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## COLLOCATIONS WITH THE ADJECTIVE *HEAVY* IN BUSINESS ENGLISH

This study aims to analyze the use of nouns collocating with the adjective *heavy* in business English discourse with the goal to find out its meanings and antonyms. The analysis is carried out on *The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)* and shows that there is a literal (*heavy*<sub>1</sub>) and a figurative meaning (*heavy*<sub>2</sub>) of this adjective. It is proposed that the figurative meaning can be explained by a CONTAINER metaphor used as a medium to indicate that the actor is not important, but the focus lies on the “direct” object – a noun perceived as a burden or load difficult to carry.

Key words: collocations, business English, adjective *heavy*, metaphor, antonyms

### 1. Introduction

Over the last few decades more attention has been given to collocations. They may be defined in different ways, but in this paper we adopt the view that collocations are “word pairs and phrases that are commonly used in language, but for which no general syntactic and semantic rules apply” (McKeow and Radev 2000: 507). Collocations are widespread, used in all spheres of languages and in different terminologies, including the discourse of business English (Sacristan 2004: 116). There are no restrictions regarding the number of elements in a collocation (Seretan 2008: 20), however, in this paper we accept the view that it is “a pair of words” (Pearce 2001: 2).

Inspiration for this analysis is the paper of Prof. Draginja Parvaz (1984-85), „O nekim kolokacijama sa pridevom *težak*“ (“On some collocations with the adjective *heavy*“). The intention is to find out which examples from the broad collocational range of adjective *heavy* may be found in popular business discourse. According to some authors journalistic texts are more frequently analysed than the texts aimed

at experts in the field and the majority of metaphorical models are of a journalistic nature (Alejo 2010: 1139), therefore this analysis is carried out on *The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)*, that in addition to academic texts, compiles the texts from popular magazines and newspapers.

The aim of this study is to analyse collocations with the adjective *heavy* and the nouns that it modifies in popular business discourse. All the nouns were checked in *Oxford Business English Dictionary for Learners of English (OBEDFLE)* as a proof that they belong to this discourse. By popular business discourse we mean “journalistic texts that deal with current economic and business matters for an audience of experts and nonexperts, and seek to inform and entertain more generally” (Skorczynska and Deignan 2000: 89).

The collocational range of this adjective is very broad, but its meanings may be roughly divided in two groups: the first is the literal meaning, and the second is the figurative (Pervaz 1984-85: 603). In the following pages we are going to discuss both the literal and the figurative meanings of this adjective, that shows strong partnership with the nouns used in the business discourse.

## 2. Literal meaning of *heavy*

In all the dictionaries the primary meaning of this adjective is “weighs a lot” (*Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (LDCE)*), “of great weight, difficult to lift or move” (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/heavy-?q=heavy>), ([http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/heavy\\_1?q=heavy](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/heavy_1?q=heavy)), “of comparatively great weight” (<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/heavy?showCookiePolicy=true>), or “with a lot of weight” (<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/heavy>). Most frequently, it is used in the context of measuring, indicating the weight of a person or a thing. In the field of business English this adjective is used with nouns indicating objects such as *cargo*, *goods*, *load*, as in the examples:

- (1) a. She explains the expense and difficulty of shipping *heavy cargo* from Peten by truck and airplane.
- b. They developed a new airship for transporting *heavy goods*.
- c. The equipment is operating under a *heavy load*.

The meaning of *heavy* is purely related to weight in physical sense. The antonym for this meaning of adjective *heavy* is *light* meaning “not heavy” ([http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/light\\_3](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/light_3)), “of little weight” (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/light?q=LIGHT#light-2>), “weighing relatively little” (<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/light>), “not

weighing much or weighing less than you expected“ ([http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/light\\_31](http://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/light_31)), as in the example:

(2) a. He made good money flying *light cargo*.

### 3. Figurative meanings of *heavy*

The adjective *heavy* collocates not only with the nouns denoting people and things, but also with abstract concepts. Literal meanings of words are extended to provide figurative meanings (Charteris-Black 2000: 152) expressed through metaphors. The reason why human beings use figurative meanings is their tendency “to conceptualise the unknown in terms of that which is known“ (Charteris-Black 2000: 153).

