THE SEMANTIC ASPECT OF THE ACQUISITION OF SYNONYMS, HOMONYMS AND ANTONYMS IN THE TEACHING PROCESS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract

The adoption of synonyms, homonyms, and antonyms is inevitable when studying English as a foreign language. Acquiring, mastering and practicing of these types of words and the essence of the mutual relationships that they pose amongst them are of essential importance to any existing or potential speaker of the English language. Given the morphological productivity, as well as the changing nature as a characteristic of any language, their referential and poetic function also develops. Learning vocabulary is a key element in the study of any language and its wealth is seen precisely in the number of synonyms, homonyms and antonyms represented in it. On the other hand, the recognition and proper usage and practice of these types of words are considered as one of the most proficient characteristics and level of knowledge of foreign speaking skills language. This paper starts from a theoretical consideration of the semantic aspect of the adoption of synonyms, homonyms and antonyms in English teaching as foreign language. In order to determine the problems that might arise in their adoption in teaching in English as a foreign language, the factors that affect the general adoption of the language are given first and comparisons are made between the adoption of mother tongue and any other foreign language. The results of the research show that certain problems in the adoption these types of words can cause not only the differences between Macedonian as mother tongue and English as foreign, but also the very way of their adoption. The problems in teaching when adopting synonyms, homonyms and antonyms stand as a subject of this research.

Keywords: semantics, language acquisition, sense relations, EFL

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1. Introduction

The acquisition of synonyms, homonyms and antonyms is unavoidable when studying the English as a foreign language. This doesn't apply only to the students who master the language in order to be able to teach it, but it also applies to the translators and to the interpreters.

Knowing how to use these types of words correctly and having the knowledge of the relations that they represent is of great importance for every speaker of the English language and as well as the potential speakers of English. When the morphological productivity is taken into consideration, as well as the changeable nature as a characteristic of every language, its referential and poetic function is at a rise. In that sense, the vocabulary goes through the biggest expansive changes. Mastering the vocabulary is a key element in the process of learning any language and the number of synonyms, homonyms and antonyms make up the wealth of the vocabulary. On the other hand, the correct usage and the knowledge of when and how to use these types of words is considered to be one of the characteristics of the highest level of speaking skills of any foreign language.

2. Synonyms, homonyms and antonyms as types of words

In this part of the paper, the definitions and the attributes of the synonyms, homonyms and antonyms will be listed. In addition to that, for every previously mentioned type of words there will be an elaboration on how, why and on what basis these definitions are different in English and in Macedonian. The results that will be established will be used and mentioned throughout the rest of the paper and they will be used to clarify the problems that may appear when the synonyms, homonyms and antonyms are taught in the English (as a foreign language) classes.

Before the definitions for synonyms, homonyms and antonyms as types of words are analyzed there will be an explanation of what the word- 'word', actually means.
As there are numerous branches of Linguistics, there are equally as numerous definitions for the word- 'word'. Nikolovska (2012) says that *according to the traditional grammar 'word' is considered to be a linguistic unit that expresses a notion.'* This is one of the widely excepted definitions for 'word', but the author also lists the following insufficiencies of this statement:

1. *there are words which are not meaningful on their own.*
2. *there are word compounds that have only one meaning – they refer to only one notion.*
3. *but there are also some words that have more than just one meaning;*

From the statements mentioned above, it is easily noticeable that all of the flaws of the previously mentioned definition are connected with the meaning of the words.

The word as a linguistic unit is the main concern and the focal point of study of lexicology.

According to the science of lexicology, there are two types of meaning that the words can have:

1. Grammatical meaning;
2. Lexical meaning.

This paper has the requirement to analyze the lexical meaning of the words and how the meaning of the words is the main concern of semantics, as a branch of linguistics, and for which there will be a more detailed discussion in the second part of the paper.

The Lexical meaning of the words signifies their connection to the objects or phenomenon which they depict. According to this, there are four types of words – synonyms, homonyms, antonyms and paronyms. The following paragraphs of the paper will deal with the first three types of words.

2.1 Synonyms

Synonyms, both in English and in Macedonian, are widely defined as words that have either the exact same meaning or as words that have a similar meaning. However, different authors state that there are different aspects that have to be taken into consideration when it comes to defining synonymy as a linguistic phenomenon.

