

THE SENSE RELATION OF COMPLEMENTARITY IN ENGLISH

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Abstract: This study aims to study COMPLEMENTARITY in English texts. A brief introduction is presented first, then the subject of oppositeness of meaning is tackled and its classifications are elaborated with examples. The study then moves to focus on the use of 'complementarity', as a type of opposition relations, in specific English texts from linguistic perspective with some examples which are given to illustrate the terms and help EFL learners distinguish and comprehend the different types of opposition which ultimately lead to better understanding of meaning.

Keywords: Complementarity, Oppositeness of Meaning, Antonymy, Converseness, converseness.

Section One: Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Generally speaking, The term "antonymy" is used to denote "opposition of meaning." Words that are opposites to each other are called antonyms. Antonyms are often considered the opposite of synonyms, but their status is distinct. Languages do not require true synonyms, and their existence is controversial. Antonyms, on the other hand, are a common and natural feature of language, capable of precise definition. Yet, surprisingly, they are often overlooked in semantics textbooks and rarely mentioned even in dictionaries. However, there are various types of opposition, one of which is complementarity (Palmer, 1981:94). Therefore, this study focuses on excluding cases where the term "antonymy" is widely used to denote contradictory or opposing meanings and on understanding different types of opposition..

1.2 Significance of the Study

First, we can say that complements actually represent opposites of meaning, because they cannot be graded (as we will see later), and if one of the two pairs applies, then the other does not. They are said to be mutually exclusive, for example, if "X" is masculine, then "Y" is feminine.. (Gairns and Redman,1986:25)

Complementariness represent a fundamental form of oppositeness, showing inherent binarity in its most unadulterated state. The terms of the opposition delineate a specific conceptual area into two mutually exclusive categories, leaving no room for ambiguity. Consequently, if an element within this defined area is classified into one category, it can not simultaneously belong to the other. Furthermore, if an element does not fit into one category, it must necessarily belong to the other (a distinction that sets complementaries apart from mere incompatibles). For instance, when examining the conceptual domain of potential responses to a legitimate command (where the issuer possesses authority over the recipient, the required action is feasible and not

previously executed, and the recipient is capable of hearing and comprehending the command), it becomes evident that responses must be categorized as either obedience or disobedience. Similarly, any entity within the biological realm must be classified as either 'alive' or 'dead', and a tangible object must be identified as either 'stationary' or 'moving' (Cruse,2000:168)

In order to achieve a broader understanding of the term 'Complementarity' in English, the researcher is going to present and discuss the subject of opposition in meaning, focusing on this special type of opposition.

Section Two: Literature Review

Traditionally, 'oppositeness of meaning' is of three types: 'antonymy', 'complementarity' and 'converseness'. Although these three types, i.e. sense relations, are related, they will be discussed separately.

2.1 Antonymy

The term antonymy (cf. Lyons,1968:460) is used to refer to lexical items that are opposite in meaning in that they are gradable opposites. This state of gradation is the most essential characteristic of defining antonyms. In this way, antonymy is kept to refer just to gradable opposites and not to all opposites. Antonymy may be exemplified by such pairs as; 'old/' 'young', 'wide/' 'narrow', 'big/' 'small', etc. All of these pairs are seen in terms of degrees of the quality involved since we can describe something as either 'wide', 'big', 'old' or very: 'wide', 'big', 'old' or 'wider than', 'bigger than', 'older than'. So, we have a state of gradation. (Al-Kattan, 1993:9)

