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## SUMMARY

“The Oxford Handbook of English Grammar”, edited by Bas Aarts, Jill Bowie, and Gergana Popova (2019), is an updated and wide-ranging survey of research in the linguistic structure of English, both as a thoroughly investigated particular language and a solid benchmark in linguistic theory. The book spans over 850 pages, and includes 31 chapters by renowned specialists in several sub-fields such as methodology, formal analysis, and theory informed by variation and change.

The handbook is made up of an introductory chapter and five parts: “Grammar Writing and Methodology”, “Approaches to English Grammar”, “Subdomains of Grammar”, “Grammar and other fields of enquiry”, and “Grammatical Variation and Change”.

In Chapter 1, “Introduction”, Bas Aarts, Jill Bowie, and Gergana Popova succinctly present this ambitious volume as a critical and reflexive series of approaches to English grammar, rather than a typical description on its own. ‘Grammar’ is primarily understood as the system of principles encompassed by morphology and syntax. The authors lay stress on the theoretical diversity at the heart of the project; they then briefly summarise the five sets of chapters to follow.

In Chapter 2 (opening Part I), “Conceptualizations of grammar in the history of English grammaticology”, Margaret Thomas offers a substantial diachrony of English-language grammar writing, focusing on five foundational figures: Lindley Murray (1745–1826), Henry Sweet (1845–1912), Otto Jespersen (1860–1943), Randolph Quirk (1920–2017), and Noam Chomsky (1928–). These case studies reveal significant variation over the decades in what was considered valid data to conceptualize a grammar and what the sources of such data should be.

In Chapter 3, “Syntactic argumentation”, Bas Aarts examines the useful notion of argumentation in the establishment of grammatical descriptions, especially syntactic. A driving principle the author puts forward is “simplicity”, which can be further subdivided into “economy” and “elegance”: these are elaborated upon through the issues of distinguishing or establishing syntactic constituents.

In Chapter 4, “Grammar and the use of data”, Jon Sprouse and Carson T. Schütze provide a synthesis of five main data types used in syntactic theory, which have each garnered much importance in recent linguistic research: corpora, acceptability judgments, reading times (self-paced reading and eye-tracking), electrophysiological methods (EEG and MEG), and haemodynamic methods (esp. fMRI). Each of these examines a specific type of language behaviour, and thus constitutes a potential source of precious information about grammar.

In Chapter 5, “Grammar and corpus methodology”, Sean Wallis focuses more closely on the first type of data identified in the previous chapter. Corpora can provide three precious types of evidence to the linguist: factual evidence, frequency evidence, and interaction evidence. Approaches to corpus research include corpus-driven strands and theory-driven strands, which should be viewed on a continuum rather than as a dichotomy. The author then summarises the central aspects of several tools used to tap these sources, and offers an introduction to experimental corpus linguistics.

In Chapter 6 (opening Part II), “Cognitive linguistic approaches”, John R. Taylor presents a

series of theoretical frameworks born in the 1980s as alternatives to prevailing generative and formalist approaches to language, focusing on Ronald Langacker's Cognitive Grammar (CG). CG views language as a structured inventory of phonological, semantic, and symbolic units that transcend the lexicon/syntax divide and are organised through schema-instance, whole-part, and similarity relations. Several case studies of grammatical phenomena in English are then developed to illustrate the importance of the notions of grounding, cognitive reference points, and viewing arrangements within the study of background cognition promoted by CG.

In Chapter 7, "Constructional approaches", Martin Hilpert goes over the foundational assumptions of Construction Grammar (CxG) and the potential they offer in linguistic research. CxG picks up on several principles in CG and postulates knowledge of language as entirely consisting of a network of symbolic form-meaning pairings, known as constructions. The author then applies the framework to various topics of English grammar including argument structure, modality, information packaging, and morphology. CxG is a rich landscape with both functional and formal-driven strands; moreover, it can come in useful from other perspectives than only theory, such as language teaching and learning.

In Chapter 8, "Dependency and valency approaches", Thomas Herbst examines a series of structural approaches to grammar first put forward by Lucien Tesnière in the first half of the 20th century, which are distinguished by their departure from part-whole hierarchical relationships between sentence constituents, and which lay emphasis on the notions of dependency and valency, understood as co-occurrence relations. Dependency and valency-based frameworks of grammar traditionally focus on the syntactic properties of words, but their rejection of a sharp lexicon/syntax divide allows them to be integrated with other approaches such as constructionist frameworks.

