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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AND EDUCATION: a collection scientific works of the International scientific conference – London, England, 2026. Issue 3

Languages of publication: Uzbek, English, Russian, German, Italian, Spanish

The collection consists of scientific research of scientists, graduate students and students who took part in the International Scientific online conference «**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AND EDUCATION**». Which took place in London 2026.

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The Relationship Between Lexicology and Semantics

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Abstract. This article explores the close relationship between lexicology and semantics as two fundamental branches of linguistics. While lexicology focuses on the study of words and vocabulary systems, semantics deals with meaning in language. The interaction between these two fields plays a crucial role in understanding how words function, change, and convey meaning in different contexts. The paper discusses theoretical perspectives, lexical meaning types, semantic relations, and the implications of this relationship for language teaching and learning.

Keywords: lexicology, semantics, lexical meaning, vocabulary, semantic relations, language study

Introduction. Language is a complex system composed of interrelated components that work together to convey meaning. Among these components, vocabulary and meaning play a central role in communication. Lexicology, the study of words and their structure, and semantics, the study of meaning, are closely connected fields within linguistics. Understanding the relationship between lexicology and semantics is essential for analyzing how language operates at both structural and functional levels. This article examines their interdependence and highlights their significance in linguistic theory and practice.

The Nature of Lexicology. Lexicology is a branch of linguistics that studies words, their formation, structure, meaning, and usage. It examines vocabulary as a system, including the origin of words, word formation processes, and lexical units. Lexicology also investigates how words are organized in the mental lexicon and how they function in communication.

Lexicology can be divided into general and special lexicology. General lexicology studies vocabulary across languages, while special lexicology focuses on the vocabulary of a particular language, such as English. Additionally, historical lexicology studies the development and evolution of words over time, while descriptive lexicology examines vocabulary at a specific stage of language development.

The Nature of Semantics. Semantics is the branch of linguistics that deals with meaning. It studies how meaning is constructed, interpreted, and communicated through language. Semantics covers different types of meaning, including lexical meaning (word meaning), grammatical meaning, and contextual meaning.

Semantic analysis involves understanding how words relate to each other and how their meanings change depending on context. It also explores abstract concepts such as reference, sense, denotation, and connotation. These elements are essential for interpreting language accurately and effectively.

The Interconnection Between Lexicology and Semantics





Lexicology and semantics are deeply interconnected because the study of words cannot be separated from the study of meaning. Words are the primary carriers of meaning, and their analysis requires semantic interpretation.

Lexicology relies on semantics to explain the meaning of lexical units, while semantics depends on lexicology to provide the material (words) for analysis. For example, when studying vocabulary, lexicologists must consider semantic properties such as meaning variation, ambiguity, and context dependency.

This relationship is particularly evident in the study of polysemy, where a single word has multiple related meanings, and homonymy, where words share the same form but have different meanings. Both phenomena demonstrate how lexical and semantic aspects interact.

Types of Lexical Meaning. Lexical meaning is a key concept that connects lexicology and semantics. It can be categorized into several types:

Denotational meaning refers to the direct, literal meaning of a word.

Connotational meaning includes emotional and associative aspects of meaning.

Contextual meaning depends on the situation in which a word is used.

Stylistic meaning reflects the social or stylistic context of language use.

Understanding these types of meaning helps explain how words function in different contexts and how meaning is shaped by usage.

Semantic Relations in Lexicology

Semantic relations are central to both lexicology and semantics. These include:

Synonymy – words with similar meanings

Antonymy – words with opposite meanings

Hyponymy – hierarchical relationships between words

Polysemy – multiple meanings of a single word

Homonymy – words with identical forms but different meanings

These relationships show how vocabulary is structured and how meaning is organized within a language.

The Role of Context in Meaning Interpretation. Context plays a vital role in understanding meaning. Words do not exist in isolation; their meanings are influenced by the linguistic and situational context in which they are used. Semantics provides tools to analyze context, while lexicology provides the lexical units involved.

For example, the word “bank” can refer to a financial institution or the side of a river. Only context determines the intended meaning. This demonstrates the importance of combining lexical and semantic analysis for accurate interpretation.

Implications for Language Teaching and Learning. The relationship between lexicology and semantics has important implications for language teaching. Vocabulary teaching should not focus only on word forms but also on meaning, usage, and context.

Teachers should introduce words in meaningful contexts, explain semantic relationships, and encourage learners to explore multiple meanings. Techniques





such as semantic mapping, contextual learning, and vocabulary exercises help students develop deeper understanding.

For EFL learners, mastering both lexical and semantic aspects of language leads to better reading comprehension, writing skills, and communication ability.

Conclusion. In conclusion, lexicology and semantics are closely related fields that together provide a comprehensive understanding of language. Lexicology focuses on words as units of language, while semantics explains their meaning and interpretation. Their interaction is essential for analyzing vocabulary, understanding communication, and improving language teaching practices. A strong connection between these two fields enhances linguistic knowledge and supports effective language use.

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