

Heming Yong and Jing Peng. *A Sociolinguistic History of British English Lexicography*. 2022, xiii + 254 pages. ISBN 978-1-032-02467-7 (Hardback), ISBN 978-1-032-02468-4 (Paperback), ISBN 978-1-003-18347-1 (eBook). London/New York: Routledge. Price \$130.00 (Hardback), Price \$38.99 (Paperback), Price \$35.09 (eBook).

The most striking feature of this book lies not in its diachronic and synchronic enquiry into British English lexicography, but in its adoption of a sociolinguistic perspective which complements the sole dictionary-ontology paradigm in dictionary history research. This volume traces the history of British English lexicography — from its Latin origin before the 16th century to the end of the 20th century — against the backdrop of sociocultural dynamics such as foreign invasion and rule, English language evolution, development of modern linguistics, sociocultural progression, and scientific and technological advancements. It is composed of an introduction section and seven chapters. In the introduction, Yong and Peng first provide the reader with a concise yet informative synopsis of the four paradigms in the evolution of British English lexicography, i.e., prescriptivism, historicism, descriptivism and cognitivism. Then, several key research gaps in previous diachronic studies are identified. In order to address these gaps, they propose their methodology, approaches and historical segmentation of British English lexicography.

Chapter One deals with the embryonic stage of British English lexicography prior to the 16th century, laying a solid foundation of linguistic data for future English monolingual/bilingual dictionary-making. Before touching upon the Latin origin of English lexicography and its lexicographical culture, the authors describe how the English language with its roots in Anglo-Frisian dialects had evolved from Old English to Middle English and how sociocultural factors such as the Roman Invasion, the Anglo-Saxon Invasion, Christianity, the Scandinavian occupation and rule, the Norman Conquest, printing technology, and British overseas colonisation, contributed to it. The authors move on to explicate how English lexicographical culture originated from the annotations of hard-word Latin glossaries compiled at the end of the 7th century and the start of the 8th century by tracing back to Ancient Greek and Roman lexicographical traditions. Afterward, they confirm that English lexicography was born with the annotations collected from Latin glossaries by monks and school masters to meet religious demand. The glossaries and bilingual dictionaries with educational and scholarly values are believed to be the primary achievement in English dictionary-making at this stage. At the end of this chapter, they argue that the four classic English–Latin or Latin–English bilingual dictionaries in the 15th century had already indicated a tendency of English lexicography towards its localisation and nationalisation.

Chapter Two centres on the early development of English bilingual dictionary-making and how it started to deviate from the Latin traditions in the 16th century. The authors largely ascribe the preliminary transition of English

lexicography, from Latin traditions to its localisation and nationalisation, to the ever-growing national awareness and the higher status of English language in British society. The economic, sociopolitical, linguistic and cultural events that facilitate this shift are adequately illustrated, including export-oriented economy and overseas colonial expansion, the English Reformation and strengthened state sovereignty, early modern English and the elevated status of the English language, and humanism and Renaissance in Britain. In view of this, the 16th century witnessed a relatively independent development of English lexicography with some of its own innovations. Although Latin–English dictionaries still dominated English lexicography in the first half of the 16th century, dictionaries with English as lemmas gained great momentum in the latter part of the 16th century. The functions of English dictionaries had transformed from basically explaining hard words to providing multiple functions by incorporating diversified lexicographical information. The authors consider the English bilingual dictionaries of the 16th century as necessary preconditions for compiling English monolingual dictionaries in the 17th century.

Chapter Three depicts the rapid growth in English monolingual dictionaries, the fading of hard-word traditions as well as the innovations of bilingual dictionary-making in the 17th century. The sociopolitical background is introduced at length, including the establishment of the East India Company, settlements in North America, the English Civil Wars, the Glorious Revolution, the population boom, promotion of elementary and higher education, and the founding of the Royal Society. At this stage, English had gradually become an international language; the Renaissance was reaching its peak with prominent cultural, scientific and technological advancements. Meanwhile, as the national awareness of the English language was increasingly heightened, heated controversies and discussions arose over its standardisation. Subsequently, dictionary compilation assumed the role of ensuring linguistic norms and purity, which naturally gave impetus to the burgeoning of English monolingual dictionaries. *A Table Alphabeticall* was regarded as the first English monolingual dictionary in the history of English lexicography. It was a hard-word dictionary compiled by Robert Cawdrey and published in 1604. The hard-word traditions of English monolingual lexicography gradually faded away with the closing of monolingual dictionary-making in the 17th century. In contrast, English bilingual lexicography made a great leap towards innovative compiling techniques such as providing explanatory notes, bidirectional configuration, lists of homophones, and a variety of appendixes. The social and academic values of English dictionaries in the 17th century are also discussed in relation to dictionary type, design features and linguistic purism.

