Laurie Bauer, Rochelle Lieber & Ingo Plag, *The Oxford Reference Guide to English Morphology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, x + 691 p. ISBN 978-0-19-957926-6.

Reviewed by GEERT BOOIJ

This reference work on English morphology can be qualified as the (for a long time needed) successor to Marchand's famous handbook *The categories and types of present-day English word formation*, of which the second and last edition was published in 1969 (Marchand 1969). The book to be reviewed here, however, has a larger scope, as it does not only deal with word formation but also with inflection. Hence, it is a comprehensive book on English morphology.

The authors of this book are all senior researchers in the domain of English morphology, with an individual track record of important publications on English morphology. So it was a good idea of these authors to work together to produce an authoritative volume on English morphology.

What are the main features of this book compared to Marchand's book? First of all, it incorporates the results of decades on research on English morphology since the 1960's. Second, it is based on huge corpora, of a size that was unthinkable in the time that Marchand wrote his book. The main corpus used are COCA (the Corpus of Contemporary American English), the British National corpus, CELEX, and the Google Book Corpus. In addition, various dictionaries and reverse dictionaries were used. Many examples of complex words are given in context, in sentences from these corpora, which makes it much easier to understand the meaning and use of such complex words that are often not registered in dictionaries.

Another feature, strongly related to the first one, is that the authors show time and again that generalizations and restrictive hypotheses on English morphology, as they appear in the linguistic literature, are not true, or only partially correct. For instance, they show that

word formation based on phrases is far more common that usually believed or accepted. An example is the derivation of nouns in *-er* from phrases, such as *do-gooder*, *no hoper*, *spoken-worder* and *all-nighter*. This critical approach of constraints and generalizations is possible because of this heavy reliance on huge corpora as databases. In the set of criticized claims they include their own claims made in the past as individual authors (for instance, on p. 318, 340 and 471), a very laudable scientific attitude of the authors. Another illustration of this importance of the richness of one's empirical base is the discussion of conversion in Chapter 13. It has often been claimed in the literature that suffixed nouns and adjectives cannot function as bases for conversion into verbs. Yet, this book mentions several of such converted verbs, such as *to interface*, *to sleeper* and *to zipper* (p. 278). Many more examples of this kind of empirical testing of hypotheses can be found in this book.

The structure of the book is at follows. In Part I, the Introduction, the authors present their aims and the way in which they collected their data. This part also contains a systematic description of the relationship between morphology and orthography in English. Part II deals with inflection, with chapters on verbs, adjectives and adverbs, nouns, and function words. Part III contains a number of chapters on derivation. For nouns, there are a number of chapters, each deals with a specific semantic class (for instance personal and participant nouns). This semantic organization is indeed the best one can have, as it makes it possible to discuss how various affixes with similar semantic contribution compete, and what their division of labour is. Part IV deals with compounding, Part V with interaction (the combination of affixes, the affixation of compounds and phrases, and paradigmatic processes). The last part VI is called 'Themes' and aims to show how the empirical data presented in this reference guide bear on a number of theoretical issues, discussed at length in the morphological literature: inflection *versus* derivation, conversion, blocking and

productivity, the nature of stratification, English in a typological perspective, and finally English morphology and theories of morphology.

At the end of the book we find the references, an index of affixes and other formatives, an index of names, and an index of subjects. Thus, the book can really function as a guide for morphological study and research.

This book is remarkably complete in its coverage of English morphology, and it is hard to find gaps in this respect. The only thing that I missed was the recently very productive use of the borrowed German prefix *über* in nouns and adjectives in both British and American English, as in *über-burger*, *über-guru*, *über-parent*, *über-style*, and *über-excited*.

In the remainder of this review I will highlight and comment on some particular points discussed in this book.

Part III (Derivation) begins with a chapter that surveys the phonological aspects of derivation such as allomorphy of bases and affixes, the role of stress, stress preservation, and the difference between cohering and non-cohering affixes. The strength of this chapter is that it provides a systematic description of the facts, and thus these data provide lots of challenges for linguists working on and modeling the interface of phonology with morphology, as they can no longer base their model on only a subset of the relevant facts.

Chapter Eleven deals with derived personal and participant nouns. This chapter can be seen as a nice illustration of the strength of the corpus-based approach of this book. For each affix, it is specified in a systematic fashion which kind of bases it takes. This is very important and challenging for proper morphological analyses. For example, this chapter provides a survey of the kind of bases that the deverbal suffix *-er* can be attached to, and one of these kinds are unaccusative verbs, as in *comer*, *descender*, *faller*, and *riser*. Such data are interesting given the lengthy debate on English deverbal *-er* nouns in the literature, where it has been claimed that unaccusative verbs do not allow for this type of affixation, because *-er*

binds the subject and unaccusative verbs lack an underlying subject. This restrictive claim had already been refuted for Dutch (Booij 1986), and it is nice to see that the same has been done now for English. A couple of times I had this experience while reading this book: a claim on English in the literature had already been shown not to hold for Dutch, and now the authors show that it does not hold for English either.

Another illustration of the theoretical importance of this reference book is the following. Chapter Sixteen deals with the class of locatives of time and space, always expressed by a prefix. Here the interesting question is discussed to what extent morphemes like *out, over* and *under* have to be considered as prefixes, or as the initial constituents of compounds. The authors choose for a prefix interpretation, because these morphemes may have a different range of meanings when used in complex words compared to their use as prepositions. Moreover, some of them have category-changing power, as in the verb *to out-absurd* ('He would do one pose, and I would try to out-absurd him') derived from the adjective *absurd*. These facts are interesting for a debate on the issue of how to deal with the phenomenon of semi-affixes or affixoids.

Part IV deals with compounding. An important quality of this part is that it presents a clear classification of the various classes of endocentric compounds. The issue of classification of compounds has been discussed extensively, and complicated classifications have been proposed. The authors deserve praise for using a simple and clear distinction, that between argumental compounds and non-argumental ones. The first class comprises those compounds where the first constituent functions as a (semantic) argument of the second. The second class comprises those compounds where the first constituent functions as a modifier with respect to the second.

The final part of the book, Part VI, deals with a number of issues of analysis and theory, and will therefore be of importance for all morphologists, whatever language they

study. The themes discussed are, as mentioned above, 'Inflection versus derivation', The analysis and limits of conversion (a hot topic for adherents and opponents of Distributed Morphology), 'Blocking, competition, and productivity', 'The nature of stratification', 'English morphology in a typological perspective', and finally, 'English morphology and theories of morphology'. This last chapter discusses a number of specific claims such as the Righthand Head Rule, the Unitary Base Hypothesis and the Unitary Output Hypothesis. The authors do not support a particular model of morphology, but instead point to the similarities between various models. Again, this chapter shows how a rich and carefully constructed database serves to problematize or falsify theoretical claims.

In conclusion, this reference work on English morphology is an indispensable tool for all serious morphologists. Whatever topic one works on, one should first read what findings the authors of this book have to offer on that topic.

References

Booij, Geert 1986. Form and meaning in morphology: the case of Dutch 'agent' nouns. *Linguistics* 24: 503-518.

Marchand, Hans 1969. *The categories and types of present-day English word formation*. München: Beck.