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# REVISTA INCLUSIONES

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## LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF PROVERBS AS A PHENOMENON OF FOLKLORE

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### Abstract

Folklore in linguistic cultures is represented in different spectra of the language, but the most vivid is the level of proverbs, sayings and aphorisms. For this reason proverbs and sayings have always attracted attention of scholars in our country and abroad. A lot of linguistic research is dedicated to this reach level of language. However the gender approach to analyzing folklore in different linguistic cultures has not been applied before. In this paper we make an attempt to analyze the proverbs with gender component in English and Tatar linguistic cultures languages from the point of view of their proverbial markers, particularly their outer form, semantic mechanisms of their formation, syntactic structure and consequently the national peculiarities of proverbs in the English and Tatar languages. In this work we use comparative method to provide the linguistic description of the proverbs with gender component so that to identify such markers as their phonic means, syntactic structure and semantic mechanisms of formation.

### Keywords

Culture – Folklore – Proverb – Semantics – National peculiarity

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## Introduction

We cannot imagine modern world without international communication. In this light the problem of comparing and contrasting languages and language cultures has become actual. A lot of linguistic works touched upon language contacts<sup>1</sup> or study languages in comparison<sup>2</sup>. Folklore being an integral part of culture shows the peculiarity of the way different people see and reflect the world. The best way to analyze different linguistic cultures is to apply a general approach to comparing them. In this paper the authors resort to the gender approach in order to find common and different features in culture under analysis. Proverbs as well as idioms and sayings have long before attracted attention of scholars. It is undeniable that proverb is an interesting question of investigation. Foreign linguists such as W. Mieder<sup>3</sup>, N. Norrick<sup>4</sup>, M. MacCoinigh<sup>5</sup>, J. Lui<sup>6</sup> have studied their semantics, pragmatics, semiotic and syntactic structure. Russian authors such as A.V. Kunin<sup>7</sup>, E.F. Arsentyeva<sup>8</sup>, F.H. Tarasova<sup>9</sup> and many others have devoted their works to the analysis of proverbs in the English and Russian and Tatar languages, many of the works compare the proverbs belonging to particular lexical-semantic field (man, food etc) or having some element or component (antonyms, components denoting food, part of body etc) in common. The proverbs with gender component in the English and Tatar languages have not been studied before. The aim of this paper is to investigate the common and different features of English and Tatar linguistic cultures on the basis of proverbs and sayings applying gender approach.

In our previous works we have studied phraseological units with gender component, the role they play in the phraseological picture in the English and Tatar linguistic cultures, their gender stereotypes<sup>10</sup>. Here we dwell on the proverbs with gender component. Gender component is considered in our works to be the noun that semantically expresses the category of gender, for example, 'man' 'woman' 'mother' 'father' 'bull' 'cow' 'эни' 'ип' and many others. The semantic and cognitive analysis shows that the phraseological units with gender components in two languages have a lot in common, but there are peculiarities that come from differences in culture and mentality. Now we intend to study the proverbs particularly their structure, for communication types

<sup>1</sup> K. Hagverdiyeva, "Language contacts as means of enrichment of languages", *Baltic Humanitarian Journal* Vol: 8 num 2(27) (2019): 348-352 y J. Xuehua, "From mixture of languages to Russian chinaism", *Baltic Humanitarian Journal* Vol: 7 num 4(25) (2018): 120-123.

<sup>2</sup> A. Prit and C. Kritsada, "Derivational nests and semantics of words derived from concept "Intellect" in Russian Language (in comparison with German and Thai languages)", *Baltic Humanitarian Journal* Vol: 8 num 2(27) (2019): 369-374 y Sh. Sun, "Comparative analysis of military terminology in the Russian and English languages", *Baltic Humanitarian Journal* Vol: 7 num 1(22): 160-163.

