A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS COMPONENTS IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH PROVERBS: THE LEXEME "GOD"

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Abstract: This paper investigates the presence and role of religious components—specifically the lexeme *God*—in Uzbek and English proverbs. Using a comparative and semantic-pragmatic approach, the study analyzes thematic classifications of religious sayings in both languages, highlighting the cultural and theological underpinnings that shape these expressions. The research identifies stark contrasts in how divine concepts are encoded linguistically: Uzbek proverbs predominantly reflect Islamic views, emphasizing divine control over personal and societal affairs, while English proverbs—rooted in Christian tradition—often promote individual responsibility and moral dualism. Through statistical and thematic categorization of 349 Uzbek and 268 English religious proverbs, the paper demonstrates how paremiological expressions mirror the spiritual and moral mentalities of different societies. The study concludes that proverbs are a rich source of cultural, religious, and linguistic knowledge and offer critical insight into worldview differences.

Keywords: Uzbek proverbs, English proverbs, religious lexemes, God, paremiology, cultural worldview, Islamic and Christian values, comparative linguistics, divine authority, dualism.

Introduction

Until now, various aspects of Uzbek proverbs—such as their origin, syntactic, linguistic, semantic-structural, and pragmatic features, as well as their classification by themes, translation challenges, and search for equivalents—have been extensively studied by scholars. In her doctoral dissertation entitled “Linguistic Foundations and Pragmatic Features of Uzbek Folk Proverbs”, Jo‘rayeva discusses proverbs formed based on religious concepts in detail. However, the issues of translating these religious proverbs into English and their thematic classification remain largely unexplored. This study, therefore, focuses on classifying proverbs that contain religious elements.

Among universal religious notions, we can highlight concepts such as God, angel, devil, sin and repentance, purity and impurity, death and punishment, this world and the hereafter. Given that Islam is the dominant religion among Uzbeks, many Uzbek proverbs are derived from Islamic teachings, including the Qur’an, Sharia law, and stories from the lives of prophets. Although the book “Uzbek Folk Proverbs” classifies

proverbs into about 30 thematic categories, it does not explicitly separate those with religious content. In most cases, religious proverbs are the result of oral folk creativity.

Moreover, in the book “Proverbs-Maqollar-Пословицы” by M. Karomatova and H. S. Karomatov, English proverbs are presented alongside their Uzbek and Russian equivalents and translations. The English people, being predominantly Christian, often have religious proverbs originating not from folklore, but directly from the Bible and Holy Scriptures. For our study, we compiled religious English proverbs using The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs and The Facts On File Dictionary of Proverbs. However, religious themes appear less frequently in modern English proverbs. For instance, in The Dictionary of Modern Proverbs: Fourth Supplement, only a few proverbs with religious terms were found.

Methods

In this research, we approached the classification of religious proverbs through thematic oppositions such as God vs. Satan/Devil; angel vs. devil; halal vs. haram; virtue vs. sin; paradise vs. hell. This method is based on the philosophical principle of duality, which suggests that every concept has its opposite. Nevertheless, not all religious terms exist in opposition. Proverbs may also reflect independent religious ideas such as sustenance (rizq), prayer (namoz), faith (iman), rituals, and religious figures.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the historical context in which these proverbs emerged. The compilers of the proverb collections noted, “With the independence of our country, many values have been restored, including religious ones. Consequently, the use of proverbs has also diversified.” However, they also caution that the revival of religious values does not mean the complete disappearance of those who misuse religion. Religious proverbs reflect a wide range of historical attitudes and are now often used figuratively. Thus, it is essential to account for temporal and contextual relevance when interpreting or translating them.

In this study, we compiled and classified proverbs and sayings related to religious concepts in both English and Uzbek languages. Specifically, within the first group of opposition-based classifications, we included proverbs and sayings that pertain to the themes of God vs. Satan/Devil, angel vs. devil, and paradise vs. hell. The term God is a universal religious concept across different faiths and is regarded as the supreme deity. In Islamic belief, it refers to the divine power that created and governs the entire universe and is the central figure of worship (known as Allah in Islam). Accordingly, the term God in Uzbek has several synonyms, all of which were taken into account in the analysis of proverbs and sayings containing this concept.

