



PROVERBS AS CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC PHENOMENA: ORIGIN, STRUCTURE, AND DISSEMINATION

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Annotation: *This article examines proverbs as important linguistic and cultural phenomena. Proverbs are traditional figurative sayings that express collective wisdom and cultural values. The study explores the origin of proverbs, their structural and stylistic features, and their role in folklore and linguistic research. Special attention is given to the dissemination of proverbs across languages and cultures, particularly within the European tradition influenced by classical Greek and Roman sources. The article also discusses the problems of translation and variation of proverbs in different linguistic communities. The analysis shows that proverbs function as stable textual units that reflect universal human experience while also preserving unique cultural characteristics.*

Keywords: *proverb, folklore, language, culture, paremiology, proverb translation, linguistic analysis, traditional wisdom*

Аннотация: *В данной статье рассматриваются пословицы как важное языковое и культурное явление. Пословицы представляют собой традиционные образные высказывания, отражающие коллективную мудрость и культурные ценности народа. В работе анализируются происхождение пословиц, их структурные и стилистические особенности, а также их роль в фольклористике и лингвистике. Особое внимание уделяется распространению пословиц в различных языках и культурах, особенно в европейской традиции, сформированной под влиянием древнегреческих и римских источников. Также рассматриваются проблемы перевода и вариативности пословиц в разных языковых сообществах. Исследование показывает, что пословицы функционируют как устойчивые текстовые единицы, отражающие универсальный человеческий опыт и одновременно сохраняющие культурную специфику.*

Ключевые слова: *пословица, фольклор, язык, культура, паремиология, перевод пословиц, лингвистический анализ, народная мудрость*

Annotatsiya: *Ushbu maqolada maqollar muhim lingvistik va madaniy hodisa sifatida tahlil qilinadi. Maqollar xalqning umumiy donoligi va madaniy qadriyatlarini ifodalovchi an'anaviy obrazli iboralardir. Tadqiqotda maqollarning kelib chiqishi,*



ularning tuzilishi va uslubiy xususiyatlari, shuningdek, folklor va tilshunoslikdagi o‘rni ko‘rib chiqiladi. Ayniqsa, maqollarning turli tillar va madaniyatlar orasida tarqalishi, xususan, qadimgi yunon va rim manbalari ta’sirida shakllangan Yevropa an’analari muhokama qilinadi. Bundan tashqari, maqollarni tarjima qilish va turli til jamoalarida ularning variantlari masalalari ham yoritiladi. Tadqiqot natijalari maqollar barqaror matn birliklari sifatida insoniyatning umumiy tajribasini aks ettirishi bilan birga milliy madaniy xususiyatlarni ham saqlab qolishini ko‘rsatadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: *maqol, folklor, til, madaniyat, paremiologiya, maqollar tarjimasi, lingvistik tahlil, xalq donoligi.*

INTRODUCTION

Proverbs, like riddles, jokes, or fairy tales, are not mysterious products of a collective folk spirit nor do they fall from the sky. Instead, they originate from individuals who create them either intentionally or unintentionally. This idea is captured in the well-known statement by Lord John Russell: “A proverb is the wit of one, and the wisdom of many” (ca. 1850). If such a statement expresses truth or wisdom and displays recognizable proverbial characteristics, it may gradually gain popularity. Initially used within a small family circle, it can later spread to a village, a city, a region, and eventually across countries and continents.

Proverbs are important elements of folklore and language. They serve as concise carriers of traditional wisdom and cultural knowledge. Because of their cultural significance and recognizable textual structure, proverbs are valuable materials for linguistic, folkloristic, and cross-cultural studies. They combine features of lexemes, sentences, fixed expressions, collocations, texts, and quotations. Their stylistic properties—

such as rhythm, parallelism, syntax, vocabulary, and imagery—also make them useful for psycholinguistic and cultural research.

