

Original Paper

Structural Semantic Patterns with Negative Prefixes: A Case Study in English and Armenian

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to provide a general overview of the unique architecture of verb compounds in English and Armenian.

It is well acknowledged that contrastive study can be used to get new insights into this or that linguistic phenomenon and the findings can prove to be useful both for the source and the target language. What is needed for cross-lingual comparison is structure perspectively, i.e., taking the meaning not the form as the starting point.

Our research question is two-fold: How are semantically structured verb compounds in negative prefixes and How are these patternings rendered from English into Armenian.

Keywords

compounds, contrastive study, paraphrase, morphological equivalent, non-morphological equivalent

It is self-evident that word formation proper can deal only with words which are analyzable both structurally and semantically, i.e., with all types of complexes. The study of the simple word as such has no place in it. Simple words however are very closely connected with word-formation because they serve as the foundation, the basic source of the parent units motivating all types of derived and compound words. Therefore, words like *writer*, *displease*, *atom-free*, etc., make the subject matter of study in word-formation, but words like *to write*, *to please*, *atom*, *free* are not irrelevant to it. Like any other linguistic phenomenon word-formation may be studied from two angles—*synchronically* and *diachronically* (Bauer, 1983, p. 20).

Most linguists in special chapters and manuals devoted to English word-formation consider as the chief processes of English word-formation *affixation*, *conversion* and *compounding*. Apart from these a

number of minor ways of forming words such as *back-formation*, *sound interchange*, *distinctive stress*, *sound imitation*, *blending*, *clipping* and *acronymy* are traditionally referred to word formation.

It has been widely documented that affixation is one of the productive word formation means in languages. So far, we have been speaking about negative prefixes in verb compounds, in the first stage of our analysis we shall dwell upon prefixation. Affixation is generally defined as the formation of words by adding derivational affixes to different types of bases. Derived words formed by affixation may be the result of one or several applications of word-formation rule and thus the stems of words making up a word-cluster enter into derivational relations of different degrees. The zero degree of derivation is ascribed to simple words, i.e., words whose stem is homonymous with a word-form and often with a root-morpheme, e.g., atom, haste, devote, anxious, horror, etc. Derived words whose bases are built on simple stems and thus are formed by the application of one derivational affix are described as having the first degree of derivation, e.g., atomic, hasty, devotion, etc. Derived words formed by two consecutive stages of coining possess the second degree of derivation, etc., e.g., atomical, hastily, devotional, etc. In conformity with the division of derivational affixes into suffixes and prefixes affixation is subdivided into suffixation and prefixation.

A careful study of a great many suffixal and prefixal derivatives has revealed an essential difference between them. In Modern English suffixation is mostly characteristic of noun and adjective formation, while prefixation is mostly typical of verb formation. The distinction also rests on the role different types of meaning play in the semantic structure of the suffix and the prefix. The part-of-speech meaning has a much greater significance in suffixes as compared to prefixes which possess it in a lesser degree (Qurik, 1997, p. 56).

Recent investigations, as has been mentioned above, allow one to classify prefixes according to this principle. It must be noted that most of the 51 prefixes of Modern English function in more than one part of speech forming different structural and structural-semantic patterns (Ginzburg, 1969, p. 4). The majority of prefixes tend to function either in nominal parts of speech or in verbs. The evidence above suggests that the main function of prefixes in English is to change the lexical meaning of the same part of speech: a) negative prefixes, such as: un1-, non-, in-, dis1-, a-, e.g., ungrateful (cf. grateful), unemployment (cf. employment); b) reversative or privative prefixes, such as un2-, de-, dis2-, e.g., untie (cf. tie), unleash (cf. leash), decentralise (cf. centralise), disconnect (cf. connect), etc.; c) pejorative prefixes, such as mis-, mal-, pseudo-, e.g. miscalculate (cf. calculate), misinform (cf. inform), maltreat (cf. treat), pseudoclassicism (cf. classicism), pseudo-scientific (cf. scientific), etc. (Ginzburg, 1969, p. 6). The problem of morphological/affixal negation can be studied both from a diachronic or synchronic approach but in the frame of our investigation we shall be concerned primarily with the present state of affairs.

For practical reasons we shall proceed by examining the various negative prefixes one after another, their structure and try to find their closest Armenian equivalents in each type.

