

## Linguistic and Cultural Characteristics of Parables in French and Uzbek Folk Tales

MATYAKUBOV OYBEK QURALBAYEVICH  
*Bukhara State University, Bukhara, Uzbekistan*

### ABSTRACT

*This article explores the parable units found in Uzbek and French folk tales from a linguistic and cultural perspective. Their similarities and differences in structure and semantics, cultural connotations, compatibility with hero images, gender differentiations, as well as their functions of reflecting ethnocultural realities and national identity are extensively studied, and the didactic-philosophical, sociopragmatic, linguistic-stylistic and semiotic functions of the parable are identified. This article provides an in-depth comparative analysis of the cultural thinking, moral image, language and culture harmony, semantic models specific to the folk worldview, and social identities of the two peoples through French and Uzbek parable texts. This process allows us to interpret parable not only as a unit existing in language, but also as a discursive unit measuring intercultural differences and commonalities.*

**Keywords:** Linguistic unit, parable, lexical and grammatical structure, linguocultural phenomenon, historical memory, critical philosophy, personal freedom, healthy skepticism, realistic assessment, cultural connotation.

### INTRODUCTION

Folktale is one of the most ancient, but still the most compact forms of oral folk art that has not lost its semantic and cultural value to this day. As a linguistic unit, it is not limited only to its lexical and grammatical structure, but is considered a

linguocultural phenomenon that embodies the deep layers of folk thinking, historical memory and moral positions. Folktale is a spiritual bridge between generations, in which culture, mentality, value system and codes of social behavior are formed as a coded semantic model [9].

The role of the parable in a fairy tale is not limited to teaching a moral lesson or dynamically developing the plot. It also performs many other functions, such as forming the image of the hero, expanding the context of events, reinforcing cultural stereotypes and values, expressing national consciousness, and so on [1]. Therefore, parable texts are considered as a unique system of sociocultural signs, which also requires this complex approach in translation [10].

#### METHODS

Parable is the most concise and meaningful form of folk oral creativity, it is a coded semantic form of folk thinking, value system, historical experience and cultural identity. Although the parable is short in terms of linguistic form, its meaning is deep and multi-layered. Behind each parable lies the philosophy of life, moral standards and social behavior of the people [3]. Therefore, the analysis of parable is a study that should be conducted not only within linguistics, but also within the framework of cultural studies.

#### RESULTS

The process of encoding a parable as a semantic unit is associated with the cultural semiotic system. In this sense, a parable can be called a “cultural code”. Through these codes, the people transmit their experience, warnings, values, and views to subsequent generations [8]. For example, the Uzbek parable *Qarg‘aning qo‘lidan tutma, qovog‘i bilan aldaydi* (Don’t hold the crow by the hand, it deceives with its frown) means the people’s cautious attitude towards suspicious people, and through this image the entire moral assessment is encoded.

This “coded” feature of the parable distinguishes it from other speech units. The images, metaphors, animals, tools or family members used in the parable evoke certain associations in the minds of the people. For example, in the Uzbek language, the parable *Ota oldida bola – bola* (A child before the father is a child) expresses not only the family hierarchy, but also respect and moral standards. Therefore, the parable is a collective semantic archive of folk culture.

The French parable *Il ne faut pas réveiller le chat qui dort* (*Uxlayotgan mushukni uyg‘otma* – Don’t wake a sleeping cat) also encodes a cultural experience – it expresses the value of not disturbing dangerous or problematic situations, that is, preventive passivity. This parable expresses the characteristics of the French people, their desire for caution, restraint, and balance.

Parable is actively used as a didactic and philosophical tool in the text of a fairy tale. Through them, the plot of the fairy tale is directed towards a moral or social lesson. Especially when a parable is presented that evaluates the actions of the fairy tale hero, this not only gives an emotional impact to the plot, but also encourages the listener or reader to draw a certain moral conclusion. One of the main functions of this parable is to educate.

In French folktales, the parable often appears at the end of the tale or at a significant turning point, providing a brief but figurative lesson. For example, in La Fontaine's fables, the parable *La raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure* (*Kuchli odamning fikri doim to‘g‘ri sanaladi* – The reason of the strongest is always right) provides a critical philosophy of the balance of power and justice [2]. Here, the parable exposes injustice in human society through animal imagery.

In Uzbek folk tales, parables are more related to social morality and family values. For example, the parable *Yolg‘onning oyog‘i kalta* (The Lie Has Short Legs) is used in a fairy tale where the hero tries to achieve his goal by deception, and through this, the value of truthfulness is instilled in the listener. Through such tales, children are guided to values such as honesty, patience, forgiveness, and justice.

