



LINGUOCULTURAL FEATURES OF THE CONCEPT OF FRIENDSHIP IN RUSSIAN AND AZERBAIJANI PROVERBS

CARACTERÍSTICAS LINGÜÍSTICAS DEL CONCEPTO DE AMISTAD EN LOS PROVERBIOS RUSOS Y AZERBAIJANOS

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ABSTRACT:

Friendship occupies a significant place within the national and spiritual value systems of both peoples, a fact that is prominently manifested in their languages, particularly in proverbial expressions. In the modern context, examining friendship as a universal value across different cultures helps to establish a vital social and moral foundation for intercultural understanding and cooperation. Furthermore, the exploration of the interrelationship between language and culture continues to gain importance in contemporary linguistic research. Thus, the primary aim of this research is to conduct a comparative linguocultural analysis of the concept of friendship in Russian and Azerbaijani proverbs, with particular attention to its structural components—namely, the notional, figurative-associative, and axiological layers. The study also seeks to determine how the concept is positioned within the value systems of both cultures. By analyzing selected proverbs, the social, moral, ethical, and cultural dimensions of friendship were explored. The findings reveal that in both cultures, the concept is closely tied to notions such as trust, mutual support, relationships valued above material wealth, and the enduring adversity. By identifying both culturally specific and universal features, this investigation contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between language, culture, and collective worldview.

Keywords: Friendship, Linguoculturology, Proverbs, Cultural values, Language and culture.

RESUMEN:

La amistad ocupa un lugar destacado en los sistemas de valores nacionales y espirituales de ambos pueblos, hecho que se manifiesta de forma destacada en sus lenguas, especialmente en sus expresiones proverbiales. En el contexto moderno, examinar la amistad como un valor universal en diferentes culturas contribuye a establecer una base social y moral vital para la comprensión y la cooperación intercultural. Además, la exploración de la interrelación entre lengua y cultura continúa cobrando importancia en la investigación lingüística contemporánea. El objetivo principal de esta investigación es realizar un análisis lingüístico-cultural comparativo del concepto de amistad en los proverbios rusos y azerbaijanos, prestando especial atención a sus componentes estructurales: los niveles nocional, figurativo-asociativo y axiológico. El estudio también busca determinar cómo se posiciona el concepto en los sistemas de valores de ambas culturas. Mediante el análisis de proverbios seleccionados, se exploraron las dimensiones sociales, morales, éticas y culturales de la amistad. Los hallazgos revelan que, en ambas culturas, el concepto está estrechamente vinculado a nociones como la confianza, el apoyo mutuo, las relaciones valoradas por encima de la riqueza material y la resistencia a la adversidad. Al identificar características tanto culturalmente específicas como universales, esta investigación contribuye a una comprensión más profunda de la compleja interacción entre la lengua, la cultura y la cosmovisión colectiva.

Keywords: Amistad, Lingüoculturología, Proverbios, Valores culturales, Idioma y cultura.



INTRODUCTION

Within the paradigm of cognitive linguistics, a concept is defined as “an operational meaningful unit of memory, an element of the conceptual system, and a reflection of the overall linguistic worldview” (Boldyrev, 2000). This definition underscores the cognitive dimension of concepts, viewing them as fundamental building blocks of human cognition and language-mediated knowledge systems. In contrast, the field of linguoculturology adopts a broader, interdisciplinary perspective. From this standpoint, a concept is understood as “a construct of collective consciousness that integrates verbal and non-verbal elements, and encapsulates culturally significant values” (Karasik, 2001; Stepanov, 1997). This interpretation emphasizes the dual linguistic and cultural nature of concepts, highlighting their role as mediators between language, culture, and thought.

