



THE PHENOMENON OF ANTONYMY IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH LINGUISTICS

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Abstract: This article discusses when and by whom antonyms, as a branch of lexicology, were first studied, how they have been interpreted in Uzbek and English linguistics, and what specific role they play within lexicology.

Keywords: Antonymy, lexicology, polysemy, paired words, semantic category, pragmatic category, cognitive category.

The term antonym derives from Greek and literally means “opposite name” or “contrary term.” Thus, antonyms are words that express opposite meanings within a language. It is known that everything in the world exists in pairs. The existence of pairs is the foundation of progress. However, not every pair guarantees development — only pairs that simultaneously contradict and complement each other form the basis of balance and evolution. Antonymous words are a simple lexical example of such pairs in language. The property of antonymy refers to the opposition between words [1;139].

In linguistics, antonymy has long been the subject of attention, as opposition is a crucial category in human thought. The concept of antonymy was first discussed in logic and philosophy, particularly by ancient Greek philosophers (such as Aristotle), as a logical opposition. Its linguistic study began at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, when antonymy started to be examined as an independent linguistic phenomenon.

The theory of antonymy continues to evolve because the entire language system itself develops continuously. The lexical system, in particular, undergoes constant change. Any transformation in words or phraseological units — or the appearance of new expressions — leads to the emergence of new antonymic oppositions or, conversely, the loss of old ones. Although some antonymic pairs disappear over time, antonymy as a whole keeps enriching the lexicon through the rise of new words and the expansion of polysemy.

In Uzbek linguistics, many scholars — including Sh. Rahmatullaev, K. Bozorboyev, A. Mamatov, N. Abbosxon, and B. Yo‘ldoshev [2,3,4,5,6] — have made significant contributions to the study of phraseological units and antonymy. Their works explore how cultural and linguistic characteristics influence the formation of antonymic pairs, reflecting the unique traits of the Uzbek language and culture.

The study of antonymy in English linguistics:

C.K. Ogden and I.A. Richards (1923, *The Meaning of Meaning*) — analyzed antonyms within the system of synonyms and opposites.

Geoffrey Leech (1981) — classified antonymy as an important opposition in lexical meaning.



D.A. Cruse (1986, Lexical Semantics) — examined the pragmatic and contextual aspects of antonymy.

John Lyons (1968, 1977) — defined antonymy as a key semantic category and identified several types:

Gradable antonyms: hot – cold, tall – short

Complementary antonyms: dead – alive, true – false

Relational antonyms: buy – sell, teacher – student.

The property of antonymy generally occurs within the same part of speech. For example, in adjectives:

“Yaxshi bilan yursang yetarsan murodga, yomon bilan yursang qolarsan uyatga.”

(If you walk with the good, you’ll reach your goal; if you walk with the bad, you’ll face shame.)

In nouns:

“Kambag‘allik qursin, kambag‘allik!” (“Curse poverty, curse it!”)

Where poverty and wealth are conceptually opposed.

Antonymy is most common among adjectives but also appears in other parts of speech, though less frequently. Pronouns and numerals, however, do not form antonymic pairs. Lexical antonymy occurs between two lexemes that form an antonymic pair, but this does not mean that every pair of words is a compound word.

For example:

katta (“big”) and kichik (“small”) — antonymic pair (two independent lexemes).

katta-kichik — a single compound word expressing a general concept.

Thus, antonymy exists only between two separate lexemes expressing opposite meanings. Likewise, forms like bor (“there is”) and borma (“don’t go”) are not antonyms because they are merely affirmative and negative forms of the same verb, not two distinct lexemes.

Antonymy and polysemy are interrelated: a polysemous word may enter into different antonymic relations depending on its meaning.

For instance:

achchiq qalampir (“hot pepper”) and shirin olma (“sweet apple”) — antonymy based on direct meanings.



achchiq gap (“bitter word”) and shirin gap (“sweet word”) — antonymy based on figurative meanings.

Today, linguists view antonymy not only as a relationship between opposite words but also as:

A semantic category – logical-semantic relations between words;

A pragmatic category – used in speech to emphasize contrast;

A cognitive category – a way of classifying and conceptualizing the world in human thought.

In linguistics, studying antonymy as a form of semantic connection between words in context is of great importance. Antonymy plays a key role in shaping the lexical system of any language and serves as a core element in understanding the linguistic picture of the world. Exploring antonymic relations deepens our understanding of linguistic organization mechanisms and the ways in which different languages express opposition. This has significant theoretical value for linguistics and practical applications in translation, foreign language teaching, and computational linguistics.

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