

**LEXICAL SEMANTICS AS A BRANCH OF LINGUISTIC SEMANTICS
THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND ANALYTICAL APPROACHES****Yunusova Muattar Shakirovna**

Asia International University the Department of History and philology.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15399526>

Abstract. *This article explores lexical semantics, a key branch of linguistic semantics that focuses on the meaning of words and the relationships between them. Lexical semantics examines how words encode meaning, how they relate to each other in semantic fields, and how they function in larger linguistic structures. The article begins with an overview of linguistic semantics and its branches, then delves into the scope, methods, and theoretical frameworks of lexical semantics, such as componential analysis, prototype theory, and cognitive semantics.*

Through analysis and examples from English and other languages, the article demonstrates the role of lexical semantics in understanding language meaning, language change, and cross-linguistic variation.

Keywords: *Lexical semantics, linguistic semantics, word meaning, semantic fields, polysemy, hyponymy, prototype theory, cognitive linguistics.*

Introduction. Semantics, as a core branch of linguistics, studies meaning in language. It addresses how signs—especially words, phrases, and sentences—convey meaning and how meaning is structured and interpreted by speakers and listeners. Within semantics, several subfields have emerged, including formal semantics, lexical semantics, compositional semantics, cognitive semantics, and pragmatic semantics. Among these, lexical semantics stands out for its focus on the meaning of words and their systematic organization in the mental lexicon.

Lexical semantics aims to answer fundamental questions: What does a word mean? How are word meanings related? How do we recognize metaphor and polysemy? These questions not only underpin linguistic theory but also inform practical applications in lexicography, translation, artificial intelligence, and language teaching.

Defining Lexical Semantics. Lexical semantics is the study of word meanings and the relationships among words. It concerns itself with the internal meaning structure of lexemes and how those meanings interact with context and structure.

Words are not isolated in meaning; rather, they form complex networks of semantic relationships. Lexical semantics seeks to uncover these networks by studying phenomena such as:

Synonymy (words with similar meanings)

Antonymy (opposites)

Polysemy (one word with multiple meanings)

Homonymy (words with same form, different meanings)

Hyponymy and Hypernymy (hierarchical word relations)

Meronymy (part-whole relationships)

These relationships help linguists map out how concepts are stored in the mental lexicon and how they function in discourse.

Theoretical Frameworks in Lexical Semantics. Several theoretical approaches have shaped modern lexical semantics. Each contributes to a deeper understanding of how lexical meaning is constructed, processed, and represented.

Componential Analysis. This approach, also called semantic decomposition, assumes that word meanings can be broken into smaller semantic features or components. For instance, the word bachelor might be analyzed as [+human], [+male], [−married].

This approach was useful for identifying shared features among related words and provided the groundwork for early semantic field theory. However, it often struggled with abstract or metaphorical concepts.

Prototype Theory. Proposed by Eleanor Rosch and later applied to semantics by George Lakoff, this theory suggests that categories are not defined by necessary and sufficient features but by best examples or prototypes. For example, a robin is more prototypical of the category "bird" than a penguin.

This model helps explain fuzziness in categories, gradience in meaning, and variation across cultures and languages.

Cognitive Semantics. Rooted in cognitive linguistics, cognitive semantics emphasizes the role of human cognition in shaping meaning. It posits that meaning is embodied, experiential, and contextually grounded. Metaphor, metonymy, and image schemas play a central role in meaning construction.

A classic example is the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MONEY (e.g., "spend time," "save time"), illustrating how abstract concepts are understood via concrete, embodied experiences.

Core Phenomena Studied in Lexical Semantics

Polysemy and Homonymy. Polysemy refers to a single word having multiple related meanings (e.g., paper as a material and as an academic article).

Homonymy occurs when a single form has multiple unrelated meanings (e.g., bat the animal vs. bat used in sports).

Lexical semantics investigates how speakers disambiguate meaning using context, syntactic structure, and pragmatic inference.

Lexical Fields and Semantic Networks. Words are organized into lexical fields—groups of related words like colors, emotions, or kinship terms. Lexical semantics maps these fields to understand how languages structure the conceptual world.

Semantic networks (often implemented in computational linguistics) model these fields with nodes and links, representing words and their relations.

Derivation and Word Formation. Lexical semantics also intersects with morphology. It studies how word meaning changes through affixation, compounding, or conversion.

