



# THE SEMANTICS OF THE CONCEPTS OF FRIENDSHIP AND ENMITY IN LITERARY TEXTS (BASED ON ENGLISH AND UZBEK FOLK PROVERBS)

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the semantic and conceptual representations of friendship and enmity as reflected in English and Uzbek folk proverbs and their artistic deployment in literary texts. Grounded in the frameworks of conceptual semantics and metaphor theory, the research examines how these emotionally and culturally charged concepts are constructed, moralized, and transmitted across generations. A comparative analysis of selected proverbs reveals shared universal values – such as loyalty, honesty, and caution – while also highlighting culturally specific metaphors and ethical nuances. English proverbs often emphasize individual psychology and strategic awareness, whereas Uzbek proverbs tend to foreground communal identity, spiritual restraint, and moral integrity. Through textual analysis of works by Shakespeare, Dickens, Kodiriy, and Hoshimov, the study demonstrates how literary authors embed proverbial wisdom to deepen narrative meaning and illuminate character dynamics. The findings underscore the role of proverbs not only as semantic units but also as literary tools that convey cultural memory, social values, and ethical frameworks. This research contributes to cross-cultural paremiology, cognitive linguistics, and the study of literature as a vessel for collective human understanding.

**KEYWORDS:** Friendship, Enmity, Proverbs, Semantics, Metaphor, English Literature, Uzbek Literature, Cognitive Linguistics, Cultural Values, Paremiology.

Human relationships have always been central to linguistic expression, cultural reflection, and literary representation. Among the most significant of these relationships are those built on *friendship* and *enmity*—universal concepts that permeate everyday communication, folklore, and the world's literary canons. These two oppositional forces shape how individuals and communities navigate loyalty, betrayal, trust, and conflict. While such concepts are global in their relevance, their linguistic encoding and cultural interpretation vary across societies. Folk proverbs, as concentrated forms of collective wisdom, offer a window into these culturally embedded conceptualizations.

Proverbs are more than decorative elements of language. They represent the semantic crystallization of generations of human experience. They convey not only advice and judgment but also emotional nuance, moral expectation, and social values. In both English and Uzbek traditions, proverbs surrounding friendship and enmity illustrate how different cultures define these relationships, what they praise or caution against, and how they internalize communal behavior through language.

This research explores the semantic structure and conceptual metaphors of the ideas of friendship and enmity as expressed in English and Uzbek folk proverbs, with the aim of tracing how these concepts function within literary texts. Drawing on the theories of conceptual semantics (Lakoff, Johnson, Kövecses) and paremiology (the study of proverbs), the paper analyzes how these culturally-loaded sayings are not only used in oral

tradition but are also embedded in the moral and emotional fabric of literature.

The literary dimension of the study focuses on how proverbs enrich narratives by shaping character relations, intensifying emotional drama, and grounding moral reflection. By comparing their use in canonical English texts (e.g., Shakespeare, Dickens) and classical and modern Uzbek literature (e.g., Kodiriy, Hoshimov), this study demonstrates how folk wisdom continues to influence literary creativity across time and language. The study applies a comparative-semantic and literary-discursive approach. It relies on a selected corpus of English and Uzbek folk proverbs, as well as primary literary texts from both traditions. Theoretical foundations are drawn from cognitive linguistics, cultural semantics, and literary stylistics. The study also incorporates examples from proverb collections and textual analysis from both languages.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative comparative methodology grounded in the principles of conceptual semantics, cognitive metaphor theory, and literary discourse analysis. The approach integrates linguistic, cultural, and literary perspectives to explore how the concepts of *friendship* and *enmity* are semantically and metaphorically encoded in folk proverbs and recontextualized in literary texts.

