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XIII Халықаралық ғылыми конференциясы

**СБОРНИК МАТЕРИАЛОВ**

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студентов и молодых ученых  
**«НАУКА И ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ - 2018»**

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## CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF SYNONYMY AND ITS USAGE IN ENGLISH

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It is first necessary to explain that this article is dedicated to the question of synonymy as one of the core issues of modern linguistics. It is generally accepted that synonymy is manifested at all levels of the language, namely phraseological, grammatical, word-formative and lexical. [1, p.24]. Nonetheless, the primary focus of the given article lies on lexical synonymy. According to famous linguist Arnold I.V., synonymy is peculiar to all languages, and, hence, indicates how sophisticated a language is and includes possibility for word choice or in other words interchangeability. [2, p.271].

Basically, synonymy (from Greek *synonymia*) is based on the ability of the linguistic system to have several meanings for one signified and helps to reflect in the language the diverse properties with the use of a minimum of linguistic means. In terms of contemporary science, the problem of identifying the phenomenon of ‘synonymy’ is no more than a breeding ground for ambiguity. The approach to the problem of synonymy has changed repeatedly over the centuries within the study of language laws. A number of linguists, especially lexicographers, tend to treat the concept of synonymy very broadly, including even an array of dozens of words and expressions that can be used instead of a word to convey the shades of its meaning, as, for example, P. Roger, compiler of the famous *Thesaurus*. Hence, the approach of P. Roger, seems very fair. In other words, when interpreting the concept of synonymy, a lexicologist is not limited to one word, but includes dozens of words and expressions that can convey the shades of the meaning of a certain word. [1, p.24]

Speaking of lexical synonymy, synonymous relations in lexicology, as in any other domain or level of a language, tremendously depend on the basic principles and patterns that characterize the system of a given language. Thus, the lexical synonymy of any language, especially a developed language, with a prolonged literary tradition, has its own peculiarities in each individual case, distinguishing it from the lexical synonyms of another language and is primarily linked with semantics.

Lexical synonyms are generally believed to be one of the most well-studied semantic categories. There are a considerable number of theoretical articles devoted to the study of this phenomenon; moreover, lexical synonyms are described in detail in hundreds of synonymous dictionaries. If, despite all this, we reiterate our appeal to this topic, we do this only because we want to consider it from a new point of view by introducing the notion of lexical synonyms in wider scope of the general theory of synonymous means of language.

When it comes to the definition of lexical synonyms, the researcher and linguist Godlinskaya Y. defines them as the words which denote the same basic notion but differ in the shades of meaning. For instance, in the synonymic group *look- glance- view- sight- glimpse* each word denotes the basic notion of the act of seeing which is common to all of them. However, these words differ from one another in some shades of meaning, and consequently in usage and in combinations with other words. Thus, *glance* denotes 'a quick and sudden look', and is also used as a component of such phraseological expressions as, *to give a glance, to cast a glance*, etc. *Sight* means 'the act of seeing' only when it is applied as a component of certain phraseological expressions as, *to catch sight of, to lose sight of*. [3, p.3]

One point that should not be omitted in order to get a clear understanding of lexical synonymy is the concept of '*shade of meaning*'. Pairs and series of words, similar to the abovementioned ones, are often treated as synonyms, differing from each other in shades of meaning. Due to this fact, it will be necessary to analyze the concept of a shade of meaning. Since it does not have a vague definition, we can only understand what is usually meant solely in one way - by observing and getting immersed into language situations, where this phenomenon is implemented. For the most part, shades of meaning are defined as mismatches of similar meanings, for instance, we can say 'a person is going', however, we can use the verb 'go' with the different nouns as well: time, (time goes quickly), train (train goes fast), etc., then the semantics of the verb 'go' in these examples is both stable and flexible. Its stability can be observed in the fact that in all these cases the verb "go" retains its primary meaning (move, to be in the process of moving), only acquiring additional shades suggested by the context. In this case, the shades are objects that are interpreted in all contemporary dictionaries as independent meanings, sometimes quite distant from one another. In particular, this phenomenon can be noticed in the example "time goes", definitely, one cannot imagine time going, but the idea that brings it together is the idea of change. Considering another salient example, the word 'deep' (for example, deep despair) meaning 'very strong', we can highlight two shades of meaning: 'complete', 'utter' (deep sleep, deep gloom) and meaning 'reached the limit' ('deep night', deep winter). Hence, there are no distinctions, except for the discrepancies in lexical compatibility, comparing 'deep despair' to 'deep sleep' or 'deep night': in all three cases it deals with the 'complete', 'total' degree of what is denoted by a definable noun.

