

Jackson, Howard (ed.) (2013) *The Bloomsbury Companion to Lexicography*. London: Bloomsbury. Pp. xiii + 420.

Reviewed by Mark Kaunisto

Dictionaries have a long history, but the scholarly, analytical interest in them has notably increased in the last fifty years or so. The developments in mass communication in the twentieth century brought about new needs for different types of dictionaries, and new practices and methods in dictionary-making, both in terms of compilation and presentation of information, have been introduced. In the last thirty years, the digital revolution and the Internet have only increased the calls for innovations in the field. Today, even a layperson may be able to appreciate the rapid developments in lexicography: we can now have dictionary or translation tool applications in our smart phones and other specialized gadgets, and accuracy and user-friendliness are key elements in launching successful new lexicographic products. Publishers have become better aware of how dictionaries are typically used, who use them, what kinds of new target groups have emerged, and how to determine the cost-efficiency of different types of potential dictionary projects.

The changing face of lexicography is also reflected in the scholarly books with the aim to describe how lexicography has evolved, what the current challenges are, and where lexicography is likely to be headed in the future. Collections of articles observing the various facets involved in lexicography include books edited by, e.g., van Sterkenburg (2003) and Fontenelle (2008). The notable difference between these works and *The Bloomsbury Companion to Lexicography*, edited by Howard Jackson, is that the very concept of lexicography can be seen as having two different kinds of points of focus: the practical side of dictionary-making, on the one hand, and the study of dictionaries, on the other. As Jackson observes in the introductory chapter of the volume, the terms *practical lexicography* and *metalexicography* could also be used to distinguish between the two approaches (p. 1). *The Bloomsbury Companion to Lexicography* focuses explicitly on the latter approach, i.e., the study of dictionaries, involving not only observations on their history, typology, compilation, and design, but also questions such as feedback and criticism of dictionaries, pedagogical interests in lexicography, and the use of dictionaries. However,

it does seem that even though the two main approaches into lexicography can be distinguished, there is inevitable and understandable overlap between the two, as questions such as macrostructure and microstructure of dictionaries and headword selection are considered in both approaches. It may be simpler to observe that books on *practical lexicography* are generally more instructive as regards their overall character, and their readership contains more people involved or looking to be involved in actual dictionary-making. One wonders whether *metalexicography* as a term will become more firmly established in the future, or whether the more general term *lexicography* will tend to be used even when referring to the study of dictionaries.

The Bloomsbury Companion to Lexicography includes contributions from 23 authors, and the range of topics covered aptly reflects the different viewpoints that are involved in the study of dictionaries. In the introductory chapter (Chapter 1), in addition to discussing the term *lexicography*, Jackson presents a thoughtful and unbiased overview of how lexicography has been described as regards how it stands in relation to other disciplines, mainly (but not exclusively) linguistics and information sciences. Jackson follows this with a description of the structure of the *Companion*, and summaries of each contribution. Instead of presenting only brief summaries, the main points, problems and conclusions of each contribution are described, which will be very useful for readers wanting to find out whether they might be interested in reading the individual contributions in greater detail or not.

The contributions are organized into chapters according to themes. The number of subchapters varies considerably: Paul Bogaards' overview of the history of lexicographic research stands alone as Chapter 2, followed by three subchapters on "Research Methods and Problems" in Chapter 3, as many as ten different contributions on "Current Research and Issues" in Chapter 4, and three contributions on "New Directions in Lexicography" in Chapter 5, before an overview on lexicographic resources, a glossary of terms, and an annotated bibliography (Chapters 6–8). However, the structure serves the overall purpose of the volume well, and it is not to be understood that the number of contributions under each chapter would correspond with the thoroughness of coverage of each main theme. Bogaards' discussion of the history of research into lexicography functions as a useful background for the chapters that follow.

In Chapter 3, Lars Trap-Jensen, Kaoru Akasu and Hilary Nesi discuss in their individual subchapters different viewpoints in the general research

of dictionaries. As regards dictionary criticism (Chapter 3.2), Akasu asks an interesting question: considering the wide variety of purposes that dictionaries have, is it possible to come up with a rigid set of criteria for evaluating them? Although dictionary criticism in general is very likely an area which is clearly outside the realm of practical lexicography, Akasu observes that “a reviewer of dictionaries should have had at least some experience of writing a dictionary before doing a review” (p. 55). While it is noted that the evaluation of dictionaries suffers from a lack of a set of common principles which would promote a more objective methodology in assessing them, Akasu remains rather cautious about the prospects of creating what he terms “a Common Yardstick”. Other interesting questions that ultimately also serve the purposes of dictionary-makers are who actually uses dictionaries and for what purposes – and in Chapter 3.3, Nesi provides an overview on the different research methods (questionnaires, interviews, log files, etc.) used to explore the topic.

