



## CLASSIFICATION OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS WITH ANTONYMIC COMPONENTS

**Tursoatov Adkham Asadovich**

Denau Institute of Entrepreneurship and Pedagogy  
Denau, Uzbekistan

E-mail: [tursoatovatham@gmail.com](mailto:tursoatovatham@gmail.com)

Tel.: (+998) 90 645 05 98

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20484236>

**Abstract.** Phraseological units represent an essential part of a language's lexical and semantic system, reflecting cultural values, cognitive patterns, and communicative traditions. Among them, phraseological units containing antonymic components occupy a special place due to their expressive nature and semantic complexity. These units are formed through the interaction of lexical opposites, which contribute to the creation of figurative meanings and enhance the stylistic effect of speech. The present study aims to classify phraseological units with antonymic components and examine their structural and semantic characteristics in modern English. The research employs descriptive, semantic, and componential analysis methods to investigate the functions and classification principles of such phraseological units. The study identifies several major categories based on the nature of antonymic relations, including binary oppositional, contradictory, gradable, and contextual antonymic phraseological units. The findings demonstrate that antonymic components play a significant role in strengthening semantic integrity, expressiveness, and communicative effectiveness. Furthermore, the research reveals that antonymic opposition serves not only as a structural element but also as a means of conveying evaluation, contrast, and emotional intensity. The results contribute to a deeper understanding of phraseological semantics and may be useful for further studies in phraseology, lexicology, cognitive linguistics, and translation theory.

**Keywords:** phraseological units, antonymy, antonymic components, phraseology, semantic classification, English linguistics, idiomatic expressions, semantic opposition, lexical semantics.

### Introduction

Phraseology occupies a significant place in modern linguistic research, as phraseological units reflect not only the lexical richness of a language but also the cultural, historical, and cognitive experience of its speakers. The theoretical foundations of phraseology were substantially developed within Russian linguistics, where phraseological units became the subject of systematic investigation. The works of **V. V. Vinogradov**, **N. N. Amosova**, **A. V. Kunin**, and **A.**



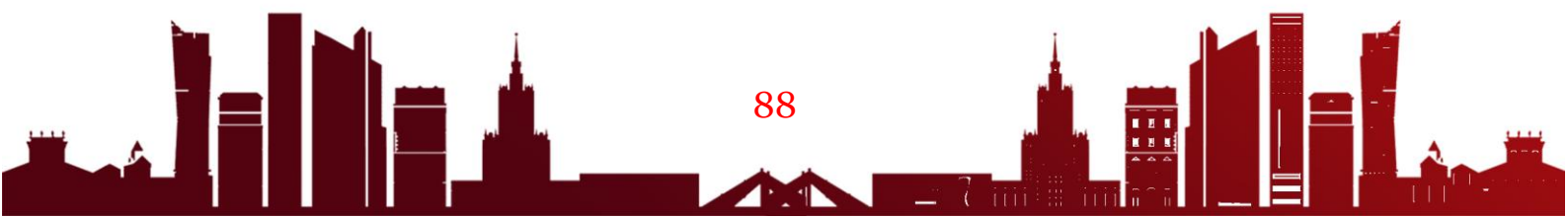
**I. Smirnitsky** laid the groundwork for the classification, semantic interpretation, and structural analysis of phraseological expressions [1].

A particularly important contribution to phraseological theory was made by **V. V. Vinogradov**, who viewed phraseological units as stable combinations of words characterized by semantic unity and reproducibility in speech. According to **Vinogradov**, phraseological units differ from free word combinations because their overall meaning cannot be fully deduced from the meanings of their individual components [2]. This approach has become one of the most influential principles in phraseological studies and continues to serve as a methodological basis for contemporary research.

Within the framework of phraseological semantics, the study of antonymic relations has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Antonymy is generally understood as a lexical-semantic phenomenon expressing opposition between concepts. However, when antonyms function as components of phraseological units, they often lose their direct oppositional meaning and become part of a semantically integrated expression. As noted by **A. V. Kunin**, phraseological meaning emerges through the interaction of lexical elements within a stable structure, resulting in a new semantic formation that cannot be interpreted literally [3].

