

Studying the English Language

SH

Studying the English Language
Rob Penhallurick



Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	ix
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
<i>Preface</i>	xi
1 Space: The Diversity of English	1
Introduction	1
Geographical variety in English	2
Geographical diversity and the passage of time	8
Conclusion	12
Further reading	14
2 Time: The History and Pre-history of English	15
Introduction	15
The pre-history of English	16
The history of English	25
Conclusion	30
Further reading	31
3 Contact: The Case of Middle English	32
Introduction	32
Middle English and grammatical change	33
Middle English and spelling and lexical change	40
Conclusion	44
Further reading	44
4 Signs: The Semiotic View of Language	46
Introduction	46
Signs, iconicity and convention	46
Categories of sign in writing systems	50
Semiotics and C. S. Peirce	52
The linguistic sign and Ferdinand de Saussure	53
Further reading	57

5	Strange Orchestras: The Underlying Structure of Languages	58
	Linguistic structure and Saussure	58
	How does <i>langue</i> [linguistic structure] come into being?	61
	<i>Langue</i> and the 'real world'	63
	Conclusion	68
	Further reading	68
6	Myth: Language and Reality	70
	Introduction	70
	The English language and sexist reality	72
	The 'Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis'	74
	Language and the 'symbolic order'	78
	Roland Barthes, semiotics and myth	80
	Conclusion	83
	Further reading	84
7	Sex: Language and Gender	85
	Introduction	85
	Women and men speaking differently	86
	Her master's voice: language treating women and men differently	93
	Conclusion	95
	Further reading	98
8	Tyranny: The Oppressiveness of Language and What to Do about It	99
	Introduction	99
	'Statements are verbal; they are never <i>it</i> '	100
	Language is quite simply fascist	101
	'We see that "victory" always comes down to the same thing: things get hierarchical'	102
	'The Word is literally a virus'	103
	An analog world	109
	The universe of reduced awareness	109
	'The Virtue of Laughing Out Loud'	110
	Strangers in a strange land	111
	'I'll tell you what it means: it's almost an evil, satanic plot!'	112
	Conclusion	113
	Further reading	114

9	Telling Stories: The Structure of Discourse in English	115
	Preamble	115
	A beginning	115
	A middle	118
	And an end	127
	Further reading	128
10	What's in a Norm? The Nature of Standard English	129
	Further reading	142
11	Language with Attitude: Dialect, Accent and Identity	143
	Introduction	143
	Master-signifiers and offensive language	144
	Master-signifiers and cultural stereotypes	149
	Cultural stereotypes, dialect and accent	151
	Conclusion	154
	Further reading	155
12	Fixing: Language Planning and Regulation	156
	Introduction	156
	The issue of language regulation: examples	158
	Language planning	161
	Language planning and English: the present day	163
	Fixing English: the historical background	166
	Conclusion	169
	Further reading	170
13	Slippage: Slips of the Tongue and Other Blunders	171
	Further reading	180
14	Communication Breakdown: Modelling What Happens when We Communicate	181
	Introduction	181
	The 1916 model of communication	183
	The 1949 model of communication	189
	Conclusion	194
	Further reading	197
15	The Nature of Language: Linguistic Theory and the Question of Origins	198
	Introduction	198
	The 'language instinct' theory	201

Language origins and the brain	204
The 'symbolic species' theory	207
The origins of writing	211
Conclusion	214
Further reading	215
<i>References for Examples</i>	217
<i>Bibliography</i>	220
<i>Index</i>	239