Charles F. Meyer. *Introducing English linguistics*. (Cambridge Introductions to Language and Linguistics.) Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. (x, 259)

The series of which this text is a part is intended, according to the publishers, to provide an "accessible" introduction to subdisciplines in language studies. Previous releases in the series include entries on phonology, language and speech processing, phonetics, and second language acquisition. The present volume seeks to serve that end in an English language text that presents a discussion of linguistic concepts applied to English, much like traditional courses in Spanish Linguistics, Japanese Linguistics, etc., which populate the curriculum for language majors. The seven chapters in this book introduce (Ch 1) The study of language, (Ch 2) The development of English, (Ch 3) The social context of English, (Ch 4) The structure of English texts, (Ch 5) English syntax, (Ch 6) English words: Structure and meaning, and (Ch 7) The sounds of English. Along with the usual indices, the text is supplemented with an extensive glossary, very useful to students who often have not yet collected sufficient resources to track down the many terms they encounter. Those with a background in pedagogical theory will recognize in this arrangement a 'top down' approach which situates the structural elements that constitute language subordinate to the 'big picture'.

In the opening chapter appears an excellent section on prescriptivism under the heading "Language ideologies" (12, f), which, however, dances around the prescriptions engendered by radical feminist ideologues as "informed prescription" (14) – but aren't they all? But *waitpersons* (68)? This portion conflates grammatical gender with sex marking, the inevitable consequence of radical feminist arguments, which are made at the expense of the factual history of the language, vestiges of which nonetheless remain in the grammars of many, such as female athletes who, in team sports, guard their *man*, players of board games who are represented on the board by their

man, speakers who make traditional reference to ships (*she* and *her*) and idiosyncratic reference to their automobiles (usually *he* and *him*), and those who speak the register of the American railroad industry, where a physical train is a *man*. Perhaps in the spirit of what's good for the goose is good for the gander, successor languages in the family model are herein referred to as "siblings" (22).

Very useful, though, are a series of "Self-study activities" (18), which elicit a range of tasks that appear oriented to learning objectives consistent with levels of cognitive demand as described in Bloom's Taxonomy (1956).

A table of the most widely spoken languages and their populations (21) lists English second, behind only Chinese. That ranking is not changed by counting among English speakers users of pidgins and creoles lexified by English, a trend consistent with the fashion in so-called 'world English' studies, which classifies languages according to vocabulary input, for mostly ideological purposes.

Stages of English are fairly well exemplified in the text, but the pages given to discussing language change remain largely free of examples. "The development of English" is located in this text in an introduction of the comparative method, exemplified by a table of English and various IE cognates (25) which itself demonstrates the weakness of the 'top down' approach to language study, namely, that it is the consciousness of the smallest bits of language, not only language sounds but their component features (voicing, manner of articulation, etc.), that makes possible the recognition and identification of cognates, e.g., the labials and dentals, respectively, in *foot* and *pied*, and correspondences such as those identified in Grimm's Law that account for them. This places the second chapter of an introductory text at a fairly steep incline for students with little background in the field. Likewise, I am not sure we need to discuss the Nostratic and

Eurasiatic hypotheses (30) in such a text, conjectural as they are, at best occupying a remote position on the outer fringe of the field, or speculations that parallel language change (and utterance selection) with Darwinism, i.e., "natural selection" (40), especially given the disasters occasioned by the notions of Social Darwinism applied to social development and linguistic typology.

Meanwhile, seven pages are given to a discussion of Grice's Cooperative principle (55, f), a good deal of space to dedicate to what is essentially a topic in language philosophy, albeit a foundational set of principles in pragmatics, especially when compared to just four and one half pages given to discussion OE, ME, and EModE. The wide scope of these discussions of pragmatics, politeness, and power relations gives rise to the suggestion that Ch 3 "Social context" might better precede Ch 2 "Development of English," in the text.

Ch 4 introduces register and genre, spoken and written, with rudimentary Conversation Analysis. These are topics which, along with the aforementioned Nostratic and Eurasiatic hypostheses, one does not usually encounter in an introductory text on linguistics. Later in the chapter, as the focus shifts to discourse structures; introduced are thematic structure, tone units, reference, cohesion, and coordination. This is a theoretically sensible arrangement, from the perspective of top down enthusiasts, but from the standpoint of a learner may seem disjointed.

In Ch 5 readers encounter an impressive array of metalinguistic terms and the concepts they name. This is to be expected; just as English is said to *like vocabulary*, so syntax can be said to *love nomenclature*. One item we will take exception to reflects a trend seen all too often of late, analyzing the particles which constitute phrasal verb particles as "prepositions" (122). Not only is this inaccurate from structural and functional perspectives — *inter alia*, prepositions relate NPs to other sentence constituents, they are complemented with NP objects, they can

belong to both VP and NP, while phrasal particles bear none of those characteristics but are variously movable depending on collocations (and dialect) — pedagogically it is a bad idea, as learners do not like to have to call both *dog* and *cat* canine.

In Ch 6 it is something of a misstatement to refer to English *per-* as an independent morpheme (153); certainly its outcomes in words borrowed into English are bound morphemes, while it was a function word, i.e., free morpheme, in Latin alongside its grammaticalized affix outcomes even in the Republican period. Very useful in this era of digital databases and their utility in activities ranging from historical study to dictionary making is the section which introduces Zipf's Law (161, f), with a segue into sets of data which demonstrate collocations and semantic content. The chapter provides a fair survey of popular approaches to meaning, and along with them, word formation, although *conversion* and *generalization* are absent from the glossary in a text which leaves out little.

The last chapter, consistent with the top down ideology that governs arrangement throughout, begins with a discussion of phrasal intonation and stress before tackling the concepts phoneme and allophone, and the IPA. In the survey of the sounds of English, which otherwise follows the late Peter Ladefoged, I note the omission of *ei* and *ov* from the list of diphthongs for both 'General American' and the RP (204), despite their appearance in the chart of vowels provided (202).

As is typical of such texts, a survey of a good deal of information which extends well beyond the surface layer is discussed in each chapter and section, which imposes upon students a rather steep gradient from introductory level to secondary and tertiary level concepts which in essence constitute the core material of several semester length courses of study, along with material not often presented at the undergraduate level. Thus, whenever I see such a text, I am

struck with a conundrum: students with no or minimal background in the discipline are not likely to get their wits around that many concepts which ramp up so quickly; on the other hand, students with enough background to study this much material successful have already gained quite a bit of it already. These reservations notwithstanding, the book is certainly a serviceable contribution to the available literature for the purpose.

Reference

Bloom, B. S., et al. *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals*; pp. 201–207; Susan Fauer Company, Inc., (1956).

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