HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

THE CONCEPT «KNOWLEDGE» IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK PROVERBS: A COMPARATIVE LINGUOCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF ITS VALUE SEMANTICS

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Doi: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21952462

Abstract: The article presents a comparative linguocultural analysis of the value semantics of the concept KNOWLEDGE as it is verbalized by English and Uzbek proverbs. The corpus consists of 150 paremiological units (80 English and 70 Uzbek) selected from authoritative paremiographic sources. The method of comparative concept analysis made it possible to establish four thematic groups of proverbs and to reveal both universal and nationally specific features of the axiological modeling of knowledge. It is proved that in both linguistic cultures knowledge is evaluated as the highest social and personal value; however, the English paremiological picture of the world emphasizes the pragmatic-instrumental usefulness of knowledge, whereas the Uzbek one sacralizes knowledge and links it inseparably with the figure of the teacher (ustoz) and with moral perfection. The results may be used in comparative paremiology, linguoculturology and foreign language teaching.

Keywords: concept; knowledge; proverb; paremiology; value semantics; comparative analysis; linguoculturology; English; Uzbek.

Introduction

Paremiological units are the most ancient and stable form of fixing the value system of an ethnic community. A proverb is a "microtext" in which the collective experience of many generations is compressed into a laconic, rhythmically organized judgment [4]. As G.L. Permyakov convincingly demonstrated, proverbs model typical situations of social life and prescribe a definite evaluation and mode of behavior [3]. For this reason, the paremiological fund of a language is an invaluable source for reconstructing the axiological layer of the national picture of the world.

The concept KNOWLEDGE (UZBEK: bilim, ilm) belongs to the key concepts of both English and Uzbek linguistic cultures, since education and enlightenment have historically determined social prestige and moral authority in both societies. Nevertheless, the specific historical, religious and economic conditions of the two peoples could not but leave an imprint on the axiological interpretation of this concept. The comparative description of the value semantics of the concept KNOWLEDGE in English and Uzbek proverbs is therefore a relevant research task; in Uzbek linguistics this problem has been studied fragmentarily, mainly within the framework of general paremiological description [7; 10].

Materials and Methods

The research corpus comprises 150 paremiological units: 80 English proverbs selected from "The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs" [9] and 70 Uzbek proverbs selected from the collections "O‘zbek xalq maqollari" by T. Mirzayev and B. Sarimsoqov [7] and "O‘zbek tilining paremiologik

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lug‘ati" by H. Berdiyorov and R. Rasulov [8]. The units were sampled continuously according to the criterion of containing, explicitly or implicitly, the theme of knowledge, learning, wisdom or ignorance.

The methodological basis is constituted by comparative concept analysis [1; 2], elements of the linguoculturological interpretation of paremias [5; 6], component analysis and quantitative methods. The value component of the concept is understood in accordance with V.I. Karasik as a set of evaluative characteristics which a linguistic community attaches to the corresponding fragment of reality [1, p. 115]. W. Mieder's classification principles of paremiological themes were taken into account in the thematic grouping of the corpus [4].

Results

The thematic and axiological classification of the corpus revealed four stable groups of proverbs in both languages: (1) the value of knowledge; (2) the learning process; (3) the figure of the teacher and the mentor; (4) warnings against ignorance. The quantitative distribution of the groups in the two languages is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Thematic groups of English and Uzbek proverbs verbalizing the concept KNOWLEDGE

Thematic group	English (n=80)	Uzbek (n=70)	Examples
The value of knowledge	30 (37.5%)	27 (38.6%)	En.: Knowledge is power; Uz.: Bilim — boylik, aql — podshoh
The learning process	22 (27.5%)	18 (25.7%)	En.: Live and learn; Uz.: Ilm o‘qib, jonni saqla
The teacher / mentor	12 (15.0%)	15 (21.4%)	En.: Like master, like man; Uz.: Ustoz — ota kabi ulug‘
Warnings against ignorance	16 (20.0%)	10 (14.3%)	En.: Ignorance is the mother of impudence; Uz.: Ilmsizlik — zulmat

As the data show, the group «The value of knowledge» occupies the dominant position in both paremiological pictures of the world, with nearly identical proportions (37.5% and 38.6%). This fact testifies to the universal axiological status of knowledge. In the English material the value of knowledge is predominantly modeled through pragmatic oppositions: knowledge is opposed to physical force (Knowledge is power), to wealth as its superior substitute (Wisdom is better than wealth), and to security (Forewarned is forearmed). The Uzbek material, while containing analogous evaluations (Bilim — boylik, aql — podshoh "Knowledge is wealth, intellect is a sovereign"), additionally sacralizes knowledge: Ilm — yurakning chirog‘i "Knowledge is the lamp of the heart";

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Ilm o‘qib, jonni saqla "Acquire knowledge and preserve your soul". Here knowledge is evaluated not only as a social instrument but as a spiritual and salvational value.

