

Morton Benson, Evelyn Benson and Robert Ilson. *The BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations*, revised edition 1997, xl + 386 pp. ISBN 90 272 2167 7 (Eur.) / 1-55619-521-4 (US). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. Prys f40,00 / \$19,95.

The years 1986 and 1997 witnessed two important lexicographical events, the publication of the first edition of the *BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations* and the appearance of the revised edition. English language teachers, students and translators are pleased that an urgently needed dictionary of collocations came into being and are delighted to see the new revised edition. The edition is enlarged and completely revised. It comprises 18 000 entries and 90 000 collocations which single it out as the most comprehensive English collocational dictionary available (cf. Kozłowska and Dzierzanowska, 1993). It is true that in the recent editions of *OALD* (1995) and *LDOCE* (1995) collocations have been brought into focus. However, foreign learners of English and translators were in serious need of a specialized collocational dictionary as the provision of collocations is not the primary aim of a general dictionary. They looked forward to a collocational dictionary which is comprehensive and up-to-date with quick access to the English word combinations which are, in the main, arbitrary and unpredictable. Fortunately this new edition fulfils all their needs.

A comparison of the 1986 and 1997 editions shows how whole articles have been reorganized and enlarged.

attack I *n.* ['assnʌt] (also fig.) 1. to carry out, make; launch, mount; lead, spearhead; press an ~ 2. to provoke an ~ 3. to blunt; break up, repel, repulse an ~ 4. (often mil.) an all-out, concerted, full-scale; coordinated; mock; pre-emptive; sneak, surprise ~ 5. (usu. mil.) an air; enemy; flank; frontal; torpedo ~ 6. a bitter, blistering, savage, scathing, sharp, violent; scurrilous, vicious; unprovoked; wanton ~ 7. an ~ fails, fizzles out; succeeds 8. an ~ against, on (our forces launched an all-out ~ against the enemy; he made a blistering ~ on his opponent) 9. under ~ ['onset of an ailment'] 10. to have an ~ (she had an ~ of hiccups) 11. an acute; light, slight; recurrent; sudden ~ 12. a fatal; heart ~
attack II *v.* to ~ viciously

attack I *n.* ['assault] (usu. mil.; also fig.) 1. to carry out, make; launch, mount, unleash; lead, spearhead; press an ~ 2. to provoke an ~ 3. to come under ~ 4. to survive, withstand an ~ 5. to blunt; break up, repel, repulse an ~ 6. an all-out, concerted, full-scale; coordinated; major ~ 7. a pre-emptive; retaliatory ~ 8. a mock; sneak, surprise ~ 9. an air; seaborne ~ 10. an enemy; terrorist ~ 11. a flank; frontal ~ 12. a nuclear; torpedo ~ 13. an ~ succeeds 14. an ~ fails; fizzles out 15. an ~ against, on (our forces launched an all-out ~ against the enemy) 16. under ~ ['a belligerent action'] (often verbal) 17. to make an ~ 18. a verbal ~ 19. a bitter, blistering, brutal, savage, scathing, sharp, vehement, vicious, violent; scurrilous; unprovoked; wanton ~ 20. an ~ on (he made a blistering ~ on his opponent) 21. (misc.) the leaked document left us open to ~ ['onset of an ailment'] 22. to have an ~ (she had an ~ of hiccups) 23. an acute; fatal; light, slight; recurrent; sudden ~ 24. a heart ~
attack II *v.* to ~ brutally, savagely, viciously; physically

The *BBI*, 1st edition, 1986

The *BBI*, revised edition, 1997

The two salient features of the *BBI* in terms of which the degree of excellence and achievement must be measured are *coverage* and *lexicographical treatment*. In

both cases the *BBI* made a breakthrough. As regards coverage, I have been using the *BBI* (1997) while listening to the radio or reading English newspapers and translating from Arabic into English, and it has never failed me. The word combinations used in this edition reflect up-to-date occurrences in material from sources dealing with a wide range of subject matter: medicine, linguistics, commerce, music, politics, computer science. Many new collocations are added. They cover all the patterns, V+N, Adj.+N, N+V, V+Adv., e.g. *a cellular, mobile, pay telephone; human rights abuses; a software package; financial crunch; a computer virus; to log into; to shout abuse at; elder, spousal abuse; alcohol, substance abuse; seal off an area; a no-smoking area; to unleash an attack; a cerebral thrombosis; a desk-top, handheld, laptop computer; a machine-readable text; a crash, interdisciplinary, remedial course; a computer freezes up; to clamp sanctions on; an arms embargo.*

