

SEMIOTIC CODES AND SYMBOLS IN ANIMAL-RELATED PROVERBS

Ergeshova Seiil Baktybekovna^{1(*)}, Eralieva Tolgonai Turgunbaevna²

^{1,2}Osh State University, Osh, Kyrgyzstan

*Corresponding author: seiilergeshova@gmail.com

Abstract. The article analyzes the linguo-semiotic nature of proverbs from a linguistic perspective, focusing on their philosophical, logical, and semantic foundations, as well as their ontological and epistemological essence. The place and status of antonyms in proverbs—as pairs of words with a special semantic relationship—are identified, along with their role in semantics. The pragmatics of lexical units with antonymic relations, their function as artistic devices, the expression of contradictions in proverbs, and their paradigmatic relationships are also examined. The study also explores the semiotic properties of signs in proverbs. The semiotic sign, which gives proverbs a different orientation and quality, is reconsidered in a new way. Kyrgyz proverbs, in particular, reveal the full semiotic potential of language. At the lexical level, words function as signs that convey symbolic meaning, while at the syntactic level, proverbs reinforce social codes through sentence structure, parallelism, antithesis, and symbolic systems. Animal images have a connotative meaning in a historical, cultural, and linguosemiotic context. For example, the fox is perceived as a semiotic marker symbolizing cunning, and the eagle — elevation and freedom. Proverbs convey hidden symbolic meanings in simple language to the public consciousness. As a result, signs and symbols transmitted through animal images serve to transmit the national experience, values and worldview of the people as a semiotic system from generation to generation. Therefore, the article describes proverbs and sayings related to animals not just as linguistic means, but as semiotic signs and symbols that preserve the historical and cultural memory of the Kyrgyz people.

Keywords. Semiotics, sign, symbol, semiotic code, proverbs, animal images, antonyms, parallelism, antithesis, pragmatics, semantics

1. INTRODUCTION

Proverbs embody the collective knowledge, experience, values, and worldview of a society. They are widely recognized across regions, and their creators are the members of particular ethnic groups. As products of ethnic creativity, proverbs belong collectively to all representatives of an ethnicity. They function as ready-made linguistic structures rather than as spontaneous linguistic creations. The speaker does not invent a proverb anew; instead, it exists in their memory as a fixed, holistic unit that is readily inserted into speech in its conventional form.

The semantic content of a proverb is self-contained and comprehensible without the need for additional contextual information. It is sufficiently autonomous to convey meaning independently of other linguistic means. The most elaborate proverbs may consist of three or four sentences, though the majority appear in the form of a single declarative statement. Language has the capacity to represent a wide range of situations, including abstract ones, according to its internal semantic organization. Proverbs serve to classify, categorize, and group typical situations. Each proverb reflects a generalized or recurrent circumstance within social experience. Therefore, no proverb can be entirely detached from a situational context; its meaning, use, and function are determined by the conditions in which it is employed.

Every proverb encapsulates elements of folk observation, thought, and experience — essential components of the national cognitive and cultural framework. Proverbs are stored associatively in collective memory and are retrieved in correspondence with typical communicative situations. This associative activation contributes to their expressive and pragmatic effect. Furthermore, proverbs serve as cognitive formulas that recur frequently in speech. They are generalized, verified through collective practice, and function as expressions of culturally sanctioned truth.

While proverbs generally possess a fixed structural form, they may undergo transformation — including compression, expansion, or variation. Nonetheless, their fundamental meaning and semiotic configuration remain stable and enduring. External modifications do not alter their internal content; a change in meaning would lead to the proverb's disappearance as a recognizable cultural unit. In proverbs, the *signified* (content) remains constant,

whereas the *signifier* (form) may vary. The statements embodied in proverbs require no external proof. They are presented as axiomatic truths whose authority derives from communal observation and experience. Thus, the proverb's argument is self-sufficient, grounded in the collective validation of folk wisdom. Animals occupy an important position within proverbs as semiotic signs of social and cultural significance. Within the folk worldview, animal imagery serves as a representational code, symbolizing human traits, behaviors, and social relations. [15, pp. 11-18].

