


Introduction to English Lexicology



Literature Recommended for the Course

Basic:

- ◆ Антрушина Г.Б., Афанасьева О.В., Морозова Н.Н. Лексикология английского языка. М., 1999.
 - ◆ Дубенец Э.М. Лексикология современного английского языка: лекции и семинары. М., 2002.
 - ◆ Минаева Л.В. Лексикология и лексикография английского языка. М., 2003.
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Literature Recommended for the Course

Supplementary:

- ◆ Заботкина В.И. Новая лексика в английском языке. М., 1987.
- ◆ Кубрякова Е.С. Номинативный аспект речевой деятельности. М., 1986.
- ◆ Кубрякова Е.С. Что такое словообразование? М., 1965.
- ◆ Кубрякова Е.С. Типы языковых значений. Семантика производного слова. М., 1981.
- ◆ Кучин А.В. Курс фразеологии современного английского языка. М., 1996.
- ◆ Хидекель С.С., Гинзбург Р.С, Князева Г.Ю., Санкин А.А. Английская лексикология в выдержках и извлечениях. Л., 1975.
- ◆ Arnold I.V. The English Word. L., 1986.

How do we define *Lexicology*?

- ◆ The term is composed of two Greek morphemes:
Lexis (word, phrase) + **Logos** (learning, a department of knowledge)
- ◆ It literally means «**the science of the word**»


How do we define *Lexicology*?

- ◆ A branch of linguistics whose basic task is a study and systematic description of vocabulary in respect to its origin, development and current use

What is the object of lexicological description?

- ◆ Lexicology is concerned with words, variable word-groups, phraseological units, and morphemes which make up words


Partitions of Lexicology

- ◆ **General** (concerned with the study of vocabulary irrespective of the specific features of any particular language)
 - ◆ **Special** (concerned with the study and description of vocabulary and vocabulary units of a certain language)
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What are the basic approaches to the study of the vocabulary units?

- ◆ **Synchronic** (from Greek *syn* – together, with, and *chronos* - time): implies the study of vocabulary as it exists at a given time (e.g., at the present moment), is employed in **Descriptive Lexicology**
- ◆ **Diachronic** (from Greek *dia* – through, and *chronos* - time): deals with the changes and the development of vocabulary in the course of time, is employed in **Historical Lexicology**


What are the basic approaches to the study of the vocabulary units?

- ◆ The two approaches should not be contrasted, but considered as interconnected and interdependent: every linguistic structure and system actually exists in a state of constant development, so that the synchronic state of a language system is a result of a long process of linguistic evolution, of its historical development
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What are the basic approaches to the study of the vocabulary units?

- ◆ **Synchronically** «*beg* – *beggar*» are related as a simple and a derived word (compare: teach – teacher, sing – singer, etc.)
- ◆ **Diachronically** «*beggar*» was borrowed from Old French; no conjugate words existed in English until the word «*beg*» was coined by dropping the final morpheme (-er), i.e. by means of back-formation

Lexicology and Sociolinguistics

- ◆ The vocabulary of the language is never stable or static, but is constantly changing, growing and decaying
 - ◆ The changes in the vocabulary are due to linguistic and extralinguistic causes (or a combination of both)
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Lexicology and Sociolinguistics

- ◆ The extralinguistic causes are determined by the social nature of the language: the word-stock of a language directly and immediately reacts to changes in social life

Lexicology and Sociolinguistics

- ◆ The intense development of science and technology, business and politics, leisure and lifestyles gives birth to numerous new words:
- ◆ *MP3-player, to photoshop, download, downtime* (время бездействия, простой), *meltdown* (1 взрыв реактора, 2 обвал финансовых учреждений), *multitasking, quality time* (время, уделяемое исключительно собеседнику, без попутных дел), *smoking police, fashionista* (человек из сферы моды), *trendonista* (гламурная женщина), *metrosexual, staycation* (отпуск, проведенный дома), *locavore* (человек, отдающий предпочтение продуктам питания местного производства), *PC, CD, ATM* (automated teller machine – банкомат), *SMS, MMS*, etc.


Lexicology and Sociolinguistics

- ◆ Lexicology is essentially a sociolinguistic science, so a lexicologist should take into account correlations between purely linguistic facts and the underlying social facts which brought them into existence


Basic Terminology

- ◆ **Vocabulary** is the system of words and word-groups that the language possesses.
- ◆ **Word** is the main lexical unit of a language resulting from the association of a group of sounds with a meaning. This unit is used in grammatical functions characteristic of it. It is the smallest unit of a language which can stand alone as a complete utterance.
- ◆ **Word-group** denotes a group of words which exists in the language as a readymade unit, has the unity of meaning, the unity of syntactical function.
- ◆ **Morpheme** is the smallest meaningful language unit. The morpheme consists of a class of variants, allomorphs, which are either phonologically or morphologically conditioned.

