
The role of metaphor and symbol in Uzbek and English proverbs

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Annotation *This article explores the role of metaphor and symbol in Uzbek and English proverbs from a linguocultural perspective. Proverbs represent an important part of a nation's cultural heritage, preserving collective wisdom, traditional values, and worldview. Metaphors and symbols enable speakers to convey abstract concepts through vivid and familiar images associated with nature, animals, household items, and everyday experiences. The study employs comparative and semantic analysis to examine selected Uzbek and English proverbs and identify similarities and differences in their figurative meanings. The findings reveal that both languages utilize universal symbolic elements, including animals, water, and light, to express common human experiences and moral lessons. At the same time, many metaphorical representations are culture-specific, reflecting the unique history, customs, beliefs, and mentality of each society. The article concludes that metaphor and symbol play a crucial role in transmitting cultural values and shaping linguistic worldview through proverbs.*

Keywords *Proverb, metaphor, symbol, linguoculture, Uzbek language, English language, comparative analysis, worldview*

O'zbek va Ingliz maqollarida metafora va ramzning o'rni

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Annotatsiya *Ushbu maqolada o'zbek va ingliz maqollarida metafora hamda ramzlarning o'rni lingvomadaniy nuqtai nazardan tadqiq etiladi. Maqollar xalqning jamoaviy donoligi, an'anaviy qadriyatlari va dunyoqarashini saqlab keluvchi muhim madaniy meros unsurlaridan biridir. Metafora va ramzlar mavhum tushunchalarni tabiat, hayvonlar, uy-ro'zg'or buyumlari hamda kundalik hayot bilan bog'liq yorqin va tanish obrazlar orqali ifodalash imkonini beradi. Tadqiqotda tanlangan o'zbek va ingliz maqollari qiyosiy hamda semantik tahlil usullari asosida o'rganilib, ularning majoziy ma'nolaridagi o'xshashlik va farqlar aniqlanadi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, har ikkala tilda ham hayvonlar, suv va yorug'lik kabi umumiy ramziy unsurlardan foydalaniladi. Shu bilan birga, ko'plab metaforik tasvirlar madaniyatga xos bo'lib, har bir xalqning tarixi, urf-odatlar, e'tiqodlari va mentalitetini aks ettiradi. Maqolada metafora va ramzlar maqollar orqali madaniy qadriyatlarni uzatish hamda lingvistik dunyoqarashni shakllantirishda muhim vosita ekanligi ta'kidlanadi.*

Kalit so'zlar *Maqol, metafora, ramz, lingvomadaniyat, o'zbek tili, ingliz tili, qiyosiy tahlil, dunyoqarash*

Роль метафоры и символа в узбекских и английских пословицах

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- Аннотация** *В данной статье рассматривается роль метафоры и символа в узбекских и английских пословицах с лингвокультурологической точки зрения. Пословицы являются важной частью культурного наследия народа, сохраняя коллективную мудрость, традиционные ценности и национальное мировоззрение. Метафоры и символы позволяют передавать абстрактные понятия посредством ярких и понятных образов, связанных с природой, животными, предметами быта и повседневной жизнью. В исследовании используются сравнительный и семантический методы анализа для изучения отобранных узбекских и английских пословиц и выявления сходств и различий в их образном содержании. Результаты показывают, что в обоих языках используются универсальные символы, такие как животные, вода и свет, для выражения общечеловеческого опыта и нравственных представлений. Вместе с тем многие метафорические образы являются культурно обусловленными и отражают историю, традиции, убеждения и менталитет каждого народа. В статье делается вывод о том, что метафора и символ играют важную роль в передаче культурных ценностей и формировании языковой картины мира через пословицы.*
- Ключевые слова** *Пословица, метафора, символ, лингвокультура, узбекский язык, английский язык, сравнительный анализ, мировоззрение*

Introduction

Proverbs occupy a significant place in every language as concise expressions of collective experience, moral instruction, and social values. They are not merely fixed phrases but cultural texts that reflect the worldview of a particular people. Through proverbs, societies preserve practical wisdom and transmit it from one generation to another. As repositories of traditional knowledge, proverbs reveal attitudes toward work, family relations, ethical norms, and interpersonal behavior. For this reason, proverbs have become an important object of study in linguistics, paremiology, cognitive linguistics, and linguoculturology (Mieder, 2004).

