

Lecture 1

Theoretical Foundations of Lexicology

Is English a language of PARADOXES?

- ▶ One in every 7 human beings can speak it
- ▶ More than half of the world's books
- ▶ three-quarters of international mail are in English
- ▶ The largest vocabulary
- ▶ One of the noblest bodies of literature
- ▶ There's no *egg* in *eggplant* (баклажан)
- ▶ There's neither *pine* nor *apple* in *pineapple* (ананас)
- ▶ *Sweetmeats* (конфеты) are candy
- ▶ *Sweetbreads* («сладкое мясо», зобная и поджелудочная железы, употребляемые в пищу), which are not sweet, are meat, etc.

Plan

- ▶ I. The aim and object of Lexicology. Its branches, links with other linguistic disciplines.
- ▶ II. Definition of the word. Motivation of words. Functions of words.
- ▶ III. Vocabulary as a system. Paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations. Diachronic and synchronic approaches to the study of the vocabulary.

I. The aim and object of Lexicology. Its branches, links with other linguistic disciplines.

The aim and object of Lexicology

- ▶ **Lexicology** (Gr. *lexis* “word” and *logos* “learning”) is a branch of Linguistics which studies the vocabulary of a language and characteristic features of lexical units.
- ▶ **Lexical units** studied by Lexicology: morphemes, words, word-groups and phraseological units.

Branches of Lexicology

- ▶ **General Lexicology** is general study of words and vocabulary, irrespective of specific features of any particular language.
- ▶ **Special Lexicology** is Lexicology of a particular language.

Branches of Lexicology studying different aspects of words (1)

- ▶ **Etymology** studies origin of words and historical changes in meanings: e.g. *OE harvest* "осень" > *MnE урожай*
- ▶ **Semasiology** deals with semantic structure of words, development of meanings: e.g. "hand" – about 40 LSV
- ▶ **Word-building** studies the process of creating new words, their structural and semantic patterns: e.g. *drive* (V+ -er)

Branches of Lexicology studying different aspects of words (2)

- ▶ **Phraseology** studies word-groups with specialized meanings: e.g. *butter-fingers* (*растяпа*)
- ▶ **Borrowing** deals with the process of adopting and assimilating words from other languages: e.g. sky, skin – Sc.; government, army – Fr.

Links of Lexicology with other linguistic disciplines

- ▶ Phonetics
- ▶ Grammar
- ▶ Stylistics

Connection with Phonetics

- ▶ on the acoustic level words consist of phonemes which distinguish between meanings thus participating in signification:
e.g. *ˈobject* (a noun) :: *obˈject* (a verb),
cop :: *cope* (different words), *ˈblackbird* (a compound noun) :: *ˈblack ˈbird* (a word-group).

Connection with Grammar

- The lexical meaning of a word can be conditioned by its grammatical forms: e.g. *glass* (стекло), *a glass* (стакан), *glasses* (очки);
- The lexical meaning of a word may affect its grammatical forms and syntactical functions: e.g. *come true*, *turn red*, *go wrong*;
- Grammatical meaning can be expressed by lexical means: e.g. *We are going there tomorrow* instead of *We shall go there*.

Connection with Stylistics

- ▶ Differentiation of vocabulary according to the functional styles of the language conditions the connection of Lexicology with Stylistics: e.g. the synonyms *father* and *dad* differing in a shade of meaning belong to different functional styles (*dad* is informal, *father* is neutral or formal).

II. Definition of the word. Motivation of words. Functions of words.

The Word as the Principal Object of Lexicology

- ▶ The **word** is the minimal (after the morpheme) meaningful unit of the language, a two-plane linguistic sign, possessing both form (the plane of expression) and meaning (the plane of content).