In line with the objectives of this research, we found it appropriate to include statistical data when classifying proverbs and sayings in both English and Uzbek. This inclusion is justified by the assumption that statistical analysis would help identify

which thematic categories are more prevalent in each language, thereby revealing differences in the mentality and worldview of English and Uzbek speakers.

Results

The comparative classification of proverbs containing the lexeme *God* revealed significant differences in conceptualization between Uzbek and English. Table 2.1 outlines thematic categories based on the semantics of proverbs involving *God (Xudo)* in both languages. While several thematic parallels exist, each culture expresses unique religious associations through its paremiological heritage.

In Uzbek, the majority of proverbs emphasize human behavior as being divinely influenced, portraying God as the ultimate cause of all worldly affairs, including fortune, character, and interpersonal relations. Proverbs such as *"Kelining yaxshi bo'lsa, berdi Xudo; kelining yomon bo'lsa, urdi Xudo"* (If your daughter-in-law is good, God granted her; if bad, God punished you) illustrate how both positive and negative life events are attributed to divine will. Additionally, sayings like *"Ota rozi — Xudo rozi"* (A father's approval is God's approval) reflect the cultural tendency to elevate parental authority to a near-divine level.

Uzbek proverbs also reflect the belief that God supports the wealthy and those in power, such as in *"Boy ham boyga, Xudo ham boyga"* (Wealth goes to the wealthy, and God favors the rich), creating a lexical opposition between divine justice and social hierarchy. Moreover, God's attributes are often placed in opposition with other figures such as *devil*, *ruler*, or *father*, showing how divinity is integrated into various societal domains.

Conversely, English proverbs that involve the word *God* are heavily influenced by Biblical themes and often underscore self-reliance alongside divine support. Examples like *"God helps those who help themselves"* and *"Man proposes, God disposes"* illustrate a balance between human agency and divine intervention. In many cases, God's actions are portrayed as slow but inevitable (*"God's mill grinds slow but sure"*), reinforcing a sense of divine justice over time.

Interestingly, the idea of God being aligned with fools or the wealthy is also present in English, as in *"God sends fortune to fools"* or *"God help the rich, the poor can beg"*, suggesting a similar perception of divine favoritism as seen in Uzbek. However, English proverbs more frequently reflect the unpredictability of divine will and the futility of resisting it (*"Whom God would ruin, he first deprives of reason"*), and often use irony to highlight human limitation in the face of divine design.

One major thematic distinction is the prominence of the *God–Devil* opposition in English proverbs. Sayings like *"He that serves God for money will serve the devil for better wages"* or *"God sends meat and the devil sends cooks"* present moral dualism in a sharper, more satirical tone compared to Uzbek equivalents, where divine wrath and punishment are expressed more reverently and fearfully.

Another cultural divergence lies in proverbs concerning cleanliness. While *"Cleanliness is next to godliness"* emphasizes spiritual purity through physical cleanliness in English, its Uzbek counterpart *"Poklik imondandir"* (Cleanliness is part of faith) conveys the same value through Islamic belief, reflecting parallel moral ideologies rooted in different religious traditions.

In summary, the results show that while both languages feature proverbs centered around divine authority, they reflect divergent religious mentalities. Uzbek proverbs tend to attribute life events directly to God's will, often intertwining spiritual belief with familial, social, and moral codes. English proverbs, in contrast, frequently balance divine power with human initiative and often incorporate elements of irony, self-reliance, and skepticism. This contrast highlights the culturally embedded perceptions of divinity and morality in the two linguistic communities.

Discussion

The comparative analysis of Uzbek and English proverbs containing the lexeme God reveals deep-rooted differences in religious worldview, social structure, and cultural values embedded in each language. While both linguistic communities acknowledge the divine as a central force in life, the way this force is interpreted and integrated into daily experience differs significantly.

In Uzbek culture, proverbs strongly reflect the belief that every event—whether fortunate or unfortunate—is a direct result of divine will. The frequent usage of expressions like "berdi Xudo" (God gave) or "urdi Xudo" (God punished) suggests a worldview in which God is not a distant deity but an active participant in human affairs. This close association between the divine and everyday life underscores the deeply Islamic foundation of Uzbek society, where faith permeates family relations, social hierarchy, and moral judgment. The identification of parents and rulers with God ("Ota rozi — Xudo rozi") also illustrates the sacralization of authority and obedience, which are core values in traditional Uzbek society.

