

**HANS SAUER AND MONIKA KIRNER-LUDWIG (2021). EVOLUTION OF ENGLISH: STUDYING THE PAST, UNDERSTANDING THE PRESENT. TÜBINGEN: STAUFFENBURG.**



The book is an introduction to the history of the English language for students at every level and is divided into 11 chapters (excluding the Appendices), dealing in turn with the main areas of linguistic research: language and language change, basic linguistic concepts, the chronology of English, writing and orthography, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, vocabulary, text and context, standard language and varieties. Chapters from *the Periods of English* to *Morphology* are further divided into three periods — Old English, Middle English and Modern English. Chapters 3 (*The periods of English*) and 5 (*Phonology: pronunciation and sound systems*) go further into West Germanic and Proto-Germanic, and, where relevant, Proto-Indo-European. Furthermore, each chapter is accompanied by a brief list of suggested reading.

The Appendices include maps, figures, tables and scripts, a glossary of terms, a bibliography, an index, a detailed *Table of Contents*, and a section that includes phonetic symbols and types of compounding.

The book's organization is excellent. It enables the reader to find their bearings quickly and compare the development of each segment throughout recorded history, e.g. a user interested in the development of the verbal categories finds it conveniently placed in the chapter on morphology, subsection *Verbs*, which describes the development of verb categories from Old English to Present-Day English.

As good as the overall structure of the book is, there is some imbalance. Some chapters contain very basic information that should be familiar to a somewhat informed reader. At the same time, in some aspects, the book goes into considerable detail, at which it only seems to hint, expecting the reader to eventually work out its meaning. These reservations can be illustrated by several examples. Chapter 2 (*Basic linguistic concepts*) lists concepts *graphs*, *phones* and *morphs* which are not included in the main body of the text. Chapter 5 (*Phonology: pronunciation and sound systems*) expects the reader to know *the manners and places of articulation* while at the same time *minimal pairs* and *phonemes* are introduced as new. Furthermore, this impartial balance can be seen in the chapters on morphology (Chapter 6) and syntax (Chapter 7). Chapter 6 is the longest chapter in the book subdivided into sections based on parts of speech and using the diachronic approach, with many examples. On the other hand, Chapter 7 merely introduces key terms, which can be found in any introductory book on syntax without any clear diachronic approach, with the exception of subchapter 7.6.3 (*Subordination*), which is extremely well written.

The book could be greatly improved by inclusion of more examples from other Germanic languages than German, although this suggests that the book is oriented toward the German speaking audience. This can be seen as an asset, especially for German-speaking students. However, in many cases, it would be helpful to support the arguments also by employing examples from other sources, namely the North Germanic languages. This can be illustrated by Chapter 3 (*The periods of English*) in which the eras of Proto-Germanic and West Germanic are grouped into one subchapter (3.4) and treated together listing only examples from English and German.



A comparison of North Germanic with West Germanic languages would highlight the West Germanic innovations and their development from Proto-Germanic as well as lay some groundwork for Chapter 9 on lexical borrowing, considering the influence that Old Norse had on English.

However, the critical points listed above are overshadowed by the many positive aspects of the book which are here illustrated on two examples. The first is Chapter 1 (*Language and language change*) which addresses the main challenges of historical linguistics, the processes of language change, and the difficulties of studying these changes. Chapter 1.3 (*Why study language change?*), in particular, is a clear and well written introduction for students of linguistics in this respect. Chapter 9 (*Vocabulary: borrowing and word formation*) presents a solid introduction to different loan types (loan formations, loan meanings, loan translations, loan renditions, loan creations, loan syntax, loan phrases), and a helpful subchapter covering borrowing from individual languages (mainly Latin, Celtic, Old Norse, French). The material also distinguishes between the immediate and ultimate origin of the loans which adds to the understanding of the complexity of the process of borrowing. Subchapter 9.2 (*Borrowing*) is recommended as a primary reading for students who encounter the topic of borrowing for the first time.

This book provides students with a quick reference tool in which they will conveniently find an explanation of the key concepts of historical linguistics with reference to the English language regardless of whether they are proficient in the topic. The book is recommended as primary source material, especially chapters 4 (*Writing and orthography*), 6 (*Morphology: word classes and word forms*), 8 (*Semantics*) and 9 (*Vocabulary*). Although some chapters are less detailed than others, the explanations given throughout are clear and effective. The authors have selected the best reference materials, and this helps the attentive reader to become oriented in the material quickly and with ease. It is also clear that the book is informed by the authors' long teaching practice. Most would agree that it is harder to write an introductory text than to write a specialised one, and that this book can stand as a perfect example of authors rising to the task.

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