

# A Content-Based Analysis of *Humanity* in Azerbaijani Proverbs

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**Abstract** – This study aims to explore Azerbaijani proverbs to find out the themes related to humanity. The corpus used in the current study contains three books on Azerbaijani proverbs that consist of 10425 proverbs. A content-based approach is used to analyze the corpus. The results show that the main humanity-related vocabulary theme is *insan* (i.e., frequency: 130 times). The findings of current study shows that some tinges of Islamic ideology on the one hand and cultural values as well as mythological beliefs on the other hand are seen in Azerbaijani proverbs. About Islamic ideology, some ideas are reported that share a common belief between Azerbaijanis and Islamic lifestyle. Regarding mythology, more works are recommended to be done to explore and report more evidences about the mythological roots of Azerbaijani proverbs.

**Keywords** – Azerbaijani Proverbs, Azerbaijani Mythology, Azerbaijani Culture, Islamic Ideology, Content-Based Analysis.

## I. INTRODUCTION

A proverb is a traditional saying that offers advice or presents a moral in a short and pithy manner (Speake: 2008). It is believed to be a nation's cultural heritage or identity. Proverbs play a very fundamental role in the folklore or literature of any region. Many themes and cultural treasures can be found in proverbs. Scholars of different majors have studied proverbs in different languages from different perspectives. This study aims to consider the themes related to humanity in Azerbaijani Turkish from content-based analysis perspective.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature shows that proverbs related to Azerbaijani Turkish have been studied at least by scholars such as Norouzzadeh Chegini (2014), Mammad (2014), Yousefi (2012), Estaji and Nakhavali (2011) and Akin (2008) among others. They consider different aspect of proverbs.

Norouzzadeh Chegini (2014) compares Farsi and English proverbs and reports that proverbs reflect people's thinking. This study claims that the root of proverbs are one, namely, feelings like fears, hopes etc. Mammad (2014) is a comprehensive study about Azerbaijani. It compares Azerbaijani Turkish language with English regarding proverbs, wise-sayings and logical expressions. It confirms that phraseological units, proverbs and sayings are created as 'the view of the ways of folk life by folk and represented their traditions, customs and the view of morality'. It also studies the internal-semantic and external-semantic structure of phraseological units, proverbs and sayings. The current study also considers how to translate and apply phraseological units, proverbs

and sayings. Nabifar (2013) considers proverbs from cognitive linguistics view point. It comparatively studies Persian and English proverbs based on Lakoff and Johnson approach. Yousefi (2012) considers Kurdish and Farsi proverbs based on cultural components. It confirms that Kurdish and Farsi proverbs contain two categories of values and norms. Positive values and norms could be as 'encouraging to truthfulness, effort, patience and tolerance, pragmatic' on the one hand and negative values could be as 'lying, avarice, cruelty'. Estaji and Nakhavali (2011) consider Persian animal proverbs according to the semantic – cognitive frame to determine if there is semantic derogation in Persian. It confirms that sex and semantic derogation are not found in Persian structures and proverbs as much as other languages. It also concludes that 'in the cases with semantic derogation, the metaphorical meanings of the female proverbs connote worse qualities than those connoted by the male proverbs'. Akin (2008) shows that 'proverbs have not any binding force, it is possible to mention their leading roles'. It also shows that management paradigms are also dynamics that 'lead the business life'. This study considers the relationships and the contents of the two mentioned items. As it can be seen, little attention has been paid to humanity concept in Azerbaijani proverbs. So, this study seeks to consider Azerbaijani proverbs to find out themes related to humanity using content-based analysis. More specifically, the current study aims at answering the following research question:

What vocabularies as well as themes are used in the Azerbaijani proverbs to depict humanity?

## III. METHOD

This study is a qualitative study which aims to analyze Azerbaijani proverbs. The authors of the present study used content-based analysis in order to consider the themes related to humanity.

### *CORPUS*

The corpus of the present study contains three main books on Azerbaijani proverbs. They are Məhinbagiri (2009), Kazimi (2013) and Dadxah (2013). Totally, 10425 Azerbaijani proverbs are used as the corpus of the present study.

### *PROCEDURE*

To find an answer for the posed research question, the researchers studied Azerbaijani proverbs meticulously and found a number of frequent themes such as *insan* (human), *ata/ana* (father/mother), *arvad* (wife), *kişi* (man), *ər* (husband), *qardaş* (brother), *bacı* (sister), *oğul* (son), *qız* (daughter), *dost* (friend), *düşmən* (enemy), *qonşu* (neighbor) and *igid/mərd* (devotee). Then, the number of the themes were tallied using content analysis which 'is a

research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use' (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). After counting the relevant themes found in the poems, the researchers showed them in a table containing frequency. Finally, a number of human-related terminologies in Azerbaijani proverbs were discussed in full details. The references used as the corpus of the current study and the number of proverbs can be seen in table 1.

Table 1: The corpus of the current study

Book title	Number of proverbs
Kamalin Camali (KC)	6000
Atalar Sözü (AS)	4000
Atalar Sözü və Məsəllər (ASVM)	425

#### IV. RESULTS

The results of the present study are shown in the following:

Table 2: Human-related vocabularies found in the corpus

Vocabularies	Meanings	KC	AS	ASVM	total
<i>insan (adam)</i>	Human	65	32	33	130
<i>dost</i>	Friend	44	24	6	74
<i>ata/ana</i>	Father/mother	49	16	5	70
<i>qonşu</i>	Neighbor	29	21	3	53
<i>arvad</i>	Spouse	34	11	1	46
<i>qız</i>	Daughter	23	17	4	44
<i>igid/mərd</i>	devotee	12	23	8	43
<i>kişi</i>	husband (man)	34	0	1	35
<i>oğul</i>	Son	19	15	1	35
<i>düşmən</i>	Enemy	17	10	0	27
<i>ər</i>	Husband	0	13	1	14
<i>qardaş</i>	Brother	6	0	0	6
<i>Bacı</i>	Sister	4	0	0	4

To answer the research question, some examples are shown in the following:

İnsan:

A: Ustada əyri baxanın gözlərinə qan damar.