<sup>3</sup> W. Mieder, *W Proverbs: A Handbook* (London: Greenwood Press, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> N. R. Norrick, *How Proverbs Mean? Semantic Studies in English Proverbs* (Amsterdam: Mouton, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> M. MacCoinigh, "Structural Aspects of Proverbs", *Introduction to Paremiology: A Comprehensive Guide to Proverb Studies* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> J. Lui, "Cognitive-metaphorical study of Chinese proverbs in Russian Mass Media space", *Baltic Humanitarian Journal* Vol: 7 num 4 (25) (2018): 70-73.

<sup>7</sup> A. V. Kunin, *A course of modern English phraseology* (Dubna: Fenix, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> E. F. Arsentyeva, *Comparative analysis of phraseological units (man-oriented PHU in English and Russian)* (Kazan: Kazan State University, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> F. Kh. Tarasova, *Comparative analysis of English and Tatar phraseological units with components belonging to the semantic field "Food"* (Kazan: KSPU, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> R. Y. Sharipova, *Category of gender in phraseology (on the basis of phraseological units with substantive gender component)* (Kazan: KSPU).

of this level of the language can throw light not only on the common and different features of culture and world outlook, but also the sentence structure and mechanisms of expressing ourselves.

### Literature review and discussion

Let us consider the peculiarities of such folklore items as proverbs as the subject matter of our research.

W. Meider and A. Dundes have defined the proverb as "a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and which is handed down from generation to generation"<sup>11</sup>.

They also add that "Proverbs obviously contain a lot of common sense, experience, wisdom, and truth, and as such they represent ready-made traditional strategies in oral speech acts and writings from high literature to the mass media"<sup>12</sup>.

H. Mollanazar has defined the proverb as "a unit of meaning in a specific context through which the speaker and hearer arrives at the same meaning"<sup>13</sup>.

N.R. Norrick has given the following definition for the proverb: "The proverb is a traditional, conversational, didactic genre with general meaning, a potential free conversational turn, preferably with figurative meaning"<sup>14</sup>.

Lately, scholars have come to the conclusion that proverbs have certain markers like a unique poetic style, a peculiar outer form and certain meaning that they convey. All these they called *proverbiality*. The phonological, semantic, and syntactic devices that occur frequently in proverbs across languages may be termed *proverbial markers*. Scholars have identified a range of devices which operate in ensemble to effect the concept of proverbial style, amongst which the most important are parallelism, ellipsis, alliteration, rhyme, metaphor, personification, paradox, and hyperbole<sup>15</sup>. Structural elements are amongst the most universal and easily identifiable proverbial markers, and feature with high frequencies across world languages, both in terms of (i) the traditional fixed formulae, and (ii) the set of optional syntactic devices that occur in proverbs, particularly syntactic parallelism, parataxis, and inverted word order in its various manifestations<sup>16</sup>. So let us state that a proverb is a sentence. Some linguists however differentiate between proverbs and proverbial phrases. For example, Taylor discriminates the proverb as a sentence and proverbial phrase like 'to bring somebody to earth' e.g. 'he brought me down to earth by telling the truth'. The proverbial phrase is not a sentence but can become a part of a sentence. Some sources however do not differentiate between proverbs and proverbial phrases and we can see both in dictionaries of proverbs.

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<sup>11</sup> W. Meider and A. Dundes, *The Wisdom of Many: Essays on the Proverb*, (New York: Garland, 1995), 119.

<sup>12</sup> W. Meider and A. Dundes, *The Wisdom of Many*...120.

<sup>13</sup> H. Mollanazar, *Principles and methodology of translation* (Tehran: SAMT, 2001), 53.

<sup>14</sup> N. R. Norrick, *How Proverbs Mean*...78.

<sup>15</sup> W. Mieder, *Proverbs: A Handbook*... 7.

<sup>16</sup> M. MacCoinnigh, "Structural Aspects of Proverbs"...12.

J. Casares resorts to the terms “proverb” and “saying” considering them to be almost the same, able to replace one another. He defines the proverb as a free and complete phrasal unit, which expresses some piece of mind, wisdom. He does not connect the proverb with any particular event and has the traces of elaborate and artificial rewording, whence the proverbial phrase is a spontaneous saying, which comes from some definite true or thought out event in the past to be generalized by further generations. These two linguistic units have the structure of a sentence but the former does not have a clear etymology. However the origin of the proverbial phrase is hard to define either, thus making these two sentence-like structures difficult to discriminate<sup>17</sup>.

