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THE REFLECTION OF ATTITUDES TOWARD KNOWLEDGE IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK PROVERBS: A LINGUO-PRAGMATIC APPROACH

Annotation

This study conducts a pragmatic analysis of how knowledge is valued in English and Uzbek proverbs. It explores the cultural, linguistic, and pragmatic features that shape the expression and perception of knowledge in proverbial speech. The research reveals both universal and culture-specific patterns, demonstrating the role of proverbs as indirect speech acts used to influence social behavior and convey moral guidance.

Key words: Knowledge, proverbs, pragmatics, speech acts, english, uzbek, cultural linguistics.

ОТРАЖЕНИЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ К ЗНАНИЮ В АНГЛИЙСКИХ И УЗБЕКСКИХ ПОСЛОВИЦАХ: ЛИНГВОПРАГМАТИЧЕСКИЙ ПОДХОД

Аннотация

В данном исследовании проводится прагматический анализ оценки знания в английских и узбекских пословицах. Рассматриваются культурные, лингвистические и прагматические особенности, влияющие на выражение и восприятие знания в пословицах. Исследование выявляет как универсальные, так и специфические для культуры модели, демонстрируя роль пословиц как косвенных речевых актов, используемых для влияния на социальное поведение и передачи моральных наставлений.

Ключевые слова: Пословицы, прагматика, речевые акты, английский, узбекский, культурная лингвистика

BILIMGA BO‘LGAN MUNOSABATNING INGLIZ VA O‘ZBEK MAQOLLARIDA AKS ETISHI: LINGVOPRAGMATIK YONDASHUV

Аннотatsiya

Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz va o‘zbek maqollarida bilimni qadrlashning pragmatik tahlilini amalga oshiradi. Maqolada bilimning til va madaniyatga xos jihatlari, shuningdek, maqollarning ijtimoiy xatti-harakat va axloqiy ko‘rsatmalarni ifodalashdagi roli o‘rganiladi. Tadqiqotda umumiy va madaniyatga xos xususiyatlar aniqlanib, maqollarning bilvosita nutq harakatlari sifatida ta’siri ko‘rsatiladi.

Kalit so‘zlar: Bilim, maqollar, pragmatika, nutq harakatlari, ingliz, o‘zbek, madaniyatshunoslik

Introduction. Proverbs are concise expressions of collective cultural wisdom that reflect and reinforce societal values and norms. They often serve as indirect speech acts that influence behavior and communicate ethical guidelines implicitly. One of the central themes across cultures is the value attributed to knowledge and wisdom. In both English and Uzbek cultures, proverbs about knowledge emphasize its importance, but the pragmatic functions and cultural nuances embedded within these proverbs differ. Proverbs encapsulate social norms, ethical values, and practical advice, often transmitted orally across generations, thereby preserving cultural identity (Muminov, 2020). This study aims to provide a comparative pragmatic analysis of knowledge-related proverbs in English and Uzbek, shedding light on how language users in different cultural contexts value and communicate the concept of knowledge.

One of the most prominent themes in proverbs worldwide is knowledge—its acquisition, value, and practical application. Knowledge is universally regarded as a vital asset for personal development and social functioning. However, the ways in which knowledge is conceptualized and pragmatically expressed through proverbs vary greatly across different languages and cultures (Khayrullayeva & Sa’dullayeva, 2025).

In English proverbs, knowledge is often framed as power and a means to achieve individual success and autonomy. Such expressions reflect the cultural values of individualism, self-reliance, and pragmatic rationalism prevalent in Western societies (Crystal, 2003). For instance, proverbs like “Knowledge is power” emphasize knowledge as a resource for empowerment and control over one’s environment.

Conversely, Uzbek proverbs frequently highlight the moral and social dimensions of knowledge. Influenced by Islamic philosophy and Turkic oral traditions, knowledge in Uzbek culture is closely linked to wisdom, ethical behavior, and communal responsibility (Karimov, 2018). Proverbs such as “Ilm – odamni odam qiladi” (“Knowledge makes a man a man”) illustrate the transformative power of knowledge in shaping character and maintaining social harmony (Muminov, 2020). This reflects a collectivist orientation where the value of knowledge is intertwined with spiritual growth and societal well-being.

