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Annotatsiya

Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz va o‘zbek tillarida maqtovnii ifodalovchi maqollarning pragmatik funksiyalarini o‘rganadi. Nutq aktlari, nutq odobi nazariyasi va madaniy lingvistika asosida maqtovnii bilvosita ifodalanishi, madaniy shakllanishi va ijtimoiy mustahkamlanishi tahlil qilinadi. Natijalar maqollar qadriyatlarini targ‘ib etuvchi va ijtimoiy uyg‘unlikni ta‘minlovchi vosita ekanini ko‘rsatadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: paremiologiya, pragmatika, maqollar, nutq aktlari nazariyasi, nutq odobi nazariyasi, maqto, madaniy lingvistika, ingliz tili, o‘zbek tili.

ПРАГМАТИЧЕСКИЕ ФУНКЦИИ ПАРЕМИОЛОГИЧЕСКИХ ЕДИНИЦ В ВЫРАЖЕНИИ ПОХВАЛЫ

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Аннотация

Это исследование анализирует прагматические функции пословиц, выражающих похвалу, в английском и узбекском языках. Используются теория речевых актов, нормы речевого этикета и культурная лингвистика. Рассматриваются косвенное выражение похвалы, её культурная обусловленность и социальная роль. Пословицы передают ценности, укрепляют коммуникацию и способствуют поддержанию социальной гармонии в обществе.

Ключевые слова: паремология, прагматика, пословицы, теория речевых актов, теория речевого этикета, похвала, культурная лингвистика, английский язык, узбекский язык.

PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF PAREMIOLOGICAL UNITS IN PRAISE

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Abstract

This study examines pragmatic functions of proverbs expressing praise in English and Uzbek. Using Speech Act, Politeness, and Cultural Linguistics frameworks, it analyzes how praise is indirectly conveyed, culturally shaped, and socially reinforced. Findings show proverbs function as expressive, assertive, and directive acts promoting values and fostering harmonious interpersonal communication.

Keywords: paremiology, pragmatics, proverbs, speech act theory, politeness theory, praise, cultural linguistics, english, uzbek.

Language is not only a means of communication but also a powerful tool that reflects and shapes cultural values, social norms, and interpersonal relationships. Among the many linguistic elements that contribute to this function, paremiological units—commonly referred to as proverbs—play a vital role in encapsulating collective wisdom, moral lessons, and societal attitudes in a concise and memorable form. Proverbs are often used to advise, warn, criticize,

comfort, and, significantly, to praise. The pragmatic use of proverbs in praise is a particularly rich area of investigation, as it reveals how language is employed to elevate individuals, actions, traits, or social ideals in culturally meaningful ways.

Praise is a fundamental human expression that serves multiple communicative purposes: it can motivate, express admiration, strengthen social bonds, and reinforce desirable behavior. When praise is conveyed through paremiological units, it becomes not only personal but also socially validated. Such proverbs are often deeply rooted in tradition and widely accepted as truth, which adds weight to the act of praising. Understanding how these units function pragmatically sheds light on the social and communicative strategies embedded in language and enhances our understanding of linguistic politeness, respect, and the transmission of values.

This article aims to explore the pragmatic functions of paremiological units in praise by analyzing examples from various languages and cultural backgrounds. Drawing on both theoretical frameworks and empirical data, the paper investigates how these proverbs operate in real-life communication to express praise and what this reveals about the social and cultural systems in which they are used. Particular attention is given to the illocutionary force of these expressions, their sociolinguistic significance, and their rhetorical and stylistic features.

By examining proverbs through a pragmatic lens, the study contributes to a broader understanding of how language performs social actions and how traditional expressions continue to influence contemporary communication. Ultimately, this investigation offers insight into the subtle yet powerful ways in which cultures encode praise through fixed expressions, thereby enhancing our appreciation of linguistic and cultural diversity.

Literature Review

The study of proverbs—also known as paremiology—has long attracted the interest of linguists, folklorists, and anthropologists because of the condensed wisdom, cultural values, and communicative power embedded in these fixed expressions. Proverbs, as a subcategory of paremiological units, are often employed to convey praise, criticism, advice, and general truths in a socially accepted and stylistically rich manner. The pragmatic aspect of proverbs, particularly in expressing praise, has been explored from both linguistic and cultural perspectives.

