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UNIVERSAL AND ISOMORPHIC FEATURES OF HYDRONYM-CONTAINING PROVERBS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Abstract
This article investigates the universal and isomorphic features of hydronym-containing and water-related proverbs in English and Uzbek. The study focuses on the comparative analysis of proverbial structures, semantic patterns, metaphorical representations, and cultural associations connected with rivers, seas, water, and other hydrological concepts. Particular attention is given to the distinction between proper hydronyms, which designate specific water bodies, and common hydrological lexemes used in proverbial expressions. The research adopts a comparative, semantic, and linguocultural approach to identify similarities and differences in the representation of water-related experience in the two languages. The findings suggest that water functions as a shared conceptual domain associated with life, movement, necessity, continuity, danger, and human relationships. At the same time, the linguistic realization of these concepts reflects the historical, geographical, and cultural characteristics of English- and Uzbek-speaking communities. The article argues that universal conceptual similarities should be distinguished from structural and semantic isomorphism, which requires a more precise comparison of proverbial units.

Keywords: hydronym-containing proverbs, paremiology, universal features, isomorphism, comparative linguistics, English language, Uzbek language, water symbolism, linguocultural analysis, conceptual metaphor.

Introduction

Proverbs represent an important component of the linguistic and cultural heritage of a nation. They preserve collective experience, traditional knowledge, moral principles, and culturally established ways of interpreting the surrounding world. Since natural phenomena have always influenced human life, references to water, rivers, seas, and other geographical objects frequently occur in proverbial language.

English and Uzbek belong to different language families and have developed within distinct historical and geographical environments. English belongs to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family, whereas Uzbek is a Turkic language. Despite their structural and historical differences, both languages employ natural phenomena as sources of metaphorical and symbolic meaning.

Water-related proverbial expressions provide particularly useful material for comparative research. Their semantic content may concern human behavior, social relations, practical experience, moral evaluation, and the value of natural resources.

The present article aims to identify the universal and isomorphic features of English and Uzbek proverbs containing hydronymic or water-related components. It also seeks to establish the extent to which similarities in meaning are accompanied by similarities in lexical structure and grammatical organization.

2. Theoretical Background: Universality and Isomorphism in Paremiology

In comparative linguistics, the term universality refers to features or patterns that occur across different languages and cultures. Universal features may be connected with shared human experiences, cognitive processes, and the physical environment.

For example, water is essential for human survival in all societies. Therefore, its association with life, necessity, and prosperity can be found in different linguistic traditions.

The term isomorphism, in contrast, refers to structural or functional correspondence between linguistic units. In paremiological research, isomorphism may be observed at several levels:

lexical isomorphism: the use of corresponding lexical components;

semantic isomorphism: the expression of similar meanings;

structural isomorphism: similarities in grammatical and syntactic organization;

pragmatic isomorphism: similarities in communicative purpose;

metaphorical isomorphism: the use of comparable source and target domains.

It is necessary to distinguish isomorphism from complete equivalence. Two proverbs may communicate a similar message while differing considerably in their lexical composition and grammatical structure.

The concept of universality is therefore broader than the concept of isomorphism. A universal meaning may be expressed through different linguistic forms, whereas isomorphic units demonstrate a more direct correspondence between their structures or semantic organization.

3. Universal Semantic Features of Water-Related Proverbs

The comparative material indicates several conceptual domains that are relevant to both English and Uzbek paremiological traditions.

3.1. Water as a symbol of life and necessity

Water is universally recognized as an essential condition of biological existence. This physical reality creates a strong basis for its figurative use in language.

In Uzbek, the proverb:

“Suvning qadri chanqaganda bilinadi.”

expresses the idea that the value of something becomes clear when it is needed.

In English, the saying:

“You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink.”

uses water to represent an opportunity or resource that cannot be imposed on an unwilling individual.

Although these expressions have different pragmatic meanings, both demonstrate the cognitive importance of water as an essential resource.

3.2. Water as a symbol of continuity and movement

The movement of water provides a natural image for processes that develop over time.
The Uzbek expression:
"Oqar suv o'z yo'lini topar."
is associated with the idea that a developing process may eventually find its direction.
In English, the expression:
"Still waters run deep."
uses the physical characteristics of water to communicate a message about human character and hidden qualities.
These examples reveal that water can be used to conceptualize processes and qualities that are not directly observable.

3.3. Water as a representation of human relationships

Water-related vocabulary may also be used to express social and interpersonal relationships.
The English proverb:
"Blood is thicker than water."
represents family relationships as stronger than certain other social connections. Water functions as a contrasting symbolic element in the expression.
In Uzbek, water-related expressions may similarly refer to collective life, social contribution, and the importance of essential resources. However, the precise meanings and pragmatic functions of individual units should be established through contextual analysis rather than assumed to be identical.

3.4. Water as a source of uncertainty and danger

Deep, turbulent, or unfamiliar water may serve as an image of uncertainty and potential danger. This association is grounded in shared physical experience: people recognize that water can be both beneficial and hazardous.
In comparative analysis, this conceptual domain should be examined through authentic proverbial examples from both languages. The presence of a water-related word alone is insufficient to establish that a proverb expresses danger; its full semantic and pragmatic context must also be considered.

4. Isomorphic Features in English and Uzbek Paremiological Units

Isomorphic features become apparent when English and Uzbek proverbial units demonstrate comparable semantic or structural organization.
At the semantic level, both languages may employ water-related images to communicate practical knowledge and moral evaluation. At the pragmatic level, proverbs in both traditions can advise, warn, criticize, encourage, or summarize collective experience.

