

LEXICOLOGY AS A LINGUISTIC DISCIPLINE

Lexicology - the semantic or morphological study of the linguistic stock of a language, particularly as to content, meaning or use of the individual forms; the study of the words in a language, their meaning and use, their derivation and history.

Lexicography - the listing and describing of the words or morphemes of a language, particularly from the standpoint of meaning, with the possible addition of derivation and history." (Mario Pei, quoted by Vachek)

Lexicology, unlike lexicography, is concerned with the study of the regularities which can be ascertained in the vocabulary of the examined language, of the mutual relations of the individual items of that vocabulary, in short, in discovering its structure.

Lexicography is descriptive; registration of the units of the vocabulary of the given language according to some fixed principle

- formal (alphabetical order)
- dictated by considerations of content (arrangement according to the semantic relationship - *dictionaries of ideas*).

THE ACT OF NAMING

Vocabulary items - naming units of language, employed by the speakers of that language in the 'onomatological' function.

The **onomatological problem** - naming of facts of the extralingual reality.

The **process of naming** is the first part/stage of the more comprehensive process of **lingual stylization** (whenever a member of a language community delivers an utterance). (Mathesius)
The second stage - organization of the names established during the first stage into larger wholes, clauses and sentences - the **functional syntax**.

Language is an **open system** - i.e. it contains some peripheral elements which are not satisfactorily integrated in it, and whose existence appears to motivate most of the **changes** to which the system of language is exposed at any epoch of its development. Language is a **dynamic, not a static system**.

Lexical level is more prominently **open** than the phonic or grammatical levels. For this reason many scholars have voiced their doubts whether the vocabulary may be ascribed the systemic status at all.

→ Bohuslav Trnka: vocabulary is only an **inventory of items** serving as materials for the genuinely systemic levels of language (phonic, morphological, syntactic, etc.).

But undoubtedly some aspects of the vocabulary of the given language clearly reveal a pattern characteristic of that language and different from the patterns found in other languages (e.g. the way of naming newly emerging facts; homonymy).

The **central problem of lexicology** – naming facts of the extra-linguistic reality which surround the speakers of the given community of language. These surroundings mostly appear to be identical in various language communities throughout the world, despite some partial differences → possibility of study from the functionalist viewpoint.

Lexeme - “a meaningful spoken form (word or stem) that is an item of vocabulary, abstracted from sentence words; a complete grammatical form.” (Mario Pei, quoted by Vachek)

Lexeme = a word = “a spoken segment that can be used in isolation“ (= not the part of such a word, which cannot be used independently, such as prefixes, suffixes, etc.).

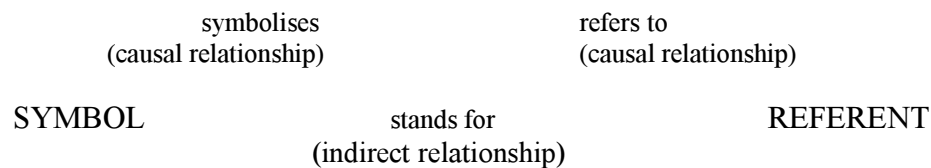
Bloomfield: “**word is a minimum free form.**“ It is free to take up different positions in a sentence (morphemes cannot).

Mathesius: “**word is the smallest independently utilizable segment of an utterance characterized by a certain meaning.**“

Lyons (1968): “**words do not name (or signify) things, they refer to them.**“

Ogden and Richards – indirect relationship between the symbol and the referent.

THOUGHT or SENSE



SEMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LEXICAL UNITS (SENSE RELATIONS): POLYSEMY, HOMONYMY, HYPONYMY, SYNONYMY AND ANTONYMY (complementarity, converseness).

Lexical items are opposed to each other, and this opposition yields **distinctive features**, also called **semes** or **semantic elements**, whereas the content of a lexeme may be called **sememe**.
(Štekauer, p. 144)

Componential analysis (=feature analysis): universal abstract constituents/features: CONCRETE x ABSTRACT, ACTION, SUBSTANCE, QUALITY (ALIVE: vegetable x animal, animal in the wider sense x human), HUMAN, ANIMATE, MALE x FEMALE, ADULT x NON-ADULT, COMMON, COUNTABLE x UNCOUNTABLE, etc.

