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Research Article



## The Power of Oxymoron: An Analytical Study of Oxymoron in Political Speeches


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### Abstract

The present study carries out the linguistic analysis of oxymoron in political speech, which is a rhetorical device that mixes contradictory words or phrases by examining the definition, structure, and the purpose behind using this device in speech. The research article also examines the various types and applications of oxymoron with drawing general parameters to grammatical and pragmatic perspectives. The data was collected from several set of public political speech delivered by John F. Kennedy. A qualitative analysis was conducted of four

political speeches. The model used to analyze the chosen data proposed by Yanfang Shen in his work “Foregrounding in Poetic Discourse: Between Deviation and Cognitive Constraints” (2007). The results demonstrate Kennedy is skillful at using the device of oxymoronic with accurate grammatical constructions to successfully convey a convenience message and create a dramatic impact on the listeners. His speeches were enriched with oxymorons expression by using mostly all its types, creating intellectually and memorable motivated statements. Finally, the study also reflects on some aspects of inserting oxymoron in the pedagogical perspective, specifically considering the practical implications of oxymorons in the classroom environment, argues that when using oxymorons, with careful consideration, can be powerful rhetorical devices for improving communication, persuasiveness, and creativity.

**Keywords:** Figure of speech, Political speech, Oxymoronic expression, Political Communication, Persuasion Techniques, Political Rhetoric, Speech Analysis

## **Introduction**

Speech is a vital kind of communication that holds significant importance in our lives. Politicians and leaders must possess strong communication skills in order to ascend to the pinnacle of the political hierarchy. The speech abilities of an individual can significantly influence the outcomes of elections, for example. Undoubtedly, Politicians must possess both intellect and charisma. Being able to effectively contact with millions of people is of utmost importance. This involves using numerous expressive methods to capture their attention and convey the intended message. In addition, speech serves as an indicator of an individual’s cognitive abilities. An oxymoron is a rhetorical device that combines two words with contrasting or conflicting meanings. This juxtaposition of opposing or contradictory phrases is frequently referred to in colloquial speech as a paradox. Oxymoron, as a literary device, serves to create an impression, enhance a notion, and provide entertainment to the reader. This is a pairing of opposing words that contradict each other. The original copy as an oxymoron commonly and figuratively means that the content of the copy is original. However, Individuals often experience confusion while attempting to distinguish between an oxymoron and a contradiction. A paradox is a stylistic tactic that presents initially contradictory concepts, which may seem illogical but might actually be valid. Paradoxes possess logical coherence and ultimately reveal a fundamental truth. Oxymoron, although a stylistic device, has a more restricted scope than paradox, mostly involving the combination of words. An oxymoron is a rhetorical device that consists of a juxtaposition of two conflicting words, rather than a

comprehensive expression of ideas. Oxymoronic expressions possess figurative truth, however lack literally truth. Stylistics employs many linguistic facts such as lexicology, grammar, phonetics, semasiology, and phraseology. However, in contrast to these fields, it does not focus on the fundamental components of language itself, but rather on their ability to convey meaning within a certain context— its stylistic role. The stylistic function refers to the ability of language elements in a document to convey not only the subject matter, but also to express emotions, evaluations, and aesthetic information. The linguistic branches analyze the complete set of linguistic elements at a particular level, while stylistics focuses on their expressive characteristics, how they work together, and their role in conveying thoughts and emotions in a specific text. Stylistics also examines how these elements influence the reader's interpretation of the text. This pertains to the holistic nature of the reader's character, encompassing not only their rational intellect but also other aspects of their personality. likewise, oxymoron like other stylistic devices has different functions in text and speech that can be highly advantageous in specific circumstances, as they can effectively demonstrate an individual's language abilities. Using oxymorons in a text or speech is seldom, but it is important for individuals to understand that words, despite their opposing nature, can collaborate to influence the reader or listener. In addition, the sentence should carry a figurative or underlying meaning. An oxymoron functions to enhance the dramatic effect. It enhances critical thinking because the word pair reveals a great difference in quality. Therefore, it is important for a listener to pause and really comprehend the meaning of the message, thereby stimulating cognitive reflection. An example of oxymoron can be seen apparently in the Politicians speech in phrases like “peaceful revolution” and “bitter peace” to create a significant dramatic effect— rarely is words like ‘revolution’, ‘bitter’ linked with ‘peace’. The listener becomes curious about the origins and actual manifestation of this situation. The combination of such words leads the listener to create a strong impression. An individual who is listening can briefly stop in order to contemplate and mentally visualize the scale of changes. Entertainment is another function of oxymoron that can be demonstrated in the speech. In addition, oxymoron can serve as a language means which is used to express a sense of irony. One more function to mention is oxymoron present words in a new manner, placing two completely contrasting concepts side by side enhances the concentration of their meanings. Nevertheless, it is worth noting the frequent use of oxymorons can hinder speech comprehension. The listeners could be bored or distracted. The desired impact produced by oxymoron can only be achieved through limited application. In conclusion, it can be stated that an oxymoron is a linguistic technique commonly used to juxtapose contrasting words,

