

FUNCTIONAL AND SEMANTIC FEATURES OF PROVERBS IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION (ON THE EXAMPLE OF UZBEK, RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES)

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Abstract

This article is devoted to a comprehensive study of the functional and semantic features of proverbs in intercultural communication, based on a comparative analysis of the Uzbek, Russian, and English languages. Proverbs, the most important element of any language's phraseological fund, carry a linguistic and cultural load, reflecting the people's value system, mentality, historical experience, and social attitudes. In intercultural interaction, they act as a “cultural marker” that can bring people together and cause difficulties in understanding due to differences in the figurative system and cultural code. The article examines the main functions of proverbs - communicative, cognitive, educational, pragmatic, and aesthetic - in a comparative aspect. Particular attention is paid to how universal human concepts receive different linguistic implementation in each culture. The analysis of specific examples demonstrates that despite all the external similarities of the subject matter, proverbs of three languages may differ in the degree of metaphor, lexical content, structure, and cultural imagery. One of the key aspects of the article is the consideration of difficulties arising in the translation and interpretation of proverbs in the conditions of interlingua communication. The author analyzes problems such as the lack of direct equivalents, misunderstanding of cultural realities and symbols, and the possibility of distortion of meaning in literal translation. The thesis is that for successful intercultural interaction, it is necessary to consider both linguistic and extralinguistic (non-linguistic) factors influencing the perception and use of proverbs.

Keywords: Proverb, intercultural communication, functional-semantic analysis, Uzbek language, Russian language, English language, cultural context.

Introduction

Proverbs are short, aptly formulated sayings that reflect folk wisdom accumulated over the centuries. They contain generalized judgments about life, morality, work, human relations, and other universal phenomena, making them an important component of not only linguistic wealth but also the people's cultural identity. Proverbs are passed down from generation to generation, acting as keepers of traditions, norms of behavior, and life attitudes. Being part of oral folklore, they are deeply rooted in the consciousness of native speakers and serve as a kind of "code" that reveals the peculiarities of the mentality of a particular nation. In all world cultures, proverbs perform similar functions - instruct, warn, teach, express an ironic attitude to life or help find a way out of a difficult situation. However, despite the universality of the topics covered, the forms of expression of thoughts in proverbs can vary greatly depending on the cultural and historical context, natural conditions, religious beliefs and the value system of a particular ethnic group. In globalization, when intercultural communication has become an integral part of everyday life – be it in education, business, diplomacy, or mass communications – the importance of proverbs as a tool for intercultural interaction is growing. On the one hand, proverbs can serve as a "bridge" between cultures, promoting better mutual understanding, identifying universal values, and common ground.

On the other hand, in the absence of cultural competence, they can become "barriers" – sources of misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and even communication failures. In this context, a comparative study of proverbs from different languages is important, since it allows us to identify both standard and unique features inherent in the worldviews of various peoples. The Uzbek, Russian, and English languages are interesting material for analysis from this point of view, since they reflect different cultural traditions – Eastern Muslim, Slavic Orthodox, and Western Anglo-Saxon. Studying proverbs in these three languages opens up the opportunity to study the features of their structure, semantics, and imagery and gain a deeper understanding of the cultural codes behind these linguistic units.

Thus, this article aims to comprehensively analyze the functional and semantic conditions of proverbs in the Uzbek and English languages to discover universal motifs, strong cultural features in general, and distinctive features conditioned by national mentality. In addition, the article examines the difficulties of adapting

proverbs in an interlingual society and their role as a means of promoting intercultural dialogue.

1. Functions of proverbs in intercultural communication

Proverbs are not just stable speech constructions but multifunctional cultures with high communicative and cognitive elements and educational potential. In nine intercultural communications, they act as practical tools for expressing thoughts, transmitting national experience of formation, and interpersonal understanding. Below, we will consider the main functions of proverbs in more detail.

- Communicative function

Proverbs are used in everyday speech to briefly but capaciously express attitudes to a situation. They help to give the statement an additional emotional coloring, assessment, or humorous shade. For example:

Uzbek: Ko‘rmagan go‘shni orzu qiladi – “He who has not seen meat dreams of it”
(*irony no поводу мечтаний о недоступном*)

Russian: “На безрыбье и рак рыба” – acceptance of a situation when there is no better choice.

English: Every cloud has a silver lining – “Every cloud has a silver lining” (hope in difficult situations).

