

## PROVERBS AND ANTI-PROVERBS AS EXEMPLARY INSTANTIATIONS OF FORMULAIC LANGUAGE

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## МАQOLLAR VA ANTI-МАQOLLAR FORMULAVIY TILNING NAMUNAVIY NAMOYON BO'LISH SHAKLLARI SIFATIDA

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## ПОСЛОВИЦЫ И АНТИПОСЛОВИЦЫ КАК ОБРАЗЦОВЫЕ РЕАЛИЗАЦИИ ФОРМУЛЬНОГО ЯЗЫКА

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**Abstract.** This research examines whether proverbs and anti-proverbs satisfy the definitional criteria often associated with formulaic language, while also demonstrating the linguocultural paradigms of both forms. Formulaic language, defined by its rigidity, conventionality, pragmatic use, and holistic processing, is essential for comprehending the cognitive storage and social transmission of language. This research utilises theoretical frameworks from cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics, and paremiology to analyse conventional proverbs and their modified versions anti-proverbs based on definitional and analytical criteria related to form, function, storage/retrieval, and meaning. Quantitative analysis and a bar chart indicate that canonical proverbs exhibit significant formulaicity, characterised by a fixed and holistic structure, robust cultural conventionality, and lasting memorability. Their practical and instructional roles facilitate their consistent transmission and recognition across many situations. Conversely, anti-proverbs, while inventive and contextually stimulating, exhibit diminished formal stability and lower conventionality ratings, indicating their playful divergence from established language standards. Nonetheless, they retain specific pragmatic and figurative attributes that correspond with formulaic functions. The findings highlight the fluid boundary between formulaic and inventive (creative, modifiable) language, indicating that anti-proverbs, albeit somewhat formulaic, serve as platforms for linguistic innovation that simultaneously uphold and contest formulaic norms. Furthermore, it has elucidated the formulaic structures of proverbs, sayings, and

perverbs using instances from the English language.

**Keywords:** Proverbs; anti-proverbs; formulaicity; analysis; synthesis; formulaic sequences.

**Annotatsiya.** Ushbu tadqiqot maqollar va o'zlashtirma maqollarning formulaviy tilga xos bo'lgan ta'rifiy mezonlarga qanchalik mos kelishini, shuningdek, ularning lingvomadaniy paradigmalarini tahlil qiladi. Formulaviy til o'ziga xos qat'iylik, konvensionallik, pragmatik qo'llanilish hamda yaxlit holda qayta ishlanish xususiyatlari bilan tavsiflanib, til birliklarining kognitiv jihatdan saqlanishi va ijtimoiy uzatilish mexanizmlarini anglashda muhim ahamiyat kasb etadi. Tadqiqotda kognitiv lingvistika, psixolingvistika va paremiologiya nazariy asoslariga tayangan holda an'anaviy maqollar va ularning o'zgartirilgan variantlari — o'zgartiriladigan maqollar shakl, funksiya, saqlanish/qayta chaqirilish va ma'no mezonlari asosida tahlil qilindi. Keltirilgan miqdoriy tahlil va diagrammalar shuni ko'rsatadi, an'anaviy maqollar yuqori darajadagi formulaviylikka ega bo'lib, ularning tuzilmasi qat'iy va yaxlit, madaniy konvensionalligi kuchli hamda yoda saqlanish xususiyati mustahkamdir. Ularning amaliy va didaktik vazifalari ko'plab nutqiy vaziyatlarda uzlusiz uzatilishini ta'minlaydi. O'zgartiriladigan maqollar esa ijodkorligi va kontekstual faolligiga qaramay, formal barqarorlik va an'anaviylik jihatidan pastroq natijalarni ko'rsatadi, bu esa ularning tildagi o'rnatilgan me'yordan ijodiy chekinishini bildiradi. Shunga qaramay, ular formulali tilga xos pragmatik va obrazli xususiyatlarni saqlab qoladi. Tadqiqot natijalari formulaviy va ijodiy (muallif tomonidan o'zgartiriladigan) til o'rtasidagi o'zgaruvchan chegarani ko'rsatadi hamda o'zgartiriladigan maqollarni til ijodkorligining ifodasi sifatida baholaydi. Bundan tashqari, inglez tilidagi maqollar, so'zlashuv iboralari hamda o'zgartiriladigan maqollarning formulaviy tuzilmalari aniqlanib, ular boshqa tillar uchun asos bo'la olishi inglez tili misolida oolib berildi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** maqollar; o'zgartiriladigan maqollar; formulaviylik; tahlil (analiz); sintez; formulali ketma-ketlik

**Аннотация.** Данное исследование рассматривает, в какой степени пословицы и антипословицы соответствуют определяльным критериям, характерным для формульного языка, а также выявляет их лингвокультурные парадигмы. Формульный язык, отличающийся фиксированностью, конвенциональностью, pragmaticheskim употреблением и целостной обработкой, играет важную роль в понимании когнитивного хранения и социального функционирования языка. В исследовании используются теоретические основы когнитивной лингвистики, психолингвистики и паремиологии для анализа традиционных пословиц и их модифицированных вариантов — антипословиц, по критериям формы, функции, хранения/воспроизведения и значения. Количественный анализ показывает, что традиционные пословицы обладают высокой степенью формульности, характеризуются устойчивой структурой, сильной культурной конвенциональностью и долговременной запоминаемостью. Их практическая и дидактическая функция способствует устойчивой передаче и узнаваемости в различных коммуникативных ситуациях. В отличие от них, антипословицы, несмотря на свою креативность и контекстуальную выразительность, демонстрируют меньшую структурную стабильность и конвенциональность, что отражает их игру с установленными языковыми нормами. Тем не менее они сохраняют отдельные pragmaticheskie и образные черты,

присущие формульным выражениям. Результаты исследования подчеркивают подвижную границу между формульным и творческим языком, показывая, что антипословицы, оставаясь частично формульными, служат пространством для языкового творчества, одновременно поддерживая и переосмысливая формульные нормы. Кроме того, выявлены формульные структуры пословиц, поговорок и антипословиц английского языка как основа для других языков.