Lexicon contains systems of lexical items which are intricately interrelated and in which the meaning of each individual word depends on its opposition to other items in the set.

Examples of relations:

Inclusion (inferential meaning, Bolinger), **exclusion**.

Scale - items on it have no absolute value, but the value is shown by comparison.

boiling hot - hot - warm - tepid - cold - ice cold

Metaphorical extension (shift of meaning) - *the girl smiles x the sun smiles, kill a person x kill time, the man runs x the water runs and the nose runs and the car runs on petrol.*

The causative relation - a relation found in verbs only.

(Štekauer, p. 148)

Semantic fields - every word is determined in its meaning by the presence of other words in the vocabulary (those that are related to the same or associated ranges or phenomena).

J. Trier: „Fields are linguistic realities existing between single words and the total vocabulary; they are parts of a whole and resemble words in that they combine into some higher unit“.

Items in the field occur in **sequences** or **cycles**, some exhibit a **part-whole relationship**, some are ordered **hierarchically** or by **taxonomy**.

Polysemy (Greek *polúsémos* = having many meanings) - words with two or more senses.

Hyperlexeme (Filipec) - a polysemic lexeme with several meanings.

Polysemy is a manifestation of the economizing tendency in the language.

Polysemy is revealed by means of antonymy: *man* (= a male adult) x *woman*

man x *boy*

man (= human) x *animal*

child x *adult*

child x *parent*

General x specific sense: *cat* (= beast of prey, e.g. *tiger*, *lion*, *panther*) x *cat* (= common cat, a pet animal)

Different senses of a polysemous word linked to **different grammatical forms:**

ucho - *uši* (animate) x *ucha* (inanimate)

brother - *brothers* (members of a family) x *brethren* (members of a religious group)

bratr - *bratři* x *bratři*

hang - *hung* (= pověsil) x *hanged* (= oběsil)

antenna - *antennae* (organs on the heads of insects and crustaceans) x *antennas* (aerials)

Polysemy by the means of **the context** - most often:

operation (surgery x army (battle or transfer of troops) x mathematics x technology x economy)

Differences between languages - polysemy in one language x two or more different words in the other:

flower x 1. *květina*, 2. *květ* (*bloom*)

klíč x 1. *key* (to a lock), 2. *spanner* (a metal tool to turn nuts and bolts), 3. *clef* (a sign in music)

The basis for the development of additional meanings is usually a **transfer** performed on the basis of **identity or similarity**.

(Štekauer, pp. 150-151)

Homonymy

Homonyms - two or more words that are identical in form but different in meaning.

Real homonyms - sound and look (in written form) identical:

bank (= slope), *bank* (= an institution where people deposit or borrow money)

Homophones - they sound identical, but are spelled differently:

through x *through*

Homographs - they have identical spelling, but different pronunciation:

lead [li:d] x [led], *wind* [wind] x [waɪnd]

False friends (*faux amis*) - interlanguage homonyms.

Paronymy - words similar in form, but totally different in meaning (*cosmic-cosmetic*, *historical-hysterical*).

Synonymy

Synonyms - words or phrases with the same or nearly the same meaning.

Few true synonyms; most pairs or rows of synonyms have nearly the same denotation and a different connotation. Synonymous relations link words from different lexical strata (standard, dialect, informal). **Tautonyms, not synonyms** (according to some lexicologists) - dialectal synonyms (valley - dale), standard-slang synonyms (girl-bird-lass), synonyms from two standards (Br. spanner - Am. wrench).

The variants which are not synonyms either:

- spelling variants (colour - color, whisky - whiskey)
- pronunciation variants [di-]-[dai-] (digest, director)
- morphological variants (effectivity - effectiveness, brothers - brethren), adjectival affixes -ic and -ical, prefix a- (wait - await)
- nominal vs. verbal constructions (walk - take a walk)
- doublets due to conversion (reading - read (this is a good read))
- paraphrases (female dog - bitch, male duck - drake, the victor from Austerlitz - Napoleon) (Štekauer, pp. 153-154)

Absolute synonyms - words agreeing in denotation, connotation and distribution (*kind - sort, jazykověda - lingvistika, zeměpis - geografie*). Rather in Czech than in English. Often a domestic word vs. a loanword. Some have become extinct (*lučba - chemie*), dated or out-of-date (*wireless* replaced by *radio*).

