



# LEXICOLOGY AS THE SCIENCE OF VOCABULARY

1. Lexicology as the science of vocabulary
2. The English vocabulary as a system
3. The word as a basic linguistic unit
4. Motivation of words

# 1. LEXICOLOGY AS A BRANCH OF LINGUISTICS

? Lexicology is a branch of linguistics, the science of language.

? The term **Lexicology** is composed of two Greek morphemes:

**lexis** means ‘word, phrase’ (hence **lexicos** ‘having to do with words’) and

**logos** which denotes ‘learning, a department of knowledge’.

? Thus, the literal meaning of the term **Lexicology** is ‘the science of the word’.



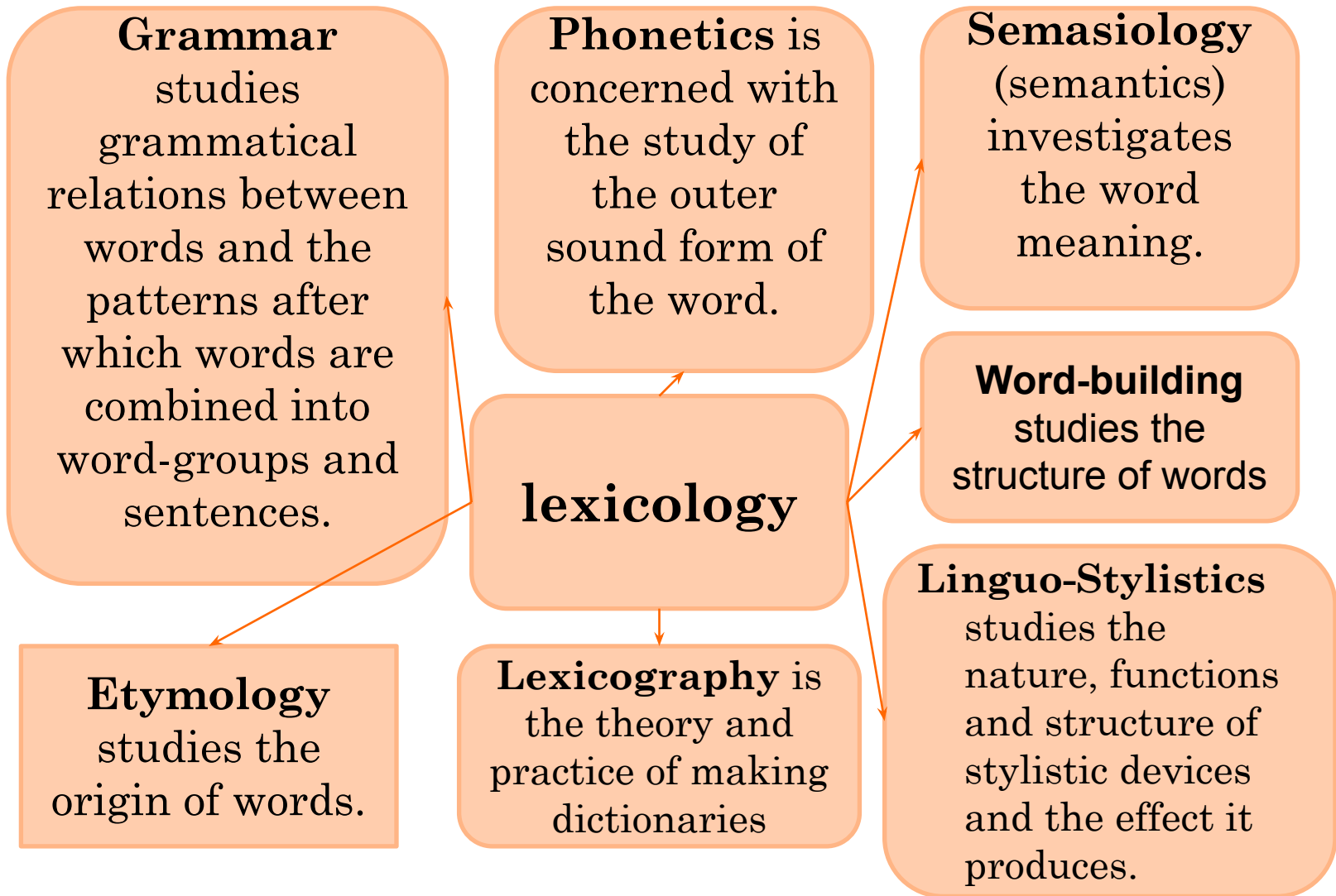
? **Lexicology** is a part of general linguistics dealing with the vocabulary of a language.