1. Semantic Structure of Verbal Compounds in Negative Prefixes in English

The group of negative prefixes is so numerous in English that some scholars even find it convenient to classify prefixes into negative and non-negative ones (Arnold, p. 98). In present-day English are distinguished five negative prefixes and a suffix which are all used in the affixal negation of adjectives: *un-*, *in-*, *im-*, *il-*, *ir-*, *non-*, *dis-*, and *-less*, of which *un-* goes back to OE times, and *-less* is of Greek origin, forming desubstantival adjectives, and *in-*, *non-*, *dis-*, came into use in English after the Norman Conquest, when with the absorption of great number of Romance words negated in this way, this new formative pattern came to be established outstriking most of the traditional English means of word-formation by prefixes (Oxford English dictionary, p. 40). They give contrary, contradictory, reverse or opposite meaning (Arnold, p. 98).

Un-

The meaning is quite different when *un-* is used with verbal stems. In that case it shows action contrary to that of the simple word: *bind-unbind*, *do-undo*, *pack-unpack* (Arnold, p. 99).

It's quite visible that in all these examples *un-* forms reversal and removal verbs on the basis of verbal and nominal base.

Un- is similar to *in-* (with its variations *im-*, *il-*, *ir-*, *i-*). The latter is of Latin origin. In general, words take *un-* when they are of English (Germanic) origin and *in-* if they come from Latin.

Latin- *in-* (adverb and preposition) is used in combinations with verbs or their derivatives (less) commonly with other parts of speech, with the sense "into, in, within, on, upon, towards, against" and expresses onward motion or continuance, sometimes intensive, sometimes transitive.

Dis-

In general *dis-* forms reversative verbs with Latinate verbal basis (*disconnect*, *disappear*) (is the reverse of appear), *dishouse* (to throw out) and verbs meaning "not+V" as *disagree* (not to agree), *dislike* (not to like).

A feature that it does not share with that it rivals *de-* and *un-*.

De-

De- attaches to verbs and nouns to form reversal and removal verbs which are frequently nominalized or adjectivalised (*deselect*, *decompose*, *decode*). It mainly coins verbs with the suffix *-ify*, *-ize*, *-ate*: *decolonize*, *demobilize*, *decontextualize*, *decodify*).

The derivation in *de-* belongs to a more formal register or to the scientific-technical data, that's why it occurs mainly in many neologisms.

Non-

No verbal patterning was manifested.

2. Semantic Structure of Verbal Compounds in Negative Prefixes in Armenian

Identifying Armenian as the target language, in the next step of our investigation we aim at establishing

the set of negative prefixes in Modern Armenian, namely to the consideration of verbal compounds with negative prefixes. Negative type of prefixes is commonly used to alter the meaning of a term from positive into negative, and this phenomenon is the same for both languages.

The following five negative prefixes are outlined in Modern Armenian: *ան-*, *դժ-*, *տ-*, *չ-*, *ապ-*, (Աբեղյան, p. 169; Սուքիասյան, p. 33; Tragut, p. 685).

1) **Ան** – not a single word with a verbal forming prefix *ան-* was established in Armenian.

2) **Չ** + verb roots

Չ- with verbs functions as a highly productive prefix in conjugation to negate verbs in the infinitive, subjunctive, aorist and auxiliaries in compound tenses and moods, as well as copular verbs in the present and imperfect tenses.

Infinitive – գրել-չգրել

Aorist – գրեց-չգրեց

Subjunctive – գրեմ, չգրեմ

Participle Resultative – գրած-չգրած (Tragut, p. 648). Thus with the verbs it performs an important syntactic function.

1) **Ապ** / **Ապ** - + verb roots

Implies the following meanings: completeness and reversativeness, as in the following antonymic pairs: կողավորել-ապակողավորել, կենտրոնանալ-ապակենտրոնանալ., (Սուքիասյան, p. 32).

As G. Grigoryan states, the prefix is highly productive in scientific terminology in political discourse (Գրիգորյան, p. 130).

1. Today the prefix **Դժ**- has not displayed any verbal compound.

5. **Տ**+verb

The prefix operates only in one verb տքնել (Սուքիասյան, p. 332).

Aiming to reveal the semantic dimensions of negative prefixes, we firstly, analyze them at vertical level and secondly, at horizontal level. Such an approach makes it possible to account for a wide spectrum of functional traits of prefixes and deal with data of very different kinds. We made use of the English sentences containing the prefixed words along with the parallel sentences in Armenian. Such a strategy helps us to extract the aligned bilingual sentences containing the searched item.

Un+v is rendered morphologically but with the help of another negative prefix.

Joining to verbal stems un- shows action contrary to that of simple word, such as in unable-չկարողանալով, չի կարող. In the first example the word unable finds its irregular correspondence (in-ոյ), and the second one is paraphrased; being patterned syntactically.

