MODERN ENGLISH LEXICOLOGY

Course syllabus

✓ 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 etc. Fuzzy boundaries.

✓ Section 2. The word and the morpheme
Different approaches to the concept of the word. The definition of the word.
Variability of the word: grammatical and lexical variability. Lexical variability: phonetic, morphological and semantic variants of the word. The word paradigm. Lexeme, type, token.
The definition of the morpheme. The morpheme and the word.
Types of morphemes: free and bound, root and non-root morphemes. Allomorphs.
Structural (or morphemic) types of words: monomorphic and polymorphic, monoradical and polyradical words.
Analysing words into morphemes. The notion of compositionality. Morphemic analysis: structural analysis, oppositions and analysis into immediate constituents. Difficulties of morphemic analysis: pseudo-morphemes, unique roots, bound root morphemes.
Historical changeability of the morphemic structure of the word.

✓ Section 3. Word building in Modern English
Prefixation. The notion of prefixation. Different classifications of prefixes: according to origin, structural and semantic classifications.
Suffixation. The notion of suffixation. Different classifications of suffixes: according to origin, structural and semantic classifications.
Polysemy and homonymy of derivational affixes.
Historical changeability of derivational affixes. Hybrids.
Conversion and substantivation. Fully and partially substantivised adjectives.
Conversion and adjectivation. Stone wall problem.
Compounds proper and derivational compounds. Means of linking two stems in a compound.
Classification of compounds by the part of speech of their constituents. Productivity of compounds.
Structural and semantic classification of compounds: co-ordinate and subordinate, endocentric and exocentric compounds. Headedness. Reduplicative compounds.
Compounds v phrases. Phonological, morphological, syntactical, semantic and graphic criteria used to distinguish compounds from phrases.
Minor ways of word building. Shortening: clipping, blending, graphical abbreviations, alphabetisms, acronyms, back formation. Word building based on phonetic peculiarities: sound interchange and sound imitation (onomatopoeia); distinctive stress.

✓ Section 4. Semasiology (lexical semantics): key notions
Introduction. The role of lexical semantics (semasiology) in the history of linguistics. Synchronic and diachronic semantics.


Lexical meaning v grammatical meaning. Grammaticalization.

Word meaning and motivation: phonological, morphological and semantic motivation.

✓ Section 5. Meaning variation. Polysemy and homonymy

The non-isomorphism of a linguistic sign.


Methods used to distinguish individual meanings of a polysemous word.

The notion of homonymy. Word, affixational, syntactic homonymy. Full and partial homonymy. Homophones and homographs. Sources of homonymy: divergence of meaning, convergence of the sound form.

Homonymy vs polysemy. Translatability.

Paronyms.

✓ Section 6. Sources of the English vocabulary. Change of meaning

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

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: specialization (narrowing, restriction) v generalization (widening, extension), elevation (amelioration) v degradation (pejoration); grammaticalization and semantic bleaching.

✓ Section 7. Syntagmatic relations, or word combinability


✓ Section 8. Paradigmatic relations: inclusion, overlapping, exclusion


✓ Section 9. Vocabulary variation

The notion of lexicon, vocabulary, dictionary. Core and specialist vocabulary. Variation by location: national and regional vocabulary. Variation by occupation, social and cultural affiliation; jargon. Variation by text type and situation: register.

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