

Lexicology and Lexicography

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Introduction:

Lexicology and lexicography both are concerned with the study of words in a language/ languages. The study of words would generally include the knowledge about their origin, formation, meaning and pronunciation. More specifically lexicology is deals with words, word groups, phraseological units and morphemes. It encompasses morphology etymology and history of words, semantics, and lexicography. Lexicography is a practical field that aims at the production of dictionaries and other reference works.

Lexicology:

Lexicology is derived from the Greek terms 'lexis' meaning words and 'logos' that means learning or science; so it is the science of words. A 'word' at the same time is a semantic, phonological and grammatical unit. So, the main concern of lexicology is the word, its morphemic structure, history and meaning. It investigates both diachronic and synchronic aspects of the vocabulary of a language.

- **Diachronic** aspect investigates into the etymology of individual words or the development of morphological features for specific word classes.
- **Synchronic** aspect is related to contemporary meaning, their usage and collocation.

Lexicology is a branch of descriptive linguistics which deals with the linguistic theory and methodology to describe lexical information, with particular focus on the meanings. Lexicology studies the lexicon of a language. In modern Linguistics the term lexicon is described in the following ways:

- The vocabulary which a speaker of a language has in his or her head, i.e. **Mental lexicon.**
- The set of lexemes of a language and the processes which are related to them.
- The set of lexical items of a language.

Aims of lexicology:

Its aims are

- To investigate the problems of word structure and word formation in modern English.
- To study the semantic structure of English words.
- To examine the principles of the classification of vocabulary units into various groups.
- To study the relation between the lexical layers of English vocabulary.
- To observe the specific laws and regulations that govern development of the vocabulary.
- To investigate the source and growth of vocabulary and changes it has undergone.

Types of lexicology:

- **General Lexicology** is concerned with the general study of vocabulary and words irrespective of the specific features of any particular language. It is a part of general

linguistics. It deals with the notion of word, meaning, context and that of the system relations.

- **Special lexicology** is the lexicology of a particular language like English etc. It describes words and vocabulary of one particular language. It is based on the principles of General Lexicology. It is subdivided into Diachronic/Historical Lexicology and Synchronic/Descriptive Lexicology.
- **Historical Lexicology** deals with the evolution of any vocabulary - the origin of various words, their change and development; linguistic and extra linguistic factors influencing the structure of words, their meaning and usage.
- **Descriptive Lexicology** is concerned with the vocabulary of a particular language at a given stage of its development.
- **Comparative and contrastive lexicology** compares the vocabulary units and systems of two or more languages. Vocabulary study includes such aspects as etymology, semasiology, and onomasiology. **Etymology** (from Gr. Etymon “true, real”) is the study of the origin of words and the way in which their meanings have changed throughout history. It examines the linguistic and extra linguistic forces that change their structure, meaning and usage.

Semasiology (from Gr. semasia “signification, meaning”) is ‘the branch of linguistics that deals with words and phrases and the concept they represent.’

Onomasiology (from Gr. onomazu “to name”) is ‘the branch of linguistics that is concerned with concepts and the terms that represent them, in particular contrasting terms for similar concepts, as in a thesaurus.’

Applied branches of lexicology include:

- Lexicography
- Translation
- Linguistic pedagogy
- Speech culture

Connections with other branches of linguistics:

It is not only lexicology that studies word but several other branches of linguistics also investigate into it. In this way lexicology is closely connected with general linguistics, phonetics, stylistics, grammar, history of language, and sociolinguistics etc.

Lexicology and phonology:

The relationship between lexicology and phonology can be explained by the fact that the word, which is a center of attention 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 word is determined by several phonological features. If we compare the pairs of words pill and bill, meat and meal, it is noticeable that ‘they differ only in one sound unit yet it has a serious affect at phonological level’. The position of stress is also responsible for change in the meaning and category of a word, the example is as follows:

Ex’port (verb) means to send (goods or services) to another country for sale.

’Export (noun) means a product or service sold abroad.

Compound provides another example to show the relevance of phonology with lexicology. Again stress factor is involved, e.g. a “greenhouse” (a glass house for growing plants) would become a noun phrase with the change of stress “green ‘house” (a house that is green).