The philosophical function of a parable is that it connects ordinary events to universal truths. For example, the French parable *On ne peut pas avoir le beurre et l'argent du beurre* (*Ham yog'ni, ham uning pulini bo'lish mumkin emas* – One cannot have both butter and its money) expresses the limits of human desires and the philosophy of choice. In this respect, a parable is the main tool for shaping a moral position within a fairy tale.

Although French and Uzbek parables share many similarities in content, there are also differences in their cultural background. For example, both cultures value values such as hard work, patience, and honesty. The Uzbek parable *Mehnat qilgan – to'yadi* (He who works hard is satisfied) conveys the same general idea as the French parable *On n'a rien sans rien* (*Hech narsaga hech narsa evaziga erishilmaydi* – Nothing is achieved for nothing) – a person achieves results through his own efforts.

However, behind these commonalities lies the unique mentality of each nation. For example, while in Uzbek parables social stability, respect and piety are paramount, in French parables personal freedom, healthy skepticism and realistic assessment are important. For example, while the Uzbek parable *Ota oldida bola – bola* (A son before his father) expresses loyalty to the social hierarchy, in French such a strict hierarchical classification is often reflected in a critical connotation.

Another difference is seen in the aesthetic style and metaphorical imagery. While Uzbek parables tend to use images of nature, animals, or rural life (e.g., *Qo'y so'ydingmi, yo'lini so'y* – Have you slaughtered a sheep, slaughter its path), French parables tend to use images of life events and urban life (e.g., *Les absents ont toujours tort* – *Yo'qlarning doim aybi bor* – The absent are always to blame).

Also, French parables widely use irony and ironic tone. This indicates a greater emotional distance and critical position compared to Uzbek parables. For example, the parable *Tel est pris qui croyait prendre* (*Aldamoqchi bo'lganning o'zi aldanadi* – He who wants to deceive is deceived) gives an ironic hint about the unnatural but inevitable restoration of justice in French

culture. Thus, in both cultures, parables reflect values, but their analysis reveals cross-cultural differences.

*Table of values in French and Uzbek parables*

<b>Parable (in the original language)</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Value/meaning</b>	<b>Cultural connotation</b>
<i>Mehnat qilgan – to'yadi</i>	Uzbek	The value of work and honesty	Blessing is in labor (agrarian mentality)
<i>On n'a rien sans rien</i>	French	Nothing happens without hard work.	No profit without work (personal responsibility)
<i>Ota oldida bola – bola</i>	Uzbek	Loyalty to social hierarchy	Young people are obliged to respect their elders.
<i>Les absents ont toujours tort</i>	French	Absence and responsibility	Those who do not participate will be criticized.
<i>Qo'y so'ydingmi, yo'lini so'y</i>	Uzbek	Compliance with tradition	Style and order are important.
<i>Les absents ont toujours tort</i>	French	The consequences of irresponsibility	Firmness in social relationships
<i>Tel est pris qui croyait prendre</i>	French	An ironic expression of justice and punishment	Critical realism and irony

The parable is recognized as the most important reflection of the mentality of the people. Mentality is a general system of historical experience, social values, outlook on life, moral ideals and stereotypes of the people. The parables encode this system at the semantic level. For example, the parable in the Uzbek language *Qo'shni haqqi – Tangri haqqi* – (The right of the neighbor is the right of God) shows that collectivism, kindness and religious and moral values are deeply rooted in our people.

In the French mentality, individual freedom, realistic assessment and critical thinking prevail. For example, through the parable *Aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera* (*O'zingga yordam ber – osmon ham yordam beradi* *Help yourself – the sky will help*

you), the French promote a philosophy of life based on human action. This parable does not contain divine help itself, but rather pragmatism that encourages action. This is the opposite of the French mentality: activity and independence.

In parables that express mentality, one can also see the stereotypes and cultural architecture of the people. In the Uzbek parable, the phrase *Yig'lamagan bolaga non yo'q* (There is no bread for a crying child) expresses the mentality of asking for help and not hiding one's need, while the French parable *Il n'y a pas de fumée sans feu* (*Tutun bo'lsa, albatta olov ham bor* – Where there is smoke, there is certainly fire) expresses the culture of critical thinking based on cause and effect.

Thus, each parable actually reveals the people's way of thinking and model of perceiving the world. Through them, mentality is formed as a cultural code and passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, studying parables is the study of the people's thinking, worldview, and moral approaches.

