IQRO JURNALI , IQRO JOURNAL, ИКРО ЖУРНАЛИ
ISSN:2181-4341| wordlyknowledge.uz/index.php/iqro
Volume 24. Issue 01. Oktabr, 2026

THE ROLE OF PROVERBS AND SAYINGS IN THE LEXICAL-SEMANTIC COHESION OF A TEXT

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https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23416986

Abstract. A text or context may incorporate not only lexical-semantic groups of words but also proverbs and sayings. In contexts in which these wise expressions occur, they contribute to a deeper understanding and interpretation. The text consequently becomes more fully realized in the reader's linguistic consciousness, while proverbs and sayings appear to serve as supporting elements in its semantic organization. Since they have historically been created by the people and convey profound meanings, proverbs and sayings may be regarded as independent texts. Within poetic contexts, they possess particular linguistic significance from both practical and theoretical perspectives. Although the stylistic potential of proverbs and sayings has been widely discussed in Azerbaijani linguistics, their investigation from the perspective of cognitive linguistics remains an important area of research. Accordingly, when examining how these wise expressions function as cohesive devices in poetic texts, the methods and principles of both empirical and theoretical linguistics should be considered in an integrated manner.

Keywords: lexical, semantic, proverbs and sayings, cohesion in poetic texts, reciprocal semantic relations between texts.

Drawing on the practice of poetic discourse, we can say that proverbs and sayings, many of which historically consist of two components and were created in verse-like forms, are used by classical and contemporary poets whenever appropriate to strengthen artistic expression. These traditional expressions are particularly significant in clarifying the structure of specific utterances and enriching the emotional and expressive dimensions of poetic language. In addition to conveying substantial information, they perform an important role in establishing semantic cohesion within a text. The use of proverbs and sayings in poetry is optional: a poet may employ them when the context calls for it, but may also choose not to do so. A. U. Savalenko discusses this issue in detail [1, pp. 32–37]. By examining the range of use of proverbs and sayings in poetry, one can often identify the particular wise expression through a fragment or a single element of it. For example:

If only I could undo what was written,
My remorseful heart is torn by doubts;
It is good to wander through foreign lands,
But the sacred homeland is the place to die [2, p. 161].

The first line contains elements of the traditional saying "What is written cannot be erased," which has long existed in Azerbaijani language and folklore. The poet deliberately transforms it

into a conditional-clause structure and links it semantically with the second line. The third and fourth lines also echo fragments of the folk bayati:

My dear, the homeland is best;
Linen is best to wear;
Foreign lands are good to visit,
But the homeland is best in which to die [3, p. 165].

Fragments and elements of this bayati are dispersed throughout the stanza. In this way, the poet skillfully connects the content of a proverb with that of a folk quatrain, creating an extended network of lexical-semantic relations. It should be noted that the conditional meaning in the first line also performs a cohesive function by developing into the assertion expressed in the final line.

Proverbs such as “A drowning person will clutch at a straw” [3, p. 178] and “A splinter falls into the eye that fears it” [3, p. 174] emerged from observations of human experience in ancient times. In their modified forms, and in combination with other lexical-semantic groups, they convey to the addressee information encoded in the text [4, p. 7]. In the poetic examples considered here, metaphorical transformation – a significant feature of proverbs – is relatively understated; the addressee interprets the expression through the form in which the poet presents it. For example:

The Kura surges beyond the mountains,
Its foam fades across the lowland plains.
For one who is drowning, hope is a straw;
Fear makes a splinter fall into the eye [5, p. 75].

Within the stanza, the expressions “the surging Kura,” “fading foam,” “drowning,” and “falls into the eye” are paradigmatically associated with the concept of water. The first line is thus semantically connected with the following lines, where the proverbs appear in transformed forms. The expressed meaning and the content of the modified proverbs in the microtext overlap. This may also be understood as a kind of synonymy between the poet’s idea and the meaning conveyed by the traditional expressions. Such a relationship can be identified within the cognitive picture constructed by the poem. In some stanzas, two proverbs are used, and semantic cohesion is evident both within each proverb and across the poetic passage. Consider the following example:

If one blind man does not call another blind, the matter may pass;
But the blind man who calls a bespectacled man blind is worse.
Unable to see the beam as large as a mountain in his own eye,
He will surely pick a speck from another’s eye [6, p. 47].

The altered forms of these folk expressions do not appear in precisely this wording in folklore collections. The recorded versions are “If one blind man does not call another blind, his heart will burst” and “He does not see the beam in his own eye, yet picks a speck from another’s eye” [3, p. 177]. Both expressions consist of two components. In the first, a conditional nuance develops into an assertion; in the second, semantic cohesion is created through the contrast between a “beam” and a “speck.” In the modified proverb used in the stanza, the first part is affirmative (“if one blind man calls another blind”), while the following part is expressed negatively. The word meaning “sighted” in the second line and the word “blind” in the first acquire antonymic meanings through substantivization and are thereby linked. The repeated use of “blind” and “eye,” originating in the proverbs, also produces effective alliteration. In the third line, “beam” paradigmatically denotes

something large, whereas “speck” denotes something small. Another poet similarly uses two proverbs in modified forms:

He has become one who measures a hundred times and cuts once,

And one who picks a speck from another’s eye [7, p. 202].