Consequently, in the semiotic system of proverbs, animals function as carriers of culturally encoded information and play a crucial role in the transmission of collective knowledge and values.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Let's turn to one sign-superstition:



This proverb makes a lot of sense. It can be summarized as "it will be an external sign of a young being giving offspring." The example illustrates the national experience. The two parts of the paremia form a paired structure:

Кочкор болор козунун тумшук эти дөн болот
Айгыр болор кулундун жаак эти чон болот

**“The lamb that will become a ram has a raised nose;
 The colt that will become a stallion has large jaws.”**

This proverb expresses the idea that **future potential can be recognized from an early age**. Just as physical signs in young animals' hint at their future strength or status, **a person's talents, abilities, or character often reveal themselves early in life**. In the proverb, the words *kochkor* (ram) and *aigy-r* (stallion) are generalized to mean “the male progenitor of livestock,” while *kozu* (lamb) and *kulun* (colt) denote “the offspring of livestock.” The words raised and large symbolize “the external physical signs of masculinity.” However, in certain contexts, this proverb can also be applied to describe the characteristics of a man, a male animal such as a bull, a male goat, a watchdog, or even a rooster. It may also be used in reference to a young boy to predict his future character based on certain traits — for instance, his decisiveness, assertiveness, or, conversely, his tendency toward theft, deceit, or cunning. The proverb thus serves as a **means of character evaluation and social prediction**, producing a strong rhetorical effect and partially convincing the listener. The analogy it presents functions as self-evident proof. Because the proverb draws upon **folk experience and collective knowledge**, it exerts a powerful influence on the listener's consciousness and, at times, even acquires a **quasi-magical or symbolic force**.

In essence, it means:

“Great qualities show themselves even in youth.”

or

“Future greatness is visible from the beginning.”

But at some point this proverb can be used even when referring to signs of the male sex, black cattle, goat, giant dog, rooster. Based on certain qualities of a small child (eloquence, determination; theft, manual capture; deception; cunning, etc.), this proverb can be used even when interpreting a sign about what kind of person he should be. This proverb creates an effect, to some extent convincing the listener. In this case, an analogy can be a

proof in itself. The proverb is based on folk experience and knowledge. Therefore, it has a strong influence on the listener's consciousness, at some point acquiring magical power. Proverbs summarize speech situations, situations of exchange of opinions. Therefore, their constructive types can also be expressed using symbols. A specially designed symbol system contributes to a comprehensive characterization of the semiotic nature of proverbs. Consequently, proverbs can express various life situations with the help of clear symbols, signs, generalizing them. Therefore, their modeling function can be emphasized. The proverb that a runner is refined on foals, fried on bananas, boiled on cheese, and assir requires a comprehensive description. Therefore, let's try to analyze it in linguistic, logical, cognitive and linguistic semiotic aspects.

Күлүктү	тайында	}	такшалт,
	кунанында		куурат,
	быштысында		бышыр,
	асыйында		асыра.

a racehorse should be	trained when it is a	}	foal,
	run it when it is a		yearling,
	get ready it when it is		filly,
	saved it when it is		assy (full-grown).
			S. Pushkin.

This expression possesses distinct linguistic characteristics. Its textual, syntactic, morphological, lexical, poetic, and stylistic features together constitute its overall textual integrity. From a syntactic perspective, it represents a coherent and unified text composed of four structural components. What unites these components? First, all components share a common temporal strategy. The temporal reference in each unit—and in the text as a whole—denotes a generalized or timeless moment. Each temporal point is equally relevant to all components, and the content of the maxim is expressed in a highly generalized form. This may be described as *shared or universal time perception*. The statement is independent of any specific temporal reference; rather, it conveys knowledge that is verified, refined, and confirmed through collective experience. For this reason, this type of maxim does not employ linguistic markers of adverbial time, place, circumstance, condition, or purpose.

Secondly, the predicate value and the predicative exponent play a crucial role in unifying the four components of the judgment. In each case, the predicate serves simultaneously to summarize and to complete the expression of meaning.

Thirdly, the combination of these components creates a cohesive text in which syntactic continuity is maintained throughout, without the presence of extraneous or disjointed elements. From a grammatical standpoint, the structure may be characterized as a **compound-complex sentence** consisting of four coordinate clauses.

3. RESULTS

The interpretation of the lexical units that form the content of this construction must be carried out from both **linguistic** and **semiotic** perspectives, as their interrelations determine the overall semantic and structural coherence of the text. At the same time, each word and phrase in the text is nominative in nature. Each sentence, as well as the text as a whole, possesses not only expressive qualities but also formal (positional) and semantic (meaningful) relationships. Identifying this correlation requires a partial distinction between the *signifier* and the *signified*. The lexeme of the predicate under consideration has a phonetic and material structure composed of five sounds. This serves as the determinant of the word. What is determined, in turn, is a set of positive and purposeful actions or qualities expressed by the lexeme—such as train(*improves*), run (*roasts*), mature (*cooks*,) and keep (*assimilates*). These represent specific manifestations of the two determinants analyzed in this context. Both general and specific markers possess semiotic counterparts, or *antipodal markers*. This system of opposition reflects positive and negative actions within social relations—positive and negative phenomena, as well as favorable and unfavorable personal traits. Within this framework, predicates function as signals that indicate the subject's association with a particular quality or attribute. The logical predicate encompasses meaning at the level of language itself, without

distinguishing between narrative and explicit categories. Differences in the attributes of the subject are made apparent through the predicate. Let's analyze it:

Table 1. Lexical meaning and explanation of horse in Kyrgyz tradition.