Among the most important stylistic and semantic features of proverbs are metaphor and symbol. Metaphor allows speakers to understand one concept through another and serves as a cognitive mechanism through which people conceptualize abstract experiences in terms of more concrete ones (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Symbols, in turn, represent culturally meaningful ideas through concrete objects, animals, or natural phenomena, thereby preserving elements of national identity and collective memory. In both Uzbek and English proverbs, metaphorical and symbolic language is widely used to describe human behavior, labor, wisdom, greed, patience, friendship, and many other aspects of social life. The study of figurative language in

proverbs is particularly valuable because it provides insights into the relationship between language, thought, and culture. Although people from different linguistic communities may share universal human experiences, they often express these experiences through culturally specific images and symbolic associations. Comparative analysis of proverbs, therefore, contributes not only to paremiological research but also to the broader understanding of intercultural communication and national mentality.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the role of metaphor and symbol in Uzbek and English proverbs and to compare how each language encodes cultural meanings through figurative language. The study also seeks to identify universal and nationally specific symbolic images, thereby highlighting both the shared cognitive foundations and the distinctive cultural characteristics reflected in the proverbial heritage of the two languages.

Literature review

The linguocultural study of metaphor and symbol in proverbs is grounded in the works of prominent scholars from paremiology, cognitive linguistics, and cultural semantics. G.L. Permyakov and Wolfgang Mieder regarded proverbs as stable verbal formulas that preserve collective wisdom, moral values, and social experience across generations (Mieder, 2004; Permyakov, 1970). From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson demonstrated that metaphor is not merely an ornamental stylistic device but a fundamental mechanism of human thought, an approach that is especially relevant to proverb interpretation, since many proverbs are based on conceptual patterns such as life, knowledge, power, or human behavior represented through figurative images (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In linguoculturology, V.N. Telia emphasized that symbols embedded in phraseological and proverbial expressions function as repositories of national memory and cultural identity, while V.A. Maslova considered figurative language a reflection of

ethnic mentality and worldview. (Telia, 1996; Maslova, 2001). E.V. Ivanova further developed the concept of the proverbial worldview, arguing that proverbs constitute a distinct fragment of the linguistic picture of the world (Ivanova, 2006). Although these theoretical contributions establish a solid framework for proverb analysis, comparative studies devoted specifically to metaphorical models and symbolic imagery in Uzbek and English proverbs remain insufficiently explored, which determines the relevance and scientific value of the present research.

Research methodology

The research is based on a qualitative comparative approach aimed at identifying and interpreting metaphorical and symbolic elements in Uzbek and English proverbs from a linguocultural perspective. A corpus of selected Uzbek and English proverbs containing metaphorical and symbolic components was compiled from dictionaries, proverb collections, folklore publications, and academic sources devoted to paremiology and phraseology. The selection of examples was guided by the relevance of the proverbial units to the objectives of the study, namely the investigation of figurative language and its role in reflecting cultural values and national worldviews.

The collected proverbs were analyzed using semantic, cognitive, and linguocultural methods. The semantic analysis focused on revealing the literal and figurative meanings of proverbial expressions and identifying the key concepts represented in them. The cognitive approach made it possible to examine the underlying conceptual mechanisms through which abstract ideas are understood and communicated by means of concrete images. Special attention was paid to the identification of metaphorical models and conceptual mappings that structure the meaning of proverbs in both languages. The linguocultural method was employed to interpret the cultural significance of symbolic elements and to determine how they reflect historically shaped

beliefs, traditions, and social norms within Uzbek and English-speaking communities.

The analysis was conducted in several stages. First, metaphorical structures were identified according to their source and target domains in order to determine how human qualities, actions, and social phenomena are conceptualized through familiar experiences and images. Second, symbolic images such as animals, water, light, food, plants, and other natural elements were examined and interpreted in relation to their cultural associations and functions within each linguistic tradition. Particular attention was given to symbols that frequently occur in proverbs and carry culturally specific meanings. Finally, similarities and differences between Uzbek and English examples were compared in order to distinguish universal patterns of metaphorical and symbolic representation from those shaped by the unique historical, social, and cultural experiences of each nation.