Lexicology and syntax:

Syntax deals with the study of sentence construction, the way words are put together to form sentence. A meaningful sentence cannot be created without proper understanding of lexical. One such is example is the famous sentence “colorless green ideas sleep furiously”, composed by Noam Chomsky. The sentence is fairly meaningless though grammatically well arranged.

Lexicology, Grammar and Stylistics:

Lexicology studies words, and grammar is concerned with grammatical problems ranging from word to sentence. Both deal with morphemes, roots, affixes etc. Grammar deals with different ways of expressing grammatical relations between words, word groups and larger units. Lexicology has links to stylistics as well because both investigate into the problems of meaning, vocabulary stratification, and style. The word is studied in the following ways:

- The structure of words is the object of **morphology**.
- The process of coining new words is studied under the heading of **word-building**.
- **Semasiology** deals with the meaning of words and their relations in vocabulary.
- Set-expressions and idioms are discussed under **phraseology**.
- **Etymology** discusses the origin of words, their development in the language.
- The behavior of words in speech is studied by **contextology**.

Lexicology and History of the language:

Lexicology has connections with the **History of the Language** as the latter explicates various peculiarities in the vocabulary of contemporary English. It tells about the origin of homonyms and synonyms and traces the roots of etymological doublets.

- **Etymological doublets** are the words that are different in form and meaning in today’s English but originated from the same word.

The structure of English vocabulary:

The terms vocabulary, lexis and lexicon are synonymous. 'They refer to total stock of language, color, and kinship terms'. These terms lead to a theory known as 'Lexical field theory'. Crystal (1995) defined lexical field as a 'named area of meaning in which lexemes interrelate and define each other in a specific way.' For example the lexical field of the 'kinship terms' includes 'father, mother, daughter, son etc'. The origin of the 'field theory' can be traced back to the middle of 19th century, to the ideas of Humboldt and Herder. According to lexical field theory, 'the vocabulary of a language is essentially a dynamic and well-integrated system of lexemes structured by relationship of meaning.' The vocabulary system is changing continuously, e.g. some old lexemes disappear, and the meaning of some lexemes is broadened or narrowed down. 'The system is mainly characterized by general-particular and part-whole relationships, which hold not only between individual lexeme but also between specific lexical field and vocabulary as a whole.' For example the 'color terms' like red, white, black, blue etc and 'kinship terms' together would be the part of whole vocabulary. All of the words in English cannot be assigned to some specific lexical field because there are three kinds of difficulties that the lexicologists face:

- Some lexemes are likely to belong to the fields that are difficult to define. For example it is not clear to which field the word "noise" should be assigned.
- Some may be assigned to more than one field like "orange".
- 'The last difficulty deals with the best way to define a lexical field in relation to the other fields on one hand and its constituent lexeme on the other.' The example is that of "tractor", whether it should belong to the field of "land vehicles", "agriculture vehicles" or just "vehicles".

Word Families:

The words are grouped into 'families' on the basis of morphology, both their inflections and derivations. 'A family consists of a base form, its possible inflectional forms, the words derived from it by prefixation and suffixation.' For example:

- State (a verb, base form)
Stated, stating, states (inflections)
Restate, statement, understate etc (derivations)

Types of word meaning:

- **Grammatical meaning** is 'the part of meaning that varies from one inflectional form to another (as from plays to played to playing).'
- **Lexical meaning** is 'the meaning of the base form (as the word play) in the paradigm of (as plays, played, playing).'

- **Conceptual meaning** is ‘based on or relating to ideas or concepts’ conceptual meaning forms the basis for the communication since a specific word symbolizes a common conceptual meaning shared by all the speakers of a language.
- **Associative meaning** is an umbrella term. ‘It refers to mental corrections that arise when referential meaning comes to mind.’
According to the semantic analysis of Geoffrey Leech, the associative meaning of a term refers to the ‘individual mental understandings of the speaker’. In this way associative meanings are sub divided into six types: connotative, collocative, social, affective, reflected and thematic.
- **Connotative meaning:** ‘The meaning that a word suggests or implies.’
- **Stylistic meaning:** Words may have stylistic features, which make them appropriate for different contexts. This stylistic difference is especially true of synonyms.
- **Affective meaning:** The effective meaning of a word is more personalized definition of word. It refers to a speaker’s personal emotions that would influence his choice of words.
- **Collocative meaning:** J.R. Firth ‘advocates the thesis that words get meaning from their collocates.’ Firth also states that, “you shall know a word by the company it keeps”.