**Ключевые слова:** пословицы; антипословицы; формульность; анализ; синтез; формульные выражения.

## Introduction

Investigations into formulaic language delineate a series of consistent attributes (form, function, meaning, storage/processing) that differentiate formulaic sequences from original language generation (e.g., A. Wray's compilation of formulaic-sequence characteristics). Formulaic sequences are characterised by their recognisably stable or semi-fixed nature, conventionality (shared within a community), ease of memorisation, and tendency to be stored and recalled holistically rather than constructed word-by-word during production [Wray 2004:95]. Proverbs are seen as quintessential instances of conventionalised, easily memorised formulaic statements in paremiology; traditional definitions characterise proverbs as concise, well recognised folk sayings that encapsulate knowledge or values in a set, memorable format [Mieder 2004]. Anti-proverbs are parodic alterations of conventional proverbs that generate hilarious, satirical, or rhetorical consequences, relying on the audience's familiarity with the original expressions. They have been delineated and examined in paremiological literature [Litovkina 2015]. This study enquires if proverbs and anti-proverbs fulfil the definitional criteria of formulaic language which can be implemented by examining the primary criteria and subsequently providing an analytical analysis.

A proverb (from the Latin "proverbium" — proverb) is a popularly known, repeated and concrete saying with complete utterance; they express a truth, based on common sense or the practical experience of people. Prominent linguist W. Mieder gives a definition to a proverb in his book: "A proverb is a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorisable form and which is handed down from generation to generation" [Mieder 1993:27]. It is obvious from the above-mentioned definition that proverbs and sayings are rich in figurative or metaphorical meaning. The definition of the word proverb given in the dictionary Merriam-Webster: a short well-known saying containing a wise thought or a brief popular epigram or maxim: adage. For example, "Haste makes waste" is a proverb.

The paremiologist Wolfgang Mieder defines **anti-proverbs** or **perverbs** as "parodied, twisted, or fractured proverbs that demonstrate humorous or satirical manipulation of traditional proverbial wisdom" [Mieder 2004:28]. W. Mieder, F. R. Shapiro, and Ch. C. Doyle characterise them as "an allusive distortion, parody, misapplication, or

unexpected contextualisation of a recognised proverb, usually for comic or satiric effect" [Mieder et al 2012:10].

An anti-proverb must be rooted in a recognised proverb to achieve its full impact. The humour in the phrase *If at first you don't succeed, quit* depends on the listener's familiarity with the conventional saying *If at first you don't succeed, try, try again*. Anti-proverbs are frequently employed in advertising, as in Red Robin's slogan, "Put your burger where your mouth is." Anti-proverbs frequently appear on T-shirts, exemplified by phrases like *Taste makes waist* and *If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you*". Standard proverbs are defined sentences widely recognised by many, such as *Don't bite the hand that feeds you*. When this sequence is intentionally altered to *Don't bite the hand that looks dirty*, it transforms into an anti-proverb. The connection between anti-proverbs and proverbs, as well as the extent to which a proverb can be altered before it ceases to be regarded as proverbial, are subjects for further investigation.

Proverbs probably appeared with the dawn of language. Sayings such as *A stitch in time saves nine* or *Pride goeth before a fall*, or *Least said, soonest mended*, or *To everything there is a season* are easily memorized nuggets of wisdom. However, the convenient thing about proverbs is that there's often one for every point of view. For every *Look before you leap*" there's a *He who hesitates is lost. A fool and his money are soon parted* can be countered with *To make money you have to spend money*. A cynic once observed, "Proverbs are invaluable treasures to dunces with good memories" [<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/proverb>]. Here are some examples from the Dictionary, Merriam-Webster:

- As the proverb goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure (Marc Saltzman, USA TODAY, 22 Jan. 2022).
- As the old proverb says: all roads lead to Rome — or in this case, all personal journeys lead back to us (Csaba Toth, Forbes, 20 Jan. 2022).

The English language is very rich in idiomatic expressions, proverbs and sayings that are constantly found in literature, in newspapers, in movies, in radio and television programs, as well as in everyday communication of the British, Americans, Canadians, Australians. English idioms, very varied, are quite difficult for English learners. Of all the languages known to science, there are none in which there would be no idioms, phraseological turns, proverbs and sayings at all. Nevertheless, the English language bypassed every language.

When it is observed from a cognitive point of view, proverbs and their modified opposites, known as anti-proverbs, are cognitively remembered as ingrained formulaic units. The detection of these elements allows for the activation of schematic knowledge structures or frames that govern interpretation, so enabling speakers to infer meaning beyond the literal composition.

