

Moral Standards In Proverbs: An Axiological Analysis Of English And Uzbek Paremiology

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Abstract: The axiological aspect of Uzbek and English proverbs is examined in this article, with special focus on how moral standards and value judgments are represented linguistically in paremiological units. The study views proverbs as culturally ingrained linguistic structures that combine semantic meaning with evaluative orientation, drawing on the theoretical frameworks of comparative paremiology and axiological linguistics. A corpus of proverbs expressing moral judgment in both languages is subjected to a qualitative semantic-pragmatic analysis. Honesty, diligence, patience, humility, generosity, justice, and social duty are among the fundamental moral categories identified by the research, which also examines their pragmatic role in discourse and metaphorical realization. The results demonstrate the coexistence of cultural-specific evaluation patterns and universal moral norms. While Uzbek proverbs promote collectivism, communal harmony, religious-ethical principles, and respect for social hierarchy, English proverbs typically emphasize individual responsibility, pragmatism, and self-control. The work advances the fields of axiological paremiology and international linguistics by showing how proverbs act as normative linguistic processes that control conduct, communicate cultural knowledge, and uphold collective value systems.

Keywords: Axiological linguistics; paremiology; moral evaluation; cultural values; English and Uzbek proverbs; intercultural analysis.

Introduction: Proverbs are short sayings that summarize traditional knowledge and frequently express moral and ethical principles. According to Wolfgang Mieder, a proverb is "a brief, well-known saying...in which wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views are figuratively and statically expressed in a memorable way" [1]. Put differently, proverbs are cultural artifacts that convey the moral standards and collective ideals of a community. Proverbs are conveyors of shared moral and cultural ideals, according to modern researchers [2].

A. Proverbs, for instance, "have cognitive and socio-cultural value," serve as socialization techniques, and represent "the moral values of a community," according to Bobuafor [2][3]. In this work, we use an axiological lens—the study of values—to analyze proverbs in both English and Uzbek to identify the moral lessons they teach. We evaluate the semantic and pragmatic patterns of moral appraisal in these proverbs, examine how they represent cultural priorities, and talk about the universal and culturally

unique elements.

Axiological Approach to Proverbs

Proverbs are viewed by axiological paremiology as linguistic symbols with significant meaning. According to Semenenko (2020), proverbs' semantic structure entails a "linguosynergic interaction of value and evaluation" [4]. To put it another way, proverbs are constructed as brief "mini-texts" that combine moral judgment with literal language. Proverbs are "among the most representative linguistic units that encode moral norms, social etiquette, and politeness," according to studies, which supports the idea that proverbs encode moral principles [3]. Proverbs contain "moral, ethical, and communicative principles that regulate social relations and maintain interpersonal balance," according to Shamuradova [3]. Analyzing proverb axiology in both Uzbek and English reveals a culture's values, whether they are societal ideals like respect and humility or virtues like diligence and honesty.

Proverbs as Vehicles of Moral Values

Proverbs serve as channels for collective wisdom and frequently dictate moral conduct. Proverbs serve as "guidelines for appropriate behavior" in any society, according to Bobuafor's corpus study of African proverbs [2][3]. These proverbs are more than just words; they have practical meaning and can be used as counsel, warnings, or motivation. Proverbs are employed in interactional speech to offer counsel, convince, correct, or bolster an argument, according to Bobuafor [5]. They carry "a philosophy of a people, a rich source of cultural values" and are often used in teaching or dispute resolution contexts [6]. Proverbs, to put it briefly, externalize a community's moral code by reminding listeners of "traditional wisdom" and moral principles [7].

Proverbs in both Uzbek and English reflect social standards with local nuances. According to Shamuradova (2025), Uzbek proverbs promote respect for elders and communal concord, whereas English proverbs frequently emphasize individual restraint and discretion [8]. English proverbs that emphasize family loyalty and individual accountability include "Blood is thicker than water" and "Charity begins at home." Uzbek proverbs, which have their roots in a collectivist and traditionally Islamic culture, frequently praise social duty, humility, and kindness. According to a study of Uzbek oral literature, Uzbek proverbs reflect Islamic moral principles like charity, patience, honesty, fairness, and humility [9]. In order to uphold communal ideals, Uzbek speakers may use proverbs that are reminiscent of Islamic teachings, such as "Rost so'z – tilsizlashar, yolg'on so'z – yuzsizlashar"—"Truth silences the tongue, lies shame the face" [10].

