

## **The Investigation and Importance of Sense-Relations and Semantics in the English Language**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is aimed to highlight Sense, relations and Semantic field in English. Lexical relations, defined as patterns of associations that occur between lexical items in a language. It is noted that we describe the meaning of linguistic item by using other words. Sense is concerned with the intra-linguistic relations, i.e. relations within the system of the language itself, such as similarity between words, opposition, inclusion etc. Some important aspects of semantics are highlighted such as homonymy, synonymy, antonymy and polysemy etc. On the other hand semantic field is closely associated with the notion of hyponymy in which the words in a semantic field share a common semantic property. This paper is quite helpful for teachers and students in understanding and learning vocabulary.

**Key Words:** Sense Relation, Sense and Reference, Antonymy, Synonymy, Homonymy, Homophones, Homographs Polysymy, Semantic field, English language.

### **Introduction**

This paper is based on the Semantic aspects specially the lexical relations in English. Lexical-semantics covers theories of the classification and decomposition of word meaning, the differences and similarities in lexical-semantics structure between different languages, and the relationship of word meaning to sentence meaning and syntax. Lexical relations, defined as patterns of association that exist between lexical items in a language.

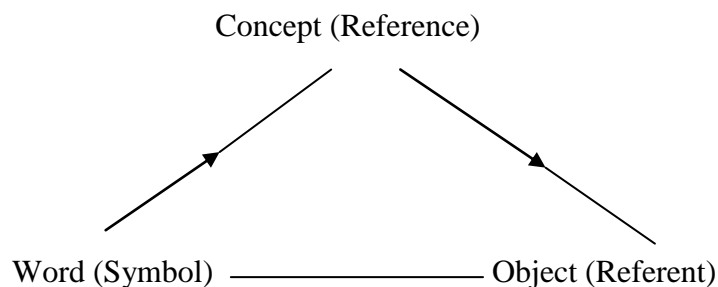
As we know, we can explain the meaning of a linguistic item by using other words. The relation of a word with other word is a sense-relation. Thus, sense is the complex system of relationships that grips between the linguistic items themselves. Sense is concerned with the

intra-linguistic relations, i.e. relations within the system of the language itself, such as resemblance between words, opposition, addition etc.

Sense relations among words are the great interest of many philosophers, linguists, computer scientists, cognitive psychologists, second language educators, cognitive neuroscientists and psychoanalysts. Investigators from just about any field whose interests involve words, meaning, or the mind. Sense relations include homonymy, polysemy, synonymy and antonymy. Before we move to these aspects it is important to understand the notion of sense and reference.

### **Sense and Reference**

A term's reference is the *object* to which the term refers, while the term's sense is the *way* that the term refers to that object. In other words, signs refer to concepts as well as to other signs. A sign is a symbol that that indicates a concept. This concept is the reference, which refers in turn to some object in the real world, called the referent. The relationship between linguistic items (e.g. words, sentences) and the nonlinguistic world of experience is a relationship of reference. It can be easily made out by the following diagram given by Ogden and Richards (1923):



The objects in the real world are referents, the concept which we have of them in our minds is the reference and the symbol we use to refer to them is the word, or linguistic item.

### **Homonymy**

If two or more words are same in sound and spelling but different in meaning, dissemination and in many cases derivation are called *homonyms*. The term homonymy is

derived from Greek ‘*homonymous*’ *homos* stand for ‘the same’ and *onoma* ‘name’ and thus expresses very well the similarity of name combined with the difference in meaning.

In linguistics, a **homonym** is, in the stern sense, one of a group of words that share the same spelling and the same pronunciation but have different meanings usually as a result of the two words having unlike origins. The state of being a homonym is called **homonymy**.

