Introduction to Lexicology

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The General Characteristics of the Modern English Vocabulary.

Modern English has a very rich vocabulary, up to 600 thousand units. But the size of the vocabulary can't be stated in terms of exact figures and dictionaries that have the title "Complete" register different numbers of language units. This is partially because of the permanent development of the English vocabulary. The vocabulary is a kind of mirror reflecting the activity of the people who use a certain language. Every new fact and phenomenon in the life of the nation finds reflection in the language vocabulary. The living language and its vocabulary is never stable, it is in a state of almost continuous evolution. The influx of new words has never been so great as in the last few decades of the 21st century.

Thus, World War II brought to English such new units as ***blackout***, ***paratroops***, ***V-day***, ***A-bomb***.

The development of science of technology accounts for the appearance of such words as ***psycholinguistics***, ***nylon***, etc.

The conquest and research of space brought about such units as ***sputnik***, ***lunnic***, ***lunokhod***, etc.

Alongside with the appearance of new words, other linguistic units may drop out of the language vocabulary. This may be the result of two reasons:
- ✓ the disappearance of objects those words used to name;
- ✓ the influence of borrowings from other languages: e.g. ***niman*** – Sc. ***take***, ***lent*** – Fr. ***spring***.

Yet, the number of newly-coined units is so much greater than the number of those words which dropped out of the vocabulary that the development of the language can be described as a process of never-ending growth. It's interesting to note that the Old English vocabulary didn't exceed 30 or 40 thousand units. At present it is more than 15 times larger.

Modern English vocabulary has some specific features which make it different from the vocabularies of other languages:

1) A high percentage of one-syllable non-motivated lexical units, that is very short words the meaning of which can't be predicted by their outer form.
2) Abundance of homonyms in English. According to the data of the Oxford dictionary there are 2450 homonymous words and word forms in English. E.g. ***case*** – 1) event;
   2) bag;
   3) disease or patient;
   4) grammatical category

Homonyms are especially numerous among monosyllabic words (89%).

3) A great number of polysemantic words in English, i.e. words which have a number of meanings. The new English dictionary registers 1000 most frequent lexical units which may express 25000 meanings.
4) The paramount importance of context in determining the meanings of words. E.g. *a green leaf*, *a green winter* (warm), *green years* (young), *a green writer* (beginning), *green wound* (fresh).
5) A very high per cent of borrowed elements in English which constitute about 70% of the English vocabulary.

The richness and variety of the English vocabulary makes it necessary to classify in a certain way. It will help to make the study of the vocabulary more thorough and complete:

1)   According to the part of speech criterion all words fall into a number of large lexical-grammatical classes: *nouns, verbs*, etc. These large classes split further into smaller subgroups according to the meaning of words, their paradigms, the combining power, possibilities of substitution. Thus, nouns, for example, fall into *common* and *proper*:
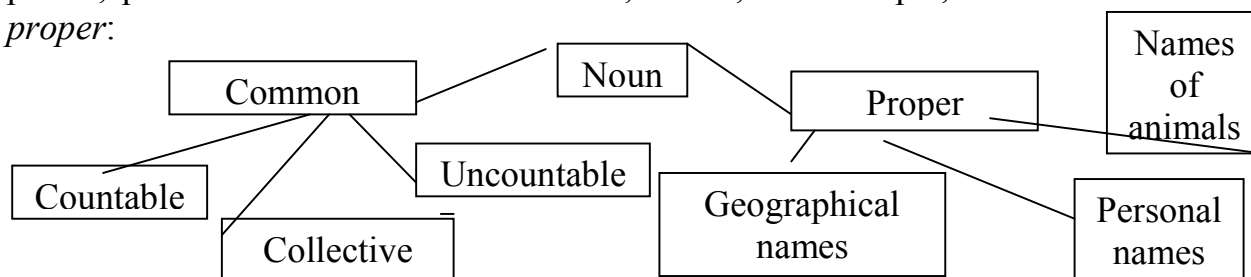
2)   In accordance with their morphemic structure words are divided into simple, derived and compound.

Simple words are those which contain only one root morpheme: **gray, book, go**.

Derived words have a root morpheme plus a suffix or a prefix: **rewrite, writer.**

Compound words are further subdivided into *compounds proper* and *derived compounds* depending on whether they have any building elements: **sun-shine** (proper), **cinema-goer** (derived).

