

Semantic Classification of the Opposition “Near-Far” in English and Uzbek Languages

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the semantic classification of the opposition “near-far” in English and Uzbek languages, focusing on their linguistic, cultural, and cognitive features. The study identifies similarities and differences in the usage, connotations, and metaphorical extensions of these spatial terms. It also examines their roles in shaping conceptual metaphors and cultural perceptions. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of how spatial oppositions reflect cultural and linguistic diversity.

Keywords: Semantic classification, near-far opposition, spatial terms, English language, Uzbek language, linguistic comparison, conceptual metaphors.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental tool for expressing spatial relationships, and antonyms like “near” and “far” serve as essential means of describing distance and proximity. In both English and Uzbek, the opposition “near-far” represents a binary semantic relationship, particularly in spatial, temporal, and emotional contexts. In semantics, words and their meanings are classified based on their relationships. These lexical relations are crucial for understanding how proximity and distance are expressed in human language. This article explores the semantic classification of this opposition in the two languages, highlighting similarities and differences in their usage and conceptualization.

2. OPPOSITION AND THEIR USAGE IN LINGUISTICS

In linguistics, opposition refers to the relationship between two linguistic elements that are contrasted to convey different meanings or functions. This concept is fundamental in understanding how languages structure information and differentiate between various units, such as sounds, words, or grammatical structures. Opposition is used in different levels of language. Such as in phonology, morphology, lexicology and syntax.

- **Phonological opposition:** In phonology, opposition pertains to the relationship between phonemes – distinctive sound units in a language. For example, in English, the words "bat" and "pat" differ only in their initial sounds: /b/ and /p/. This single sound difference creates a contrast in meaning, illustrating a phonological opposition. Such minimal pairs demonstrate how substituting one phoneme for another can change the meaning of a word.
- **Lexical opposition.** This involves the relationship between words with contrasting meanings, commonly known as antonyms. Examples include pairs like "hot" vs. "cold," "near" vs. "far," and "young" vs. "old." These oppositions help structure our understanding of concepts by providing clear distinctions between different states or qualities.
- **Grammatical opposition.** Grammatical elements can also stand in opposition to each other. For instance, in English, the distinction between singular and plural forms (e.g., "cat" vs. "cats") represents a grammatical opposition. Similarly, verb tenses like past and present ("walked" vs. "walk") are in opposition, indicating different temporal contexts.

3. SEMANTIC FEATURES OF "NEAR" AND "FAR" IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

The words "near" and "far" in English are fundamental terms that describe relationships across various domains, including spatial, temporal, emotional, and metaphorical contexts. While their primary use is spatial, their meaning extends beyond physical proximity or distance, offering nuanced applications in language.

The primary semantic domain for “near” and “far” is spatial relationships, where they describe physical closeness or distance relative to a reference point. For instance “near” indicates closeness or short distance: “The school is near the park, Come closer; sit near me.” “Far” indicates distance or separation: “The city is far from the mountains, He lives far away.”

Both terms require a “reference point” to establish the relationship. For instance, in “The house is near the lake”, the “lake” acts as the point of reference. They are often associated with relative, not absolute, distances. What is considered “near” or “far” depends on context and perception. In oppositional nature, the terms “near” and “far” form a clear opposition, representing binary ends of a distance spectrum. This opposition is often used in navigation like “Turn near the gas station” or “The destination is far from here.” When we describe “degrees of proximity,” both terms can be modified to express gradation, such as “very near” or “extremely far,” showing that the opposition is not always absolute.

In Uzbek, *yaqin* (near) and *uzoq* (far) function as core terms that describe spatial, temporal, emotional, and metaphorical relationships. Their meanings are closely tied to the cultural and linguistic context of the Uzbek-speaking world.

In Uzbek like in English, *yaqin* and *uzoq* are most commonly used to describe physical proximity or distance. *Yaqin* (near) refers to closeness in physical space:

- *Maktabbizninguyimizgayaqin* – The school is near our house.
- *Yaqinjoygaboramiz* – We are going to a nearby place. “**Uzoq**” (far) refers to physical distance:
- *Shahartog‘largauzoq* – The city is far from the mountains.
- *Uzoqjoygaborishimizkerak* – We need to travel to a far place.

4. ABSTRACT AND METAPHORICAL USAGE

The temporal meaning of the “near-far opposition” refers to how these spatial terms are metaphorically extended to describe temporal relationships in languages like English and Uzbek. Both languages often use spatial metaphors to conceptualize time, but they may do so in slightly different ways due to cultural and

linguistic factors. In Collins dictionary, temporal defined that someone is also able to see how specific acts are related to a temporal and spatial context.

The near-far opposition is frequently used to describe social and relational dynamics. For example, in English language “close friends” – emotionally intimate relationships. “Distant relatives” – weaker or less familiar relationships. In Uzbek language we may come across the same social and relational trends. *Yaqindo‘stlar* – close friends, *Uzoqqarindoshlar* – “distant relatives.” While analyzing these examples, we identified that “near” signifies emotional or relational closeness, while “far” implies detachment or unfamiliarity.

The opposition is also applied to abstract ideas, such as goals, knowledge, or success in both cultures. For instance in English language, there are some proverbs indicating abstract notions like “Success seems far away” – difficult to achieve or “The solution is near at hand” – easily achievable. In Uzbek language, *Muvaffaqiyatuzoqdatuyuladi* or *Yechimyaqin*. These examples demonstrate how spatial language is used to conceptualize abstract challenges and achievements.

The “near-far” opposition is frequently used to represent temporal relationships. Time is conceptualized as a linear path, with proximity signifying immediacy and distance indicating remoteness. Near in time: urgency or immediacy. “The deadline is near. The future feels closer than ever.” “Far” is used for in time, delays or historical remoteness. “The event is far in the future, That memory feels so far away.”

Metaphor is a powerful tool in language, allowing speakers to understand and express complex ideas in terms of more familiar, concrete experiences. The near-far opposition is frequently used metaphorically to describe a wide range of concepts. Key metaphorical domains include “emotional distance.” The near-far opposition is often used to describe emotional states and relationships. For example: “She feels close to her family – emotional intimacy,” He is distant and unapproachable – emotional detachment. In these cases, spatial terms are used metaphorically to describe emotional proximity or remoteness.

The near-far opposition can also describe levels of understanding or familiarity with a subject. The topic is close to my heart (deeply understood or valued) – *Bu mavzumeningyuragimgayaqin*. That idea is far from my mind (not currently considered) – *Bu fikrmeningfikrimdanuzoq*. These metaphors illustrate how spatial language is used to conceptualize intellectual and emotional engagement.

In conclusion I may say that the semantic opposition “near-far” plays a crucial role in expressing physical, temporal, and emotional concepts in both English and Uzbek. Understanding its theoretical background through semantics, deixis, and conceptual metaphor theory offers insight into how humans perceive and describe proximity and distance, both literally and figuratively. This cross-linguistic study highlights universal patterns while uncovering unique cultural nuances in each language.

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