

Syntactic Relations Between Oxymoronic Constructions

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Abstract: This article explores the syntactic and semantic relations underlying oxymoronic constructions in Uzbek literary and colloquial discourse. While oxymoron is traditionally treated as a stylistic figure based on semantic contradiction, this study demonstrates that its internal structure is governed by systematic syntactic connections and valency patterns. Drawing upon examples from contemporary Uzbek literature, the article identifies five major types of syntactic relations within oxymoronic expressions: predicative, attributive, objective, circumstantial, and oppositive. Through detailed linguistic analysis, it is shown that despite their paradoxical semantics, oxymorons preserve grammatical coherence and reveal subtle mechanisms of expressivity, emotional intensity, and cultural coding. The findings affirm that oxymoron, as a syntactic phenomenon, not only enhances stylistic effect but also reflects the richness of Uzbek conceptual and communicative frameworks.

Keywords: Oxymoron, syntactic relation, semantic contradiction, Uzbek language, stylistic figure, predicative relation, attributive structure, objective construction, apposition, linguistic valency, expressivity, literary syntax.

Introduction: Language functions not only as a tool for communication but also as a system of expressive possibilities. Its structural organization often depends on the syntactic connection of components—manifesting as both grammatical and semantic relations. While syntactic connections refer to formal grammatical linkages, syntactic relations describe the functional and semantic roles of words in utterance. This distinction becomes especially significant in the analysis of expressive stylistic figures such as oxymoron, which, despite its internal semantic opposition, follows recognizable syntactic patterns.

In Uzbek literature and speech, oxymoronic expressions are widely used to intensify emotional content and articulate complex philosophical or psychological states. However, their structural nature remains underexplored in terms of syntactic theory. This article seeks to fill that gap by classifying and analyzing oxymorons according to their syntactic relations. The study is grounded in literary and colloquial examples, demonstrating how seemingly contradictory lexemes can interact through regular grammatical mechanisms while producing extraordinary stylistic effects.

The main part

Language, as a means of communication, is structurally formed in most cases through the combination of elements – namely, on the basis of syntactic connections and syntactic relations. These two phenomena are closely interconnected: where there is a syntactic connection, there is a syntactic relation, and vice versa (with the exception of certain sentence elements such as parentheticals and interjections, which do not directly participate in syntactic linkage but influence the overall meaning of the sentence). However, this close connection should not lead to the assumption that syntactic connection and syntactic relation are one and the same phenomenon – they are, in fact, distinct.

As noted above, a syntactic connection refers to the grammatical linkage between components of a syntactic construction. In contrast, a syntactic relation refers to the grammatical meaning and functional roles of words within phrases and sentences, as well as the relationships between sentences in discourse. For example, in the phrases *maktabga bormoq* (“to go to school”) and *ukamga olmoq* (“to take for my younger brother”), the syntactic connection is identical: in both cases, the components are connected using the same grammatical marker – the dative case suffix *-ga*.

However, the syntactic relations differ: in the first example, the relation is locative (relational), expressing a place, while in the second, it is object-oriented (complementary), denoting the recipient of an action.

In discourse, we may observe the interaction of lexemes that are connected in an unusual manner, despite being semantically incompatible. In such instances, the syntactic harmony between the elements is disrupted. Word combinations formed in this way are often distinguished by their emotional intensity and expressiveness, as the speaker or author conveys their intended meaning using lexemes that do not logically cohere in a conventional sense.

The syntactic linkage of such unexpectedly paired words or sentence elements results in the emergence of a unique stylistic figure – a specific type of poetic or rhetorical device. This contributes to the expressiveness and affective power of the utterance. Various literary devices such as simile, analogy, personification, rhetorical questioning, and particularly oxymoron – a figure based on the juxtaposition of seemingly contradictory or incongruous elements – rely heavily on this kind of unconventional syntactic connection.

