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Structural Analysis of the Oxymoron in the Sonnets of William Shakespeare

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Abstract

This paper considers the structural groups of oxymoron in the Russian and English languages. It is also relevant to study oppositional lexical units represented in heterogeneous system languages from the standpoint of linguistic and extra linguistic meanings, since the figures of contrast are inconceivable without the associative-emotional and evaluative qualifications of the objects of opposition. They give the analysis of the oxymoron's nature and its functions in two different-structured languages. The article has carried out lexical and semantic characteristics of oxymoron. In the linguistic literature there is no generalized, concrete and universal structural and semantic classification of this stylistic device. This study attempts to create a structural and semantic classification, combining all the existing varieties of this figure of contrast. The analysis is applied in the linguistic examination of the Sonnets written by William Shakespeare. When studying, systemizing and analyzing the opposite units, it is extremely important to study their structural features. The main objective of this study is to identify and describe the types of oxymoron in the language of Shakespeare's sonnets.

Keywords: Linguistics, Language, Speech, Lexical and semantic characteristics, Types of oxymoron, Contrast, Opposition, Sonnet, Shakespeare.

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Introduction

The knowledge of the existence of the opposite in both languages stems, first, from the axiom that the opposite is present in all lexical subjects; Second, from the history of the development of denotatory systems worked out by mankind; Thirdly, a great experience of comparing the analyzed languages and, in particular, on the basis of this work on the figures of contrast and opposition. The abundance of antonyms and additional lexical pairs in the dictionary of natural languages is connected, apparently, with the universal tendency to polarize experience and value judgments—to think of opposites (Safina, 2015: 495).

Oxymoron is a stylistic figure of contrast and opposition, which is a combination of opposing words, figuratively revealing mutually exclusive and contradictory principles: *убогая роскошь, большой карлик, ужасно красиво, горячий снег, faith unfaithful, falsely true, hot snow, free slave, loud silence, excellent pain, sad joy.*

A distinctive feature of oxymoron is that this method is based on the deviation from the laws of the language code, on the violation of the rules of the semantic compatibility of words, which creates the effect of surprise, gives a new meaning to phrases and verbal turns, and leads to a new concept. On the one hand, oxymoron is a stylistic device for the synthesis of opposites, in which contrast is neutralized, on the other hand, it is an obvious form of contrast, a clear verbal opposition. Some linguists (Safina, 2015; Bochina, 2002; Ismaeva & Kornilova, 2016; Kornilova & Sitdikova, 2015) call oxymoron a compressed antithesis, although there are significant differences between these stylistic methods of contrast and opposition. In oxymoron, the opposite signs refer to the same denoter from which they become logically incompatible, in the antithesis the opposite signs are inherent in different denoters. In addition, the unification of opposing concepts as a whole is not a characteristic, but a contrast comparison of two objects or a phenomena.

Oxymoron, being the most explicit and concentrated form of verbal opposition in its semantics, is close to the antithesis, but its distinctive feature is the combination of contrasting, completely opposite linguistic units into a single whole. T. Bochina writes about this: "In this sense, the antithesis and the oxymoron are at different poles of contrast: in the antithesis several oppositions mutually emphasize each other's contrast, and in the oxymoron the apparent contrast serves to strengthen the implicit identity uniting opposites" (2002:16).

In terms of its semantic-stylistic essence, oxymoron is a higher verbal figure than a phraseology established in ordinary human speech. It is so much higher that oxymoron excludes the presence of phraseology. Mostly, phraseology is always a stamp, an unshakable speech structure, polished by centuries of linguistic practice of one or another people. Oxymoron usually is an invention, the result of a creative search for a writer.

