Fourth Lecture: The Nature of Words

Lexeme and Lexical Item

A lexeme is the fundamental unit of a language's lexicon (or word stock) in linguistics . A lexical unit , lexical item , or lexical word are all terms for the same thing . Lemmas are a term used in corpus linguistics to refer to lexemes (Nordquist , 2019)

A lexeme is usually , but not always , a single word (also known as a simple lexeme or dictionary word) . A single dictionary term (such as chat) may have several inflectional forms or grammatical variants (in this example , talks , talked , talking) . A phrasal verb (e.g. , speak up ; pull through) , an open compound (fire engine ; couch potato) , or an idiom are examples of multiword (or composite) lexemes (throw in the towel ; give up the ghost) . The word class or grammatical category of a lexeme determines how it can be employed in a sentence (Nordquist , 2019)

It's a lexical meaning unit that exists independent of how many inflectional ends it has or how many words it contains . Fibrillate , rain cats and dogs , and come in , as well as elephant , jog , cholesterol , happiness , put up with , face the music , and hundreds of thousands of other meaningful items in English , are all lexemes . A dictionary's headwords are all lexemes . It's a linguistic item with the following specifications that make up what's known as the lexical entry for this item : Its sound form and spelling (for languages with a written standard) ; the lexeme's grammatical category (noun , intransitive verb , adjective , etc.) ; its inherent grammatical properties (for some languages , e.g. gender) ; the set of grammatical forms it can take , especially irregular forms ; and its lexical meaning . Both basic and compound lexemes are covered by these guidelines (Nordquist , 2019)

Definitions are attempts to characterize the ' meaning ' or sense of a lexeme and to distinguish it from the meanings of other lexemes in the same semantic

field, such as the 'elephant' from the meanings of other large mammals. A definition characterizes the 'potential' meaning of a lexeme in some ways; the meaning becomes exact only when it is actualized in a context. Because the differentiation of a lexeme's meaning into senses is predicated on the change of meaning experienced in different circumstances, lexicography is torn between the recognition of distinct senses and the potentiality of meaning found in definitions. This could account for a major part of the variance in the number of senses recorded and, as a result, differences in definition amongst dictionaries of similar size (Nordquist, 2019)

In many circumstances, it doesn't matter whether we look at things from a syntactic or lexical standpoint. Invariable lexicemes, such as 'and' and, have only one word that corresponds to them. Lexemes like efficiently are also invariable: while more efficiently is tougher in some ways, it is not a single word, but a sequence of two, and therefore efficiently and more efficiently are separate forms of the same lexeme. Variable lexemes, on the other hand, can take two or more forms. We shall use bold italics to indicate that we are considering an item as a lexeme rather than a word. Hard, for example, is a lexeme that has the forms hard and harder—as well as hardest. Similarly, are and is, as well as be, been, being, and other forms of the lexeme be, are all forms of the lexeme be. A variable lexeme is a word-sized lexical item that has grammatical features that differ depending on the syntactic construction in which it appears (Nordquist, 2019)

A lexical item, on the other hand, is the smallest unit that a Linguistic Agent can utilize to create a Linguistic Expression. A Part-of-Speech Role must be assigned to it. It can be anything from a Lexemes (a word meaning with word paradigms) to an Interjection Word like "Ummmm" or "You know." It can be anything from a Content Word (one that conveys meaning) to a Function Word (performing a grammatical function). It might be anything from a Derived Word to an Inflected Word to a Contracted Word. It might be anything from a Simple to a (Morphologically) Complex Word. It could be an Unsegmented Terminal Word, for example (Lexical Item, 2022)

A Lexical Item Referencer, such as a Word Mention (inside a linguistic phrase) or a lexical item record, can refer to it (e.g. in a lexical database). One or more

Word Spellings and one or more Word Pronunciations can be found in a lexical item.

Within a Linguistic Expression, it can be moved, for example, the mice-ridden house is for sale => the house is for sale and infested with mice. It has only one main Phonetic Stress and can be strained. It can be used in the middle of two other words. It may belong to a Lexical Item Cluster (such as a lexicon). A Lexical Definition Item can be used to express it. It can be used as a source of data for a Lexical Mapping Model (Lexical Item, 2022), Consider the following example:

"the" (a Determiner and the most frequently used lexical word in the English language).

"man" (a Common Noun and the most frequently used common noun in the English language).

"in" (a Preposition).