3)   Depending on their meaning and function all words are divided into *notional* and *form* or *structural*. *Notional words* have a full lexical meaning, can be used independently in speech and fulfill a certain syntactical function. They constitute the bulk of the English vocabulary (93%).

The rest are *form words* which have a lexical meaning but rather vague one and can't fulfill any independent syntactical function in the sentence. Their function is to show grammatical relations between words in a sentence. Here belong auxiliary verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, particles and articles. The distinction between national and structural words is not always clear cut.

E.g. **I haven't seen her <u>since</u> we finished school together**. (conjunction).

I haven't seen her <u>since</u> then. (preposition)

I haven't seen her <u>since</u>. (adverb).

4)   According to the number of meanings words possess they are divided into *monosemantic* and *polysemantic.* Polysemy depends upon two main factors:

a) frequency of usage;

b) the syllabic structure of a word;

The more frequently the word is used and the shorter it is the more polysemantic the unit is:

⎧ **head** – many meanings   **man** – 10 meanings
⎨ **forehead** – one meaning   **woman** – 3 or 4 meanings

5)   Identity of the root morpheme is the basis for singling out word families in the English vocabulary, e.g. **dog, doggie, dogless, doggiedly, doglike, hotdog, doghole, doghouse, dog-days, dog-lead, dogberry, dogcart**.

6)   According to the similarity and polarity of meaning there are in English groups of *synonyms* and *antonyms.* Synonymic and antonymic relations are the basic types of linguistic relationship and are characteristic of the vocabulary of any language.

7)   Identity of sound form or spelling or both underlies the existence of *homonyms* and *homographs*.

E.g.   **I** – я
[ai]⟨ **I** – letter   **wind** [i] – **wind** [ai]
        eye – око

8)   According to the sphere of usage all words fall into *stylistically neutral* and *stylistically marked*. The latter are further divided into *literary bookish* and *colloquial*.

E.g. **child** (neutral)   **horse** (neutral)
      infant (literary bookish)   **steed** (poetic)
      kid (colloquial)   **gee-gee** (colloquial)

9) Etymologically vocabulary units are split into *native* and *loan* words.

Etymological Characteristics of the Modern English Vocabulary.

Modern English is a product of number of epochs and has a composite nature. The branch of lexicology which deals with the origin and history of words is called *etymology*. Thus, to give the etymological survey of the modern English vocabulary means to characterize it from the point of view of its different layers, the historical courses of their appearance, the role and comparative importance of native and borrowed elements of the English vocabulary.

Traditionally the term native is used to denote words of Angle-Saxon origin which were brought to the British Isles from the continent in the 5th century by the Germanic tribes: the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes. These words are registered by the earliest available manuscripts of the Old English period.

Native elements fall into two large groups:

❖ words of the Indo-European origin;

❖ those of the common Germanic origin.

Words of the Indo-European origin make up the most ancient of the English vocabulary and have related elements in different Indo-European languages. Here belong words of the following important semantic groups:

1) names of celestial bodies: **sun, moon, star,** etc.
2) terms of relationship: **father, mother, brother**;
3) numerals: **one, two, three,** etc.
1) names of animals and birds: **cow, bull, wolf, cat**, **goose,** etc.
2) names of plants and trees: **birch, willow, poplar,** etc.
3) names of parts of the day*: **day, night**, etc.
4) names of parts of a human body: **arm, foot, heart, lip**, etc .
5) names of common actions: **see, hear, do,** etc.
6) names of qualities and properties: **old, young, dark,** etc.

Words of the common Germanic origin have parallels in such languages as: German, Islandic, Norwegian but which are not to be found say in Russian or French. Here belong:

1) auxiliary and modal verbs;
2) adverbs of place and time;
3) most pronouns;
4) prepositions;
5) conjunctions;

Besides, words of the common Germanic origin are represented by the following important semantic groups:

1) names of colours, all the colours of the rainbow have English names except **orange** and **violet**;
2) names of seasons: **summer, winter**;
3) names of plants, trees and berries: **acorn, oak, fir, linden, ash, berry**;
4) names of animals: **bear, fox, hen, horse, goat**;
5) names of meals: **bread, egg, meal**;
6) names of parts of a human body: **hand, head, finger**;

Distinctive features of native elements:

1. In the course of time native elements undergo serious semantic changes and may become *polysemantic*.

E.g. **finger** – 1) a part of a hand ;
2) a part of a glove covering one binger;
3) a hand of a clock;
4) an index of any scale;
5) a unit of measurement ;

2. Native elements are characterized by high combining power and can *form large word families*: E.g. **wood, wooden, woodless, woody, wooded, Hollywood, woodpecker, woodwork, woodcutter, Woodstock, woodcraft**.