Significant differences were found in the group «The teacher / mentor» (15.0% in English versus 21.4% in Uzbek). Uzbek proverbs elevate the teacher to the rank of a parent and a spiritual guide: Ustoz — ota kabi ulug‘ "A teacher is as great as a father"; Ustozingni xudo bil, ilmni ulug‘ bil "Revere your teacher as God and knowledge as sacred". The English corpus, on the contrary, represents the teacher primarily through pragmatic and behavioral models (Like master, like man; Experience is the best teacher), where the personified teacher is often replaced by de-personified experience. The group "Warnings against ignorance" is more weighty in English (20.0% versus 14.3%), which reflects the traditionally ironic and cautionary tonality of English paremiology. The comparative distribution is visualized in Figure 1.

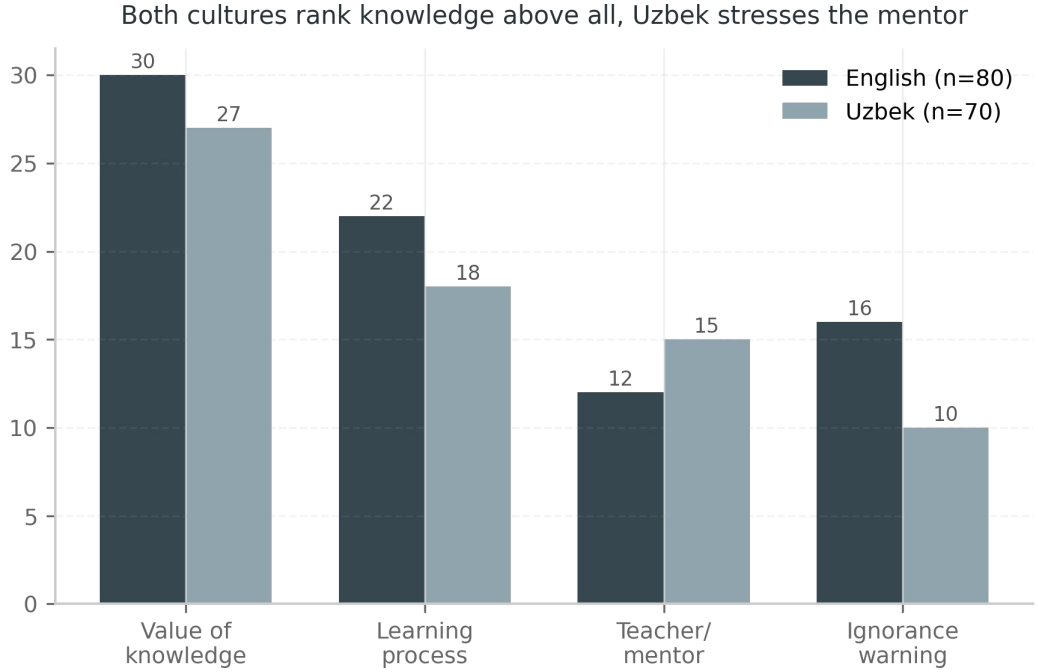


Figure 1. Comparative distribution of thematic groups of English and Uzbek proverbs verbalizing the concept KNOWLEDGE

Discussion

The comparison reveals a two-layer structure of the value semantics of the concept KNOWLEDGE. The universal layer includes the evaluation of knowledge as the highest personal and social value, the positive evaluation of learning as labor, and the negative evaluation of ignorance. These features correspond to what A. Wierzbicka described as "universal human concepts in culture-specific configurations" [2]: the core evaluation is common, but its cultural "configuration" differs.

The nationally specific layer is determined by the axiological accents. The English paremiological picture of the world accentuates the instrumental value of knowledge — its convertibility into power, security and success; the teacher is conceived as an instructor whose role is limited to the transmission of skills, while the ultimate authority is personal experience (Experience is the best teacher). The Uzbek picture of the world accentuates the sacral and moral value of knowledge:

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knowledge is light (nur), the teacher is a sacred figure next to the father, and learning is a religious-moral duty. These accents are rooted in the centuries-old Islamic educational tradition of the region and in the collectivist type of culture, whereas the English accents reflect the individualistic and pragmatic orientation of Anglo-Saxon culture. Our observations confirm the conclusion of V.A. Maslova that paremias "store the most stable value dominants of a linguistic culture" [5, p. 84] and are in line with the findings of Uzbek researchers on the cultural markedness of the national paremiological fund [10].

Conclusion

The comparative analysis of 150 English and Uzbek proverbs has demonstrated that the value semantics of the concept KNOWLEDGE is built on a universal axiological foundation — the absolute positive evaluation of knowledge and the negative evaluation of ignorance. The national specificity manifests itself in the axiological accents: the English model is pragmatic-instrumental and experience-centered, the Uzbek model is sacral-moral and teacher-centered. The identified parameters of comparison may serve as a model for further contrastive studies of other value concepts in the two languages and as linguodidactic material for the culture-oriented teaching of English and Uzbek. Prospective research directions include the diachronic analysis of the paremiological representation of the concept and its comparative study on the material of three or more languages.

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