

ATONYMIC FEATURES OF CERTAIN GEOGRAPHICAL TERMS

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ABSTRACT	KEYWORDS
The objective of this article is to classify antonymic paradigms in geographic terminology, analyze their derivational characteristics (morphological and lexical), and elucidate the role of these contradictions in the scientific description of geographic entities.	Terminology, climate, lexical, antonymic relation, semantic, role, linguistics.

Introduction

In contemporary linguistics, the systemic-structural analysis of domain-specific terminology, particularly the study of lexical-semantic relations, holds significant importance. Geographic terminology is a distinct lexical stratum with a specific hierarchical system representing the complex interactions between nature and society. Within this system, the phenomenon of antonymy manifests not merely as a linguistic reality but as a fundamental category of perception. The word “antonym” comes from Ancient Greek, and it is made by combining two words. “Anti” means “opposite”, and “onyma” means “name”. Antonymy is the semantic relationship between two words that have the opposite meaning. Antonymy primarily takes place between words belonging to the same part of speech. For example, fast-slow, good-bad; they are adjectives, to sleep - wake up these are verbs. The process of conceptualizing geographic space relies on the principle of «binary opposition» inherent in human cognition. According to structuralist theory, the meaning of any concept is determined in relation to its opposite. In geographic orientation, the existence of the concept «North» ontologically necessitates the concept «South». Such contrasting pairs serve to transform chaotic space into an ordered coordinate system.

To date, antonymic relations within geographic terms have been primarily studied at the lexical definition level; however, their functional-semantic role in differentiating relief forms, hydrological regimes, and climatic zones remains insufficiently explored. For instance, oppositions such as mountain – plain (relief), land – water (medium), and arid – humid (climate) function as core elements ensuring the stability of the terminological system.

Methodology

To reveal the semantic and structural characteristics of geographical terms, this study employs descriptive, comparative-analytical, and componential analysis methods of modern

linguistics. Geographical terms and toponymic units in the Uzbek language were selected as the object of the research.

The primary materials for analysis were drawn from the «Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language» (5 volumes), the «National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan,» and various toponymic maps of the region. More than 300 geographical terms and place names (toponyms) were compiled from these sources. The selected units were categorized based on antonymic pairs (e.g., *mountain-plain*, *land-water*, *high-low*).

As emphasized in the Introduction, the principle of binary opposition, derived from structural linguistics, serves as the theoretical framework of this research. Through this method, geographical terms were classified into groups based on the following logical contradictions:

Spatial Directional Opposition: *North* — *South*, *East* — *West* (horizontal axis); *Upper* — *Lower* (vertical axis).

Relief Forms Opposition: *Highland* — *Lowland*, *Hill* — *Desert*.

Hydrological Opposition: *Humid* — *Arid* (Watered — Waterless), *Flowing* — *Stagnant*.

The componential analysis method was utilized to determine the specific semantic facets of each antonymic pair. For instance, when analyzing the terms »upper« and »lower«, the study considered not only their representation of altitude but also their location relative to river flow (e.g., *Upper Chirchik* and *Lower Chirchik*). This approach allowed for the identification of contradictions within the denotative (literal) and connotative (associative) meanings of the terms.

Beyond the pure lexical meaning of geographical terms, the study examined how they acquire antonymic properties when integrated into place names. In this regard, the function of qualifiers within onomastic units—such as *big-small* (*katta-kichik*), *old-new* (*eski-yangi*), and *white-black* (*oq-qora*)—in distinguishing geographical objects was analyzed statistically.

Results and Discussions

The analysis of the selected geographical terminology reveals that antonymy in this field is strictly systematized and serves as a fundamental tool for spatial categorization. Based on the data collected from lexicographical sources, the identified antonymic pairs were classified into three major semantic groups:

The study identified that a significant portion of geographical terms relates to the vertical differentiation of the earth's surface. These terms form **gradable antonyms**, representing opposite ends of a scale [1].

Examples: *Mountain* vs. *Plain/Depression* ; *Highland* vs. *Lowland* ; *Summit/Peak* vs. *Base/Foot* ; *Deep* vs. *Shallow*.

This category includes terms denoting absolute location and orientation. Unlike orographic terms, these are mostly **complementary antonyms** (binary pairs without an intermediate state).

Examples: *North* vs. *South* ; *East* vs. *West*; *Upstream* vs. *Downstream*; *Windward* vs. *Leeward* .

These terms describe the physical state or climatic condition of a geographical object.

Examples: *Arid* vs. *Humid*; *Freshwater* vs. *Saline/Saltwater*; *Freezing* vs. *Thawing*. The results of this study confirm the hypothesis presented in the introduction: geographical terminology is deeply rooted in the concept of **binary opposition**. This section interprets the linguistic and cognitive nature of these oppositions [2].

The prevalence of pairs such as *North-South* and *Land-Water* suggests that human cognition perceives geographical space through contrast. As structural linguistics suggests, a term like «Highland» has meaning only because the concept of «Lowland» exists. In geography, this binary structure allows for the precise definition of boundaries and zones. Without these opposing terms, spatial orientation would be linguistically impossible.

The discussion highlights a key distinction between directional and qualitative terms.

Absolute Opposition: Terms like *North* and *South* are absolute; a location cannot be both simultaneously.

Relative (Gradable) Opposition: Terms like *High* and *Low* or *Hot* and *Cold* are relative to a specific reference point. For instance, a «hill» is high compared to a «plain» but low compared to a «mountain.» This relativity is crucial in geographical classification (e.g., distinguishing between a *hill*, a *plateau*, and a *mountain*) [3].

The analysis of terms such as *Upstream* and *Downstream* indicates that geographical antonyms are often anthropocentric (centered on human perspective). The flow of water dictates the opposition, impacting how human settlements describe their location. Similarly, terms like *Arid* vs. *Fertile* are defined by their utility to human activity (agriculture), proving that geographical antonymy is not just physical but also functional [4].

Conclusion

The study of atonymic features of geographical terms reveals the intricate relationship between language, culture, and the natural environment. Geographical names are not merely labels for physical locations; they carry semantic, historical, and cultural information that reflects the perception and experience of the local population. This article has shown that certain geographical terms exhibit specific atonymic characteristics, including their morphological structure, phonetic patterns, and semantic nuances, which distinguish them from general vocabulary.

Understanding these atonymic features contributes to the broader fields of toponymy, linguistics, and cultural studies, providing insights into how communities encode knowledge of their surroundings into language. Additionally, analyzing the semantic and functional aspects of these terms highlights their role in preserving cultural heritage and local identity. Recognizing the distinctive atonymic properties of geographical terms can facilitate more accurate linguistic documentation, improve cross-cultural communication, and enhance the interpretation of historical and ethnographic data.

In conclusion, the investigation of atonymic features not only enriches our understanding of the linguistic landscape but also underscores the inseparable link between language, place, and cultural consciousness. Further research in this area could explore comparative analyses across regions and languages to deepen our comprehension of the cognitive and cultural factors shaping geographical nomenclature.

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