

Bibliography

Michael Wallerstein has provided this Bibliography for his recently published tract about the state of the English language, *Dear Mr Howard*.

Baugh, A. C., & Cable, T., *A History of the English Language*, 4th edn, 1993

A well-written account, which is outstanding for its unobtrusive erudition and the wide scope of its references and quotations. For example, it describes, with quotations, the evolution of the personal and relative pronoun systems, the past passive voice and the progressive (B.E. continuous) aspect of verbs. It also traces, again with numerous interesting references and quotations, the development of prescriptive grammar. Like all American text-books, it is excellently well laid out and the chapter-end bibliographies are both extensive and usefully descriptive. It is interesting to observe that, though the authors emphasise the purely descriptive nature of their account, yet, in their own prose, they take the greatest care to preserve the traditional proprieties.

This is language study at its civilised best.

Bryson, W., *Mother Tongue*, 1990 & 1991

The writer of popular travel books, Bill Bryson, an American who was one of the founding journalists of *The Independent*, has here produced a skilful potted distillation of the works of more academic researchers (e.g. William Labov, Peter Trudgill [see below] and Baugh & Cable [see above]), with a few personal observations thrown in. He gives useful comparisons between different languages and important notes on the origins of language both in humankind and in the infant. Here and there are interesting remarks on language and nationalism—not least in the USA—and on the use of English as a power and status symbol by non-native speakers. He also looks at conventional shibboleths and shows the relationship between certain linguistic phenomena and social stratification. There are chapters on the phenomena of swearing, with examples from many languages, and word-play, both of which are of social and anthropological interest.

Ignore the blurb and the quotations from reviews; this book gives some essential background understanding and will help to remove certain common misapprehensions; but take note that Mr Bryson is not an academic and sometimes gets his terminology wrong; he calls an “idiolect” what should be a “sociolect”, which may imply a failure of understanding. There is a good bibliography.

The same author’s excellent *Troublesome Words* gives an interesting, but not wholly accurate, account of the differences between American and British usage of *which* and *that*.

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Carpenter, H. & Prichard, M., *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, 1984 & 1987

This has useful entries under both authors and titles. Thus, there are notes under E. Nesbit, F. H. Burnett and Richmal Crompton and also under *The Railway Children*, *The Secret Garden* and the *William* books. The lives of Elizabeth Nesbit and Frances Hodgson Burnett make surprising reading!

Curran, S., *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, 1993

See especially Chapter 5, "Romanticism and Language", by William Keach, which examines the ideas of Coleridge, Shelley and Wordsworth regarding language and the relationship of these to Locke's supposedly simple-minded dualistic view. It is interesting to find that Coleridge, like Chomsky, entertained notions of a "universal grammar". The questions raised remain unresolved.

Foster, B., *The Changing English Language*, 1968

At a popular level, this charts very thoroughly some of the changes of the 20th century, looking especially at the evidence of journalism. Brian Foster was, perhaps, the first to note the increasing incidence of *on* at the expense of other prepositions; he also gives a good account of *the* deletion in the titles of journals and newspapers. (Note, for instance, how *The New Scientist* and *The Scientific American* have lost the article.) But he says little about the structure of either prose or dialogue and nothing about speech rhythms and intonation patterns.

Fowler, H. L. (revised by Gowers, E.), *Modern English Usage*, 1926, 1965, 1968 & 1974

This has lengthy entries on some of the matters raised in this book, e.g. "fused participles", "illiteracies" and the use of *around*. On the whole, the stated attitude is that we must yield to usage and idiom, but in many instances this is contradicted by the views on specific matters. As befits a lexicographer (H. L. Fowler was, with his brother, the author of the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*), the book is stuffed with quotations, chiefly from the better newspapers but also from parliamentary reports, *etc.*, which are given at length but never given the exact sources of.

Very occasionally, the relationship between language and thought is demonstrated.

Frayn, M., *The Tin Men*, 1965

This early novel of Michael Frayn's is listed here for its very telling—and Swiftian—account of the possibilities of automating newspapers; see especially chapters 13 and 20. The examples of computerised journalese are altogether too convincing; we feel we have reached this phase of modernity.

Hargraves, O., *Mighty Fine Words, Smashing Expressions*, 2003

Orin Hargraves, an American lexicographer who has spent 15 years in Britain, sets out comparative lists of American and British English words and expressions. It is very thorough in its examination

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of vocabulary and covers important topics such as the law, politics and the armed forces. The book is valuable in showing how very rapidly Britain is adopting American usages—some of the items listed as British (*e.g. barber's, hairdresser's, ironmonger's*) are well-nigh obsolete. It is interesting to see that *flats* has, in the USA, now acquired value-added prestige status just as has *apartments* in Britain; one wonders how long it will take to be re-imported with twice the value (*cf. cinema*).

