

LINGUOCULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF THE CONCEPT LIFE / ÓMIR IN
ENGLISH AND KARAKALPAK PAREMIOLOGICAL UNITS

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Abstract: The present study examines the linguocultural representation of the concept LIFE / ÓMIR in English and Karakalpak paremiological units from the perspective of cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology. The study aims to identify semantic, metaphorical, figurative, and axiological peculiarities of the concept in two linguistic worldviews. The material of the study consists of English and Karakalpak proverbs and sayings containing the lexemes life, live, and ómir, selected through continuous sampling from paremiological dictionaries and folklore sources. The research employs descriptive, comparative, contextual-semantic, and conceptual analysis methods. Particular attention is paid to conceptual metaphors as cognitive mechanisms for representing abstract notions through concrete experiential domains. The analysis demonstrates that the concept LIFE / ÓMIR possesses a complex multicomponent structure including semantic, figurative, metaphorical, and evaluative layers. The results reveal both universal and culturally specific features in the conceptualization of life. In English paremiology, the concept is predominantly represented through abstract philosophical metaphors such as LIFE IS A JOURNEY, LIFE IS HOPE, and LIFE IS TIME, emphasizing existential reflection and individual experience. In contrast, the Karakalpak linguistic worldview conceptualizes life through practical and didactic metaphorical models such as ÓMIR GÚRES (LIFE IS STRUGGLE) and ÓMIR MEKTEP (LIFE IS SCHOOL), reflecting moral values, labor, and social harmony. The study confirms that paremiological units function as an important means of preserving national worldview and transmitting culturally significant knowledge.

Keywords: concept, linguoculturology, cognitive linguistics, paremiology, paremiological units, metaphor, conceptual metaphor, linguistic worldview, conceptual analysis

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary linguistics, increasing attention is being paid to the interrelation between language, culture, and cognition, which has led to the active development of linguoculturology as one of the key interdisciplinary research domains. Within this framework, language is regarded as a means of communication and a powerful instrument for representing and transmitting cultural values, collective experience, and national worldview. As Maslova argues, language serves as a repository of cultural knowledge and reflects the mentality of a linguistic community [5, p. 6].

A particularly important role in linguocultural studies is played by paremiological units — proverbs and sayings — which accumulate the centuries-old experience of a people and reflect their historical memory, traditions, ethical norms, and value systems. As Dehkanova notes, the paremiological stock of a language represents a valuable national heritage that embodies the worldview and social reality of a given culture [3, p. 12].

Researchers emphasize that proverbs are characterized by a high degree of semantic density and cultural markedness, which makes them an especially productive material for the analysis of conceptual structures. As Arnold points out, figurative language, including proverbs, is based on



associative thinking and contributes to the formation of expressive and culturally significant meanings [2, 45].

One of the central notions in cognitive linguistics is the concept, which structures human knowledge about the world. According to Lakoff and Johnson, the human conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature, and abstract concepts are understood through metaphorical models grounded in everyday experience [7,3]. Among such universal and culturally significant concepts, the concept LIFE/ ÓMIR occupies a central position, as it reflects fundamental aspects of human existence and worldview. The study of this concept in a comparative perspective allows for identifying both universal patterns and culturally specific features of its representation.

In Karakalpak linguistic tradition, the concept LIFE/ ÓMIR is deeply rooted in national consciousness and is widely represented in paremiological units. As G.Kdyrbaeva emphasizes, proverbs play a key role in preserving cultural values and reflecting the moral and philosophical understanding of life [4,28]. Similarly, G. Usenova argues that paremiological units serve as an important source for studying conceptual structures and national worldview [6,15].

METHODS

The study of concepts within modern linguistics is closely connected with the development of cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology, where language is interpreted as a means of representing human knowledge, cultural values, and national worldview. One of the central categories of cognitive linguistics is the concept, which serves as a mental unit reflecting culturally significant fragments of reality. According to Popova and Sternin, a concept is understood as a complex mental formation that includes conceptual, figurative, and value components [8, 34]. The scholars emphasize that concepts are not only linguistic phenomena but also cognitive structures connected with human experience, perception, and cultural consciousness. Similarly, Maslova states that concepts function as “cultural condensations” through which national mentality and worldview are manifested [5,27]. Within linguocultural studies, special attention is paid to the relationship between language and culture. Language preserves collective historical experience and transmits culturally significant meanings from one generation to another. In this regard, paremiological units occupy a special place due to their semantic richness and cultural markedness.

