

LEXICOLOGY AND ITS BRANCHES

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Abstract: Linguistics—the scientific study of human language—is a dynamic and interdisciplinary field that influences diverse areas including education, anthropology, sociology, language teaching, cognitive psychology, philosophy, computer science, neuroscience, and artificial intelligence. Together with these latter disciplines, linguistics plays a foundational role in cognitive science, which explores the structure and function of human cognition. Despite its importance, many—even among the educated—have only a vague understanding of what linguistics entails. Some mistakenly equate linguists with multilingual individuals. In reality, linguistics examines the nature of language and communication. Humans have long been intrigued by language, yet we are still uncovering its complex mechanisms.

Keywords: general lexicology, special lexicology, semantics, semasiology, word formation, idiom, morpheme.

Introduction

Lexicology, the study of vocabulary and word systems, is deeply intertwined with all other components of language. These components, though often examined separately, function as interconnected elements within communication.

Lexicology has several branches. *General lexicology* investigates vocabulary and word structure across all languages, focusing on universal linguistic principles. *Special lexicology* examines the vocabulary of a particular language, while *contrastive lexicology* compares vocabularies across languages, revealing cross-linguistic similarities and differences. Subfields like etymology, semasiology, and onomasiology further enrich our understanding of vocabulary.

Historical lexicology (or etymology) studies the origin, evolution, and changes in words over time, exploring how internal and external factors influence word structure and meaning.

A “word” is the smallest independent unit of language that conveys meaning and can function as a complete utterance (Hajiyeva, 2011). Lexicology also studies morphemes, phraseological units, and word groups using specific methods and objectives.

Lexicology intersects with other linguistic disciplines such as phonetics, grammar, stylistics, semantics, sociolinguistics, and lexicography. Though each field focuses on a specific aspect of language, they are all interdependent in actual language use and must ultimately be synthesized to fully understand language as a system.

Lexicography—the practice of dictionary compilation—aims to systematically collect and define the words and phrases of a language. It plays a key role in promoting linguistic competence and language culture. A well-developed vocabulary enables clear, structured communication, whereas a limited vocabulary may hinder thought expression and mutual understanding (Jafarov, 2007).

Phonetics analyzes the sound structure of words and helps distinguish meanings: e.g., “pit” vs. “tip”. Though phonemes lack meaning individually, they build morphemes, the smallest units carrying meaning.

Onomasiology studies how concepts are named in a language, often contributing to the study of dialects and synonymy.

Descriptive lexicology examines the vocabulary of a language at a particular time, focusing on the form and function of words within the system. In English, it explores both morphological and semantic structures, as well as their interrelations.

Stress also differentiates word meanings: e.g., *import* (noun) vs. *import* (verb).

Lexicology is linked to grammar since words rarely appear in isolation. Meaningful communication emerges through grammatically structured combinations. Every word belongs to a grammatical class and takes forms that may influence its lexical meaning. The morpheme, central to morphology, is also essential in lexicology as the building block of words (Pereyma, 2020).

Linguo-stylistics overlaps with lexicology when examining expressive and emotional word usage. While stylistics focuses on contextual function, lexicology investigates how meanings evolve.

The main subject of lexicology is the word: its literal and figurative meanings, stylistic nuance, origin, synonymy, and antonymy. Azerbaijani lexicology, for example, can be studied both synchronically (present state) and diachronically (historical evolution). Synchrony is often preferred for clarity, but diachronic studies provide valuable historical insights.

Lexicology explores the systematic and dynamic nature of vocabulary—its internal logic, interrelations, and semantic links. The Azerbaijani language, like any language, has a complex and evolving lexicon shaped by both linguistic and cultural forces (Hasanov, 2005).

General lexicology focuses on language universals—shared features across languages. In contrast, *special lexicology* studies a specific language's vocabulary. In this course, for example, we explore modern English vocabulary both synchronically and diachronically.

Semantics (or semasiology) investigates meaning development, including etymology and stylistic variation. Onomasiology, meanwhile, studies naming patterns.

Together, they contribute to understanding the systemic relationships among lexical units and how meaning is constructed.

Lexicology does not isolate words but examines them within their broader lexical networks. It addresses relationships such as synonymy, antonymy, and word formation. A core challenge is defining the word's status as an independent linguistic unit.

Conclusion

Lexicology formulates principles for vocabulary use, growth, and classification. It considers variation across colloquial, literary, professional, dialectal, and historical usage, as well as neologisms and archaisms. As a foundational field in linguistics, lexicology supports all aspects of mastering a language.

Although English has an expansive vocabulary, its relevance lies in its continued use as the world's most widely spoken language. Lexicology provides the tools to study and understand this vocabulary systematically, bridging the domains of morphology, grammar, and semantics.

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