



The Notion of Homographone

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Introduction

This paper is an attempt to shed light on the notion of the homographone in English. It is problematic in the sense of the practical use by our students. The use of homonymous lexemes are adopted in this study in order to clarify the ambiguity that may occur by the users of English. This paper concentrates on showing the significant role of homographone in making the classification of some lexemes easier.

The Problem:

The problem of the current study lies in the manner of answering the following questions:

- 1- What is the difference between the semantic classification related to the lexemes 'lead' and 'bank'?
- 2- What is the difference between the semantic classification connected to the lexemes 'saw' and 'hear'?
- 3- How can we classify each of the lexemes 'lead', 'hear', 'saw' and 'bank'? And what is the term that covers each of the lexemes mentioned above?

Aims of the Study:

This study aims at:

- 1- Drawing attention to the confusion that some lexemes have on the semantic classification, especially homonymous ones.
- 2- Finding an appropriate term to separate between the ambiguity and disambiguation in classifying some lexemes.
- 3- Showing the significant role of 'homographone' in making the classification of some lexemes easier.



Hypothesis:

It is hypothesized that a great deal of easiness in distinction among homonymous lexemes can be attributed to the role of homographones besides homophones and homographs.

Procedures:

The procedures to be adopted in this study are represented in presenting a brief theoretical survey of homonymous lexemes. Another procedure is that adding a new term to be familiar in using these lexemes.

Value of the Study:

The study is a theoretical attempt at clarifying that a new term may be created by the researcher himself to be used in semantic classification of homonymous lexemes. This will be shown through several examples prepared for this purpose.

Limits of the Study:

The limitation of the present study includes the effective role of the term 'homographones' in the recognition of some homonymous lexemes. Some lexemes are taken from (Hornby, 1989) to be as authentic examples which are used to improve the significance of the current study.



The Notion of Homographone

Homographone is a dual term refers to certain lexemes that comprise both cases of homographs and homophones. That is, the lexemes that consist, at the same time, of, semantically different meanings, phonologically identical pronunciations and grammatically the same spelling (Al-Abbasi, 2004:71-2).

Although the distinction between polysemy and homonymy is not clear cut, however, the major distinction between them is the relatedness vs. unrelatedness in meaning, in which it becomes of a considerable significance (Lyons, 1977:551).

A brief illustration deals with polysemous and homonymous lexemes is taken from the most standard English dictionaries. Polysemous lexical items, within these dictionaries, are treated as single entries on the one hand. And homonymous lexemes are treated as separated entries on the other hand. For example, the polysemous item 'fluid' means (able to flow freely: as gases and liquids do; not fixed: able to be changed e.g fluid arrangements, ideas, opinions; smooth and graceful in movements). Whereas the homonymous item 'bear¹' means (tolerate or carry), 'bear²' means (large heavy animal with thick fur), etc.(Hornby, 1989: 89-90, 472).

Homonymy:

It is defined as the existence of more than one morphological specification sharing the same phonological or graphic form (Leech, 1974: 230).

Lyons (1977: 550) illustrates that "it is generally taken to be a sufficient, though not a necessary, condition of homonymy that the lexemes in question should be known to have developed from what were formally distinct lexemes in some earlier stage of the language".

As regarding ambiguity, Lyons (Ibid: 569) argues that "partial homonymy creates ambiguity in sentences, it creates ambiguity that is both lexical and grammatical". Consider the example below:

- He is putting the ball on the green.



‘Putting’, here, is lexically (and perhaps grammatically) ambiguous. Due to ‘putting’ is of either (put, puts, putting) or (putt, putts, putted, putting), therefore it constitutes ambiguity (Ibid: 563).

Hurford and Heasley (1983: 123) identify homonymy as “one of an ambiguous word, whose different senses are far apart from each other and not obviously related to be each other in anyway. Cases of homonymy seem very definitely to be matters of mere accident or coincidence”.