The Romanian linguist Bulgar (2000) says that *'synonyms are those words which have almost the same meaning and they can be used interchangeably context-wise and they don't change the meaning of the context.'*

This definition seems suitable, but If it would be accepted as the only definition then synonyms would be considered to be an extremely rare phenomenon, especially in the English language. These 'perfect' synonyms, Puscariu (1993) in one of his papers has described them as a '*luxury*' to the language. But when the time period (the second half of the XX c.) in which his research was conducted, as well as the growth of the morphological productivity of the synonyms is considered, this statement was viewed as irrelevant by certain authors and there came the need for classifying the synonyms according to their interchangeableness.

Novikov (1968) was the first who made the attempt to classify synonyms. He in his paper wrote about the complete interchangeableness and partial interchangeableness, as well as the existence of perfect and partial synonyms. Building on this idea, Buca (Buca, 1971) thought that the interchangeableness of the synonyms may be viewed from two aspects – from the number of contexts in which it can occur, and the degree of success of using words interchangeably. So he listed four different types of changeableness, along with their suitable synonyms:

1. Complete interchangeability – when the words can be used interchangeably in every context;
2. Partial interchangeability - when the words can be used interchangeably only in specific context;

3. Absolute interchangeability- it doesn't result in any changes in the context from a semantic aspect, there is also no change in the style, nor there is a change in the affective aspect;

4. Relative interchangeability- it can bring about semantic, stylistic and affective changes, depending on the context.

The last types of interchangeability have proven to be the most efficient and the most effective; because that the majority of the further linguistic researches dedicated to this phenomenon either elaborate on this classification or are based on it, with slight changes in the nomenclature of the types of synonyms.

The acceptance of this classification has brought about the need among the linguists to modify the definition of synonyms. Yule (1996) confirms that *'it should be emphasized that the notion of their interchangeableness, which is used in the discussion of the synonyms, and it also doesn't mean total interchangeability. There are numerous cases when a word is suitable to be used in a sentence, but the use of that word's synonym in the same sentence may come out as weird.'*

Both the ability of certain words to be used interchangeably with others and at the same time keep their meaning (have the same meaning) in a context in which they are given, and also the words that sound unnatural and inadequate in a sentence can be studied as only one characteristic of the synonyms as a type of words. This will be elaborated further below through examples of the distinction between synonyms in the Macedonian and English language (they can be problematic when they are taught to foreign English language learners).

2.2 Homonyms

Homonyms are words that have the same form, but they have a different meaning. According to one of the most widely accepted definitions for this type of words by Hurford, Heasley and Smith (2007), homonymy is when the meanings of a word that has multiple meanings are drastically different from one another and do not have an obvious connection with one another. These authors also mention that homonymy is a language phenomenon that was created unintentionally and by chance.

In the English language, the sameness of the form is analyzed from two different aspects – orthographic and phonetic. In that sense, homonyms can be:

1. Homophones – words that sound the same, but have a different meaning

2. Homographs – words that have the same written form, but have a different meaning.

In the Macedonian language, this division can be analyzed only from a theoretic aspect because the phonetic spelling doesn't allow words to be to pronounced differently from the way that they are written.

Some authors don't agree when it comes to the notion of homonym being associated and thought to be the same as *homophones* and *homographs*, and they think that only the words that both share the same properties of homographs and homophones should be labeled as homonyms.

McArthur (1992) distinguishes three types of 'homonyms'. According to him, homonyms are words that have the same written form and they sound the same, homographs are words that have the same written form, and homophones are words which sound the same; all of them have a different meaning.

On the other hand, some authors don't reject the existence of homophones and homographs as types of words, but at the same time, they think that according to their definitions – they are homonyms. According to Rothwell (2007), the concept described with the word *homonym* includes the homonyms and the homographs.

When homonyms are being discussed, the mention of polysemy as a language phenomenon is inevitable. Polysemy is when a word has the same written and spoken form, but different meanings that are related in some way. Despite that, homonymy and polysemy are rarely the source of conflict among the linguists; they can confuse the learners of English as a foreign language. This will be discussed in more detail in the chapter that is dedicated to the problems that appear when homonymy is taught in English (as a foreign language) classes.

