

PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF OXYMORONS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH

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Abstract: The goal of this paper is to study the practical features of oxymorons in both Uzbek and English languages. The study looks at how oxymorons are used in regular conversation to bring out irony, humor, different moods, and criticism. The thesis uses examples from various sources to explain how the use of oxymorons is alike and different in Spanish and English.

Keywords: Oxymoron, pragmatics, irony, figurative language, semantics, Uzbek, English, stylistics.

Language allows not just for communication, but also for sharing how we feel and what we think. This type of expression relies heavily on figurative language, and oxymoron is a main part of it. By combining words that are opposite in meaning, oxymorons create an interesting effect. These expressions are used for practical reasons, for example, to be ironic, humorous, critical, or to put more emphasis on emotions.

Oxymoron involves using words that seem to contradict each other in order to make a powerful expression. Even though it contains a logical contradiction, the main aim of this device is to increase the depth of meaning, strong emotions, or to add a touch of irony. It encourages the listener or reader to look deeper and get the message behind the phrase. An oxymoron is a phrase made from words that do not fit semantically together, yet are used to present a strong and coherent idea. An oxymoron usually highlights a tension, a conflict in reality, or the different sides of human emotions.¹ Typical examples in English include:

- *bittersweet*
- *living dead*
- *clearly confused*

In Uzbek, we can find:

- *achchiq kulgu* (bitter laughter)
- *jim tovush* (silent sound)
- *yumshoq qattqlik* (soft hardness)

These expressions serve more than a decorative role—they often reflect deep philosophical or emotional truths.

Pragmatic Functions of Oxymorons: *Pragmatics studies how language is used in real-life situations and how meaning is shaped by context. Oxymorons, from a pragmatic point of view, are powerful tools for indirect expression. They allow speakers to express subtle evaluations, hidden criticism, humor, and emotional complexity⁶. Here are the main pragmatic functions of oxymorons in both English and Uzbek:*

a) Irony and Sarcasm: Oxymorons often serve as vehicles for irony. By combining two opposite concepts, the speaker can draw attention to absurdity or contradiction in a clever or humorous way.¹⁰

For example:

English: *“That was a definite maybe.”*

Uzbek: *“aniq noaniqlik”* (definite uncertainty)

These phrases highlight uncertainty in a sarcastic tone, often used to mock vague answers or indecisive behavior.

b) Emotional Emphasis: Oxymorons help express emotional duality—such as pain and pleasure occurring simultaneously. This makes them ideal for poetry, music, or personal reflection. Examples: English: *“Sweet sorrow”* (used by Shakespeare to express the sadness of parting).¹⁰ Uzbek: *“baxtli azob”* (happy torment), often used in romantic contexts to show the pain of love.⁷ Such expressions carry a depth that a simple adjective or literal phrase cannot convey.

c) Humor and Wordplay: Oxymorons can also serve humorous purposes. By combining contradictory terms, speakers can create a comic effect that surprises the listener.

Examples:

English: *“Seriously funny”, “pretty ugly”*

Uzbek: *“quvonchli yig‘i”* (joyful cry)

Humorous oxymorons are often used in media, advertising, or informal conversations to catch attention or entertain.

d) Indirect Criticism and Social Commentary: Oxymorons provide a way to criticize people, policies, or situations without direct confrontation. This is especially useful in societies where open criticism may not be socially acceptable¹. Examples: English: *“Civil war”* – a contradiction that reflects the tragedy of internal conflict. Uzbek: *“faol betaraflik”* (active neutrality) – often used critically to describe political stances that claim neutrality but are involved behind the scenes. Thus, oxymorons serve as indirect yet sharp tools of commentary and critique.

Usage Contexts of Oxymorons:

a) Literature and Poetry: In both English and Uzbek literature, oxymorons are commonly found in poetry and prose to convey complex emotional or philosophical ideas. **English literature:** Shakespeare frequently used oxymorons to dramatize emotional tension, as in *“O loving hate, O anything of nothing first create!”* **Uzbek literature:** Poets like Abdulla Oripov and Muhammad Yusuf often used oxymoronic expressions to portray internal conflict or critique societal norms. Example: *“sokin hayajon”*

(calm excitement) – used to describe mixed feelings during important life events.

b) Media and Advertising. Modern media and advertising also make creative use of oxymorons to attract attention or promote irony.

English: “*seriously fun*”, “*plastic glasses*”

Uzbek: “*sog‘lom zarar*” (healthy damage) – used in humorous or ironic health advice ads.

These phrases are effective in engaging the audience and leaving a lasting impression.

c) Political and Diplomatic Speech In politics, oxymorons can be employed to diplomatically phrase uncomfortable truths or contradictory policies.⁹

English: “*constructive destruction*”, “*friendly fire*”

Uzbek: “*faol betaraflik*”, “*insoniy zo‘ravonlik*” (humane violence)

These are often used in government reports or official discourse to mask harsh realities in a palatable form.

Cross-Linguistic Comparison of Uzbek and English Oxymorons: While oxymorons exist in both Uzbek and English, their frequency, tone, and context of use may differ due to cultural and linguistic differences.³ In English, oxymorons are widely used in everyday speech, media, and formal writing. In Uzbek, they are more often found in poetry, satire, or emotionally charged speech rather than in casual conversation.⁴

For example:

English: “*original copy*” – commonly used in bureaucratic setting.

Uzbek: “*kutilgan tasodif*” (expected coincidence) – poetic and less frequent in daily speech

This difference reflects broader cultural attitudes toward figurative language and rhetorical expression.

Challenges of Translation and Interpretation: One of the major challenges when dealing with oxymorons across languages is preserving their pragmatic meaning. A literal translation often fails to capture the nuance, irony, or cultural reference embedded in the original expression.

For instance: “Living dead” → tirik o‘lik in Uzbek may sound awkward or even confusing outside a specific cultural context. “achchiq kulgu” (bitter laughter) translated as bitter laugh in English may not carry the same emotional resonance unless placed within the right context. Thus, translators must consider not only the lexical meaning but also the cultural and pragmatic dimensions of oxymorons.

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