

SIGNIFICANCE OF HOMONYMY IN BUSINESS ENGLISH

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Introduction

The given work aims at continuing a series of articles on linguistic topics currently focusing on the phenomenon of homonymy to show differences of meanings in homonymous pairs of business English words, types of homonyms and their differences and, finally, making an attempt of differentiating between the two confusing phenomena such as polysemy and homonymy.

Comprehension of the meaning of homonymous words we come across in Business English helps us avoid some of the misinterpretations of language realities and better acquisition of the language and the precise distinction of polysemic and homonymous words contributes to the building of proper business English vocabulary.

The Purpose of Learning Homonyms for Business Students

An absolute conviction exists among all linguists concerning the importance of giving special attention to homonymous pairs in learning general and business English words that arises from the necessity to differentiate their meanings to avoid confusing situations. The point is that ¹English is not only the most widely spoken language in the world, but also most widely accepted written language, which means that all official and business documentation is done in English.

Therefore, the use of precise, accurate and error-free language is very important. Recognition of homonymous pairs, in particular, homographs, is possible only on a contextual basis or in word combinations, otherwise, viewed separately, they can't be informative as they have the same graphical form.

So, which words do we call **homonyms**? These are words which are **spelled or pronounced similarly**. Homonyms usually take **two forms**; those with phonological similarity are called **homophones** and the ones with similarity of graphical form are called **homographs**. Examples of homophones are write/right, site/sight, wait/weight, etc. Examples of homographs are lead /li:d/ (of a dog), and lead /led/(on the roof) or tear /tiə/ on the eyes and tear /teə/ on the shirt. There are some homonyms which are

¹ <https://www.netscribes.com>, p. 1 downloaded June, 29.

simultaneously **homophonic and homographic**. For example, mail (armour) and mail (post), minute (unit of time) and minute (of agenda) mean (having the meaning of smth) and mean (being not generous, unkind).

The analysis shows that although a considerable number of the **latter form** of homonyms can be found in **business English** terms, they can also be found in non-business context. Examples are **settle** (repay) a debt, settle (inhabit) on the shore of the island; **commision** (payment to the middleman) – commission (a group of officials chosen for a certain responsibility, e.g. European Commission), **exchange** (a place where financial instruments can be bought or sold) – exchange (changing one thing for another), **outlet** (point of purchase, shop) – outlet (pipe through which water can come out), **pool** (common fund of money) – pool (a small area of still water), **average** (accident on the water) – average (middle, ordinary) income, person. Examples of non-business homonymous pairs are **blind** (window shade, a screen for a window) – **blind** (unable to see), peer (person equal in a status or age) – peer (In the U.K., member in the House of lords).

Still another analysis proves that **homophonic pairs** can be frequently seen in English and **business English**. Here are the examples: **compliment** (expression of admiration) – **complement** (supplement, complete something); **ensure** (assure, make believe) – **insure** (obtain insurance), **incite** (urge) – **insight** (deep perception and understanding, e.g. of consumers), **accede** (agree) – **exceed** (be greater than); e.g. demand for money often **exceeds** its supply; **differ** (be different) – **defer** (postpone), e.g. **deferred** (payment, taxes), **principal** (an important person) – **principle** (fundamental doctrine), e.g. international accounting **principles**, **pore** (tiny openings on the skin) – **pour** (flow of capital) etc. Homophonic words can be often met in common words as well. Let's consider some of them; **blew** – **blue**, **by** – **buy** – **bye**, **cent** – **sent**, **flower** – **flour**, **cheep** – **cheap**, **current** – **currant**, **die** – **dye**, **fair** – **fare**, **for** – **four**, **guessed** – **guest**, **new** – **knew**, **hole** – **whole**, **due** – **dew**, **here** – **hear**, **our** – **hour**, **bare** (without clothing) – **bear** (wild animal) etc.

According to the following observation the availability of pure homographs is less frequently found. Here are some more examples we would like to show to a reader:

Sewer /su:ər/ meaning **draining** and **sewer**/səuər/ meaning someone who sews, **wound** /wəʊnd/ (past tense of wind) – wound /wu:nd/, meaning injury, or **wind**/wɪnd/, direction of the air and wind/wəɪnd/, which means twisting something, e. g. a wool ball, or **desert**/dɪ'zɜ:t/, meaning to leave smb., smth. to abandon, and desert/'dezət/, like a large area of land with almost no water.

What becomes more difficult for linguists is to² distinguish between **polysemy** and **homonymy**.