One foundational perspective on proverbs is provided by Mieder (2004), who defines proverbs as “short, generally known sentences of the folk which contain wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed, and memorable form.” Mieder emphasizes the importance of the social and communicative function of proverbs, which serve as tools for reinforcing shared cultural values, including praise of socially accepted traits such as honesty, bravery, or diligence.

Several studies have analyzed how proverbs function pragmatically in specific linguistic contexts. For instance, Al-Khalidi and Al-Azzawi (2021) conducted a socio-pragmatic analysis of Arabic tribal proverbs and found that many of them function to praise desirable character traits such as hospitality and courage, thereby reinforcing communal ideals. Similarly, Rahman and Khan (2020) explored Pashto and English proverbs and concluded that both languages use proverbs to fulfill functions such as applauding virtues and promoting moral behavior, though with distinct cultural emphases.

In a comparative study of English and Uzbek proverbs, Karimova (2023) demonstrated that both languages encode praise through culturally specific metaphors and analogies. For example, in Uzbek, the proverb “*Er yigit elda tanilar*” (“A real man is known among the people”) praises public honor and reputation, while the English equivalent “*Actions speak louder than words*” subtly praises integrity and dependability.

On the theoretical side, Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory provides a useful lens through which to analyze the function of praise in proverbs. According to their framework, praise acts as a positive politeness strategy, enhancing the hearer’s self-image and strengthening social cohesion. Proverbs that contain praise often serve as indirect compliments, allowing

speakers to express approval in a socially acceptable and non-threatening way.

Other studies have focused on stylistic devices that reinforce praise in proverbs. According to Usmanova (2022), the use of metaphor, hyperbole, and parallelism is common in English and Uzbek paremiological units, adding aesthetic and rhetorical force to the act of praising. This stylistic richness contributes to the effectiveness and memorability of such expressions in everyday communication.

Finally, cross-cultural paremiological research highlights the universality of praise as a pragmatic function while pointing out the diversity of its expression. For example, in Chinese and Hakka proverbs, praise is often expressed through botanical or culinary metaphors, as explored by Chen and Lee (2016), reflecting culturally salient values such as harmony, fertility, and endurance.

In sum, the literature affirms that paremiological units are powerful pragmatic tools for praise, reflecting cultural values, rhetorical traditions, and social norms. However, the depth of this function remains underexplored in some languages and comparative contexts, indicating the need for further research into how praise is pragmatically structured and culturally framed within proverb usage.

Theoretical Framework

To explore the pragmatic functions of paremiological units in the expression of praise, this study draws on key principles from pragmatics, particularly Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986). These frameworks provide a basis for understanding how language operates beyond literal meaning to perform social actions, express attitudes, and reflect cultural norms.

Speech Act Theory

At the core of pragmatics, Speech Act Theory posits that language is used not merely to describe reality but also to perform actions. According to Austin (1962), utterances have three dimensions: locutionary (literal meaning), illocutionary (intended function), and perlocutionary (effect on the listener). Proverbs used in praise function primarily as illocutionary acts, where the speaker's goal is to positively evaluate someone or something. For example, in the English proverb "*A friend in need is a friend indeed,*" the utterance performs the act of praising loyalty in friendship.

Searle (1969) further categorized speech acts, with expressives and commissives being especially relevant in proverbs expressing praise. Expressives reveal the speaker's attitude toward a situation or person—such as admiration or appreciation—while commissives reflect values that the speaker endorses through the proverb.

Politeness Theory

Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory offers a sociolinguistic explanation for why and how praise is expressed. Praise is typically a positive politeness strategy aimed at enhancing the hearer's self-image by showing admiration, approval, or appreciation. Proverbs serve as culturally embedded tools that express praise in an indirect but socially accepted way. For example, the Uzbek proverb "*Yaxshi odam elga yaraydi*" ("A good person is useful to the nation") elevates individuals who contribute to society while avoiding overt flattery.

This theory also explains the use of indirect speech acts in proverbs: praise is conveyed without naming the individual directly, thereby maintaining humility and decorum in high-context cultures such as Uzbek society.