In N.R. Norrick's words "Seiler introduces this definitional criterion solely to distinguish proverbs from proverbial phrases. With reference to these characteristics in Norrick's words "proverbial phrases like *"to face the music"* and *"Brown as a berry"* are immediately excluded from the class of proverbs because they lack precisely essential grammatical units, which can thus be substituted into them at will"<sup>18</sup>.

Another linguist who has characterized proverbs is C.R. Trench. He says that all proverbs should possess three things: shortness, sense, and salt<sup>19</sup>.

Thus we see that apart from semantic and cultural peculiarity of proverbs, linguists point out the syntactic feature of the proverb being the structure of a conversational unit, sentence. So we cannot name a set unit of speech a proverb if it is not a sentence. And we cannot name any sentence a proverb, it must contain a scenario, a piece of cultural “wisdom”, something to be held within generations. Also important is the outer form of the proverb, something that makes it different, usually some stylistic or phonic means like repetition, rhyme, alliteration and others.

Let's draw the conclusion that proverbs are defined by most linguists as traditionally used semantically peculiar syntactic units that have the sentence structure and which convey a certain wisdom. We shall stick to the opinion that proverbial phrases and sayings can take their place together with proverbs for their fulfilling the same function and having the same structure, besides most Russian dictionaries include them as well.

## Methodology and research

In our work we resort to such methods as linguistic analysis, comparative analysis and statistic analysis. The research is based on 108 English and 96 Tatar proverbs and sayings.

So the main criteria for defining the proverb are

- 1) Traditional use, peculiar outer form (folklore, phonological peculiarities)
- 2) Semantic:
- 3) Structural.

<sup>17</sup> J. Casares, Introduction to modern lexicography (Moscow: Prosvetchniye, 1978).

<sup>18</sup> N. R. Norrick, How Proverbs Mea... 82.

<sup>19</sup> C. R. Trench, On the Lessons in Proverbs (New York: Redfield, 1853), 16.

Now let us consider each item separately on the basis of our examples.

All proverbs have their traditional use, national and cultural peculiarity and special outer form which is usually expressed by phonic and syntactic stylistic means: alliteration, rhyme and parallelism. For example,

1) Alliteration:

*Money makes the **mare** (to) go*

Үлгән **агайга** югалган май – Like a foal to the dead uncle, something unnecessary

Rhyme: *Wham bam thank you **ma'am** – 1) (coll.) careless sexual relations;*

2) something unexpected

*Faint heart never won fair **lady***

*He that would have eggs must endure the cackling of **hens***

Суда чакта **үгезе**, судан чыккач **мөгезе** – When in water it is a bull, when out only horns (about people who promise too much)

*Торам-торам да **хатынның** (кодагыйның) колагын борам* – Little by little I turn my wife by the ear, used to say when you blame somebody who is not to blame

Alliteration and rhyme:

*New **lords**, new laws*

**Абзыкаем** Фәрхетдин, түбәтәең бәрхетдин – Uncle Farhetdin, velvet tubetey (a kind of hat) used to say that people judge you by your clothes

Repetition:

*All the **King's** horses and all the **King's** men can't (couldn't) do something*

Parallelism: *Like **father**, like son (child)*

*Моны эт тө белә, **тавык** та белә* – Even dog and hen know it (it is known to everybody)

Parallelism and rhyme:

**Кодалар** килде капкага, кыз утырды кабага – Parents -in-law have come to the gate, the girl has sat to spin the wool – used to say about people who start to do their work when it is too late

Proverbs have their national peculiarity, which is conveyed through the inner form of the proverb, their 'scenario'. For example:

*Diamonds are a **girl's** best friend* – [from the comedy «Gentlemen prefer blondes»]

*When Adam delved and Eve span who was then a (the) **gentleman**?* (a motto of Peasant rebellion in 1381 r., said to be used by the companion of Wat Tyler the monk John Bold. In modern English is used about people who are proud of their background)

*It's not the **gay** coat that makes the **gentleman***

These proverbs underline the peculiarity of the English to have and to be proud of their noble roots and to value all the attributes of noble life, which sometimes may be too excessive.