2.3 Antonyms

The shortest definition for antonyms is that they are words that have the opposite meaning. One of the characteristics of the antonyms is that this semantic relation is a language phenomenon that only appears in 1:1 ration. One word can only have one antonym, which is definitely not the case with the synonyms.

Antonyms differ from the other lexical relations in a way that the speakers of a certain language can easily guess the second element of the antonym pair according to their intuition.

The fact that the interrelation of the meanings of synonyms is not absolute, which means that a complete opposite between the meanings of the synonyms does not exist, is very important to be mentioned. Antonyms must have some shared characteristic that determines their oppositeness. In other words, the degree of the 'oppositeness' of the antonyms is determined on the basis of the fact that they have the same or a similar characteristic in their own meaning or in the context in which they can be found.

In relation of the previously discussed things about antonyms, different authors have different ways of dividing antonyms. According to Egan (1968), there are seven different types of antonymy and antonyms:

1. Contradictory antonyms – antonyms that don't include the second element in the binary pair, as well as the options that they offer between the words; example: perfect- imperfect;
2. Opposites or opposing antonyms– words that are diametrically opposite from one another regarding their meaning , but they have other possibilities between them; example: black- white;
3. Reverse antonyms– words that have opposite meanings in the sense of a reversal of a certain action, state or quality; example: construct- deconstruct;

4. Contrasting antonyms– words that don't belong to the same comparative scale and they are not the polar opposites of each other; example: cold- lukewarm;

5. Incompatible antonyms – words that have arbitrary oppositeness and they don't belong in the same semantic field; example: honest – hypocritical;

6. Converse (Relation) antonyms - words that imply the meaning of the words that are opposites of them; example: parent- child;

7. Complementary antonyms – words that have reciprocal meaning, where one word implies the meaning of the other word; example: question – answer.

This classification of antonyms confirms the theory that says in order to determine which words can be considered as antonyms, they primarily must share exactly the same characteristic or a partially similar characteristic, which lies in the semantic field in which they belong. The previously mentioned elements confirm the validity of the theory of the characteristics of the antonyms which was created by Rusiecki (1985), which states that the antonyms:

1. can be graded;
2. belong to the same semantic field;
3. are not compatible;
4. are fully or partially reciprocal.

The combination of these two theories resulted in a new widely accepted classification and division of the types of antonyms in the English language:

1. Gradable – words that have opposite meanings from the same comparative scale; example: warm- cold

2. Complementary – words that don't belong to the same comparative scale of attributes and they have opposite meanings; example : inhale – exhale;

3. Relational – the oppositeness of the words depends on the context; example: teacher – student.

This classification is the same for the Macedonian antonyms, the only distinction between the English classification and the Macedonian classification of antonyms is that the relational antonyms in the Macedonian language are called converse antonyms. We can see that the differences between the Macedonian and English antonyms are insignificant, but that doesn't mean that there is no potential of the appearance of certain problems when the antonyms are taught in English (as a foreign language) in class. These problems would be the result of the fact that the English semantic fields are bigger than the Macedonian, and this is because English generally has a bigger vocabulary. This will be discussed in the part of the paper which is dedicated to the problems that may occur when the antonyms are taught in class.

3. Semantics as a science

This part of the paper will discuss semantics as a linguistic science. According to the widely accepted definition for semantics, semantics is the study of meaning. It is important to note that during the analysis of the words from a semantic aspect the

conventional meaning of the words should be analyzed. In other words, the focus of semantics is the study of meaning which is recognized by the majority of the speakers of a language and not the meaning that certain individuals convey in a certain context. One of the fields of study of semantics is the description of words on the basis of their connection to the meaning of other words. This semantic approach is called lexical analysis or semantic relations, and according to which synonyms, homonyms and antonyms are recognized as types of words. In the latest literature, these types of words are described as the center of study of lexical semantics, as well as a branch of semantics which is different from the *formal* and *conceptual* semantics. Synonyms, homonyms and antonyms are in fact, words that are studied by multiple linguistic branches. Morphology deals with their form and the way they are constructed, lexicology deals with their structure and content. If we say that the word is a linguistic unit which carries meaning or has a certain function in a compound word, then its content would be the meaning of the word and that is quite a complex field of study. With the advancement of linguistics as a science, there came the need for its branches to strictly deal with the meaning of the words and how that can be changed under different conditions. In the XX c. semantics as a science came to be, and it is the science that deals with what the words can denote and later pragmatics began dealing with the connotation of the words. According to some theorists, these two are independent branches of linguistics, and according to other theorists, semantics is a branch of lexicology and pragmatics is the branch of semiotics.

