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LINGUOCULTURAL STUDY OF SOMATIC PROVERBS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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Annotation. *This article examines somatic proverbs, that is, proverbs containing names of human body parts, in English and Uzbek from a linguocultural perspective. Drawing on the principles of linguoculturology, cognitive metaphor theory and comparative paremiology, the study identifies the most productive somatic components (hand, head, eye, tongue, heart, ear), analyses their symbolic meanings and determines the degree of equivalence between the two languages. The findings show that both languages share a universal bodily experience that underlies many proverbs, while cultural differences are visible in the evaluation of the heart, the tongue and the head, in collectivist and individualist value orientations and in the national imagery that accompanies the body part. The results may be useful in teaching proverbs, in translation studies and in intercultural communication.*

Keywords: *somatic proverbs, linguoculturology, paremiology, body-part lexemes, conceptual metaphor, English, Uzbek, equivalence, intercultural communication.*

1. Introduction

Proverbs are condensed forms of collective experience. They record the worldview, moral norms and historical memory of a people and pass them from generation to generation in a compact, rhythmic and easily memorized form. For this reason proverbs have long been regarded as one of the richest sources of linguocultural information [1; 2]. Among the thematic groups of paremiological units, proverbs with a somatic component occupy a special place. The human body is the first object that a person knows and measures the world against, so body-part names become a natural source domain for describing abstract notions such as intelligence, honesty, friendship, labour, speech and emotion [3].

In the age of globalization, when intercultural communication is intensifying and language teaching increasingly relies on culturally grounded material, comparing the proverb systems of genetically and culturally distant languages is highly topical. English and Uzbek belong to different language families (Germanic and Turkic) and reflect different cultural traditions, yet both have a large stock of proverbs built around the same set of body parts. This makes them a suitable pair for a linguocultural comparison.

The aim of the article is to identify and compare the semantics, symbolism and cultural specificity of somatic proverbs in English and Uzbek. The tasks are: (1) to define the notion of a somatic proverb; (2) to determine the most frequent somatic components in the two languages; (3) to analyse their figurative meanings; and (4) to classify the proverbs according to the degree of equivalence.

2. Theoretical Background and Methods

The study rests on linguoculturology, which treats language as a carrier of culture and investigates how cultural values are encoded in linguistic units [4; 5]. Wierzbicka's work on culture-specific concepts showed that even words that seem to be translation equivalents may carry different cultural scripts [6]. The second basis is cognitive metaphor theory, according to which abstract concepts are understood through embodied experience [7]. Kövecses has demonstrated that body-based metaphors are partly universal and partly shaped by culture, which explains both the similarities and the differences found in proverbs [8]. In the Uzbek tradition, proverbs have been collected and described in the fundamental collection of Mirzaev and his colleagues [9], and cognitive and linguocultural approaches to Uzbek are developed in the works of Safarov [10]. Cross-linguistic research on figurative units is summarized in the volume by Dobrovolskij and Piirainen [11], and for English the Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs serves as a standard reference [12].

In this article a *somatic proverb* is understood as a complete, traditional, didactic sentence that contains the name of a human body part or organ as a structural and semantic component. The material consists of about one hundred English and one hundred Uzbek proverbs selected from paremiological dictionaries and collections. The following methods were used: descriptive and comparative analysis, componential analysis, contextual and cultural interpretation, and the method of classification by degree of equivalence.

3. Analysis and Results

The analysis shows that in both languages the most productive somatic components are hand (qo‘l), head (bosh), eye (ko‘z), tongue (til), heart (yurak, ko‘ngil), ear (quloq), mouth (og‘iz) and foot (oyoq). Their meanings are discussed below.

3.1. Hand. The hand is the main symbol of labour, mutual help and agency. English proverbs such as “Many hands make light work” and “One hand washes the other” stress cooperation and reciprocity, while “Don’t bite the hand that feeds you” expresses gratitude and loyalty. In Uzbek the same semantic field is represented by “Qo‘l ishlasa, og‘iz ishlaydi” (if the hand works, the mouth eats), which links labour directly to wellbeing, and by “Qo‘l qo‘lni yuvar, ikkalasi yuzni yuvar” (a hand washes a hand, and both wash the face), where the benefit of mutual help is extended to the person’s honour, expressed through the word “face” (yuz). The English “It takes two to tango” and the Uzbek “Bir qo‘ldan chapak chiqmas” (no clap comes from one hand) convey the same idea of joint responsibility through different images: a dance in the first case, applause in the second. This is an example of partial equivalence, where the meaning coincides but the cultural image differs.

3.2. Head. In English the head is associated with intellect and the individual’s ability to think: “Two heads are better than one”, “Heads I win, tails you lose”. In Uzbek the head more often symbolizes life, safety and responsibility. The proverb “Bosh omon bo‘lsa, do‘ppi topiladi” (if the head is safe, a skullcap will be found) puts life above property, and the skullcap, a national headwear, adds a clear cultural marker which has no counterpart in the English proverb system.

Thus, the same body part acquires a cognitive meaning in English and a more existential meaning in Uzbek.