The following table presents the main comparative dimensions:

Level of comparison	English	Uzbek
Type of correspondence	Lexical	Water, river, sea
	Suv, daryo, dengiz	Partial lexical correspondence
Semantic	Life, necessity, opportunity	Hayot, zarurat, imkoniyat
Potential semantic correspondence	Metaphorical	Water as a source of abstract meaning
Suv as a source of abstract meaning	Conceptual correspondence	Pragmatic
Advice, warning, evaluation	Maslahat, ogohlantirish, baholash	Functional correspondence
Structural	Declarative and conditional patterns	Darak va shart mazmunli tuzilmalar
Requires individual syntactic analysis	Cultural	Geographical and historical associations
Geographical and historical associations	Culture-specific realization	

The table demonstrates that the two languages share several conceptual and functional tendencies. Nevertheless, the correspondence should be determined separately for each pair of proverbs.

For instance, the Uzbek proverb “Suvning qadri chanqaganda bilinadi” and the English expression “You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink” both contain the concept of water as a necessary resource. However, they do not express the same central message. Therefore, they may be compared at the level of a broad conceptual domain but should not be treated as full paremiological equivalents.

5. Hydronym-Containing Proverbs and Their Onomastic Characteristics

An important methodological issue in the study of hydronym-containing proverbs concerns the distinction between proper geographical names and common hydrological vocabulary.

A hydronym is a proper name assigned to a specific water body. Examples include:

the Thames — a river in England;

the Nile — a major river in northeastern Africa;

the Jordan — a river in the Middle East;

Amu Darya — a major river in Central Asia;

Syr Darya — a major river in Central Asia.

By contrast, the words water, river, sea, lake, suv, daryo, and dengiz are common nouns. They refer to categories of natural objects rather than to individually named geographical entities.
This distinction has direct implications for paremiological classification. A proverb containing the word river is not necessarily a hydronym-containing proverb in the strict onomastic sense. It is more accurately described as a water-related or hydrological-component proverb.
A unit should be classified as hydronym-containing only when it includes a proper geographical name that functions as a component of an established proverbial expression.
This classification makes it possible to separate three related but different research categories:

Proverbs containing common hydrological vocabulary.

Proverbs containing proper hydronyms.

Proverbs containing broader geographical or environmental references associated with water.

Such a distinction improves the terminological consistency and methodological reliability of comparative paremiological research.

6. Universal and Culture-Specific Features: A Comparative Interpretation

The universal features of water-related proverbs are primarily connected with shared human experiences. Both English- and Uzbek-speaking communities recognize the importance of water for life, agriculture, health, and economic activity. These common experiences provide a basis for similar metaphorical interpretations.

However, the cultural realization of these concepts may differ.

In English, some water-related proverbial expressions reflect particular social, historical, and literary traditions. In Uzbek, water imagery is closely connected with everyday life, irrigation, agriculture, settlement, and the social organization of communities in Central Asia.

The geographical significance of Amu Darya and Syr Darya, for example, contributes to the historical and cultural associations of water in the Uzbek-speaking environment. Similarly, the Thames has an important place in the historical and cultural identity of England.

Nevertheless, geographical importance should not be confused with proverbial usage. The cultural significance of a river does not prove that its name occurs in a traditional proverb. Such claims require direct evidence from reliable paremiological collections, historical texts, or documented oral sources.

Thus, universal conceptual patterns and culture-specific manifestations should be treated as complementary dimensions of comparative analysis.

7. Methodological Principles for Comparative Research

A systematic investigation of English and Uzbek hydronym-containing proverbs should be based on several methodological principles.

First, the researcher should establish a reliable corpus of proverbial units. Each example should be accompanied by its source, publication details, and, where available, page number.

Second, the collected material should be classified according to the type of water-related component:

common hydrological nouns;

proper hydronyms;

metaphorical or symbolic references to water;

geographical expressions associated with water.

Third, the semantic structure of each proverb should be examined. The analysis should identify its literal meaning, figurative meaning, conceptual domain, and communicative function.

Fourth, comparative equivalents should be classified according to their degree of correspondence:

full equivalence: similar meaning and comparable linguistic structure;

partial equivalence: similar central meaning but different imagery or structure;

semantic correspondence: related conceptual meaning without direct lexical or structural equivalence;

non-equivalence: a culture-specific unit without a direct counterpart in the other language.

Finally, quantitative conclusions should only be drawn when the corpus is sufficiently representative. The frequency of a particular conceptual pattern cannot be established through a small number of illustrative examples.

8. Conclusion

The comparative study of English and Uzbek water-related paremiological units reveals that water functions as a shared conceptual domain through which human communities interpret life, necessity, opportunity, movement, social relations, and uncertainty.

The universal features of these expressions are rooted in common human experience and the physical properties of water. Isomorphic features, meanwhile, become apparent at the lexical, semantic, structural, metaphorical, and pragmatic levels, although the degree of correspondence varies from one proverbial unit to another.

The study also establishes the importance of distinguishing proper hydronyms from common hydrological terms. This distinction is essential for maintaining terminological accuracy when investigating hydronym-containing proverbs.

Further research should focus on the compilation of a verified bilingual paremiological corpus. Such a corpus would make it possible to identify authentic hydronym-containing expressions, determine their semantic and structural equivalents, and distinguish universal conceptual patterns from culture-specific features.

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