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Research Article

PECULIARITIES OF THE USE OF OXYMORON IN POETICS

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with one of the most expressive figures of speech, an oxymoron. Oxymoron can be seen everywhere due to its power to convey subjective attitude. Indeed, the uniqueness of this stylistic device has appealed to writers and poets since the early times. It helps characters to be described in the way that readers fully understand the attitude of a poet and the feelings of characters themselves. The very paper studies factors which distinguish poetic oxymora from non-poetic oxymora in terms of their internal semantic structure. As data a great deal of examples in English and Russian poetry has been used.

KEYWORDS

Oxymoron, poetic, non-poetic, direct, indirect, semantics, antonym, hyponym.

INTRODUCTION

An oxymoron is a phenomenon that is created by combining two words that are incompatible in meaning, while not affecting the loss of each other's meaning, on the contrary, when combined; they create some new, different phenomenon. Also, it is important to emphasize that the oxymoron is studied from both the point of logic and language, that is, "the concept is a logical category, while the lexical-objective

meaning [the informative content of the word] is a linguistic category."

In addition, such a relation makes it possible to analyze an oxymoron as a linguistic matter (words, sentences, text), when "the lexical-objective meaning of the word <...> is under the constant influence of the system and history of a certain language ...", and also how an ideal construct abstract from linguistic matter and is "<...> as a constant in the meaning of a word or phrase that does not depend on the lexical meaning of the word ..." It should be noted that the basis for the commonality of definitions and differences between words and concepts is built on their subject relatedness.

And at the same time, oxymoron can be considered not only as an intersection of linguistic matter and an ideal construct, but it is also worth looking at it as a poetic phenomenon.

MAIN PART

One of the main strands of theories of poetic language, from the early work of the Russian formalists, has been an attempt to distinguish the subtle line between poetic and non-poetic language, more precisely, to reflect the features that make poetic language poetic in comparison with non-poetic.

It is appropriate to argue that theories of expressive language, which is based on figures of speech, affect only the differences between poetic and non-poetic language only in metaphors, oxymora, etc. However, the point is that this question is relatively rarely addressed in theories of poetic language itself. The main concern is the discussion of problems such as the definition of expressive language and individual examples of figures of speech (metaphor, comparison, oxymoron, etc.) and their interpretation, but the largest part of the address is devoted to the theory of metaphor. In general, the distinction between poetic and non-poetic metaphors can be displayed using two methods. The first states that the distinction between them is based on the criterion of "petrification". More specifically, while petrified or, shall we say, "dead" metaphors are common in non-poetic texts, "living" metaphors are more common in poetic texts.

The second method is based on the distinction between different "perceptual procedures" that are used in the understanding of metaphors. Therefore, for example, Culler argues that there are unique procedures that are part of the so-called "literary competence" for understanding poetic texts[2].

They are different from the procedures involved in understanding non-poetic texts. Another example can be found in the work of Reinhart, where he finds differences between two procedures in understanding metaphor-focus interpretation and vehicle interpretation[6]. She suggests that the first procedure is common in understanding poetic and non-poetic metaphors, while the second is only involved in understanding poetic metaphors.

Without delving into the question carefully, it is clear that both methods share the claim that the semantic structure of these two figures does not play a role in separating poetic and non-poetic

metaphors, their use is more important here. This also means that the same metaphor in one context can be defined as poetic, and in another as non-poetic, that is, external factors (which are external to the metaphor itself) determine whether the metaphor is poetic or not.

Therefore, it is implied that metaphor does not have a unique internal structure that distinguishes it from non-poetic metaphor. Extrapolating this position with other figures of speech that are often cited as examples of metaphor, such as oxymoron, synesthesia, personification, etc., one adheres to the same idea in distinguishing between poetic and non-poetic figures, and the internal structure of one or another does not differ.

