

# THE MENTAL

## ASPECTS OF ECONOMY IN PROVERBS AND SAYINGS OF THE LANGUAGE OF POETRY

### ASPECTOS MENTALES DE LA ECONOMÍA EN LOS PROVERBIOS Y DICHOS DE LA LENGUA POÉTICA

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Suggested citation (APA, seventh ed.)

Hasanova, K. (2025). The mental aspects of economy in proverbs and sayings of the language of poetry. *Universidad y Sociedad*, 17(2), e5034.

#### ABSTRACT

Proverbs and sayings, which are among the ancient genres of oral folk literature, are the product of the people's cognition and thought, and have existed in economical forms since their emergence. The lexical composition and structure of folklore expressions in this genre remain largely unchanged, and although they are in a local context, in the language of poetry, depending on stylistic features, they can be shortened or, on the contrary, expanded according to the poet's technical requirements. Some proverbs and sayings have stabilized in language in an economical form since their inception, and in the majority of cases, the synonymic components for "human, person" are presented in a shortened form. Imagery and dual-component characteristics are common to these wise sayings, so the content of the shortened lexical units in both components is determined by the corresponding style of the text, which is discussed in the article. This study examines the linguistic mechanisms of proverbiality, focusing on the lexical composition, structural stability, and stylistic variations of proverbial expressions, focusing particularly but not limited to economic proverbs and sayings.

**Keywords:** Poetic texts, Proverbs and sayings, Language and culture, Linguocultural aspects, Economics of language.

#### RESUMEN

Los proverbios y dichos, que pertenecen a los géneros más antiguos de la literatura popular oral, son el resultado del conocimiento y el pensamiento del pueblo y han existido en formas económicas desde su aparición. La composición y la estructura léxicas de las expresiones folclóricas de este género permanecen prácticamente inalteradas y, aunque se encuentran en un contexto local, en el lenguaje de la poesía, dependiendo de las características estilísticas, pueden acortarse o, por el contrario, ampliarse según los requisitos técnicos del poeta. Algunos proverbios y dichos se han estabilizado en el lenguaje en una forma económica desde su inicio y, en la mayoría de los casos, los componentes sinónimos de "humano, persona" se presentan en forma abreviada. Las características de la imaginería y de los dos componentes son comunes a estos dichos sabios, por lo que el contenido de las unidades léxicas abreviadas en ambos componentes está determinado por el estilo correspondiente del texto, que se analiza en el artículo. Este estudio examina los mecanismos lingüísticos de la proverbialidad, centrándose en la composición léxica, la estabilidad estructural y las variaciones estilísticas de las expresiones proverbiales, centrándose particularmente, pero no limitado a, los proverbios y refranes económicos.

**Palabras clave:** Textos poéticos, Refranes y proverbios, Lengua y cultura, Aspectos lingüístico-culturales, Economía de la lengua.

## INTRODUCTION

Economy is traditionally understood as the science of managing scarce resources, but it habitually transcends its material dimension to infiltrate the symbolic fabric of societies (Blaug, 2025). In this sense, the “mental aspects” of economics allude to the cognitive and emotional processes that influence economic decisions, such as risk aversion, procrastination, or the perception of fairness. Behavioral economics, pioneered by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, demonstrates that economic choices are rarely rational; instead, they are mediated by heuristics and biases (e.g., anchoring effect, loss aversion) (Corr & Plagnol, 2023). Related to this, proverbs and sayings, by condensing practical wisdom, act as “cognitive shortcuts” that guide behaviors even in modern contexts (Faria, 2024). There are extensive examples of this fact and here we highlight some of them:

- the Spanish saying “better a bird in hand than a hundred flying” (Pérez & Holzinger, 2024) encapsulates risk aversion, prioritizing certainty over potential gain. This adage not only teaches prudence but also reflects a fundamental economic principle: the subjective value of security.
- the Arabic Proverb: «راني دلا لبق مہردلا» (Ad-dirham qabl ad-dinar) Literal translation: «Dirham before the dinar» shows the importance of taking care of the small expenses first, which relates to careful financial management and saving.
- the English Proverb: «A penny saved is a penny earned» (Kim et al., 2022) emphasizes the importance of frugality and conservation of resources, directly connecting to economic principles of value preservation and smart financial decision-making.

