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Teaching Lexicology as the Main Priority of Linguistics

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A B S T R A C T

Lexicology as a branch of linguistics. Its interrelations with other sciences. Lexicology (from Gr lexis "word" and logos "learning") is a part of linguistics dealing with the vocabulary of a language and the properties of words as the main units of the language. It also studies all kinds of semantic grouping and semantic relations: synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, semantic fields, etc.

A R T I C L E I N F O

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In this connection, the term vocabulary is used to denote a system formed by the sum total of all the words and word equivalents that the language possesses. The term word denotes the basic unit of a given language resulting from the association of a particular meaning with a particular group of sounds capable of a particular grammatical employment. A word therefore is at the same time a semantic, grammatical and phonological unit. So, the subject-matter of lexicology is the word, its morphemic structure, history and meaning. There are several branches of lexicology. The general study of words and vocabulary, irrespective of the specific features of any particular language, is known as general lexicology. Linguistic phenomena and properties common to all languages are referred to as language universals.

Special lexicology focuses on the description of the peculiarities in the vocabulary of a given language. A branch of study called contrastive lexicology provides a theoretical foundation on which the vocabularies of different languages can be compared and described, the correlation between the vocabularies of two or more languages being the scientific priority. Vocabulary studies include such aspects of research as etymology, semasiology and onomasiology. The evolution of a vocabulary forms the object of historical lexicology or etymology (from Gr. etymon "true, real"), discussing the origin of various words, their change and development, examining the linguistic and extra-linguistic forces that modify their structure, meaning and usage.

Semasiology (from Gr. semasia "signification") is a branch of linguistics whose subject-matter is the study of word meaning and the classification of changes in the signification of words or forms, viewed as normal and vital factors of any linguistic development. It is the most relevant to polysemy and homonymy. Onomasiology is the study of the principles and regularities of the signification of things / notions by lexical and lexico - phraseological means of a given language. It has its special value in studying dialects, bearing an obvious relevance to synonymity Descriptive lexicology deals with the vocabulary of a language at a given stage of its evolution. It studies the functions of words and their specific structure as a characteristic inherent in the system. In the English language the above science is oriented towards the English word and its morphological and semantic structures, researching the interdependence between these two aspects. These structures are identified and distinguished by contrasting the nature and arrangement of their elements.

Within the framework of lexicology, both synchronic (Gr syn "together", "with" and chronos "time") and diachronic or historical (Gr dia "through") approaches to the language suggested by the Swiss philologist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) are effectively realized. Language is the reality of thought, and thought develops together with the development of a society, thus the language and its vocabulary should be studied in the light of social history. Every new phenomenon in a human society in general, which is of any importance for communication, finds a reflection in the corresponding vocabulary. A word is considered to be a generalized reflection of reality; therefore, it is impossible to understand its development if one is ignorant of the changes in socio-political or everyday life, manners and culture, science of a linguoculture it serves to reflect. These extra-linguistic forces influencing the evolution of words are taken into the priority consideration in modern lexicology. With regard to special lexicology the synchronic approach is concerned with the vocabulary of a language as it exists at a certain time (e.g., a course in Modern English Lexicology).

The diachronic approach in terms of special lexicology deals with the changes and the development of the vocabulary in the course of time. It is special historical lexicology that deals with the evolution of vocabulary units as time goes by. The two approaches should not be contrasted, as they are interdependent since every linguistic structure and system actually exists in a state of constant development so that the synchronic state of a language system is a result of a long process of linguistic evolution. As every word is a unity of semantic, phonetic and grammatical elements, the word is studied not only in lexicology, but in other branches of linguistics, too, lexicology being closely connected with general linguistics, the history of the language, phonetics, stylistics, and grammar.

According to S. Ullmann, lexicology forms next to phonology, the second basic division of linguistic science (the third is syntax). Consequently, the interaction between vocabulary and grammar is evident in morphology and syntax. Grammar reflects the specific lexical meaning and the capacity of words to be combined in human actual speech. The lexical meaning of the word, in its turn, is frequently signaled by the grammatical context in which it occurs. Thus, morphological indicators help to differentiate the variant meanings of the word (e.g., plural forms that serve to create special lexical meaning: colors, customs, etc.; two kinds of pluralization: brother → brethren - brothers; cloth → cloths - clothes). There are numerous instances when the syntactic position of the word changes both its function and lexical meaning (e.g., an adjective and a noun element of the same group can change places: library school - school library). The interrelation between lexicology and phonetics becomes obvious if we think of the fact that the word as the basis unit in lexicological study cannot exist without its sound form, which is the object of study in phonology. Words consist of phonemes that are devoid of meaning of their own, but forming morphemes they serve to distinguish between meanings. The meaning of the word is determined by several phonological features: a) qualitative and quantitative character of phonemes (e.g. dog-dock, pot-port); b) fixed sequence of phonemes (e.g. pot-top, nest-sent-tens); 3) the position of stress (e.g. insult (verb) and insult (noun)).

Summarizing, lexicology is the branch of linguistics concerned with the study of words as individual items and dealing with both formal and semantic aspects of words; and although it is concerned predominantly with an in-depth description of lexemes, it gives a close attention to a vocabulary in its totality, the social communicative essence of a language as a synergetic system being a study focus. 1.2. The word as the fundamental object of lexicology. The morphological structure of the English word. A word is a fundamental unit of a language. The real nature of a word and the term itself has always been one of the most ambiguous issues in almost every branch of linguistics. To use it as a term in the description of language, we must be sure what we mean by it. To illustrate the point here, let us count the words in the following sentence: You can't tie a bow with the rope in the bow of a boat. Probably the most straightforward answer to this is to say that there are 14. However, the orthographic perspective taken by itself, of course, ignores the meaning of the words, and as soon as we invoke meanings we at least are talking about different words bow, to start with. Being a central element of any language system, the word is a focus for the problems of phonology, lexicology, syntax, morphology, stylistics and also for a number of other language and speech sciences. Within the framework of linguistics the word has acquired definitions from the syntactic, semantic, phonological points of view as well as a definition combining various approaches. Thus, it has been syntactically defined as "the minimum sentence" by

H.Sweet and much later as “the minimum independent unit of utterance” by L. Bloomfield. E. Sapir concentrates on the syntactic and semantic aspects calling the word “one of the smallest completely satisfying bits of isolated meaning, into which the sentence resolves itself”. A purely semantic treatment is observed in S. Ullmann’s explanation of words as meaningful segments that are ultimately composed of meaningful units. The prominent French linguist A. Meillet combines the semantic, phonological and grammatical criteria: “A word is defined by the association of a given meaning with a given group of sounds susceptible of a given grammatical employment”.

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