POLYSEMY IN ENGLISH AND ARABIC A CONTRASTIVE STUDY

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Abstract: This study aims at conducting a contrastive study of polysemy in Arabic and English. It tries to give a full description of polysemy in English and Arabic. It focuses at finding aspects of similarities and differences between the two languages compared. The findings show some aspects of similarities and differences between the two language compared. They show that English and Arabic are similar when they are used as realizations of polysemy in nouns, verbs and prepositions. Moreover, the findings a reveal that English is different from Arabic in that, polysemy in English is realized by using adjectives and phrasal verbs unlike in Arabic. In contrast, the results show that Arabic is different from English in that, polysemy in Arabic is realized by using adverbs.

Keywords: Contrastive analysis, English, Arabic, polysemous words, nouns.

1.Introduction

Contrastive analysis can be defined as "a linguistic enterprise aimed at producing inverted(*i.e.* contrastive, not comparative) two-valued typologies (a CA is always concerned with a pair of languages), and founded on the assumption that languages can be compared." (James,1980:3). CA is chiefly carried out by applied linguistics which is an attempt to compare languages in order to find out dissimilarities.(Aitchison,2003:172)

Polysemy is one of the semantic relations that deals with the relationship between words with each other's. One word can have many meanings that are related. Hurford et al.(2007:130) defines POLYSEMY as "one where a word has several very closely related senses. In other words, a native speaker of the language has clear intuitions that the different senses are related to each other in some way". Aloni and Dekker (2016:40) state that "Polysemy is the relationship that exists between related senses of a word, rather than arbitrary ones"

2. Polysemy in English

Polysemy is one of the sense relations which deals with the relationship of words with each other's. Dictionaries treat words as polysomic if they have the same origin by depending on their etymology (Palmer,1981:102). Riemer (2010) defines polysemy as "the possession by a single phonological form of several conceptually related meanings." And it is opposite to monosemy (Greek 'single meaning'): "a word is monosemous if it contains only

a single meaning"(P.161). Palmer (1987:100) clarifies that a word is considered as polysemy that when we have the same word has a set of different meanings. Palmer also (1997:188) defines polysemy as "one word with several meanings". Polysemy can be defined as is one a word has several very closely related senses (Hurford et al.,2007:130) and related to homonymy which according to Saeed (2016:60) can be defined as "unrelated senses of the same phonological word".

HURFORD, HEASLEY, and SMITH, (2007) argue that words can be considered if they can identify the sense that seems most basic, prototypical, or concrete, based on intuitions of the native speaker, and then work from there to discover how the other senses could have developed from that basic sense. It's usually enough for the polysemous senses of a word to be related to each other on condition that they share at least some characteristics in common.(HURFORD et al., 2007:139)

 They also state that polysemy in English is not restricted to only one part of speech. It can be used with different parts of speech such as verbs and nouns. They argue that nouns are widely used in human languages to express polysemy. (Ibid.130)

Apresjan, (1974:16) makes a distinction between two types of polysemy: regular polysemy and irregular polysemy.

A- Regular Polysemy according to him is defined as " Polysemy of a word A with the meaning ai and aj is called regular if, in

the given language, there exists at least one other word B with the meaning bi and bj , which are semantically distinguished from each other in exactly the same way as ai and aj and if ai and bi, aj and bj are non-synonymous."
For example , polysemy of the word *cherry*, with the meaning *fruit* and *color*, is regular since there exists at least one other word, *chestnut*, that also has the meaning *fruit2* and *color*, as illustrated below :
1-   (cherry) , the red colour of cherries.
2-   (chestnut), the brown colour of chestnuts.

Moreover, J. Apresjan (1992:14) gives us another important definition of a particular type of regular polysemy, that he calls *productive.*
We will call a given kind 'A' – 'B' of regular polysemy productive, if for
every word that has the meaning 'A' it is factual that it can be used also
in the meaning 'B' (if 'A', then 'B').Therefore, productivity is determined only by totality of scope of the units with the given set of properties; the class itself of such parts may be so tiny.
B-   Irregular polysemy, on the other hand, is termed by Apresjan (1974:16) as cases where the semantic distinction between the meanings ai and aj for a word A cannot be found in any other word of the given language. The English verb *run* may be an example of this: it has different senses as in:
3-   *run* a mile,
4-   *run* a shop,
5-   *run* late,
6-   *run* on gasoline, etc.
this verb seems to be idiosyncratic to this particular lexical item, and may each have appeared accordingly of dissimilar lexical semantic or pragmatic procedures, such as for example specification, loosening, metaphorical extension, and so on.(Ibid)

2.1 Realizations of Polysemy in English

In English, polysemy can be expressed by different parts of speech such as *nouns, verbs and adjectives*.