Prototypical meaning “weighs a lot” is extended to “needing a lot of physical strength“ (*OBEDFLE*). The meaning is extended from physical weight to “needing much physical effort” (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/heavy?q=heavy>), as with the nouns *work* and *lift*:

(3) a. Let’s get started. You’ll have to do all the *heavy work*.

b. I was going to have to do all the *heavy lifting* if our farm was to make it.

Interestingly, the noun denoting the doer of the action (*worker*) does not collocate with the adjective *heavy* (*\*heavy worker*), but it collocates with the adjective *hard* (*hard worker*).

The antonym of *heavy work* is *light work* as in the example:

(4) a. He was too heavy for *light work*, and too light for *heavy work*.

A similar meaning is “involving a lot of work or activity; very busy“ (*OBEDFLE*), “hard to bear, accomplish, or fulfill”, (<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/heavy?showCookiePolicy=true>). This does not necessarily mean physically hard work, but may imply that the work is psychically exhausting and/or time consuming. Here are the examples of adjective *heavy* collocating with the abstract concepts such as *schedule*, *paperwork*, *workload*, and *overtime*:

(5) a. He’s saddled with a *heavy schedule* nowadays, thanks to his bankability.

b. Bringing in people from outside would produce *heavy paperwork*.

c. He was tired by the end of that season, under a *heavy workload*.

d. Smith doesn’t dispute that employees were asked to work *heavy overtime*, but some workers were glad to have the extra pay.

Nouns such as *advertising*, *marketing* and *promotion* are frequently used in business English. These activities of making a product or a service known to the

public are carried out with the intention to increase the sale. In collocations with these nouns adjective *heavy* means “involving a lot of work or activity; very busy“ (*OBEDFLE*), as in the examples:

- (6) a. None of the candidates has begun *heavy advertising*.
- b. Design, develop and launch, and then support with *heavy marketing* for a year or so.
- c. The grocery chain has sworn off *heavy promotions* and lowered some prices.

Slightly different meaning of adjective *heavy* is presented in the following examples:

- (7) a. There is a lot to be said for a *heavy role* of banking.
- b. Within a new corporation structure he bore a *heavy responsibility*.

In these examples *heavy* is understood as something “of great importance or seriousness” (<http://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=heavy&submit.x=27&submit.y=13>).

Antonym for *heavy role* is *easy role*, but for *heavy responsibility* is *light responsibility*, as in:

- (8) a. That could not have been a *light responsibility*.

When combined with the nouns *price*, *cost*, or *expenditure*, *heavy* means “more or worse than usual in amount“ (*OBEDFLE*), “of more than the usual amount”, (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/heavy?q=heavy>), “not easily borne” (<http://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=heavy&submit.x=27&submit.y=13>).

Obviously, people find the amount higher than they expected, as in the examples:

- (9) a. But these fuels carry a *heavy price*.
- b. We’re paying a *heavy cost* for founding our society on dead-end technologies.
- c. The situation is urgent enough to warrant the prolonged and *heavy expenditure* of political capital.

It is interesting to note that the noun *bill* does not collocate with the adjective *heavy*. In English it sounds more natural to say a *big/hefty/high/huge bill* (*OCDSE*).

In the same category we may also include the collocation with the noun *debt*:

- (9) d. *Heavy debt* and large losses of wealth have forced spending onto a lower path.

Experiencing “more or worse than usual in amount“ (*OBEDFLE*) is especially true when people have to pay for careless deeds thus making an unplanned expenditure like in:

- (10) a. Maybe there is another solution rather than a *heavy penalty* on those can least afford it.  
 b. He could get up to 30 years in prison and a very *heavy fine*.  
 c. Water shortages and extreme heat take a *heavy toll* on global agriculture.

Besides desired payment (*price, cost, expenditure*), and undesired financial losses (*debt, penalty*), there are some payments that are to be paid towards a company or a bank (*mortgage*), the authorities, for example to the police (*fine*) or the state (*toll, taxes/taxation*). People may experience them as very high and this is expressed through collocations such as:

- (11) a. They pay *heavy taxes*.  
 b. Obsolete bookkeeping allows them to escape *heavy taxation*.  
 c. Mister Locker was in debt, he had a very *heavy mortgage* on his house.

