English Canonical Antonyms in Non-Native Speakers

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Abstract

This paper deals with non-native speakers' perception of the structure of antonymy in English. It concentrates on the notion of canonical antonyms – conventionalized pairs of words with contrastive meaning. To compare the perception of native and non-native speakers, the elicitation experiment designed by Paradis, Willners, and Jones is used. The results suggest that the nature of antonymy in English is perceived in the same way by both native and non-native speakers. Moreover, the set of adjectival canonical antonyms is very similar for both studied groups, while certain differences can be observed in the group of less strongly related antonyms.

Keywords: antonymy, canonical antonyms, adjective, native speakers, non-native speakers