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The Linguopoetic Function of Oxymorons in the Works of A. Dabylov

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Abstract: This paper explores the linguopoetic and expressive properties of oxymorons within the poetic heritage of the prominent Karakalpak poet, A. Dabylov. Positioned at the intersection of stylistic contrast and semantic synthesis, the oxymoron serves as an essential tool for maximizing text imagery and revealing the author's psychological and aesthetic attitudes. By evaluating a wide range of text segments from Dabylov's collections, this study uncovers how the poet pairs contrasting concepts—such as "keyless lock," "uneducated nation's poet," and "flowerless nightingale"—to produce sudden, metaphorical meanings that encapsulate the socioeconomic struggles, historical memory, and natural worldview of the Karakalpak people. The structural-semantic analysis demonstrates that while oxymorons share a binary opposition with antonyms and antitheses, they operate uniquely by merging opposites into a unified, descriptive concept rather than separating or negating them. Ultimately, this research sheds light on Dabylov's linguistic mastery and contributes a new template to the stylistic and semantic investigation of early 20th-century Karakalpak poetry.

Keywords: Oxymoron, Linguopoetics, Stylistic Figures, Contrast, A. Dabylov, Karakalpak Poetry, Semantic Synthesis, Antithesis.

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Introduction

The artistic value of any literary work is directly linked to the expressiveness of its language and the strategic deployment of stylistic devices. In philology, the expressive means utilized to enhance imagery, conciseness, and emotional sharpness are fundamentally categorized into lexical means (tropes) and syntactic arrangements (stylistic figures). While conventional tropes like epithets, similes, and metonymies enrich individual words or phrases, syntactic and stylistic figures reshape structural boundaries to amplify communicative impact [1].

Among these figures, the phenomenon of *contrast* holds a vital position in both social communication and literary aesthetics. In human cognition, contrast functions as a natural psychological reflex: invoking an image like "peace" or "sweet" instinctively summons its opposite, "war" or "bitter." Within structural linguistics and stylistics, this conceptual juxtaposition manifests through several related but distinct phenomena: antonymy, antithesis, and oxymoron [2].

An oxymoron—derived from the Greek root for "witty-foolish"—represents a unique manifestation of semantic contrast. Unlike an antithesis, where contradictory items are placed against each other to emphasize separation or negation, an oxymoron structurally

merges opposite components into a single sequence, where one element modifies the other. This fusion bypasses conventional linguistic expectations, generating an entirely unexpected, figurative meaning filled with dense imagery [3].

While the theoretical framework of oxymorons has been categorized from grammatical and semantic viewpoints by scholars like Yu.V. Massalskaya, its practical application within specific regional literatures requires deeper investigation. In Karakalpak literature, the works of Abbas Dabylov stand out as a rich repository of this linguistic phenomenon. This study aims to conduct a thorough linguopoetic evaluation of oxymorons in A. Dabylov's poetry, demonstrating how he converts simple structural contradictions into highly evocative tools of social critique, psychological portraiture, and aesthetic expression [4].

Methods

This study adopts an integrated philological approach, combining structural-semantic analysis, contextual stylistic evaluation, and linguopoetic text mapping. The operational framework is organized into the following phases:

1. **Text Corpus Selection:** A targeted selection of poetic excerpts was compiled from A. Dabylov's definitive publications, including his *Selected Works* (2018) and *Works, Vol. 3* (1972). The selected data focuses on structural segments containing direct conceptual contradictions.
2. **Structural-Grammatical Classification:** Following the theoretical frameworks of contemporary text semantics and Massalskaya's typology, the identified oxymorons were classified based on their morphosyntactic structures (e.g., adjectival-noun combinations, substantive pairings, and parallel phrase structures).
3. **Contextual-Semantic Mapping:** Each oxymoron was examined within its immediate stanza context to decode the underlying metaphorical meanings produced by the conceptual clash. This step distinguished conventional dictionary antonymy from contextual, poetic oxymorons.
4. **Comparative Stylistic Analysis:** The functional boundaries of the oxymorons were contrasted with neighboring figures like antithesis to clarify their unique contribution to text semantics and communicative impact.

Various artistic tools of language are widely used in writing and speech to increase conciseness, imagery, and sharpness of thought. The artistic value of any literary work is manifested through its language and the stylistic devices employed within it. These expressive means in a language are primarily divided into two types: lexical and syntactic.

