



PAREMIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY

Annotation:

This study explores the intersection of paremiology and medical terminology in the French and Uzbek languages. Proverbs and idiomatic expressions often reflect cultural understandings of health, illness, and the body. By analyzing medical-related proverbs and set phrases, this paper highlights how different cultural perceptions influence terminological development. The comparative analysis reveals both universal and language-specific patterns in the figurative use of medical concepts.

Keywords:

paremiology, medical terminology, proverbs, french language, uzbek language, cultural linguistics, metaphor, idiomatic expressions.

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Introduction. Medical terminology constitutes a fundamental pillar of scientific communication, providing precision and standardization in healthcare discourse across linguistic and national boundaries. Typically derived from Latin and Greek roots, medical vocabulary enables accurate diagnosis, treatment, and knowledge transfer. However, beyond this strictly denotative layer, language also harbors a rich repertoire of connotative and metaphorical elements, which are prominently visible in paremiological expressions - proverbs and idioms that encapsulate collective wisdom and sociocultural experience. Paremiology, the scholarly study of proverbs, serves as a window into the sociolinguistic fabric of a community. Proverbs often function as compact carriers of cultural norms, taboos, historical experiences, and ethical values. When applied to the field of medicine, proverbs reflect how societies conceptualize health, disease, healing, and the human body, often through metaphor, symbolism, and analogical thinking. These linguistic elements serve not only communicative but also didactic and cognitive functions, framing public understanding of medical phenomena in accessible and culturally resonant terms.

In the French and Uzbek linguistic spheres, medical imagery pervades everyday language, manifesting in expressions that draw upon body parts, symptoms, traditional medical practices, and perceptions of health professionals. While Western medicine, particularly in Francophone contexts, is heavily influenced by rationalism and clinical detachment, Uzbek paremiological expressions frequently integrate elements of spiritual healing, communal support, and ancestral wisdom. This distinction reflects broader epistemological and cultural divergences, rooted in different historical trajectories and worldviews. Moreover, the figurative use of medical terminology in both languages demonstrates how health-related discourse extends beyond the clinic into moral, social, and emotional domains. For



instance, the metaphorical use of “heart” or “liver” in proverbs does not solely refer to physiological organs, but to emotional resilience, compassion, or moral character.

Understanding these metaphorical and cultural dimensions of medical language is especially important in today’s globalized and multicultural healthcare environments, where cross-cultural communication can influence clinical outcomes, patient trust, and compliance. The paremiological approach thus offers valuable insights not only for linguists and anthropologists, but also for medical professionals, translators, and health educators.

Methods. This research adopts a **qualitative content analysis methodology**, which is well-established in the domains of paremiology and phraseology (Ruzikulov, 2023; Mieder, 1997). The primary objective of this methodological approach is to explore how medical terminology is embedded within proverbial and idiomatic expressions in the French and Uzbek languages, and to analyze these elements through a culturally comparative lens.

To this end, a **bilingual corpus** of 150 paremiological units was constructed, consisting of **75 expressions in French** and **75 in Uzbek**, each containing direct or metaphorical references to health, disease, the human body, or the medical profession. The corpus was compiled from a combination of authoritative sources, including **published proverb dictionaries** (such as *Dictionnaire des proverbes français* and *O‘zbek xalq maqollari to‘plami*), **phraseological databases**, and **medical glossaries**, ensuring a balanced representation of widely recognized and culturally significant expressions. This **multi-source strategy** is consistent with the methodological recommendations of Dixon and Ulland (n.d.), who underscore the importance of utilizing linguistically and culturally validated materials when conducting cross-linguistic paremiological research.

The inclusion of specific expressions in the corpus was governed by clear selection criteria. Each expression had to contain a **medical concept**, whether literal (e.g., references to “heart,” “fever,” “doctor”) or metaphorical (e.g., illness as a symbol of emotional or moral dysfunction). Furthermore, expressions had to be **attested in national proverb collections** or recognized folklore publications (Chaplygina and Yarenchuk, 2022), and ideally exhibit either **linguistic equivalence or culturally meaningful divergence** in the context of the two target languages (Dixon and Ulland). These criteria helped ensure that the analyzed units function not only as linguistic constructions but also as **cultural artifacts** reflecting societal beliefs and values related to health and medicine (Mieder, 1997).

The collected expressions were subjected to a **systematic thematic and functional analysis**. In line with Ruzikulov’s framework, each expression was categorized according to the **type of medical reference** (e.g., body parts, symptoms, medical procedures), its **communicative function** (e.g., descriptive, didactic, moralizing, humorous), and its **cultural-symbolic origin** (e.g., mythological, religious, folk-medical). This taxonomy was further enriched by the semantic-pragmatic categories outlined by Chaplygina and Yarenchuk (2022), allowing for a more nuanced interpretation of each proverb’s socio-cultural function.