Horwill, H. W., *Modern American Usage*, 1935, 2nd edn 1944

Besides being a mine of information in its individual entries, all carefully supported by numerous quotations, the book has a good introduction on the nature and quality of American English. It goes into quite some detail about American prepositional usage, including the favouring of *on* and *for*. It also demonstrates, from reading this account of 1935, how altered is B.E. usage since that date.

Howard, P., *The State of the Language; English Observed*, 1984 & 1986

Good for its wide geographical and sociological scope, *i.e.* creoles, pidgins, slang, jargon and dialects.

The author is both a classicist and a journalist and is sometimes torn between these two roles; he equivocates between acceptance and condemnation; for instance, he says that *of that ilk* is always used incorrectly.

Bill Bryson, in *Mother Tongue* (*loc.cit.*) pp.127–8, finds occasion to twit Philip Howard (and H. W. Fowler) on his grammar!

Jones, D. (revised by Gimson, A. C.), *English Pronouncing Dictionary*, 1917, 1963, 1964, paperback 1975

This is the great authority on the pronunciation of English words, recognised abroad as well as in this country. However, two *caveats* must be entered: the pronunciation described is exclusively R.P. (Received Pronunciation) and there is no account given of “supra-segmentals”, that is, of such important elements of speech as (1) rhythm and sentence stress, (2) intonation in monologue and, where it is significantly different, in dialogue. However, there is some attention given to different levels of formality and different paces of speech.

Those who would like to take up the issue of the stressed schwa vowel, raised on page 54 of *Dear Mr Howard*, should glance at page viii, sections (d) and (e).

Joos, M., *The Five Clocks*, 1962

This is no more than a long pamphlet and only pages 13 to 41 need be read, the first chapter being rather flippant and the last irrelevant. Martin Joos lays out in some detail the variety of levels of formality in English, from “intimate” to “frozen”, the former being characterised by grunts, monosyllables and minimal information, the latter by a total reliance on language alone and that as pure soliloquy, *i.e.* typically, book language. He shows, without technical jargon,

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how style is, in the first instance, dependent on the perceived or assumed relationship between the participants in a conversation and between a writer and his/her readers. He says interesting things about how serious writing is not merely written but re-written and how it can, therefore, be re-read again and again, on each occasion with deeper penetration.

Lakos, G., & Johnson, M., *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*, 1999

For those who have some familiarity with linguistic theory and/or the philosophy of mind, this volume will provide much grist to the whirring mills of disputation. In particular, with reference to *Dear Mr Howard*, the sections on Noam Chomsky's Cartesian philosophy, his mentalistic linguistic theories and his "anarchical-socialistic" political ideas should be studied, pondered and inly digested. The dust will have little time to settle!

Mitton, R., *English Spelling and the Computer*, 1996

Do not let the title of this book put you off. It gives the most balanced and *sense* account of the nature of English spelling, of its difficulties and its sublimities, of any book I know. Roger Mitton is not a linguist but a social-scientist and, as such, is well-placed to investigate, and illuminate, the *social* and *educational* complexities presented by the received system. In particular, chapter 3, "Pros and Cons of English Spelling", should be read and re-read; he makes the invaluable point that the spelling of what we read and of what we ourselves write may, without causing any great trauma, be different; that standardisation is essential only in the former. Chapter 1 gives a sketch of the evolution of the spelling of English that clarifies, with great lucidity, how it is that the spelling and pronunciation of English, as opposed to Spanish and Italian, for instance, have come to diverge so widely.

Roger Mitton's style is wonderfully free of obfuscation.

Orwell, G., *Collected Essays*, 1961

See, especially, the essay "Politics and the English Language". What George Orwell had to say in 1946 is as applicable today as it was then, but with a rather different set of phrases, metaphors and clichés to those given in *Dear Mr Howard*. Note that, despite the title to the essay, the issue of "academically respectable" prose is tackled with equal gusto to that of political language; everyone remembers "The fascist octopus has sung its swan song" (apocryphal?) but it is well-worth studying with attention the first three of Orwell's "exhibits", as he calls them, as also the rendering into modern academically acceptable prose of a passage from Ecclesiastes.

Phillipps, K.C., *Language and Class in Victorian England*, 1984

This draws on the works of the many novelists and tract-writers, both well-known and otherwise, of the 19th century to illustrate the attitudes of, necessarily, the literate to sometimes minute class

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differentiators in, almost exclusively, pronunciation and word usage. It documents, for instance, the moment when *lady-like* became vulgar. It has an interesting section on the incidence of, and attitudes to, the *doin'*, *goin'*, *shootin'*, *fishin'* pronunciation.

