

The Dichotomous Worldview Encoded in Antonymic Frames

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Abstract. *This article analyzes dichotomous worldviews within antonymic frames from a cognitive linguistic perspective. Using frame semantics, corpus analysis, and associative testing, the study explores cases of semantic asymmetry in antonymic pairs. The findings reveal that antonyms are structured not symmetrically but around evaluative centrality. Central lexemes, often negatively marked, are cognitively more active and salient in discourse. Examples such as “ҳалол – ҳаром,” “ифлос – пок,” and “вайрон – обод” are used to model these conceptual oppositions. This approach has both theoretical and practical relevance for lexicology, cognitive linguistics, and educational discourse.*

Key words: *antonymy, frame semantics, dichotomy, semantic asymmetry, evaluative function, corpus analysis, cognitive salience, national worldview.*

INTRODUCTION (IN ENGLISH)

Antonymy is one of the most expressive forms of semantic relations that reflect the dichotomous structure of human cognition. Pairs such as “яхши – ёмон,” “ҳақ – ноҳақ,” and “ҳаёт – ўлим” are not merely linguistic contrasts but embodiments of binary worldviews. These oppositions go beyond lexical meaning to express conflicting values, evaluations, and cultural codes. Thus, through antonyms, reality is perceived and evaluated via polar categories [1, p. 114]. From the perspective of frame semantics, each word is part of a conceptual scenario – a frame. Antonyms typically occupy opposing slots within the same frame. For instance, the pair “обод – вайрон” belongs to a spatial frame where “обод” represents order, harmony, and societal approval, whereas “вайрон” signifies collapse, danger, and disapproval. In this way, antonyms encode more than opposition – they express a complete worldview [2, p. 93].

In cognitive linguistics, antonyms are seen as verbal reflections of internal categorical systems, mental scenarios, and evaluative mechanisms. Each pair consists of one term occupying a favored, socially acceptable position, while its counterpart signifies rejection, exclusion, or threat. This cognitive asymmetry correlates with the word’s semantic weight, rhetorical function, and ideological role in society [3, p. 85]. Dichotomous patterns of thought expressed through antonyms are not random contrasts; they are part of how humans evaluate the world using oppositional schemas such as “light – dark,” “true – false,” or “white – black.” These expressions are deeply rooted in cultural identity, education, and collective memory. For example, in Uzbek proverbs, the opposition between “ҳақ йўл” and “ноҳақ йўл” goes beyond legal interpretation and reflects moral, religious, and philosophical frameworks [4, p. 122].

This article analyzes dichotomous worldviews embedded in antonymic frames from a cognitive perspective. The goal is to examine how such pairs embody evaluative mechanisms, semantic positions, and conceptual functions. The study applies corpus analysis, frame modeling, and

associative testing to reveal how binary structures in human cognition are reflected, activated, and shaped through language and cultural context.

METHODOLOGY

To examine dichotomous worldviews within antonymic frames, this study applied an integrated approach combining cognitive linguistic and empirical methods. The primary theoretical framework was Charles Fillmore's frame semantics, which views every lexical item as playing a specific role within a conceptual scenario. In antonym pairs, these roles typically occupy opposing positions – one symbolizing a “preferred” concept, and the other denoting its “rejected” counterpart [1, p. 47]. The secondary foundation of this study was evaluative semantics. As emphasized by Y.D. Apresyan and N.D. Arutyunova, words are not only descriptive units but also carriers of emotional and social evaluations. Thus, identifying which word in a pair holds stronger evaluative weight was a key task of this research [2, p. 138; 3, p. 199].

The analysis proceeded in three main stages. The first involved corpus research. Using the Uzbek National Corpus, the “Ziyonet” language platform, and a selection of published literary and journalistic texts, 120 active antonymic pairs were collected. Pairs with moral, psychological, social, and religious dimensions were prioritized. Examples include “мард – номард,” “ҳақ – ноҳақ,” “ҳалол – ҳаром,” and “дўст – душман.” These pairs were selected based on genre frequency, contextual function, and evaluative significance.

In the second stage, frame modeling was implemented. A dedicated cognitive frame was constructed for each pair, detailing the dichotomous roles (positive/negative), activation potential, cultural stereotypes, and associative elements. For instance, the word “вайрон” within the “life-space” frame was linked to concepts such as “destruction,” “loss,” and “collapse,” while its counterpart “обод” was connected to “peace,” “order,” and “human values” – albeit with less metaphorical intensity [4, p. 89].

The third phase involved associative testing. A group of 35 specialists in linguistics, literature, and media were surveyed to assess which word in each of 20 antonymic pairs left a stronger impression or triggered quicker recall. In the pair “ифлос – пок,” 77% of participants identified “ифлос” as the more cognitively active and evaluative term [5, p. 102]. Additional techniques included contextual activation indexing and genre-sensitive analysis, which helped determine in which text types a word appeared, its syntactic roles, and evaluative functions. These tools allowed the semantic hierarchy of each pair to be reconstructed.

Through this multi-method approach, the cognitive model of dichotomous worldview embedded in antonymic frames was systematically identified and described.