3. Most native elements are neutral in style and serve as *the basis for forming numerous phraseological units*: E.g. **head over heels, heels over head, to kick heels, the**

iron heel, the heel of Achilles, to show smb a clean pair of heels to take to one's heels, to cool one's heels, to set one' heels upon smb.

Thus, semantic peculiarities stability, wide combinability, unlimited sphere of usage and high frequency value account for a very significant role of native elements in the English vocabulary.

Modern English is very rich in loan words (70%). This is because in its 15-century long history English came into long and close contacts with other languages mainly Latin, Scandinavian and French. It is an amalgamation of many tongues which created a language which is richer, more flexible and expressive than any of those from which it was created.

Borrowings may penetrate into other languages in two main ways:
- economic, political and cultural relations with other nations;
- the so-called "language crosses".

English experienced language crosses twice: first with Scandinavian language in the 5th century and later with the Norman dialect of French in the $11^{th} - 14^{th}$ century. In both cases English was victorious. It preserved the bulk of its vocabulary and grammar and at the same time greatly enriched itself at expense of numerous borrowings.

After a borrowed word stays in the language for a long time it becomes assimilated. There are there types of assimilation of loan words:
1) phonetic;
2) grammatical;
3) lexical;

Phonetic assimilation means changes in the sound form and stress. Sounds alien to the norms of English are gradually fitted into the scheme of English sounds. E.g. **[e:]**→ **[ei]**: ***communiqué, café***. Stress was gradually shifted to the first syllable so that such French words as ***honour***, ***reason*** are accented similarly to such native elements as ***mother***, etc.

Grammatical assimilation presupposes the change of the paradigm because loan words lose their former grammatical categories and acquire the forms characteristic of the adopting language. E.g. sputnik (2 cases and 2 number forms):

Sputnik   Sputnik's
Sputniks   Sputniks'

Lexical assimilation means changes in the semantic structure of borrowed words. E.g. a primary meaning can become a secondary one: Sc. ***fellow*** came to English in the meaning of ***friend, companion***. Its main meaning now is ***a boy, a man***. Some loan words may acquire a new meaning in English. E.g. It. ***umbrella*** penetrated into English in the meaning of ***sunshade***. Gradually it came to mean ***protection from the rain as well***.

Alongside with borrowings proper there are in English *translation* and *semantic loans*.

By *translation loans* we understand words and phrases built from the material available in the given language but after the patterns borrowed from some other language. It is done by way of literal, morpheme-for-morpheme translation. E.g. ***wall newspaper***.

Semantic loans presuppose the development in an English word of a new meaning under the influence of a correlated element in some other language: E.g. *pioneer* used to mean *the first*. Under the influence of the Russian *пионер* it also came to mean *a member of a children organization*.

Among borrowed words in any language there are *international words* which appear as a result of simultaneous or successive borrowings by different languages. They are mainly to be found in terminology. Among them are some <u>English international words:</u>

1) sport terms: *ball, football, time*, etc.
2) names of articles of clothing: *jersey, sweater, pullover, nylon*, etc.
3) words connected witch entertainment : *jazz, film, club, cocktail*, etc.

Word-Building in English.

Word building is the most important means of enriching the English vocabulary. It can be defined as the process of coining new words from the material available in the given language after certain semantic and structural patterns. Some ways of word building can be resorted to whenever the occasion demands. They are called *productive* and include:

- affixation;
- conversion;
- word composition;
- shortening.

Conversion is a specifically English way of word formation. It is defined as the process of coining new words without adding any derivational affixes so that the basic forms of the original and derived unit are homonymous. E.g. *cool* (adj.) – *to cool* (verb).

