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COGNITIVE-SEMANTIC FEATURES OF HYDRONYMIC CONCEPTS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK PAREMIOLOGICAL UNITS

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Abstract

This article examines the cognitive-semantic features of hydronymic concepts represented in English and Uzbek paremiological units. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which water-related lexical elements and proper hydronyms participate in the formation of culturally significant meanings in proverbial discourse. From a cognitive linguistic perspective, water is considered not merely as a natural phenomenon but also as a conceptual domain associated with life, movement, change, depth, danger, purification, abundance, and human experience. The study explores the relationship between the lexical meaning of hydronymic components and their figurative interpretation within paremiological expressions. A comparative approach is employed to identify shared conceptual patterns and culture-specific semantic associations in English and Uzbek. The analysis demonstrates that water-related concepts may function as cognitive instruments through which communities interpret social relations, moral values, practical knowledge, and the surrounding environment. The article also distinguishes proper hydronyms from common hydrological terms, emphasizing the importance of terminological accuracy in paremiological research.

Keywords: Cognitive linguistics, paremiology, hydronymic concepts, cognitive semantics, English proverbs, Uzbek proverbs, conceptual metaphor, water symbolism, cultural linguistics.

1. Introduction

Language reflects not only the structure of human communication but also the cognitive processes through which people perceive, categorize, and interpret the world. One of the most significant sources of linguistic conceptualization is the natural environment. Natural phenomena, geographical objects, and elements of

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the physical world frequently become components of figurative expressions, including proverbs and sayings.

Water occupies a particularly important position in human conceptual experience. Its presence is essential for life, agriculture, economic activity, transportation, and the development of civilizations. Consequently, water-related vocabulary has acquired extensive symbolic and metaphorical meanings in different languages. In English and Uzbek, paremiological expressions containing references to water, rivers, seas, and other hydrological phenomena provide valuable material for investigating the relationship between language, cognition, and culture.

The term hydronym traditionally refers to the proper name of a water body, such as a river, lake, sea, or ocean. Examples include the English hydronyms the Thames and the Nile, as well as the Uzbek geographical names Amu Darya and Syr Darya. However, paremiological research also frequently examines common hydrological terms such as water, river, sea, and their Uzbek equivalents suv, daryo, and dengiz. These lexical units should not be confused with proper hydronyms, although both may participate in the conceptualization of water-related experience.

The purpose of this article is to identify the cognitive-semantic features of hydronymic and water-related concepts in English and Uzbek paremiological units and to explain how these concepts contribute to the formation of figurative and culturally meaningful interpretations.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Cognitive-Semantic Analysis

Cognitive linguistics considers language as an integral part of human cognition. According to this approach, linguistic expressions reflect the ways in which individuals conceptualize their physical and social environment.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) demonstrate that metaphor is not merely a stylistic device but a fundamental mechanism of human thought. Through conceptual metaphors, abstract experiences are understood in terms of more concrete and familiar domains. Water provides a productive source domain for such conceptualization because its physical characteristics can be transferred to emotional, social, moral, and intellectual experiences.

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For example, the movement of a river can be associated with the continuity of human life, while the depth of water may symbolize hidden knowledge, complexity, or an individual's inner qualities. Similarly, turbulent water can represent instability, conflict, or unpredictable circumstances.

From a cognitive-semantic perspective, water-related paremiological units may be analyzed through several conceptual dimensions:

Life and existence: water as a necessary condition for survival.

Movement and continuity: flowing water as a representation of time and life processes.

Depth and complexity: deep water as a metaphor for hidden qualities or knowledge.

Change and transformation: water as an image of constant development.

Danger and uncertainty: turbulent or deep water as a representation of risk.

Purification and renewal: water as a symbol of cleansing and restoration.

These conceptual dimensions provide a framework for comparing English and Uzbek paremiological material.

3. Cognitive-Semantic Features of Water-Related Concepts in English

English proverbial language contains numerous expressions in which water-related vocabulary functions as a source of figurative meaning. One well-known example is:

“Still waters run deep.”

This proverb illustrates the conceptual relationship between physical depth and psychological or intellectual complexity. The expression suggests that people who appear quiet or reserved may possess profound thoughts, emotions, or abilities.

Its cognitive structure can be represented as follows:

Source domain: the physical depth of water.

Target domain: the complexity of human character.

Conceptual mapping: physical depth is associated with psychological depth.

Pragmatic meaning: outward appearance does not necessarily reveal inner qualities.

Another English expression is:

“Blood is thicker than water.”

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In this proverb, water participates in the conceptual opposition between family relationships and other social connections. The expression traditionally emphasizes the strength of family ties. The semantic interpretation is based on the contrast between blood, symbolizing kinship, and water, representing relationships outside the family.