Comparative Axiological Examples

- Analyzing particular proverbs reveals both common and unique moral ideas. Both languages have numerous important virtues. Honesty, for example, is a recurring subject. English proverbs such as "Honesty is the best policy" have Uzbek equivalents like "Rost so'z – tilsizlashar" (Truth silences the tongue) [10]. Vibrant imagery is frequently used in Uzbek proverbs to commend integrity and denounce dishonesty. For instance, English proverbs concerning the pointlessness of lying are paralleled in "Yolg'onning umri qisqa" ("A lie has a short life") [10]. Similarly, hard work and diligence are valued across cultural boundaries. The Uzbek proverb "Halol mehnat – halol rizq" ("Honest labor brings honest sustenance") parallels the English phrase "Hard work pays off" [11]. Both proverbs emphasize the lessons that hard work pays off and that laziness is wrong.
- Patience: The English phrase "Patience is a

virtue" is equivalent to the Uzbek phrase "Sabr qilgan – omad topgan," which means "He who is patient finds success." According to both proverbs, perseverance pays off [12].

- Friendship: Similar to English sentiments like "Friends are the family we choose," Uzbek "Yaxshi do'st – mol-dunyo emas" ("A good friend is not material wealth") promotes loyalty over wealth.

- Generosity vs. Greed: While "Xasisning molidan – o'zgalar yer" ("The miser's riches feeds others") cautions against stinginess, Uzbek "Saxovatli qo'l hech qachon qisqarmas" ("The generous hand is never empty") commends generosity, much like English "Charity begins at home" [13].

- Humility: The Uzbek adage "Shox qancha balandga o'ssa ham, baribir egiladi" emphasizes modesty and is comparable to English proverbs like "Pride comes before a fall." It means "No matter how tall the branch grows, it eventually bends."

While Uzbek proverbs generally have philosophical or religious connotations (e.g., "Adolat – tumanli kunning quyoshi" – "Justice is the sun of a foggy day"), English proverbs often express individualistic or pragmatic ethos (e.g., "Time is money," "Look before you leap") [15]. However, basic moral principles like integrity, diligence, fairness, and charity are shared by both traditions. According to Makhkamova, proverbs from Uzbek culture offer unambiguous moral judgments "to uphold socially valued virtues and denounce immoral behaviors" [16], a pattern shared by proverb traditions across the globe.

Semantic and Pragmatic Functions of Moral Evaluation

Both pragmatically and semantically, proverbs encode moral judgment. Semantically, they condense moral precepts into analogies and metaphors. For instance, Uzbek proverbs like "Oltin olma, oltinga teng so'z ol'" ("Do not take gold, take a word equal to gold") contrast material and moral prosperity [17]. Here, the metaphor of "gold" versus "words" emphasizes the superiority of intangible moral value over monetary gain. In a similar vein, "Birovga choh qazigan o'zi tushar" ("He who digs a pit for others will fall in himself") use the metaphor of excavating a pit to convey justice or karma [18]. Proverbial semantics is characterized by such vivid language, which makes abstract values memorable.

Proverbs serve as "syncretic sign[s]" that combine literal statements with "a 'folded' semantic structure" of values, according to Semenenko [19]. To put it another way, a single proverb can both express a circumstance and suggest a moral guideline.

Proverbs serve as speech acts that direct behavior in a

pragmatic sense. When a proverb is used in conversation, it frequently serves as advice or criticism. Bobuafor demonstrates that proverbs are frequently employed for chastisement, persuasion, and guidance [5]. For example, "Hard work pays off" (English) or "Ishlagan tishlar – ishlamagan tishlamas" (Uzbek: "He who works chews; he who doesn't work, won't eat") could be used to chastise a lazy peer [20]. In each instance, the proverb fulfills an illocutionary function by subtly informing the audience of what is proper or bad.