Asymmetrical dualism of a linguistic sign

- ▶ Sound form and meaning of a word are firmly associated with each other in the mind of a speaker but each of them has relative independence: sound form tends to develop polysemy and further homonymy (e.g. *dull* – 1. lacking interest; 2. lacking brightness; 3. slow to understand, etc.), while meaning tends to develop synonymy (e.g. *boring; gloomy; stupid*, etc.).

Motivation of words

(*motivation* is the relationship between phonemic or morphemic composition of the word and its meaning)

- ▶ **phonetical** (e.g. *hiss, buzz, cuckoo*)
- ▶ **morphological** (e.g. *thinker, self-propelling, endless*)
- ▶ **semantic** (e.g. hand of a clock, mouth of a river)

Phonetical motivation

- ▶ 1) based on similarity between the sounds which make up words and the sounds these words denote: e.g. *boom, splash, whistle*
- ▶ 2) based on association between some sound-clusters and a certain meaning (*phonetical symbolism*): e.g. [fl] (“quick movement”) – *flap, flash, flutter*; [sl] (“mud”) – *sleet, slush*
- ▶ **But: *flat, floor, slim* (non-motivated)**

Morphological motivation

- ▶ based on direct connection between the morphological structure of the word and its meaning: e.g. *poetess*, *overestimate*, *regain*, *blackberry*
- ▶ But: *repeat*, *matter*, *cranberry* (non-motivated)

Semantic motivation

- ▶ Based on co-existence of direct and figurative meaning: e.g. *foot of a page*, *eye of a needle*, *head of an army* (metaphoric transfer); *astrakhan*, *china*, *tweed* (metonymic transfer)

Functions of words (1-3)

- ▶ **significative function** which consists in expressing a general idea (characteristic of all signs);
- ▶ **nominative function** (typical of notional words);
- ▶ **representative function** (peculiar to proper names);

Functions of words (4-6)

- ▶ **deictic function** (typical of demonstrative, possessive, reflexive and relative pronouns and of adverbs);
- ▶ **expressive function** which consists in rendering emotions or attitude (peculiar to interjections *oh, wow, ouch, Why! etc.* and other emotionally coloured words, such as *kid, dear, honey, puppy, etc.*);
- ▶ **interpretative function** (characteristic of linguistic units with transferred meaning);

Functions of words (7-9)

- ▶ **cumulative function** which consists in enriching semantic structure of words;
- ▶ **pragmatic function** which consists in acquiring connotations according to the sphere of communication;
- ▶ **structural function** which consists in serving as a basic structural material of a language

Word and Lexeme

- ▶ The invariant of a word in all its meanings and forms is called **lexeme**.

*The child wanted to play with other children
(8 words, 7 lexemes)*

Word and Lexeme

- ▶ The **word** is a unit of speech.
- ▶ The **lexeme** is a unit of the lexical system of the language.

Word and Lexeme

- ▶ The system showing a word in all its word-forms is called a **paradigm**. The lexical meaning of a word is the same through its paradigm, while the grammatical meaning is different: e.g. *take – took – takes – taking*.

III. Vocabulary as a system.
Paradigmatic and syntagmatic
relations. Diachronic and synchronic
approaches to the study of the
vocabulary.

Vocabulary as a system

- ▶ Vocabulary is a **system**, i.e. a coherent homogeneous whole, constituted by interdependent elements of the same order related in certain specific ways.

Relations between linguistic units

▶ **Paradigmatic** relations (in language) are based on interdependence of words in the vocabulary system: e.g. *to run, to jog, to rush, to race* (synonymic group); *to accept – to reject* (antonyms).

▶ **Syntagmatic** relations (in speech) are linear relations based on the influence of context: e.g. *illegal / irregular, to tell smb. / to say smth.*

Approaches to the study of language material

- ▶ The **synchronic** (Gr. *syn* “together, with” and *chronos* “time”), or **descriptive**, approach deals with the vocabulary of a language as it exists at a given time
- ▶ The **diachronic** (Gr. *dia* “through”), or **historical**, approach is concerned with the development of vocabulary in the course of time