

Book review

Bejan Camelia. 2017. *English words: structure, origin and meaning. A linguistic introduction*. New York: Addleton Academic Publishers, 233 pag., ISBN: 978-1-942585-36-7. eISBN: 978- 1-942585-37-4.

Most textbooks on word study either propose an overview of the main word formation processes in the English language, within the framework of lexical morphology (Bauer 2002, Plag 2003, Harley 2006, among others), or deal with the syntagmatic relations of synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, polysemy, etc. from the perspective of lexical semantics (Cruse 2000, Lipka 2002, Murphy 2003, etc.).

Camelia Bejan's book brings the two approaches together, in an attempt to give readers an overview of the formation, structure and meaning of the lexical units in the vocabulary of the English language and contributes the etymological component. The goal of this book is to help readers understand the synchronic and diachronic factors that have shaped the lexicon of modern English.

Summary

The book is organized in three chapters dealing with: word-building processes, word history and word meaning, further subdivided into several sections.

Chapter 1 discusses both major and minor word-building processes in English. The author provides an overview of affixational and compounding patterns. It is shown that both derived words and compounds have an internal structure that may be visually represented in the form of tree diagrams. Compounds are classified and further analysed as endocentric or exocentric. Then the focus is on more specialized word-formation types such as clipping, conversion, blending, back-derivation, stress change, eponymy, reanalysis, reduplication and highlights issues related to the productivity of word-formation processes and supplies information concerning online resources for study.

Chapter 2 addresses the main issues concerning word origins, the wide variety of loan words in the English language, and the creation of neologisms. The author mentions the major stages in the shaping of the English word-stock which consists of the core vocabulary of Germanic origin, namely the commonest and most basic words used in English today, and loan-words that were adopted throughout the centuries. Borrowing accounts for the noteworthy diversity of the etymological sources of the present-day English vocabulary.

The modern English vocabulary reflects not only the effects of significant borrowing but also the process of new word-formation. The author considers

the ways in which, using the internal resources of the language, speakers are able to produce an indefinitely large number of new words, that are either transient, as nonce-words, or make their way into the dictionaries, as established neologisms.

The diachronic view of the vocabulary provides answers to questions about the etymological diversity of the modern English lexicon.

Chapter 3 is concerned with various approaches to word meaning and to the semantic relations that a lexical item contracts with other lexical items. The priority is given to the syntagmatic sense relationships established in collocational patterns and idiomatic expressions. The emphasis then shifts to the diverse and complex paradigmatic sense relationships of hyponymy, synonymy, antonymy, homonymy, polysemy, and so on. The chapter also explores lexical fields and the componential analysis of meaning. In the final section the author deals with dictionaries, as the ultimate word-books that supply the readership with essential information concerning word meaning and usage.

Critical evaluation

This book evinces a distinctive feature that makes it appealing to its reading audience – the pedagogical rigour.

First of all, it stands out as a clearly presented, and well-organized introduction to English lexicology. The theoretical accounts are supported by numerous illustrative examples. Each chapter ends with a summary and each section is followed by suggestions for further reading, aimed at extending knowledge or deepening the focus of study. The book is also given pedagogical rigor by the inclusion of exercises, a glossary of terms, and an answer key section. The volume is completed by a substantial and up-to-date reference section.

Secondly, its pedagogical value resides not only in its reader-friendly terminology and concise style, but also in its informative content. The readers gain an overall view of the main theoretical issues related to word formation, origin and meaning. Though not written in the perspective of a particular theoretical framework, the book draws on insights from various research traditions. In selecting the informative content for each chapter, the author's emphasis is on clarifying terminology and putting it to practice in the analysis of language facts.

Thirdly, the author's goals are aimed at increasing readers' awareness of the structure and meaning of the lexical items belonging to the English word stock and at developing their language skills. The author constantly guides the

readers through suggestions for further reading that direct their attention to the main bibliographical sources for the linguistic topic under consideration.

Study assignments are clearly devised and allow easy self-checking of the knowledge acquired. The tasks are varied and they require the use of modern technologies to explore the lexicon of English, such as online dictionaries of various types, including: *Online Etymology Dictionary* (2004), Quinion's (2002) on-line dictionary of affixes, the electronic thesaurus *WordNet*, and its extension *VisuWords*, the online *Abbreviations and Acronym Finder*, etc. and language corpora.

The ability to draw information from a wide range of general or specialized dictionaries, as well as all available corpora of the English language, is required for professionals working as English teachers, interpreters, or translators.

Though brevity and clarity are the main features of theoretical presentations in an introductory textbook, accounts of the social and political events that affected the vocabulary of the English language are necessary for a better understanding of how the English lexicon evolved. Our suggestion is that, in a revised version of this book, the author should provide more detailed accounts of the social and political events that have brought about the changes in the language. These additions to chapter two would greatly help readers understand the interplay of internally and externally motivated language changes.

Conclusion

Overall, this is a clearly written and neatly organized book, accessible to both advanced undergraduates and readers interested in a concise treatment of English lexicology. We recommend it as a well-designed textbook for a course on word-formation, origin and meaning, as a convenient source-book for pre-university teachers of English, and as an up-to-date reference concerning selected lexicological topics in English for a more general readership.

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