

Linguocultural Analysis of Uzbek and English Anti-Proverbs including Somatisms

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ABSTRACT

Proverbs encapsulate collective wisdom, while anti-proverbs creatively transform these traditional expressions through parody, humor, or modern reinterpretation, and within both genres somatisms – lexical items denoting body parts - function as figurative anchors that connect physical experience to abstract concepts. This study examines somatisms in Uzbek and English anti-proverbs by compiling a corpus of examples from both languages, drawn from published paremiological sources and online databases, and applying lexical-semantic, comparative cultural, and pragmatic methods to analyze figurative meaning, humor, and cultural symbolism. The findings reveal that both traditions frequently employ somatisms such as head, eye, hand, heart, and tongue, yet their cultural functions differ: Uzbek anti-proverbs tend to parody moral and communal values, while English anti-proverbs emphasize humor, irony, and individualism. Somatisms act as metaphorical bridges between the physical and abstract domains, and their reinterpretation in anti-proverbs reflects cultural shifts and contemporary social critique. In conclusion, the comparative analysis demonstrates that somatisms in Uzbek and English anti-proverbs reveal universal figurative tendencies alongside culture-specific features, underscoring the complex interplay of language, cognition, and culture in paremiological creativity.

Keywords: Somatisms, Uzbek proverbs, English anti-proverbs, paremiology, figurative language, cultural analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Proverbs are widely recognized as condensed expressions of collective wisdom, moral principles, and cultural identity. They function as stable folklore units that preserve centuries-old experience, social norms, and ethical values of a community. Anti-proverbs, by contrast, represent creative transformations of these traditional proverbs, often employing humor, parody, or irony to challenge established norms and adapt proverbial wisdom to modern contexts. Within both proverbs and anti-proverbs, somatisms – lexical units denoting parts of the human body – play a central role, serving as figurative anchors that link physical experience to abstract concepts such as morality, wisdom, love, and social behavior.

The study of somatisms in paremiology is significant because body-related metaphors are deeply embedded in human cognition and cultural symbolism. As Asrorova (2025) notes, somatisms in Uzbek and English proverbs reflect national mentality and worldview, demonstrating how language conveys cultural values through metaphorical associations with body parts. Similarly, Akbaraliyeva (2025) emphasizes that somatic proverbs reveal ethnolinguistic patterns and highlight the intersection of linguistics and culture, showing how paremiological units embody both universal and culture-specific meanings. Yaxyoyev (2025) further argues that comparative studies of somatisms in English and Uzbek proverbs are essential, as they uncover shared figurative tendencies while also identifying unique cultural patterns in metaphorical usage.

In Uzbek tradition, somatisms often emphasize communal morality and ethical conduct, with proverbs such as *Ko'ngil ko'zi ko'r bo'lsa, til ojiz* (“If the eye of the heart is blind, the tongue is powerless”) illustrating the moral dimension of bodily metaphors. In English, however, somatisms frequently highlight individualism and pragmatic values, as seen in proverbs like “A man’s eyes are his castle.” Anti-proverbs in both languages creatively distort these associations: Uzbek anti-proverbs parody moral lessons by inserting modern references (e.g., technology),

while English anti-proverbs often employ humor and irony to critique contemporary life.

This comparative investigation of somatisms in Uzbek and English anti-proverbs is therefore crucial for understanding how language, cognition, and culture interact in paremiological creativity. By analyzing the linguistic structures and cultural functions of somatisms, the study aims to reveal both universal figurative tendencies and culture-specific features, thereby contributing to broader discussions in linguistics, ethnolinguistics, and cultural studies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted on the basis of a carefully selected corpus of Uzbek and English proverbs and anti-proverbs. The Uzbek material was drawn from folklore anthologies, linguistic studies, and academic publications that specifically address somatic phraseology and cultural symbolism (Maqsudova 2024; Nuritdinova 2025). The English material was collected from established proverb dictionaries, scholarly works on anti-proverbs, and online databases that document modern transformations of traditional proverbs (Asrorova 2025). In order to ensure balance and comparability, the corpus included an equal number of examples from both languages, representing a wide range of themes such as morality, humor, social critique, and everyday wisdom.

The sources were chosen to reflect both traditional paremiological collections and contemporary reinterpretations. Uzbek proverbs were primarily taken from oral folklore and published collections, while anti-proverbs were gathered from modern linguistic studies and cultural commentaries. English proverbs were selected from internationally recognized proverb dictionaries, while anti-proverbs were drawn from online repositories and scholarly analyses of parody and humor in modern discourse. Comparative references were also consulted, particularly ethnolinguistic works that highlight the role of body-related metaphors in shaping cultural identity and worldview (Akbaraliyeva 2025).

The analytical framework combined several complementary approaches. First, a lexical-semantic analysis was applied to identify and categorize somatisms such as “head,” “eye,” “hand,” “heart,” and “tongue,” examining their metaphorical extensions and semantic fields (Maqsudova 2024). Second, a comparative cultural analysis was undertaken to explore how these somatisms reflect values, moral patterns, and worldview differences between Uzbek collectivism and English individualism (Nuritdinova 2025). Finally, a pragmatic analysis was employed to study anti-proverbs as creative distortions of canonical forms, focusing on their use of humor, irony, parody, and social critique (Asrorova 2025).

The procedure involved classifying proverbs and anti-proverbs according to the somatisms they employed. Each somatism was analyzed for its figurative meaning, cultural symbolism, and pragmatic function. Comparative charts and descriptive commentary were then developed to highlight similarities and differences across Uzbek and English traditions. Anti-proverbs were examined in terms of their deviation from canonical forms, with particular attention given to modern cultural references such as technology, consumerism, and social change.