serving to enhance drama, provide entertainment, and convey irony. The use of oxymoron in speech demonstrates the presence of advanced linguistic proficiency. However, the high frequency at which it is used in speech can make it challenging to effectively convey its intended meaning.

### **Literature Review**

An oxymoron is a figure of speech that combines two opposed or conflicting words or concepts to produce a paradoxical effect. A combination of these opposing aspects is widely used to communicate complex or multi-faceted meanings and can improve the depth, comedy, or concentration in verbal or written expression. An oxymoron, according to Leech (1969:132) and Stranza (2005:336), is a figure of speech that combines terms with opposing meanings, such as “darkness visible”.

Oxymorons have been integral to literature for centuries. Shakespeare’s literary works contain a numerous of oxymorons, exemplified by the line “parting is such sweet sorrow” in *Romeo and Juliet*. The use of contrasting words in this context highlights the intricate and multifaceted aspects of human emotions, which is a central theme in Shakespeare’s tragedies. These literary examples demonstrate the efficacy of oxymorons in conveying complex emotions and ideas. Oxymorons frequently function as a means of conveying cleverness and amusement. Jonathan Swift utilizes oxymorons, such as the phrase “devouring their children,” in his satirical essay “A Modest Proposal” to critique British oppression in Ireland through the use of irony and absurdity. The *Modern English Usage Dictionary* (1995:595) provides a definition of oxymoron as a rhetorical device where contradictory terms are used together, such as cheerful pessimist or harmonious discord.

Oxymorons serve various cognitive and communicative functions not only add depth and richness to language but become a topic of fascination in the fields of linguistics and psycholinguistics.

There are some recent papers that have been done on Oxymorons, (Qasim & Bushra 2022; Chin Tsao et al., 2020; Amani, 2020; La Pierta & Masini,2020; Rejaa, 2009). These papers are discussed below to compare with the present study.

Qasim & Bushra, 2022 conducted a study and examines a collection of 100 pairs of oxymoronic words that were obtained from the internet. The objective is to determine the grammatical forms, semantic and pragmatic functions, and overall uses of oxymora. A study has determined that the most common form of oxymoron consists of an adjective-noun combination preceded by a noun that has contrasting meanings. Furthermore, oxymorons are frequently employed to convey dramatic, sarcastic, and humorous concepts.

In the study of Nil Abu Amana (as cited in Qasim, 2022. P.5) tries to assess 80 instances of oxymora found in contemporary Arabic poetry. The researcher attempts to elucidate the differentiation between direct and indirect oxymora. He has clearly shown a strong preference for the indirect oxymoron rather than its opposite (Nil, 1978)

Similarly, Reja'a 2009 attempted in her study "A linguistic study of oxymorons" To demonstrate the concept of oxymoron as a rhetorical device. The study seeks to establish overarching criteria for describing both the grammatical structure and the semantic perspective. This presentation will focus on the diverse rhetorical impact of oxymorons and their different types. The practical component comprises specific excerpts taken from Shakespeare's play, Romeo and Juliet. The findings of her study indicate that oxymoron is a lexical device the syntactic and semantic structures of which come to clashes. And the frequency with which this device appears is significant because it is used to express the characters' mixed emotions and conflicting feelings. Oxymoron can be seen as a reflection of the intricate and paradoxical nature of life and the deceptive appearances of things.

Another pragmatic study done by Amani (2020), this paper examines the various occurrences of oxymoron found in Alfred Tennyson's "Lancelot and Elaine." The paper examines the meaning and significance of each instance before analyzing how Tennyson employed oxymoron to establish and sustain a figurative structure in his poem. The paper demonstrates that Tennyson's intricate use of oxymoron enabled him to employ additional rhetorical devices to convey the intense atmosphere of the poem. In conclusion, the paper asserts that Tennyson's violation of Grice's maxims resulted in the creation of novel implied significance.