In Chapter 9, "Generative approaches", Terje Lohndal and Liliane Haegeman provide a synthesis of a highly influential series of approaches to English grammar known as derivational and transformational, introduced among others by Noam Chomsky. Its most prevalent model is currently known as Minimalism. In generative linguistics, grammar and especially syntax are subject to a number of hierarchical relations including Binary Merge, Movement, and C-command. They are further analysed as involving abstract entities of structure that may be present in underlying representations without being realised overtly. These principles are then applied by the authors to a detailed case study of VP ellipsis in English.

In Chapter 10, "Functional approaches", J. Lachlan Mackenzie presents a broad spectrum of linguistic approaches known as "functional", which all share the assumption that linguistic phenomena are motivated by a number of extralinguistic factors such as cognitive properties, social relations, spatio-temporal contexts, and socio-cultural contexts. The author then provides a survey of central topics in functionalism, from the relationship between grammar and discourse to the typological orientation of functionalist research.

In Chapter 11, "Modern and traditional descriptive approaches", Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey Pullum focus on one of their most important publications, *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (CGEL, 2002), as a type of modern descriptive grammar which departs in several ways from traditional ones written in earlier centuries. The most salient difference in approach adopted by the authors is to rely on a rigorous formal study of grammatical structure rather than on vague and ill-defined categories of meaning. This grants access to a better understanding of pronouns, auxiliaries, adjectives, prepositions, subordinate clause types, and the relation between syntactic constructions and discourse/information structure. Despite these improvements, however, the biases and mistakes of traditional approaches seem to remain rather

unquestioned in the general public today.

In Chapter 12, “Theoretical approaches to morphology”, Andrew Spencer describes and discusses several theoretical approaches to the structure of words and word-formation in grammar. These approaches have been numerous and diverse, from classical morphemics to Distributed Morphology, Paradigm Function Morphology, and Construction Morphology. One of the views shared by many researchers in the field is that the peculiar internal structure of words warrants a type of analysis that is independent from syntax. The author then discusses several phenomena which are related to morphology in a wide sense.

In Chapter 13 (opening Part III), “Inflection and derivation”, Andrew Spencer delves deeper into two morphological concepts presented in previous pages. The author offers an introduction to the structure of morphologically complex words in English, with specific attention paid to the problematic case of neo-classical compounds. English inflection is then examined as a case of grammatical attrition. The final section deals with problems in English derivational morphology, including its status as a rule-governed phenomenon, and the status of verbs with varying complementation patterns as lexemic.

In Chapter 14, “Compounds”, Laurie Bauer exposes two central problems in the study of English compounds. The first of those is the precise definition and circumscription of compounds as a category. The second main problem is how to interpret compounds semantically. The author then offers a survey of compound structure and modelling, notably through the issues of binarity and headedness; finally, an overview of compounds involving not only nouns, but also adjectives, verbs, and prepositions is provided.

In Chapter 15, “Word classes”, Willem B. Hollmann examines and challenges the widespread view in linguistics according to which structural approaches to grammar writing were substantial improvements upon traditional approaches due to their departing from vague semantics-based criteria. According to the author, this view is too simplistic, and problematic in several respects. Three specific beliefs are critically discussed: that the notional terms employed in traditional grammarians’ definitions were “things”, “actions”, and “qualities”; that traditional word class descriptions were purely notional; and that linguists have replaced notional criteria with structural criteria.

In Chapter 16, “Phrase structure”, Robert D. Borsley unpacks a central concept in several approaches to (English) syntax, including Transformational Grammar (TG), Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG), Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG), and Generalized Phrase Structure Grammar (GPSG). Following a brief introduction to phrase structure in X-Bar theory, closer analyses are dedicated to various grammatical structures. Problems arise for each of them, for instance concerning whether all phrases are headed, whether there are phonologically empty heads, whether all non-heads are phrases, and whether branching may be more than binary.

In Chapter 17, “Noun phrases”, Evelien Keizer offers an overview of the main problems encountered in studies of the English noun phrase. Following a preliminary, theory-neutral characterisation of noun phrases, the author discusses several issues in their internal structure from the perspectives of generative, functional, and cognitive linguistic approaches. One central problem that arises is the question of headedness within noun phrases, both in itself as a notion and in the criteria that could be invoked to define it. The author then examines the important contrast of relational versus non-relational heads, cross-examining it with that of modifier versus complement.

In Chapter 18, “Clause structure, complements, and adjuncts”, Patrick Duffley focuses on the internal structure of clauses in English, and how this structure can be analysed. Three main topics are covered in turn: the delineation of headedness in the determination of clause type from constituent-based and dependency-based perspectives, the distinction between complements as obligatory components and adjuncts as optional components of a clause based on Talmy Givón’s influential account, and the ways in which predicates constrain the choice of obligatory components of the clause, also known as subcategorization.