Lexicology studies and describes the vocabulary as to its origin, development and current use.

? The term **vocabulary** denotes the system formed by the sum total of all the words and word phrases that a language possesses.



THERE ARE SEVERAL PARTS IN LEXICOLOGY WHICH DEAL WITH DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF WORDS:



**Paralinguistics** — the study of non-verbal means of communication (gestures, facial expressions, eye-contact, etc.)

**Pragmalinguistics** — the branch of linguistics concerned with the relation of speech and its users and the influence of speech upon listeners.



# DISTINCTION IS NATURALLY MADE BETWEEN GENERAL LEXICOLOGY AND SPECIAL LEXICOLOGY

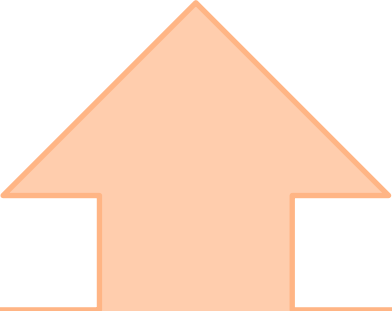
**General Lexicology** is part of General Linguistics; it is concerned with the study of vocabulary irrespective of the specific features of any particular language.

**Special Lexicology** is the Lexicology of a particular language (e.g. English, Russian, etc.), i.e. the study and description of its vocabulary and vocabulary units, primarily words as the main units of language.



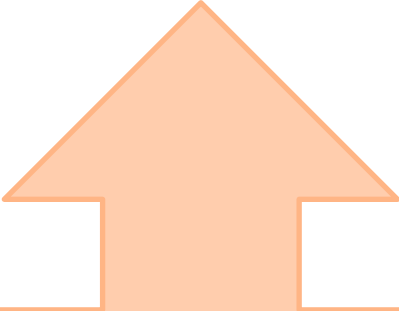
# THERE ARE TWO PRINCIPAL APPROACHES IN LEXICOLOGY TO THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE MATERIAL:

?



the **synchronic** (*Gr. syn* — ‘together, with’ and **chronos** — ‘time’)

The synchronic approach is concerned with the vocabulary of a language as it exists at a given time, for instance, at the present time. It is descriptive.



**diachronic** (*Gr. dia* — ‘through’) approach

The diachronic (historical) approach deals with the changes and the development of vocabulary in the course of time, with the evolution of words, how they originate, change their meaning and usage.

*Ex. To tell one's money – считать деньги  
(OE tellian – считать)*



## 2. THE ENGLISH VOCABULARY AS A SYSTEM

- ? **Vocabulary** is the system formed by all the words and word equivalents that the language has.
- ? The term **system** is not merely the sum total of English words, it denotes a set of elements associated and functioning together according to certain laws.
- ? It is a coherent homogeneous whole, constituted by interdependent elements of the same order related in certain specific ways.





# THERE ARE TWO FUNDAMENTAL TYPES OF RELATIONS:

**syntagmatic and paradigmatic.**

? **Syntagmatic** relationships are linear. A word is studied in relationships with other neighbouring lexical units in connected speech.

Ex. The structure of a word: *teach-er-s*

Collocability (combinability) *a white rose (colour) – white coffee (with milk) – white lie (harmless) – white meat (poultry).*



**paradigmatic** relations are contrastive. *Paradigm*  
< Lat *paradigtna* < Gr *paradeigma* 'model' 'to  
compare'.

They occur in the words of similar meaning but of  
different functional properties. The words form  
an opposition. A lexical opposition is defined as a  
semantically relevant relationship of partial  
difference between two partially similar words.

Labour – work; man – chap; *doubt* :: *doubtful*

The main problems of paradigmatics are polysemy,  
synonymy, antonymy, functional styles.