La peitra & Masini (2020. P. 176-185) investigated a preliminary corpus study of oxymorons based on naturally occurring data from Italian, with a view to contributing to the NLP-oriented research on figurative language; the study produced a compilation of 376 oxymorons. These were identified by extracting a collection of antonymous pairs from written Italian texts and subsequently verifying the findings through manual examination. Additionally, a supplementary approach is proposed for identifying contextual oxymorons, which are particularly essential in detecting humor, irony, and sarcasm.

Within these amounts of studies, oxymorons cover the design filed when Chin Tsao et al., 2020 Trying to construct an innovative oxymoron which could apply into a product design which conversely to stimulate a user's sense of innovation and curiosity by giving them a reason to question the product's usage.

The aforementioned studies have concentrated on the types and functions of oxymorons in various domains. The current paper analyzes the different instances of oxymoron presented in John F. Kennedy, 35th president of the United States in four famous speeches (Inaugural Address - January 20, 1961- Speech at the University of California, Berkeley - March 23, 1962 - Address at Rice University in Houston- Sep 12, 1962 - Commencement Address at American University - June 10, 1963). The paper studies the ways in which Kennedy used oxymoron in order to create and serve multiple functions, such as emphasizing, enhancing depth, creating tension or humor, conveying ambiguity or irony, and making language more memorable and thought-provoking. Their intelligent combination of conflicting elements can serve as an effective rhetorical tool in both written and spoken discourse.

### **What is Oxymoron**

Oxymoron means joining two words with conflicting meanings. For example the classical words “sweet sorrow”. Collins Concise Dictionary defines an oxymoron as: “If you describe a phrase as an oxymoron, you mean that what it refers to combines two opposite qualities or ideas and therefore seems impossible.”

According to Patrick (2017:1) An oxymoron is a rhetorical device that juxtaposes two contradictory or incongruent words or concepts in order to express unique and often thought-provoking expression or paradoxical idea. It is used to create a striking and memorable effect in language and literature such as: deafening silence.

Etymologically the word oxymoron is derived from Greek “oxy” meaning “sharp, wise,” and “moron,” meaning “foolish.” Therefore, the word “oxymoron” is a contraction itself.

An oxymoron falls within the category of “contradictions in terms,” but what sets it apart from other paradoxes and contradictions is its deliberate use for rhetorical impact. In oxymorons, the apparent contradiction in the combination of terms serves to create a unique expression of a concept (Small, 2008:2).

Broadly speaking, oxymorons can be categorized as intentional expressions that are purposefully contradictory, like “dark day” and “pretty ugly,” or as phrases that unintentionally harbor contradictions, often due to the playful use of one or both words, as seen in examples like “even odds” and “divorce court” (Wegmaan, 2008: 4).

Accordingly, Oxymorons, such as “absent presence,” “alone together,” and “awful good,” “less is more” are commonly used in our everyday language. Abrams (1999: 201-202) contends that an oxymoron is a rhetorical device where apparently contradictory terms are juxtaposed, similar to other forms of figurative language. The followings are ways in which oxymoron used in speech

- 1- Emphasizing a point: Oxymorons can be used to draw attention to a particular concept or idea by highlighting its contradictions. For example, saying “bittersweet” to describe a situation combines the contradictory emotions of bitterness and sweetness to emphasize the complexity of the feeling. (Small, 2008:3)
- 2- Creating drama or tension: In literature, drama, or persuasive speeches, oxymorons can be used to create a sense of tension or conflict. For instance, in Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet,” Romeo refers to his love for Juliet as “loving hate,” which underscores the intense and conflicting emotions he feels. (Merriam-webster)
- 3- Adding humor: Oxymorons can also be employed for comedic effect. By putting together words that don’t normally go together, you can create a humorous or absurd image. For example, “jumbo shrimp” is a common humorous oxymoron. ( Lederer, 2008:2).
- 4- Expressing ambiguity: Sometimes, oxymorons are used to express ambiguity or uncertainty. For example, saying something is a “small crowd” or a “controlled chaos” suggests that the situation is both small and large or controlled and chaotic simultaneously, highlighting the nuanced nature of the situation. (Willis, 2008: 2).
- 5- Conveying irony or sarcasm: Oxymorons can be used to convey irony or sarcasm by presenting a situation in a way that contradicts the expected outcome. For instance, calling a noisy library “a peaceful cacophony” is a form of irony. (Chuanyu,2008: 17)
- 6- Eliciting thought and reflection: Encouraging Contemplation and Reflection: The employment of oxymorons can stimulate audiences to engage in deeper thought regarding the topic at hand. It challenges established notions and fosters consideration of the apparent contradictions being conveyed
- 7- Strengthening language: Oxymorons can make language more vivid and imaginative. They can be especially effective in poetry and literature to evoke strong imagery and emotions (Greenblatt, 2012, p. 567)

