

## Syntactic Frames for Conceptual Binary Oppositions

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**Abstract:** *This article discusses one of the most significant human emotional state 'happiness' and 'unhappiness' by a syntactic opposition frame. Mettinger's typology of a syntactic frame has been adopted in this paper in order to show an efficient method for finding examples of constructed oppositions of the binary concept.*

Since the advance of human civilization, people have thought of importance of dualism. Throughout history several philosophical assumptions about binarism has been a widely discussed theme in human thought. Coming to the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>, a group of linguists <sup>2</sup>(namely structural linguists) started using **binary opposition** widely in their researches. Even though a number of criticisms have been aroused against to dualism, as a matter of questions like "what about the third option?", significance of binarism has not been lost yet. Major branches of modern linguistics are still using binary opposition in order to define important concepts in a simple and understandable way. In this article, one of the most significant human emotional state **happiness** and **unhappiness** will be discussed with the help of a syntactic opposition frame.

From the linguistic point of view, opposition is not something that can be easily defined as it has variate of terms to characterize. David Mat points out that the same or similar terminology which is used to refer to opposition in linguistic studies includes 'antonymy', 'opposition', 'complementariness', 'contrast', 'contrariety'. Studies that focus less on the linguistic elements of opposition and more on their broader significance, such as politics, media and cultural studies tend to use terms such as 'polarisation', 'dichotomy', 'difference' (and 'differance'), 'otherness', and 'binarism'<sup>3</sup>. David Matt also reveals complex explanation of 9 types of oppositions including **negated, transitional, comparative, replacive, concessive, explicit, parallelism, contrastive and (Jones') ancillary antonymy**.

According to Lyons, "antonymy" can be used as standart term for oppositeness of meaning, however, he also used "complementaries" when it comes to gradability of opposites<sup>4</sup> and he provides a schematic outline of Lyons' typology, with some common examples (in bold) of those types. He uses the umbrella term 'contrast' to cover all possible claims to oppositional status, and divides this into 'binary' and 'non binary contrasts'. Figure 1 below shows A diagrammatical representation of Lyons

<sup>1</sup> L.R. Waugh, in International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, 2001 (Deconstruction: Cultural Concerns)

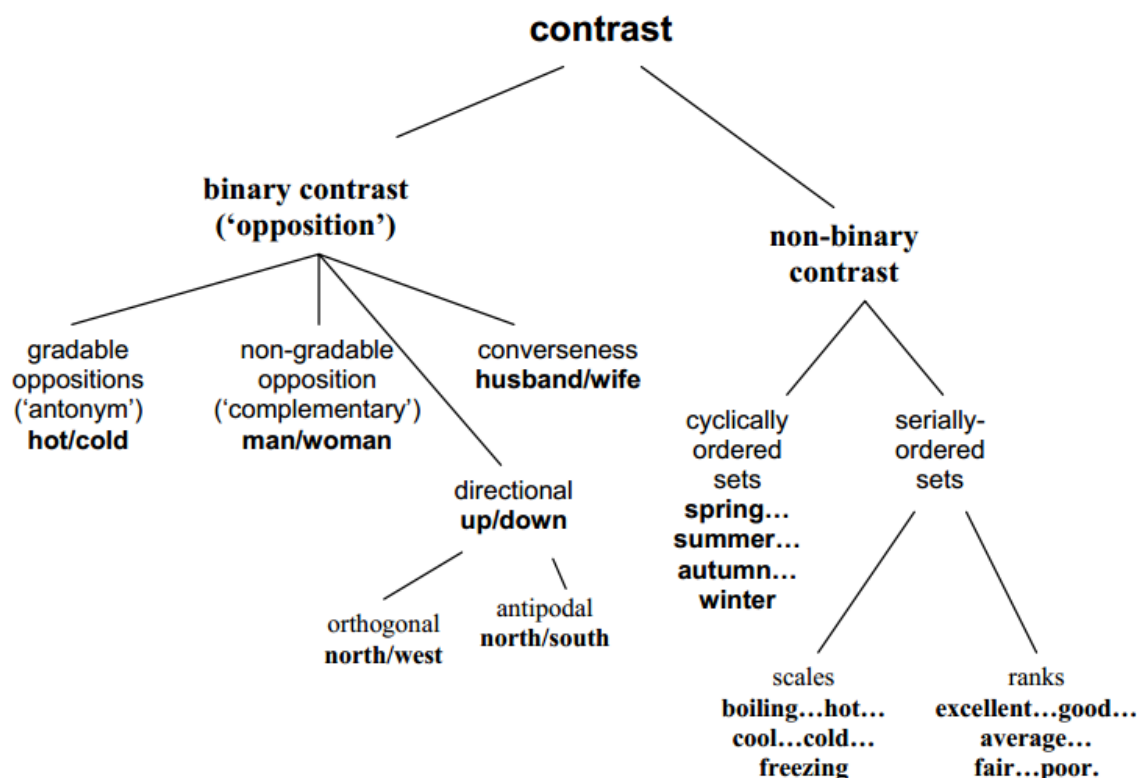
J. Culler, in International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, 2001