3.1 Synonyms, homonyms and antonyms viewed from a semantic aspect

In the first chapter of this paper, synonyms, homonyms and antonyms were described through the lens of lexicology and they were viewed as types of words on the basis of the classification of their lexical meaning. On the other hand, in the introduction of the paper it was emphasized that they are a result of the semantic analysis of the lexical relations between the words. It is more than obvious that the understanding of these types of words in both cases lies in their meaning, while lexicology only lists them and describes them. Semantics, i.e. lexical semantics thoroughly deals with the study and analysis of these words.

In the basis of the previously mentioned arguments, it is easy to conclude that the definitions, explanations and the examples in the first part of this paper are valid even from the standpoint of semantics. The only distinction that can be made is the name of synonymy, homonymy and antonymy as semantic relations.

3.2 The problems that occur when foreign learners of the English language come across synonyms, homonyms and antonyms in English classes

This part of the paper is dedicated to the problems and difficulties that can occur when foreign learners of the English language come across synonyms, homonyms and antonyms in English classes. Before we discuss the potential problems in studying a

certain language, first we have to make a distinction between the factors that generally influence the language learning.

3.2.1 Factors that influence the acquisition of foreign languages

It is more than logical that the learning of foreign languages is hugely different than how the native language is learned. Despite that some authors think that the field of cognitive linguistics is connected to the general intelligence, there are numerous differences regarding the general surroundings in which the native language, or any other language is being learned. That implies that there are differences regarding the ways in which a language is learned, as well as the methods and techniques with which the learning is stimulated.

3.2.2 The differences between studying and acquisition of a language

Even though these two words are often used interchangeably in everyday speech, their meaning is different. They distinguish two different and mutually independent ways of language skills development. *Acquisition* of a language refers to a process - which is similar but not the same– as the way in which children develop skills in their native tongue. They are not aware of any grammatical or linguistic rules, but they still know how to use the language as a means of communication. This type of acquainting of a language is instinctive and subconscious, because the young speakers of a language solely base their intuition, in order to use the language as a means of fulfilling and satisfying their primitive needs. Other notions with which the acquainting of a language can be described are: informal or 'natural' learning. The acquainting of a language doesn't always have to imply the mother tongue, but any other language can be acquainted, if the person is exposed to a certain agree to that language – either intentionally or unintentionally. On the other hand, the studying of a language as a means of developing a set of skills for that language is connected to conscious and intentional learning of the grammatical and the rest of the linguistic rules, it also means being able to recognize these rules and being able to use them in new buts still similar situations. In other words, studying a language is connected to formal learning. According to some authors, adolescents and adults cannot acquire a set of skills in a language by the process of acquisition; they can only do that by studying the language. But taking the hypothesis into consideration, which will be discussed later in this part of the paper, we will see that not only acquisition is present when adults learn a new language, but it also plays a huge part in gaining new language skills even in the formal way of learning.

3.2.3 The hypothesis of the natural order of acquainting a language

According to Krashen and Terrell (1983), there are five phases in acquainting a language:
1. Quiet / receptive phase;
2. The phase of early production;

3. Occurrence of speech;
4. Partial acquisition of the language;
5. Continuous language development / advanced acquisition of the language.

Similar to this, Krashen (1982) says that there is a certain natural order of acquisitioning a language, according to which the children learn the phonetic system of the language first, and they do this while they are trying to pronounce certain words by the end of the first phase. Then the acquisition of the grammatical system begins and this happens by attempting to form past tenses and verb conjugation. The primary understanding of the meaning of the words appears in the early phase of production and with the occurrence of speech as a skill the vocabulary expands and the learned words can be used in short sentences according to their meaning. The more profound understanding of the meaning of words happens when in the fourth phase, where the vocabulary of the child grows for almost 50% more than the previous phase and a part of this progress happens due to the understanding of the concept of synonyms, homonyms and antonyms and how they are used.