### **Methodology**

This paper employs a qualitative descriptive approach to collect and analyze textual information extracted from various political speeches. The objective is to identify the diverse oxymoronic words and expressions used by the speaker to accomplish different goals. Benson (2013 as cited in Hamza et al., 2023) asserts that a qualitative approach requires “research that relies mainly on the reduction of data to words (codes, labels, categorization systems, narratives, etc.) and interpretative argument”. The researcher analyzes oxymoronic expressions and discusses the speaker use of this figure of speech. The research data consisted

of the transcripts of four famous political public speeches by the 35th president John F. Kennedy, which provided valuable insights into the rhetoric and messaging strategies utilized. The data include the speeches taken from (Inaugural Address - January 20, 1961- Address at Rice University in Houston- Sep 12, 1962 -Speech at the University of California, Berkeley - March 23, 1962 - Commencement Address at American University - June 10, 1963).

### **Conceptual framework**

Yanfang Shen's approach to analyzing linguistic deviation and cognitive constraints in poetic discourse can be adapted and applied to the analysis of oxymorons in political speech. Oxymorons are a specific form of linguistic deviation, and their use in political speech can have cognitive and rhetorical effects.

In accordance with Shen's perspective, that individuals instinctively and unconsciously employ oxymorons as rhetorical devices to such a point that they sometimes pass unnoticed in everyday conversation. The researcher categorizes and chooses the data that will be examined, following Shen's (2007) classification of oxymora, where he categorizes oxymoron into two main categories: direct oxymoron and indirect oxymoron.

According to his analysis of the underlying semantic structure of oxymorons in a large-scale poetic corpus, the indirect oxymoron is more common and prominent in the poetic corpus than the direct oxymoron, which has a very low frequency.

As a result, in a poetic discourse, **the direct oxymoron** is known as the non-poetic oxymoron, whereas the indirect oxymoron is known as the poetic oxymoron. He distinguishes between these two categories based on the sense relationships that exist between the two phrases that comprise an oxymoron. It is important to note that the conceptual knowledge identified by the structure of an oxymoron determines how well it can be understood. (Shen, 2007. p 12).

### **The Indirect Oxymoron**

This oxymoron comprises two components, one of which is the hyponym of the other, rather than being the direct antonym or the antonym of the hyponym. The oxymoron is formed by combining two lexical items, where one element, usually the second, is a hyponym of the antonym of the other element, typically the first. Examples of this include "sweet sorrow," "bright smoke," and "sacred garbage." From a semantic perspective, these two lexical items are not straightforwardly antonymous. As per the definition, "sorrow," the second phrase, is considered a fundamental component of "bitter" entities rather than being in direct opposition to "sweet." The reason for this is that the sense relations of meaning between these two elements establish the foundation of the internal semantic structure of this category. This



type of oxymoron is commonly referred to as a poetic oxymoron due to its association with poetry.

The third type is the **metaphor structure**. This form of metaphor is characterized by two phrases that have the same distinguishing feature, indicated by the sign “+/-”. However, they differ in their less prominent features. For example, in the phrase “the silence goes,” the terms “silence” and “going” are distinguished based on their properties. Specifically, the term “going” includes the feature “+movement,” which is not shared in the term “silence.” (Plett, 2010 as cited in Falih, 2020. p. 1452).

