

## **Twelfth Lecture: Introduction Learning Vocabulary in Context**

The context is the setting the sentence and paragraph - in which a word or phrase appears . The meaning of a word or phrase in context is its meaning in the particular sentence and paragraph in which it is used . A single English word can have many different meanings . Its precise meaning always depends on the context in which it is used .

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### **Learning Vocabulary in Context**

One of the most important strategies to help build your vocabulary , increase your reading speed and how much you understand is by learning vocabulary in context . " In context " means using the situation that you understand in the sentences you have read so far to guess the meaning of new vocabulary without depending on a dictionary constantly .

Guessing the meaning of new words using the context of the situation also means using a dictionary less . When you are reading something , if you stop and use a dictionary every time you come across a new word , not only do you use more time , but you may forget what you learned from the reading and you won't remember the new vocabulary as well . In addition , many words in English have several different meanings depending on the context . As much as possible , try to guess the meaning of the vocabulary using context clues . You could make a note of the new word and look up the meaning in a dictionary after you read , just to confirm your

guess against the dictionary definition, but wait until you have finished reading a page or two before you use a dictionary. Also, of course you should use a dictionary if what you are reading becomes confusing and it is difficult to understand. <https://iagtm.pressbooks.com/chapter/learning-vocabulary-in-context/>

### **What is the context?**

Suppose someone were to ask you the meaning of “bear”. You wouldn’t be able to tell him because “bear”, as presented to you, has no context. But if he were to say “polar bear”, you would immediately know he is talking about animal. If, on the other hand, he were to say, “Please stop that smoking – I can’t bear it”, you would know that in the context “bear” means endure or stand.

### **Why is the context important?**

An important point for those of us who want to enlarge our vocabularies is this: the context can give us the meaning not only of familiar words like “bear”, but also of strange words. Suppose, for example, you were asked for the meaning of “valiant”. You might not know it, unless, of course, you already have a fine vocabulary. But if you were to meet “valiant” in the following context, you would have a very good chance of discovering its meanings:

*“Cowards die many times before their deaths*

*The valiant never taste of death but once”.*

*(William Shakespeare’s Julius Caesar)*

From the above context you can tell the author is contrasting two ideas “cowards” and “the valiant”. Therefore, “the valiant” means the opposite of “cowards”, namely “brave men”. “Valiant” means “brave”.

## Definition of Vocabulary

Vocabulary can be defined as the words of a language, including single items and phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning, the way individual words do. Vocabulary addresses single lexical items—words with specific meaning(s)—but it also includes lexical phrases or chunks. (Lessard-Clouston, 2013, p. 2)

## The Description of Vocabulary

Vocabulary has been discussed and divided into various types. Some are divided into two types: **active and passive vocabulary**. Gruneberg and Sykes (1991) distinguished the two types of vocabulary. The first type of vocabulary referred to the one that the students had been taught and that they were expected to be able to use. Meanwhile, the second one referred to the words which the students would recognize when they met them, but they would probably not be able to pronounce. (Susanto, 2017, p. 185).

Hatch and Brown (1995), indicated two kinds of vocabulary, namely as receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary means words that learners recognize and understand when they are used in context, but which they cannot produce. The type of vocabulary that learners recognize when they see or meet in reading text but do not use it in speaking and writing. Meanwhile productive vocabulary is the words that the learners understand and are able to pronounce correctly and use constructively in speaking and writing. It consists of what is needed for receptive vocabulary plus the ability to speak or write at the appropriate time. Productive vocabulary can be addressed as an active process, because the learners can produce the words to express their thoughts to others.

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## Types of lexicology

Lexicology is a branch of linguistics which studies the vocabulary of a language. Its basic task is to study the origin, the different properties of the vocabulary of a language. In other words, lexicology is concerned with words and set phrases which function in speech. Lexicology also studies all kinds of semantic relations (synonyms, antonyms etc) and semantic grouping (semantic fields). Etymologically the word «lexicology» is a Greek word: «Lexic» means «word» and «logos» — learning.

**There are 5 types of lexicology: 1) general; 2) special; 3) descriptive; 4) historical; 5) comparative.**

**1. General lexicology** is a part of general linguistics which studies the general properties of words, the specific features of words of any particular language. It studies the peculiarities of words common to all the languages. General lexicology attempts to find out the universals of vocabulary development and patterns. Linguistic phenomena and properties common to all languages are generally called language universals.

**2. Special lexicology** deals with the words of a definite language. Ex.: English lexicology, Russian lexicology, Uzbek lexicology and so on.

**3. Descriptive lexicology** studies the words at a synchronic aspect. It is concerned with the vocabulary of a language as they exist at the present time.

**4. Historical or diachronic lexicology** deals with the development of the vocabulary and the changes it has undergone. Ex. In descriptive lexicology the words «to take», «to adopt» are considered as being English not differing from such native words as «child», «foot», «stone» etc. But in historical lexicology they are treated as borrowed words.

