USING CONTEXTUAL APPROACH OF ANTONYMS

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ABSTRACT

Contextual antonyms are a linguistic phenomenon often applied but rarely discussed. This paper is to discuss the semantic relationships between contextual antonyms the requirements under which words can be used as contextual antonyms between sentences. The three basic relationships are embedment, intersection and non-coherence. The requirements are discussed in the course of the discussion on the three relationships.

Keywords: contextual antonym, text, context, relationship.

INTRODUCTION

Not all language researchers today are unfamiliar with such terms as “context” and “antonym”, but they may not quite understand the term “contextual approach of antonym”. This is only because contextual antonyms are still beyond most linguists’ eyesight up to the present. In spite of this, contextual antonyms and synonyms are very often used in real texts. Discussions on contextual antonyms may reveal some features between words in a language and may help language learners to comprehend better in their reading and do better in their writing. This paper will focus on the discussion of semantic relationships between contextual antonyms. These relationships might help us understand which words in what circumstances can be used as contextual antonyms. The present thesis is a corpus-driven study that takes a constructional perspective antonym relations in text. The data are obtained using corpus methodology with the general aim of drawing on their lex ico-syntactic interface investigated in previous studies but with a Construction Grammar theoretical mindset. I explore how conventionalized pairs of words that share a contrastive relation (canonical antonyms (Murphy, 2003)) are used in Modern Standard text. I build upon work investigating antonym behavior.

METHODOLOGY

The degree of conventionalization depends on two factors. First, in order to become conventionalized, opposing pairs must co-occur in context, so that their pairing may be learnt. Thus, more conventionalized pairs co-occur more frequently than other possible oppositions in the semantic field (Jones et al., 2012). Second, the two items

share a mutual relationship (Jones et al., 2007). For example the antonym of *heavy* is *light* and the antonym of *light* is *heavy.* Murphy (2003) adds stability across a number of senses as an indicator of canonicity. For example, the pair *black/white* are used to refer to color, race, and as adjectives describing coffee with or without milk. Moreover, semantic properties of the pair are not the only relevant properties, morphological and phonological properties of the lexical items can contribute to their canonicity (Murphy, 2003). For example, the pair awake/asleep is judged as a better antonym pair than awake/sleeping or up/asleep (Murphy, 2003: 34).

RESULTS

Antonym canonicity lies on a continuum rather than clear cut groups of 'good' antonyms and 'bad' ones (Jones et al., 2012). Highly canonical antonyms are generally very parallel in their semantic characteristics, and they are conventionalized through use. Highly canonical antonyms are recognized as antonyms out of context while pairs of antonyms lower in the canonicity scale need contextual cues to frame them as contrastive. The next section presents studies that have investigated antonyms in context substitution hypothesis and add that the 'the cue for learning to associate direct antonyms is not their substitutability, but rather their relatively frequent co-occurrence in the same sentence' (Charles and Miller, 1989: 357). Justeson and Katz (1991) used the same corpus to examine Charles and Miller's (1989) co-occurrence hypothesis. Their findings supported the co-occurrence hypothesis, but they added that antonymous adjectives tend to co-occur in the same sentences in contexts where each antonym could be grammatically substituted for the other. Fellbaum (1995) also used the Brown corpus to investigate antonymous pairs from different word classes, and found that semantically opposed words from different word classes, such as the noun life and the verb die, co-occur at high rates and refers us to different types of contrast antonyms the Lyons and Cruse books . This section reviews some definitions of antonymy, starting with definitions based on different types of contrast such as Lyons (1977) and Cruse (1986). Then I move on to presenting a pragmatically oriented definition and pay some attention to the property of canonicity of antonymous pairs. Although the approach of the present study looks at antonyms in context, a look at antonym pairs out of context is essential because this study takes stand-alone antonym pairs as a starting point. Therefore, different relational kinds of contrast are presented before presenting the definition of antonyms adopted here. Contrast between lexical items can be of different relational kinds, and a very detailed classification of them is presented by Lyons (1977). In his classification, contrast can be either *binary* or *non-binary.* In binary contrast, the relationship is between a pair of lexical items, while in

