

# The Use of Metaphors in Paremiological Units of English, Russian, and Kazakh Languages: A Study Based on the Thematic Group "Labor-Idleness"

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**Abstract**—This study investigates metaphorical functions in proverbs related to *labor* and *idleness* across three languages: English, Russian, and Kazakh. A corpus of 17 semantically equivalent proverbs was selected and analyzed through a comparative qualitative approach, drawing on the theoretical framework of Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Kharchenko's classification of metaphorical functions. The findings reveal both universal and culture-specific patterns: English proverbs emphasize individual responsibility and rational pragmatism, Russian proverbs highlight collective values and moral lessons, while Kazakh proverbs embody the nomadic worldview, pastoral imagery, and ethical-religious undertones. The study demonstrates that metaphor in proverbs functions not only as a cognitive and linguistic device but also as a cultural code shaping attitudes toward work and idleness. These insights contribute to cross-cultural paremiology and cognitive linguistics, offering implications for translation studies, language teaching, and intercultural communication.

**Index Terms**—proverbs, metaphor, labor, idleness, cross-cultural comparison

## I. INTRODUCTION

Metaphors are integral to the comprehension and interpretation of paremiological units, such as proverbs and sayings. Since Aristotle's definition of metaphor as a transfer of meaning by analogy (Bywater, 2018), scholars have emphasized its role as a fundamental cognitive mechanism (Quine, 1977; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Gibbs, 1994; Kövecses, 2010). Proverbs, as condensed forms of folk wisdom, rely heavily on metaphorical mappings that encapsulate not only linguistic creativity but also culturally specific worldviews. As Pishghadam (2013, 2024) notes, language embodies "culturing," or cultural memes that are transmitted across generations through proverbs, sayings, and literature.

Previous research in paremiology has highlighted the cognitive, cultural, and pedagogical dimensions of metaphor. Comparative studies have explored metaphorical representations of key cultural domains such as wealth (Bredis, 2024), taxation (Ulisko, 2017), gender (Ramanova et al., 2024; Dabbagh & Babaii, 2023), and education (Wołónciej & Paul,

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2019). These investigations demonstrate that metaphorical language in proverbs functions simultaneously as a cognitive model, a cultural code, and an instructional tool. Moreover, cross-linguistic analyses (Galieva, 2021; Ramlan, 2021; Alyoshin & Zinovieva, 2021) have revealed both universal patterns and culture-specific variations in the metaphorical conceptualization of human experience.

However, despite the growing body of literature, relatively little attention has been paid to the metaphorical conceptualization of labor and idleness, particularly in a trilingual comparative perspective. This semantic domain is central to cultural identity, reflecting values of diligence, responsibility, and morality, yet its representation across languages remains underexplored. The present study addresses this gap by analyzing proverbs related to labor and idleness in English, Russian, and Kazakh. The choice of these languages is motivated by Kazakhstan's unique trilingual context, where Kazakh functions as the state language, Russian as the language of interethnic communication, and English as the global lingua franca.

The study aims to identify the metaphorical functions of proverbs related to labor and idleness across the three languages, to determine both universal conceptual tendencies and culture-specific patterns, and to highlight the cultural values encoded in these proverbial metaphors. By integrating Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) with cultural-linguistic perspectives, this research contributes to cross-cultural paremiology, cognitive linguistics, and intercultural communication.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of metaphor has undergone a profound transformation since the publication of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's groundbreaking work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). Their conceptual metaphor theory established a fundamentally new perspective, arguing that metaphors are not peripheral ornaments of speech but central cognitive mechanisms that shape human thought, perception, and communication. This theoretical stance positions metaphor as a structural principle of human cognition, whereby abstract concepts are understood and organized through mappings from more concrete, embodied domains of experience.

At the core of Lakoff and Johnson's framework lies the concept of **conceptual metaphors**, which demonstrate that human beings do not merely *use* metaphors but actually *live by them*. Expressions such as *time is money* or *life is a journey* are not linguistic coincidences; rather, they reflect underlying mental models through which individuals perceive and interpret reality. Such metaphors, therefore, constitute the foundation of cognitive activity, guiding the way speakers of a language conceptualize relationships, events, and experiences.

Another essential dimension of the theory emphasizes the role of **embodiment** in metaphorical thought. Human bodily experiences, such as verticality, movement, and spatial orientation, form the basis for metaphorical mappings. For instance, metaphors like *prices are rising* or *spirits have lifted* are rooted in the bodily perception of upward movement as a symbol of control, positivity, or authority. This embodiment principle highlights the inextricable link between the physical and the cognitive, suggesting that abstract reasoning is always grounded in lived experience.

Equally significant is the recognition of **cultural variation** in metaphorical frameworks. While some metaphors, such as *life is a journey*, are prevalent in Western contexts, other cultures may employ alternative conceptualizations, shaped by their own historical, social, and ecological realities. This observation underscores the necessity of cross-cultural analysis in order to reveal both universal and culture-specific patterns in metaphorical thought.

Alongside conceptual metaphor theory, research in Russian and post-Soviet linguistics has provided a rich functional perspective on metaphor. Notably, Kharchenko (1991) identifies metaphors as multivalent semiotic tools capable of performing a wide array of linguistic and communicative functions. She enumerates fifteen distinct metaphorical functions, ranging from the nominative and informative to the emotional-appraisal, ethical, heuristic, and traditional. This classification shifts attention from metaphor as a purely cognitive phenomenon to its diverse pragmatic roles in discourse, thereby complementing Lakoff and Johnson's cognitive model.

