



RESEARCH PAPER

Cross-Cultural Stylistic and Semantic Analysis of Proverbs: A Comparative Study of Balti and English

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to investigate the similarities and differences between Balti and English proverbs and the impact of culture on them through the exploration of Parallelism as a Stylistic approach. For this purpose, Theory of Cultural Linguistics by Farzad Sharifian (2017) and Palmer (1996) are used to investigate the cultural significance of proverbs. Previous studies in the region have primarily focused on describing proverbs from a single perspective. As a result, there is a lack of exploration from alternative viewpoints. This current study aims to fill that gap. Qualitative and textual analysis methods are employed on 50 randomly collected proverbs from both English and Balti languages. The Balti proverbs are collected from Ghulam Hassan Hasni's book "Tam Lo" (2004), while the English proverbs are collected from two online sources, namely The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs by Jennifer Speake and John Simpson, and A Handbook of Proverbs by Henry G. Bohn. The results show that proverbs of both languages use cultural conceptualizations and cultural objects to produce proverbs, and they are significantly affected by the native cultures. The English and Balti proverbs exhibit both similarities and differences in terms of stylistic, semantic, and thematic elements. Moreover, parallelism has been explored in proverbs of both languages as a Stylistic device which enhances the rhythm and beauty of proverbs. This research contributes to the field of Linguistics, Stylistics, Anthropology, and Paremiology. Future researchers can carry out research studies using other perspectives and other regional languages.

KEYWORDS

Stylistics, Semantics, Proverbs, Culture, Parallelism, Balti, English

Introduction

Language is the cornerstone of human communication, enabling the transfer of ideas, experiences, and wisdom across generations. One of the most enduring forms of language is the proverb, defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as a short, well-known saying that expresses a general truth or piece of advice. Proverbs are much more than just linguistic expressions; they reflect a society's values, norms, and shared wisdom. Degener (2022) observes that proverbs not only mirror societal behavior but also convey common observations, experiences, and normative values. As culturally transmitted, formalized, and figurative expressions, proverbs serve as indicators of the prevailing values and habits within a society.

The study of proverbs, known as paremiology, has been a significant focus for linguists and folklorists for many years. Scholars such as Archer Taylor, Matti Kuusi, and

Wolfgang Mieder have made major contributions to this field (Villers, 2014). However, defining what constitutes a proverb remains contentious, as existing definitions in dictionaries are often imprecise and fail to distinguish proverbs from other short forms of expression. While some scholars, like Whiting (1932), suggest that proverbs must have an archaic or antique form, this criterion overlooks many modern proverbs whose structures remain relevant and "up-to-date" in contemporary discourse.

Despite this debate, scholars generally agree that proverbs are complete sentences or full statements. However, some linguists, such as Norrick (1985), argue that proverbs may not always meet grammatical standards and should not always be classified as canonical sentences. What remains clear is that proverbs typically carry logical implications, which provide valuable insights into the cognitive and cultural structures of the societies from which they originate.

The use and existence of proverbs as a literary device can be traced back to the history of the medieval Ages. The literary traditions from Chaucer to Villon, proverbial ballads, and then from the writing of John Lily to Benjonson are very prominent. Proverbs witnessed its golden age in the 16th and 17th centuries, when it gained widespread use in daily life communication, to art and literature. However, the 18th century observed a sharp decline in the proverbial genre. Proverbs are not merely linguistic devices that carry simple meaning and are used for transferring simple ideas and thoughts; rather, they are expressions and reflections of collective mentality, propensities, and experiences in both written and spoken form of a speech community (Malik, 2019). Proverbs value communication, accentuating wisdom, knowledge, moral values, and human experiences. In other words, proverbs produce beliefs, feelings, and realities of societal life.

Having cultural and historical roots is true for proverbs of every language. For instance, if we inquire into English proverbs, they are derived from various sources, including Holy scriptures, folklore, and literature. A significant percentage originating from Latin and French, Ivanov and Petrushevskiaia (2015) make two categories of English proverbs: native and borrowed forms. This fact highlights another aspect of language that borrowing is not limited to words and phrases only, but also cultural-linguistic aspects as well.