*Яраткан Аллам түгел, тапкан **анам** түгел* – It is not my Allah, it is not my mother (I don't have to be responsible)

*Акчасыздан **ама** каз* – A gander appeared when you didn't have money  
1) unexpected money; 2) used to say to a man who complains to pay.

*Аны Мәнди **анасы** (Гөләп жиңги дә) да белә* - It is known to Mandy mother (Golep sister-in-law) – Everybody knows it.

In Tatar people most proverbs come from folklore, they reflect country life, religious views of the people, family relations.

But some proverbs have equivalents in other languages and do not convey national and cultural peculiarity. For example:

*Like **father**, like son (child)*

Peculiar here is the structure of this elliptical sentence. So as we see syntactical structure can also have national peculiarity.

***Ама** улны, **ана** кызны белми. Эт иясен танымый* – The father doesn't know his son. The dog doesn't know its host. Used to say about a mess

In Tatar peculiar is the outer form of the sentence (rhyme, alliteration, parallelisms).

2) As for semantic peculiarity of proverbs, they can be based on

- Metaphor, for example:

*Is your **father** a glazier?*

***Анасының** карынында ничек тугыз ай да ун көн чыдап торган* – How did he manage to sit in the mother's womb – used to say about hyperactive people

*Акча өчен **анасын** сатар* – He will sell his mother for money

*Till the **cows** come home*

*That **cock** won't fight*

- Paradox (in Tatar):

*Аларның үгезләре дә бозаулаган вакыт* – Their bull is going to calve (Do not believe them)

*Аннан әйбер алганчы, тавыктан сөт саварсың* – You will sooner milk a hen than get something from him

*Аның алашасы да колынлы* – His castrated stallion will give birth (you cannot know him)

Here the gender component plays the main role, the paradox is based upon the impossibility of the male to give birth, or rarely of birds to give milk.

- Personification (in Tatar mainly):

*Рамазан агай килде* – Uncle Ramadan has come

Many months and nature phenomena are associated in Tatar with such gender components (genonyms) as ‘uncle’, ‘mother’.

- Antithesis (in Tatar)

*Уллы кеше губернатор, кызлы кеше көтеп ятыр* – The one who has a son is the ruler, the one who has a daughter will wait

*Тавык күкәй салмас борын чебеш ашыи башлама* - Don't eat the chicken as soon as the hen has eggs

*Күңелем кара сыерның сөте кебек ап-ак* – My conscience is as white as the black cow's milk

Very often antithesis is based on gender, but not always.

- Metonymy:

*If you sell the cow, you sell her milk too*

*Атаң малы бармы. Ата малы түгел* – Is there the wealth of your father, you do not have the right for the inheritance

- Synecdoche:

*The cow knows not what her tail is worth until she has lost it*

*Атаң башы ғына юк* – There is everything but for the head of the father (you will find anything there)

*Вәли дә хатынлы булган – эт тә койрыклы булган* – Valy has got a wife, the dog has got a tail (used to say about people who marry without all necessary conditions)

Metonymy and synecdoche as usual have some part of body or some part of family standing for some particular element in life of people.



- Periphrasis:

*The red **cock** will crow in his house*

*Акчасыздан **ама** каз* – A gander appeared when you didn't have money  
1) unexpected money; 2) used to say to a man who complains to pay

Interesting is the fact that periphrasis usually has a male component.

- Allusion: A **cock** is valiant of his own dunghill [etymology Bible.]  
*Am I my **brother's** keeper? (I am not me brother's keeper)*  
[etymology Bible.]

English proverbs very often come from Bible or from literature.