Lexical and Grammatical (Functional) Words

Words are divided into two categories: functional/grammatical words and lexical/content words. Functional, or grammatical, words are those whose meaning is difficult to define but which provide a grammatical role in the phrase. Take, for example, its role is straightforward: it is the definite article. It clarifies things (indicates that you're discussing a specific instance of whatever follows). Or could - it's difficult to put into words what it means, but its function is evident. Prepositions such as on, at, and if are also useful. We can't easily add new functional words because they're a closed class (Functional and lexical words, 2012)

Lexical terms, on the other hand, have obvious meanings that you could describe to someone: cat, armchair, toilet-brush, and velociraptor, to name a few. They're all nouns as well, which are a form of lexical word. Fly, arrange, and steal are examples of lexical verbs. Lexical words are an open class, and we can make them up as we go along, using whatever word-formation rules we can come up with. Anyone now has the ability to create a new word by simply nouning a verb or adding -ify to something (Functional and lexical words, 2012)

Lewis Carroll invents a slew of gibberish phrases in The Jabberwocky. However, each and every one of them is a lexical word. No one would be able to grasp the poetry as well if they weren't. In the first verse, the gibberish words are bolded, and the reader may readily interpret them as nouns, adjectives, and verbs (which are all generally lexical). All of the English terms are functional (Functional and lexical words, 2012)

The slithy toves were brillig.

The borogoves were all mimsy, and the mome raths outgrabe, as they gyre and gimbled in the wabe.

We understand it because, while not knowing what the foreign words signify, we can recognize them as part of a sentence. Slithy is an adjective, while toves is a noun, as we can see. How? A definite article appears just before that phrase, and we know that in English, a definite article appears at the beginning of a noun phrase. We expect it to appear with a noun at the conclusion of the sentence, and if there is another word in there, we expect it to be an adjective that comes before the noun. We also know that nouns can end in -s for plural, as in tove-s, and adjectives can finish in -y, as in slith-y (Functional and lexical words, 2012)

Because function words provide sentence structure, converting them to nonsense syllables leaves you in the dark. You've got a string of words, some of which you understand lexically but have no idea how they fit together (Functional and lexical words, 2012)

Word Classes

Differentiation between word classes is an example of one of the most fundamental properties of human cognition: grouping people, objects, and even more abstract entities like words, based on shared characteristics (categorization). The ten word classes are traditionally distinguished as follows: verb (sit, go, read, etc.), noun (dog, tree, table, etc.), adjective (blue, cheap, nice, etc.), adverb (here, today, well, often; more on adverbs below), preposition (in, on, below, before, after, etc.), two numeral (one, two, etc.), article (the, a/an), pronoun (you, they; someone, anybody; who (shh, oh no, phew, hey, hmm, etc.). This categorization is, however, skewed toward word classes in common European languages, and various typological investigations have urged that the

above-mentioned standard set of categories be altered to account for specific word classes reported in other, sometimes more 'exotic' languages (Rijkhoff, 2007)

The term 'word class' has two meanings. It encompasses both grammatical and lexical word classes in the broad sense, but only lexical word categories in the narrow sense. The focus of this article is on lexical word classes in various languages around the world (parts-of-speech systems). Words that belong to a grammatical word class (also known as "function words" or "empty words") have little or no discernible meaning and are part of a small, closed paradigm (i.e. there are few other words that belong to the same word class). Grammatical terms include articles, numerous types of pronouns, and conjunctions (Rijkhoff, 2007).

According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, the grammatical term 'article' is a word used before a noun to indicate whether the noun refers to a specific example of something or a general example of something. The definite article in English is 'the,' while the indefinite articles are 'a' and 'an.' Lexical words, on the other hand, have a defined semantic content (hence the term "content words") and often belong to an open word class, which means that the number of words in a lexical word class is not fixed. Verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs are the four major lexical word classes in English. In the following sentence, all main lexical word classes are represented (Rijkhoff, 2007):

The Brazilian (Adj) student (N) put in a lot of effort (Adv).

As the definition of the noun 'tree' demonstrates, lexical words may have many meanings (senses). 1. a tall plant with branches and leaves that can thrive for many years; 2. a graphic that uses lines to connect objects to demonstrate how they are related (Rijkhoff, 2007).

Productive and Receptive Vocabulary

When learners read or listen to a text, they are aware of and understand the meaning of receptive vocabulary. Learners grasp and recognize the meaning of terms that helped them comprehend the material they read but haven't utilized to speak or write. Learning receptive vocabulary is usually done in the manner of the teacher explaining the definition of the word and using it in a sentence, but

simply asking the students to spell and pronounce the term (Maskor & Baharudin, 2016).

Learners are regarded to have productive vocabulary knowledge if they can understand and pronounce the words. In reality, students can effectively employ these words in both speech and writing. As a result, productive vocabulary can be considered an active word process since learners can develop words to describe their thoughts and feelings that are understood by others. The ability to recover the structure and meaning of a term, or to pass it on in the original learners' language, is considered productive vocabulary knowledge. Laufer (1998, as cited in Maskor & Baharudin, 2016).) divides knowledge into two categories: productive vocabulary and free vocabulary. Controlled productive vocabulary knowledge refers to the ability to construct words when given a cue, whereas free productive vocabulary knowledge refers to the ability to utilize words spontaneously and without prompting to make specific words, such as writing independently.