Hence, the role of proverbs to reflect indigenous wisdom, culture appears to be true in every language; the same is true with the Balti language. Proverbs in the Balti language have been an integral part of the Balti language since history can be traced back. With the arrival of Islam in the region, Balti witnessed a linguistic and cultural shift (Hussainabadi, 2004). The underlying historical, cultural, and religious structure of a Balti society can be easily understood through a critical analysis of Balti proverbs. Proverbs add texture to any language, making it more condensed and terse, hence more appealing to the speakers and listeners. As Balti writer Muhammad Hassan Hasrat eloquently states, "A language without proverbs is like food without salt and spices" (Hasrat, 2004). In the first book of Balti proverbs, *Balti Tamlo (Balti Proverbs)*, Hasni has been successful in gathering around 900 proverbs. These proverbs reflect the evolution of the Balti language and give a gist of Balti culture.

Xiangyang (2016) accentuates the intersectional nature of culture and language, and declares proverbs as a 'window' giving an opening to look at the various cultural dimensions of a nation. Proverbs are the containers of collective wit, experiences, worldview, and social structure of a speaking community, subsequently offering their collective identity. Along with the language, these proverbs are also passed down through

generations. Socio-cultural significance of proverbs in a language community is undeniable as they manifest a nation's worldview (Zendeh Dil et al., 2021).

This study in hand deals with two distinct cultures, overlooking the limitation of Golton's problem that favors cross-cultural studies from the same geographical regions to reduce the influence of cultural borrowing. (Lavinson, 1996). Balti and English are the descendants of two distinctive language families, Sino-Tibetan and Indo-European, respectively, and represent two classifiable cultural worlds; hence, their speakers' worldview is also different. This comparative study shows how the proverbs of two different cultures perceive the worldview and share a similar life experience.

The paper emphasizes the collective wisdom and language features that these proverbs of two distinctive languages and cultures carry. By examining proverbs from these two languages, this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural functions of proverbs across different linguistic traditions.

Literature Review

The literature reviewed for this study covers various aspects of proverbial studies, particularly focusing on their relationship with intercultural communication, semantics, stylistics, and translation studies.

Proverbs are widely recognized as linguistic artifacts, often linked to language and culture. Mahmud and Islam (2005) argue that while it is not mandatory to explicitly relate proverbs to language and culture, they still play a significant role in bridging cultural differences and promoting intercultural communication. This is particularly evident in English proverbs, where they are frequently associated with human values, attitudes, and behaviors. In understanding proverbs, the study of meaning plays a pivotal role. The distinction of conceptual and associative meaning is important to analyze the proverbs (Yule, 2010).

Leech (1974), in his semantic framework, proposed seven kinds of meaning. Dictionary and literal meaning, he called the denotative meaning. Connotative meaning expresses emotional and associative meaning related to the word. Collocative meaning is the meaning that often appears together; likewise, affective meaning refers to how emotions can shape interpretation. Whereas stylistic meaning copes with social context and niceties in language use. While thematic meaning talks about the structure and it accentuates a text. Reflexive meaning gives details about the words or expressions that generate multiple interpretations based on their context. While interpreting or examining proverbs, these types are relevant to bring under consideration as they often involve multiple layers of meaning.

Hence, semantics also talks about the semantic relations of words, such as polysemy, hyponymy, antonymy, and hyponym prototypes. These relations play a vital role while interpreting and analyzing the meaning of proverbs depending upon their context. Relying on the intentions and shared cultural knowledge of the speakers' lexical items used in proverbs gives multiple kinds of meaning.

Stylistics helps the user to use language in specific ways to make a special effect through the choice of syntactic structures and words. Stylistics guides the readers to understand how the user uses language to make more persuasive and effective communication. Giovanelli et al. (n.d.) argue that stylistics is more rooted in rhetoric. Parallelism is one of the most effective stylistic devices that creates a special effect in

communication. Parallelism is a common feature of proverbs used to underscore or spotlight certain ideas. It involves the repetition of syntactical structure to make analogical relationships or comparisons, shaping the proverbs easier to remember and impactful. Coiningh (2015) believes that parallelism may be semantic or structural. It can be achieved through using conjunctions (syndetic coordination) or without using conjunctions (asyndetic coordination). In stylistic quality of proverbs, grammatical and phonetic parallelism makes a great contribution. Grammatical parallelism is the repetition of sentence structure, and phonetic parallelism is about sound patterns or repetition of the same sound(s) that suggest the connection of meaning.