Chapter Four ushers English lexicography into the stage of a prescriptive paradigm with the termination of hard-word traditions in the 17th and 18th centuries. The influential sociocultural factors contributing to the shaping of the English language and English lexicography in the 18th century are described in detail, for instance, the Industrial Revolution, the world's first English daily,

the first modern English novel, the establishment of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, Protestantism, and the American War of Independence. In 1664, the Royal Society passed a resolution to set up the English Reformation Committee coping with English standardisation and codification; the nationally unified writing system had been adopted step by step propelled by language-inherent motivations and social impetuses. The authors maintain that printing technology, industrialisation, public literacy, the mass media and publishing industry played an irreplaceable role in promoting and establishing language norms. Driven by linguistic purism, normalisation and prescription, dictionary compilers had to take linguistic standardisation and codification as their top priority in response to the more diversified user demands on authoritative reference works. Thus, English dictionary-making began to shift from a compiler-centred hard-word tradition to a more market-oriented fashion. In this sense, Samuel Johnson's monumental *A Dictionary of the English Language* published in 1755 is a direct outcome and reflection of the pressing need for national language standards. More importantly, it is also a typical showcase of descriptivism established as a paradigm in the history of British English lexicography. Johnson's success was further analysed with a reference to his *Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language* (1747) and the preface of his dictionary. However, the defects and mistakes in his dictionary with respect to headword selection, etymological information, definition, pronunciation, citation, spelling etc. are also mentioned. Other significant English monolingual dictionaries adhering to prescriptivism in the 18th century are furthermore covered and evaluated. The authors close this chapter with the humanistic and academic values of English monolingual, bilingual and other types of dictionaries in the 18th century.

Chapter Five explores the part that European philological traditions played in the creation of a historical paradigm of English dictionary-making in the 19th century. Overall, profound social transformations, economic prosperity and the fast pace of scientific and technological innovations took place in Britain, for example, the First and Second Industrial Revolution, its monopoly status in international trade, the strengthened sociopolitical privilege of the bourgeois class, the founding of the Philological Society of London, and the publication of *The Origin of Species* (1859). In this period, the transformations in British ideology and the progress of science and technology led to a considerable expansion of the English vocabulary. However, no significant changes arose in the pronunciation, grammar, or structure of English. Along with the expansion of the British Empire, English had gradually spread to almost every corner of the globe. As a result, regional varieties of English gradually emerged in different parts of the world. In the meanwhile, English standardisation and the linguistic purity movement did not come to an end. The Philological Society of London was established in 1842 to "investigate and promote the study of and knowledge of the structure, the affinities, and the history of languages" (p. 124). In Yong and Peng's words, it "played a key role in formulating the compiling notions of OED (*Oxford English Dictionary*) and the sophisticated plan for making

its compilation and publication possible" (p. 135). The proposals for and publication of OED (originally titled NED, *A New English Dictionary*) proclaimed the birth and successful implementation of the historical paradigm in English dictionary-making. The initiatives and the practice of compiling a dictionary based on historical principles by the Philological Society were directly linked with the European philological traditions of a historical and comparative paradigm in the study of language origin and families, which broadened the theoretical visions and academic foundation for English lexicography. Although descriptive elements can be found in Johnson's plan for making his dictionary, his masterpiece is prescriptive by nature. Yong and Peng reckon that historical descriptivism lies at the core of the compiling principles of the OED, which indicates the transition of English lexicography from prescriptivism to descriptivism in the 19th century. The authors assert that the academic significance and sociocultural values of the OED have gone far beyond its values as a cultural product, but also "as an icon of scholarship [...] a signifier of British civilisation and a symbol of national identity" (p. 159). The traditional inheritance and theoretical innovations of other major British English dictionaries in the 19th century are also discussed.

