THE ARTISTIC USE OF OXYMORON IN UZBEK POETRY

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Abstract*. The article examines the concept of the oxymoron as a stylistic device in literary language, through which a new meaning is generated by means of the illogical combination of words in order to enhance expressiveness, richness, and vividness in the depiction of images and events. The definition and examples of oxymoron are presented based on the mastery of Uzbek poets in employing this device.*

Keywords*: oxymoron, literary work, language of the text, sentence component, modifier, modified element, illogical combination, prose, poetic device, emotionality.*

Introduction

The term *"oxymoron"* (Uzbek: *oksimoron / oksyumoron*) derives from the Greek *oxymoron*, meaning "pointedly foolish" or "sharp-dull." Semantically, it refers to a phrase formed through the illogical combination of two lexically contradictory units that stand in a modifier–modified (determinative) relationship. In linguistics, such phenomena are also referred to as *antisemantic units* (*antisemias*). Expressions such as *"hot snow," "red snow," "sweet lie," "burning river," "living corpse," "false truth," "lying angels," "black sun," "honest thief," "intelligent thief," "wise destroyer," "severe summer," "scorching winter," "white coal," "dark fortune," "fiery ice," "liquid stone," "screaming silence," "soundless cry," "familiar stranger," "cruel kindness," "cold love,"* and similar unexpected combinations constitute oxymorons. Above all, they possess artistic and aesthetic value insofar as they generate new and unexpected meanings and evoke novel associations. For this reason, they are regarded as a distinct poetic device. More precisely, the oxymoron is a type of figurative expression that serves to create strong imagery. It is based on the emergence of an extraordinary new meaning from semantically contradictory words, and therefore is not always immediately comprehensible. This very feature contributes to its expressive power and emotional impact. In an oxymoron, primary emphasis is placed on the modifying element, through which the meaning of the modified component is more deeply revealed. The comprehension of an oxymoron may require a degree of intellectual effort from the reader. However, once the reader fully grasps the essence of the oxymoron employed by the poet or writer, they may perceive meanings that extend beyond the author's explicit intention.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative descriptive and stylistic analysis method. The article analyzes oxymoron as a poetic device in Uzbek poetry by examining examples from the works of Uzbek poets, particularly Rauf Parfi, Muhammad Yusuf, and Ulugbek Hamdam. The selected examples are studied according to their semantic contradiction, artistic function, emotional effect, and role in creating symbolic meaning.

The analysis focuses on how logically contradictory word combinations form new poetic meanings and how these combinations increase the expressiveness of the text. Special attention is paid to oxymorons such as "black sun," "black light," "pitch-black snow," "liquid stones," "living death," "soundless cry," "sweet torment of life," and "sweet lie."

Results

The analysis shows that oxymoron is an effective stylistic device in Uzbek poetry. It creates unexpected meanings by combining words with opposite or logically incompatible meanings. These combinations make poetic images more vivid, emotional, and symbolically rich.

The examples show that Uzbek poets use oxymoron to express complex emotional and psychological states. For example, “black sun” may symbolize misfortune, hypocrisy, or spiritual darkness, while “black light” creates a powerful contradiction between brightness and darkness. Similarly, expressions such as “living death” and “soundless cry” help convey deep pain, inner conflict, and emotional suffering.

The results also show that oxymoron differs from simple contrast or antithesis. While antithesis places opposite ideas side by side, oxymoron unites contradictory meanings inside one expression. This makes it more compact, expressive, and poetic.

The oxymoron represents a specific poetic method of artistic reflection of reality. Its characteristic features are particularly evident in poetry produced in the second half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century, where it serves to express characters and ideas through distinctive symbolic markers. This expressive device has contributed to the renewal of national poetry in terms of content, form, and stylistic development. As a stylistic device that imbues imagery and interpretation with emotional coloring, the oxymoron is not equally present in the works of all poets and writers. It is most frequently observed in the poetry of authors whose творчество is marked by a strong tendency toward symbolism. An oxymoron is formed either by equating two opposing concepts in an unnatural, logically incompatible manner, or by inappropriately attributing the characteristic of one entity to another. Accordingly, oxymorons may be classified into two main types:

1. Oxymorons arising from the illogical equivalence of two opposing concepts. For example, the phrase *“black sun”* is syntactically correct but logically contradictory, since the sun is not black in reality but characteristically associated with brightness or a yellow hue. Thus, such a combination contradicts both nature and logic. Nevertheless, from an artistic and stylistic perspective, it cannot be regarded as erroneous. An illustrative example can be found in the poem *“Black Sun”* by Muhammad Yusuf. In this context, the poet employs the phrase metaphorically and symbolically to refer to a lyrical subject whose life has brought misfortune to others and has been marked by falsehood and hypocrisy. The adjective *“black”* signals the negative traits of the character. As noted by V. A. Kukharenko, the primary function of the oxymoron in such cases is to express the author’s subjective attitude toward the depicted phenomenon [1].