Example:

happy → happiness (derivation)

blackbird vs. black bird (compounding vs. phrase)

Applications of Lexical Semantics. Lexical semantics has practical applications in many fields:

Lexicography: Helps define dictionary entries and identify word senses.

Language Teaching: Guides vocabulary instruction, especially in understanding nuances of meaning.

Natural Language Processing: Word sense disambiguation, sentiment analysis, and machine translation rely on lexical semantic analysis.

Cognitive Science: Offers insights into how humans mentally organize language and concepts.

Cross-Linguistic and Cultural Considerations. Lexical semantics also explores how different languages carve up conceptual space. For instance:

English distinguishes foot and leg, while some languages use one word for both.

The concept of snow has many lexical items in Inuktitut, reflecting environmental salience.

Such cross-linguistic data enrich our understanding of language universals and the diversity of conceptual categorization.

Challenges and Future Directions

Despite its progress, lexical semantics faces several challenges:

Ambiguity and context-dependence remain difficult to formalize.

Integrating lexical semantics with discourse and pragmatics is an ongoing endeavor.

Advances in corpus linguistics and computational modeling are reshaping how semantic relationships are identified and analyzed.

Future research may focus more on dynamic meaning construction, socio-cognitive variation in lexical access, and integrating lexical semantics with multimodal communication.

Conclusion. Lexical semantics, as a central branch of linguistic semantics, provides deep insights into how words encode and structure meaning. Through its study of word relations, category structure, and conceptual mapping, it bridges theoretical linguistics and practical applications in language learning, AI, and cognitive science. As our understanding of language evolves, lexical semantics will remain a foundational area for exploring how meaning lives in words.

REFERENCES

1. Shakirovna, Y. M. (2025). Research on Lingupoetics in Modern Linguistics. Spanish Journal of Innovation and Integrity, 38, 150–154. Retrieved from <https://sjii.es/index.php/journal/article/view/191>
2. Yunusova Muattar Shakirovna. (2024). The Educational Impact of Studying
3. Linguopoetics in the Work of Halima Khudoyberdiyeva. Miasto Przyszłości, 55, 693–695. Retrieved from <https://miastoprzyszlosci.com.pl/index.php/mp/article/view/5707>
4. Yunusova Muattar. (2022). THE PHENOMENON OF POLYSEMY AS A
5. PHENOMENON OF LINGUISTICS. Galaxy International Interdisciplinary Research Journal, 10(5), 449–453. Retrieved from <https://www.giirj.com/index.php/giirj/article/view/3218>
6. Karimova Go'zal Ikhtiyorovna. (2024). Crucial Approaches to Fairy Tales from History Up to Now. EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF INNOVATION IN NONFORMAL EDUCATION, 4(5), 186–190. Retrieved from <https://www.inovatus.es/index.php/ejine/article/view/3232>
7. Karimova Go'zal Ixtiyorovna. (2025). Concept: Ideal, Material, Dimensional, Concept as a Multidimensional Mental Formation. Spanish Journal of Innovation and Integrity, 38, 41–46. Retrieved from <https://sjii.es/index.php/journal/article/view/173>
8. КАРИМОВА, Г. (2024). LINGUO-CULTURAL ASPECTS OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK FAIRY TALES. News of the NUUZ, 1(1.5), 107-109. <https://doi.org/10.69617/nuuz.v1i1.5.5257>
9. Shakirovna, Y. M. . (2025). Research on Lingupoetics in Modern Linguistics. Spanish Journal of Innovation and Integrity, 38, 150–154. Retrieved from <https://sjii.es/index.php/journal/article/view/191>