The message is that they are “not easily borne“ and people find them oppressive (<http://www.ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=heavy&submit.x=27&submit.y=13>) and “burdensome and distressing” (<http://www.yourdictionary.com/heavy>).

We cannot talk about *\*light taxes/taxation* and *\*light mortgage*, or *\*light price/cost*. The nouns *taxes/taxation, mortgage* but also *price* and *cost* collocate with *low*, which is the antonym for *heavy* in these collocations:

- (12) a. The government should be advised to establish a regime of *low taxation* and minimal regulation.  
 b. The proposition des not support *low taxes* all the time.  
 c. We have a *low mortgage* on our house.  
 d. Amazon has a good device and they offered a *low price*.  
 e. The official at the DLA says the agency does its best to provide fuel at a *low cost*.

In these examples every expenditure is experienced as a difficulty that must be carried out and it collocates with the adjective *heavy*. On the other hand, the nouns indicating any kind of income, an amount of money that is received regularly (like salary, pension, etc.), does not collocate with the adjective *heavy*, even when the amount is higher, i.e. “more than usual“. In the cases when the salary is “more than usual in amount“ adjectives *big, high, large* are used. (Adjectives *big* and *generous* collocate with the noun *pension* and adjectives *high, strong* collocate with the noun *earnings* (*OBEDFLE*.)

Collocation *heavy losses* is usually coupled with the losses of human life (like in “... at large expenses and with *heavy loss* of human life“ (COCA)) or losses in agriculture (“... threat to the future it would food balance is the *heavy loss* of crop-land“ (COCA), but the examples of this collocation are found in business English like in:

(13) There’s fears that those banks could suffer *heavy losses* or worse collapse.

Collocation *heavy loser* is a frequent one, as in:

(14) He isn’t a *heavy loser*, as far as I know.

Although the adjective *heavy* has other meanings as well, the above mentioned are the most frequent ones that we encounter in business English.

#### 4. Metaphor in business English

Metaphor is present when one conceptual domain is understood in terms of another conceptual domain (Kövacsés 2002: 4). Most speakers are not aware of metaphors neither in every day life, nor in terminology, yet it does not mean metaphors are not present in all spheres of language. Metaphor in economics (Henderson 1982; Charteris-Black and Ennis 2001; Sacristan 2004; Silaški and Đurović 2010), and also business English (Boers 2000, Skorczynska and Deignan 2006), has received attention both from economists and from applied linguists (Alejo 2010: 1137).

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) there are three different types of metaphors: structural, ontological and orientational. The purpose of the ontological metaphor is to provide an ontological status to abstract concept by means that we conceptualize our experiences as entities, substances, and containers. “The CONTAINER metaphor belongs to that group of metaphors mapping an image schema, or basic sensorimotor experience, onto the way we reason and structure the world around us“ (Alejo 2010: 1142). By doing this we perceive the events, activities or states as containers in some expressions (Johnson 1987: 21). We are aware of our bodies that are three-dimensional containers and this experience results in the fact that many things in our surrounding, that are not physical objects, are given container shape (Kövacsés 2002: 83). By its nature CONTAINER metaphor is “a good candidate for metaphorical model“ (Alejo 2010: 1142) and is used in different discourses as a concept beyond cultural limits (ibid.).

Among the three types, the ontological metaphor may be related to understanding how the adjective *heavy* extends its meaning. The choice of metaphors indicates a specific conceptualization and differs in science disciplines (Charteris-Black 2000: 154). The CONTAINER metaphor is frequent in the field of eco-

nomics and business English, for example “market as a container” (Alejo 2010: 1143), “economy as a container” (Alejo 2010: 1146). The corpus we analyse shows that the adjective *heavy* can be partnered with various nouns, including both concrete and abstract concepts, that are conceptualized as CONTAINERS.

## 5. Discussion

It has already been mentioned that the adjective *heavy* has literal meaning: “weighing a lot” (*heavy*<sub>1</sub>). The examples from our corpus show that it is used with the nouns indicating objects that are handled in different ways (for example, sold, transported, purchased, etc.). Collocation with a noun denoting a person is unusual, because personal weight is not of concern in the domain of business English. The antonym is *light*.

