

## REVIEWS

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**Bas Aarts, Sylvia Chalker and Edmund Weiner**, *The Oxford dictionary of English grammar*, 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. 1–453. ISBN 978-0-19-965823-7. £11.99.

**Pam Peters**, *The Cambridge dictionary of English grammar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. viii+391. ISBN 978-0-521-86319-3. £75.00; US\$115.00.

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The main purpose of a dictionary is to be a practical resource for its users. But dictionaries are also products of their time. They occupy a position in a field of competing forces and carry invaluable information far beyond the limits of practical use. For the historian of language they record important facts about the arrival of new lexemes and the loss of outdated ones. To the lexicographer they signal trends in how practice is adapting to changing demands. To the grammarian they mark shifts in the perception of what exactly ‘grammar’ is held to be. To the terminologist they reveal the points at which the terminology itself is coming under pressure, with new terms being introduced to compete with older terms which are losing their currency. And to the linguist they signal which areas of their discipline are currently the focus of attention.

Over the last few decades a relatively young discipline – metalexicography – has moved into the centre of interest (Petrequin & Swiggers 2007). While not itself a source of dictionaries, metalexicography is concerned with the theory and practice of dictionary-making. Not least coincident with the development of computerized lexica, where everything needs to be explicitly stated, models have been constructed to incorporate and standardize all aspects of dictionary-making. ‘The increasing convergence of lexicon-theoretic and practical lexicographic issues through the use of efficient computational lexicographic methods has resulted in a situation today in which theoretical underpinnings are needed in order to develop complex computational tools for lexicography’ (Gibbon 2005: 257). The distinction introduced by Rey-Debove between macrostructure (‘l’ensemble des entrées ordonnées, toujours soumise à une lecture verticale partielle lors du repérage de l’objet du message’ – the sum of ordered entries, always subject to a partial vertical reading with respect to retrieving the content of the message) and microstructure (‘l’ensemble des informations ordonnées de chaque article, réalisant un programme d’information constant pour tous les articles, et qui se lisent horizontalement à la suite de l’entrée . . .’ – the items of information ordered within each entry, providing a single framework for all entries, to be read horizontally after the headword, Rey-Debove 1971: 21) is giving way to a more comprehensive, structured view which now includes megastructure (Hartmann 1983) and even mesostructure. As

Gibbon points out, far from being simply repositories of idiosyncratic information, dictionaries contain many different kinds of lexical generalizations (Gibbon 2005: 269). Information which was traditionally deployed in a Preface, an Introduction, as a separate section ('Abbreviations'), or even on the slip jacket (Coleman 2009: 503) is sorted in terms of the kind of objects the information relates to (formal types of meta-information, information specific to the lexical object language, generalizations over microstructure, etc.) and assigned to specific parts of the lexicon (Gibbon 2005: 261). It is against this background that dictionaries will increasingly come to be judged.

The dictionaries under review here show little evidence of convergence in the way they deploy their material, either in terms of structure or presentation. Rather, each organizes its information in the way best calculated to meet the needs of its envisaged readership. Although these readerships overlap, the execution and tone of the publications differ. A summary overview of the megastructure of the two dictionaries, including the meta-information, makes this clear. Aarts *et al.* list the various kinds of information on their Contents page, with two Prefaces, 'Organization', 'Notational conventions', 'Abbreviations', 'Dictionary', 'References' and 'Useful Web links' (the latter, a particularly useful tool). In this scheme, statements about the coverage (macrostructure) are assigned to the Prefaces, while the microstructure (information on the lexical entries) appears under 'Organization'. Peters has only four headings under Contents: 'How to use this book', 'Introduction', 'The Dictionary' and 'References'. The section 'How to use this book' has subsections 'Lookup' (coverage), 'Within entries' (microstructure), 'Type contrasts' (notational conventions) and 'In-text references'. The Introduction contains more information on coverage, 'New terms and adaptations of older terms', 'Terms of grammar and related areas of linguistics', 'Access to entries and their contents', 'Corpus evidence and emergent grammar' and 'Acknowledgements'. This is followed by 'The Dictionary' (the lexicon proper) and 'References'. The References play an important role in both these works (more on this below). Why Peters' 'Introduction' should follow and not precede the more specialized 'Lookup' is not apparent. And while her Contents page looks simpler, the presentation in Aarts *et al.* makes it easier for the user to go straight to the required information.

