

First Lecture: Lexicology as a Field of Linguistics

Lexicology and Morphology

The discipline of lexicology (from Greek *lexis* , " word " and *logos* , " learning ") deals with a language's vocabulary and the properties of words as the main units of that language . In this context , vocabulary refers to the system of words , equivalents , and synonyms comprised within a particular language . The word is a fundamental unit of a language , which is formed by associating a meaning with a group of sounds capable of performing a particular function . Lexicology is concerned with words , their morphemic structures , histories and meanings . Morphology and syntax display how vocabulary and grammar interact . The grammar represents the lexical sense of a word and the ability to combine words in human speech . The grammatical context in which the word occurs , in turn , indicates the word's lexical meaning . Therefore , morphological indicators can distinguish between the various meanings of a word (e.g. , plural forms that indicate a special lexical meaning , such as colors , customs , etc . ; two kinds of pluralization : brother brother - brothers ; cloth cloths - clothes) (Lectures of Lexicology , n.d.)

Studying *lexis* allows one to gain an in - depth and more thorough understanding of the entire language system . The study of lexicology allows us to gain insight into the formation of words as well as the structure and semantics of language on a large scale , such as the patterns we adopt in conventional discourse . Lexical items are thought to be building blocks for creating coherent , meaningful expressions and sentences in a language . In this way , lexicology could offer insight into conventional semantic and structural patterns encountered or produced by typical language users . Studying morphology , we can observe how words with prefixes such as " anti- " , " un- " , " in- " and " dis- " (e.g. undemocratic , inconsolable , disloyal) assert negation or rejection of a particular entity or quality , although not necessarily negative in meaning . If the suffix " -ly " is present , the reader typically understands that the word is an adverb , one that is used in

conjunction with a verb in a sentence. The examples above show how lexis can be used to identify linguistic conventions, which in turn allow speakers to use the language more effectively. (Mah, 2012, p:2)

Lexicology and Semantics

A lexicology definition must include two basic principles: Lexis (words or vocabulary) and meaning, which must be in its own right defined. Lexicology, therefore, is today identified with the study of the meaning in a language's words. Hence, the problem with lexicology is defining what the lexis of a language is, under what perspective it is to be studied, and what aspect you should look for in studying it. Taking these considerations into account, it can be argued that the study of meaning (whether you call it lexicology or lexematics) is an autonomous discipline in itself. It follows, then, that the study of a language's vocabulary, that is, of its lexical units, must address two objects: words on one hand, and meaning on the other. Both of these objects are complex enough that you must first define them separately before you begin to define lexicology. The two objects should however be discussed separately and from their own perspective (Castillo, 2012, p.8)

A semantic study focuses on understanding the meaning of words in general. Semantics can generally be identified with the following disciplines (Castillo, 2012, pp. 9):

- a) In linguistics, semantics is the study of meanings, meanings, denotations, connotations, implications, and ambiguities of words, phrases, and sentences. It is possible to study words and meanings at different levels of analysis of language: phonological, grammatical (morphological and syntactic), and semantic.
- b) Philosophy, the study of logical expressions and the principles that determine whether a statement is true or false.
- c) Semiotics, the study of signs and meanings they convey, as well as how speakers respond to them.
- d) General use. Semantics is of interest in general use, that is, to define words intuitively, because they encompass meanings such as denotation, connotation, implications, and ambiguities.

Thus, semantics refers to the general lexical structure of a language, and not its specifics. Language science, which studies the lexis of a language, requires that meanings and words are defined on their own terms, without taking them for granted.

Lexicology Vs Phonetics and Phonology

Language in its many branches - and Lexicology is no exception - has developed its own methods of investigation that are shaped by the aims and perspectives of the particular investigation field. It is impossible to isolate one area of linguistic study from another. The data obtained from one field of specialization help explain the phenomena studied in the other field. All of these cases have language as their object of investigation (Girunyan, 2009, p:11).

There is a connection between lexicology and phonetics, since every word has a sound form that comes from phonemes or allophones (variant forms of phonemes). As phonemes have no meaning of their own, they serve to distinguish words from one another, e.g. [laik], [leik], [luk], [læk], [lʌk], [li:k]. In addition, the order in which the phonemes are pronounced in a word affects its meaning, such as [tip] and [pit], [bæk] and [kæb], [naut] and [taun], etc. Different meanings can also be conveyed by super segmental phonetic elements, e.g. ['fri:kwənt], an adjective and [fri'kwent] a verb. (Mateshvili, p:4)

It is therefore important to analyze the phonetic characteristics of a word (quality, stress, order, etc.) when defining its meaning. The connection between Phonology and Lexicology is evident in this manner (Girunyan, 2009, p.11)

As an example, showing the connection between the pronunciation and spelling of two words as well as their meanings (Girunyan, 2009, p. 11) can be illustrated by considering the pair hop/hope, bun/barn (covered building for storing hay, grain, etc. on a farm).

Any English speaker knows that the sounds [dɪ] and [θɪ] never appear at the beginning of a word in English, and the sound [h] is rarely found at the end. There is a good deal of evidence that long vowels and diphthongs do not precede the final [ŋ] in English; [e, æ] do not appear in the final place of a word; [ŋ] does not appear at the beginning of a word; such initial sequences as fs, mh, stl, or spw are

unknown. Girunyan (2009) points out that lexicologists should not overlook these linguistic regularities in English (p.12).

Lexicology and syntax

Among the linguistic disciplines with which Lexicology shares a common sphere of concern is Grammar. In order to differentiate words according to their meaning, grammatical forms are essential. For example, the word custom means 'A way of behaving long established in society' whereas Customs, its capitalized plural form, stands for 'a government department that collects import duties'; the adjective empty and verb empty both mean something different even when combined with the same noun basket - 'the empty basket' and 'emptying the basket'. Examples such as these illustrate the need for knowledge of Grammar when defining the meanings of words and their usual collocations (Girunyan, 2009, p.12).

Lexicology and grammar are closely related, according to Mateshvili (n.d.):

- 1-Words are classified by their part of speech (lexico-grammatical groups).
- 2-The function of words in speech is expressed by one of their grammatical forms, for example, 'These girls are prettier than their mother.' 'Her brothers studied at Oxford and Cambridge Universities.' The grammatical forms present in a sentence convey certain relations between their meanings and the things they stand for.
- 3 -Some grammatical forms may become lexicalized, for example, the words manner and manners: 'During his lifetime he painted his pictures in three different manners' and 'She has bad manners' because her behavior is not cultivated
- 4 - Alternatively, grammatically equivalent word-forms (e.g. plurals of some nouns) can have very different lexical meanings. For example, brothers and brethren are both plural forms of the noun brother, but brethren refer to 'members of a special society or a religious community'.

References

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