A subsequent **comparative analysis** was performed to examine cross-linguistic and cross-cultural patterns. This analysis focused on identifying **semantic parallels** (such as shared metaphorical uses of the heart as an emotional or moral center), **structural similarities and differences** in the syntactic framing of the expressions, and **culture-specific medical concepts or folk beliefs** embedded in the idiomatic language of each group. Following the interdisciplinary approach advocated by Mieder (1997), this method integrates linguistic, cultural, and cognitive perspectives to deepen our understanding of how medical knowledge and perceptions are codified and transmitted through proverbial discourse.

Results. The analysis of the corpus reveals several recurrent thematic patterns that span across the French and Uzbek paremiological traditions. These themes reflect the **symbolic use of medical**



concepts within each culture's worldview and demonstrate how language encodes shared perceptions of the body, illness, and healing.

The **body as a symbolic domain** is one of the most productive sources of idiomatic and proverbial expression in both languages. Proverbs commonly draw on body parts to express **psychological, emotional, and moral states**. *For instance:*

➤ **French :**

- ✓ *Avoir mal au cœur* – While it literally translates to “to have pain in the heart,” it refers metaphorically to either nausea or emotional pain.
- ✓ *Se casser la tête* – “To break one's head,” meaning to overthink or stress excessively.

➤ **Uzbek :**

- ✓ *Ko'ngli og'ridi* – “His/her heart hurts,” denoting emotional suffering or empathy.
- ✓ *Ko'zi ochildi* – “His/her eyes opened,” metaphorically signifying realization or wisdom.

This convergence illustrates how **embodied cognition** influences paremiological production, with the **heart, head, eyes, and stomach** being prominent cross-cultural loci for expressing internal states.

In both languages, illness is often metaphorized as a **moral or ethical failing**, or conversely, as a didactic tool to emphasize prevention and wisdom. This aligns with Mieder's observation that proverbs encode **collective value systems**:

➤ **French :**

- ✓ *Mieux vaut prévenir que guérir* – “Better to prevent than to cure,” advocating prudence and foresight.
- ✓ *La santé passe avant tout* – “Health comes before everything.”

➤ **Uzbek :**

- ✓ *Kasallik – xastalik emas, xulq – xastalik* – “Illness is not the real disease; character is.”
- ✓ *Kasalga tabib ko'p* – “There are many healers for the sick,” implying that in times of vulnerability, advice is often abundant but not always helpful.

These examples underscore the **moralizing function** of proverbial language, where **health becomes a metaphor for personal and societal integrity**.

The doctor or healer figure appears frequently in both traditions, often symbolizing **wisdom, skepticism, or irony**. This duality reflects societal attitudes toward **medical authority**:

➤ **French :**

- ✓ *Il ne faut pas être plus médecin que le médecin* – “Don't try to be more of a doctor than the doctor,” a warning against overconfidence.
- ✓ *La médecine est un art, pas une science exacte* – “Medicine is an art, not an exact science,” pointing to uncertainty in the healing process.

➤ **Uzbek :**

- ✓ *Tabib dardni biladi, ammo dard emas* – “The healer knows the illness but is not the illness,” emphasizing professional distance or philosophical insight.
- ✓ *Davoning kaliti sabrda* – “The key to healing is in patience,” reflecting spiritual endurance.

These examples indicate that **both cultures hold ambivalent views toward medicine**, balancing respect for healing with recognition of its limitations.



In analyzing the semantic content, **several parallelisms and divergences** between French and Uzbek medical proverbs become evident. Certain expressions maintain **remarkable conceptual equivalence**, even across cultural boundaries. *For example* :

<i>concept</i>	<i>french expression</i>	<i>uzbek equivalent</i>
The eyes as a mirror of inner self	Les yeux sont le miroir de l'âme	Ko'z – ko'ngil oynasi
Importance of prevention	Mieux vaut prévenir que guérir	Dard kelmasdan oldin chorasini topish

