

A COMPARATIVE STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF UZBEK AND TAJIK FOLK PROVERBS

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Abstract: This article analyzes the centuries-old historical affinity and cultural ties between the Uzbek and Tajik peoples, reflected in their oral literature, particularly proverbs. These proverbs, along with their similar content and philosophical foundations, also differ in their linguistic and structural features. The purpose of this analysis is to comparatively examine the commonalities in the content of Uzbek and Tajik folk proverbs on upbringing-related topics and the differences in their internal structure. In this process, the structural components of each proverb are examined separately at the lexical, syntactic, and semantic levels, revealing their role and significance in folk pedagogy. This analysis helps us understand not only the cultural similarities of these two fraternal peoples but also their specific linguistic thinking.

Keywords: proverb, structural feature, structural component, upbringing, linguistic, syntactic, semantic, interpretation.

I. Introduction

Despite certain similarities, there are some structural differences in Uzbek and Tajik folk proverbs. These differences are often related to the phonetic, morphological and syntactic features of the two languages. Since the Uzbek language belongs to the Turkic language family, and the Tajik language belongs to the Iranian language family, there are differences in their sound systems. This is reflected in the tone and rhythm of the proverbs. Lexical and morphological differences are also observed. Although there are many similar words in the general lexical wealth, the use of some words and the ways of word formation in the proverbs differ. For example, the Tajik equivalent of suffixes such as -lik, -chi in Uzbek proverbs is expressed differently. The two languages also have their own characteristics in sentence construction. In Uzbek, the verb often comes at the end of the sentence (SOV), while in Tajik this rule is not strict and the verb can often

come in the middle or at the end of the sentence. This is reflected in the order of proverbs and sentence structure.

II. Analysis

The fact that there are many similarities in the structure of Uzbek and Tajik folk proverbs indicates their linguistic and cultural proximity. At the same time, there are also certain differences due to the specific characteristics of the two languages.

“Halol mehnat – mo‘l daromad” [1, 512] proverb consists of two parts connected by a dash (–). The first part expresses the cause (“Halol mehnat”), while the second part presents its result (“mo‘l daromad”). The sentence is composed of a subject (mehnati) and a nominal predicate (daromad), and no verb is used. Such a structure is widely found in the Uzbek language. The proverb has a direct meaning, indicating that honest work brings good results. There is no figurative meaning or hidden imagery in this proverb.

The proverb “Halol molning qulfi o‘zida bo‘lar” [2, 218] also consists of two parts. In the first part, the subject (“Halol molning qulfi”) is given, while in the second part the verbal predicate (“bo‘lar”) appears. Here, a metaphor is used to express that the owner’s conscience is the most reliable protection for his property. The word qulf symbolizes protection, while o‘zida refers to conscience and honesty. The most important feature of this proverb is its figurative meaning. It suggests that property acquired through honest means does not require an external lock for protection; rather, a person’s inner conscience and honesty are sufficient to safeguard it.

The proverb “Rost gapga zavol yo‘q” [2, 218] consists of a subject (zavol), a predicate (yo‘q), and secondary elements such as an attribute and an object. The syntactic structure of the sentence is simple, and the idea is expressed directly. The meaning of the proverb is clear and explicit: truth is eternal and cannot disappear. This sentence is often perceived as a wise saying, since it contains more of a philosophical conclusion than a deep figurative meaning.

The proverb “Rost gapirgan – to‘g‘ri, yolg‘onchi – o‘g‘ri” [2, 218] consists of two parallel parts. In the first part, the result of truthfulness is presented, while in the second part the consequence of lying is compared. In both parts, the subject and predicate are connected by a dash. The syntactic structure of the proverb strongly expresses similarity and parallelism. Truthfulness is associated with righteousness, while lying is compared to

theft. The proverb uses the methods of comparison and parallel construction, revealing the characters of truthful and deceitful people in a simple and expressive way. Each of the proverbs presented has its own distinctive structure.

In the proverb “To‘g‘ri so‘zlagan odam tug‘ishganingdan afzal” [2, 218], the method of comparison is used. On one side stands a person who speaks the truth, and on the other side a relative, and they are compared by means of the word *afzal* (better). The proverb answers the question of “who is better than whom.” It emphasizes that moral qualities such as honesty and truthfulness are valued more highly than blood relations.

