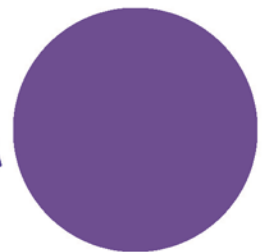


Paula Rodríguez-Abruñeiras
Jesús Romero Barranco

Long Story Short

An Interactive Journey Through the History of English



Working with Words: English Linguistics Series

Series Editors

Miguel Fuster-Márquez, Barry Pennock-Speck & Antonia Sánchez

This series is conceived as a set of practical introductory textbooks associated with English Linguistics. The books in this series are especially suitable for undergraduate students in English Degree programmes in institutions where English is a foreign language. All textbooks in this series have been written by scholars from the University of Valencia and cover the full range of core English subjects taught at most universities. But apart from mainstream linguistics areas like phonology, lexicology, syntax, or the history of the English language we also incorporate neighbouring fields like translation or language acquisition together with other interdisciplinary titles. These materials are designed as helpful guides and present key ideas illustrated with numerous examples. However, they take on board a new approach in higher education in which students are required to play a more active role in their learning. These textbooks offer activities that allow readers to explore different issues on their own. Self-assessment tests are included after each set of activities. Finally, small glossaries with terms used in the texts are also included. These books have been conceived as a starting-point to encourage reflective reading, critical thinking and, hopefully, to enable students or interested readers to carry out further research in each of the disciplines covered by the books in our series.

LONG STORY SHORT:

AN INTERACTIVE JOURNEY
THROUGH THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH

Paula Rodríguez-Abruñeiras & Jesús Romero-Barranco

UNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA

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The beauty (or lack thereof) that comes from linguistic change may be in the eye (better said, in the ear) of the beholder, but language change is not really good or bad; mostly it just is.

(Campbell 1999: 4)

“Yes, I am fond of history”.

“I wish I were too. I read it a little as a duty, but it tells me nothing that does not either vex or weary me. The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all – it is very tiresome”.

Northanger Abbey (1803), by Jane Austen

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This textbook intends to do a clear, informal review of the history of the English language. Although the main focus is not to provide a thorough social description of the different periods in which the history of English is divided, we want to make it clear that language has changed because it is used by society, and therefore one cannot be understood without the other.

Over the past few decades, scholars all around the world have noticed that students have little interest in highly theoretical explanations on past stages of the English language (see Ritt 1999: 8 and Fernández-Cuesta and Senra-Silva 2001). On top of being rather theoretical and abstract, other reasons may contribute to the consideration of HEL (History of the English Language) as hell on the part of our students. First, its wide chronological scope, as we usually cover from Old English or even Indo-European up to Modern English or Present-day English. Second, its interdisciplinary reach, as we need to deal with aspects related to syntax, morphology, lexis, semantics, phonology, literature, and culture, among others. And all this in barely four months! As a result, it comes as no surprise that some of our students regard the subject as *awesome*, but in the original meaning of the word, that is, ‘inspiring awe; appalling, dreadful, weird’ (*Oxford English Dictionary*, *awesome*, adj., 2; cf. Hayes and Burkette 2017: 1). However, discovering the history of any language may be a rewarding, enlightening and amusing process, and we would like to transmit this to our students. It is precisely in this spirit that this textbook has been written. We hope this interactive proposal is more in tune with 21st-century students.

At the same time, we would also like to celebrate those women who are usually silenced when the past is told and who found ways to outmanoeuvre social or cultural norms. Although it is beyond the scope of this book to discuss in depth the role of women in society, most chapters provide some key notions on how women were regarded or how some of them made themselves visible in a male-dominant world. Unfortunately, the stories of many women will remain untold.

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