**Table 1**  
*Cognitive and pragmatic functions of proverbs and anti-proverbs*

Proverb	Anti-Proverb	Language	Cognitive Function	Pragmatic Effect
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“A rolling stone gathers no moss.”	“A rolling stone gathers no internet.”	English	Blending, Humor	Irony, Modernization
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Given *Table 1* illustrates the manner in which anti-proverbs recontextualise canonical proverbs by modifying their language and semantic elements. The saying *A rolling stone gathers no moss* carries a didactic message on restlessness and stability, suggesting that continual mobility hinders accumulation both of moss and, symbolically, of duties or goods. The anti-proverb *A rolling stone gathers no internet* wittily merges the ancient metaphor with a contemporary digital framework. This cognitive mixing process produces a comedic impact while simultaneously updating the phrase. The anti-proverb ironically contrasts conventional wisdom with modern technological reality, illustrating language innovation and socio-cultural evolution.

The study of proverbs has application in a number of fields. However, proverbs have their own field of study — “paremiology” (from Greek “paroimia” — “proverb”). [<https://doi.org/10.2478/9783110410167>]. A number of scientific investigations have been done in or linking with this field. Still there are many issues to be analyzed and defined by scholars.

### Methods

Criteria for definition (operationalisation). The prevalent load-bearing criteria have been delineated for formulaic sequences derived from literature syntheses:

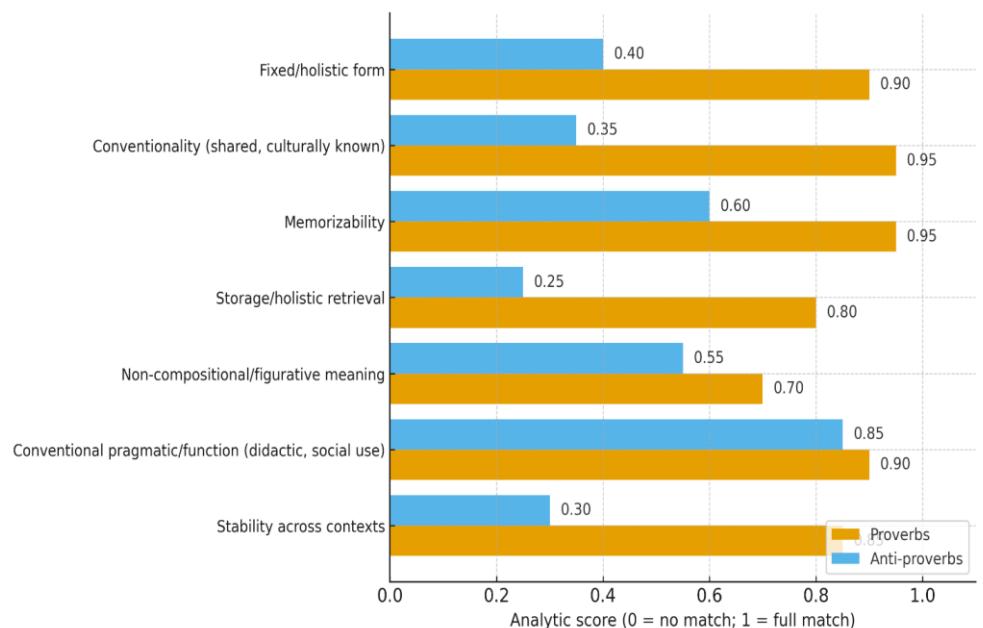
- a) Fixed/holistic structure;
- b) Conventionality (culturally shared recognition);
- c) Memorability;
- d) Holistic storage/retrieval;
- e) Non-compositional or figurative meaning;
- f) Conventional pragmatic/function (didactic, social applications);
- g) Stability across contexts.

These align with topics in A. Wray (various overviews) and associated reviews [Casilde 2004:95]. Utilised by Wolfgang Mieder’s and conventional paremiological descriptions of proverbs and anti-proverbs to delineate the canonical characteristics of proverbs and the modifications of anti-proverbs. Articles and evaluations about proverbs as formulaic constructs and the human storage and processing of formulemes (Sidtis; Lindholm on proverbs and formulaic sequences in dementia situations) were utilised to substantiate assignments concerning storage and retrieval. For each criterion, an analytical score has been allocated on a 0 -1 scale reflecting the extent to which the group (Proverbs versus Anti-proverbs) fulfils the requirement. Scores are not actual corpus counts but rather informed assessments derived from the referenced literature and paremiology; they are displayed in a table and bar chart (see the Results section). This research study elucidates the formulaic nature of proverbs and anti-proverbs by reviewing studies conducted by various experts, therefore substantiating its arguments based on their findings. The results and its limitations are clearly stated below.

**Limitations.** This brief research constitutes a literature (scientific research)-based analytical data rather than a corpus frequency analysis or psycholinguistic experiment; empirical validation (e.g., reaction-time completion, corpus stability metrics) is required for quantitative corroboration.