**5. Comparative lexicology** deals with the properties of the vocabulary of two or more languages. In comparative lexicology the main characteristic features of the words of two or more languages are compared. Ex.

Russian— English lexicology, English—French lexicology and etc.

<http://library.ziyonet.uz/ru/book/download/101062>

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**A lexeme** is the term used in Linguistics to refer to a minimal unit of language. Lexemes are phonologically and semantically distinct and can stand alone (because they contain a root morpheme.)

"An abstract unit of morphological analysis in linguistics, that roughly corresponds to a set of forms taken by a single word."

Examples

- Verb Lexeme

Love, loves, loved, loving

These are all forms of the lexeme LOVE

Word forms walk, walks, walked, walking makes up the lexeme WALK

Run, runs, ran and running are forms of the same lexeme, RUN.

- Noun Lexeme

Crown, crowns, crown's. crowns'

The above are all forms of the lexeme CROWN.

- Adjective Lexeme

Good, better, best

The above are all forms of the lexeme GOOD.

- The English lexeme which holds the record for most forms is BE. It has 12 separate forms.

am, are, aren't, been, be, being, is, isn't, was, wasn't, were, weren't.

"**Lexical item** (or lexical unit, lexical entity) is a single word, part of a word, or chain of words (catena) that forms the basic elements of language's lexicon (vocabulary)."

The term lexical item is a wider term and covers other items which are not actually words but give meaning. For instance affixes er , ment , re, ly are not words but convey meaning in the following words –

establisher, establishment , recent and recently.

er ment re ly

**A lexical unit** can be understood in a sense Lexical unit is a division in the sense of a lexeme. For example. If the two meanings of a word are related, then they are lexical units of one lexeme.

Pen for writing, pen-friend, penknife and pen-name are lexical units of the lexeme PEN because they all have aspects of WRITE in them.

**Lexical units** constitute all the senses of a lexeme and all the words which are associated with the meaning of that lexeme. This includes words formed out of blending, compounding, backformation, etc.

For e.g.

telecast (blending), televise (backformation) are lexical units of the lexeme TELEVISION.

Education - educator, educationist, educated, educant are all lexical units of the lexeme EDUCATE.

House- housekeeper, houseboy, housegirl are all lexical units of the lexeme HOUSE.

**Lexical units** are not limited to single words. A lexical item may contain more than one word: these are idioms such as break the leg, kick the bucket etc. (Idioms are composed of lexical items.) Lexical item may also be the preferred term for word, words or a phrase whose meaning is not deducible from the meaning of its parts. e.g., greenhouse. Lexical item can be Phrasal verbs, e.g., switch off or get out.

**Lexical items** may also encompass collocations, (a group of words that usually come together) e.g., Heavy rain, absolutely convinced, commit suicide, fast food etc.

So, we conclude that Lexeme can be a word which has a group of variants while Lexical Item is a single word, a part of a word, or a chain of words that forms the basic elements of a language's vocabulary.

<https://prezi.com/egxdtddsu5ym/lexeme-and-lexical-unit/?frame=8ee9f3206f0110606d00d380275832090e3e6337>

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## **Lexical meaning**

Lexical meaning is the meaning of a word considered in isolation from the sentence containing it, and regardless of its grammatical context, e.g., of *love* as represented by *loves, loved, loving, etc.*”.

According to the free dictionary, lexical is “the meaning of a word in relation to the physical world or to abstract concepts, without reference to any sentence in which the word may occur.

Lexical words, also known as **content words**, have concrete meaning that goes beyond their function in a sentence. These words refer to things, people, actions, descriptions, or other ideas that have more than just a grammatical usage. Their meaning is easily identified by a clear concept or item.

The categories of English words that are lexical include nouns, adjectives, most verbs, and many adverbs. Nouns, for example, refer to specified ideas, people, places, or things. The concepts behind words like "dog," "love," or "Brazil," for example, are very clear.

Adjectives describe nouns in well-defined ways, providing information about colors, texture, number, size, and so on. Likewise, adverbs can be lexical words if they specifically describe nouns or verbs. Because they evoke specific ideas, descriptors like "red," "quickly," "heavy," or "effectively" are considered lexical.

Most verbs also fall into the lexical category because they refer to specific actions. For example, the meanings of words like "think," "sing," "understand," and "jump" are easy to grasp.

## Grammatical Meaning

According to Lyons (1995: 52) a lexeme may have different word-forms and these word-forms will generally differ in meaning: their grammatical meaning – the meaning in terms of grammar. For example, the forms of *student* and *students* differ in respect of their grammatical meaning, in that one is the singular form and the other is plural form and the difference between singular forms and plural forms is semantically relevant: it affects sentence-meaning. The meaning of a sentence is determined partly by the meaning of the words (i.e., lexemes) of which it consists and partly by its grammatical meaning.