If we switch our attention to the main topic of the article, namely classification of lexical synonyms; the study of theoretical resources shows that all linguists classify synonyms mainly into three groups: total synonyms, ideographic synonyms, stylistic synonyms. This classification is conventional, it was established by foreign linguists and approved by Russian scientist V.V.Vinogradov. [4, p.76] Another eminent linguist I.V.Arnold adds contextual and relative synonyms, contemporary linguists mention dialectal and borrowed, or loan synonyms as well. [2, p.199] We will draw our attention to the classification based on the semantic and lexical changes of synonyms: semantically they are divided in *absolute (total)* and *contextual* synonyms, lexically – in *ideographic, dialectal* and *stylistic* synonyms. In order to consult each type of lexical synonyms, we will endeavor to reveal this topic in greater detail providing some practical research on using synonyms in speech.

Speaking of *total*, or absolute synonyms, they usually coincide in all their shades of meaning and in all their stylistic characters. Moreover, they can replace each other in any given context, without the slightest alteration in denotative or emotional meaning and connotations. [5, p.59] It should be noted that this type of synonyms is the rarest to occur due to the fact that it is quite arduous to find words which meanings would be entirely interchangeable. Perhaps the most salient instances can be found for the most part in special literature, namely among technical terms and others, e.g. fatherland - motherland, suslik - gopher, scarlet fever – scarlatina, etc.

Comparing to absolute synonyms, *contextual or context- dependent* synonyms are identical only under some peculiar distributional conditions. It is possible in the case when the discrepancy between the meanings of two words is contextually neutralized. For instance, if we take a look at the list of synonymous at first glance adjectives: *smart- intelligent- bright*. However, it should be taken into consideration that 'smart' is a neutral adjective, 'intelligent' has positive connotation, and

when we implement the adjective ‘bright’ in speech we mean that we are not speaking about older people, on contrary, we do mean younger ones. The evidence of contextual synonyms is even more obvious in the case of the verbs *bear*, *suffer* and *stand* which are semantically different and not interchangeable except when used in the negative form; *can’t stand* is equal to *can’t bear* in the following words of an officer: *Gas. I’ve swallowed too much of the beastly stuff. I can’t stand it any longer. I’m going to the dressing-station.* [6, p.202]

Let us take another examples of synonymous adjectives which denote size: *big- large- huge*. The abovementioned adjectives are almost similar in one or more denotational meanings as well as interchangeable at least in one context, and called *ideographic* synonyms. When dealing with the adjectives ‘big’ and ‘large’, it may seem that there is no difference in meaning, they both used to refer to things more than average size. Nevertheless, there might be different contexts where only one of the adjectives is used, e.g. we say ‘big decision’, but we cannot use ‘large’ or ‘huge’ with this noun, however, in all other cases these adjectives can be used freely to indicate that they are synonyms and hence interchangeable.

It is not insignificant in this regard to mention ‘*dialectal*’ synonyms, which are formed by dialect words, especially American and Australian ones. For instance, the nouns ‘sweets’(BrE), ‘candy’(AmE), ‘lolly’ (AuE) are considered as dialectal synonyms due to the fact that they relate to the different variants of the language. Another examples of dialectal synonyms may be given: postbox (BrE), mailbox (AmE), letterbox (AuE); trousers (BrE), pants (AmE), daks (AuE).

