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### **PRAGMATIC INTERPRETATION OF THEONYM-BASED PROVERBS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK**

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#### **Abstract**

This article examines the pragmatic interpretation of theonym-based proverbs in English and Uzbek. The study focuses on the communicative functions of theonyms such as God, Xudo, and Tangri within proverbial discourse. From a pragmatic perspective, proverbs are treated as context-dependent utterances performing indirect speech acts rather than literal statements. Using a qualitative comparative method, the research analyses selected proverbs to identify their illocutionary force, speaker intention, and cultural presuppositions. The findings indicate that English theonym-based proverbs tend to employ theonyms symbolically to express moral responsibility, whereas Uzbek proverbs reveal a stronger connection to religious belief and emotional involvement. The study highlights the importance of cultural and religious context in understanding pragmatic meaning.

**Keywords:** Pragmatics, theonym, proverb, illocutionary force, cultural pragmatics, English, Uzbek.

#### **Introduction**

Proverbs are widely recognized as fixed expressions that reflect the cultural values and social experience of a speech community. They are frequently used in everyday communication to provide advice, or offer emotional support. Unlike



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ordinary sentences, proverbs rarely function as neutral descriptions; instead, they carry pragmatic force and are closely linked to context.

From the perspective of pragmatics, proverbs can be viewed as indirect speech acts through which speakers convey meanings implicitly. Their effectiveness depends on shared cultural knowledge between the speaker and the listener. Among various types of proverbs, those containing theonymic components deserve particular attention. Theonyms, understood as names referring to divine beings, introduce religious and moral authority into discourse, thereby strengthening pragmatic impact.

This article aims to analyze the pragmatic features of theonym-based proverbs in English and Uzbek. By comparing the two languages, the study seeks to reveal how similar communicative intentions are realized differently due to cultural, religious, and pragmatic factors.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Pragmatics is concerned with how meaning is constructed in interaction rather than encoded directly in linguistic forms. According to Levinson (1983), pragmatic meaning emerges from the relationship between utterances, speakers, and context. Proverbs, due to their figurative nature, rely heavily on pragmatic interpretation. Speech act theory provides a useful analytical tool for examining proverbs. Austin (1962) argues that utterances perform actions, while Searle (1969) emphasizes the importance of illocutionary force. Proverbs typically function as directives, expressives, or evaluatives, even when their grammatical form is declarative.

Cultural pragmatics further explains how meaning is shaped by shared beliefs and values. Proverbs containing theonyms reflect collective attitudes toward religion, destiny, and morality. As Mieder (2004) notes, proverbs act as cultural signs that



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preserve traditional wisdom. Therefore, analyzing theonym-based proverbs requires attention not only to linguistic form but also to cultural presuppositions.

### Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative comparative approach. A small corpus of theonym-based proverbs was selected from reliable English and Uzbek proverb dictionaries. The selection focused on frequently used proverbs that include explicit references to divine entities. Each proverb was analyzed in terms of its pragmatic function, illocutionary force, and typical usage context. Rather than focusing on literal meaning, the analysis emphasizes speaker intention and listener interpretation. The comparative method allows for identifying similarities and differences in pragmatic realization across the two languages.

**Pragmatic functions of theonym-based proverbs in English.** In English, theonym-based proverbs often use the word God in a symbolic manner. The proverb 'God helps those who help themselves' is a clear example. Pragmatically, it functions as a directive encouraging initiative and personal responsibility. Although theonymic reference is present, the emphasis is placed on human effort rather than divine intervention. Another example, 'Man proposes, God disposes,' highlights the uncertainty of human plans. This proverb is commonly used to explain failure or unexpected outcomes. Its pragmatic function is consolatory, as it helps speakers justify events beyond their control. Theonymic reference here softens negative emotions and provides philosophical acceptance. Overall, English theonym-based proverbs tend to rely on indirectness and metaphor. The pragmatic force is achieved through moral reasoning rather than explicit religious instruction. This reflects a cultural preference for implicit persuasion and restrained emotional expression.



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**Pragmatic functions of theonym- based proverbs in Uzbek.** Uzbek theonym-based proverbs demonstrate a more direct connection to religious belief. Theonyms such as Xudo and Tangri are associated with fate, hope, and divine power. For example, the proverb `Xudo xohlasa, tog` ham ko`char` is frequently used in situations of difficulty. Pragmatically, it functions as an expressive speech act that provides encouragement and emotional support. Another proverb, `Bandaning kuchi bir qadam, Xudoning qudrati ming qadam,` emphasizes human limitation and divine strength. This proverb serves both evaluative and directive functions by promoting humility and patience. Unlike English examples, the pragmatic impact here is more explicit and emotionally charged. Uzbek proverbs presuppose shared religious knowledge between interlocutors. As a result, theonymic references function as authoritative and persuasive elements that legitimize advice and evaluation.

**Comparative discussion.** A comparison of English and Uzbek theonymic – based proverbs reveals both convergence and divergence in pragmatic usage. In both languages, such proverbs function as indirect speech acts that guide behavior and interpret experience. However, the degree of religious explicitness differs. English proverbs typically employ theonyms metaphorically, focusing on moral responsibility and rational explanation. Uzbek proverbs, by contrast, emphasize faith and emotional reassurance. These differences reflect broader cultural attitudes toward religion and communication styles.

**Conclusion.** This study has shown that theonymic –based proverbs in English and Uzbek play a significant role in pragmatic communication. While both languages use theonyms to strengthen communicative force, their pragmatic realization is shaped by cultural and religious context. English proverbs favor metaphorical and implicit strategies, whereas Uzbek proverbs display explicit



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religious orientation and emotional involvement. The findings confirm that pragmatic analysis of proverbs must consider cultural presuppositions and belief systems. Further research may expand the corpus or explore the use of theonym-based proverbs in spoken discourse.

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