

CHIASMUS IN UZBEK AND FRENCH: A COMPARATIVE LINGUOCULTURAL
PERSPECTIVE

Zebiniso Bekmuradova

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Philology, Associate Professor
Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature named after Alisher Navoi,
Uzbekistan.

bekmurodovazebiniso4@gmail.com

ORCID ID:0000-0003-4314-1009

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23378532>

Abstract. *In world linguistics, analyzing the chiasm phenomenon specific to a particular language from a semantic-stylistic perspective and comparing it with a genetically unrelated language helps identify similarities and differences between the two languages. This, in turn, contributes to the development of linguistics and the emergence of new terms. The study of the chiasm phenomenon has been an object of research for linguists for many years. However, in modern linguistics, both approaches to studying chiasm and views on its linguistic status remain diverse. This article discusses the use of chiasmus not only in poetic texts but also in folklore genres. Special attention is given to the widespread use of chiasmus in folklore texts, particularly in proverbs. Additionally, the article focuses on the similarities and differences of chiasmus in intercultural linguistic and cultural aspects.*

Keywords: *Chiasmus, paremiology, proverb, folklore.*

Although the term chiasmus has been used in linguistics since the 19th century, the phenomenon itself has existed for much longer, dating back to antiquity, and has been described using terms such as antimetabole, antimetalepsis, and antimetathesis. This stylistic device, particularly prevalent in religious texts, serves to create a distinct aesthetic and logical coherence in discourse. Essentially, chiasmus enables the juxtaposition of opposing meanings and the establishment of cause-and-effect relationships through the symmetrical or intersecting arrangement of elements. Viewed as a stylistic figure, one of its primary characteristics is the AB/BA arrangement of words and phrases, although in some cases it manifests in more complex structural forms.

This figure generates parallelism or antithesis by arranging two-part expressions symmetrically or in reverse relative to each other. If the units in the text are arranged in the same order, a parallelism of the ABC/A'B'C' type is formed; conversely, if the units are arranged symmetrically around a central element, a reverse parallelism of the ABC/central element/C'B'A' type emerges.

The roots of the chiasmus figure in speech trace back to very ancient sources. While it is known that chiasmus emerged as a linguistic phenomenon around the third millennium BCE, some Chinese sources even speculate that its history may extend as far back as the eleventh millennium BCE. However, it was the Greeks who elevated it to the level of rhetorical art in the 4th century BCE, thereby producing chiasmus-based speeches with logical beauty, wise proverbs, and expressions that have stood the test of time.

O. Mamaziyayev, addressing the phenomenon under study, defines chiasmus as follows: “Chiasmus is merely a syntactic-stylistic device that forms a compound sentence, in which the

positions (order) of the segments in the first part of the sentence are required to be completely reversed in the placement of the segments in the second part” (Mamaziyayev, 2004:15).

It is appropriate to analyze the semantics of chiasmus based on G. L. Permyakov’s logical-semantic classification of proverbs and sayings. However, while a proverb represents the product of collective thought and consistently reflects the worldview and life experience of the community, chiasmus, encompassing several layers of folklore, predominantly serves to express individual ideas and emotions (Amanov, 2016:215).

Paremiology is the study of humanity’s thought crystallized over the years and manifested in wise sayings that embody the truths of life. It examines the wisdom of the people, which has arisen as a result of observing the laws of the universe and drawing conclusions based on life experience. Proverbs, sayings, idioms, and aphorisms—all of these constitute a collection of precious words that encapsulate the community’s attitude toward society, emotional state, ethnic and aesthetic feelings, as well as virtuous qualities.

They have been transmitted orally from generation to generation, condensing the truths of life into concise, simple, and meaningful expressions. The term *paremia*, when translated from Greek, denotes “a statement with deep meaning, a wise word, expression, proverb, or saying.” For centuries, proverbs, sayings, tongue twisters, wordplays, and riddles—shaped by individual experience and passed down orally—have reflected people’s way of life, worldview, social attitudes, moral norms, national history, and psychological state. Proverbs, which combine formal beauty with semantic conciseness, represent a valuable cultural asset for any society.

They date back to antiquity and continue to be used consistently. In terms of form, proverbs are short, concise, simple, logically well-constructed, yet sometimes incomplete and densely packed with meaning. Proverbs cultivate the human mind, teaching individuals to be righteous, honest, hardworking, brave, patient, and resilient, while promoting virtuous qualities. They also train people to express ideas briefly and clearly. Thoughts are often conveyed metaphorically, and through a single proverb or saying, one can gain insight into the way of life and experiences of an entire people.