Parallelism, besides being used for creating emphasis it also brings rhythm that aids in memorization. Writers like Crystal (2003), Cook (1989), and Mathews (2007) have investigated parallelism as a rhetorical instrument to reinforce meaning and generate a sense of balance in language. They are of the opinion that parallelism can be observed at various levels while studying parallelism, such as repetition of lexical items, syntactic reflection, and structural reversal. And all these enhance the stylistic effects of the proverb.

Furthermore, translation studies have also made a contribution to the understanding of proverbs in addition to stylistic analysis. Issa et.al (2024) and Khan (2014) have investigated the translation of proverbs in the setting of gender and culturally bound items. Their study talks of the challenges in the translation of proverbs owing to cultural differences. They emphasize the importance of preservation of the proverbial expressions of indigenous languages. Translation of proverbs requires special attention to be culturally sensitive, hence, balancing cultural and semantic equality. Their study relies on the role of translation theories, such as that of Farzad (2009).

Another approach that has been frequently employed by researchers and investigators is the lingua-cultural approach. Eshdavlatovna (2021) and Ahmed et al. (2021) have probed into cultural and structural aspects of the proverbs of various languages. These studies show how proverbs express the cultural rarity and worldviews of the different societies. In a similar study, Khan and Awan (2020), using a lingua-cultural approach, found that both the Punjabi and African proverbs mainly perform the same communicative task as they both convey the preferences, ideologies, social norms, and cultural aspects of their origin. This approach, by allowing the comparison of cultures and languages, guides the researchers to understand how the proverbs shape communication.

There are several studies that focus on stylistic studies of proverbs, giving special emphasis to the use of these proverbs in literature and in everyday conversation. Hassan (2022) performed a stylistic analysis of proverbs while using Leech's model that quantifies the various meanings carried by the proverbs. This type of analysis is more useful in understanding different types of indigenous knowledge, social values, and beliefs that the proverbs convey. Another study conducted by Anila (2021) shows how the Balti proverbs depict traditionally rooted beliefs and social norms. Hence, Enstitusu (2019) brings out the stylistic features of Turkish proverbs through the application of stylistic and structural analysis. Orlova (2021) investigated Russian and English proverbs related to weddings and highlighted how these proverbs express cultural perspectives on marriage in both societies. Moreover, Klegr (2019) highlighted those proverbs that carry the word 'death' to explain how different cultures employ proverbs to convey the idea of life and death.

Succinctly, a tour of literature on proverbs shows that multiple approaches, such as stylistic analysis, lingua-cultural approach, translation studies, and representation of cultural objects, have been used by the investigators to explore various aspects of the proverbs. There seems to be consensus among all the researchers that these proverbs very

effectively communicate shared wisdom, cultural views, and social values. However, more comparative studies can be more useful to understand the variation and fascinating contradictions in the worldviews of the speakers. This research in hand is a step forward in this regard, as it attempts to compare one indigenous and one international language, that are Balti and English.

Material and Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach. The data has been analyzed by applying semantic, stylistic analysis, and cultural linguistics. For the theoretical foundation, this study employs Farzad Sharifain's frame of cultural linguistics, which emphasizes over conceptualization of culture that includes cultural categories, schemas, and metaphors. In addition to this, Gary B. Palmer's linking of languages and culture has also been brought into consideration. To explore the structural features of the proverbs, the research uses stylistics, particularly analysis of parallelism. While semantics has guided the research to examine the connotative and denotative meanings. Two main sources, 'Tam Lo', a book on Balti proverbs, and 'The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs' by Speake, were used for the purpose of data collection. A purposive sampling technique was used to collect the proverbs with the common cultural themes. These proverbs were meticulously analyzed to identify themes, patterns, and cultural representations.

Results and Discussion

Aiming at semantic and syntactic analysis of the intricate relationship between culture, language, and cognition of the Balti and English proverbs, this study applies Cultural Linguistics as a framework for the purpose. It follows a qualitative approach embedded in Farzad Sharifian's Cultural Linguistic model that focuses on the significance of the conceptualization of culture, such as cultural categories, metaphors, and schemas, to shape the language. This study, additionally, examines the intersection between culture and language through the lens of Gary B. Palmer's theory linking languages and cultures.

