



SEMANTIC AND PRAGMATIC ASPECTS OF THE CONCEPT “HEART” IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK PROVERBIAL LANGUAGE

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Abstract: *This study explores the semantic and pragmatic dimensions of the concept “heart” in English and Uzbek proverbial expressions. By analyzing proverbs from both languages, the research highlights how “heart” metaphorically conveys emotional, moral, and cultural meanings. Findings underscore both universal and culture-specific conceptualizations, offering insights useful for linguistics, intercultural communication, and translation studies.*

Key words: *heart, semantics, pragmatics, proverbs, metaphor, English, Uzbek, comparative linguistics*

1. Introduction

The “heart” has been a potent metaphor and symbol of human emotion, morality, and sincerity across cultures. Proverbs, carrying deep-rooted cultural wisdom, frequently embed the concept of “heart” to express universal human experiences through idiomatic language. Both English and Uzbek cultures use “heart” metaphorically but may differ in emphasis due to divergent cultural backgrounds.

This study investigates semantic and pragmatic aspects of the “heart” concept in English and Uzbek proverbial language, seeking to understand how metaphorical meaning and linguistic usage reflect cultural values. This comparison aims to contribute to the fields of cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, and intercultural communication.



2. Methods

2.1 Data Collection

The data corpus for this study comprises proverbial expressions that feature the lexemes “heart” in English and “yurak” in Uzbek, selected from well-established and authoritative collections of proverbs in both languages. These proverbs were chosen due to their cultural salience and frequent use in everyday speech as carriers of collective wisdom and cultural values.

For English, the primary source of proverbial expressions is Wolfgang Mieder’s *Proverbs: A Handbook* (2008). Mieder is a renowned scholar in paremiology whose comprehensive work catalogs and analyzes a wide range of English proverbs, their meanings, origins, and usage. This collection includes numerous entries where “heart” serves as a central metaphor, reflecting emotions such as love, courage, sincerity, and sorrow. Examples such as “Take heart,” “Cross my heart,” and “A heart of gold” are typical proverbs illustrating the conceptual richness of the “heart” metaphor in English culture and language.

For Uzbek, proverbs incorporating the word “yurak” are collected from Mirziyoev’s *O‘zbek Maqollari* (2008), which is considered one of the most authoritative and comprehensive collections of Uzbek folk sayings. Mirziyoev’s compilation gathers traditional and widely recognized proverbs that have been passed down orally through generations, encapsulating Uzbek values and cultural worldview. The “yurak” metaphor in these proverbs simultaneously conveys emotional depth, moral integrity, spiritual purity, and social cohesion, as seen in examples like “Yurakdan o‘tmoq” (to deeply move the heart), “Yurakdan chiqmoq” (to be sincere or heartfelt), and “Yuragi ezilgan” (one whose heart is broken or deeply sorrowful).

2.2 Analytical Framework

A qualitative semantic and pragmatic analysis was applied: Semantic analysis focused on denotative and connotative meanings of “heart”-related proverbs, identifying metaphorical extensions and sense relations.



Pragmatic analysis examined contextual usage, illocutionary acts, and social functions within proverb-dialogues or narratives.

Comparative approach highlighted similarities and differences tied to cultural contexts.

3. Results

3.1 Semantic Findings

English proverbs like “take heart,” “a heart of gold,” and “break one’s heart” denote courage, kindness, and emotional pain respectively (Mieder, 2008).

Uzbek proverbs such as “yurakdan o‘tmoq” (to deeply affect emotionally), “yurakdan chiqmoq” (to be sincere), and “yurak yig‘lamoq” (heart cries, to grieve) convey emotional depth and moral sincerity (Mirziyoev, 2008).

3.2 Pragmatic Findings

English proverbs pragmatically serve to encourage, warn, or praise individual character traits. Uzbek proverbs are used to emphasize social values like communal sincerity, emotional openness, and moral resilience. Both sets function to maintain social norms and transmit cultural knowledge.

3.3 Comparative Observations

Both languages employ the “heart” as a core metaphor for emotions and morality, confirming theoretical views by Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

English focuses more on individual feelings and psychological states.

Uzbek embeds the heart metaphor within community-oriented values and spiritual sincerity.

4. Discussion

The findings underline the universality of the “heart” metaphor but also reveal culturally specific conceptualizations. The pragmatic functions of these proverbs correspond with social norms and communicative goals unique to each culture. This supports Mieder’s (2008) assertion that proverbs are integral to social regulation and cultural transmission.



The differences suggest that translators and educators should be aware of cultural nuances to avoid misinterpretation. Such insights have practical implications for intercultural communication, language teaching, and folklore studies.

5. Conclusion

This study confirms that while the metaphor of “heart” functions as a universally shared cognitive and linguistic construct across both English and Uzbek proverbial languages, there exist considerable differences in its semantic range and pragmatic functions that closely align with the distinct cultural priorities inherent to each society. In English proverbs, the concept of the “heart” tends to emphasize individual emotional experiences, personal integrity, and internal psychological states, reflecting a cultural orientation that often values individualism, personal agency, and emotional expression. In contrast, Uzbek proverbial language situates the “yurak” metaphor within a framework that accentuates social harmony, communal values, spiritual sincerity, and collective well-being, mirroring a more collectivist cultural model where interpersonal relationships and moral duties towards the community are paramount.

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