



STRATEGIES OF COGNITIVISM AND LINGUOCULTUROLOGY IN ENGLISH AND KARAKALPAK PROVERBS

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Abstract

The article traces how cognitivism and linguoculturology formed and developed as complementary approaches, using English and Karakalpak proverbs as a shared empirical field. Conceptual Metaphor Theory provides the mapping procedure (e.g., OPPORTUNITY–HEAT in “Strike while the iron is hot” / Temirdi qizg'anda bas), while linguoculturology adds value-oriented cultural commentary. Drawing on verifiable bilingual compilations, the study examines full, partial, and functional non-equivalences, with attention to Latin-script Karakalpak forms. It shows that universal cognitive frames (time as resource, prudence, collaboration) are realized through culture-specific imagery (craft, fauna, metals) and numeric heuristics. The narrative also outlines practical strategies that supported the field’s growth: systematic mapping, ethnographic framing, corpus building, and orthographic standardization. Pedagogical implications include concept-first explanations and equivalence matrices for contrastive teaching. The article argues that proverb analysis is an effective laboratory for observing the co-evolution of thought and culture in linguistic meaning.

Keywords: Cognitivism; linguoculturology; conceptual metaphor; cultural linguistics; cultural scripts; paremiology; Karakalpak proverbs; English proverbs.

Introduction

When linguistics moved away from narrow structural descriptions and started to ask how language relates to the human mind and culture, two lines of thinking came forward like two rivers that finally meet: cognitivism and linguoculturology. In one river, metaphor was no more a decoration of style, but a mechanism of thought (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In the other, words and fixed expressions were not only signs, but also cultural carriers – symbols that preserve values and scripts of a



community (Maslova, 2001; Telia, 1996). Their meeting place, for our purposes, is not in technical syntax or laboratory tasks; it is in the small, resilient forms of proverbs – paremiological units that people still say at work, at home, and in classrooms. In English and in Karakalpak, proverbs concentrate practical intelligence. They also show, sometimes very precisely, how mind and culture co-author meaning.

This narrative follows the road by which these two schools emerged and then started to cooperate. It looks at their strategies – how they argued, what they paid attention to, and which tools they used. It then watches these strategies at work in English and Karakalpak proverbs, comparing where the cognitive picture seems universal and where the cultural picture demands a local explanation. The aim is modest but clear: to show how and why cognitivism and linguoculturology must be read together when we study proverbs, especially in a Turkic language like Karakalpak next to English, the global lingua franca. Throughout the text, when I cite a proverb in Karakalpak, I use the Latin script that is standard in current public and educational practice in Karakalpakstan (Omniglot, 2025).

The story begins with a simple but radical sentence: “Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action.” This claim, formulated by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), broke the stereotype that metaphor belongs to poets while “real thought” is literal. From that moment, scholars were asked to look for conceptual mappings like TIME IS MONEY, ARGUMENT IS WAR, LIFE IS A JOURNEY in everyday talk and in the grammar itself. Cognitivism, especially in the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) version, insisted that metaphors come from bodily experience and are systematic across our language (Kövecses, 2010). If this is true, then a proverb such as “Strike while the iron is hot” is not only advice; it is a condensed map of how people understand opportunity as HEAT that quickly disappears.

At the same time, in Russia and later across post-Soviet scholarship, linguoculturology took shape. Telia’s famous studies of phraseology organized the field with the idea that phrases and proverbs must be read with cultural commentary. The task was not only to describe meaning, but also to reconstruct the value system behind the meaning, often through “key concepts” of a culture (Telia, 1996). Maslova (2001) pushed this direction further, treating language as an encoded form of culture where axiological (value) meanings are not optional; they



are central. In the 2010s, Cultural Linguistics proposed by Sharifian (2017) made a bridge in English-speaking scholarship. He spoke about cultural conceptualizations, the shared patterns that people learn and store, which later guide metaphor, categorization, and pragmatic behavior. So the two rivers – cognitive and cultural – moved closer and closer until they were no longer easy to separate.

Paremiology, the study of proverbs, benefited from this union. Proverbs are short, memorable, and socially legitimate; they also have strong metaphorical images and moral commands. In English studies, Mieder (2004) and the Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs (Speake, 2015) gave the field a strong empirical base and diachronic perspective. In Central Asian scholarship, a growing number of works analyzed Uzbek and Karakalpak materials, sometimes in contrast with English, to show how communal norms, work ethics, hospitality, respect for elders, and time-management scripts live in proverbial forms (Jolibekova, 2024; Ziba, 2024; Kudaibergenova, 2024).

It is easy to say “they developed,” but more useful to name the strategies by which both directions strengthened themselves.

First, cognitivism normalized metaphor analysis as a scientific routine. It replaced ad hoc intuition with systematic mapping: find the source domain (HEAT), find the target domain (OPPORTUNITY), list the entailments (must act quickly; delay reduces effect), and observe how it appears across different linguistic forms (proverbs, collocations, imperative constructions). In that sense, CMT trained a method that we can apply to any proverb in any language (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010).