In the light of the foregoing, the main task of this part of the work is the first steps towards the construction of the idea, affecting the poetic / non-poetic difference in the internal semantic structure of the "oxymoron" figure. First, the distinction between the two types of semantic structure will be discussed. Both types, in principle, can be used by any oxymora, for example, direct or indirect. According to researcher Shen, oxymora of the first type are created on the basis of the mutual exclusion of the meanings of their constituent parts, that is, from two explicit antonyms[7].

However, oxymora of the second class "suggest a clash of meanings at the level of associations, where the inconsistency of the components is not so obvious, since secondary semata interact". Then, these two structures will be compared by frequency of use in a separate corpus of poetry, which consists of examples of several oxymoron prototypes in English and Russian poetry. Comparing the frequency of use of the above types of oxymoron in a poetic corpus, it is argued that indirect oxymora are statistically dominant in the corpus, while direct oxymora are rare.

Since indirect oxymora are more common than direct oxymora in a poetic corpus, they can be characterized as poetic oxymora and direct oxymora as non-poetic.

SEMANTIC FEATURES

Since the linguistic phenomenon itself is based on a semantic relationship, it is necessary to consider it on a lexical-semantic basis. One of the widely known semantic theories is "Componential analysis", which suggests that the meanings of lexical particles are formed from a large theoretically infinite set.

They, in principle, can be reduced to a relatively small set of "meaning atoms" called semantic features or components. These features, in turn, are also conceptual units, the combination of which can comprehend the meaning of a particular lexeme. So, for example, in English the lexeme "man" (male) is defined as a combination of semantic components; ...+adult, +male, +animate, while the lexeme "woman" (female) is determined by the same semantic properties, except for the sign "+" is changed to the sign "-".

The main characteristic of such an analysis is the structuring of semantic properties, to be more precise, they are not listed randomly, but are organized in a hierarchical structure, where some components are higher in meaning than others. Hierarchical structuring is important, since the

semantic properties of a given lexeme are different in the number of their meanings. More often, the lowest semantic components in the tier are distinct and have a great semantic value, where its function is to distinguish a lexeme from its adjacent element. Therefore, the property that distinguishes "male" from "female" represents the lowest level of semantic

The two main semantic concepts that emerge from this theory form an important part of the following discussion: antonym and hyponym. These two terms are antonymous to each other when they share all their semantic properties, except for the diversity of the +/- sign of their distinguishing feature, as in "man" - "woman".

For the concept of antonym and hyponym meanings, the distinction between three semantic structures can be represented:

1. The "direct oxymoron" structure, which consists of two antonymic elements, whose semantic properties are the same, except for the lowest tier sign "+/-". For example, "a feminine man", "living death" etc.

2. The "indirect oxymoron" structure, in which one of the components is not a direct antonym of the other, but rather a hyponym of its antonym. Consider, for example, the phrase "the silence whistles" taken from Hebrew's poetry. If we take the first element, then the components are: "+noun, +sensual, -count,... -sound." The only lexical antonym for the word "silence" is the word "sound", whose components are identical, again except for the "-" sign. It should be noted that, although, the second element of the oxymoron is not "sound" but its alias, that is, "sharpness". In

this structure, according to Shestakova, a certain "culture of thinking" is taken into account, for example, "beautiful death" does not act as antonyms out of context, and the combination of these two elements is considered as an oxymoron phenomenon that does not depend on empirical factors:

Death

(negative) -a positive state or phenomenon that, for example, defines joy, fun, pleasure, beauty, tenderness, bliss.

The beauty

(positive) -negative manifestation of the concept: gloom, wretchedness, sadness, gloom[10].

Examples of oxymoroa in English poetry and English corpus:

- "cold fire" (Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet[8]). "Fire" which means "fire" in Russian cannot be a direct antonym for the word "cold" - "cold".

- "sweet sorrow" (an often mentioned oxymoron, which was mentioned in Preminger 1975[4]).