When analysing the figurative meaning (*heavy*<sub>2</sub>) it may be concluded that there is more than one. Although “the most important metaphors in economics emerge from the sedimentation of economic thinking through history” (Alejo 2010: 1138), the concept that is appropriately expressed in the above mentioned examples is the CONTAINER metaphor which indicates that specialised economic thinking may find its analogies in everyday thought (ibid.).

Many nouns collocating with the adjective *heavy* are construed as containers with various meanings. For example, in collocations with the nouns *work* and *lifting* (3), where this adjective means “needing a lot of physical effort”, the nouns may be understood as a container for which physical strength is needed. Antonym is *light* (4).

However, with the examples from (5) (*schedule, paperwork, workload, overtime*), physical effort is not an obligatory element. According to cognitive linguistics they may be interpreted by the concept of a CONTAINER where the nouns are understood as loads heavy to carry from physiological point of view. In these examples physical strength is not necessarily implied, but another type of energy is needed. The antonym is the adjective *easy* (6).

The nouns *role* or *responsibility*, when serious and of great importance, may also be experienced as a burden, i.e. a load that has to be handled with as in (7). Again, the CONTAINER metaphor provides a mean to express feelings in a vivid way. The antonym is *light* (8)

Obviously, every occasion when we have to give a huge amount of money is experienced hard and unpleasant, like in collocations *heavy price/cost/expenditure* (9). The same is with the noun *debt* (9 d) where the debt is *heavy as a burden* (the expression frequently found in everyday life, and in COCA).

We get the same impression when the adjective *heavy* collocations with the nouns that indicate punishment for breaking a rule or law (*heavy penalty, heavy fine*), payment obligations towards the state (*heavy toll, taxes/taxation*) or a bank (*heavy mortgage*) - examples (9), (10) and (11). The antonym is *low* (12).

Among the other concepts, the CONTAINER metaphor has been recognized as “an appropriate means to adequately map important target domains“ (Alejo 2010: 1142) in business discourse. The reason why it is used may be found in a suggestion given by some authors that “the CONTAINER metaphor is a rhetoric device, like the passive voice or hypotheticality, used to convey the idea of depersonalization and objectification“ (Alejo 2010: 1137). Perceiving it as a depersonalized metaphor it is understood as something beyond human control, something that is unwillingly imposed, therefore it is “carried“ with a lot of effort.

## 6. Conclusion

This research leads us to a conclusion that in the field of business English the adjective *heavy* is used in literal (*heavy<sub>1</sub>*) and figurative meaning (*heavy<sub>2</sub>*). When its meaning is literal, than it refers to objects, but not humans. In most of the figurative meanings the CONTAINER metaphor may be applied when the noun used collocating with *heavy* is experienced as a burden, load difficult to carry, either physically or psychologically. Antonyms used for this adjective are *light, easy* or *low*, depending on the collocation.

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## **KOLOKACIJE S PRIDEVOM *HEAVY* U POSLOVNOM ENGLISKOM JEZIKU**

### **Rezime**

Ovaj rad analizira značenje prideva *heavy* (*težak*) i njegove antonime u kolokacijama sa imenicama u diskursu poslovnog engleskog jezika. Analiza je vršena na primerima pronađenim u *The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)*. Značenje prideva može grubo da se podeli u dve grupe: konkretno (*heavy*<sub>1</sub>) i figurativno značenje (*heavy*<sub>2</sub>). Kod konkretnog značenja pridev označava fizičku osobinu imenice. U ovom diskursu se koristi uz reči koje imenuju predmete (*cargo, goods, load, itd.*). Kada se radi o figurativnom značenju predložena je konceptualna metafora KONTEJNERA: imenice koje se javljaju uz pridev *heavy* percipirane su kao težak KONTEJNER, bilo u fizičkom ili psihičkom smislu, čime se iskazuje stav da akter nije važan, nego je pažnja usmerena na imenice koje se doživljavaju kao težak teret.

Ključne reči: kolokacije, poslovni engleski, pridev *heavy*, metafora, antonimi