

*If You Want to Know the Plural of Wug, Ask a Penguin**Introducing Linguistics*

David Crystal. 1992. Penguin. 77 pp.

Introducing Language and Mind

Jean Aitchison. 1992. Penguin. 96 pp.

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In the last few years, a crop of encyclopedias and dictionaries of language and linguistics has appeared on the market, in an attempt to address the quandary of a science which is becoming ever more popular and important to professionals in other areas, and yet at the same time is becoming more and more specialised and technical, spawning, like all mature sciences, a vast and unruly offspring of jargon.² As I have argued in previous articles in the journal (Hall 1993, 1994), one group for whom a knowledge of linguistics is of vital importance is the language teaching profession. The books in David Crystal's *Penguin English Linguistics* series are not designed specifically for language teachers, however, they constitute useful reference works for English teachers studying (applied) linguistics either at college or on their own. In this review, I have been asked to examine two of the five volumes in the series: the introductory volume, on linguistics in general (*Introducing Linguistics*; henceforth "IL"), and the psycholinguistics volume (*Introducing Language and Mind*; henceforth "LM")³

The volumes in the series are designed "to provide a comprehensive outline of [the sub-areas of linguistics covered], which can be used as a general backup for lectures, a supplementary index for textbooks, and an opportune aid for revision."⁴ They are slim paperbacks, printed on inexpensive paper, but with attractive cover designs. The format is novel for reference works in linguistics, which are generally bulky and informationally dense. The volumes in this series are small dictionary / encyclopedias, arranging terms alphabetically with related topics listed or cross-referenced under a keyword entry (e. g. *folk etymology* is listed under *etymology*; the entry for *irregular*

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² Recent reference works for linguistics include: Crystal 1987; Collinge 1989; Malmkjaer 1991; Trask 1993; Asher 1994.. (It appears that U. K.-based linguists and publishers are particularly active in the production of this type of volume, as this list illustrates.)

³ The other books in the series are *Introducing English Grammar*, covering English syntax and morphology, *Introducing Language and Society*, on sociolinguistics and *Introducing Phonetics*.

⁴ For American English readers, *revision* is the British term for "preparing for an exam."

has a cross-reference to the entry for *regular*). The entries are compact: for IL the average length of an entry is a quarter page; for LM, a third of a page. Figures and diagrams are few: IL has a couple of phrase structure trees and a family tree of Germanic languages; LM has a couple of diagrams of the brain. Cross-referencing is amply used; indeed, Aitchison in her introduction to LM invites readers to use her volume for browsing, using "broad outline" entries as the starting point for a tour of cross-references.

Entries cover a wide range of topics, including: linguistic theories / models and the descriptive tools they employ; techniques used in linguistic research; the various phenomena of natural language (and different languages); prominent scholars (and even a prominent place: Massachusetts Institute of Technology); and an exploding range of subdisciplines (Crystal lists at least 30). The legitimate temptation of any reviewer of reference works of this type, however, is to identify what he/she believes to be significant omissions and to berate the editors for their oversights. In what follows, I fall into this temptation, although my criticisms are tempered by my appreciation that a compilation meeting the wish-list of every linguist would be excessively damaging to the rain forests.

According to the back cover blurb, IL contains "a wide range of terms which are central to general linguistic theory and practice. It deliberately avoids terms of a more restricted nature which are dealt with in the other titles in the series." It is my feeling that, due to this policy, IL will rarely be useful on its own: most students reading textbooks or original articles will require more specialised references, such as those provided by the other volumes in the series. IL suffers also from an implicit bias in favour of grammar, specifically syntax, at the expense of other levels of analysis, notably morphology and phonology; and other perspectives on language, such as those provided by psycholinguistics, diachronic linguistics and sociolinguistics. Despite the attempt to exclude specialised terms dealt with in other volumes, we find some odd inclusions, such as entries for more restricted topics, when definition of more general terms are omitted. Among examples of this type are entries for: *case grammar*, but not *case*; *affixing language*, but not *affix*; *idiolect*, but not *dialect*; *sign language*, but not *bilingualism*. Some areas which are neglected almost completely are second language learning and teaching (there is an entry for *first language*, but none for *second language*), language evolution, modularity, writing systems, and conceptual semantics. Two terms missing from IL that students often ask me to define are: *input* (to a rule, to a child, to a language processor), and *generative* (although, of course, *generative grammar* is defined.) As noted above, omissions are inevitable in a work of this type; however, in this case (though not in LM), space dedicated to redundant terminology (e.g., entries for *functional load*, *functional yield* and *functionalist* all redirecting the

