

THE NOMINATIVE-COMMUNICATIVE FIELD OF IRONY IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK: CORE AND PERIPHERAL UNITS

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Abstract. This article examines the concept of irony/sarcasm in English and Uzbek as a nominative-communicative field rather than as an isolated stylistic figure. The central assumption of the study is that irony is organized around a semantic-pragmatic contradiction between the literal expression and the implicit evaluative intention of the speaker. The research analyzes the core and peripheral layers of this field, the linguistic means that verbalize ironic meaning, and the ways in which nominative and communicative units interact in actual discourse. In English, the field is represented by such units as irony, sarcasm, mockery, ridicule and teasing, whereas in Uzbek it includes kesatiq, piching, kinoya, istehzo, masxara and qochirim. The article argues that the field structure of irony consists of a semantic core, an inner periphery of prosodic and morphological markers, a middle periphery of lexical-semantic, phraseological, syntactic and paremiological units, and an outer periphery of textual, pragmatic and paralinguistic signals. The comparative analysis reveals both universal mechanisms, such as semantic inversion and implicit evaluation, and nationally specific forms of realization shaped by communicative norms and cultural expectations.

Keywords: irony, sarcasm, mockery, kesatiq, nominative-communicative field, core, periphery, semantic inversion, implicit evaluation, English, Uzbek.

Introduction

In contemporary linguistics, the study of implicit and evaluative meaning has become one of the most productive directions within anthropocentric, cognitive and pragmatic paradigms. Language is no longer viewed only as a neutral system of naming; it is also interpreted as a means of representing social attitudes, cultural experience and communicative intentions. Within this framework, irony and related phenomena occupy a special place because they require the simultaneous analysis of linguistic form, context, speaker intention, cultural norms and hearer interpretation.

The Uzbek term kesatiq is a particularly complex category. It overlaps with piching, kinoya, istehzo and other forms of indirect evaluation, but it cannot be reduced to any single one of them. In English, the closest terms are irony, sarcasm, mockery, ridicule and teasing, although none of these terms fully corresponds to the Uzbek semantic and cultural range of kesatiq. For this reason, the concept should be treated not as a single lexical item but as a field of interrelated nominative and communicative units.

The relevance of the nominative-communicative field approach lies in the fact that ironic meaning does not emerge from isolated words alone. It may be produced by intonation, morphological markers, idioms, rhetorical questions, proverbs, textual contrast, silence, facial expression and shared cultural knowledge. A phrase such as “What a brilliant idea!” or the Uzbek “Juda aqlli ish qilibsiz!” may be sincere praise in one situation, but it becomes sarcastic when the context shows that the addressee has made an obvious mistake. Thus, irony is not located solely in the lexical form; it emerges through the interaction of form, context and inference.

The aim of this article is to provide an expanded analysis of the core and peripheral organization of the nominative-communicative field of irony in English and Uzbek. The article



also seeks to identify the structural-semantic, functional-stylistic, linguocultural and linguopragmatic characteristics of the units constituting this field.

Theoretical Background: From Stylistic Figure to Field Structure

Classical rhetoric traditionally defined irony as a figure based on contrast between the expressed and intended meanings. This definition remains important, but it is insufficient for describing how irony functions in real communication. Modern pragmatic and cognitive approaches show that irony is not merely a formal contradiction; it is an inferential and evaluative act. Grice's theory of conversational implicature explains how speakers may communicate a meaning that is not explicitly encoded in the utterance (Grice, 1975). In ironic discourse, the literal meaning is often incompatible with the situation, and the hearer must infer the speaker's real evaluative intention.

Relevance Theory, developed by Sperber and Wilson, further supports this interpretation by presenting communication as an inferential process. According to this approach, the hearer searches for an interpretation that provides sufficient cognitive effect with reasonable processing effort (Sperber & Wilson, 1986). In irony, the literal interpretation is normally rejected or reinterpreted because it fails to correspond to the context. The utterance is then understood as expressing the speaker's attitude toward a thought, expectation or situation.

The field approach complements pragmatic theory by showing that irony is realized through a network of related units. A linguistic field is not a random collection of elements; it is an organized structure with a center and peripheral zones. The center contains the most stable and essential features, whereas the periphery contains units whose relevance depends more strongly on context, discourse and communicative conditions. When applied to irony, field theory allows us to distinguish between the semantic core of irony and the diverse linguistic and paralinguistic means that activate this core.