The research is comparative in nature, comparing English and Uzbek proverbs and literature to identify both universal and



culture-specific conceptualizations of interpersonal relationships. The data for this study were drawn from two main sources: proverb collections and literary texts. English proverbs were selected from established paremiological collections and reference works such as Wolfgang Mieder's "Proverbs: A Handbook" (2004) and Taylor's "The Proverb" (1931). Uzbek proverbs were sourced from authoritative linguistic publications, including "O'zbek tilida maqol va matallar poetikasi" by Rasulov (2012), and "Til va milliy tafakkur" by Yusupov (2007). Literary texts were chosen for their explicit or implicit use of proverbs, as well as for their thematic focus on interpersonal relationships, moral values, and emotional conflict: "Othello" and "Hamlet" by William Shakespeare, "Great Expectations" by Charles Dickens, "O'tkan kunlar" by Abdulla Kodiriy, "Ikki eshik orasi" by Utkir Hoshimov, "Jimjitlik" by Said Ahmad. The analysis was conducted in two stages: semantic and metaphorical analysis of proverbs and discourse analysis of literary contexts. Proverbs were analyzed using the tools of conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2005), focusing on metaphorical structures such as "friendship is treasure" or "enmity is fire/poison". The semantic fields of each concept were mapped and compared across the two languages. Literary texts were examined to identify how proverbs and their semantic contents are embedded within narrative structures. Attention was given to how proverbs shape character development, convey cultural and moral values, support narrative conflict or resolution. All findings were interpreted within a cross-cultural framework, emphasizing how different cultural contexts influence the moral and emotional connotations of the same conceptual domains. This study provides a foundational semantic and cultural comparison which can be expanded in future research using digital paremiology databases or linguistic corpora.

Conceptual semantics is a branch of cognitive linguistics that studies the relationship between language and thought. It explores how abstract concepts are structured, understood, and expressed through linguistic means. According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their foundational work "Metaphors We Live By" (1980), human thought is largely metaphorical, and our understanding of abstract domains—such as friendship and enmity—is deeply shaped by metaphorical mappings from more concrete experiences[3]. In this framework, concepts such as friendship and enmity are seen not merely as words, but as structured mental representations encompassing emotional, cultural, and moral components. Lakoff also emphasizes the role of idealized cognitive models (ICMs), where recurring patterns help encode social norms and expectations into linguistic forms like proverbs[7]. Russian linguist E.S. Kubryakova views concepts as the "units of collective memory" and "mental representations of culturally significant phenomena"[6]. In her view, the semantic field of a concept is expanded through associations, collocations, and context-dependent usage. Another influential theory comes from Vyacheslav Karasik, who divides concepts into basic (universal) and cultural-specific levels. Friendship may be a universal value, but its culturally nuanced expression differs across languages and societies, often reflected in phraseology and folk wisdom[4].

## RESULTS

The comparative semantic and metaphorical analysis of English and Uzbek folk proverbs, along with selected literary texts, yielded several significant findings. These results are grouped into three key areas: semantic fields, conceptual metaphors, and literary integration.

Proverbs are short, fixed expressions that encapsulate cultural knowledge, social norms, and ethical judgments. They are essential tools for encoding the semantics of friendship and enmity, and serve as linguistic evidence of how these concepts are framed and transmitted intergenerationally. In both English and Uzbek, proverbs are more than rhetorical devices—they are semantic condensations of collective experience. According to Mieder, proverbs reflect the worldview of a people and are "miniature moral stories" which embody behavioral expectations and emotional wisdom [8]. In Uzbek linguistics, the role of paremiology (the study of proverbs) has been emphasized in the works of A. Rasulov and Sh. Yusupov, who argue that proverbs reveal the national-cultural character of language and carry the emotional-evaluative attitude of the speech community. For example, English proverbs like *A friend in need is a friend indeed* or *Keep your friends close and your enemies closer* encode pragmatic advice and moral evaluation, while Uzbek counterparts such as *Do'st kulfatda bilinadi* or *Do'st achitib gapirar, dushman kuldirib* express deeply embedded cultural values about sincerity, trust, and vigilance. Moreover, proverbs often function through conceptual metaphors, such as:

Friendship is treasure: *A faithful friend is the medicine of life.*  
Enmity is poison or fire: *The enmity of a wise man is better than the friendship of a fool.* These metaphors are culturally shaped and differ subtly between English and Uzbek traditions.

