

Words, Meaning and Vocabulary: An Introduction to Modern English Lexicology (Open Linguistics)

Howard Jackson, Etienne Zé Amvela



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This work goes back to the sources of modern English words and studies the development of vocabulary over time. It examines what constitutes a word, with a discussion of words that look and sound the same, words that have several meanings, and "words" that are made up of more than one "word". As well as considering the borrowing of words from other languages throughout the history of English as a means of increasing the vocabulary, the book also outlines how English forms new words by exploiting the structure of existing words, through processes of derivation and compounding. The meaning of a word is composite of a number of relations: reference to external context, relations with other words of a similar or opposite meaning, collocational relations, and so on. The book grapples with the meaning problem, but then goes on to look at the contexts in which words are used and the purposes for which they are used, raising the question whether it is more sensible to talk about English "vocabularies" rather than English "vocabulary".

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