Furthermore, the study of proverbs has attracted scholars from various disciplines. Folklorists examine them as folklore items, linguists analyze their structural and semantic properties, and lexicographers collect and categorize them according to origin, distribution, and relationships with other phraseological units.

METHODS

This study approaches proverbs from a descriptive and comparative perspective. First, it examines the terminology and classification used by folklorists and linguists in defining proverbs and distinguishing them from related forms such as proverbial phrases, idioms, clichés, and comparisons. Second, it considers historical sources and literary texts to trace the development and variation of proverbs across time.

In addition, the analysis draws on findings from corpus linguistics, which provide statistical evidence of how proverbs are actually used in language



communities. Comparative linguistic evidence is also used to examine the spread of proverbs across languages and cultures, particularly in Europe. Translation studies and bilingual observations further help identify similarities and differences among proverbs in different linguistic traditions.

RESULTS

The analysis shows that proverbs often appear in multiple textual variants before one standard form becomes dominant. Historical records illustrate this process clearly. For example, a proverb expressing prudence existed in several versions before the modern form became established: “It is good to be wise before the mischief” (1584), “After the business is over, every one is wise” (1666), and “It is easy to be wise after the event” (1900).

Tracing the origins of proverbs in a particular language is often complex, especially when they date back to medieval or classical times. Comparative research reveals two main types of proverbs across languages. The first type consists of proverbs that convey the same meaning but differ in wording, structure, and imagery. For example, English speakers use “Brevity is the soul of wit,” while German speakers say “In der Kürze liegt die Würze.” Although the meaning is similar, the expressions developed independently in their respective languages.

The second type includes proverbs that are almost identical across many languages due to historical borrowing and translation. Such “general European

proverbs” spread widely through loan translations. Studies show that several classical proverbs appear in numerous European languages. Examples include “Where there is smoke, there is fire,” “Barking dogs do not bite,” “One swallow does not make a summer,” “Walls have ears,” and “Still waters run deep.”

Historical analysis also identifies four major sources for the dissemination of European proverbs. The most influential source is Greek and Roman antiquity. Many classical authors, including Aristotle, Plato, Sophocles, and Homer, recorded early proverbs. These sayings were later translated into Latin and preserved in the works of Roman writers such as Plautus, Terence, Cicero, and Horace. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, scholars like Erasmus of Rotterdam and Martin Luther further spread classical and regional proverbs through translations, writings, and educational practices.

DISCUSSION

The findings highlight the dynamic nature of proverbs as linguistic and cultural phenomena. Although they often appear as fixed traditional expressions, proverbs evolve through variation, adaptation, and transmission across languages and cultures. Mass media in modern societies also accelerates the spread of proverb-like statements, allowing them to gain international recognition more quickly than in the past.

The wide distribution of many proverbs demonstrates the existence of



shared human experiences and universal forms of wisdom. Classical sources, particularly those transmitted through Latin, played a significant role in shaping a common European proverb tradition. Through translation, education, and oral transmission, these sayings became part of everyday language in many cultures.

Proverbs are important language and speech materials in any foreign language course, as well as motivating learners. They are necessary for the development of receptive skills in speaking and writing, as well as the formation of speaking and writing skills (Alidjanova, N., & Vasiliyeva, T., 2023).

Proverbs are common among peoples, reflecting their culture, way of life, customs, and traditions. Proverbs are often very easy and convenient to remember, which is why they have been used by many peoples and

passed down through the centuries. It's no exaggeration to say that proverbs are a mirror reflecting the culture of each people. At first glance, proverbs may mean one thing, but when used in speech, we see that they have a different pragmatic meaning. Studying and analyzing proverbs is both a fascinating and challenging endeavor (Alidjanova, 2025).

In conclusion, a proverb can be defined as a traditional figurative saying that forms a complete sentence and expresses a general truth or piece of wisdom. Its ability to stand alone as a complete utterance distinguishes it from related forms such as proverbial phrases, which cannot function independently. Proverbs therefore represent an important intersection of language, culture, history, and human experience.

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