Since the cohesion created by the proverb in the second line is the focus here, attention should be directed to the formal and semantic relationship of the wise expression in the first line. The proverb recorded in folklore collections as “Measure a hundred times, cut once” [3, p. 178] is modified by adding the reflexive pronoun “himself” at the beginning and the verb “has become” at the end. The idiomatic effect arising from the unity of form and meaning strengthens the stylistic potential of the poetic expression. Elements deliberately omitted from the proverb are virtually reconstructed in the addressee’s imagination.

In microtexts structured around the opposition between heroism and cowardice, proverbs are adapted to the overall context, lyrical expression is given to psychological truths, and semantic cohesion is created through contrast. For example:

“A brave man dies, but his name lives on”– What will remain of a coward?These are tried and tested words of wisdom; So our ancestors used to say. [8, p. 235].

In the first line, the verbs “to die” and “to remain” are stylistic antonyms. In the second line, this opposition is extended by transferring characteristics associated with the brave man to the opposing pole represented by the coward. The rhetorical question gives precedence to bravery, while the poetic statements in the third and fourth lines praise and reaffirm the traditional saying.

Because proverbs and sayings generally emerge through an intensive process of figurative transformation, their characteristic features are transferred to the personality and disposition of the lyrical “I” within the poetic context. For example:

“Grass grows from its own roots”so the saying goes

The piercing voice of this lineage did not fall silent.

For fifty years, his father was the respected elder

Now Hasan Mirzasi is the elder [8, p. 238].

The folk expression in the first line is semantically linked to the word “elder” in the third and fourth lines and is transferred to both the lyrical speaker’s father and his child.

In texts that employ proverbs and sayings, semantic cohesion may be expressed either explicitly or implicitly. For example:

Mirzalioglu departed this world,

And the will of the Almighty was not mistaken.

“Every lover has his own time,”

The road he travelled was not bleak [8, p. 235].

The figurative euphemism “to depart” in the first line is semantically and conceptually synonymous with the proverb in the third line, which evokes the idea that every person has a time or season of their own. The classical Azerbaijani poet Muhammad Fuzuli also uses this saying in one of his ghazals, skillfully establishing semantic cohesion: Majnun’s turn has passed; now I am the one disgraced by love;\nThey speak truly: every age has its own lover [9, p. 180].

In this couplet, the words corresponding to “turn” and “time/era” function as stylistic synonyms and become cohesive devices. “In linguistic analysis, the role of proverbs found in literary texts within their contextual situations, their form in the textual environment, their unity

with the content of the work, their stylistic nuances, and other features should be identified" [10, p. 45]. Proverbs are not introduced into poetry merely for the beauty of their form. When form and content are organically united, they function as cohesive devices with a rich stylistic effect. For example: I should never have yielded to any desire;Who will believe me victorious once again? I have cast my fate into the water like a fish: Even if the fish does not know, the Creator will [11, p. 69].

In this passage, the abstract concept of "desire" is pragmatically clarified through the simile in the third line, which makes specific aspects of the lyrical "I"'s wish more concrete. The lines achieve semantic cohesion not through a complete proverb, but through the abbreviated form in the fourth line: "Even if the fish does not know, the Creator will". The full form recorded in folklore collections is: "Catch the fish and cast it into the sea; even if the fish does not know, the Creator will." It is expressed as a conditional construction.

A traditional Azerbaijani saying reads: "It passed over me and struck my brother; I thought it had hit a sack of straw". The People's Poet Mammad Araz constructed an extended poem in keeping with the meaning and content of this folk expression. By repeating the phrase "It passed over me" throughout the poem, he sharply criticizes those who have historically treated the integrity of the sacred homeland with betrayal or indifference. In this way, he skillfully connects other expressions to an element in the first component of the saying and creates an original poetic work characterized by semantic unity and depth of thought:

It passed over me… It passed over me! O my ancient forefather,turned to stone, turned to earth! You who have grown distant from my today and my yesterday, my ancient forefather! Rise to your feet!Write a memory of regret\non the headstone of the saying you once dismissed, and send it: The blow that passed over you struck me; the blow that passed over me struck you. The blow that passed over you and me struck you, O Homeland, Homeland! [11, p. 86].

As can be seen, from the beginning to the end of this passage, forms of parallel and antithetical repetition are linked in a chain with other lexical units. In response to the communicative need to foreground particular elements of the text, the syntactic repetitions in the first line are semantically connected with those in the final lines. Elements of the proverb radiate through the microtext, acting as activating cues that generate further associations.

Conclusion. In poetic speech acts, proverbs and sayings contribute to semantic cohesion and enable the text to achieve a more complete form. They provide an organizing stimulus for cohesion: in such instances, the topical element functions as the theme, while the lexical unit connected to it serves as the rheme. As a result, the lexical units used alongside these wise expressions form a coherent structural-semantic whole, and the poetic environment is shaped into a vivid, figurative composition.

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