

Gradual Antonyms in the English and Azerbaijani Languages

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Abstract

The article has been written on the basis of comparative-typological method in the study of the English and Azerbaijani languages belonging to different language systems. The main aim of the investigation is to discover different shades of gradual meaning of adjectives in the both languages.

The article studies peculiarities of gradual antonyms. It is revealed that distinguishing feature of the given class of words is graduality of their opposition where the utter members of opposition have maximal degree of feature. The placement of other words, for which middle degree of feature is typical between these members, is allowed.

Keywords: antonym, gradual antonyms, graduality conversion

1. Introduction

Among the units of expression of the language exist different ties. One of the types of ties is formulated on the basis of contradiction, opposition supplementing each-other. Such units, establishing pair, stand in the opposite to each-other poles, such pairs are called antonymous pairs. Antonyms possess other type of units in which intensification and weakening of contradictions between the units, standing in opposite poles to each other, makes it possible for the placement of other units between them. The phenomenon of antonymy has been widely studied in linguistics. Nevertheless, one of the types of antonyms formulated on the basis of opposition which is called gradual antonymy needs further investigation in the typological-comparative plan, on the materials of English and Azerbaijani languages.

2. Scope of the Study

Linguistic coordination or linguistic postpositionality is accepted as vivification and mutual confrontation of meanings of antonymous words in speech. Usage of one of the antonymous words in speech stirs associative impression on the other. Antonym demands not one word, but two. Thus, two words are linguistically linked and as if they turn to post positions of each other.

Sokolova determines antonyms like this: Antonyms belonging to the seme of speech are unique binary [privative] gradual words, pairs, being the members of many-sided oppositions with linguistic ties [linguistic post positions] (Sokolova, 1977).

Three types of antonyms are distinguished: 1] gradual and coordinating antonyms: for example *white-black*, *near-far*, *kind-cruel* etc. In such an antonymy there is such a seme in meaning that this seme makes it possible to put the words in opposition to one another. *White* and *black* are the words contradicting to each-other. It is worth mentioning that the reason why these colours are opposed with each other, lies in the fact of their attitude to light: 2] antonyms completing the converse contradictions. For ex: *single-married*, *aggressive-peace loving* etc.; 3] antonyms created by the dichotomic division of notion. Such antonymous words as a rule are formed from the adjectives of the same roots. For ex: *lawful-lawless*, *tasteful-tasteless* etc (Novikov, 1993).

In the Azerbaijani language in the research works linked with gradual antonyms only a few works can be found (Modern Azerbaijani Language, 1978).

As to the form of contradictions gradual antonyms in the Azerbaijani language are more than in the other compared languages. Likhacheva, speaking on the gradual antonyms in the Russian and English languages, also notes that in these languages gradual antonyms in comparison with other types of antonyms are plenty more (Likhacheva, 2015).

The fact is that disposition of word pairs of gradual antonyms in opposite poles, does not show impossibility of placing any other word between them. It is possible to place words nearer to the semantics of these words. To set up any line in the mentioned order means to create degrees between the two words of opposite poles or to show them. For ex: *zəqqütüm-zəhər-lap çox acı-lap acı-çox acı-bir az acı-az acı-azcana acı-acı-acıtəhər-dadsız-şirintəhər-azcana şirin-az şirin-bir az şirin* etc. [*very bitter-poison-very much butter; utterly butter bitterest-too bitter; a little bitter; bitter to the vaguest degree-bitter-bitter tasting, tasteless-sweet tasting-sweet-like, a little sweet, sweeter, sweet etc.*]. When we fall the adjectives under such degree we discover the possibility of increasing intensiveness among the words from left to the right order. For ex: *şirin-çox şirin-lap şirin lap çox şirin sip-şirin-bal kimi şirin* etc. [*sweet, very sweet-too sweet, very much sweet, sweetest-as sweet as honey etc.*].

Studying the adjectives as to the degrees can be carried out on the materials of different languages. Investigation of antonyms, learning the antonyms belonging to different parts of speech shows that gradual adjectives does not belong to all parts of speech. Nevertheless, it is possible to determine the line of word order formulating this chain of coordination between the antonymous words occupying the poles, contradictiong to each-other.

