

ANTITHESIS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK PROVERBS: LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL FEATURES

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Abstract. This paper explores how antithesis functions in English and Uzbek proverbs, focusing on both linguistic structure and cultural significance. Proverbs from each language are analyzed to identify the rhetorical patterns and thematic oppositions used to convey moral and philosophical values. The research reveals that while both traditions rely heavily on contrast, the underlying worldviews differ: English proverbs often reflect individualism and pragmatism, while Uzbek proverbs emphasize collectivism and moral integrity. The study contributes to intercultural linguistics by highlighting the shared and divergent ways in which languages use contrast to express human wisdom.

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается использование антитезы в английских и узбекских пословицах с акцентом на лингвистическую структуру и культурное значение. Пословицы обоих языков анализируются с целью выявления риторических моделей и тематических противопоставлений, используемых для выражения моральных и философских ценностей. Исследование показывает, что, несмотря на общую склонность к контрасту, мировоззрение, лежащее в основе этих пословиц, различается: английские пословицы часто отражают индивидуализм и прагматизм, тогда как узбекские подчеркивают коллективизм и нравственную чистоту. Работа вносит вклад в область межкультурной лингвистики, демонстрируя как сходства, так и различия в способах выражения человеческой мудрости с помощью контраста.

Keywords: proverb, antithesis, contrast, English, Uzbek, culture, linguistics

Introduction

Proverbs are concise expressions of collective wisdom that reflect the values, beliefs, and norms of a society. They serve as practical tools for communication and moral instruction, often passed down through generations. Among the stylistic techniques used in proverbs, antithesis—the pairing of opposite ideas—plays a vital role in reinforcing meaning and rhetorical force. By highlighting contrasts such as good versus evil, speech versus silence, or haste versus patience, antithetical proverbs present two competing ideas to guide judgment and behavior.

In both English and Uzbek cultures, proverbs are rich in antithetical structures, yet the content and moral orientation of these proverbs differ. English proverbs tend to prioritize action, decisiveness, and personal responsibility, while

Uzbek proverbs are more reflective of ethical restraint, social harmony, and spiritual depth. This paper investigates the structural and semantic features of antithesis in English and Uzbek proverbs and offers a comparative analysis of how these expressions reveal the cognitive and cultural orientations of the two language communities.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, comparative methodology. A corpus of 40 proverbs—20 from English and 20 from Uzbek—was compiled from established collections and online databases. Each proverb was selected based on the presence of antithetical elements. The analysis involved three primary stages:

1. Structural analysis: examining sentence patterns, parallelism, and syntactic devices.

2. Semantic analysis: identifying the contrasting ideas and their implications.

3. Cultural interpretation: considering the social, ethical, and historical background that influences the message of the proverb.

The findings are informed by theoretical frameworks in cognitive linguistics, cross-cultural communication, and rhetorical theory.

1. Structural Features of Antithesis

In both English and Uzbek, antithesis is expressed through clear binary constructions, often using parallel grammatical forms. English proverbs typically use conjunctions such as 'but', 'while', or juxtapose phrases directly:

- 'Speech is silver, but silence is golden.'

- 'Easy come, easy go.'

Uzbek proverbs frequently employ rhyme and rhythmic balance:

- 'Ko‘p gap — g‘am, oz gap — salomatlik.'

- 'Yomoni yuvsa ham, suv bo‘lmas.'

These structures enhance memorability and oral transmission.

2. Semantic and Cultural Interpretations

English antithetical proverbs highlight action, logic, and self-reliance:

- 'Look before you leap.'

- 'He who hesitates is lost.'

Uzbek proverbs emphasize patience, morality, and harmony:

- 'Shoshgan — shayton ishi.'

- 'Yaxshilik qil — daryoqa tashla.'

This demonstrates cultural differences in risk-taking, ethics, and individualism.

3. Universal and Unique Proverbs

Some proverbs show universal wisdom:

- English: 'Better late than never.'

- Uzbek: 'Kech bo‘lsa ham, foydasi bor.'

Others show divergence:

- English: 'Time waits for no man.'
- Uzbek: 'Sabr qilgan — omad topadi.'

Conclusion

The comparative study of antithesis in English and Uzbek proverbs reveals that while both traditions use contrast to communicate wisdom, the values they emphasize differ substantially. English proverbs prioritize urgency and individual action, while Uzbek proverbs underscore restraint, community values, and moral thoughtfulness. Understanding these contrasts offers insights into the distinct cultural logics that shape everyday language. Proverbs, as repositories of ancestral thought, use antithesis not only for stylistic beauty but also as a reflection of collective identity.

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