Paremiology, derived from the Greek words paroimia (“proverb”) and logos (“study”), is a branch of linguistics concerned with the investigation of proverbs and sayings. However, scholars differ in their interpretation of the term “paremia.” Some researchers apply this notion only to proverbs and sayings, whereas others include aphorisms, idioms, riddles, and other folklore genres within the paremiological system [1,52]. In the present study, the term “paremiological units” is used in its narrow sense and refers specifically to proverbs and sayings. As Dehkanova argues, the paremiological corpus of a language reflects the spiritual and material culture of a people, their traditions, social structure, ethical norms, and worldview [3,14]. Proverbs accumulate collective wisdom and preserve culturally significant models of perception and evaluation. Therefore, the analysis of paremiological units makes it possible to reveal national peculiarities of conceptualization.

One of the key mechanisms involved in conceptualization is metaphor. Cognitive linguistics considers metaphor not merely as a stylistic device, but as a fundamental instrument of human thinking. Lakoff and Johnson argue that human conceptual system is metaphorically structured



and that people understand abstract phenomena through more concrete experiential domains [7,5]. Consequently, conceptual metaphors play a crucial role in shaping the semantic structure of concepts.

The concept LIFE/ ÓMIR is especially productive for metaphorical representation because it belongs to the fundamental existential concepts of human consciousness. In different linguistic cultures, life may be conceptualized through metaphors of journey, struggle, school, game, time, or hope. These metaphorical models reflect culturally specific ways of understanding human existence. According to Arnold, figurative language is based on associative similarities between objects and phenomena, which enables speakers to create expressive images and emotionally colored meanings [2,63]. In paremiological units, metaphorical images are often connected with sensory perception, emotions, moral values, and social experience.

An important role in conceptual analysis is also played by the distinction between perceptive and cognitive imagery. As Popova and Sternin note, the figurative component of a concept consists of perceptive images based on sensory experience and cognitive images based on metaphorical associations [8, 91]. Such an approach makes it possible to analyze how abstract concepts are verbalized through concrete images and culturally significant symbols.

In Karakalpak linguistic tradition, proverbs constitute an essential part of national culture and reflect moral, philosophical, and educational values. As G.Kdyrbaeva emphasizes, paremiological units preserve the cultural memory of the people and reveal national patterns of thinking [4,31]. Usenova also notes that conceptual analysis of proverbs allows researchers to identify culturally specific representations of reality and value orientations [6,19].

Thus, the theoretical foundations of the present study are based on the principles of cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, and conceptual analysis, which make it possible to investigate the semantic, figurative, and axiological peculiarities of the concept LIFE/ ÓMIR in English and Karakalpak paremiological units. The research material consists of proverbs and sayings selected from English and Karakalpak paremiological dictionaries and folklore collections. The corpus of the analyzed material includes English and Karakalpak paremiological units containing the lexemes life and live, and Karakalpak paremiological units containing the lexeme ómir.

The selection of the material was carried out through the method of continuous sampling from lexicographic and paremiological sources and only those proverbs and sayings that directly or indirectly verbalize the concept LIFE/ ÓMIR were included in the analysis. In the study were employed several research methods. The descriptive method was used to classify and systematize the paremiological units according to their semantic and structural characteristics. The method of conceptual analysis was applied to identify the conceptual components of the concept LIFE/ ÓMIR, including its semantic, figurative, and axiological layers. As Popova and Sternin argue, conceptual analysis enables researchers to reveal the cognitive structure underlying linguistic representations [8,45]. The comparative method was used to determine similarities and differences in the representation of the concept in English and Karakalpak linguistic worldviews. The contextual-semantic analysis made it possible to interpret the meanings of paremiological units within their cultural and metaphorical contexts. Particular attention was paid to the analysis of conceptual metaphors. Following the theory proposed by Lakoff and Johnson, metaphor was considered not merely as a stylistic phenomenon but as a cognitive mechanism for conceptualizing abstract notions through concrete experience [7,11].



