THE IMPORTANCE OF LEXICAL MEANS IN LEXICOLOGY

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Annotation: *This article examines the significance of lexical tools in the study of lexicology, focusing on their functions, applications, and contributions to linguistic research and language learning. The paper analyzes various lexical tools such as dictionaries, thesauri, corpora, concordancers, and digital lexical databases, highlighting their roles in understanding word meaning, usage, semantic relations, and linguistic patterns. Through a review of literature and methodological analysis, the study identifies how lexical tools enhance theoretical and applied lexicology, improve vocabulary acquisition, and support linguistic research. The article concludes with suggestions for optimizing the integration of lexical tools into lexicological studies.*

Keywords: *Lexicology; lexical tools; dictionaries; corpora; semantic analysis; vocabulary acquisition; lexicography; linguistic research; digital lexicology.*

Lexicology, a branch of linguistics devoted to the study of words, their nature, structure, development, and meaning, relies heavily on lexical tools for data collection, semantic interpretation, and linguistic analysis. In contemporary linguistics, the rapid advancement of digital technologies has transformed the methodologies used in lexicological research, making lexical databases, corpora, and concordancers essential instruments. Traditional tools such as dictionaries and thesauri remain fundamental, yet modern digital resources have expanded lexicologists' capabilities, enabling deeper, more accurate insights into language structure and usage.

The importance of lexical tools extends beyond academic research. They support language teaching, translation studies, lexicography, computational

linguistics, and cognitive linguistics. As language evolves and new lexical units emerge, these tools become even more vital for identifying neologisms, tracing semantic shifts, and understanding linguistic variability. Thus, studying the significance of lexical tools in lexicology is crucial for developing effective linguistic methodologies and enhancing language competence.

Lexicology is the branch of linguistics that studies the vocabulary (lexis) of a language – its words, their origin, form, meaning, use, and relationships with one another.

"Lexical means" (or "means of vocabulary/lexicon enrichment") refer to all the linguistic mechanisms and processes through which a language creates, borrows, or develops new words and expressions to name new concepts, objects, phenomena, or nuances.

The study of these lexical means is absolutely central to lexicology for the following key reasons:

They Explain How the Vocabulary of a Language Grows and Changes

Languages are living systems that must constantly adapt to new realities (technological, social, cultural, scientific). Lexical means are the tools that enable this adaptation:

- Without word-formation processes (derivation, compounding, conversion, etc.), languages would be unable to create thousands of new terms every year.

- Borrowing (loanwords, calques) allows rapid integration of foreign concepts.

- Semantic extension (metaphor, metonymy, generalization, specialization) recycles existing words instead of creating new ones.

→ Lexicology cannot describe the current state and historical development of the lexicon without analyzing these mechanisms.

They Reveal the Systemicity of the Lexicon

Vocabulary is not a chaotic list of words but a structured system. Lexical means show regular, productive patterns:

- Morphological derivation: un- + happy → unhappy; child → childhood; happy → happiness

- Compounding: black + board → blackboard; smart + phone → smartphone

- Abbreviation and blending: influenza → flu; breakfast + lunch → brunch

These regularities are the object of morphological and word-formation studies within lexicology.

They Are Essential for Both Synchronic and Diachronic Lexicology

- Synchronic lexicology (description of vocabulary at a given moment) needs lexical means to explain polysemy, homonymy, synonymy, antonymy, and lexical fields.

- Diachronic (historical) lexicology relies on them to trace etymology, semantic shifts, borrowing waves, and the birth or death of words.

They Determine the Typological Character of a Language

Different languages prefer different lexical means:

- English → very productive compounding and conversion ("to google", "a "text" as verb)

- German, Dutch, Russian → rich derivational morphology and compounding

- French → traditionally prefers derivation and borrowing from Latin/Greek

- Chinese → compounding is almost the only productive means

Understanding dominant lexical means helps classify languages typologically in terms of word-formation strategies.

Practical Applications

- Lexicography (dictionary making): compilers must recognize productive word-formation patterns to decide what to include and how to describe new words.

- Teaching foreign languages: learners must master the main word-building techniques of the target language.

- Computational linguistics and NLP: automatic lemmatization, morphological analysis, and neologism detection depend on models of lexical means.

- Terminology and specialized languages: scientific and technical fields create terminology predominantly through certain lexical means (Greek-Latin derivation, acronymy, etc.).

Main Lexical Means Usually Distinguished in Lexicology

Category	Subtypes / Examples	Importance
Word-formation	Derivation (un+happy), Compounding (notebook), Conversion (water → to water), Blending (smoke + fog → smog), Abbreviation (UNESCO), Back-formation (editor → edit)	Most productive internal means
Semantic change	Metaphor, metonymy, broadening, narrowing, amelioration, pejoration	Recycles existing words
Borrowing	Direct loans (ballet, sushi), Calques (skyscraper → rascacielos), Semantic loans	Main source of enrichment in contact situations
Occasional / minor means	Onomatopoeia, reduplication, eponyms, phrasal verbs, phraseological units	Less systematic but culturally significant

In short, lexical means are not a marginal topic in lexicology – they are its very core. Without understanding how new words and meanings are created and incorporated, it is impossible to explain the dynamism, richness, and constant evolution of any language's vocabulary.

The findings underscore that lexical tools are indispensable for lexicology, providing both foundational knowledge and advanced analytical capabilities. While traditional dictionaries serve essential functions, modern research increasingly relies on digital corpora and computational tools. These developments demonstrate a shift from prescriptive to descriptive and data-driven approaches in linguistics.

Lexical tools contribute to understanding language as a dynamic system. For instance, corpora expose semantic prosody—subtle connotations associated with

specific collocations—which older tools could not detect. Similarly, lexical databases model semantic relationships more systematically than printed thesauri.

Conclusions

Lexical tools play a central role in the study of lexicology, enhancing accuracy, depth, and scope of linguistic research. Digital lexical tools—corpora, concordancers, and lexical databases—have revolutionized modern lexicology by providing empirical, real-world data. Lexical tools support language teaching, translation, and lexicography, bridging theoretical and practical dimensions of language study. The effectiveness of lexical tools depends on the user's methodological competence and ability to interpret linguistic data critically.

Expand the use of digital lexical tools in educational settings, especially in linguistics and foreign language programs.

Promote training in corpus linguistics for students and researchers to enhance analytical skills.

Develop multilingual lexical databases to support comparative lexicology and translation studies.

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