### **Semantic Analysis of the Oxymoron’s Structure**

Semantically, an oxymoron is a relationship where the meanings of two words are in opposition to one another. The opposition between these two lexical items is analyzed within a lexical framework, as it represents a semantic relationship. The componential analysis theory is a prominent semantic theory that explains the process of meaning construction and the integration of different aspects of semantic opposites. Shen (as cited in Guloyim, 2022)

### **The Grammatical Structure of Oxymoron**

Oxymoron has a variety of grammatical structures. Oxymoron can be found at the word level, according to Ruiz (2009), Lederer (2010), and Evans (2012), who categorize it into the following groups:

- 1- An oxymoron is a term made up of separate morphemes. In this instance, a term that combines two meaning-bearing aspects could stand alone as a separate word, such as “firewater,” “bittersweet,” and “bridegroom.”
- 2- Additionally, oxymoron can take place at the phrase level when words are either in the same syntactic class or in a different one (Flayih, 2009:31). state that oxymoron as a term can be limited to the following syntactic formulations:
  - (a) N+N (b) N of N (c) Adjective (or Participle) +Noun (d) Adjective (or Participle) + Adjective (e) Verb + Adverb (f) Adjective + Be + Adjective

In addition to these existing categories, Sakaeva & Krnilova (2017) list other oxymoron forms that are also classified at the phrase level, such as the following:

- 1) V+ Article + N
- 2) N+ Preposition + N
- 3) Free forms. This group includes long phrases based on antonyms.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

According to Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Vanderstoep & Johnston, 2009), the most effective instrument for carrying out qualitative realistic research is the human. They argue

that nonhuman instruments can solely benefit from the layers created within the instrument. Similarly, according to Creswell (2007), the researcher who uses a qualitative approach is considered the instrument themselves. The researcher engages in various tasks, such as gathering and examining textual data through reading the script and encoding the expressions. Political discourse is a social phenomenon that demonstrates how language usage reflects specific contexts, such as politics within society. The qualitative method, as described by Rossman and Rallis (1998), is characterized by several key features. Firstly, it takes place in a natural setting. Secondly, it employs multiple interactive and humanistic methods. Thirdly, it is emergent and free, allowing for flexibility and adaptability. Lastly, it is fundamentally interpretive and takes a holistic view of social phenomena. In addition, Ary et al. (2009) suggest that qualitative methods are most appropriate for analyzing specific types of data such as public records, letters, films, tapes, themes, and reports. Political discussion is often presented through televised video tapes. Essentially, the researcher will listen to the four political discourses then transcripts and label all the oxymoronic expression used by the speaker. The researcher categorizes and chooses the data that will be examined, following Shen's (2007) classification. Then, he draws a discussion and conclusion based on the findings of the study.

### **Findings**

The following is the analysis of the oxymoronic expression, including an introductory explanation of the context, date, and subject matter of the negotiation. Subsequent to a semantic analysis conducted using the research model. The first claim highlights the existence of specific patterns observed in the use of figurative language in political communication, while the second claim proposes a cognitive explanation for these structures. The analysis is illustrating the possibility that basic cognitive principles are implicated in the use of figurative language in political and poetic discourse.

#### **Inaugural Address - January 20, 19**

***The first quote: "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country."***

**Analysis:** This famous line is a powerful oxymoron that encourages a sense of civic duty and selflessness. By juxtaposing "what your country can do for you" with "what you can do for your country," Kennedy stresses the idea that individuals ought to prioritize their contribution to the wellbeing of the nation rather than pursuing personal advantages. The statement's contradictory nature enhances its memorability and emphasizes the significance of shared accountability.

**Second quote: “*born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace.*”**

A notable figure of speech found in this quote, semantically: semantically, Kennedy’s uses indirect oxymoron, by using the words “*hard and bitter*” with the word “*peace*”. Grammatically, the phrase follows the syntactic structure of (Adjective (or Participle) +Noun). In this context, the word bitter does not mean opposite of the word sweet, rather convey the idea of resentment, harshness or unpleasantness. The combination of the two adjectives with the noun “*peace*” implies that the state of tranquillity is accompanied with adverse feelings or enduring hostility.

**Third quote: “*But this peaceful revolution of hope cannot become the prey of hostile powers.*”**

In this quote, Semantically, Kennedy uses a direct oxymoron represented by the words “*peaceful*” which is defined by a lack of violence or hostility. It proposes a pacifistic method for achieving substantial transformations. And “*revolution*” that indicates a fundamental and significant transformation, usually in the organization or governance of a society. Grammatically, the phrase consists of form of (Adjective (or Participle) +Noun).

**Fourth quote: “*We in this country, in this generation, are - by destiny rather than by choice - the watchmen on the walls of world freedom.*”**

In his inaugural address in 1961, Kennedy uses indirect oxymoron shaped by free form “*by destiny rather than by choice*” To recognize the United States’ position as a dominant force on the global stage and the associated responsibility that accompanies it. This statement emphasizes the concept that the United States did not actively pursue this position, but rather, it was thrust into it.

