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REPRESENTATION

OF THE CONCEPT OF “LABOR” IN RUSSIAN AND AZERBAIJANI PROVERBS AND SAYINGS

REPRESENTACIÓN DEL CONCEPTO DE “TRABAJO” EN LOS PROVERBIOS Y REFRANES DE RUSIA Y AZERBAIYÁN

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ABSTRACT

It has long been known that the wisdom and spirit of a people are manifested in their proverbs and sayings, and knowledge of the proverbs and sayings of a particular people contributes not only to a better knowledge of the language but also to a better understanding of the way of thinking and character of the people. Linguistic folk consciousness is the embodiment of the folk worldview in linguistic form, in linguistic stereotypes. But in the proverbs and sayings of different peoples, there are many international themes and motives, after all, people of different countries, as a rule, have similar moral ideals and aspirations, which, in turn, can contribute to their better mutual understanding and rapprochement. Considering this, the goal of this work is a comparative analysis of Russian and Azerbaijani proverbs that implement the concept of “labor”. The relevance of the work lies in the fact that in modern society there is a rapid development of intercultural communication. Thus, by studying Russian proverbs and sayings and comparing them with Azerbaijani ones, we have the opportunity to significantly expand our knowledge of both languages, get acquainted with some customs and facts of history, as well as learn from popular wisdom.

Keywords: Proverbs, Sayings, Labour, Culture, Rhythmic sayings.

RESUMEN

Desde hace mucho tiempo se sabe que la sabiduría y el espíritu de un pueblo se manifiestan en sus proverbios y dichos, y el conocimiento de los proverbios y dichos de un pueblo en particular contribuye no solo a un mejor conocimiento de la lengua, sino también a una mejor comprensión de la forma de pensar y el carácter del pueblo. La conciencia lingüística popular es la encarnación de la cosmovisión popular en forma lingüística, en estereotipos lingüísticos. Pero en los proverbios y dichos de diferentes pueblos, hay muchos temas y motivos internacionales, después de todo, las personas de diferentes países, por regla general, tienen ideales y aspiraciones morales similares, lo que, a su vez, puede contribuir a su mejor comprensión y acercamiento mutuos. Teniendo en cuenta esto, el objetivo de este trabajo es un análisis comparativo de los proverbios rusos y azerbaiyanos que implementan el concepto de “trabajo”. La relevancia del trabajo radica en el hecho de que en la sociedad moderna hay un rápido desarrollo de la comunicación intercultural. Así, al estudiar los proverbios y dichos rusos y compararlos con los azerbaiyanos, se tiene la oportunidad de ampliar significativamente el conocimiento de ambos idiomas, familiarizarse con algunas costumbres y hechos de la historia, así como aprender de la sabiduría popular.

Palabras clave: Proverbios, Refranes, Trabajo, Cultura, Refranes rítmicos.

INTRODUCTION

Proverbs and folk sayings are short, widely-known expressions that convey wisdom and/or advice. They often reflect cultural values and beliefs and are used to communicate general truths or observations about life. Proverbs are concise statements that summarize a general truth or principle based on common sense or experience (Belkhir, 2024). They are often metaphorical and can be used to impart lessons or moral guidance. For example, "Prevention is better than cure" suggests that addressing problems early can prevent them from becoming larger issues later. On the other hand, folk sayings are similar to proverbs but usually do not carry the same weight of wisdom or moral lesson. They can be idioms or phrases that convey a particular sentiment or observation. For example, "Time flies" is a saying that reflects on the rapid passage of time without necessarily imparting a moral lesson (Xasanova, 2024).

Proverbs and folk sayings are present in many religious texts (Maksudov, 2019; Simanjuntak, 2020) that contain moral teachings, wisdom, and practical advice. Among the best-known are:

1. Islam:
 - The Hadith: Although not a single book, hadiths are collections of sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. Many hadiths offer advice on behavior, ethics, and practical wisdom.
 - The Quran also contains passages of wisdom and practical advice, especially in suras such as Luqman.
2. Christianity: The Book of Proverbs is a collection of sayings and teachings attributed primarily to King Solomon, offering practical wisdom, ethics, and moral advice for living a righteous and just life according to God's principles. Its themes include the importance of wisdom, fear of God, honesty, diligence, and human relationships.
3. Hinduism:
 - The Bhagavad Gita: Part of the epic Mahabharata, this text presents teachings on duty, righteousness, and spirituality.
 - The Vedas and Upanishads: Contain many philosophical and ethical teachings that guide Hindus in their daily lives.
4. Buddhism: The Dhammapada, a Buddhist text containing verses on ethics, meditation, and wisdom, is similar in style and purpose to the Proverbs.

