Section 1. Introduction

The object of lexicology. Basic lexical units: morphemes, words and word groups.
Main branches and problems of lexicology.
The systemic nature of English vocabulary: paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations; the notion of morphological and semantic distinctive features; study of the vocabulary in terms of sets, oppositions and correlations.
Lexicology and other branches of language study: phonology, morphology and syntax, lexicography.

Section 2. The Word and the Morpheme
Different approaches to the concept of the word. The definition of the word. The paradigm. The word as the basic unit of language representing the unity of form and content.
Variability of the word: phonetic and morphological variants of the word.
The definition of the morpheme. The morpheme and the word.
Types of morphemes: free and bound, root and non-root morphemes. Allomorphs.
Analysis of the morphemic structure of words: structural analysis, oppositions and correlations and analysis into immediate constituents. Difficulties of morphemic analysis: unique roots, pseudo-morphemes.
Structural (or morphemic) types of words: monomorphic and polymorphic words.
Historical changeability of the morphemic structure of the word.

Section 3. Word Building in Modern English
Introduction. Principal types of word building in English. Productive and non-productive types and means of word building in English.
Suffixation. Classification of suffixes according to (a) meaning, (b) bases they are added to and (c) parts of speech they produce (nominal, verbal, adjectival suffixes).
Prefixation. Classification of prefixes according to (a) meaning and (b) parts of speech they produce. Polysemy and homonymy of derivational affixes. Productivity of affixes.
Conversion and substantivisation. Fully and partially substantivised adjectives.
Conversion and adjectivisation. Stone wall problem.

Word composition/Compounding. Definition. Compounding as a major way of word building in English. Specific features of English compounds.
Compounds proper and derivational compounds. Means of linking two stems in a compound.
Classification of compounds according to the structural relation between the stems within a compound: co-ordinative compounds (reduplicative, rhythmic) and subordinative compounds (endocentric and exocentric).
Semantic relations between the components of a compound word.
Compounds v phrases. Stone wall problem. Phonological, morphological, syntactical, semantic and graphic criteria used to distinguish compounds from phrases.
Compounds v derivatives. Semi-affixes.

Shortening: clipping, blending, graphic abbreviations, alphabetisms, acronyms.

Section 4. Semasiology (semantics)
Introduction. The role of semasiology in the history of linguistics. Synchronic and diachronic semasiology.
Lexical meaning v grammatical meaning.
Word meaning and motivation: phonological, morphological and semantic motivation.
Section 5. The Semantic Structure of the English Word

Non-isomorphism between the expression plane and the content plane: polysemy, homonymy, synonymy.


Methods used to distinguish individual meanings of a polysemous word: componential analysis, distribution, substitution by synonyms and antonyms.

The semantic structure of a polysemous word in different languages.

Change of meaning. Causes of semantic change: linguistic causes and non-linguistic causes. Nature of semantic change: metaphoric and metonymic change of meaning. Results of semantic change, acquisition and loss of semes: specialisation (narrowing, restriction) v generalisation (widening, extension), elevation (amelioration) v degradation (pejoration).

Sources of the English vocabulary. Native English vocabulary (Anglo-Saxon and Celtic). Borrowing from other languages: Latin and Greek, Scandinavian and other Germanic languages, French etc.

Section 6. Syntagmatic Characterisation of the English Vocabulary


Correlation between semantic and syntactic valencies. Lexical valency v grammatical valency. Valency of different parts of speech. Collocations and idioms. The role of context. Language corpora.

Section 7. Paradigmatic Characterisation of the English Vocabulary

Classification of English vocabulary based on relatedness of meaning. Semantic relations in English vocabulary.


Methods used to distinguish homonymy and polysemy: diachronic basis of distinction, synchronic basis of distinction. Lexicographic practice of treating homonyms. Paronyms.

Vocabulary variation: core and specialist, national and regional, jargon, formal and informal.

Resource books
Plag, I. 2003. Word-formation in English. CUP.