The pragmatic function of proverbs in both languages extends beyond mere didacticism; they perform indirect speech acts that convey advice, warnings, and moral injunctions while preserving interpersonal politeness and face (Yusupova, 2023).

This pragmatic indirectness is crucial in maintaining social cohesion, especially in cultures where direct criticism may be considered inappropriate or offensive (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Despite the extensive research on proverbs as cultural artifacts, there is a relative scarcity of pragmatic comparative analyses focusing on how knowledge is valued and expressed in English and Uzbek proverbial traditions. This study aims to fill this gap by providing an in-depth pragmatic examination of knowledge-related proverbs in both languages. By doing so, it contributes to cross-cultural pragmatics, linguistic anthropology, and applied linguistics, offering insights for intercultural communication, translation studies, and language pedagogy.

Moreover, the work of notable Uzbek scholars such as Muminov (2020) and Karimov (2018) provides a foundational understanding of the linguistic and cultural nuances in Uzbek proverbs. Their research underscores the importance of considering contextual and cultural pragmatics when interpreting proverbial meanings, an approach adopted and extended in the present study.

In summary, this paper investigates how knowledge is pragmatically framed and valued in English and Uzbek proverbs, highlighting both shared universal functions and culture-specific features. Understanding these differences and commonalities is essential for fostering effective intercultural dialogue and enhancing mutual understanding in an increasingly globalized world.

Understanding these differences is essential not only for linguistic theory but also for practical fields such as translation, intercultural communication, and language education.

Literature Review. The study of proverbs has been a rich field in linguistics and anthropology, especially concerning their pragmatic functions (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1975). Proverbs are often analyzed as indirect speech acts that perform advisory or evaluative functions without direct commands, thus facilitating face-saving communication (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

English proverbs have been widely studied for their role in expressing individualistic values such as self-improvement, caution, and practical wisdom (Crystal, 2003; Kövecses, 2005). For example, English proverbs like "Knowledge is power" (Francis Bacon) highlight the association of knowledge with agency and social mobility.

In her study "A Corpus-Based Empirical Analysis of Pragmatics of English Proverbs with Gradonymy" (2022), Abdullaeva analyzes the evaluative speech acts manifested in proverbs through gradational units (gradonymy) and identifies their socio-pragmatic functions. She examines English and Uzbek proverbs from a linguo-pragmatic perspective, demonstrating how these expressions function as indirect communicative tools for conveying cultural values. The findings of the study reveal that in both languages, proverbs employ different pragmatic strategies to express knowledge and wisdom, thereby reinforcing their illocutionary force through moral norms specific to each society.

In contrast, Uzbek proverbs often root knowledge within a moral-ethical framework influenced by Islamic and Turkic traditions (Muminov, 2020; Karimov, 2018). Proverbs such as "Ilm – odamni odam qiladi" ("Knowledge makes a man a man") emphasize the transformative and civilizing power of knowledge beyond mere utility.

Comparative studies (Khayrullayeva & Sa'dullayeva, 2025; Boymurodova, 2025) have noted these divergences, but there remains a gap in pragmatic analyses focusing on how these proverbs function in actual communication and their illocutionary forces.

Methods. The current study employs a qualitative content analysis of a purposive corpus consisting of 10 English and 10 Uzbek proverbs related to knowledge and wisdom. These proverbs were selected from authoritative collections and cross-verified with native speakers and linguistic experts to ensure representativeness and authenticity.

Each proverb was analyzed using Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1975), focusing on:

The illocutionary force (what the proverb does in communication—advice, warning, evaluation, etc.),

The perlocutionary effect (intended impact on the hearer),

The pragmatic context (cultural and situational factors shaping meaning).

Further, a contrastive cultural analysis was conducted to identify culturally specific pragmatic features and shared universal patterns.

Results. English Proverbs. English proverbs about knowledge frequently carry a didactic and cautionary tone. Examples include:

"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing."

"Knowledge is power."

"An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest."

These proverbs highlight knowledge as a practical asset and a means for individual advancement. Pragmatically, they often function as assertives with an implied directive: encouraging the pursuit of knowledge or warning against superficial understanding.