5. Confucianism: The Analects of Confucius: a collection of teachings and sayings by the philosopher Confucius, focusing on morality, ethics, and practical wisdom.
6. Taoism: The Tao Te Ching: written by Lao-Tzu, this foundational text of Taoism offers teachings on wisdom, simplicity, and harmony with the Tao (the way).
7. Judaism:
 - The Talmud: Although more of a commentary and analysis of Jewish law, it contains a wealth of ethical teachings and practical wisdom.
 - The Book of Psalms and Ecclesiastes: Also in the Hebrew Bible, these contain reflections and wisdom similar to Proverbs.

Each of these texts has its own cultural and religious context, but they share the goal of guiding their followers in daily life with principles of wisdom and ethics. Thus, both proverbs and popular sayings are fundamental to language and culture, often passed down from generation to generation, and serve as a means of communication that resonates with shared human experiences (Eizadirad & Wane, 2023). In this way, proverbs and sayings serve as both universal and unique landmarks of human activity, no matter the language or cultural context. It is, therefore, no surprise that the study of sayings and proverbs has a very long history, dating back to the works of linguists such as Demirchizade, Zeynalli, Huseynzadeh, Bayramov, Jafarov, Yusifov, Alizadeh, Poteben, N. A. Alifirenko, V. P. Anikin, I. M. Snegiryov, F. I. Buslayev, V. I. Dal, V. M. Mokiyenko, G. L. Apperson, A. Johnson, A. Taylor, A. Dandes and others.

Considering specifically proverbs and sayings that include the word "labor," we can see them as an embodiment of the concept of labor as a social value. Therefore, proverbs about work, found in a variety of traditions, highlight the importance of diligence, integrity, and responsibility as fundamental pillars for success and personal satisfaction. These sayings teach that constant effort and commitment are essential to achieving goals and living a fulfilling life, promoting a work ethic that values honesty and dedication in any task undertaken (Estill, 2011; Lang, 2004). Thus, isolating this concept reveals key values, understandings, and needs of civilizations: Russian, Western, and/or Eastern.

But on the other hand, it is also key to see "labor" as a concept, in other words, that which stands behind the content side of a verbal sign (meaning is one or a certain complex of closely related meanings). A concept is an idea that captures the essential "intelligible" properties of realities and phenomena, as well as the relationships

between them, belonging to the mental, spiritual, or vitally important material sphere of human existence, developed and consolidated by the social experience of the people, having historical roots in their life (Maslova, 2001, p. 10).

In general, all human cognitive activity (cognition) can be considered as developing the ability to navigate the world, and this activity is associated with the need to identify and distinguish objects. Concepts thereby arise to ensure operations of this kind. Consequently, the formation of concepts is associated with knowledge of the world and the formation of ideas about it. In linguistic science, we can identify three main approaches to understanding a concept. All are based on the following general position: a concept is what names its content, i.e., a synonym for meaning.

The first approach, represented by Y. S. Stepanov, pays more attention to the cultural aspect of the concept. According to this, culture is understood as a set of concepts and relationships between them. Consequently, the concept is the main cell of culture in the human mental world; concepts occupy a nuclear position in the collective linguistic consciousness, and therefore their study becomes extremely relevant (Stepanov, 2001, p. 40). The second approach, involving cognitive linguists such as Bulygina and Shmelev, sees the semantics of a linguistic sign as the only means of forming the content of a concept (Babushkin, 2001, p. 45). Proponents of the third approach, including Likhachev and Kubryakova, believe that the concept does not directly arise from the meaning of the word, but is instead the result of a collision of the word's meaning with the personal and folk experience of a person. In other words, the concept is a mediator between words and reality (Kubryakova, 2004, p. 24). However, concepts as interpreters of meanings are constantly amenable to further clarification and modification. They represent realizable entities only at the beginning of their appearance, but then, being part of the system, they come under the influence of other concepts and themselves change. This term still does not have a uniform definition, although it is firmly established in modern linguistics.

Taking into account the above, this work aims to analyze the concept of "labor" in the proverbs and sayings of Russia and Azerbaijan. To achieve this goal, it is important to study the concept of "labor" in Russian and Azerbaijani linguistic cultures; explore the concept of proverbs and sayings; and compare the implementation of the concept of "labor" in Russian and Azerbaijani proverbs and sayings. Then, we use comparative analysis as the main method of research.