For example, the **nominative function** illustrates how metaphors facilitate lexical innovation, especially in the language of children or in terminology related to plants and animals. The **informative** and **mnemonic** functions demonstrate the pedagogical and memory-enhancing roles of metaphor, often evident in scientific literature and proverbial wisdom. Equally important are the **style-making** and **genre-making** functions, which highlight the contribution of metaphor to literary expression, from fiction to lyrical poetry. Other functions, such as the **heuristic** and **interpretative**, underscore the epistemological significance of metaphor in shaping new scientific concepts and discoveries.

Furthermore, Kharchenko's identification of the **emotional-appraisal** and **ethical** functions foregrounds the evaluative potential of metaphor in transmitting values and emotional states. Meanwhile, the **coding** and **secretive** functions show how metaphor condenses complex ideas or deliberately obscures meaning, as in riddles and esoteric discourse. Finally, the **traditional** function reveals the conventionalization of metaphor in stable communicative genres such as greetings and condolences. Importantly, Kharchenko stresses that metaphors in proverbs rarely operate in isolation; instead, they often combine multiple functions simultaneously, thereby enriching the interpretative depth of proverbial language.

These insights resonate with the position advanced by Telia (1996), who conceptualizes metaphor as a dynamic word-formation model. For Telia, metaphors act both "privately" and "non-standardly" in the language, serving as a

creative mechanism for generating new meanings. Her view reinforces the notion that metaphor is not a static figure but a productive linguistic process, bridging cognitive, cultural, and pragmatic dimensions of communication. Taken together, these approaches establish a robust theoretical foundation for the present study. The cognitive orientation of Lakoff and Johnson provides the necessary tools for understanding how proverbs reflect universal patterns of conceptualization through embodied metaphors. Simultaneously, the functional classifications of Kharchenko and the creative perspective of Telia offer valuable insights into the pragmatic and stylistic roles of metaphors within specific cultural traditions.

In this research, the integration of cognitive and functional frameworks enables a comparative analysis of proverbs in English, Russian, and Kazakh. These three languages, belonging to distinct cultural and linguistic traditions, provide fertile ground for examining both universal metaphorical mappings and culturally specific expressions. English proverbs, rooted in Western individualism and rationalist traditions, often emphasize linearity and progress through metaphors such as *life is a journey*. Russian proverbs, shaped by Orthodox Christian and communal values, reveal metaphors of endurance, fate, and morality. Kazakh proverbs, grounded in nomadic culture and oral tradition, display metaphors linked to nature, livestock, and collective wisdom.

By situating the study at the intersection of cognitive and functional theories of metaphor, this framework not only highlights the multifaceted role of metaphor in language and thought but also demonstrates the importance of cultural context in shaping metaphorical expression. The synthesis of these perspectives ensures a comprehensive understanding of the metaphorical imagery and functions of proverbs across English, Russian, and Kazakh languages, thereby advancing both theoretical and applied dimensions of metaphor research.

### III. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative comparative approach to analyze metaphorical functions in proverbs related to labor and idleness. The research was conducted in several stages:

#### 1. Data Selection

A corpus of 17 semantically equivalent proverbs was compiled from English, Russian, and Kazakh. The choice of these three languages was motivated by Kazakhstan's unique trilingual context, where Kazakh serves as the state language, Russian as the language of interethnic communication, and English as a global lingua franca. This sociolinguistic situation provides a valuable framework for cross-cultural analysis. Proverbs were selected on the basis of their semantic equivalence, i.e., they expressed comparable ideas about diligence, work, laziness, or idleness. Kazakh proverbs were taken from *Proverbs in the archive* by outstanding Kazakh academician Sarybayev (2023), Russian proverbs from *Dictionary of Russian proverbs and sayings* by Seryakov (2005), and English proverbs from *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* edited by Simpson and Speake (2008).

#### 2. Analytical Framework

The analysis was guided by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and Kharchenko's (2017) classification of metaphorical functions in proverbs. This framework made it possible to identify both the cognitive and cultural dimensions of metaphor.

#### 3. Procedure

Each set of proverbs was examined according to:

- their metaphorical imagery and conceptual mappings;
- the functions assigned to metaphor (didactic, evaluative, ethical, pragmatic);
- cultural and worldview-specific features encoded in the language.

#### 4. Comparative Analysis

The results were compared across the three languages to reveal universal conceptual tendencies as well as culture-specific differences in framing labor and idleness.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before analysis we perform seventeen proverbs and sayings with similar meanings but different form of metaphorical representation:

TABLE 1  
ENGLISH, RUSSIAN AND KAZAKH PROVERBS ON THE TOPIC 'LABOR-IDLENESS' AND METAPHOR FUNCTIONS

English proverbs	Metaphor function	Russian proverbs	Metaphor function	Kazakh proverbs	Metaphor function
1. Four eyes are better than two.	informative	Две головы лучше, чем одна. Latin transliteration: Dve golovy luchshe, chem odna English translation: Two heads are better than one	informative	Келісіп пішкен тон келте болмас. Latin transliteration: Kelsıp pışken ton kelte bolmas. English translation: The sheepskin coat that was sewn together will not be short	ethical
2. A good deed never	informative	Добрые дела живут вечно. Latin transliteration: Dobrye dela	informative	Ігіліктің ерте кеші жоқ. Latin transliteration: İgılıktıñ erte	informative

