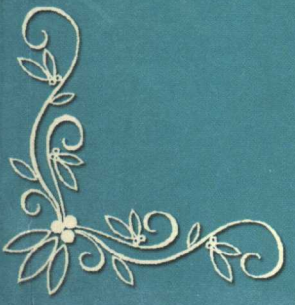




新编英语词汇学引论

An Introduction To English Lexicology
New Edition

秦建栋 ◆ 编著



山西出版集团
山西人民出版社

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秦建栋，1956年生，苏州市人，1982年江苏师范学院外语系本科毕业，1985年苏州大学外语系研究生毕业，1985年至1987年苏州大学外语系教师，1987年至2002年苏州铁道师范学院外语系副教授，2002年至今苏州科技学院外国语学院副教授。研究方向是英语词汇学、英语语法学和英语教学理论。迄今已出版《现代英语词汇学》、《大学英语语法》（副主编）等著作，在各级外语刊物和高校学报上发表专业论文三十余篇。

Preface

In the recent years increasing numbers of colleges and universities in China have offered the course of English lexicology. This book is meant as a guide book in English lexicology and is intended for third- or fourth-year college students who would like to know more about the way the English vocabulary works. This book aims at helping the students to summarize what they have learned and acquire a systematic knowledge of English vocabulary so that they can enlarge their personal vocabularies and improve their ability to analyze and use English words and phrases.

This book deals with various topics in English lexicology. It begins with an introduction of the origin and growth of the English vocabulary, then classifies morphological structures, the major and minor processes of word-formation, analyzes word meanings and their semantic changes in the course of historical development, studies the meaning relations between lexical items such as synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, semantic field and collocation, probes into lexical gaps and idioms in English and finally investigates the characteristics

and history of American English vocabulary.

The book is based on the course of lectures in English lexicology delivered by the author for quite a few years at the Department of Foreign Languages in Suzhou University of Science and Technology. In the course of writing this book, the author refers to a fairly large number of publications on the subject of lexicology. His indebtedness to various books and papers will be readily perceived from the bibliography at the end of the book.

Qin Jian-dong

Suzhou University of Science and Technology

Oct. 15, 2006

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Chapter One

A General Survey of English Vocabulary

I. Definition of a Word

What is a word? The definition of a word has engaged the attention of philosophers and linguists for ages. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle defined a word as “the smallest significant unit of speech”, a definition traditionally accepted for centuries. But modern linguists have discovered that the smallest meaningful unit of speech is not a word, but a morpheme. A word may consist of one or more than one morpheme, e. g. “*antiestablishment*”, which contains three morphemes.

The American linguist L. Bloomfield defines a word as “a minimum free form” in his *Language* published in 1933. He distinguishes between two types of linguistic form: free forms and bound forms. A free form is one which can occur as a separate word while a bound form is one which cannot exist on its own as a separate word. Take “*antiestablishment*” for example. It contains a free form or morpheme “*establish*” and

two bound forms or morphemes “*anti-*” and “*-ment*”. The former can be used independently as a word while the latter cannot appear in isolation, but must attach themselves to the free form or morpheme “*establish*”.

The French linguist A. Meillet gives his definition as follows: “A word is defined by the association of a given meaning, with a given group of sounds susceptible of a given grammatical employment.” (Lin Fu-mei 1985: 16-17) This definition shows a unity of meaning and sound with special emphasis on the word function in the grammatical structure.

To put the two above definitions by Bloomfield and Meillet together, we may define a word as an independent lexical unit and a minimum free form; with a unity of sound and meaning (both lexical and grammatical), capable of performing a given grammatical function. A word may act as a complete utterance, as in exclamation “*Liar!*”, “*Help!*” and in replies such as “*Tom*” in answer to the question “*What is his name?*” or “*Five*” to the question “*How old is he?*”. But more frequently a word is used as a part of a sentence (subject, predicate verb, object and etc.).

Words may also be defined in phonological and orthographical terms. Phonologically, a spoken word is a phoneme or combination of phonemes, marked by a given position of stress. Orthographically, a written word is a printed symbol, with a space on either side of it but none within it, with the exception of compounds either hyphenated or written open

like “*air-blower*” and “*air base*”.

Lexicology may be defined as the study of lexis, understood as the stock of words in a given language, i. e. its vocabulary or lexicon (from Greek lexis, “word”, lexikos, “of or for words”). A comparison of the words “vocabulary”, “lexis”, and “lexicon” would show that the three items may be considered more or less synonymous. However, it must be added that the first is more colloquial, the third more learned and technical, and the second may be situated half-way between the other two.

II. The Growing English Vocabulary

This part makes a general survey of the historical development of the English vocabulary.

1. A Historical Review of English Vocabulary

Down through the ages, English has borrowed vast amount of foreign words, which makes the English word stock extremely rich and heterogeneous. A historical review of English vocabulary will be quite informative.

A. The Period of Old English (450-1100)

Before about 450 A. D. there was no English language in Britain. Britain was then inhabited by the Celts, who had dwelt there for centuries. They spoke a language which was an ancestor of modern Welsh and the Gaelic of Ireland and Scotland. In 55 B. C., Julius Caesar led the first Roman invasion of the island. By the end of the first century A. D., the conquest