From the perspective of form, oxymoron – considered a syntactic figure equivalent in structure to a word combination or a sentence – exhibits syntactic valency between its components. While it is true that in oxymoronic constructions, syntactic relations do not trigger lexical valency in the conventional sense (where the presence of one word activates expected semantic fields, as in o'qidim (read), which typically evokes kitobni, gazetani, jurnalni (book, newspaper, or journal), this does not preclude the presence of syntactic connections.

Indeed, between the components of an oxymoron, various semantic relations can be observed – similar to those found in regular syntactic constructions – despite the apparent logical or semantic contradiction between the elements.

1. Predicative Relation. In this case, the subject and predicate enter into a syntactic relationship that gives rise to a semantic connection. For example:

Oqsoq tek turmas, (The lame does not stay still,)

Soqov – jim. (Maqol) (The mute – silent. (Proverb)

Oqshom cho'kib, keldi-ketdi uzilgach, uyda ona-bolalar yolg'iz qolishdi. (Jamila Ergasheva "Zulfizar" 2010)

As evening fell and visitors had left, the mother and children were left alone at home.

(Jamila Ergasheva, Zulfizar, 2010)

In such constructions, even when the syntactic

arrangement may be elliptical or abbreviated, a predicative semantic structure emerges, anchoring the utterance in a subject–predicate framework.

2. Attributive Relation. This type of semantic connection occurs between a quality and an object, and is expressed through a modifier – modified (determiner–determinate) relationship. For example:

Havo sovuq. Osmonda zahardek achchiq qor uchqunlari erinchoq kezadi. Ko'chalarni oynadek muz bosgan, mashinalar emaklagandek qo'rqa-pisa imillaydi. Nafas olsang, og'zinga sovuq olov kiritayotgandek bo'g'zingni achishtiradi. Odamlar toyg'onoqda yiqilib mayib bo'lmaslik uchun ehtiyotlab qadam bosadi. (The air is cold. Bitter snowflakes, sharp as poison, drift lazily across the sky. The streets are coated with ice as smooth as glass, and cars creep along, hesitantly crawling as if afraid. Each breath feels like inhaling cold fire – stinging the throat with a burning chill. People tread carefully, wary of slipping on the icy ground and getting injured) (O'.Hoshimov)

Muhabbat, ey go'zal iztirob,

Ko'chang kezdim sarson, dovdirab,

Yuzlarimga yuzlaring tirab,

Ko'zlarimni boylab qo'yding-ku!.. (Muhammad Yusuf)

3. Objective Relation. This type of semantic connection arises between the complement and the verb it completes, typically occurring between an action and the object it is directed toward. For example: To shine through drops of blood (qon tomchilaridan yorishmoq); To struggle for misfortune (baxtsizlik uchun kurashmoq)

Baxtsizlik uchun kurashish nima degani o'zi. Bu hamma narsadan voz kechish, hammasini unitish, befarqlik, loqaydlikka yuz tutish deganimi?.. Yoki qabohat, jirkanch tuyg'ular bilan oshno bo'lib yashashmi?.. Agar shunday bo'lsa siz bir umr baxtsizlik uchun kurashib yashabsiz. (What does it even mean – to struggle for misfortune?)

Does it mean giving up on everything, forgetting it all, surrendering to indifference and apathy?.. Or is it living in constant companionship with vice and repulsive emotions?.. If that is the case, then you have spent your entire life struggling for misfortune) (N.Otaxonov)

Quyosh horib yiqildi,

tirqirab sizindi qoni,

uning qon tomchilaridan yorishdi Osmon. (Tursun Ali)

4. Relational (Circumstantial) Relation. In this type of syntactic-semantic relation, a connection is established between the adverbial modifier (hol) and the predicate it modifies (hollanmish), resulting in an observed link

between circumstance and action. For example:

I sold you this idea for free – tuck it away in the corner of your philosophy notebook. (Tohir Malik, Shaytanat), She's crying out of joy... But you know, when a girl cries from happiness, even that crying is both sad and beautiful. (A. Qahhor, A Voice from the Coffin)

Bu fikrni men sizga tekinga sotdim, falsafa daftaringizning bir chekkasiga qistirib qo'ying. (Tohir Malik "Shaytanat"), Suyunganidan yig'layotipti... Ammo-lekin qiz bola suyunganidan yig'lasa yomon ham chiroyli yig'laydi-da. (A.Qahhor "Tobutdan tovush")

5. Oppositive Relation. This type of relation is based on an explanatory–explained (appositional) structure, in which the oxymoron is constructed from a noun + noun combination. The syntactic opposition serves as the structural framework for the oxymoronic expression.