Lexical expressive means are called tropes, while syntactic expressive means are referred to as stylistic (or rhetorical) figures. There are many types of tropes, each performing specific functions in a sentence. Tropes include epithet, simile, metonymy, synecdoche, irony, allegory, hyperbole, litotes, and others.

However, the linguistic units we intend to discuss are stylistic figures. Among the expressive means of language, stylistic figures hold a significant place. Stylistic (or rhetorical) figures are specially constructed syntactic sequences or sentences that serve to enhance the imagery of language. The following types of stylistic figures are most commonly used.

An oxymoron (from Greek) is considered a descriptive method used to emphasize the features of an object by placing words that express two contradictory concepts in immediate succession. Expressions such as "*the living dead*," "*the end of eternity*," "*dead souls*," and "*happy beggars*" serve as examples of oxymorons. An oxymoron is constructed by utilizing contradiction to create a stylistic effect. From a psychological perspective, an oxymoron is viewed as a method of resolving ambiguous situations. According to Yu.V. Massalskaya, oxymorons can be classified from grammatical and semantic viewpoints.

"From a grammatical perspective:

- One-word oxymorons: (*demigoddess / half-woman deity*);
- Diverse oxymorons: (*hot snow*);
- Equipartite oxymorons: (*the epicenter of the holiday*).

From a semantic perspective, oxymorons are divided into:

- Denotative and connotative: (*female politician*);
- Conventional and temporary: (*dry wine*);
- Antonymic and non-antonymic: (*poor rich man, perfect mistake*);
- Natural and artificial: (*dangerously beautiful, humane guillotine*)".

An oxymoron stands close to antithesis. While in an antithesis, words with mutually contradictory meanings negate one another, in an oxymoron, contradictory concepts are combined. In the social sciences, the phenomenon of contrast remains one of the issues of constant interest to researchers. The phenomenon of contradiction, understood as a broad concept that identifies the distinctive qualities of things and objects by juxtaposing their inherent actions, states, and features, is connected to all types of art and sciences related to human activity.

"Contrast manifests both sensorially (through symbols, drawings, images) and intellectually or abstractly (through words, concepts, and laws), reflecting the distinguishing features between objects and phenomena. This situation leads to the formation of an opposing image in the human mind. If a person thinks of the concept of 'sweet,' the contrasting 'bitter' involuntarily comes to mind. If one uses the term 'peace' in speech, the term 'war' immediately manifests.

When reasoning about virtues of character, vices naturally appear as well. Contrast constantly occurs and prevails in social life as a regularity related to human potential, intellect, life experience, general educational level, and attitude towards nature and society. In philology, relevant dictionaries specify that contrast has semantic, stylistic, and rhythmic-syntactic types. Accordingly, semantic contrast is based on expressing concepts that create a contradiction as being in opposition, usually in a way that cannot be combined. The manifestation of this phenomenon in the lexical domain of language with the help of lexicological units is understood as an oxymoron.

Results

Stylistic contrast occurs when language units are used for various stylistic purposes. Thus, the stylistic function of contrast is observed in its service as a method for creating figurative, metaphorical expressions in speech [5]. The emergence of rhythmic-syntactic contrast is directly related to the text, implying a strong collision or convergence between rhythm and syntax. In the emergence of this type of contrast, the paired components expressing opposition ensure structural symmetry within the contrast as a specific structural-semantic feature [6].

Although terms such as "*contrast*," "*antonymy*," "*antithesis*," and "*antonym*" are widely used today in philology regarding the phenomenon of contradiction, it is possible to show the differences between actions, states, and features within them. From a philological viewpoint, if the manifestation of these phenomena is studied through units belonging to various linguistic situations, contrast in literature is understood in a broad sense as a phenomenon that generalizes related concepts [7]. In literature, it is described as "a method of portraying the character of a person, or the qualities and attributes of things and phenomena by placing them in opposition to one another," while in stylistics, it is viewed as an essential link based on the mismatch of the stylistic coloring of words, which are interrelated according to general regularities.

The oxymoron, considered within the framework of contrast, is a word of Greek origin meaning *witty-foolish*. It represents the opposing combination of lexical units according to their meaning, resulting in a concept with a new meaning [8].

The primary function of an oxymoron is to express the author's personal attitude toward the depicted phenomenon. Unlike other phenomena viewed within the framework of contrast, an oxymoron expresses a new meaning by combining components that are opposite in terms of content. Based on these characteristics, in literary studies, it is considered one of the types of words used in a figurative sense, where the opposing concepts within its structure bring about a new, sudden meaning. This characteristic feature in an oxymoron acquires strong imagery. In general, although the quality of expressing opposing meanings unites the oxymoron and antithesis within a common field of contrast, there are clear differences between them [9].