A person who looks at his master/professor unkind, his eyes will become bloody.

This proverb shows the high prestige of master among Azerbaijanis. The mentioned status of master are repeatedly seen in Azerbaijani poems as in Shahriar and Zalimkhan (two well-reputed Azerbaijani poets).

B: Böyüksiz evdə bərəkət olmaz.

There is no blessing in a house without an elderly.

This proverb shows the importance of respecting to the elderly that is seen Azerbaijani ancient culture. The tinge of this proverb can be found in Shahriar's Xan Nəna (Şəhriyar M.: 2005, Şəhriyar M.:2007).

C: Adam hər düşməndən bir ağıl öyrənər.

Man learns things from every enemy.

The importance of learning is seen in this proverb. It is recommended to learn from everybody even from your enemy. Most Azerbaijanis are Muslims and some of the proverbs have close equivalents in Islamic teachings. For instance, there is a speech quoted from the Holy Prophet Mohammad (P. B. U. H.) that says: 'أَطِيبُوا الْعِلْمَ وَلَوْ بِالصَّيْنِ' (<http://quran.porsemani.ir/>), which orders Muslims to learn the science even if it is in China (it was difficult to go from the Holy Prophet's land to China). It clearly shows how much Islam is concerned with the priority of knowledge that coincides with the belief of Azerbaijanis.

D: Qalib qurd ilə qiyamətə

(S/he) has been till Resurrection with the wolf.

Turks believe that the wolf will stay until Resurrection, since Turkic peoples believe they were descendants of wolves. Wolf is a revered animal according Turkic mythology.

Ata və Ana:

A: Ata ana kiçik tanrıdır.

Fathers and mothers are like a small god.

The high and well-respected positions of both fathers and mothers are showed in this proverb. It does not mean that they are as a God but it shows their high and holy positions in Azerbaijani culture. The theme mentioned in this proverb can be found in the Holy Qur'an too as in the following:

And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve (any) but Him, and goodness to your parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, say not to them (so much as) "Ugh" nor chide them, and speak to them a generous word.	وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا <a href="http://www.tebyan.net">http://www.tebyan.net</a>
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B: Ata çörəyi meydan çörəyi, oğul çörəyi zindan çörəyi.

The bread of father is broad while the child's bread is like the prison bread.

It shows that parents are kind to their children and they support them in vicissitudes but children are not that kind as it is supposed to be. When parents are old, children support them but not that much.

Arvad/kişi:

A: kişinin özünə baxma sözüne bax.

Do not look at the man himself, but look at his words.

Here, the importance of words is stressed. The same can be seen in the speech of Alī ibn Abī Tālib (A. S.). Sunnis consider Alī ibn Abī Tālib (A. S.) as the fourth and final of the Rashidun (rightly guided Caliphs), while Shias regard Him as the first Imam after the Holy Prophet Muhammad (P. B. U. H.). He says: لا تَنْظُرْ إِلَىٰ وَ أَنْظُرْ إِلَىٰ مَا قَالَ that means the same Azerbaijani proverb.

Oğul/qız:

A: Qız özgə çirağını yandırar.

The daughter burns a stranger's fire.

It says that your daughter will marry soon and she will not help you in the future, since she is the wife of another person. In Azerbaijani culture, the girl will live with her in-laws and the boy will live with his parents. The same belief can be seen in other proverbs as:

B: Qız qapısı şah qapısı, mini gələr, biri razi gedər.

The daughter's home is like the palace of a king, thousands of people come but one returns satisfied.

In this proverb, the daughter has a high prestige that is described as a king/queen.

Qonşu:

A: Qonşun tox səndə tox.

If your neighbor is full, then you are full too.

It recommends you to help your neighbor and feed him if he is hungry. It shows that you are advised to think about your neighbor all the time.

B: Qonşuya ümid olan şamsız qalar.

If one waits for his neighbor, he will be hungry at night.

This proverb insists on thinking about the future. Seizing the day is good but having a plan for the future is advised.

Dost/ düşmən:

A: Dost daşı bərk incidər.

The friend's stone is so painful.

It depicts that people cannot stand the friend's unfaithfulness or unfair behavior. It can be said that a friend should be faithful and fair all the time.

B: Dost başa baxar düşmən ayaqa.

The friend looks at head and the enemy looks at foot.

It shows the kindness of friend and enmity of enemy. It declares that the enemy sees the weak points of people but the friend sees positive points of them.

Mərd/igid

A: Mərd arxadan vırmaz.

A devotee does not attack from back.

This proverb declares a piece of advice that is morally accepted.

## V. DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that the main humanity-related vocabulary theme was human (i.e., frequency: 130 times) and then several other themes such as friend (74 times) and father and mother (70 times) etc are found. Totally, the findings of current study, which can be

beneficial for those interested in carrying out research studies in literature, culture and education, demonstrate that Azerbaijani proverbs have witnessed some tinges of Islamic ideology on the one hand and cultural values as well as mythological beliefs on the other hand. About Islamic ideology, some ideas are found that share a common belief between Azerbaijanis and Islamic beliefs and lifestyle. Regarding mythology, more works are recommended to be done to explore and report more evidences about the mythological roots of Azerbaijani proverbs.

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