

# Contradictory Constructs: Oxymorons and Antonymic Vocabulary

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**Abstract:** This article explores linguistic anomalies, particularly oxymorons, within language's stylistic function. It discusses historical and contemporary understandings of anomalies, emphasizing their role in unlocking linguistic creativity in English and Russian. Through examples and scholarly insights, it shows how anomalies, like oxymorons, seamlessly integrate into language despite seeming unnatural. The study also explores parallels between oxymorons and upside-down songs, highlighting their shared foundation in paradoxical combinations. It underscores the multifaceted functions of language games like oxymorons and their role in amplifying meaning through linguistic play. Additionally, it situates oxymorons within the broader context of linguistic creativity, drawing parallels with other literary devices. Ultimately, it portrays oxymorons as tools for exploring alternative perspectives on reality and navigating life's complexities with humour and imagination.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Oxymoron, a stylistic phenomenon of contradictory nature, captivates with its unique fusion of incompatible elements, transcending conventional logical boundaries while preserving the essence of conveyed meaning. Its employment imbues text with individuality, enriching speech with originality and depth. Virtually no literary work is devoid of oxymoronic examples, highlighting its pervasive presence in language. Many linguists devote significant attention to this device, making it a focal point of research. Studies explore oxymoron from various angles, including linguostylistic interpretation and linguopragmatics, as well as delving into structural and semantic classifications. This work contributes to the understanding of oxymoron as a tool for creating anomalies within discourse (Kuregyan 2006).

Oxymoron, as an aesthetically concentrated stylistic phenomenon, adds a distinctive flavour to language by juxtaposing incongruous elements, thus evoking intrigue and complexity. Its usage transcends mere linguistic ornamentation, serving as a vehicle for conveying deeper layers of meaning. Through the lens of oxymoron, texts acquire a nuanced and enriched quality, resonating with readers on multiple levels. Linguistic scholars explore various aspects of oxymoron, exploring its implications and

applications across different contexts. This research aims to dissect oxymoron as a potent tool for creating anomalies within the fabric of language, shedding light on its intricate interplay of contradiction and coherence (.).

## 2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To explore the stylistic phenomenon, a variety of sources were utilised, ranging from encyclopaedias and fiction to dictionaries and materials from foreign conferences. Employing an array of linguistic analysis methods, including the descriptive method, contextual analysis, comparative method, conceptual integration method, and cultural analysis, the paper aims to delve into the use of oxymoron in creating anomalies. The objective is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the intricacies surrounding oxymoron. By integrating these methodologies, the article endeavours to offer a multifaceted and in-depth examination of this stylistic figure.

Combining resources from disparate fields, the study of oxymoron delves into its nuances through a multidimensional lens. Encyclopaedic knowledge, literary works, and cross-cultural perspectives provide a rich tapestry for analysis. Employing descriptive, contextual, and comparative analyses, alongside conceptual integration and cultural

scrutiny, the research seeks to unveil the complexities inherent in oxymoronic expressions. Through this amalgamation of approaches, the paper endeavours to present a nuanced and profound understanding of oxymoron's role in creating linguistic anomalies.

### 3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Before exploring the denotative basis of the oxymoron, it's essential to understand the nature of linguistic anomalies in stylistic language functions. A linguistic anomaly can significantly contribute to realizing the creative potential of stylistic means. According to Kozlova (2012), it's a linguistic phenomenon contradicting linguistic norms to some extent. Surprisingly, researchers argue that synonymy and similar phenomena also qualify as anomalies, a view more relevant in ancient times when anomaly was contrasted with analogy. Today, the concept of linguistic anomaly is different.

Language naturally deviates from norms despite striving for stability, giving rise to semantic anomalies like the oxymoron. Researchers consider it part of puns and wordplay due to its "unnaturalness" (Kozlova, 2018). Figures of speech like metaphor and metonymy may deviate from direct meaning (denotation) but are accepted norms in speech. In literary speech, anomalies can be adequate, as seen in the example: "– Давно мы с вами не видались!... с тех пор много воды утекло! – Да, князь! Правда, что много воды утекло! Даже Дунай уплыл от нас! – отвечал Ермолов." (Mikhail Pogodin: General Ermolov. Battles and victories of the legendary soldier of the empire, hero of Eylau and Borodin). Here, functional load outweighs aesthetic interpretation.

Shcherba (1939) highlighted the connection between adhering to systemic patterns (the norm) and deviations from it. Anomaly is widely used in literary works, reflecting the linguistic creativity of the writer. Tropes ensure clear idea transmission and are products of authors' creativity. Stable phrases and proverbs represent stereotypical reality, while occasional units reflect creative linguistic competence.

According to Ganeev (2004), analogy is simply a linguistic phenomenon accepted by people. "There are no norms in nature; comparing normal and abnormal is determined by people. A living corpse isn't possible in nature, but the oxymoron 'living corpse' is, normative in modern speech (referring to a very sick person). Like in English, oxymorons are accepted without obstacles, e.g., 'awfully beautiful',

indicating extreme beauty. Language anomalies are products of people, defining what's normal. Many linguistic phenomena start as anomalies then become commonplace, making them 'usual'.

Despite contradiction, oxymorons are conventional anomalies, easily accepted, e.g., 'terribly beautiful'. They function smoothly and are considered linguistic facts, mastered by native speakers. Oxymorons may be seen as techniques by writers or mere wordplay. They represent complex phenomena, defined as 'analytème', reflecting contradictory aspects of life.

Chukovsky (1990), who is famous among readers of children's literature, in one of his works "From Two to Five" discovers that the child, to some extent, adopts folk linguistic thinking. This is observed at all levels of language; in morphology, phonetics and the most interesting manifestation in vocabulary. You can also find interesting children's phrases used to achieve a comic effect in reverse rhymes, which describe an extraordinary fantasy world that is far from reality.