Investigation on the basis of two linguistic phenomena-antonymy and attitudes of comparison among the adjectives is relatively simple. Antonyms are the words establishing contradictions, having occupied places in the diametral opposite poles, but the adjectives stating quality and features of the object, also express the intensiveness of features and degrees of qualities of of adjectives as well. For a number of antonymous adjectives it is not possible to determine the medium position.

Antonyms as to the grades of oppositions are divided into relative and absolute antonyms. Absolute antonyms are the words establishing contradictions with one another: *ağ-qara* [*white-black*], *gəcə-gündüz* [*day-night*], *dərə-dağ* [*valley-mountain*]. But in relative oppositions contradictions are not in the character of oppositions: *dağ-düz* [*mountain, plain*], *dərə-düz* [*valley-plain*].

While studying comparative analysis of separately taken types of adjectives linked with the expression of the opposition in the compared languages, we cope with wide facilities to discover similar and distinctive features.

Antonyms, differentiating the whole as to the quality, movement, case, direction etc. at the same time indicate both the final limit and coordination of the opposition. For ex: *hot* and *cold* belongs to temperature. *Cold* in the negative direction but *hot* in the positive direction are the final limits. *Hot* and *cold* are notions in mutual contacts. If one of them is missing, there is no need for another one. *Hot* is determined as to *cold* and *cold* as to *hot*. It is true that between these two notions there is a neutral position or there are other positions. The presence of other positions affirms that the mentioned pair of adjectives are antonyms. But thermometer scale being taken into consideration, meanings take two opposite directions and the pair vector approaches nearer to antonymy.

Antonymy of syntactic constructions is derivative and are formed as to the lexic units in the composition. Vector antonymy shows itself in the antonyms of syntactic constructions as well. *Evdən çıxmaq-evə girmək* [*to go into house-to go out of house*].

The feature forming antonymy shows itself in different levels. For ex: In the example of *tall-short* the feature of the notion *boy* has been shown in the negative and positive poles. In the example of *hot-cold* the differentiation in temperature lies on the poles oriented to negative and positive notions.

As to Fomina, antonyms are situated on the poles of lexis paradigm. Nevertheless, between them there may appear other words, either increasing or lessening the feature. If we distribute them systematically from the words placed on the left hand pole, towards the right pole we shall observe lessening of the feature, at least a transition to another feature and we shall observe strengthening of the feature of the adjective in the direction of the right. Such a distribution is in the form of grading as to the strengthening of the feature. Such antonyms are called degree-taking or gradual adjectives. This term is of latin origin *gradatio-meaning* gradual increase of feature or quality. Semantic gradation in the semantic structure is peculiar to the antonyms, possessing degree of quality. In other antonyms gradation feature is missing (Fomina, 2004).

In the antonyms, possessing gradual feature the words can be substituted by the words coming between the words standing in opposite to each-other poles. Such a substitution is used to give the colouring of the meaning of relative respect in speech. Words used to avoid roughness, severity in speech, are called euphemisms. From this point of view in literature sometimes the term antonymous euphemisms are used.

It is necessary to note that during such an order of distribution of words in different poles it is necessary to make intermediate confrontation: *short-medium, hot-warm, cold-chilly, warm-cool* etc. It is worth mentioning that above given examples refer to root antonyms. Here antonymous pairs have been established from different roots.

They also state polar notions. Such antonyms are called polar antonyms. Intermediate antonyms are gradual antonyms. Confrontation of words is possible with words of the same roots: *happy-unhappy*, *regular-irregular*. In such antonyms for attaining opposite meaning, grammatical word-forming means—an affix is added to the first word. In such cases feature is not expressed completely, no confrontation, no opposition is achieved. Putting them in other words, such antonyms do not take degrees, they express the initial notion. As to the formation, such antonyms are opposed to the root antonyms. So, antonyms as to the degree of confrontation are divided into two types: polar and gradual antonyms. As to the manner of formation of antonymy types are root antonyms and derivative antonyms.