Phraseological units containing antonymic components represent a distinctive group of expressions in which semantic opposition contributes to the formation of figurative and expressive meanings. Such units as “**high and low**,” “**sooner or later**,” “**ups and downs**,” and “**all or nothing**” demonstrate how lexical opposites interact to create a unified phraseological meaning. In these expressions, antonyms perform not only a structural function but also an important stylistic and communicative role. They intensify expressiveness, emphasize contrast, and contribute to the emotional impact of speech [4].

The problem of classification has remained one of the central issues in phraseological research. Although numerous classifications of phraseological units have been proposed, relatively little attention has been paid to phraseological units with antonymic components as a separate object of study. Russian linguists have primarily focused on issues of phraseological stability, semantic cohesion, and structural organization, while the classification of antonymic phraseological units remains insufficiently systematized. This creates a need for further investigation into the nature of antonymic opposition within phraseological structures and its role in the formation of phraseological meaning.





The relevance of the present study is determined by the increasing interest in semantic and cognitive approaches to language analysis. The examination of phraseological units with antonymic components makes it possible to identify the mechanisms through which semantic opposition contributes to figurative meaning and communicative effectiveness. Furthermore, such research enhances our understanding of the relationship between lexical semantics and phraseological structure.

The aim of this study is to classify phraseological units containing antonymic components and to examine their semantic and structural characteristics from the perspective of Russian phraseological theory. Particular attention is paid to the types of antonymic relations represented within phraseological units, their functional significance, and their contribution to the formation of phraseological meaning. The results of this research may contribute to the further development of phraseological studies, lexical semantics, and comparative linguistic analysis.

### **Methods**

The present study employs a qualitative linguistic approach to investigate phraseological units containing antonymic components and to establish their classification based on structural and semantic characteristics. The research is grounded in the theoretical principles of Russian phraseological studies developed by **V. V. Vinogradov**, **A. V. Kunin**, **N. N. Amosova**, and other scholars whose works have significantly contributed to the understanding of phraseological semantics and classification [5].

The empirical material for the study consists of phraseological units containing antonymic components selected from authoritative English phraseological dictionaries, idiom dictionaries, and linguistic publications. Particular attention was paid to phraseological expressions in which antonyms function as integral elements of a stable linguistic construction. Examples such as **“sooner or later,” “high and low,” “all or nothing,” “ups and downs,”** and **“give and take”** were examined as representative units demonstrating different types of antonymic relations.

Several research methods were applied to achieve the objectives of the study. First, the **descriptive method** was employed to identify and describe phraseological units containing antonymic components. This method made it possible to collect, organize, and systematize the linguistic material according to the research objectives.

Second, the **semantic analysis method** was used to determine the meanings of phraseological units and to examine the role of antonymic components in the



formation of phraseological meaning. Through semantic analysis, the study investigated how lexical opposition contributes to the creation of figurative meanings and semantic integrity within phraseological constructions.

Third, the **componential analysis method** was applied to identify the semantic features of antonymic lexical elements. This method enabled the examination of oppositional semantic components and their interaction within phraseological units. The analysis focused on the relationship between the literal meanings of antonyms and the overall figurative meaning of the phraseological expression.

In addition, the **classification method** was employed to categorize phraseological units according to the nature of antonymic opposition. Based on the results of semantic and structural analysis, the collected phraseological units were grouped into several categories, including binary oppositional units, contradictory antonymic units, gradable antonymic units, and contextual antonymic units. This classification allowed for a systematic interpretation of the linguistic data and facilitated the identification of common structural and semantic patterns.

The research also utilized elements of **comparative analysis**, which made it possible to compare different types of antonymic phraseological units and determine the similarities and differences in their semantic organization. This approach contributed to a deeper understanding of the role played by antonymic opposition in phraseological meaning formation.

The collected data were analyzed through a step-by-step procedure involving the identification of antonymic components, examination of their semantic relations, interpretation of phraseological meanings, and classification of the units according to established criteria. The findings obtained through these methods provide the basis for understanding the structural diversity and semantic functions of phraseological units with antonymic components in modern English.

