

LINGUOCULTURAL FEATURES OF IDIOMS AND PROVERBS

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Abstract: This article examines the linguocultural nature of idioms (phraseological units) and proverbs, their role in reflecting national culture, their function within the conceptual system, and their significance in literary and oral discourse. The study analyzes the role of linguistic units in preserving cultural codes as well as their lacunar characteristics in translation.

Keywords: linguoculturology, phraseological unit, proverb, national mentality, concept, cultural code, folk wisdom, lacuna.

Language is not merely a means of communication; it is also a unique repository of a people's accumulated experience, worldview, values, and historical memory developed over centuries. From this perspective, linguoculturology—the discipline that studies the interrelationship between language and culture—has gained particular relevance. Among the linguistic units that embody cultural meanings in the most concentrated and expressive form are idioms (phraseological units) and proverbs. They serve as the “oral encyclopedia” of a nation, reflecting concepts formed in the deepest layers of national consciousness. This article provides a scientific analysis of the linguocultural characteristics of idioms and proverbs, as well as their role and functions in expressing national mentality.

From the perspective of linguoculturology, every linguistic unit is associated with a particular cultural concept. The renowned linguist V.N. Teliya defined phraseological units as the “cultural memory of a language.” Idioms and proverbs are not created randomly; rather, they are stable linguocultural models formed as a result of a people's everyday life, relationship with nature, socio-economic conditions, and philosophical views.

Idioms (phraseological units) are stable and semantically integral linguistic expressions formed through the combination of two or more words. In linguocultural analysis, their primary feature is that they preserve the “codes” of national culture. For example, the Uzbek idiom “to protect something like the pupil of one's eye” (“ko'z qorachig'idek asramoq”) not only means to guard something very carefully but also reflects the culture of boundless affection and reverence toward children and sacred values in Uzbek society.

Another example is the idiom “a cauldron boiling beneath another cauldron” (“qozon ostida qozon qaynamoq”), which is closely connected with the traditional lifestyle, culinary culture, and family values of the Uzbek people. Explaining this expression to representatives of another culture may be difficult because it constitutes a specific cultural “lacuna” (cultural gap). The metaphorical and figurative expressions found in idioms reveal a nation’s way of thinking, that is, how it perceives reality. For instance, such idioms as “a rough heart” (“yuragi dag‘al”), “an open hand” (“qo‘li ochiq”), and “a high head” (“boshi baland”) are based on expressing human psychology and character through external physical attributes, demonstrating the high level of figurative thinking characteristic of the people.

Proverbs represent the highest form of folk wisdom and possess not only a descriptive but also a didactic function. They define a nation’s moral and aesthetic standards, social norms, and philosophy of life. One of the cultural concepts most vividly reflected in Uzbek proverbs is hospitality. Proverbs such as “A guest is a gift from God” (“Mehmon – atoyi Xudo”) and “A guest brings light to the home” (“Mehmon uyni nurlantirar”) linguistically express the Uzbek cultural tradition of regarding guests as sacred and treating them with great respect.

The harmony between nature and human beings is also widely reflected in proverbs. Expressions such as “Where there is water, there is prosperity” (“Suv bor joyda obod”) and “The land is our mother” (“Yer – onajon”) demonstrate the people’s responsible attitude toward the environment and natural resources, as well as their decisive importance in life. In this context, water and land are not merely physical objects; rather, they are concepts sanctified in national consciousness and glorified as sources of life.

Furthermore, proverbs reveal both the positive and negative aspects of national character. Proverbs such as “Measure seven times, cut once” (“Yetti o‘lchab, bir kes”) and “The end of patience is pure gold” (“Sabrning tagi sariq oltin”) promote virtues such as caution, patience, and foresight. Conversely, proverbs such as “He who hates his neighbor hates himself” (“Qo‘shnisini yomon ko‘rgan, o‘zini yomon ko‘ribdi”) and “Pride is the enemy of man” (“Kibr – insonning dushmani”) establish standards of behavior condemned by society. Thus, proverbs constitute one of the most effective tools of folk pedagogy and play an important role in educating younger generations in the spirit of national values.

The linguocultural nature of idioms and proverbs creates significant difficulties in translation. These units possess not only literal meanings but also preserve deep cultural, historical, and religious implications. For example, when translating a

complex proverb such as “Rather than living as a dog in a street built by dogs, it is better to live as a servant in a street built by humans” (“It qurgan ko‘chada it bo‘lib yashashdan ko‘ra, odam qurgan ko‘chada qul bo‘lib yashaganimiz yaxshiroq”), its cultural and philosophical significance may be lost. Therefore, translators are required to possess not only linguistic competence but also a high level of linguocultural competence and profound knowledge of both cultures.

In conclusion, idioms and proverbs are not merely decorative elements of language; they are among the most reliable preservers of national culture, people’s mentality, and historical memory. They encode and preserve a nation’s worldview, moral values, relationship with nature, and social norms. From a linguocultural perspective, the study of idioms and proverbs enables us to understand not only the richness of a language but also the spiritual gene pool of a people—their unique “cultural DNA.” Therefore, collecting, analyzing, and preserving these linguistic units is an important task not only for linguistics but also for cultural studies and the development of national identity.

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