Antonyms with the same roots are formed as a result of word-forming. But we should take into consideration the fact that sometimes addition of affixes to the roots causes to express weak opposition between the adjectives. Such a case is obvious in the Russian language as well. Addition of prefixes “*ne*”, “*bez*” to the adjectives and adverbs in the Russian language establishes weaker opposition: *molodoy-nemolodoy*. At this time real antonym finds its weaker expression than in the case when it appears in pair. [compare: *molodoy-stariy*, *molodoy-nemolodoy*] [*young-old*, *young-not young*].

The fact that the antonymous paradigm of antonymous pairs are formed by the ground of outer polar elements must be taken into consideration as well.

Any sort of polarization in the phenomenon of antonymy does not give way to graduality. In the gradual antonyms polars are situated in the maximal farther distance from each-other. Here the length of distance is not only in the locality understanding. Farness may state quantity, quality and other distinctions. For ex: *acı-şirin*, *yaxşı-pis*, *əvvəl-axır*, *gözəl-çirkin* etc. [*bitter-sweet*, *good-bad*, *beginning-end*, *beautiful-ugly* etc.]. Antonymous pair consists of two words. The object, thing, quality, quantity, direction, state, movement etc. which are expressed by each member of the pair, does not always give negative meaning of the second member of the pair. During the confrontation, oppositional meaning is actualized in the maximal level. In the rest of the cases the second side of the antonymous pair is imagined associatively.

The fact that “*bitter*” arouses imagination about sweet, “*sweet*” in its turn arouses imagination about “*bitter*” as well. This always shows itself in the lexical level. But in the syntactic level associative image is changeable. For ex: The sentence “*Alma şirindir*” [*apple is sweet*] and word combination “*Şirin alma*” [*sweet apple*] does not create imagination of the word “*acı*” [*bitter*] to its counterpart “*şirin*” [*sweet*], because for “*alma*” [*apple*] bitterness is an occasional quality. It is an occasional quality for the reason that as a whole we have an impression on the apple that it must be sweet, but it is possible that “*alma*” [*apple*] can also be bitter. For example *unripened apple*, *medicined apple*, *rotten apple* etc.

But the sentence “*Alma şirindir*” [*apple is sweet*] mostly as an opposite pole, creates imagination on the “*turş alma*” [*sour apple*]. It should be taken into consideration that we have met sweetish, bitter-tasting apples as well.

3. Logical Approach to the Problem

The word “*alma*” [*apple*] as a whole expresses the logical oppositions “*bitter*” and “*sweet*”. In such a case, antonymous pair “*sour-sweet*” is formed. In the lexical level this is not accepted. In the conceptual level this can be accepted. Antonymy being a linguistic phenomenon belonging to lexic level, between the words “*turş*” [*sour*] and “*şirin*” [*sweet*] as no diametral and logical opposition is marked, they are not considered to be antonyms.

In the word combinations “*Acı çay*” [*bitter tea*] and “*şirin çay*” [*sweet tea*] in the second word combination “*şirin çay*” [*sweet tea*] the word “*şirin*” [*sweet*] is used in the concrete meaning because by putting sugar into tea we can make it sweet and by this way we change its quality. In the polarization with the word combination “*şirin çay*” [*sweet tea*] stands neutral position of the word “*çay*” [*tea*]. This is tea without any the mixture. It can be simply called “*çay*” [*tea*]. Here the word “*çay*” is not opposed with word combination “*şirin çay*” [*sweet tea*]. Confrontation takes place in the level of “*acı çay*” [*bitter tea*] in “*şirin çay*” [*sweet tea*]. In the word combinations “*açık çay*” and “*tünd çay*” [*weak tea-strong tea*] the components “*açık*” [*weak*] and “*tünd*” [*strong*] from the view of indicating the colour of tea establish antonymous pair. For these two words there is another word to indicate neutral position.

Açık sarı-sarı-tünd sarı [*weaker yellow, yellow, strong [dark] yellow*].

