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LINGUOCOGNITIVE FEATURES OF PROVERBS FORMED ON THE BASIS OF SOMATISMS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES

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Abstract: This article investigates the linguocognitive characteristics of proverbs containing somatic components in English and Uzbek languages. Somatisms—lexical units that include body-part names—represent ancient elements of vocabulary and reflect the embodied cognition of speakers. Proverbs containing somatic elements such as head, hand, eye, tongue, and foot play an essential role in expressing cultural values, social norms, emotional states, and national worldviews. Through comparative analysis, the article examines how somatic imagery encodes these meanings and identifies both universal metaphorical patterns shared by the two languages and culture-specific conceptualizations. The findings indicate that while both languages use similar physiological metaphors, their interpretations are influenced by national mentality, social norms, and cultural symbolism. The study highlights the significance of somatic phraseology in understanding the interplay between language, thought, and culture.

Keywords: somatisms, proverbs, cognitive linguistics, metaphor, conceptualization, cultural codes, worldview, semantic analysis

Introduction. Proverbs are among the oldest, most concise, and culturally rich forms of folk wisdom. Their linguistic structure is compact, yet they encode deep conceptual and cultural meanings. Among various lexical elements, somatisms—words denoting body parts—play a distinctive role, as human beings primarily perceive the world through their body. Consequently, the human body serves as the main source for metaphorical mapping in cognition. Somatic expressions in English and Uzbek proverbs are not mere lexical combinations; they are symbolic representations of moral principles, social expectations, emotional experiences, and national mentality. They offer a window into the cognitive and cultural frameworks of each linguistic community. For instance, Uzbek speakers use “Ko’ngilda nima bo’lsa, yuzda shu” (“Whatever is in the heart appears on the face”), while English speakers say “The eyes are the mirror of the soul”. Both illustrate the face as a



metaphorical reflection of inner states, but their cultural emphases differ. The linguocognitive analysis of somatisms provides insights into how human experience is conceptualized across cultures. This study investigates English and Uzbek proverbs containing somatic components, explores their metaphorical and cognitive functions, and identifies similarities and differences in their cultural interpretations.

Literature Review. The study of somatisms in proverbs is grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which posits that abstract concepts are understood through bodily experience. Expressions like “warm heart” or “cold feet” illustrate how physical experience maps onto cognitive and emotional understanding. Previous research has demonstrated that somatic metaphors are present across languages but carry culture-specific meanings. Kövecses (2000, 2005) emphasizes that while body-based metaphors are universal, their cultural and social extensions vary. Dobrovolskij & Piirainen (2006) argue that figurative language, particularly somatisms, reveals cognitive and cultural patterns of speech communities. In English, proverbs such as “a big mouth” or “keep an eye on” indicate social evaluation and moral judgment, whereas in Uzbek, proverbs involving the tongue or hand often reflect respect for elders, hospitality, and communal responsibility (Jo’rayev, 2017). Sharifov (2020) categorizes Uzbek somatic phrases into functional, emotional, and symbolic types, demonstrating their socio-cultural significance. Despite these studies, there remains a lack of systematic cross-linguistic comparison examining both metaphorical patterns and cultural meanings of somatic proverbs in English and Uzbek. This research addresses this lacuna by providing a descriptive-analytical comparison.

Methodology. This study adopts a descriptive-comparative framework. The corpus comprises 300 proverbs: 150 English and 150 Uzbek proverbs containing explicit references to body parts (head, hand, eye, tongue, foot, heart). English proverbs were drawn from Mieder’s collections and online archives; Uzbek proverbs were compiled from published anthologies, folklore dictionaries, and academic sources.

Each proverb was analyzed in three stages:

1. Lexical isolation – identification of the somatic element.
2. Semantic and metaphorical analysis – examining literal and figurative meanings.
3. Cultural interpretation – assessing social, moral, and emotional functions within the respective linguistic community.

The analysis was guided by Lakoff & Johnson’s Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Kövecses’s classification of universal versus culture-specific metaphors. Semantic domains were coded according to emotion, cognition,



morality, social relations, and physical action. Cross-linguistic comparisons highlighted similarities and divergences in metaphorical usage and cultural emphasis.

Head

In English, the head often symbolizes intelligence, authority, or decision-making: "Keep a cool head" (maintain composure), "Heads will roll" (punishment for failure). In Uzbek, the head is similarly associated with wisdom but also carries moral and social responsibility connotations: "Boshni baloga solma" ("Do not bring the head into trouble") emphasizes the importance of careful behavior to protect oneself and the community.

Hand

The hand frequently represents action and agency. English proverbs: "Many hands make light work" (cooperation), "Wash your hands of something" (avoid responsibility). Uzbek proverbs: "Qo'l uzilsa, dil bo'sh qolmasin" ("Even if the hand fails, the heart should remain full") emphasizes moral perseverance and communal ethics.

Eye

The eye is a metaphor for perception and insight. English: "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder", "Keep an eye on". Uzbek: "Ko'z o'ngida bo'lish" ("Be present before one's eyes") emphasizes vigilance and moral accountability within social interactions.

Tongue

The tongue reflects speech, honesty, and social conduct. English: "Hold your tongue", "The tongue is sharper than a sword". Uzbek: "Tilni ushla, oshni yo'qotma" ("Control your tongue, don't lose food") emphasizes social harmony and respect.

Foot

Feet often symbolize progress or moral direction. English: "Put your best foot forward", "Get cold feet". Uzbek: "Oyoq ostida er bo'lsin" ("Let there be land under the feet") symbolizes stability and responsible action in communal life.

Results and Discussion

Comparative analysis reveals that while English and Uzbek proverbs share universal metaphorical mappings (head = intelligence, heart = emotion), the cultural interpretation differs. English emphasizes individualism, self-reliance, and moral reasoning, while Uzbek proverbs stress communal responsibility, social hierarchy, and respect for tradition. These differences reflect the interplay between embodied cognition and cultural context. The study also demonstrates the richness of somatic imagery as a cognitive tool, allowing abstract ideas to be grounded in concrete bodily experience. Cross-cultural examination reveals both universal patterns and culture-



specific deviations, highlighting the importance of somatic phraseology in language teaching, translation studies, and intercultural communication.

Conclusion

Somatic proverbs in English and Uzbek illustrate how language encodes both universal human experience and culturally specific cognitive patterns. While physiological metaphors are commonly shared, their meanings diverge according to social norms, moral values, and collective mentality. Understanding these differences provides valuable insights into cross-cultural cognition, metaphorical thinking, and linguistic expression of cultural knowledge.

Future research could expand the corpus to include regional variants, oral traditions, and modern proverb usage, contributing to a broader understanding of the evolution and function of somatic metaphors in real-world communication.

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