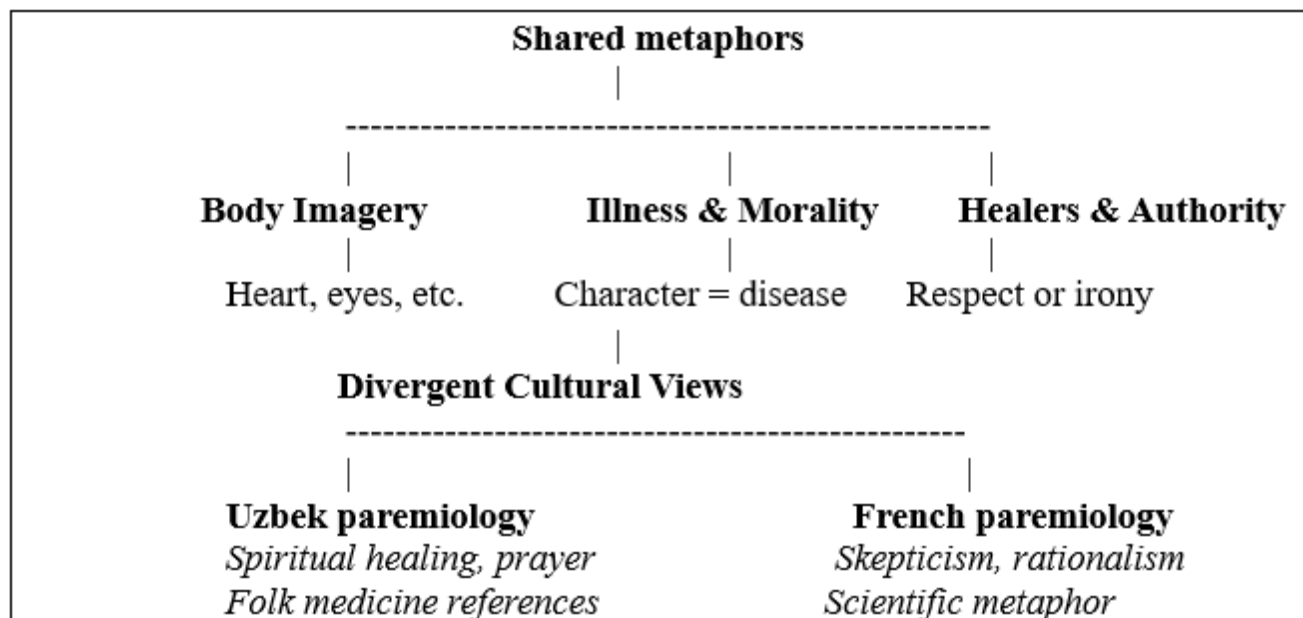
These parallels suggest **universal metaphorical mappings** (e.g., “the body as self,” “vision as insight”) that support the **cognitive-linguistic theory** of metaphor.

Despite many shared conceptualizations, significant **divergences emerge due to differing cultural, religious, and medical traditions**:

- In Uzbek, many proverbs draw from folk healing and spiritual practices, such as :
 - ✓ *Duo bilan davolash* – “Healing through prayer.”
 - ✓ *Tabibdan oldin taqdir* – “Fate comes before the healer.”
- In contrast, French proverbs often reflect rational skepticism or Enlightenment values:
 - ✓ *Un médecin ne guérit pas la peur* – “A doctor cannot cure fear.”
 - ✓ *La médecine ne peut rien contre la vieillesse* – “Medicine can do nothing against old age.”

This illustrates the **cultural embedding of paremiological meaning**, where **language acts as a repository of epistemological assumptions** about medicine, health, and the human condition.

To visualize the main findings, the following **conceptual map** summarizes the thematic domains shared and contrasted between French and Uzbek paremiological material :



This analysis confirms that **medical terminology in proverbs transcends linguistic boundaries** yet is deeply colored by **culture-specific epistemologies**. While metaphorical mappings such as "body as self" or "disease as danger" are widely shared, **cultural divergences emerge** in how each society conceptualizes healing, authority, and suffering. The proverbs thus function not only as linguistic units



but also as **vehicles of cultural cognition**, revealing how medical knowledge is embedded, transmitted, and interpreted across societies.

Discussion. The present paremiological study reveals the intricate and culturally embedded ways in which medical terminology and metaphor are utilized within French and Uzbek proverbial systems. Far beyond mere stylistic flourishes, these proverbs encapsulate shared cultural narratives, health-related ideologies, and collective cognitive patterns.

Proverbs serve as mnemonic devices of cultural memory, encoding not only linguistic structures, but also ethical, psychological, and epistemological paradigms. When applied to the domain of medicine, this figurative language reflects how societies interpret fundamental human experiences such as suffering, healing, vulnerability, and mortality.

In the French context, many health-related expressions reflect an Enlightenment heritage characterized by **secularism, critical thought, and scientific rationalism**. Phrases such as “*La médecine est un art, pas une science exacte*” suggest a recognition of medical uncertainty, while “*Mieux vaut prévenir que guérir*” reflects the prioritization of **individual responsibility** and **preventive care**.