These proverbs illustrate how cultural wisdom often aligns with core economic insights, demonstrating the deep connection between traditional knowledge and economic behavior. Therefore, we do not hesitate to affirm that popular culture functions as a living archive of economic knowledge, where proverbs serve as a bridge between abstract theory and everyday experience (Winfrey, 2018). In addition, the poetic structure—metaphors, rhythm, rhyme—facilitates the memorization and perpetuation of complex ideas. In addition, proverbs generally operate as teaching tools in oral and written societies. For example, in West Africa, the Yoruba saying “He who does not know where he is going, has already arrived” criticizes the lack of planning, a key principle in resource management (Owomoyela, 2008). These sayings can also reflect historical contexts. During the Industrial Revolution, proverbs such as “Time is money” linked labor productivity to economic progress, reinforcing the Protestant ethic described

by Max Weber. Thus, proverbs are natural laboratories for studying economic psychology. Their brevity and universality make them mirrors of cognitive biases and adaptive strategies (Satyan, 2022).

Considering Azerbaijan, it is important to highlight that the method of forming phraseological units by omitting certain components in some proverbs and sayings is the result of a long historical process. These stable combinations are frequently encountered in classical literary works. For example, the proverb “The rich’s eye is hungry, the poor’s eye is full” (Huseynzade, 1965, p. 90) has been stabilized in artistic style as phraseological units “hungry eye” and “full eye.” From a psycholinguistic perspective, and considering the aspect of linguistic economy, it becomes clear that in both constructions of this folk saying, the word “human” (adam) was omitted after the formation of the saying, which originally would have included it. If we restore the construction, the saying should be used in its full form: “The rich person’s eye will be hungry, the poor person’s eye will be full.” Moreover, the verb “will be” (olar) is added in the first construction, which, in turn, creates a certain heaviness in the folkloric saying. Consequently, throughout history, people have preferred more concise and laconic forms by filtering their creations through deep thought.

Considering the above, the main objective of this work is to examine the linguistic mechanisms of proverbialism, focusing on the lexical composition, structural stability, and stylistic variations of proverbial expressions, particularly in the context of economic proverbs and sayings. To achieve this objective, analytical methods were employed that include the review of the structure and economy of language in sayings and proverbs, as well as a psychological-linguistic approach that considers how these expressions have evolved over time, adapting to the technical requirements of poetry. In addition, the transformations and reinterpretations that poets make of these cultural elements are analyzed, highlighting their aesthetic relevance and their capacity to transmit wisdom accumulated over generations.

## DEVELOPMENT

In Azerbaijani language, some proverbs consist of three components, and it is evident from their structure that omissions have been made in each component. For example, “Anlayana da can qurban, anlamayana da, dad yarımçıq əlindənən” [Even if you understand, your life is sacrificed, and even if you don’t, your taste is left unfinished] (Huseynzade, 1965, p. 35). In fact, in our cognitive apparatus, this saying becomes mentalized as: “To the person who understands, my soul is sacrificed; to the person who

does not understand, my soul is sacrificed; God save us from an incomplete person.” As seen, unnecessary repetition leads to physical fatigue for the listener. In other words, when redundant elements are mentally integrated into the composition of the thought, they are removed from the text, beautifying its structure and creating a concise form with deeper meaning.

From the proverb “Özü bütövdür, sözü yarımçıq” (He/She is whole, but his/her words are incomplete) (Huseynzade, 1965, p. 25), the phraseological combination “sözü bütöv” (the complete word) has also emerged. Furthermore, in its second component, the suffix “-dır” has been omitted, resulting in “yarımçıqdır” (it is incomplete). On the other hand, since the proverb refers to a general person, the personal pronoun “onun” (his/her) has also been omitted, and the restoration of thought would reflect this as: “His/her own is complete, his/her own words are incomplete.”