In recent decades, linguocultural approaches have emerged as one of the principal paradigms within contemporary linguistic science (Hidayat & Baksheyish, 2024). This perspective emphasizes the role of language not merely as a tool for communication but as a fundamental carrier of cultural meanings, enabling the analysis of conceptual systems at the intersection of linguistic and cultural domains (Hidayat & Baksheyish, 2024). In particular, the investigation of culturally significant concepts—those that encode a community’s core values and worldview—plays a pivotal role in illuminating the social and moral priorities that shape collective identity (Lamazhaa, 2023). Within this framework, the concept of friendship holds special importance, representing one of the key axiological categories that govern interpersonal relationships (Braun, 2017; Kim, 2021).

The conceptual analysis of friendship in the Russian language has been significantly advanced by scholars such as A.D. Shmelev (2002). Through comparative analysis of semantic models related to friendship across various languages, this author has highlighted intercultural differences in the conceptualization of this notion. By analyzing the semantic core of the word *druzhba* (“friendship”) and the verb *druzhit* (“to be friends”), Shmelev demonstrates how the concept of friendship is expressed in Russian through the lenses of emotionality, selflessness, and loyalty. In Azerbaijani studies, paremiological sources compiled by scholars such as Guliyev (1979), Mammadov (1999), and Ismayilov (2005) illustrate how the concept of friendship is embedded in national culture. These sources show that friendship is not only associated with personal relationships but also connected to broader ideas of social justice, trust, moral obligation, and unity.

This article presents a comparative analysis of the concept of friendship within Russian and Azerbaijani linguocultures, using paremiological material as the basis of inquiry. The primary objective is to identify the structural components of the friendship concept—namely, its notional, figurative-associative, and axiological layers—and to examine how this concept is represented and conveyed through the proverbs and sayings of both cultures. Throughout the literature review, it was found that proverbs and sayings function not only as repositories of conceptual content but also as linguistic expressions of cultural codes and collective worldviews. The present analysis thus aims to uncover the cultural conceptualization of friendship in Russian and Azerbaijani traditions and to delineate the specific components through which it is articulated.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopted a linguocultural and paremiological approach to examine the concept of friendship as reflected in Russian and Azerbaijani proverbs and sayings. The research material consisted of paremiological units drawn from both linguistic traditions, selected on the basis of their thematic relevance to the concept of friendship. Russian proverbs and sayings were sourced primarily from the lexicographic and semantic work of Shmelev (2002), as well as the definitions provided by the Great Academic Dictionary of the Russian Language (Vorontsov, 2024). Azerbaijani paremiological sources were used to constitute the corpus for that tradition. Specifically, Azerbaijani proverbs were drawn from Guliyev (1979), Mammadov (1999), and Ismayilov (2005). In total, approximately thirty paremiological units — fifteen from each tradition — were retained for systematic analysis. Units were excluded if their thematic content was only tangentially related to friendship or if their attribution across sources was disputed.

The analysis proceeded through the application of four complementary methods. A comparative analysis was employed to contrast proverbs and sayings from both languages, with the aim of identifying structural similarities and culturally specific differences in the conceptualization of friendship. Componential analysis was applied to examine the semantic layers embedded in each paremiological unit, allowing for the identification of the notional, figurative-associative, and axiological components of the friendship concept as theorized in the linguocultural framework. Contextual interpretation was used to situate each proverb within its cultural and communicative context, enabling a nuanced understanding of the social functions and pragmatic meanings these expressions

fulfill within their respective communities. Finally, the descriptive method was applied to systematize and classify the collected material into thematic groups, which were defined as follows: (1) proverbs that define the role of friendship in human life; (2) proverbs that describe its place within interpersonal relationships; (3) proverbs that characterize the qualities of a true friend; and (4) proverbs that reflect social and moral expectations associated with friendship.

The analytical procedure was structured in accordance with the three-component model of the concept—notional, imagery-perceptual, and axiological. This model served as the analytical grid through which the paremiological material was systematically interpreted. By combining linguistic analysis with cultural interpretation, the study aimed to uncover both the universal dimensions and the culturally specific features of friendship as conceptualized in Russian and Azerbaijani linguistic traditions. The methodological approach ensures the replicability of the analysis, as the corpus and the interpretive criteria are explicitly defined and grounded in established theoretical sources within the field of linguoculturology and paremiology.