*Кыз авырмы, тоз авырмы* – Is the girl heavy or the salt heavy – a question asked to people who are going to marry [It was necessary to pay the 'makhr' for the girl, usually it was salt]

Tatar proverbs mostly come from folklore, which often resorts to Islamic traditions.

- 3) Let us dwell on structural peculiarities of proverbs:  
Most proverbs have the structure of a simple sentence:

*War is the sport of **kings***

*Егем сүзе бер булып* –Guy said guy has done, used to say that men usually stick to their word

*Аналары бер кояшта киндер килтергәннәр* – Their mothers always dried hemp under the same sun (they are very close people)

Mostly they have the same model N is N of N in English.

N adverbial modifier + Object + Verb in Tatar

For example: *Diligence is the **mother** of good luck (or of success)*

Proverbs with the component "mother" here make the most of the proverbs of this type

Another model of simple declarative sentence is N +V + N + prep + N group

They can be affirmative and negative.

*Many kiss the child for the **nurse's** sake*

*One (you) cannot make a silk purse out of a **sow's** ear*

*The **king** can do no wrong*

*It couldn't happen to a nicer **guy***

*Бирнэ биргээн **букэ** килэн димэслэр эле* – The girl with the dowry is not the daughter-in-law (used to say about people, who will not thank you even if you do your best)

(*Анда*) ***атаң** белэн анаң гына юк* – there is everybody apart from your mother and father (there is a variety of things)

Structures with the infinitive:

Model N + V+ N + infinitive (complex object)

*Need makes the old **wife** trot*

Model It is N of N + infinitive phrase

*It's a **woman's** (lady's) privilege to change her mind*

Most subjects of simple sentences have no attribute except some sentences

*The still **sow** eats up all the draff*

For example N's N is the Adj +N

*The cobbler's (улу shoemaker's) **wife** is the worst shod*

A variation of this model is N's N is adverbial modifier

*A **wife's** (woman's) place is in the home*

Adverbial modifier + N is N

*Among the blind the one-eyed man is **king** (.in the country улу in the kingdom of the blind the one-eyed man is king)*

Model There is N adverbial modifier is not very common.

*There's a **woman** in it*

Some simple sentences have elements of comparison, but it is not typical for the proverbs with gender component

*Hell hath no fury like a **woman** scorned*

(*Just*) *like **mother** makes (used to make)*

***Ана** сөтө кебек хэлэл* - It is 'halal' (permitted for Muslims) like mother's milk, something precious

Interrogative sentences are commonly used in proverbs that have colloquial colouring. For example: *Who's she, the cat's **mother**?*

*Does your **mother** know you're out?*

*All are good **lasses**, but whence come the bad wives?*

*Кыз чагында бар да яхшы, кайдан чыга усал хатыннар? – All girls are nice, where from do bad wives come?*

***Атаң** пыялачымы әллә? Is your father a glazier?*

The structure of the interrogative sentence is different in English and Tatar due to the difference in language types. Tatars do not use auxiliary verbs and start the question with different parts of the sentence, the word order is not so strict here.

Exclamatory sentences also can be described as colloquial. For example:

*No more **Mr.** Nice Guy!*

*Кыймылда инде, **атаң** ташбака түгелдер бит - Do move, you are not a turtle!*  
(to a passive person)

***Атаңа** нәләт (ләгънәт)! - Confound your father (your family)!*

They have a rather various structure having an interjection in English, a verb or noun in Tatar.

Compound sentence usually employs 'and' conjunction in English and a comma in Tatar.