The concepts are rooted in cognitive structures and shaped by metaphorical thinking, emotional experience, and cultural heritage. Proverbs serve as a rich source for semantic analysis, as they encode centuries of human wisdom in brief, expressive language. The comparison of English and Uzbek proverbs allows for identifying universal patterns alongside culture-specific values that shape the perception and portrayal of social relationships in literature.

The concept of *friendship* is universally valued but culturally interpreted in distinct ways. In both English and Uzbek folk traditions, friendship is portrayed as a vital human connection, often characterized by loyalty, trust, empathy, and moral support. Proverbs serve as condensed expressions of these values, allowing us to observe how friendship is semantically constructed in each linguistic-cultural setting.

In English proverbs, friendship is closely associated with:

- **Support in adversity:** *A friend in need is a friend indeed; True friends are like stars; you don't always see them, but you know they're always there.*

- **Loyalty and sincerity:** *True friends stab you in the front; Better an open enemy than a false friend.*

- **Equality and shared joy:** *Friendship doubles joy and halves grief; A friend's eye is a good mirror.*



In Uzbek proverbs, friendship carries a communal and spiritual dimension, often embedded in collectivist values:

- **Tested in hardship:** *Do‘st kulfatda bilinadi* (A friend is known in hard times); *Do‘st do‘stni kulfatda sinar, odam odamni mehnatda..* (A friend tests the friend in need.)

- **Moral and spiritual kinship:** *Do‘st ko‘p – boylik ko‘p* (Where there many friends, there are much wealth); *Do‘st do‘stga – qalqon.* (A friend is a shield to a friend.)

- **Loyalty and sacrifice:** *Do‘sting uchun zahar yut* (Swallow poison for your friend); *Do‘stning ko‘zi ayb ko‘rmas* (A friend's eye sees no fault.)

These examples show that Uzbek friendship proverbs often emphasize collective identity and moral obligation, while English proverbs highlight emotional support and honesty in interpersonal relationships.

Semantic Field	English Example	Uzbek Example
Loyalty	A faithful friend is the medicine of life.	Do‘st kulfatda bilinadi.
Truthfulness	True friends stab you in the front.	Do‘st – oshkor, dushman - yashirin.
Support in hardship	A friend in need is a friend indeed.	Do‘st do‘stga – qalqon.
Moral kinship	A friend’s eye is a good mirror.	Do‘st dillar bir biriga ko‘zgu bo‘ladi.

The core of the *friendship* concept includes trust, loyalty, support, and emotional honesty. However, in Uzbek proverbs, the friend is often portrayed as an extension of the self or the nation, highlighting the collective dimension, while in English proverbs, the emphasis is more individualistic, focusing on emotional or moral authenticity.

As explained by Lakoff and Johnson, many proverbs function through conceptual metaphors, which allow us to understand abstract ideas like friendship via concrete imagery[3]. Both English and Uzbek languages employ such metaphors in unique but comparable ways.

Common Metaphors in English Proverbs: Friendship is a journey: *Friends are the companions on a journey*; Friendship is a treasure: *A faithful friend is the medicine of life*; *Friendship is the only cement that will ever hold the world together.* Common Metaphors in Uzbek Proverbs: Do‘stlik –oltin (Friendship is gold): *Yaxshi do‘st — oltindan qimmat* (A good friend is more valuable than gold.); *Do‘stlik oltinga sotilmas, mehmon pulga* (Friendship cannot be sold for gold, a guest for money); *Do‘stlik sinovda paydo bo‘ladi* (Friendship is tested by fire or hardship): *Do‘stning sinovi — tashvishli kunlar* (The test of a friend is troubled days); *Ot sinovi bir bo‘lar, Do‘st sinovi ming bo‘lar* (A horse is tested once, the test of a friend is a thousand.)

These metaphors suggest that friendship is seen as something precious, tested, and enduring, but while English often uses metaphors of medicine or tools of emotional survival, Uzbek proverbs lean toward natural forces (fire, light) and spiritual elements. The key differences are English metaphors are more symbolic, abstract, universal and Uzbek metaphors are more moral, situational, and emotionally intense.