**Fifth quote: “*In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger.*”**

From his inaugural address, semantically: Kennedy’s use the free form of indirect oxymoron of “*maximum danger*” within the positive context “*defending freedom*”. Both phrase at the same syntactic structure which is (Adjective (or Participle) +Noun). The speaker demonstrates the severity of the challenges and dangers that the nation encountered during the Cold War.

**Speech at the University of California, Berkeley - March 23, 1962**

**Sixth quote: “*We hear such talk much less now.*”**

Analysis: In this sentence, semantically, Kennedy uses the direct oxymoron represented by using the word “*much*” that the opposite of “*less*” The combination of those elements,

functioning as an adverbial phrase, conveys the idea of a significant decrease in the frequency of the indicated discourse in the present context compared to a previous time.

**Seventh quote: “We are not here to curse the darkness, but to light the candle that can guide us through that darkness to a safe and sane future.”**

Analysis: In this sentence, semantically, Kennedy uses the indirect oxymoron “curse the darkness” to contrast with the idea of “light the candle.” Grammatically, the phrases consist of (V+ Article + N). The message conveyed is that rather than complaining about difficulties or obstacles (symbolized by darkness), individuals should adopt a proactive and optimistic approach (symbolized by lighting a candle) to create a more promising future. The metaphorical usage of the oxymoron enhances the depth and optimism to his message. The pairing of “safe” and “sane” in “safe and sane future” is another oxymoron, in this context, “safe” signifies protection and security, whereas “sane” denotes mental stability and rationality. As a whole, they highlight the aspiration for a future characterized by stability and psychological well-being, signifying a harmonious and prosperous result. To summarize, the quote effectively employs oxymoronic language and specific grammatical structures to communicate a powerful point. The contrast of “curse the darkness” and “light the candle” highlights the transition from a pessimistic to an optimistic perspective, while the grammatical features, such as parallelism and inversion, enhance the quote’s rhetorical effectiveness and clarity of intent.

**Address at Rice University in Houston- Sep 12, 1962**

**Eighth quote: “We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard.”**

In his famous 1962 speech at Rice University, semantically, Kennedy used the free form of oxymoron to convey the immense difficulty and challenge of the space race by using the words (easy) and (hard). Grammatically, (*they are easy*) (*they are hard*) are at the sentence level (subject – predicate) Saying that the goal is not chosen “because they are easy,” he emphasizes the audacity and ambition of the mission.

**Commencement Address at American University - June 10, 1963:**

**Ninth quote: “What kind of peace do we seek? Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war.”**

**“Our problems are man-made—therefore, they can be solved by man.”**

Analysis: In the first example, semantically, Kennedy employs the metaphorical indirect oxymoron “Pax Americana” and “American weapons”. To emphasize the United States’

attitude, it is crucial that the desired peace be not attained by employing or forcing military action. This illustrates a dedication to nonviolent diplomacy.

In the second example, “Our problems are man-made—therefore, they can be solved by man”. Its free form of oxymoron underscores the idea that human actions and decisions have created many of the world’s challenges, but humans also have the capability to address and resolve these issues. It conveys a sense of responsibility and agency. Grammatically, it is a parallel structure in using the same grammatical structure in both phrases.

**Tenth quote: “*Prolonged peace is a dream and conflict is a reality.*”**

In this statement from Kennedy’s 1963 commencement address at American University, semantically, it is direct oxymoron, he combines the words “conflict” and “prolonged peace” and the words “dream” with “reality” to illustrate the challenging and often elusive nature of lasting peace. The juxtaposition of these opposing ideas emphasizes the difficulties in achieving global harmony. The quotation employs a contrasting syntactical arrangement to highlight the dichotomy between peace and conflict. In terms of contrasting grammatical structure, the statement “prolonged peace is a dream” use optimistic language to portray peace as an idealistic and ambitious condition that is challenging to attain. However, the following statement “conflict is a reality” uses clear and direct language to emphasize that conflict is widespread and unavoidable. The contrasting syntactic arrangement enhances the division between the two ideas and emphasizes their underlying contradiction.