Reliability was ensured by cross-referencing multiple sources and verifying examples against established paremiological collections. Validity was strengthened by applying both linguistic and cultural frameworks, which allowed for a holistic interpretation of somatisms in context. By combining traditional paremiological analysis with modern cultural perspectives, the study sought to capture both the continuity and transformation of somatisms in Uzbek and English proverb traditions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the collected corpus revealed that somatisms are among the most productive figurative elements in both Uzbek and English paremiological traditions. In both languages, body-related terms such as “head,” “eye,” “hand,” “heart,” and “tongue” appear frequently, serving as metaphorical anchors that

connect physical experience with abstract domains of morality, wisdom, and social behavior. However, their reinterpretation in anti-proverbs demonstrates both universal tendencies and culture-specific features.

In Uzbek proverbs, somatisms often emphasize communal morality and ethical conduct. For instance, the traditional proverb *Ko'ngil ko'zi ko'r bo'lsa, til ojiz* ("If the eye of the heart is blind, the tongue is powerless") highlights the moral dimension of bodily metaphors. In its anti-proverbial transformation, *Ko'ngil ko'zi ko'r bo'lsa, telefon yordam beradi* ("If the eye of the heart is blind, the phone helps"), the moral lesson is humorously replaced with a modern technological reference. This shift illustrates how anti-proverbs parody traditional wisdom while reflecting contemporary realities, such as the reliance on digital devices.

Furthermore, English proverbs, by contrast, often foreground individualism and pragmatic values. The canonical proverb "An apple a day keeps the doctor away" emphasizes personal responsibility for health. Its anti-proverbial variant, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away – but not the dentist," introduces humor and irony by pointing out the limitations of the original wisdom. Here, the somatism tooth is implied, and the anti-proverb critiques the oversimplification of health advice.

Another Uzbek example is the proverb *Qo'l qo'lsa, ish bitadi* ("If the hand works, the task is done"), which underscores diligence and collective effort. The anti-proverb *Qo'l qo'lsa, internet topadi* ("If the hand works, it finds the internet") humorously reinterprets the proverb in light of modern digital culture, showing how somatisms adapt to new social contexts. Similarly, in English, the proverb "The eyes are the window to the soul" is transformed into "The eyes are the window to the wallet", shifting the metaphor from spirituality to consumerism, thereby critiquing materialistic tendencies in contemporary society.

A further illustration of somatisms in anti-proverbs can be seen in the Uzbek saying *Til yarasi tuzalmas* ("The wound of the tongue never heals"), which traditionally warns against the lasting harm of harsh words. In its anti-proverbial transformation,

Til yarasi tuzalmas, lekin internet unutar (“The wound of the tongue never heals, but the internet forgets”), the moral warning is humorously reframed in the context of digital communication. This version reflects contemporary anxieties about online discourse, where offensive speech may be quickly buried under the flood of new information. The somatism tongue continues to symbolize speech and its consequences, but the anti-proverb shifts the focus from timeless moral caution to the fleeting nature of digital memory. Similarly, in English, the proverb “The heart wants what it wants” is transformed into “The heart wants Wi-Fi,” parodying the emotional depth of the original by replacing it with a modern technological necessity. These examples demonstrate how anti-proverbs exploit somatisms to juxtapose traditional wisdom with modern realities, creating humor while simultaneously critiquing social change.

These examples demonstrate that while both traditions employ somatisms as metaphorical bridges, their anti-proverbial reinterpretations reflect different cultural priorities. Uzbek anti-proverbs tend to parody moral and communal values, often inserting references to technology or social change, whereas English anti-proverbs emphasize humor, irony, and individualism, frequently critiquing modern lifestyles.

Overall, the results confirm that somatisms in anti-proverbs serve as a fertile ground for linguistic creativity and cultural commentary. They reveal universal figurative tendencies – such as the metaphorical use of body parts to express abstract ideas – while also highlighting culture-specific features that distinguish Uzbek collectivist values from English individualist humor. This interplay underscores the adaptability of paremiological traditions and their relevance in contemporary discourse.

CONCLUSIONS

The comparative analysis of somatisms in Uzbek and English anti-proverbs demonstrates that body-related metaphors remain a powerful linguistic and cultural resource, even when traditional wisdom is creatively transformed. Both traditions employ somatisms such as “head,” “eye,” “hand,” “heart,” and “tongue”

as metaphorical bridges between physical experience and abstract concepts, yet their reinterpretation in anti-proverbs reflects distinct cultural orientations. Uzbek anti-proverbs tend to parody moral and communal values, often inserting references to technology or social change, thereby highlighting the tension between traditional ethics and modern realities. English anti-proverbs, in contrast, emphasize humor, irony, and individualism, frequently critiquing contemporary lifestyles and pragmatic concerns.

These findings suggest that anti-proverbs are not merely playful distortions of canonical proverbs but serve as cultural commentaries that reveal how societies negotiate continuity and change. The persistence of somatisms across both languages underscores their universal cognitive function, while the differences in their reinterpretation highlight culture-specific priorities – collectivism and morality in Uzbek discourse, individualism and humor in English. By examining these transformations, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how language, cognition, and culture interact in the ongoing evolution of paremiological creativity.

Ultimately, somatisms in anti-proverbs remind us that the human body remains a central metaphorical framework through which communities articulate values, critique social realities, and express humor. Their adaptability across time and culture illustrates the resilience of proverbial wisdom and its capacity to remain relevant in modern discourse. This research therefore not only enriches linguistic and cultural scholarship but also affirms the enduring role of proverbs and anti-proverbs as living reflections of human thought and society.

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