THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF ANTONYMY IN BUSINESS ENGLISH

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Introduction

The given article aims at revealing the phenomenon of antonymy in General and Business English and interpreting the opposition of meanings between them. The perception of the opposite meanings will contribute to the formation of more profound knowledge of the language in the aspects mentioned and will enable the learner avoid using ambiguous or confusing terms. As a result, the interaction between the language and the special subject will strengthen and the learner will acquire the needed and desirable knowledge of the language and special subject.

The Purpose of Learning Antonyms for Business Students

The idea to study the role of antonyms occured after one of my recent articles devoted to synonymy as the opposite linguistic phenomenon. The purpose of making the knowledge of antonyms and synonyms the focus of discussion is obvious as the awareness of this part of linguistics plays a significant role in enhancing the vocabulary of the language learned.

Therefore, I am deeply convinced that this aspect deserves more attention and the analysis of it should be presented on a comprehensive rather than fragmentary basis.

As we know synonymy studies words similar in meaning or sense while antonymy shows a relationship between words which are oppoite in meaning.

We strongly believe that the process of learning more about synonymy and antonymy should find practical application by surfing synonymy and them antonymy pairs paying special attention on terminology of the material studied, then further introducing them in different contextual formats, finding new ones from related sources and finally strengthening all of them by exercising.

Business students are perceived to be especially interested in this kind of work because the work with synonyms and antonyms, in special terms, in particular, is considered to be the basis for professional language development, therefore, the learner will acquire not only higher level of terminology knowledge, but will strengthen the connection between language and scientific discipline and, as a result, the learner will benefit from the acquired knowledge of both subjects.

Revealing opposite terms is, indeed, conceived meaningful since not primitive words like "day and night", or "black and white"are opposed but economic notions and concepts overall are considered in real time.

It is worth mentioning that a large amount of synonyms and antonyms in English language is due to the polysemantic nature of words which means that words can have multiple meanings.

Antonyms, in general, fall into three types, namely, gradable, complementary and relational, but also can be recognized by structure and origin.

Antonyms which are classified by degrees of opposition are called **grad-able antonyms**; examples are "*wide and narrow*", "*old and young*", "*beauti-ful and ugly*", "*tall and short*", "*hot and cold*". In each of these pairs the opposition is **not absolute**. There are degrees of beauty, width, age and height. To say that "*the water is not hot*" doesn't mean that "*it is cold*", it can be warm, cool, etc. To say that "*the road is not wide*" doesn't mean "*it is narrow*" and "she is not beautiful", does not mean "she is ugly" and vice versa.

Also, the definition of wide, old and tall varies according to the **referent**.¹ For instance, a"*tall man* "is shorter than a "*tall building*" or a "*wide street* is" narrower than a "*wide canal*".

Gradable antonyms normally have one item that can be more widely used². We can say that someone is 3 years "old" or 60 years "old", without meaning that they are "old", but we can refer to them as "young", if they are really young or cosidered to be so. In this case, "young" is less frequently used than "old".

¹ Finch 2005, 144.

² Finch 2005, 144.

Examples of gradable antonyms are often found not only in General English. Business English is characterised by an abundance of synonymy and antonymy pairs in terminology units which have precise meanings much like phraseological units or idioms. Cosider some of them:

Inflation and deflation are antonymy pairs which are absolute in meaning. As economic phenomena there is inflation or not, there can be deflation or cannot. The concepts of *privatization* and *nationalization* are also not gradable, for example, the phenomenon of privatization may exist or not, the object cannot be privatized to a certain degree, or depending on economic system and government policy, the objects or major infrastructure can be either nationalized or not. Another example refers to the notions of *macroeconomics and microeconomics*. These notions also have an opposing meaning, and the **opposition is again absolute**, there is no in-between position; each of them studies a particular field of economy; macroeconomics studies a big picture of economy, microeconomics focuses on smaller, separate units of economy.

Another important idea in economics is the idea of *goods*. Goods are largely divided into *tangible and intangible* ones. They are directly opposed, or **absolute** because tangible goods necessarily have material substance, and intangible ones are not material.

Although the notion of a good is broad, it is divided into 2 major classes: *consumer goods and producer goods* depending on the purpose, i.e. whether used only by final consumers or used in industry for the production of consumer goods. Within the category of consumer goods we can still see other opposing notions: white and brown goods, hard and soft goods³. All of them are in direct opposition since there is no degree of being white or brown, hard or soft.