Palmer (1981:94) indicates that the concept of gradation was firstly introduced by Sapir (1944) who further distinguished between explicitly graded antonyms and implicitly graded antonyms. Explicitly graded antonyms are those ones which are formed by the use of comparative forms of English, e.g. 'my bag is smaller than yours', 'he is more intelligent than his wife', etc. On the other hand, implicitly graded antonyms are embedded in the use of the lexical item itself. For example, 'the ostrich is a big bird' implies a state of gradation, implicit one, in the sense of comparing the size of birds. Similarly, 'this street is wide' implies also a state of implicit gradation in the way of comparing this particular street with the normal size of streets. Such uses of lexical items, as Palmer (1981:94) suggests, imply a logical gradation in that 'wide', 'big', etc. can only be understood in terms of being wider than, bigger than something. In this way, it is deduced that in the case of implicit gradation, we have a sort of implied comparison with a certain norm. However, Kempson (1977:84) stresses the fact that gradable antonyms do not represent absolute quality in that the use of one item completely denies the sense of the other. Instead, they represent different points along a scale on which they can be ordered. For instance, 'hot' and 'cold' are not the only members of the set of lexical items used in describing temperature because there are other ones used for the same purpose, e.g. 'warm', 'tepid', 'cool', etc.

So, to say 'this water is not hot' does not imply that 'the water is cold'. It may be 'tepid', 'warm', or 'cool' and all of these are looked at as different points on temperature scale. (Al-Kattan,1993:10-11)

2.2 Complementarity

The second relation of oppositeness is that of 'complementarity' which holds between ungradable pairs of lexical items such as 'single': 'married', 'dead': 'alive', 'male': 'female', etc. Such pairs truly represent oppositeness of meaning and their main characteristic is that "the denial of the one implies the assertion of the other and the assertion of the one implies the denial of the other" (Lyons,1968:461). So, these forms of oppositeness can not be graded; they are mutually exclusive. For example, to say 'he is not dead' implies that 'he is alive' and to say 'he is dead' implies that 'he is not alive'. Hence, pairs like 'single': 'married', 'dead': 'alive', etc. are said to be complementarities. These forms of ungradable lexical items seem similar to gradable antonyms already discussed

(see 2.1), but they differ in that in the case of ungradable lexical items, we have only two possibilities while the possibility is left open in the case of gradable antonyms, as Palmer (1981:96) remarks. For example, to say 'the water is cold' implies 'the water is not hot' and 'the water is hot' implies 'the water is not cold'. But to say 'the water is not cold' does not imply 'the water hot' because it may be 'warm', 'tepid', etc.(Al-Kattan:1993:11)

2.3 Converseness

Certain pairs of words exhibit another form of "opposition" or "contradiction." Here are two examples:

1. a) Julia is Martin's wife.
- b) Martin is Julia's husband.
2. a) The painting hangs above the fireplace.
- b) The fireplace is below the painting.

In these examples, (a) and (b) explain each other, and we can consider the relationship between the two pairs to be reciprocal. Family and social relationships provide many examples of opposition, as do spatial and temporal relationships.. (Gairns and Redman,1986:25-26)

Section Three: Complementarity

3.1 Complementarity: definition

Therefore, complementarity is a type of antonym in semantics, often used to denote a type of semantic relationship between words.

The concept of complementarity (or complement) expresses a semantic opposition, such as "single"/"married" and "boy"/"girl." "Single" is considered the complement of "married," and vice versa. In this relationship, affirming one element implies negating the other: a single entity cannot possess both. Complementarity is characterized by the absence of any hierarchy between elements (there is no consistent hierarchy between "boy" and "girl," so a person can be "not too boyish," "very boyish," and so on). In this respect, the term contrasts with the technical meaning of "antonym," in which a hierarchy can exist between opposites (e.g., tall, higher, very tall, etc.), and with "antonym relations," in which opposites presuppose one another (e.g., husband/wife). Some analysts prefer the term "paradox." (Crystal, 1998:75)

3.2 Gradable Antonyms and Complementarity

Lyons (1968:460) considers certain pairs, such as "male"/"female," "married"/"single," and "living"/"dead," to be complements, meaning that the components complement each other. In this respect, they resemble gradable antonyms: the two are mutually exclusive. Saying someone is "married" implies that they are not "single." However, there is no significant distinction between the two types. Furthermore, for the pairs we introduced, saying something is not one implies that it is the other. If Peter is not "married," then he is "single," and vice versa. This naturally follows from the fact that there are only two possibilities (the situation would be different in multiple clauses). However, for gradable antonyms, although there are only two concepts, saying something is not "broad" does not mean it is "narrow," nor does saying something is not "narrow" mean it is "broad." The possibility of being neither "broad" nor "narrow" remains.