3.2.4 The hypothesis of 'monitoring'

We have confirmed that acquisitioning a language and studying a language are two different concepts, and this applies that they have different roles in the process of gaining language skills. According to Krashen (1982), the acquisitioning of a language is that which indicates the speech of specific language, while the studying of a language has the role of a 'monitor', or a supervisor. According to this, the language rules that we have learned in a formal way are used for adapting and correction of what is intuitional spoken and written in a language. From this, we can see that the studying of a language has a very limited role in its production. In one of Krashen's researches, he confirmed that these limitations are connected to certain conditions which must be fulfilled so that the people can consciously recall the already learned rules while they produce phrases in a language. Those conditions are:

1. Time –It is logical that people need time to recall the rules that they have learned and use them correctly. While this may not be a problem in a written form of communication, it can be a problem If this happens in a spoken form because the speaker will come across as unsure, and there will be lack of attention to the message that is supposed to be conveyed and also to the received information (the messages that come from the opposite side).
2. Concentration on the form –It is in the focus of communication and the transmission of a message. Equal distribution of attention to the message that has to be conveyed and the way that it will be conveyed is needed for the previously learned rules to be applied. It is natural for the people to concentrate more on what they want to say, instead of how they are going to say it.
3. Knowing the rules – It is obvious that people must fully be familiar with the rules, so the speakers can know where and when to use them in the process of production. Taking the complex structure of languages and their continuous

development, it is difficult to say that anyone, including the linguists, knows all of the rules of a language.

3.2.5 The exposure to a language

When knowing that the studying of a language is a peripheral aspect regarding the acquisitioning, our goal as teachers of English as a foreign language is to stimulate acquisition. This poses the questions: what is the acquisition of a language due to and how one step from one phase to another in the natural order? The answer to the both questions lies in the exposure that someone has to a language. When it comes to the native language, the exposure is greater and it is daily, but when it comes to learning a foreign language – things get a little bit complicated. In the acquisitioning of one's mother tongue, there are a few elements that are difficult to be replicated in the foreign language classes:

1. Continuous exposure - The mother tongue is not only used by the closest family members, as well as the everyday environment to which the child is exposed to, but also it is used in the wider environment where the child lives.
2. Adapting to the complexity of a language – The members of the closest family of the child often use simple language forms, so that the child can understand them more easily.
3. The principle of urgency –The acquisition of the mother tongue is simplified because there is the possibility for some things to be named or described almost immediately. In other words, the children in the early phases of the natural order for language acquisition learn through practical examples which are tangible and there are available to be pointed at.

4. Practical examples taken from English classes

Taking all of the previously mentioned factors which influence the acquisition of a language as a process into consideration, for the requirements of this paper, a research was conducted in which the problems that come along with the acquisition of synonyms, homonyms and antonyms, as well as the methodical implications that come from them were analyzed.

4.1 Methodological framework of the research
4.1.1 The subject of the research

This paper gives a theoretical contemplation of the semantic aspect when one is learning synonyms, homonyms and antonyms during the English as a foreign language classes. When synonyms, homonyms and antonyms are described and viewed as types of words and semantics is examined as a science, it is obvious that there are certain differences between these language phenomena in the Macedonian and the English language. With the goal of determining the problems that may appear when synonyms, homonyms and antonyms are taught in English as a foreign language classes, firstly

there was an elaboration on the factors which influence the general acquisition of a language and in this elaboration there was a comparison made between the acquisition of the mother tongue and the acquisition of any other language. It is obvious that certain problems in the acquisition of synonyms, homonyms and antonyms can appear not only because there are differences between the Macedonian, as a native language and the English, as a foreign language, but also there is a difference in how they are learned. The subjects of this research are the problems that appear when synonyms, homonyms and antonyms are taught in English as a foreign language classes and the methodical implications which come from them.