reader to the neighboring keyword *function*) could have been better used to cover other key terms.

LM fares much better on all criteria, providing more hands-on terms, more cross-referencing, more browsability, fewer omissions, and less redundancy (except where this saves time within full entries). LM covers almost all areas of linguistics concerned with the roles of the mind-brain, including: word and sentence processing; L1 acquisition; language and cognition; pragmatics; and language and brain (including aphasia and some clinical questions). The great omission again is second language: standard terms such as *L2*, *interlanguage*, *transfer*, *input hypothesis*, and *monitor* are missing. Although readers of this journal will probably not need to look up such terms, we should be concerned that readers from other areas will yet again find our profession under-represented in work coming from the "non-applied" camp. As in IL, the inclusion of some terms seems gratuitous: entries for peripheral terms such as *vervet monkey*, *allokines*, *tongue-slip lows*, *scribble talk* and *delphinology* are preferred over the L2 terms mentioned above and other important terms in psycholinguistics, such as *null-subject*, *mental models*, *schema theory*, *conceptual structure* and, again, *input*. Maybe the most serious omission (which I presume is the publisher's) is that of a bibliography to give meaning to Aitchison's numerous author-date references.

Despite such drawbacks, this little book does a remarkably thorough job of cataloguing the lexical palate used by the psycholinguistic landscape painters of the last few decades. The book's internal consistency and concise, lucid explanation will be of great service to dabblers and beginning (applied) psycholinguists alike. Particularity laudable is Aitchison's attention to current models, trends, and issues; there are, for instance, entries on modularity, connectionism, the subset principle, and I- and E-language. Also very useful are the entries on experimental techniques used in word recognition and acquisition studies, and on celebrated case studies which have thrown light on the nature of human language, such as the atypical children Genie and Marta, and the apes Washoe, Lana and Nim Chimpsky.⁵

Despite my reservations about the selection of entries for these volumes, I have little to complain about with regard to the clarity and accuracy of the definitions offered, nor with the appropriateness of the examples employed to support them. Although in IL I might have placed the emphasis rather differently or amplified a definition here or there, I would still be hard put to render the essential properties of the terms defined as clearly and concisely as Aitchison and Crystal have done. Their success in this regard is hardly surprising given their track record: both are eminent

⁵An entry on the normal "Harvard" children, Adam, Eve and Sarah, is, in contrast, uninformative.

scholars in their own right, and have had considerable success in the task of presenting the arcane realms of linguistics and psycholinguistics to the uninitiated.

In sum, then, these volumes should be useful auxiliary sources of reference: their size does not overwhelm, unlike many other recent encyclopedias of language and linguistics, and they are very easy to use, given their dictionary format and clear definitions. Having not seen the other volumes in the series, it may be that I have been excessive in my criticisms of IL, however, on its own I can only conclude that it is of rather more limited value than LM, which strikes me as a more solid resource, and will be particularly helpful for students with an interest in the psycholinguistic study of second language learning or bilingualism. ⁶

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⁶ A *wug*, by the way, is the name of an imaginary bird, originally used in an acquisition experiment to confirm children's ability to form linguistic rules (in this case the plural rule) and therefore to apply them to novel forms (see LM: 96).