In the BCG (Boston Cobsulting Group) matrix all products are divided into 4 types relating to 4 stages of PLC (product life cycle). *Stars and dogs*⁴ have opposing meanings as stars refer to high market growth, high market share goods and dogs are products with low market share and low market growth. Still, we consider them to be gradable as there are other types of goods or services in between: *cash cows* with a high relative market share but little market growth, and *problem children* not yet established or slow-growing

³ Cambridge 2009, 32.

⁴ Cambridge 2009, 34.

businesses. So, we see that the products vary at different stages of their lifecycle, therefore, are gradable according to BCG matrix.

Costs are among the most frequently used terms in business and economics. Students frequently come across *fixed and variable costs, direct and indirect costs*. Both meanings of these terms are absolute. Fixed and variable costs exist side by side having precise meanings which are directly opposite. Thus, fixed costs never change while variable costs do change depending on the volume of production.

Speaking of direct and indirect costs it is clear to understand that direct costs are directly connected with the production costs. In case of indirect costs no direct connection with the production process exists.

In accounting, among the most widely used terms that students come across are *assets and liabilities*. They are also **absolute** in meaning as assets stand for everything the company owns and liabilities are all that the company owes.

Let's look at an example from international trade. Countries usually have an active (favorable) or passive (unfavorable) balance of trade, depending on whether exports exceed imports or vice versa. Since there is no other interim meaning between them they are again absolute.

In fact, the examples are numerous and it is not possible to consider all of them. In this stage let's limit the interpretation of antonyms and simply display some more pairs of business glossary: gross (profit) – net (profit), lend (money) – borrow (money), public (company) – private (company), authentic (jewellery, document) – fake, false, forged, fabricated (jewellery, document), perpetual (inventory method) – periodic (inventory method)⁵, buzz marketing – word-of-mouth marketing, wholesaler – retailer, boom –recession, etc.

All the above mentioned examples are **absolute** antonyms and all of them are **root antonyms** which means they originated from different roots of the word.

There is a large group of antonyms which have the same root but different **affixes** and are called **derivative antonyms**. Examples are patient – **im**patient, possible – **im**possible, proper – **im**proper, reasonable – **un**reasonable, flexible – **in**flexible, and such business and economic terms as *comparative*

⁵ Eisen 2013, 140.

advantage – comparative disadvantage, favourable balance of trade – unfavorable balance of trade, outflow – inflow, centralization – decentralization, marketing – demarketing, progression – digression, nationalization – denationalization, direct marketing – indirect marketing, capitalization – decapitalization, balance-sheet accounting – off-balance-sheet accounting⁶, realized gains – unrealized gains, national market – international market, sufficient resources – insufficient resources, appreciation of value – depreciation of value, branded product – unbranded product, indoor advertising – outdoor advertising, inhome training – out-of-home training, leading figures – misleading figures, interpretation (of terms) – misinterpretation, realistic goals – unrealistic goals, profit-making – non-profit making (organization), manage (a company, economy) – mismanage an (economy, company), balance the economy – unbalance the economy, tangible assets – intangible assets, monopolise – demonopolise, appear – disappear, statement – misstatement, commercial – noncommercial...etc.

Although the list of derivative antonyms may be endlessly prolonged, it has to be limited by the above-mentioned ones since we are convinced that they evidence of derivative antonyms to be the largest group of antonyms in Business English in comparison with other types.

Considering the structural classification in addition to root and derivative antonyms it is reasonable to include those which are simple and compound by structure. Here are some of the examples of simple antonyms:

good and bad, clever and stupid, boring – exciting, clean – dirty, loose – tight, fiance – fiancee, produce - consume, goods – services, public – private, buy – sell, relative – absolute, profit – loss, debit – credit, rise – fall, flexible – rigid, etc.

Saying *compound*, we mean antonyms which are made up of two roots or words. They are, indeed, not many in number in Business English but sometimes we can come across them.

Introvert – extrovert, interdependent – independent, *in-home training – out-of-home training, gilt-edged* stocks – junk stocks, short-sighted marketing strategy (marketing myopia) – long (far) – sighted (marketing strategy), ad-versely-related (demand) – directly-related (demand), monolingual – multilingual, multilateral treaty – unilateral treaty, moneylender – moneyborrower, peace-

⁶ Frendo 2016, 11.

maker – warmaker, polygamy – monogamy, wartime – peacetime, tailor-made marketing – mass marketing, multicolor design – monocolor design, open-end questions – closed-end questions, point-of- sale, point-of-purchase, profit-seeking company – nonprofit-seeking company, down payment – full payment etc.