goes unpunished.		zhivut vechno. English translation: Good deeds live forever		keşi joq. English translation: There is no early or late for goodness.	
3. All things are difficult before they are easy.	mnemonic	Всякое начало трудно. Latin transliteration: Vsyakoe nachalo trudno English translation: Every beginning is difficult	mnemonic	Басы қатты болса, аяғы тәтті болады Latin transliteration: Basy qatty bolsa, aiaǵy tätti bolady English translation: If the beginning is severe, the end will be sweet.	mnemonic
4. A bad shearer never had a good sickle.	ethical	Мастер глуп - нож туп. Latin transliteration: Master glup - nozh tup English translation: The master is stupid - the knife is dull	game	Орақшының жаманы орақ таңдайды. Latin transliteration: Oraqsynyñ jamany oraq tañdaidy English translation: A bad reaper takes a long time to choose his sickle	informative
5. He that would eat the fruit must climb the tree.	ethical	Любишь кататься, люби и саночки возить Latin transliteration: Lyubish' katar'sya, lyubi i sanochki vozit' English translation: If you love to ride, you must love to carry the sled.	ethical	Еңбегіне қарай өңбегі. Latin transliteration: Eñbegine qarai õñbegi. English translation: You reap what you sow	mnemonic
6. Diligence is the mother of success.	mnemonic	Терпение и труд все перетрут. Latin transliteration: Terpenie i trud vse peretrut. English translation: Patience and hard work will grind everything down.	mnemonic	Еңбек етсең – емерсің, ерінбесең – жеңерсің. Latin transliteration: Eñbek etseñ – emersıñ, erınbeseñ – jeñersıñ. English translation: If you work, you will eat, if you're not lazy, you will win.	mnemonic
7. The burden of one's own choice is not felt.	self-sustaining	Своя ноша не тянет. Latin transliteration: Svoya nosha ne tyanet. English translation: Your own burden is not heavy.	self-sustaining	Өзіңнің ісің мақтадай жеңіл, кісінің ісі тастай ауыр. Latin transliteration: Öziñniñ isıñ maqtadai jeñil, kısıniñ isı tastai auyr. English translation: Your work is as light as cotton, but the work of others is as heavy as a stone.	self-sustaining
8. A lazy sheep thinks its wool heavy.	game	Ленивой лошади и хвост в тягость Latin transliteration: Lenivoj loshadi i hvost v tyagost' English translation: A lazy horse's tail is a burden	game	Жалқаудың жанына барсаң, Сылтаудың астында қаласың. Latin transliteration: Jalqaudyñ janyuna barsañ, Syltaudyñ astynda qalasyñ. English translation: If you approach a lazy person, you will remain under excuses.	game
9. He that fears every bush must never go birdwatching.	game	Не ходи в лес, коли зайца боишься. Latin transliteration: Ne hodi v les, koli zajca boish'sya. English translation: Don't go into the forest if you're afraid of the hare.	game	Шымшықтан қорыққан тары екпес. Latin transliteration: Şymşyqtan qoryqqan tary ekpes. English translation: Those who are afraid of birds will not plant millet.	game
10. Better to do well than to say well.	ethical	Визга много, а шерсти нет. Latin transliteration: Vizga mnogo, a shersti net. English translation: There's a lot of squealing, but no fur.	game	Ерді сөзіне қарап емес, ісіне қарап бағала. Latin transliteration: Erdı sözine qarap emes, isine qarap baǵala. English translation: Judge a man by his actions, not by his words.	ethical
11. Easy come, easy go.	informative	Пришло махом - ушло прахом. Latin transliteration: Prishlo mahom - ushlo prahom. English translation: It came in one fell swoop - it went to waste.	game	Еңбексіз тапқан мал есепсіз кетеді. Latin transliteration: Eñbeksız tapqan mal esepsız ketedi. English translation: Livestock earned without labor will be lost without accounting.	informative
12. Every tub must stand on its own bottom.	game	Живи всяк своим умом да своим горбом. Latin transliteration: Zhivi vsyak svoim umom da svoim gorbom. English translation: Let everyone live by their own wits and their own hump.	game	Дирменді өзің тарт, базарыңды өзің қыл. Latin transliteration: Dirmendı öziñ tart, bazaryñdy öziñ qyl. English translation: Pull your own millstone, make your own market.	game
13. He that will thrive,	ethical	Рано вставши, больше работает.	ethical	Ерте тұрған жігіттің, Ырысы артық; Ерте тұрған қатынның,	ethical