## **Results**

The analysis of phraseological units containing antonymic components in the Russian language revealed that antonymic opposition functions as an important mechanism for the formation of phraseological meaning and expressiveness. The collected material demonstrates that antonyms within phraseological units are not merely lexical opposites but rather components of a semantically integrated structure. Their interaction contributes to the creation of figurative meanings, strengthens stylistic expressiveness, and enhances communicative effectiveness.

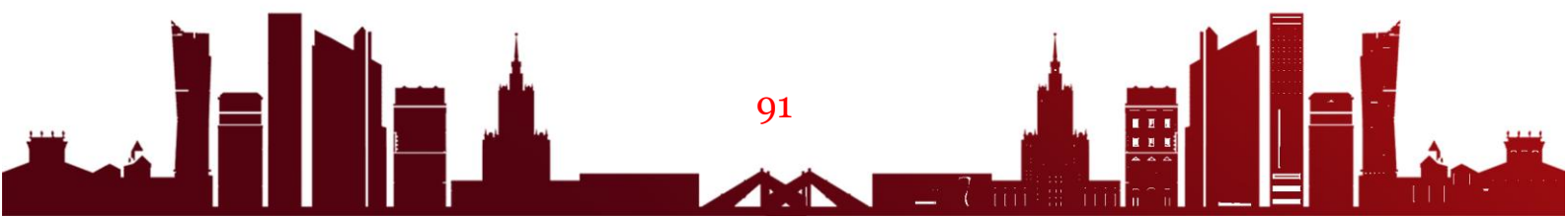


The examined phraseological units can be classified into several semantic groups according to the nature of the antonymic relationship. The first group consists of phraseological units based on direct binary opposition. These expressions combine two opposite concepts in order to convey the idea of completeness, universality, or inevitability. Examples include **«рано или поздно»**, **«больше или меньше»**, and **«ни жив ни мёртв»**. The phraseological unit **«рано или поздно»** does not simply indicate opposite temporal points but expresses the inevitability of an event. Similarly, **«ни жив ни мёртв»** is used to describe a state of extreme fear, anxiety, or emotional shock rather than the literal opposition between life and death. In such cases, antonymic components lose their independent lexical meanings and function as parts of a single phraseological whole.

The second group includes phraseological units based on contradictory antonymy. In these expressions, one concept logically excludes the other, creating a strong semantic contrast. Examples such as **«пан или пропал»**, **«всё или ничего»**, and **«живым или мёртвым»** belong to this category. The phraseological unit **«пан или пропал»** expresses a situation involving high risk, where success and failure are the only possible outcomes. Likewise, **«всё или ничего»** emphasizes determination and the absence of compromise. The analysis shows that contradictory antonymy intensifies the emotional and evaluative meaning of phraseological expressions.

A separate group is formed by phraseological units containing gradable antonyms. Such expressions are based on opposite ends of a semantic scale and often imply intermediate stages between them. Representative examples include **«вдоль и поперёк»**, **«от мала до велика»**, and **«день и ночь»**. The phraseological unit **«от мала до велика»** denotes all members of a community regardless of age, while **«день и ночь»** emphasizes continuity, intensity, or constant activity. In these expressions, antonymic components help convey the idea of totality and completeness.

The analysis also identified phraseological units based on contextual opposition. In such expressions, antonymic relations emerge through the interpretation of contrasting situations, stages, or experiences. Examples include **«от начала до конца»**, **«взлёты и падения»**, and **«между небом и землёй»**. The phraseological unit **«взлёты и падения»** metaphorically refers to alternating periods of success and failure, while **«от начала до конца»** represents the entirety of a process or action. These units demonstrate that





contextual opposition plays an important role in the creation of figurative meaning.

The findings indicate that phraseological units based on binary and gradable antonymic opposition constitute the most productive groups within the analyzed material. At the same time, contradictory and contextual antonymic units display a high degree of semantic expressiveness and figurative potential. The study confirms the views of V. V. Vinogradov and A. V. Kunin that phraseological meaning emerges from the interaction of all components within a stable linguistic structure. Although antonymic elements preserve traces of their lexical opposition, they primarily function as constituents of a unified semantic whole. Consequently, antonymic opposition should be regarded as one of the key mechanisms contributing to the formation, stability, and expressiveness of Russian phraseological units.

