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[Svartvik, Jan; Quirk, Randolph, ed. **A corpus of English conversation**]

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The Survey of English Usage (SEU) carried out under the direction of Professor Randolph Quirk at University College London has become one of the most important linguistic projects of the latter half of the twentieth century. Apart from Randolph Quirk's name, it is connected with those of a number of other outstanding scholars, such as Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, Jan Svartvik (who together with Randolph Quirk have written *A Grammar of Contemporary English*), Wolf-Dieter Bald, R. A. Close, David Crystal, Derek Davy and many others. The aim of the project is to offer an overall description and analysis of the grammatical repertoire of adult educated native speakers of British English, taking into account all their written as well as all their spoken linguistic activity. In order to achieve this aim, a corpus representative of the whole range of written and spoken educated British English has been collected and uniformly filed on slips and is being subjected to an overall analysis. In this way a unique collection of classified material has come into existence. One of the many achievements based on the SEU corpus is, for instance, *A Grammar of Contemporary English*, prepared by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik.

In order to make the collection of prosodically transcribed readings of the SEU corpus available to all scholars interested in spoken English, a sister project, the Survey of Spoken English (SSE), has been started under the direction of Professor Jan Svartvik at the University of Lund. The work of the Lund group is already bearing fruit as well. In collaboration with Randolph Quirk's team, Jan Svartvik's group has prepared a volume containing 34 'texts', each of 5,000 words (170,000 words in all), of genuine face-to-face conversation by native English speakers. Moreover, thanks to the Lund group the material is now available also in machine-readable form on computer tape and ready for computer processing. (Computational studies of the material have already been started at Lund.)

In reproducing the conversations, the volume, which is the main concern of the present note, uses an orthographic non-phonetic representation wherever possible. It is, however, consistent in employing a special prosodic transcription, which is sensitive to such basic distinctions as tone unit, nucleus, booster, onset and stress. The transcription can be read with ease thanks to a number of special devices. For instance, the end of a tone unit is indicated by a conspicuous black little square; a word bearing a nucleus is printed in capitals, its nuclear syllable carrying an arrow indicating pitch direction; empty triangles of three different sizes mark three different degrees of rise in pitch.

The very detailed information offered by the SEU slips has been intentionally reduced, especially a number of paralinguistic features (tempo, loudness, various features connected with voice quality) having been omitted. The omissions heighten the readability without impairing the linguistic interpretation. Special investigations of paralinguistic features and their relationship to linguistic phenomena will have to fall back on the slips of the SEU.

It is worth adding that the prosodic transcription used in the volume is in perfect conformity with the transcription used on the SEU slips. It is in fact based on the system employed by Quirk et al. in *A Grammar of Contemporary English*. The volume contains a table in which the symbols used are listed together with the corresponding symbols on the SEU slips and the corresponding codes employed on the computer tape.

The publication of *A Corpus of English Conversation* will be welcomed by all scholars who are engaged in the inquiry into the spoken form of educated British English. It makes an important part of the SEU corpus accessible to them and provides them with a wealth of valuable genuine material. Such material will be highly appreciated, for instance, by researchers into English intonation who are not native speakers of English; it will free them from having to collect their own material and to analyze it tonetically. (True enough, English texts tonetically transcribed by prominent British phoneticians exist and can and will be used by investigators. It must, however, be borne in mind that these texts are primarily meant for the learner and do not record genuine spontaneous conversation.) *A Corpus of English*

*Conversation* provides a 'text' that can now be analyzed by various individual research workers and research teams all over the world and in this way be subjected to an overall description. A challenge worth taking up.

Jan Firbas

**Christopher Gillie, *Longman Companion to English Literature*, London: Longman, 1978, 889 pp.**

The Companion is meant primarily, though not exclusively, for students whose mother tongue is not English and who take courses in English literature at non-English universities outside Great Britain. It is concerned with English, or rather British, literature only, not including information about American or Commonwealth literature, but paying considerable attention to foreign influences. The space of time covered is that from 1066 down to the present day.

The book consists of two parts, the first containing three essays devoted in succession to English history, society and thought, and four essays dealing in their turn with the development of English narrative literature, drama, poetry and critical thought. The second part is constituted by a reference section with alphabetically arranged entries. A wide range of subjects related to English literature is covered: English writers, synopses of their works, English philosophers, foreign writers and philosophers who have exerted some influence on English literature, characters from English and world literature, literary movements, technical terms employed by literary theory, various items of background information, historical, political, social, philosophical, educational, etc., etc. A comparatively dense network of cross-references within the Companion greatly heightens its usefulness. The value of the reference work is then further enhanced by the author's successful endeavour to deal with the historical, social and political issues in an unbiased and well-balanced way.

The lucid presentation of the material and the wealth of background information will appeal to a wider readership than one composed merely of students of literature. Being closely related to the outer history of the English language, the information offered by the Companion cannot fail to attract the interest of the linguist. (The author of the present note himself is not a literary historian, but a linguist.)

Seen from a linguist's point of view, it is perhaps a pity that the entry dealing with the English language and the entry dealing with Anglo-Saxon (Old English) literature have not been expanded into essays and transferred to the first section of the Companion. (The entry concerning the English language correctly emphasizes and characterizes the changes that in the course of historical development have taken place in the English stock of words, but does not pay attention to the vital changes that have affected the grammatical structure.) The author is certainly right in maintaining that in important respects Anglo-Saxon literature is distinct from the literature of the later periods and can be regarded as a separate field of study (cf. p. 387), but it used an older form of English as its vehicle, a strong enough argument for giving it full treatment in a companion to English literature. An author, however, has always the legitimate right to limit the scope of his interest and cannot be criticized for it.

Another linguistic note may be added concerning the phonetic transcriptions accompanying some entry titles the pronunciation of which may cause difficulty. This helpful practice could have been extended to cover other titles, such as *Heracles*, *Holmes*, *Hop-o'-my-thumb*, *Igdrasil*, *Inchbald*, *Jacobin*.

To sum up. *The Longman Companion to English Literature* is a highly serviceable book of reference, admirably suited for foreign students of English. Moreover, it is a very attractive publication owing to its general lay-out and the copious illustrations. It will be acclaimed not only by those who specialize in English literature, but even by those who are interested in the English language and English culture in general.

Jan Firbas