These proverbs convey information with personal attitude and worldview and can be an essential signal for the interlocutor in an intercultural dialogue.

- Cognitive function

Proverbs reflect the knowledge accumulated by the people about life, nature, human relations, and morality. They form and support cognitive schemes - stable ideas about the “normal” and “correct”. For example:

Uzbek: Dononi so‘zi qisqa bo‘ladi — “The wise man speaks briefly”.

Russian: Молчи — за умного сойдёшь.

English: Silence is golden — “Silence is golden”.

All examples reinforce the idea of the value of silence and thoughtfulness of speech, which fosters a particular style of behavior and thinking.

- Cultural identification function

Proverbs express unique cultural features: traditions, norms, religious attitudes, natural realities, and even climatic features. They serve as “linguistic markers” of artistic affiliation.

Uzbek proverb: Ko‘p yashagan emas, ko‘p ko‘rgan dono — “Not he who has lived much is wise, but he who has seen “much” – the emphasis is on life experience.

Russian: С милым и рай и в шалаше – идея духовного богатства важнее материального.

English: Time is money – a reflection of the Western culture of efficiency and the value of time.

Thus, proverbs “encrypt” a cultural code that may not be obvious to representatives of other nations and cause difficulties in intercultural interpretation.

- Aesthetic function

Proverbs make speech more expressive, emotional, and memorable. Due to brevity, rhyme, metaphors, allusions, and alliteration, they perform an aesthetic role, decorating communication and giving it liveliness. Examples:

Uzbek: Oltin qum ichida ham yaltiraydi.

Russian: Не всё то золото, что блестит.

English: A stitch in time saves nine.

In intercultural communication, the aesthetic function helps attract attention and make speech expressive, but caution is required to avoid distorting the meaning during translation.

Proverbs perform the same basic functions in all three languages – Uzbek, Russian, and English – but they acquire special features due to differences in the cultural, historical, and social environment. This emphasizes the need for not only a linguist but also an artistic approach to the study and use of proverbs in international communication.

2. Comparative semantic analysis of proverbs

Despite the brevity and stability of form, Proverbs contain a rich cultural and semantic potential. Their analysis by thematic groups allows us to identify both universal human values and features of worldview inherent in different cultures.

Let us consider a comparison of Uzbek, Russian, and English proverbs on the following topics:

a) About work and patience

Uzbek proverb: Mehnat qilgan halol yeydi.

The main emphasis is not simply on the work but also on its honesty and legal result. The process and its moral component are necessary.

Russian proverb: Без труда не вытащишь и рыбку из пруда.

Visual and metaphorical image: a fisherman who will not get a catch without effort. The emphasis is on the need for active action.

English proverb: No pain, no gain – “Нет боли – нет результата”.

Brief and strict in its wording, it emphasizes the price of success: only through overcoming discomfort can one achieve something.

Comparative conclusion:

All three proverbs emphasize the importance of efforts, however:

Uzbek - ethical coloring (honest work → honest earnings);

Russian - folk and everyday imagery (fish, pond);

English is straightforward, uses sports and motivational metaphors, and is close to business culture.

b) About friendship and relationships

Uzbek proverb: Do‘st qiyinchilikda bilinadi.

The moment of crisis is emphasized when true friendship emerges.

Russian proverb: Друг познаётся в беде.

Almost identical in structure and meaning is a universal truth.

English proverb: A friend in need is a friend indeed.

The rhyming form is typical for English proverbs, but the meaning is similar.

Comparative conclusion:

This is a vivid example of a universal human value - true friendship is revealed in difficult times, with minimal differences, only in the wording and style.

Uzbek - emotionally restrained;

Russian - a statement of fact;

English - aphoristic and rhythmic.

c) About thrift

Uzbek proverb: Tomchi tomib, ko‘l bo‘lar (*important patience, consistency*).

Russian proverb: Копейка рубль бережёт.

Financial sense, emphasis on frugality as an economic strategy.

English proverb: Take care of the pennies and the pounds will take care of themselves.

A pragmatic attitude, focused on financial discipline and everyday economics.

Comparative conclusion:

The idea of gradual accumulation and the value of the small is common.

The Uzbek proverb is based on the image of nature and consistency.

The Russian one is based on the value of a coin, relying on everyday wisdom.

The English one is rational and economic, reflecting capitalist culture's spirit.