The metaphor plays an important semantic role in the plot structure of a fairy tale. It is often used in a fairy tale in connection with an important decision of the hero, overcoming an obstacle, or learning a lesson. The metaphor is naturally included in the plot and leads the listener or reader to a general conclusion. This aspect is especially evident in educational fairy tales.

For example, when a hero acts patiently in an Uzbek fairy tale, a moral conclusion is reinforced through parables such as *Sabr qilgan – daromad topgan* (He who is patient is a gainer) or *Shoshgan – shaytonga sherik* (He who is hasty is a partner of the devil.) This parable is directly related to the actions in the plot and serves as a conclusion to the content of the fairy tale. The parable summarizes the lesson that the reader understands as an artistically based moral criterion.

In French fables, the parable is often placed at the end of the fable, summarizing the entire content of the tale. For example, almost all of La Fontaine's fables end with a moral. In the fable *La cigale et la fourmi* (The Grasshopper and the Ant), the theme of waste and labor ends with the parable *On ne prête pas aux gens sans prévoyance* (One does not lend to the unwary).

These parable elements in fairy tales help the reader think logically and emotionally. The moral lesson formed by the events experienced by the hero is captured through a short and figurative parable. Thus, the parable in a fairy tale is the sociocultural and educational equivalent of the plot.

The parable plays a key role not only in the moral conclusion, but also in the linguistic and cultural formation of the hero's image. In Uzbek folk tales, heroes are often ordinary, but wise, patient and honest people from the people [6]. These heroes are evaluated through the parable or they themselves tell the parable – this emphasizes their virtue. For example, the parable *Bilmagan – o'rganadi, bilgan – boshqaradi* (He who does not know – learns, he who knows – manages) is used in relation to an intelligent hero.

In French fairy tales, heroes are often unconventional, characters who overcome through cunning or experience rather than intelligence. For example, characters like the “Maître Renard” (Master Fox) triumph through cunning, and this is justified by the parable *La ruse est une forme d'intelligence* (*Ayyorlik – aqlning bir ko'rinishi* – Cunning is a form of intelligence). This shows the value of pragmatic intelligence in French culture.

The harmony of the parable and the image of the hero shows that both of them rely on cultural codes. The Uzbek hero is a positive, patient and kind image, while the French hero is a self-thinking, quick-thinking and adaptable image. In both cases, the parable serves as a linguo-cultural tool in “presenting” this image [5].

The role, function, and attitude of the hero in society are also formed through the parable. The Uzbek parable *Yaxshi ot – yarmi odam* – A good horse is half a man praises the hero's loyalty and reliability. In French, the parable *Un homme averti en vaut deux* (*Ogohlangan odam – ikki kishilik* – A warned man is worth two) values intelligence and preparation. Thus, the parable is a powerful tool for contextualizing the image of the hero from a linguocultural perspective.

In parables, male and female images are often presented based on social stereotypes. In linguistics, this is called linguistic

differentiation – that is, the semantic and stylistic differentiation of language units based on gender. The Uzbek parable *Ayol bosh bo'lsa – el xor bo'ladi* (If a woman is the leader, the nation will be humiliated) reflects a skeptical, patriarchal view of women's leadership position in society. Such parables encode ancient social positions regarding gender.

In French parables, women are more often associated with characteristics such as willpower, prudence, or sensitivity. For example, the folk saying *Femme qui rit à moitié dans ton lit* (*Kulayotgan ayol yarim yotog'ingda* – The woman who laughs half in your bed) associates the image of a woman with charm and intuition. Such expressions semantically encode gender-specific behaviors. It is unacceptable to translate such differences literally, but they should be expressed with a culturally appropriate interpretative approach.

In Uzbek folktales, male characters are often portrayed as brave, wise, patient, or strong. The parable *Erkak kishining boshi bir bo'lsa ham, gapi ikki* (A man may have one head, but two mouths) illustrates the social roles and evaluations of the male character. The French phrase *Un homme averti en vaut deux* (*Ogoh erkak ikki kishilik* – A wise man is worth two) also reflects a positive stereotype of the male character – this character values more intelligence and caution.

