

# 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:fn̩];  
*again* [əˈgeɪn] 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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