RESULTS

The analysis revealed that antonymic pairs within cognitive frames are structured not only through lexical contrast but also via asymmetric configurations in terms of evaluation, emotional salience, and cultural load. Based on corpus analysis and frame modeling of 120 Uzbek antonymic pairs, several clear findings emerged. First, in nearly every pair, one term consistently demonstrated higher contextual activation, emotional intensity, and metaphorical usage. For example, in the pair “ҳалол – ҳаром,” the word “ҳаром” frequently played the central evaluative role in religious, legal, and moral discourse, activating denser semantic networks [1, p. 96]. Second, central terms exhibited greater frequency and wider genre distribution in corpus data. The term “душман” appeared approximately 2.3 times more often than “дўст” in political, military, and journalistic texts. This disparity was attributed to the “threat-centrality” effect in cognitive framing [2, p. 74]. Third, in the associative survey, 71% of respondents identified the negatively marked term in each pair as cognitively central. These words were described as “more memorable,” “more controversial,” and “frequently metaphorical.” In the pair “ахлоқсиз – ахлоқли,” most participants recalled “ахлоқсиз” more readily in evaluative contexts [3, p. 103]. Fourth, frame modeling showed that the dichotomous roles were often not symmetrical. In the pair “вайрон – обод,” the word “вайрон” had twice as many semantic branches, evaluative functions, cultural associations, and genre activations compared to

“обод” [4, p. 69]. Fifth, central lexemes were frequently associated with ideological or moral load. They commonly functioned as key elements in didactic genres, pedagogical texts, and sacred discourse. Lexemes such as “номард,” “гунох,” and “ифлос” were repeatedly observed in such roles [5, p. 121]. Sixth, in some pairs, asymmetry manifested through conceptual prominence in specific contexts. In “хаёт – ўлим,” the term “ўлим” appeared as a dominant concept in literary, philosophical, and religious narratives. This indicates its firmly embedded status in the mental lexicon [6, p. 88].

Overall, the results suggest that antonymic frames structure dichotomous worldviews around socially embedded hierarchies of value, establishing models of “preferred – rejected” meaning. These relationships cannot be adequately explained by lexical opposition alone; they must be interpreted through the lens of cognitive and ideological structures.

DISCUSSION

The results suggest that dichotomous relationships in antonymic frames are shaped not merely by lexical opposition but through mechanisms of evaluative centrality, semantic asymmetry, and ideological load. This centrality is directly related to the word’s cognitive weight, social function in discourse, and activation potential within frames. In most pairs, the term occupying the central role was negatively marked. Lexemes like “душман,” “ифлос,” “гунох,” and “вайрон” stood out due to their ease of recall, emotional salience, and rhetorical frequency. This can be explained by the cognitive tendency to react more strongly to potential threats – a pattern aligned with psychological models of danger-centrality [1, p. 124].

From the perspective of frame semantics, such words activate broader conceptual scenarios, support metaphorical extensions, and perform a consistent evaluative function in discourse. For example, “ифлос” is not confined to physical impurity but extends to spiritual corruption, political deceit, and dishonesty. In contrast, “пок” tends to serve a background role, becoming contextually activated with less force [2, p. 87]. The dichotomous worldview represented through antonyms often manifests as a “value vs. threat,” “normal vs. deviant,” or “right vs. wrong” schema. These binaries reflect not only meaning but also a society’s stance toward the concept. In “ҳалол – ҳаром,” the term “ҳаром” is associated with notions of prohibition, error, and punishment, whereas “ҳалол” appears primarily as an aspirational counterpoint [3, p. 99].

Both the associative survey and corpus data confirm these relationships. Negative terms were activated more quickly, used more frequently across genres, and played dominant roles in phraseological expressions. In idioms like “қора кун,” “аҳмоқлик қилмоқ,” and “вайрон бўлмоқ,” the central lexeme structurally anchored the dichotomous pair [4, p. 71].

This centrality arises not from lexical convention alone, but from deeper mental scenarios. When a word assumes a role like “victim,” “accused,” or “dark force,” its evaluative content is triggered automatically. Lakoff’s theory of ontological metaphors provides an explanation: words are conceptualized as entities within frames and assigned to specific roles [5, p. 113]. Viewed from this perspective, the dichotomy expressed through antonyms constitutes a foundational cognitive model of meaning. It structures mental classifications such as “preferred – dangerous” or “accepted – excluded.” Therefore, antonyms must be examined not just as symmetrical opposites but as ideological code systems embedded in discourse.

This insight has practical implications for education, media, and moral communication. The central terms activated in oppositional language influence individuals’ value hierarchies. Recognizing this influence opens avenues for working more consciously with dichotomous stereotypes in public and pedagogical discourse.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that dichotomous worldviews embedded in antonymic frames reflect conceptual structures of human cognition. Pairs such as “ҳалол – ҳаром,” “ифлос – пок,” and “вайрон – обод” do not represent symmetrical oppositions but asymmetrical semantic relations. These relations are shaped by evaluative, rhetorical, and ideological forces, not merely grammatical or lexical contrasts.

Central terms are frequently negatively marked and demonstrate higher cognitive activation, broader frame expansion, and stronger associative salience. Through these terms, societal attitudes toward concepts like danger, punishment, and rejection become visible. This pattern aligns with the internal “preferred – threatened” model of cognition.

The analysis showed that cognitive centrality, rather than symmetry, serves as the primary principle in structuring antonymic pairs. The central lexeme performs the evaluative function, acting as a marker of social or moral dominance or exclusion. Frame semantics, corpus analysis, and associative testing jointly facilitated a systematic understanding of these mechanisms. This multidimensional approach proved effective for uncovering deep cognitive layers of antonymy.

These conclusions have both theoretical and practical implications for lexicology, cognitive linguistics, value-based education, and discourse analysis. Understanding dichotomous frames allows for more deliberate engagement with evaluative standards, social stereotypes, and ideological codes encoded in language.

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