Of most interest to linguists and users alike are the questions relating to macrostructure (coverage and arrangement) and microstructure (the organization of individual entries). From the point of view of coverage, both dictionaries concentrate on terms relating to the morphology and syntax of English, while adding complementary terms linking these areas with related fields. Peters adds terms from lexical semantics, orthography and punctuation (p. 2), and also terms 'relating to information delivery, and pragmatics of communication . . . with reference to written as well as spoken discourse' (p. 3). The core of her terminology is determined by a restricted but well-motivated choice of grammars, each grammar being the result of co-operation between scholars in the British Isles and Europe (Quirk *et al.* 1985), between scholars across the Atlantic (Biber *et al.* 1999), or between authors working in the northern and southern hemispheres (Huddleston & Pullum 2002 and Halliday 1985).

Aarts *et al.* too see ‘grammar’ as ‘encompassing syntax and morphology . . .’, while also including terms from ‘related fields of study, such as corpus linguistics, historical linguistics, lexicology, (lexical) semantics, sociolinguistics [and] stylistics and so on, but only where this terminology is broadly relevant to grammar’. They also, however, add that ‘Readers familiar with the first edition will notice that the entries on English phonetics have been removed’ (Preface to the second edition).

The sequence of entries in both is (following Trask 1993) generally speaking strictly alphabetical, i.e. takes no account of word boundaries.

Lexicographers face the general problem, whether in the case of complex expressions to put the main entry under the head or under the modifier: should the main entry for ‘adjective phrase’ be entered under the head ‘phrase’, as a subentry for a kind of phrase, or under ‘adjective’ because an adjective phrase is a single concept in opposition to a noun phrase, verb phrase, etc.? Under the general head ‘phrase’ Peters has short subentries for noun phrase, adjectival [sic] phrase, verb phrase, etc. (pp. 260–1), but the main entries for each are to be found under the modifier (‘noun’, ‘adjectival’, ‘verb’ etc.).

Aarts *et al.* generally enter complex expressions under the head word. However, in the specific case of ‘phrase’ the subtypes are listed under the entry for ‘phrase’, as in Peters, with the main entry under the modifier. To take a different example, in the case of ‘grammar’, Aarts *et al.* have entries for descriptive grammar, generative grammar, pedagogical grammar, prescriptive grammar, reference grammar, theoretical grammar and traditional grammar. Of these, pedagogical, reference, theoretical and traditional grammar are not dealt with in strict alphabetical order in the macrostructure, but do have an entry under the modifier with a cross-reference to the main entry under ‘grammar’, while generative grammar has a main entry to itself under the modifier. Descriptive grammar has two entries, one under ‘descriptive’, one under ‘grammar’. These two entries are, however, well differentiated, and complement each other nicely: in each instance the word ‘descriptive’ participates in a different paradigm or semantic field.

The clearest sign of a shift in the nature of the genre (though not one made by Aarts *et al.*) is Peters’ statement, ‘the entries in this book are of two kinds, focusing on: (1) grammatical terms . . . (2) common function words of English grammar, such as: *AND, BE . . .*’ (p. vii). The first of these is what one would expect in a terminological dictionary. The second, however, suggests a publication of a different nature – not a lexicon of grammar terms but a dictionary of English grammatical words, something approaching Palmer’s *Grammar of English Words*, which was intended as ‘a manual of usage’ (Palmer 1938: iii). Peters’ inclusion of this kind of material suggests that she may be addressing a readership uncertain of current usage, such as foreign learners, teachers working in a dialect area different from that of their native speech community, or speakers of non-standard varieties anxious to adapt their speech to a norm.

With this simple distinction, however, Peters mentions only a fraction of the kinds of lexical object her dictionary actually contains. The lexicon – the body of the dictionary proper – in both works incorporates a surprising range of types. It includes not only the above-mentioned information on individual words included in Peters, but also a variety of forms and otherwise encyclopedic information relating to schools of linguistics,

grammar theories, the names of individual grammarians, hypotheses, titles of individual works, individual morphs, and also abbreviations.