The proverb “To‘g‘ri so‘zlining to‘ni yirtiq” [2, 218] contains a metaphor. It suggests that the coat of a truthful person may be torn, meaning that such a person may be poor. The torn coat symbolizes a weak material condition and the possibility of facing hardships in life. The proverb consists of a simple sentence: a subject (to‘g‘ri so‘zlining to‘ni) and a predicate (yirtiq). The main meaning of the proverb is concentrated in the phrase “to‘ni yirtiq.” It conveys that telling the truth in life often requires sacrificing material benefits, and a truthful person may not always be wealthy.

The proverb “To‘g‘ri so‘zning zahri yo‘q” [2, 218] also contains a metaphor. A truthful word is described as something without poison. The word *zahr* symbolizes harmful influence, pain, or negative consequences. Its syntactic structure is simple: the proverb consists of a subject, a predicate, and secondary parts of the sentence. The main idea is that no matter how bitter the truth may seem, it does not carry harmful intentions or a desire to cause damage. A truthful word simply reveals the reality.

In the proverb “To‘g‘ri so‘zning to‘qmoq‘i bor” [2, 218], a metaphor is also used. A truthful word is depicted as a *to‘qmoq* (a hammer or club). The word *to‘qmoq* symbolizes strength, influence, or protection. The syntactic structure is simple: the proverb consists of a subject, a predicate, and secondary elements, and it uses the existential form *bor*. This proverb indicates that truthful words possess great power: they can expose any lie and sometimes help protect people from making mistakes.

Below we analyze Uzbek and Tajik folk proverbs from a structural perspective.

The Tajik folk proverb “Mehnati halol – noni bemalol” [3, 190] is based on a cause–effect relationship. The first part presents the cause (*mehnati halol*), while the second part

gives its result (noni bemalol). The two parts are separated by a dash. The proverb expresses the idea that honest work always brings a prosperous and comfortable life.

In the proverb “Birovning bergani – ko‘rgulik, mehnatning bergani – to‘ygulik” [1, 512], the methods of comparison and antithesis are used. Two alternative ideas (birovning bergani and mehnatning bergani) are contrasted with two opposite results (ko‘rgulik and to‘ygulik). The words used are rhythmically similar to each other. The proverb conveys that something received from others may bring dependence or difficulty, whereas sustenance earned through one’s own labor brings real satisfaction and abundance.

In the proverb “Yer egasi bo‘lma, mehnat egasi bo‘l” [4], the method of comparison is applied. A contrast is drawn between “yer egasi bo‘lish” and “mehnati egasi bo‘lish,” with the latter being presented as superior. The proverb emphasizes that for a person it is more important to work and master a profession than merely to possess material wealth.

The proverb “Yomg‘ir bilan yer ko‘karar, mehnat bilan – el” [4] demonstrates parallelism. Two sentences with a similar structure (“yomg‘ir bilan yer ko‘karar” and “mehnati bilan – el,” where the verb ko‘karar is implied) are combined. In this proverb, a natural phenomenon is compared with a process in human life. Just as rain gives life to the earth, labor contributes to the development and flourishing of people and society.

In the proverb “Ish kuchini yelga berma, yerga ber, jamg‘armani selga berma, elga ber” [4], parallelism, antithesis, and rhyme are strongly expressed. The words “yel–yer” and “sel–el” form rhyming pairs and express two contrasting ideas (wasteful use and beneficial use). Semantically, the proverb suggests that a person should not waste their labor or accumulated wealth but should direct them toward useful and meaningful purposes.

The proverb “Bo bandi begona ba choh furo‘ marav” [3, 190] uses metaphor (comparison) and a negative form. The phrase “bo bandi begona” refers to an unreliable or ill-intentioned person, while “ba choh furo‘ raftan” means entering a dangerous or wrong path. The proverb warns that one should not rely on strangers or untrustworthy people when engaging in risky actions.

The proverb “Odami umedashro az dast doda, imonu viqdon nadorad” [3, 190] has a cause–result structure. A “person who has lost hope” (cause) “loses faith and conscience”

(result). The proverb demonstrates that despair may deprive a person even of the highest moral values—faith and conscience.

In the proverb “Firebgar noni xudro tanho mexo‘rad” [3, 190], the cause–effect relationship is expressed through a simple sentence. The loneliness of the deceiver is portrayed as the consequence of his betrayal. The proverb implies that deception and dishonesty isolate a person from society and ultimately lead to loneliness.