**Results.** Linguistic creativity has emerged as a rapidly advancing domain within linguistics. According to N. Chomsky [Chomsky 1965:6], the originality of language is “...one of the essential qualities that all languages have in common...” Consequently, a fundamental characteristic of language is its capacity to convey an infinite number of concepts and to respond suitably to an unlimited array of novel circumstances. N. Chomsky’s term “creativity” is more accurately referred to as “productivity” [Yule 2010: 13]. This study’s linguistic creativity reflects the work of J. Lyons (1977) and L. Bauer (1983), denoting usages that are distinguished as remarkable and original. Linguistic innovation entails a significant deviation or modification of language laws and conventions, encompassing intentional experimentation with its structures and meanings. Over the past 20 years, there has been increasing interest in everyday language inventiveness. R. Carter asserts that originality is a ubiquitous characteristic of ordinary language [Carter 2004: 9]. Linguistic creativity demonstrates that speakers frequently construct meanings through various innovative methods, across several social settings, and for a multitude of purposes. From a sociolinguistic standpoint, J. Gillen examines quotidian linguistic creativity in communicative practices, enhancing the comprehension of daily linguistic innovation as a strategic performance within particular and intricate circumstances [Gillen 2018]. L. Körtvélyessy et al. investigate creativity in English word generation and interpretation, correlating linguistic creativity with the overarching creative capacity of humans [Körtvélyessy et al. 2022]

Figure 1. Formulaicity of Proverbs vs Anti-proverbs (Horizontal Chart)



The bar chart has been created and presented below (see Figure 1).

Proverbs have elevated scores for fixed/holistic form ( $\approx 0.9$ ), conventionality ( $\approx 0.95$ ), memorability ( $\approx 0.95$ ), storage/holistic retrieval ( $\approx 0.8$ ), conventional pragmatic function ( $\approx 0.9$ ), and stability across contexts ( $\approx 0.85$ ). Their non-compositional or figurative meaning ratings are somewhat high ( $\approx 0.7$ ) because many proverbs are metaphorical, but not all are strictly impenetrable. These evaluations correspond with the consideration of proverbs as quintessential formulaic elements in paremiology and formulaic language literature.

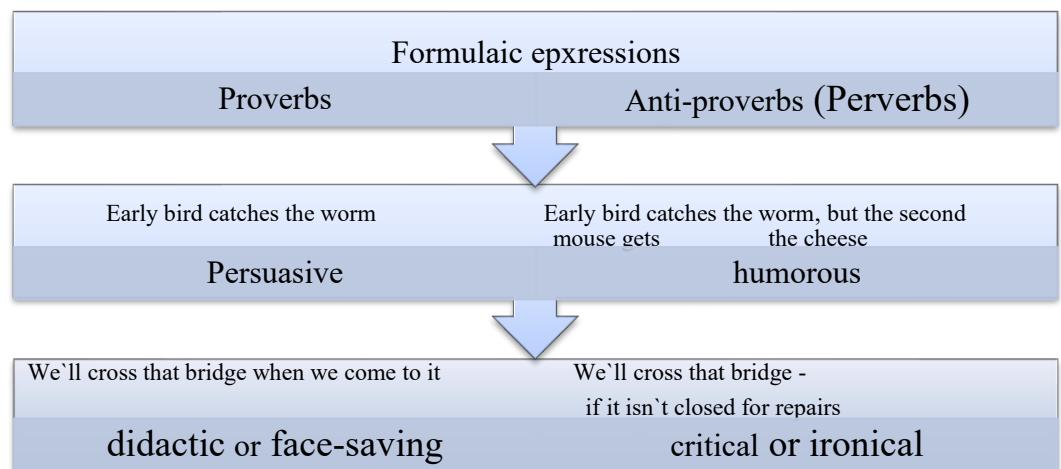
Anti-proverbs have a distinct profile: they typically rely on the original proverb's conventionality to generate impact, resulting in high scores for pragmatic function (humour, satire, rhetorical effect) ( $\approx 0.85$ ). Nonetheless, they exhibit lower scores in fixed form ( $\approx 0.4$ ), conventionality ( $\approx 0.35$ ), holistic storage ( $\approx 0.25$ ), and stability across contexts ( $\approx 0.3$ ) — since anti-proverbs represent creative deviations that are often unique or less conventionalised. Memorability is modest ( $\approx 0.6$ ) while many anti-proverbs may get widespread repetition, although many remain transient. The non-compositional or figurative meaning is intermediate ( $\approx 0.55$ ) as anti-proverbs frequently contrast original figurative material with additional literal or satirical components. These characterisations align with paremiological definitions of anti-proverbs as intentional, parodic alterations of traditional proverbs.

The above figure demonstrates the extent to which proverbs and anti-proverbs fulfil the same linguistic and cognitive characteristics of formulaic language. Each criterion was systematically evaluated on a scale from 0 (no correspondence) to 1 (complete correspondence). The findings indicate that proverbs regularly display more formulaicity in all aspects, particularly in fixedness, conventionality, and holistic retrieval, highlighting their established cognitive and cultural significance. Conversely, anti-proverbs, although frequently preserving the original proverb's pragmatic purpose and memorability, exhibit less conventionality and structural stability, signifying their inventive divergence from established formulaic standards.

Empirical and theoretical frameworks in cognitive linguistics and phraseology especially in formulaic language [Wray 2002; Gibbs 1994; Dobrovolskij & Piirainen 2005] delineate many characteristics of formulaic language: Structured format and comprehensive storage, Cultural norms and retention. Non-compositional figurative significance, and Consistent pragmatic and social functions. The graphic illustrates: Proverbs achieved elevated scores (0.8–0.95) across all categories, indicating their established position in language memory and social discourse. Their considerable stability and established holistic structure facilitate their identification as classic formulaic statements.