Semantic and Stylistic Analyses of Proverbs

Table 01
Effect of the Company

Balti Proverb	English Proverb	Common theme
Twana Byarna Skinoq, Rgomna Biyarna Phe. Translation: If you lean the griddle, you will certainly be soiled; if you lean the flour box, the flour will color your dress white.	A man is known by the company he keeps.	Effect of the company.

Table 01 compares two proverbs that both emphasize the influence of the company one keeps. The central idea proposes that a person's character or public image is often judged based on the people they are associated with. If someone surrounds themselves with good, respectable individuals, they are perceived as good. On the other hand, if they keep bad company, society tends to judge them negatively.

In the Balti proverb, the message is conveyed through vivid metaphors drawn from everyday life in Baltistan. The proverb uses the imagery of a cooking pot and a flour box—objects commonly found in a Balti household. Most families store flour in wooden boxes, and the proverb implies that just as one cannot lean a cooking pot without getting stained, similarly, bad company inevitably leaves its mark. Conversely, leaning a flour box causes one's clothes to turn white, symbolizing the positive influence of good company.

The English proverb also communicates the idea that a person is judged by the company they keep. If their friends have a good reputation, that reputation reflects on them. However, if their friends are known for bad behavior, people are likely to assume the same about them. In English-speaking cultures, a person's social circle plays a significant role in shaping how others perceive their character.

From a stylistic perspective, the Balti proverb employs metonymy – substituting the name of an attribute or associated object for the thing meant. Here, “Twa” (griddle) represents bad company, while “Rgom” (flour box) symbolizes good company. The Balti version also makes use of synonymous parallelism as a syntactic feature. The structure highlights a balanced contrast: leaning the cooking pot leads to being soiled, while leaning the flour box makes one appear clean or white. The verb “byar-na” if lean, exists in both parts reiterating the idea through rhythmic and artistic appeal. On the contrary, the English proverb gives the same sense more candidly, without using any poetic instruments or parallelism. It offers the idea as a plain statement, depending upon reason more than figures of speech, such as metaphors, to elaborate the impact of one's social circle.

To conclude, although both proverbs use distinct cultural and linguistic expressions, but convey the same ideas, moral lessons very effectively. The Balti proverb is more figurative and poetic, while the English proverb is more literal and candid.

Table 02**Laziness**

Balti Proverb	English proverb	Common Theme
Trangmoy dunsukks, hlenmi gyabdas. Translation: An active man is always on time, while a lazy man has to after.	Lazy folks take the most pains.	Don't be lazy. Be punctual.

Both the proverbs above tell us about the importance of time and punctuality. We can find similarities in them as both proverbs criticize people who are lazy and are late. The Balti word “Trangmo” is an adjective that means a simple, honest, and straightforward man. A simple man arrives on time, while a lazy person starts working at the eleventh hour. As a result, he gets late and faces a crisis. The writer has used the semantic relation of antonymy.

The English proverb also teaches us that we should not be lazy and work-shy. Otherwise, we will take most of the pain. Persons having different qualities are used in both languages to deliver the message. Here, the Balti proverb has antithetic parallelism as a device to create a reverse idea. “Trangmo” means a straightforward man, while “hlenma” means a lazy man and a procrastinator. The consequences of punctuality and laziness are clearly mentioned. Thus, it shows a parallel comparison of two ideas. While the same theme has been incorporated in the English language by using a simple statement.

Table 03**Greed**

Balti Proverb	English proverb	Common Theme
Roa tsale songfikha tsyuna bral. Translation: The hoofs were also lost while searching for the horns.	Greed is a curse.	We should not be greedy.

The proverbs advise us not to be greedy because greed is a curse. In Balti, this theme has been presented with the help of a cultural metaphor of an animal. When the animal went out scavenging for the horns, it lost its hoofs. This metaphor is used for greedy people. Sometimes, people have never-ending wishes. They are not content with the things that

they already have; rather, they try for more. In this way, they lose everything. In English, the writer says that greed is not a good attribute. This universal theme has been conveyed to us using different styles by proverbs.

