

## Synonyms as the Semantic Component of Conversion



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**ABSTRACT:** Conversion is very common in modern English. The main condition for the formation of a new language unit through conversion is the change of the syntactic function of the word, which is observed by the change of meaning. It is sometimes necessary to change the basic syntactic environment that is needed for conversion. A word formed by the conversion takes all the inflectional forms of the part of the language to which it belongs. Conversion, as a means of forming verbs and nouns, has become one of the characteristic features of the English language since the XIII century.

The conversion formed as a result of the collapse of the inflectional system at the beginning of the Central Asian period. From 1150, a number of derivative verbs formed by conversion from adjectives appeared, and from the 13th-15th centuries, verbs derived from adverbs and participles appeared.

In the Middle English period, until about the 15th century, the formation of verbs from nouns and adjectives significantly decreased due to the emergence of a large number of nouns and verbs borrowed from French. The grammatical homonymy of many English verbs and nouns resulting from the loss of inflection was only one of the prerequisites for the emergence of conversion as a new way of word formation.

**KEYWORDS:** synonyms, antonyms, polysemy, meaning, text, word formation

### INTRODUCTION

Traditional linguistics takes the meanings of words as their basis and classifies them as synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, polysemous, etc. The language is perfect when the form and the meaning are based on each other, that is, a form can convey only one meaning, or the opposite is also possible. Scholars are of the opinion that no language conforms to one form and one format of meaning. For example, in English *big-large-huge-wide-massive* and other words expressing the meaning of “big” reflect the same meaning, albeit in a relative sense. It should be said that the use of these words in conversation is also related to certain stylistic nuances. In linguistics literature, such words are considered as “synonymous” words. If it is the opposite, that is, when the same form expresses several meanings, homonyms are meant. For example: *aid-assist-assistance*, etc. Words that contradict each other according to their lexical meanings are called antonyms. For example: *alive-dead, artificial-natural, adult-child*, etc.

### DISCUSSION

Synonyms are words that are different in form and close in meaning. S.A.Abdullayev, who investigated the issue of synonymy in Azerbaijani linguistics, writes: about them “...synonyms serve the purpose of providing a colorful and varied expression of an idea, strengthen the expression, increase its pragmatic potential, perform the function of selection and clarification, explanation and clarification., these numerous lexical elements reveal the real language powers, creating the foundations of text construction in various functional styles” [Abdullayev 2013, p.199 ]. According to this scientist, “In order to investigate the communicative-pragmatic potential of synonymous units, it means to activate the entire lexical-semantic system of the language, to set it in motion, to observe it in action. Depending on the social situation and pragmatic purpose, it is necessary to approach the manipulative possibilities of words in this general background” [Abdullayev 2013, p. 200]. A word must enter one or another sign system in order to acquire meaning. The same concept can be included in different systems with different meanings. A. Solomonik writes that lexemes can be brought together and become synonyms only in the context environment [Solomonik 2012, p. 91].

The value of signs lies in the fact that, differing from each other, the signs introduce some new content into the system. This difference can be both in form and content. W. L. Chafe called the birth of a new meaning from an old one in a particular context idiomatization, and the coincidence of the old and new meanings in one form – literalization [Chafe 1975, p. 53]. At the same time, depending on the communicative tasks, the tendency of the development of the form leads in the language to the formation of polysemy and homonymy [Bierwisch 1970, p.166]. The trend in the development of the content of the sign leads to the formation of synonymy. However, in communication, not only the content and the form of the sign are important, but also its

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function. In English, the development and expansion of the sign of its function contributes to the formation of the conversion. Unlike polysemy, homonymy, synonymy, which are observed at all levels of the language system, but are structurally limited, conversion serves the relationship of different levels of the language hierarchy, thereby developing and expanding the language as a system. It should also be noted that not every sign can be ambiguous or develop homonymous or synonymous meanings. But each sign, depending on the communicative tasks, can expand its functions and act in a different form. Therefore, conversion is an extension of the functional component of the sign. It is noteworthy to mention that under the influence of conversion, while retaining its form, a new sign can be transformed into: 1) a sign of another level of the English language system; 2) a sign of the same level of the English language system.