Anti-proverbs purposely modify or parody traditional proverbs (e.g., *“Don’t put all your eggs in one basket”* → *“Don’t put all your eggs in one browser”*), preserving memorability while deviating from established form and meaning. Their diminished analytic scores in holistic retrieval (0.25) and stability (0.3) indicate innovative alterations that subvert formulaicity while maintaining cultural significance. Notably, anti-proverbs have a robust score (0.85) for pragmatic/social application, reinforcing the notion that even novel expressions retain communicative significance through

collective acknowledgement of the original framework. Some African proverb scholars refer to anti-proverbs as “postproverbials,” as evidenced by a substantial compilation of essays on this topic in *Matatu* edited by Aderemi Raji-Oyelade and Olayinka Oyeleye [Raji-Oyelade & Oyeleye 2019: 232]. In the research work titled “Proverbs and Anti-proverbs in Oladejø Okediji’s *Réré Rún*: A Marxist Perspective,” Lere Adeyemi from the Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria, asserts that they provide humour, vibrancy, and aesthetic appeal to his writing. Politically, he asserts that they may “cultivate critical consciousness in readers to advocate for their rights, albeit with discernment: .... The deliberate alteration of established proverbs may provide fresh expressions, stimulate creativity among writers, and reveal underlying significances of proverbs [Adeyemi 2019: 214]. Finally, anti-proverbs—also known as “postproverbials”—showcase the dynamic adaptation of proverbial language. They inject humour, innovation, and a new viewpoint into debate by purposefully altering established forms while keeping cultural relevance. Their great pragmatic value and capacity to raise critical consciousness demonstrate their continued significance as communicative tools and vehicles for social critique.



*Figure 2. Pragmatic and Functional Roles of Proverbs and Anti-Proverbs as Formulaic Expressions*

The graphic framework (see *Figure 2*) illustrates the division of formulaic statements into two categories proverbs and anti-proverbs (perverbs) each linked to certain pragmatic functions: Traditional statements embodying communal knowledge or ethical direction. They are generally utilised to persuade, enforce societal standards, or serve as face-saving mechanisms in communication. Anti-proverbs (Perverbs) illustrate creative modifications or distortions of conventional proverbs. They undermine conventional assumptions to provide humour, critique, or irony, frequently mirroring modern cultural or ideological transformations. The vertical arrows in the diagram represent the functional descent from the broad category (formulaic representation)

to particular pragmatic outcomes, demonstrating the transition from form to communicative intent.

An antiproverb is a witty alteration of a conventional proverb that maintains the original structure long enough for the listener to engage with its familiar moral insight, before altering one lexical element such as replacing “worm” with “cheese”, appending “if it isn’t closed for repairs,” or negating the anticipated result thereby provoking humour, irony, or critique through a sudden disparity, while still leveraging the cognitive shortcut afforded by the established formula (see the *Figure 2*). Consequently, the speaker appropriates the credibility of collective wisdom, subverts it to preserve dignity or ridicule antiquated counsel, and showcases cultural-linguistic ingenuity that corpus linguists can systematically analyse and educators can utilise to enhance advanced learners’ figurative adaptability.

## Discussion

Proverbs and sayings, being an indispensable attribute of folklore, and in turn, an attribute of the culture of a given people, carry a reflection of the life of the nation to which they belong, this is the way of thinking and character of the people. For instance,

Proverbs and sayings are diverse, as they were, outside the temporal space. Indeed, no matter what time we live, proverbs and sayings will always remain relevant, always falling into place. Proverbs and sayings reflect the rich historical experience of the people, ideas related to work, life and culture of people. The correct and appropriate use of proverbs and sayings gives speech a unique originality and special expressiveness. For example, there are a bunch of Uzbek proverbs that show the people’s family life and commonly used in a conversation *Chiqqan qiz — chig’iriqdan tashqarida, Qazisan, qartasan, axir aslinga tortasan, Pul bo’lsa, changalda sho’rva* [Sattor 33/41/46: 147]. Russian proverbs — *Поле труд любит, У каждого дня свои заботы, Не красна изба углами, а красна пирогами, Труд кормит, а лень портит, Береги платье снегу, а честь смолоду* [Рыбникова 1961: 35].

Clearly, proverbs capture a great many details of everyday life, even for ordinary people. Many linguists have offered a method of discussing proverbs as cultural texts based on the linguocultural level of language and the cultureme as its basic structural unit. The term “linguoculturology” has been supposed to be used as a separate linguistic field since the beginning of the previous XX century.

**An anti-proverb** or a **perverb** is the transformation of a standard proverb for humorous effect. W. Mieder defines them as “parodied, twisted, or fractured proverbs that reveal humorous or satirical speech play with traditional proverbial wisdom”. They have also been defined as “an allusive distortion, parody, misapplication, or unexpected contextualization of a recognized proverb, usually for comic or satiric”. To have full effect, an anti-proverb must be based on a known proverb [<https://www.definitions.net/definition/ANTI-PROVERB>]. For example, the Uzbek national proverb *Bolali uy — bozor, Bolasiz uy — mozor* (see the *Figure 3*) have the following equivalents (anti-proverbs) in the same

language [<https://n.ziyouz.com/portal-haqida/xarita/uzbek-xalq-ogzaki-ijodi/uzbek-xalq-maqollari/oila-va-qo-shnichilik-haqida-maqollar>]:

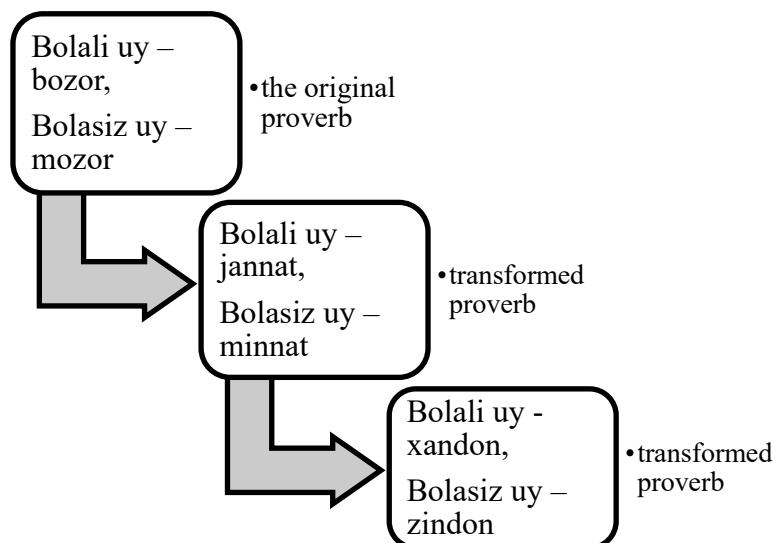


Figure 3. The example of an Uzbek proverb and its perverbs

The figure demonstrates the language and conceptual evolution of the Uzbek saying *Bolali uy — bozor, bolasiz uy — mozor* (“A house with children is a market; a house without children is a graveyard”) into its subsequent modified forms. Each variation illustrates the dynamic, context-dependent characteristics of formulaic language in Uzbek paremiology. The proverb evolved to express the fundamental dichotomy between familial energy and solitude, while incorporating additional metaphorical frameworks: *Bolali uy — jannat, bolasiz uy — minnat* and *Bolali uy — xandon, bolasiz uy — zindon* (new metaphorical frames “HEAVEN — OBLIGATION,” “JOY — PRISON”). This process illustrates the innovative adaptation and cultural persistence of formulaic statements within dynamic linguistic traditions.

Some African proverb scholars refer to anti-proverbs as “postproverbials”, as evidenced by a substantial compilation of essays on this topic in *Matatu* edited by Aderemi Raji-Oyelade and Olayinka Oyeleye [Raji-Oyelade & Oyeleye 2019:232]. In the research work titled “Proverbs and Anti-proverbs in Oladejo Okediji’s Réré Rún: A Marxist Perspective,” Lere Adeyemi from the Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria, asserts that they provide humour, vibrancy, and aesthetic appeal to his writing. Politically, he asserts that they may “cultivate critical consciousness in readers to advocate for their rights, albeit with discernment: ... The deliberate alteration of established proverbs may provide fresh expressions, stimulate creativity among writers, and reveal underlying significances of proverbs [Adeyemi 2019: 214].

I am especially fascinated to the African critics’ assertion that anti-proverbs have a purpose beyond entertainment: they reconfigure

traditional knowledge for political objectives. A. Raji-Oyelade and O. Oyeleye utilise the term “postproverbials” to emphasise this activist perspective, but Adeyemi contends that the intentional distortion of established expressions in Oladejø Okediji’s Réré Rún “cultivate(s) critical consciousness” and may even produce new proverbial currency. If altered proverbs may concurrently elicit humour and radicalise audiences, the pertinent inquiry is not the nature of postproverbials, but the extent to which authors can distort them before the liberating drive diminishes.

In the book of Uzbek linguist U. K. Yusupov it is clearly mentioned that *linguocultureme* is a linguistic or speech unit defining one part of a culture; consequently *linguoculturology* is a branch of linguistics, which studies interrelation between language and culture, and conveying culture in a language [Yusupov 2013: 262]. Still it is clarified that *linguoculturology* focuses attention onto the reflection of spiritual state in the language of a human in the society.

The correlation of English and Russian proverbs and sayings might demonstrate national identity of the whole nation. Comparison of proverbs and sayings of different peoples shows how much these peoples have in common, which, in turn, contributes to their better mutual understanding and rapprochement. It should be noted that many English and Russian proverbs and sayings have multiple meanings, which makes them difficult to interpret and compare. When selecting Russian correspondences of an English proverb, the obligatory criterion was the coincidence of one of the meanings (as a rule, the main one). Nevertheless, it is important to remember that, taking shape in different historical conditions, English and Russian sayings and proverbs often used different images to express the same or similar thoughts, which, in turn, reflect the different social structure and way of life of the very people and there are not absolute equivalents that often. For example, the proverb *The glass is always greener on the other side* (of the fence/hill) - something that you say that means that other people always seem to be in a better situation than you, although they may not be:

— *I sometimes think I'd be happier teaching in Spain. Oh well, the grass is always greener on the other side!* [<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/>]

According to operational criteria and scholarly literature, proverbs mostly satisfy the definitional standards employed by academics to categorise formulaic language: they are culturally conventionalised, easily memorised, often recalled as a whole, and have established social or didactic purposes. The research on formulaic sequences and paremiology substantiates the classification of proverbs as a subset of formulaic language (e.g., Wray’s synthesis; Lindholm’s examination of proverbs as formulaic constructs and clinical patterns) [Wray 2002].

