A REVIEW AND IMPLICATIONS OF BOTH PRODUCTIVITY AND DISPLACEMENT PROPERTIES OF ENGLISH IN COMMUNICATION

SỨC SINH SẢN VÀ TÍNH DỊCH VỊ CỦA TIẾNG ANH TRONG GIAO TIẾP VÀ MỘT SỐ ĐỀ XUẤT

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ABSTRACT: *Because of complicated characteristics of language in communication activities, teaching, learning and using a language in a successful and effective way are not always manageable work. From observation we could find that in some cases, although learners spoke English very fluently, they did not meet what we as listeners had expected. And in other cases, learners failed to express what they had wanted to say, then we lost our floor. Therefore, the aim of this article is to review two out of those characteristics-productivity and displacement in association with samples to illustrate so that we can understand more thoroughly about the reasons why learners often face such problems when using English as a foreign language. The findings showed that there were various language forms to verbalize meaning. As such, learners are able to have a plan for learning and using English more efficaciously. In addition, some suggestions from the two characteristics are made in order that the teachers probably refer to deploy them in their classrooms.*

Keywords: *Language characteristics, productivity and displacement.*

TÓM TẮT: *Do các đặc tính phức tạp của ngôn ngữ trong hoạt động giao tiếp, việc dạy học và sử dụng ngôn ngữ một cách thành công, hiệu quả không phải lúc nào cũng là một công việc dễ dàng. Từ quan sát thực tiễn có thể thấy, đôi khi người học nói tiếng Anh lưu loát, trôi chảy nhưng chưa hẳn đáp ứng được những gì chúng ta mong đợi. Trong một số trường hợp, người học không biết diễn đạt ý mình như thế nào nên cơ hội thực hiện lượt nói của họ trong hội thoại có thể qua đi. Vì vậy, trong bài báo, tác giả sẽ điểm lại hai trong số các đặc điểm cơ bản của tiếng Anh với các ví dụ minh hoạ để có thể hiểu hơn nguyên nhân tại sao người học thường gặp phải các tình huống như vậy khi sử dụng tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ. Nghiên cứu tập trung xem xét cách diễn đạt linh hoạt hoán đổi được cho nhau và tính hiệu quả của nó trong việc giao tiếp tiếng Anh. Trên cơ sở đó, người học có thể có những chiến lược, kế hoạch học tập và sử dụng ngôn ngữ này hiệu quả hơn. Bài báo cũng đưa ra một số đề xuất để giáo viên có thể tham khảo, áp dụng vào thực tiễn giảng dạy các lớp học do mình đảm nhiệm.*

Từ khoá: *Đặc điểm của ngôn ngữ, tính dịch chuyển, tính năng suất.*

1. INTRODUCTION

According to linguists John Lyons (1981) and Nguyen Thien Giap (2008), two of the most essential properties of English as in any other languages in communicative activities of human beings are productivity and displacement. Depending on the communicative purpose in a particular context, a learner can use a variety of language forms to express the same meaning. Further, one word can be combined with other words by different conventional rules to express different

meanings. With displacement property, they can use English to express abstract and emotional ideas. In combination with grammar and reasoning skills, they can express and understand meanings of numereous sentences that they never heard before. Like other properties of a language, the use of productivity and displacement properties depends on the learner's style and communicative abilities. The higher level of productivity and displacement properties a learner achieves, the more plentiful and multiform his or her competence of language use is [7]. Therefore, if the learner has learned and practised these features in real, daily communication, they can use and interact English quickly, flexibly and creatively. In order to more thoroughly grasp these two features of English, this paper further investigated samples of these properties and their implications

2. PRODUCTIVITY AND DISPLACEMENT PROPERTIES OF ENGLISH IN COMMUNICATION

2.1. What is productivity property in English language?

According to Nguyen Thien Giap (2008), productivity means that language users can understand and produce any utterances that they may have never heard before.

Productive characteristics of English are demonstrated by the infinite number of words, phrases, sentences and discourses created and used in communication with only 26 letters and 44 phonemes [12, p.7]. Although each letter, as well as each phoneme, has no meaning in isolation, they can be combined with other letters or phonemes in dissimilar ways to create a countless number of words with meanings. Words in English can be created by coordinating morphemes with each other, with a limited stock of root morphemes. The user

can add affixational morphemes to create a larger number of new words, whose meaning tints or part of speech differs from the root ones. In addition, an English word stock can broaden by other ways like conversion, shortening, onomatopoeia, reduplication, back-formation and borrowings.

Some standard dictionaries, like the second edition of the 20 – volume Oxford English Dictionary, has compiled 171 476 words that are currently used, 47 156 words have become outdated. However, the 7th Edition Oxford advanced learner's Dictionary introduces 183 500 British and American words and phrases. Nevertheless, each word or phrase can be combined with other words by different rules to make various sentences. These sentences can be connected in different ways to different paragraphs, which then can be linked according to their own ways to make different texts. Similar to other languages, some new vocabularies in English can be developed over time according to the user needs by the speakers.

2.2. What is displacement property in English language?

Displacement means that people can use langugage to talk about objects, abstract concepts or events in the past time, presence and future as well as things don't exist in the immediate environment [10, p.34-35].

2.3. Findings and discussion

As stated by Lê [7, p.22], One meaning can be expressed in a variety of languague forms. For example, all the sentences 1-6 can be talked to ask the price of a camera:

1, How much is this camera?
2, Can you tell me the cost of the camera?
3, What is the price of this camera?
4, What is the cost of this camera?
5. How much does this camera cost?