In the vocabulary one can find the following oppositions:

1. native words – borrowed (*corn, milk – pizza, pasta*)
2. formal – informal (*begin – commence; abandon – give up*)
3. emotionally coloured – emotionally neutral (*daddy – father*)
4. common words – terms (*metaphor*)
5. obsolete (words that are not used any longer), archaisms (words that once were common but now are replaced by synonyms) – neologisms (new words) – *eve, morn – laptop (ноутбук), to network, filmnik.*



# THE ENGLISH VOCABULARY IS DIFFERENT FROM THE VOCABULARIES OF OTHER LANGUAGES IN THE FOLLOWING FEATURES:

1. monomorphemic structure of most important words (*man, go*)
2. widespread development of homonymy (*sent – scent – cent, lead – lead*)
3. widespread polysemy (a word has several meanings)  
*way* – track, road; direction;  
progress (to push one's way);  
a course of actions (I like it this way);  
manner, behavior (I don't like his way);  
respect or degree (the photos are in all way similar). <http://www.visualthesaurus.com/app/view>
4. very limited antonymy of English words (fire can be a noun and a verb).



### 3. THE WORD AS A BASIC LINGUISTIC UNIT

**UNIT** is one of the elements into which a whole may be divided or analysed and which possesses the basic properties of this whole.

Lexical units are two-facet elements possessing **form** and **meaning**.

*apartment* – a furnished dwelling

The basic lexical units are **the word, the morpheme, the phoneme and set expressions**.

The borderline between various linguistic units is not always sharp and clear.



# MORPHEMES

are parts of words, into which they may be analysed.

They function in speech only as constituent parts of words.

They cannot be divided into smaller meaningful units.

The meaning of morphemes is more abstract and more general than that of words and at the same time they are less autonomous.

- ? use – ful                      broad – en
- ? use – less                      re – cycle – ing
- ? use – ful – ness                seven – teen – th



# WORDS

are the central elements of language system.

The word is a complex phenomenon, because it is a phonological, semantic and grammatical unit at the same time.

The word can consist of only one morpheme (ex. *I*).

It can be equal to one morpheme (*boy, go*).

It can be an equivalent of a phrase (*red tape – бюрократия*).

The word can comprise a sentence (*Silence!*).

Words are indivisible and fulfil the nominative, significative, communicative and pragmatic functions.



? The word has many different aspects.

- 1) It has a sound form because it is a certain arrangement of phonemes;
- 2) it has its morphological structure, being also a certain arrangement of morphemes;
- 3) when used in actual speech, it may occur in different word forms, different syntactic functions and signal various meanings.
- 4) In the spelling system of the language words are the smallest units of written discourse: they are marked off by solid spelling.





The **word** is the smallest meaningful language unit capable of functioning alone and characterised by morphological indivisibility, semantic integrity and positional mobility within a sentence.

? The weak point of that definition is that it does not establish the relationship between language and thought.

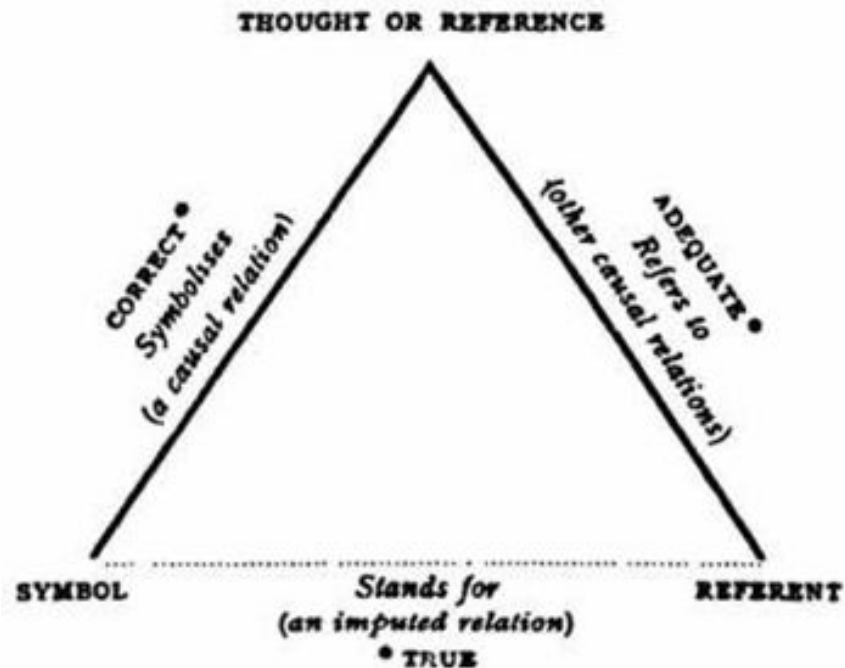
the word is a dialectical unity of form and content, of the outer side and inner side. The outer side is the sound and graphical form. The inner side is the meaning rendering the emotion or the concept in the mind of the speaker which he intends to convey to his listener.