Some new headwords are also added, e.g. *terrorism, AIDS, bomber, stabilization, backlash, cross-country, thumbs-up, elected, electrical appliance, civil unrest, civil disobedience, civil disorder, cleansing, differing, flash point, freak, free will, ground rules, volatile.*

It has to be noted that the *BBI* is the most comprehensive dictionary available on lexical collocations. However, certain lexical collocations in English do not only require a V+N, Adj.+N or N+N but also call for a qualifying adjective or noun, thus forming what may be called "tripartite collocations":

- (a) V+Adj.+N e.g. *to acquire a good command of a language, to have an impressive command of a language*
- (b) N+N+N e.g. *World Health Organization*
- (c) Adj.+Adj.+N e.g. *International Monetary Fund*

Such collocations should be included and an efficient method for looking them up should be devised.

Collocations of a different kind comprise a phrasal verb (compound or two-element verbs), e.g. *pick up / a skill, language.* These, it is suggested, may be treated like other collocations since as a special type of verb syntactically and semantically, phrasal verbs can be considered as heads or headwords that need collocates. Phrasal verbs such as *black out, screw up* and *cut down* could be presented according to the dictionary format as follows:

- (a) **black out** *ph.v.* ~ news, information ["suppress"]
- (b) **screw up** *ph.v.* ~ an arrangement, planning ["mishandle, mismanage"]
- (c) **cut down** *ph.v.* ~ expences, consumption ["to reduce"]

In the revised edition many grammatical collocations are also included either in the entry of the new headwords introduced or as additions to the ones already treated in the first edition, e.g. *to rampage through; touched to + inf.; touched that + clause; condescending to; by computer; to tingle with; to top off with; to terminate in; to throb with; abusive to, toward; up above; etc.*

The dictionary is also provided with a "Visual Guide" to indicate how entries are structured. Such a guide, missing from the first edition, is badly needed in an unfamiliar type of dictionary such as the *BBI*. It is a successful approach to use a different typeface in the definition to make it prominent, e.g.

appointment *n.* ["agreement to meet"] 1. to have; keep; make, schedule an - with 2. to break; cancel; miss an - 3. by - (she sees patients by - only) 4. an - to + inf. (she had an - to see the dean) ["selection"] 5. to confirm; make an - 6. to block an - 7. - to (they announced her - to the commission) 8. an - as (an - as professor) ["position"] 9. to have, hold; receive an - 10. an interim; permanent; temporary - 11. a political - ["designation"] 12. by - to Her Majesty

The *BBI*, revised edition, 1997

In its "Style Guide" the dictionary sticks to the use of the colon and semicolon. The use of the semicolon is confusing for the user. It is suggested that either numbers should be used, or better still, short phrases should be placed within brackets, e.g.

the revised edition:

answerable: *adj.* ~ for; to (we are ~ to our superiors for our actions)

suggested treatment:

answerable: *adj.* 1. ~ for 2. ~ to

or

answerable: *adj.* ~ for (the decision he made); ~ to (government).

Besides, the semicolon does not help the user distinguish between *synonymous* and *nonsynonymous* collocations, e.g.

booth *n.* an information; listening; phone, telephone; polling, voting; projection ~.

It is suggested that slanting lines be used, e.g.

booth *n.* an information/phone, telephone/polling, voting/projection ~.

They serve as distinct demarcation lines between synonymous or related collocations.

Grammatical collocations in the dictionary consist among others of *nineteen* English verb patterns designated by nineteen capital and small letters (see p. xxix), e.g.

abandon *II v.* (D; tr.) to ~ to (they abandoned us to our fate).

It is suggested that explicit references be used, e.g.

abandon II *v* (+object)

which is more readily seen, and more quickly comprehended and will help the user assimilate the syntax.