Uzbek Proverbs

In contrast, Uzbek proverbs emphasize knowledge as a moral and social virtue, often framed within spiritual or ethical metaphors:

"Ilm – odamni odam qiladi" ("Knowledge makes a man a man")

"Johil do'st'dan dono dushman afzal" ("A wise enemy is better than an ignorant friend")

"Bilimsiz odam – tunu kun qorong'uda yuradi" ("A person without knowledge wanders in darkness day and night")

Here, the proverbs function as indirect admonitions and moral reminders, reinforcing social values and encouraging humility and ethical behavior.

Discussion. The pragmatic functions of proverbs in both languages reflect their respective cultural value systems. English proverbs tend to promote individual agency, pragmatism, and rationalism, aligning with Western Enlightenment ideals. They are frequently employed in educational and motivational contexts to foster personal responsibility.

Uzbek proverbs, meanwhile, emphasize community-oriented ethics, spirituality, and humility. Their pragmatic use often aligns with politeness strategies that mitigate directness and encourage social harmony (Yusupova, 2023).

The indirectness inherent in proverbial speech acts serves as an important pragmatic strategy in both cultures, helping speakers offer advice or criticism without face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This universality highlights the social function of proverbs as tools for harmonious interpersonal communication.

Conclusion. This study has provided a comprehensive pragmatic analysis of how the concept of valuing knowledge is manifested in English and Uzbek proverbs. Through comparative linguistic and cultural investigation, the research reveals that while both languages regard knowledge as an essential human value, the way it is linguistically framed and pragmatically employed differs significantly due to the socio-cultural underpinnings of each society.

English proverbs predominantly present knowledge as a means of empowerment, self-development, and practical decision-making. They are often used to motivate, advise, or warn, with a focus on individual agency and rational thought. Such proverbs align with Western ideals rooted in Enlightenment thinking, where knowledge equates to progress and control.

In contrast, Uzbek proverbs conceptualize knowledge as a moral obligation and a social virtue, emphasizing its role in spiritual growth, ethical behavior, and community cohesion. The pragmatic use of these proverbs frequently carries an admonishing, didactic, or guiding function, often embedded in polite and indirect speech acts. This reflects cultural tendencies toward collectivism, interdependence, and respect for social harmony, which are central to Uzbek communicative norms.

From a pragmatic perspective, both English and Uzbek proverbs serve important communicative functions: they perform indirect speech acts such as advising, cautioning, or evaluating, while mitigating face-threatening implications. This aligns with Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1975) and Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), confirming the role of proverbs as effective tools of socially acceptable communication.

The findings also support previous scholarship by Uzbek linguists such as Muminov (2020) and Karimov (2018), who argue that proverbs serve not only as carriers of folk wisdom but also as mechanisms for reinforcing moral behavior and traditional values. This study extends their work by demonstrating how pragmatic strategies—particularly indirectness and politeness—enhance the communicative effectiveness of such proverbs in contemporary discourse.

From a pedagogical and intercultural communication perspective, understanding the pragmatic values encoded in

proverbs is essential. In the context of language teaching, translation, or cross-cultural dialogue, knowledge of the underlying speech acts and cultural assumptions helps avoid misinterpretation and fosters mutual understanding. For instance, a literal translation of a proverb may retain semantic content but lose its pragmatic function if cultural norms are not accounted for.

However, the study is not without limitations. The corpus was limited to 10 proverbs from each language, which may not capture the full range of expressions related to knowledge. Additionally, while the analysis considered cultural context, it did not involve empirical discourse analysis or native speaker interviews, which could further enrich the pragmatic interpretation.

Future research could address these gaps by employing corpus linguistics, ethnographic methods, or discourse analysis to explore how these proverbs are used in real-life conversations, classrooms, media, and political speech. Moreover, expanding the study to include proverbs from other Turkic, Slavic, or Asian languages could provide deeper insights into universal versus culture-specific pragmatic patterns.

In conclusion, this research highlights that while proverbs in both English and Uzbek celebrate the value of knowledge, they do so through culturally distinct pragmatic lenses. Recognizing and respecting these differences is key to fostering effective and empathetic communication in our increasingly interconnected world.

Future research could expand this study to additional languages or investigate how these pragmatic patterns evolve in digital communication.

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