The linguocultural approach allowed the study to reveal national and cultural peculiarities reflected in the paremiological representation of the concept LIFE/ ÓMIR. The methodological framework of the research is based on the works of Lakoff and Johnson, Maslova, Arnold, Popova and Sternin, as well as studies devoted to paremiology and conceptual linguistics. The combination of these methods ensured a comprehensive analysis of the linguistic, cognitive, and cultural features of the concept under investigation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the paremiological corpus revealed that the concept LIFE/ÓMIR is represented in English and Karakalpak languages through a complex system of semantic, figurative, metaphorical, and axiological characteristics. The analysed paremiological units demonstrate both universal conceptual features and nationally specific patterns of worldview representation.

One of the central semantic characteristics identified during the analysis is the perception of life as a temporally limited phenomenon. In both linguistic cultures, time is conceptualized as the essential substance of human existence. This idea is verbalized in the English proverb “Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that’s the stuff life is made of”, where life and time are metaphorically equated. The proverb emphasizes the value of time and presents its irrational use as the loss of life itself. A similar semantic model is observed in the Karakalpak proverb “Bos ótken ómir – óshken kómir” In this paremiological unit, life without meaningful activity is compared to extinguished coal, which symbolizes uselessness and spiritual emptiness. The metaphorical image intensifies the negative evaluation of passive existence.

The analysis further demonstrated that the concept LIFE/ ÓMIR contains a fatalistic component in both linguistic worldviews. In the English proverb “Man proposes, God disposes,” human life is represented as dependent on divine power and destiny. The semantic structure of the proverb reflects the opposition between human intention and higher predestination. A similar worldview is observed in the Karakalpak proverb “Taǵdirden qashıp qutılalmaysan” where fate is conceptualized as an unavoidable force controlling human existence. The comparative analysis shows that both cultures preserve traditional ideas about the limited ability of humans to influence their destiny.

Particular attention should be paid to metaphorical models verbalizing the concept LIFE/ ÓMIR. The analysis revealed that conceptual metaphors constitute one of the principal mechanisms of conceptualization. In English paremiology, abstract philosophical metaphors prevail. For example, the proverb “While there is life, there is hope” verbalizes the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS HOPE, where hope becomes an inseparable attribute of existence. The semantic structure of the proverb constructs life as a positive existential state connected with spiritual endurance.

Another productive metaphorical model identified in English paremiology is LIFE IS A JOURNEY. This model is represented in the proverb “Life is a pilgrimage,” where human existence is interpreted as a continuous spiritual path. The lexical unit pilgrimage introduces religious and philosophical connotations, emphasizing moral experience and personal development.

In contrast, the Karakalpak paremiological worldview demonstrates predominantly practical and didactic metaphorical models. The conceptual metaphor ÓMIR GÚRES (LIFE IS



STRUGGLE) is represented in the expression “Ómir – maydan, adam onda gúresker” Here, life is conceptualized through the image of battle, while a human being is represented as a fighter. The metaphor reflects the perception of life as continuous effort and resistance against difficulties.

Another important metaphorical model is ӨМИР МЕКТЕП (LIFE IS SCHOOL). In the expression “Ómir eń úlken mektep” life is interpreted as a source of knowledge and moral education. Unlike English philosophical abstraction, the Karakalpak model emphasizes the educational and ethical function of life experience. The figurative component of the concept also occupies an important place in both linguistic cultures. The analysis demonstrated that perceptive imagery in English paremiological units is frequently based on sensory perception, particularly taste and visual images. For instance, the expressions “life is sweet” and “life is bitter” verbalize emotional evaluation through taste perception.

The opposition of sweet and bitter creates an antithetical image reflecting the contradictory nature of human existence. Visual imagery is represented in the proverb “Life is not a bed of roses,” where life is metaphorically associated with hardship and suffering. The image of roses traditionally symbolizes comfort and beauty; however, its negation intensifies the pragmatic perception of life difficulties. A similar sensory model is observed in the Karakalpak proverb “Ómir geyde ashshı, geyde tatlı” The opposition between bitter and sweet taste verbalizes the alternation of positive and negative experiences in human life. The analysis indicates that sensory metaphors in both languages perform not only expressive but also evaluative functions.