In the Balti and the English languages, greed is being criticized and is considered a bad quality. The fate of the greedy has been described by using the example of an animal. The animal lost its hoofs while searching for the horns. Similarly, the theme is depicted in English with a simple, concise statement that "Greed is a curse". But neither the proverbs have used any type of parallelism.

Table 4
Out of Sight

Balti Proverb	English proverb	Common Theme
Ma thong khi ma zuk. Translation: When I don't go before the dog, how will it bite?	Out of sight, out of mind.	We forget things that are not before us.

In the Balti culture, the dog has a symbolic importance. This proverb uses the dog as a symbol of danger; that is, if we do not confront the danger, we receive no harm. Similarly, the English proverb "Out of sight, out of mind" conveys that we tend to stop worrying about things or people once they are no longer visible or present. In contrast, another well-known English proverb claims, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." These two proverbs express opposing perspectives on absence—one suggests forgetfulness, while the other implies emotional attachment. However, both are ultimately rooted in the notion that what is out of sight tends to fade from our thoughts after a certain period of time.

The Balti proverb uses repetition of the lexical item *ma* (meaning "not") to create a rhythmic and patterned structure: *When the dog does not see you, it does not bark at you*. This repetition introduces structural parallelism. Likewise, the English proverb employs the syntactic structure "Out of NP1, out of NP2" to create a balanced and rhythmic pattern. In both cases, form reinforces meaning, helping to emphasize the idea that distance, whether physical or emotional, diminishes presence in the mind.

Table 05
Kind-behavior

Balti Proverb	English proverb	Common Theme
Anchani chik ching, khaspa bgya ching. Translation: Power gets hold of one, pleasant talk gets hold of hundreds.	Softly, softly, catchee monkey.	Effect of kind words

In Balti, the word "Anchan" is a combination of two morphemes, that is, *An* – power, *-chan* – full of. This proverb conveys the message gathered from common observation that a powerful man suppresses individuals and instills fear in the hearts of the people by seizing control of them, but a humble and polite man endears him or herself in the hearts of the people through their kind behavior. This loudly speaks of the far-reaching impact on people's sentiments and attitudes. The proverb conveys the cultural value of being gentle and kind in actions and attitude.

Similarly, the English proverb "Softly, softly, catchee monkey", which is from the creole cultures of the Caribbean, speaks of the same message. The outlook of the proverb is literal; the phrase is figurative, accentuating the values of gentle speech, patience, and a gradual approach to achieve goals. Catchee monkey is symbolic of any goal that demands peace and continuity rather than an aggressive approach.

The Balti proverb uses the technique of parallelism, where the verb “ching”, to get hold, is rendition in both parts of the sentence to make rhythm and focus on the differences between power and politeness. On the contrary, the English proverb employs a simple affirmative sentence structure using no parallelism, but achieves the rhythm through the repetition of the adverb softly. Both proverbs use the figurative device of parallelism to reiterate the central theme that gentleness and patience often produce more effective and lasting results than power.

Table 6
Fix a Problem

Balti Proverb	English proverb	Common Theme
Dusay skudpa chatpa, jukla thaqpa chatpa. Translation: Better to cut a thread now than to cut a rope later.	A stitch in time saves nine.	It is better to fix a problem when it is small.

Hasni (2004) explains that when a husband and wife experience conflict in their relationship, they are encouraged to resolve the issue rather than let it fester. In Balti culture, elders often advise that if the couple has no children, divorce may be a reasonable option. However, if they do have children, separation is generally discouraged. The Balti proverb symbolically compares divorce to the cutting of a thread – implying that, without deeper ties like children, severing the relationship is easier and cleaner.

In contrast, the English proverb “A stitch in time saves nine” also emphasizes the importance of timely intervention but uses a different metaphor. Here, the focus is on mending a garment early – if a small tear is stitched right away, only one stitch is needed. But if it is not cured, looked after, the damage aggravates, demands more stitches and hard work. This proverb suggests that attempting to solve problems early stops huge problems later on.

The Balti proverb uses superfluous parallelism where ideas are interconnected, adding more profundity and refinement to the situation depending upon the children’s involvement. In contrast, the English proverb gives its message candidly, without using any parallelism. Despite their distinct stylistic techniques and imagery, both proverbs signify the value of decisions taken in time to stop huge difficulties.