- **unable** –անկարող, կարողությունից զուրկ, անընդունակ (Ասմանգուլյան & Հովհաննիսյան, p. 1034).

1) Mrs. Bennet deigned not to make any reply, but *unable to contain* herself, began scolding one of her daughters. “Don’t keep coughing so, Kitty, for Heaven’s sake! Have a little compassion on my nerves.

You tear them to pieces (Austen, p. 6).

Տիկին Բենեթը նրան պատասխանի չարժանացրեց, սակայն զայրույթը զսպել չկարողանալով՝ սկսեց նախատել դուստրերից մեկին.

-Ինչ ես այդպես հագում, Քեթի՛: Ո՛վ երկինք, գոնե մի քիչ նյարդերիս մասին մտածիր: Դու դրանք ծվեն-ծվեն ես անում(9):

2) Mr. Bingley was obliged to be in town the following day, and, consequently, *unable to accept* the honour of their invitation, etc. (Austen, p. 44).

Պարոն Բինգլին պետք է հաջորդ օրը քաղաքում լիներ, հետևաբար չի կարող ընդունել նրանց պատվաբեր հրավերը և այլն, և այլն (40):

- **Un+verb+ing** is transformed non-morphologically. In some cases, infinitive construction is transformed into a verb.
- **Unwilling** անտրամադիր, անհակամետ, անհոժար, ակամա, իր կամքին հակառակ (Ասմանգուլյան & Հովհաննիսյան, p. 1049).

“About a month”, said Elizabeth; and then, *unwilling* to let the subject drop, added, “He is a man of very large property in Derbyshire, I understand” (Austen, p. 96).

-Մի ամիս կլինի, - ասաց Էլիզաբեթը, բայց չուզենալով արծարծված թեման բաց թողնել՝ ավելացրեց, - որքան գիտեմ՝ նա Դերբիշիրում խոշոր ունեցվածքի տեր է (91):

- **Dis-**

The next prefix which is under the investigation is dis-. As it was already mentioned this prefix is more productive with verbal basis.

a) Dis- forms reversative verbs such as: dissatisfy- not to satisfy, dislike—not to like, disappear—not to appear.

- 1) – dissatisfy- v չբավարարվել, դժգոհել, դժգոհություն պատճառել: (Հ . Ա . Ասմանգուլյան:206).

From the illustrated examples it could be deduced that the verb finds its equivalents either applying its synonym (դժգոհել) or paraphrase (դժգոհություն պատճառել):

- 1) I won't tell you that I am *dissatisfied* with what I have done of him, or that his beauty is such that art cannot express it (Wilde, p. 9).

Ես չեմ ասում, թե *գոհ չեմ* իմ աշխատանքից, չեմ ուզում քեզ հավատացնել, թե այդպիսի գեղեցկությունն անհնար է պատկերել արվեստի մեջ (19):

- 2) She said no more, and they went down the other dance and parted in silence; and on each side dissatisfied, though not to an equal degree for in Darcy's breast there was a tolerable powerful feeling towards her, which soon procured her pardon, and directed all his anger against another (Austen, p. 118).

Աղջիկը ձայն չհանեց, պարը փոխվեց, և Էլիզաբեթն ու Դարսին լուռ հրաժեշտ տվեցին: Երկուսի *հոգում էլ դժգոհություն կար*, սակայն դրա չափերը տարբեր էին . Դարսին սրտում

աղջկա հանդեպ մի գորեղ զգացմունք էր կրում, որի շնորհիվ շուտով նրա համար արդարացում գտավ և իր ամբողջ բարկությունն ուղղեց մեկ ուրիշի դեմ (112):

3) Disappear—v անհետանալ, չքանալ, կորչել: (Ասմանգուլյան & Հովհաննիսյան, p. 257).

“I suppose in about a fortnight we will be told that he has been at San Francisco. It is an odd thing, but everyone who *disappears* is said to be seen at San Francisco. It must be a delightful city and posses all the attractions of the next world” (Wilde, p. 209).

Հավանաբար մի երկու շաբաթ հետո կլսենք որ նրան տեսել են Սան-Ֆրանցիսկոյում: Զարմանալի է, հենց որ մեկն *անհետանում* է, ասում են, որ տեսել են Սան- Ֆրանցիսկոյում: Պետք է, որ այդ Սան-Ֆրանցիսկոն չքնաղ քաղաք լինի՝ աշխարհի բոլոր հրապույրներով օժտված (294):

4) discourage –v 1) վիստեցնել, վստահաբեկ անել, հուսալքել 2) մտադրությունից ետ կանգնեցնել, տարհամոզել, միտքը փոխել տալ : (Ասմանգուլյան & Հովհաննիսյան, p. 259).