Close synonyms differing in a single **seme**:

jump - leap (both mean „change in vertical position“, but *leap* in addition also contains the seme „change in horizontal position“.

close (stresses exclusion) - *shut* (stresses the process)

Synonyms differing in intensity - greater intensity is often accompanied by expressive or stylistic connotations (*break - smash, cry - shout, scream, screech, yell, howl, squall*).

Stylistic synonyms - oppositions neutral - marked, neutral - formal, neutral - obsolete, neutral - poetic.

Near-synonyms - words which are closely related with the members of a synonym group (or a semantic field)

Antonymy

Oppositeness (Lyons) - two words have opposite meanings.

- **antonymy (contrary antonyms)** - gradable adjectives (i.e. implicitly comparable terms) which may be modified with adverbs (*very, much, slightly, etc.*)

- **complementarity (contradictory/complementary antonyms)** - oppositeness between pairs of non-gradable words. The denial of one word in such a pair implies the assertion of the other and the assertion of one implies the denial of the other.

- **converseness**

Antonyms vs. negative words:

The derivatives with prefixes *in-*, *un-*, *non-*, *dis-* usually are not rated as antonyms but as **negative words**, i.e. mere denials of the positive meanings (*certain - uncertain, literate - illiterate*). Sometimes both a real antonym and a negative word are available (*easy - uneasy, difficult, married - unmarried, single*).

LANGUAGE FIGURES: METAPHOR, METONYMY, SIMILE, TABOO, EUPHEMISM, DYSPHEMISM, UNDERSTATEMENT, HYPERBOLE, SYNECDOCHE, LITOTES. LOAN WORDS.

Figurative language - an expressive use of language when words are used in a non-literal way to suggest illuminating comparisons and resemblances (**figures of speech**). It has a local, restricted effect in which special meaning is extracted from the linking of two unlike words.

Metaphor - a figurative expression in which one notion is described in terms usually associated with another. The linkage between the two words is implicit. (*launch an idea*)

Metonymy - a semantic change where an attribute is used for the whole (*crown=king*).

Přenesení pojmenování na skutečnost, která je s původní skutečností spjata nějakou prostorovou, časovou, kvalitativní, funkční, příčinnou a jinou souvislostí či soumezností. Na rozdíl od metafory si metonymie v podstatě vždy uchovává primární význam přenášeného pojmenování, pouze ho zasouvá do pozadí. Je představitelná jako jistý druh elipsy (vypil sklenici). Metonymie **aktuální** (*Dvacet podvlékaček podívalo se nahoru a řeklo...*), **uzuální** (*nosí stříbrnou lišku*); **kontextová** (*číst Haška, hrát Dvořáka, Praha rozhodla*).

Simile - a figurative expression that makes an explicit comparison (*as tall as a tower*).

Taboo - expressions which people avoid using in polite society because they believe them harmful or feel them embarrassing or offensive.

Euphemism - a figure of speech in which an unpleasant, offensive, harsh or blunt word or expression is avoided and a vague or indirect expression or one that is milder is used instead (*pass away/on for die, little girls' room for lavatory or toilet; developing countries for backward countries; single-parent family; previously owned, gosh for God*).

Dysphemism - the substitution of a derogatory or unpleasant term for a pleasant or neutral one and a term so used (*pushing up daisies, sniff it*).

Understatement - (an unduly) restrained statement or expression, representing the facts as being less than is actually the case.

Hyperbole - a figure of speech consisting in emphatically exaggerated or extravagant statement, used to express strong feeling or produce a strong impression, not meant to be taken literally (*There were millions of people in the street. The heat drives me crazy. smashing new dress; skyscraper*).

Synecdoche - a figure of speech in which the part is used for the whole or the whole is used for the part (*wheels for car, creatures for cats*).

Litotes - a figure of speech where something is understated, often ironically. E.g. an affirmative is expressed by the negative of the contrary. (*No small amount*). (*Not bad, meaning good*).

Irony - language that expresses a meaning other than that literally conveyed by the words. (*That's marvellous, said of poor work*)

Paradox - an apparent contradiction that contains a truth. A situation, fact or statement which seems impossible and/or difficult to understand because it contains two opposite facts or characteristics.