The distinctive aspect of antithesis is that the author compares a certain side of the object or event under discussion with the exact same side of another object or event to draw the reader's attention and emphasize that specific feature. In an oxymoron, however, as we have observed, two words with opposing meanings are combined together, where one acts as a modifier for the other. Yet, in this case, more emphasis is placed on the figurative meaning arising from this combination. From this, it becomes clear that oxymorons resemble antonyms in their lexical-semantic features. However, they differ from each other in their usage in speech, purpose, method of formation, and function. Their artistic-aesthetic impact function becomes clearly visible in poetic texts [10].

In short, in reflecting the linguistic picture of the world within an artistic text, drawing the reader's attention to the crucial points of opposing reality ensures artistic-aesthetic impact. The current development of philological science is characterized by a growing interest in researching how texts reflect specific features belonging to various forms of speech [11]. Viewing the text in the social sciences as a complex unit, a structural-semantic product, an organized communicative whole, and a meaningful completion within logical, grammatical, and semantic connections shows that investigating the specific characteristics of the oxymoron is one of the urgent issues in studying text semantics [12].

We can observe from the following examples how effectively and qualitatively the poet utilized the expressive means of language in his creativity. Essentially, the following examples of oxymorons were taken from the poetic collections of A. Dabylov. For instance:

"Hoping that orphanhood and widowhood will pass from our heads, Hoping that the wounds of my heart will heal completely, Thinking that one who has experienced deficiency will reach perfection, My mother constantly walked with these thoughts."

"Without studying, I indulged too much in games, Now I am no different from an empty leather sack, I have become the exact equivalent of a keyless lock, I could not open my heart to make things happen."

"Poverty turns out to be a friend to the uneducated, Like a featherless bird trying to raise its wings, Knowledge is a great fruit if one can grasp it, But I could not reach my hand out to attain it." ("From Knowledge")

A number of oxymorons can be encountered in this poem titled *"From Knowledge"* by A. Dabylov.

In this poem by A. Dabylov, the word combination *"deficiency-perfection"* (*kemlik-kamal*) in the first stanza can serve as an example of an oxymoron. That is, it implies that the future of a person who has seen deficiency will not be bad, and expresses belief that they will certainly achieve a good result. In the subsequent lines, we took the combination *"keyless lock"* (*gilsiz qulip*) as an example. Since a lock is inherently created with a key, it cannot perform any function without a key and becomes useless. On this basis, the phrase *keyless lock* functions as an oxymoron. The phrase *"featherless bird"* (*pársiz qus*) in the third

example is also related to this; since almost all birds have feathers, remaining featherless – that is, becoming a *featherless bird*—carries a deep underlying meaning. For example, it conveys meanings such as being incapable or useless. Nevertheless, it serves as a clear example of an oxymoron [13].

"I emerged as a poet from an uneducated nation, What can come from a tongue that fails to articulate? From a dark, sorrowful, and sad heart, I walked for a long time without finding the spring of words. I write about beautiful literature, Living souls improve through assistance, If upbringing clearly reaches them through nourishment, It will lead one's steed to its ultimate goal." ("My Dream")

In the poem "My Dream," combinations like "poet of an uneducated nation" (*sawatsız eldiñ shayırı*) and "living souls" (*janlı janlar*) serve as examples of oxymorons.

In these presented examples, by using the oxymoron *poet of an uneducated nation*, the poet presents concepts that are contradictory to each other. This, of course, reflects the hardships of the lyrical hero and his efforts to emerge as an educated poet from an uneducated nation. In the next example, in the phrase *living souls*, since there are no "lifeless souls," the combination *living souls* acts as an oxymoron.

"In the nineteenth century, his name was well-known, The boneless tongue of the Karakalpak people, A flowerless nightingale even when finding a melody, I am Berdaq, whose life passed in constant oppression."