RESULTS-DISCUSSION

Linguoculturology has emerged as one of the rapidly developing fields in modern linguistics, focusing on the study, description, and classification of concepts (Kadyrbekova et al., 2024; Maslova et al., 2024). Unlike simple notions, they encompass not only descriptive and classificatory features but also emotional-volitional and figurative-perceptual elements — they are, as the literature notes, “not only thought but also experienced” (Jafarova, 2021). From a linguoculturological standpoint, each concept consists of three interlocking layers:

- Notional component – the core meaning of the concept, often aligned with its dictionary definition.
- Imagery-perceptual component – mental representations, cultural associations, and symbolic connotations connected to the concept.
- Axiological component – the cultural and emotional value that the concept holds for members of a specific community.

The imagery element, unlike the factual and axiological ones, carries a predominantly non-verbal character and can therefore only be described rather than directly cited (Jafarova, 2021). The following analysis applies this three-component grid to the paremiological material.

It is from these culturally significant concepts that a value-based worldview is constructed. As research suggests,

“In this complex mental construct, the fundamental meanings and value dominants of a particular culture come to the forefront—their totality forms a specific type of culture preserved through language” (Stepanov, 1997). Moreover, it is emphasized that “The factual element of a linguocultural concept is retained in consciousness in verbal form and can therefore be directly expressed in speech.

In the paremiological material examined here, the imagery-perceptual layer of the friendship construct is sustained by a set of recurring metaphors and cultural archetypes common to both traditions. Friendship is consistently figured as light (“the world is not sweet when there is no friend”) and as relief from weight (“with a friend, even pain becomes light”), constructing the friend as both a source of perception and a redistributor of burden. A second dominant image is that of fire and metal: time and adversity function as a forge that tests and purifies relational bonds, an archetype present in both the Russian preference for the “old” friend and the Azerbaijani formulation of temporal recognition. The two-faced figure in Azerbaijani proverbial discourse and the temporary ally in Russian proverbial discourse share a common symbolic logic: duplicity and contingency are figured as structural inversions of authentic friendship. These recurring images — light, weight, fire, the double face — constitute the symbolic vocabulary through which both cultures render friendship perceptible and emotionally resonant.

One of the most insightful ways to understand the characteristics of any culture is by identifying its regulatory concepts—those that explain its dominant values and behavioral norms. One of the principal means of expressing such concepts is through value-laden expressions, especially proverbs and sayings. Proverbs reflect specific social norms and encapsulate collective experience. At the same time, they function as symbolic representations of real-life situations or potential scenarios. In the value-based worldview of both Russian and Azerbaijani societies, the concept of friendship holds a prominent position. As a form of interpersonal relationship, friendship is embedded in the system of social values and governed by social norms. Paremiological materials—particularly from Russian linguoculture—provide rich sources for analyzing the cultural characteristics of the friendship concept. Its ethnocultural specificity is closely tied to the hierarchy of values in Russian society.

Both Russian and Azerbaijani paremiological traditions include proverbs, sayings, and intermediate expressions that blend features of both (Bakhshiyeva, 2024). Structurally, proverbs and sayings are complete sentences conveying a full idea. A proverb typically functions on two levels: a literal level based on direct interpretation, and

a figurative level expressing deeper meaning. Sayings, by contrast, are generally one-dimensional, conveying direct meaning without an additional interpretive layer. Some expressions combine traits of both, forming what may be termed proverb-saying types. As noted in the Introduction, the concept of friendship within the Russian worldview has been studied by scholars such as Wierzbicka (1999, 2020) and Shmelev (2002). Wierzbicka (1999, 2020) analyzed friendship models across different cultures, focusing on lexemes such as friend, female friend, comrade, companion-in-arms, and acquaintance. Shmelev expands upon Wierzbicka's findings by adding the verb to be friends (*druzhit*) to this lexical network. He underscores the significance of friendship among Russian speakers, noting that one of its core features is a friend's willingness to offer help in difficult circumstances.