The semantic analysis of *friendship* in English and Uzbek folk proverbs reveals both shared universal values—such as loyalty, trust, and emotional support—and culturally distinct perspectives, such as the collectivist framing in Uzbek and the personal, individualist focus in English. These proverbs reflect deep-rooted cultural ideals and continue to shape how relationships are described and understood in literary texts.

The concept of *enmity* is as deeply rooted in human experience as friendship, yet it is often associated with conflict, betrayal, hostility, and distrust. In both English and Uzbek folk traditions, enmity is treated as a morally and emotionally charged concept, frequently expressed through metaphor and irony in proverbs. In English proverbs, *enmity* is often portrayed as:

- Deceptive and hidden: *Keep your friends close and your enemies closer*; *A silent enemy is more dangerous than a roaring one.*
- Emotionally toxic or morally inferior: *An enemy’s enemy is a friend*; *He who seeks revenge should dig two graves.*
- Intertwined with false friendship: *Better an open enemy than a false friend.*

In Uzbek proverbs, the concept of enmity carries strong moral and cautionary tones:

- Warning against hypocrisy: *Do‘st achitib gapirar, Dushman kuldirib.* (An enemy may make you laugh, a friend may make you cry.)

- Advice for moral strength and self-restraint: *Dushmaning bo‘lsa ham, insonligingni yo‘qotma* (Even if he is your enemy, don’t lose your humanity); *Do‘sti nodon bo‘lguncha, dushmani ziyrak bo‘lgin* (Let your enemy be wise until your friend is foolish.)

- Recognition of danger in passivity or naivety: *Do‘sti ko‘p dushmansiz bo‘lmas* (A man who has many friends, will not stay without an enemy); *Dushmaning chumoli bo‘lsa, fil hisobla* (If your enemy is an ant, consider him as an elephant).



The languages have shared semantic themes

Theme	English Proverb	Uzbek Proverb
Deception / disguise	<i>Keep your enemies closer.</i>	<i>Do 'st achitib gapirar, Dushman kuldirib.</i>
Danger / caution	<i>A silent enemy is more dangerous.</i>	<i>Dushmaning chumoli bo 'lsa, fil hisobla</i>
Moral behavior	<i>He who seeks revenge should dig two graves.</i>	<i>Dushmaning bo 'lsa ham, insonligingni yo 'qotma.</i>
Enemy vs. false friend	<i>Better an open enemy than a false friend.</i>	<i>Do 'st – oshkor, dushman - yashirin.</i>

These proverbs demonstrate that enmity is not merely conflict, it is deeply moralized. Both languages emphasize caution, self-awareness, and ethical behavior in the face of enmity.

Folk proverbs often reveal how enmity is conceptualized metaphorically, turning it into a tangible or animate entity. Drawing from conceptual metaphor theory, enmity is frequently represented as a force of destruction, a poison, or a hidden threat [3].

Conceptual Metaphors in English: enmity is poison: *Bitterness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die*; enemy is a predator: *Even a cornered rat will bite*; enmity is a strategy: *Keep your enemies closer*. Conceptual Metaphors in Uzbek: dushman–ilon (snake): *Ilonning tashi yaltiroq bo 'lsa ham, ishi zahar solmoq* (Even though a snake's skin is shiny, its job is to inject poison); dushman — zahar (poison): *Dushmaning makkor bo 'lsa, zaharni sharbatdek ichiradi* (If your enemy is cunning, he will make you drink poison like juice); dushmanlik — xatar (danger): *Dushmanning biri ham xatar* (Even one enemy is a danger.)

These metaphors reinforce the idea that enmity is a threat, but the response to that threat is also a reflection of moral character. In Uzbek tradition, there is often a higher emphasis on restraint, honor, and maturity even when facing animosity.

The semantic structure of enmity in both English and Uzbek proverbs illustrates a complex interplay between fear, caution, morality, and wisdom. While both traditions highlight the dangers posed by enemies, the Uzbek approach often stresses ethical conduct and spiritual restraint, whereas the English proverbs occasionally lean toward strategic awareness and emotional psychology. These conceptualizations provide rich material for analysis when such proverbs are embedded in literary texts.

