



**ENANTIOSEMY: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS AND
METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES FOR A LINGUOCULTURAL
INTERPRETATION**

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A B S T R A C T	KEYWORDS
<p>This article examines enantiosemy as a phenomenon in which a single lexical unit develops opposing meanings across different contexts. Rather than treating enantiosemy as an isolated irregularity, the study approaches it as part of broader processes of meaning construction shaped by cognitive, structural, and pragmatic factors. The analysis is based on two comparable corpora of English and Uzbek, each consisting of approximately one million tokens and covering both formal and informal discourse. The findings show that enantiosemy is not random, but emerges through systematic mechanisms such as metaphorical extension, contextual reinterpretation, and shifts in pragmatic focus. While both languages rely on similar cognitive processes, their structural organization leads to different patterns of realization. English data demonstrate a predominance of lexical enantiosemy, whereas Uzbek exhibits a greater reliance on phraseological and morphologically conditioned forms.</p> <p>The study argues that semantic polarity should be understood as a context-sensitive and dynamically constructed phenomenon rather than a fixed lexical property. These results contribute to ongoing discussions in cognitive semantics and offer practical implications for translation, where meaning interpretation depends heavily on discourse context.</p>	<p>Enantiosemy, contronym, semantic opposition, polysemy, cognitive linguistics, corpus analysis, discourse context, pragmatic shift, English, Uzbek.</p>

INTRODUCTION

Enantiosemy presents a notable challenge for traditional approaches to lexical semantics, as it involves a single lexical form expressing mutually opposing meanings.¹ Items such as sanction, which may denote both approval and punishment, undermine the assumption that lexical meaning is stable and unambiguous.² From this perspective, enantiosemy should not be viewed as an exceptional anomaly but as evidence of the flexibility inherent in natural language.

¹ Djumabaeva, J. S., & Murodova, N. I. (2019). Enantiosemy and its semantic features. *Central Asian Linguistics*, 5(1), 12–29.

² Hakobyan, T. (2020). Different approaches to enantiosemy in English. *Journal of Linguistic Studies*, 12(3), 45–62.

Within cognitive linguistics, such semantic opposition is often explained through processes of divergent development, where a shared conceptual base gives rise to contrasting interpretations.³ Previous research has highlighted the role of metaphorical extension and shifts in conceptual focus in producing these meanings.⁴ However, despite these theoretical insights, empirical studies comparing typologically different languages remain limited. In particular, the interaction between cognitive mechanisms, linguistic structure, and discourse context has not been sufficiently explored in a cross-linguistic framework.

This study addresses this gap by examining enantiosemym in English and Uzbek through a corpus-based approach. By combining qualitative analysis with quantitative methods, it aims to identify how opposing meanings are realized across different discourse environments and to what extent these patterns are shaped by typological differences between languages.

METHODOLOGY

The analysis is based on two comparable monolingual corpora in English and Uzbek, each comprising approximately one million tokens. The data were selected to represent a range of discourse types, including news media, literary texts, and online communication, allowing for variation across both formal and informal registers. The identification of enantiosemic items followed a three-stage procedure. First, an initial list of candidate items was compiled from dictionaries and previous studies.⁵ Second, this list was expanded through corpus-based collocation analysis and cross-linguistic comparison. Finally, all candidates were evaluated by native speakers to confirm the validity of their contextual meanings. A lexical item was included only when it met three criteria: it retained the same formal structure across contexts, displayed at least two distinct meanings, and showed clear semantic opposition, whether functional, evaluative, or pragmatic. In practice, ambiguous or borderline cases were excluded in order to maintain consistency. Each occurrence was manually annotated according to a classification model distinguishing three types of enantiosemym: antonymic polarity, pragmatic inversion, and metonymic or institutional shift. To ensure reliability, a subset of the data was independently annotated by two coders. The resulting inter-annotator agreement ($\kappa = 0.81$) indicates a high level of consistency. The analysis combines qualitative interpretation with quantitative methods, including frequency counts and chi-square testing.

RESULTS

The corpus analysis identified 78 enantiosemic items in English and 52 in Uzbek, distributed across several discourse domains, including socio-political communication, everyday usage, and culturally specific contexts. In English, enantiosemym is predominantly lexical, often reflecting historical semantic developments. Items such as sanction, oversight, and cleave illustrate how opposing meanings emerge and stabilize through repeated contextual usage.

³Shmelev, A. (2016). Semantic shifts and enantiosemym. *Moscow Linguistic Journal*, 14(4), 21–39.