Açık kırmızı-tünd kırmızı [*weaker red-red-strong [dark] red*].

In the analogical order it is possible to set up the line of weak [normal] *tea-strong tea*, but in the combination of “*bitter tea*” and “*sweet tea*” there is not such a neutral intermediate position.

In the line of “sweet-tea” intensiveness is associated with the quantity of sweetness: *tea-less sweet tea-sweet tea, very sweet tea*.

Quality always refers to a certain object, otherwise quality cannot represent itself. Quality possesses diametral opposite side and neutral position. Quality is liable to intensification in both directions. For ex:

Bitter-bitter tasting-normal-sweet tasting-sweet

Cold-cold like-normal-mildly cold-warm

When we belong quality to an object sometimes no intensification takes place in a certain direction.

Tea-less sweet [sweet-tasting] tea-sweet tea.

In this line intensification of quality of tea in the direction of quality does not take place.

Unless we take the superlative degree of quality of tea into consideration [sweetest tea] in the above mentioned line on the left side of polarization stands neutral position, but in the right hand side stands normal maximalized limit [sweet] of quality. There are two polars and an intermediate position [the first polar: *tea*; intermediate position: *less sweet tea*; in the second polar: *sweet tea*]. In such cases, utter bases for confrontation in the language are created. Namely, comparison of polars, comparison of polar and intermediate position are possible, real. As far as there are three kinds of one object which are distinctive in quality they are liable for comparison and language must realize its expression by the comparison within the frame of language means. In the confrontation of *tea-sweet tea* there is something missing. On the second side, intensification degree of quality in the positive direction is indicated, but on the first side there is no intensification, nor information on the change of quality. In reality the word *tea* expressing the neutral quality of fruits is one direction is intensified, in the direction of “sweet”, but in the opposite direction it is intensified in the direction of “sour”. By this time intermediate neutral position remains. For ex:

Turş alma-turşməzə alma-alma-kəmşirin / alma-şirin alma

Turş alça-turşməzə / turştəhər alça-alça-kəmşirin / şirintəhər alça-şirin alça

Turş nar-turşməzə nar-nar-kəmşirin [mələs] nar-şirin nar etc.

During the comparison between polars, one of the logically opposite sides is the word “*turş*” [sour]. Consequently quality opposition finds its expression by the “*turş-şirin*” [sour-sweet] word pair. Namely, it establishes “*sour-sweet*” antonymous pair.

The carried out analysis throws light onto two issues. The first, when the quality is intensified in one direction during the comparison in the syntactic level words, denoting maximal intensification in the negative or positive directions are used [*bitter tea-sweet tea; bitter coffee, sweet coffee*]. The second, the opposite qualities peculiar to the object establish antonymous pair with each-other [*sour-sweet; sour pomegranate-sweet pomegranate*].

In a few antonyms semantics, expressing different degrees of the same quality, feature, movement etc. shows itself. In such antonyms logically there is a possibility for graduality: *gənc-orta yaşlı, yaşlı-ahıl-qoca* [young-middle-aged, old, aged, advanced in years, old].

A number of antonyms [for example, conversives] don't have the feature of graduality. For ex: in the pairs *ana-ata, kişi-qadın* [mother-father, man-woman] no intermediate word can be used between the pairs.

The establishers of the line created by the gradual antonyms possess the degrees of approaching each other and going farther from each other. Utter [complete] opposition shows itself in the units situated in the poles. In the intermediate units the quantity of measurement of the grade of nearness to each-other is unknown. Namely, it is impossible to determine exactly to what extend the words *less sweet* and *sweet* are nearer to each other. Though the word “sweet” indicates incompleteness of the quality, it does not give any information on the measure of completeness.

In the English proverbs Sargoredseva, who has carried out exact investigation of antonymic coorelation, mentioned that in the proverb “*Better a wee fire to warm us than a mickle fire to burn us*”, “*wee*” was in antonymous relation with the word “*mickle*” which was taken from the dialect: “*As in the structure of seme of adjective wee [very small] there is a seme, specifying degree of quantitative value, and in the gradual scale, the given antonyms are situated in different distances from the centre, the given coorelation refers to the quasiantonomous degree*” (Tsaregoredseva, 2013).