Both dictionaries include – as entries in the main lexicon – abbreviations of the kind a reader of grammatical literature might expect to come across. The abbreviations constitute the weakest aspect of these dictionaries, reflecting as they do the unsystematic nature of contemporary practice. They cover a diverse range of lexical objects – lexical categories (P), phrase-structure categories (VP), individual grammar theories (GB, LFG) and functional categories (A), but none of them comprehensively or systematically. Peters has entries for AdjP (but not ‘AP’), AdvP, NP, etc. (cross-referenced), but none for lexical categories N, P, V, etc. For functional categories Peters has no symbol for complement, object or subject, but gives ‘A’ as the functional ‘adjunct’ or ‘adverbial’. The situation is complicated in Aarts *et al.* by the fact that a selection of abbreviations is listed separately in the front matter. In the lexicon proper they then have entries for AP, NP, PP and VP as phrase-structure categories, but ‘V’ is presented not as a lexical category (verb) but functionally as ‘an element in clause structure’ (p. 431). Other abbreviations in Aarts *et al.* denote functional categories ‘O’ (object) and ‘C’ (complement), but not ‘IO’ or ‘DO’, though these are used in the text. ‘IO’ and ‘DO’ are however listed separately in the ‘Abbreviations’ section, but not ‘C’. Having found ‘A/AP’ listed under ‘Abbreviations’ with the meaning ‘adjective/adjective phrase’, it is confusing to find ‘A’ as the first entry on the facing page being given the meaning ‘adverbial [sic] as an element of clause structure’.

The ‘References’ section in each dictionary marks a further shift in the genre. Conventional dictionaries did not have a ‘References’ section or, if they did, it tended to be a list of sources from which the attestations were taken. The references in the dictionaries under discussion here are an integral part of the architecture. They have two main functions: (1) they direct the reader to the main sources of the terms defined lexical section, and (2) they provide material for further study. Pared down, the references read almost like an ideal course of reading for a first degree in the linguistics of English. That said, there are differences, with Peters giving more nuanced recognition to southern hemisphere sources (Australia and New Zealand).

Particularly welcome are the references to linguists whose work does not (here) belong to the ‘mainstream’ (Langacker and Sinclair, for instance). But there are also some historical references whose motivation is unclear. They do not appear to be integrated into the lexicon in the same way as the other references are. One is positively struck on the other hand by the inclusion of authors whose work contains much valuable material, but who are often unjustly ignored (Strang, for instance, or Olsson – though his ‘complex verbal structures’ – *Funktionsverbgefüge* in German – is not given an entry).

The References in Aarts *et al.* offer a good picture of how the lexicon links up with works of historical importance in the description of English, such as those by Jespersen, Curme, Kruisinga, Long, Poutsma and Zandvoort.

Among the numerous theories of grammar entered in these dictionaries we find Cognitive Grammar, Construction Grammar, traditional and Transformational

(Generative) Grammar, Government-Binding Theory, Word Grammar and even Optimality Theory. Peters also includes familiar abbreviated forms for a number of well-known grammar theories such as GB, GPSG, LFG, etc. with cross-references to main entries. Aarts *et al.* enter these theories under their full names, with the abbreviations following in brackets, as in ‘Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG)’. Interestingly, in view of the prominence she accords to Hallidayan grammar, Peters has, unlike Aarts *et al.*, no place for Scale-and-Category Grammar, perhaps the earliest version of Halliday’s Systemic Functional Grammar. This difference underlines the weight placed by Aarts *et al.* on situating theories diachronically as well as systematically. The point is reinforced by the entries in Aarts *et al.* devoted to schools of linguistics – not just Bloomfieldian, Firthian, etc. but also glossematics, the Prague School etc.

On the titles of individual works and individual morphs the two dictionaries part company. Peters does not include the titles of individual grammars, but Aarts *et al.* have entries for many of the major works in the recent history of English grammatical description – grammars by Curme, Dixon, Fries, Jespersen, Long, Nida, Palmer (H. E.) – not, though, going so far back as Sweet.

Again unlike Peters, Aarts *et al.* have no entries for individual morphs. Though not grammatical terms, Peters has entries for inflectional morphs such as *-ed*, *-ing* and *-s*.

The inclusion of encyclopedic information in these dictionaries is an unmitigated advantage. It effectively turns them into integrated structures of which the lexical section is only part. The reader is given not only the meaning of a term, but a reference to the system in which it is embedded. This in turn enables him or her to acquire the meaning not as an isolated gobblet of information, but as a unit in the larger terminological architecture.

But beyond their immediate practical use, these dictionaries throw light on topics of far-reaching importance to grammarians and lexicographers alike. There are sixty or more theories of grammar currently on offer, and in many of these terminology is deployed to mark off the domain of one theory in contradistinction to other, competing theories. The plethora of current terminology, with its resulting synonymy and polysemy, is a consequence of the proliferation of grammatical theories and the way terminology is put to practical use. The underlying postulate is that, modern theories being as rigorously precise as they are, each forms a complete and coherent system, so that interference in one part will affect mechanisms in other parts of the system. From this it follows that the meaning of each term is dependent on its place in one specific system, and that terms can not be transferred from one theory to another – even if they have the same label – without their meaning being modified.