In Chapter 19, « Clause types and speech act functions », Ekkehard König presents several ways of distinguishing clause types in English according to their speech act functions. This can be done on syntactic grounds, semantic grounds, or on the basis of illocutionary force, although each approach comes with its own set of specific problems. A synthesis is then given of the four main types generally recognized in English grammar : declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamative.

In Chapter 20, « Tense and aspect », Ilse Depraetere and Anastasios Tsangalidis provide a substantial introduction to three central notions in studies of verbal form and meaning, namely situation type (also known as Aktionsart), aspect, and tense. The authors focus more specifically on the interaction of aspect and tense marking in English through the case studies of progressive marking, past tense, the perfect, the conditional, and the future. Furthermore, there are cases where situation types have an impact on the temporal interpretation of the clause, and conversely, there are cases where tense influences the interpretation of Aktionsarten, through processes of coercion.

In Chapter 21, « Mood and modality », Debra Ziegeler introduces two areas of meaning centred on non-actualized or non-factual events, which have been notoriously difficult to pin down in linguistic research, including in English grammar. Several important concepts are surveyed and problematized, including mood, modal verbs in English, dynamic modality along with other non-epistemic types of modality, epistemic modality, and modal source. The second part of the chapter is devoted to the equally problematic question of the diachrony of the English modals through processes of grammaticalization, with a presentation of several diverging views, including one based on the notions of subjectivity and subjectification.

In Chapter 22, « Subordination and coordination », Thomas Egan presents two means that speakers use to signal the relationship between clauses, namely subordination and coordination. Subordinate clauses can be subdivided into those that function as complements on the one hand, and modifiers on the other; moreover, they can be formally classified according to finiteness or non-finiteness. Coordination can be realized at the phrase level as well as at the clause level, and is also involved in a number of phenomena that are non-prototypical with respect to the coordinator or the coordinated elements. Finally, the author shows that there is at times a grey area between subordination and coordination.

In Chapter 23, « Information structure », Gunther Kaltenböck examines the lexicogrammatical means used by speakers to arrange information in a way that fits their communicative needs, first labelled ‘information structure’ by Mark Halliday. Following a synthesis of the central notions of presupposition, assertion, activation, given and new information, topic, focus, end-focus, and end-weight, the author offers a survey of the most important information packaging constructions in English.

In Chapter 24 (opening Part IV), « Grammar and lexis », Doris Schönefeld shows that the view one takes of the relationship between grammar and the lexicon has profound theoretical

implications across frameworks of (English) grammar. In generative models, a modularity hypothesis is adopted whereby both are seen as clearly distinct. This view becomes more relaxed and continuum-based when moving on to functionalist frameworks; even more so in usage-based frameworks informed by progress in corpus linguistics.

In Chapter 25, Sam Hellmuth and Ian Cushing challenge the separation between phonology and « grammar » understood in this handbook as morphosyntax, insofar as morphosyntactic theory informs phonological theory and vice-versa, for instance when investigating the status of phonology and syntax as autonomous or grounded. Following an overview of word- and sentence-level phenomena that take place at the interface of phonology and morphosyntax across varieties of English, and a discussion of the role of phonological properties in English word-class categorization, the authors show two examples of how phonology can be integrated in a theory of grammar.

In Chapter 26, « Grammar and meaning », Ash Asudeh assesses the position and role of lexical semantics, compositional semantics, and pragmatics with respect to grammar. The field of lexical semantics leads one to consider topics such as lexical relations including synonymy and antonymy, as well as argument structure at the lexicon-grammar interface. Influential approaches in compositional semantics include model theory, type theory, interpretive composition, and parallel composition. Pragmatics is then presented as a field that has emerged from the study of speech acts (Austin) and implicature (Grice). Finally, the author mentions several phenomena challenging the boundary between grammar and meaning.

In Chapter 27, « Grammar and discourse », Jill Bowie and Gergana Popova consider the regularities of language found beyond the level of the sentence, i.e. in discourse, and how these should be related to grammar and grammatical models. The authors examine the interaction between grammar and text coherence ; they also review strands of research on grammar and spoken discourse, and discuss issues in the delimitation of grammatical units as well as clause fragments in dialogue, showing that the boundary between grammar and discourse remains unclear. Finally, there are reasons to view grammar and discourse as shaping each other in a mutual, dynamic relation.

In Chapter 28 (opening Part V), « Change in grammar », Marianne Hundt examines approaches to the study of morphosyntactic change in the history of English, which evolved from a more analytical to a more synthetic language today. While formal and generative frameworks usually view change as abrupt or ‘catastrophic’, cognitive and functional approaches postulate it as gradual, stepwise, and incremental. The author then provides a detailed case study of diachronic mood and modality in English. The specific processes of ‘syntactic demise’ and ‘grammatical revival’ are also discussed.