2.1.1 Nouns for expressing Polysemy

Kreidler (2002) , Aloni and Dekker (2016) and HURFORD et al.(2007) that nouns in English such as *head, lunch, book* and *Mouth* can be used to express polysemy. The noun *head* appears to have related meanings , as in:

7-   *head* of a person.

8-   the *head* of a company.

9-   *head* of a table or bed.

10-   A *head* of lettuce or cabbage. (Kreidler, 2002:52)

If we take the anatomical referent as the basic one, the other meanings

can be realized as resultant from the basic one, either reflecting the

overall shape of the human head or, more abstractly, the relation

of the head to the rest of the body.

The same thing with the noun *book*, which can be used to express related senses as in:

11-   Mary carried the *book* home.

12-   Mary doesn't agree with the *book*.

The noun *book* is polysemous and can denote to either the information contained in it or a physical object. (Aloni and Dekker, 2016:40)

The noun Mouth is another polysemous word that has related sense, for example:

13-   *Mouth* of the river.

14-   *Mouth* of an animal.

The two senses, as seen above, are obviously related by the concepts of an opening from the internal of some solid mass to the outer, and of a place of issue at the end of some extended narrow channel. HURFORD et al.(2007,130)

8.1.2 Adjectives for expressing polysemy

Expressing polysemy can also be achieved by using adjectives. Aloni and Dekker (2016) state that polysemy is expressed by adjectives. Adjectives such as *good, fast*, and *dangerous* can be presented as polysemous, where the sense is modulated slightly, depending on the noun being modified.

13- Ahmed is a *good teacher*.

14- *A good meal* is what we need now.

15- Mona took *a good umbrella* with her into the rain.

In the examples above, *good* is a manner modifier whose clarification is dependent on the noun it modifies; in (13) it means "to teach well", in

(14), it means a "delicious meal", and in (15), it means "something keeping you dry".

The same remarks are hold for the adjective *dangerous*, for example:

16-This is *a dangerous road* at night.

17- She used *a dangerous knife* for the goat.

That is, the road is dangerous in (16) when "one drives on it", and the knife is dangerous in (17) when "one cuts with it".(P.41)

2.1.3 Expressing Polysemy by using verbs

HURFORD et al.(2007), McIntosh(2011) and Falkum (2015) argue that verbs in English can be used to express polysemy such as: *keep*, *run, absorb, get, receive ,move*, *travel*, for example:

18- *keep* the money.

19- *keep* the car in the garage.

2- *keep* the crowd happy.

The analysis of the polysemy of keep, according to which the meaning of this verb is taking values from different semantic fields: possession, location, mental state, etc. (Falkum,2015:1)

2.1.4 Expressing Polysemy by using prepositions

HURFORD et al.(2007) and Falkum(2011) argue that propositions in English can be used to express polysemy such as: *over*, for example:

18- The pigeon flew *over* the house. ('above and across')

19- The picture is *over* the couch. ('above')

20- The van ran *over* the rabbit. ('across')

21- Jack lives *over* the hill. ('on the other side of')

22- Lina nailed a board *over* the hole in the ceiling. ('covering')

23- They will read the papers *over* the weekend. ('temporal')

24- Sara has a strange power *over* Mary. ('control')

 The different senses of the preposition over are related depending on and organized around a central sense, or prototypical which is the 'across' and above sense in a lexical network arrangement.(Falkum,2011:139)

2.1.5 Expressing Polysemy by using Phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs are words that consist of a verb plus and adverb or a preposition. The term 'phrasal verbs' is defined as "a type of verb consisting of a sequence of a lexical element plus one or more particles." (Crystal, 1980: 170). Quirk and Greenbaum (1973: 347) define them as "units which complement the verb and which are, in common, compulsory in clause structure".

