

Lexicology as a Branch of Linguistics. Lexical Units

Introduction



Lexicology as a Branch of Linguistics

1. Lexicology: central terms
2. Parts and areas of lexicology
3. Two approaches to language study
4. Lexical units
5. Varieties of words

Etymology of the word 'lexicology'

2 Greek morphemes:

lexis - 'word, phrase' ;

logos - 'learning, a department of knowledge'.

The literal meaning of the term «lexicology» is 'the science of the word'.

I. Lexicology: central terms

1. Lexicology – a branch of linguistics dealing with different properties of words and the vocabulary of a language.
2. Word - the basic unit of a language resulting from the association of a particular meaning with a particular group of sounds capable of a particular grammatical employment.
3. Vocabulary - the system formed by the total sum of all the words that the language possesses.

II. Parts of Lexicology

1. General Lexicology - the study of vocabulary irrespective of the specific features of any particular language.
3. Special Lexicology - the Lexicology of a particular language (English, Russian, etc.), i.e. the study and description of its vocabulary and vocabulary units.

Areas of Lexicology

1. Historical Lexicology.
2. Descriptive Lexicology.
3. Comparative Lexicology.
4. Contrastive Lexicology.
5. Combinatorial Lexicology.
6. Applied Lexicology.

Functional Approach

stands out as describing how words are used in discourse to provide and support meaningful communication.



Modern English Lexicology aimed at giving systematic description of the word-stock of Modern English

- ▶ Words, morphemes and various types of word-groups are subjected to structural and semantic analysis primarily from the synchronic angle.
- ▶ Modern English Lexicology investigates:
 1. the problems of word-structure and word-formation in Modern English;
 2. the semantic structure of English words;
 3. the main principles underlying the classification of vocabulary units into various groupings;
 4. the laws governing the replenishment of the vocabulary with new vocabulary units.

Modern English Lexicology studies:

- ▶ the relations between various layers of the English vocabulary;
- ▶ the specific laws and regulations that govern its development at the present time,
- ▶ the source and growth of the English vocabulary;
- ▶ the changes it has undergone in its history are also dwelt upon.
- ▶ **Lexicography** is the science and art of dictionary-compiling, is traditionally included in a course of Lexicology.

Modern English Lexicology studies:

1. Semasiology.
2. Word-Structure.
3. Word-Formation.
4. Etymology of the English Word-Stock.
5. Word-groups.
6. Phraseology.
7. Variants of the English Language.
8. Lexicography.

III. Two Approaches to Language Study

- ▶ The **synchronic (descriptive) approach** is concerned with the vocabulary of a language as it exists at a given time or at the present time.
- ▶ The **diachronic (historical) approach** refers to *Historical Lexicology* that deals with the evolution of the vocabulary units of a language over time.

to beg & beggar

Descriptive lexicology

- ▶ Synchronically, these words are related as a simple word (*to beg*) and a derived word (*beggar*). The noun *beggar* is derived from the verb *to beg* by means of the suffix **-ar**.

Historical lexicology

- ▶ Diachronically we learn that the noun *beggar* was borrowed from Old French and the verb *to beg* appeared in the English language as a result of back derivation – the formation of a word from the stem (base) of another word, by means of cutting off suffixes (prefixes) from the source word, i.e. it was derived from the noun *beggar*.

IV. Lexical Units

1. **Morphemes** - the smallest indivisible two-facet language unit: *stress-ful*
2. **Word** - the basic unit of language system;
3. **Word-group** - the largest two-facet lexical unit comprising more than one word: *a high tree*
4. **Phraseological unit** – the group of words whose combination is integrated as a unit with a specialised meaning of the whole: *a red tape.*

1. *flower, wall, taxi* – **words** denoting objects of the outer world;
2. *Black frost* - 'frost without snow',
red tape - 'bureaucratic methods',
a skeleton in the cupboard – 'a fact of which a family is ashamed and which it tries to hide' - **phraseological units**

V. Varieties of Words

The **word** –

a two-facet unit possessing both form and content = soundform and meaning.

Neither can exist without the other.

Paradigm - the system showing a word in all its word-forms.

► **Word-forms** - grammatical forms of words:

e.g. *take, takes, took, taking, taken;*

e.g. *singer, singer's, singers, singers'.*

*I wonder who has **taken** my umbrella. His brother is a well-known **singer**.*

Variants of Words

Group One

Lexical varieties - **lexico-semantic variant** –
the word in one of its meanings.

e.g. *green*

LSV1 - colour of grass;

LSV2 - not ready to be eaten;

LSV3 - not experienced;

LSV4 - made of green leaves of vegetables;
etc.

Variants of Words

Group Two

1. **phonetic variants:**

often [ˈO:fn] and [ˈO:fn];
again [əˈgein] and [əˈgen].

2. **morphological variants:**

learned [-d] and *learnt* [-t];
geologic – *geological*, etc.

Conclusion

1. A slight change in the morphemic or phonemic composition of a word is not connected with any modification of its meaning.
2. A change in meaning is not followed by any structural changes, either morphemic or phonemic.
3. Like word-forms variants of words are identified in the process of communication as making up one and the same word.
4. Within the language system the word exists as a system and unity of all its forms and variants.

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