*Parables about the image of man/woman in linguistic differentiation*

Parable (in the original language)	Language	Social context of gender
<i>Ayol bosh bo'lsa – el xor bo'ladi</i>	Uzbek	Patriarchal skepticism about women's leadership roles
<i>Femme qui rit à moitié dans ton lit</i>	French	The woman's charm and sensitivity prevail
<i>Erkak kishining boshi bir bo'lsa ham, gapi ikki</i>	Uzbek	A man's mind is considered stable and strong.
<i>Un homme averti en vaut deux</i>	French	A wise man is a symbol of a valued virtue
<i>Ayol – uying ko'zgusi</i>	Uzbek	The woman is interpreted as a mirror of domestic upbringing and culture

<i>La femme est l'avenir de l'homme</i>	French	The woman is interpreted as a mirror of home upbringing and culture
<i>Erkak – tog', ayol – soy</i>	Uzbek	The psychological and social differences between the sexes are symbolized
<i>L'homme propose, Dieu dispose</i>	French	A man wants, but God determines fate (a man is an initiator)
<i>Qiz bola – elga omonat</i>	Uzbek	The social status of girls is associated with responsibility and protection.
<i>Les femmes sont faites pour être aimées, non pour être comprises</i>	French	Women are there to love, not to understand – an ironic gender stereotype

This linguistic differentiation is a linguistic representation of culturally valued gender roles. Therefore, when translating a parable, it is important to correctly interpret not only the lexical unit related to gender, but also the social value, moral connotation, and cultural symbols behind it [4]. Otherwise, the translation may misrepresent gender stereotypes or lose the delicate cultural context.

The units of parables semantically reflect ethnocultural realities in the life of the people - that is, the lifestyle, family model, division of labor, religious values, and social roles characteristic of a particular society. For example, the parable in the Uzbek language *Er egasi – uy bekasi* (The owner of the land is the mistress of the house) expresses the family hierarchy, gender-based social roles. This reality stems from the patriarchal social system of the Uzbek people.

The French *Bon sang ne saurait mentir* (*Yaxshi nasl yolg'on gapirmaydi*) emphasizes family background, upbringing, and "high" and "low" class positions in society. Here, social role is expressed in terms of lineage and morality. In the French context, attitudes towards social position are more related to historical social differences.

*Table of quotes reflecting ethnocultural realities*

<b>Parable (in the original language)</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Social/cultural context</b>
<i>Er egasi – uy bekasi</i>	Uzbek	Family hierarchy, gender-based role
<i>Bon sang ne saurait mentir</i>	French	Lineage, morality, and social position
<i>Onaning bir qarg'ishidan bolasining o'n yili xor bo'ladi</i>	Uzbek	Psychological impact between mother and child
<i>Mieux vaut être seul que mal accompagné</i>	French	Personal choice and social caution
<i>Ona – maktab, bola – daftar</i>	Uzbek	Mother as a center of education
<i>La femme est l'avenir de l'homme</i>	French	The impact of the image of women on the social future
<i>Otangga qarab o'g'il ol</i>	Uzbek	Social decision-making based on lineage
<i>Tel père, tel fils</i>	French	Interpretation of upbringing through resemblance to the father
<i>Ko'ra qarab oyoq uzat</i>	Uzbek	Living within economic means
<i>Qui trop embrasse mal étreint</i>	French	Excessive desire is not productive.

In Uzbek parables, roles in society are clearly demarcated: father – ruler, mother – educator, child – obedient. Phrases such as *Onaning bir qarg'ishidan bolasining o'n yili xor bo'ladi* (A mother's curse will make her child ten years old) indicate psychological roles and moral priorities within the family. Such realities must be enriched with commentary or context when translated into another culture, otherwise their semantic depth will be lost.

In French parables, the image of society is based more on individual, critical, and freedom-oriented values. The parable *Mieux vaut être seul que mal accompagné* (*Yomon do'stdan ko'ra yolg'izlik afzal – It is better to be alone than with a bad friend*) emphasizes personal qualities, friendship, and social

choice. This contradicts the idea that “loneliness” in Uzbek society is not a blessing, but a problem. Therefore, the correct interpretation of ethnocultural realities in the translation of parables is important.

As a coded unit of folk culture, the parable expresses national identity and cultural thinking through the shortest but deepest semantic means. Each parable embodies the unique value system, historical experience, and moral norms of the people. Although the parable in Uzbek fairy tales *O‘z uyim – o‘lan to‘shagim* (My home is my bed of death) seems like a simple expression, it expresses an important element of national thinking – contentment, blessing, and independence.

The French parable *Chacun voit midi à sa porte* (*Har kim quyoshni o‘z eshigi yonida ko‘radi* – Everyone sees the sun at their door) reflects a cultural mindset based on individual thinking, subjective truth, and pluralism. This parable emphasizes that everyone’s criterion of truth depends on their own context. This is a linguistic expression of tolerance, critical thinking, and individual freedom in French culture.