Biber et al. (1999) and Gardner and Davies (2007) make lists about the most common phrasal verbs in English such as : *put out* and *go on,* for example:

25- *Put out* (smoother) (deprive of the oxygen necessary for combustion) as in: "smother fires"

26- *Put out* (douse) (put out, as of a candle or a light) as in: "Douse the lights"

27- Put out (Hold out), as in "He held out his hand".

 Gardner and Davies' (2007:339) recognize different senses and think that what establishes a single meaning sense comes up as two different entries.

3. Polysemy in Arabic

In Arabic, polysemy is known as المشترك اللفظي , الوجوه والنظائر and الاشباه والنظائر . Ibn Fares (1910:117) defines Polysemy as one word which has more than two meanings. This definition indicates that the pillar of polysemy is semantics since one word can have one, two or more than one meaning. 'Anis (1976 :19) states that polysemy in Arabic can be defined as only one word which has two totally different unrelated meanings. Ibn Al Jwzy (1987:35) defines polysemy as word which has the same form and pronunciation has different meanings according to the context it occurs in(In Arabic, المشترك اللفظي can be used to express Polysemy and homonymy but we will focus on only the meanings that are related and used to express Polysemy.

One of the important points is that the change of pronouncing a word can be regarded as polysemy, i.e. vowel change (Fat'ha, dhama and Kasra) of the same word can give different meanings. Moreover, the core of the polysemy in Arabic is that of the context. The meaning of any word can be understood due to the word before and after it. The context determines the diversity of meanings of a word in a sentence. (Mukrram,1996:23). He adds that polysemy is widely used in the Arab's language and especially occurs in glorious Quran.

3.1 Realizations of Polysemy in Arabic

In Arabic, polysemous words can be realized in different parts of speech such as nouns, verbs, adverbs and prepositions.

3.1.1 Nouns for expressing polysemy

Al Balkhy (2011), Ibn Al Jwzy (1987), Al Hana'y (1988), Al Nahwy (1988) and Mukrram(1996) state the polysemy can be expressed by nouns such as عين, الارض,الخرص, الخجل, العمرْ , for example:

28- عَيْنٌ (eye) can have more than one meanings ,

a- العين التي نبصر بها (The itself that we watch with)

b- عين الماء (The source of water)

c- عين الميزان (The Balance's arm)(Al Nahwy, 1988:48) all the senses of the nouns are closely related.

29- الأرض (A Land) can have more than one meanings ,

a- أرض الجنه (Heaven's Land)(Mukrram,1996:61- 62), for example:

(وَأَوْرَثَنَا الْأَرْضَ)(Az-Zumar – 74) (and has made us inherit (this)

land.) (AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.:629).

b- الأرض المقدسة بالشام (The holy land in Palestine and Jordan), for example: (وَأَوْرَثْنَا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يُسْتَضْعَفُونَ مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ) (Al-A'raf – 137)

(And We made the people who were considered weak to inherit the eastern parts of the land)(ibid-219) once again, all the senses of the noun الارض are closely related.

3.1.2 Verbs for expressing polysemy

Al Balkhy (2011), Bin Musa (1988), Al Hana'y, Ibn Al Jwzy(1987) and Mukrram(1996) state the polysemy can be expressed by verbs such as: نأي, أطمأن,أنشأ , كان , هلك, لقى , جَعَلوا , for example:

30- جَعَلُوا (They Made)(Mukrram,1996:106) can have two meanings,

a-   وصفوا الله(They described God), for example:

(وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ)(Al-An'aam- 100) (They join the jinn as partners in

worship with Allah) (AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.:186).

b-   قد فعلو بالفعل (They already did) (Mukrram,1996:106), for example:

(وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ مِمَّا ذَرَأَ مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ نَصِيبًا) (Al-An'aam- 136)(And they assign to Allah a share of the tilth and cattle which He has created) (AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.:193). The senses of the verb جعلوا are related in the three given examples.

31- لقى (cast) (Mukrram,1996:179-181) has multiple meanings, for example:

a-   ألقى (وضع) (He put), for example:(اذْهَبُوا بِقَمِيصِي هَٰذَا فَأَلْقُوهُ عَلَىٰ وَجْهِ أَبِي يَأْتِ بَصِيرًا)(Yusuf-93) (Go with this shirt of mine, and cast it over the face of my father, he will become clear-sighted) (AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.:317).

b-   ألقى(رمى)(threw),as in: (فَأَلْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ عَصَاهُ)(As-Shu'ara- 45)(Then Musa (Moses) threw his stick)(Ibid-491).

c-   ألقى (أدخل) (He inserted), for example: (فَأَلْقُوهُ فِي الْجَحِيمِ)(As-Saffat-97)(and throw him into the blazing fire!)(Ibid-603)

Once again, the meanings of the three given examples are related to the basic one ألقى (He threw).