non-binary contrast, the relationship involves multiple items that can be *cyclically* or *serially* ordered sets. According to Lyons (1977), *contrast* is a general term referring to any type of opposition, the term *opposition* is restricted to binary contrast, excluding sets of contrastive terms like *summer/autumn/winter/spring*; and more specifically *antonymy* is restricted to gradable oppositions, such as *hot/cold* or *tall/short.* The pairs *alive/dead* and *pass/fail* are examples of complementaries. The second group of contrasts is *antonymy* which refers to gradable oppositions that can be used in comparative structure, such as *hot/cold* and *tall/short. The third group is* directional opposites *like* up/down. Research on antonymy moved away from being introspective to looking at lexical relations in context in which antonymy is not defined as gradable opposition only. thesis, the term *antonymy* is not confined to gradable contrastive pairs as in Lyons' and Cruse's typologies. Instead, gradability is considered as one attribute of some antonym pairs. Antonyms can be gradable like *tall/short* because they measure the dimension in different directions, in this case the dimension of height. So, even something that is short can be taller than something else (Bierwisch, 1989).

DISCUSSION

On the other hand, antonyms can be non-gradable such as *alive/dead* or *married/unmarried.* There are no degrees between the opposing words, rather, they divide one conceptual space. Gradability of antonymous pairs, however, is affected by context. A gradable pair like *hot/cold* can be used exclusively, i.e. with no reference to their gradability, as in sentences like *I put the hot drinks on the table and the cold ones on the counter.* On the other hand, non-gradable pairs like *alive/dead* can be used with a scalar meaning as in *He is more dead than alive.* Paradis et al. (2015) investigated this property in antonymous adjectives and found that when the adjective is descriptive it is scalar, but when it is a classifier it is non-gradable, as the sentences in (a,b) below.

a. **The book is thick. (Paradis et al., 2015: 156)**

b. **Put all the thick books in the box to the left and the thin ones in the one to the right.(Paradis et al., 2015: 157)**

Antonym semantic differences make them perform opposing functions in discourse, which functions in association with these syntactic frames in which antonyms are coordinated. Researcher as Metinnger and Fellbaum, Jones through their research have categorized the 56 couple's contextual coordination canonical antonyms include names, adverbs, verbs, adjectives. These are harvested from the corpus of British newspapers. Jones identifies eight main functions, two dominating in most of the cases, precisely coordinated function and the auxiliary. The coordinated function which Jones calls antonym of incorporation or depletion showed in an axle. Example: The Albion

manager would neither confirm nor deny Goodman's impeding departure. The aid function is as widespread as much as the coordinated one in Jones's study. Antonyms auxiliary also play an important role in countering the discourse modelled using an association or other antonym pairs. Hence aide function couple which are used to emphasize the difference between the limbs of another couple. Example: It is meeting public need not private greed Presence of aid strengthens couple dichotomous nature of the couple next companion. Sometimes accompanying the couple cannot be seen as antonymic if not accompanied by the couple. Example: Kennedy dead is more interesting than Clinton alive. The other six functions as Jones classifies as insignificant, also adds a category which are called "the left overs". Jones thinks that some of these categories may be classified as a subcategory of the main functions. Other models or categories besides the coordination and auxiliary functions are also comparable, distinct, transitional and retracted. Comparative function Example:
More X than Y X
Rather than Y
Sometimes I feel more masculine than feminine.

CONCLUSION

It is important to underline in the end the fact that antonyms are an essential part of the daily communication in different circumstances. As the examples above showed, antonyms are used to differentiate meanings of sentences and their structures and are a source of new means of communication. Even though they are linguistically explained, every second language learner of English language must be aware when using them and also very attentive when trying to get their meaning. Due to the use in journalism and all kinds of media, which a very good source of learning a second language, in English language they are very much utilised for different modifications of expressions. The way they are used are different in many languages and the importance, without noticing the proper value sometimes, is increased when using the language daily.

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