The Great Academic Dictionary of the Russian Language provides the following definitions:

- Friendship: "interpersonal relationships based on mutual affection, spiritual closeness, shared interests, and so forth".
- Friend: "a person closely connected to another through mutual trust, loyalty, and friendly relations" (Vorontsov, 2024).

From these definitions, an initial list of notions associated with the conceptual structure of friendship may include: interpersonal relationships, mutual affection, spiritual closeness, shared interests, trust, and loyalty. The analysis of paremiological units reflecting the concept of friendship in Russian reveals that relevant proverbs and sayings can be categorized into four thematic groups:

1. Proverbs that define the role of friendship in human life.
2. Proverbs that describe the place of friendship within the system of interpersonal relationships.
3. Proverbs that identify the qualities of a true friend and the formation of friendship.
4. Proverbs that reflect social and moral expectations related to friendship.

Ethical aspects in the semantics of the concept of friendship and its place in a person's life

From a linguocultural perspective, the concept of friendship functions as one of the foundational constructs in the system of cultural values. It is regarded as a key indicator of human spiritual existence, and its semantic analysis enables the identification of the distinctive and essential characteristics of this concept (Vorkachev, 2001). According to the Dictionary of Ethics, friendship is defined as a form of voluntary interpersonal relationship,

characterized by mutual respect, trust, kindness, and care (Cuneo, 2020). Its semantic proximity to related concepts such as kinship, love, and companionship highlights both its emotional depth and its historical development.

In ancient Greek philosophy, the term *philia* (friendship) is understood in both broad and narrow senses. In its broader interpretation, it refers to any voluntarily formed positive relationship between individuals. The word *philia* is etymologically linked to *phyle* (tribe), indicating the social and communal roots of friendship (Kon, 1989). In Aristotle's ethical theory, friendship represents an ideal relationship grounded in spiritual closeness and mutual affection. He connects friendship to altruistic behavior, arguing that a person must perform good deeds for a friend's benefit, without expecting personal gain, and must view the friend as an equal. This conception was further developed in Stoic philosophy and early Christian thought. For example, Seneca asserted that if one calls another a friend, one must trust them as fully as one trusts oneself (Seneca, 2000).

The Stoics perceived friendship as a bond founded on moral values and free will. Diogenes Laertius described a friend as a person's "second self," while Epictetus regarded friendship as a relationship between just and virtuous individuals, noting that true friendship is rare. Epicurus valued friendship as a primary means through which wise individuals attain happiness. While friendship may initially arise out of utility, he emphasized its inherent worth. Finally, the Roman philosopher Cicero presented friendship as a relationship rooted in nature. He described it as a noble and morally elevated connection possible only between virtuous and loyal individuals. Cicero further linked the Latin term *amicitia* (friendship) with *amor* (love), underscoring the emotional and conceptual proximity of the two (Cicero, 1993).

Undoubtedly, friendship occupies a vital position in an individual's life and is widely recognized as one of the key indicators of social well-being, emotional stability, and overall life satisfaction. Its significance is deeply embedded in the linguistic and cultural traditions of both Russian and Azerbaijani societies. Proverbs such as "In a world without friends, bright days are not precious" and "Better to have a hundred friends than a hundred rubles" (Ismayılov, 2005) reveal that friendship transcends the realm of personal attachment, functioning as a cultural value and a reliable form of social support.

These paremiological examples highlight that interpersonal bonds categorized as friendship are often regarded as more valuable than material wealth, serving as primary sources of emotional richness and societal integration.

The notion that life without friends is both difficult and devoid of meaning is a recurrent theme across numerous proverbs in both cultures. Therefore, friendship as a cultural construct is not limited to private interactions but emerges as a foundational component in shaping an individual's societal role and their place within a broader system of cultural values.

