
Bluhme’s dictionary is conceived according to cultural and linguistic principles about the origin of words and human speech, the relationship between the real world and its perception, between reality and description. The linguistic sign was often analyzed, from the Middle Ages to the present days, as the representation of things and materiality. Modern scholars such as Mayrhofer, Meier and Malkiel took the initiative of constructing scientific etymological studies of the vocabulary; their method supposes finding all the derived terms from an Indo-European root and all words of a certain lexical family. 46 categories make up the semantic field section (WF), every item being classified in one of these groups: there are totally 3800 German words that are registered in Duden and Wahrig, as they are very frequent and well-known (NHD). Out of these 3800 basic words, 1770 are borrowed words, 364 are onomatopoeic; related words are indicated by reference to the basic word: Ob die angegebenen Wörter wirklich mit dem Grundwort verwandt sind, hängt auch davon ab, welches idg. Etymon angenommen wird. (p. 11) The foreign influence on the German vocabulary is mentioned by the identification of the precise source: Dutch (NL, MNL): there are 3323 NL and 2487 MNL correspondences to German words, English (NE) and Old English (AE): 2828 and 2615 etymons, Germanic (GER) 1840 reconstructions, Latin (Lat): 2964 cases, Greek (GR): 2939 words, Slavic (SL): 2105 words, Greek (GR): 2939 words, Slavic (SL): 2105 words, Indo-European: 3438 words, Semitic (SEM): 154 words. The sign “>” means “becomes”, while the sign “<” means “comes from”. A list of abbreviations helps the reader get through the book and understand names and linguistic terms.

In the chapter about the phonology of German, the author provides rules about good writing, the quantity of vowels, groups of consonants. The description of the phonological system supposes historical processes such as the two vowel mutations, the monophthongizing of diphthongs and the diptongizing of long vowels. The genetic relation between words is established according to four criteria: phonetic, morphologic, semantic and contextual. The statistics show that 2964 Latin words, 2939 Greek words and 2105 Slavic words are related to 3800 German basic words. Phonetic and morphologic principles are presented in the introduction: the minimal units in both domains are the morpheme and the phoneme; more than 7 words are onomatopoetic (of these, 351 occur in phrases). The difference between “Fremdwörter” and “Lehnwörter” shows that the former are directly taken from other languages, while the latter undergo adaptations and assimilations to the German language. 2043 words are originally German, while 1757 are borrowed from the basic stock: 416 from Dutch, 299 from Latin, 97 from French, 59 from Italic, 54 from English, 44 from Slavic.
At the internal level of the country, there are 697 items (dialectal phrases) representative for the German regions: Westniederdeutsch, Ostniederdeutsch, Sächsich, Thüringisch, Hessisch, Rheinisch, Pfälzisch, Schwäbisch-Alemanisch, Fränkisch, Bairisch.

The dictionary contains valuable information about the role of etymology: the search for the perfect language, for the right description of the word, for the Garden of Paradise, for the power over all things, as we read in the *Genesis*. Some consider that myth and language were created out of the fear of things, in order to replace the objects through linguistic signs.

A table of abbreviations shows how complex this dictionary is and how many criteria it uses. Moreover the introduction to the book is made up of rules of orthography, of a phonological and morphological description of German, also of lexical division of the German fundamental vocabulary into layers of influences; the author (H.B.) believes that language must be compared to a river: it continually changes waters, but preserves the same course; the duty of a lexicographer is to envisage both aspects: to express present-day words and to demonstrate how they reached the form they now have (through chronological phases of phonological mutations), also how their meaning evolved in time.

This is a very useful book for all those who study German, proposing a thorough and subtle research into the past and the present of this language.

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