By contrast, English proverbs portray a more nuanced and sometimes skeptical view of divine intervention. While God is acknowledged as omnipotent, many sayings place emphasis on personal responsibility, rational decision-making, and the unpredictability of fate. Phrases like "God helps those who help themselves" and "Man proposes, God disposes" imply that divine will operates independently of human desires, and that human effort remains essential. This perspective is indicative of a more individualistic cultural model, often shaped by Protestant work ethics and Enlightenment values.

Another important contrast is the presence of God–Devil opposition in English proverbs, which rarely appears in Uzbek paremiology. This dualism reflects the moral dichotomy inherent in Christian teachings, especially in Western interpretations of good versus evil. Sayings such as "You cannot serve God and Mammon" encapsulate

the tension between spiritual integrity and material temptation, a theme that is treated more indirectly in Uzbek proverbs through references to divine punishment and reward.

The concept of divine justice also differs. Uzbek proverbs often frame God's will as immediate and emotionally responsive—rewarding the good, punishing the bad—while English proverbs suggest a slower, more abstract form of justice ("God's mill grinds slow but sure"). Furthermore, the inclusion of ironic and humorous tones in English, as in "God sends nuts to those who have no teeth", indicates a cultural comfort with questioning or satirizing divine decisions, which is relatively uncommon in Uzbek religious discourse where reverence predominates.

Finally, it is notable that certain concepts—such as rizq (provision or sustenance)—are culturally specific. In Uzbek, rizq is often seen as divinely allocated and morally conditioned, while in English the equivalent concept (e.g., fortune, blessing) is less often tied to religion and more associated with personal effort or chance.

These differences suggest that proverbs are not only linguistic expressions but also mirrors of collective consciousness. They encode a society's theology, ethics, and view of human agency, and thus serve as valuable data for cross-cultural and religious studies. The findings confirm that religious language in paremiology is deeply shaped by the dominant religious doctrines of each culture—Islam in the Uzbek context and Christianity in the English-speaking world—and that these doctrines inform broader philosophical attitudes toward life, destiny, and morality.

Conclusion

This study has explored the religious components embedded in Uzbek and English proverbs, with a particular focus on the lexeme *God* and its associated semantic fields. The findings reveal that while both linguistic traditions utilize religious imagery and refer to divine authority, the nature, function, and cultural implications of such references differ markedly.

In Uzbek proverbs, the concept of *Xudo* (God) is intimately linked to Islamic theology and traditional social norms. God is portrayed as the ultimate arbiter of justice, the provider of sustenance (*rizq*), and the authority behind both natural events and social hierarchies. The divine is deeply embedded in daily life, often invoked in relation to family, morality, and communal expectations. This reflects a theocentric worldview in which human actions are seen as directly influenced—or even predetermined—by divine will.

English proverbs, on the other hand, draw upon Christian, especially Biblical, sources, yet exhibit a broader range of philosophical orientations, including rationalism, humanism, and individualism. The divine in English sayings often appears as a distant yet fair force, rewarding personal effort and moral conduct but rarely intervening without cause. Furthermore, the frequent inclusion of the *God–Devil*

dichotomy underscores a dualistic moral framework less pronounced in Uzbek culture.

One of the most distinctive contrasts lies in the cultural understanding of divine justice and human agency. Uzbek proverbs emphasize submission, gratitude, and reliance on divine mercy, while English proverbs often highlight the necessity of human initiative alongside trust in God. This suggests that Uzbek paremiology tends to be more collectivist and fatalistic, whereas English proverbs are more individualistic and pragmatic.

Ultimately, this comparative analysis demonstrates that proverbs are not merely linguistic artifacts but repositories of cultural values, religious beliefs, and societal norms. Through the lens of proverbial wisdom, we gain insights into how different cultures conceptualize divinity, morality, and human responsibility. These differences should be appreciated not as contradictions but as reflections of unique historical, theological, and sociocultural experiences.

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