

THE AGE CONCEPT IN PROVERBS

Khujamberdiyeva Gavhar Ilhom kizi

Denau Institute of Entrepreneurship and Pedagogy Teacher of the

Department of Foreign Language and Literature Upper Courses"

gavhar0697@gmail.com

Abstract

This article explores the linguistic and cultural representation of the concept of age in proverbs, focusing on the opposition between youth and old age in English and Uzbek paremiological traditions. Proverbs serve as an important means of reflecting the axiological worldview of a people, conveying life experience, cultural values, and moral guidelines. The study emphasizes that in English linguoculture, each stage of life — youth, maturity, and old age — has its own social function and significance. Special attention is given to the role of values and anti-values associated with different ages, which form the foundation of cultural identity and regulate human behavior. The analysis demonstrates that the concept of age in proverbs not only reflects everyday realities but also serves as a system of cultural orientation, transmitting ethical norms and life lessons from generation to generation.

Keywords: Proverb, age concept, youth, old age, axiological worldview, values, anti-values, linguoculture, English and Uzbek paremiology, cultural identity, life stages, folk wisdom.

Introduction

Paremiological units (proverbs, sayings) exist in all the languages of the world. In particular, the languages of the Indo-European, Turkic, Ugro-Finnic, Tungus-Manchu, Eskimo-Aleut, Nakh-Daghestanian, Sino-Tibetan, Austro-Asiatic, Malay-Polynesian, Dravidian, Papuan, Afro-Asiatic, Semitic-Hamitic, Arabic, Persian, and many other language families are characterized by the richness and uniqueness of their proverbs. According to scholars, paremiology is a field of study that engages both literary scholars and linguists — it is considered a branch of philology. "Paremiology" is the branch of philology that studies proverbs

(paremias) and classifies them. In addition, there is a specific discipline called paremiography, which focuses on collecting, preserving, and processing paremiological materials.

The genre-specific features of proverbs — their didactic nature, the aspiration to convey accumulated folk wisdom, and to express generalized observations about the essence of phenomena in the surrounding world in an extremely concise and easily memorable form — are closely connected with the axiological worldview, that is, the system of values and anti-values of a people. According to P.S. Gurevich, “Value is a special type of worldview orientation of people, a representation of the ideal and moral standards of behavior formed within a particular culture. Facts, phenomena, and events occurring in nature, society, and an individual’s life are perceived by a person not only through a logical system of knowledge but also through the prism of their attitude toward the world, their humanistic standards, and their moral and aesthetic norms. A person compares their behavior with the ideal, with a goal that serves as a model for them.” [3; p.3] It is no coincidence that many researchers consider value to be a core concept of paremiology (the study of proverbs) [3; p. 137].

MAIN PART

In proverbs, youth is regarded as the unmarked norm. In English and Uzbek paremiology (the study of proverbs), it is characteristic to compare old age and youth based on the following features:

- Physical condition and health : When I was young — I flew on wings; now that I am old — I sit on the stove. When you are young — gnaw on bones; when you are old — eat porridge. Youth grows stronger — old age fades.
- Experience and wisdom: A young person grows older — becomes wiser; an old person grows older — becomes more foolish. Old and young — twice as foolish. Young but wise, old but foolish.
- Social maturity: The young will outgrow their wildness; the old will not change. The young wander the world; the old feed the family. Youth is careless — old age is cautious.

Proverbs serve as linguistic reflections of a community’s collective worldview, encapsulating cultural values, norms, and social expectations in concise, memorable forms. Within this framework, the concept of age—particularly the