Anti-proverbs generally fail to satisfy all criteria of formulaicity. They deliberately alter the traditional structure, resulting in forms that are frequently more fluid, less conventionalised, and less prone to holistic storage and retrieval compared to canonical proverbs. Anti-proverbs rely on the presence of conventional proverbs for their pragmatic impact (parody, humour, critique), and they frequently exhibit significant pragmatic functionality. Over time, certain anti-proverbs may become

conventionalised, hence progressing towards more formulaicity, indicating a diachronic transition from novelty to conventionalisation. This dynamic aligns with literary and paremiological descriptions of anti-proverbs as generative and contextually reliant modifications of proverbs [Litovkina 2004:338]. Consequences for categorisation and research methodologies. The analysis indicates that proverbs ought to be distinctly classified as formulaic sequences, while anti-proverbs are more aptly categorised as derivative or creativity-driven entities that primarily engage with formulaicity through pragmatic application and intertextual references to conventional proverbs. This endorses more nuanced and usage-oriented taxonomies of formulaic language rather than a merely binary approach [Buerki 2016: 25].

It is stated that “a counter-proverb is nothing more than an overt negation... calling into question whatever wisdom the original proverb encapsulated”. When it comes to counter-proverbs, the pure-negation technique is extremely uncommon, as evidenced by the fact that just 11 counter-proverbs (or.77 %) were found in the 1,422-item corpus, provided in the article by W. Mieder. “*Not all publicity is good publicity*”, “*Bigger is not always better*” (counter-proverbs) — “*Any publicity is good publicity*”, “*The bigger the better*” (target traditional proverbs) [Mieder 2012: 154].

Anti-proverbs are defined as “an allusive distortion, parody, misapplication, or unexpected contextualisation of a recognised proverb, typically for the purpose of achieving a comedic or satirical effect” [Mieder 1982: 155]. Anti-proverbs are the most prevalent type of proverb-play in the contemporary era, as evidenced by the fact that the modern-proverb dictionary contains 118 of them, which accounts for 8.3 percent of the corpus [Mieder 1982: 155]. The term “re-incarnations” (in current discourse, the original metaphor and connotation are preserved) is not considered to be anti-proverbs; rather, they are continuations of the conventional wisdom in a more contemporary form. Modern proverbs are deliberately established by individuals as “laws” encapsulating the recurring challenges and adversities of life. Typically, these ideas are attributed to their originators, and several publications exist on these (in)famous laws. Some have evidently become proverbial. For instance, *Murphy's Law* (less often, “*Reilly's Law*” or “*O'Reilly's Law*” [Mieder 1981:157].

Furthermore, the research indicates the use of empirical evaluations - such as completion tasks, lexical decision-making, and priming to examine claims about holistic storage and retrieval of proverbs compared to anti-proverbs. D. Van Lancker Sidtis and colleagues have employed analogous paradigms for formulaic representation [Sidtis 2015:42]. Constraints of the current analytic scoring system. The ratings reflect reasoned evaluations drawn from the literature, rather than new corpus counts or experimental findings. Empirical investigations would bolster assertions (e.g., corpus frequency of anti-proverb recurrence, reaction-time metrics associating proverbs with comprehensive retrieval). After analyzing a great number of proverbs and sayings, I have come to the following conclusions that proverbs and sayings are ambiguous and bright that cannot be changed in

terms of structure, but some words may be replaced and contradicted. This phenomenon of proverbs are called as anti-proverbs.

Proverbs constitute canonical exemplars of formulaic language precisely because they satisfy the three diagnostic criteria that define prefabricated multi-word units in the mental lexicon: first, they are fixed in form, as evidenced by corpus-based frequency analyses demonstrating that sequences such as *The early bird catches the worm* exhibit near-zero lexical variability across decades of usage [Davies 2008], thereby displaying the same positional rigidity observed in idiomatic expressions; second, their semantic interpretation is non-compositional and metaphorical, so that the global meaning “*earlier agents obtain advantage*” cannot be derived by summing the literal senses of early, bird, catch, and worm, a property that aligns them with other non-literal formulae such as idioms and collocational metaphors [Gibbs 1994]; and third, they are stored and retrieved as holistic units rather than being assembled on-line, a claim substantiated by a convergent body of neurocognitive evidence: Event-related potential studies indicate significantly diminished N400 amplitudes for proverbs compared to equivalent novel sentences [Van Lancker Sidtis & Rallon 2004]. Eye-tracking data reveal shorter gaze durations and fewer regressions in the latter half of proverbial strings [Conklin & Schmitt 2012]. Additionally, lexical-decision experiments exhibit acceleration effects of approximately 120 MS when the target is situated within a proverbial context [Gibbs & Beitel 1995]. Collectively, these findings suggest that the entire multi-word sequence is activated as a singular lexical unit in long-term memory. Anti-proverbs are defined as an allusive distortion, parody, misapplication, or unexpected contextualisation of a recognised proverb, usually for comic or satiric effect [Mieder et al. 2012:11]. They exemplify creative manipulation within formulaic language: while the lexical content is modified, the canonical syntactic or phonological structure is carefully maintained, as in *The early bird catches the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese* or *A penny saved is a penny taxed*. This preservation ensures that the listener's linguistic processor first activates the established multi-word unit before the semantic alteration is perceived. The deliberate preservation of the original structure is not solely aesthetic; corpus-based data substantiates that the established framework be it the correlative comparative format (the X-er, the Y-er) or the binomial maxim (a penny saved is a penny X) remains statistically consistent across numerous instances [Davies 2008], while psycholinguistic research indicates that the initial clause prompts the same swift, comprehensive retrieval and diminished N400 amplitude linked to complete proverbs [Van Lancker Sidtis & Rallon 2004]. The comedic or satirical impact of the anti-proverb relies on the earlier acknowledgement of the formulaic nature of the original phrase; without the established pattern, the rephrasing would forfeit its persuasive effect [Thompson 2021]. In summary, anti-proverbs do not surpass formulaic structures; rather, they exploit them, presenting themselves as novel yet parasitic manifestations whose effectiveness is contingent upon the psychological reality of the pre-existing proverbial framework.

