



A LINGUOCOGNITIVE ANALYSIS OF TIME CONCEPTS IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN PROVERBS

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Abstract

This article presents a linguocognitive analysis of time concepts as reflected in English and Russian proverbs. Drawing on cognitive linguistics, the study examines how different cultures conceptualize time similarly through metaphorical and proverbial expressions, highlighting both shared and divergent perceptions. Proverbs are categorized according to their representation of time as value – as a resource for everything, as a teacher – providing with knowledge and wisdom, as healer – as a curative force, as a judge – an impartial evaluator, as a cycle – part of the natural order and as opportunity – time as a chance. The analysis reveals that both English and Russian proverbs emphasize the value of timely action, yet cultural nuances shape their expressions and underlying attitudes toward time. English proverbs often employ vivid imagery and imperatives to stress seizing the moment, while Russian proverbs combine practical wisdom with moral and ethical reflections.

Introduction

A proverb, as a type of paremiological cliché, represents a story, worldly wisdom, spiritual wealth, and cultural heritage that has been examined through the centuries-long experience of the peoples of the world. A proverb is a brief saying that takes the form of a complete sentence, expresses a particular inference, and can be used both literally and figuratively, whereas a saying is a widely used figurative expression that describes a particular life phenomenon. Unlike a proverb, whose main purpose is moral instruction, a saying has an allegorical character. A saying can be continued, while a proverb is semantically complete. A proverb also differs from such types of paremias as phraseological units, winged words, aphorisms, riddles, and others. A proverb differs from a phraseological unit in that its meaning is conveyed through a complete sentence,

whereas the meaning of a phraseological unit is expressed through words or word combinations. Another distinction is that a proverb consists of words with independent lexical meaning, while the components of a phraseological unit are not motivated, and their meaning can be understood only within the fixed expression.

Methods:

While conducting scientific research the method of linguistic description, comparative method, semantic-stylistic method etc. were used.

Results and Discussion:

There are several definitions proposed by English linguists, indicating the importance, value, and folk nature of proverbs: As V. I. Dal asserts: “A proverb is a short parable... It is a judgment, a sentence, a lesson, expressed indirectly and put into circulation under the stamp of folk character...” [6; p. 13]. S. I. Ozhegov provided definitions for proverbs and sayings, highlighting the differences between them. He defines a proverb as follows: “A proverb is a short folk saying with a didactic meaning, a folk aphorism” [9; p. 568]. W. Mieder: “proverbs are short, generally known sentences of the folk that contain wisdom, truths, morals, traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorable form and that are handed down orally from generation to generation” [2; c. 5]. N.R. Norrick: “A proverb is a traditional, colloquial, didactic genre with a generalized meaning, a potentially free speech unit with a figurative sense” [3; p. 78]. A. Dundes: “A proverb is a traditionally uttered statement consisting of at least one descriptive element, which comprises a topic and a comment” [1; p. 127]. B.J. Whiting, regarding the nature of proverbs, provides the following definition: “Some proverbs have both a literal and a figurative meaning. Either variant makes sense, but most often they have only one of the two” [4; p. 302].

From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, any language is a system of concepts through which its speakers can interpret and classify the flow of information from the external world. Cognitive linguists consider a concept to be a mental formation that develops in a person’s consciousness and functions in the process of their speech activity. S. Kh. Lyapin confirms that a concept is a multidimensional, culturally significant socio-psychological formation in collective consciousness, which is objectified in linguistic form [8; p. 55]. As E.S.

Kubryakova notes, a concept is an “operational content unit of memory, the mental lexicon, the conceptual system of language and the brain (lingua mentalis), the entire picture reflected in the human psyche” [7; p. 90]. N.N. Boldyrev believes that a concept is the result of human cognitive activity, which unites into a single system. This system consists of concepts of varying levels of complexity. The diversity of cognitive forms determines different ways of forming concepts in human consciousness... [5; p. 23].

The concept of “time” is both interesting and highly complex manifestation, as our understanding of the world is largely shaped through its lens. Time is an abstract phenomenon, and our grasp of its essence is mediated by language: notions of time and its qualitative characteristics, developed in human consciousness through direct temporal experience, are encoded in symbolic forms and become an integral part of language. In proverbs, time can be marked as value, as a teacher, healer, judge, cycle etc.