⁴Li, L. H. L. (2019). Polysemym and enantiosemym: Cognitive mechanisms of meaning opposition. *Cognitive Linguistics Journal*, 25(1), 33–58.

⁵Hakobyan, T. (2020). Different approaches to enantiosemym in English. *Journal of Linguistic Studies*, 12(3), 45–62.

⁶Odilov, Y. R. (2015). Grammatical enantiosemym in Uzbek. *Philological Research Journal*, 9(2), 88–106.

Item	Sense 1	Sense 2	Type
sanction	permission	punishment	lexical polarity
oversight	supervision	mistake	institutional shift
cleave	to split	to cling	lexical split polarity
fast	fixed/firm	moving quickly	semantic divergence
dust	remove dust	add fine particles	functional reversal

As shown in **Table 1**, English enantiosemY is predominantly lexical and often historically motivated. By contrast, Uzbek data reveal a stronger tendency toward phraseological and grammatically conditioned enantiosemY.⁷ Rather than isolated lexical oppositions, meaning reversal often arises through idiomatic constructions and morphological extensions. This difference reflects the agglutinative nature of Uzbek and its reliance on multi-word expressions.

Item	Sense 1	Sense 2	Type
chiqish	exit	publication/performance	pragmatic shift
olish	take	receive/allowance	functional reversal
yurmoq	walk	function/operate	metaphorical extension
tushmoq	descend	be understood/realized	semantic extension
chiqarmoq	remove	publish/produce	pragmatic inversion

Table 2 demonstrates that Uzbek enantiosemY more frequently emerges through phraseological and morphologically extended constructions.

The contrast between the two languages is not merely quantitative but structural. English tends to encode semantic opposition within individual lexical items, whereas Uzbek distributes this opposition across larger linguistic units. This distinction becomes particularly visible in corpus concordances, where Uzbek examples frequently depend on contextual framing and idiomatic usage.

Quantitative analysis further demonstrates that the realization of enantiosemY is highly sensitive to discourse context. In formal registers, such as academic writing and news reporting, primary meanings dominate, accounting for approximately 70 -80% of occurrences. In informal and media discourse, however, pragmatically shifted meanings appear more frequently.

A chi-square test of independence confirmed a statistically significant relationship between language type and enantiosemY type ($\chi^2 = 14.62, p < 0.01$). This result supports the claim that typological structure plays an important role in shaping how semantic opposition is expressed. Collocational patterns also indicate that evaluative and especially negative contexts tend to trigger reversed interpretations, reinforcing the view that meaning emerges through interaction with discourse rather than residing in lexical items alone.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that enantiosemY cannot be adequately explained as a simple case of binary lexical opposition. Instead, it operates across multiple dimensions, including functional contrasts,

⁷ Odilov, Y. R. (2015). Grammatical enantiosemY in Uzbek. *Philological Research Journal*, 9(2), 88–106.

evaluative shifts, and discourse-driven reinterpretation. This supports approaches that treat enantiosemym as a dynamic phenomenon located at the intersection of semantics and pragmatics. This tendency is particularly visible in media discourse, where pragmatic framing can override lexical meaning and trigger semantic reversal.⁸ The higher proportion of phraseological enantiosemym in Uzbek can be linked to its morphological structure, which facilitates the formation of stable multi-word expressions. These constructions, in turn, are more susceptible to contextual reinterpretation. While cognitive mechanisms such as metaphorical extension appear to function across both languages, their realization is mediated by language-specific constraints.⁹

This interplay between universal cognitive processes and structural variation highlights the importance of adopting an integrated analytical framework. Enantiosemym emerges not as a fixed property of lexical items but as a flexible and context-dependent feature of language use.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates that enantiosemym is a systematic and context-dependent phenomenon shaped by the interaction of cognitive, structural, and discourse-related factors. The comparison between English and Uzbek reveals both shared mechanisms and significant differences in how semantic opposition is realized.

In English, enantiosemym is largely lexical, while in Uzbek it is more frequently expressed through phraseological and morphologically complex constructions. Quantitative findings confirm that meaning realization is strongly influenced by discourse context, with informal settings more likely to produce semantic reversal.

These results have important implications for translation, where meaning cannot be treated as fixed but must be interpreted in relation to context. More broadly, the study contributes to cognitive and corpus-based approaches to semantics by providing a framework for analyzing semantic opposition across languages.

Future research should extend this approach to larger and more diverse corpora, as well as explore computational methods for identifying enantiosemym patterns in multilingual data.

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⁹ Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.