The diversity of proverbs exemplifies linguistic creativity and signifies the originality and suitability of this creative capacity. Novelty denotes the semantic and formal divergence of the proverb from its original form, while appropriateness signifies the alignment of the proverb variant with the communication intent and contextual requirements of the topic. The variety of proverbs represents a novel verbal manifestation of creative potential, signifying cognitive innovation. Cognitive innovation serves as the foundation for language originality [Leikin et al. 2014; Vaid et al. 2015:53–86]. A. Langlotz defines creative cognitive thinking as the capacity to generate novel and unorthodox information from an existing, established body of knowledge [Langlotz 2016]. J. Guilford similarly describes creative thinking as an individual's capacity to produce novel ideas or products, encompassing both divergent and convergent thinking [Guilford 1967]. Divergent thinking is described as the cognitive process that enables individuals to generate several responses to a given stimulus or situation [Mumford et al. 1991]. G.U. Davletshina posits that anti-proverbs are both fun and critical reinterpretations of conventional proverbs, maintaining the original structure for immediate identification while altering one prominent element, thereby converting enduring wisdom into contextually relevant, amusing, or subversive criticism [Davletshina 2022:67-68].

Hence, the creative and original character of human intellect is highlighted by the variety of proverbs and their capacity to adapt to different situations. In addition to demonstrating linguistic innovation, the capacity to develop fresh proverb versions that are contextually appropriate demonstrates the underlying cognitive processes that promote originality in language. The broader basis of cognitive innovation is reflected in this creative potential, which is grounded in both divergent and convergent thinking. This foundation was emphasised by the researchers mentioned above.

Proverbs and anti-proverbs illustrate formulaic language by maintaining structural consistency while allowing for creative diversity. Their utilisation signifies the conservation of cultural knowledge and the dynamic, imaginative capacity of human language. Notwithstanding their inflexibility, proverbs are often adapted to meet communication requirements. Variations encompass the addition, substitution, and reduction of constituents, yielding both canonical and non-canonical forms. Anti-proverbs, as a distinct variety, deliberately twist or parody the original proverb, illustrating the interaction between conventionality and creativity in linguistic usage. The inventive alteration of proverbs and anti-proverbs illustrates linguistic and cognitive ingenuity. Language learners, including EFL students, frequently employ proverbs mechanically, reflecting diminished sociolinguistic and metaphorical proficiency.

## Conclusion

To recapitulate, proverbs and sayings, being part of the culture of a given people, have always remained and will remain relevant, despite the development of the economy and technology, progress, etc. At any time, proverbs and sayings will be a characteristic feature of these people, the

object of attention and research. In addition, there are twisted proverbs [Mieder 2004:200], which may be regarded as the most fruitful and productive subgroup of modified proverbs. One characteristic feature which distinguishes them from quasi-proverbs is the fact that they undergo various lexical, conceptual and phonological modifications. As an illustration consider He who laughs last, thinks slowest, which involves lexical substitution in the second part (cf. original version He who laughs last, laughs best). Moreover, a slight phonological play on sounds may be noticed in the modified proverb Curiosity thrilled the cat. An almost unnoticeable change of few letters i.e. thrilled instead of the original killed, results in a witty and enchanting book title. (This twisted-proverb is a title of the book *Curiosity Thrilled the Cat* (Magical Cats Mystery Series 1) by Sofie Kelly (2011).) Hence, proverbs are deemed as a type of formulaic expressions that cannot be altered by other words; however, it is possible to add some changes by humorous and sarcastic ways. Linguocultural paradigm of proverbs and anti-proverbs can be seen through the cultural aspect, while the discourse of using them is identified with the help of a communicative approach.

Proverbs satisfy the majority of definitional criteria for classification as formulaic: they are fixed, customary, easily memorised, frequently kept as wholes, and serve traditional pragmatic roles. Nevertheless, anti-proverbs do not satisfy the criteria of formulaicity as they are innovative alterations whose effect is linked to the acknowledgement of the traditional adage: high in pragmatism/functionality but lower in structural stability, conventionality, and comprehensive retention. Certain anti-proverbs may get conventionalised over time, therefore approaching formulaicity.

According to the theory of cognitive psychology, the process of proverb variation and understanding involves a number of intricate cognitive processes. These processes include the activation of proverb prototypes in the brain as well as the integration of these prototypes with other preset symbolic units and construction schemas. The majority of the time, proverbs are considered statements that are structurally consistent; nonetheless, they can exhibit a wide range of variation in linguistic usage. The creative use of language is directly connected to the way in which proverbs are transformed. From the point of view of linguistic creativity, proverb variation refers to the creative manipulation of proverbs in order to make them match the context. This is a sort of linguistic creativity that represents the cognitive creativity of people.

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