Logically, one might ask whether phraseological units are historically older than proverbs and sayings. As is evident from the intensive participation of phraseological combinations in the formation of proverbs and sayings, the history of the creation of stable word combinations is indeed very ancient. For example, in the proverb “Aşı bişirən yağdır, gəlinin üzü ağdır” (Is that the butter that pilaf is cooked by? Is that the bride that comes up to someone’s expectations?) (Huseynzade, 1965, p. 75), the phraseological unit “üzü ağ” (to come up to someone’s expectations) plays a key role in the formation of the proverb.

Furthermore, when both components of this proverb are presented as questions, it takes the form: “Where does butter cook?” and “Where does the bride come up to someone’s expectations?” In our cognitive framework, this creates a structure for the proverb that can be understood as: “The butter cooks pilaf on the stove, and the bride comes up to someone’s expectations at home.”

As logical thinking has historically evolved, language has shifted from these expansive forms to more concise structures, thus creating compact and laconic proverbial expressions and sayings. The broader forms we’ve presented here reflect how they are currently conceptualized. In poetic texts, proverbs and sayings are also used for specific stylistic purposes, and in their historical and modified forms, linguistic economy manifests itself in open structures.

For example, in the proverb “keçmə namərd körpüsündən, qoy aparsın sel səni” (Do not cross the bridge of the coward, let the flood carry you) (Huseynzade, 1965, p. 33), related to the opposite components of “mərd” (brave) and “namərd” (coward), although the word “adam” (person) has been omitted in the first component (namərd adam),

it still conceptually appears as a visual mechanism. This wise saying is also in the form of a two-line poem. In the proverb “Namərd mərdə tələ qurur” (The coward sets a trap for the brave), the phrase is used both in its original form and in a modified one for stylistic purposes in poetic texts. However, the word “adam” is omitted in its components, and in this case, it serves as a kind of synecdoche, taking on a specific function.

*“Olan - olub keçdi, dərdə üzülmə,*

*Namərdlər tor qurur mərdə üzülmə”* (Aslan, 2006, p. 56).

*(“What has happened, has passed, don’t sorrow over the trouble,*

*Cowards set traps for the brave, don’t be distressed by it.”)*

In the second line of the proverb, after the word “namərdlər” (cowards), the word “adam” (person) is omitted, and by using the word “tor” (net) as a synonym for “tələ” (trap), linguistic economy is achieved in both the first and second components. This can be clearly observed by restoring the structure in our abstraction: “Namərd adamlar tor qurur mərd adamlara” (Cowards set traps for brave people). The words “namərd” (coward) and “mərd” (brave) have created both antithetical and synecdoche phenomena, and the formation of these linguistic events incorporates the law of economy. All three of these aspects reflect the richness and potential of the language.

Although proverbs and sayings in the language of poetry may undergo various changes in form and content, the element of economy is still evident in them. For example, proverbs and sayings historically created in our language related to physical disabilities, such as “kor kora kor deməsə, bağı çatlar” (Blind leaders of the blind), “kor nə istər, iki göz, biri əyri, biri düz” (A blind man would be glad to see), and “kor kuru tapar, su çuxuru” (the blind finds the blind, the water finds the hole), are laconic and metaphorically have acquired the status of synecdoche. Even though these sayings undergo semantic changes in poetic language, the element of economy still operates, as the word “adam” (person) is omitted.

*“Kor (adam) kora (adama) kor (adam) desə - bu keçib gedər,*

*“Gözlüyə (adama) kor (adam) deyən kor (adam) daha dəhşət”*

*“If a blind person calls another blind person blind, it will pass by,*

***It is more terrifying if a blind person calls a sighted person blind***

(Shamil, 1983, p. 42).