Lyons introduces the term "categorial meaning" which is part of grammatical meaning: it is that part of the meaning of lexemes which derives from their being members of one category of major parts of speech rather than another (nouns rather than verbs, verbs rather than adjectives, and so on). Thus, all lexemes with full word-forms have a grammatical, more particularly, a categorial, meaning.



For example, the lexemes 'easy' and 'difficult' have the same categorial meaning: they are both adjectives. Each lexemes, however, has certain semantically relevant grammatical properties. The two word-forms *easy* and *easier* of the lexeme 'easy', though sharing some part of their categorial meaning, differ grammatically in that: one is the absolute form and the other the comparative form. This difference does not occur to the lexeme 'difficult' for this lexeme has only one form *difficult*, which does not accept any inflection.

Though 'easy' and 'difficult' belong to the same category of adjectives, having the same categorial meaning, they do not share all the grammatical features each has in terms of morphology and syntax. Likewise, all the lexemes sharing categorial meaning do not have all the grammatical meanings in common.

Grammatical words, also known as function words, have little definite meaning on their own and are ambiguous without context. Some also function to impart the speaker's attitude or perspective onto other words. These kinds of words define the structure of a sentence and relate lexical words to each other.

Grammatical words include prepositions, modals and auxiliary verbs, pronouns, articles, conjunctions, and some adverbs.

- Prepositions are used in a variety of ways, and often have ambiguous meanings dependent on the context.
- Auxiliary verbs like "be" and "have" are used to shift a verb's time, while modals like "should" or "will" also impact the sense of verb in various ways related to time or attitude.
- Pronouns have little meaning except as placeholders for general nouns.
- Articles also simply qualify nouns.

- Question words, like "why," alter the function of a sentence or replace a noun. Other adverbs can shift the time or other senses of the lexical words they are connected to.
  - Conjunctions link parts of a sentence together by establishing logical relationships between lexical words.
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## Word classes

When a dictionary lists the function of a word, the definition does at least two things: it describes the word's lexical meaning and also gives what is traditionally known as the part of speech of the word, which modern linguists call the word-class; e.g., modern will be marked as an adjective, modernize as a verb, and modernization as a noun. The word-class is essential, for when we use a word in a sentence, we have to take into consideration two factors: its specific lexical meaning and the position it normally occupies in a sentence, which is determined by the word class to which the word belongs.

English has four major word classes: nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. They have many thousands of members, and new nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs are often created. Nouns are the most common type of word, followed by verbs. Adjectives are less common and adverbs are even less common. Many words belong to more than one word class. For example, book can be used as a noun or as a verb; fast can be used as an adjective or an adverb:

It's an interesting book. (noun)

We ought to book a holiday soon. (verb)

He loves fast cars. (adjective)

Don't drive so fast! (adverb)

We need a much more reliable and more systematic method than this for distinguishing between word classes. We use a combination of three criteria for determining the word class of a word:

1. The meaning of the word
2. The form or 'shape' of the word
3. The position or 'environment' of the word in a sentence

Another important type of sense relation is Syntagmatic relationships are about positioning. Paradigmatic relationships are about substitution. syntagmatic relationship involves a sequence of signs that together create meaning. A paradigmatic relationship involves signs that can replace each other, usually changing the meaning with the substitution.

The words in a sentence are all syntagms and together they form a syntagmatic relationship that creates meaning. If you change the order of syntagms in a sentence it can change the meaning significantly.

John ate an octopus.

An octopus ate John.

Two sentences using the exact same words (syntagms), but very different meanings because the order (the syntagmatic relationship) of the words changed. The syntagmatic relationship is seen along the horizontal axis and the paradigmatic relationship is seen along the vertical axis. For example, "The cow jumped over the moon" (syntagmatic) together form one meaning, but you could replace cow with another word in the column (paradigmatic) to form a different sentence with a different meaning such as the "The fish jumped over the moon."

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## The Difference Between Lexical Words and Grammatical Words

Lexical words supply meaning to a sentence, whereas grammatical words relate the lexical words to one another. Look at the following sentence that only shows the lexical words: " \_\_\_ cat jumped \_\_\_ \_\_\_ tree \_\_\_ \_\_\_ dog ran \_\_\_." This looks like nonsense. All you know is that it is about jumping cats, running dogs, and trees. It may be possible to guess the complete meaning of the sentence, but you can't know for certain because cats, dogs, and trees can be related in different ways. Now look at the sentence with the grammatical words re-inserted:

"The cat jumped into the tree as the dog ran forward." The sentence makes sense. Notice, however, that if you put a different set of grammatical words in, you get a completely different meaning: "The cat jumped from the tree after the dog ran away." You can see that the grammatical words clarify the logical relations between the lexical words and define their function in the sentence. <http://deddisetiawan1.blogspot.com/2014/11/lexical-meaning-versus-gramatical.html>

### References

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