Various assumptions regarding the nature of receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge that existed previously between them. Although the researchers provided a variety of responses, this could only be accurate if we consider each facet of language knowledge in a broader context. For example, the capacity to detect spelling in written form may come before the ability to spell correctly, or the ability to recognize and identify the written form may come before the ability to express meaning and use it in the appropriate terms (Maskor & Baharudin, 2016).

On the other hand, before the meaning of the term is grasped, is likely to spell the word correctly (productive vocabulary knowledge in written aspect) or use the correct words with grammar (productive vocabulary knowledge in grammatical function) (receptive vocabulary knowledge in form and meaning). As a result, in order to learn and comprehend productive vocabulary information, it is vital to distinguish between receptive and productive knowledge in all aspects of vocabulary knowledge. It should also be highlighted that the major purpose is to deliver vocabulary learning in the form of communicative communication, either orally or in writing (Maskor & Baharudin, 2016).

Webb (2013) claims that a study of the term receptively only has an impact on the meaning of receptive. The results accounted for receptive and productive

knowledge while learning language in a constructive manner. Both were found to have a strong and mutual link in the growth of vocabulary, particularly in boosting the learners' language efficiency. As a result, when the feature of vocabulary knowledge and its process is understood, teaching and learning vocabulary can optimize and benefit both parties (teachers and learners) (Maskor & Baharudin, 2016).

Vocabulary and the Role of Context

"Contextual vocabulary acquisition" (CVA) is the process of deducing a meaning for a word in a text using textual clues and prior knowledge, such as linguistic knowledge and hypotheses generated through previous encounters with the word, without the use of dictionaries or other people. It is the challenge encountered by anyone who comes across a new term while reading and has no outside source of assistance but needs to figure out what the word means in order to grasp the text (Rapaport, 2003).

Context cues are hints contained inside a sentence, paragraph, or passage that might help a reader figure out what new or unfamiliar words imply. Because a dictionary is not always available when a reader encounters an unknown word, learning the meaning of a word through its use in a phrase or paragraph is the most practical way to increase vocabulary. Many words have multiple meanings, which the reader must be aware of. Only by paying attention to the context in which a term is used can the reader choose a suitable definition for the situation. When an obvious clue to meaning is offered, or when only a general sense of the meaning is required for the reader's aims, the reader should rely on context clues. When a specific meaning is necessary, when clues offer numerous possible definitions, when neighboring words are unfamiliar, and when the unknown word is a common one that will be used again, context clues should not be relied upon; in these circumstances, a dictionary should be consulted (Context Clues, 2005).

Context hints come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Here are a few examples (Context Clues, 2005):

1. Clue to a definition or description The new term might be explicitly defined, or a suitable explanation could be provided inside the sentence or the next sentence. "That is," commas, dashes, and parentheses are all clues to definition.

His emaciation, or skeleton-like look, was terrifying to witness. "Emaciation" is defined as a "skeleton-like look."

2. Examples of hints When a reader comes across a new word, an example may appear adjacent that helps to illustrate its meaning. Example clues are highlighted by words like including, such as, and for example. Piscatorial species like flounder, salmon, and trout, for example, reside in the coldest areas of the ocean. The term "piscatorial" clearly refers to fish.

3. A hint for restatement of a synonym. Because it repeats a notion stated in neighboring familiar terms, the reader may learn the meaning of an unknown word. Words that have the same meaning are called synonyms. - The new Miss America, bathed in spotlights and the center of all attention, began her year-long reign. For the rest of the evening, she was the center of attention. The term "cynosure" refers to "the center of all attention."

The types of Lexicology

Lexicology is separated into numerous types as a separate area of linguistics. To begin with, distinguishing between General or Theoretical Lexicology and Special or Descriptive Lexicology is natural (Lexicology as a branch of linguistics, 2014).

Theoretical or general lexicology is a branch of general linguistics. It is concerned with the study of vocabulary, regardless of the specific qualities of any language's lexicon. Its goal is to provide theoretical conceptions, classifications, and research techniques that may be used to the study of words, word combinations, and vocabularies in all languages. It also recounts the accomplishments of different tongues' lexicologies (Lexicology as a branch of linguistics, 2014).

The study and description of lexical units and vocabulary in a specific language (English, German, and Russian) is known as special or descriptive lexicology. Special lexicology is based on General Lexicology's general theory of vocabulary, conceptions, classifications, and research principles (Lexicology as a branch of linguistics, 2014).