The dictionary is also provided with a "Practical Guide" which is essential for the user. It divides collocations into *grammatical collocations* and *lexical collocations*. Grammatical collocations are those which are governed by a dominant word. The dominant word is either a noun, an adjective or a verb and the user will look them up to find the preposition or the grammatical construction, an infinitive or *that* clause which may go with them, e.g.

- (a) **adhere** *v.* 2. (d. int.) to adhere to (to ~ strictly to a plan)
- (b) **affinity** *n.* 4. ~ between; for; to; with (he always felt a close ~ with the underdog)
- (c) **stress II** *v.* (L) the police ~ed that all regulations would be strictly enforced

Lexical collocations differ in their structure: they may comprise V+N, Adj.+N or N+N, Adv.+V or N+V, and Adv.+Adj. Hence the noun, the verb and the adjective constitute the heads of the lexical collocations or the headwords of the dictionary. The user of the dictionary will look them up to find the *collocates* that go with them. These collocates are either nouns, adjectives, verbs or adverbs.

Since the collocates that are sought are different for grammatical and lexical collocations, it is suggested that the *BBI* be divided into two parts, one for grammatical collocations and the other for lexical ones. It will facilitate the job of the user who may look for the grammatical collocates which are dispersed across the entry (note grammatical collocations nos. 16, 17, 18, 19, 25, 31, 35 in the entry **order**).

order I *n.* ["request for merchandise or services"]

1. to give, place, put in an - 2. to make out, write out an - 3. to fill; receive, take an - (has the waiter taken your -?) 4. to cancel an - 5. a back; mail; prepublication; rush; shipping; standing - 6. a side (esp. AE; in a restaurant) - 7. (new) -s are falling off; are picking up 8. on - (the merchandise is on -) 9. to - (made to -) 10. (misc.) a tall - to fill ("a difficult task to carry out") ["command"] 11. to give, hand down (AE), issue an - 12. to carry out, execute; obey, take an - 13. to cancel, countermand, rescind, revoke; violate an - 14. a direct; executive; preservation (BE); specific - 15. doctor's; marching; sealed; standing; verbal; writ-

ten ~s 16. an ~ to + inf. (we received an ~ to attack)
 -17. an ~ that + clause; subj. (headquarters issued
 an ~ that the attack be/should be resumed) 18. at,
 by, on smb.'s ~ (by whose ~ was this done?) 19.
 under ~s (we were under ~s to remain indoors)
 ["court decree"] 20. to issue an ~ 21. an affiliation
 (BE); cease-and-desist; court; gag; maintenance
 (BE), support (AE); restraining ~ ["association,
 group"] 22. a cloistered; Masonic; mendicant;
 monastic; religious; secret ~ ["system"] 23. an
 economic; pecking; social ~ (he's at the bottom of
 the pecking ~) ["proper procedure"] 24. (a) point
 of ~ 25. in ~; out of ~ (the senator was out of ~) 26.
 to call a meeting to ~ ("to begin a meeting"; "to
 reestablish proper procedure at a meeting") ["state
 of peace"] 27. to establish; keep, maintain; restore
 ~ 28. public ~ ["state in which everything is in its
 proper place or condition"] 29. to put smt. in/into
 ~ 30. apple-pie, good, shipshape ~ 31. in; out of ~
 (everything is in good ~; this machine is out of ~
 again) ["condition"] 32. working ~ (in working ~)
 ["sequence"] 33. alphabetical; chronological;
 logical; numerical ~ 34. ascending; descending ~
 35. in; out of ~ (in ~ of importance; in alphabetical
 ~; these entries are out of ~) ["military formation"]
 36. close; extended; open ~ ["instructions to pay"]
 37. a money (AE), postal (BE) ~ ["misc."] 38. law
 and ~; a new ~; a new world ~; an old ~; of the ~ of
 (BE)/on the ~ of (AE) ("approximately"); research
 of the highest ~
 order II v. I. (C) ~ a copy for me; or: ~ me a copy 2.
 (D; tr.) to ~ from (to ~ merchandise from a mail-
 order house) 3. (d; tr.) to ~ from, out of (she ~ed
 him out of the house) 4. (d; tr.) to ~ off (the referee
 ~ed the player off the field) 5. (H) the sergeant ~ed
 his platoon to fall in 6. (L; subj.) the mayor ~ed
 that free food be/should be distributed 7. (M) the
 judge ~ed the prisoner to be transferred 8. (esp.
 AE) (N: used with a past participle) the judge ~ed
 the prisoner transferred to the county jail 9. (misc.)
 the doctor ~ed her to bed

The BBI, revised edition, 1997

Dividing the BBI into two parts, one for entries for grammatical collocations and the other for entries for lexical collocations, will make the entries shorter and more manageable for the user who may lose his bearings in his search for the grammatical collocations in long entries.

