline of some interesting topics on Modern English, like the grammatical changes at the beginning of the period, the influence of prescriptive grammar, modern varieties of English, the American linguistic identity and current trends in lexical creation. Some tables offer specific data on these matters, like the evolution in the creation of scientific vocabulary and the preferred pronunciation of some terms. Besides, thanks to numerous images, it introduces and illustrates a number of literary personalities that contributed to the linguistic identity of Modern English, like Charles Dickens.
- 14 Chapter 7 deals with the varieties of English across the world, such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, South and South-East Asia, Colonial Africa and South Pacific, paying special attention to the synchronic and diachronic description of US varieties. Although such an ambitious coverage is necessarily schematic, maps and diagrams allow us to relate them to derivations of either British or American English. It also

presents interesting data on the use of English as L1 and L2 through the world, and the grouping of these varieties under different standards of English.

- 15 The second part of the book, grouping chapters 8 to 12, is dedicated to the lexicon, and explores its nature, its sources, etymology, structure and a number of lexical-semantic concepts like taboos and clichés. Chapter 8 introduces this part, broaching the subject of the size of the lexicon and some kinds of items that make part of it, like abbreviations and proper nouns. Chapter 9 further tackles the subject, presenting the sources of the English vocabulary and some word-formation rules, such as compounding or neologisms, providing amusing illustrated examples of popular and literary culture.
- 16 Chapter 10, dedicated to etymology, tackles the traditional subjects of semantic change and folk etymology, and develops the more original question of proper names for places, people or objects. Place names are illustrated with several maps that present the sources of place names in England, the US and Canada, and people names are analysed for their type, variations, and use through time.
- 17 Chapter 11 investigates the structure of the lexicon, addressing subjects such as semantic fields, thesauri, syntagmatic vs. paradigmatic relationships, collocations, lexicalisation and semantic relationships like synonymy and hyponymy. The use of panels for diagrams and example constitutes an essential tool in this chapter to illustrate structural relationships within the lexicon. Chapter 12 enriches this account with the inclusion of its connotative aspects: taboo, swearing, jargon, slang, double-speak, political correctness and archaisms, among others.
- 18 Part 3 deals with the grammar of English by addressing a number of topics: the definition of syntax, morphology, parts of speech and sentence structure, in Chapters 13, 14, 15 and 16 respectively. Chapter 13 distinguishes the concepts of grammatical knowledge and prescriptive grammar, and introduces basic concepts that will allow non-linguists to easily understand the following chapters. Chapter 14 presents some salient features of English grammar, such as suffixation for noun number and case and verb tense system. The examples are very specific, but accessible thanks to their schematic disposition. Here, as in the rest of the work, accessibility is preferred to depth.
- 19 Chapter 15 continues this technical description, dealing with parts of speech and its sub-classes, according to their particular semantic, morphological or syntactic properties. Again, the synoptic presentation allows the reader to have a quick overview of the basic units of analysis. Similarly, Chapter 16's account of sentence structure contains a profusion of structured topics, like sentence types and functions, clause elements, phrases, verbal properties (such as aspect, voice and tense), information structure and textual coherence. This broad account is especially useful to get acquainted with one of these particular topics, but it is less explicit in the relationship between these different aspects of grammar.
- 20 Shorter than the other parts, Part 4 is composed of only two chapters, 17 and 18, which deal with spoken and written English respectively. The first one presents the basics of the English phonological and phonetic system, paying particular attention to the description of the most complex aspects, like vowels and diphthongs, and focusing on the place and manner of articulation, syllable structure, connected speech, prosody and

sound symbolism. Except for this last topic, the chapter is necessarily technical, but clear enough to provide basic knowledge to any reader lacking linguistic background.