We consider the study of proverbs relevant because it offers a deep insight into culture by reflecting social norms, beliefs, and historical experiences, allowing for a richer understanding of the identity and cultural heritage of both nations. From an individual perspective, the analysis of proverbs allows for improving language skills, enriching vocabulary, and understanding of nuanced meanings, which is especially useful for those who are learning a new language. Thus, this work may be interesting for speakers of one of the two languages who want to approach the other. Finally, proverbs are effective tools in communication, as they allow complex ideas to be conveyed in a concise manner, which improves the ability to connect with others and express messages effectively. Understanding the relationship and/or equivalence of these elements in other languages is of great relevance, although it is not unknown to us that achieving adequate translations can be a process with certain difficulties (Qizi & Tursunovich, 2024).

DEVELOPMENT

Basic concepts about proverbs and sayings

The cultural study of proverbs and sayings has brought to the fore the need for a comparative identification of different types of culture reflected in language. The cultural study of language involves illuminating the genre and stylistic features of texts in which the cultural priorities of a civilization, ethnic group, and social system are expressed in the most capacious form. As works of folk oral art, proverbs and sayings are examples of texts of this kind that have been subjected to special research in the cultural and linguistic aspects.

Proverbs and sayings have accompanied people since ancient times, with many dating back to before the advent of writing. They are brief and precise, formulated as a result of long experience – the result of absorbing the past. Expressive means such as precise rhyme, simple form, and brevity make proverbs and sayings persistent, memorable, and, ultimately, necessary in speech. Due to their oral origin and long history, they are also best seen as being of folk origin; their primary source is the collective mind of the people.

Afanasyev wrote that:

Proverbs, by their very form, are not subject to distortion and therefore are a monument to long-established views. Proverbs are the main source of the wisdom of ancestors, guardians of memory, and a tool for transmitting human experience (Afanasyev, 1996, p. 15).

Dal similarly considers the proverb as a product of an exclusively popular environment of communication:

No one will argue that to find proverbs and sayings, no one needs to argue; in an educated and enlightened society, there are no proverbs. High society does not accept ready-made proverbs because these are pictures of a life alien to it, and not its language; but it doesn't make its own, perhaps out of politeness and secular decency: the proverb stabs not in the eyebrow, but right in the eye. (Dal, 2003, p. 10).

Proverbs and sayings, being part of the culture of a given people, have always been and will always remain relevant, remaining a characteristic feature of a given people and therefore an object of attention and research. They react to all phenomena of reality, reflect the life and worldview of the people in all their diversity, and convey every day, social, philosophical, religious, moral, ethical, and aesthetic views of the people. The main purpose of proverbs is to give a popular assessment of objective phenomena of reality, thereby expressing a worldview. And proverbs cope with this task very successfully. Their topics are truly limitless. They cover absolutely all aspects of human life and the most diverse relationships between different phenomena of reality.

One of the most notable theoretical works on the distinction between the concepts of proverbs and sayings is Permyakov's typological classification, which states that "a proverb is a grammatically complete (sentence-like) saying with a figurative motivation of general meaning, requiring a broad interpretation" (Permyakov, 1970, p. 150). "A saying is a grammatically incomplete (not forming a sentence) saying with a figurative motivation of general meaning" (Permyakov, 1970, p. 155). In the work of Arkhangelsky, proverbs and sayings are considered a special type of secondary linguistic sign included in the circle of phraseological units (Arkhangelsky, 1964, p. 147).

Proverbs and sayings are the most important material for the study of historical events, ethnography, life, and worldview of the people. Having withstood the evaluation of time, they have organically merged with speech, enhancing it with wit, and giving the speaker the ability to aptly and accurately characterize all the diverse manifestations of life. Comparing proverbs and sayings of different peoples shows how much they have in common, which, in turn, contributes to their better mutual understanding and rapprochement. Proverbs and sayings reflect the rich historical experience of the people and ideas related to work, life, and culture of people. The correct and appropriate use of proverbs and sayings gives the speech a unique originality and special expressiveness.