3.1.3 Adverbs for expressing polysemy

Al Balkhy (2011), Bin Musa (1988), Al Nahwy (1988) and Mukrram(1996) clarify that polysemy can be expressed by adverbs such as : حين, أنّى, وراء,for example:

32- وراء can have different meanings for example:

a-   وراء has a meaning of خلف (behind)(Mukrram,1996: 214) as in:(فَنَبَذُوهُ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ)(Al-'Imran-187)(but they threw it away behind their backs) (AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.:103-104).

b-   وراء has a meaning of بعد (after)(Mukrram,1996: 215) as in: (وَيَكْفُرُونَ بِمَا وَرَاءَهُ)(Al-Baqra- 91) (And they disbelieve in that which came after it)(AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.:18).

c-   وراء has a meaning of سوى (beyond), as in: (فَمَنِ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ) (Al-Mu'minun-7).(But whoever seeks beyond that, then

those are the transgressors) (AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.:455).

Through presenting the multiple meanings of the adverb وراء , all the given examples are related and used to express the meaning of *behind*.

3.1.4 Prepositions for expressing polysemy

Another means that are used to express polysemy is prepositions. Al Balkhy (2011),Bin Musa(1988:308), Al Nahwy (1988) and Mukrram(1996) state the polysemy can be expressed by prepositions such as : إن, ما, أم , إلا,for example:

33- ما this preposition can have different meanings as in:

a-   ما has the meaning of لا (don not))(Mukrram,1996: 84) , for example: (وما أنا من المتكلفين)(Sad-86)(nor am I one of the Mutakallifun (those who pretend and fabricate things which do not exist). (AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.: 617).

b-   ما has the meaning of ليس (Not) (Mukrram,1996: 84), for example: (وَإِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا ۚ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ)(Hud-61)(And to Thamud (people We sent) their brother Salih. He said: "O my people! Worship Allah: you have no other ilah (god) but Him.) (AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.: 295).

c-   ما has the meaning of لم (did not) (Mukrram,1996: 86), for example:(وَاللَّهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ) (Al-An'aam-23)("By Allah, our Lord, we were not those who joined others in worship with Allah.") (AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.: 172).

The examples above that are used to give many meanings of the preposition ما indicate that is used to express negation and they are related in one way or another.

4. Data Analysis

Throughout presenting and comparing the realizations of polysemy in English including *nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions and phrasal verbs* and the realizations of polysemy in Arabic including *nouns, verbs, adverbs* and *prepositions* some aspects of similarities and differences have been found.

4.1 Comparison at level of Nouns

In English and Arabic, nouns can be used to express polysemy. Different nouns can be used to express polysemy in English such as: *head, lunch, book* and *mouth*, for example:

1-   *Head* of a person.

2-   The *head* of a company.

3-   *Head* of a table or bed.

4-   A *Head* of lettuce or cabbage. (Kreidler, 2002:52)

Similarly in Arabic, large number of nouns can be used to express polysemy such as:الارض,الخرص, الخجل , العمرْ, عين, for example:

5-عَيْنٌ   (eye) can have more than one meanings ,

a-   العين التي نبصر بها (The itself that we watch with)

b-   عين الماء (The source of water)

c-   عين الميزان (The Balance's arm)(Al Nahwy, 1988:48) all the senses of the nouns are closely related.

4.2 Comparison at level of Verbs

Now we move to the verbs, the second level of comparison on our study. Verbs are also used to express polysemy in English. A lot of verbs are used to express this sense such as: *keep, run, absorb, get, receive ,move, travel*, for example:

6- *keep* the money.

7- *keep* the car in the garage.

8- *keep* the crowd happy.