- 21 Chapter 18 addresses the subject of writing, and is composed of two different parts. The first one presents a description of the items in the Latin alphabet, with its origins and variants, both synchronic (upper case vs. lower case) and diachronic, and finishes with a couple of concepts of textometry: frequency and distribution. The second part continues the technical account, and includes some pedagogical material for dealing with various heterogeneous topics: graphemic symbolisms and variety, graphology, spelling and punctuation.
- 22 Section 5 of the work completes the description of the English language given in the preceding chapters by adding a different perspective. If Parts 2 to 4 deal with the different aspects of English language as an abstract system, Part 5 describes the way the English language is used, and more particularly, the different axes of variation according to classical analysis. These axes include diatopic, diastratic and diaphasic differences, but Crystal's work includes also more innovative frames like the specificities of various textual genders and the use of English in the internet sphere.
- 23 Chapter 19 enlarges the description of language use by taking into account the use of sentences in actual discourse. It pays special attention to current trends in language study such as conversation and presents some existing models of analysis, covering both monologic and dialogic differences. It also contains an interesting description of language variation in text types and speech media, including recent text types born with the internet revolution.
- 24 Chapter 20 enriches the account of the use of English with a presentation of regional variations, mainly by showing and commenting excerpts from newspapers in the two main models of language use, US and UK English. It displays some of the most salient differences in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary. It also makes extensive use of maps and dialectal atlases to account for the internal variation in these two models, providing detailed data, including UK varieties of English such as Scots, Irish and Welsh English, and world varieties like Canadian, Caribbean, Australian, New Zealand, South African and South Asian English. This account is necessarily schematic, but allows the reader to grasp the general idea of the particularities of English worldwide.
- 25 Chapter 21 deals with social variation, including topics such as prescriptivism, and gender-respectful use, but most of it focuses on the particularities of English in different occupational domains, like science, law, and politics, as well as within media types: journal, broadcasting, sports, publicity, etc. Similarly, Chapter 21 integrates data from recent trends in corpus linguistics that aim to cover a maximum diversity of language use. In its aim for exhaustivity, it also includes very specific uses of language, like chess, heraldics and recipe books.
- 26 Chapter 22 goes even further in the description of language variation; if Chapter 21 aimed to cover a wide range of cases of particular language use for communication purposes, this chapter explores the possibilities of language variation for other purposes, like playing, creating social distance, humour, and stating literary or personal identity. Particular attention is given to humour and the expression of identity, detailing their specificities in the different levels of language: phonetics, syntax, morphology, vocabulary and writing. It concludes with a reference to forensic

linguistics, which analyses personal differences for creating scientific reports used in legal matters.

- 27 Under the title “Electronic variation”, Chapter 23 closes Part 5, presenting here the particular uses in digital media, and the different characteristics of its various text types: text messages, e-mail, chat groups, blogs, etc., as well as the particular use of language for humorous purposes. More interestingly, it presents schematically the distinctive features of English in electronic-mediated communication (EMC) or *netspeak*. The chapter analyses the particularities regarding word-formation, graphology (spelling, capitalisation, spacing, etc.), punctuation, grammar, discourse and pragmatics.

The work’s account of recent topics in electronic-mediated communication can be an advantage, since it informs about the latest trends on the subject as few book do, and a disadvantage, since these data will soon be outdated by the quick development of technology and its (linguistic) practises. In any case, the comprehensive nature of the work makes necessary the inclusion of this chapter, which will remain as a witness of the state of electronic-mediated communication at the end of the 2010s.

- 28 The last section of the work introduces some topics regarding language acquisition and study, making use of recent tools. Chapter 24 displays a number of examples that give a general idea about the way children acquire language, and their use of sounds, words, morphology and syntax in the early stages of their learning. It also mentions some insufficiencies in language production, like those created by aphasia, stammering or language delay.
- 29 Finally, chapter 25 concerns the use of digital tools for the analysis of English, such as corpus and electronic dictionaries. It presents a typology of corpus, some examples of the most important ones, and some techniques for analysing corpus data, like tagging and structuring. However, it does not address more specialised methods like parsing. Similarly, the account on electronic dictionaries mentions new systems of words classification, like wordtrees, but does not mention other important ones, like the creation of lexico-semantic ontologies. This chapter is in this way less deep than the rest, undoubtedly due to the aim of the work to give preference to accessibility over depth.
- 30 All things considered, in this book, the reader will not find answers to questions about grammatical rules or pronunciation, either of descriptive or prescriptive nature, of a particular item of the language. It is not a grammar book, and as such, it does not describe how English as a particular instance of language works, but how it works as a specimen of natural language, as a macro-system. Nonetheless, the comprehensive coverage of this description makes it unique for the number of subjects addressed in a unified and structured fashion.
- 31 In this way, Crystal’s *Encyclopedia* provides a detailed and user-friendly account of almost every aspect concerning the English language that a non-specialist could be interested in. On the one hand, the illustrations, examples and straightforward language make it accessible for all readers; on the other hand, the specificity of data and the wide coverage of subjects makes it also an interesting tool for linguists. Besides, thanks to the simple and explicit structure of the work, the reader can easily find the answer, an example or a development for any particular question about the linguistic description of English other than grammatical rules.

- 32 Nevertheless, the reader should keep in mind that this is a reference work dealing with basic matters on the scientific discipline of linguistics, not a manual that can be easily read from beginning to end. Indeed, the detailed account of the subjects covered in the book makes it informationally dense to an extent that it would be overwhelming to read it from cover to cover. The extent of the coverage of this work can be illustrated by comparing it to the program of a university curriculum on English Linguistics: Parts 2 to 4 could provide material for independent subjects in the first year of the degree.
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