<sup>2</sup> W.V. Heydebrand, in International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, 2001

<sup>3</sup> D. Matt (2008) Oppositions in News Discourse: the ideological construction of us and them in the British press. Doctoral thesis, University of Huddersfield:50

<sup>4</sup> Lyons, J. (1977) Semantics Cambridge University Press.:241

categories of opposition. It is the binary contrasts that are mostly considered archetypal oppositions so the focus will be specifically on these, although the non-binary ones do also provide food for thought.<sup>5</sup>



**Fig.1 A diagrammatical representation of Lyons categories of opposition**

To analyze conceptual binary oppositions of happiness through contexts syntactic frames are used below on the basis of Mettinger's categories<sup>6</sup>. A syntactic frame is a formulaic structure in which grammatical function words such as conjunctions systematically conjoin both members of an oppositional pair. Common structures include 'X not Y', 'rather X than Y', and 'X and Y'<sup>7</sup>

Frame	Frame Form	Examples	Context	'Major textual function'
A1	X and Y	Happiness/unhappiness	Life is happiness and unhappiness. Life is day and night, life is life and death. You have to be aware of both.	a) Simultaneous validity of X,Y
A2	X, at the same	pleasant/unpleasant	...an increasing	a) Simultaneously

<sup>5</sup> D.Matt (2008) *Oppositions in News Discourse: the ideological construction of us and them in the British press*. Doctoral thesis, University of Huddersfield:50

<sup>6</sup> Mettinger, A. (1994) *Aspects of Semantic Opposition in English* Oxford University Press.

<sup>7</sup> D.Matt (2008) *Oppositions in News Discourse: the ideological construction of us and them in the British press*. Doctoral thesis, University of Huddersfield:89

	time Y	t	number of cross-cultural studies indicated that people can experience pleasant and unpleasant emotions at the same time in various occasions <sup>8</sup>	validity of X,Y
B	neither X nor Y.	Happiness/unhappiness	“Now I have neither happiness nor unhappiness.” <sup>9</sup>	a) Simultaneous (non) validity of X,Y
C	X or Y	Happy/unhappy	Whether happy or unhappy, life is the only treasure man possesses	c)Choice (exclusive)
	either X or Y	Sad/happy	Apathy is the feeling of neither being <b>sad</b> nor <b>happy</b> . It describes a lack of strong emotion in any direction <sup>10</sup>	c)Choice (exclusive)
D	X or (= ‘and’) Y	pleasant/unpleasant	.....in a state of blessed numbedness, incapable of any thought at all, pleasant or unpleasant.	a) Simultaneous validity of X, Y (weak disjunction; non – exclusive}
E	X, (but) Y	Happy/unhappy	Arteta happy after Palace win but unhappy “that we didn’t score more goals” <sup>11</sup>	d) Retrospective Correction
F	X rather than Y	Happiness/sadness	This meditation invites you to choose <b>happiness rather than sadness</b> . <sup>12</sup>	E) Comparison

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01692/full>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/188338>

<sup>10</sup> <https://ironyoflife.com/why-am-i-not-sad-or-happy/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.justarsenal.com/arteta-happy-after-palace-win-but-unhappy-that-we-didnt-score-more-goals/316169>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.aurahealth.io/track/choose-happiness-rather-than-sadness-karuna-priya>

G	X turns (in)to / becomes Y	Unhappiness/happiness	Turn Unhappiness Into Happiness In 5 Easy Steps <sup>13</sup>	F) Mutation
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Major textual functions of binary opposition of concepts happiness and unhappiness here are simultaneously validity of X,Y, exclusive choice, retrospective correction, comparison and mutation. Typology of a syntactic frame developed by Mettinger has been adopted in this paper in order to show an efficient method for finding examples of constructed oppositions of the binary concepts happiness and unhappiness. Each frame form has its own aim to use two contrast concepts in a sentence together. It would be interesting to know whether they perform similar or different functions in different texts, or indeed in different genres. The discovery of binary oppositions through syntactic frames are open for further development.

### References:

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.healthyway.com/content/turn-unhappiness-into-happiness-in-5-easy-steps/>