

# CLASSIFICATION OF ANTONYMS IN KOKBOROK

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*This paper emphasizes on the classification of antonyms in Kokborok, dealing with the nuances of linguistic oppositeness. The classification includes of two types; semantic classification and morphological classification. The semantic classification has gradable and non-gradable oppositeness. A subtype of morphological classification is derivational opposite which are formed by the addition of negative suffixes in Kokborok. This study employs qualitative data collection methods, emphasizing different oppositeness used in the language. It then diligently looks upon each antonym types, offering comprehensible examples to demonstrate their distinctive meanings of oppositeness in the language.*

**Keywords:** Kokborok, antonyms, gradable opposite, non-gradable opposite, derivational opposite

## 1. Introduction

This paper overviews the use of antonyms in the Kokborok language, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Northeast Indian state of Tripura. Kokborok belongs to the Bodo-Garo sub-group of the Tibeto-Burman family (Benedict, 1972). Shafer (1966-74) classified Kokborok under the Western Units of the Baric sub-division of the Sino-Tibetan language family. However, Burling (2003) classified Kokborok as part of the Bodo group, which is now included in the Bodo-Koch category. Antonymy has been proved as vital in the organization of words and discourse (e.g., Cruse, 1986; Jones, 2002; Murphy, 2008). In semantics, antonyms have been classified according to their logical properties. Cruse (1986) and Lyons (1977), for instance, grouped antonymy relations into such major categories as contradiction, contrariety, and converseness. Based on these categories, later semantic research

(e.g., Jaszczolt, 2002; Saeed, 2009) suggests various types of antonyms, such as complementary antonyms (contradictions), gradable antonyms (contraries), relational antonyms (converses), directional antonyms (reverses), and taxonomic sisters. Antonyms are words that have opposite meanings, and they can be useful for highlighting contrasts, contradictions, and expressions in language. Semantically, an antonym is one of the categories of semantic sense relations. These sense relations include synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, hyponyms, hypernyms, and polysemy. Sense relation is a paradigmatic relation between words or predicates. It also indicates the connection between the meaning of words and the sense of words. It also illustrates whether these senses and meanings are similar or dissimilar. The prime focus of this paper will be the use of antonyms dealing with the oppositeness of meaning in Kokborok. In this paper, I highlight the different types of oppositeness in meaning found in Kokborok. Besides, we categorize antonyms at the semantic and morphological levels and show the existence of both gradable and non-gradable oppositeness of meaning in the language.

This paper is organized into four sections. Section 2 deals with the methodology whereas Section 3 looks at classifications of antonyms in Kokborok. Section 4 presents a conclusion of the paper.

## 2. Research methodology

No scholar or linguist has written books on semantics in Kokborok, so the data collection for the proposed study appears to be very limited. As a native speaker of the language, I primarily gathered data through personal collection and field visits. The data for this study were collected from three districts of Tripura: Khowai, West and Sepahijala, which are the main areas where

Kokborok is spoken. I gathered information from six different villages with 15 informants from various districts, during 2018-2019. Additional data were also collected from secondary sources such as Kokborok dictionaries, books, journals, etc.

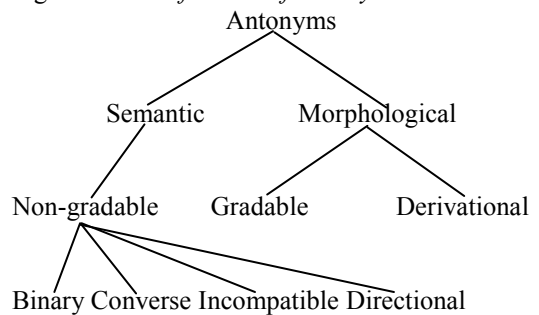
### 3. Classification of antonyms

Lyons (1977) defines “antonym” as the words which are opposite in meaning and “antonymy” as the oppositeness between words. For example, “buy” and “sell” is a pair of antonyms and the relation between these two words is termed as antonymy. According to Aina et al. (2019), the study of negated adjectives and antonyms in distributional semantics reveals significant differences between morphological and lexical antonyms.