Antonyms and complements do not fit well into the logical formalizations suggested earlier. With antonyms, we want to say that if something is A, it is not B (and vice versa); with complements, we must additionally say that if it is not A, it is B (and vice versa). (Palmer, 1981:96)

Gradable antonyms are word pairs that refer to both ends of a scale but leave "semantic space" at either end; ungradable antonyms are word pairs that, taken together, exhaust the entire "semantic space" of their scale. Examples of the former are "cold" and "hot," which wed in concepts like "warm," "lukewarm," "icy," and "frigid";

examples of the latter are "alive" and "dead," which leave no room for any intermediate concepts—you are either alive or dead. (Jones, 2004:149)

In both cases, we need to show that they belong to the same semantic system or domain. First, consider complementarity: it is incorrect to say that something that is not "male" is "female," because it could also be inanimate. The complementarity of "male" and "female" is limited to discussing living things. Similarly, we shouldn't consider "ape" and "iron" antonyms, even though "ape" isn't "iron" (and vice versa). Furthermore, for antonyms, simply belonging to the same system of concepts isn't enough, since "like a horse" and "like a cow" aren't antonyms. The concept of hierarchy is also crucial.

Another interesting point is that there's no absolute distinction between the two types. We can sometimes think of "male"/"female," "married"/"single," and "alive"/"dead" as gradable antonyms. Some adjectives can mean "very masculine" or "prefer to be married," and certainly "prefer to be dead" rather than "alive." More obviously, some gradable antonyms share some characteristics of dichotomous pairs:

1. Some adjective pairs, such as "honest"/"dishonest," "compliant"/"discompliant," and "open"/"closed," can be either highly or poorly gradable, but the negation of one is often understood as the affirmation of the other. Thus, while we can say "Bill is more honest than John," "Bill is dishonest" implies "Bill is dishonest." While these are explicitly gradable, they are not usually considered implicitly gradable.

2. In Sapir's terms, some antonym pairs are not "symmetrically reversible." This means that the relationship between "more" and "less" does not apply to them. Take the words "brilliant" and "dumb," for example, because "more brilliant" is not equivalent to "less stupid," and "dumber" cannot replace "less brilliant." While these two words are gradable, they also have an absolute value at one end of the scale. (Palmer, 1981:97)

3.3 Complementary Antonymy and Contrast

Ogden (1967:58)¹ Distinguishing between opposite antonyms and complementary antonyms, he noted that "opposites can be the extremes of a scale or the sides of a cut". Lyons (1977)² defined this type of antonym in terms of the entailment relation between the members of antonym pairs: if X is p, then X is not q; if X is not q, then X is p. We can see this relation in the following example: (1):

1. cited in Murphy (2003:194)

2. cited in Murphy (2003:194)

(1) a. The monster is alive. → The monster is not dead.

The monster is not alive. → The monster is dead.

b. The photo is in color. → The photo is not black-and-white.

The photo is not in color → The photo is black-and-white.

c. The integer is odd. → The integer is not even.

The integer is not odd. → The integer is even.

While this formula is particularly easy to use in testing adjectives, complementaries also include nouns such as 'human' / 'non-human' and verbs as 'stay' / 'go'.

There is no particular reason, however, to limit the definition of complementarity to binary sets. For contrast sets whose members clearly and entirely divide the domain into smaller categories, the entailment relation between members of that set holds if the p or q of the definition includes a disjunctive set. For instance, spade / heart / diamond / club is a complementary contrast set, as indicated by the entailment in (2).