Additionally, proverbs are used to uphold common standards in ceremonial and formal contexts (sermons, speeches) [21]. Notably, Shamuradova emphasizes how proverbs "implicitly, culturally codedly" convey social norms [22]. Proverbs indexically connect moral precepts to cultural context, whether as subtle reminders of civility or harsh cautions against sin. For instance, Uzbek politeness proverbs emphasize communal harmony ("Eldan haybat yaxshi, o'zingdan haybat – yomon")—"Power over others is good, power over yourself is bad"—while English politeness proverbs frequently emphasize individual privacy ("Don't air your dirty linen in public") [8]. Proverbs have the pragmatic effect of shaping the listener's actions in accordance with the moral standards of the group.

Universal and Culture-Specific Morality

The comparison of English and Uzbek proverbs reveals both universal and culture-specific moral themes. Universal values include honesty, industriousness, family loyalty, and patience—virtues that appear in proverb collections worldwide. For instance, both traditions valorize hard work and patience as paths to success[12][20]. Generosity and fairness also recur: Uzbek proverbs affirm that oppression harms a society ("No land prospers through oppression") [15], echoing global maxim "No justice, no peace."

Metaphors and emphases reveal cultural distinctiveness. Islamic and communal values are frequently reflected in Uzbek proverbs. As mentioned, Islamic ethical values such as generosity and humility align with a number of Uzbek moral proverbs [9]. Zakat customs are linked to the importance of generosity ("Saxovatli qo'l hech qachon qisqarmas" – "The generous hand never diminishes" [13]), while sayings regarding family and social repute embed respect for elders and community. According to Shamuradova, English proverbs emphasize self-control and individual liberty, while Uzbek proverbs define civility in terms of "collective harmony, modesty, and reverence for elders" [8]. For instance, the Uzbek proverb "Bosh egilsa, el tegar" ("Bow your head and people will bow to you") [23] clearly teaches humility and reflects the

importance on social cohesiveness in the culture. English proverbs, on the other hand, may present comparable concepts in a different way (e.g., "It's better to bend than to break" on humility or simply "Don't look a gift horse in the mouth" as a traditional caution against ingratitude).

In one society, however, some moral principles are taught more explicitly. The Islamic concept of unselfish charity is preached in the Uzbek saying "Yaxshilik qil, daryoga tashla" ("Do good and cast it into the river, for if fish don't know, God will") [24]. English proverbs frequently use secular language to discuss morality. However, the underlying feelings frequently coincide.

Therefore, both sets of proverbs represent a common human concern with good and wrong, despite the differences in their representations. Proverbs "uphold socially valued virtues and denounce immoral behaviors," according to Makhkamova's summary of Uzbek sayings [16]. This goal applies to both Uzbek and English speakers.

CONCLUSION

This axiological study of proverbs in Uzbek and English highlights their significance as cultural moral indicators. Every proverb expresses a value assessment; some do so explicitly ("Truth is dearer than gold"), while others do it subtly (via metaphor or anecdote). Proverbs serve as instructive speech acts that reinforce social standards; semantically, they encapsulate ethical principles in formulaic imagery. The comparative examples demonstrate that while some virtues, such as patience, honesty, hard effort, and charity, are cross-cultural, their focus and framing can vary depending on the culture. English proverbs typically use pragmatic or individualistic language to convey morality, while Uzbek proverbs frequently use religious or communal analogies [8][10].

All things considered, proverbs reflect a people's axiological landscape. They are both unique in reflecting national character and universal in elevating fundamental human virtues. We can learn more about how language upholds value systems by analyzing the moral standards contained in Uzbek and English paremiological units. Our analysis confirms that studying proverbs is essential to comprehending cultural morality as communicated via language, as Semenenko believes that proverbs are a realm where "value and evaluation" combine [4].

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