Thus, a proverb is a short, often rhythmic saying, which is a complete sentence and expresses a certain conclusion,

and a saying is a widespread figurative expression that aptly defines any life phenomenon. Unlike proverbs, sayings are devoid of direct instructive meaning and limited to a figurative, often allegorical definition of a phenomenon. The main feature of the proverb is its completeness and didactic content; it is distinguished by the completeness of the conclusion and the presence of an instructive character. A proverb is a grammatically complete (sentence-like) saying, while a saying is grammatically incomplete (not forming a sentence). Thus, a proverb is understood as a short, often rhythmic saying, which is a complete sentence and expresses a certain conclusion, while sayings are widespread figurative expressions that aptly define any life phenomenon.

Comparative analysis of Russian and Azerbaijani proverbs and sayings expressing these two peoples' attitudes to labor

Labor plays the most important role in human life, so, naturally, proverbs about labor occupy a significant place in the proverbial collections of Russian and Azerbaijani languages. The national character of the proverbs and sayings of the Russian and Azerbaijani people is determined by their way of life, rituals, working conditions, folklore traditions, special poetic views of the world, etc. The universality of proverbs and sayings, as a reflection of folklore, constitutes something in common, against the background of which nationally determined differences in worldview, in particular about work, if any, can appear especially clearly.

Greater concreteness of thinking and "reality" is manifested in Azerbaijani proverbs and sayings. Conversely, in Russian proverbs and sayings, there is little specificity; everything that is described is unspeakably beautiful, extremely terrifying, and unreal. The wealth of imagination of the Russian person and the pragmatic restraint of the Azerbaijani is also reflected in the choice of constant epithets that define the means, objects, and actions that are spoken of in proverbs and sayings.

Work in Azerbaijani folklore appears as a constant, "routine" activity, sometimes poetic, but more often devoid of any romantic flair. And the couch potato is perhaps the most negative character, blamed and condemned. *Bekarlıq korluq gətirər – An idle brain is the devil's workshop; Cavanlıqda daş daşı, qocalıqda ye aşı – An idle youth, a needy age.* These meanings have analogues in Russian, for example: *Праздная голова – мастерская дьявола – An idle head is the devil's workshop; Праздность в молодости – нужда в старости – Idleness in youth is need in old age; Без труда нет плода / Без труда меду не едят – He that would eat the fruit must climb the tree;*

Что посеешь, то и пожнешь - As you sow, you shall mow (Rybnikov, 1961)

Since ancient times, laziness and idleness in the eyes of the majority of Azerbaijanis have almost seemed to be the main vice, while work and diligence are considered obvious virtues. *Zəhmətsiz bal yeməzlər – No sweet without sweat; İstəyirsən bal-çörək, al əlinə bel-kürək – No song, no supper, no please without pain; Nə əkərsən, onu da biçərsən – As you sow, you shall mow; İstəyirsən bol-çörək, al əlinə bel-kürək – No song, no supper* (Abasgulyev, 1981, p. 84). Among the Russian people, this meaning is realized by the well-known proverb: *Труд человека кормит, а лень портит – Labour feeds a person, while laziness spoils him*. Therefore, we can say that for both Russian and Azerbaijani mentalities, laziness is a vice.

Using the example of the proverbs and sayings we analyzed, we can say that in Russian proverbs and sayings, there is a certain pressure, instruction, and sometimes even a threat. See, for example: *От труда здоровеют, а от лени болеют – Work makes you healthy, but laziness makes you sick; Праздность (безделье) ум притупляет – Idleness rusts the mind. Без труда нет плода – He that would eat the fruit must climb the tree; Кто не работает, тот не ест – No bees, no honey, no work, no money* (Rybnikov, 1961).

Thus, we concluded that in Russian proverbs, labour appears as a more difficult and exhausting phenomenon than in Azerbaijani ones. In Russian proverbs and sayings, there is a theme that there is no need to work too hard and rush to do the job. *Дело не медведь, в лес не уйдет – Work is no bear, it won't go anywhere; Сидя на печи, не испечешь калачи – A bad beginning makes a bad ending*. In Azerbaijani proverbs and sayings, on the contrary, there is a theme that “you have to work to get something”, “a worker is evaluated by his work”, “laziness leads to poverty and hunger”; *İşləməyən dişləməz – He that will eat the kernel must crack the nut or He that would have eggs must endure the cackling of hens; Cəhd müvəffəqiyyətin anasıdır - Diligence is the mother of success (good luck); Dildən deyil, əldən iti ol – Deeds, not words* (Abasgulyev, 1981, p. 51).