Cognitive and Metaphorical Categorization of the Concept of Time in English and Russian Proverbs

Category	Core Metaphor
Value	Time = resource
Teacher	Time = wisdom
Healer	Time = cure
Judge	Time = evaluator
Cycle	Time = natural order
Opportunity	Time = chance

The first category is “Value,” where time is viewed as a resource. In this metaphor, time is seen as a precious commodity that can be spent, wasted, or saved, emphasizing efficiency, productivity, and economic importance. For example, the English proverb Time is money; Make the most of your time; A stitch in time saves nine and the Russian equivalent Время — деньги (Time is money); Кто рано встает, тому Бог дает (God gives to those who rise early); Не откладывай на завтра то, что можно сделать сегодня (Don’t put off until tomorrow what you can do today) illustrate this perspective.

The second category, “Teacher,” presents time as a source of wisdom. Time is perceived as a guide that provides knowledge, insight, and understanding, revealing truths and teaching lessons. Examples include the English proverb Time



will tell; Time teaches all things; Time reveals all truths and the Russian *Время покажет* (Time will show); *Долго будет день, пока узнаешь всё* (It takes time to learn everything); *Со временем всё узнается*. (In time, everything is learned).

The “Healer” category treats time as a curative force. Here, time alleviates pain, suffering, or emotional wounds, bringing recovery and restoration. This idea is expressed in English through *Time heals all wounds*; *Time mends all sorrows*; *Patience is a remedy for every sorrow* and in Russian through *Время лечит* (Time heals); *Со временем заживают все раны* (With time, all wounds heal); *Время — лучший лекарь* (Time is the best healer).

In the “Judge” category, time functions as an impartial evaluator. It reveals the true value of actions, people, or events. English and Russian proverbs reflecting this view include *Time is the best judge*; *Truth will out in time*; *What is hidden will be revealed in time* and *Время — лучший судья* (Time is the best judge); *Время расставит всё по местам*. (Time will put everything in its place); *Время покажет правду*. (Time will show the truth).

The “Cycle” category portrays time as part of the natural order. Time is seen as cyclical and orderly, reflecting the rhythm of life, seasons, and events. Proverbs illustrating this include the English *There is a time for everything*; *What goes around comes around*; *After rain comes fair weather* and the Russian *Всему своё время*; *После дождя бывает солнце* (After rain comes sunshine); *Не бывает зимы без весны* (There is no winter without spring).

The “Opportunity” category highlights time as a chance. It provides the right moment for action, and success depends on recognizing and seizing opportunities. Examples include the English *Strike while the iron is hot*; *Make hay while the sun shines*; *Don’t put off until tomorrow what you can do today* and the Russian *Куй железо, пока горячо* (Strike the iron while it’s hot); *Утро вечера мудренее*. (Morning is wiser than evening; sometimes interpreted as acting at the right time); *Не откладывай на завтра то, что можно сделать сегодня*. (Don’t put off until tomorrow what you can do today).

Conclusion

The present study demonstrates that English and Russian proverbs provide rich material for understanding the concept of time from a linguocognitive perspective. By categorizing time according to core metaphors—Value, Teacher, Healer, Judge, Cycle, Opportunity, and Enemy—it becomes clear that both



languages share common cultural attitudes toward time while also exhibiting unique nuances. English proverbs often emphasize efficiency, direct action, and vivid imagery, reflecting a pragmatic and instructive approach. Russian proverbs, meanwhile, combine practical advice with moral and ethical reflections, revealing a deeper philosophical and cultural engagement with temporal experience. Overall, the analysis shows that proverbs not only encode cultural knowledge and collective wisdom but also shape how speakers perceive and interact with time. Time, as a concept, functions simultaneously as a resource, guide, healer, evaluator, natural cycle, chance, and potential threat—illustrating the multidimensionality of temporal cognition. This study confirms that proverbs are not merely linguistic artifacts but cognitive tools that reveal how human thought and cultural values are intertwined with the perception of time.

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