Semantically, antonyms are the pair of words that are opposite in meanings. A word also may have more than one opposite meanings. Antonym is a part of sense relation which the sense relation takes place between predicates. The antonyms are usually the word class of nouns, verbs, adverbs and adjectives that are often used as opposite meaning in Kokborok. It shows the differentiation of two opposite meanings that appears in daily use of the language. Antonym is the opposite of synonym. The difference between synonym and antonym is nothing but showing the two poles of similarities and dissimilarities of another word.

Generally, the classifications of antonyms in Kokborok are divided into semantic classification and morphological classification. These two classifications are necessary to show us the evidence of antonyms that appears in Kokborok language while using the word stock in daily lives. Neither linguists nor any researchers have classified the antonyms being used in Kokborok language. So, it can be better understood from the following classification of antonyms as classified in Figure 1.

Figure 1: *Classification of Antonyms in Kokborok*



The data was compared with the distinct pairs of antonyms between the roots of lexical and derived affixation, i.e., lexical and morphological antonyms (Joshi, 2012) (e.g., small - large and happy - unhappy respectively). The data also compared on the distinction between lexical antonyms that are contrary or contradictory, that is, those that have or do not have an available intermediate value (Fraenkel and Schul, 2008): e.g., something not cold is not necessarily hot - it could be lukewarm - but something not present is absent.

Based on some sources, the analysis can relate to classify the antonyms on semantic and morphological level. Semantic classification will share a common opposite root words without modification, while morphological classification will modify by adding affixes to a word to create its opposite meanings. Antonyms are very commonly used in the language and therefore it is very important to enlist the words categorically. At the same time it is also very important to know the dissimilar meanings deeply in different context.

#### 3.1. Semantic classification

Semantic antonyms are words that have opposite meanings but may not share a common morphological structure. Semantic classification has one type of antonyms, i.e., non-gradable which are non-modifiable. A non-gradable antonym is the opposite of a gradable antonym. It cannot be measured or compared by the scale of the spectrum. It is non-gradable because adverbs like very, more, pretty, extremely, etc., do not modify such antonyms.

## a. Binary antonyms

Binary meaning refers to the concept of having two distinct, mutually exclusive, and often opposing meanings or interpretations. Binary antonyms are pairs of words made with two opposite meanings. It is also known as complementary or contradictory antonyms. These binary antonyms represent fundamental oppositions in human thought processes and verbal communications and obtain outline contrasts and distinctions in the language. Here are some binary antonyms in Kokborok, exemplified in Table 1.

Table 1: *Binary antonyms in Kokborok*

Binary antonyms		
	Lexeme	Opposite lexeme
1.	<i>burui</i> 'girl'	<i>cula</i> 'boy'
2.	<i>hɔr</i> 'night'	<i>sal</i> 'day'
3.	<i>kuu<sup>h</sup>aŋ</i> 'alive'	<i>kuu<sup>h</sup>ui</i> 'dead'
4.	<i>tɔŋɔ</i> 'present'	<i>kuurui</i> 'absent'
5.	<i>ih</i> 'yes'	<i>ihe</i> 'no'

Binary antonyms are usually exhaustive because they cover all possible cases with no middle or additional alternative morphemes. In other words, they represent a complete and mutually exclusive set of opposites, where something is either one or the other, with no overlap or ambiguity.

The examples shown in Table 1 are all non-gradable antonyms, as there is no middle ground or gradation for comparison. These words are ungradable because the system does not allow for it. Binary antonyms are also mutually exclusive because they exclude each other: One implies the negation of the other (e.g., if it is present, it is not absent, and vice versa). They contradict each other: They represent opposing states or conditions that cannot coexist and they can't be simultaneously true or applicable: One cannot be both at the same time (e.g., something can't be both present and absent simultaneously). This mutual exclusivity is a fundamental property of binary antonyms, allowing us to use them to categorize and classify in a clear and concise way in the language we communicate every day.

## b. Converse antonyms

Converse meaning refers to the relationship between two words or phrases that have opposite or complementary meanings. Converse antonyms are pairs of words that are opposite in meaning but imply a relationship between the two concepts. In other words, they are antonyms that are interdependent and inseparable. Converse antonyms are also called relational antonyms.

