



OCCURRENCE OF SOMATIC OBJECTS IN PAREMIOLOGICAL TEXTS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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Abstract

This article examines the occurrence and role of somatic objects—terms referring to body parts—in English and Uzbek proverbs. Based on the theory of conceptual metaphor, the study analyzes how both languages use bodily metaphors to convey thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and social values. The findings reveal that although there are universal metaphorical structures, cultural interpretations differ: English proverbs often highlight individualism and rationality, while Uzbek proverbs emphasize respect, community, and emotional sincerity. This research contributes to cross-cultural linguistics by revealing how language, through somatic imagery, reflects cultural identity.

Keywords: Somatic objects, proverbs, conceptual metaphor, paremiology, cultural comparison, English, Uzbek

1. Introduction

Proverbs are a vital part of the linguistic heritage of any people, capturing centuries of cultural, philosophical, and moral insights in brief and often metaphorical expressions. One recurrent linguistic element in proverbs across many cultures is the use of somatic objects—words denoting parts of the human body such as head, heart, hand, eye, tongue, and foot. These terms often bear metaphorical and symbolic meanings that transcend their anatomical function.



The role of somatic lexicon in paremiology is of particular interest in cross-cultural studies, as it reveals how different societies understand and express human experience. This article explores how somatic objects appear and function in English and Uzbek proverbs, identifying their metaphorical meanings, pragmatic functions, and cultural implications.

2. Theoretical Background

Somatic metaphor falls under the larger umbrella of conceptual metaphor theory, as proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who argue that human cognition is largely metaphorical. The human body, being the most accessible and universal domain of experience, serves as a primary source domain in conceptual metaphor. For example, head often symbolizes intellect or leadership, while heart connotes emotion or sincerity.

In paremiology, somatic metaphors are not merely decorative but serve as cognitive tools for shaping moral behavior and social interaction. The frequency and variety of somatic references in proverbs can reflect both universal patterns and culturally specific values.

3. Somatic Lexicon in English Proverbs

English proverbs often feature body parts to express moral lessons, personality traits, or social behaviors. The following categories are especially prevalent:

a. Cognition and Reason (Head, Brain)

Use your head. – Think logically.

Keep a cool head. – Stay calm under pressure.

Two heads are better than one. – Emphasizes cooperation and collective intelligence.

b. Emotion and Sincerity (Heart)

Follow your heart. – Trust your feelings.

A change of heart. – A shift in feelings or opinion.

To have a heart of gold. – Being kind and generous.

c. Action and Work (Hand, Foot)

A helping hand. – Assistance.

To have a hand in something. – Be involved.



To put your best foot forward. – Make a good impression.

d. Speech and Communication (Mouth, Tongue)

Hold your tongue. – Refrain from speaking.

A slip of the tongue. – A verbal mistake.

4. Somatic Lexicon in Uzbek Proverbs

Uzbek paremiology is deeply rooted in the oral tradition, often expressing ethical values and communal norms. The body parts in Uzbek proverbs frequently serve to illustrate moral character, social hierarchy, and emotional wisdom.

a. Humility and Respect (Head, Neck)

Boshingni eg, elingni hurmat qil. – Bow your head, respect your people.

Bo‘yin egsa, bosh omon. – If the neck bends, the head remains safe (symbolizing submission ensures safety).

b. Sincerity and Emotion (Heart, Liver)

Ko‘ngil ko‘zdan ko‘ra o‘tkir. – The heart sees more than the eye.

Jigarbandim. – My liver-child (an endearing expression for someone beloved, often one’s child).

c. Generosity and Action (Hand, Palm)

Qo‘l bilan bergan ko‘ngilga boradi. – What is given by hand reaches the heart.

Ochiq qo‘l – saxiylik belgisi. – An open hand is a sign of generosity.

d. Speech and Wisdom (Tongue, Mouth)

Til – balo, til – davo. – The tongue is both a curse and a cure.

Og‘zingdan chiqqan so‘z – qaytmaydi. – A word once spoken cannot return (emphasizing responsibility in speech).

5. Comparative Analysis

Both English and Uzbek proverbs frequently use the human body as a metaphorical framework to convey everyday wisdom, social norms, and moral guidance. This shared linguistic strategy demonstrates a universal tendency to ground abstract ideas in familiar, concrete imagery. For example, both languages use the “head” and “heart” to symbolize intellect and emotion respectively, and hands or feet to represent action and labor.

Yet, a closer examination reveals notable differences in how these bodily metaphors are thematically developed. English proverbs often highlight personal



agency, self-reliance, and pragmatic individual behavior. Sayings like “Keep your head above water” or “Put your best foot forward” stress the importance of individual effort and resilience in overcoming challenges.

In contrast, Uzbek proverbs rooted in the same bodily imagery tend to emphasize collective harmony, social hierarchy, and ethical self-restraint. Phrases such as “Boshing bilan ish qil” (Act wisely, literally “Use your head”) or “Ko‘ngil ko‘ngildan suv ichar” (Hearts drink from hearts — implying mutual understanding) show how bodily metaphors are tied to social and moral obligations rather than just individual benefit.

This divergence stems from deeper cultural paradigms: English proverbial wisdom reflects societies where individual initiative and self-expression are highly valued, whereas Uzbek proverbs mirror a worldview that prizes communal relationships, deference to elders and authority, and moral decorum. Therefore, while the human body is a shared metaphorical foundation, the social values and ethical lessons attached to it reveal distinct cultural identities encoded in language.

6. Conclusion

The presence of somatic objects in English and Uzbek paremiological texts illustrates both universal cognitive patterns and culture-specific ideologies. While both traditions use the body to encode metaphorical meaning, their use reveals deeper cultural values—rationality and self-expression in English, and humility and social harmony in Uzbek. This comparative study underlines the importance of paremiological texts in understanding the intersection of language, thought, and culture.

References

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