2. Oxymorons formed through the inappropriate transfer of attributes from one entity to another.

For instance, expressions such as *“severe summer”* or *“scorching winter”* arise from the misapplication of seasonal characteristics. In reality, severity is associated with winter, while scorching heat is characteristic of summer. A poetic example involving the palace complex *Sitorai Mohi Khosa* (the residence associated with the Emir of Bukhara’s harem) illustrates this type. In the cited verses, despite the intense heat of summer, the poet describes individuals who “feel cold,” thereby creating a striking contradiction. This apparent illogicality prompts deeper reflection, leading the reader to interpret the phrase symbolically: despite material abundance, the inhabitants—women confined within the palace—experience emotional suffering and spiritual deprivation. Here, the oxymoron contributes to the compositional unity of the poem.

Based on usage, oxymorons may also be categorized into the following types:

1. Oxymorons describing natural phenomena, e.g., *"hot snow."* Such expressions may reflect experiential realities (e.g., snow shelters providing warmth in extreme conditions).
2. Oxymorons describing seasons, e.g., *"severe summer," "scorching winter."*
3. Oxymorons expressing human characteristics, e.g., *"brave woman," "effeminate man," "living corpse."*
4. Oxymorons describing objects, e.g., *"small giant constructions."*
5. Oxymorons in naming conventions, e.g., *"Old New Year."*

Oxymorons may appear not only as word combinations but also as idiomatic expressions, such as *"to come out dry from water," "to make water flow backward,"* and *"to emerge whole from the mill."* Thus, the oxymoron arises from the unexpected semantic integration of mutually contradictory elements. For this reason, it is sometimes interpreted as a "stylistic anomaly" or the combination of words that would not ordinarily co-occur. However, a stylistic anomaly is something in a piece of writing that stands out because it breaks the expected style or pattern.

Discussion

It is also important to distinguish the oxymoron from *antithesis*. While antithesis involves the juxtaposition of contrasting concepts, its function differs fundamentally from that of the oxymoron. Below given some examples for usage of juxtaposition in literary and real life.

In written text:

"He was very wealthy, yet his soul was profoundly impoverished".

Wealthy and poverty are placed side by side to highlight contrast.

In literature:

Joy and sorrow are depicted within the same scene, emphasizing their emotional contrast.

In real life:

A modern skyscraper stands next to an old, dilapidated house, illustrating a striking visual contrast.

Oxymorons are employed in both poetry and prose. In poetry, they often constitute a key element of the poet's stylistic system and contribute to compositional structure. By introducing contrast, they enhance the emotional intensity and expressiveness of the text. For example, in a poem by Rauf Parfi beginning with the line "Not rain, but pearls are falling," the expression *"black light shines in my eyes"* exemplifies an oxymoron. Since light inherently implies brightness, attributing the quality of darkness (*black*) to it creates a logical contradiction that generates poetic effect.

My body quivers as if balanced upon a needle's tip;
within my eyes, a dark radiance flickers.
Last night, in the rain,
it appeared to me like an ominous vision—
in that night which had washed her face,
there emerged a naked consciousness unknown to me.

Similarly, in another poem, the phrase *"pitch-black snow"* symbolizes oppression and violence imposed upon the Uzbek people during a totalitarian period. In a poem dedicated to the Japanese poet Ishikawa Takuboku, Parfi employs the oxymoron *"liquid stones"* to emphasize the transience of human life, suggesting that only good deeds ensure lasting remembrance. In the poem *"Love,"* Parfi uses multiple oxymorons in succession, such as *"living death"* and *"soundless cry,"* both formed through the combination of logically incompatible elements. Likewise, Ulugbek

Hamdam employs oxymoronic expressions such as *"sweet torment of life"* and *"sweet lie,"* combining semantically opposing words to produce new conceptual meanings.

Conclusion

The oxymoron occupies a significant place in modern poetry, particularly in the expression of symbolism. It prioritizes interpretative depth over direct representation and serves as an effective means of conveying the emotional and psychological states of the author.

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