Like regular antonyms, converse antonyms are opposing in meaning. Unlike binary antonyms, they signify a relationship between the two concepts. One concept cannot exist without directing to the other. They often involve a mutual relationship, where one concept is the reverse of the other, by which they complement each other. In another sense, the meaning of one concept depends on the existence of the other, which means one concept logically implies the existence of the other. They highlight the contrast between the two related concepts. Consider the following examples in Table 2.

Table 2: *Converse antonyms in Kokborok*

Converse antonyms		
	Lexeme	Opposite lexeme
1.	<i>pai</i> 'buy'	<i>p<sup>h</sup>al</i> 'sell'
2.	<i>sai</i> 'husband'	<i>hik</i> 'wife'
3.	<i>map<sup>h</sup>a</i> 'parent'	<i>curai</i> 'child'
4.	<i>yaksi</i> 'left'	<i>yakra</i> 'right'
5.	<i>suŋmun</i> 'question'	<i>p<sup>h</sup>irɔkmun</i> 'answer'
6.	<i>rɔhɔr</i> 'send'	<i>yacak</i> 'receive'
7.	<i>na</i> 'take'	<i>ri</i> 'give'

The above examples have a co-relation to one another. One cannot exist without referring to the other as they are closely related. One opposite word cannot make sense without directing to the other word. These words are antonyms because they describe opposite roles and also imply a connection between the two words. The examples 1 to 7 in Table 2 demonstrate that we cannot have a buyer without a seller, no husband without a wife, no question of child without parents, no definition of left without right, no answer without question, there cannot be receiving without sending, no taking without giving, and so on. In Kokborok, the converse antonyms also convey the

meaning of social roles between *p<sup>h</sup>uruy<sup>h</sup>nai* ‘teacher’ and *suruy<sup>h</sup>nai* ‘student’, the kinship relations between *map<sup>h</sup>a* ‘parent’ and *curai* ‘child’, between *sai* ‘husband’ and *hik* ‘wife’ which pair of words represent the opposite perspectives of the same relations. Therefore, the pair of words like *map<sup>h</sup>a-curai* ‘parent-child’, and *sai-hik* ‘husband-wife’ are converse antonyms in Kokborok.

c. Directional antonyms

Directional antonyms are pairs of words that correspond to opposite directions or movements. They relate to the directions, locations, or orientations in space. Other terms for directional antonyms are spatial or orientation antonyms. The examples of directional antonyms in Kokborok are given below in Table 3.

Table 3: *Directional antonyms in Kokborok*

Directional antonyms		
	Lexeme	Opposite lexeme
1.	<i>yaksi</i> ‘left’	<i>yakra</i> ‘right’
2.	<i>saka</i> ‘up’	<i>tola</i> ‘down’
3.	<i>buskaj</i> ‘front’	<i>uklak</i> ‘back’
4.	<i>gana</i> ‘near’	<i>hakcal</i> ‘far’
5.	<i>bisij</i> ‘in’	<i>p<sup>h</sup>atar</i> ‘out’

All these examples are mutually exclusive because they can move only in one direction at a time. The movement cannot be in both the directions simultaneously. For instance, one can only be in either *yaksi* ‘left’ or *yakra* ‘right’ but not on both sides at the same time. Similarly, in the pair of words between *saka* ‘up’ and *tola* ‘down’, one can go either in ‘up’ or ‘down’ but not in both at the same time. The set of words between *buskaj* ‘front’ and *uklak* ‘back’ one can only be either ‘front’ or ‘back’ but not simultaneously at both the occurrence.

While these antonyms describe opposite meanings of directions, they can also be gradable to exhibit the meanings of different degrees of direction or movement. For instance, the word *saka* ‘up’ can be modified to *kisisa sakao* ‘slightly up’, or *sakakuk* ‘extremely up’. Likewise, the word *bisij* ‘in’ also can be modified by *kisia-misa bisij* ‘partially in’, *kusu bisij* ‘mostly in’ or *bisij hapjak* ‘completely in’.

d. Multiple incompatible antonyms

A large number of antonyms are terms taken from “systems of multiple incompatibility” (Hurford & Heasley, 1983). Multiple incompatible antonyms are the antonyms in which a word has multiple opposites which are comparable in multiple ways. Kokborok also has multiple incompatible examples as discussed below.