Name	Lexical meaning	Explanation
Racehorse	The horse that participates in the race. For many years, the Runner has been bred specially.	Here, a talented, gifted person is also explained through the image of a runner.
Foal	A foal is a horse of one year old	Childhood, the initial stage of a child's development
Yearling	yearling is a two-year-old horse	adult, adolescent age
Filly	filly is a three-year-old horse	In adulthood and maturity
Asyy	Asyy is a four-year-old horse. Since the fifth year, it can be called one Asyy, then two Asyy, three Asyy and so on.	The time of full maturity, the knowledge of life

The proverb not only says that a horse should be handled correctly in accordance with its age characteristics, but also indirectly describes the stages of a person's life (probationer child, teenager, adult).

Table 2. Lexical meaning of verbs.

Word	Lexical meaning	Explanation
Train	To teach, to train	Building a basic skill
Run	To work hard, let it tingle	Strengthening the strength of body and spirit
Mature	Full maturity, preparation for life	Achieving a result
Save	Find the way in life, build a future	Proper care, building a future

There is a saying in Kyrgyzstan: "until the age of 6, take care of a child like a king, force to work like a slave until the age of 12, and advise like an adult after the age of 12." In this saying "Runner" is not just a horse, but a sign of potential strength and talent.; The "foal, yearling, filly, asyy" — symbols of a person's age (childhood, youth, maturity); A "train, run, mature, save" — signs of the process of upbringing and development. The runner is marked in the national consciousness as a symbol of a competitive, race-ready, strong personality. Age Stages establishes that each age should be approached with the right approach. Therefore, in the proverb, the process of human development through an animal is represented in a symbolic form. Through the age stages of the horse, the zoonymic code was given. The form of upbringing, education, and personality formation in society was codified through the social code. The pragmatic meaning of the proverb is that if you properly raise a child from an early age and point him in the right direction, in the future he will become a strong person who will serve people. There is a sense in age that if you give work, education, and upbringing, a person will grow up to be a strong personality in society. Semiotically, a symbolic message is conveyed through a name, reflecting the stages of human development and the importance of upbringing. Train, run, mature, save is another generalizing name for human activity. That's why sentence has a wide range of use cases, situations. Let's return to the cognitive content of this creature. The proverb gives teachers, parents, and society the need to properly raise a child at every age. The structure of the proverb is of a complex opinion. It has several mini feedback loops, mental scrolls with predicate ratios. The first study in this direction was conducted by B.T.Borchiev in his work "The concept of top-bottom in the linguistic picture of the world of native speakers of Russian and Kyrgyz languages" [2, pp. 81-84.].

In proverbs, animals are used as semiotic symbols. Kyrgyz proverbs have developed a way of describing human life through signs in comparison with animal behavior. This is a feature of folklore semiotics. *An egg lying on the ground will be a bird flying through the sky.* Here, the earth-sky organizes a spatial contradiction [13, p. 211]. Here it describes how an egg hatches, hatches by the mother and turns into an ordinary bird with outstretched wings. The place where this process takes place is the earth and the sky. The earth is the birthplace of creatures, birds, the sky is the place where they grow up and fly. This meaning is denotative: the earth, the sky, the egg, and the bird in their original meaning. The meaning of the proverb is general, and the designation may vary in different contexts. The first part of the proverb is an egg lying on the ground. The concepts of this can be found in books such as "a child with blisters in the cradle," "a meek child who eats everything with a stuffy nose," "a student who learns the alphabet with great difficulty," etc. The potential concepts of the second part are "became the head of a large enterprise", "became a famous composer", "developed a business, became an entrepreneur", "acts as the head of a rural district", etc. Therefore, the word earth denotes the initial position, place, while the word heaven becomes

the name of the high rank, dignity, high "chair" that a person has reached. The above-mentioned proverb refers to the social "ladder", figuratively represented by the ascent of a person up the primary ladder to the highest. Some paroemias describe that the direction of the action "up" and "down" does not have a positive effect. The reason why we put the phrases "up" and "down" in quotation marks is that there is a content in proverbs of this type that says:

"Wherever you run, you cannot escape punishment".