There exist several varieties of conversion:

- verbalization – forming verbs from other parts of speech. E.g. N. *air* – V. *to air*, A. *free* – V. *to free*.
- substantivization – forming nouns from other parts of speech. E.g. A. *round* – N. *round*, V. *to say* – N. *a say*.
- adjectivization. E.g. part. *standing people* – A. *standing rule* (constant);
- adverbalization. E.g. Pr. *that film* – adv. *that dull* (so)

Conversion is especially productive in forming verbs at present. E.g. *to screen, to campaign, to star*. Conversion is so productive in English that we can observe conversive relations between three, four and more units. E.g. such clusters as *down* or *round* can operate as five different parts of speech. E.g.

We all have our ups & <u>downs</u> (noun).
Let us meet at the <u>down</u> platform (adj).
The workman <u>downed</u> their mugs of ale (verb).
The stream ran <u>down</u> the slope (preposition).
Two trees fell <u>down</u> during the storm (adverb).

There are two reasons which explain high productivity of conversion in English:

1) a relatively small number of affixes;
2) the lack of part of speech markers.

Affixation is a way of coining new words by adding affixes. It is subdivided into prefixation and suffixation.

As a result of mass borrowings some affixes may become <u>synonymous</u> to each other or some native element. Thus, there are three suffixes denoting the doer of the action: **-er, -ist** (Gr), **-eer** (Fr). These suffixes are not absolute synonyms because the suffix **-ist** has an additional meaning – ***the follower of some doctrine***. As to the suffix **-eer**, it has a derogatory connotation. E. g., ***profiteer*** (спекулянт), ***sonneteer*** (рифмопліт).

If identical affixes are used to form different parts of speech they are <u>homonymous</u>. E. g. **-en**, can build verbs and adjectives: ***widen*** and ***wooden***; **-ly**, can form adverbs and adjectives: ***evidently*** and ***timely***; **-ful**, – adjective and nouns: ***beautiful*** and ***handful***.

If an affix is used for a long time it may become <u>polysemantic</u>: E. g. **-er**
1) the doer of the action: ***writer, driver***;
2) an instrument or device: ***cutter, boiler***, etc.;
3) a collective meaning: ***reader*** (хрестоматія).

Compound words are words consisting of at least two stems which occur in the language as free forms: ***time-table, fountain-pen, birthday***.

The most productive way of word formation is *shortening*. It is coining new words by clipping the existing lexical units with the aim to create shorter words, convenient for use in speech. There are three types of word-shortening:
 - aphaeresis
 - syncope
 - apocope

Aphaeresis is clipping the beginning of a word, E. g. ***omnibus – bus, telephone – phone***.

Syncope is taking away the middle of the word, E. g. ***madam – ma'am, fantasy – fancy***. Graphic examples of this type are ***Mr, Mrs, Dr***.

Apocope is clipping the end of the word. This is the most widely spread type. E. g. ***sanatorium – san, examination – exam***.

Phrases can be abbreviated in two ways:
1) each component is clipped up to the initial sound or letter. E. g. ***UNO, FBI***.
2) only the first component is clipped. E. g. ***X-mas, H-bad*** (***hand-bad***).

<u>Non-productive ways of word-formation:</u>
1.   *Blending* is forming a new word by joining two clipped stems. E. g.
breakfast + lunch – brunch;
smoke + fog – smog;
fruit +juice – fruice;
motor + hotel – motel;
boat + hotel – botel.
2.   *Change of stress* is used for forming verbs out of nouns. E. g. ***object, record***.
3.   *Backformation* is coining a word by subtracting a real or supposed suffix sometimes through misinterpretation of the morphemic structure of a linguistic unit. E. g. ***beggar – to beg, editor – to edit, sculptor – to sculpt***.

4. *Reduplication* is coining a word by repeating the root, it can be full or partial, depending on whether the root is repeated with or without any changes. E. g.
- *full*: **murmur, goodie-goodie**;
- *partial*: **fulfill, giggle-gaggle, ping-pong**.

5. *Sound interchange* used to be very productive in Old English and now we only have some remnants of this process. The examples can be found among words belonging to:

a) different parts of speech, e. g. **speak – speech**;

b) the same part of speech, e. g. **rise – raise**.

