

# Lexicology

**Lecture 1. The subject matter of  
Lexicology and its main problems**

# Outline of the lecture:

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- 1. Lexicology as a linguistic science.**
- 2. Branches of lexicology**
- 3. The Main Lexicological Problems**

# Lexicology aims at

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- giving systematic descriptions of the word-stock of ME,
- Investigating:
  - the problems of word-structure and word-formation,
  - the semantic structure of words,

- the main principles of the classification of vocabulary units into various groupings,
- the relations existing between various layers of the English vocabulary,
- the laws governing the replenishment (enrichment) of the vocabulary, the changes it has undergone in its history.

## 2. Branches of lexicology

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- **general lexicology**
- **special lexicology**
- **contrastive lexicology**
- **historical lexicology (or etymology)**
- **descriptive lexicology**

### 3. The Main Lexicological Problems

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The 1st problem is **the problem of the definition of the notion “word”**.

The word has been defined:

- Syntactically (Henry Sweet; Leonard Bloomfield)
- Phonologically (Alan Gardiner)
- Semantically (Stephen Ullman)
- By combining various approaches (V.V. Vinogradov, A.I. Smirnitsky, M.D. Stepanova)

*The word is*

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*a speech unit used for the purposes  
of a human communication,  
materially representing a group of  
sound possessing a meaning  
susceptible to grammatical  
employment and characterised by  
formal and semantic unity.*

# The internal and external structure of a word

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- The external structure of the word (*morphological*)
- For example, *post-impressionists*: the prefixes **post-**, **im-**, the root **press**, the noun-forming suffixes **-ion**, **-ist**, and the grammatical suffix of plurality **-s**.

- The internal structure of the word (*semantic*)  
This is certainly the word's main aspect.



# Syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations of lexical units

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- On the syntagmatic level, the semantic structure of the word is analysed in its linear relationships with neighbouring words in connected speech.
- *Ex. In the phrase “a hat on her head” the noun “head” means “part of the body” whereas in the phrase “head of the department” the word “head” means “chief”.*

# On the paradigmatic level,

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the word is studied in its relationships with other words in the vocabulary system.

A word may be studied in comparison with other words

of similar meaning (e. g. *work*, n. — *labour*, n.;  
*to refuse*, v. — *to reject* v. — *to decline*, v.),

of opposite meaning (e. g. *busy*, adj. — *idle*,  
adj.; *to accept*, v, — *to reject*, v.),

of different stylistic characteristics (e. g. *man*, n.  
— *chap*, n. — *bloke*, n. — *guy*, n.).

# The study of the vocabulary of a language as a system

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- *synchronically*, that is, at a given stage of its development,
- or *diachronically*, that is, in the context of the processes through which it grew, developed and acquired its modern form.

# Paradigm

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- The lexical meaning (the same throughout the paradigm)
- The grammatical meaning (varies from one form to another)
- Ex. *His brother is a well-known singer.*  
*I wonder who has taken my umbrella.*