### Types of homonymy

The standard way of classification given by I.V. Arnold

SAME PRONUNCIATION		DIFFERENT PRONUNCIATION
SAME SPELLING	Homonym proper	Homograph or heteronym
DIFFERENT SPELLING	Homophone or heteronym	Allonym

Utmost words vary in both spelling and pronunciation – therefore they are known as *allonyms*. Not so plentiful linguists differentiate this category. Nonetheless it must be admitted that Keith C. Ivey, in his discussion of homonyms, recognizes this fact and writes:

Words that contrast in spelling and pronunciation as well as meaning and origin (alligator/true), these pairs are technically known as **different words**.

Inappropriately, this apparently neat solution doesn't work because all heteronyms are different words as Ivey's examples show. He illustrates homophones with board/bored, clearly two different words though pronounced alike, and his example of homographs (the verb desert/the noun desert) again shows, by their pronunciation, that they are different words. Even this example of a homonym -- words having both the same sound and spelling, as illustrated by "to quail and a quail" -- clearly shows they are different words. Lexicographers underline this point by writing separate entries for different words, whether or not they have the same spelling and pronunciation. One could specify a phrase, like uniquely different words but this method is clumsy and not clear. A simpler solution can be found by means of a neologism. It is not difficult to think of a suitable term. An allonym is a word that differs in spelling and pronunciation from

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Mohd Imran Khan, Ph.D.

The Investigation and Importance of Sense-Relations and Semantics in the English Language 108

all other words, whereas both homonyms and heteronyms identify words that are the same, in some ways, as other words. No doubt in ordinary usage, we will have little need for this term, although it would simplify lexical explanation if one could start by making the claim that the most words in English are allonyms. The clear exceptions are other groups. Different words that are spelled and pronounced the same way are called *homonyms proper* - but some writers, confusingly, call them heteronyms. When different words are spelled the same way but pronounced differently, they are called *homographs* and they are sometimes misleadingly called heteronyms. By contrast, when different words are pronounced the same way but spelled differently, we may properly call them *homophones* - rarely, they have also been called heteronyms.

### Examples of Homonym proper from English

Homonym proper	Gloss
Back	Part of the body
Back	Away from the front
Ball	A gathering of people for dancing'
Ball	Round object used in games'
Bark	The skin of a tree
Bark	To utter sharp explosive cries'
Bark	The noise made by dog'

### Examples of Homophones

Different spelling, same pronunciation	
Accept	Except
Berth	Birth

Cattle	Kettle
Die	Dye
Naughty	Knotty
Sea	See

### Examples of Homographs

Same spelling	Different pronunciation
Bow	/bow/
Bow	/bau/
Lead	/li:D/
Lead	/leD/
Row	/rou/
Row	/rau/

It is often argued that homographs constitute a phenomenon which differs from homonymy, as the aim of linguistics is sound language. This viewpoint can hardly be accepted. The written English is generalized form of expression because of the effects of education and culture. An average speaker does not detach the written and oral form. On the contrary he is more likely to analyze the words in terms of letters than in terms of phonemes with which he is less familiar. That is why the task of a linguist must take into consideration both the spelling and the pronunciation of words when analyzing cases of identity of form and diversity of content.

**A.I. Smirnitsky** classifies homonyms into full and partial homonyms

#### 1. Full homonyms

This kind of homonyms represents the same category of parts of speech and has the same paradigm.

**Example-1**

Homonym	Category	Gloss
Match	N	A contest, a game
Match	N	A short piece of wood used for producing fire

**Example-2**

Homonym	Category	Gloss
Wren	N	A member of the Women’s Royal Native Service
Wren	N	A bird

**2. Partial homonyms**

These are subdivided into the following three types

**a) Simple lexico-grammatical**

These kinds of homonyms belong to the same category of parts of speech. Their paradigms have only one identical form, but it is never the same form.

**Example-1**

Homonym	Category	Gloss
(to) Found	V	-
Found	V	Past indef., past part. of <i>to find</i>

### Example-2

Homonym	Category	Gloss
(to) Bound	V	-
Bound	V	Past indef., past part. of <i>to bind</i>

### b) Complex lexico-grammatical

These kinds of homonyms belong to the different category of parts of speech. They have identical form in paradigms.