# THE TRIANGLE OF REFERENCE

It is also known as the triangle of meaning and the semiotic triangle.

It is a model of how linguistic symbols are related to the objects they represent. The triangle was published in *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923) by Ogden and Richards.



## 4. MOTIVATION OF WORDS

The term **motivation** is used to denote the relationship existing between the phonemic or morphemic composition and structural pattern of the word on the one hand, and its meaning on the other.

Motivation is the way in which a given meaning is represented in the word.

There are three main types of motivation:

*phonetical motivation*  
*morphological motivation*  
*semantic motivation*



## THE MOTIVATION IS PHONETICAL

- ? when there is a similarity between the sounds that make up the word and those referred to by the sense. This phenomenon is called **onomatopoeia**.

Ex.: *bang, buzz, cuckoo, giggle, gurgle, hiss, purr, whistle.*

Here the sounds of a word are imitative of sounds in nature because what is referred to is a sound or at least, produces a characteristic sound (*cuckoo*).

- ? There's the variability of echo-words within one language and between different languages. Cf. *cuckoo* (Engl), *Kuckuck* (Germ), *кукушка* (Russ).
- ? also: *purr* (of a cat), *moo* (of a cow), *crow* (of a cock), *bark* (of a dog), *neigh* (of a horse) and their Russian equivalents.



Some linguists consider one more type of motivation closely akin to the imitative forms, namely **sound symbolism**. Some words are supposed to illustrate the meaning more immediately than do ordinary words.

Ex.: *flap, flip, flop, flitter, flicker, flutter, flash, flush, flare;*

*glare, glitter, glow, gloat, glimmer;*

*sleet, slime, slush,*

where *fl-* is associated with quick movement,

*gl-* with light and fire,

*sl-* with mud.

Thus, phonetically such words may be considered motivated.



## MORPHOLOGICAL MOTIVATION

Its main criterion is the relationship between morphemes.

Hence all one-morpheme words, e.g. **sing, tell, eat**, are by definition non-motivated. It is observed in derived words built by affixation, conversion and compounding.

Thus, the prefix *ex-* means 'former' when added to human nouns: *ex-filmstar, ex-president, ex-wife*.  
*vitaminise, re-think, **finger-ring, ring-finger***



## SEMANTIC MOTIVATION

It is based on the co-existence of direct and figurative meanings of the same word within the same synchronous system.

*Ex.:* *Mouth* as a part of the human face, and any opening or outlet (used metaphorically): *the mouth of a river, of a cave, of a furnace.*

*Jacket* is a short coat and also a protective cover for a book, a phonograph record or an electric wire.



? Some words seem **unmotivated** (*go, face, boy*).

The word is said to be **non-motivated** for the present stage of language development when the connection between the meaning of the word and its form is conventional that is there is no reason for the word having this particular phonemic and morphemic composition. They have lost their motivation. It can be restored in diachronic researches.

? the history of *not* which is a reduced form of *nought* from OE *nowiht* <*nowiht* ‘nothing’.





# FOLK ETYMOLOGY

The changing of the form of a borrowed word so as to give it a connection with some well-known word in an attempt to find motivation for it.

These cases of mistaken motivation are called folk etymology.

A *nightmare* is not ‘a she-horse that appears at night’ but ‘a terrifying dream personified in folklore as a female monster’ (OE *mara* ‘an evil spirit’.)

The international radio-telephone signal *may-day* corresponding to the telegraphic SOS used by aeroplanes and ships in distress has nothing to do with the First of May but is a phonetic rendering of French *m'aidez* ‘help me’.

*asparagus* – *sparrow grass*

*pigeon language*