Blind peeks, Deaf eavesdrops, Legless ran after, Mute guard shouted. (A. Sobolevsky. Velikorussian folk songs.) Other nations are also known for their "absurdities," which were created by different representatives of nations. An example from English folklore: If a gentleman, sir, was a lady, - The world would be Upside-down! If any or all of these wonders Should ever come about, I should not consider them blunders, For I should be Inside-out! Such inverted rhymes are created by naming one object by another, imposing the semantics of the first: If the pony rode his master, If the buttercups ate the cows, If the cats had the dire disaster To be worried, sir, by the mouse; (W. Rands. B. Topsy-Turvy World.) In these songs, the world is presented as completely upside down and absurd. The reasons why our ancestors imagined the world in this way are unknown, and at the same time interesting. Perhaps, with the help of these inverted rhymes, they wondered why A-A, B-B and why not vice versa. Or even in this way they wanted to overcome fear, difficulties and troubles. It is quite likely that behind these eccentric absurdities there is a recognition of the world and its possibilities by representatives of those peoples. What is this world like? What can people do in this world? It is obvious that children and ancient people at the initial stage of their development understood the impossibility of the existence of such an absurd world.

According to the results, oxymorons are closer to upside-down songs. Both phenomena are built on a paradox that combines the incongruous. If upside-down songs are created for some of the reasons stated

above, then the oxymoron phenomenon is different; Let's just say that this is a more serious "shifter", a phrase that, at first glance, is simply based on absurdity and wordplay. Although, this is one of the techniques of language for describing the external world through the creative use of language. Moreover, there is a significant difference between a play on words and a linguistic anomaly. Although both are based on attracting attention with their uniqueness, they differ in function. Researchers divide the functions of language games into expressive, manipulative, and carnivalistic, i.e., I'm playing. The latter is considered the main function of the language game, based on the very name of the phenomenon.

The great British linguist Crystal (Crystal 1998), in his work on language games, addresses the reader with the question: "Why do people play with language, expanding and violating its norms?" The answer to this question was: "For pleasure, fun, jokes" (for fun). While the main function of a linguistic anomaly is to increase meaning through wordplay, conveying the innermost feelings of the person being described. The oxymoron borrowed one of the characteristics of shapeshifters - to see the world around them in other facets. You could even say that the oxymoron is an improved form of shapeshifter. Under the described there is a real and hypothetical denotation. This phenomenon is the result of in-depth thinking. The fact that an oxymoron defines and denotes denotation in such a non-standard way is not a coincidence, but inverted rhymes are living proof that such an approach to naming is in our roots and does not in any way interfere with the popular consciousness. This statement can also be confirmed by the presence of oxymoronic phraseological units (Sinyuk 1977).

Of course, not all oxymorons can be classified as phraseological units: bitter joy, bored fun. However, without a doubt, one can assert the presence of an oxymoron in the following phraseological units: get away with it, nothing at all, not oneself. The world itself consists of contradictions, and this idea is not new. Thanks to this contrast, the essence of the world is determined. Being a contradictory creature, a person strives for the ideal and tries to understand the essence of abnormality. Although not in all situations the norm can satisfy a person. For example, wolves hunt sheep and eat them, feeding their cubs - it's logical. And there is no benefit or benefit for a person from this situation. Consequently, a person domesticates dogs, and they guard herds and other property.

It is not always possible to realize expressions about well-fed wolves and whole sheep. The human mind allows us to adjust the world in our way, transforming it into a more perfect form. Let's go back to the example about wolves and sheep. The most optimal alternative in this situation would be for the wolves to eat the sheep. It is obvious that this will not happen; this is absurdity in its purest form. The thirst to experiment and transform leads a person to create an ugly world in his mind. The end result makes the author himself laugh, realizing that this will not happen in life. In this created upside-down world, the key element is the "upside-down image".

The above thoughts can be more clearly explained in the words of Lotman (Lotman 1999) in his work "Culture and Explosion": "In a space that lies outside the norm (based on the norm and violating the norm), we are faced with a whole range of possibilities: from ugliness (destruction of norms) to the completeness of positive qualities located above the norm. However, in both cases we are not talking about finding a norm, its simplification and hardening, but about life pouring over the edge. One of the most elementary techniques for going beyond predictability is a trope (especially often used in the visual arts), in which two opposed objects exchange dominant features. This technique is widely used in the vast baroque literature of the "inverted world." In numerous texts, a sheep ate a wolf, a horse rode a man, and a blind man led a sighted man. These inverted plots were usually used in satirical texts.

Texts found in folk art or texts created by writers will include this "inverted world", creating the desired or, conversely, inventing the unwanted, which, in turn, causes laughter. Thus, a person goes through the difficulties of life easier with the help of humour. In both cases, we are faced with an "upside-down world", with non-standard oxymoronic images.

## 4 CONCLUSION

The exploration of linguistic anomalies, particularly the oxymoron, reveals their crucial role in creative expression within language. Anomalies deviate from conventional linguistic norms, yet they contribute to linguistic richness and creativity. Figures of speech like metaphor and metonymy, while deviating from direct meaning, are widely accepted in speech. The oxymoron, despite its seemingly contradictory nature, functions seamlessly in language usage and is even compared to phraseological units. Other cultures also exhibit their own linguistic absurdities, reflecting a universal aspect of human creativity and expression.

Any language anomaly is a product of the linguo-creative activity of the language.

However, an oxymoron can be classified as a conditional anomaly, since despite the obvious sign of an anomaly, it can easily function in communication. Through the exploration of anomalies, we gain deeper insights into the intricacies of language and its role in shaping human understanding and expression.

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