² Finch 2005, 151.

Polysemy is a sense relation of a lexeme or word in which a lexeme acquires more than one meaning, as distinct from homonymy, in which two lexemes have either the same sound or the same written form.

At a theoretical level, the distinction is quite clear in that homonyms are separate lexical items and the relationship between the words is purely accidental, not logical. Therefore, words are totally unrelated. e.g. **Crane**, a machine to lift heavy things and **crane**, a large bird, **Consonant**, phonetic symbol, and **consonant**, corresponding, being in harmony with smth; e.g. *She is consonant with her social position*, **Credit**, meaning appraisal and respect, e.g. why not give him credit for such a scrupulous work, and credit like a bank **credit**, buying smth. on **credit**.

In the case of polysemy, however, we are dealing with a single lexical item that has acquired more than one sense. In practice, however, the distinction is often difficult to make. It seems first that the most direct solution is to take the word *origin* or *etymology* as the principal criterion, but that will also lead us to confusing decisions. **Apple** (fruit) and *apple in the idiom the apple of the eye (the most beloved person)* or **pupil** (student at school) and **pupil** (the centre of the eye). A similar problem exists with the word **sole** as a fish and **sole** as part of a shoe. These words have a common origin and, therefore, are polysemic by etymology. We can see some logical similarities between apple as an important favorite fruit and apple as a loved person, and pupil as the centre of educational process and pupil as the centre of the eye, however, not all of them can be observed to have some logical sense similarities as was the case with sole and credit. Therefore, we can state that when most of the senses are unrelated, people will classify them as separate lexical items, therefore, homonyms.

It likely appears that a more useful approach is to look for a **common core** of meaning existing between senses for the recognition of polysemic words and set aside the matter of etymology.

The term³ **flight** can have the following meanings 1. the power of flying 2. an air journey 3. an air craft making such a journey 4. a series of steps 5. digression in the sense of fleeing, running away 6. a unit of the air force.

Words capable of acquiring more than one meaning are **polysemic**, opposed to those that can have only one meaning called **monosemic**. Let's consider some frequently used polysemic terms in Business English. e.g. **Consolidate (join, unite) accounts – consolidate (make strong), break (annul) a contract – break a vase, peddle**, sell goods house to house and **peddle**, spread news or smth. else all over, **grapevine**, grapes growing on the vine and **grapevine**, an informal communication means for spreading rumours, **gearing**, movement of device, mechanism, directing smth, **gearing**, proportion of the company's borrowed capital to its own capital.

³ Hornby 1998, 447.

The word **account** means first, a description or analysis of something, I gave a detailed account on the robbery in my house to the police. In a business context **account** is an **arrangement** with a bank to leave money there and a written **financial statement** with the money paid or owed. **Account** also means **consider**, and to **account for smth.** is equal to **explain the cause of smth**, **consider smth.** for example, *Please account for your disrespectful attitude towards the committee members.*

An Idiom **on account of smth.** is explained **because of smth**, for the reason of smth. *We delayed our flight on account of terrible weather.* A commonly used phrase is *take into account* which means consider the importance of smth, for example, *you must take his physical state into account when you give him such a task*

Another business term is **premium**⁴. Premium in **insurance** business means regular payment by a customer to an insurance company, additional payment to the regular one, in **branding** it is high quality brand, **premium pricing** is above the average price for smth valuable, e.g. for CD Rome attached to the book, and in **marketing** premium is a free good given to a customer to promote sales. The term **stock** is also polysemic, first of all it implies **supply of goods** available, e.g. fuel stocks will be running very low in winter, **a storehouse of goods** available for sale, e.g. the shop has a big stock of microcomputers, **amount of securities** bought and sold at the stock exchange, e.g. the prices on our stocks are skyrocketing, and *farm animals* such as **livestock**.

Policy assumes insurance policy, a **document** stating the terms and conditions of an insurance transaction, as well as **a plan, a direction** of actions taken by government or a business.

Provision is an **item or article** in a contract or agreement, in accounting terms, it means **reserve funds** for taxes.

One of the examples of polysemic terms is the term **bill**. First of all, it is the **statement of money for home services**, water/telephone/gas/ bills and so on, a proposed **draft** to the new law **presented to the parliament**, a **banknote** in the US and in some specific phrasal terms such as **bill of exchange** - *an order to pay money* to a named person, **bill of lading**, transport document listing the details of a cargo etc. Another example is **market** as a consumer and **market** as a shop.

