An Explicative Analysis of Bura Antonyms

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Abstract

In Semantics, antonyms are words that lie in an inherently incompatible binary relationship as in the opposite pairs: wide/narrow, slow/fast and low/high. The notion of incompatibility refers to the fact that one word in an opposite pair entails that it is not the other pair member. For instance, something that is narrow entails that it is not wide. The main thrust of this paper is to carry out an explicative analysis of Bura Antonyms. The paper examines the various types of antonyms, viz. gradable, Ungradable, converse and auto-antonyms. After close investigation, and judging from the data analyzed, Bura language has no auto-antonym. What is present from the data are gradable antonyms which occurred 10 times, Ungradable antonyms occurred 13 times and relational antonym occurred 7 times.

1.0 Introduction

Bura is a term which refers to a language as well as to its speakers. The general claim about the origin of Bura people is that they migrated from Egypt to Southern Africa, then to the Congo Basin into Cameroon crossing the Benue River into their present settlement (Samuel, 2013). Presently, majority of Bura speakers are found in Borno State, with Biu as their major town. The Bura language is linguistically classified as Afro-Asiatic, Chadic and Biu-Mandara (Greenberg, 1970 and Greenberg, 1963).

The aim of this paper is to examine Bura antonyms. It has been discovered that not much has been done on the aspect of antonyms in Bura. It is for this reason that we are carrying out this study with the objectives of identifying the Bura antonyms and classifying them on the basis of gradable, non-gradable, converse and auto-antonyms.

According to Palmer (1981:94) "the term ANTONYMY is used for 'oppositeness of meaning', words that are opposite are ANTONYMS. Antonymy is often thought of as the opposite of synonymy, but the statuses of the two are very different". Crystal (2008:28) states that antonymy is "a term used in SEMANTICS as part of the study of oppositeness of MEANING. He further states that "Antonymy is one of a set of SENSE relations recognized in some analyses of meaning, along with SYNONYMY, HYPONYMY, INCOMPATIBILITY and others". Antonyms can be seen to refer to a word that has the opposite meaning to another, although not necessarily in all its senses (Murthy, 2007, Latilo and Beckley, 2008).

2.0 The Concept of Antonym

According to Eyisi et.al, (2014), an antonym is one of a pair of words with opposite meanings. Each word in the pair is the antithesis of the other. A word may have more than one antonym. There are four categories of antonyms identified by the nature of the relationship by the opposed meanings, namely, gradable, complementary, relational and auto antonyms (Janet and Bello, 1989). Where the two words have definitions that lie on a continuous spectrum of meaning, they are gradable antonyms. Where the meanings do not lie on a continuous spectrum and the words have no other lexical relationship, they are complementary antonyms. Where the two meanings are opposite only within the

context of their relationship, they are relational antonyms. A situation where the two meanings are opposite due to context differences indicates auto-antonyms. Auto-antonym also called contronym refers to a word that can have opposite meanings in different contexts or under separate definitions (Abdulwahab, 2015).

3.0 Model of Approach

The model of approach adopted for the classification of Bura antonyms is Abdulwahab (2015). He classifies antonyms into four classes, namely, graded, ungraded, relational and auto-antonyms.
Graded antonym refers to opposition that expresses the degree of a certain quality, e.g., of size, temperature, disparity, speed, etc., and is divided into explicitly and implicitly graded. Example of implicitly graded antonyms is *light/heavy* and explicitly graded is *lighter/heavier*. The ungraded antonym on the other hand, refers to relationship between words, whose meanings are mutually complete and absolute. Example of such antonyms is the pair of *man/woman*. Relational antonyms on the other hand, are opposite in which one word describes its relationship with another, while auto-antonyms refer to the same two words that mean the opposite. While relational antonyms is exemplified by *buy/sell*, auto-antonyms has the following examples; *fast* (able to move with speed) and *fast* (firmly fixed in a place).

4.0 Methodology

The method of data collection employed for this research is the interview. Bura native speakers from the following places: Marama, Biu, Gwa and Maiduguri were interviewed.