6. *Onomatopoeia* or *sound imitation*, is a process of coining new words which reproduce natural sounds, e. g. **cock-a-doodle-do**.

There are four main groups of words built through this way:

a) words which imitate sounds made by people in the process of their communication. E. g. **whisper**;

b) words reproducing sounds made by animals. E. g. **moo** (cow), **mew, purr** (cat), **hiss** (snake), **oink** (pig);

c) words reproducing sounds made by water. E. g. **bubble, splash**;

d) words reproducing sounds made by metallic things. E. g. **clink, clang, tinkle**.

Homonyms and Synonyms in English.

Homonyms are two or more words which are identical in their sound form (or spelling) but different in meaning, distribution and sometimes origin. English abounds in homonyms (2540 words and word forms). This is because of the monosyllabic structure of the overwhelming majority of words in English and practically the lack of inflections.

1) According to their graphic form homonyms fall into three groups: *homonyms proper* or *perfect homonyms*, *homophones* and *homographs*.

Homonyms proper are identical both in their sound form and spelling:

E. g. **light**$_1$ – opposite to **dark**;   **case**$_1$ – event;

light$_2$ – opposite to **heavy**.   **case**$_2$ – bag;

case$_3$ – grammatical category.

Homophones have the same sound form only but different meaning and spelling. This is the most numerous group:

E. g. *the play***wright** *on my* **right** *thinks it* **right** *that some conventional* **rite** *should symbolize the* **right** *of every to* **write** *as he pleases*. Thus the sound cluster /**r a i t**/ is used here as four different parts of speech, has four different spellings and six different meanings.

Homographs are identical in spelling but different in sound form and meaning.

E. g. **wind**$_1$ and **wind**$_2$; **lead**$_1$ and **lead**$_2$, **row**$_1$ (ряд) and **row**$_2$ (скандал).

2) According to their grammatical structure homonyms are divided into *full* and *partial*.

Full homonyms have identical paradigm, i.e. they coincide in all their grammatical forms. E. g. **seal**$_1$ (печатка) and **seal**$_2$ (морж).

Partial homonyms coincide only in some of their grammatical forms.

E. g. ***to lie₁*** (to deceive smb.) and ***to lie₂*** (лежати). Past. ***lied*** and ***lay***.

3) <u>According to the type of meaning</u> that helps to differentiate between identical sound clusters we distinguish l*exical, lexical-grammatical* and *grammatical* homonyms.

Lexical homonyms differ in their lexical meaning: they are words of the same part of speech. E.g. ***case₁*** and ***case₂***.

Lexical-grammatical differ in both types of word meaning, they may belong to different parts of speech (***seal*** and ***to seal***) or to the same part of speech (***found*** (past of ***find***) and ***found*** (to set up); ***bore*** (past of ***bear***) and ***bore***).

Grammatical homonyms differ in their grammatical meaning, they are homonymous forms of the same word.

E.g. ***put – put, put***.

The diachronic analysis of homonyms helps to establish the following <u>main sources of homonymy in English</u>:

Convergent sound development when two or more words accidentally coincide in the course of their historical development. E. g.

O.E. ***sunne – sun,***   ***lufu*** – N. ***love***,

      sunu – son.   ***lufian*** – V. ***love***.

There are some examples of this process among borrowings which coincided in their sound form with some native elements: E. g. ***match*** (Fr.) means *сірник* coincides with ***match*** (native) meaning *матч; pale* (Fr.) – *блідий* and ***pail*** (n.) – *відро*.

Conversion as a productive way of word formation in English: V. ***to broadcast***, N. ***broadcast***, etc.

Split of polysemy – when two meanings of a polysemantic unit move so far away from each other that they came to be associated with entirely different words.

E. g. ***air*** – повітря;

      air – вигляд (***to put on airs***).

Synonyms are two or more words of the same language which belong to the same part of speech, have a similar denotational component of the lexical meaning, are interchangeable at least in some contexts but which differ in shades of meaning, valency, emotional charge, stylistic reference.

Shades of meaning: ***hostess, mistress*** and ***landlady***; ***clock*** and ***watch*** (a smaller time-piece which people wear on their wrist).