In Chapter 29, « Regional varieties of English », Peter Siemund focuses on non-standard grammatical features present in regional varieties of English, and argues for a cross-linguistic and typological approach to these phenomena, which implies the exploration of the patterns and limits of language variation, as well as the language universals they might reveal. Closer attention is brought to specific grammatical subsystems including pronouns, tense and aspect, negation , subject-verb agreement, and clause structure across varieties of inner circle English.

In Chapter 30, « Global variation in the Anglophone world », Bernd Kortmann also examines morphosyntactic variation from a cross-linguistic and typological perspective, although the focus this time is on varieties of World Englishes. Following the exhibition of various patterns of morphosyntactic variation across the Anglophone world, the author extracts the most widespread

features shared by these varieties, known as ‘angloversals’. Moreover, it is shown that varieties cluster into variety types and regional types, which feature higher degrees of morphosyntactic similarity in the form of ‘varioversals’ and ‘aeroversals’ respectively. Finally, the hypothesis of a Standard American-based World system of Englishes is critically discussed.

In Chapter 32, « Genre variation », Heidrun Dorgeloh and Anja Wanner give an overview of how speakers adapt their language according to the various situations they are in. The chapter begins with a survey of research traditions in the study of genre variation ; the effect of medium on genre is then examined through the examples of grammatical features of spoken and written English. Special attention is brought to the impact of evolving text types and the digital media on genre variation.

In Chapter 33, « Literary variation », Lesley Jeffries examines several ways in which grammar varies in literature. The author provides an introduction to the field of stylistics, one of the questions it explores being whether literary language fundamentally differs from everyday language; corpus methods have also enabled the emergence of the subfield of corpus stylistics. The use of non-standard forms in literature introduces theoretical issues such as the representation of regional and social varieties, of spoken and informal language, and of cognitive patterns through experimental ‘ungrammaticality’ in literature. The final section focuses on grammatical variation as a source of literary creativity and effect.

## EVALUATION

The Oxford Handbook of English Grammar is massive: not only in sheer physical size and length (and weight!), but also in its array of topics, and its ambitions to produce a complete critical introduction to theoretical linguistics through the case study of English. Reading the book from beginning to end as I did is probably not the easiest and most productive approach to adopt in this case; as with other volumes in the Oxford Handbook series, the editors and authors offer an encyclopedia of knowledge that one can dip in and out of, about a topic so extensively studied that the resulting scope is more than justified. In fact, they could probably have got away with even more.

Overall, this handbook is excellent and will be a useful addition to the library of theoretical linguists and linguists of English alike. The theoretical neutrality inherent to the volume deserves particular praise, since it was bound to call for a survey of at least the most salient theories of grammar out in the wild, a challenge which is successfully met in Part II, “Approaches to English Grammar”. More generally, the diversity of all the contributions to the book is appealing and stimulating: it evokes the idea of a wide, collective investigation into the nature of linguistics and the English language, rather than a list of exclusive projects or “schools” cut off from one another. There is also a well-maintained balance between very traditional topics in the field, such as the nature of the relationship between syntax and other levels of grammar, and more recent ones, such as the emergence of modern and plural methods bringing linguistic research closer to interfaces with other disciplines of (social) science.

The accessibility of this handbook and its contents is also a decisive advantage. Most chapters are clear and concise, both as introductions for beginners or scholars from other subdomains of research, and as freshly updated syntheses for more experienced specialists. This makes the book useful for a wide readership spanning many backgrounds, although to be sure, those who will most directly benefit from it will typically be undergraduate, postgraduate, and PhD students. A couple of chapters here and there may seem a little less tightly knit than others, as they enumerate a number of phenomena and take the risk of resembling chapters of descriptive grammars, which

was what the editors precisely wanted to avoid. But this is a minor aspect that is not necessarily problematic, as these chapters are still guaranteed to constitute updated summaries of what is known and consensual in the field.

Despite its impressive size and scope, this handbook cannot be taken as exhaustive, and of course it does not make that claim. Rather, it is an introductory tool with gateways into specific topics that are contextualised and related to others. It is important that linguists specialising in a given domain should know the essentials of other disciplines that their colleagues are working on; crucially, it is an attitude of open curiosity that is encouraged in this volume, with appropriate references given to readers who would like to delve deeper.

In sum, *The Oxford Handbook of English Grammar* is a welcome contribution to the literature, a successful introduction to many rich subjects, and both a substantial and pleasant read.