The parts marked in parentheses six times in this micro-text are the actualized members, and

the actualization of sentence members is based on the logical foundation of the sentence and the extralinguistic process (potential) that regulates the normal functioning of the sentence in the speech process. The identification of individual categories of actualization is related to the logical placement of the components of the sentence. (Abdulla, 2016, p. 112).

Proverbs are concise and deeply meaningful expressions of folk wisdom. Their use in the language of poetry not only expands the stylistic possibilities of the poetic text but also enhances the impact of the expressed ideas. The use of proverbs in poetry serves to make the content more vivid and emotional. Especially as a semantic category, in some proverbs, certain words acquire metaphorical meanings, creating broader nuances of meaning.

For example, the metaphORIZATION of the words “kor” (blind) and “adam” (person) leads to them carrying spiritual-psychological and figurative meanings. While in everyday communication, the word “kor” primarily refers to a physical condition, in the language of poetry, it can symbolize a person’s limited worldview, moral level, or cognitive ability. Such metaphors, from a psycholinguistic perspective, cause certain conclusions to form in the human brain. For instance, expressions like “Kora günəşin nə faydası?” (What use is the sun to the blind?) symbolically convey the idea of a person being unable to perceive the beauty and truths around them.

Additionally, sometimes two or more proverbs are used consecutively in a poetic text. In this case, their intonation and content complement each other according to stylistic requirements, further enhancing their meaning and nuances. Structurally, certain changes may be made to maintain the harmony and rhythm of the poem. When proverbs are adapted to a poetic context, their syntactic structure, word order, or substitution of certain words may occur. However, these changes do not interfere with the preservation of the main content; on the contrary, they enhance the artistic power of the expression.

In general, the use of proverbs in the language of poetry demonstrates the unity of folk thought with poetic thinking. This process also proves the dynamic nature of the language, the vastness of its poetic possibilities, and the

ability of folk creativity to evolve in various forms over time. The inclusion of proverbs in a poetic text not only creates an artistic and aesthetic effect but also enhances the content of the poem, influencing the reader’s perception. For example:

*“Özü də yüz ölçüb, bir biçən olub,*

*Özgenin gözündə qıl seçən olub.”*

*(“He has measured a hundred times, cut once,*

*He has picked a speck in someone else’s eye.”)*

(Kurdoglu, 1989, p. 202)

“Yüz ölç, bir biç” (Measure twice, cut once) (Akhundov, 1968, p. 175)– The proverb, although originally in an imperative tone and in the model of a general personal sentence, shows the economy of language in the form of the second-person singular pronoun “sən” (you) being omitted. This saying, in imagination, can be reversed as “when you do something, measure a hundred times, cut once.” In the second line of the proverb, there is also fluency in line with stylistic economy.

For example, its full form in our folklore is “öz gözündə qılı görmür, başqasının gözündə çöp axtarır” (“He doesn’t see the speck in his own eye, but looks for a mote in someone else’s”) (Akhundov, 1968, p. 177). It is in a two-component form, and although the second part is stylistically abbreviated, it is still mentally visualized and used according to poetic requirements. In such fixed folk expressions, the stylistic operations performed by the word artist create a type of structural economy.

The proverb “Sənə güvəndiyim dağlar, sənə də qar yağarmış” (A fair-weather friend) (Akhundov, 1968, p. 178) has a poetic structure that is harmonious, melodic, and musical, with the word “mountains” being activated. It is also clear from the poetic structure that in the second line, the word “mountains” is ellipsized, preventing unnecessary repetition. On the other hand, in this micro-text of a poem, this proverb has undergone structural-semantic compression, further shortening it from a stylistic point of view.