Valency or *combining power*: ***beautiful*** and ***handsome***;

{***Much*** and ***many***;

{***Little*** and ***few***

{***high*** (building)   ***win***   war

{***tall*** (man)   ***gain*** (victory)

The difference in lexical valency may be supported by the difference in syntactic distribution: E.g.

{***Ill*** is used as a predicative;

{***Sick*** is used both as predicative and attribute.

$\begin{cases} \textbf{\textit{to look}} + \text{adj., noun;} \\ \textbf{\textit{to seem}} + \text{inf. } \textbf{that}\text{-clause.} \end{cases}$

Sometimes the difference is restricted to the use of prepositions:

$\begin{cases} \textbf{\textit{to say to smb.,}} \\ \textbf{\textit{to tell smb}}. \end{cases}$

$\begin{cases} \textbf{\textit{to answer a question}} \\ \textbf{\textit{to reply to a question}} \\ \textbf{\textit{to address smb.}} \\ \textbf{\textit{to apply to smb.}} \end{cases}$

Emotional charge depends on the speaker's attitude:

$\begin{cases} \textbf{\textit{aunt}} \\ \textbf{\textit{auntie}} \end{cases}$

Stylistic reference is connected with the sphere of application

$\begin{cases} \textbf{\textit{child}} \\ \textbf{\textit{kid}} \\ \textbf{\textit{infant}}. \end{cases}$

There is no universally accepted classification of synonyms. The best known classification was suggested by academician Vinogradov who divided synonyms into *ideographic* and *stylistic* depending on whether they differ in the denotational or connotational component of their meaning. This classification is open to criticism because synonyms which are usually described as stylistic usually differ in their denotation too. E.g.

$\begin{cases} \textbf{\textit{to see}} \\ \textbf{\textit{to behold}} \end{cases}$

Alongside with the meaning they have in common (***to use the power of sight***) the verb ***to see*** has some additional meanings ***to understand***, ***to experience, to meet***.

All words with a similar denotational component make up *a synonymic set* or *row*. If a word is polysemantic it enters a number of sets. Eg ***fresh***

fresh paragraph (new) ;
freshman (inexperienced);
fresh metaphor (original);
fresh air (pure);
to be fresh with smb. (rude).

One member of the synonymic set is a word which is more general in meaning, neutral in style and possesses a greater combining power. It is called *a synonymic dominant*. E.g. ***piece, slice, lump, bar, morsel, cake***.

English is extremely rich in synonyms and their diachronic study reveals the following <u>main sources</u>:

1)   *Borrowings* from other languages which form very often the so called triple scale in which the native element is neutral in style its French counterpart is literary bookish and Latin or Greek is learned.

E.g.

teaching (n.)
guidance (Fr.)
instruction (L)

rise (n.)
mount (Fr.)
ascend (L.)

ask (n.)
question (Fr.)
interrogate (L.)

2) *Variants* and *dialects* of English:

Lift (Br.)
Elevator (Am.)

Wireless (Br.)
Radio (Am.)

Think (Br.)
Guess (Am.)

3) *Shortening*:

E. g. *bicycle* and *bike*

4) *Euphemisms* (Gr. "well" and "speak") – substitution of vague (mild) connotation for rough and unpleasant lexical units.

E. g. *pregnant;*
in a family way;
to bin waiting;
heavy with a child;
with a baby coming.

sweat;
perspiration

belly;
stomach.

Euphemisms may be caused by the following main reasons:
 - the existence of the so called superstitious taboos:

E. g. *God*
 Lord
Father
He
Goodness

Hell
 lower regions
hot place
the other place

devil
gosh
the prince of darkness
old Nick
old Harry
the black one
the evil one
deuce

- the requirements of social etiquette:

E. g. *toilette;*
lady's room;
bathroom;
water closet (w. c.);
rest room;
a powder room;
public comfort station;
where can I spend a penny?
where can I see my aunt?
pawn shop;
loan office

- requirements of style:

E. g. *cemetery;*
bone orchard;
memorial park.

to die;
to join the silent majority;
to kick the bucket;
to pass away;
to go west;
to go visiting;
to go the way of all;
to close one's eyes;
to push up the daisies;
to hop the twig.

Synonyms enrich the language vocabulary, they help to express our thoughts in a more precise and imaginative way. The more developed the language is the greater possibilities of lexical choice it possesses.