One is hence committed with each new theory to learning a new language. Many phenomena in what might be called ‘HPSG-speak’ or ‘GPSG-speak’ can be more or less rephrased in ‘LFG-speak’, and vice versa. This is where the so-called ‘translation-problem’ arises: if one works in a different theory, one has, when listening to linguistic papers or in reading linguistic books or articles, to mentally translate from one ‘-speak’ into another ‘-speak’. In practice this situation throws up important questions. The first

is how best to deal with the proliferating terminology; the second concerns the image of linguistics/grammar in the outside world.

With respect to the first, the dictionaries under discussion deserve high praise indeed. For those terms defined differently in different theories, the meanings are listed and assigned to the appropriate theory. ‘Each application of (a) term is explained in accordance with the grammar(s) to which it belongs’ (Peters, p. 3; and cf. Aarts *et al.*, Preface to the second edition). The entries for ‘complement’ in Peters and Aarts *et al.* respectively, very much pared down, are as follows (Peters in the left-hand column, Aarts *et al.* on the right; the six entries from Peters appear in a ‘boxed menu’, directing the reader to fuller but concise explanations of the meanings, together with more restricted uses in particular theories. CGEL, OMEG, CaGEL etc. are abbreviations for the respective grammars):

<b>Peters (pp. 80–1)</b>	<b>Aarts <i>et al.</i> (pp. 78–80)</b>
1. A structure required to complete a phrase	1. A constituent (*phrase, *clause, etc.) that is *licensed by a *head, e.g. a *verb, *noun, or *adjective. <b>Predicative complements . . .</b> <b>(i) subject complement . . .</b> <b>(ii) object complement . . .</b> <b>A predicative oblique . . .</b> •• <b>complement clause . . .</b> •• <b>core complement . . .</b> •• <b>external complement . . .</b> •• <b>internal complement . . .</b> •• <b>non-core complement . . .</b>
2. Complement of the clausal subject or object	2. More narrowly, one of the five *elements of clause structure, along with subject, verb, object and adverbial.
3. Any obligatory postverbal element of a clause	
4. Nonfinite complement for catenative verbs.	
5. Obligatory structure following prepositional verbs	
6. Non-subject participants in the clause	

[\* indicates a cross reference to another entry; •• indicates an ‘extended term’ – J.W.]

A number of the terms in Aarts *et al.* (above) are further cross-referenced to main entries. Both Aarts *et al.* and Peters provide useful examples for each definition.

With respect to the image of linguistics/grammar in the outside world, the plethora of terms these publications document does bring out the lack of agreement among linguists over even the most fundamental terms. At a time when language-work is

fighting for recognition in schools (in the National Curriculum in the UK) and a linguistic component is not yet compulsory for many UK courses leading to a degree in 'English', this situation is grist to the mill of those, like Thompson, who argue that linguists 'will have to compose some of their differences before their science can be of direct assistance to the teacher' (Thompson 1969: 7).

Not all the terms recorded in these dictionaries are equally happy, nor even desirable. This points up the descriptivist's dilemma – namely, what is a dictionary compiler to do when confronted with a term which is a misnomer, such as *present participle*, *future tense*, but which nevertheless occurs in linguistic or would-be linguistic works?

A first impulse would be to exclude such terms from the dictionary as incorrect (participles are unrestricted in their application to time, and English has no future tense). But linguists are constrained by the prevailing ideology, which would stamp this procedure as subjective, and not empirically motivated. This item in the linguists' creed has led to a situation which prohibits active interference in a language (except for one or two seemingly uncontroversial exceptions, such as in the campaign against sexist language).

These two impulses – the prescriptive and the descriptive – surface in these dictionaries in a barely disguised tension: on the one hand the need to provide an objective description of the language as it is used; on the other, the desire to guide the user to some kind of standard practice. In recent years, terminology has developed as an essentially normative discipline independent of linguistics, with lexicography remaining (theoretically) purely descriptive. Cabré makes a pointed distinction between 'dels objectius perseguits per la terminologia (la denominació i la normalització [and] els de la lexicologia (la descripció) . . .' – the aims pursued by terminology (naming and standardization) [and] those of lexicology (description), Cabré 1992: 79). Perhaps we should draw a sharper distinction between a terminology for speakers/writers, and one for listeners/readers. The speaker/writer looks for guidance as to which forms are appropriate and current and which not, which to use, and which to avoid. The listener/reader needs the widest possible coverage, to reflect the literature he/she may come into contact with, together with objective (as far as possible) definitions.