Better still, grammatical and lexical collocations could be distinctly marked either by shadowing or using different colours to indicate grammatical collocations or the closed set, and black for lexical collocations or the open set.

Finally, to exemplify the differences between the two editions (1986 and 1997) the entry *test* has been chosen.

test I n. ['examination, set of questions'] 1. to administer, conduct, give a ~ 2. to draw up, make up, set (BE) a ~ 3. to take a ~ 4. to fail; pass a ~ 5. a demanding, difficult; easy ~ 6. an achievement; aptitude; intelligence; loyalty (esp. AE); placement; proficiency ~ 7. a completion; free-association; lie-detector; multiple-choice; objective; true-and-false ~ 8. a competency; means ~ 9. a ~ in, on (a ~ in mathematics; a ~ on new material) ['trial, experiment'] ['examination'] 10. to carry out, conduct, do, run a ~ 11. exhaustive, extensive, thorough ~s 12. an acid, demanding, exacting, severe ~ 13. a blood; diagnostic; endurance; laboratory; litmus; means; nuclear; paraffin; Pap; patch; paternity; personality; psychological; road; saliva; screen; skin; tuberculin ~ 14. a ~ for (to do a skin ~ for tuberculosis) 15. a ~ on (they conducted a series of ~s on me at the health center) 16. (misc.) to stand the ~ of time; the ~ turned out to be positive; to put smb. to the ~

test II v. 1. (D; intr., tr.) to ~ for (to ~ for excessive air pollution; to ~ the urine for sugar) 2. (D; tr.) to ~ in (we ~ed them in English) 3. (P; Intr.) some of our students ~ed in the top percentile 4. (esp. AE) (s) some students ~ high, others low

The BBI, 1st edition, 1986

test I n. ['examination, set of questions'] 1. to administer, conduct, give a ~ 2. to draw up, make up, prepare, set (BE) a ~ 3. to sit (for) (BE), take a ~ 4. to fail, flunk (colloq.; esp. AE) a ~ 5. to pass a ~ 6. a demanding, difficult ~ 7. an easy ~ 8. an achievement; aptitude; intelligence ~ 9. a placement; proficiency ~ 10. a cloze; completion; multiple-choice; objective; true-false ~ 11. a driving; road ~ 12. a breath ~ 13. a lie-detector, polygraph ~ 14. a competency; means ~ 15. a ~ in, of, on (a ~ in mathematics; a ~ on new material) ['ordeal; trial'] 16. an acid, demanding, exacting, litmus, rigorous, severe ~ 17. an endurance ~ ["experiment, trial"] ["examination"] 18. to carry out, conduct, do, perform, run a ~ 19. to have, undergo a ~ 20. exhaustive, extensive, thorough ~s 21. a blood; breathing; diagnostic; DNA; drug; PAP; patch; saliva; skin; scratch; tuberculin ~ 22. a personality; psychological ~ 23. a laboratory; nuclear ~ 24. a road ~ 25. a ~ for (to do a skin ~ for tuberculosis) 26. a ~ on (they conducted a series of ~s on me at the health center) 27. (misc.) to stand the ~ of time; the ~ turned out (to be) negative/positive; the ~ was negative/positive; to put smb. to the ~

test II v. 1. (D; intr., tr.) to ~ for (to ~ for excessive air pollution; to ~ the urine for sugar) 2. (D; tr.) to ~ in, on (we ~ed them in English/on their knowledge of English) 3. (P; intr.) (esp. AE) some of our students ~ed in the top percentile 4. (esp. AE) (s) some students ~ high, others low; to ~ negative/positive for a disease

The BBI, revised edition, 1997

Without any doubt, the 1986 BBI has been largely expanded and updated to be a unique treasure of English word combinations. The more I use it, the more I appreciate the effort put into it.

References

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