*“O gün olsun Arazla da öyünüm,*

*Qar yağmasın güvəndiyim dağlara”*

*(“May the day come when I can boast with Araz too,*

*May no snow fall on the mountains I trust.”)*

(Badalzade, 1978, p. 184)

Stylistically, in the second line, a considerable number of lexical units have been omitted, and the poet has, in a sense, “domesticated” the folk saying (Hüseynov, 2008: 404). The realization of the actualization is carried out with the lexical unit “dağlar” (mountains), but the microtext has not been deprived of metaphor; it is clothed in a true form. The shortened forms of proverbs and sayings created by the poet himself are clearly manifested in the structure of figurative expressions, and these appear as instances of economy, becoming mentalized in thought, strengthening the lyric-poetic thought sphere, and prompting the reader to engage in deep reflections on word forms.

The folk poet Məmməd Araz, in one of his poems, preferred the shortened, abbreviated form of a folk saying rather than the full version, using the code-word in the title, “məndən ötdü, qardaşıma dəydi” (it passed me, it struck my brother). In fact, the full form of the saying would be something like: “məndən ötdü qardaşıma dəydi, elə sandım saman çuvalıma dəydi” (It passed me, it struck my brother, I thought it hit my hay bag) (Akhundov, 1968, p. 177). The poet also indicated the abbreviated nature of the saying by using ellipses after each part of the proverb in the title.

In the larger poem text, while the sentence “məndən ötdü” (it passed me), a component removed from the proverb, is used intensively and repetitively, we do not encounter the full second part “qardaşıma dəydi” (it struck my brother). In fact, the final part – “I thought it hit my hay bag” – is equivalent in its level of usage. This shows that, in the poem, it is possible to encounter two instances of economical linguistic choices regarding the stylistic and thematic palette of a full proverb or saying. While the omission of any element of a proverb or saying in a poetic text leads to a formal economy, it also creates paradigms in the structural-content aspect, arouses stylistic-aesthetic interest, and becomes a unique and original creative material for the word artist.

*“Məndən ötdü!..*

*Məndən ötdü!..*

*Sevincə bax, qeyrətə bax!*

*Bunu yazan xilqətə bax!*

*Məndən ötdü!..*

*Qulağımdan getmir bu səs,*

*Zərbələri qardaşıma,*

*Sirdaşıma ötürən səs”*

(Araz, 2004, p. 85).

“In poetry texts, the proverb ‘a fearful eye will catch a speck of dust’ and ‘one who drowns will grab a straw in the water’ (Akhundov, 1968, p. 178) are used in one form or another. In these established folk sayings, the word ‘person’ has been omitted since, from the time of their origin, the concept of ‘human being’ is implied.”

*“Ümid (suda) boğulanın (adamın) saman çöpüdür,*

*Qorxub çəkinir (adamın) gözüne düşər”*

*(“Hope is the straw of the one (person) drowning in the water,*

*Fear and hesitation will make the speck of dust fall into the eye of the (person).”*(Mustafa, 1983, p. 25)

In this case, the addressee receives poetic information from the addresser (the speaker, the poet) and, in the contextual situation, determines how many proverbs are used and what kind of economy event occurs there, marking it in their mind. The image created in the mind by the proverb ‘Yüz saman yeyənin olsun, bir yaman deyənin olmasın’ (Let there be a hundred who eat straw, and let there be none who speak badly) is as follows: ‘Let there be a hundred (people) who eat, and let there be no one who speaks badly.’ The image, derived from the addresser’s figurative thinking, has naturally and systematically been used in this way.

*“Sənin də mənim kimi, varlığını, ruhunu,*

*Söküb yeyəninmi var ?*

*Yaman yeyənin olsun, yaman deyəninmi var?”*

*(“Does anyone have the power to tear apart your existence, your soul, like mine? May the one who devours you be cursed, but does anyone dare to speak ill of you?”)*

(Mustafa, 1983, p. 95)

Proverbs and sayings are expressions that reflect the experience and wisdom accumulated by the people over millennia. They are deep, concise examples of words that offer wise advice and life lessons at various moments. As folklore samples, proverbs also embody the lifestyle, worldview, and spiritual values of the people. However, unlike

other genres of folklore, proverbs can sometimes be presented in different forms. This method of presentation may vary depending on the talent of the wordsmith, artistic nature, and approach to language.

