



PROVERBS AS LINGUOCULTURAL PHENOMENA: A PAREMIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH TRADITIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the linguistic, cultural, cognitive, and historical dimensions of proverbs within the Uzbek and English paremiological traditions. Drawing on thematic, syntactic, and semantic classifications, the study analyzes how proverbs function as linguocultural units that encode social values, worldview models, and shared knowledge across generations. Special attention is given to the contributions of key scholars such as Mahmud Koshg'ari, Herman Vambéry, and John Heywood, whose works provide foundational documentation of proverbial heritage. The findings demonstrate that despite linguistic and cultural differences, both Uzbek and English proverbs exhibit universal features including metaphorization, didactic purpose, and cognitive framing. Their continued relevance in contemporary oral and written discourse underscores their importance not only within linguistics but also in anthropology, psychology, ethnology, and cultural studies. The study reaffirms that proverbs function as vital cognitive and communicative tools, preserving cultural memory while shaping human perception and social behavior.

A nation's language, alongside its homeland and statehood, represents one of its greatest and most fundamental cultural treasures. Language unites individuals into a community and identifies a people as a distinct nation. Proverbs, as stable linguistic units embedded in a language's expressive system, play a crucial role in articulating national culture and enhancing the stylistic richness of speech. When a particular semantic relation is realized through multiple proverbs, varying nuances within these units form paradigmatic series within the proverb system. Thus, the mother tongue functions both as a mirror of national culture and as a treasury that preserves it.

A proverb is among the oldest and most enduring manifestations of human cognition. It functions not merely as a linguistic element but as a linguocultural unit encapsulating the spiritual, cultural, and historical experience of a society. Transmitted across generations over centuries, proverbs embody human emotions, observations, ethical views, value systems, and accumulated life experience. Therefore, their study necessitates an approach that goes beyond

purely linguistic considerations, recognizing them as socio-psychological constructs grounded in the human factor.

The natural environment in which a people live, their economic structure, oral creativity, written literature, art, science, customs, and traditions are collectively reflected and transmitted through the national-cultural content encoded in language. Proverbs—among the oldest and most compact forms of oral creativity—thus represent the worldview, cultural practices, daily life, and intellectual heritage of the society that produced them.

The study of proverbs enables the exploration of a people's values and traditions, serving as an essential source for understanding cultural logic and social behavior. Wise sayings have been described metaphorically as decrees that no ruler has issued, laws that no authority has sealed, and constitutions no state has written. Proverbs may therefore be regarded as an “encyclopedia of life,” an oral archive, and a unique artistic-historical chronicle. They sharpen intellect, clarify expression, enhance persuasive force, guide moral choice, and help individuals resolve life's complexities.

Although scholars have defined proverbs in various ways, they generally converge on the understanding that a proverb is a concise, semantically rich, structurally stable unit of folk oral creativity grounded in life experience. Archer Taylor characterizes proverbs as “the concise form of generalized wisdom,” whereas Wolfgang Mieder views them as “the linguocultural memory of society.” In Uzbek linguistic scholarship, the works of M. Imomnazarov, F. Abdullayev, and T. Mirzayev have significantly contributed to the structural, semantic, and functional description of proverbs.

Proverbs are classified according to several criteria, reflecting different dimensions of linguistic inquiry, including semantics, syntax, pragmatics, phraseology, and folkloristics.

Proverbs are frequently grouped into thematic categories such as:

- ethical and didactic proverbs;
- proverbs concerning labor and livelihood;
- proverbs devoted to intellect, knowledge, and education;
- proverbs about family, society, and social relations;
- proverbs related to nature and life phenomena;
- proverbs expressing friendship, kindness, and human virtues.

Each category encapsulates particular value systems, worldviews, and collective experiences.

Proverbs exhibit diverse structural patterns, including:

parallel constructions: *“Approach the good and find goodness; approach the bad and find trouble”;*

antithetical constructions: *“Walk with the good—you will rise; walk with the bad—you will fall”;*

conditional constructions: *“If you work, you will prosper”;*

imperative forms: *“Do good—expect nothing in return.”*

These patterns reveal the grammatical architecture and stylistic functionality of proverbs.

From a semantic perspective, proverbs may be:

- realistic;

- metaphorical and figurative;
- didactic;
- aesthetic-folkloric.

All of these types generalize life experience and express it artistically.

As early as the 11th century, Mahmud Koshg'ari included a substantial number of Turkic wise sayings in his *Devon*, providing explanations in Arabic regarding their semantic scope and pragmatic use. His *Devonu lug'otit turk* records over 300 poetic fragments and 291 proverbs and sayings.

Hungarian scholar Herman Vambéry occupies a prominent position in the study of Uzbek proverbs. His 1867 publication *Chagatai Language* includes 112 Uzbek proverbs presented in both original and German translation.

N. P. Ostroumov's *Proverbs and Riddles of the Native People* documents more than 600 proverbs, though many were collected from non-native settlers and the original Uzbek forms were not provided.

Uzbek scholars T. Mirzayev and B. Sarimsoqov note that individuals may actively use up to 800 proverbs in daily communication, though recalling them consecutively is difficult. This reflects the pervasive functional presence of proverbs in speech. The Uzbek paremiological corpus today contains tens of thousands of paremias, forming a rich resource for linguistic and cultural analysis.

Proverbs also play an essential role in the linguistic and cultural heritage of English-speaking peoples. Their origins trace back to early medieval times, when they circulated orally within Anglo-Saxon communities. Early English proverbs appear in manuscripts such as *Beowulf*, *The Exeter Book*, and homiletic texts, often in poetic or alliterative form.

Biblical literature, Latin classical texts, and early scholarly writings deeply influenced English paremiology. The spread of Christianity facilitated the adoption of Biblical proverbs, while classical authors such as Cicero, Horace, and Seneca contributed maxims integrated into English discourse.

A major achievement in documentation came with John Heywood's *A Dialogue of Proverbs* (1546), which preserved many proverbs still widely used today, including "*Many hands make light work*" and "*Rome was not built in a day*." Subsequent lexicographers, including Samuel Johnson and James Howell, further expanded the corpus.

Proverbs remain central in modern English communication, appearing in journalism, literature, political rhetoric, and advertising. Linguistically, they are distinguished by brevity, metaphor, rhythm, and structural fixity. Despite changing cultural contexts, they continue to evolve while maintaining their essential symbolic and cognitive roles.

Proverbs represent one of the most ancient, stable, and culturally meaningful forms of human expression. As compact units of folkloric creativity, they enrich the phraseological system of a language, shape its stylistic character, and transmit cultural and experiential knowledge across generations. Because proverbs encapsulate collective worldview, value systems, cognitive patterns, and social experience, their study holds substantial significance not only for linguistics but also for anthropology, psychology, ethnology, folklore studies, and cultural studies. The comparative examination of Uzbek and English traditions reveals both

universal and culture-specific features, reaffirming the status of proverbs as vital linguocultural phenomena and enduring instruments of human thought.

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