Considering the next type of synonyms, it should be emphasized that *stylistic* synonyms are generally words which are distinguishable in stylistic colouring. We must make a distinction here, they are: colloquial, scientific, technical terms, poetics, etc. In order to demonstrate the glaring discrepancy in styles, one should pay particular attention to the following table which was suggested by the outstanding linguist and lexicographer Galperin I.R. [7, p.73]

Table 1. Stylistic synonyms among various vocabulary

Colloquial	Neutral	Literary
Kid	child	infant
Daddy	father	parent
Chap	fellow	associate
get out	go away	retire
go on	continue	proceed
Teenager	boy (girl)	youth (maiden)
Flapper	young girl	maiden
go ahead	begin	commence

More detailed studies show that stylistic synonyms sometimes may overlap with such phenomenon as euphemisms, which are words and phrases that help people to tackle some unpleasant and offensive situations in a diplomatic and polite way. As an illustration, the verb ‘to die’ might be successfully substituted by ‘to pass away’, ‘to sweat’ by ‘to perspire’.

In order to reinforce the theoretical basis of our article we have carried out a study on using synonyms in speech. In the following research will be examined synonymous words which are generally used by speakers in daily life and we will endeavor to analyze them according to Vinogradov’s classification.

Let us begin with the synonymic group of words *partner- companion – comrade*. It goes without saying that these synonyms are dialectical synonyms as all of them are used more and less broadly depending upon the place. Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that these synonyms have stylistic connotation, i.e., we can encounter them in different styles. It is not surprising to find that the dominant synonym in this synonymic group is, undoubtedly, *partner*, due to the fact that it has much broader and general meaning.

It has already been noted that it is extremely rare to find total synonyms as they have to be



absolutely interchangeable. In the case *famine-hunger* this is perhaps the most obvious that these nouns are completely coincidental. When it comes to the connotation, it is clear that the synonyms have stylistic connotation and, in addition, *hunger* is likely to be the dominant synonym as it is more widely used in speech than its synonym. Another example of total synonyms may be illustrated by the verbs *search for- look for*. Needless to say, that due to the frequent usage the verb *look for* remains a dominant synonym.

In the synonymic group of the adjectives *obstinate- stubborn*, it is important to recognize another type of synonyms- ideographic. It is also worth mentioning that the connotation of these synonyms is evaluative, though, it completely depends on the speaker if he or she implies positive or negative attitude. Notwithstanding the synonyms are interchangeable, the dominant synonym is the adjective *stubborn*. The verbs *stop- cease* are ideographic synonyms as well, but the former one is considered as the dominant synonym.

According to Vinogradov's classification the synonyms *to sleep- to nap* are contextual, i.e. they can be similar only under some peculiar circumstances. Indeed, if we examine these two words in broader scope, then, we can observe that the word 'nap' is not considered as the state when a person falls into due to tiredness or lack of energy, vice versa, it is generally understood as brief and of short duration rest. Nevertheless, these verbs are sometimes treated as context- dependent synonyms, where *sleep* is obviously the dominant synonym. Analogously, *hair-fur* are contextual synonyms, with the dominant synonym *hair* as it has a broad general meaning.

The last but not least, we can notice stylistic synonyms in the synonymic group of adjectives *insane- mad- crazy*, it is clear that *insane* is characteristic of common literary vocabulary, meanwhile *mad* is neutral and *crazy* is typical of colloquial style. Another salient examples which are not uncommon in speech are presented in the Table 1.

All things considered, we can sum up that such a phenomenon as synonymy not only helps us to improve or somewhere bust our vocabulary, but also it prevents us from repeating one word over and over again or put it simply being monotonous. Admittedly, synonyms do embellish our speech, spice and add variety to the language we speak and write. Moreover, synonymic groups allow us to opt for the word which best fits within the context and audience. For this reason, one has to bear in mind that synonyms must not be misused while speaking and writing, otherwise, if used improperly and inappropriately it may lead to the opposite effect.

What is really remarkable is that this article may be both applicable and beneficial for teachers and as well as for students. It is also significant to note that one can enhance his or her lexical choice in speaking as well as writing by reading authentic literary works, articles, etc. Hence, synonymy is a simultaneously confusing and fascinating linguistic phenomenon which demands much deeper interest and research.

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