In the proverb “Muqobili shaxsi beadolat tir adl ast” [3, 190], metaphor and comparison are used. The “arrow of justice” is directed against an unjust person. The word “tir” (arrow) symbolizes the strength and influence of justice. The proverb emphasizes that the most powerful weapon against injustice and oppression is justice itself.

The structural analysis of Uzbek and Tajik folk proverbs shows that Uzbek proverbs often focus on the ideas of labor, honesty, patience, and contentment. They are frequently based on cause–effect relations, parallelism, and rhythmic construction. Tajik proverbs, in contrast, often emphasize moral values such as justice and trust, as well as life experience. They are commonly expressed through metaphor, comparison, and conditional–result structures. Overall, the proverbs of both peoples reflect folk wisdom, ethical views, and practical life principles.

In the proverb “Ba yak javon chil hunar kam” [3, 190] (Forty skills are few for one youth), hyperbole is used. The number “forty” symbolizes multiplicity rather than an exact quantity. The main idea is that the more knowledge and skills a person acquires in youth, the better it will be. The purpose is to encourage young people to learn continuously.

In the proverb “Mehnat farovon mekunad, Tanbalī vayron mekunad” [3, 190] (Labor brings prosperity, laziness brings ruin), antithesis and parallelism are used. The two parts of the proverb have opposite meanings, contrasting the positive effects of labor with the negative consequences of laziness.

In the proverb “Hunar az mulku merosi padar beh” [3, 190] (Skill is better than inherited property), the method of comparison is applied. On one side stands inherited property, and on the other side skill, with the superiority of skill emphasized. Wealth

inherited from one's father may eventually disappear, but a skill serves a person throughout life.

In the proverb "Bekori beori bor ovarad" [3, 190] (Idleness brings shamelessness), the cause–effect relationship is expressed simply and concisely. Idleness acts as the cause, while shamelessness appears as its result. Semantically, the proverb suggests that idleness may lead a person to lose moral values.

In the proverb "Odam agar xohad, k̄yhro zada talqon mekunad" [3, 190] (If a person wishes, he can even crush a mountain), hyperbole and a conditional–result structure are used. The phrase "crushing a mountain" represents accomplishing something extremely difficult or seemingly impossible. The proverb highlights the boundless power of human determination and effort.

In the proverb "Az zindai bekor murda behtar ast" [3, 190] (Better a dead person than an idle one), comparison and antithesis are also used. The words "alive" and "dead" are contrasted to demonstrate how harmful idleness can be. Semantically, it suggests that living a purposeless life is worse than death.

In the proverb "To mehnat nakuni, sangi siyoh la'l nagardad" [3, 190] (Without labor, a black stone will not become a ruby), conditional–result structure and metaphor are combined. The transformation of a black stone into a ruby symbolizes how effort can turn something ordinary into something valuable.

In the proverb "Be mehnat rohat muyassar nameshavad" [3, 190] (Without labor, comfort cannot be achieved), a conditional–result structure is used. "Without labor" represents the condition, and "comfort cannot be achieved" is the result. The meaning of this proverb is direct and explicit, without a deep metaphorical layer.

Results and Discussion.

Based on the structural analysis of the Uzbek and Tajik proverbs presented above, their similarities and differences can be explained as follows. The structural similarity of Uzbek and Tajik proverbs is mainly connected with the fact that they developed within closely related cultural and historical environments. In both languages, proverbs aim to convey an idea briefly and effectively, avoiding unnecessary words. For example, in the proverbs "Mehnati halol – noni bemalol" and "Hunar az mulku merosi padar beh," the central idea is expressed in only a few words.

In many proverbs, two contrasting situations or concepts are juxtaposed to strengthen the impact of the message. For instance, the Uzbek proverb “Birovning bergani – ko‘rgulik, mehnatning bergani – to‘ygulik” and the Tajik proverb “Mehnat farovon mekunad, Tanbalī vayron mekunad” share such a structure. In both languages, abstract ideas are frequently expressed through concrete images, metaphors, and symbols. For example, in the Uzbek proverb “To‘g‘ri so‘zning to‘qmog‘i bor” and the Tajik proverb “Bo bandi begona ba choh furo‘ marav,” the words “to‘qmoq” and “choh” are used figuratively. A cause–effect structure is also common, where the reason for an event and its consequence are clearly indicated. Proverbs such as “Mehnati halol – noni bemalol” and “Bekori beori bor ovarad” illustrate this pattern.