The interview was conducted with the aid of a smart phone in order to record the conversation between the researcher and the respondents. Both educated and uneducated individuals were interviewed from different occupations, among which are: farmers, traders, students and civil servants respectively. A total number of one hundred (100) antonyms were collected from the field. Out of this, thirty (30) antonyms are been selected using the ballot system for analysis. The balloting procedure was carried out by assigning code number 001-100 on one hundred pieces of papers. The pieces were then folded and put into a container. With blindfolded eyes we picked at random the required number, which is 30. This procedure gives each item an equal probability of being selected.

5.0 Data Presentation and Analysis

Some of the data collected for the study are highlighted in this section. As indicated before, the data were collected in natural discourses, presented and analyzed in the following pattern: gradable antonyms, ungradable antonyms and relational antonyms.

5.0.1 Gradable Antonyms

Gradable or graded antonyms are word pairs whose meanings are opposite and which lie on a continuous spectrum. Example, *hot/cold*.

Antonym: Ola/Raka

Gloss: Big/small

Explanation: Size gradation varies, depending upon the objects involved. A jeep vehicle may look smaller when compared to a truck, but appear quite big to a car which carries a small number of passenger.

Antonym: Ngu]i/Gana
Gloss: Rich/poor
Explanation: To a billionaire, a millionaire is not that rich. But when such a millionaire is compared to a person with thousands of Naira, the millionaire will be considered richer.

Antonym: Hala/Nkyar
Gloss: Old/young
Explanation: A man of 50 years that looks old to a man of 20 years will surely appear young to an 80 years old man.

Antonym: Kasala/Mwovur
Gloss: Easy/difficult
Explanation: What may seem difficult to one, can be easy to another person. For example, Math as a subject may seem difficult to one student but easy to another.

Antonym: Bwarbwar/Tathaku
Gloss: Hot/Cold
Explanation: What one person will refer to as being hot may not necessarily be considered as such by another person who sees it as being cold.

Antonyms: Ntsaha/Mdanakami
Gloss: Junior/Senior
Explanation: A primary 6 pupil will consider a primary 3 pupil his junior, whereas the same primary 3 pupil will perceive a primary 1 student as his junior.

Antonym: [a]ahu/Ninim
Gloss: Bitter/Sweet
Explanation: There is a saying that, one man's food is another man's poison. What may seem to be sweet to X can be bitter to Y and vice-versa. A lemon for instance, may be bitter to X and sweet to Y.

Antonym: Ka hankal/Taktar
Gloss: Slow/fast
Explanation: The hare which runs faster than the tortoise will seems to be slower when compared with cheetah, an Africa wild cat that has black spots and is able to run very fast.

Antonym: Dakuikur/Adiyakur
Gloss: Tidy/untidy
Explanation: An environment may look tidy to X while Y will see the same environment as untidy due to the variation in perception. For instance, an untidy person will be comfortable with cups, plates and spoons scattered in the room, whereas, one who is tidy will not be that comfortable in the same room. Therefore, what is tidy to someone may be untidy to another.

Antonym: Hira/Ngalari
Gloss: Like/Dislike
Explanation: Individual likes and dislikes varies; depending on who the individual is. Somebody may like football, while another person may utterly dislike it and prefer table-tennis.

5.0.2 Ungradable Antonyms

Ungradable or complementary antonyms are word pairs whose meanings do not lie on a continuous spectrum. Example, *pull/push*.

Antonym: Sal/Mwala

Gloss: Male/Female

Explanation: Every creature, be it animal, bird, or insect in terms of gender is either male or female. One cannot be male and female at the same time. What this means is that, if one is by nature male then he or she cannot be female, and vice-versa. By implication, this antonym include the following pairs: man and woman, boy and girl, cow and bull, dog and bitch, lion and lioness.

Antonym: Ngalari/Hirsi

Gloss: Hate/Love

Explanation: This kind of opposition does not occur at the same time. One cannot love and hate at the same time.

Antonym: Ngalari/Kalankir

Gloss: Refuse/Accept

Explanation: One cannot accept something and reject it at the same time. A thing can only be accepted without rejection, or rejected without acceptance.

Antonym: Gigi~u/Kakafu

Gloss: Heavy/Light

Explanation: An object can either be heavy or light in terms of weight. No object can be heavy and light at the same time.

Antonym: Kumangar/Kahankal
Gloss: Wicked/Kind
Explanation: The meaning of this opposition is that, a person cannot be wicked and kind at the same time. So, if one is wicked, it entails he or she is not kind, and vice-versa.