The nominative-communicative field combines two dimensions. The nominative dimension includes units that name or categorize the phenomenon: irony, sarcasm, mockery, *kesatiq*, *piching*, *kinoya* and so on. The communicative dimension includes actual utterances and discourse strategies that produce ironic meaning. This distinction is crucial because the presence of the word irony does not necessarily create ironic discourse, while an apparently ordinary sentence may become ironic under specific pragmatic conditions.

Methodology

The study applies a comparative-descriptive method, component analysis, field analysis and contextual-pragmatic interpretation. The comparative method is used to reveal similarities and differences between English and Uzbek units expressing ironic meaning. Component analysis identifies the semantic features of these units, such as implicit evaluation, semantic contradiction, indirect criticism, emotional colouring and pragmatic effect. Field analysis organizes the relevant units into core and peripheral layers. Contextual-pragmatic interpretation explains how these units function in actual speech situations.

The material of the analysis includes lexical items, idiomatic expressions, phraseological units, proverbs, rhetorical constructions, literary examples and typical communicative utterances from English and Uzbek. The focus is not only on dictionary meanings but also on the interaction of linguistic form with context, cultural norms and communicative intention.

The Nominative Layer of the Field

The nominative layer of the field consists of lexical units that name different forms of irony and indirect evaluation. In English, the most frequent terms include irony, sarcasm, mockery, ridicule and teasing. These units are semantically related but not identical. Irony is broader and may include rhetorical, literary, situational and verbal forms. Sarcasm is usually sharper and



more personally directed. Mockery and ridicule involve stronger derision, while teasing may be either playful or critical depending on the relationship between speakers.

In Uzbek, the field includes *kesatiq*, *piching*, *kinoya*, *istehzo*, *masxara* and *qochirim*. *Kesatiq* often functions as a central category because it covers hidden criticism, evaluative contrast and communicative influence. *Piching* tends to be more colloquial and frequently depends on intonation. *Kinoya* is close to irony in the sense of indirect meaning. *Istehzo* and *masxara* are more intense, often involving mockery or contempt. *Qochirim* may express indirect allusion or a culturally marked hint.

The comparison demonstrates that the English and Uzbek systems do not form perfect lexical equivalents. For instance, sarcasm and *kesatiq* overlap in their critical function, but sarcasm in English often suggests sharper and more direct verbal aggression, whereas *kesatiq* in Uzbek may include culturally softened forms of indirect evaluation. This shows that the nominative layer itself already reflects national-cultural differences.

The Communicative Layer of the Field

The communicative layer includes utterances that do not necessarily contain any explicit term for irony but produce ironic meaning in discourse. In both languages, the most common mechanism is semantic inversion: a positive or neutral expression is used to communicate negative evaluation. For example, the Uzbek utterance “*Vaqtida kelibsiz-da!*” and the English “*You’re right on time!*” may both become sarcastic when addressed to someone who is late.

The communicative layer is highly dependent on the speech situation. A sentence may be sincere in one context and ironic in another. This explains why irony cannot be fully described through lexical semantics alone. It requires attention to pragmatic factors: who speaks, to whom, in what situation, with what intention and with what expected effect.

In Uzbek discourse, communicative irony is often connected with indirectness and social harmony. It may allow the speaker to express dissatisfaction without direct confrontation. In English discourse, communicative irony often appears in concise, witty or sarcastic replies. However, English irony is also context-dependent; it is not automatically more direct but relies on different contextual and intonational signals.

Core and Peripheral Structure of the Field

The core of the field is formed by the semantic-pragmatic contradiction between literal expression and implicit evaluation. This contradiction is the most stable feature of irony in both languages. Without such a contradiction, ironic interpretation becomes impossible. The core also includes evaluativeness, implicitness and inferential interpretation. These features constitute the conceptual foundation of the field.

The inner periphery consists of prosodic and morphological means. Intonation, stress, pause and rhythm may transform an ordinary utterance into an ironic one. In Uzbek, certain evaluative and diminutive-affective suffixes may also support ironic interpretation when used in an incongruent context. In English, stress and intonation play a particularly visible role in distinguishing sincere praise from sarcastic evaluation.