- (2) If the ace is a spade, then it is not a heart, diamond or club.
If the ace is not a spade, then it is a heart, diamond or club.

Identifying complementary antonyms and contrast sets in language is made difficult by the fact that complementaries can sometimes be used as contraries and contraries are sometimes used as complementaries. To use Palmer's (1981) examples, we might say that someone is 'more dead' than 'alive' or 'very married', so these adjectives which are usually ungradable are gradable in these contexts, thus not allowing for the clear segmentation of the field assumed in the definition of complementarity.

Furthermore, some pairs are gradable, as shown below in (3), but the denial of one is usually taken to be the assertion of the other, as shown in (4).

- (3) a. Ari is very (dis)honest. Ari is more (dis)honest than Bea.
b. The door was more open/shut than I wanted it to be.
- (4) a. Ari is not honest. → Ari is dishonest.
Ari is not dishonest. → Ari is honest.
b. The door is not open. → The door is shut.
The door is not shut. → The door is open.

Cruse (1986)¹ categorizes these as gradable complementaries. In many cases, one of the gradable complementaries is more gradable than the other. For example, 'open' can be graded in many ways (wide open, slightly open, more open than before, moderately open), while 'shut' is less accepting of such modification. Cruse (1986:203), on the other hand, sees that both members of the pairs 'honest'/'dishonest' and 'clean'/'dirty' are gradable. But while Cruse considers these gradable

1.cited in Murphy (2003:195)

complementaries, he notes that they are not truly complementary in that they do not perfectly bisect the domain, as in (5) where a middle ground is asserted.

- (4) a. The kitchen is neither clean nor dirty.
b. Ari is neither honest nor dishonest.

Cruse (1986)¹ We address this problem by claiming that such words must have two meanings: one complementary to their antonyms and the other opposite to their antonyms.

While these words may have multiple meanings, an intralexical specification of their relationship is not necessary. Instead, we can assume that differences in the entailment relationships of antonyms arise from differences in the semantic structure of the individual words. These can be either complementary or opposite, and the states they describe can be conceptualized as all-or-nothing or scalar. The private nature of "clean" / "dirty" and "honest" / "dishonest" allows for two interpretations. In a private opposition, one of the terms in a pair is defined by the absence of something, while the other is defined by the presence of something. For example, "clean" refers to the absence of "dirtiness," and "honest" refers to the absence of "lying." But absence or presence can be either relative or absolute states. When 'clean' meaning 'absolutely free of filth' is contrasted with 'dirty' (which involves

presence of filth), a complementary opposition results because there are only two possible states to describe: having filth or not having filth.

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1.cited in Murphy (2003:196)

But if 'clean' is used to mean 'relatively free of filth' (relative to some social –contextual standard), then it is opposed to a sense of 'dirty' meaning (relatively full of filth) and results in a contrary opposition.

In other cases, the adjectives are naturally complementary or contrary, but usage indicates a different sense of an adjective. For example, 'dead'/'alive' describe complementary states, but if we use them as gradables ('very dead' / 'more alive', for instance), the nature of their antonymy then changes to contrariety. (Murphy, 2003:194-196)

Section Four: Conclusion and Suggestions

4.1 Conclusion

So far we were discussing the sense relation of complementarity in English. We can sum up by saying that oppositeness of meaning is generally of three types: antonymy, complementarity and converseness.

The defining feature of antonymy is gradability; the defining feature of complementarity is the process of the assertion and denial between ungradable antonyms; the defining feature of converseness is paraphrasing or reciprocity. We noticed that pairs of complementarity are naturally exclusive. For example, 'he is dead' implies that 'he is not alive' and vice versa.

4.2 Suggestions for Future Studies

- Investigating pedagogical approaches to teaching complementary structures in EFL.
- Studying how proficiency levels in English language affects learners' mastery of complementary terms.

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