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ANNA WIERZBICKA, *English: Meaning and culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Pp. ix, 352. Pb \$30.00.

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This is an important book. Anna Wierzbicka's concern is the "cultural baggage" of English, the lingua franca of the modern world, which is so often considered a neutral means of communication. Her main argument is that English is by no means neutral, but contains a plethora of "Anglo" cultural scripts deeply embedded in the language. For a nonnative speaker of English like myself, cross-cultural linguistic differences are nothing new, but Wierzbicka's book served as an eye-opener concerning their background. Wierzbicka claims that the 18th-century English Enlightenment brought about patterns of thought – such as the acknowledgment of the limitations of one's knowledge, respect for facts, and personal autonomy – which, as they gradually spread into the minds of the English people, influenced the semantics and even the grammar of English, making it different from the other languages of the world. According to Wierzbicka, the aim of the book is "to investigate English as a historically shaped universe of meaning and to reveal English's cultural underpinnings and their implications for the modern world" (p. 19).

The book is divided into four parts. The first part, "Meaning, history and culture," begins with a chapter entitled "English as a cultural universe," which discusses the role of English as the global language of today's world. Acknowledging the inevitable problems of conceptualization, Wierzbicka speaks about "Anglo" English and "Anglo" culture, referring to the language and culture of the traditional bases of English: the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. She claims that Anglo English, like any language, is a result of its history, during which specific cultural meanings have developed.

Apart from providing an illuminating case study of the differences between Syrian and English patterns of linguistic usage, the second chapter, "Anglo cultural scripts seen through Middle Eastern eyes," introduces the theory of cultural scripts, the unwritten rules about how to behave, speak, think, and even feel. This chapter focuses on a number of Anglo features, such as rationality and accuracy, the limitations of one's knowledge, a focus on facts, and personal autonomy, all of which are expressed in language in various ways. Wierzbicka claims that the Anglo cultural scripts have sometimes wrongly been taken as universal by linguists whose mother tongue is English, especially in the fields of pragmatics and politeness studies.

Part II, "English words: From philosophy to everyday discourse," concentrates on the semantics and specific uses of three key concepts. Wierzbicka's

treatment of these notions is both cross-linguistic and historical. The concepts are RIGHT, REASONABLE, and FAIR, each of which has a chapter devoted to it. Wierzbicka's argument is that these concepts, in many ways untranslatable into other languages, acquired their present meaning and use after the English Enlightenment, having been embodied in the writings of John Locke.

The discussion of *right* (and *wrong*) in chap. 3 explores the use of this term in both moral discourse and conversational contexts. According to Wierzbicka, English employs *right* vs. *wrong* in ethical statements, whereas many other languages choose *good* vs. *bad* in corresponding cases. In conversation, *right* has acquired several uses in which the word *true* is found in many other languages. She claims that the rise of *right* is linked with reason and 18th-century rationalism. Its extension into everyday conversational use derives from its use in folk philosophy.

The analysis of *reasonable* in chap. 4 includes the collocations *reasonable man*, *doubt*, *force*, *care*, *time*, *amount*, in addition to the general discussion of *reasonable* vs. *unreasonable*. Wierzbicka's internal reconstruction of the semantic history of *reasonable* proceeds from 'endowed with reason' via the ability to think well to a general tool of moderation. During this process, the term becomes deeply rooted in the Anglo system of justice.

The third key concept in modern Anglo culture, *fair*, which is discussed in chap. 5, often co-occurs with *right* and *reasonable*. Expressions that include the relational terms *fair* and especially *not fair* are dealt with in relation to justice and equity. Wierzbicka traces *fairness*, too, to 18th-century political philosophy. An excellent illustration of Wierzbicka's view of *fairness* is her comment on p. 166: "In a way, sport – especially team sport – provides a perfect model for 'fair' interaction because the emphasis is on rules and procedures, which are blind to the individual players' interests and which everyone voluntarily accepts."

The three chapters in the third part of the book, "Anglo culture reflected in English grammar," focus on English causatives as well as epistemic phrases and adverbs. Chap. 6, on causatives, deals with interpersonal causation expressed using the verbs *have*, *get*, *make*, and *let*. According to Wierzbicka, the broad spectrum of interpersonal causative structures in English is linked with the cultural emphasis on personal autonomy and noninterference, which leads to a preference for voluntary cooperation.

