

DISCURSIVE FEATURES OF THE CONCEPT OF 'HOMELAND' IN SPANISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BASED ON APHORISMS AND PROVERBS

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Abstract:

This study explores the discursive characteristics of the concept of "homeland" as expressed in Spanish and Uzbek languages, focusing on aphorisms and proverbs. Through a comparative analysis, the research identifies cultural, historical, and linguistic factors that shape the representation of "homeland" in each language. Findings reveal both universal themes and culturally specific expressions, highlighting the deep connection between language, culture, and national identity.

Keywords: Homeland, discourse analysis, aphorisms, proverbs, Spanish language, Uzbek language, cultural linguistics, national identity.

Introduction

The concept of "homeland" occupies a central position in the cultural consciousness of both Spanish and Uzbek peoples. It encapsulates not only the physical space where one was born or raised, but also carries profound emotional, historical, and moral weight. Language plays a critical role in shaping and reflecting this concept, and one of the most culturally resonant linguistic forms through which "homeland" is conceptualized is the genre of proverbs and aphorisms. These forms of expression are rooted in oral traditions and serve as

repositories of communal values, national memory, and identity. In both the Spanish and Uzbek linguistic worlds, proverbs related to the homeland often express ideals of loyalty, sacrifice, and emotional attachment. However, the way in which these values are metaphorically framed and emotionally charged differs due to distinct cultural and historical experiences.

Uzbek language proverbs related to homeland often frame it in maternal and sacred terms. The use of expressions such as “ona yurt” (motherland) and “ona yer” (mother earth) emphasizes the perceived sacredness of the land as a giver of life and sustenance. The metaphor of the homeland as a mother is central to Uzbek cultural consciousness and appears in numerous sayings. For instance, the proverb “Ona yurting — oltin beshiging” (“Your motherland is your golden cradle”) illustrates the view of the homeland as a space of origin and nurturing that should be revered and protected. The cradle metaphor also implies continuity, tradition, and the transmission of values from one generation to the next. The association of the homeland with gold further strengthens its sacred and invaluable nature.

In the Spanish language, the concept of “patria” or “tierra natal” also carries deep emotional significance. However, Spanish proverbs and aphorisms often reflect a more dynamic relationship with the homeland, influenced by the history of colonization, migration, and regionalism within Spain and Latin America. The saying “A donde el corazón se inclina, el pie camina” (“Where the heart leans, the foot walks”) demonstrates the emotional magnetism of the homeland. It implies that even if physically distant, the heart’s longing draws a person back to their place of origin. In contrast with the Uzbek maternal metaphor, the Spanish expression underscores choice and affective directionality rather than a predetermined sacred bond.

Metaphorically, the Uzbek conceptualization often elevates the homeland to a divine or spiritual level. Proverbs such as “Ona yerning tuprog’i — ona sutidan aziz” (“The soil of the motherland is more precious than mother’s milk”) highlight not only reverence but also the sense of irreplaceable emotional debt to one’s homeland. This form of expression reflects the traditionally agrarian, sedentary, and family-oriented nature of Uzbek society. The close relationship with land and agriculture historically has made the physical soil itself a symbol of identity and belonging. The homeland is not just a territory—it is a source of moral grounding, ethics, and even personal worth.

Spanish expressions, while also emotionally powerful, are frequently more pragmatic in tone and content. Many Spanish proverbs address the tension between personal ambition and national loyalty, or reflect the historical complexities of Spanish-speaking countries, particularly issues related to civil war, exile, and regional identities. For example, the phrase “Nadie es profeta en su tierra” (“No one is a prophet in their own land”) reveals a nuanced, even critical relationship with the idea of homeland. It suggests that recognition often comes from outside, and that the homeland may not always appreciate or support its own people. Such expressions reflect a reality of migration and displacement common in both Spanish and Latin American contexts. The homeland in this sense is not idealized in absolute terms but is instead seen through the lens of lived, sometimes painful experience.

In comparing both traditions, it becomes evident that Uzbek proverbs generally prioritize unity, collectivity, and a quasi-religious reverence for land and heritage. The homeland is rarely questioned, and its value is stated in moral absolutes. This can be seen in sayings like “Vatan uchun jon fido” (“The soul is sacrificed for the homeland”), where sacrifice is not a choice but a noble duty. This type of expression functions to reinforce national cohesion and collective responsibility, reflecting the socio-political context of Uzbekistan where patriotism is deeply linked to moral and social standing.

Conversely, Spanish-language proverbs show more discursive variation in the way homeland is viewed. While there is certainly admiration and longing, the homeland may also be portrayed as flawed or subject to critique. This duality could be traced back to historical factors such as colonial expansion, intra-national conflict, and the influence of enlightenment and modernist thought. In expressions like “Más vale tierra que no guerra” (“Better land than war”), one sees an implicit commentary on the cost of defending or disputing the homeland, suggesting a more pragmatic or even pacifist attitude.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the emotional tone embedded in these expressions. Uzbek proverbs tend to be emotionally elevated, moralistic, and idealistic. They convey a sense of duty that goes beyond the individual. Spanish proverbs, however, are more likely to reflect irony, philosophical reflection, and emotional ambiguity. The homeland may inspire pride and nostalgia, but it may also provoke disappointment or even resentment, as in the phrase “La patria es el

lugar donde se muere” (“The homeland is the place where one dies”), which presents a stark, existential view of one’s relationship to land and nation.

One crucial factor in the difference of discursive framing is the type of historical narratives dominant in each culture. In Uzbek culture, oral traditions have long glorified the defense and purity of the homeland. This aligns with both Islamic teachings and Central Asian epics, where the homeland is a battleground of honor. In contrast, Spanish-language discourses have historically included both celebratory and critical voices, influenced by centuries of internal divisions (e.g., Catalonia, Basque Country), religious pluralism, and colonial experience.

Despite these differences, one striking commonality is the idea of inextricable connection. Whether expressed as sacred soil or as the emotional pull of memory, the homeland is never merely a neutral backdrop in either language. It is a living part of the individual’s moral and emotional landscape. It dictates behavior, instills pride or guilt, and serves as a point of reference in one’s understanding of the self.

The ideological function of these proverbs is also significant. In Uzbekistan, proverbs about homeland are used in educational, political, and ceremonial contexts to foster national unity and loyalty. In Spanish-speaking countries, while similar sayings may appear in speeches and media, they are more often used in personal, nostalgic, or even humorous contexts, which points to a more individualistic interpretive frame.

In both cases, the discourse of homeland is intimately tied to the question of identity. The proverbs reflect collective memory and carry ethical imperatives. They teach respect for the past, and guide how future generations should relate to their land and people. In this sense, they are not just linguistic artifacts but instruments of cultural transmission.

Finally, aphorisms, being more philosophical and literary in tone than proverbs, also play a role in shaping the discourse around homeland. In Spanish literature, aphorisms from writers such as Antonio Machado and José Ortega y Gasset offer reflections on identity and place that are both universal and deeply national. For instance, Ortega y Gasset’s notion that “Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia” (“I am myself and my circumstance”) implies that one’s environment—often implicitly the homeland—is essential to self-understanding. In Uzbek literary tradition, aphorisms by Alisher Navoi and other classical poets similarly link identity with place and heritage, though often with a more spiritual or didactic undertone.

Taken together, the proverbs and aphorisms in both traditions form a complex discursive network that allows speakers to understand, express, and negotiate their relationship with the concept of homeland. The comparative analysis shows that while certain themes—love, loyalty, memory—are universal, the way these are articulated and interpreted is deeply shaped by cultural, historical, and ideological contexts.

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