4.1.2 Population and samples of the research

This research is based on the observations made during the English as a foreign language classes in one of the high schools in Bitola, from the gymnasium curriculum. While conducting this research, the author had the role of a passive observer, but also the author had the role of a teacher as it was a requirement for the realization of the practical lessons of the last semester of the author's studies. The subjects of this research were the students of the high school 'Taki Daskalo' in Bitola and their English language teachers, and they were chosen randomly as the research was conducted during the hours of the regular schedule.

- **The methods of the research**

For the requirements of this paper, the methods of observation and conversation were used.

- **Interpretation of the results**

As it was mentioned before, for the requirements of this paper a research was conducted which was based on observation and active part-taking in the English as a foreign language classes. Besides that, the author used the method of conversation with the teachers of English, and all of the conversations were about the previously mentioned problems.

4.2 Problems that appear in the acquisition of synonyms, homonyms and antonyms in the English as a foreign language classes from where they originate

The problems that appear in the acquisition of synonyms, homonyms and antonyms in the English language as a foreign language classes are due to the different aspects of the general acquisition of a language and also they appear due to the properties of these words.

A. Example 1

The students were asked to find synonyms for the word *regarding* in a text. Even though the majority easily recognized the word *concerning* as a synonym of regarding, but only a few of the students said that *regarding* is connected to observation and point of view, while the word *concerning* is connected to the word *worrying,* so according to that they could not see how these two words had the same or a similar meaning.

The students were also asked whether *related to, with regard to* and *with respect to* synonyms to the previously mentioned words are or not. Even though some students said that they were indeed synonyms of the previously mentioned words, those who gave a negative answer had different reasons why they thought that these words were not synonyms. According to some, these words could not be synonyms of the words *regarding* and *concerning* because they are consisted of more than just one word, while others thought that *with respect to* is connected to 'respect' and therefore they cannot be synonyms.

In the both cases described in this example, we can confirm that the students translate these words from English to Macedonian quite in the literal sense. Besides that, they reject the semantic relations between the first and the second group of words, with the explanation that the first are only consisted of one word and the second group of words is consisted of more than just one word.

B. Example 2

The students were asked to give examples of homonyms. One of the given examples was *get* in *get answers* and *get* in *get confused*.

Aside from that, the students were asked if the words *they're and there are* homonyms. Even though the teacher gave an affirmative answer from the majority of the students, some said that these words were not homonyms because they do not have the same written form.

In the second case of this example, it can be seen that the students – even though it was emphasized that they should not rely on literal translation – still are under the influence of the negative transfer. This time the students govern themselves only the phonetic orthography of the Macedonian language, because in the Macedonian language the homonyms are both homonyms and homographs. It is evident that in the first case the students don't differentiate polysemy from homonymy.

C. Example 3

The students were asked whether the words *good* and *poor* are antonyms or not. The majority said that they were not, providing a literal Macedonian translation of the words and in accordance to that they do not have opposite meanings.

Aside from that, the students were asked to provide examples of antonyms. The majority of them included pairs such as good – bad, hot – cold, happy – sad.

In the first case of this example, we can see that the students once again rely on the literal translation of the words, thus not noticing the option that these words belong to the semantic field of words that describe how skillfully something is done. In the second case, none of the examples provided by the students are wrong but it is obvious that the students think that only the polar opposites are antonyms.

4.3 How to solve the problems that appear in the acquisition of synonyms, homonyms and antonyms in the English as a foreign language

On the theoretical basis mentioned in this paper, as well as the conversations with the teachers which were realized for the purpose of this paper (with taking everything

which was previously mentioned into consideration – the examples from the classes), this part of the paper will cover the solutions for how the problems that appear in the acquisition of synonyms, homonyms and antonyms in the English as a foreign language classes can be overcome.

Having the first and the third examples into mind it is necessary that in the English (as a foreign language) classes it should be insisted that the students should not reply on literal translation in the acquisition of synonyms, homonyms and antonyms as well as other words. One of the ways to get around this is the English language to be used exclusively during the English classes. If this is applied, there will be a drastic decrease of the negative transfer and the exposure to the language will be increased (due to its continuous usage, as well as the adaptation to its complexity).

Taking the second case in the first example into consideration as a part of the activities completed in the time of the planned classes for the acquisition of synonyms, there should be a part of that class dedicated to polysemy as a language phenomenon (during which the teacher should give the students exercises in which the students have to distinguish polysemy from homonymy).