Proverbs reflect the national identity, mentality, and cherished values of each people.

Accordingly, in national literature, paremic units are effectively used to convey artistic expression and the author’s conceptual vision. In particular, when analyzing chiasmus phenomena in proverbs across the compared languages, both similarities and differences become evident.

Furthermore, the characteristics of Uzbek proverbs, like those of French proverbs, do not intersect uniformly along a single plane. Their rhythmic properties correspond to the semantic structure of the sentence, and rhythmic symmetry arises from binary or comparative constructions.

Proverbs, distinguished by their expressiveness and brevity, employ rhetorical figures to facilitate the understanding of complex moral concepts, to concretize abstract truths, and to present causes in a more comprehensible and even humorous manner.

Chiasmus is also universal, as its functions recognize no boundaries or stylistic limitations.

It is primarily employed in spoken discourse, especially in folk oral creativity, including proverbs, sayings, tongue twisters, riddles, and humorous anecdotes. The use of chiasmus in such genres helps to reveal cross-cultural aspects, that is, its linguocultural dimensions. It is well known that linguoculturology studies linguistic culture, which is reflected in each nation’s way of life, customs, and traditions.

For instance, the French and Uzbek peoples each have distinct cultures that neither resemble nor replicate one another. The following examples illustrate features specific to the mentalities of the Uzbek and French peoples.

Kelin bo'ldim – **qaynonamga** yoqmadim.

Qaynona bo'ldim – **kelinimga** yoqmadim. (O'zbek xalq maqollari, 2003: 255)

For the Uzbek people, mother-in-law–daughter-in-law relationships have always been considered primary, and these relationships contribute to the formation of the parameters for the emergence of proverbs such as those mentioned above. Indeed, conflicts frequently arise in these relationships, reflecting that a daughter-in-law may displease her mother-in-law, and conversely, a mother-in-law may displease her daughter-in-law, thereby alluding to social events and occurrences. As a continuation of this proverb, another illustrative example can be provided.

Kelining yaxshi bo'lsa, **o'g'lingdan** ko'r,

O'g'ling yomon bo'lsa, **keliningdan** ko'r. (O'zbek xalq maqollari, 2003: 265)

The essence of this example also lies in the mother-in-law–daughter-in-law relationship.

The reason is that if the son is just, as expressed in this saying, “**Kelining yaxshi bo'lsa, o'g'lingdan ko'r**”, treating both his mother and wife equally and without favoring one over the other, no problems will ever arise between these women, as illustrated by this proverb. In the following line, “**O'g'ling yomon bo'lsa, keliningdan ko'r**”, the meaning is entirely reversed, reflecting the opposite perspective—a pattern consistently found in such proverbs developed over centuries..

Yaxshi xotin olib bersang yigitga,

Ming kuni bir kun bo'lib o'tar.

Yomon xotin olib bersang yigitga,

Bir kuni ming kun bo'lib o'tar. (O'zbek xalq maqollari, 2003:265)

In this proverb, the impact of marital relationships on a person's life is expressed very concisely and clearly. In Uzbek culture, the family is considered sacred; therefore, marriage is approached as an important value requiring responsibility. Disagreements between spouses affect not only their personal lives but also the lives of their children and relatives. Sometimes, even if spouses do not agree with each other, they are compelled to live together patiently due to the influence of their children, family, or community. Such situations can, at times, strengthen the family as a result of patience and compromise, while at other times, they can have a significant negative impact on an individual's inner psychological state. For this reason, establishing a good family and choosing a life partner wisely hold great significance in a person's life.

Erdan – **xato**, **xotindan** – **uzr**,

Xotindan – **xato**, **erdan jazo**. (O'zbek xalq maqollari, 2003: 266)

Indeed, proverbs emerge from each nation's way of life, customs developed over many years, and the collective experiences of the people. In both of the proverbs discussed above, one can observe characteristics unique to the Uzbek nation. Despite the brevity of expression regarding marital relationships, these examples manage to fully illuminate the entire spectrum of family issues through just two lines.

Les bons comptes font les bons amis – Hisobli do'st ayrilmas.

During the translation of the above French proverb, it can be observed that there exists an exact Uzbek equivalent, in which the meaning is preserved, although the chiasmus structure is

completely lost. Similarly, the humorist Alphonse Allais transforms proverbs in this manner: *Partir, c'est mourir un peu... Mais mourir c'est partir beaucoup*. In chiasms produced through this method, the enhancement of meaning becomes clearly evident.