3.3. Eye. The eye is a symbol of perception, attention and, in a wider sense, memory and attachment. The English proverb “Out of sight, out of mind” and the Uzbek “Ko‘zdan yiroq – ko‘ngildan yiroq” (far from the eye, far from the heart) express one idea, but the second links the eye to the heart, which is typical of Eastern cultures where emotional closeness is emphasised. “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder” reflects the English emphasis on subjective evaluation, whereas the Uzbek “Ko‘z qo‘rqoq, qo‘l botir” (the eye is timid, the hand is brave) says that fear lies in anticipation and that action overcomes it. The proverb “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”, of biblical origin, has no direct Uzbek proverb of the same form and shows the influence of religious texts on the English paremiological fund.

3.4. Tongue, mouth and ear. Speech-related organs are used to teach verbal prudence in both cultures. The English “A closed mouth catches no flies” and “Walls have ears” are matched by the Uzbek “Devorning ham qulog‘i bor” (even the wall has ears), which is a case of full equivalence in form and meaning. The Uzbek tradition, however, gives the tongue an exceptional place. The proverbs “Til – tig‘dan o‘tkir” (the tongue is sharper than a blade) and “Tilning yarasi bitmas” (the wound of the tongue does not heal) emphasise the destructive power of the word and reflect the high value that Uzbek culture places on respect, politeness and the preservation of another person’s honour. In English the tongue appears less frequently in proverbs, and the prudence of speech is expressed more through the mouth or silence.

3.5. Heart. The heart is the center of emotions in both languages. English proverbs “Absence makes the heart grow fonder”, “Faint heart never won fair lady” and “Home is where the heart is” connect the heart with love, courage and belonging. The Uzbek language distinguishes yurak (the physical heart and courage) and ko‘ngil (the inner spiritual world, mood, desire), a distinction which has no exact English counterpart. Therefore, Uzbek proverbs about ko‘ngil, such as “Ko‘ngil ko‘ngildan suv ichadi” (heart drinks water from heart, that is, hearts understand each other), reveal a spiritual and Sufi-influenced layer of meaning, while English proverbs with “heart” are mostly emotional or courage-related.

3.6. Foot and other components. The foot represents movement, the choice of path and measure. The Uzbek proverb “Oyog‘ingni ko‘rpangga qarab uzat” (stretch your legs according to your blanket) has the English counterpart “Cut your coat according to your cloth”. Here the Uzbek version retains a somatic component, whereas the English version replaces it with a non-somatic image from tailoring. This case shows that equivalence may exist between somatic and non-somatic proverbs and that the choice of image depends on the everyday life of the people: the blanket and the sitting position on the floor in the Uzbek household, and the tailor’s craft in English culture.

4. Discussion

On the basis of the analysed material, three groups of proverbs can be distinguished according to the degree of equivalence. The first group contains proverbs with complete equivalence, in which the somatic component, the image and the meaning coincide (“Walls have

ears" – "Devorning ham qulog'i bor"). The second and largest group consists of partial equivalents with the same meaning but different images or different somatic components ("Out of sight, out of mind" – "Ko'zdan yiroq – ko'ngildan yiroq"; "It takes two to tango" – "Bir qo'ldan chapak chiqmas"). The third group is made up of proverbs without equivalents, which carry a strong national-cultural component, for example proverbs with the skullcap (do'ppi) in Uzbek or biblical formulas in English.

The existence of the first two groups can be explained by the universality of embodied experience: all people see with the eyes, work with the hands and feel emotions in the chest, and therefore the conceptual metaphors HAND IS ACTION, EYE IS KNOWLEDGE and HEART IS THE CENTER OF EMOTIONS are found in both languages [7; 8]. The differences, in turn, are determined by cultural factors: the collectivist orientation of Uzbek society, which gives priority to respect, honour and family ties and is reflected in the high status of the tongue and the "face"; the individualist and pragmatic tendencies in English proverbs, which stress personal intellect and independence; the religious and historical sources of the proverbs; and the material culture reflected in the imagery. These results agree with the general conclusion of cross-cultural paremiology that proverbs combine universal and culture-specific features [1; 11].

The findings have practical value. In translation, a literal rendering of a somatic proverb may distort the cultural meaning, so the translator should look for a functional equivalent and, when none exists, use descriptive translation with a comment. In language teaching, comparing somatic proverbs helps learners to recognise both the shared human experience and the cultural specificity of the target language, thus developing intercultural competence.

5. Conclusion

The study confirms that somatic proverbs form a significant and culturally informative layer of the paremiological systems of English and Uzbek. Hand, head, eye, tongue, heart, ear and foot are the most productive components in both languages. Similarities are caused by the common bodily experience of people and the universal cognitive mechanisms of metaphorization, while differences are caused by national mentality, values, religion and everyday life. The Uzbek proverbs show a stronger emphasis on the tongue, the heart (ko'ngil), honour and collective responsibility, and the English proverbs more often stress reason, individual choice and pragmatic evaluation. Further research can be extended to a quantitative corpus analysis, to the comparison of somatic proverbs with other languages, and to their use in teaching foreign languages.

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