

EXPRESSION OF ANTONYMIC RELATIONSHIPS IN TONGUE TWISTERS WITH THE CONCEPT PLANT

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Abstract

Abstract. This article investigates the expression of antonymic relationships in tongue twisters that incorporate the conceptual domain plant. Tongue twisters, though primarily associated with phonetic difficulty, demonstrate complex semantic mechanisms, including antonymy. The study examines how plant-related lexical units enter into oppositional relations and how these relations enhance phonetic tension, semantic contrast, and stylistic expressiveness. The analysis shows that antonymy in plant-based tongue twisters is realized mainly through contextual, gradational, and evaluative oppositions rather than strict lexical antonyms.

Keywords: Tongue twister, antonymy, plant concept, lexical semantics, paremiology, stylistics.

Introduction

Tongue twisters are traditionally viewed as playful linguistic forms aimed at developing pronunciation skills. However, contemporary linguistic research considers them **multifunctional paremiological units** that combine phonetic complexity with semantic and stylistic richness.

One of the most productive semantic mechanisms in tongue twisters is **antonymy**, the opposition of meanings. When combined with the *plant* concept—an essential and culturally universal domain—antonymic relations acquire additional expressive and cognitive value. This article aims to analyze how antonymic relationships are expressed in tongue twisters containing plant-related imagery and lexemes.

Within paremiology, tongue twisters are characterized by:

- formulaic structure,
- repetition and rhythm,

- dominance of phonetic devices,
- minimal narrative content.

Despite their brevity, tongue twisters reflect **semantic oppositions** that contribute to their memorability and linguistic tension.

Antonymy is defined as a semantic relationship based on opposition. Linguists distinguish several types of antonymy:

gradable antonyms (*tall – short*),

complementary antonyms (*alive – dead*),

conversive antonyms (*grow – wither*),

contextual antonyms, emerging only within discourse.

We will analyze them by paying attention to fast utterances with contradictory meanings in the cross section of languages.

In Uzbek:

Qora qora ko‘zli qora sigir (qarama-qarshi ranglar: qora va oq).

Oqqul g‘azablanib, ho‘lqizil keladi (qarama-qarshi holatlar: ho‘l va qurqizil).

In English:

How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?

How little wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?

In Uzbek:

Ko‘kda qora qora qushlar qanot chiroqlaydi.

Qorong‘ida oq oq qushlar qanot chiroqlaydi.

(Ranglar o‘rtasidagi qarama-qarshilik.)

In English:

A black bug bleeds black blood.

A white bug bleeds white blood.

(Rang o‘zgarishi: qora va oq.)

In Uzbek:

Tez-tez, tinch-tinch, to‘qmoq tortar.

Sekin-sekin, qattiq-qattiq, yumshoq tortar.

(Tezlik va sekinlik, yumshoqlik va qattiqlik.)

In Uzbek:

Oq qanotli, qora qanotli, qushning qarshi qarashlari.

Qora qanotli, oq qanotli, qushning do‘stona qarashlari.

(Qarama-qarshi ranglar va tuyg‘ular o‘rtasidagi farqlar.)

Bizning ilmiy izlanishimizda tahlilga tortilgan tez aytishlar orasida omonimlik xususiyatlarga ega bo‘lgan tez aytishlar ham aniqlandi.

In Uzbek:

Qora qush qanot qirradi bilan qochdi.

Qirradi so‘zi chegara yoki yon tomon ma’nosida ishlatiladi. Ammo bu frazada qanotning qirradi deb, qushni qanotining asl ma’nosini anglatadi.

In English:

The bat bit the ball.

Bat o‘zi ko‘rshapalak ma’nosini anglatadi, lekin bu yerda u sport asbobi (Baseball yoki kriketda ishlatiladigan *bat*) ma’nosida qo‘llanilgan.

Also, in tongue twisters, antonymy is often **context-dependent** and stylistically motivated.

The *plant* concept includes lexical units related to:

- growth and decay,
- freshness and dryness,
- strength and fragility,
- fertility and barrenness.

Such semantic features naturally lend themselves to **oppositional structuring**, making plant imagery highly suitable for antonymic constructions in tongue twisters.

Gradable antonymy is the most frequent type found in tongue twisters with the plant concept.

Example:

Tall trees twist, tiny trees tremble.

Here, *tall* and *tiny* form a gradable antonymic pair. The opposition emphasizes contrast in size while reinforcing alliteration and rhythm.

Another example:

Fresh flowers fade fast.

The words *fresh* and *fade* introduce a gradual semantic opposition between vitality and decline.

Contextual antonymy occurs when words function as opposites only within a specific semantic environment.

Example:

Green gardens grow, dry gardens droop.

The opposition *green* – *dry* becomes antonymic within the plant-based context, symbolizing life versus lifelessness.

Although *green* and *dry* are not absolute antonyms, the conceptual framework of plants creates semantic opposition.

Conversive antonymy is expressed through verbs denoting opposite processes in plant life.

Example:

Seeds sprout, stems shrink.

The verbs *sprout* and *shrink* represent opposite biological processes: expansion versus reduction.

Such oppositions reflect natural cycles and enhance the dynamic character of tongue twisters.

Evaluative antonymy involves oppositions based on positive and negative assessment.

Example:

Lovely leaves live long, lousy leaves lose life.

Here, *lovely* and *lousy* express positive and negative evaluation of plant qualities, contributing to emotional contrast and stylistic effect.

Antonymic relationships in plant-based tongue twisters perform several key functions:

The use of plant-based antonymy reflects universal human experience:

- plants symbolize life, renewal, and fragility;
- oppositions mirror natural cycles (growth–death, bloom–wither);
- cultural perceptions of nature influence lexical choice.

Thus, antonymy in tongue twisters is not only linguistic but also **conceptual and cultural**.

To sup up, the study demonstrates that antonymic relationships play a significant role in the semantic organization of tongue twisters with the concept *plant*. These oppositions are predominantly contextual and gradational, serving phonetic, semantic, and stylistic purposes. Tongue twisters therefore represent valuable material for exploring the interaction between sound and meaning in language.



References

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