The expression:

"You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink."

illustrates the relationship between opportunity and individual choice. Water represents an available resource or opportunity, while drinking symbolizes the decision to make use of it. The proverb expresses the idea that external assistance cannot replace personal willingness.

These examples demonstrate that water-related lexical elements in English proverbs perform more than descriptive functions. They contribute to the construction of abstract meanings through metaphorical and metonymic processes.

4. Cognitive-Semantic Features of Water-Related Concepts in Uzbek

In Uzbek linguistic and cultural experience, water has a significant place due to its relationship with agriculture, settlement, everyday life, and traditional social practices. The lexical units suv, daryo, ariq, and dengiz are associated with both physical reality and figurative conceptualization.

One widely used Uzbek proverb is:

"Suv keltirgan xor bo'lmas."

The proverb expresses the social value of useful work and practical contribution. Water is understood as a necessary resource, while the act of bringing water represents service, effort, and participation in collective life.

Its cognitive structure includes the following elements:

Source domain: the practical activity of bringing water.

Target domain: social usefulness and human contribution.

Conceptual mapping: providing an essential resource is associated with being valuable to society.

Pragmatic meaning: useful work deserves recognition.

Another Uzbek proverb is:

"Suvning qadri chanqaganda bilinadi."

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This expression emphasizes the relationship between need and appreciation. Water symbolizes something essential whose value becomes especially clear when it is unavailable.

The cognitive structure may be interpreted through the conceptual metaphor:

THE VALUE OF A RESOURCE IS UNDERSTOOD THROUGH ITS ABSENCE.

The proverb reflects a broader principle of human experience: people often recognize the importance of essential resources only when they experience their lack.

The expression:

“Oqar suv o‘z yo‘lini topar.”

is also used in Uzbek speech to express the idea that a natural process or a developing situation eventually finds its appropriate direction. Flowing water becomes a metaphor for continuity, adaptation, and the ability to overcome obstacles.

The examples indicate that Uzbek water-related paremiological units frequently connect natural experience with practical wisdom, social responsibility, appreciation, and the continuity of life.

5. Comparative Cognitive-Semantic Analysis

A comparison of English and Uzbek material reveals several shared conceptual patterns. In both languages, water can function as a cognitive source domain for interpreting human behavior and social experience.

Conceptual domain

English interpretation

Uzbek interpretation

Life and necessity

Water as an essential resource

Suv as a condition of life and survival

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Human character

Depth as a symbol of inner complexity

Depth and stillness as possible images of inner qualities

Opportunity

Water as an available opportunity

Suv as a necessary resource and practical possibility

Social value

Water in expressions of family and social relations

Suv in expressions of service and collective usefulness

Continuity

Flowing water as movement and development

Oqar suv as continuity and finding a way

The comparison suggests that the physical characteristics of water provide a common cognitive basis for figurative meaning in both languages. Nevertheless, the cultural interpretation of individual expressions depends on historical experience, social practices, and the linguistic traditions of each community.
It is important to distinguish between a universal conceptual pattern and an identical proverb. Two languages may use the same source domain but express it through different lexical structures, images, and pragmatic functions.

6. The Role of Hydronyms as Cultural and Cognitive Markers

Proper hydronyms may also contribute to the formation of cultural meaning in paremiological discourse. River names such as the Thames, the Nile, the Jordan,

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Amu Darya, and Syr Darya are not simply geographical labels. They may evoke historical memory, national identity, economic development, religious associations, and collective experience.

For instance, the Nile has strong associations with the historical development of Egyptian civilization, while the Jordan River has religious and cultural significance in several traditions. Similarly, Amu Darya and Syr Darya are closely connected with the historical and geographical experience of Central Asia.

However, the presence of a hydronym in cultural discourse does not automatically make an expression a proverb. To classify a unit as a hydronym-containing proverb, researchers must establish that the proper geographical name occurs in an attested paremiological expression and functions as a meaningful component of its structure.

This distinction is important because common hydrological vocabulary and proper hydronyms represent different levels of linguistic categorization.

7. Conclusion

The cognitive-semantic analysis of English and Uzbek paremiological units demonstrates that water-related concepts play an important role in the linguistic representation of human experience. Water is conceptualized through several interconnected semantic dimensions, including life, necessity, continuity, depth, opportunity, social value, and transformation.

The comparative analysis reveals that English and Uzbek share certain cognitive patterns based on the physical characteristics of water. At the same time, the interpretation of individual paremiological expressions is influenced by culturally specific experiences and communicative traditions.

The study also emphasizes the necessity of distinguishing between proper hydronyms and common hydrological terms. While both may participate in cultural conceptualization, only proper geographical names should be classified as hydronyms in the strict onomastic sense.

Further research should be based on a systematically collected corpus of English and Uzbek proverbs, with each unit accompanied by its source, contextual information, and semantic interpretation. Such an approach would make it possible to identify more precisely the universal and culture-specific dimensions of hydronymic conceptualization.

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