

THE SEMANTIC, SYMBOLIC, AND STEREOTYPICAL PROPERTIES OF LEXICAL UNITS IN UZBEK FOLK PROVERBS

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21461662>

INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the topic. A linguistic unit – specifically the lexeme – embodies not only objective-logical meaning but also the historical experience, worldview, and value system of a given people. This pattern is clearly manifested in the material of Uzbek folk proverbs, since the proverb is a compact and stable linguistic-cultural form shaped by the centuries-long collective experience of popular thought.

The question of the interrelation between language and culture has a long scholarly tradition, running from W. von Humboldt's classical idea that "language is the mirror of the national spirit" [1] to the linguoculturological theories of V.N. Teliya and V.V. Vorobyov [2], and it is precisely on this theoretical foundation that the present study rests.

Literature Review. The theoretical basis for studying the semantic nature of lexical units in Uzbek linguistics is formed by the work of Sh. Rahmatullayev on the methodology of semic analysis, in which the concepts of seme and sememe are substantiated as independent linguistic units [6]. Within the framework of the theory of cultural codes, somatic, zoomorphic, phytomorphic, spatial, color, and other code types have been distinguished, and their realization in phraseological and paremiological units has been studied [7].

The scholarly interpretation of the concept of stereotype has traveled a path from W. Lippmann to U. Quasthoff's linguistic definition, according to which a stereotype is defined as the verbal expression of an oversimplified and recurring belief directed at social groups [8].

Furthermore, the concept of "linguistic personality," introduced into scholarship by Yu.N. Karaulov, makes it possible to interpret proverb texts as an expression of collective linguistic-cultural identity [9]: proverbs express not the subjective opinion of an individual, but the common judgment of the people, distilled through centuries of collective experience.

Nevertheless, in existing research the lexical-semantic, linguoculturological, and stereotype-theoretical aspects have often been studied in isolation from one another, and studies analyzing them within a single, integrated model remain insufficient. It is precisely this gap that determines the scholarly relevance of the present thesis.

The aim of the study is to analyze the semantic properties of lexical units in Uzbek folk proverbs, the cultural codes realized within them, and social-gender stereotypes, on the basis of a unified linguoculturological model. **The source of the study** was Sh. Shomaqsudov and Sh. Shorahmedov's explanatory dictionary "Ma'nolar mahzani" [3], together with the academic collection compiled by T. Mirzayev, A. Musoqulov, and B. Sarimsoqov [4]. Using a **purposive sampling method**, 15 proverbs were selected from "Ma'nolar mahzani"; the selection criterion

was the presence within the proverb of a clearly zoomorphic, phytomorphic, somatic, spatial, color, or social-gender lexical unit that is extensively explained in the dictionary itself.

Descriptive, componential, and linguoculturological methods of analysis were applied, whereby the grammatical structure of each proverb, the denotative-connotative composition of the key lexeme, and the type of cultural code or stereotype it carries were consistently analyzed.

DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis showed that the lexical units within the proverbs manifest a unity of denotative and connotative meaning: for instance, in the proverb “The nightingale loves the flower garden, man loves the Motherland,” the denotative meaning of the lexeme “nightingale” refers to a species of bird, while its connotative meaning expresses the notions of love and patriotism [3].

The zoomorphic code constituted the most active layer of the analyzed material: in the proverb “The horse pulls the cart, the dog only chases its shadow,” the opposition between genuine labor and false activity is expressed through “horse” and “dog”; in the proverb “A wolf is killed not for being a wolf, but for eating the sheep,” a legal-ethical principle is expressed whereby punishment is determined by conduct rather than by essence [3].

Another important manifestation of the zoomorphic code was observed in the proverb “One fox leads seven wolves”: here “fox” is set in opposition to “wolf” as a symbol of cunning and intelligence versus physical strength devoid of guile, expressing the folk philosophy that intelligence surpasses strength [3].

In the proverb “When the wolf grows old, it becomes a laughingstock even to a puppy,” the relationship between age and social standing was examined: the image of the “wolf” carries the stereotype of status grounded in strength and power, while its fading in old age expresses the universal view of the impermanence of status; at the same time, the proverb itself ironically condemns disrespect toward the elderly [3].