(1) *pali* ‘colour’:

- kasom* ‘black’
- *kup<sup>h</sup>ur* ‘white’
- *kucak* ‘red’
- *kormo* ‘yellow’
- *kuk<sup>h</sup>uraj* ‘green’

Many people write opposite of ‘black’ is ‘white’ and vice versa. The word *kasom* ‘black’ can have multiple ways to compare for its oppositeness. The opposite of *kasom* ‘black’ can be *kup<sup>h</sup>ur* ‘white’, *kucak* ‘red’, *kormo* ‘yellow’, or *kuk<sup>h</sup>uraj* ‘green’.

(2) *mol* ‘season’:

- tanbula* ‘summer’
- *masij* ‘winter’
- *sachlanj* ‘autumn’
- *watui mol*
- ‘monsoon season’

The opposite of *tanbula* ‘summer’ is not only *masij* ‘winter’, it can also be *sachlanj* ‘autumn’, or *watui mol* ‘monsoon season’, and so on.

(3) *malmata* ‘animal’:

- musa, mayuj, muk<sup>h</sup>ura, musui*
- ‘tiger, elephant, monkey, deer, etc.’

An animal does not indicate only *musa* ‘tiger’ or if the animal is not *musa* ‘tiger’, then it can be *mayuj* ‘elephant’, *muk<sup>h</sup>ura* ‘monkey’, or *musui* ‘deer’ and so on.

(4) *tal* ‘month’:

- talruj, taltuj, talyuj, talhij, akorok*
- ‘January, April, June, December, etc.’

We can use in the same way regarding *tal* ‘month’ also where *tal* ‘month’ can be either *talruj* ‘January’, *taltuj* ‘April’, *talyuj* ‘June’, or *talhij* ‘December, and so on.

(5) *sal* ‘day’:

*koktisal, taŋsal, p<sup>h</sup>asal, casal, etc.*  
'Sunday, Monday, Friday, Saturday, etc.'

The weekdays are comparable in multiple ways. The week has seven days and each day can be compared to the weekdays. The day does not only mean *koktisal* 'Sunday' alone, it can be any day considering from *taŋsal* 'Monday' to *casal* 'Saturday'. Different antonyms may have different connotations or shades of meaning. By acknowledging and exploring multiple incompatible antonyms, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the intricacies of language and in multiple ways words are being opposed. It can be drawn that it is not as strong as binary and gradable but the antonyms are being compared in multiple ways.

### 3.2. Morphological classification

Morphological classification in semantics is a way to classify words based on the internal construction and the connections between their functions. It implicates identifying and examining the morphemes that make up a word, such as roots, prefixes, suffixes, and infixes. Morphological classification helps to identify the grammatical and semantic functions of morphemes that are to be discussed here regarding affixes, i.e., prefixes and suffixes in Kokborok that are added to the root to modify their meaning.

#### 3.2.1. Gradable antonyms

The gradable antonymy has three characteristics: first, as the name suggests, they are gradable, that is, the members of a pair differ in terms of degree; second, antonyms of this kind are graded against different norms; third, one member of a pair, usually the term for the higher degree, serves as the cover term. (Hu, 2001, p.164; Gao & Zheng, 2014).

Gradable antonyms are pair of words with opposite in meanings having continuous spectrum of comparable degrees. These antonyms are used in comparative constructions. The comparative constructions are usually adjectives which are predominantly used in the language. Adjectives that are modifiable are all gradable antonyms. Let

us see the antonyms used as adjectives in Kokborok.