Conclusions

In conclusion to this analysis we can say that all the terms considered have more or less a common core of the meanings for polysemic words. As in the case with **flight**

⁴ Farrall, Lindsley 2009, 6.

the common core of all the meanings is direction upwards, to the heights, to the sky, or running away from somewhere.

In **account** the core meaning of all lexemes is the ability to count figures, indicators, or present them in some documents, describe and analyze them. The word **premium** also proves this assumed theory of the core meaning, proposing smth. above the average, smth more, smth. of higher quality.

The list of polysemic words can be, certainly, continued but, assumably, the number of the examined words is enough to say that the best approach to understand whether we come across polysemy and not homonymy lies in finding the core meaning of all the words and not in their origin or etymology.

Although it requires quite an extended time and efforts to make distinction between the categories of homonymous words, from linguistic viewpoint it makes sense and it pays since deeper penetration into the essence, to a great extent, improves the comprehension and proper knowledge of such words in English and Business English context by penetrating into the slightest details of each of the word to bring the acquired lexics to a relatively possible perfection.

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Ռուզաննա Խոստիկյան

Ամփոփում

Անգլերենում, մասնավորապես գործարար լեզվի փաստաթղթագրության մեջ հանդիպող համանուն բառերի ոչ ճշգրիտ իմացությունը, հետևաբար նաև համապատասխան ճիշտ տարբերակման բացակայությունը հանգեցնում են սխալ բառընկալմանը և աղավաղում ընդհանուր իմաստը: Նման իրողությունից խուսափելու համար, կարծում ենք, նախ, անհրաժեշտ է ուսուցանողին սովորեցնել համանուն բառերի և դրանց համահնչյուն և համապատկեր տեսակների հստակ բաղիմաստները՝ հենվելով վերջիններիս հնչյունաբանական և ձևային առանձնահատկությունների վրա: Սա թույլ կտա ոչ միայն խուսափել շփոթեցնող լեզվական իրողություններից, ընկալումներից, այլև համանուն բառազույգերի

հստակ տարբերակումը կնպաստի ընդհանուր և գործարար լեզվի խորքային ու բազմաշերտ իմացությանը և կատարելագործմանը: Ելնելով լեզվաբանների վերջին ուսումնասիրություններից՝ առաջարկում ենք բազմիմաստ և համանուն բառերի տարբերակման ամենաարդյունավետ եղանակը՝ հիմք ընդունելով առանցքային իմաստը և ոչ թե ստուգաբանությունը:

Բանալի բառեր՝ համանունաբանություն, համահնչյուն բառ, համապատկեր բառ, բազմիմաստություն, մենիմաստություն, առանցքային իմաստ:

ЗНАЧИМОСТЬ ОМОНИМИИ В ДЕЛОВОМ АНГЛИЙСКОМ

Рузанна Хостилян

Резюме

В английском языке, в особенности в деловой письменной документации, можно встретить случаи нечеткой дифференциации значений омонимичных слов, что может привести к искажению смысла, раздвоению или двусмысленности этих слов, что также меняет контекст устной и письменной речи. Письменная документация требует самой четкой дифференциации значения слов. Следует уделять особое внимание обучению студентов точным значениям омонимичных пар, дифференцируя их по типу омофонов и омографов с учетом фонетических и графических особенностей. Это позволит не только доступным образом дифференцировать значения омонимичных слов, но и будет способствовать глубокому и многогранному усвоению и усовершенствованию общей и деловой лексики английского языка. Помимо этого, согласно последним исследованиям лингвистов, наиболее эффективен способ дифференциации омонимов и полисемантичных слов на основе учета их ключевого значения.

Ключевые слова – омонимия, омофон, омограф, полисемия, моносемия, ключевой смысл.

SIGNIFICANCE OF HOMONYMY IN BUSINESS ENGLISH

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Abstract

English homonyms found in oral and written speech and, in particular, in business documentation can lead to misunderstandings and confusions of language realities due to the lack of precise knowledge and ability of differentiation of the core meanings of homonyms and their types. Homophones can create difficulties of understanding because of the similarity of pronunciation and homographs cause difficulties due to the similarities in the graphical form. The author suggests paying special attention to the understanding of meanings of homonymous words and their precise differentiation to avoid misleading situations. The phenomenon of polysemy is also presented in the article and the way of differentiation of polysemic words from homonyms is explained on the basis of their core meaning rather than the etymology of these words.

Key words – homonymy, homophone, homograph, polysemy, monosemy, core meaning.