As examples, chiasmatic proverbs from Uzbek and French can be illustrated as follows:

1. **Phonetic chiasmus:** *Erning otini xotin chiqarar, Xotinning otini o'tin chiqarar.* (proverb)

2. **Lexical chiasmus:** *Och bola to'q bola bilan o'ynamaydi, To'q bola och bolani o'ylamaydi.*

Un trésor n'est un ami, mais un ami est un trésor. (proverbe)

3. **Syntactic chiasmus:** *Sen baloga tegmasang, Baloning senda ne ishi bor.* (O'zbek xalq maqollari, 2003: 240)

Il faut vivre ses rêves et non rêver sa vie. (proverbe) *Celui qui veut être jeune quand il est vieux, doit être vieux quand il est jeune.* (proverbe) *A jeune homme – vieux cheval, à cheval jeune – vieil homme.* (proverbe) *A jeune femme et vieux mari, des enfants: à vieille femme et jeune mari, des querelles.* (proverbe) *Burun tortildi – dum tiqildi, dum tortildi – burun tiqildi.* *Yaxshi odam qo'yga qarshi, lekin qo'y yaxshi odamga qarshi. Vin sur lait, bien fait : lait sur vin, venin.*

Chiasmatic structures in proverbs are very stable. They are recorded in various languages, noting similarities across French and Uzbek proverbs.

Bir kishi ming kishi uchun,

Ming kishi bir kishi uchun. (O'zbek xalq maqollari, 2003: 268)

Tous pour chacun,

Chacun pour tous. (proverbe)

The given example demonstrates that the proverb is stylistically, semantically, and grammatically identical in both languages, and during the translation process, both retain the same meaning. This indicates that chiasmus possesses a stable chiasmatic structure across all languages.

Pora kanda bo'lmasa, (fonetik xiazm: tovush almashinuvi)

Parokanda bo'lasan. (O'zbek xalq maqollari, 2003: 42)

Yaxshi bo'lsa – **bola**, (tovush xiazmi)

Yomon bo'lsa – **balo**. (O'zbek xalq maqollari, 2003: 277)

In these examples, one can observe phonetic chiasmus, where the sounds a and o intersect in an X-shaped pattern. Phonetic chiasmus can be seen in words such as *pora* and *paro*, as well as *bola* and *balo*. The analysis of the above examples shows that chiasmus can occur not only within compound sentences but also within individual words. During the analysis, it was found that chiasmus is more prevalent in Uzbek proverbs than in French ones, indicating that the stylistic figure of chiasmus is widely employed in Uzbek proverbs and serves to enhance their expressive intonation.

Les fous sont plus utiles **aux sages** que **les sages** **aux fous**

Baxil avliyo bo'lmas,

Avliyo baxil bo'lmas. (O'zbek xalq maqollari, 2003: 168)

In the process of comparing Uzbek and French proverbs, it is evident that, in terms of meaning, the proverbs share common features reflecting the similarities and specific characteristics of both nations' mentalities, customs, and ways of life. Furthermore, the semantic aspects of the words in both sets of proverbs are almost identical.

Les fous – aux sages

les sages – aux fous

Baxil –avliyo

Avliyo – baxil

Although in translation the proverbs may not convey the exact same overall meaning, they share an identical structure in terms of lexicosemantic function. In the French proverb, the word *les fous* can be functionally matched with the Uzbek word *baxil*, while *les sages* can be used synonymously with *avliyo* in terms of functional equivalence.

An example of a chiasmatic construction based on synonymy can be observed in the French chiasmatic phrase involving the hydronyms *Tamise* (Thames) and *Seine*, which participate through homonymy.- *J’ai inventé un système pour la purification de l’eau qui va contenter à la fois les gens de Londres et ceux de Paris. Suppose un siphon qui reunit et la Tamise et la Seine...*

- Alors?

- Alors, **les eaux de *Seine* seront *tamiseés* et les eaux de la *Tamise* seront *saines*.**

Here, in the play of word combinations, one can identify not only homophones (e.g., *Siene* – *saine*, “healthy, clean”), but also homographs and even paronyms (for instance, *tamisé*, derived from the verb *tamiser* meaning “sifted” or “filtered,” is associated with *Temise* [Thames], which has no semantic or etymological connection).

Moreover, in this example, one can observe not only the homonymic and paronymic features but also elements specific to French culture. When considering the *Seine* and *Thames* rivers, they immediately evoke the major rivers of France. Furthermore, based on several French examples, it can be asserted that chiasms, in addition to serving as a stylistic device that generates novel perspectives in various linguistic fields, also provide a basis for certain sources in linguoculturology.