Based on the observations above, the structural characteristics of Tajik proverbs can be summarized as follows. The syntactic structure of Tajik proverbs is diverse and often includes simple sentences, paired constructions, and various subordinate clauses to express different meanings. Many Tajik proverbs consist of a single simple sentence, often with a verb in the present tense expressing a general truth or advice. For example: “Dīstī to dame, ki ҷon dorī” (As long as you have life, you have friendship).

Paired constructions are also common, where proverbs consist of two parallel parts often connected by conjunctions such as “and,” “or,” or “but.” For example: “Rīz meguzarad, vale kor nameshavad” [3, 190] (The day passes, but the work is not done).

Subordinate clauses are also used in proverbs to express purpose, condition, time, cause, and result, which allows more complex ideas to be conveyed. For example: “Agar xohī, ki baland parvoz kunī, boyad bisyor bizanī” (If you want to fly high, you must make many attempts).

Elliptical constructions are another feature, where certain parts of a sentence are omitted to make the proverb shorter and more expressive. For example: “Dar boron bixīr, dar oftob binshin” (Eat in the rain, sit in the sun). Another example: “Bekorī, bemorī” (Idleness is illness).

Inversion also appears in Tajik proverbs, where the word order is changed to create a stylistic effect: “Nest bad bad, bad on ast, ki namedonad” (There is no worst evil; the worst is the one who does not know).

Thus, Tajik folk proverbs demonstrate a wide variety of syntactic structures used to create vivid and expressive statements.

The structural differences between Uzbek and Tajik proverbs are mainly related to the linguistic characteristics of the languages. Uzbek belongs to the Turkic language family, while Tajik belongs to the Iranian language family.

Sentence structure. In Uzbek proverbs, the predicate (verb) usually appears at the end of the sentence (SOV – subject, object, verb). For example: “To‘g‘ri so‘zning to‘ni yirtiq.” In Tajik, this rule is not strict, and the predicate may appear in the middle or at the end of the sentence. For example: “Mehnat farovon mekunad” or “Bekori beori bor ovarad.”

Use of affixes. In Uzbek proverbs, noun and verb suffixes (affixes) play an important role. In Tajik, words are often used more independently without as many affixes.

Word order. Word order in Uzbek proverbs tends to be more fixed, whereas in Tajik it can be more flexible.

Rhyme and rhythm. In both languages, rhyme and rhythm are present in proverbs, though they appear in different forms depending on the phonetic features of each language. For example, in the Uzbek proverb “Ish kuchini yelga berma, yerga ber, jamg‘armani selga berma, elga ber,” the rhyme “yel–yer, sel–el” is strongly expressed. Tajik proverbs also contain rhyme, but it has a different phonetic character.

III. Conclusion

In conclusion, there are many structural similarities in Uzbek and Tajik folk proverbs. This reflects the closeness of the two peoples’ shared values, experiences, and worldviews. At the same time, certain differences appear due to the specific linguistic characteristics of the languages. Based on the information presented above, the structural similarities and differences between Uzbek and Tajik proverbs can be compared in the following table.

Characteristics	Similarities	Differences
General structure	Short, concise, and rhythmic. Complex sentence structures are usually avoided.	In Uzbek proverbs, the verb more strictly appears at the end of the sentence, while in Tajik proverbs the position of the verb is more flexible.
Syntactic structure	Cause–effect relationships, comparison, and parallelism are widely used.	Affixes: In Uzbek, noun and verb affixes are widely applied, whereas in Tajik words often function more independently
Stylistic devices	Metaphor, hyperbole, and antithesis are commonly used.	In Uzbek proverbs, rhyme and rhythm are strong, for example “yel–yer” and “sel–el.” In Tajik proverbs, similar phonetic harmony exists but appears in a different stylistic form.
Meaning	Common themes include labor, honesty, truthfulness, moral values, and social wisdom.	
Examples	Similarities : "Mehnati halol – noni bemalol" and "Mehnat farovon mekunad, Tanbalī vayron mekunad" such proverbs reflect a cause–effect	Differences "Birovning bergani – ko‘rgulik, mehnatning bergani – to‘ygulik"

	relationship	(comparison and rhythm) and "Bo bandi begona ba choh furo‘ marav" (comparison and rhythm)
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(Table 1).

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