Thematic Analysis of Friendship in Russian and Azerbaijani Proverbs

The Necessity of Friendship in a Person's Life

The Russian proverbs *Не мил и свет, когда друга нет* (The world is not sweet when there is no friend) and *Без друга в жизни туго* (Without a friend, life is hard) find their profound echo in the Azerbaijani expressions *Dost olma-yanda, həyatın da mənası olmaz* (When there is no friend, life has no meaning) and *Dostsuz həyat çətinidir* (Life without friends is difficult). This paremiological convergence reveals a fundamental anthropological truth: friendship is not merely a complement to human existence, but its constitutive element. The metaphor of light that fades (*не мил и свет*) in the absence of a friend suggests that the very perception of reality transforms when we lack genuine bonds. The external world, regardless of its objective beauty, loses its capacity to move and nourish the human soul.

The psychological dimension of these proverbs points toward what might call "existential loneliness" - a state in which the person experiences a fundamental disconnection not only from other human beings, but from the very meaning of life. The Azerbaijani expression that speaks of the loss of *mənası* (meaning) in life illustrates how friendship functions as an interpretive lens through which one can understand its vital experience. From a sociological perspective, these proverbs reflect the inherently social nature of human beings. The "hardness" of life without friends refers not only to practical difficulties, but to the impossibility of fully experiencing the human condition in isolation. Friendship thus emerges as a mechanism of existential validation, where the "other" confirms our reality and grants it emotional depth.

The Superiority of Friendship Over Material Values

The sayings *Не имей сто рублей, а имей сто друзей* (Don't have a hundred rubles, have a hundred friends) and *Доброе братство дороже богатства* (Good brotherhood is more valuable than wealth) establish a clear axiological hierarchy, which finds parallel in the Azerbaijani expressions *Kisadə pulun olunca, divanda dostun olsun* (When you have money in your pocket, have a friend on the

divan¹) and *Yaxşı dostluq var-dövlətdən dəyşərli* (Good friendship is more valuable than wealth). This juxtaposition between the material and the relational transcends simple economic comparison to delve into profound philosophical territories. The Russian proverb establishes a provocative quantitative equivalence: a hundred rubles versus a hundred friends, suggesting that the value of friendship is exponentially superior to that of currency. This numerical hyperbole emphasizes that while money is finite and fungible, relational wealth is infinite and irreplaceable. The Azerbaijani expression introduces a crucial temporal dimension: the moment when one possesses money (*pulun olunca*) must coincide with the presence of friends in the intimate space of home (*divanda dostun olsun*). This simultaneity is not coincidental; it suggests that true prosperity requires the convergence of material resources and affective bonds. However, the hierarchy remains clear: friends dignify wealth, not vice versa.

The concept of *братство* (brotherhood) in the Russian proverb elevates friendship to an almost sacred dimension, equating it with blood ties but based on free choice. This "chosen brotherhood" possesses superior value to *богатство* (wealth) because it transcends material contingencies and is founded on loyalty, mutual affection, and profound understanding. Culturally, these proverbs reflect societies that have historically experienced the volatility of material goods - invasions, economic crises, political changes - but have found in human bonds a constant that endures beyond external circumstances. Friendship thus becomes the true "social security" of these cultures.

The Difficulty Arising from the Lack of Friendship

The proverbs *С другом и беда не беда* (With a friend, even misfortune is not misfortune) and *Друг познается в беде* (A friend is known in misfortune) reveal the alchemical function of friendship: its capacity to transmute suffering. The parallel Azerbaijani expressions *Dostla dərd də yüngül olar* (With a friend, even pain becomes light) and *Dost dar gündə tanınar* (A friend is recognized in difficult times) confirm this universal wisdom. The paradox expressed in *беда не беда* (misfortune is not misfortune) suggests that the friend's presence does not objectively eliminate the problem, but radically transforms the subjective experience of it. This transformation operates on multiple levels: emotional (shared pain is reduced), cognitive (additional perspective to understand the situation), and practical (combined resources to face the challenge).