4. Similar Usage of Antonyms in Different Context Types in English and Azerbaijani

Antonymous words in the contexts of different types realizes opposition, antonymy. In the languages of different

systems, including English and Azerbaijani languages on the basis of initial analysis, it is possible to determine 5 such context types (Fedosov, 1996).

Let's consider such types as to the examples.

The first type is characterized by the commonness of the meaning. By this time antonymous words in the context are used as homogenous words. Antonyms are correlated by the help of uniting and separating conjunctives. For ex: If you have obeyed all the rules, good or bad, and you still come out at the dirty end, then I say the rules are no good [M. Wilson, *Live with Lightning*].

Nərimin bu dünyada yaxşı və pisi ele bil ayırmaqda çətinlik çəkirdi [Tahir. Sərv ağacının kölgəsində].

The second context is directly formed on the basis of confrontation. The used antonyms are the homogenous members and are coordinated by means of confrontation.

*He was alive, not dead [B. Show, *The Apple Cart*].*

Yox, yox, ölməmişəm, hələlik sağam

*İndi mən ölümlə çarpışacağam [S. Vurğun, *Vaqif*].*

The third type contexts are set up on the basis of alternativity. Antonymous words in the context become homogenous and are coordinated by means of conjunctives.

*You will see if you were **right** or **wrong** [A. Cronin, *The Hatter's Castle*].*

*Nəriminin gözləri yol çəkirdi. Onun başında fikirlər sanki bir-biri ilə vuruşurdu. Mən **səhv** ya **düz** düşünürəm, bilmirəm. O mənə **doğru** ya **yalan** deyir. O mənə **sevir** ya **sevmir** [Tahir. Sərv ağacının kölgəsində].*

The fourth type contexts are characterized by the participation of oppositional ground.

The opposed with each-other words as the same member of the sentence are used in two parallel constructions:

*The whole was **big**, oneself was **little** [J. Galsworthy, *The White Monkey*].*

*Ayrı yaşayırlar **atamla anam**,*

Bir təzad ömr edir by kainatda,

*Onlara **doğmayam**, onlara **yadam***

*Göz açıb nənəmi gördüm həyatda [N. Kəsəmənli, *Yaxşı ki...*]*

The fifth context type is characterized by an exact structure. Antonyms are used alongside each-other. The opposed words are used either as distinctive members in one of the sentence, or they are used within two sentences. They are semantically coordinated with each-other.

*In its **great** presence our **small** sorrows creep away, ashamed [K. Gerome, *Three Men in a Boat*].*

The usage of two members as homogenous members, which are mutually opposite to each-other and which indicate two activities, can be considered as a special form of the contexts of the fifth type:

*I've **lost** and **won** more lawswuits than any man in England [W. M. Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*].*

Thus, it becomes clear that in the gradual antonyms the condition of completeness bears relative distinction. Antonyms, situated on the poles do not show the grade of completeness exactly. Such pairs complete each-other, as if isolated from each-other. But when we put them into a certain context, we may come to the conclusion that polarization bears relative character.

5. Conclusion

In the language as to a certain criterion word pairs establishing polarization with each other create antonymous relations. Antonymy appears as a result of opposition, contradiction, feature, between the language units or as a result of existence or absence of quality, or as to certain features of two language units, which complete each-other. The differences in the determination of criteria of antonymous relations, gives us the ground to divide them into different types. Gradual antonyms establish a separate type. Between the gradual antonyms, between the units situated in the polar of antonymic relation, additional units distinctive as to the degree of intensification of quality or feature in the conditionally positive or negative direction are placed. In the languages of different systems, including English and Azerbaijani languages gradual antonyms establish majority. Gradual antonyms which are used in one language, possess equivalents in the other languages as well. The equivalents of the words standings at the poles establish gradual antonyms and affirms the fact that graduality bears a

systematic character.

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