BINOMIALS IN THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH

Binomials, such as for and against, dead or alive, to have and to hold, can be broadly defined as two words belonging to the same grammatical category and linked by a semantic relationship. They are an important phraseological phenomenon present throughout the history of the English language. This volume offers a range of studies on binomials, their types and functions from Old English through to the present day. Searching for motivations and characteristic features of binomials in a particular genre or writer, the chapters engage with many linguistic levels of analysis, such as phonology or semantics, and explore the important role of translation. Drawing on philological and corpus-linguistic approaches, the authors employ qualitative and quantitative methods, setting the discussion firmly in the extra-linguistic context. Binomials and their extended forms – multinomials – emerge from these discussions as an important phraseological tool, with rich applications and complex motivations.

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OF ENGLISH

Fixed and Flexible

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The idea for our book on binomials in the history of English developed in parallel with a workshop organized at the 18th International Conference on English Historical Linguistics, held in Leuven in July 2014. We are grateful to the conference organizers for selecting our workshop for the programme, and we have to admit that the interest in this theme surpassed our expectations. We could only accommodate eight papers, therefore a book project became an indispensable next step, and one which – we hope – fills in an important gap in scholarship and suggests new pathways for future research. Several chapters have benefited from discussions and feedback at and after the ICEHL conference, but the majority of contributions have been written specifically for this volume. All have the same aim, namely to shed new light on the history, structure and use of binomials. We are grateful to our contributors for their originality, scope, attention to detail and timely cooperation.

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