That the prescriptive–descriptive dichotomy in its simplest simple form does not stand up to examination has been persuasively argued by Klein (2004). Of the four 'dimensions' he distinguishes – data, author, text and recipient – not one of them can claim to be purely objective in any real sense (Klein 2004: 381ff.). Both the works under review signal that selection is in fact taking place: Aarts *et al.* concentrate on an undefined 'mainstream', while Peters confines herself mainly to the grammars set out in her 'consolidated list'. But even these restrictions are insufficient to resolve the dilemma, with the result that both sets of authors feel the need to give advice on the right terminology to use while trying to remain impartial. Aarts *et al.* write in their Preface, 'Usage advice is given where appropriate, though it is never prescriptive' and 'Advice is sometimes given regarding the use of terminology that most linguists would agree is best avoided'. And for Peters, 'the dictionary aims to describe alternative conceptualizations of English grammar, not to pass judgment on them' (p. 3). This

policy finds expression in the body of the lexicon in such comments as that under ‘absolute’ – ‘modern English grammarians generally avoid it’ (Peters, p. 6); and Aarts *et al.* talk of ‘preferred terms’ (*passim*).

These signals suggest that there is a pressing need for a standardized glossary to mediate between the jungle of grammatical theories and the needs of the non-specialist, a need which the glossary provided by the Linguistics Association of Great Britain goes some way to meeting (see Linguistics Association of Great Britain, below).

What, finally, can or should the reader expect from a dictionary of English grammar? The compiler of a dictionary of linguistic or grammatical terms has a difficult task – more difficult certainly in the current situation than it would have been in earlier periods of history, or than it is in comparable sciences. Faced with the proliferation of competing grammatical theories, which areas is one to select, and which should be excluded? If one turns to the definitions given under the entries for ‘grammar’ in the dictionaries themselves, one finds in Peters: ‘a codified system consisting of grammatical word classes [sic] (nouns, verbs, etc.) and ways of assembling them into phrases and sentences (= *syntax*) . . . Both word classes and concepts such as number and tense may be expressed in the *morphology* of words’ (pp. 150–1, emphasis in the original); and in Aarts *et al.*: ‘1. The system of a language, traditionally encompassing syntax and morphology. In some cases (e.g. the work of Jespersen), a description of the sounds of a language is also included. 2. A book . . . 3. An individual’s application of the rules . . .’ (p. 185).

These definitions (excluding Aarts *et al.* [2] and [3] – the book, and the individual’s application of the rules) we might characterize as a narrow interpretation. Jespersen’s inclusion of the sounds of a language in the grammar may be seen as a reflex of the fact that for non-native users, as Jespersen’s students were, information of this kind is essential, somewhere. It does however raise issues as to what ‘a grammar’ ought to look like, and on this Jespersen had quite specific views. He saw the traditional scheme of grammar (morphology [= ‘accidence’] plus word-formation plus syntax) as insufficient for the construction of a modern grammar: ‘the whole system, if system it can be called, is a survival from the days when grammatical science was in its infancy, and only the fact that we have all of us been accustomed to it from our childhood can account for the vogue it still enjoys’ (Jespersen 1924: 39f.). In its place, Jespersen saw syntax and morphology as mediators between the *formal* expression of language and the *notions* expressed (Jespersen 1924: 56). Linguistic structures find their expression in utterances which appear in either the written or the spoken medium. We can equate the study of the latter with graphology and phonology, respectively. At the other end of the scale, notions connect up with semantics.

Jespersen’s view anticipates Chomsky and his collaborators’ later conclusion that ‘[the] grammar of a language is . . . a system of rules relating the meaning (or meanings) of each sentence it generates to the physical manifestations of the sentence in the medium of sound’ (Lyons 1970: 79; the written medium, be it noted, is not mentioned here). This broader interpretation of ‘grammar’ is not adopted in these dictionaries. Taking this interpretation further, however, an elementary grammar could be expected to



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contain the following core components: syntax, lexicon (containing the morphological rules), a semantic component, a graphological component and a phonological component; many introductions to linguistics have chapters corresponding to all or most of these. Together, they constitute the linguistic foundation from which one can work out to other – less central – disciplines such as computer linguistics, discourse analysis, gender studies, pragmatics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, stylistics, etc. It follows from this that a dictionary of grammar should list terms from at least the core areas.