10. Yunusova Muattar Shakirovna. (2024). The Educational Impact of Studying Linguopoetics in the Work of Halima Khudoyberdiyeva. *Miasto Przyszłości*, 55, 693–695. Retrieved from <https://miastoprzyszlosci.com.pl/index.php/mp/article/view/5707>
11. Yunusova, M. (2025). THE ENDURING MAGIC OF FAIRY TALES IN LINGUISTIC PHENOMENON: A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME. *Modern Science and Research*, 4(4), 1432–1440. Retrieved from <https://inlibrary.uz/index.php/science-research/article/view/81146>
12. Yunusova, M. (2025). POLYSEMY IS A FASCINATING ASPECT OF LANGUAGE, ITS ASPECTS IN LINGUISTICS. *Modern Science and Research*, 4(3), 1361–1367. Retrieved from <https://inlibrary.uz/index.php/science-research/article/view/74042>
13. Yunusova M. (2025). LINGUOPOETICS IN ELIZABETH BISHOP'S POETRY: A STUDY OF LANGUAGE, SOUND, AND MEANING. *Modern Science and Research*, 4(2), 1335–1338. Retrieved from <https://inlibrary.uz/index.php/science-research/article/view/69582>
14. Yunusova, M., & Muhammedov, M. (2025). LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IS A VALUABLE SKILL. *Modern Science and Research*, 4(2), 82–90. Retrieved from <https://inlibrary.uz/index.php/science-research/article/view/65643>
15. Fayzullayeva, N. (2024). "AMERICAN DREAM" IN WALT WITHMAN'S POEMS. *Modern Science and Research*, 3(1), 220–224. Retrieved from <https://inlibrary.uz/index.php/science-research/article/view/27940>
16. Fayzullayeva, N. S. qizi (2023). Theoretical Views on the Use of the Term "Concept" in Cognitive Linguistics. *EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF INNOVATION IN NONFORMAL EDUCATION*, 3(5), 27–31. Retrieved from <https://www.inovatus.es/index.php/ejine/article/view/1685>
17. Sur'at qizi Fayzullayeva, N., & Kilicheva, M. R. (2022). UOLT UILTMANNASRIDA "AMERIKA ORZUSI" KONSEPTI. *INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING*, 1(8), 574–576.
18. Fayzullayeva, N. (2023). THE IMPROVING OF LISTENING SKILL. *Modern Science and Research*, 2(10), 272–276. Retrieved from <https://inlibrary.uz/index.php/science-research/article/view/25086>
19. Qobilova Nargisa Sulaymonovna, & Fayzullayeva Nigina Sur'at qizi. (2025). Tilshunoslikda Qisqaruvni Vujudga Keltiruvchi Shart-Sharoitlar Va Ularning Linguistik Xususiyati. *Miasto Przyszłości*, 57, 113–115. Retrieved from <https://miastoprzyszlosci.com.pl/index.php/mp/article/view/6069>
20. Fayzullayeva, N. . (2025). LINGUISTIC FOUNDATIONS OF THE PRINCIPLE OF ECONOMY THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND APPROACHES. *Modern Science and Research*, 4(4), 657–667. Retrieved from <https://inlibrary.uz/index.php/science-research/article/view/79289>
21. Fayzullayeva, N. (2025). FUNKSIONAL LINGVISTIKA DOIRASIDA TEJAMKORLIK TAMOIYILI. *Modern Science and Research*, 4(3), 621–626. Retrieved from <https://inlibrary.uz/index.php/science-research/article/view/72798>
22. Karimova Go'zal Ikhtiyorovna. (2023). Fantasy as One of the Essential Genres of 21st Century. *American Journal of Language, Literacy and Learning in STEM Education* (2993-2769), 1(10), 544–551. Retrieved from <https://grnjournal.us/index.php/STEM/article/view/2170>

23. Karimova, G. (2023). SKIMMING AND SCANNING. Modern Science and Research, 2(9), 334-335.
24. Karimova Go'zal Ikhtiyorovna. (2023). MASTERING THE ART OF EFFECTIVE SPEAKING AND READING: STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING SPEAKING AND READING SKILLS. International Journal Of Literature And Languages, 3(10), 32–38. <https://doi.org/10.37547/ijll/Volume03Issue10-06>
25. Qurbonova N.R., & Karimova Guzal Ikhtiyorovna. (2023). DEVELOPMENT OF FANTASY GENRE IN 20TH CENTURY. Intent Research Scientific Journal, 2(5), 1–5. Retrieved from <https://intentresearch.org/index.php/irsj/article/view/68>
26. Karimova, G. (2023). DEVELOPMENT OF FANTASY GENRE IN 20TH
27. CENTURY. Modern Science and Research, 2(10), 67–71. Retrieved from <https://inlibrary.uz/index.php/science-research/article/view/25307>
28. Karimova, G. (2023). DEVELOPMENT OF LITERARY CRITICISM IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN 20TH CENTURY. Modern Science and Research, 2(10), 411–413. Retrieved from <https://inlibrary.uz/index.php/science-research/article/view/25308>