When it comes to the first case in the third example, it is quite necessary for the teacher to talk about semantic maps during classes. In these types of exercises not only the students can enrich their vocabulary, but also they will help the students learn how to relate words to semantic fields (and this will definitely contribute to an easier acquisition of specific types of words, such as synonyms, homonyms and antonyms).

The next paragraphs will be dedicated to the problems (and this problems may be a result of disorder of some of the factors for language acquisition) that the students may face during the acquisition of synonyms, homonyms and antonyms in their English as a foreign language classes.

As it was mentioned before, there is a difference between the words acquisition and studying. Our job as teachers of English as a foreign language is to stimulate the acquisition more than the formal way of learning. One of the ways that this can be achieved is to reduce the time that is planned for theoretical study of the grammatical and the rest of the linguistic rules and the time that is dedicated for practical exercises based on spontaneous conversations are increased.

When it comes to the natural order of the acquisition of a language it is very possible that different students are in different phases of language acquisition. If this is true then it is very necessary for the teacher to give special attention to the more advanced students as well as the students who fall behind. Even though synonyms, homonyms and antonyms are suitable for studying in the fourth phase that doesn't mean that they don't spontaneously appear in the earlier phases. In such a case, the semantic relations of these words, should not be analyzed in detail, but rather a simple explanation should be given (the connection between the words should be explained in order for the lesson to be successfully realized).

Based on the hypothesis of 'observation' and the conditions that are needed for the process of studying to have a positive influence on the productivity of the English

as a foreign language, Krashen (1982) thinks that one of our duties as teachers is to create 'optimal users of observation'. In this sense, the students should apply the formally acquired rules in a way that it would not inhibit the communication – neither in their speech, nor in their understanding of received messages. The students should be encouraged to rely on their intuition when they are forming these messages.

Regarding the exposure to a certain language, we have mentioned the elements that are present during the acquisition of the mother tongue which are difficult – almost impossible – to replicate in the English (as a foreign language) classes. The complete realization of the teacher's planned in-class activities and the requirement of the students to learn new information from documentaries, or from films where the English language is spoken, are going to result in a more continuous exposure to the English language. One of the duties that the teachers have is to help the students adapt to the complexity to the language.

Regarding the motivation as one of the affective filters, one of the things which could help its expansion and growth is the explanation of the importance of the subject and the lecture, which will be taught by the teacher. When it comes to the students' self-confidence, the teachers should not be overly critical regarding the achievements of the students. Even though the teachers must point out the students' mistakes, they should also reward the students' success and accomplishments. This is one of the things which could help in the conversion of the burdening anxiety to become a reliving anxiety. And this can be achieved when the teachers point out that even the best students can make mistakes and that it is important for us to concentrate on our weaknesses only when we want to better ourselves.

5. Conclusion

There are different factors which influence the acquisition of synonyms, homonyms and antonyms in the English as a foreign language classes. Some of them appear due to the differences between the Macedonian and the English language, and some of them are connected t the factors which influence the acquisition of a language.

This type of differences between the two languages, as well as the disruption of some of the factors influence the acquisition of synonyms, homonyms and antonyms in the English as a foreign language classes. And they can often create certain problems in class.

Depending on the nature of the problem, there are numerous ways of coming up with a solution to that problem. Some of them are connected to the reduction of the students' need to rely upon a literal translation and in addition to that, the influence of the negative transfer will be reduced. Some of them are connected to the replication of the conditions in which the acquisition of the language occurs and they are connected to the process of following the individual natural order of the acquisition of the language and during this process the teacher should pay special attention to the advanced students as well as the students who are falling behind.

Apart from that, similarly to the acquisition of any skill, the teachers should pay attention to the affective filters. In other words, the teachers should stimulate the students' motivation and their self-confidence as well, and also the teachers should not forget about the reduction of the students' anxiety. These affective filters can be often crucial when it comes to how successfully the students' acquisition of the synonyms, homonyms and antonyms will be carried out, because they can inhibit the intuitive aspect of the recognition and the production of the synonyms, homonyms and antonyms (this is also the basis of the acquisition of any language skill).

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