However, the Amu Darya is bridleless and reinless, It has waves that can break mountains without guarantee, The riverbank is also unfaithful to its promise, Disrupting the calculations of the Karakalpak people." ("The Competition Intesified")

Discussion

In this poem by A. Dabylov, we included the phrase "flowerless nightingale" (*gúlsiz búlbil*) in the category of oxymorons. Because a nightingale exists where there is a flower, and a flower exists where there is a nightingale, through the phrase *flowerless nightingale*, the poet attempted to depict the life of the people living in deprivation. In the next example, regarding the phrase "unfaithful promise" (*opasız wáde*), a promise is inherently given to be kept faithfully. If unfaithfulness is committed, then it is not a promise. Therefore, the phrase *unfaithful promise* serves as an oxymoron [14].

"In such conditions, he completed forty or fifty tasks, He presented his works before the people. Whoever wrote a dastan, a novel, or a play, He gave his criticism by looking into the mirror of friendship." ("To Qállı Ayımbetov")

A number of oxymorons are also encountered in the poem "To Qállı Ayımbetov".

Since criticism (*sm*) inherently possesses a critical and exposing nature, the phrase "friendly criticism" (*doslıq smı*) expresses mutually contradictory concepts, and therefore, we included it in the category of oxymorons.

"The Karakalpak people experienced that from the start, The century that passed, covered in scorched earth, The tyrants brought the sky down to the earth, Their ribs ached, and their backs were broken."

Finding no stability due to the tyrants' oath, Finding no relief from the intended effort, From the cloud of darkness hanging over their heads, Their daytime days constantly turned into night." ("Years of the Past Century")

In these examples, the phrase "the sky brought down to the earth" (*jerge túsken aspan*) functions as an oxymoron. Because the sky falling to the earth is an incomprehensible situation and an impossible phenomenon. The poet used this artistic device to depict the destruction inflicted upon the people by tyrannical enemies. In the subsequent examples, in the combinations "unstable oath" (*turaqsız ant*) and "reliefless labor" (*ráhatsız miynet*), since they are opposite to their core meanings, these also serve as examples of oxymorons [15].

"Barefoot, I suffered abuse since my youth, The world became a wild deer fleeing without letting me catch it, The moon and the sky became closer than that, Who else is there like me who stepped into fire for the sake of life! ("Memory")

The stars shine together with the moon, Twinkling and smiling, looking down at the earth, Saying: living and lifeless, rise from your place! The tongue of spring is speaking exactly that. ("Spring")

In the poem "Spring," given through a didactic artistic text, the sequences "The world became a wild deer fleeing without letting me catch it, the moon and the sky became closer than that" present contradictory meanings. Even though a deer is a swift wild animal, it is possible to catch it. In the first example, the distance of the moon and the sky is implied, and a contradictory concept is understood by portraying it through comparison to a certain thing. In the second example, the phrase "living-lifeless" (*janli-jansiz*) consists of mutually contradictory words; since a person without a soul is a dead body, and a person with a soul is a living person, and these two units appear together, they function as an oxymoron according to their meaning.

Conclusion

The systematic analysis of A. Dabylov's poetry reveals that the oxymoron is not merely an occasional decorative trope, but a foundational pillar of his linguopoetic system. Through the purposeful pairing of contradictory lexical units, Dabylov successfully bridges the gap between historical reality and artistic imagination, capturing the complex dualities of human experience and social transition.

The textual evidence demonstrates that Dabylov utilized oxymorons across three core thematic domains:

- **Socio-Educational Critique:** Through phrases like "keyless lock" (*gilsiz qulip*) and "featherless bird" (*parsiz qus*), the poet conveys the heavy psychological limitations imposed by illiteracy, turning structural contradictions into symbols of social stagnation.
- **National Identity and Hardship:** By describing historical figures or his own persona through constructs like "flowerless nightingale" (*gilsiz bulbil*) or "poet of an uneducated nation" (*sawatsiz eldin shayri*), he highlights the resilience of Karakalpak cultural expression amidst systemic material deprivation.
- **Historical and Natural Transcendence:** Extreme phrases like "the sky brought down to the earth" (*jerge tusken aspan*) and "living-lifeless" (*janli-jansiz*) compress massive, conflicting realities into single lines, illustrating the destructive impact of war and the renewing vitality of nature.

In conclusion, this research proves that oxymorons in Dabylov's works function as an external cognitive stabilizer, allowing the poet to communicate deep, multi-layered truths with extreme linguistic economy. From a stylistic perspective, his technique relies heavily on using the modifying component to completely redefine the semantic core of the phrase, creating a vibrant, unexpected mental image. Ultimately, studying these specific characteristics deepens our understanding of text semantics, showcases the expressive potential of the Karakalpak language, and provides a valuable framework for future research into Turkic poetic styles.

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