Mr. Collins, however, *was not discouraged* from speaking again, and Mr. Darcy’s contempt seemed abundantly increasing with the length of his second speech, and at the end of it he only made him a slight bow, and moved another way (Austen, p. 123).

Սակայն այս հանգամանքը պարոն Քոլինսն չխանգարեց, որ նորից խոսքերի հեղեղ թափի: Իր հետ զրույց սկսելու այս երկրորդ փորձը կարծես ծայր աստիճանի հասցրեց Դարսիի արհամարանքը, և հենց Քոլինսը վերջացրեց, նա թեթևակի խոնարհվեց ու հեռացավ (117):

It is noticeable that in all these examples the translator implies mainly paraphrase for rendering adequate message that should be appropriate for Armenian readers.

Very often non-morphological counterpart of the verb in dis- in target language is embodied with other techniques, as in example 2, where we find substitution of parts speech—verb-> noun; noun-> verb. Example 4 is peppered with contextual synonymy.

5) disconcert—v 1) շփոթեցնել, շփոթության մեջ զցել 2) հուզել, գրգռել անհանգստացնել, 3) խափանել (Ասմանգուլյան & Հովհաննիսյան, p. 259).

Catherine *was disconcerted*, and made no answer; but Lydia, with perfect indifference, continued to express her admiration of Captain Carter, and hope of seeing him in the course of the day, as he was going the next morning to London (Austen, p. 35).

Քեթրինը *շփոթվեց* և չկարողացավ պատասխանել, իսկ Լիդիան հոր խոսքերն ընդունելով կատարյալ անտարբերությամբ՝ շարունակեց իր հիացմունքն արտահայտել կապիտան Քարթերի հանդեպ և իր ակնկալիքը՝ օրվա ընթացքում նրա հետ տեսնվել, քանի որ հաջորդ առավոտյան նա Լոնդոն է մեկնելու (35):

It’s a specific type of non-morphological translation - zero translation: the affixed word is not rendered.

6) Mrs. Bennet *was quite disconcerted*. She could not imagine what business he could have in town so soon after his arrival in Hertfordshire (Austen, p. 11).

Տիկին Բենեթի *հիասթափությանը չափ չկար*, նրա երևակայության մեջ չէր տեղավորվում, թե քաղաքում այդ ինչ շտապ գործ կարող էր ի հայտ գալ հենց Հերթֆորդշիր ժամանելուց հետո (12):

Here morphological negation is rendered syntactically.

7) Mary, though pretending not to hear, *was somewhat disconcerted*; and Elizabeth, sorry for her, and they sorry for her Father's speech, was afraid her anxiety had done no good (Austen, p. 126).

Մերին ձևացրեց, թե ոչինչ չի լսել, բայցևայնպես *մի փոքր շփոթվեց*: Էլիզաբեթն ամաչեց քրոջ համար, նեղվեց նաև հոր այդօրինակ արձագանքից՝ վախ ապրելով, թե իր տազնապները ոչ մի օգուտ չտվեցին (121):

In this example we find zero translation embedded with the addition of lexical unit բայցևայնպես. The lack of negation is compensated by the insertion of Armenian conjunction.

3. Conclusion

The findings of our research strongly suggest that the majority of prefixes in English affect only the lexical meaning of words, whereas in Armenian they can coin new parts of speech. An exhaustive comparison based exclusively on the literature itself offers diverging overview of negative prefixation. Morphological translations in Armenian reflect linguistic similarities in the use of negative affixes and also point out dissimilarities between the two languages.

Analyzing the translations of all English negative affixes it becomes obvious that morphological translation is very useful strategy for rendering and when morphological translation is not appropriate for the given context, translator uses non morphological strategy, which includes paraphrasing, synonymy, zero translation, substitution, etc.

Un + derivatives of present participle are less numerous and un + substitution + ed involves privation and has a fairly regular equivalents in Armenian. Dis + verb patterning is mainly paraphrased in Armenia translations. De—generally belongs to a more formal register and non-morphological translation strategy is productive in this case.

The large number of paraphrases points to the possible difficulties encountered by translators to render English negative affix (prefix) into Armenian.

Translator's choices in translation strategies probably mirror some of the specific features of English negative morphology that can or cannot be easily rendered into Armenian.

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