Discussion

The findings of the present study confirm that antonymic opposition plays a significant role in the formation of phraseological meaning within Russian phraseology. The analysis demonstrated that antonymic components are not merely lexical elements expressing opposite meanings; rather, they function as integral parts of stable phraseological structures. Their interaction contributes to semantic unity, figurative interpretation, and communicative effectiveness.

Classification of Phraseological Units with Antonymic Components

Type of Antonymic Relation	Phraseological Unit	Figurative Meaning
Binary Opposition	«рано или поздно»	Inevitability of an event
Binary Opposition	«ни жив ни мёртв»	Extreme fear or anxiety
Contradictory Antonymy	«пан или пропал»	Success or complete failure
Contradictory Antonymy	«всё или ничего»	Total commitment
Gradable Antonymy	«от мала до велика»	Everyone without exception
Gradable Antonymy	«день и ночь»	Continuous activity
Contextual Antonymy	«взлёты и падения»	Successes and failures
Contextual Antonymy	«от начала до конца»	Entire process



The results support the theoretical assumptions proposed by **V. V. Vinogradov**, who emphasized that the meaning of a phraseological unit cannot be reduced to the sum of the meanings of its individual components [6]. The analyzed phraseological units clearly illustrate this principle. For example, the expressions **«ни жив ни мёртв»** and **«пан или пропал»** possess meanings that extend beyond the direct lexical opposition of their components. The figurative interpretation emerges from the interaction of antonymic elements within a fixed phraseological structure, resulting in the creation of a new semantic whole.

The study also confirms the observations of **A. V. Kunin**, who regarded phraseological meaning as a complex semantic phenomenon formed through the interaction of lexical, grammatical, and contextual factors [7]. The examined examples demonstrate that antonymic opposition serves as an important semantic mechanism contributing to phraseological expressiveness. In many cases, antonyms intensify emotional evaluation, emphasize contrast, and facilitate the transmission of generalized meanings. This is particularly evident in phraseological units such as **«всё или ничего»**, **«день и ночь»**, and **«взлёты и падения»**, where opposition enhances both semantic depth and stylistic impact.

Another important finding concerns the diversity of antonymic relations represented in phraseological units. The classification proposed in this study revealed the existence of binary, contradictory, gradable, and contextual antonymic phraseological units. Although these categories differ in terms of semantic organization, they share a common functional characteristic: the use of opposition as a means of creating semantic integrity. This observation supports contemporary linguistic approaches that view antonymy not only as a lexical phenomenon but also as a cognitive mechanism for conceptualizing reality through contrast.

Furthermore, the analysis demonstrated that gradable and contextual antonymic phraseological units possess particularly high expressive potential. Expressions such as **«от мала до велика»** and **«от начала до конца»** illustrate how opposition may be used to represent completeness, universality, and continuity. Such phraseological units contribute to linguistic economy by allowing speakers to express complex ideas through concise and memorable constructions.

