



# Lexicology of English

(lectures and exercises  
for part-time students)



# **What Lexicology is about (The Object of Lexicology)**

Lecture 1.

## § 1. Aspects of Study

**Lexicology** (of Greek origin: **lexis** «word» + **logos** «learning») is the part of linguistics dealing with **the vocabulary** of the language and **the properties of words** as the main units of language.

**The word** is the basic unit of the lexical system of a language resulting from **the association of a particular meaning with a particular group of sounds capable of a particular grammatical employment.**

The term **vocabulary** is used to denote the system formed by the sum total of all the **words and word equivalents** that the language possesses.

English has the greatest vocabulary of all (≈2700) languages – **about 1 mln words** (according to the estimate of Global Language Monitor made in 2006)

Spanish – 225,000

German – 200,000

Russian – 125,000

French – 100,000

# Lexeme as an object of lexicology

**A lexeme** is a unit of lexical meaning, which exists regardless of any inflectional endings it may have or the number of words it may contain.

- ***to read, have read, is reading, reads*** are forms of one and the same lexeme
- **to read** as 1) **understand something intuitively** (*to be able to read the future*)  
2) **interpret written material and utter written words**  
3) **give particular interpretation to something** (I read this passage as being extremely optimistic), etc.  
are variants of one and the same lexeme
- ***to read between lines*** is a set expression, semantically equivalent to a word and is a lexeme

## § 2. Branches of Lexicology

**Semantics** – studies meanings, in terms of their types, relation to the form, means of change and analysis.

*How can a word have several meanings?*

*What are the components of word-meaning?*

*What's **contextual** meaning of a word and where does it come from?*

*What's the difference between **fashion** and **style**?*

**Word-formation** - the study of the morphology of the word, or the parts of a word, and the patterns on which a language builds new words.

*What's the difference between **puzzled** and **puzzling**? **excited** and **exciting**?*

*What does **educationalist** mean?*

*What's the difference between **selected**, **selective** and **select**?*

**Phraseology** – studies set phrases that are word equivalents.

*Can we say once in a green moon on analogy with once in a blue moon?*

*What's the difference between **small talk** and **big talk**?*

**Etymology** - discovers earlier, «true», meanings of words and their origin

*80% of English words is foreign-born, but native words form its core and are used more often*

**Cuisine, cotton, sugar, sofa, phenomenon, kindergarten, hamburger, seminar, piano, yacht**

**Lexicography** - dictionary making, deals with words, their meaning and vocabulary structure.

*Types of dictionaries*

*Type of information offered and its order*

# Course structure



## **Part 1. Word as the basic unit of language**

1/2. The object of lexicology.

Word as the basic unit of language

3/4. Word-meaning: semantic triangle, types of meaning, connotations.

Word-meaning analysis: contextual and componential.  
Combinability. Polysemy.

5/6. Word-formation: morphological structure and its analysis

Main types: derivation and types of morphemes.

7/8. Main types: composition and conversion

Minor types of word-formation.

9/10. Phraseology

## **Part 2. Vocabulary as a system.**

11/12. Semantic word groups: synonyms, homonyms, antonyms

Morphological and lexico-grammatical groups. Semantic fields.

13/14. Stylistic groups. Word-origin groups.

15/16. Regional varieties: British, American and Australian English

17/18. Lexicography



### § 3. Theoretical and practical value of lexicology

- The theoretical value of lexicology - it forms **the study of one of the three main aspects of language**, i.e. its vocabulary, the other two being its grammar and sound system (+stylistics).
- It is particularly useful in **building up the learner's vocabulary** by an effective selection, grouping and analysis of new words. New words are better remembered if they are given not at random but organized in thematic groups, word-families, synonymic series, etc.
- A working knowledge and understanding of **functional styles** and stylistical synonyms is important when literary texts are used as a basis for acquiring oral skills, discussing and translation.
- A good knowledge of the system of word-formation is a tool helping the student **to guess and retain in his memory the meaning of new words** on the basis of their motivation and by comparing and contrasting them with the previously learned elements and patterns.

immovable  
deforestation  
miscalculate

'that cannot be moved'  
'clearing land from forests'  
'to calculate wrongly'.



# Practical tasks # 1

## 1. Lexicology studies the difference between:

- A) leak and lick
- B) be, was and are
- C) tell, speak, say and talk

## 2. Which is not a lexicological issue:

- A) characteristic features of scientific functional style
- B) types of meanings reflected in the dictionaries
- C) how many morphemes are there in the word “expert”?

## 3. Which branch of lexicology studies phenomena used in the jokes below?

**Match with etymology, word-formation, semantics**

- A) **Syntax** is the money collected at the church from sinners; **canteen** = capable young adult
- B) Jane couldn't sleep since **ignorance** of Tarzan's snoring was impossible.
- C) Customer: Do you serve crabs here?  
Waiter: We serve anyone – sit down.