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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RUSSIAN AND UZBEK PROVERBS

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Abstract. This article examines semantic and figurative correspondences between Russian and Uzbek proverbs. The analysis focuses on proverbs concerning work, caution, friendship, home, and respect for others. Particular attention is paid to cases in which similar ideas are expressed through comparable images, as well as to instances where a shared theme does not ensure equivalence in translation. Selected examples illustrate differences in grammatical structure, culture-specific references, and contexts of use. The article also considers how comparative proverb analysis can be incorporated into the teaching of Russian and Uzbek.
Keywords: paremia, proverb, Russian language, Uzbek language, comparative analysis, meaning, imagery, equivalence, translation, linguoculturology.

Introduction

A proverb has a quality that makes it especially useful for comparative study: a short statement can convey an evaluation of an entire life situation. Everyday observation, advice, and an image familiar to speakers of the language are brought together in a single phrase. When we encounter a proverb from another culture, we often recognise a familiar idea expressed in unexpected words. This contrast between the underlying meaning and the way it is expressed is precisely what makes proverbs an interesting subject of analysis.

Russian and Uzbek belong to different language families, yet they reflect many similar observations about life. A shared proverbial meaning does not necessarily indicate borrowing: work, friendship, and responsibility are part of human experience across cultures.

The purpose of this study is to identify the features that should be considered when establishing correspondences between Russian and Uzbek proverbs. The material consists of proverbs included in collections by V. I. Dal and V. P. Zhukov and in O‘zbek xalq maqollari [2; 3; 6]. The comparison is qualitative: it examines selected examples rather than measuring the frequency of particular themes across the entire proverbial repertoire of either language.

A comparison of proverbs should address three questions in sequence. First, do the expressions convey the same practical lesson? Second, do they rely on the same concrete image to make that lesson memorable? Third, can they be used appropriately in the same communicative situation? The third question is especially important in translation, since sayings dealing with the same subject may differ in evaluative nuance, degree of emphasis, and communicative purpose.

It is therefore necessary to distinguish close equivalents from partial correspondences and proverbs that are merely related in theme. The boundaries between these categories depend on context. The absence of a direct equivalent does not mean that the underlying idea is absent from the other culture [1; 4; 5].

The Russian proverb «Семь раз отмерь, один раз отрежь» (“Measure seven times, cut once”) and its Uzbek counterpart «Yetti o‘lchab, bir kes» (“Measure seven times before cutting once”) both advise careful consideration before taking an irreversible step. They share the image of working with material and contrast repeated checking with a single decisive action. Their grammatical structures, however, differ: Russian uses two imperative verbs, whereas Uzbek expresses the preliminary action through the converb o‘lchab, followed by the main imperative kes.

The proverbs «Что посеешь, то и пожнёшь» (“You reap what you sow”) and «Nima eksang, shuni o‘rasan» (“You will reap what you sow”) connect actions with their consequences. The agricultural imagery extends beyond its literal meaning and may refer to personal relationships or decisions. In translation, both the lesson and the metaphor of sowing and harvesting can be preserved.

The pair «Не имей сто рублей, а имей сто друзей» (“Better to have a hundred friends than a hundred rubles”) and «Yuz so‘m puling bo‘lguncha, yuz do‘sting bo‘lsin» (“Better to have a hundred friends than a hundred soums”) share a numerical image, a contrast between money and friendship, and the same value judgement. Only the culture-specific reference to currency changes. Here, an established expression is more natural than a literal transfer of the currency name.

The proverbs «По одёжке протягивай ножки» (“Stretch your legs according to your clothes”) and «Ko‘rpangga qarab oyoq uzat» (“Stretch your legs according to your blanket”) demonstrate how similar advice may be conveyed through different everyday objects. Both encourage people to live within their means. The Russian expression evokes clothing, while the Uzbek one refers to a blanket. What matters is not the object itself but the implied limitation: one cannot act as though one has more resources than are actually available. The everyday situation is expressed more directly in Uzbek, while the Russian proverb is distinguished by its rhythm and the rhyme between odyozhke and nozhki.

