

THE ROLE OF METAPHOR IN THE FORMATION OF AXIOLINGUISTIC CONTENT
IN PROVERBS

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Abstract

This article investigates the linguistic nature of proverbs from an axiolinguistic perspective. The reflection of societal values in proverbs and the role of metaphor as a linguistic mechanism in this process are analyzed through the lens of Uzbek folk proverbs.

Keywords

axiolinguistics, metaphor, proverb, value, linguistic picture of the world, connotation, paremiology.

INTRODUCTION. Language is not merely a tool for communication; it is a vast treasury that preserves the worldview, culture, and value system of a particular nation. Today, national linguistics is rapidly developing and becoming more refined. One of the priority directions of modern linguistics, axiolinguistics (linguistic axiology), studies the reflection of values that are significant for individuals and society within linguistic units. Broadly speaking, axiolinguistic analysis can be categorized as follows: it would not be an exaggeration to say that proverbs represent a collection of existing values. Proverbs are the most concise and meaningful form of folk wisdom, in which axiolinguistic content is often formed through the medium of metaphor. They reflect the distillation of years of experience.

Proverbs and sayings are the product of the people's intellect, their judgment, centuries of experience, and their attitude toward various life events. A proverb is created in everyday life and within human interactions. A folk proverb is the property of the people. The sorrow of a proverb is the people's sorrow; its wrath is the people's wrath; its laughter is the people's laughter; and its irony is the people's irony. There is no language that has not created proverbs, and no nation that does not use them.

The difficult life and harsh fate experienced by our people before the Great October Socialist Revolution characterized by national animosity, lack of freedom, and injustice were reflected in their proverbs and sayings. At the same time, the people's confidence in their own strength, their dreams, and their aspirations also found expression in their proverbs.

Paremiology is derived from Greek, where "paromia" means a wise word or proverb, and "logia" means study. Paremiology is used in two senses:

The science that studies paremias—wise expressions such as proverbs, sayings, and aphorisms that emerge as concise, simple, and meaningful logical generalizations passed down orally from generation to generation.

The system of such expressions existing in a specific language.

Because paremias are passed down only orally and are products of oral folk art, they are subjects of study for literary criticism; they often resemble poetic forms and utilize descriptive tools such as simile, antithesis, anaphora, alliteration, irony, and sarcasm.



Simultaneously, they are objects of linguistic study as they consist of sentences formed from words to express a specific thought.

In proverbs, metaphor is not just an artistic device; it is a cognitive tool that implants abstract values (goodness, evil, honesty, knowledge, time) into the human mind through concrete images. In proverbs, axiolinguistic content manifests in the subject's evaluation of an object, such as “good–bad”, “useful–harmful” or “right–wrong”.

Below is an analysis of proverbs with a metaphorical basis: “Acquiring knowledge is like digging a well with a needle” (Ilm — igna bilan quduq qazimoq): In this proverb, the metaphor of “digging a well with a needle” expresses the extreme difficulty of the learning process. From an axiolinguistic standpoint, patience and industriousness are glorified as supreme values. The metaphor visualizes the abstract concept of “acquiring knowledge” through an image of physical hardship.

“One lash for a good horse, a thousand for a bad one” (Yaxshi otga bir qamchi, yomon otga ming qamchi): Here, the “horse” metaphor refers to human discernment and upbringing. At the axiolinguistic center lies the value of perception and understanding. A “single lash” finding the right path with a slight hint is evaluated positively, while “a thousand lashes” stubbornness and lack of understanding is evaluated negatively.

“If your meal is honest, eat it in the street” (Oshing halol bo‘lsa, ko‘chada ich): “Osh” is a metaphorical expression for sustenance and wealth earned through honest labor. This proverb promotes the values of a clear conscience and openness. The metaphor forms the axiolinguistic judgment that “honesty grants a person fearlessness and freedom”.

“A tree is known by its fruit, a man by his labor” (Daraxt — mevasi bilan, odam — mehnati bilan): Through the metaphorical similarity between a human and a tree, the value of social utility is evaluated. Just as the “fruit” of a tree is precious, the “labor” (result) of a person is equally esteemed.

“Motherland is a golden cradle” (Ona yurti — oltin beshik): The “golden cradle” metaphor seals the concept of the Homeland as the most cherished, safest, and most valuable space. Here, patriotism is elevated to the status of a supreme axiolinguistic category. The word “gold” here signifies absolute value rather than color.

“Few words are tuned (soz) words” (Oz so‘z — soz so‘z): Through the metaphor of “soz” (a tuned instrument or state), the importance of speech culture is demonstrated. Here, restraint and moderation are valued. In the linguistic picture of the world, excessive talking carries a negative (“useless”) value.

“There is no rose without a thorn” (Tikansiz gul bo‘lmas): “Thorn” and “Rose” are metaphors for the contradictory sides of life (hardship and happiness). From an axiolinguistic perspective, this proverb instills the values of patience and the acceptance of reality, teaching that perfection is achieved only through struggle.

“The tongue is a blade; its wound does not heal” (Til — tig‘, jarohati bitmas): Comparing the tongue to a “blade” (sword) illustrates the destructive power of words. In this proverb, kindness and ethics are positive values, while malice and slander are sharply negative axiolinguistic concepts.



“A good friend is the soul's nourishment” (Yaxshi do‘st — jon ozig‘i): The metaphor of “soul's nourishment” expresses a spiritual need through a physical one (food). Loyalty and friendship are evaluated as essential values for human existence, much like water and air.

“Time is a flowing river” (Vaqt — oqar daryo): The “flowing river” metaphor signifies that time is fleeting and irreversible. The axiolinguistic content serves to form ethical norms such as appreciating life and managing time wisely.

These examples represent folk traditions in the literary language; however, similar paremiias also exist in the Khorezm dialect. Analysis shows that metaphors perform the following axiolinguistic functions in proverbs:

Visualization: They explain abstract moral norms through concrete objects from daily life. Intensity (Amplification): Compared to plain speech, a metaphorical image has a stronger impact on human emotions and reinforces the value.

Preservation of Cultural Heritage: Through metaphors, the specific national code of the Uzbek people (e.g., bread, cradle, salt) is preserved.

In conclusion, metaphor plays a decisive role in the formation of axiolinguistic content in proverbs. It transforms existing societal values from simple information into a “living image”. The analyzed proverbs prove that within the Uzbek paremiological system, values such as labor, knowledge, homeland, family, and ethics are placed on the highest pedestal through metaphors. Evaluations expressed through metaphor penetrate the human consciousness and serve as an important linguo-didactic tool in shaping one’s life principles.

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