Antonym: Nza/Kulaza
Gloss: Fat/Thin
Explanation: A person described as fat cannot be said to be thin. A person is either fat or thin at any given period.

Antonym: Kampika/Mta
Gloss: Alive/Dead
Explanation: If one is alive it means he or she is not dead. Attaining the two different conditions at a time is not possible.

Antonym: Mungil/Mwapu
Gloss: Black/White
Explanation: If something is portrayed as black, it means that the thing is not white or cannot be of another colour.

Antonym: Zurang/Tukratha
Gloss: Deep/Shallow
Explanation: Deep refers to the long distance that exists from the surface of something to its bottom. A hole, for example, can either be deep or shallow but not one sharing the two different qualities at a time.

Antonym: Ciju/Kuzaha
Gloss: Far/Near
Explanation: A location that covers a long distance cannot at the same time be said to be near.

Antonym: Hang/Duku
Gloss: Plural/Singular
Explanation: A person or thing that is in one form cannot be in more form at the same time. So, if a thing is in singular form, it certainly cannot be plural.

Antonym: A]i/A]awa
Gloss: Present/Absent
Explanation: A person cannot be present and absent simultaneously. If one is present, it means he or she is obviously absent.

Antonym: Akira/Atakir
Gloss: Bottom/Top
Explanation: The highest part of something is referred to as the top, while the bottom is the opposite. A person who is at the mountain top cannot be at its bottom at the same time.

5.0.3 Relational Antonyms

Relational or converse antonyms are pair of words that refer to a relationship from opposite points of view, such as *parent/child* or *borrow/lend.*

Antonyms: Masa/Dala
Gloss: Buy/Sell

Explanation: It is a fact of life that, there cannot be buying without selling. For one to sell to another, the other must be in existence to be able to buy.

Antonyms: Dijirya/Zir
Gloss: Parent/Child
Explanation: A child cannot just exist without parent. For there to be a child, there must be parent that will be responsible for its existence. Conversely, one can only be addressed as a father or a mother after he or she has a child.

Antonym: Malam/Pukura
Gloss: Teacher/Student
Explanation: For X to be a student, it entails there is Y which is the teacher. Therefore, learning can take place only when the teacher is in place, and vice-versa.

Antonym: Vari/Pci
Gloss: Day/Night
Explanation: The period of time which becomes light is referred to as day, while the period of darkness is called night (Longman, 2004). Each of these periods require one another to survive. Going by the present cosmic laws, the presence of the day presupposes the emergence of the night and vice-versa.

Antonym: Tsakathti/Hena
Gloss: Awake/Sleep
Explanation: To stay awake one must have slept. Without sleeping one cannot be said to be awake.

Antonym: Hal-hal/Balin

Gloss: Old/New

Explanation: Nothing was ever created in its old form. At a point it was once new. So, there cannot be an old object or item without it been new at first. And for every new thing it will one day become old with the passage of time.

Antonym: Bwahali/Bawkumi

Gloss: Back/ Front

Explanation: Virtually everything has its back and front. It may be the back or the front of a house; the back or the front of a page; the back or the front of a human being, etc.

The summary of the findings are presented in the table below:

Antonym Frequency Table

Class of antonym	Antonym Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gradable	10	33.33
Ungradable	13	43.33
Relational	7	23.33
Total	30	99.99

Formula= Antonym frequency/Total number of frequency × 100

1. Gradable = 10/30 × 100
   = 33.33%
2. Ungradable = 13/30 × 100
   = 43.33%
3. Relational = 7/30 × 100
   = 23.33%

From the above antonym frequency table, Ungradable antonym has the highest occurrence of 43.33%, followed by gradable antonym with 33.33% and relational frequency has the lowest occurrence of 23.33%.

6.0 Conclusion

This paper has attempted an explicative analysis of Bura antonyms. It has discussed three types of antonyms, namely graded antonym, ungraded antonym and relational antonym. A major type of antonym which is not found, considering our data is the auto-antonym. The analysis, finally revealed that Ungradable antonym has highest frequency, occurring 13 times, equivalent to 43.33%, gradable antonym is second, occurring 10 times, with an equivalent percentage of 33.33. Relational antonym which has the lowest frequency, occurred 7 times, with an equivalent percentage of 23.33.

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