Chapters Six and Seven come to the descriptive and cognitive stage of British English lexicography, with a summary of the accomplishments, developments and prospects in the 21st century. The 20th century saw two world wars, the declining of British power, the rise of the United States, English as an international lingua franca, radical sociopolitical transformations, a striking advancement of science and technology, etc. The breakthroughs in computers, information processing and internet technology made possible the application of databases and corpora for dictionary compilation. The dictionary is a carrier of language and culture, a mirror of human communication and language evolution, and a document of the trajectory of civilisation advancement (p. 161). The prosperity of the 20th century English lexicography drew immensely on the emerging new disciplines such as modern linguistics, cognitive science, information science and technologies of the computer and internet in terms of theoretical underpinning and methodological support. The incorporation of information technology into dictionary-making has led to a revolution in the ways of data collection, processing, retrieval, storage, transmission etc. According to Yong and Peng, the pioneering lexicographical works that employed corpora in dictionary-making were *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1978) and *Collins COBUILD Dictionary of the English Language* (1987). As the flourishing of new linguistic theories, there was a noticeable transition "from the diachronic and comparative description of language to its structural description and from structuralism [...] to cognitivism" (p. 168). It is modern linguistics such as semantics, pragmatics, stylistics, structural linguistics, descriptive linguistics and cognitive linguistics that made the 20th century English dictionaries unusual and characteristic from previous stages. This is especially true of English learner's dictionaries with regard to compiling techniques, defining modes,

structural organisation and other design features. The authors claim that early learner's dictionaries had an evident impact on headword selection, phonetic notation, definition and usage explanation in subsequent philological dictionaries; in the second half of the 20th century, some features such as usage notes and synonym discrimination in English philological dictionaries were modelled on the design of learner's dictionaries. The English learner's dictionaries had gone through three generations of evolution by 1989. The period from 1978 to and after 1995 was an era of the thriving development of the British learner's dictionary family, and "the Big Four" in 1995 was expanded to "the Big Five" with the publication of *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* in 2002. At this stage, the cognitive idea of user-friendly was taken as an essential principle in the designing and compiling of learner's dictionaries so as to earn a competitive edge in the world market. "The Big Five", together with their bilingualised versions, served as the essential reference toolkit for English learners and teachers worldwide. As for the development of British philological dictionaries in the 20th century, OED is again recognised as an unparalleled representative of this type. Other dictionary types such as electronic and online dictionaries, pronouncing dictionaries, dialect dictionaries, slang dictionaries, dictionaries of etymology and usage, thesauruses, encyclopaedic dictionaries, dictionaries of new words, and quotation dictionaries are also investigated.

To some extent, two key words in the title of this volume — "sociolinguistic" and "British" — can distinguish itself from previous works such as *The Oxford History of English Lexicography* (2009) and *The Lexicography of English: From Origins to Present* (2010). First of all, it narrows its focus of enquiry down to British English lexicography rather than the lexicography of world Englishes, though the authors relate it to European and world lexicographical culture when the need arises. Secondly, its greatest innovation lies in incorporating the sociolinguistic perspective into the traditional dictionary-ontology paradigm of diachronic English lexicography, in an attempt to truly represent the interactions between sociocultural dynamics and British English dictionary-making. Thirdly, a trinocular perspective, which integrates the dictionary, its compiler, and its user, is employed to examine the evolution of lexicographical works to overcome compiler-centric limitations. Fourthly, the separate individual case study of English dictionaries and its theorisation are reviewed and refined in the holistic evolution of British English lexicography under a more coherent and unified sociolinguistic framework. Fifthly, a five-stage segmentation of British English lexicography is presented, based on the "regularities and distinctive features" (p. 8) in the evolution of English dictionary-making and previous relevant findings.

Admittedly, aside from the merits mentioned above, the book still has some room to achieve perfection. Chapter Six seems to end somewhat abruptly without providing a due section of the significance and values of the 20th century British English dictionaries as previous chapters do. While contending that descriptivism and cognitivism as paradigms are prevailing in English dictionary-

making in the 20th century and beyond, the authors fail to elaborate them in length in Chapter Six. Albeit, the readers can find some relevant account of the two paradigms scattered in the concluding Chapter Seven.

All things considered, this is probably the first volume on the history of British English lexicography adopting both sociolinguistic and lexicographical perspectives. It portrays a vivid, holistic and dynamic picture of how the paradigms of British English lexicography have developed from its earliest roots to prescriptive, historical, descriptive and eventually cognitive approaches in relation to the sociocultural momentum in British society. This volume will serve as a valuable resource for students and academics of English lexicography and English linguistics.

Acknowledgments

This study was supported by a grant from the National Philosophy and Social Sciences Foundation of China (Grant No. 22BYY010).

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