The wordsmith reinterprets proverbs and sayings through artistic perception and poetic sensitivity, giving them new life and adding poetic nuances. In this process, the core meaning of the expressions is preserved, but certain structural changes may occur. When compared to other genres of folk art, particularly to bayatis, it becomes evident that some proverbs and sayings are semantically synonymous with bayatis. This similarity is reflected both in their meaning and in their figurative expressions.

Bayatis, as a product of folk thought, serve to express emotions and thoughts in an artistic manner. Their structural features and expression in poetic form create conditions for the content to be more full-bodied and emotionally impactful. In some cases, transforming proverbs into poetic form and expressing them through the language of poetry helps present the wise words created by the people in a more effective and memorable way. Such transformations ensure a more vivid and clear realization of the ideas expressed in the human mind.

These transitions and artistic treatments among various genres of folklore demonstrate the dynamism of folk creativity, its ability to renew over time, and how it can be uniquely expressed by the artist of each era. This process also reveals the artist's individual approach to folk literature, the depth of their poetic thinking, and their artistic-aesthetic sensibility.

For example, the proverb "gəzməyə qürbət ölkə, ölməyə vətən yaxşıdır" (Axundov, 1968: 177) in Bayati form:

*"Əzizim vətən yaxşı,*

*Geyməyə kətan yaxşı,*

*Gəzməyə qürbət ölkə,*

*Ölməyə vətən yaxşı"*

*("My dear, homeland is good,*

*Clothing made of linen is good,*

*Traveling to foreign lands is good,*

*But dying in one's homeland is best")*

(Akhundov, 1968, p. 167)

The way of expression in poetry is as follows:

*"Gəzməyə yaxşıdır, qərib ölkələr,*

*Ölməyə müqəddəs yer – Vətən olsa"*

*("Foreign lands are good to travel,*

*But sacred is the homeland where one dies")*

(Rza, 1986, p. 161)

The leitmotif of the image system in all three poetic examples is undoubtedly the human factor, as the expression "for the human" has been condensed, and this is reflected in the text through the structural and internal-semantic resources of the texts in the mind.

## CONCLUSIONS

Proverbs and sayings, based on the psychological resources of the folk mind, intellect, and thought, have historically emerged, been observed over time, and passed down through generations to reach the present day. They have deeply rooted in the memory of the addressee (the poet, the speaker) and enriched their knowledge reserve, becoming an integral part of the associative processes in the mind. These proverbs and sayings have been used in poetic texts in various forms, and in this regard, the process of condensation has taken place. This event manifests itself primarily as the result of the addressee's individual style and ability to use words. As a result of the complex associative processes occurring in the brain, the wise sayings created by the people's history have been approached in terms of conveying deep meaning in a highly compact form, with some conceptual indicators being condensed. This leads to the formation of appropriate sayings in the cognitive organs and indicates the continuity of the human long-term memory apparatus.

Our analysis showed the deep interconnection between language, economics, and human psychology through the lens of folk proverbs. It is relevant to remark that, within a general framework, these linguistic artifacts serve as complex repositories of collective wisdom since proverbs and sayings encode sophisticated cognitive principles, especially those identified in prospect theory. It can be said that in general, these linguistic constructs provide a narrative framework for understanding human economic behavior beyond traditional economic models and poetic language, in this respect, represents a powerful medium of translation of abstract economic concepts into tangible and accessible narratives.

The findings of this work have important practical implications. For instance, given the acceptance of proverbs and

sayings and its oral features, we can say that when using communicative strategies, it is very important to keep things simple in order to convey information more effectively, which is essential in economic policies, financial education, and/or social interventions. To sum up, proverbs and sayings are not mere linguistic relics but dynamic, living expressions of collective economic wisdom. They allow a peek into the more subtle interrelations between psychology, culture, and economic thinking that underlie any economic behavior, which is a human, narrative-driven phenomenon at its core.

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