Free word groups and phraseological unit:

Phraseological unit: ‘A stable word-group characterized by a completely or partially transferred meaning’. (A.V. Koonin). It is a group of words whose meaning cannot be inferred by investigating the meaning of the constituent lexemes. They are ready made, for example, a dark horse, a white elephant.

Free word groups: The free word groups are only relatively free. They are called so, because each time they are built up anew in the speech process. Substitution is possible during the use of ‘free word group’.

Semantic classification of phraseological unit:

Semantic classification of phraseological units is based on the motivation of the unit. It is divided into three types.

- **Phraseological Fusions:** Phraseological fusions are units whose meaning cannot be deduced from the meanings of their component parts. The meaning of phraseological fusion is unmotivated.
- **Phraseological Unities:** The meaning of the expressions can be deduced from the meanings of their components; the meaning of the whole is based on the transferred meanings of the components, e.g. to show one’s teeth (means to be unfriendly). They are motivated expressions.
- **Phraseological Collocations** contain one component used in its direct meaning, while the other is used metaphorically, e.g. to meet requirements, to attain success. They are motivated expressions.

Word formation: Word formation is the process of creating a new word.

Types of word formation: There are two types of word formation processes, productive and non productive ways.

Productive ways involves affixation, conversion, word composition, abbreviation.

Non productive ways includes sound interchange, stress interchange, sound imitation, blending, and back formation.

Lexicography:

Lexicography is the ‘theory and practice of compiling or editing dictionaries.’ It is a scholarly discipline that includes practice of compiling, writing and editing dictionaries. Two related areas of lexicography are as follows:

Theoretical lexicography deals with the analysis and description of the vocabulary of a particular language, and the meanings that connect certain words to others in a dictionary. Theoretical lexicography is particularly concerned with developing theories of the dictionary components and structures linking the data in dictionaries. As it is concerned with the theoretical analysis of the lexicon, so it is also known as **Metalexicography**.

Practical lexicography is an art and craft of writing, compiling and editing dictionaries.

Related aspects:

- Dictionary criticism (evaluating the quality of one or more dictionaries)
- Dictionary history (tracing the traditions of a type of dictionary or of lexicography in a particular country or language)
- Dictionary typology (classifying the various genres of reference works, such as dictionary versus encyclopedia, monolingual versus bilingual dictionary, general versus technical or pedagogical dictionary)
- Dictionary structure (formatting the different ways in which the information is presented in a dictionary)
- Dictionary rule (observing the reference acts and skills of dictionary users)
- Dictionary IT (applying computer aids to the process of dictionary compilation)

Scope of lexicography:

The compilation of well crafted dictionaries requires a careful consideration of some of the following aspects:

- Profiling the intended users
- Defining words

- Choosing the appropriate structures for presenting the data in the dictionary
- Selecting words and affixes for systemization as entries.
- Selecting collocations, phrases and examples.
- Defining words
- Organizing definitions
- Specifying pronunciations of words
- Labeling definitions, and pronunciations for register and dialect, where appropriate.
- Designing the best way in which students can access the data in printed and electronic dictionaries.

Functions of practical lexicography

The functions of practical lexicography are as follows:

Educational function presupposes teaching language both native and foreign. This is the major function of English lexicography, as English language is the need of hour and everyone wants to learn it.

'Legislative' function is related to the problems of description and normalization of language; it aims at describing, standardizing native language, and forming a certain language norm. Lexicographers apply two basic philosophies to define words:

- Prescriptive
- Descriptive

All the first dictionaries were prescriptive as the selection of words and verbal illustrations were chosen by the lexicographer himself and the aim of the dictionary was to fix the norm of the language.

Communicative function deals with 'realizing intercultural communications.'

Scientific function aims at studying 'vocabulary of a language periods of practical lexicography.'

A brief history of English lexicography:

The Earliest Dictionaries of English:

English lexicography began with the compilation of the "lists of words" / glossaries by the Anglo-Saxon priests, and schoolteachers. The purpose was to enable the readers to read Latin manuscripts. Throughout medieval period, some writers such as William Caxton began to compile glossaries. Most of them provided brief English definitions of Latin words. With the revival of learning and literature in 15th c the list was compiled as 'English-Latin' explanation.