Complementary antonyms⁷ are different from gradable in that the opposition between the terms is absolute. Unlike gradable items there are no degrees in between. In such examples as *Alive and dead, married and single, male and female, switch on and switch off, online – offline, trainer – trainee, asleep – awake, inclusive – exclusive, single ticket – double ticket, perpetual (inventory control) – periodic (inventory control), positive (auditor's report) – negative (auditor's report), indoor (advertising) – outdoor (advertising), out-of-date (technologies) – up-to-date (technologies), we see that all of them have either/or relationship. To say someone is not alive means he/she is dead, or to say that the ticket is not single means it is double and vice versa. It is not rare to find colloquial examples of grading, for enstance, <i>he is very much alive*, or *she is quite sick*.

Relational antonyms are also different from gradable ones in that they are not influenced by degrees of opposition. However, unlike complementary antonyms they are not either/or in character; we could say, for example, that the husband is opposite to wife, but to be a wife does not mean that you are her husband. Similar pairs are son and daughter, brother and sister, bride and bridegroom, fiance - fiancee, above and below, front and back, hello and goodbye, lend and borrow, student - teacher, aunt and uncle. Relational antonyms exhibit reversability. This is a logical relationship, and these antonyms cannot exist without the other, which allows to say that if you are my bride then I am your *bridegroom*, and if I am *above* you then you are *below* me. Similarly, in Business English we can come across the following examples; if this media is not positive then it is adverse, or if the company is not customer-oriented it must be business-oriented. If you say how you dare say so, it, s not me who is a debtor, it is logically assumed that you are not a debtor, but a creditor etc..., or if we say today's education is more student-centered in contrast to the 1990-2000s, it becomes obvious that the education at the end of the 20th century was more teacher-centered. Other examples, such as buy and sell, profit

⁷ Finch 2005, 144.

and loss, debit and credit, work – relax, precede – follow, export and import are also logically connected to each other.

The examples prove that all the antonyms of the last paragraph are mutually dependent and the existence of one presupposes the other.

In conclusion, the students learning synonyms and antonyms in Business terms will significantly enhance the the language wordstock which is the major achievement to mastering it. In addition, the analysis done on the basis of the interpreted terms clearly shows that the overwhelming majority of all antonyms in Business vocabulary, being precise in nature, belong to the absolute form of antonyms and in terms of origin the prevailing antonymy pairs are derivative ones.

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Ռուզաննա Խոստիկյան

Ամփոփում

Անգլերենում, մասնավորապես գործարար լեզվում հաճախ հանդիպող հականիշ եզրույթների առկայության միջոցով մեկնաբանվում է հակադիր իմաստների տրամաբանությունը։ Այսպիսի իմաստների ընկալումը նպաստում է ուսումնառողի ավելի խոր գիտելիքների ձևավորմանը հատկապես գործարար անգլերենում, ինչպես նաև թույլ է տալիս խուսափել շփոթեցնող եզրույթների օգտագործումից։ Այդ կերպ ամրապնդվում է լեզվի և մասնագիտական առարկայի փոխգործակցությունը, և ուսանողը ձեռք է բերում լեզվական և մասնագիտական հարուստ գիտելիքներ, որի շնորհիվ էլ ընդլայնվում է ուսումնառողի աշխարհընկալումը։

Բանալի բառեր՝ հականիշություն, աստիճանական հականիշներ, փոխլրացնող հականիշներ, ազգակից հականիշներ, արմատական հականիշներ, ածանցյալ հականիշներ, բաղադրյալ հականիշներ։

РОЛЬ И ЗНАЧИМОСТЬ АНТОНИМИИ В ДЕЛОВОМ АНГЛИЙСКОМ

Рузанна Хостикян

Резюме

Антонимия в общем и деловом английском поясняет логику противоположных значений, способствуя формированию более глубоких знаний в английском языке. В то же время антонимы дают возможность избежать употребления двусмысленных и искажающих смысл высказывания слов.

Использование антонимичных пар способствует лучшему усвоению специальной дисциплины, языковых реалий и расширению кругозора в целом.

Ключевые слова – антонимия, разноуровневые антонимы, взаимодополняющие антонимы, (реляционные) родственные антонимы, корневые антонимы, деривативные антонимы, сложные антонимы.

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Abstract

Antonymy in both General and Business English interprets the logic of items having opposite meanings and assists in the formation of more profound knowledge of the language enabling to escape ambiguous and misleading words. As a result, students benefit from the interaction of the language and the special subject which strengthens the acquisition of both disciplines and contributes to the enhancement of the learner's general worldview.

Key words – antonymy, gradable antonyms, complementary antonyms, relational antonyms, root antonyms, derivative antonyms, compound antonyms.