

A SEMANTIC AND PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF SOMATIC IMAGERY IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH PROVERBS

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Abstract. This article analyses somatic imagery in Uzbek and English proverbs from semantic and pragmatic perspectives. Ten proverbs selected from a proverb collection and a dictionary are examined in five comparative pairs. The analysis considers somatic components, figurative scenarios, generalised propositions, and communicative purposes. The findings show that similar bodily imagery does not guarantee equivalent meanings, while different somatic images may support comparable functions. Metaphorical and metonymic relations are distinguished, with attention to semantic emphasis and communicative orientation. The results offer descriptive criteria for bilingual proverb lexicography and translation. Conclusions are limited to the selected sample and require further contextual investigation.

Keywords: proverb, somatic component, contrastive paremiology, semantic equivalence, pragmatic equivalence, conceptual metaphor, metonymy, linguocultural interpretation, communicative function, translation.

O'ZBEK VA INGLIZ MAQOLLARIDAGI SOMATIK OBRAZLARNING SEMANTIK VA PRAGMATIK TAHLILI

Annotatsiya. Maqolada o'zbek va ingliz maqollaridagi somatik obrazlar semantik va pragmatik jihatdan tahlil qilinadi. Maqollar to'plami hamda lug'atdan maqsadli ravishda tanlangan o'nta maqol beshta qiyosiy juftlik asosida o'rganiladi. Tahlilda somatik komponent, obrazli vaziyat, umumlashgan hukm va kommunikativ maqsad mezonlari hisobga olinadi. Natijalar o'xshash somatik obrazlar ma'no muqobilligini kafolatlamasligini, turli obrazlar esa yaqin nutqiy vazifalarni bajarishi mumkinligini ko'rsatadi. Metaforik va metonimik munosabatlar farqlanib, mazmuniy urg'u hamda kommunikativ yo'nalishga e'tibor qaratiladi. Tadqiqot natijalari ikki tilli paremiologik lug'atlar tuzish va tarjima muqobillarini tanlash uchun tavsifiy mezonlarni taklif etadi. Xulosalar tanlangan material bilan chegaralanadi hamda maqollarning real nutqiy vaziyatlardagi qo'llanishini keyingi tadqiqotlarda tekshirish zarurligini ko'rsatadi.

Kalit so'zlar: maqol, somatik komponent, qiyosiy paremiologiya, semantik muqobillik, pragmatik muqobillik, konseptual metafora, metonimiya, lingvomadaniy talqin, nutqiy vazifa, tarjima.

СЕМАНТИЧЕСКИЙ И ПРАГМАТИЧЕСКИЙ АНАЛИЗ СОМАТИЧЕСКИХ ОБРАЗОВ В УЗБЕКСКИХ И АНГЛИЙСКИХ ПОСЛОВИЦАХ

Аннотация. В статье анализируются соматические образы в узбекских и английских пословицах с семантической и прагматической точек зрения. Десять пословиц, отобранных из сборника и словаря, рассматриваются в пяти сопоставительных парах. Анализ учитывает соматические компоненты, образные ситуации, обобщённые суждения и коммуникативные цели. Результаты показывают, что сходство телесных образов не гарантирует смысловой эквивалентности, тогда как разные соматические образы могут выполнять близкие речевые функции. Разграничиваются метафорические и метонимические отношения, рассматриваются смысловые акценты и коммуникативная направленность пословиц. Предлагаются описательные критерии для составления двуязычных паремиологических словарей и выбора переводческих соответствий. Выводы ограничены исследуемой выборкой и указывают на необходимость дальнейшего изучения пословиц в реальных контекстах их речевого употребления.

Ключевые слова: пословица, соматический компонент, сопоставительная паремиология, семантическая эквивалентность, прагматическая эквивалентность, концептуальная метафора, метонимия, лингвокультурная интерпретация, речевая функция, перевод.

Introduction. Proverbs express shared experience through language, presenting ideas about human activity, social relations, and moral judgement in a concise form. Their study cannot be limited to lexical meaning. A proverb expresses a generalised judgement about a situation while also offering advice, issuing a warning, providing encouragement,

or expressing an attitude. Mieder examines the traditional character and generalised meaning of proverbs in relation to their use in speech (Mieder, 2004, pp. 1–4).

