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CONVERSENESS AS A RELATIONAL OPPOSITION

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Abstract. This article provides information about pairs of words – converses – that express mutually related inverse relations. A distinctive feature of converse words is that each of them necessarily presupposes the existence of its semantically reversed counterpart from the opposite perspective. The article discusses lexical and grammatical converses and substantiates the properties of symmetry, transitivity, and reflexivity associated with the phenomenon of converseness. It is demonstrated through examples that the discussion of converse relations among kinship terms is of particular interest for two reasons. The article also examines how gradable antonyms form mutually related oppositional relations.

Key words: converseness, mutually related inverse relation, opposition, symmetry, transitivity, reflexivity, arguments.

Introduction. Lexical semantic relations such as synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy and meronymy have long been regarded as the basic means of describing the systemic organization of vocabulary. Among them, oppositeness of meaning occupies a special place, since it is one of the most readily recognized relations in natural language [M. L. Murphy, 2003]. However, the term antonymy is often applied to a heterogeneous group of oppositions that differ considerably in their logical and semantic properties. For this reason, linguists distinguish several types of opposites, including complementaries, gradable antonyms, directional opposites and converses [J. Lyons, 1977; D. A. Cruse, 1986].

The notion of converseness was developed in the works of J. Lyons, who treated it as a specific type of oppositeness in which the members of a pair describe the same relation from opposite perspectives [J. Lyons, 1963; J. Lyons, 1968]. D. A. Cruse examined converses within the broader class of directional opposites [D. A. Cruse, 1986], while Yu. D. Apresyan considered conversives as one of the important means of lexical paraphrase [Ю.Д. Апресян, 1995]. Corpus-based studies have also shown that opposites perform a variety of discourse functions in actual language use [S. Jones, 2002]. In Uzbek linguistics, antonymy has been studied mainly from the lexical-semantic and lexicographic points of view [Sh. Rahmatullayev, N. Mamatov, R. Shukurov, 1980], whereas converse relations, particularly in comparison with English, require further investigation.

The aim of this article is to describe converseness as a type of relational opposition, to identify the lexical and grammatical types of converses, and to examine the logical properties of symmetry, transitivity and reflexivity in converse relations, with particular attention to kinship terms, deictic verbs of motion and gradable antonyms. The study is based on descriptive, comparative and logical-semantic analysis of English examples, with reference to Uzbek where relevant.

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There exists a distinctive type of "opposition" formed by pairs of words that express mutually related inverse relations between two objects (or arguments). For example: buy/sell, husband/wife. If Ali sells a book to Vali, Vali buys a book from Ali; if Ali is Bahora's husband, Bahora is Ali's wife.

J. Lyons referred to this phenomenon as "converseness" (J. Lyons, 1963), whereas another linguist, F. Palmer, focused more specifically on the mutually related inverse nature of this phenomenon and called it "relational opposition" [F. Palmer, 1976: 81]. The components of converse pairs are referred to as arguments.

From a lexical point of view, pairs of words expressing mutually related inverse relations occur among the following parts of speech:

1. **Verbs:** buy/sell, lend/borrow, rent/let, own/belong to, give/receive.
2. **Nouns:** husband/wife, fiancé/fiancée, parent/child, debtor/creditor, teacher/pupil.
3. **Prepositions and prepositional expressions:** above/below, in front of/behind, north of/south of.
4. **Conjunctions and connective expressions:** because/that's why.
5. **Adjectives and adverbs:** faster/slower, louder/lower.

From a grammatical point of view, the categories of active and passive voice in verbs may also form a mutually related inverse opposition. For example, if Ali hits Vali, Vali is hit by Ali.

Such relations are often described by logicians in terms of symmetry, transitivity and reflexivity. If a relation connects its arguments (mutually related linguistic units) in both directions, it is considered a symmetric relation. In other words, if the relation between the arguments "a" and "b" is represented by "R", then "a R b" entails "b R a".

The English expressions "be married to" and "cousin" provide clear examples of such relations. For instance, if John is married to Mary, Mary is married to John. Similarly, if Bill is Fred's cousin, Fred is Bill's cousin as well.

A relation is transitive if a R b and b R c entail a R c. Consequently, many spatial and temporal terms may display transitivity. For example, if John is in front of Harry and Harry is in front of Bill, John is also in front of Bill. A similar situation can be observed with such expressions as behind, above, below, north of, south of, and inside. This, however, does not necessarily include a symmetric relation such as A is opposite B and B is opposite A; rather, the relation may be transitive only. If a relation holds between an argument and itself, it is considered reflexive, that is, a R a. This may be understood as a relation of equality or similarity. For example: Five equals five and Tom resembles himself. Such relations may also possess the properties of symmetry and transitivity. However, reflexivity is not of primary importance for the present discussion, and therefore it will not be considered further.

The discussion of kinship terms in relation to relational opposition, that is, converseness, is of particular interest for two reasons. First, many kinship terms express not only the kinship relation itself but also the gender of the person concerned. Thus, the word father denotes the male member of the more general category parent, while daughter denotes a female child, and so on. This circumstance does not, therefore, necessarily reflect a symmetric or reflexive relationship. In English, the statement John is Sam's father does not entail that Sam is John's son, since Sam may also be John's daughter. Thus, languages contain converse terms that express opposite genders while denoting mutually related kinship relations, such as father/mother, son/daughter, uncle/aunt, and niece/nephew.