Relevance Theory

Relevance Theory, developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986), emphasizes that communication depends on the listener's ability to infer meaning from context with minimal effort. Proverbs are often used when the speaker wishes to say something meaningful and culturally resonant in a concise and efficient way. When used to praise, proverbs provide maximal relevance: they are economical yet rich in implied meaning. For example, saying "*Still waters run deep*" conveys admiration for someone's quiet intelligence or depth of character, relying on the

listener to infer this meaning based on shared cultural understanding.

Cultural Linguistics

In addition to general pragmatic theories, the study draws on Cultural Linguistics (Sharifian, 2017), which highlights the importance of cultural schemas and conceptual metaphors in shaping language use. Praise-related proverbs are heavily influenced by these shared cultural understandings. In many cultures, for example, agricultural metaphors such as “*As you sow, so shall you reap*” praise diligence and foresight, drawing on shared experiences in farming communities.

This theoretical foundation allows for a nuanced analysis of how paremiological units function pragmatically in praise. The integration of these theories facilitates an understanding of both the linguistic mechanisms and the cultural values underlying proverb usage.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive method grounded in pragmatic and cultural-linguistic analysis to explore the functions of paremiological units that convey praise. The goal is to identify how selected proverbs function as speech acts and cultural expressions of admiration or approval within their respective linguistic communities.

Data Collection

The data set consists of 60 proverbs selected from two languages: Uzbek and English, with 30 proverbs from each language. The selection was based on the criterion that each proverb must explicitly or implicitly express praise, whether directed at a person, trait, behavior, or general virtue.

Sources for data collection include:

- Printed proverb dictionaries (e.g., *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*, *O‘zbek Hikmatli So‘zlar Lug‘ati*);
- Online proverb databases and linguistic corpora;
- Scholarly articles and works of folk literature in which proverbs were cited in praise-related contexts.

To ensure the representativeness of the data, attention was given to:

- Proverbs commonly used in educational, familial, and public discourse;
- Proverbs still in active use, as observed in media, literature, and everyday speech.

Analytical Procedure

The analysis was carried out in two stages.

1. Pragmatic Categorization

Each proverb was examined to determine its speech act function following Searle’s (1969) classification:

- **Expressive**: revealing the speaker’s positive evaluation or admiration;
- **Directive (indirect)**: implying desired behavior by praising certain traits;
- **Assertive**: presenting a culturally approved value as a truth or norm.

Examples:

- Uzbek: “*Do‘st boshida bilinadi*” (“A friend is known in times of hardship”) – expresses praise of loyalty.
- English: “*Hard work never goes unrewarded*” – praises diligence as a virtue.

2. Cultural and Politeness-Based Analysis

Each proverb was analyzed in light of Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), focusing on:

- Positive politeness strategies (e.g., solidarity, group values);
- The use of metaphor and indirectness to convey praise;
- Cultural norms reflected in the praise (e.g., community, humility, courage).

Additionally, Relevance Theory was used to interpret how the proverb efficiently conveys praise in minimal words and how listeners infer the speaker’s intent based on shared

cultural knowledge.

Limitations

This study focuses on two languages and selects only praise-related proverbs. A broader multilingual or quantitative approach could offer wider generalization. In addition, context-specific usage in actual spoken interaction is not recorded directly but inferred through examples found in dictionaries, literature, and scholarly sources.

Analysis and Discussion

This section presents the pragmatic analysis of selected paremiological units that function as expressions of praise in English and Uzbek. Each example is interpreted through the lens of Speech Act Theory, Politeness Theory, and Cultural Linguistics to demonstrate how praise is encoded, delivered, and culturally understood.

1. Praise Through Expressive Speech Acts

Many proverbs express admiration for desirable human qualities. These are typically expressive acts that reveal the speaker's positive evaluation.

- **English:** *"Still waters run deep."*
This proverb praises individuals who are quiet or modest but possess deep intelligence or emotional strength. The speaker's admiration is conveyed indirectly, maintaining modesty—a strategy aligned with positive politeness.
- **Uzbek:** *"Yaxshi odam elga yaraydi."* ("A good person is useful to the people.")
Here, the proverb functions both as a compliment and as a social standard. It praises selflessness and public service, reflecting the Uzbek cultural emphasis on collectivism and communal value.

