

INTERCULTURAL PRAGMATICS OF PROVERBS: SEMANTIC NUANCES AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC FUNCTIONS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH

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Annotation. *This article explores the intercultural pragmatics of proverbs in Uzbek and English, emphasizing semantic subtleties and sociolinguistic functions. Proverbs are examined as culturally embedded expressions that convey ethical values, rhetorical strategies, and communicative norms. By comparing idiomatic parallels and pragmatic distinctions, the study highlights how linguistic expressions reflect divergent cultural logics. The findings demonstrate how intercultural pragmatics fosters understanding in translation studies, bilingual education, and cross-cultural communication.*

Keywords: *Intercultural pragmatics, proverbs, semantic nuance, sociolinguistic functions, Uzbek and English languages, metaphorical expression, paremiology, translation studies, communicative competence.*

Introduction

In the landscape of linguistic anthropology and cross-cultural communication, proverbs occupy a uniquely rich terrain. Far from being stylistic ornaments, they encapsulate worldviews, ethical values, and communicative norms. The comparative study of proverbs in Uzbek and English provides insights into how speakers convey judgment, irony, encouragement, or caution.

It also reveals the pragmatic logic behind indirect communication, politeness strategies, and metaphorical wisdom.

The present article aims to analyze the semantic nuances and sociolinguistic functions of proverbs in Uzbek and English through the lens of intercultural pragmatics.

Literature Review

Scholars such as Norrick (1985), Mieder (2004), and Hanks (2013) have emphasized the multifunctionality of proverbs in discourse, identifying their roles in persuasion, criticism, social bonding, and moral instruction. Cognitive linguistic approaches, notably Lakoff and Johnson (1980), show how proverbs crystallize abstract concepts in metaphorical imagery.

Uzbek paremiological studies, including works by Karimov and the Tashkent Linguistics Institute, highlight the use of proverbs in family, education, and public communication. Comparative works, however, remain limited, often treating each tradition in isolation or oversimplifying translation equivalences.

Methodology

The study applies a comparative intercultural pragmatic approach by:

1. Analyzing selected Uzbek and English proverbs with parallel or overlapping meanings.
2. Examining their semantic structures and metaphorical imagery.
3. Identifying sociolinguistic functions in real-life contexts such as advice, critique, or solidarity.
4. Comparing pragmatic nuances across cultural settings.

Analysis

1. Advice and Thoughtfulness

- Uzbek: “Avval o‘yla, keyin so‘yla” (“First think, then speak”)
- English: “Think before you speak”

Both emphasize caution in speech. The Uzbek proverb reflects collectivist politeness and respect, while the English version is more direct, sometimes functioning as criticism.

2. Social Connectedness

- Uzbek: “Odam bilan odam — odam” (“One becomes human through other humans”)
- English: “No man is an island”

Both highlight interdependence. The Uzbek version stresses communal harmony; the English one evokes philosophical reflection.

3. Irony and Critique

- Uzbek: “Essiz otni eshak minibdi” (“The donkey is riding the horse without a mind”)
- English: “The lunatics are running the asylum”.

Both express absurdity and imbalance, but the Uzbek version uses metaphorical politeness, while the English one is blunter and satirical.

4. Ethical Reciprocity

- Uzbek: “Yaxshilikka yaxshilik — bu insonlik” (“Returning good for good is humanity”)
- English: “What goes around comes around”

Both convey reciprocity, though the Uzbek version emphasizes moral duty, while the English equivalent carries a karmic undertone and is sometimes used ironically.

Discussion

The comparative analysis shows that:

- Uzbek proverbs are deeply rooted in collectivism, hierarchy, and metaphorical politeness.
- English proverbs often highlight individuality, directness, and irony.
- Despite cultural differences, universal communicative functions—advice, critique, solidarity—remain common.

Such findings support the role of proverbs as dynamic pragmatic tools that regulate interpersonal communication, transfer wisdom across generations, and construct cultural identity.

Conclusion

Proverbs, as compact cultural artifacts, reflect both universal human concerns and culture-specific communicative styles. Through intercultural pragmatics, the study reveals that Uzbek proverbs favor collectivist harmony and respectful indirectness, while English proverbs foreground individuality and pragmatic directness.

Understanding these nuances enhances translation studies, bilingual education, and intercultural communication. In today’s globalized academic and social environment, the study of proverbs offers valuable insights into how cultures encode meaning, navigate relationships, and preserve ethical worldviews.

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