Table 7
Trouble

Balti Proverb	English proverb	Common Theme
Sosay kaming stary matyong. Translation: Don’t chop your own leg with an axe.	Don’t make a rod for your own back.	Do not put yourself in trouble.

Both proverbs of English and Balti convey a universal message that one should avoid making anything or taking any action that may harm oneself in the future. Balti proverbs employ a more serious object of destruction, which is the axe. It metaphorically threatens to abstain from the decisions that could backlash or cause destruction. Similarly, the English proverb “Don’t make a rod for your own back” issues a warning against the same decision that may backfire in the future, but in a soft tone. This English proverb uses a rod as a symbol of destructive actions and decisions one takes. The rod is often associated with punishment. It suggests that people should not create hard and tough situations for themselves through their own choices and actions.

Both proverbs give a cautionary message employing direct and imperative language. Without using parallel structure, the Balti proverb presents the message in a

candid and impactful way. By following the same sentence pattern, the English proverb communicates its message through a simple and singular construction. The metaphors used in both proverbs are different, one using a rod and another using an axe. These proverbs carry indigenous wisdom: one should refrain from taking such actions and doing things that may cause difficulties for him/ herself.

Table 8
Gain vs Pain

Balti Proverb	English proverb	Common Theme
khmulchu metna khser met. Translation: No sweat, no gold.	No gains without pains.	No pains, no gains.

The Balti word “khmulchu” is a homonym with two meanings: “sweat” and “gold-water.” The writer skillfully employs this semantic relationship – homonymy – to deliver a layered message. In the context of the proverb, khmulchu refers to sweat, but it simultaneously evokes the image of gold, highlighting the value of hard work. The underlying idea is that without exertion – represented by sweat – one cannot attain wealth or success, metaphorically compared to gold. In essence, sweat becomes as precious as gold, symbolizing the price of achievement.

The English equivalent, “No pain, no gain,” conveys the same principle, though it lacks symbolic imagery. It presents a straightforward truth: without effort, there can be no reward. While the Balti proverb is rich in metaphor, the English one opts for a direct and concise expression.

Structurally, both proverbs follow a similar pattern. The Balti version follows the formula: No NP1, no NP2, where NP1 is sweat and NP2 is gold. In contrast, the English proverb follows a slightly different structure: No NP2 without NP1, placing the reward (gain) before the effort (pain). Despite this variation in word order, both proverbs establish a clear dependency between two elements – effort and outcome – making them well-structured and logically coherent.

Table 9
Co-incidence

Balti Proverb	English proverb	Common Theme
Mi-ñan bukpikha thon. Translation: An evil-natured man usually enters a gathering (arrives) when he is subject to backbiting.	Talk of the devil and he is sure to appear.	Co-incidence

Both the Balti and English proverbs express a common human observation: when people speak ill or gossip about someone, that person often appears unexpectedly. In such situations, English speakers commonly say, “Talk of the devil and he is sure to appear,” or its variation, “Think of the devil and he is there.” The metaphor of the devil is used figuratively – not to imply actual evil, but to reflect the uncanny timing of someone’s sudden appearance when they are being talked about.

This proverb captures a humorous, slightly superstitious take on coincidence, highlighting how gossip can sometimes feel like it summons the subject of discussion.

Structurally, neither the Balti nor the English proverb makes use of parallelism as a stylistic device. Instead, both rely on direct, declarative constructions to deliver the message. Despite the absence of parallel structure, the use of metaphor (in the English version) and the reference to real-life situations (in both) make the proverbs memorable and widely relatable.

Table 10
Power of Money

Balti Proverb	English proverb	Common Theme
Phe metna zde met.		
Translation: If you have no flour, you have no reward.	Money talks	Power of money.

“Phe” means flour, and “Zde” means reward. These cultural categories are applied to tell that if someone does not have money, he/she will have no reward and respect from anyone. Generally, in society, people invite each other to meals. However, the writer views such invitations as a display of wealth. If these meals are based on sincerity, it’s good. But if they are meant to show off, they are worthless.

The Balti proverb has repeated the lexical item “met” (not) in both halves of the proverb. The structure used here is: NP1 met na NP2 met. Thus, the use of this parallel structure makes this proverb emphatic and ordered. On the other hand, the English.