Parables that shape national identity often serve as a means of preserving the historical and social memory of the people. For example, the Uzbek parable, *Er yurt – elning ko‘zidir* (The land is the eye of the people) reflects the patriotic feelings of the people, historical lessons, and social solidarity in society. By placing such units in the appropriate context in translation, the national spirit is preserved.

Generally accepted values, such as *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* (*Erkinlik, tenglik, birodarlik* – Liberty, equality, fraternity) in the French parable, determine the political and social foundations of the thinking of society. Therefore, the parable in fairy tales is not just a textual element, but a cultural product that reflects national thinking and cultural consciousness. If these components are not preserved in translation, the text not only loses its identity, but also becomes the cause of misinterpretation.

*Quotes reflecting national identity and cultural thinking*

<b>Parable (in the original language)</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>National identity/cultural thought</b>
<i>O'z uyim – o'lan to'shagim</i>	Uzbek	Values of contentment, independence, inner bliss
<i>Chacun voit midi à sa porte</i>	French	Subjective truth, tolerance and individual perspective
<i>Er yurt – elning ko'zidir</i>	Uzbek	Patriotism, historical memory, unity
<i>Liberté, égalité, fraternité</i>	French	Liberty, equality, fraternity - the expression of French political consciousness
<i>Yurt yong'in bo'lsa, o't ichra qolarsan</i>	Uzbek	Connecting identity with the people, fighting spirit
<i>L'union fait la force</i>	French	Strength through unity – the value of teamwork
<i>Qazonsiz osh bo'lmaydi</i>	Uzbek	No results without hard work – realistic thinking
<i>On ne fait pas d'omelette sans casser des œufs</i>	French	Sacrifice is necessary for success – a pragmatic worldview
<i>Til – millat ko'zgusi</i>	Uzbek	Unity in national consciousness and language
<i>Il faut tourner sept fois sa langue dans sa bouche avant de parler</i>	French	Respect for the responsibility of speech, cultural norms of behavior

As a semantic and cultural multifunctional unit in the tale, the tale expresses the national mentality, value system, and historical consciousness of the two peoples. While social stability, respect, collectivism, tolerance, and religious and moral orders are paramount in the Uzbek tale, values such as personal freedom, critical thinking, individualism, and realism are clearly manifested in the French tale. Metaphorical images, stereotypes, symbols, and forms of plot connection in the tales form different discursive models in both cultures.

## DISCUSSION

Parable, being a language tool, also serves as a semantic “mirror” of folk thinking. Its linguocultural nature requires high attention

in translation, since in the translation process it is necessary to maintain not only lexical and spiritual compatibility, but also contextual harmony with cultural connotations, communicative intention and hero images. This situation was practically substantiated in the study using examples from French and Uzbek.

Also, the images of men and women, family structures, social roles and gender stereotypes in the parable texts were identified as linguistic expressions of the cultural thinking of the people. While Uzbek culture reflects patriarchal hierarchy and collectivist values, freedom, criticality and pragmatism prevail in French parable. These aspects are direct evidence of cross-cultural differences in parable analysis.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the tale is a semantically-moral, culturally-linguistically and functionally rich layered unity in the fairy tale. Through it, national identity, historical consciousness, mentality and moral norms are transmitted from generation to generation. This complex, multi-layered nature of the tale needs to be deeply analyzed in translation. On this basis, the comparative analyses conducted within the chapter made it possible to assess the tale as a central discursive form of folk thought.

Although French and Uzbek parables express common concepts such as work, honesty, courage, and freedom, their semantic orientation, metaphorical expression, and cultural interpretation differ sharply. For example, in Uzbek parables, work is associated with blessing, while in French it is associated with personal initiative and freedom. These differences require ensuring cultural compatibility in translation.

Through the texts of parables, images of women and men in society, family models, moral norms and cultural stereotypes are encoded. While patriarchy and collectivism prevail in Uzbek culture, freedom and individualism are the main directions in French parables. These differences require accurate reflection of gender differentiation and cultural realities in translation.

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**MATYAKUBOV OYBEK QURALBAYEVICH**

FRENCH LANGUAGE TEACHER,  
ACADEMIC LYCEUM,  
URGENCH STATE UNIVERSITY,  
INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER,  
BUKHARA STATE UNIVERSITY,  
BUKHARA, UZBEKISTAN.