Practical Lexicology is also in opposition to Theoretical Lexicology. The goal of Practical Lexicology for a specific language is to provide a theoretical study of

vocabulary with concrete examples showing the morphological, semantic, word-building, and etymological peculiarities of lexical units of a given language, and to assist teachers in explaining and students in learning these lexical phenomena and developing their lexical skills and enriching their knowledge of vocabularies and private lexicons through special practical exercises (Lexicology as a branch of linguistics, 2014).

The synchronic and diachronic methods to the study of language forms and facts are the two main techniques in linguistic science. Differentiation of lexicological excursions is also done using these methods. It illustrates the distinction between synchronic (Modern) and diachronic (Historical) lexicology (Lexicology as a branch of linguistics, 2014).

Synchronic or Modern Lexicology refers to the current status of a language's word pool as a result of prior growth and modifications.

The process of forming a language lexical system, the origins of its growth, and changes in the structure and semantics of words that occurred in the known history of their existence, that is, their etymology, are all shown in diachronic or historical lexicology (Lexicology as a branch of linguistics, 2014).

In Special Lexicology, the synchronic approach is concerned with a language's vocabulary at a certain point in time, such as right now. It is Special Descriptive Lexicology, which is concerned with the vocabulary and word stock of a certain language at a specific moment. Therefore, A Course in Modern English Lexicology is a course in Special Descriptive Lexicology of the English Language, with the English vocabulary as it exists now as the subject of study (Lexicology as a branch of linguistics, 2014).

In terms of Special Lexicology, the diachronic approach is concerned with the evolution of vocabulary over time. Special Historical Lexicology is concerned with the evolution of a language's lexical system and terms over the course of its documented existence. As a result, the goals of English Historical Lexicology are to uncover the origins, sources, and growth of the English vocabulary, as well as changes and developments in the morphological composition and semantics of English words, as well as linguistic and extralinguistic factors that affect their structure, meaning, and usage throughout the English language's history (Lexicology as a branch of linguistics, 2014).

Comparative Historical or Diachronic Lexicology is closely related to Historical Lexicology. Comparative Historical Lexicology investigates the lexical systems of cognate languages in order to discover the origins of their terms and the principles governing their lexicon growth (Lexicology as a branch of linguistics, 2014).

We also differentiate between Contrastive Descriptive and Synchronic Lexicology. Descriptive Contrastive Lexicology is the study of a language's vocabulary and terms in comparison to the analogous facts of another language or multiple other languages, whether cognate or non-cognate, in order to determine their common characteristics, similarities, and differences (Lexicology as a branch of linguistics, 2014).

There are regional, territorial, and local variations of every language. As a result, Dialectal Lexicology, which investigates lexical dialectisms, can be distinguished. The so-called social lexicology, or Sociolexicology, is one of the most up-to-date disciplines of lexicology. Low colloquialisms, slang, vulgarisms, various types of jargons, argot, cant, lexicons of social and ethnic dialects, such as Negro slang, city patois, such as London Cockney, Liverpool Scouse, contact-language lexicons, such as Pidgin English, and "secret languages," such as Pig Latin of American gangsters, are all studied by sociolexicology (Lexicology as a branch of linguistics, 2014).

There is one more branch of lexicology that has to be highlighted. It's known as Applied Lexicology. Lexicography, translation, linguodidactics, and so-called speech culture are the four domains in which it can be used (Lexicology as a branch of linguistics, 2014).

References

"Context Clues". (2005). Retrieved from
https://www.mdc.edu/kendall/collegeprep/documents2/contextcluesrev8192.pdf. Date of retrieving 19/Feb./2022.

"Functional and lexical words" (2012). Retrieved from
https://linguistlaura.blogspot.com/2012/08/functional-and-lexical-words.html#:~:text=Functional%20words%20are%20a%20closed,you%20could%20describe%20to%20someone. Date of retrieving 19/Feb./2022.

"Lexical Item". (2022). Retrieved from
https://www.gabormelli.com/RKB/Lexical_Item. Date of retrieving 19/Feb./2022.

"Lexicology as a branch of linguistics". (2014). Retrieved from
https://studopedia.su/7_40588_Kinds-of-lexicology.html. Date of retrieving 19/Feb./2022.

Maskor, Z. M., & Baharudin, H. (2016). Receptive Vocabulary Knowledge or Productive Vocabulary Knowledge in Writing Skill, Which One Important? International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 6(11), 261-271 .DOI: 10.6007/IJARBSS/v6-i11/2395

Nordquist, R. (2019). Lexeme (words) Definition, Etymology and Examples. Retrieved from https://www.thoughtco.com/lexeme-words-term-1691225. Date of retrieving 19/Feb./2022.

Rapaport, W. (2003). What Is the "Context" for Contextual Vocabulary Acquisition?

Rijkhoff, J. (2007). Word Classes. Language and Linguistics Compass, 1(6) Blackwell Publishing Ltd: 709–726, DOI:10.1111/j.1749-818x.2007.00030.x