The Russian proverb «В гостях хорошо, а дома лучше» (“It is good to be a guest, but better to be at home”) directly contrasts two settings. The Uzbek saying «O‘z uying, o‘lan to‘shaging» (“Your own home, even with a simple grass-filled bed”) evokes attachment to home through the image of modest bedding. Both express affection for one’s dwelling, but their communicative functions are not identical. The Russian expression is particularly appropriate after returning from a visit or journey. The Uzbek proverb can emphasise the value of having a home of one’s own, however modest. This distinction matters when selecting a translation.

Another revealing comparison involves «Волков бояться, в лес не ходить» (“If you are afraid of wolves, do not go into the forest”) and «Bo‘ridan qo‘rqqan qo‘y boqmas» (“Someone afraid of wolves cannot tend sheep”). In the Russian proverb, the forest represents a place whose risks must be accepted by anyone who chooses to enter it. In the Uzbek saying, fear of wolves prevents a person from engaging in shepherding. Both discourage excessive fear of unavoidable

risks, but the Uzbek version ties that fear to a specific occupation. The relationship is therefore better described as partial rather than complete equivalence, even though both sayings may serve a similar purpose in everyday speech.

The proverbs «Без труда не вытащишь и рыбку из пруда» (“You cannot even catch a fish from a pond without effort”) and «Mehnatning tagi rohat» (“Hard work brings comfort”) are united by the theme of labour, yet they place emphasis on different aspects of it. The Russian saying warns that a desired result cannot be achieved without effort. The Uzbek proverb focuses on the reward that follows work. The former may be more suitable as a reminder to make an effort; the latter may be more appropriate when offering encouragement. A common theme does not necessarily make two proverbs interchangeable in translation.

Proverbs about patience do not always coincide either. «Терпение и труд всё перетрут» (“Patience and hard work can overcome anything”) links perseverance with action, whereas «Sabr qilgan murodiga yetar» (“Those who are patient will achieve their goal”) stresses the ability to wait for a desired outcome. Both offer reassurance, but they highlight different aspects of patience.

The proverb «Не красна изба углами, а красна пирогами» (“A cottage is valued not for its corners but for its pies”) conveys hospitality through details of domestic life. Uzbek sayings may express a similar value through images of the dastarkhan, the guest, or the home. Individual examples, however, do not justify conclusions about which people are more hospitable. What is being compared is the linguistic expression of a shared value, not the cultures or their members themselves.

For example, «Mehmon otangdan ulug‘» (“A guest is held in higher esteem than one’s father”) uses deliberate exaggeration to emphasise the guest’s respected position. The expression «Ota rozi, Xudo rozi» (“If the father is pleased, God is pleased”) associates a father’s approval and blessing with both family and religious values. The Russian proverb «При солнышке тепло, при матушке добро» (“The sun brings warmth; a mother brings comfort”) draws on a different image but likewise conveys deep respect and affection for a parent. Different proverbial formulas should not be interpreted as evidence of opposing cultures: similar values can be expressed through different figurative systems.

Bread is an important image in both cultural traditions. The Russian saying «Хлеб всему голова» (“Bread is essential to everything”) highlights its vital role, while bread is also treated with great respect in Uzbek tradition. The meaning of a particular proverb should nevertheless be distinguished from the everyday customs associated with its imagery.

In translation, the choice between an established equivalent and a literal rendering depends on context. «Ko‘rpangga qarab oyoq uzat» is often naturally translated into Russian by the proverb «По одёжке протягивай ножки». Yet if an author intends the blanket itself to evoke a particular aspect of domestic life, replacing that image removes a cultural nuance from the text. The translator must then find a way to preserve the detail.

In the classroom, students can be asked to identify where and to whom a proverb would be appropriately addressed, find a corresponding expression in the other language, and explain differences in imagery. Another exercise is to select thematically related proverbs that cannot be

regarded as full equivalents. Such activities develop contextual understanding, linguistic intuition, and translation skills at the same time.

Conclusion

The comparison shows that a single practical idea may be expressed through similar or different images. Some proverbs are close in theme but differ in their communicative function. Establishing correspondences therefore requires attention not only to dictionary meaning but also to wording, cultural references, and the circumstances in which an expression is used.

The closest correspondences in the material examined are those based on the shared images of measuring and cutting, and of sowing and harvesting. The images of clothing and a blanket, or of a forest and sheep farming, indicate only partial equivalence. These examples are suitable for bilingual classroom activities, although broader conclusions about the two proverbial systems would require a more extensive corpus.

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