In Uzbek paremiological scholarship, proverbs are described as expressions of views about life, society, and interpersonal relations. The introduction to the collection compiled by Mirzayev, Musoqulov, and Sarimsoqov discusses the semantic potential of proverbs, their imagery, and their dependence on the situations in which they are used (Mirzayev et al., 2005, pp. 1–3). These features suggest that comparisons between proverbs in two languages should consider communicative function alongside form and meaning.

In this study, proverbs with somatic components are understood as proverbial expressions containing the name of a body part. The central problem is that the presence of the same body-part term in two languages does not necessarily imply identical meanings or communicative functions. Conversely, proverbs based on different bodily images may serve similar communicative purposes in particular situations.

Literature Review. Conceptual metaphor theory provides an important basis for interpreting the meaning of proverbs with somatic components. Lakoff and Johnson view metaphor not simply as an ornamental device but as a mechanism for understanding one domain of experience through another (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, pp. 3–5). This approach helps explain how bodily experience can represent abstract ideas such as work, courage, cooperation, and the effects of speech. However, not every meaning extension involving a body-part term should be classified as metaphor. Kraska-Szlenk examines such extensions in relation to cognitive, cultural, and usage-related factors, distinguishing metaphorical and metonymic relations (Kraska-Szlenk, 2014, pp. 15–18). A body part standing for a person or an activity should therefore be distinguished from a physical action representing a social relationship. In their theoretical review of proverb pragmatics and sociolinguistics, Lomotey and Csajbok-Twerefou consider the relationship between proverbial functions, contexts of use, and cultural values (Lomotey & Csajbok-Twerefou, 2021, pp. 86–91). This perspective is important for comparative research because proverbs with similar meanings may express different evaluations or attitudes in different situations. Equivalence therefore requires attention to communicative orientation as well as lexical meaning.

Tejedor-Martinez compares English proverbs with their Spanish and Romanian equivalents, examining the relationships between expressions of opposite meaning within them (Tejedor-Martinez, 2024, pp. 101–130). This work provides a basis for distinguishing overall semantic similarity from correspondence within the internal lexical structure. In the present study, semantic equivalence refers to similarity between generalised propositions, whereas pragmatic equivalence refers to the capacity of proverbs to perform similar communicative functions in a given situation. These criteria are related but are not identical.

Materials and Methods. The material consists of ten purposively selected proverbs organised into five comparative pairs. The Uzbek examples were taken from O'zbek xalq maqollari [Uzbek Folk Proverbs], while the English examples were selected from M. H. Manser's The Facts On File Dictionary of Proverbs. The source and page number of each proverb are given in the relevant analytical section. The use of a paginated proverb dictionary for the English examples makes it possible to identify both their status as proverbs and the specific variants examined. Selection was based on three criteria: the presence of a somatic term, the expression of a generalised judgement, and the recording of the expression in a proverb source. Fixed expressions that did not form independent generalising statements were excluded from the main material. The pairs were not selected as established translation equivalents but as examples through which different degrees of similarity and difference could be examined. The final pair was included to test whether similar somatic imagery necessarily entails a similar communicative orientation.

Page references for the Uzbek proverbs follow the internal pagination of the 257-page electronic version prepared by Ziyouz Library; they should not be equated with the pagination of the printed edition. References for the English proverbs follow the dictionary's printed page numbers. Clear typographical errors and apostrophe forms were standardised, while the lexical wording of the proverbs was retained. In this English version of the article, the Uzbek proverbs are preserved in their original form and accompanied by English glosses. These glosses explain the imagery and are not presented as established English proverbs or translation equivalents.

The study uses contrastive analysis, component analysis, conceptual-semantic interpretation, and pragmatic description. Each pair is examined in terms of correspondence between somatic components, the structure of the figurative scenario, the content of the generalised proposition, and communicative purpose. Evaluative orientation and stylistic restrictions are also considered where relevant. Metonymic relations are interpreted through associations between a body part and a person or activity; metaphorical relations involve the transfer of physical experience to an abstract relationship.

This is a qualitative study based on dictionaries and proverb collections. It does not include a corpus of recorded conversations, frequency measurements, or respondent evaluations. Pragmatic descriptions rely on the explanations provided in the sources and on the structure of the proverbs. They are not presented as experimentally established generalisations applicable to every communicative situation. These methodological limitations define the scope of the findings.