Hofiz Zelixon Xongireyev kimligini bilmasam yurgan ekanman-da "o'qilonman", de-yeb kerilib. Haddingdan oshma, bola. Har ishning o'z hadisi bo'ladi. Akademik o'g'ri. O'g'rilikda unga teng keladiganini topish qiyin. Zelixon "akademik" o'g'ri, Chuvrindi-Mahmudning fojiali o'limidan keyin u ittifoqsizlik haqida ko'p o'ylardi. O'lim bilan yakunlanuvchi noaxillik sababini bilolmay garang edi. Pul talashishadi, desa, hammasi pulga ko'milib yotibdi.

Zohidning xayoli Chuvrindi kelguniga qadar shu muammolar bilan band bo'ldi. Mahmud Esonov ayni aytilgan vaqtda, bir daqiqa nari-beri qilmagan holda keldi. U bilan birga xonaga yoqimli atir hidi ham kirdi. Chuvrindi kun issiq bo'lishiga qaramay, oq-pushtiga moyil kostyum kiygan, qizil galstuk bog'lab olgan edi. Sochlarini silliq taragan, o'ng qo'lining ko'rsatkich barmog'iga tilla uzuk taqqan odamni biron "Chuvrindi", deb chaqirsa, kulgili holat yuz berardi.

Chuvrindi bashang kiyigani bilan harakatida, qarashlarida, hol-ahvol so'rashayotganidagi ovozida kibr sezilmadi.

In the first example taken from Tohir Malik's novel *Shaytanat*, the lexeme *akademik* (academic) conventionally refers to a full member of the Academy of Sciences—an honorary title granted to scholars, writers, artists, sculptors, and others elected to membership in an academic institution. However, the author employs this positively connoted lexeme in reference to the thief Zelixon, thereby creating an oxymoron through ironic contrast.

In the second example, the lexeme *Chuvrindi* is defined in the Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language as "a person in worn-out, tattered clothing; a pauper." Admittedly, the nickname *Chuvrindi* was originally assigned to Mahmud based on his destitute appearance when he was first discovered. However,

the sentence in which the term is used portrays Mahmud Esonov—alias *Chuvrindi*—as an extremely wealthy individual, thereby establishing a semantic contradiction. In this way, *Chuvrindi* Mahmud forms an oxymoron structured through an appositional (explainer–explained) relation.

From a syntactic perspective, such constructions are typically composed of modifier–modified noun phrases in which the meaning of the modifier logically contradicts or negates the semantic content of the head noun—or vice versa.

In general, oxymoronic constructions manifest various types of syntactic relations, as discussed above. Such examples attest to the semantic and stylistic richness of the Uzbek language and highlight its limitless expressive potential.

CONCLUSION

The analysis confirms that oxymoron, far from being a purely stylistic anomaly, operates within a framework of conventional syntactic relations. The five core types identified—predicative, attributive, objective, circumstantial, and oppositive—illustrate the systematic ways in which paradoxical meaning is structured grammatically. In each case, semantic contradiction is accompanied by syntactic coherence, allowing oxymoron to function as both an expressive and structurally grounded linguistic unit.

Furthermore, the article demonstrates that the semantic tension within oxymoronic expressions serves as a powerful tool of emotional and conceptual intensification. Examples drawn from Uzbek literary texts and spoken discourse reveal not only the aesthetic potential of oxymoron but also its role in encoding cultural meaning and individual worldview. The syntactic flexibility and semantic depth of oxymorons attest to the expressive richness of the Uzbek language and offer fruitful ground for further investigation in stylistics, syntax, and cognitive linguistics.

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