Consequently, Yule (1996: 121) assures that the two or more unrelated meanings of a certain form (written or spoken) are described as homonymy. He argues that “the attemptation is to think that the two types of [e.g.] bank must be related in meaning”, but on the contrary, they are not.

As far as homonymy is concerned, different types can be distinguished depending on their spellings and pronunciations. And in order to get an enough image or idea about the new derivated term homographone, the researcher prefers, at the beginning, to give a summary on each of it constitution, and then converts to homographone. Let us consider these types with reference to their examples.

Homograph:

Lexemes (words) which have different meanings, but identical spellings and different pronunciations are called homographs, for example:

- lead /led/ = the name of metal.
lead /li:d/ = to show the way.
- desert / diz3:t/ = go away from (a place) without intending ever to return.
desert /dezðt/ = (large area of) barren land, with very little water and vegetation, often sand – covered.
- present /preznt/ = thing given or received as a gift.
present /prizent/ = introduce something formally.
- tear /tið (r)/ = a drop of a salty water coming down from the eye.
tear /teð (r)/ = pull something sharply to pieces.
- sow /sau/ = fully grown female pig.
sow /sðu/ = put or scatter (seed) in or on the ground.



Homophone:

Lexemes (words) which are different in meanings and spellings, but they are identical in pronunciations are called homophones, for example:

- hear /hið (r)/ = perceive sounds with ears.
here /hið (r)/ = in this position or place.
- right /rait/ = true or correct.
write /rait/ = make letters or other symbols on a surface.
- through /θru:/ = from one end or side of (a channel, passage, etc.)
to the other.
threw /θru:/ = past tense of throw.
- see /si:/ = using the eyes for looking at something, meeting, etc.
sea /si:/ = the salt water that covers most of the earth's surface and
encloses its contents and islands.

Homographone:

Clearly, each of homograph and homophone has formed the new term in which its lexemes have different meanings, but they are identical in both spellings and pronunciations (Thakur, 1999:32-3). Thus, these lexemes are called homographones, for example:

- left /left/ = past tense of leave.
left /left/ = opposite of right.
- lap /læp/ = circuit of a course.
lap /læp/ = part of body when sitting down.
- can /kæn/ = indicating ability, permission, request, etc.
can /kæn/ = metal or plastic container for holding or carrying
liquids.
- spring /sprɪŋ/ = act of springing or jumping up, jump.
spring /sprɪŋ/ = the first season of the year coming between winter
and summer.
- page /peɪdə/ = one side of a sheet of paper in a book, magazine, etc.
page /peɪdə/ = boy or youngman employed in a hotel or club to
carry luggage, open doors for people, etc.

Moreover, many hundreds of lexemes are tackled as homographones. Such lexemes are: book, gill, fair, wax, miss, about, act, bid, blaze, post, bow, mean, mine, reason, right, saw, bank, etc.



We can see that the term homographone has a binary use. However it compromises between certain kinds related to the two lexemes : homograph and homophone. Besides, the new created lexeme homographone is an easy way to get rid of the ambiguity may appear in making a comparison between homographic and homophonic lexemes. That is to say, the lexeme which makes a confusion between them should be put in the field of homographone. Thus, any misunderstanding of any lexeme, henceforth, will be obvious, and the researcher thinks that, no doubt, concerning this aspect any trouble will be easy to solve.

Conclusions

Since the use of homographic and homophonic lexemes is very obvious, the use of others (i.e. neither homographs nor homophones) seems to be ambiguous. However, it is felt necessary to bridge the gap resulting from the ambiguity which is found during the use of neither homographic nor homophonic lexemes.

Moreover, to make an accurate determination to the classification of such lexemes, the researcher thinks that the key solution of this problem lay in a renewal term. This term is called 'homographone'. Therefore, homographone should be used as a vital term to separate between homophone and homograph on the one hand and the others within the field of homonymous lexemes on the other hand.



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