Second, linguoculturology built a culture-aware commentary tradition. It insisted that you cannot interpret a fixed expression without asking whose expression it is, which history it carries, and what social evaluations it encodes. This required scholars to collect not only proverb texts but also ethnographic context and axiological glosses (Telia, 1996; Maslova, 2001).

Third, both directions learned from paremiography, the practical work of collecting and describing proverbs. English scholarship benefited from major descriptive works (Mieder, 2004; Speake, 2015). In Karakalpak studies, comparative works with English provided parallel lists and classification by equivalence (full, partial, and non-equivalent), which is exactly what a cognitive-cultural analysis needs



because it creates natural experiments: same function, different image; or same image, different function (Djumambetova & Shakurova, 2023; Djumambetova, Khabibullaeva, & Jumayeva, 2023; “English–Karakalpak Proverbs,” 2024).

Fourth, the field clarified its orthography and access issues. For Karakalpak, the historical shift from Arabic and Cyrillic scripts to Latin (with reforms in 2016) matters for academic citation. Publishing in Latin script makes comparative work more transparent for international audiences and improves digital searchability (Omniglot, 2025).

Let us move from method to actual material. If we put English and Karakalpak proverbs in a table of equivalences, three zones usually appear: full equivalence, partial equivalence, and non-equivalence with functional similarity. Each zone gives a different lesson about mind and culture.

Take “Strike while the iron is hot” and “Temirdi qizg'anda bas”. The image is the same: a blacksmith must act when the metal is soft. The cognitive mapping (OPPORTUNITY IS HEAT) appears identical; the imperative rhythm also matches. Because the image belongs to very basic craft knowledge, it is not surprising that we find it in both languages. Where there is iron work, there is a hot window for action (Djumambetova & Shakurova, 2023; Djumambetova et al., 2023).

Another set includes “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree” and “Alma tereginnen alisqa túspeydi.” Again the mapping – FAMILY RESEMBLANCE IS SPATIAL PROXIMITY – is quite universal, and the tree/fruit schema is widely available as an agricultural observation (cf. Speake, 2015). Karakalpak uses alma ‘apple’ and terek ‘tree’ with a direct negative construction that mirrors the English observation (Djumambetova & Shakurova, 2023).

Even set phrases like “Speech is silver, but silence is golden” find elegant mirrors. In Karakalpak, “So’z gumis, undemew altın” keeps the metal hierarchy and the moral that controlled speech is valued (English–Karakalpak collections, 2024). The VALUE IS PRECIOUS METAL mapping appears intact.

Here we can place “Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today” and “Bu’gingi isti erenge qaldirma.” Both construct TIME as a resource and recommend immediate action. However, in some Karakalpak lists, the English pair for Bu’gingi isti erenge qaldirma is glossed slightly differently; and other times the English match is “Better late than never,” which is not identical in counsel but stays



in the same prudence frame (Kudaïbergenova, 2024). The lesson is the same – do not delay – but the proverb network around it shows different neighboring tensions: haste versus care, urgency versus correctness (Speake, 2015; Kudaïbergenova, 2024).

Non-equivalents with functional similarity

A famous English impossibility marker is “When pigs fly.” Karakalpak offers “Tüyenin quyırığı jerge tiygende” (“when the camel’s tail touches the ground”). The function is the same – signal of impossibility – but the image ecology is different. English selects an absurd airborne pig; Karakalpak selects a local giant with a tail that does not touch the ground. The cognitive intention is universal; the cultural imagery inventory is local (Djumambetova & Shakurova, 2023; Mieder, 2004).

Cultural scripts and cognitive frames in practice

If we put the theoretical lenses on and look closely at a small group of proverb pairs, we can watch cognition and culture negotiate. Consider six items:

1. Temirdi qizg'anda bas – Strike while the iron is hot.
Cognitive frame: OPPORTUNITY IS HEAT; ACTION IS FORGING.
Cultural script: timely initiative is a virtue; hesitation is a vice.
Empirical base: replication across English and Karakalpak lists (Djumambetova & Shakurova, 2023; Speake, 2015).
2. Bu'gingi isti erenge qaldirma – typically aligned to “Never put off till tomorrow...” or placed in the same prudence cluster.
Cognitive frame: TIME IS A RESOURCE; DELAY IS WASTE.
Cultural script: preference for immediate action in everyday work.
Empirical base: comparative notes in Kudaïbergenova (2024).
3. So'z gumis, undemew altın – Speech is silver, silence is golden.
Cognitive frame: VALUE IS PRECIOUS METAL; SILENCE > SPEECH.
Cultural script: control of talk signals maturity and respect.
Empirical base: bilingual proverb collections (2024).
4. Alma tereginnen alisqa túspeydi – The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.
Cognitive frame: RESEMBLANCE IS PROXIMITY.



Cultural script: family continuity; character is partly inherited.
Empirical base: comparative lists (Djumambetova & Shakurova, 2023).

5. Bir oq penen eki qoyan atiw – To kill two birds with one stone.
Cognitive frame: EFFICIENCY IS TARGETING; ONE ACTION, TWO RESULTS.