Results and Analysis

1. Close Equivalence Based on Shared Somatic Imagery

"Avaylab so'zla so'zingni, devorning ham qulog'i bor" (Mirzayev et al., 2005, p. 221).

English gloss: "Speak your words carefully; even a wall has ears."

The Uzbek proverb warns that a conversation may be overheard and therefore encourages caution in speaking. Its

opening phrase, *Avaylab so'zla so'zingni* ("Speak your words carefully"), expresses the instruction directly through an imperative. The second part provides its figurative justification: even a wall is represented as having ears. The attribution of hearing to an inanimate wall creates metaphorical personification, while the association between the ear and a potential listener provides a metonymic basis for the image.

"Walls have ears" (Manser, 2007, p. 287).

Manser explains the English proverb as a warning that other people may overhear a conversation (Manser, 2007, p. 287). The component ears creates an auditory image comparable to Uzbek *quloq* ("ear"). Unlike the Uzbek proverb, however, the English expression does not include an explicit instruction to speak carefully. Its warning is conveyed indirectly through a declarative sentence.

Both proverbs express the general idea that the complete privacy of a conversation should not be assumed. They are therefore closely related in imagery, meaning, and communicative purpose. Nevertheless, they are not identical in syntactic structure or in the explicitness of the instruction: the Uzbek proverb combines a direct request for caution with its figurative justification, whereas the English proverb leaves the warning to be inferred.

2. Different Semantic Emphases with the Same Somatic Component

"Ikki qo'l qilgan ishni bir qo'l qilolmas" (Mirzayev et al., 2005, p. 9).

English gloss: "One hand cannot do the work of two hands."

The Uzbek proverb presents collective work as more effective than individual effort. It compares the working capacity of two hands with that of one hand. This physical image can be applied figuratively to people working together or alone. The somatic component *qo'l* ("hand") is consequently associated with labour and practical assistance. The placement of the proverb in the collection's section on collective solidarity and selfishness also supports its interpretation in terms of cooperation and mutual help.

The contrast between "two" and "one" emphasises the difference between combined effort and individual action. The form *qilolmas* ("cannot do") presents an individual's capacity as insufficient for work that requires combined effort. The proverb should therefore not be reduced to a statement that a task is impossible. Its main point is the need to join forces and help one another.

"Many hands make light work" (Manser, 2007, p. 184).

The English proverb expresses the idea that work becomes easier and quicker when many people contribute. This meaning is also reflected in Manser's explanation (Manser, 2007, p. 184). The word *many* indicates a large number of helpers rather than an exact quantity, while *light work* refers to a task that becomes easier to perform.

The word *hands* refers to people who work or provide assistance. A body part thus stands for the whole person. This meaning extension can be described more specifically as synecdoche, a part-for-whole relation. The description of hands as a metonymic device is therefore clarified by identifying the particular part-whole relationship involved.

Both proverbs express the advantages of collective work, but they place emphasis on different aspects of cooperation. The Uzbek proverb highlights the need for cooperation by presenting individual effort as insufficient. The English proverb emphasises the reduction of difficulty when many people participate. They can therefore be treated as close equivalents in meaning and in their capacity to encourage cooperation, without assuming identical propositions or identical semantic emphasis.

3. Mutual Assistance Expressed through Different Somatic Images

"Qo'l qo'lni yuvar, ikki qo'l — yuzni" (Mirzayev et al., 2005, p. 162).

English gloss: "One hand washes the other; two hands wash the face."

The Uzbek proverb expresses mutual assistance and solidarity through the images of the hand and the face. Its first part describes one hand washing the other, a physical action that can be compared figuratively to people helping one another. Its second part presents two hands washing the face and thus highlights the result of joint action. On this basis, the proverb can be interpreted as expressing the importance of mutual help in achieving a shared goal.

The component *qo'l* ("hand") is associated with practical action and assistance. *Yuz* ("face") denotes the body part towards which the combined action of the hands is directed. The word *yuz* does not itself mean "a shared goal"; the idea of a cooperative outcome emerges from the whole scenario. An everyday physical action therefore provides a way of representing relations of assistance between people.

"You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours" (Manser, 2007, p. 318).

The English proverb expresses the idea that one person will return a service provided by another: "If you help me, I will help you." The component back and the action of scratching represent an exchange of favours. The pronouns *you* and *I* identify the two parties directly. The expression may therefore function as an offer or agreement addressed to a particular interlocutor.