*There is one good **wife** in the country, and every man thinks he has her*

*A **man** is as old as he feels, and a woman as old as she looks*

*Үзөбөз тапкан мал түгел, **атай** тапкан жәл түгел (үзем тапкан мал түгел, әтинеке жәл түгел) – It is not the wealth we have earned, my father has earned, I don't begrudge it*

Complex sentences are not too many among proverbs with gender component:

Complex sentence with a relative clause

*He that would have eggs must endure the cackling of **hens***

Complex sentence with a subject clause:

*(What's) sauce for the **goose** (is sauce for the gander)*

(Complex sentence with a time clause:

*When Adam delved and Eve span who was then a (the) **gentleman**?*

Complex sentence with a conditional clause:

*Кесәсендә ун тиен акча булса әтәч булып кычкыра* - If he has 10 cents he cries like a cock (about a person who spends too much)

Complex sentences are not typical for the Tatar language. Tatars mainly use such grammar phenomena like verb-noun and participial constructions:

*Анасын имчәген имгәндә икенчесен кулы белән торган* - When he ate his mother's milk he held the other breast by his hand (a very greedy man)

*Бу сиңа әниң пешергән әлбә түгел* - It is not the mother's cake

Some proverbs have elliptical structure as if taken from a conversation but it is not typical in our case.

*Like mother, like daughter*

*If mother could see us now*

As for imperative sentences we can hardly find such models among proverbs with gender component.

There is also a model with direct speech (typical for Tatar)

Direct speech “ди(е)п” V “әле (ди)”.

For example: *Юк, без яшь чакта сызгыру юк иде, дип әйтте ди бер бабай* – One old man said that in his youth they didn't use to whistle (about people who like to moralize)

*Бабайныкы* – *илнеке (дип әйтте ди бер кияү)* – one son-in-law said that if it is grandfather's then it is the people's (about a man who doesn't value his inheritance).

The results of the comparative analysis of proverbs with gender component in the English and Tatar languages are represented in table 1:

Criterion		English (%)	Tatar (%)
Semantic	Metaphor	82	64
	Metonymy	15	12
	Synecdoche	2	5
	Periphrasis	2	2
	Paradox	4	22
	Antithesis	12	18
Outer form	Alliteration	6	6
	Rhyme	22	42
	Parallelism	20	16
	Repetition	6	18
Markers of National peculiarity		56	94
Structure	Simple sentence	86	96

	Simple sentence with predicative constructions	24	32
	Compound sentence	46	42
	Complex sentence with a time clause	46	1
	Complex sentence with a conditional clause	36	1
	Complex sentence with a clause of manner	12	0
	Complex sentence with a subject clause	8	0
	Complex sentence with a relative clause	6	0

Table 1

## Conclusion

In our work we have defined the field of our investigation to be folklore, particularly the proverbs with gender component in the English and Tatar languages. The proverb is defined by us as traditionally used semantically peculiar syntactic units that have the sentence structure and which convey certain wisdom. We consider proverbial phrases and sayings in our work as well as they can take their place together with proverbs for their fulfilling the same function and having the same structure, besides they are included in most dictionaries of proverbs in our country and abroad.

So our research has proved that folklore in the Tatar and English linguistic cultures has a lot in common: proverbs and sayings all come from communication, they have a common outer form characterized by alliteration, rhyme, repetition. In Tatar linguistic units the outer form is more important than in English proverbs, for Tatar ones come from the language of peasantry and lower class people, thus making proverbs and sayings more vivid and with some kind of 'spice'. In comparison, most English cultural units tend to be originated in the noble society, come from the Bible and literature. The semantic mechanisms of formation have a lot in common. There are such mechanisms as metaphor, metonymy, comparison, antithesis, paradox (in Tatar). The most commonly used semantic mechanism is metaphor and in Tatar it is paradox. Gender component does not play the main role in creating the peculiarity, mainly in Tatar. If we speak about stylistic means, we should stress that proverbs employ a lot of syntactical stylistic means like parallelisms and rhyme. Structurally English and Tatar proverbs and sayings are mainly simple declarative sentences with some rare cases of questions, exclamatory, imperative sentences. English linguistic units usually have definite syntactic models, which can be explained by fixed word order. Tatar proverb models are of a different and a more varied type. There are some compound and complex sentences, the latter not common in Tatar. The difference in structure can be easily explained by the difference in the language type, for the Tatar language belongs to the group of agglutinative languages having a different word order and a different way of language economy. Tatar people prefer to use such language phenomena as verb-noun and infinitive, which are not common in English proverbs.

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