6. Can you tell me the price of this camera?

And if a person in an electronic devices shop is handling your camera or if the pronoun is used as an anaphor, he/she can ask the price of the camera as sentences 7-10:

7. How much is it?

8. Can you tell me its price?

9. Can you tell me its cost?

10. What is the camera's price?

So, why can we use various language forms to verbalize the same meaning? Firstly, there are a lot of synonyms in English from which we can choose to express the same meaning. For example, the pair *scarcely* and *hardly* as in the sentences 11, 12 [2, p. 36].

11. *Scarcely/hardly* had I taken my coat off when the post arrived.

12. We've *scarcely/hardly* seen a customer all morning.

However, it is necessary to note that *scarcely* and *hardly* are a rare pair in English because they are exact synonyms. Most synonyms are just near-synonyms (plesionyms), or they only have similar meanings in some particular use contexts. This explains why Nguyen Manh Hung and Le Quoc Manh [9, p.71] define synonyms as words that belong to the same part of speech, possess one or more identical or nearly identical denotational meanings, and are interchangeable in some contexts. Looking at the pairs *large - big* as in 13, *fast - rapidly* as in 14 and *leave – depart* as in 15 [1, p.15], we can recognize that each of a pair of words can be substituted for another in these situations without changing each sentence's meaning.

13. The rock is large/big.

14. The train traveled fast/rapidly.

15. The bus left/departed promptly at 10.

The majority of synonyms have differences in connotational meanings to demonstrate the addresser's emotions, evaluation, and attitudes towards referents. For example, the verb *commence* in sentence 16 is used to express the addresser's formal attitude while the phrasal verb *kick off* in sentence 17 is used to express the addresser's informal attitude.

16. When did the meeting commence? (formal) [2, p. 36].

17. When did the meeting kick off? (informal) [2, p. 36].

Therefore, the synonyms often need to be elaborately chosen to convey the correct affectional and attitudinal tints of the addresser towards a referent. Nguyen Manh Hung and Le Quoc Manh showed us these kinds of connotations as seen in (a - l) [9] that we should refer to as follows:

a. Connotation of the degree of intensity

E.g.: To surprise - to astonish - to amaze - to astound

To satisfy - to please - to content - to gratify - delight

b. Connotation of duration

E.g.: To stare - to glare - to gaze - to glance - to peep - to peer

c. Emotive connotation

E.g.: alone - single - lonely - solitary

d. Evaluative connotation

E.g.: Well-known - famous - notorous - celebrated

e. Causative connotation

E.g.: to shiver - to shudder

f. Connotation of manner

E.g.: to like - to admire - to love - to adore

g. Connotation of attendant circumstances

E.g.: to peep - to peer

h. Connotation of attendant features

E.g.: pretty, handsome, goodlooking,

beautiful

l, Stylistic connotation

E.g.: girl (neutral word) - birth (slang);

Loch (Scottish-dialectual word) - lake (neutral word)

Secondly, there are a wide range of words, phrases and idioms which could be expressed by other equivalent language forms. Looking at Table 1 below, we can see these expressions and their equivalents [5, 6].

Table 1: Some words, phrases and idioms and their equivalents

S/N	Word/Phrase/idiom	Equivalence
1	**Unexpected** E.g.: His appearance was completely unexpected.	**Beyond expectation** E.g.: His appearance was beyond expectation.
2	**To be taken aback** E.g.: I was taken aback.	**To be surprised** E.g.: I was very surprised.
3	**To be far from true/the truth** E.g.: His sory is far from true.	**To be false** E.g.: His sory is false.
4	**By no means** E.g.: He is by no means a smart boy.	**Completely not** E.g.: He is completely not a smart boy.
5	**To pull sombody's leg** E.g.: He pulled his son's leg.	**To tease somebody** E.g.: He teased his son.
6	**Remember** E.g.: Remember to lock the door.	**Do not forget** E.g.: Don't forget to lock the door.
7	**To be against the law.** E.g.: It is against the law.	**to be illegal** E.g.: It is illegal.

Apart from the aforementioned two basic ways, we can use paraphrases, proverbs, and other indirect ways with figures of speeches (like simile, metaphor, metonymy, personification, irony, and euphemism) to express the same meaning of an utterance. The utterances as in sentences 18 and 19 are examples of paraphrasing, in which two language forms can be used to convey relatively similar meanings. The ones in sentence 20 means "go to the WC" and sentence 21 means "he really needs help becuase his family is so poor." These are examples of eupomism in which indirect expressions are used to alter direct ways of impoliteness or frankness.

18. *Bachelors prefer redhaired girls.* [4, p.104]

19. *Girls with red hair are preferred by unmarried men.* [4, p.104]

20. *Answer the call of nature.* [12, p.82]

21. *He needs sympathy, his family is less privileged than us.* [12, p.82]

3. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study reflected the productivity and displacement properties of English in communication by giving examples of different ways in expressing a language. Speccificlly, thers were various language forms and ways to verbalize the same meaning, for example by using synonyms etc.

In my observations in teaching English, most students are not aware of those various oral interactions with others in English, have a large number of language form choices to express the same ideas. There are even contextual elements to support and supplement things that they can not talk about immediately

at the time of an interaction. In situations that they can not find a word or a sentence to express what they mean, they can offhand change to another way - like using a synonym, an equivalent or a paraphrase to verbalize their ideas. Therefore, teachers should help students raise their awareness of how they can use various language forms and other appendages to express their ideas. Teacher should also give their students opportunities to practise using English with this approach and encourage them

to use language appropriate to particular conexts and communicative purposes. Since synonyms and paraphrases have connotational meanings that are relatively different from each other (such as seen in idioms, proverbs, or figures of speeches), the subtle nuances of meaning of usual expressions can change. Therefore, when students interact with others, they should choose language forms appropriate to the emotional, contextual and stylish aspects of a situation and their ideas.

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