must rise at five.		Latin transliteration: Rano vstavshi, bol'she narabotaet. English translation: The early riser gets more work done.		Бір ісі артық. Latin transliteration: Erte tūrğan jıgıtıñ, Yrysy artyq; Erte tūrğan qatynnyñ, Бір ісі артық. English translation: A man who gets up early, has more wealth; A woman who gets up early, has one more thing to do.	
14. Honour and profit lie not in one sack.	informative	Честным трудом богат не будешь. Latin transliteration: Chestnym trudom bogat ne budesh'. English translation: You can't get rich by honest work.	self-sustaining	Адал еңбекпен мал таппас. Latin transliteration: Adal eñbekpen mal tappas. English translation: One cannot acquire cattle (wealth) through honest labor.	ethical
15. Idleness is the mother of all evil.	informative	У лентяя Федорки всегда отговорки. Latin transliteration: U lentyaya Fedorki vseгда otgovorki. English translation: Lazy Fedorka always has excuses.	game	Жалқаудың ертеңі бітпес Latin transliteration: Jalquadyñ erteñi bitpes English translation: A lazy person's "tomorrow" never ends.	game
16. Everything comes to him who waits.	self-sustaining	Терпение и труд все перетрут. Latin transliteration: Terpenie i trud vse peretrut. English translation: Patience and hard work will grind everything down.	self-sustaining	Сабыр түбі-сары алтын. Latin transliteration: Sabyr tübi-sary altyn. English translation: The result of patience is pure gold.	self-sustaining
17. Never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.	ethical	Никогда не откладывай на завтра то, что можно сделать сегодня. Latin transliteration: Nikogda ne otkladyvaj na zavtra to, chto mozhno sdelat' segodnya. English translation: Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today.	ethical	Бүгінгі істі ертеңге қалдырма. Latin transliteration: Bügingi isti erteñge qaldyrma. English translation: Don't put off today's work until tomorrow.	ethical

*Proverbs 1:* The first three proverbs emphasize the value of collective intelligence, cooperation, and advice. They suggest that joint efforts and the exchange of opinions lead to better decision-making. The English proverb *"Four eyes are better than two"* highlights the importance of an additional perspective, metaphorically referring to assistance and support. The Russian proverb *"Two heads are better than one"* underscores the significance of multiple minds, as two people can generate more solutions than one. The Kazakh proverb *"Kelisip pishken ton kelte bolmas"* (A coat tailored by agreement will not be too short) serves as a metaphor for discussion and collective decision-making, which results in an optimal outcome. The English proverb emphasizes "eyes," symbolizing observation and additional insight. The Russian proverb refers to "heads," alluding to intellect, reasoning, and analysis. The Kazakh proverb employs the imagery of tailoring, representing collaborative work and consensus. This aligns with the traditional Kazakh culture, where mutual agreement within the community is a fundamental principle.

Thus, while all three proverbs foreground collaboration, they draw upon different conceptual metaphors: *vision* (English), *intellect* (Russian), and *crafting* (Kazakh). In terms of Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory, these represent culturally specific mappings that structure how collective action is perceived.

*Proverbs 2:* At first glance, these proverbs convey a similar message; they emphasize the significance of good deeds. However, the English proverb carries an ironic undertone, while the Russian and Kazakh proverbs have a more positive connotation.

*"A good deed never goes unpunished"* (English proverb): Ironic meaning – good actions may lead to unforeseen negative consequences; this proverb is used in situations where a person performs a good deed but unexpectedly faces unfavorable outcomes.

*"Добрые дела живут вечно"* (Good deeds live forever) (Russian proverb): Straightforward and positive meaning: good actions leave a lasting impact on the world and people; it highlights the value and enduring nature of kindness.

*"İgılıktıñ erte keşi joq"* (There is no early or late time for a good deed) (Kazakh proverb): Good deeds are always appropriate and significant, regardless of timing and it emphasizes the process of doing good rather than the moment it occurs.

The English culture exhibits an element of realism and irony, possibly reflecting a pragmatic outlook on life. In Russian culture, there is an emphasis on eternal values, altruism, and moral legacy. The Kazakh culture, on the other hand, underscores the timeliness and naturalness of good deeds, aligning with traditional values of hospitality and mutual assistance. Although all three proverbs address the theme of good deeds, their metaphorical meanings differ:

The English proverb serves as a warning about unexpected consequences. The Russian proverb asserts the immortality of good actions. The Kazakh proverb highlights that goodness is always appropriate. This analysis illustrates how proverbs reflect cultural characteristics and moral perspectives in different societies. From the

perspective of conceptual metaphor theory, these represent divergent mappings of the abstract domain of *morality*: as *risk* (English), as *eternity* (Russian), and as *timeliness* (Kazakh).

*Proverbs 3*: All three proverbs convey the idea that any undertaking is initially difficult but, with time, effort, and practice, it becomes easier and yields results. The English proverb "*All things are difficult before they are easy*" employs a contrast between difficulty and ease, emphasizing the natural process of learning and adaptation. The Russian proverb "*Всякое начало трудно*" ("Every beginning is difficult") similarly highlights the initial stage as the most challenging but does not explicitly suggest subsequent ease. The Kazakh proverb "*Басы қатты болса, аяғы тәтті болады*" ("If the beginning is hard, the end will be sweet") employs a richer metaphorical image: the beginning is difficult, whereas the end is sweet, symbolizing the path to success through overcoming obstacles.

The English proverb reflects a pragmatic and universal approach, portraying difficulties as a natural stage preceding ease. The Russian proverb serves as a statement of fact, underscoring the inherent challenges of any beginning without necessarily promising future relief. The Kazakh proverb is rooted in the traditional nomadic way of life, where the initial stages of a journey or endeavor may be arduous, but the outcome brings joy and satisfaction. Despite differences in wording and cultural nuances, all three proverbs emphasize patience and the necessity of overcoming challenges to achieve success.

*Proverbs 4*: A metaphorical analysis of proverbs in English, Russian, and Kazakh reveals a common underlying meaning: an unskilled worker tends to blame their tools rather than acknowledge their own shortcomings. Let us examine the metaphors employed in each proverb.

"*A bad shearer never had a good sickle*" (English proverb): "Bad shearer" symbolizes an unskilled worker, while "good sickle" represents a high-quality tool, which form general meaning that an inexperienced or lazy worker will always find excuses for their failures, attributing them to external circumstances rather than their own incompetence.