Chapter 4 presents a set of ten contributions representing current issues in lexicographic research. The range of topics and general character of the subchapters vary considerably. This has its advantages, but also some drawbacks. On a positive note, one cannot but appreciate the sheer variety of viewpoints covered, from the use of corpora in dictionary-making by Adam Kilgarriff in Chapter 4.1 to the question of whether one can perceive a “theory of lexicography” (by Tadeusz Pietrowski in Chapter 4.10). What is also to be lauded is the avoidance of anglocentrism: in addition to subchapters on bilingual dictionaries, the reader is introduced to the challenges observed in the compilation of dictionaries of African languages (Chapter 4.7 by Danie J. Prinsloo) and sign languages (Chapter 4.8 by Inge Zwitterlood, Jette Hedegaard Kristoffersen and Thomas Troelsgård). For a reader without much previous knowledge in these special fields in lexicography, the variety of concerns as discussed in detail in these chapters is eye-opening and fascinating. On the other hand, one thing that is arguably hard to avoid in edited collections on a common theme in general, but perhaps particularly in collections on lexicology, is the frequent repetition of certain points and themes. For example, the practical difficulties in headword selection, the role of electronic corpora in lexicographic work, and the opportunities with online dictionaries are mentioned in more than one (sub)chapter. However, as noted, some overlap is inevitable. The topics of some contributions are quite close to each other, but because of different viewpoints they tend to complement each other; good cases in point are Chapters 4.4 (by Amy Chi) and 4.5 (by Shigeru

Yamada), both discussing issues involved in the compilation and design of monolingual learners' dictionaries.

One can also perceive some structural and stylistic variation between the contributions, which in general is to be expected and which should not necessarily be regarded in a negative light. Some of the contributions involve in-depth empirical research and presentation of results of data analysis (e.g., the detailed study on the use of electronic dictionaries in Chapter 4.2 by Verónica Pastor and Amparo Alcina), while some other contributions consist of a combination of an overview and critical discussion, as in the case of John Considine's paper on historical lexicography and etymology in Chapter 4.3. Differences between individual styles of writing can also be observed, with some authors not shying away from using the first-person pronoun while others prefer the use of passive constructions. However, the occasional shift in style from one contribution to another does not have a drastic effect on the overall reading experience. If anything, the stylistic variety is refreshing when observed.

The future of lexicography is considered from different viewpoints in Chapter 5. Not surprisingly, the emphasis is on electronic and online dictionaries, the production of which involves a whole new set of challenges. In Chapter 5.2, Charlotte Brewer brings us up to date about the development of the Online OED. As Brewer observes, the earlier history of the *Oxford English Dictionary* is still very much present in the OED today as the creation of the third edition of the dictionary is an ongoing project, with revisions and new entries being added every three months. The frequent updates understandably have an effect on the actual use of the online version of the dictionary, and these practical considerations are described clearly and in detail. Sandro Nielsen finally wraps up the discussion on the future of lexicography in Chapter 5.3. It is observed that there are a number of things that are about to change as regards the form, size, and scope of dictionaries, but more importantly, significant changes will probably be seen in how people will view them, and Nielsen outlines ways in which lexicographers could respond to the changing requirements from dictionary users in the future.

To further strengthen the idea of providing a comprehensive picture of the current state of lexicography, Chapter 6 (by Reinhard Hartmann) includes useful listings of the most important lexicographic resources today, including lexicographic associations, the major corpora and databases available, lexicographic journals and publishers. Appropriately

placed towards the end of the book and followed by a glossary by Barbara Ann Kipfer (Chapter 7) and an annotated bibliography by Howard Jackson (Chapter 8), the final chapters help to make the *Companion* a useful book to refer back to.

All in all, the wealth of different perspectives that the *Companion* offers to its readers is impressive. Although many of the state-of-the-art observations and presentations made in the volume will undoubtedly at some point in time seem outdated because of the great state of flux that we find lexicography currently in, the picture that the collection presents of the overall situation of lexicography today appears comprehensive and accurate. The volume is generally beautifully edited and organized. Each (sub)chapter begins with a neat and helpful table presenting the structure of the contribution, with page numbers directing the reader to different sections of the chapter. One point of criticism that can be mentioned is that in some chapters some of the figures with computer screen shots can be a little difficult to read.

References

- Fontenelle, Thierry (ed.) (2008) *Practical Lexicography: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Van Sterkenburg, Piet (ed.) (2003) *A Practical Guide to Lexicography*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

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