Proverbs have long served as artistic tools in literature, offering authors a way to reflect popular wisdom, collective memory, and moral frameworks in a concise, resonant form. The integration of folk proverbs into narrative fiction enhances stylistic richness, thematic depth, and psychological complexity of literary works.

As Mieder notes, proverbs in literature can act as “stylistic markers, moral signposts, and intertextual bridges” between folk tradition and literary creation [8]. They are used to reinforce cultural values, establish narrative irony or

foreshadowing, reveal inner beliefs of characters, serve as symbolic anchors for central themes. In both English and Uzbek literature, proverbs about friendship and enmity frequently appear at critical moral or emotional junctures. They are not only decorative but structural devices that mirror characters’ internal conflicts and societal norms.

In English literature, the use of proverbs enriches psychological and moral tension, especially in classic and modern drama.

1. William Shakespeare – “Othello”. In “Othello”, Iago manipulates Othello’s perception of friendship and betrayal. Although not directly quoting folk proverbs, Shakespeare constructs “proverbial wisdom” through dialogue: “Men should be what they seem” (Act III, Scene 3). This line echoes the sentiment of *Better an open enemy than a false friend*. The tragedy explores the disintegration of trust, Othello views Cassio as a friend, but Iago’s false loyalty reveals the fragility of friendship when corrupted by envy (a key element of enmity in proverbs).

2. Charles Dickens – “Great Expectations”. Through characters like Pip and Joe, Dickens contrasts genuine friendship with hypocritical relationships (e.g., with Pumblechook or Miss Havisham). Pip’s regret mirrors the proverb: *Don’t value someone only after losing them*. Dickens often embeds moral reflection using language structurally similar to proverbs, such as “Suffering has been stronger than all other teaching”, a concept aligned with *A friend is known in hardship*.

Uzbek literature is rich in proverbial expression, often directly integrating maqollar (proverbs) into dialogue or narration. These sayings serve to emphasize ethical contrast between friends and enemies, particularly in times of social unrest or personal challenge.

1. Utkir Hoshimov – “Ikki eshik orasi”. The novel includes numerous references to friendship and betrayal. Example: *Do 'st do 'stiligini dardda ko 'rsatadi*. (A friend shows his loyalty in times of pain.) This proverb is used both narratively and thematically to contrast sincere neighbors with opportunistic individuals.

2. Abdulla Kodiriy – “O’tkan kunlar”. In this historical novel, the complex friendship between characters like Otabek and his allies is often challenged by political intrigue and social enmity. Proverbs used in direct speech provide insight into moral codes of 19th-century Bukhara society. “*Yor yong 'inda bilinadi*.” (A true friend is revealed in fire.) Used when Otabek faces betrayal and must distinguish between allies and enemies.



3. Said Ahmad – “Jimjitlik”. The story explores human dignity, gossip, and moral courage. Proverbs related to enmity and false friendship, such as: “*Yuzda kulib, orqada g‘iybat qilma.*” serve to express internalized ethical struggles in village life.

Proverbs serve as cultural bridges between folk wisdom and literary art. Whether in the tragedies of Shakespeare or the village realism of Hoshimov, proverbs about friendship and enmity act as thematic linchpins, shaping characters, guiding moral discourse, and enriching emotional tone. In both English and Uzbek literature, these proverbial elements illuminate how individuals navigate loyalty, betrayal, and identity within broader social structures.

## DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study reveal the deep cultural and linguistic embeddedness of the concepts of friendship and enmity within both English and Uzbek folk proverbs, as well as their nuanced application in literary discourse. While universal semantic elements such as loyalty, honesty, and caution recur across both languages, their cultural interpretations, metaphorical framing, and moral emphases diverge in meaningful ways. Both traditions highlight the moral depth of friendship and the emotional and psychological risks posed by enmity. However, the Uzbek paremiological system tends to approach these concepts from a collectivist and spiritual perspective, viewing friendship as a bond that unites not only individuals but also communities. Proverbs such as *Do‘st bor — el bor* suggest that friendship contributes to national identity and collective strength. Furthermore, Uzbek proverbs often recommend ethical restraint, even in the face of hostility (*Dushmaning bo‘lsa ham, insonligingni yo‘qotma*), reflecting traditional values of dignity and forbearance. In contrast, English proverbs, though sharing the same conceptual domains, lean toward an individual-centered interpretation. Sayings such as *True friends stab you in the front* or *Keep your enemies closer* focus on emotional honesty, strategic awareness, and the psychological intricacies of trust and betrayal. These expressions suggest a worldview where personal insight and cautious judgment are vital tools for navigating relationships.

This dichotomy reflects broader cultural orientations identified in cross-cultural studies: Uzbek culture’s emphasis on collectivism and moral endurance, and English-speaking cultures’ emphasis on personal autonomy and pragmatic reasoning[5]. From a cognitive linguistic perspective, both traditions rely on shared conceptual metaphors to express abstract ideas. Metaphors such as “friendship is treasure” or “enmity is danger” demonstrate the universal tendency to understand emotional relationships through physical or tangible domains. This supports Lakoff and Johnson’s theory that abstract domains are conceptualized via concrete experience[3].

When embedded in literary texts, these proverbs serve not only as stylistic or rhetorical elements but as narrative tools. In English literature, Shakespearean tragedies like *Othello* dramatize the dangers of misjudged friendship and the manipulative power of false loyalty. Dickens uses the

emotional weight of lost or rediscovered friendship to reflect character transformation. In Uzbek literature, authors like Kodiriy and Hoshimov embed proverbs directly into character speech, making proverbs not just thematic markers but essential to dialogue authenticity and cultural immersion. These proverbs often occur at moments of ethical decision, emotional conflict, or narrative climax, thereby mirroring the reader’s own moral intuition.

This study highlights that proverbs are not static sayings but living expressions of cultural memory. Their repeated appearance in literary texts confirms their relevance beyond oral tradition, demonstrating their adaptive function in shaping moral consciousness and guiding interpersonal judgment across generations. Moreover, the comparative analysis affirms that proverbs are semantically flexible, allowing them to fit seamlessly into both classical and modern literary narratives. Their brevity, imagery, and moral weight make them ideal for both condensed philosophical insight and dialogic realism.

## CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore how the concepts of *friendship* and *enmity* are semantically constructed and culturally expressed through folk proverbs, and how these expressions are reflected and reimagined within literary texts in both English and Uzbek traditions. Through the theoretical lens of conceptual semantics and metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2005), it was demonstrated that friendship and enmity are not just social realities, but deeply metaphorized and morally charged conceptual domains. Proverbs serve as powerful cognitive and cultural tools that encode shared values, norms, and emotional wisdom passed from generation to generation.

The semantic analysis revealed striking parallels between English and Uzbek proverbs. Both cultures emphasize key values in friendship such as loyalty, honesty, support, and resilience, while portraying enmity through metaphors of fire, poison, deceit, and moral testing. Yet, notable cultural differences emerged: Uzbek proverbs often carry collectivist, spiritual, and moral restraint themes, especially in their treatment of enmity. English proverbs frequently focus on individual agency, psychological insight, and strategic awareness.

In literary texts, these proverbs and their underlying semantic structures are not merely repeated, but transformed into narrative devices. Authors like William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Utkir Hoshimov, and Abdulla Kodiriy use proverbial knowledge to build psychological realism, express moral dilemmas, and comment on human relationships in complex socio-political settings.

This paper also highlighted the role of proverbs in shaping character identities, framing narrative conflict, conveying cultural values across time and genre. Thus, proverbs about friendship and enmity serve not only as semantic expressions, but also as literary tools that enrich storytelling and deepen readers’ understanding of emotional and ethical struggles.



With this research, we affirm that proverbs are more than folklore—they are linguistic artifacts of human thought, linking the semantic, cultural, and artistic dimensions of language. Their presence in literature is not incidental but essential, serving as vessels of cultural memory, moral instruction, and narrative artistry.

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