### **The Relevance of Oxymoron Study for College Students**

The study of language and rhetoric is an important component of education, particularly for college students who want to improve their knowledge of communication, critical thinking, and linguistic intricacies. Exploring oxymorons is a captivating aspect of language that could prove quite beneficial for college students. Morner and Rausch define oxymoron as a rhetorical device that juxtaposes two contradictory terms to create a distinctive and unique impression. (Morner and Rausch 2017, p 158 ). While the study of oxymorons may seem limited in scope, it offers numerous advantages to undergraduate students across all academic disciplines.

### **Enhancing Language Skills**

Studying oxymorons is a powerful technique for enhancing language fluency, particularly when studying the English language. An analysis of these conflicting statements allows undergraduate students to engage with language at a deeper level. It motivates children to carefully analyze the significance of words and their surrounding settings. By diving into the concept of oxymorons, students enhance their lexicon and develop a deeper comprehension

of word usage, semantics, and the dual nature of language as both a means of communication and a form of art expression. (Bazerman, 2004. pp. 108-122).

### **Encouraging Critical Thinking**

Studying oxymorons improves the development of critical thinking skills. Students are required to analyze the contradictory character of these statements and examine the coexistence of opposing parts. This critical analysis beyond the limitations of language and encompasses the process of problem -solving and engaging in intellectual inquiry. Exploring the notion of oxymorons enables students to cultivate the capacity for deep and analytical thinking, which very advantageous skills in any academic are setting (Ennis, 2019)

### **Cultural and Rhetorical Awareness**

Oxymorons are found in many languages and cultures. This study might enhance cultural awareness and assist individuals to understand how language reflects social norms. University students studying linguistics, anthropology, or cultural studies may benefit from this cross-cultural perspective. 2019 Hymes (P 1).

Oxymorons expand beyond literary works and serve as an effective rhetorical weapon applied in speeches, essays, and persuasive communication. Studying oxymorons can help college students learn how to communicate effectively, draw in an audience, and keep their attention. Students of fields where strong communication skills are essential, such as communication, politics, or rhetoric, will find this information extremely helpful. (Foss, 2009. P. 176)

### **Literary Analysis**

Oxymorons provide a valuable and plentiful resource for students who are studying literature and participating in literary analysis. Literary works often incorporate their presence as a method of expressing complicated ideas and emotions. Examining the use of oxymorons in literature can improve a student's comprehension and appreciation of the writer's proficiency, thematic development, and narrative ingenuity. Moreover, it helps students in developing better expertise in detecting embedded dimensions of meaning within written works (Eagleton, 2013, p. 121).

### **Practical Application**

The study of oxymorons is more than just an academic exercise. It is useful in fields where clear and concise communication is essential, such as law, business, and journalism. Legal documents, marketing campaigns, and news headlines all contain oxymorons. University students can navigate everyday language challenges and apply their knowledge in their chosen careers by recognizing and understanding oxymorons (Markman, 2016 p 619).

## Conclusion

The paper studies the ways in which Kennedy used oxymoron in order to create and serve multiple functions, such as emphasizing, enhancing depth, creating tension or humor, conveying ambiguity or irony, and making language more memorable and thought-provoking. Their intelligent combination of conflicting elements can serve as an effective rhetorical tool in both written and spoken discourse. The efficacy of his remarks was enhanced by his adept employment of language and rhetorical techniques. Using oxymoron expression enhance the memorability and creating complexity, therefore, University students are more likely to remember and discuss speeches that are unique and thought-provoking, and finally, it serves as “Inspiration and Motivation” The juxtaposition of contradictory ideas in oxymorons, like “prolonged peace is a dream and conflict is a reality,” can be inspirational. It challenges students to strive for a better future despite the difficulties they might face. By presenting contrasting ideas within a single phrase, the speaker was inviting students to reflect on the interconnectedness of concepts and the potential for reconciling opposing viewpoints.

In conclusion, the study of oxymorons is far from a frivolous or niche pursuit. It offers a host of benefits to university students, whether they are language learners, critical thinkers, literary analysts, or future professionals. The ability to grasp and appreciate the paradoxical nature of language not only enriches students’ understanding of their primary language but also sharpens their cognitive abilities and equips them for more effective communication and analysis. Oxymorons create a paradoxical effect, encouraging listeners to think deeply about the issues being discussed. Using oxymorons can encourage students to think critically and consider multiple perspectives. Therefore, the study of oxymorons is a valuable and useful endeavor for university students across a range of academic disciplines and can be attributed to several strategic and rhetorical considerations such as Intellectual Challenge: as a way to challenge their intellect

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