Manser notes that the proverb is often used to suggest collusion or corruption between the parties involved (Manser, 2007, p. 318). However, it should not be interpreted as exclusively negative. Its basic meaning is the return of one service for another; a negative evaluation depends on the context of use.

The common ground between these proverbs is the expression of mutual help through different somatic images. The Uzbek proverb presents both assistance and the outcome of joint action, whereas the English proverb makes the exchange of services more explicit. This does not imply that help in the Uzbek expression is always selfless or that help in the English expression is always self-interested or unlawful. Within this analysis, the pair is treated as partially equivalent in its function of expressing mutual assistance. Substitution in translation requires attention to the relationship within

which the assistance occurs and to the speaker's evaluation.

4. Context-Dependent Functional Similarity in Encouraging Courage

"Ko'z — qo'rqqoq, qo'l — botir" (Mirzayev et al., 2005, p. 55).

English gloss: "The eye is timid; the hand is brave."

The Uzbek proverb represents hesitation before an apparently difficult task and the courage needed to perform it through the images of the eye and the hand. The eye is associated with seeing a task's difficulty and feeling intimidated, whereas the hand is associated with beginning the work. The proverb can therefore be interpreted as encouraging practical action rather than withdrawal in the face of difficulty.

The opposition between qo'rqqoq ("timid") and botir ("brave") strengthens the expressive effect. Attributing these human qualities to body parts gives figurative form to the contrast between hesitation and determined action. What matters is not the anatomy of the eye and the hand but the attitude and activity that they represent. The main emphasis is on starting a task rather than being discouraged by an external assessment of its difficulty.

"Faint heart never won fair lady" (Manser, 2007, p. 84).

The English proverb expresses the need for boldness and courage in winning a woman's affection or achieving another important goal. Manser's explanation indicates that its application is not restricted to romantic relationships (Manser, 2007, p. 84). The romantic image provides the basis for a more general statement about the importance of courage.

The component heart is interpreted as a somatic image associated with human courage. However, lack of courage is expressed by the phrase faint heart, not by the word heart alone. The construction never won presents timidity as an obstacle to achieving a goal. The proverb therefore expresses the need for courage by highlighting the failure of a timid approach.

The two proverbs converge in their capacity to encourage people to overcome hesitation and act. The Uzbek proverb emphasises beginning a task that appears difficult, whereas the English proverb stresses the courage needed to achieve a desired goal. Their bodily images and modes of expression nevertheless differ. The romantic imagery of the English expression also needs to be considered in translation. The pair is therefore not treated as fully interchangeable, but as capable of performing similar functions in particular communicative situations.

5. Opposing Communicative Orientations Despite Similar Imagery

"Suyaksiz til suyak sindirar" (Mirzayev et al., 2005, p. 41).

English gloss: "A boneless tongue breaks bones."

The Uzbek proverb expresses the powerful effects of speech through the somatic components til ("tongue") and suyak ("bone"). The tongue is directly associated with speaking, and its name is used to stand for the words that are spoken. This meaning extension can be interpreted as metonymy. The image of breaking bones figuratively represents the serious consequences that words may have. On this basis, the proverb can be understood as encouraging people to speak thoughtfully and consider the consequences of what they say.

The contrast between suyaksiz ("boneless") and suyak ("bone") intensifies the expression. The image of a tongue without bones breaking a bone exaggerates the power of words. The point is not literal bone fracture but the seriousness of the harm that speech can cause. The metonymic use of the tongue and the hyperbolic image of breaking bones jointly create the proverb's warning function.

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me" (Manser, 2007, p. 252).

Manser gives the main form of the English proverb with the component names, referring to insulting names or labels, and records a variant with words. The dictionary also notes its use by children as a response to teasing or insults (Manser, 2007, p. 252).

In the English proverb, bones forms part of an image of physical injury. The harm caused by sticks and stones is contrasted with verbal insults. The first-person forms my bones and me show that the statement concerns the speaker. On the basis of this structure and the dictionary explanation, the proverb can be interpreted as a response that refuses to yield to an insult. Its communicative function is not to warn others about the danger of speech but to express the speaker's attempt to defend themselves against verbal abuse.