Chap. 7, "*I think*: The rise of epistemic phrases in modern English," provides an insightful discussion of what Wierzbicka calls epistemic phrases, such as *I think*, *I guess*, *I believe*, *I suppose*, *I gather*, which in their grammaticalized form are indeed a peculiarity of modern English. According to Wierzbicka, "the leit-motif of these phrases is the acknowledgement of the limitations of one's knowledge and of the tentative status of most of the things we say" (241), which is linked with Locke's discussion of the limitations of human knowledge and the importance of being cautious and tentative in one's statements.

Chap. 8, “*Probably*: English epistemic adverbs and their cultural significance,” continues the discussion of epistemic expressions. Wierzbicka argues that English has a much larger repertoire of epistemic adverbs than other European languages. She includes the following adverbs in this category: *probably*, *possibly*, *clearly*, *obviously*, *presumably*, *apparently*, *supposedly*, *conceivably*, *undoubtedly*, *reportedly*, *arguably*, *unquestionably*, *seemingly*, *certainly*, and *likely*. According to her argument, these speaker-oriented adverbs function like warnings at the beginning of a statement, signaling abstention from a claim to knowledge. They differ from the epistemic phrases in being not only personal and subjective, but also appealing to other people.

The concluding Part IV with its single chapter returns to the significance of the “cultural baggage” of English to the world at large. Among other things, Wierzbicka emphasizes the importance of understanding the Anglo character of many of the concepts used in international law. She also points out how miscommunication can end in disaster, drawing examples from air traffic. It is self-evident that she recommends that these questions be taken up in cross-cultural education.

The strength of this book lies in its accurate and insightful analysis of various linguistic elements and their cross-linguistic equivalents. Cultural scripts and semantic primes, concepts that Wierzbicka has worked on for a long time, offer reliable tools for comparison. Wierzbicka’s command of a large number of European languages and her personal experience of cross-cultural communication provide an excellent background for this type of study. Although the comparison of meanings and uses between different languages remains the main issue, the other topics she touches upon are also highly interesting. I particularly enjoyed the analysis of the English epistemic phrases and adverbs, and learned a great deal about their similarities and differences.

The only area in which the book unfortunately does not reach the same high standard is the historical part. Wierzbicka has a good command of the history of philosophy, but more work needs to be done on the linguistic history. It must be said in fairness that Wierzbicka herself admits that her historical analysis is only tentative. She also admits that it is not easy to establish a causal link between English semantics and the great themes of the British Enlightenment. However, one way to prove her point would be to make a comparison of the situation before and after the Enlightenment. In other words, an accurate analysis of the linguistic key words and epistemic expressions is needed for both the 17th and 19th centuries, carried out using the same analytical tools she has used for present-day English.

Wierzbicka employs the *OED* and a number of literary texts as data for historical research. It is a pity that she has not had access to the historical corpora that have been published during the past decade or so. Moreover, the growing interest in historical pragmatics has provided results that could have been useful for this book. For instance, there are diachronic studies on the epistemic expres-

sions, such as Swan 1988 and Palander-Collin 1999, which suggests that the number of epistemic phrases corresponding to *I think* was not as limited in Early Modern English as Wierzbicka argues.

Despite the problems with the historical research, the message of this book is highly significant. In the modern world, where English is increasingly used as the global language, people should be aware of its “cultural baggage,” the values and patterns of thought that underlie the semantics of many of its concepts and phrases. The back cover of the book expresses the hope that it will appeal not only to linguists and others concerned with language and culture, but also to everyone interested in English and English as a second language. Unfortunately, the length of the volume, over 350 pages in small print, will probably put off potential readers. I would very much welcome a popular version of this book, shorter, less repetitive, and less technical, which could be included in the course requirements for teacher training, for both nonnative and native speakers of English.

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JANET HOLMES, *Gendered talk at work*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. Pp. viii, 251.
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In this book, Janet Holmes sets out to “explore some of the diverse ways in which women and men in a number of mainly white-collar, professional, New Zealand organizations manage workplace discourse, and illustrate how they respond to the varied contextual conditions and communicative demands of their different ‘communities of practice.’” She accomplishes this goal and more.

Each chapter of the book provides a clear theoretical framework that focuses on a different aspect of gendered language. Holmes presents multiple examples to illustrate her points. Her valuable insights about gendered language allow for accessible understanding of the background that brings Holmes to her analysis.

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