"*Мастер глуп – нож туп*" (A foolish craftsman has a blunt knife) (Russian proverb): "Foolish craftsman" represents a person lacking skill, while "blunt knife" symbolizes poor work results or an excuse for incompetence. If a person lacks the necessary skills, they will blame their tools instead of recognizing their own inadequacy.

"*Орақшының жаманы орақ таңдайды*" (A bad harvester chooses the sickle) (Kazakh proverb): "Bad harvester" represents an unskilled person, while "choosing the tool" suggests searching for excuses instead of working. Those who lack skills tend to complain about their tools and seek ideal conditions rather than improving themselves.

All three proverbs employ the metaphor of a tool (sickle, knife, or scythe), representing an individual's skills and capabilities. The central idea is to avoid shifting responsibility to external factors and instead acknowledge one's own mistakes while striving for improvement. The English and Kazakh proverbs specifically mention a harvester's tool (sickle/scythe), whereas the Russian proverb is more universal, referring to a knife, making it applicable to various professions. Thus, despite differing cultural contexts, the meaning of all three proverbs remains the same: an inexperienced individual blames external circumstances rather than themselves. From the standpoint of conceptual metaphor theory, these proverbs embody the metaphor *failure is an external obstacle*, contrasted with the implicit moral that true mastery comes from internal skill, not external conditions.

*Proverbs 5*: All three proverbs convey the idea that effort is required to achieve a result (fruit, fish, harvest). They emphasize the connection between labor and reward. The English proverb ("He that would eat the fruit must climb the tree"): metaphor – the tree represents the path to success, while the fruit symbolizes the reward. Climbing signifies effort. The proverb presents a vivid and physical process – one must overcome an obstacle (climb) to reach the goal (fruit); the reward already exists (the fruit is hanging), but it must be attained through effort.

The Russian proverb ("*Без труда не вытащишь и рыбку из пруда.*" / "Without effort, you won't even pull a small fish out of a pond."): metaphor – the pond represents the sphere of labor, while the fish signifies the result. Pulling the fish out symbolizes the effort required. The result is hidden (the fish is underwater) and must be "retrieved," which necessitates work. Unlike the English version, this proverb emphasizes the process of labor itself rather than overcoming an obstacle.

The Kazakh proverb ("*Еңбегіне қарай өнбегі.*" / "The yield depends on the labor."): metaphor – the harvest (*өнбегі*) symbolizes the result, while labor (*еңбек*) represents effort. A farming metaphor highlights a cause-and-effect relationship: the more one sows, the more one reaps. The idea of direct dependence between effort and outcome is central to this saying.

So, the English proverb focuses on overcoming obstacles, the Russian proverb highlights the necessity of effort in the process of work, and the Kazakh proverb expresses the idea of natural retribution, one's results are directly proportional to one's labor. Despite cultural differences, these proverbs illustrate the universal value of hard work. However, the ways in which this idea is expressed depend on imagery familiar to each culture: trees (the West), fishing (Russia), and agriculture (Kazakhstan).

The English proverb illustrates Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) concept of metaphor as an obstacle-to-goal mapping, where effort is framed as overcoming barriers. The Russian proverb reflects Kharchenko's (2017) view of metaphor as emphasizing the processual function of labor rather than the outcome. The Kazakh proverb exemplifies the cultural-linguistic principle of cause-and-effect framing, where work and reward are directly proportional (Pishghadam, 2013).

*Proverbs 6*: All three proverbs emphasize the importance of hard work and perseverance. Success is regarded as a reward for persistence.

The English proverb, *"Diligence is the mother of success,"* employs a metaphor in which diligence is depicted as the "mother" of success, implying that success is born from persistent effort. In other words, hard work serves as the source that gives life to success, just as a mother gives life to a child.

The Kazakh proverb, *"Еңбек етсең – емерсің, ерінбесең – жеңерсің,"* conveys a similar idea through two distinct metaphors. The first part, *"Еңбек етсең – емерсің"* (*If you work hard, you will reap the results*), associates labor with harvest, symbolizing the fruits of one's efforts. The second part, *"ерінбесең – жеңерсің"* (*If you are not lazy, you will win*), links perseverance to victory, suggesting that psychological resilience leads to triumph. Thus, physical labor is metaphorically connected to reaping a harvest, while mental endurance is associated with overcoming challenges.

The Russian proverb, *"Терпение и труд всё перетрут"* (*Patience and hard work grind down all obstacles*), presents a metaphor where patience and labor are likened to a force capable of "grinding down" any barriers. This imagery highlights the gradual yet inevitable overcoming of difficulties through persistence.

Each proverb conveys a similar underlying message but utilizes distinct metaphors. The English proverb focuses on the origin of success, portraying it as the "offspring" of diligence. The Kazakh proverb introduces two separate metaphors – harvest (the outcome of labor) and victory (overcoming laziness). The Russian proverb emphasizes the process of overcoming obstacles through perseverance, depicting hard work as an unstoppable force that erodes difficulties over time. These variations reflect cultural perspectives: the English proverb highlights creation (success as a product of diligence), the Kazakh proverb underscores reward and triumph, while the Russian proverb emphasizes endurance and the power of persistence in overcoming hardships.