Table 4: *Gradable antonyms used with double deverbal adjective prefixes*

	Deverbal Adjectives	Deverbal Adjectives
1.	<i>ku-tuŋ</i> 'hot' DPF-be hot	<i>ku-caŋ</i> 'cold' DPF-be cold
2.	<i>ku-p<sup>h</sup>uŋ</i> 'fat' DPF-be fat	<i>ke-ram</i> 'thin' DPF-be thin
3.	<i>ku-ran</i> 'dry' DPF-be dry	<i>ki-si</i> 'wet' DPF-be wet

In both the lexemes the deverbal adjectives are used with prefixation as summarized in table 1. It is observed that a deverbal is derived from the verbs by the addition of prefix to form an adjective morpheme in the language. The deverbal prefix as in the example 1, *ku-*, *ku-*, 2 *ku-*, *ke-*, and in example 3 *ku-*, *ki-* are attached to the root verb *tung*, *caŋ*; *p<sup>h</sup>uŋ*, *ram*; and *ran*, *si* creating a new class of lexeme as an adjective morpheme. So if one root verb appears operational with prefix then the other root verb which is in opposite direction also appears with prefix, thereby forming an adjective gradable opposite in the Kokborok language.

Table 5: *Gradable antonyms used with single deverbal adjective prefix*

	Deverbal Adjectives	Underived Adjectives
1.	<i>ku-cuk</i> 'high' DPF-be high	<i>hace</i> 'low'
2.	<i>ku-t<sup>h</sup>uk</i> 'deep' DPF-be fat	<i>t<sup>h</sup>ene</i> 'shallow'
3.	<i>ku-buk</i> 'sharp' DPF-be sharp	<i>pat<sup>h</sup>ura</i> 'blunt'

Here, the first deverbal adjectives are marked with deverbal prefix *ku-* to the root verb *cuk*, *t<sup>h</sup>uk*, *buk* in serial number 1, 2, and 3 and the adjective in second column which is underived ones remains unmarked with deverbal prefix as exemplified in table 5.

Table 6: Gradable antonyms with compound adjectives

	Compound Adjectives	Adjectives
1.	<i>nai-t<sup>h</sup>ɔk</i> ‘beautiful’ look-be tasty	<i>situra</i> ‘ugly’
2.	<i>munui-kɔ<sup>h</sup>ɔk</i> ‘funny’ laugh-tasty	<i>kubui</i> ‘serious’

Gradable antonyms are also used with compound adjectives. Two verbs are compounded together forming a new lexeme as an adjective compound in Kokborok. Here, the example in table 6 demonstrates that if one morpheme is compounded then the other in the opposite meaning remains uncompounded. The words *nai<sup>h</sup>ɔk* ‘beautiful’, *munui-kɔ<sup>h</sup>ɔk* ‘funny’ are compounded words and the words in their counterpart appear to be in uncompounded form as *situra* ‘ugly’ *kubui* ‘serious’. So, this is another way of forming rules that how gradable antonyms are being used with compound adjectives in Kokborok language.

Technically, another way to look at the meaning of antonyms in Kokborok is by using the degree of adverbs. The degrees of adverbs intensify the quality of measurement or comparable. In Kokborok, modifiers like *-kuk*, ‘highest degree’, *belai* ‘very’, and *selai* ‘more than’ are used for gradable adjectives indicating the gradability of its quality that can be compared or measured. Kokborok adjectives as modified by various degrees of adverbs are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Gradability of adjective antonyms by degree adverbs

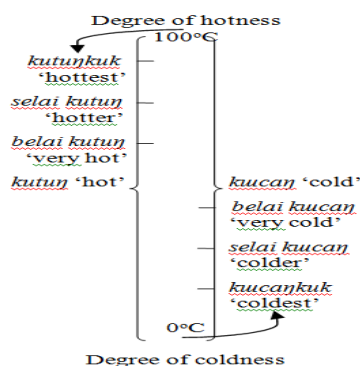


Figure 2 explains the spectrum of temperature between *kutun<sup>h</sup>* ‘hot’ and *kucan<sup>h</sup>* ‘cold’ where the two opposite meanings end in the scale of gradability. In the degree of hotness, the word *kutun<sup>h</sup>kuk* explains the extreme of hotness, and in the degree of coldness, the word *kucan<sup>h</sup>kuk* explains the freezing point of Celsius. It is the disparity between hotness and coldness that the degree of spectrum being measured. So, the adjective word *kutun<sup>h</sup>* ‘hot’ and its counterpart *kucan<sup>h</sup>* ‘cold’ are examples of gradable antonyms used in the language.

The gradable adjective between *hilik* ‘heavy’ and its counterpart *helen* ‘light’ can also be graded and compared by different modifiers as exemplified below.

