



DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES OF PROVERBS IN ENGLISH AND TURKISH LANGUAGES

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Abstract. The proverb is an important part of the folklore and they are consecrated fortunes of individuals' way of life and language. This article provides a comparative description of English and Turkish proverbs. In addition, this research discusses the classification of English proverbs in relation to Turkish equivalents and difficulties in translating from English proverbs.

Keywords: proverb, cultural treasure, linguistics, equivalent

Introduction

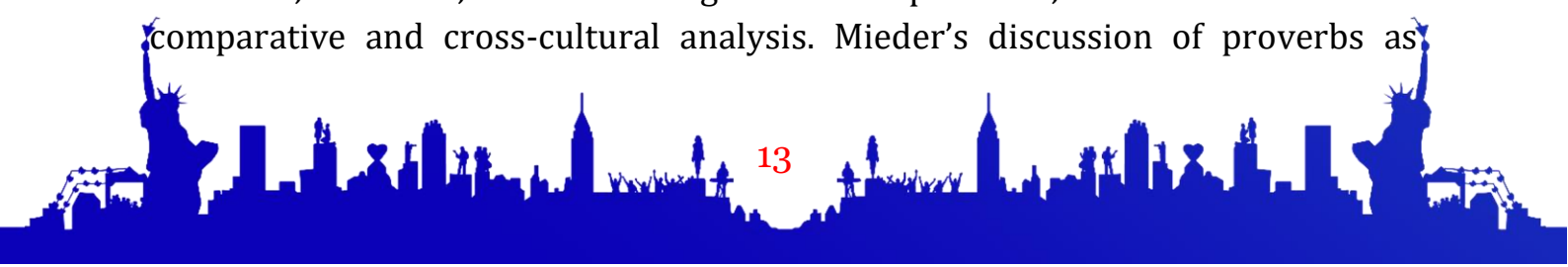
The values, traditions, and mindset of every nation are strongly reflected in its language. Because of this, language can be considered a nation's most precious cultural treasure. Through language—especially through phraseological units—we can observe the unique aspects of a nation's mentality, history, culture, and worldview. The study of such expressions is closely connected to external factors such as a country's past, lifestyle, and cultural background.

Phraseological units often arise from real events and incorporate elements of people's daily lives, beliefs, politics, religion, and aesthetic principles. Proverbs, in particular, are concise and expressive linguistic tools that convey deep meaning in just a few words, quickly influencing the listener. Due to this feature, proverbs express rich meaning without unnecessary wording. Although different nations may have their own distinctive proverbs, many share similar meanings, reflecting universal human experiences shaped by long historical development.

Materials and methods

Proverbs carry profound wisdom and are transmitted from generation to generation, shaped by the lifestyle and experiences of each community. For this reason, many proverbs across different cultures show similarities in meaning and content. When comparing Turkish and English proverbs, it becomes clear that both languages contain numerous examples that resemble each other. In both cultures, proverbs form an important part of folklore and remain a widely used and meaningful genre in everyday speech.

The views on proverbs presented by Wolfgang Mieder in this study are based on his book *Proverbs: A Handbook* (2004), in which he examines the definition, structure, functions, and cultural significance of proverbs, as well as their role in comparative and cross-cultural analysis. Mieder's discussion of proverbs as





reflections of collective wisdom and universal human experience is central to his theoretical approach.

The pragmatic and discourse-oriented perspective on proverbs is drawn from Neal R. Norrick's work *Proverbs and Their Uses* (2014). In this book, Norrick analyzes how proverbs function in real communication, emphasizing their contextual use, pragmatic meaning, and role in spoken and written discourse. His ideas support the view that proverb comparison should consider usage and communicative function, not only semantic equivalence.

When translating proverbs from one language to another, rather than finding the direct translation of the proverb in the second language, it is more important to convey their main meaning through equivalents, because proverbs are folk-oral creations of each nation. In English and Turkish proverbs, we can see that some proverbs in these two languages correspond to each other in terms of lexical semantic, structural and linguistic features, so we analyzed the English and Turkish proverbs into several groups.

Discussion

In the first group, we can include proverbs with full equivalents, because when we translate proverbs in this group, we can see that the words in both languages correspond to the full, including that they have common meanings. For instance:

- The apple doesn't fall far from the tree – *Elma ağacından uzağa düşmez.*
- Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today – *Bugünün işini yarına bırakma.*
- Better late than never – *Geç olsun, güç olmasın.*
- Strike while the iron is hot – *Demir tavında dövülür.*
- Many hands make light work – *Bir elin nesi var, iki elin sesi var.*
- Like father, like son – *Armut dibine düşer.*

The second group of proverbs consists of partial or similar equivalents: that is, when translating proverbs in English and Turkish languages, we witness the small number of words in their composition, but we can see variants with close meanings. For example:

- Haste makes waste – *Acele işe şeytan karıştır.*
- You reap what you sow – *Ne ekersen onu biçersin.*
- Don't count your chickens before they hatch – *Dereyi görmeden paçayı sıvama.*
- Anger is a bad advisor – *Keskin sirke küpüne zarar.*
- Practice makes perfect – *Tekrar etmek başarıya götürür*





- Every dog has its day – *Sabreden derviş muradına ermiş.*

The third group includes proverbs that cannot be completely translated from English or Turkish, because the two languages use different lexicons. There may not be a full or similar equivalent in the Turkish language, but in some cases the word and its meaning are close to each other. For example:

- No man is an island – *Komşu komşunun külüne muhtaçtır.*
- You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar – *Tatlı dil yılanı deliğinden çıkarır.*
- No pain, no gain – *Emeksiz yemek olmaz.*
- The early bird catches the worm – *Erken kalkan yol alır.*
- Curiosity killed the cat – *Merak felakettir.*
- Every cloud has a silver lining – *Her şerde bir hayır vardır.*

Conclusion

The comparison of Turkish and English proverbs clearly shows that, although these two languages come from different cultural and historical backgrounds, they share many common ways of understanding life. Some proverbs match each other almost word-for-word, revealing universal human experiences such as patience, effort, and wisdom. Others show the same meaning but use different metaphors, reminding us that each culture expresses its lessons in its own style. And there are also many Turkish proverbs that have no direct English equivalent, yet carry messages that can still be found in English through different expressions.

Overall, studying these similarities and differences helps us see how language reflects culture. Proverbs are short, but they carry the values, humor, and worldview of a society. By examining them side by side, we not only understand the languages better, but also gain a deeper appreciation of the cultures behind them.

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