Analysis and Results

Metaphor is widely used in Uzbek proverbs to express moral lessons, practical wisdom, and social behavior through vivid everyday imagery. Many Uzbek proverbs are connected with agriculture, family life, labor, and nature, reflecting the traditional lifestyle of the Uzbek people (Rahmatullayev, 2006). For example, the proverb "*Mehnat, mehnatning tagi rohat*" (Hard work pays off) presents labor as the path to prosperity and well-being. Another proverb, "*Tilga e'tibor – elga e'tibor*" (Respect for language is respect for the nation), and "*Tilga ixtiyorsiz – elga e'tiborsiz*" (One who has no control over their tongue shows no respect for the people) metaphorically links language with national honor and identity. Animals also function as metaphorical carriers of meaning. In the proverb "*Zag'cha sigirdan qo'rqmas*" (A jackdaw is not afraid of a cow), this proverb uses zoomorphic metaphor to represent human traits, where jackdaw symbolizes a small or weak person and metaphor "cow" is used to describe gentle and

harmless person. Such metaphors help speakers describe human character through familiar natural images. English proverbs also make extensive use of metaphor to communicate wisdom in a concise form. Many English examples originate from agricultural life, religion, and everyday observation. For instance, "*You reap what you sow*" compares human actions to planting and harvesting, expressing the idea that consequences follow behavior. Similarly, "*Don't count your chickens before they hatch*" uses farming imagery to warn against premature confidence. Another common metaphor appears in "*Time is money*" where time is conceptualized as a valuable economic resource (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This reflects the practical and productivity-oriented worldview often associated with English-speaking societies. Thus, metaphor in English proverbs frequently emphasizes responsibility, planning, and cause-effect relations.

Symbols in Uzbek proverbs often emerge from traditional culture, family structure, and the natural environment. Bread, for example, symbolizes livelihood, blessing, and gratitude. The proverb "*Mehnatning noni – mazali, o'g'rinig umri – azali*" (The bread of labor is delicious, the thief's life is doomed), uses culturally loaded symbol of bread to represent lawful sustenance and moral reward, while thief's life symbolizes the inevitable insecurity and destructive consequence of dishonest living (Mahmudov, 2012). Water commonly symbolizes purity, life, and continuity as in the proverb "*Suv keldi – nur keldi*" (Water came – light came). Family-related symbols are also highly significant. The concepts of father, mother, and home often symbolize authority, care, and stability. Such symbolic structures demonstrate the collectivist values and family-centered worldview deeply rooted in Uzbek culture. The clear example of it can be seen in the proverb "*Oila tinch – yurt tinch*" (If the family is peaceful, the country is peaceful) When it comes to English proverbs, they contain many symbols derived from

Christianity, medieval life, and nature. Light often symbolizes truth, hope, or knowledge, while darkness symbolizes ignorance or danger. In the proverb "*Better to light a candle than curse the darkness,*" light represents constructive action and wisdom. Animals are also common symbolic elements (Dundes, 1980). In "*A barking dog never bites,*" the dog symbolizes empty threats or noisy but harmless people. The fox in English tradition often symbolizes cunning, while the lion may symbolize courage and nobility. These symbols reflect historical cultural associations preserved through language.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis shows that both Uzbek and English proverbs rely on metaphor and symbol as universal cognitive tools for expressing complex ideas through

simple images. In both languages, animals, food, nature, and household objects are frequently used to describe human qualities and social behavior.

However, the symbolic meanings often differ according to cultural background. Uzbek proverbs place stronger emphasis on hospitality, family unity, respect for elders, and communal harmony. English proverbs more frequently highlight independence, practicality, time management, and personal responsibility. While some metaphors are universal, such as sowing and reaping or light and darkness, others remain nationally specific and reveal each culture's unique historical experience. Therefore, metaphor and symbol in proverbs function not only as stylistic devices but also as mirrors of national consciousness and cultural memory.

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