6. Tüyenin quyriğı jerge tiygende – When pigs fly.
Cognitive frame: IMPOSSIBILITY IS ABSURD EVENT.
Cultural script: local fauna iconics drive imagery selection.
Empirical base: comparative sets (Djumambetova & Shakurova, 2023).

These items show that if we only apply cognitivism, we will catch the mapping, but we might miss why camel and not pig, or why precious metals dominate silence. If we only apply linguoculturology, we will praise the cultural relevance of the camel and the apple tree, but we might miss the cross-linguistic stability in the underlying frame. The co-development strategy – keeping both lenses active – explains more.

In Uzbekistan and Karakalpakstan, the 21st century brought a clear anthropocentric turn in linguistics: research programs that put the speaker, mentality, and culture in the center. This turn strengthened both cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology. Recent Uzbek-language surveys highlight how these fields reshaped national linguistics, naming cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, and pragmalinguistics as the visible pillars of the new paradigm (Khudayberganova et al., 2023). In this environment, proverbs appear as an obvious object: they are anthropocentric artifacts by nature, holding moral norms, social roles, and emotion scripts. Studies targeted at Karakalpak paremiology explicitly explore educational value and cultural identity functions (Ziba, 2024), while comparative articles with English train students and young scholars to use equivalence classes, which is a crucial method for responsible contrastive analysis (Kudaïbergenova, 2024; Djumambetova & Shakurova, 2023).

One small but telling area where the cognitive and cultural roads meet is numerals in proverbs. English uses small integers as heuristic markers – two heads are better than one, measure twice, cut once, a stitch in time saves nine. These numerals do more than count; they signal procedure, verification, and prevention. In Karakalpak, as regional studies show, numerals participate in didactic and collective scripts; sometimes the function is equivalent to English even when the



proverb does not show a number on the surface (e.g., Temirdi qizg'anda bas functions like a timing/verification rule) (Jolibekova, 2024). When numerals appear explicitly in Karakalpak items, they often index proportion, seniority, or shared obligation, reflecting the social arithmetic of communal life (Aimhammetova, 2024). The lesson is practical: memory techniques (rhyme and small integers) serve cognitive economy, while local value grammars distribute which numbers and which rhythms get social authority.

For language teaching, combining cognitivism and linguoculturology allows a teacher to move beyond translation toward conceptual explanation and cultural commentary. In a Karakalpak–English classroom, an instructor can first map the shared cognitive frame (e.g., OPPORTUNITY/HEAT) and then compare the cultural imagery (blacksmith heat; camel tail). This double action supports metalinguistic awareness and intercultural competence. For research, the implication is to keep building balanced corpora with stable Latin-script Karakalpak entries and verified English counterparts. It is also important to publish equivalence matrices with a minimum of three levels (full, partial, functional non-equivalent) and to standardize orthography so that students and computational tools can index examples (Omniglot, 2025; Speake, 2015).

A second implication touches methodology: scholars should continue the paired-analysis tradition, but also add diachronic tracking (how a proverb's meaning shifts) and register analysis (which proverbs survive in formal contexts, which move to social media). Modern resources like the Oxford corpus notes and Mieder's handbook help with English (Speake, 2015; Mieder, 2004). For Karakalpak, we profit from local journals and repositories that document proverb usage in education, cultural events, and everyday life (Ziba, 2024; Kudaïbergenova, 2024).

Imagine a bilingual teacher in Nukus explaining Temirdi qizg'anda bas to English-major students. She writes on the board: "Strike while the iron is hot." Then she asks: why iron? Students will answer: when it is hot, you can shape it; if you wait, you lose the chance. The teacher then draws the mapping: OPPORTUNITY IS HEAT; ACTION IS FORGING (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010). She continues: what values are behind this proverb? Students answer: initiative, readiness, courage. Here she brings in linguoculturology: in Karakalpak agricultural life, timing (season, heat, daytime) matters; in English-speaking

industrial history, tool timing also matters. The class then compares when pigs fly and tüyeniñ quyriğı jerge tiygende. The mapping (IMPOSSIBILITY IS ABSURD EVENT) is universal; the image is cultural. Finally, the teacher adds a numeric English proverb – measure twice, cut once – and asks the students to name a Karakalpak prudence proverb that functions the same way. Someone offers Temirdi qizg'anda bas again; another student mentions a proverb about not delaying today's work. In this small lesson, the teacher used the strategy of our whole field: cognitive mapping + cultural commentary.

10. A concluding narrative thread

From the first intuition that metaphor guides our mind to the careful cultural commentary that explains why a camel appears where a pig flies, the combined growth of cognitivism and linguoculturology created a strong toolkit for proverb analysis. In English, proverbs look familiar because we meet them in books and online dictionaries; in Karakalpak, they carry a strong local flavor and still move actively in classrooms and public speech. When we place them side by side, we see the two halves of meaning – frame and picture. The frame is cognitive: it is task-oriented, based on bodily and social experience. The picture is cultural: it is selected from local ecology, work practices, and moral economy. If our strategic aim in linguistics is to explain how language, thought, and culture co-evolve, then English–Karakalpak paremiology is not a peripheral case; it is the right laboratory.

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