

科目：語言學短文評論 適用：外文系(語言學組)

編號：132

考生注意：

1. 依次序作答，只要標明題號，不必抄題。
2. 答案必須寫在答案卷上，否則不予計分。
3. 限用藍、黑色筆作答；試題須隨卷繳回。

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第 1 頁**注意事項**

- 一、禁止使用任何型式的字典。
- 二、答案必須寫在答案卷上；寫在本試題卷上不予計分。
- 三、本試題卷必須與答案卷一併繳回。

新**Part One**

The following essay, written by Michael Hoey, is the foreword to *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*. Read it carefully before you proceed to Part Two.

When I was in my early teens, I was taken to a spectacular show on ice by the mother of a friend. Looking around at the luxury of the rink, my friend's mother remarked on the 'plush' seats we had been given. I did not know what she meant, but being proud of my vocabulary and not wanting to lose face by admitting ignorance, I tried to infer its meaning from the context. 'Plush' was clearly intended as a compliment, a positive evaluation; that much I could tell from the tone of voice and the context. So I started to use the word. Yes, I replied, they certainly are plush, and so are the ice rink and the costumes of the skaters, aren't they? My friend's mother was too polite to correct me, but I could tell from her expression that I had not got the word quite right.

Often we can indeed infer from the context what a word roughly means, and that is in fact the way in which we usually acquire both new words and new meanings for familiar words, particularly in our own first language. But sometimes we need to ask, as I should have asked about *plush*, and this is particularly true in the case of a second or foreign language. If you are continually surrounded by speakers of the language you are learning, you can of course ask them directly, but often this opportunity does not exist for the learner of English. So dictionaries, such as the one in your hands, have developed to fill the gap.

The fact that you can ask a native speaker what a word means and expect to get a useful answer is evidence that we are all living dictionaries of our own languages. But the strategies we use to define words are not necessarily those that are traditionally associated with dictionaries. If I am asked by a child what an oval is, I would be ill-advised to reply 'It's an elongated circle, often broader at one end than the other' (unless of course I am trying to put the child off asking difficult questions). A much better strategy would be to pick up a pencil and draw one, or if there is no paper at hand to say 'It's more or less the shape of an egg'. The first strategy need not involve any words at all; the second makes a comparison. Both are excellent ways of conveying the meaning of a word. In fact, not only are we living dictionaries but we are first-rate lexicographers too.

At one point in *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, by Lewis Carroll, Alice asked Humpty Dumpty about the meanings of words she has encountered in a nonsense poem (all in fact words made up by Lewis Carroll), because she is impressed with his command of the special English of the Looking Glass world she has entered:

'You seem very clever at explaining words, Sir,' said Alice.

As we shall see, she is quite right. Humpty is indeed skilled at explaining words (though, unlike the lexicographers who prepared this dictionary, we are left with suspicion that he may be making up the meanings as he goes along). Asked first about the word *brillig* (made up by Lewis Carroll like all the others), he comments that *brillig* 'means four

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o'clock in the afternoon'. When Alice goes on to ask him about *toves* and *borogoves*, Humpty comments:

'Well, "toves" are something like badgers—they're something like lizards—and they're something like corkscrews. . . also they make their nests under sun-dials—also they live on cheese. . . And a "borogove" is a thin shabby-looking bird with its feathers sticking out all round—something like a live mop.'

Encouraged by these answers, Alice goes on to bother her tutor further:

'And what does "outgrabe" mean?'

to which Humpty responds:

'Well, "outgrabing" is something between bellowing and whistling, with a kind of sneeze in the middle; however, you'll hear it done, maybe—down in the wood yonder—and when you've once heard it you'll be quite content. Who's been repeating all that hard stuff to you?'

'I read it in a book,' said Alice.

Hard words and books have a tendency to go together, especially when one is learning a foreign language, and I have some sympathy with Humpty's frustration as a teacher at being asked to explain things that had not been written clearly in the first place!

Despite his irritation, Humpty Dumpty proves himself in this passage to be a skilled lexicographer. His defining strategies include

- a) using synonymous expressions (so *brillig* is defined as 'four o'clock in the afternoon'),
- b) giving a general description and then narrowing it down with more specific features (so a *borogove* is a bird — a general description — which is thin and shabby-looking and has its feathers sticking out all round — three, rather unlikely specific features that distinguish *borogove* from all other kinds of birds),
- c) drawing on encyclopedic knowledge (*toves*, he observes, make their nests under sun-dials — also they live on cheese, neither of which detail defines what a *tove* is but would certainly help you recognize one if you were ever to see a strange creature eating cheese under a sun-dial),
- d) referring out into the world (after a rough definition of *outgrabing*, Humpty invites Alice to listen for the sound, and then she will know what it is, much as a drawing of an oval will help define *oval*),
- e) making comparisons (*toves* are something like badgers).

Humpty does more than answer the question 'what does this word mean?'. He provides encyclopedic information, he suggests the contexts the word might appear in, he relates the word he is describing to other words, and so on. The dictionary aims to do the same. Many of the definitions use synonyms and many use a general noun followed by particulars (see the definitions of *companionable* and *company* for examples of each). Some draw attention to useful encyclopedic information — the entry for *community college* is an example. A few makes comparisons (I will give an example below) but it is more common for the entries to give an example or a particularly typical context.

The odd thing is that when we ask a living dictionary (a person) to define a word, we expect all these kinds of information and a great deal more. For example we expect to be told the contexts a word is used in and whether it is informal or polite. We expect to be told informally something of the grammar of the word. (Humpty, for example, indicates to Alice that *outgrabe* is a verb by changing it in his definition to *outgrabing*.) We expect to be given examples. But when people turn to dictionaries that are not living, they tend to expect a lot less. A small survey I

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undertook of non-native speakers showed that they expected from a dictionary entry some definition of the word, a small amount of contextual information and information about pronunciation, and little more. If you are like them, you may be expecting too little of this dictionary. Yes, it will define the words for you and show you how they are pronounced, but, like Humpty, it will tell you a great deal more about the ways the words are actually used.

Let us return for a final moment to my misuse of *plush*. What might I have been told to prevent me over-generalizing about its use and meaning? The dictionary in your hands provides two entries for *plush*:

plush¹ /plʌʃ/ adj 1 expensive, comfortable, and attractive: *plush offices/surroundings* 2 made from or covered with a soft thick cloth similar to VELVET: *a luxurious red plush carpet*

plush² /plʌʃ/ noun [U] a soft thick cloth similar to VELVET

Notice how in addition to providing the expected definition, pronunciation guidance, and grammatical category, the entries provide me with other types of information as well. I am told by the examples and by two of the senses that *plush* is the result of manufacture, not something that occurs naturally. I am also told in the examples that the adjective is used of furnishings and rooms (not of the costumes of skaters, even though these can presumably be expensive, comfortable, and attractive too). I am told too that *plush* can be compared to velvet, a comparison like those used by Humpty. More subtly, perhaps, I am told by the examples that *plush* is typically used before the noun, not often in contexts such as *the rink is plush*. All these bits of knowledge are crucial to my using the word appropriately, but they are likely to be overlooked for a brief definition. Expect more from this dictionary and you will not be disappointed. You will find it as informative and clever as Humpty Dumpty, and the words it defines are far more useful.

Part Two

Write, in English, a review of the essay. In the review, do the following:

- (1) summarize the essay IN YOUR OWN WORDS (about 250); (50%)
- (2) state, in about 250 words, your opinions about the main ideas of the essay. (50%)