General conclusion to the section

Comparative analysis shows that many proverbs, despite different linguistic forms and cultural images, reflect similar life principles, such as work, patience, friendship and thrift. This indicates the presence of cultural universals - universal concepts found in different ethnic groups.

However, differences in images, metaphors and structure emphasize the peculiarities of national thinking. Uzbek proverbs often appeal to nature, morality and the wisdom of ancestors. Russians favor life experience and everyday realities. English favor logic, conciseness, and practicality, often reflecting the Protestant work ethic. Such analysis promotes a deeper understanding of cultural differences and improves intercultural communication skills.

3. Semantic features and difficulties of translating proverbs

Translating proverbs is one of the most challenging tasks in interlingual and intercultural translation, since they carry both literal and deeply cultural, historical and figurative meanings. It is essential to consider the following aspects:

1. Cultural realities

Proverbs often reflect norms of behavior, traditions, customs and even the way of life of the society from which they originate. For example:

Uzbek proverb: “O‘z uyim – Vatanim” – conveys the idea of home comfort and the importance of the family hearth, which is deeply rooted in Uzbek culture.

When translated literally into another culture, where individualism is more pronounced, the proverb may not evoke the same emotional associations or be perceived differently.

2. Symbolism

Different cultures use different symbols, especially when it comes to animals, plants, and objects. In Uzbek culture, a camel can symbolise patience, while in European culture, such a symbol can be a donkey. English proverb: “Don’t count your chickens before they hatch” may not have a similar expression in other languages and will require an adapted translation rather than a literal one.

3. Degree of imagery

Different languages have different approaches to expressing thoughts:

English proverbs are often straightforward and practical.

Example: Honesty is the best policy.

Russian and Uzbek proverbs often use metaphors, hyperboles, and allegories, which makes their translation more difficult.

Example: Uzbek proverb “Yig‘lamagan bolaga sut berilmaydi” — “A child who does not cry will not get milk” has a figurative meaning: you need to declare your needs in order for them to be met.

English equivalent: “The squeaky wheel gets the grease”. Despite having the same meaning, the images are completely different: in one, a child and milk; in the other, a wheel and grease.

4. The Role of Proverbs in Teaching Intercultural Communication

Proverbs are not just linguistic units but concentrated folk wisdom forms that can teach intercultural communication. Their use makes it possible to:

1. Immerse yourself in culture through language

Studying proverbs helps:

- understand the values, attitudes, and mentality of the people;
- learn to mentally “switch” between cultural codes.

- Increase the flexibility of thinking when working with a multilingual audience.
Example: understanding why in Uzbek culture proverbs are often associated with land, bread, and elders, while in English they are associated with time, discipline, and success.

2. Improving negotiation and communication skills

When used correctly, proverbs strengthen arguments, add expressiveness to speech and contribute to establishing trust, especially if the interlocutor recognizes the proverb from his culture – this creates a sense of respect for his traditions.

For example, in business negotiations with English-speaking partners, using a suitable proverb like “Let’s not put all our eggs in one basket” can demonstrate cultural awareness and savvy.

3. Intercultural pieces of training

In pieces of training, proverbs can be used:

- as interactive material (discussion of proverbs from different cultures);
- to develop empathy and the ability to see the world through the eyes of others;
- as a tool for comparing worldviews and identifying points of similarity and differences.

Methodological techniques:

- Comparison of similar proverbs in different languages.
- Discussion of the context in which they are used.
- Translation with comments explaining the cultural background.

4. Avoiding misunderstandings

Without proper knowledge of the context, a proverb can be taken literally; cause laughter or bewilderment; disrupt the delicacy of communication.

Example: The English proverb “Curiosity killed the cat” may sound absurd in a literal translation in a culture where cats symbolize holiness or good luck.

Proverbs are a powerful tool, but their effective use in translation and intercultural communication requires deep knowledge of both cultures, understanding of symbolism and the ability to adapt phrases while preserving the meaning and emotional coloring.

Proverbs are an important element of intercultural communication, as they convey not only the language but also the mentality of the people. Despite the universality of many topics (labor, friendship, morality), the ways of expressing them depend on the cultural environment. A comparison of Uzbek, Russian, and English proverbs shows both similarities and differences in imagery, structure, and cultural load. A deep understanding and correct use of proverbs can significantly enrich intercultural interaction and increase the effectiveness of communication.

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