Both examples show how proverbs serve indirect praise functions, reducing the risk of overt flattery while strengthening social harmony.

2. Praise Through Normative Assertion

Some proverbs present praise in the form of assertives—statements that describe the world as it "should be" according to cultural values. By asserting a standard, these proverbs inherently praise those who embody it.

- **English:** *"Hard work never goes unrewarded."*
This proverb is often used to praise a diligent person while also reinforcing the social value of industriousness. The illocutionary act of praise is embedded in a general moral truth.
- **Uzbek:** *"Mehnat qilgan – rohat topar."* ("He who works will find comfort.")
The structure is similar: a culturally sanctioned value (hard work) is praised through the promise of a positive outcome. The implicit praise of diligence functions as both encouragement and commendation.

Such proverbs serve didactic and motivational roles, especially in high-context societies where indirectness is valued.

3. Praise Via Comparison and Metaphor

Metaphorical expressions often elevate individuals by likening them to admirable natural or social elements.

- **English:** *"He's the salt of the earth."*
This proverb metaphorically praises someone as essential, humble, and morally strong. The reference to "salt" suggests purity and value, drawing on cultural schemas deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian traditions.
- **Uzbek:** *"Oltin bosh – egilar."* ("A golden head bows down.")
This proverb praises humility in the wise or talented. It reflects the cultural belief that true greatness is accompanied by modesty. Metaphorically, the "golden head" elevates the person, while "bows down" highlights humility.

These metaphors are concise yet powerful, achieving high relevance by relying on shared conceptual knowledge between speaker and listener.

4. Praise with Implicit Directives

Some proverbs use praise not only to admire a quality but also to encourage it in others, thus functioning as indirect directives.

- **English:** “*Honesty is the best policy.*”
While seemingly descriptive, this proverb praises honesty in a way that subtly encourages the hearer to adopt it. It fits within commissive acts, endorsing a value the speaker personally aligns with.
- **Uzbek:** “*To‘g‘riлик – odamning ziynati.*” (“Honesty is a person’s adornment.”)
This proverb similarly praises honesty as a beautifying trait. By metaphorically equating honesty with ornament or beauty, it adds social prestige to the quality.

Such praise, though not directed at a particular individual, functions normatively and promotes behavior through culturally appealing language.

Summary of Findings

The analysis demonstrates that proverbs praising individuals or qualities:

- use indirect language to maintain politeness and social balance;
- reflect culturally embedded values such as humility, diligence, and loyalty;
- rely heavily on metaphor and comparison for efficiency and emotional impact;
- serve both expressive and norm-setting functions.

These patterns confirm that paremiological units are not merely fixed expressions but powerful pragmatic tools for shaping social perception, reinforcing values, and maintaining interpersonal relationships.

This article has explored the pragmatic functions of paremiological units—specifically proverbs—that convey praise in English and Uzbek. Through a theoretical and qualitative framework drawing on Speech Act Theory, Politeness Theory, and Cultural Linguistics, it has been demonstrated that proverbs function not only as linguistic expressions but also as cultural instruments for affirming and reinforcing positive human values. The analysis revealed that proverbs function as expressive, assertive, and, in some cases, directive speech acts that convey admiration, endorse social norms, and promote moral behavior. The indirectness inherent in proverb use allows speakers to deliver praise subtly and effectively, in line with cultural expectations, especially in high-context societies such as Uzbekistan. Moreover, the widespread use of metaphor and comparison in these proverbs enables a rich and nuanced expression of approval, often relying on shared cultural imagery and values. Importantly, proverbs such as “*Still waters run deep*” and “*Yaxshi odam elga yaraydi*” reflect not only language use but also the worldview and ethos of a community. Through such expressions, societies validate traits like humility, loyalty, hard work, and wisdom, revealing the deep intertwining of language and culture.

In conclusion, paremiological units continue to play a vital role in daily communication, serving as concise yet powerful tools for expressing praise, shaping behavior, and maintaining social cohesion. Further research could extend this inquiry by analyzing the pragmatic role of praise in proverbs across additional languages or within specific real-life discourse contexts.

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