

ETHNOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF CLOTHING NAMES IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH PAREMIOLOGICAL UNITS

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Abstract. This article investigates the ethnolinguistic characteristics of clothing names within the paremiological systems of the Uzbek and English languages. Proverbs and sayings are regarded as a “cultural code” that preserves a nation’s historical experience and social values. The article analyzes how traditional and modern garments function as metaphorical tools to express concepts of social status, morality, gender, and identity. By employing a comparative-typological approach, the study reveals that while both cultures use clothing to signify social hierarchy, the Uzbek language emphasizes collective honor and ceremonial status (centered around the to‘n and do‘ppi), whereas English paremias often reflect individual pragmatism and economic discipline (centered around the coat and hat). The findings contribute to the fields of cognitive linguistics, paremiology, and intercultural communication by highlighting the unique “linguistic pictures of the world” inherent in these two genetically unrelated languages.

Keywords: Ethnolinguistics, paremiology, vestingonyms, Uzbek culture, English culture, linguistic picture of the world, metaphor, cultural code, social status.

INTRODUCTION

The study of the relationship between language, culture, and national cognition remains one of the most fundamental tasks of modern linguistics. Ethnolinguistic analysis allows us to look beyond the surface of words and understand the underlying cultural codes that shape a nation’s worldview. Within this framework, paremias - encompassing proverbs and sayings - act as a unique repository of a people’s historical experience, moral values, and social norms. Clothing names, or vestingonyms, within these paremias are particularly significant because attire is not merely a physical necessity but a complex social signifier. The theoretical foundation for understanding language as a cultural phenomenon was laid by Wilhelm von Humboldt, who argued that the language of a nation is its spirit and its spirit is its language. This concept was further developed in the 20th century through the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which suggests that the structure of a language affects its speakers’ world view or cognition. In the context of ethnolinguistics, Edward Sapir emphasized that language does not exist in a vacuum but is inextricably woven into the social fabric of a community.

When we examine clothing names in English and Uzbek proverbs, we see a clear manifestation of what Anna Wierzbicka calls “cultural scripts.” These scripts dictate how individuals should perceive social status, gender roles, and moral integrity through the prism of their national attire. In Uzbek linguistics, the scholar Sh. Shomaqsudov, a prominent figure in paremiology, noted that Uzbek proverbs are the quintessence of the people’s wisdom, often using everyday objects like clothing to convey profound ethical lessons. Similarly, in the English-speaking world, paremiologists such as Wolfgang Mieder have demonstrated that proverbs function as sociolinguistic tools that regulate human behavior. By comparing the vestingonyms of these



two distant cultures - one Central Asian and Islamic, the other Western and predominantly Christian - we can observe how different environments and histories have shaped their linguistic pictures of the world. Despite the abundance of general paremiological studies, a dedicated ethnolinguistic comparison of clothing names between these two specific languages has not been fully explored, creating a research gap that this study aims to fill.

METHODS

The research methodology is built upon a qualitative and comparative framework designed to extract and analyze cultural data from linguistic units. The primary method used is the descriptive-analytical approach, which facilitates the categorization of clothing-related proverbs based on their semantic fields. To identify the national-cultural specificities, a comparative-typological method was applied, allowing for the discovery of isomorphic (shared) and allomorphic (distinct) features in Uzbek and English paremias. The ethnolinguistic analysis was central to the study, as it sought to interpret the historical and social reasons behind the choice of specific garment names in each language.

The data for this study were gathered from authoritative lexicographical sources, including the “Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs” for the English corpus and the multi-volume “O‘zbek xalq maqollari” (Uzbek Folk Proverbs) edited by T. Mirzaev and Sh. Shomaqsudov for the Uzbek corpus. Approximately 200 paremias from each language containing references to garments were selected for the initial analysis. The study focused on frequently occurring items such as the to‘n (robe), do‘ppi (skullcap), and chakmon in Uzbek, and the coat, hat, shoe, and shirt in English. The analysis was conducted in three stages: extraction of the units, semantic classification, and cultural-historical interpretation.