### Example-1

Homonym	Category	Gloss
Rose	N	A flower
Rose	V	Past indef., of <i>to rise</i>

### Example-2

Homonym	Category	Gloss
Left	Adj	-
Bound	V	Past indef., past part. of <i>to bind</i>

### c) Partial lexical homonyms

These kinds of homonyms belong to the same category of parts of speech. They are identical only in their corresponding forms.

### Example-1

<b>Homonym</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Corresponding forms</b>
To lie	V	Lay, lain
To lie	V	Lied, lied

### **Example-2**

<b>Homonym</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Corresponding forms</b>
To hang	V	Hung, hung
To hang	V	Hanged, hanged

### **Polysemy**

When we meet two or more words with the same form and connected meanings, we have what is technically known as polysemy. Polysemy can be defined as one form (written or spoken) having multiple meanings that are all related by extension. (Yule, 2006)

The unclear concept of relatedness is the test for polysemy, results of polysemy can be very difficult to make. For the reason that applying pre-existing words to new situations is a natural process of language change, looking at words etymology is supportive in determining polysemy but not the only solution; as words become lost in etymology, what on one occasion was a useful division of meaning may no longer be so.

We have several tests to judge polysemy, and one of them is zeugma: if one word looks to show zeugma when applied in various contexts, it is likely that the contexts bring out different polysemes of the same word. If the two senses of the same word do not seem to *fit*, yet seem connected, then it is likely that they are polysemous. The fact that this test again depends on



narrators' judgments about connection, however, means that this test for polysemy is not reliable, but is rather merely a helpful conceptual aid.

If we aren't certain whether different practices of a single word are examples of homonymy or polysemy, we can check in a dictionary. If the word has several meanings (i.e. it's polysemous), then there will be a single entry, with a numbered list of the different meanings of that word. If two words are treated as homonyms, they will typically have two separate entries. In most dictionaries, *bank*, *mail*, *mole*, and *sole* are clearly treated as homonyms whereas *face*, *foot*, *get*, *head* and *run* are treated as examples of polysemy. (Yule, 2006)

Polysemous words	Gloss
Hand	1. Part of human arm (e.g. put your hand on the door)
	2. Performer (e.g. he is an old hand at this kind of work)
	3. Clock needle (e.g. two hands of a clock)
Leg	1. Human leg
	2. Leg of chair, leg of table etc.
Tongue	1. Mouth organ
	2. Language (e.g. Mother tongue)
Head	1. Head of the body
	2. Head of the department

	3. Head of the bottle
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According to Pustejovsky (1991, 1993, 1995), words are naturally ambiguous: they possess something Pustejovsky calls this *logical polysemy*, where *logical* is endowed with the meaning analytical philosophers have given to *logics*, i.e. the entity which structures the universe and the mind. If polysemy is "natural" then there must also be a "natural" way of selecting senses. Pustejovsky hypothesises a number of very general predicative devices, such as type coercion, which govern the phrase and sentence levels.

For example, let us consider one of Pustejovsky's favourite examples :

- 1) *Mary began a book*
- 2) *Mary began reading a book*
- 3) *Mary began writing a book*
- 4) *Mary bought a book*

Sentence 1 is interpreted as 2 or 3 according to the context. If we know that Mary is a writer, 3 may be correct, else it is 2.

### **Synonymy**

Two or more words with very closely related meanings are called synonyms or, if two or more lexical items have same denotative, connotative and social meaning and can replace each other can be called as synonyms. However they cannot always replace each other in a sentence. One word is appropriate in one position while the existence of the other is odd. Thus, they are not completely same. According to Yule (2006), the word *answer* fits in the sentence *Sandy had only one answer correct on the test*, the word *reply* would sound odd. Synonymous forms may also differ in terms of formal versus informal uses. The sentence *My father purchased a large automobile* has virtually the same meaning as *My dad bought a big car*, with four synonymous replacements, but the second version sounds much more casual or informal than the first.