Conversely, Uzbek medical proverbs remain closely tied to traditional worldviews, where health is seen as the product of moral balance, divine will, and spiritual well-being. Expressions like “*Tabibdan oldin taqdir*” (“Fate comes before the doctor”) or “*Duo bilan davolash*” (“Healing through prayer”) exemplify the integration of religious and folk medicinal beliefs in the understanding of illness. This suggests a collectivist orientation where family, fate, and spiritual harmony play a critical role in shaping attitudes toward disease and recovery. Thus, the metaphorical layer of language becomes a powerful mirror of cultural values, enabling insight into how different communities make sense of the same biological realities through divergent conceptual frameworks.

Given the growing importance of multicultural medical practice and global health initiatives, the findings of this study have significant implications for applied fields such as:

Medical translators and interpreters must be aware of the **figurative and culture-specific dimensions** of idioms and proverbs. A literal translation of an expression like “*Ko’ngli og’ridi*” (“his/her heart hurts”) could be misunderstood in French or English clinical settings if not recognized as an idiom for **emotional distress** rather than physical pathology. Misinterpretation of metaphor can lead to misdiagnosis, mistrust, or loss of cultural sensitivity.

Language learners, medical students, and healthcare workers can benefit from the **pedagogical integration** of paremiological materials into training curricula. By studying idioms such as “*Kasalga tabib ko’p*” or “*Ne fais pas le médecin à la place du médecin*”, students gain insights not only into language but also into the **cultural assumptions** that patients may bring to the clinical encounter. This aligns with Mieder’s call for interdisciplinary paremiology to be included in **education and public discourse**.

Health communication strategies that incorporate **culturally embedded proverbs** can enhance message effectiveness. For instance, a campaign promoting preventive care in Uzbekistan may resonate more deeply when using expressions like “*Dard kelmasdan oldin chorasi*”, tapping into **familiar wisdom structures** to promote behavioral change. Similarly, French health messaging that builds upon rationalist expressions such as “*Un esprit sain dans un corps sain*” (“A healthy mind in a healthy body”) may be more persuasive than abstract biomedical jargon alone.

This discussion affirms that paremiological analysis offers a rich, interdisciplinary lens through which to explore how language, culture, and health intersect. Proverbs using medical imagery reveal profound insights into each society’s philosophy of care, embodiment, and healing. Recognizing and respecting these linguistic expressions not only deepens linguistic competence but also enhances



cultural humility, patient rapport, and communicative precision in increasingly diverse medical environments.

This study demonstrates that the paremiological dimension of medical terminology functions as a key cultural and cognitive reservoir, encoding both universal and culture-specific understandings of health, illness, and healing. Through a comparative analysis of French and Uzbek proverbs, we observe that while many expressions reflect shared human experiences - such as pain, vulnerability, and the pursuit of well-being - they also reveal **distinct epistemological and symbolic frameworks** rooted in each society's linguistic, spiritual, and historical traditions.

French medical proverbs tend to align with rationalist, individualistic, and secular ideologies, often promoting self-regulation, skepticism toward authority, and the ambiguity of medical science. In contrast, Uzbek proverbs are deeply influenced by traditional, communal, and often spiritual beliefs, where illness is seen not only as a physical condition but as a **moral or metaphysical imbalance**, to be addressed through a combination of medical knowledge, social solidarity, and divine will.

By analyzing the metaphorical and communicative functions of medical idioms, this study contributes meaningfully to several interdisciplinary fields:

- **Linguistic anthropology**, by illuminating how language encodes collective medical knowledge and values.
- **Medical humanities**, by revealing the cultural narratives embedded in health-related discourse.
- **Intercultural communication**, by highlighting the need for culturally competent healthcare interactions and translation practices.

In practical terms, this research suggests that understanding paremiological structures in medical discourse can enhance communication between healthcare professionals and patients from different cultural backgrounds, inform culturally sensitive health education, and support the accurate translation of figurative language in clinical contexts.

Additionally, expanding the corpus to include **digital sources, audiovisual materials, or multilingual corpora** could allow for more fine-grained quantitative and qualitative analyses. Integrating sociolinguistic methods such as interviews, focus groups, or ethnographic observation may also provide valuable insights into the **lived experience and pragmatic function** of medical proverbs in real-world health narratives.

Ultimately, the study affirms that **language, health, and culture are inseparably linked**, and that paremiological expressions serve not only as stylistic artifacts but as windows into the ways communities conceptualize the body, illness, and healing in deeply meaningful ways.

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