Concerning Arabic, verbs are also regarded as a main parts of speech which is used to express polysemy. Large number of verbs can be used to express this sense such as: جَعَلوا , لقى ,هلك , كان , أنشأ,أطمأن, نأي , for example:

9- جَعَلوا (They Made)(Mukrram,1996:106) can have two meanings,

a-   وصفوا الله) They described God), for example:

(وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ)(Al-An'aam- 100) (They join the jinn as partners in

worship with Allah) (AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.:186).

b-   قد فعلو بالفعل (They already did) (Mukrram,1996:106), for example:

(وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ مِمَّا ذَرَأَ مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ نَصِيبًا) (Al-An'aam- 136)(And they assign to Allah a share of the tilth and cattle which He has created) (AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.:193).

4.3 Comparison at level of Prepositions

The function words ,prepositions, which represent another category that is used to express polysemy. In both languages, English and Arabic,
polysemy can be realized. The preposition *over* is an example for expressing polysemy in English as in:

10- The pigeon flew *over* the house. ('above and across')

11- The picture is *over* the couch. ('above')

12- The van ran *over* the rabbit. ('across')

13- Jack lives *over* the hill. ('on the other side of') (Falkum,2015:1)

The same thing for Arabic, prepositions can be used to express this sense, such as : إن , ما, أم , إلا ,for example:

14-ما   this preposition can have different meanings as in:

ما -a has the meaning of لا (don not))(Mukrram,1996: 84) , for example: (وما أنا من المتكلفين)(Sad-86)(nor am I one of the Mutakallifun (those who pretend and fabricate things which do not exist). (AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.: 617).

ما -b has the meaning of ليس (Not) (Mukrram,1996: 84), for example: (وَإِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا ۚ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ)(Hud-61)(And to Thamud (people We sent) their brother Salih. He said: "O my people! Worship Allah: you have no other ilah (god) but Him.) (AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.: 295).

ما -c has the meaning of لم (did not) (Mukrram,1996: 86), for example:(وَاللَّهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ) (Al-An'aam- 23)("By Allah, our Lord, we were not those who joined others in worship with Allah.") (AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.: 172).

4.4 Comparison at level of Adverbs

In Arabic, adverbs can be used to express polysemy unlike in English. Many adverbs are used to express this sense such as: حين, أنّى, وراء, for example:

15- وراء can have different meanings for example:

a-   وراء has a meaning of خلف (behind)(Mukrram,1996: 214) as in:(فَنَبَذُوهُ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ)(Al-'Imran-187)(but they threw it away behind their backs) (AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.:103-104).

b-   وراء has a meaning of بعد (after)(Mukrram,1996: 215) as in: (وَيَكْفُرُونَ بِمَا وَرَاءَهُ)(Al-Baqra- 91) (And they disbelieve in that which came after it)(AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.:18).

c-   وراء has a meaning of سوى (beyond), as in: (فَمَنِ ٱبْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُوْلَٰئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْعَادُونَ) (Al-Mu'minun-7).(But whoever seeks beyond that, then

those are the transgressors) (AL Hilali &Muhsin Khan , n.d.:455).

4.5 Comparison at level of Adjectives

At this level we can notice that in English, adjectives can be used to express polysemy unlike in Arabic. Adjectives such as *good, fast*, and *dangerous* are used to express this sense, for example:

16- Ahmed is a *good teacher*.

17- *A good meal* is what we need now.

18- Mona took *a good umbrella* with her into the rain.

4.6 Comparison at level of prepositional phrase

In English, prepositional phrases are unique and can have versatile meanings. In English, unlike in Arabic, polysemy are expressed by phrasal verbs such as: *go on* and *put out* , for example:

Put out (smoother) (deprive of the oxygen necessary for combustion) as in: "smother fires"

19- *Put out* (douse) (put out, as of a candle or a light) as in: "Douse the lights"

20- Put out (Hold out), as in "He held out his hand".(Gardner and Davies, 2007:339)

5. Conclusion

The current study concludes the following:

1-   Polysemy is realized in Arabic by different parts of speech.

2-   Polysemy in English and Arabic can be expressed in various parts of speech. For English, nouns, verbs, adjective, prepositions and phrasal verbs are realized to express this sense.

3-   Concerning Arabic, nouns, adverbs, verbs and prepositions are realized to express polysemy.

4-   The expressions of polysemy in English and Arabic produced usually from single i.e. the meanings of related senses have central main word and are related to the basic one.

5-   The context plays an important role in order to determine the related meanings of different words in English and Arabic.

6-   Polysemy in Arabic can be formed by a single word. One word with different pronunciations can be regarded as polysemy due to its related meanings.

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