*Proverbs 7:* All three proverbs (See Table 1) convey the idea that people find difficulties easier to endure when they have chosen them themselves or when they are accustomed to a particular type of work. In contrast, unfamiliar tasks or responsibilities tend to seem more burdensome. The English proverb employs the metaphor of a "burden," which is associated with physical weight. However, the underlying meaning suggests that personal choices and responsibilities are perceived as less burdensome. The Russian proverb uses the term "ноша" (burden), similarly evoking the notion of physical weight, emphasizing that one's own duties feel lighter than those of others. The Kazakh proverb contrasts "мақтадай жеңіл" (light as cotton) with "тастай ауыр" (heavy as stone), which intensifies the contrast between personal and external responsibilities. The English version highlights the aspect of choice, aligning with an individualistic culture that places significant emphasis on personal responsibility. The Russian proverb reflects collectivist values, suggesting that one's own burdens feel lighter due to familiarity. The Kazakh proverb underscores comparison, which is characteristic of Eastern wisdom and the oral traditions of the steppe culture.

Despite linguistic and cultural differences, all three proverbs express a universal idea: people perceive the burdens they choose or are accustomed to as lighter than those imposed by others. The distinction lies in emphasis, while the English version focuses on choice, the Russian version highlights subjective perception, and the Kazakh version stresses the contrast in perceived weight.

*Proverbs 8:* All three proverbs reflect the idea that a lazy person tends to exaggerate difficulties and find excuses instead of taking action. The English proverb *"A lazy sheep thinks its wool heavy"* employs the image of a sheep complaining about its own wool. This serves as a metaphor for individuals who perceive even light tasks as burdensome. The Russian proverb *"A lazy horse finds its own tail a burden"* presents a horse that struggles even with carrying its own tail, emphasizing the extreme nature of laziness. The Kazakh proverb *"If you visit a lazy person, you will be buried under a pile of excuses"* uses the metaphor of excuses accumulating like a physical mass, overwhelming the listener. In the English proverb, the sheep is a symbol of meekness and passivity; highlights the inability of a lazy person to cope with even natural responsibilities. The Russian proverb features a horse, an animal traditionally associated with hard work, but here depicted as lazy, making the metaphor particularly striking. In the Kazakh proverb, the focus is on the verbal aspect of laziness – excuses, which is especially significant given the importance of oral tradition in Kazakh culture.

*Proverbs 9:* All three proverbs mean that excessive fear hinders action and prevents one from achieving goals. They emphasize that risk is an inherent part of any endeavor, and if one fears every obstacle, success may remain unattainable. *"He that fears every bush must never go birdwatching."* (English proverb) with literal meaning: if one fears every bush, it is better not to go birdwatching. The "bush" symbolizes potential danger and fear of the unknown. "Birdwatching" represents determination, curiosity, and a willingness to take risks. Excessive caution prevents one from experiencing life and embracing new opportunities.

*"Не ходи в лес, коли зайца боишься."* (Russian proverb) with literal meaning: if you are afraid of a hare, do not go into the forest, where the "forest" symbolizes new opportunities, adventures, or life challenges. The "hare" represents minor fears or insignificant difficulties that should not deter one from pursuing a goal. Being overly fearful of small challenges means missing out on greater opportunities.

*"Шымшықтан қорыққан тары екпес."* (Kazakh proverb) with literal meaning: one who fears the sparrow will not sow millet. In this metaphorical structure, the "sparrow" represents minor problems or risks, while "millet" symbolizes work or effort that yields rewards. Fear of small troubles can lead to missed opportunities for greater achievements.

The English proverb employs the image of a bush, which may conceal potential danger, evoking a sense of anxious anticipation. The Russian proverb exaggerates the fear of a harmless hare to highlight the absurdity of excessive cowardice. The Kazakh proverb emphasizes practical labor and illustrates how fear of minor obstacles can prevent one

from achieving results. Despite their differences in imagery, all three proverbs underscore the importance of overcoming fear of small difficulties, as success is impossible without taking risks.

*Proverbs 10: "Better to do well than to say well"* (English Proverb): metaphor – a contrast between words and actions. Actions are more important than mere words.

*"Визга много, а шерсти нет!"* "A lot of yelping, but no wool" (Russian Proverb): metaphor – comparing empty talk to a barking dog that brings no benefit. Much noise, but no tangible results.

*"Ерді сөзіне қарап емес, ісіне қарап бағала!"* "Judge a man not by his words, but by his actions" (Kazakh Proverb): metaphor – evaluating a person based on their deeds rather than their speech. Actions matter more than words, as they reveal a person's true nature.

All three proverbs convey the same fundamental principle: words are meaningless unless supported by real actions. The English proverb expresses this idea directly: "It is better to do well than to say well." The Russian proverb uses imagery – noise (yelping) without result (wool) – to emphasize the futility of empty words. The Kazakh proverb introduces a moral dimension: a person's worth is determined by their actions rather than their speech.

These proverbs reflect the cultural values of their respective societies: English culture – pragmatism, protestant ethics, and a focus on tangible results. The English proverb embodies a rational approach, highlighting that success is defined by actions. Russian culture – a tendency toward irony and criticism of empty rhetoric. The Russian proverb mocks those who speak much but achieve little. Kazakh culture – emphasis on honor, deeds, and male dignity. The proverb aligns with traditional nomadic values, where actions, not words, determine a person's reputation.

Although these proverbs originate from different cultures, they express a universal truth: words lose their significance without real actions. The only difference lies in the metaphors each culture chooses to illustrate this idea.