A proverb succinctly conveys the idea in a single sentence. Both proverbs convey the common theme that money is powerful.

Discussion

The comparative exploration of Balti and English proverbs reveals deep-rooted cultural values, stylistic patterns, and the expressive power of language in shaping thoughts. Proverbs, as condensed expressions of collective wisdom, offer not only insight into the everyday concerns of a community but also showcase the stylistic choices unique to each linguistic tradition.

From a cultural linguistics perspective, both Balti and English proverbs reflect universal human experiences—work, family, home, conflict, and caution—while embedding these experiences in culturally resonant images. Both proverbs eulogize the importance of hard work, which is universally recognized as a human trait necessary for a successful life. One of the Balti proverbs employs ‘khumulchu’, a homonym for sweat and gold-water, which signifies the value of hard work. Khmulchu has cultural symbolic importance and is a poetic metaphor. While the English proverb ‘no pain, no gain’ conveys the same meaning, but plain, without the use of any metaphor. This contrast shows how proverbs, an important aspect of language, encode culture. Balti proverbs seem to depend too often upon the use of vivid, palpable images embedded in the lived experiences and conditions of the people, whereas English proverbs often prefer commonly understood idioms and intangible expressions.

To build rhythm and reinforce analogies, Balti proverbs frequently use the stylistic device of parallelism, both synonymous and stylistic. For example, in one of the proverbs, to emphasize the significance of the central theme of home and family, two parallel situations are given: an elderly man and a homeless person. On the contrary, English proverbs such as “a stitch in time saves nine” are more brief and rely on fixed syntactic structure and aphoristic clarity. These distinctions in pattern reflect wide propensities in the oral tradition of both cultures. Balti proverbs tend to be more narrative, longer, and fold in symbolism, while English proverbs are succinct, metaphorically compact, and memorable.

Moreover, metaphor is a key stylistic tool in both languages, though imagery varies. To express life lessons, Balti proverbs employ culturally rooted objects such as *thread*, *gold-water* and an *axe*. Whereas, the English language frequently uses wider symbols and general actions such as devil, stitching, and striking. In spite of these variations, the main function

of them is the same. That is to convey shared veracities in a memorable and culturally relevant form.

A proverb has another valuable pragmatic aspect that is to serve instructive and moral purposes. English and Balti proverbs not merely embody stylistic features but also serve as instruments for teaching, persuasion, and promoting social cohesion. Just as the English proverb "A stitch in time saves nine" teaches the importance of proactive decisions and actions, it subsequently motivates the user to inculcate proactive behavior.

To summarize, this stylistic analysis depicts how these proverbs reflect cultural values and linguistic patterns and structures. Through using different stylistic devices such as parallelism, repetition, metaphors, and various structures, proverbs show the worldview of the speakers. English proverbs are aphoristic, terse, and they tend to support clarity and brevity. Balti proverbs are enriched with more parallel constructions and poetic imagery. Together they show how culture and language are intertwined, and how proverbs work not only as linguistic units but also the containers of collective wisdom and cultural identity.

Conclusion

Viewing through the lens of stylistic analysis and cultural linguistics, this comparative study of Balti and English proverbs exhibits how language functions as a powerful tool for revealing social norms, collective wisdom and knowledge, and worldviews. Both traditions, despite being distinct from each other, talk to universal human experience and observation: relationships, patience, conflict, home, and work. Although they use different forms and expressions.

Balti proverbs seem to count on frequent pictorial metaphors taken from indigenous culture, such as axes, gold-water, and thread, and often employ parallel constructions to reinforce meanings. On the other hand, English proverbs seem to believe in brevity and metaphorical generalization, bringing syntactic clarity, well-formed expressions, and confirming the memorability of the proverbs. Despite having these stylistic variations, both cultures use proverbs as devices for manifestations, social guidance, and advice.

Finally, the analysis shows that proverbs are not merely linguistic units; they are cultural objects. Through them, the community passes down its collective knowledge, wisdom, and worldviews to the coming generations. Besides shaping moral understandings, the community employs proverbs to preserve collective wisdom.

Be they Balti poetic and metaphorical proverbs or English proverbs with the perfect brevity and candidness, proverbs continue to function as a bond between life and language, grounding cultural identity in the flow of everyday speech.

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