- (6) *Kormoti kusu hilik-ɔ*  
Person quite heavy-PRS  
‘Kormoti is quite heavy’
- (7) *Kormoti belai hilik-ɔ*  
Person very heavy-PRS  
‘Kormoti is very heavy’
- (8) *Kormoti kisisa hilik-ɔ*  
Person slightly heavy-PRS  
‘Kormoti is slightly heavy’
- (9) *Kormoti hilik-kuk-ɔ*  
Person heavy-SUP-PRS  
‘Kormoti is extremely heavy’
- (10) *Kormoti Komo-ni selai hilik-ɔ*  
Person Person-GEN than heavy-PRS  
‘Kormoti is heavier than Komo’

There are multiple examples of gradable antonyms in Kokborok, which can be compared using different modifiers. These include *gunan:kurui* ‘rich:poor’, *cikɔn:kɔɔɔɔ* ‘small:big’, *kepeleɲ:kɔkɔi* ‘straight:curve’, *curai:ɔkuura* ‘young:old’, *kulai:mɔɔɔk* ‘cheap: expensive’, *kucan:t<sup>h</sup>amci* ‘calm:angry’.

### 3.2.2. Derivational antonyms

Derivational antonyms are words that appear opposite meanings and are formed by adding either prefixes or suffixes to a root word. In other terms, they are words having the same root but contradict in meaning due to adding affixes

indicating opposition or contrast. In Kokborok, the derivational antonyms are formed by negative suffixes to modify their meanings. Consider the following examples as summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: Derivational antonyms in Kokborok

Derivational antonyms		
	Lexeme	Opposite lexeme
1.	<i>kaham</i> 'good'	<i>ham-ya</i> 'bad'
2.	<i>cajagɔ</i> 'like'	<i>cajak-ya</i> 'dislike'
3.	<i>tɔŋ<sup>h</sup>ɔk</i> 'happy'	<i>tɔŋ<sup>h</sup>ɔk-ya</i> 'unhappy'
4.	<i>kusuraŋ</i> 'active'	<i>kusuraŋ-ya</i> 'inactive'
5.	<i>bodo</i> 'Bodos'	<i>bodo-ya</i> 'non-Bodos'

The examples stated above are also called complementary antonyms because they complement each other in the sense that they complete or serve out the possibilities between them. In other words, they form a complete and exhaustive contradiction, where one word implies the absence or negation of the other.

In Kokborok, derivational antonyms are formed by adding negative suffixes to a root word, which modifies the meaning of its opposite. In the above example, the word *ham-ya* 'bad' is derived from *kaham* 'good', *tɔŋ<sup>h</sup>ɔk-ya* 'unhappy' from *tɔŋ<sup>h</sup>ɔk* 'happy', *kusuraŋ-ya* 'inactive' from *kusuraŋ* 'active, and so on. It is to be noted that prefixes are also used to form derivational antonyms in Kokborok as in example (1) and (7), the prefix *kui-* is added to a root verb *ham* 'be good', *suraŋ* 'be active' to form adjective words.

#### 4. Conclusion

The classification of antonyms highlights the diverse ways in which words can oppose each other in meaning. In Kokborok, there are two main types: semantic classification and morphological classification. Semantic classification includes non-gradable antonyms, which represent a simple either-or relationship without degrees of opposition. In contrast, gradable antonyms, found under morphological classification, form a continuum with varying degrees of opposition. Non-gradable antonyms imply true or false, with no middle ground for modification.

Adverbs do not modify binary antonyms in Kokborok, and pairs of binary antonyms do not coexist simultaneously. Converse antonyms highlight the interconnectedness of relationships, demonstrating how one word can have an inverse meaning to another. Multiple incompatible antonyms illustrate words with various oppositions, depending on context and specific meaning. Directional antonyms help us in understanding opposite meanings, as they represent contrasting directions or movements. Derivational antonyms under morphological classification form opposite meanings through morphological modification, such as adding prefixes or suffixes in the language. Thus it is observed that all non-modifiable words are classified under semantic categories, while modifiable words fall under morphological classification.

#### Abbreviations

DPF	Deverbal prefix
GEN	Genitive
PRS	Present
SUP	Superlative

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