*Proverbs 11: All three proverbs reflect the idea that anything acquired quickly and effortlessly tends to disappear just as swiftly and without a trace. They serve as a warning against a careless attitude toward resources, wealth, or achievements obtained without effort.*

English proverb: *"Easy come, easy go"* is based on the contrast between acquisition and loss. The simplicity and ease of both actions convey the idea of instability and the fleeting nature of possessions.

Russian proverb: *"Пришло махом – ушло прахом"* (literally, "Came in a flash – turned to dust") employs a rhythmic structure and a vivid antithesis. The word *"махом"* (rapidly, suddenly) and *"прахом"* (dust, ruin) reinforce the notion of impermanence and the destructive nature of easily acquired wealth.

Kazakh proverb: *"Еңбексіз тапқан мал есепсіз кетеді"* translates literally as "Wealth gained without labor disappears without a trace." The key terms *"еңбексіз"* (without labor) and *"есепсіз кетеді"* (vanishes without being accounted for) emphasize the importance of honest work in preserving wealth.

In Anglophone culture, the proverb reflects a *laissez-faire* attitude toward life and finances, characteristic of the entrepreneurial spirit of the West. In Russian tradition, it carries an element of fatalism – the belief that wealth acquired too easily is inevitably lost. In Kazakh culture, the idea is rooted in the traditions of nomadic pastoralism, where labor and resource management play a crucial role in survival.

*Proverbs 12: These proverbs reflect the idea of self-reliance and personal responsibility for one's own life. They emphasize that individuals must rely on their own strengths rather than expecting help from others.*

The English proverb *"Every tub must stand on its own bottom"* employs the image of a tub (or barrel) that must be stable on its own. This serves as a metaphor for independence and self-sufficiency.

The Russian proverb *"Живи всяк своим умом да своим горбом"* ("Live by your own mind and your own hump") utilizes two metaphors: mind as a symbol of intellect and hump as a representation of physical labor. This suggests that success depends on both mental and physical effort.

The Kazakh proverb *"Діірменді өзің тарт, базарыңды өзің қыл"* ("Turn the mill yourself, set up your own market") features the mill as a symbol of the production process, emphasizing the necessity of labor to achieve results, while the *market* symbolizes organizing one's life and financial well-being.

Despite cultural differences, all three proverbs convey the same core idea that individuals should rely solely on themselves. However, the metaphors vary depending on the cultural context: the English proverb emphasizes stability (*a tub*), the Russian proverb highlights a combination of intellect and physical labor, and the Kazakh proverb focuses on both work processes (*the mill*) and resource management (*the market*). Thus, while the underlying message remains consistent, each culture shapes its metaphors according to its unique worldview.

*Proverbs 13: All three proverbs convey the idea that waking up early contributes to success, prosperity, and productivity. They emphasize the importance of discipline, diligence, and efficient time management.*

The metaphor of time – in these proverbs, early rising is associated with greater opportunities. Time is portrayed as a resource that must be used wisely.

The metaphor of labor – waking up early provides an advantage in work, symbolizing progress, prosperity, and well-being.

The metaphor of luck and fate – in the Kazakh proverb, the word *"ырғушы"* (*ырысы артық*) signifies well-being, luck, and prosperity. This highlights the connection between hard work and success in life.

The English proverb emphasizes a specific time ("rise at five"), which may reflect a more structured approach to scheduling and productivity. The Russian proverb underscores the causal relationship between waking up early and the

amount of work completed, emphasizing the quantity of labor. The Kazakh proverb differentiates advice for men and women: a man gains more luck (*yrysy*), while a woman manages to complete more tasks (*bir isi artyk*). This distinction reflects traditional gender roles in Kazakh culture.

Despite linguistic and cultural differences, all three proverbs express a universal idea: those who wake up early gain more opportunities for success. This confirms that the values of diligence and self-discipline are recognized across different cultures.

*Proverbs 14:* A metaphorical analysis of these proverbs – exploring their hidden meanings, imagery, and cultural features. The image of a sack in the English proverb "*Honour and profit lie not in one sack.*": it employs the metaphor of a sack to illustrate the incompatibility of honor and wealth, suggesting that they cannot coexist in the same place. This phrase highlights a contrast between moral values (honor) and material gain (profit).

Labor and wealth in the Russian proverb "*Честным трудом богат не будешь.*" (One cannot become rich through honest labor.). Unlike the English version, the Russian proverb does not explicitly feature the image of a sack, yet it conveys the same idea: honesty and wealth rarely go hand in hand. The metaphor of "honest labor" is used, contrasting with wealth and implying that significant financial success is often achieved through dishonest means.

The Kazakh proverb and the moral aspect "*Адал еңбекпен мал таппас.*" (One cannot acquire wealth through honest labor.) It includes the word "адал" (adal), meaning "honest" or "conscientious," which aligns with the Russian version. The metaphor of "мал" (mal), meaning "livestock" or "property," reflects the traditional nomadic way of life, in which wealth was measured by the number of animals owned.

All three proverbs express the idea that wealth and honesty are incompatible. The English proverb uses the metaphor of a "sack" to symbolize limitation, suggesting that opposing elements cannot be contained within the same space. The Russian and Kazakh versions employ the metaphor of honest labor, which is portrayed as an insufficient means of acquiring wealth. The Kazakh proverb is closely tied to a traditional lifestyle in which livestock represented economic prosperity.

Thus, despite cultural differences, these proverbs reflect a shared worldview regarding the relationship between moral values and material prosperity.