The image of bones and their breaking brings the two proverbs together, but it serves different purposes. The Uzbek proverb warns about the harmful power of words, whereas the English proverb expresses an attitude that rejects the impact of an insult. Replacing one with the other in translation may therefore change the communicative purpose. This pair illustrates different functions built around similar somatic imagery rather than translation equivalence. The conclusion concerns the rhetorical function of the proverbs: the English expression should not be interpreted as scientific evidence that words cannot cause psychological harm.

Table 1. Types of correspondence in the selected proverb pairs

Focus of comparison	Somatic imagery	Meaning and communicative function	Type of correspondence
A wall that hears	Quloq ("ear") — ear	Encouraging caution in speaking	Close figurative, semantic, and pragmatic correspondence
Collective work	Qo'l ("hand") — hand	Benefits of cooperation; different emphasis on capacity and ease	Close semantic and pragmatic correspondence

Focus of comparison	Somatic imagery	Meaning and communicative function	Type of correspondence
Mutual assistance	Qo'l ("hand"), yuz ("face") — back	Exchange of help; agreement and possible negative evaluation	Partial functional equivalence
Encouraging courage	Ko'z ("eye"), qo'l ("hand") — heart	Encouragement to act; differences in imagery and style	Context-dependent functional similarity
Effects of speech	Suyak ("bone") — bone	Warning about verbal harm versus rejecting the impact of an insult	No equivalence; different communicative orientations

Discussion. The analysis indicates that equivalence cannot be established solely through lexical correspondence between body-part terms. In the pair involving quloq and ear, imagery, meaning, and warning function converge. In the pair involving suyak and bone, similar imagery coexists with different communicative orientations. Somatic correspondence is therefore a useful starting point for comparison, but it does not determine the outcome.

Proverbs containing different body-part terms may also be functionally close. The washing scenario involving hands and a face and the scenario of scratching someone's back converge in expressing mutual assistance. Identifying this similarity requires attention to the actions, relationships between participants, and expected results rather than simply to anatomical correspondence. At the same time, a negative evaluation or a suggestion of collusion may restrict the scope of equivalence.

The findings also show the importance of distinguishing metaphor from metonymy. The association of a hand with a worker requires a metonymic interpretation, while a physical act of service used as a model for social assistance involves metaphorical transfer. These mechanisms may operate together in a single proverb. Describing all somatic imagery simply as metaphor would obscure differences in how meaning is constructed.

When selecting a translation equivalent, the communicative purpose of the proverb should take priority. A proverb calling for caution should retain its warning function, while a proverb encouraging courage requires both a comparable motivating function and an appropriate style. Reliance on a shared theme alone may lead to the substitution of expressions with different functions. A partial change in imagery may preserve communicative purpose, whereas retaining similar imagery does not always produce this result.

A bilingual proverb dictionary should therefore provide more than a proposed equivalent. It is useful to identify the somatic component, briefly explain the imagery, state the generalised meaning and communicative function, and indicate restrictions on use. Proverbs that correspond only in certain situations should not be labelled fully equivalent. Such a description helps users understand which aspects of similarity are preserved in translation and which are changed.

The five selected pairs do not provide a basis for general conclusions about the collective mentality or all the values of Uzbek and English speakers. A difference in imagery does not establish a fixed characteristic shared by every member of a language community. Broader generalisations would require more material, historical variants, actual contexts of use, and independent evaluation. The present findings remain descriptive and limited to the selected sample.

Conclusion. The analysis of the selected Uzbek and English proverbs demonstrates the need to examine semantic and pragmatic equivalence as distinct but interrelated criteria. In some pairs, corresponding body-part terms occur alongside similar imagery and meaning. In others, similar images serve different communicative orientations.

The proverbs involving ears show close correspondence in their warning function. The proverbs about work involving hands share the idea of cooperation but differ in their emphasis on capacity and ease. The expressions of mutual help use different somatic images to achieve partial functional equivalence. In the pair encouraging courage, similarity is limited by context and style. The expressions involving bones are not treated as translation equivalents because they adopt different attitudes towards the effects of words.

Considering the somatic component, figurative scenario, generalised proposition, and communicative purpose together helps distinguish shared imagery from semantic and functional correspondence. The conclusions remain limited to a purposive sample of ten proverbs. Further research should apply these criteria to a larger bilingual corpus, examine actual discourse contexts, and assess the extent to which independent researchers agree in their pragmatic descriptions.

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