The somatic-zoomorphic code is vividly manifested in the proverb “Parents are golden wings,” and the spatial-axiological code in the proverb “Your native land is your golden cradle”; both symbolically express the values of parents and Motherland that lie at the center of the Uzbek mentality. In the first proverb, the lexeme “wing” denotatively refers to a bird’s limb, while connotatively it conveys the meaning of protection, support, and the possibility of ascent; in the second, the image of “cradle” is transferred to the concept of the Motherland as the most sacred symbol of childhood, a mother’s affection, and protection. The analysis of the color code was carried out through the proverbs “A white coin for a black day” and “A black heart is a wounded heart”; notably, the people also knew how to critique the very color-stereotype they had created, through the supplementary proverb “Not every white-faced person is white of heart, and not every black-faced person is black of heart” [3]. This shows that Uzbek folk wisdom, on the one hand, creates stereotypes, and on the other, approaches them critically – and this dual quality attests to the depth of the mentality.

As an example of the phytomorphic code, the proverb “The apple falls beneath the apple tree” was analyzed separately: here the lexeme “apple” moves away from its denotative meaning and becomes the metaphorical vehicle of a generalizing stereotypical conclusion about lineage and

heritage – the view that a child’s character resembles that of the parents is accepted in folk thought as an almost indisputable truth.

Studies examining botanical terms within the anthropocentric paradigm have likewise found that the phytomorphic symbols “pomegranate” and “apricot” carry the meanings of fruitfulness and beauty [12], which confirms that the phytomorphic code is a stable and systemic phenomenon in Uzbek linguo-culture.

The analysis relating to gender stereotypes revealed two opposing layers: the proverb “Train the child from childhood, train the wife from the start” reinforces a patriarchal view interpreting a woman, like a child, as an “object to be raised”; whereas the proverb “Woman did not come from the earth – she is man’s child; man did not descend from the sky – he is woman’s child” was created, conversely, as a counter-stereotypical example asserting gender equality [3; 5].

The proverb “To the dog, the madman is a torment; to the bride, the mother-in-law is a torment,” concerning the daughter-in-law–mother-in-law relationship, reflects one of the most persistent social stereotypes in the Uzbek family mentality.

In the proverb “The mother of seven daughters is still a young bride,” the normative stereotype imposed by society on a woman’s age and outward appearance is expressed through irony; this proverb, originally derived from a riddle, is applied to women who dress in the manner of young brides despite their advancing age [3].

A social-occupational stereotype was observed in the proverb “When the baker dies, bread comes out of his bosom”: here the occupational term “baker” is generalized from an individual instance into a social type, becoming a stable linguistic device carrying the trait of stinginess [3].

A social-property stereotype, meanwhile, is manifested in the proverb “The feast belongs to the man with a horse, the wedding to the man with a fine robe,” where, through the wealth symbols “horse” and “robe,” the people’s ironic-critical stance toward social inequality at ceremonial events is expressed [3].

The results obtained, alongside the earlier findings of D. Tosheva [10] and U. Akhmedova [11], enrich them from a new angle: our analysis showed that proverbs containing zoonymic components perform not only a metaphorical-figurative function but also the function of expressing definite legal-ethical principles.

It was likewise established that the boundary between the concepts of cultural code and stereotype is often conventional in nature: when an image is repeated with the same evaluative connotation across numerous independent proverbs, it rises from the level of a purely figurative code to that of a fully formed social stereotype.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, analyzing the semantic nature of lexical units in Uzbek folk proverbs within the context of cultural-code and stereotype theories more fully reveals their multilayered linguoculturological content. The results of the study demonstrated that the system of proverbs is not unidirectional but internally contradictory and dynamic, and that alongside the creation of stereotypes, the folk mentality also possesses the capacity to approach them critically.

The conclusions obtained can be applied in the fields of linguoculturology, lexicography, and translation studies, as well as within the higher-education system.

For future research, conducting a quantitative-statistical analysis based on the full corpus of proverbs represents a promising direction.

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