¹ A divan is an elongated seat, similar to a sofa or daybed, designed primarily for reclining or lying down. It usually lacks a full backrest or has a lower one at one end, and is widely used for relaxing, reading, or as a decorative element in living rooms and bedrooms.

The concept of recognizing a friend *в беде* (in misfortune) introduces a fascinating epistemological dimension: difficulties function as a reagent that reveals the true nature of relationships. Moments of crisis act as a kind of “trial by fire” that separates authentic friendship from superficial or interested relationships. The Azerbaijani expression *dərd də yüngül olar* (pain becomes light) employs a metaphor of physical weight to describe a psychological phenomenon. This lightness does not imply frivolity, but genuine relief - the emotional burden is distributed between two people, following a kind of “emotional redistribution” where total pain does not disappear, but its individual impact is mitigated. The absence of this mitigating function turns life’s ordinary difficulties into potentially insurmountable obstacles. Without the perspective, emotional support, and practical solidarity that friendship offers, the individual faces not only the objective problem, but also the additional weight of isolation and hopelessness.

The Strengthening of Friendship Through Time and Trials

The proverbs *Старый друг лучше новых двух* (An old friend is better than two new ones) and *Время покажет, кто настоящий друг* (Time will show who is a true friend) establish a temporal philosophy of friendship that finds resonance in the Azerbaijani expressions *Hər şeyin təzəsi, dostun köhnəsi* (Everything new, but friends old) and *Dost zamanla tanınar* (A friend is known with time). The preference for the *старый* (old) over the *новых* (new) in the context of friendship inverts the consumerist logic that privileges novelty. This inversion is not arbitrary; it reflects a profound understanding that genuine human relationships require time to develop their most valuable qualities: trust, mutual understanding, proven loyalty, and intimate knowledge of each other’s character.

The Azerbaijani expression establishes a fascinating categorical distinction: while for material objects we prefer novelty (*hər şeyin təzəsi*), for friends we value antiquity (*dostun köhnəsi*). This dichotomy reveals a cultural wisdom that recognizes different criteria of value according to the nature of the good in question. Time functions as a revealing agent (*nokajem*, *tanınar*) that gradually uncovers the true nature of people. This revelation is not instantaneous but progressive, requiring the accumulation of shared experiences, crises overcome together, and moments of mutual vulnerability. Authentic friendship emerges as a distillate of these temporal experiences. The implicit metaphor of time as “trial” suggests that human relationships, like precious metals, require refining processes. Superficial friendships do not resist the “alloy” of time, while authentic ones are strengthened and purified through it.

Trials and Betrayal in Friendship

The warning proverbs *Друг до поры — тот же недруг* (A temporary friend is the same as an enemy) and *Лучше быть одному, чем с плохим другом* (Better to be alone than with a bad friend), along with their Azerbaijani equivalents *İkiüzlü dostdan düşmən yaxşıdır* (Better an enemy than a two-faced friend) and *Pis dostla olmaqdan, tək olmağı üstün tut* (Prefer to be alone rather than with a bad friend), reveal a darker but equally important dimension of popular wisdom about friendship. The concept of *друг до поры* (temporary friend) introduces a conditional temporality that subverts the notion of friendship as a lasting bond. This “temporary friendship” reveals itself as a contradiction in terms, since true friendship, by definition, transcends circumstantial conveniences. The proverb suggests that whoever is a friend only when it suits them was never really a friend.

The equation between *друг до поры* and *недруг* (enemy) is particularly devastating because it indicates that the betrayal of the supposed friend causes more harm than the frank hostility of a declared enemy. This betrayal is more painful precisely because it violates the expectations of loyalty and trust inherent in the concept of friendship.