As noted above, both dictionaries offer terms from areas of overlap with ‘fringe’ areas, something which helps the reader to anchor his or her studies in a broader linguistic framework. This said, the exclusion of phonetics (phonology is not even mentioned) is evidence of a considerable shift of emphasis. It is not for nothing that Sweet described phonology as ‘the indispensable foundation of all linguistic study, whether practical or scientific’ (Sweet 1892: Preface). If the spoken medium is taken as primary, then without its phonological foundation there can be no meaningful descriptive morphology nor, building on that, of its syntax. With this maxim, Sweet revolutionized the study of language in his time. Since then, one of the main criticisms which have been levelled at so-called traditional grammar has been its preoccupation with the written language. An objective approach to linguistic description, whether dictionary or grammar, could be expected to give at least equal weight to both the spoken and written medium. It is interesting to see that for present-day linguists it is the written medium which is either assumed not to exist, or is not considered part of the grammar (see Lyons 1970, cited above, and e.g. Jackendoff 2002: 127, 199 *et passim*).

An interpretation of grammar which excludes phonetics and phonology is important not least for the picture it presents to the outside world. A brief visit to the internet confirms how chaotic the use of phonetic–phonological terms currently is. Guidelines in the area of phonology–phonetics are today at least as important as they are in neighbouring areas. It is not clear why dictionaries claiming to address the needs of ‘classroom teachers who grapple with grammatical terms and concepts as part of language pedagogy’ (Peters, p. 1) should find a sound terminology in the area of graphology to be of greater importance than in phonetics or phonology. Nor is the motivation offered for this decision immediately persuasive. Peters could argue that terms from phonetics or phonology do not occur in her reference set of grammars. But even this is not the case. It has always been one of Halliday’s merits that he has from the beginning implemented in practice the requirement to which too many linguists merely pay lip-service, that phonetics/ phonology should be an integral part of any descriptive grammar.

As motivation for their decision, Aarts *et al.* argue that ‘it is very unusual for phonetics to be covered under the heading of “grammar”’ (Aarts *et al.*, Preface to the second edition). True, but the same applies to corpus linguistics, historical linguistics, pragmatics, semantics, and particularly graphology, orthography and punctuation. The evidence of these dictionaries suggests that the view of what constitutes ‘a grammar’ is changing, with the focus of attention drifting away from

phonology and phonetics in the direction of semantics, discourse, and the written medium, all reinforcing ‘the curious view that phonetics is not part of linguistics’ (Bach 1965: 281).

It is only against this shifting background that one can properly appreciate the achievement of these two dictionaries. Indeed, it is the context which explains why dictionaries like these are necessary. Given the developments which have taken place in linguistics over the last fifty years or so, going for a weakly defined ‘mainstream’, or starting from a limited set of reference grammars, may be seen as eminently sensible solutions, serving as they will the needs of the majority of their readers.

Terminology is an important point of entry to any grammatical theory. It is also an area in which competing theories meet. To understand the theory one needs to know how the terminology is used. In this respect these two dictionaries perform a useful service. What they do extremely well is to bring out the distinctive meaning assigned to any given label by each of the theories they draw on. From a historical point of view the shift in genre (the increasing inclusion of properly encyclopedic information) reflects the multiplicity of theories which have sprung up since the mid-twentieth century. Polysemous terms, or conflicting concepts (valence vs transitivity, for instance) register a point in history where conflicting ideologies have not yet been resolved.

In terms of clarity, conciseness and accessibility both the dictionaries discussed here offer all that one could ask. If one has to find differences between them, the most obvious would be that Peters is directed more towards the humble beginner (‘if you are unsure . . .’ – p. vii), and her approach, starting from her ‘consolidated list’, is more concentrated but more limited in scope. Aarts *et al.* casts its net much wider, not only in the range of terms but in the way in which it provides the user with a context of contemporary and historical references in which the terms are embedded, thus giving recognition to the contributions made by earlier grammarians of English. But both these works offer excellent summaries of current thinking on the major grammatical categories of English, and may be read with profit not only by students of language or English linguistics, but by anyone seeking concise and accurate explanations of terms which illuminate the differences between theories.

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