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There are also kinship terms that express a symmetric reciprocal relationship without specifying gender. For example, if John is Sam's brother, it does not necessarily follow that Sam is John's brother; Sam may instead be John's sister. In English, gender-neutral kinship terms are relatively limited. For example, cousin is symmetric, whereas parent/child and grandparent/grandchild are not symmetric. Although gender-specific kinship terms are relatively numerous, anthropologists frequently employ gender-neutral terms in order to avoid unnecessary gender distinctions. For example, spouse is used instead of husband/wife, and sibling instead of brother/sister; both of these terms express symmetric relations. However, English has no single gender-neutral term corresponding to the pairs uncle/aunt and nephew/niece.

Second, whether a particular term denotes a symmetric or non-symmetric relation is itself a problematic linguistic issue. Thus, the expression be married to is symmetric in English because, like spouse, it does not specify gender. In many languages, however, the concept of "to be married to" is expressed by different terms depending on whether the subject is male or female. For example, in Uzbek, uylanmoq is used with reference to a man, whereas turmushga chiqmoq is used with reference to a woman. In many cases, a similar distinction can also be observed through the use of active and passive constructions: for example, Tom marries Mary, whereas Mary is married to Tom. In English, however, the terms marry and be married to may be used with reference to either gender and, although they differ grammatically and semantically, both can express a symmetric relationship.

Likewise, in many languages, the absence of gender-neutral equivalents corresponding to terms such as English cousin makes it necessary to use different terms for the two genders. There are also further complications. For example, in some languages, terms denoting sibling relationships express not only gender but also relative age, with different terms being used depending on whether the sibling is older or younger. Thus, if two girls are sisters, one may be referred to as the elder sister, while the other is the younger sister.

There are also other terms that, although closely related as relational opposites, do not form a straightforward converse pair but nevertheless differ from one another in terms of temporal and spatial orientation. An interesting example is the pair of verbs come and go, discussed by C. J. Fillmore [C. J. Fillmore, 1997]. The verb come has a more restricted range of use than go, since it generally indicates movement towards the speaker or the addressee.

First, come is used to indicate movement towards the speaker or addressee, as in Come to me and I'll come to you. Second, it may refer to an action directed towards the speaker or addressee in relation to a relevant event in the past, present, or future. For example: He came to me in London and I'll come to see you in Paris (when you get there). Third, the verb may be used to indicate movement towards a place that is habitually associated with the speaker or addressee, even when that person is not physically present there at the particular time. For example: Come to my office (though I shan't be there) and I came to your house (but you were out).

In the third situation, the verb go may also be used, as in Go to my office and I went to your house. Furthermore, go is generally preferred when the location of the speaker or addressee is not being emphasized. For instance, a person who is situated at a considerable distance from the speaker cannot normally be instructed to come to my office if the speaker's location is the relevant point of orientation; instead, go to my office would be more appropriate. Similarly, we would not normally say that a person came to your house if the movement was directed away from the relevant person and the spatial perspective does not establish the speaker or addressee as the point of orientation. When there

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is no explicit indication of the position of either the speaker or the addressee, the verb go is generally used.

Come and go are not the only pair of verbs exhibiting such characteristics. The verbs bring and take may demonstrate a similar relationship, particularly when they express the additional meaning of carrying or transporting something to a particular destination.

There are also other pairs of words that are related in a similar manner. Thus, the verb ask presupposes a potential reply, while offer anticipates acceptance as a possible response. These, however, are examples not of reciprocal oppositions but rather of temporary or contingent relations. Moreover, the relationships between the members of each pair are not identical. Ask and offer may anticipate reply and accept, respectively, but the expected outcome is not necessarily positive: an offer may receive no response or may be rejected (that is, an offer may be refused). At the same time, the verbs reply and accept presuppose or arise in response to a prior communicative act such as ask or give. This asymmetry is a natural consequence of the temporary and context-dependent nature of such reciprocal relations.

It should be emphasized that gradable antonyms can reasonably be regarded as a type of relational opposition. In other words, if a is wider than b, it necessarily follows that b is narrower than a (a is wider than b; b is narrower than a). Here, the comparative forms wider and narrower constitute a pair of relational opposites. Furthermore, these relations are transitive, since if a is wider than b and b is wider than c, then a is also wider than c (if a is wider than b and b is wider than c, a is wider than c as well). However, they cannot be regarded as either symmetric or reflexive. It is also noteworthy that expressions such as as wide as and as narrow as can simultaneously exhibit the properties of symmetry, transitivity and reflexivity.

Conclusion. On the basis of the material analyzed, it can be concluded that pairs of words expressing mutually related inverse relations, i.e. converses, constitute an important linguistic phenomenon. A distinctive characteristic of converse words is that they necessarily presuppose the existence of a semantically inverse counterpart representing the corresponding relation from the opposite perspective. Lexical converses may exhibit the properties of symmetry, transitivity, and reflexivity. The converse relationship between kinship terms is of particular interest for two reasons. Gradable antonyms constitute one of the linguistic means through which relational opposition can be established.

The analysis also shows that symmetry is not an inherent property of all converse pairs. Gender-specific kinship terms such as father/son or brother/sister do not form symmetric relations, whereas gender-neutral terms such as cousin, spouse and sibling do. Languages differ in this respect: the English expression be married to is symmetric, while Uzbek distinguishes uylanmoq and turmushga chiqmoq according to the gender of the subject.

Pairs such as come/go, bring/take, ask/reply and offer/accept show that relational opposition may be closely connected with deixis, the speaker's point of orientation and the communicative situation. Although such pairs are not converses in the strict sense, they demonstrate that oppositional relations in the lexicon form a gradual rather than a strictly bounded system. The results of the study can be used in courses on lexicology, semantics and translation theory, as well as in the comparative study of the English and Uzbek lexical systems. Further research may focus on a systematic, corpus-based comparison of converse pairs in English and Uzbek.

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