In the first case, heterogeneous signs are converses, in the second - homogeneous ones. In turn, heterogeneous signs serve to link the levels of the English language as a system, while homogeneous signs expand the potential of each level of the language. At the same time, both types of conversives are characterized by certain semantic transfers. According to A.A. Reformatzky, there are three groups of semantic transfers: 1) metaphorization and its particular manifestations - metonymy and synecdoche; 2) homonymy and its transfer by function [Reformatzky 2002, p. 80]. According to A.A. Reformatzky, conversion is a special case of homonymy: "A special type of homonymy is the case of so-called conversion, when a given word goes into another part of speech without changing its morphological and phonetic composition" [Reformatzky 2002, p. 93]. However, we agree with this thesis of the scientist only partially, and do not consider conversion to be a special case of homonymy. Firstly, the material of the English language allows us to conclude that the conversion is an independent semantic transfer, in which the functional use of the sign is expanded in the first place. Secondly, the meanings of homonyms, as a rule, are not interconnected with each other, while in the case of conversion; the meanings of conversives can either coincide or differ. Thirdly, between conversives one can observe not only homonymous relations, but also polysemy, antonymy, synonymy. Consequently, conversion serves the formation of new forms, meanings, or expands the functional potential of a language unit. With homonymy, we are dealing with the coincidence of forms, without their semantic and functional correlation.

The stylistic or pragmatic selection of the words included in the group of synonyms depends on the degree of effectiveness and value of the meaning they express in the text. For example: the word groups such as "*mansion – house – cottage*" are combined in one group as they have the general meaning of "building for living". It is necessary to underline that these words do not have the same meaning capacity. According to its meaning capacity, among them the weak one is observed to be the word "house" as it has only one meaning, and it is "a building". As the words like "a mansion" and "a cottage" have the meaning of "a house", they have additional meanings characterizing largeness (mansion) and smallness (cottage). In other words, the words "mansion and cottage" include some additional information that is not included in the word "a house". These differences in the semantic content of words can be used for stylistic purposes.

The word acquires a meaning different from its lexical meaning in the literary work, and at this time intratextual synonymy is clearly observed and these are called speech (textual, contextual) synonyms. They are understood only in a certain text, in a certain speech, and the speech characteristic of the speaker is taken into account. The contextual tool is based on the fact that the meaning of the artistic word acquires a different meaning from the dictionary meaning and does not exist freely. It is characterized by the functioning of the word within a certain artistic structure. By contextual lexical meaning, the meaning of the word is understood only in speech, in the context. M. L. Murphy notes that the identity of words is determined by the fact that it depends on the context [Murphy 2003, p.34].

Otherwise, in our study, we also consider another type of semantic transfer - transfer by function. According to A.A. Reformatzky, with functional transfer, "things can be completely different both in shape and color, etc., their common function unites them" [Reformatzky 2002, p. 84]. By function, the scientist understands the commonality of perception, for example: a quill pen and a steel pen - there is a transfer by function, since both concepts are called a writing tool. By function transfer, we mean the ability of a sign to expand its functionality in the language system, i.e. the use of one sign at different language levels or the transition of one sign to another sign of the same language level but with a change in its function (for example, the transition of a word from one part of speech to another), which in turn is accompanied by both the preservation and change of its semantic content when saving the form.

## ANALYSES

Three types of transfers are distinguished in the formation of converses:

1) metaphorical; 2) homonymous; 3) transfer by function.

These three types of semantic transfer in English can be observed both in the pure form and in the mixed form. It is noteworthy to consider them in more detail.

Metaphorical transfer is based on the similarity of material characteristics: on color, shape, character of movements, i.e. "on the totality of the similarities directly perceived by the senses (especially vision) of what the name is transferred from, to where this name is transferred" [Reformatzky 2002, p. 84]. It should be noted that in our study only a linguistic metaphor is analyzed, which in linguistics is opposed to an artistic one. This is justified by the following considerations. Artistic metaphor arises "as a

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result of purposeful and conscious aesthetic searches” and “is studied in poetics as one of its main aesthetic categories” while the linguistic metaphor is “spontaneous, inherent in the very nature of the language and is studied in linguistics as a complex problem related to different specialties: lexicology, semasiology, nomination theory, psycholinguistics, linguistic stylistics” [Sklyarevskaya 2004, p. 34]. G.N. Sklyarevskaya identifies 3 types of language metaphor: motivated, syncretic and associative [Sklyarevskaya 2004, p. 53]. It is necessary to mention that all these three types of metaphor are observed during the conversion. Now we consider it important to give some brief information about each of them:

1. Motivated language metaphor. In it, the semantic element explicitly links the metaphorical meaning with the original one. The metaphor in these cases is transparent. The example may illustrate our point of view:

I have already picked out all the clothes *worn* by them.

The other example:

His *worn* youth.

In the given examples /worn/ is observed to be adjectives though they differ both functionally and semantically. In the first example, /worn/ is Participle II; in the second example it describes the semantics of the degree of the state – *very ruined youth of someone*.

Consequently, under the influence of conversion in the word *worn*, an expansion of the syntactic function is observed, which leads to the development of a meaning, namely a gradual meaning: a feature indicating *worn* can also indicate the degree of this state. In other words, conversion forms synonymous conversives.

