

THE FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS OF WORDS IN LEXICOLOGICAL STUDY

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Abstract

Lexicology, as a fundamental branch of linguistics, examines the semantic, structural, and historical characteristics of words. Contemporary research emphasizes that vocabulary reflects cultural and cognitive dimensions of human communication. This article provides an overview of the theoretical foundations of lexicology, the structure and essence of the word, lexical relations, and mechanisms of vocabulary enrichment, drawing from classical and modern linguistic scholarship.

Key words: lexicology, semantics, lexeme, etymology, word structure, phraseology.

Introduction. Vocabulary plays a crucial role in shaping linguistic structure and communication. As Crystal states, “vocabulary represents not merely isolated items but a system reflecting cultural and cognitive patterns within a community”[1]. Similarly, Lyons argues that words constitute the semantic core of language, serving as the primary means through which humans conceptualize reality[2]. In Uzbek linguistics, scholars such as Orinboyev and Tursunov et al. highlight that lexicology studies the lexical system of a language, focusing on semantic, morphological, phonetic, and etymological properties[3]. According to Bobojonov, vocabulary remains the key parameter for understanding the diversity of languages[4]. From an international perspective, Jackson and Zé Amvela assert that lexicology encompasses the study of word structure, semantic relations, lexical change, phraseology, and borrowing[6]. Ullmann further emphasizes that meaning is the central component that distinguishes words from other linguistic units [5].

Theoretical foundations of lexicology. Lexicology (lexis — word, logos — study) is defined by Crystal as the branch of linguistics concerned with the lexical composition of language [1]. This includes the study of word meanings, their origins, structural properties, and the relationships they form within the lexicon. In Uzbek linguistic tradition, Tursunov, Axmedov & Hojiyev describe lexicology as a discipline investigating the semantic structure of words and their role in communication[4]. Lexicology consists of several subfields:

- Semantics, which studies lexical meaning and semantic change (Ullmann,) [5].
- Etymology, which examines the historical origins of words
- Phraseology, which focuses on set expressions and idioms
- Lexicography, relating to dictionary-making
- Onomasiology and semasiology, analyzing naming and meaning relationships

The essence and structure of the word.

Although fundamental to linguistic research, defining the word precisely remains difficult. Lyons notes that the word is a linguistic sign composed of phonological, grammatical, and semantic properties, forming its functional unity [2]. Ullmann adds that the complexity of the word arises from its simultaneous roles in communication and cognition [5]. Ullmann explains from a cognitive perspective and classified his ideas into the following groups:

1. Lexical Meaning. Lexical meaning represents the central semantic content shared by all forms of a lexeme. Ullmann highlights that semantic change—metaphor, metonymy, narrowing, broadening—reflects the dynamic nature of vocabulary[5].

2. Morphological Structure. Words consist of morphemes, the smallest meaningful units. Crystal distinguishes simple, derived, and compound structures [1]. Orinboyev argues that morphological composition influences syntactic and semantic behavior [3].

3. Etymology and Historical Development. Historical development includes borrowing, semantic shift, and phonological change. According to Jackson and Zé Amvela, these processes shape the evolution of vocabulary [7].

4. Lexical Relations. Lexical relations—synonymy, antonymy, homonymy, hyponymy—demonstrate how vocabulary functions systematically. Ullmann explains these relations as crucial elements in meaning formation[5].

Lexeme and its role in Lexicology.

A lexeme is an abstract unit representing a set of word forms sharing the same meaning. Crystal defines the lexeme as the “central semantic unit in the lexicon,” foundational for morphological and syntactic analysis(1).

Vocabulary enrichment mechanisms.

Vocabulary expands through various mechanisms. Bobojonov and Jackson & Zé Amvela identify neologisms, affixation, compounding, borrowing, and phraseological development as key sources(5)(6). Ullmann emphasizes metaphor and metonymy as drivers of semantic change[5]. In Uzbek linguistics, Tursunov et al. highlight idioms and fixed expressions as significant contributors[4].

Conclusion

The study of words remains central to linguistic theory. Research by Crystal, Lyons, Ullmann, Orinboyev, and Tursunov demonstrates that words serve as structural, semantic, and cognitive units essential to communication. Understanding the nature and development of words deepens insight into language teaching, translation, and intercultural communication.

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