The axiological analysis demonstrated that the concept LIFE/ ÓMIR possesses ambivalent evaluation in both paremiological systems. In English proverbs, positive evaluation is connected with self-development, optimism, family harmony, and active lifestyle. For example, the proverb “Live and learn” presents life as a continuous process of acquiring knowledge and experience. The semantic core of the proverb is based on the positive evaluation of intellectual development. Similarly, the proverb “Happy wife, happy life” reflects the importance of family harmony as a condition of a successful and emotionally balanced life. The lexical repetition of the adjective happy strengthens the positive evaluative meaning.

Negative evaluation in English paremiology is associated with excessiveness, greed, and purposeless existence. In the proverb “He that lives too fast goes to his grave too soon,” rapid and uncontrolled lifestyle is represented as destructive. The metaphorical opposition between life and grave intensifies the warning function of the paremiological unit.

In Karakalpak paremiology, positive evaluation is mainly connected with morality, labor, and social harmony. The proverb “Mıynetsiz ómir – qara kómir” conceptualizes life without labor as something spiritually empty and worthless. The metaphorical image of black coal symbolizes lifelessness and absence of productivity. Family values also occupy an important place in the Karakalpak worldview. The proverb “Kewil quwanışhı – bala, turmıs quwanışhı – bala” presents children as the central source of happiness and stability in life. Such representation reflects the collectivist orientation of the Karakalpak cultural worldview. Thus, the analysis demonstrated that the English linguistic worldview tends to conceptualize life through abstract philosophical and existential categories, whereas the Karakalpak worldview reflects practical, moral, and socially oriented perceptions of human existence. The identified metaphorical and evaluative models confirm that paremiological units function as an important mechanism for preserving and transmitting culturally significant knowledge and value systems.



CONCLUSION

The present research investigated the representation of the concept LIFE/ ÓMIR in the paremiological units of the English and Karakalpak languages from the perspective of cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology. The analysis demonstrated that paremiological units serve as an important means of preserving and transmitting culturally significant knowledge, reflecting national worldview, moral values, and collective experience. The conducted research revealed that the concept LIFE/ ÓMIR possesses a complex multicomponent structure including semantic, figurative, metaphorical, and axiological layers. The analysis of the paremiological corpus showed that both English and Karakalpak linguistic cultures conceptualize life through universal categories such as time, destiny, morality, struggle, and spiritual values.

At the same time, the comparative analysis identified considerable differences in the representation of the concept. English paremiological units tend to verbalize life through abstract philosophical and existential metaphors, such as LIFE IS HOPE, LIFE IS TIME, and LIFE IS A JOURNEY. These metaphorical models reflect individual experience, emotional endurance, and philosophical interpretation of human existence.

In contrast, the Karakalpak linguistic worldview demonstrates a more practical, moral, and didactic conceptualization of life. The dominant metaphorical models ÓMIR GÚRES, ÓMIR MEKTEP and ÓMIR SÍNAQ

reflect the perception of life as struggle, education, and moral trial. Such representation reveals the importance of labor, family values, social harmony, and ethical behavior in Karakalpak culture.

The analysis also demonstrated that the figurative component of the concept is actively realized through perceptive and cognitive imagery. Sensory metaphors connected with taste, movement, and spatial perception contribute to the expressive and evaluative representation of life in both languages. The axiological analysis revealed that the concept LIFE/ ÓMIR is characterized by ambivalent evaluation. Positive evaluation is associated with morality, labor, knowledge, hope, and family harmony, whereas negative evaluation is connected with laziness, greed, purposeless existence, and destructive lifestyle. Thus, the study confirms that paremiological units function as a valuable source for investigating conceptual structures and national-cultural peculiarities of linguistic worldview. The identified similarities and differences in the conceptualization of LIFE/ ÓMIR reflect both universal human experience and culturally specific models of perception shaped by historical, social, and spiritual factors.

The findings of the present study may contribute to further studies in cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, comparative paremiology, and conceptual analysis. In addition, the findings can be applied in the teaching of English and Karakalpak languages, as well as in courses related to intercultural communication and linguistic worldview.

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