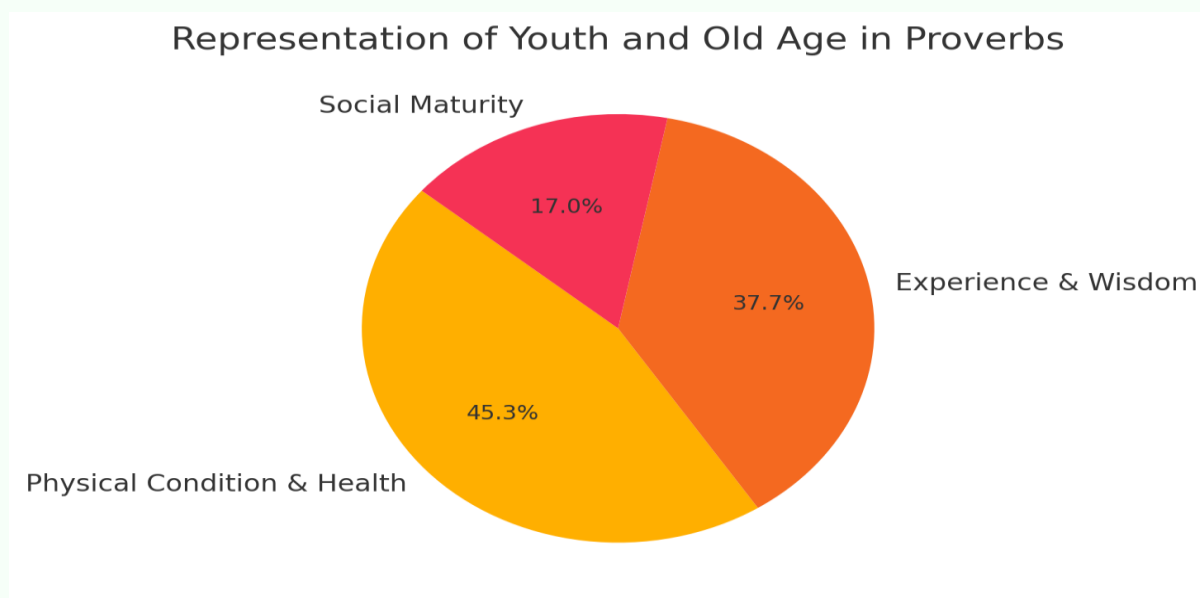


contrast between youth and old age—is a significant thematic axis. This dichotomy often serves to reinforce behavioral models, signal moral lessons, and construct cultural hierarchies associated with life stages. In many cultural traditions, including Turkic and Slavic folklore, youth is often viewed as a period of physical vitality and social obligation, while old age symbolizes wisdom, fragility, or even burden, depending on context. The following Uzbek proverbs illustrate these axiological distinctions: “Yoshi yetmay ishi yetmas” (Youth will have its course): This saying underscores the limitations of youth, highlighting the importance of maturity and life experience for competence. It reflects a cultural recognition that every life stage has its own capabilities and responsibilities. “Yosh kelsa – ishga, qari kelsa – oshga” (Youth will serve, age will feast): This proverb emphasizes the traditional division of labor and respect within intergenerational relationships. Youth is associated with productivity and service, while old age is linked to rest, honor, and reward.[6;7]

“Yosh ketaman deb qo‘rqitar, qari – o‘laman deb” (Youth and age will never agree): Here, a generational conflict is highlighted, wherein the young threaten to leave (in pursuit of freedom or adventure) while the elderly express fears of death. It captures the psychological and emotional divide between aspiration and resignation. “Qarib quyilmagan, achib suyulmas” (Young saint, old devil): This proverb metaphorically conveys the idea that moral character is formed in youth. If a person fails to cultivate virtue early on, it is unlikely they will become morally upright in later years. It conveys a cultural belief in the permanence of personality traits. These proverbs not only illustrate linguistic artistry and metaphor, but also offer insight into the value systems embedded in traditional societies. The recurring themes—such as physical vitality, social roles, moral development, and intergenerational tension—serve to encode and transmit cultural expectations about the life cycle. Such proverbs are closely tied to the axiological worldview of a society, reflecting its ideals, norms, and ethical standards. As P.S. Gurevich notes, values represent “a specific type of worldview orientation formed in a particular culture, which serves as a standard or ideal of behavior.” Thus, age-related proverbs are not merely folk expressions but serve as cognitive tools that guide individual and collective behavior in accordance with a society’s moral compass.

Thus, the opposition “youth – old age” in English and Uzbek proverbs is viewed dialectically, from different perspectives of human life. English and Uzbek

proverbs emphasize that each stage of life has its own purpose: “In youth — learn, in maturity — work, in old age — take pride.”



In order to understand the features of age-related axiology in English and Uzbek linguoculture, it is important to determine the relationship between values and anti-values as fundamental units of culture associated with a particular age of a person. The role of values in the life of culture and society is immense. Value serves as a fundamental principle of culture, and the uniqueness of a system of values determines the differences between cultures. Values are formed as products of human interest in transforming the surrounding reality. They perform orientational functions and are considered meaning-forming elements of human existence, setting the direction of a person's life. Values constitute the basis of individual or collective judgments and actions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, proverbs show us how people in English and Uzbek culture understand life, age, and human values. In many proverbs, youth and old age are compared to show their differences. Youth is often connected with learning, working, and energy, while old age is seen as a time for wisdom, rest, and respect. Each age in a person's life has its own special role and importance. Proverbs teach people how to behave properly in different stages of life. They help to pass important advice and life lessons from one generation to another. Studying these

proverbs helps us understand the traditions, culture, and way of thinking of the English and Uzbek people. Proverbs are not only beautiful words but also a reflection of people's experience, values, and views about life.

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