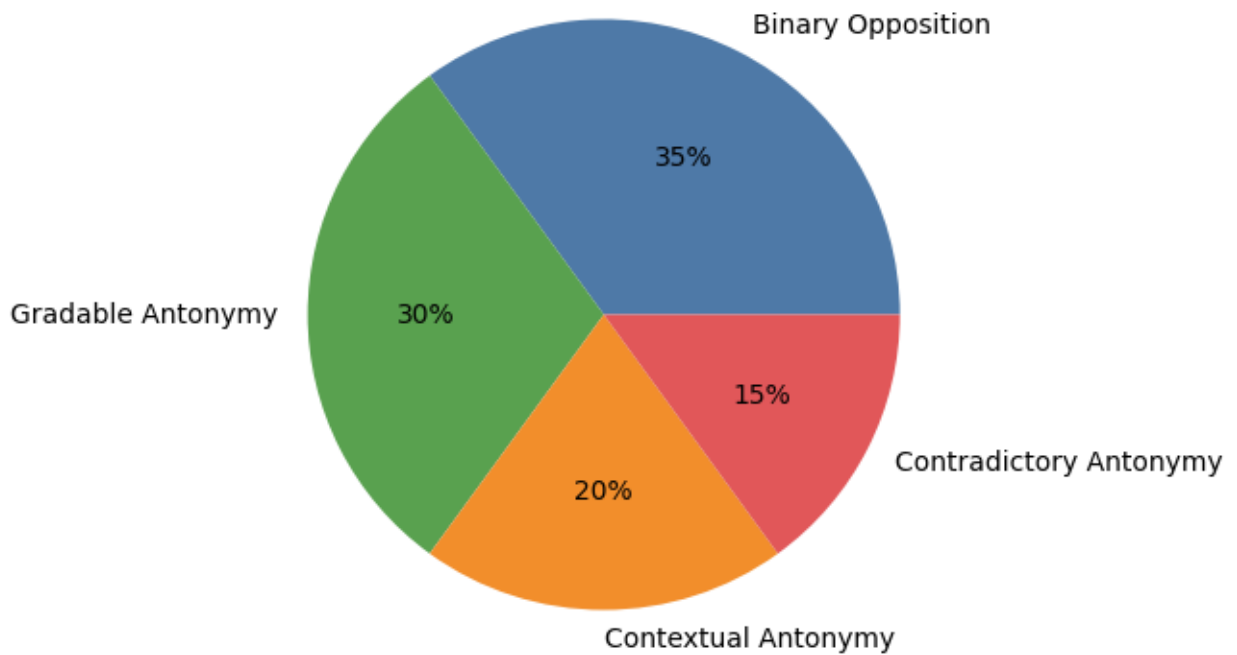
The findings also have practical implications. Understanding the classification and semantic functions of antonymic phraseological units can



facilitate language teaching, translation, and lexicographic description. Since many phraseological units cannot be translated literally, knowledge of their semantic structure may help translators preserve their figurative meaning and stylistic value in the target language.

Overall, the results indicate that antonymic opposition represents one of the most productive mechanisms in Russian phraseology. It contributes not only to the structural organization of phraseological units but also to their semantic richness, expressiveness, and communicative effectiveness. Therefore, the classification proposed in this study may serve as a useful framework for further investigations into phraseological semantics, cognitive linguistics, and comparative phraseological research.

Distribution of Phraseological Units with Antonymic Components



**Conclusion**

The present study examined phraseological units containing antonymic components from the perspective of Russian phraseological theory and proposed their semantic classification. The analysis demonstrated that antonymic opposition constitutes one of the fundamental mechanisms contributing to the formation of phraseological meaning, semantic integrity, and stylistic expressiveness.

The findings revealed that antonymic phraseological units can be classified into several semantic categories, including binary oppositional, contradictory, gradable, and contextual antonymic units. Despite differences in their structural



and semantic organization, all of these categories utilize opposition as a means of creating a unified figurative meaning. The study showed that antonymic components do not function independently within phraseological units; instead, they become elements of a stable semantic structure characterized by integrity and reproducibility.

The research further confirmed the theoretical principles formulated by **V. V. Vinogradov**, **A. V. Kunin**, and other representatives of the Russian phraseological school. The analyzed phraseological units demonstrated that phraseological meaning emerges through the interaction of all components within a fixed linguistic construction and cannot be reduced to the direct meanings of individual words. Antonymic opposition, therefore, should be regarded not only as a lexical-semantic phenomenon but also as an important factor in the formation of figurative and expressive meanings.

Furthermore, the study established that antonymic phraseological units perform various communicative functions, including the expression of completeness, contrast, evaluation, emotional intensity, and generalization. Their widespread use in speech reflects the cognitive tendency to conceptualize reality through oppositions and contrasts.

The proposed classification contributes to a more systematic understanding of phraseological units with antonymic components and may serve as a basis for further research in phraseology, lexical semantics, cognitive linguistics, comparative linguistics, and translation studies. Future investigations may focus on cross-linguistic comparisons of antonymic phraseological units and the cognitive mechanisms underlying their formation and interpretation.

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