Methods

The structural classification of oxymoron distinguishes various types of syntactic connections of its components:

Adj + N. This group of oxymoron includes stylistic figures consisting of incompatible words that are opposite in meaning and are combined only by syntactic connection: adjective and noun: *окаянная любовь, sweet pain, adoring hatred, bitter happiness, selling love.*

Adj + Adj. This group of oxymoron suggests stylistic figures consisting of incompatible, opposite in meaning, the adjective and the adjective: *далекое близкое прошлое, плохой хороший человек, the biggest little town, sad happy marriage, white black life.*

V + Article + N. This group of oxymoron includes stylistic figures consisting of incompatible, opposite in meaning, a verb and a noun (with a preposition): *упасть в небо, утонуть в стакане, ruined by civilization, to spit in the soul, to sink in the glass.*

V + Adv. Oxymoron consists of a verb and an adverb: *молчать громко, лететь ползком, to cry silently, to die away brightly.*

N + Article + N. The group includes oxymoron, consisting of a noun, a preposition and a noun: *жизнь после смерти, буря в стакане, victory in defeat, birth of death.*

Free type. This group includes extended phrases based on antonyms: *твоя мораль аморальна, обесчестить честь бесчестной.*

Discussion

Carrying out the structural analysis of oxymoron in W. Shakespeare's sonnets, we see that the English classic mostly uses the following type of syntactic connection - the adjective + the noun:

Then, *beauteous niggard*, why dost thou abuse
The bounteous largess given thee to give?
(4)

But that I hope some *good conceit* of thine
In thy soul's thought, all naked, will bestow it...
(26)

I do forgive thy robbery, *gentle thief*,
Although thou steal *thee all my poverty*...
(40)

Those *pretty wrongs* that liberty commits,
When I am sometime absent from thy heart,
Thy beauty and thy years full well benefits,
For still temptation follows where thou art.
(41)

Why should *poor beauty* indirectly seek
Roses of shadow, since his rose is true?
(67)

Speaking about the oxymoron with the structure of the adjective + noun and noting its greatest relevance, we note in Shakespeare's sonnets with this structure the most common adjective *sweet* in combination with various non-matching nouns. There are other examples of Shakespeare's predilection in adjectives, but the adjective *sweet* is more common:

But here's the joy; my friend and I are the one;
Sweet flattery! Then she loves but me alone.

(42)

... Sweet roses do not so;
Of their *sweet deaths* are sweetest odours made...

(54)

Sweet thief, whence didst thou steal thy sweet that smells,
If not from my love's breath?

(99)

After the adjective + noun on the second place Shakespeare's sonnets in the structural plan are adverb + adjective and adjective + noun + adjective. These stylistic designs of oxymoron met in the sonnet's work even in one sonnet:

But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,
And, *darkly bright*, are bright in dark directed.

Then thou, whose *shadow shadows* doth make *bright*,
How would thy shadow's form form happy show
To the clear day with thy much clearer light,
When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so!

(43)

The most complex type of oxymoron is a free type. As noted above, the free type of oxymoron is similar in structure to the semantic antithesis. Sometimes it unfolds so that it begins to border on other opposing paths. For example, the sonnet number 119:

O benefit of ill! Now I find true
That better is by evil still made better;
And ruin'd love, when it is built anew,
Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater.
So I return rebuked to my content.
And gain by ill thrice more than I have spent.

As a result of the study, it became obvious that whether the languages are related or not, are in one language family or in different, ancient ones, dead or developing, opposition, nevertheless, there is a place in all known lexical and semantic systems.

Shakespeare in the structural meaning applies in his sonnets and various types of oxymoron, including, not shunning and the simplest forms, when oxymoron is converted into a phraseological cliché: *deadly joy, endless sky...* Nevertheless, examples of oxymoron in sonnets, as indeed, in all of Shakespeare's works are an order of a smaller quantity, compared to the other studied figure of contrast and opposition - the antithesis. However, this does not mean that Shakespeare did not fully apply to oxymoron because of the complexity of this type of linguistic device.

Conclusion

From the point of view of philosophy, the world is built on opposites. Contrast, polarity, contrasting give the nature, human society and consciousness movement and development. Since the lexical system is based on universal human development laws, then its figures of contrast and opposition are an unconditional continuation of the objective world. The antinomy of real reality implicates an antonymy in linguistics. That is, the language with its antonymy is the essence of reality with all its contradictions and opposites.

Thus, the given usage of oxymoron, this amount is the golden mean, the optimal way of using the stylistic method, in which the mutual balance of tropes in the artwork is achieved. The surplus of one of the stylistic devices, in our case - oxymoron, would lead to an imbalance and a decrease in the artistic level of the sonnets. In a word, such a noticeable stylistic device should be used in moderation, which Shakespeare did in his sonnets.

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