The Word

- ◆ A **two-facet unit** possessing both form and content (sound/orthographic form and meaning)
 - ◆ The basic unit of the language system, **the largest on the morphologic and the smallest on the syntactic plane** of linguistic analysis;
 - ◆ A **structural and semantic entity** within the language system
 - ◆ A vocabulary unit **used for naming a thing** (we deal with names of actions, objects, qualities, etc.)
 - ◆ A unit of speech which **serves the purposes of human communication** (a unit of communication)
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The Word Structure

- ◆ **External** = the word's morphological structure (morphemes constituting a word are to be singled out)
 - ◆ **Internal** = the word's semantic structure / meaning (the main aspect of the word due to which the word serves the purposes of communication)
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The Word

- ◆ When used in actual speech, the word undergoes certain modifications and functions in one of its forms;
- ◆ The system showing a word in all its forms is called the word **paradigm**.

The Paradigm

- ◆ The **lexical meaning** of a word is **the same** throughout the paradigm (all the word forms of the same word are lexically identical)
- ◆ The **grammatical meaning varies** from one form to another:
- ◆ Take (inf) – takes (present 3d person singular) – took (past) – taking (present participle / gerund) – taken (past participle)
- ◆ Singer (singular) – singers (plural) – singer's (singular possessive) – singers' (plural possessive)

What are the basic approaches to the paradigm?

- ◆ As a system of forms of one word it reveals the differences and relationships between them:

Take (inf) – takes (present 3d person singular) – took (past) – taking (present participle / gerund) – taken (past participle)

What are the basic approaches to the paradigm?

- ◆ In abstraction from concrete words it is treated as a pattern on which every word of one part of speech models its forms, thus serving to distinguish one part of speech from another:
- ◆ Works, plays, skates / worked, played, skate / working, playing, skating (-s, -ed, -ing) are verbs;
- ◆ Girls, friends, ships / girl's, friend's, ship's / girls', friends', ships' (-s, -'s, -s') are nouns.

What are the basic approaches to the paradigm?

- ◆ The paradigm or rather **the paradigmatic approach** is also to be considered in respect to the word meaning;
- ◆ From this angle, **on the paradigmatic level**, the word is studied **in its relationships with other words** in the vocabulary system.

Semantics: Paradigmatic Approach

- ◆ A word is studied in comparison with other words of similar meaning (**ideographic synonyms**): look – stare – gaze – glance, etc.
- ◆ A word is studied in comparison with other words of opposite meaning (**antonyms**): busy – idle, heavy – light, accept – reject, etc.
- ◆ A word is studied in comparison with words of different stylistic characteristics (**stylistic synonyms**): man (neutral) – chap (colloquial) – bloke (colloquial/slang), etc.
- ◆ A word is studied in comparison with words describing the same system of objects (**words of the same semantic set**): table – chair – sofa – cupboard, etc.
- ◆ A word is studied in comparison with words sharing the root morpheme (**conjugate words / words of the same cluster**): head – headless – behead – header – headache, etc.

Paradigmatic Approach vs Syntagmatic Approach

- ◆ **On the syntagmatic level**, the semantic structure of a word is analyzed in its linear relationships with neighbouring words in connected speech, i.e. the semantic characteristics of the word are observed on the basis of its typical contexts.

What is a word variant?

- ◆ Word variants are lexical varieties different from word forms:
 - Lexico-semantic variants
 - Phonetic and morphological variants


Lexico-semantic variant

- ◆ A word in one of its meanings (appearing in actual speech):
- ◆ **Brain, n**
- ◆ *He suffers from a serious **brain** disease* (the organ of the body in the upper part of the head which controls thought, feeling and physical activity)
- ◆ *It takes **brains** to think of something like *that!** (the ability to think clearly, intelligence)
- ◆ *Some of the best **brains** in the country are working on this project* (a person with a very good mind)

Phonetic and morphological variants

- ◆ Phonetic variants are pronouncing variants of words:
 - ◆ Often [ˈo:fn] / [ˈoftən]
 - ◆ Again [əˈgeɪn] / [əˈgen]
- ◆ Morphological variants are coexisting morphological forms of a word:
 - ◆ Learn – learned / learnt
 - ◆ Geologic / geological, phonetic – phonetical, etc.

The Word

- ◆ Word-forms and variants are identified in the process of communication as making up one and the same word;
 - ◆ Thus, within the language system the word exists as a system and unity of all its forms and variants.
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Aspects of Lexicological Analysis

- ◆ Modern English Lexicology investigates
 - the problems of word structure and word formation in modern English
 - the semantic structure of English words
 - the main principles underlying the classification of vocabulary units
 - the laws governing the replenishment of the vocabulary with new vocabulary units

Aspects of Lexicological Analysis

- ◆ It has become a tradition to include in the course a section dealing with Lexicography, i.e. the theory and practice of dictionary making.

Popular Sayings about Words

- ◆ *There is nothing more powerful than the word* (Menander)
- ◆ *I am not so lost in lexicography as to forget that words are the daughters of earth, and that things are the sons of heaven* (Samuel Johnson)
- ◆ *The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug /светлячок/* (Mark Twain)
- ◆ *A word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged; it is the skin of a living thought, and may vary greatly in color and content according to the circumstances and the time in which it is used* (Oliver Wendell Holmes)

**Thank you for your
attention!**