1. *If you pull up, the ox will die, if you pull down, the cart will get break.*

2. *If you go uphill, the wolf will eat you, if you go downhill, the thief rob you.*

3. *If you pull upward so the ox will not die, pull downward so the cart will not break [6, 366 p.].*

Here we have preserved both the spelling and punctuation of the authors. These proverbs are also used in other transformed forms. In them, there is never any mention of an ox, a cart, a wolf, or a thief. All three share a common semantic meaning. The third one is expressed with an **imperative purpose** and carries a **commanding intonation**; its content contains **advice** and an **attempt to prevent possible misfortune in advance**. It is noted that the means of an antonymic relation are sometimes found in the form of complex words: tulpar is often written [6, p. 366]. The meaning of these spatial antonyms is not only "up", "down", but also often "along different roads", "along winding, winding places", "up, down and straight." the word "high-low" can generalize the money essence "somewhere on different terrain, in different directions." All of these proverbs have an imperative form. Their addressees are every listener or student. Therefore, they are of great educational importance. They teach each recipient, listener, or student that they should do good for the sake of good, return one good many times, knowing that this rule is an ancestral tradition. These imperatives contain a national tradition that can be fulfilled without bias. It is the sacred duty of every representative of the people to remember him. This requirement is also found in other paroemias.

Returning goodness with goodness is a national tradition. "If you eat someone's chicken, tie a goose; if you eat their livestock, tie a daughter." This proverb contains a **semantic gradation**: *chicken* → *goose* → *livestock* → *daughter*. The objects form a sequence that increases gradually in both **size** and **value**. There is **no antonymic relation** here; however, the **ethnolinguistic significance** of this proverb supports the internal meaning of proverbs belonging to the highly antonymic group. In essence, this set of **imperative expressions** introduces a "fragment" of national tradition into the **mental world of younger generations**, encouraging them to preserve and apply it in daily life. These sayings teach **reciprocity in kindness** and **hospitality toward others**. The antonymic pairs such as *one-thousand* and *one-forty*, which organize the content of these proverbs, represent the generalized meaning of "one-many." They form the conceptual foundation for the moral rule that **a small act of kindness should be repaid with a greater one**.

4. DISCUSSION

Sometimes a proverb can have both positive and negative connotations. This property may also be possessed by the proverb that *When the horn of one cow breaks, the horns of a thousand cows ache*. Cognition in this sense can be defined as "when one person suffers, it upsets all members of the group they belong to." This may apply to different social groups: a family, a tribe, students of the same class, representatives of the same collective, etc. Even here, numerals don't name exact numbers. That's why using this proverb can become a situation where in a small family of five, one gets into an accident, and the rest are grieving or acting up. The word thousand was used in a generalizing, reinforcing form. Proverbs with one to a thousand antonyms are the most numerous in the list that we have compiled-78 pieces.

In a proverb, a semiotic code is formed through words with opposite meanings: Kyrgyz proverbs fully reveal the semiotic possibilities of the language. At the lexical level, words become symbols and convey symbolic meaning. At the syntactic level, the sentence structure (parallelism, antithesis, inversion) reinforces the social code through a system of symbols. Thus, proverbs are important not only as linguistic means, but also as semiotic texts that preserve the historical and cultural memory of the Kyrgyz people. They play an important role in the formation of national identity and the transmission of social values from generation to generation.

5. CONCLUSION

The proverb follows a typical model. Therefore, its syntactic content is also generalizing. The proverb provides folk knowledge, experience, and value. Its content is the perceived truth without evidence. A **proverb** is a fixed, time-tested, and socially accepted concise formula of thought that encapsulates collective wisdom in a precise, imaginative, and memorable form. Within the framework of linguistic and cultural interaction, the worldview encoded in proverbs is expressed promptly, efficiently, and effectively. For this reason, **antonymy** is a particularly common feature in proverbs, reflecting the contrastive and comparative nature of human cognition and experience.

Proverbs and sayings summarize and generalize the situations, events, phenomena, and qualities of the world. They embody the accumulated knowledge, experience, and worldview of an ethnic community, preserving and transmitting them across generations. As cultural artifacts, proverbs function as a continuously expanding repository of collective thought and national consciousness.

By identifying the distinctive properties of proverbs, it becomes possible to determine their **core linguistic and functional characteristics**. As noted above, these features are manifold and encompass **linguistic, linguo-semiotic, cognitive, ethnolinguistic, mentalinguistic, pragmatic, ethnopedagogical, and aesthetic** dimensions. Together, they define the complex and multifunctional nature of proverbs as both linguistic units and cultural symbols.

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