The Azerbaijani expression *İkiüzlü dostdan düşmən yaxşıdır* (Better an enemy than a two-faced friend) employs the powerful metaphor of the “double face” to describe duplicity. This image suggests not only falsehood, but a fundamental division of personality that makes the person unpredictable and dangerous. The declared enemy, at least, offers the clarity of their hostile intentions. The radical recommendation to prefer solitude (*Лучше быть одному, tək olmağı üstün tut*) rather than toxic company represents a paradoxical wisdom: sometimes, the absence of relationship is preferable to a harmful relationship. This preference for solitude does not contradict the importance of friendship established in other proverbs, but refines its definition: not any company constitutes true friendship.

These cautionary proverbs function as cultural protection mechanisms, warnings transmitted from generation to generation about the dangers of misplaced trust. They establish criteria of discernment that allow distinguishing between authentic friendship and its harmful imitations, thus protecting the emotional, and social integrity of the individual.

CONCLUSIONS

This research shows that the notion of a concept occupies a central place in contemporary linguistics, particularly within linguocultural studies and cognitive linguistic

frameworks. Concepts are not merely lexical elements but are also mental constructs that constitute the semantic foundation of cultural systems. They shape individual and collective worldviews, regulate social behavior, and serve as mechanisms for transmitting cultural knowledge across generations. Therefore, language is not solely a communicative instrument but also a repository of cultural identity and worldview. Through proverbs and other forms of verbal tradition, language encapsulates complex social and moral insights, thereby reinforcing its status as a vital channel for intercultural understanding.

At the heart of this research lies the construct of friendship, which holds high axiological significance in both Russian and Azerbaijani linguocultures. In both, friendship is viewed as a profound social relationship grounded in spiritual affinity, mutual trust, and loyalty.

The linguocultural analysis of friendship revealed its central role in articulating both universal human values and culturally specific attitudes. The comparative analysis of Russian and Azerbaijani proverbs revealed a transcultural understanding of friendship as a fundamental human phenomenon. Through paremiological expressions, both cultures have codified complex wisdom that recognizes both the supreme value of authentic friendship and the dangers of its falsifications. The thematic convergence between both traditions suggests that certain truths about friendship transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries, pointing toward universal aspects of human experience.

Among the features that appear to be universal across both traditions are: (1) the axiological superiority of friendship over material wealth; (2) adversity as the definitive test of authentic bonds; (3) temporal depth as a marker of relational quality; and (4) the identification of false or conditional friendship as socially and emotionally dangerous. By contrast, certain culture-specific inflections are also discernible: Russian proverbial discourse tends to foreground the concept of *братство* (brotherhood), embedding friendship within a quasi-kinship register that implies chosen solidarity; Azerbaijani expressions more frequently invoke the spatial and social setting of intimacy (the *divan*, the domestic threshold) as a measure of true companionship, reflecting the cultural significance of hospitality as a relational value. Additionally, the Azerbaijani corpus shows a more explicit articulation of the meaning-conferring function of friendship (*dostun olmaqdə həyatın mənası olmaz*), while Russian proverbs tend to frame its absence in terms of experiential impoverishment rather than existential meaninglessness. These differences do not undermine the fundamental convergence between the two traditions but rather enrich the shared conceptual framework with culturally distinct emphases.

The paremiological units discussed throughout the text reflect deep-rooted reflections on human relationships within both Russian and Azerbaijani cultures, where friendship is not only a source of joy and mutual support but also a value subjected to rigorous ethical scrutiny. These expressions underscore that the true strength of companionship lies in its capacity to endure hardship and withstand the tests of time. Additionally, these traditions acknowledge the psychological toll of false or toxic relationships. By promoting the wisdom of avoiding harmful associations, these sayings stress the need to distinguish authentic friendships from superficial or self-serving ones. In both cultures, the moral depth and emotional integrity of friendship are essential—and when these qualities are absent, isolation may serve as a safer and more honorable alternative.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

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