Dr Phillipps' book shows clearly the origins of the "U" *versus* "non-U" movement described by Nancy Mitford and Evelyn Waugh in *Noblesse Oblige*.

Potter, S., *Changing English*, 1969 & 1975

Written by an academic linguist of the old (*i.e.* pre-structuralist) school, it is not without hand-wringing, deploring, for instance, the increasing incidence of the schwa vowel in weak syllables. It draws useful comparisons between British and American English but says nothing about dialogue or texts.

Robinson, I., *The Survival of English*, 1973

The book concentrates on the levelling down of styles in English, to the impoverishment of tones of address. It relates linguistic style to social and inter-personal attitude; styles not only reflect but re-inforce human relationships. See, especially in connexion with the present volume, the chapter entitled "The Vulgarisation of *The Times*".

Spark, M., *You Should Have Seen the Mess*.

This short story has been widely anthologised. It depends for its effect on a specific moment in social class history. That moment passed, it has become almost incomprehensible; the very title held, at that moment, the essence of a social situation. In a word, it is dated—and many may feel thankful that this is so.

Twain, M., *Huckleberry Finn*, 1855; Puffin Books, 1953 and many times, thereafter.

As a work of art, I feel this novel is rather unsatisfactory; Mark Twain's view of his characters is equivocal, even of Huck himself who, at the end, after all the moral dilemmas he has encountered, is turned back into a stereotypical poor white wild-boy, the stooge of Tom Sawyer.

In connexion with *Dear Mr Howard*, however, the point is that the English of all the characters, including that of the *quasi*-autobiographical Huck, is captured with extraordinary subtlety; and, by this, I mean not just in dialectal words, idioms and grammar, but in speech *rhythms* and dialogue *movements*. The introductory "explanation" is to be noted, for it shows that Mark Twain was well-aware of what he was doing in this sphere.

Trudgill, P., *Sociolinguistics—an Introduction to Language and Society*, 4th edn, 2000

Peter Trudgill is, along with William Labov in America, one of the leading dialectologist-cum-sociolinguists of the day. This means that his data is drawn from genuine field enquiry analysed by sociological method. There is a clear outline of the Sapir-Whorf

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Hypothesis on pages 13–16, describing it in its “strong” and its “weak” forms.

For a fourth edition, there are some surprising errors—and quirks—in the phonetics here and there.

Upton, C., & Widdowson, J. D. A., *An Atlas of English Dialects*, 1996

The sub-heading of this publication is an accurate description: “The only compact guide to understanding regional English”. It is based on the monumental dialect survey initiated by Harold Orton of Leeds University, with frequent references to such older authorities as *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* and Joseph Wright’s *The English Dialect Dictionary*, 4 volumes, 1898–1905. For absolute beginners, the introduction is useful reading. Page 173 should be read in connexion with what appears on page 64 of *Dear Mr Howard*.

Whomersley, D., *Sheffieldish; A Beginner’s Phrase-book*, 1981, Publicity Dept., Sheffield City Council

Now out of print, this booklet was the first modern popular primer of the local dialect. It is replete with humorous, but enlightening, cartoons and anecdotes which give the terms and idioms an essential context, so that they can be understood and used with some confidence by the reader. It also has a small collection of poems in dialect—an additional attraction.

Widdowson, J. D. A. & Smith, P. S., *The Hallamshire Glossary, by The Rev. Joseph Hunter*, 1983

This is a facsimile reproduction of Hunter’s encyclopaedic collection, published in 1819, of words, idioms, proverbs, practices and pronunciations peculiar to the Sheffield region. The Rev. Joseph Hunter was one of those extraordinary, 19th-century, polymathic clerical gentlemen of the same cast as William Buckland and Adam Sedgewick, the founders of Geology at Oxford and Cambridge. It makes fascinating reading and has an excellently informative introduction.

Wilkinson, A., *In your own words—Spoken English and Communication*, 1967, BBC Publications

A short booklet written to accompany a series of radio talks on English. It gives a succinct and down-to-earth description of such commonly misunderstood issues as accent, dialect and slang and also a very easy introduction to structural grammar. The idea of “registers”—different types of English—is illustrated in a simple manner, including the essential differences between spoken and written language. It shows clearly, by examples and cartoons, that “correctness” is not the cut-and-dried thing it is often taken to be.

Like many other writers on language who claim to be entirely objective, Andrew Wilkinson is not devoid of prejudices and prescriptivism; he describes as “bad” an accent that cannot be

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understood—so must be, by the same token, any such language.
Out of print, but a copy might be found in the local library.