The next example:

**2) The waiters are happy to answer customer’s questions** [Longman 2001, p. 49]. – *What was her answer?* [Longman 2001, p. 49]

The conversives in these examples are the verb to answer and the noun an answer. They differ functionally: firstly, in part-of-speech, secondly, in the syntactic functions they perform in sentences, and thirdly, the semantic distinction, namely the metaphorical transfer, is quite transparent here: the semantics of the action of the answer turns into a concept, which expands the possibilities the commonness of the sign answer with other signs, otherwise it expands the circle of interaction of the lexeme with other words. The example:

**3) Jokester have compared long CVS receipts to Meghan Markel’s 16-foot wedding veil, the length of babies and the size of vertical window blinds (Detroit Free Press, 29 December 2019).** – *the woman was veiled from head to foot* [Longman 2001, p. 1603].

A veil is a noun and to veil is a verb. Both are conversives. They belong to different parts of speech; perform different functions in a sentence; the semantics of a part of women’s clothing as a result of metaphorical transfer is replenished with the meaning of the action, thereby it makes the word polysemantic.

2. Syncretic language metaphor. It is the type of metaphor based on sensations. This type of metaphor was discovered and described in detail in the works on historical poetics by A.N. Veselovsky, who noted that most of the metaphorical transformations of modern languages go back to the ancient time, when the physiological illegibility of the primitive psyche did not divide sensory impressions, and this fusion was fixed in the language – in his “everyday formulas” [Veselovsky 1940, p. 88]. The following example may illustrate this type of metaphor on the material of modern English:

1) *Oh, snap! guess what I saw?*

The other example:

2) *One day, she just (oh) snapped and began to threaten the people in the office.*

In the first example /Oh, snap/ means an exclamation, surprise, etc. In the second one it means to take advantage, etc.

If as an interjection /oh snap/, it expresses emotion; as a verb it is known to be a transitive verb expressing making use of something.

**3) Our family has helped us deal with the grief and anger we felt over his death** [Longman 2001, p. 47]. – *The court’s decision angered environmentalists* [Longman 2001, p. 47].

The word *anger* as the noun has the semantics of a negative emotion, which acquires the semantics of an action when this word passes into the class of verbs. With this metaphorical transfer, the given word not only expands its functions in speech, but also becomes polysemantic. If the word *anger* expresses negative emotions, then feelings of happiness and joy are conveyed, for example, by the word *bliss*. For example:

**4) If you like fish, this menu is bliss** [Longman 2001, p. 133]. – *Josh is just blissed out, always smiling* [9].

In the first case, *bliss* is the noun that conveys the semantics of happiness, while in the second case, the verb *bliss* already conveys the semantics of the state, the feeling of this emotion. Metaphorical transfer and expansion of the function of the word led to the expansion of its meaning, i.e. it has become multifaceted.

**3. Associative language metaphor.** It is based on the ability of consciousness to find analogies between any objects of reality. Such a linguistic metaphor is based on the association of signs or psychological parallelism.

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The example:

*Petersen is an active member of the Maricop County Republican Party, the Arizona Republican Party, and a precinct commetteeman in Legislative District 25, according to the bio (USA Today, 09 October 2019) – With The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks author Rebecca Skloot has drawn longoverdue attention to the black patient whose canserous cervical cells were essential to the biotechnology boom and ensuing developments in the biomedical science (National Geographic, 9 January 2020).*

In the first case, *bio* is a noun, in the second (meaning the adjective biomedical) it is a prefix. As in the previous examples, here the noun changed its function under the influence of conversion and began to be understood as a prefix, and as a result of the associative metaphorical transfer, psychological parallelism occurred: the concept of life, together with other roots, indicates a connection with life. Compare: *biorythm, biodiversity, biochemical* and others.

## CONCLUSION

The lexical composition of the language is known to be important. It is constantly updated with new words. This is related to existing word-forming processes. The language has a system of tools and rules specially designed for nomination purposes, with the help of which new words are formed on the basis of already existing units. And among these funds, one can distinguish the most productive ones. It is known to be conversion.

Conversion is observed to be one of the most productive ways of word formation in modern English. As a result of conversion, a word with new meanings and new functions appears.

By reviewing the various classifications, it was observed that transformation is divided into substantivization, verbalization, adverbialization, and adjective. The most productive models are “noun-verb” and “verb-noun” models. Trans-positive and derivational conversion has also been distinguished. Attention is paid to the change of the part of speech during lexical conversion.

When using synonyms in English texts, the relationship among the components of the text should be semantically complete, and attention should be paid to their pragmatic expressiveness. As a result of the investigation different types of synonyms such as contextual, ideographic and stylistic synonyms have been defined.

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