The examples of synonyms are as follows

<b>Words</b>	<b>Synonyms</b>
Abhor	Hate
Accept	Agree
Buy	Purchase
Big	Large
Broad	Wide
Praise	Admire
Display	Show, reveal
Fight	Dispute, quarrel
Respect	Honour, esteem
Peak	Apex, top
Work	Task, deed

### **Antonymy**

When two words are in opposite meanings then they are called as antonyms. Basically antonyms are divided into two main categories- gradable antonyms (opposites along a scale e.g. big-small, long-short, fast-slow etc.) and non-gradable antonyms (direct opposites e.g. male-female, true-false, married-single etc.).

The examples of antonyms are as follows

<b>Words</b>	<b>Antonyms</b>
Above	Below
Abhor	Love, like
Alive	Dead
Arrest	Release
Beautiful	Ugly
Blunt	Sharp
Enjoy	Suffer
Fat	Lean
Import	Export
Present	Absent
Smooth	Rough
Rich	Poor
Zigzag	Straight
Ability	Inability

Aware	Unaware
Polite	Impolite
Encourage	Discourage
Regular	Irregular

There are antonyms which show contrast on the basis of gender such as man-woman, boy-girl, some are of similar nature such as bull-cow, stallion-mare, and lion-lioness while some are based on relationships e.g. father-son, mother-daughter, uncle-nephew, brother-sister etc.

### **Semantic Field**

Semantic field is set of words grouped by meaning referring to a specific subject or it refer to the phenomenon that vocabulary is an integrated system interrelated in sense and can be divided into semantically related sets or fields. Words in each semantic field define one another.

Brinton (200:p.112) defines Semantic field as related to the concept of hyponymy, but more loosely defined, is the notion of a semantic field or domain. A semantic field denotes a segment of reality symbolized by a set of related words. The words in a semantic field share a common semantic property.

"Traditionally, semantic fields have been used for comparing the lexical structure of different languages and different states of the same language" Andersen (1990:p.327).

### **Semantic Field Theory**

#### **Trier's Paradigmatic Semantic Field**

German scholar J. Trier in 1930 brought the semantic field theory into its puberty. Wu (1988: 94-95) summarized semantic field theory as

- The vocabulary in a language system is semantically related and builds up a complete lexical system. This system is unsteady and changing constantly.
- Since the vocabulary of a language is semantically related, we are not supposed to study the semantic change of individual words in isolation, but to study vocabulary as an integrated system.
- Since lexemes are interrelated in sense, we can only determine the connotation of a word by analyzing and comparing its semantic relationship with other words. A word is meaningful only in its own semantic field.

Trier's semantic field is generally considered paradigmatic. It deals with paradigmatic relations between words such as hyponymy, synonymy and antonymy.

### **Porzig's Syntagmatic Semantic Field**

Porzig was also a German Linguist who proposed the theory of semantic field which is called syntagmatic semantic field or syntactic field by various scholars. It was based on the analysis of the inside relation of the co-occurrence between words. It premeditated the possibility for a lexical item to co-occur with others in the same context, e.g., bite and teeth, lick and tongue, bark and dog, etc. (Changhong, 2010)

In Porzig's view, a Semantic Field is the range of words that are capable of meaningful connection with a given word. In other words, terms belonging to the same field are syntagmatically related to one or more common terms, as for example the set of all the possible subjects or objects for a certain verb, or the set of nouns to which an adjective can be applied. Words in the same field would be distinguished by the difference of their syntagmatic relations with other words. (Gliozzo, 2009)

### **Conclusion**

To conclude this paper we can say that the knowledge of sense relations is necessary for language learners, teachers, translators etc. as it plays an important role in accessing the language tasks. It should always keep in mind that the meaning is very important in translation. So in translation, focus must be on types of meaning that is the knowledge of semantics will be quite useful. Words and their meanings play a crucial role in translation, because they are of many

types. They may be homonymous, polysemous, and so on. Words of these types produce ambiguity in a language so they can be ambiguous. Therefore it is not only the knowledge of words and their types, but the meaning and the senses are also very important in understanding and removing the lexical as well as syntactic ambiguities.

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