RESULTS

The results of the analysis indicate that clothing names in both languages are heavily metaphorical, but their symbolic weights differ according to national history. In the Uzbek paremiological fund, the to‘n (traditional robe) occupies a central position. It is found that the to‘n serves as a primary symbol of social prestige and masculine honor. The linguistic data shows that in traditional Uzbek society, the quality and type of robe a man wore were immediate indicators of his social standing. This is reflected in proverbs that suggest social interactions are dictated by the “robe” one wears, highlighting a society where external signs of status were strictly observed. Similarly, the do‘ppi (skullcap) was found to be a symbol of moral integrity and religious identity. The absence of a head covering in Uzbek paremias is often equated with a loss of shame or dignity, reflecting the deep-seated Eastern values of modesty.

In the English corpus, the coat and the hat emerge as the most frequent vestingonyms. However, the symbolism of the English coat is predominantly economic and pragmatic. It is often used to discuss personal limits and financial management, as seen in the foundational proverb about cutting one’s coat to fit the cloth. Unlike the Uzbek to‘n, which focuses on communal respect, the English coat focuses on individual responsibility. Furthermore, the English hat often symbolizes professional roles or individual identity. The analysis revealed that English paremias use the hat to represent the various “roles” a person plays in a modern, specialized society. Interestingly, both languages share a common theme regarding the deceptive nature of appearance. Both the Uzbek and English paremiological systems contain numerous warnings that fine clothes do not reflect the true character of a person, though they use different metaphors - such as “fine feathers” in English and “intellect” in Uzbek - to deliver the same moral lesson.



DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the ethnolinguistic differences between English and Uzbek speakers. The prevalence of the to‘n in Uzbek proverbs can be explained by the historical “hil’at” tradition, where rulers gifted expensive robes to subjects as a mark of favor. This has left a deep mark on the language, where clothing is not just an individual choice but a social gift and a sign of communal belonging. This aligns with the “high-context” nature of Uzbek culture, where non-verbal cues and social symbols carry immense weight. In contrast, the English emphasis on the coat and shirt reflects the transition of English society through the Industrial Revolution and the rise of the middle class, where pragmatism, labor, and individual economic success became the dominant cultural values.

The symbolic use of headwear further illustrates the contrast between religious-moral codes and professional-social roles. For the Uzbek speaker, the do‘ppi or salla is a sacred boundary between the individual and the divine, whereas for the English speaker, the hat has historically been a tool of social etiquette and professional branding. Moreover, the gendered analysis of clothing in paremias shows that both cultures used garments to reinforce traditional roles. The English use of “breeches” to symbolize household authority and the Uzbek use of “ro‘mol” (scarf) to symbolize family honor indicate that vestingonyms have historically served as linguistic tools for social control. These differences confirm that while the basic human need for clothing is universal, the linguistic conceptualization of clothing is highly dependent on the historical, religious, and geographic context of the speech community. This study supports Wierzbicka’s theory that key cultural concepts are embedded in the very vocabulary of a language, and that understanding these proverbs is essential for effective cross-cultural communication.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the ethnolinguistic study of clothing names in Uzbek and English paremias demonstrates that vestingonyms are much more than lexical units; they are vital cultural metaphors that provide a window into the national psyche. Through the comparative analysis of these proverbs, we can see that the Uzbek linguistic picture of the world is deeply rooted in notions of communal honor, respect, and traditional hierarchy, symbolized by the to‘n and do‘ppi. Conversely, the English linguistic picture reflects a culture of pragmatism, individualism, and social versatility, symbolized by the coat and hat. Despite these differences, both languages use clothing to navigate the complex relationship between appearance and reality, showing that the struggle to define one's true self against social expectations is a universal human experience. This research underscores the importance of paremias in preserving cultural heritage and suggests that further study into other lexical groups, such as food or household items, could yield even deeper insights into the ethnolinguistic identity of the Uzbek and English peoples.

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