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English Dictionaries

A Linguistic Introduction

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and
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with the assistance of
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Preface

The purpose of the present volume is to introduce the reader to the world of English dictionaries. Dictionaries, along with grammars, are the most important tools for foreign language learners and indeed everybody who professionally deals with language. From the linguistic point of view they are fascinating because many aspects of the description of language are also dealt with in dictionaries. In that sense, an introduction to English dictionaries is also an introduction to many linguistic properties of the English language itself, which is why the present volume has the subtitle “A linguistic introduction”. The topic is therefore well-suited for exploration by foreign language students of English at university level and the present book will be useful as a basic text for seminars at intermediate to advanced level. A wealth of bibliographic references will enable students to go beyond the present introduction and conduct their own research.

However, English dictionaries are not only fascinating records of the English language; they are also practical tools which are meant to serve the users in the best possible way in their concrete reference needs. Dictionaries must always strike a balance between linguistic soundness of description and serving the needs of the user. This balance is reflected in the theory of lexico-parameters and lexicographic scope first developed in Herbst and Klotz (2003) and adopted here.

In fact, the present volume owes much to our above-mentioned earlier introduction to lexicography, but the text has been fundamentally reworked in several ways. Firstly, the book is now written in English and limits itself to English and English-German dictionaries making it more suitable to be used in English departments at German universities. Secondly, the chapters have been rearranged and in most cases also fundamentally rewritten. Thirdly, current editions of dictionaries as well as up-to-date research literature has been worked into the text.

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Michael Klotz and Thomas Herbst

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