However, it would be incorrect to say that, according to everything presented above, Azerbaijanis are hard-working nations while Russians are lazy. In Russian and Azerbaijani proverbs and sayings, labor and work are presented as positive, profitable, obligatory concepts. Example: *Труд человека кормит, а лень портит; Без дела жить – только небо коптить. Business is the salt of life or our reason to live without anything is to smoke the sky. Halva-halva deməklə ağız şirin olmaz – Fine words*

butter no parsnips or Mere words will not fill a bushel. Bıkarlıq korluq gətirər - Doing nothing is doing ill / Satan always finds work for idle hands (Abasgulyev, 1981, p. 132).

The concept of labor in the linguistic picture of a people is only one of many components and, accordingly, cannot reflect the fullness of its appearance. Such a comparison, however, makes us think that the Russian linguistic personality, along with respect for work, is more negligent in its work activity than the English one. In turn, the English language personality pays more attention to accuracy and conscientiousness in work. However, a positive and negative assessment of work may be associated with different understandings of the same concept by different social groups. Thus, based on all of the above, the following conclusions can be drawn: It is common for a Russian person to show more moderation in work and be content with praise as a reward for work, *Поспешность нужна только при ловле блох – Nothing must be done hastily but killing of fleas*. While Azerbaijanis are more interested in the material side of the issue. *Dürüstlük və qazanc bir çuvala sığmaz – Honour and profit lie not in one sack*.

The Azerbaijani people have a more pragmatic attitude towards work; they are inclined not to exaggerate the results of their work and not to express an overly emotional attitude towards it. *Bir gül ilə bahar olmaz – One swallow does not make a summer or an oak is not felled at one stroke; Roma şəhəri bir gündə tikilməyib və ya pilləkana bir-bir ayaq qoyurlar* (Abasgulyev, 1981, p. 132). – *Rome was not built in a day*.

Wealth and prosperity in the Azerbaijani language are directly related to conscientious work, in contrast to the Russian language, where such a clear pattern is not visible. *Əgər bir işi görməyə dəyərsə, yaxşı görməyə dəyər – If a job is worth doing it is worth doing well; Heç vaxt yarımçıq iş görmə və ya soyub, soyub quyruğunda saxlama* (Abasgulyev, 1981, p. 115). – *Never do things by halves; Əgər yaxşı ola bilmirsənsə, diqqətli ol - If you can't be good, be careful*.

In both Russian and Azerbaijani languages, hard work is compared with images from the animal world such as an ant, an ox, a horse, a bee, and a fish. See, for example, the following proverbs:

“Муравей не велик, а горы копает” – The smallest axe may fell the hugest oak;

“Трудолюбивой пчелке некогда грустить” – A busy bee has no time for sorrow;

“Без пчел не получишь меда” – No bees, no honey;

“Ранняя птичка носок прочищает” – The early bird catches the worm;

“С паршивой овцы хоть шерсти клок” – Even a bad sheep gives a bit of wool;

“трудолюбивый как бобёр” – an eager beaver; to be as busy as a beaver (Rybnikov, 1961).

“Ҳақси ат өзүнә қатғи вурдурмаз” – A good dog deserves a good bone (Abasguliyev, 1981, p. 25).

“Könlü balıq istəyən özünü suya vurar” – He who would catch fish must not mind getting wet (Abasguliyev, 1981, p. 86).

“qarışqa kimi, at kimi işlək” – as active as an ant, a horse, and so on.

Having analyzed the labor proverbs and sayings of the Russian and Azerbaijani people, we can see that labor and its high-quality implementation are positively assessed in Russian society. Idleness and laziness are assessed negatively in the collection of proverbs and sayings of the Russian language. It should also be noted that Russian speakers approve of a person's active creative activity, their desire to work well and efficiently, and the employee's honest attitude toward their duties. In both languages, proverbs with a positive attitude towards labor predominate. For the Azerbaijani people, careful and systematic execution of work is very important. Also, according to Russian and Azerbaijani proverbs and sayings, an employee is evaluated by their work, and laziness leads to poverty and hunger.

CONCLUSIONS

Russian and Azerbaijani proverbs and sayings reveal the idea that labor is what ennobles a person, which is one of the main components of his life, his social value. The morality of both Russian and Azerbaijani proverbs expresses exactly this. Some differences in the assessment of work activity are due to the peculiarities of the national character of Russians and Azerbaijanis. The Azerbaijani people have a more pragmatic attitude to labor, they are inclined not to exaggerate the results of their work and not to express too emotional an attitude towards it. In Russian laziness and idleness are most often condemned, but at the same time avoiding hard and exhausting work is welcomed.

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