In the works of the great French writer *Pierre Corneille*, one can observe chiasmatic constructions that reflect the French mentality in both examples. For instance: *Qu’on parle mal ou bien du fameux cardinal*

Ma prose ni mes vers n’en diront jamais rien :

*Il m’a fait trop de **bien pour en dire du mal**,*

*Il m’a fait trop de **mal pour en dire du bien**.*

Vers sur le cardinal de Rechelieu composés à l’occasion de la mort du cardinal. (Corneille, 1862: 45)

In the above example, the reference is exclusively to a position established in France (Cardinal – advisor to the Pope), highlighting aspects that are not characteristic of other countries.

As demonstrated, chiasmus is highly characteristic of artistic discourse. As Dubois (1973:26) notes, “It is not enough to say that it merely uses forms – it lives with them,” emphasizing that chiasmus, through its very structure, reveals all its components and unlocks the full range of the finest semantic and emotional nuances that the construction conceals

Parallelisms can be observed in Uzbek proverbs just as in French proverbs. The French proverb “*Loin des yeux, loin du cœur*” is translated as “*Ko‘zdan yiroq ko‘ngildan yiroqdir.*” Remarkably, a corresponding Uzbek proverb exists, which can be rendered as “*O‘zi yo‘qning ko‘zi yo‘q*” or “*Ko‘zdan nari – mehrdan nari*”. This proverb appears in the *Baburnama* in the same form. Such similarities between Uzbek and French, languages belonging to different systems, can be viewed as a result of literary connections.

Furthermore, Yusuf Khass Hajib's *Qutadg'u Bilig* was widely disseminated within French culture through the translation by the French scholar Jaubert Amadi. As the wisdom contained in the work was assimilated, some of these sayings were later attributed to prominent French figures.

For instance, a few years ago, the aphorism **"If a lion leads the dogs, the dogs will fight like lions; if a dog leads the lions, the lions will act like dogs"** was circulated on social media and attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte, although it directly originates from *Qutadg'u Bilig*.

Notably, chiasmus is also evident in this aphorism.

Examining the actual relationships between Uzbek and French proverbs and the use of chiasmus, it becomes clear that, stylistically—particularly in terms of the use of syntactic units—chiasmus is absolutely more prevalent in Uzbek proverbs.

Although Uzbek paremic units may seem unrelated to French paremiological expressions, analyses show that there are both similarities and differences between them. The unique characteristics of Uzbek proverbs, like those of French proverbs, do not intersect uniformly along a single plane; rather, they manifest in various forms such as parallelism, binary structures, and comparative constructions. At the same time, when compared from a linguoculturological perspective, reflecting each nation's identity, mentality, and enduring values, noticeable natural differences between the proverbs of these two peoples become evident.

References

1. Amanov, Abdug'ani (2016), *Features of Paremiological Units and Their Study as Cultural Heritage*, // Scientific Bulletin, Samarkand, No. 4, p. 215.
2. Corneille, Pierre (1862), *Poésies diverses*, Text established by Charles Marty-Laveaux, Hachette, Tome X.
3. Dubois, Jean (1973), *Éléments de linguistique française*, Paris: Larousse, p. 26.
4. Mamaziyayev, Ollaberdi (2004), *Chiasmus and Gradation in Uzbek Poetic Speech*, PhD dissertation abstract, Fergana, p. 44.
5. *Uzbek Folk Proverbs* (2003), Compilers: T. Mirzayev, A. Musoqulov, B. Sarimsoqov; Responsible editor: Sh. Turdimov, Tashkent: Sharq.
6. Yusuf Khass Hajib (2016), *Qutadg'u Bilig* (Translated into Modern Uzbek by F. Ravshanov), Tashkent: Akademnashr, p. 544.
7. Bekmuradova, Z. (2025). THE UNIVERSAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHIASMUS (Based on examples from Uzbek and French literary texts). *Modern Science and Research*, 4(2), 434-439.
8. Bekmuradova, Z. (2025, May). The O'ZBEK TILSHUNOSLIGIDA XIAZM HODISASINING O 'RGANILISHI. In *Conferences* (Vol. 1, No. 01).
9. Bekmuradova Z. THE UNIVERSAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHIASMUS (Based on examples from Uzbek and French literary texts) // *Modern Science and Research*. – 2025. – T. 4. – №. 2. – C. 434-439.
10. Bekmurodova Z. Symmetry-Chiastic Structures as A Main Form of Making Constructions // *European Journal of Humanities and Educational Advancements*. – T. 3. – №. 3. – C. 155-157.
11. Bekmuradova, Z. E., & Mamatov, A. (2022). Etymological and structural study of chiasmus. *Asian Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 12(2), 7-10.