The middle periphery includes lexical-semantic, phraseological, syntactic and paremiological means. Lexical-semantic means include antonymy, hyperbole, understatement, metaphor and metonymy. Phraseological means include idioms such as “*Oh, that’s rich!*” or Uzbek expressions like “*qo’li gul*” when used in a contradictory context. Syntactic means include rhetorical questions, inversion, repetition and parallelism. Paremiological means include proverbs and folk sayings that acquire ironic meaning in specific contexts, such as “*Oshpaz ko’p bo’lsa, osh buziladi*” when used to criticize excessive interference.



The outer periphery includes textual, pragmatic and paralinguistic signals. At the textual level, irony may arise from contradictions across a whole text rather than a single sentence. At the pragmatic level, it depends on shared knowledge and communicative expectations. At the paralinguistic level, facial expression, gesture, silence, eye movement and ironic smile may activate hidden evaluation even when the verbal expression remains neutral.

Core-Periphery Model

Layer	Main feature	Typical means	Function
Core	Semantic contradiction and implicit evaluation	Semantic inversion; literal-implicit opposition	Creates the conceptual foundation of irony
Inner periphery	Immediate linguistic marking	Intonation, stress, pause, evaluative affixes	Activates ironic reading in speech
Middle periphery	Lexical, phraseological and syntactic realization	Idioms, metaphors, hyperbole, rhetorical questions, proverbs	Verbalizes hidden evaluation
Outer periphery	Contextual and non-verbal realization	Textual contrast, situation, gesture, silence, ironic smile	Completes pragmatic interpretation

This model demonstrates that the field of irony is not linear. The core provides the semantic foundation, while the peripheral layers supply various resources through which ironic meaning becomes observable in discourse. Some units are close to the core because they directly express contradiction; others are peripheral because they require stronger contextual support. Nevertheless, even peripheral elements may become decisive in actual communication.

Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Relations

Paradigmatic relations are revealed in the semantic proximity and differentiation of the units belonging to the field. For example, *kesatiq*, *piching*, *kinoya*, *istehzo* and *sarkazm* are related because they all involve implicit evaluation, yet they differ in intensity. *Piching* is relatively mild and often colloquial; *kinoya* is indirect and evaluative; *kesatiq* is more psychologically marked; *istehzo* and *sarkazm* are sharper and more negative. In English, irony is broader, sarcasm is more aggressive, mockery and ridicule are more derisive, and teasing may be friendly or critical.

Syntagmatic relations are realized when irony-expressing units combine with other linguistic or contextual elements in discourse. A positive adjective may combine with a negative situation; a rhetorical question may combine with an absurd context; a discourse marker may combine with exaggerated praise. For instance, “Oh, sure, he is the most honest politician in the country — never lies, never cheats!” uses the discourse marker “Oh, sure” and exaggerated repetition to create sarcasm. Similarly, the Uzbek “*Aqlingizga balli, hamma narsani bilarkansiz*” may create ironic evaluation through positive lexical form and negative contextual implication.

Comparative Findings

The comparative analysis reveals several isomorphic features. First, both English and Uzbek irony are based on semantic inversion. Second, both rely on context and shared knowledge. Third, both use positive evaluation to express negative judgement. Fourth, both may function as indirect criticism and pragmatic influence.

At the same time, allomorphic features are evident. Uzbek irony is more strongly connected with indirectness, social hierarchy, respect, age relations and collective norms. It frequently employs phraseological units, folk expressions and culturally marked hints. English irony and sarcasm often appear in short replies, idiomatic formulas, understatement, overstatement and



intonational contrast. These differences are not absolute, but they demonstrate that the same universal mechanism may be culturally realized in different ways.

Conclusion

The nominative-communicative field of irony in English and Uzbek is a complex, multi-layered system. Its semantic core is formed by contradiction between literal meaning and implicit evaluation, while its periphery includes prosodic, morphological, lexical, phraseological, syntactic, paremiological, textual, pragmatic and paralinguistic means. The field approach makes it possible to analyze irony not as an isolated stylistic figure but as an integrated cognitive, pragmatic and linguocultural phenomenon.

The comparison of English and Uzbek shows that the universal nature of irony lies in semantic inversion and implicit evaluation, whereas national specificity is revealed in the preferred means of expression and the cultural conditions of interpretation. This approach is useful not only for theoretical linguistics but also for translation studies, intercultural communication and language teaching.

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