



THE IMPORTANCE OF SYNONYMY IN ENGLISH LINGUISTICS

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**Abstract:** *This article discusses the important concept of synonymy in English lexicology and its role in linguistics. It also discusses the contextual meanings of some synonyms and the features of distinguishing lexemes from each other in context.*

**Keywords:** *phrase, synonym, ideographic, lexemes, absolute, stylistic.*

**Annotatsiya:** *Ushbu maqolada ingliz tili leksikologiyasida muhim ahamiyatga ega bo'lgan sinonimiya hamda uning tilshunoslikda tutgan o'rni to'g'risida so'z yuritiladi. Shuningdek, ba'zi sinonimlarning kontekstual ma'nolari hamda leksemalarning kontekstda bir- biridan o'zaro farqlanish xususiyatlari haqida gap boradi.*

**Kalit so'zlar:** *ibora, sinonim, ideografik, leksemalar, mutlaq, stilistik.*

**Аннотация:** *В статье рассматривается синонимия, имеющая большое значение в английской лексикологии, и ее роль в лингвистике. В статье также рассматриваются контекстные значения некоторых синонимов и характеристики лексем, которые отличают их друг от друга в контексте.*

**Ключевые слова:** *фраза, синоним, идеографический, лексемы, абсолютный, стилистический.*

If we consider the world's languages as a vast universe, English is the sun that illuminates this universe with its bright rays. Currently, English is the world language. All official international documents, online websites or applications are mostly in English. According to statistics, the number of English speakers in the world is 341,000,000 people. In fact, this indicator ranks 4th in the world. The reason is that representatives of all nationalities are currently paying attention to learning English and they are obtaining a number of English language certificates: IELTS, CEFR, TOEFL, MULTILEVEL, etc. In particular, it is a fact that this language has more than 1 million words in its vocabulary, and the Oxford English Dictionary contains more than 170,000 actively used words. If old and technical terms are also taken into account, this number may exceed 600,000. With this indicator, some sources state that English is the second most widely spoken language in the world, after Arabic.

Why is the vocabulary of the English language so diverse?

This is due to the various forms of synonymy of words in English. Linguistic experts have stated: "The wider the range of synonyms of lexemes in a language, the greater the vocabulary wealth of the language, but it is also true that homonymous forms of words lead





to a decrease in the richness of the language.” Therefore, the more synonyms of lexemes, that is, their synonyms, the more useful they are in each language.

The great English linguist Peter Mark Roget conducted a synonymous analysis of lexemes in the English language. His work “Roget’s Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases”, published in 1852, is considered a fundamental work in the systematization of synonyms. This work was the basis for the creation of a dictionary of synonyms in linguistics.

British linguist John Lyons has done important work in the field of semantics and the subtle differences between synonyms and the semantic similarities between them. His famous book Semantics (1977) provides an extensive analysis of synonyms, antonyms, hyponyms, and other semantic relations.

Linguist Geoffrey Leech, in his work The Study of Meaning (1974), also examines the pragmatic aspects of synonyms. In particular, he studies the stylistic or emotional differences between synonyms, comparing them with each other. In particular, Russian linguist Zellig Harris proposed that synonymy, that is, the synonymous aspects of lexemes, can be studied based on distributional analysis.

Synonym – a word or phrase that has the same or nearly the same meaning as another word or phrase in the same language:

For example: the words “small” and “little” are synonyms,  
“happy” and “joyful” are synonyms.

Understanding and using synonyms effectively can enhance your writing by avoiding repetition and allowing you to choose the most precise words for your intended meaning. Here are some examples of synonyms:

Beautiful: Attractive, lovely, gorgeous

Large: Big, huge, vast

Small: Tiny, little, minute

Happy: Joyful, glad, cheerful

Sad: Mournful, dejected, gloomy.

There are several classification systems for synonyms which were established

By different scientists, such as: Academician V.V Vinogradov, the famous Russian Scholar or Russian philologist A.I. Smirnitsky. In Vinogradov’s classification System there are three types of synonyms: ideographic (which he defined as words Conveying the same concept but differing in shades of meaning), stylistic (differing In stylistic characteristics) and absolute (coinciding in all their shades of meaning and in all their stylistic characteristics).

**1. Absolute synonyms** - are rare in the vocabulary and, on the diachronic Level; as to professor Hoshimov: “the phenomenon of absolute synonymy is anomalous and the vocabulary system invariably tends to abolish it either by rejecting one of the absolute synonyms or by developing differentiation





characteristics in one or both (or all) of them". Therefore, it does not seem necessary to include absolute synonyms, which are a temporary exception, in the system of classification.

**EXAMPLES:**

Exciting – joyous

- 1). I watched an exciting film on TV with my family yesterday.
- 2). I watched a joyous film on TV with my family yesterday.

Clarify – explain

- 1). She asked him to clarify what he meant.
- 2). She asked him to explain what he meant.

**2. Ideographic synonyms** - denote different shades of meaning or different degrees of a giving quality. They are nearly identical in one or more denotational meanings and interchangeable at least in some contexts, e.g. beautiful – fine – handsome – pretty. Beautiful conveys, for instance, the strongest meaning; it marks the possession of that quality in its fullest extent, while the other terms denote the possession of it in part only. Fineness, handsomeness and prettiness are to beauty as parts to a whole.

**EXAMPLE:**

Accept – receive – take

- 1). We hope you will accept this little gift.
- 2). My friend received the letter, which I sent it two weeks ago.
- 3). I forgot to take my bag with me when I got off the bus.

**3.** There seems to be right no rigid demarcation line between synonyms differing in their shades of meaning and in **stylistic** characteristics. There are numerous synonyms which are distinguished by both shades of meaning and stylistic coloring.

Therefore, even the subdivision of synonyms into ideographic and stylistic is open question.

**EXAMPLE:**

Lovely – beautiful

- 1). The designs were pure, austere and coldly beautiful. (NOT ... coldly lovely)
- 2). "Can I get you anything?"  
"A cup of tea would be lovely." (NOT ... beautiful)

Even intelligent and qualified linguist David Crystal said so about synonyms: "The fact that two words are synonyms does not mean that they can always be used interchangeably without altering the meaning or tone of a sentence."<sup>13</sup>

In conclusion, synonyms play a crucial role in enriching the English language by providing variety, nuance, and precision in communication. They allow speakers and writers to avoid repetition, express subtle differences in meaning, and tailor their language to specific contexts, audiences, or emotional tones. A deep understanding of synonyms not

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<sup>13</sup> Crystal D. The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English language. Cambridge University Press.1995





only enhances vocabulary but also contributes to more effective and stylistically diverse expression. Therefore, mastering the use of synonyms is essential for developing advanced language competence and achieving clarity and elegance in both spoken and written English.

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