-"traitorous trueness" (Francis Thompson, The Hound of Heaven[9])

3. Metaphorical structure, to explain this type, we can give a clear example of "silence goes". Here the components are already compared not of a low tier, but of a higher one. The expressiveness of the language is achieved with the help of metaphor and oxymoron, since silence cannot move, and silence cannot represent movement.

Results and discussions

In order to find which of these semantic structures characterizes a "poetic oxymoron", a plethora of examples collected from various sources of Russian and English poetry were

studied. Of course, some of these oxymora are widely discussed and denounced by speakers. Although this corpus seems to be relatively small in order to reflect "poetic phenomena", the following three points must be considered:

1. Most of the examples have been taken from the work of poets who belong to periods of modern poetry. Fifty examples, though, were pseudo-randomly chosen to avoid contextual restrictions or bias. Therefore, it can be argued that these examples are pointers to the common use of poetic oxymora.

2. In order to support the conclusions made in this corpus, 48 well-known examples taken from three literary dictionaries (Cuddon 1977[1], Shipley 1953[5], and Leech`s Guide to English Poetry, 1969[3]) were examined. These examples are approved by the authors as the most classic examples of oxymora used in poetry; moreover, they are not limited to one specific poet, poetry, or period. These characteristics help to avoid drawing too broad conclusions based on limited data.

3. The analysis presented here indicates the dominance of a certain oxymoron structure in a given corpus; he does not impose a dichotomy between poetic and non-poetic oxymoron, since the possibility of the appearance of an oxymoron characterized as "non-poetic" in a poetic text is by no means excluded. Therefore, the conclusions cannot be considered as definitive or exhaustive, but rather can be addressed as preliminary or initial indications in support of the direction of the research, which is still in progress.

This work aims to describe the broad parameters by which the structure of an oxymoron will be described, regardless of its particular context appearance. A more detailed study is to examine how a particular context may determine the use of these parameters.

The main findings from the data are as follows: contrary to what was expected, only 25% of the oxymora in our corpus were of the "direct" structural type, or rather, those that combined two antonyms. The more common structure was "indirect", more precisely, in which the second component is the hyponym of the first antonymic component, which characterizes 75% of our corpus.

Semantic structure of "poetic oxymoron" based on structural-cognitive consideration: two limitations.

The problem is how to explain the fact that of the three possible semantic structures, common in the poetic corpus is an "indirect oxymoron"[11].

An extensive explanation can be offered for this phenomenon that will satisfy two (sub)questions: 1. Why is "indirect" oxymoron more common than "direct oxymoron"? 2. Why is an "oblique oxymoron" more common than a metaphor?

It is argued that these two questions can be answered by the fact that the "indirect" oxymoron can be (rather than the other two structures) face two limitations: 1. It is treated as an oxymoron (and not as a metaphor or other figure of speech). 2. Among the possible structures that are accepted as oxymora, this is the structure that requires more complex processing.

The first constraint refers to the fact that an "indirect" oxymoron is an oxymoron, and answers the second (sub)question by excluding the third type of structure (metaphor). It is obvious that only the remaining two structures ("direct" and "indirect" oxymoron) correspond to the first restriction.

The second limitation relates to the fact that the "oblique" oxymoron is poetic, which in this context means not easy processing.

The idea of identifying the completeness of processing with "poeticism" is widely spread by theories of poetic texts, and its roots can be attributed to the early works of Russian formalists. Given this fact, the "indirect" oxymoron is poetic, and meets the requirements of the first limitation, since it needs more complex processing than the "direct" oxymoron. Therefore, he answers the first question, which is formulated above.

In order to understand the idea of "processing completeness", certain cognitive considerations must be taken into account.

CONCLUSION

The research can be outlined on two levels of analysis: 1. The oxymoron construction consists of indirect antonyms, i.e.., the second component of it is the hyponym of the antonym of the first component. 2. The hyponym serves as the "medium example" of the given antonym which is based on the two constraints.

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