*Proverbs 15:* All three proverbs condemn laziness and inaction, emphasizing their negative consequences. They employ metaphorical constructions to convey the idea that idleness leads to undesirable outcomes.

English proverb "*Idleness is the mother of all evil.*": metaphor – idleness is portrayed as the "mother" of all evil. Laziness gives rise to other vices, such as poverty, crime, and misfortune. The use of a familial metaphor makes the message vivid and easily comprehensible.

Russian proverb "*U len'tyaya Fedorki vseгда otgovorki*" (A lazy Fedorka always has excuses): metaphor – the collective image of "Fedorka" represents a stereotypical lazy person. A lazy person will always find excuses to avoid work. The folk character's name adds a cultural nuance, making the proverb emotionally expressive.

Kazakh proverb "*Zhalqaudyn erteñi bitpes*" ("A lazy person's 'tomorrow' never ends"): metaphor – "tomorrow" is depicted as endless, implying perpetual procrastination. Lazy people continuously postpone tasks but never complete them. The notion of temporal infinity reinforces the idea of idleness being futile.

The English proverb highlights the consequences of laziness (leading to evil), the Russian proverb focuses on its psychological aspect (excuses), while the Kazakh proverb illustrates a behavioral pattern (procrastination). While the core idea remains the same in all three, each reflects a distinct cultural perspective.

*Proverbs 16:* These proverbs in English, Russian, and Kazakh convey a similar idea about patience, diligence, and the inevitable reward for perseverance. Let us examine them more deeply from a metaphorical perspective. The English proverb "*Everything comes to him who waits.*": metaphor – waiting is depicted as a tool that leads to the desired outcome. This expression conveys the idea that time plays a crucial role in achieving one's goals. The Russian proverb "*Терпение и труд все перетрут.*" (Patience and labor will grind everything down.): metaphor – the concepts of "patience" and "labor" are portrayed as forces capable of eroding any obstacles, akin to sandpaper or millstones that gradually wear down a stone. The Kazakh proverb "*Сабыр түбі – сары алтын.*" (The essence of patience is pure gold.): metaphor – patience (sabyr) is compared to "sary altyn" (pure gold), emphasizing its value. In Kazakh culture, gold symbolizes wisdom, wealth, and success. Patience is ultimately rewarded, much like one who mines for gold.

In the English proverb, the key element is "waiting," highlighting the passive aspect of patience. The Russian proverb combines patience with labor, emphasizing active effort. Meanwhile, the Kazakh proverb associates patience with gold, underscoring its intrinsic value. These proverbs reflect the cultural characteristics of their respective nations while conveying a universal truth: diligence and patience lead to success.

Proverbs number 17 are nearly equivalent in three languages, and equally urge not to leave today's affairs for tomorrow.

## V. CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of proverbs related to labor and idleness in English, Russian, and Kazakh confirms earlier findings in cognitive linguistics that metaphors function as universal conceptual tools while simultaneously reflecting culture-specific worldviews (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2010). In line with Gibbs (1994), our results show that metaphors in proverbs are not merely stylistic devices but cognitive models that shape social values.

English proverbs in the corpus demonstrate a strong orientation toward pragmatism, efficiency, and individual responsibility. This finding resonates with previous studies on Anglo-Saxon cultural models, where metaphors often highlight productivity and rational action. Russian proverbs, in contrast, foreground collective morality and social evaluation, which supports Kharchenko's (2017) claim that Russian paremiology reflects communal and ethical dimensions of work. Kazakh proverbs stand out for their nomadic imagery and religious-ethical undertones, confirming earlier ethnolinguistic research that Kazakh proverbial metaphors encode the pastoral worldview and emphasize harmony with nature and divine order.

The differences identified suggest that metaphor in proverbs operates as a double-layered mechanism: universal in its cognitive function yet deeply shaped by cultural and historical experience. This duality explains why semantically equivalent proverbs across languages still convey different nuances in evaluating labor and idleness. For instance, while diligence is praised in all three traditions, English proverbs frame it as a path to success, Russian proverbs as a moral duty, and Kazakh proverbs as both ethical obligation and survival strategy in nomadic life.

This study is not without limitations. The analysis was restricted to 17 proverb pairs, which provides only a partial picture of the broader paremiological systems. Moreover, the qualitative nature of the study, while suitable for cultural interpretation, could be complemented in future research by corpus-based quantitative methods to verify frequency and contextual variation.

Despite these limitations, the study contributes to cross-cultural paremiology by integrating conceptual metaphor theory with cultural-linguistic analysis. The findings may have practical implications for translation studies, language pedagogy, and intercultural communication, where understanding metaphorical differences is crucial for fostering mutual comprehension across cultures.

The comparative analysis of English, Russian, and Kazakh proverbs has shown that metaphor serves as a universal but culturally adapted mechanism for conceptualizing labor and idleness. Despite shared human experiences reflected in similar proverbial meanings, each language encodes distinct cultural priorities: pragmatic efficiency in English, moral didacticism in Russian, and ethical-nomadic worldview in Kazakh. These differences highlight the role of metaphor as both a cognitive and cultural tool, shaping attitudes toward work across societies. The study expands the field of cross-linguistic paremiology by integrating conceptual metaphor theory with cultural-linguistic perspectives. Future research may extend this approach to other semantic domains, such as family, nature, or emotions, thereby deepening our understanding of how metaphors encode collective values in diverse linguistic traditions.

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