The word dictionary was not associated with such writings until 'Thomas Elyot's Dictionarie' was published. During the 16th century many words were from classical languages and were introduced into English as a result of which the need for English dictionary was felt. So, there came on scene the first English dictionary (A table Alphabetical...) by Robert Cawdrey. In Cawdrey's dictionary, there were included only "hard words", the words borrowed from Hebrew, Greek, Latin and French. It provided most words that people didn't know. "Hard word" dictionary only included approximately 2,500 words. These dictionaries of hard words continued to appear throughout the 17th c.

The beginning of modern lexicography:

During 18th c John Kersey wrote 'A New English Dictionary', it was the first one to include common words along with the hard words. Another English man Nathan Bailey published the first etymological dictionary (A universal etymological English Dictionary) which explained the origin of English words. Bailey' dictionary included 40,000 words. Samuel Johnson was another prominent lexicographer of the century, he wrote 'A dictionary of English Language'. Compared to the others, at that time, Johnson's dictionary was better organized, better justified, more consistently analytical, more systematic in its pronunciations and its definitions.

Historical lexicography:

Sir William Johns, Rasmus Rask, Franz Bopp and Jacob Grim started a new field of historical linguistics in 1850s. historical linguistics compared many Indo-European languages in order to try to learn history of words in language in the area. The Grim brothers then made a German dictionary. Not soon after, work began on similar kind of dictionary called "Oxford English Dictionary/OED". James Murray was the first editor of this dictionary, the other followed as the dictionary was worked on from 1859 to 1928. The first OED was of 16,000 pages, and contained 400,000 entries. It has since been edited to a second edition that came out in 1989. A third edition is in the works.

American lexicography:

The American independence created desire for linguistic independence from Britain. Noah Webster, an American English man, wrote the first American dictionary in 1828. He promoted American English; the first copy of that dictionary had 70,000 words. When Webster died in 1843, his family sold the rights to G & C Merriam Company. They revised the dictionary in to Standard American Edition.

Patrick Hanks provides lists of 20th c English dictionaries and EFL dictionaries, the lists are as follows:

Some 20th c English Dictionaries:

W. Geddie (1901): *Chambers 20th-Century Dictionary*

- A vast ragbag. Many rare Scottish dialect terms. Some witty definitions, e.g.

H. W. Fowler (1911): *Concise Oxford Dictionary*

- A distillation of OED. Interesting approach to sense groupings.

P. Hanks (1979): *Collins English Dictionary*

- Coverage of technical vocabulary and names. Guidance on usage.

P. Hanks and J. Pearsall (1998): *New Oxford Dictionary of English*

- Corpus-based *and* citation-based. Distinguishes core senses from sub-senses. Major vocabulary surveys, e.g. of languages, flora and fauna, technology etc. Syntactic information. Corpus-based guidance on usage.

Some EFL Dictionaries:

A.S. Hornby (1947): *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*

- Pedagogical. Gives syntax, e.g. verb patterns, count vs. uncount nouns.

P. Procter (1978): *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*

- Restricted defining vocabulary. More elaborate syntax.
- Semantic fields in the electronic version.

J. M. Sinclair, P. Hanks, et al. (1987): *Cobuild*

- Corpus-based; real-language examples. Full-sentence definitions, showing how to use the word normally and naturally.

P. Procter (1993): *Cambridge International Dictionary of English*

- Corpus-based; gives syntagmatics and semantic fields.

M. Rundell (2001): *Macmillan English Dictionary*

Much pedagogical help with vocabulary building.

Corpus used in lexicography:

Written part:

- Extracts from local and national newspapers.
- Periodicals and journals for all ages and interests.
- Academic books and popular fiction.
- Published and unpublished letters.
- Memoranda.
- Schools and university essays.
- And many other kinds of text.

Spoken part:

- Orthographic transcriptions of unscripted informal conversations (recorded by volunteers selected from different age, region and social classes in a demographically balanced way)
- Spoken collected in different contexts, ranging from formal business or government meetings to media.

Examples of the corpus:

- Collins cobuild
- British National Corpus
- Longman Corpus Network
- American National Corpus

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