

ARTICLE

Linguistic Analysis of Proverbs Containing Phytonyms

Sadagat Hasanova 

Faculty of History and Philology, Nakhchivan State University, Nakhchivan AZ 7000, Azerbaijan

ABSTRACT

Proverbs represent a universal linguistic and cultural phenomenon through which societies encapsulate and transmit moral values, collective experiences, and philosophical reflections in a concise, memorable form. This study focuses on Azerbaijani proverbs that include phytonyms (names of plants) as essential symbolic and semantic components. These proverbs reflect the historical worldview, ecological awareness, and cultural imagination of the Azerbaijani people, illustrating how plant imagery is embedded in folk wisdom and traditional modes of expression. The primary aim of this research is to examine the linguistic structures, semantic functions, and cultural significance of Azerbaijani proverbs containing phytonyms. Special attention is given to the metaphorical depth of these expressions and their role in shaping human perceptions of the natural world. Phytonymic proverbs are shown to function not only as linguistic units but also as cognitive and didactic tools that encapsulate traditional ecological knowledge and ethical values passed down through generations. Firmly rooted in the oral traditions of Azerbaijani culture, these proverbs demonstrate a refined linguistic artistry and a high degree of national self-awareness. The use of plant symbolism serves to convey moral principles, social attitudes, and aesthetic sensibilities. Furthermore, many of these proverbs reflect agricultural practices and nature-based worldviews, offering insight into the ecological and economic conditions of traditional life. This article undertakes a structural, semantic,

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Sadagat Hasanova, Faculty of History and Philology, Nakhchivan State University, Nakhchivan AZ 7000, Azerbaijan;
Email: sedaqethesenova@ndu.edu.az

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and stylistic analysis of selected phytonymic proverbs, offering comparative perspectives and emphasizing their role in cultural continuity, identity preservation, and the intergenerational transmission of moral and ecological knowledge.

Keywords: Proverb; Phytonym; Plant Symbolism; Azerbaijani Language; Folk Wisdom; Metaphor; Ecological Knowledge; Cultural Identity

1. Introduction

Every nation possesses a lexicon that is unique to its language, which is shaped by historical experience, cultural development, and social interaction. Although the vocabulary of each language consists of a finite number of lexical units, these units are subject to both quantitative and qualitative changes over time. As researchers have noted, “The intensive development of technology, culture, art, agriculture, and other fields generates its own specialized vocabulary. This phenomenon occurs globally and manifests in the material form of various languages”^[1].

The Azerbaijani language, dynamic and historically rich Turkic language, is no exception to this universal linguistic phenomenon. Its lexical system comprises a wide range of words and expressions that differ in meaning, function, and stylistic usage. Among these, proverbs constitute a distinct and culturally significant layer of the vocabulary. Proverbs serve not only as linguistic artifacts but also as carriers of traditional wisdom, ethical norms, and social values.

The roots of Azerbaijani proverbial heritage can be traced back to early literary monuments, notably *The Book of Dede Qorqud*, a cornerstone of Azerbaijani Turkic literature. This epic text includes over seventy proverbs and proverbial expressions, marking one of the earliest recorded efforts to document such linguistic material. Subsequent discoveries, such as the *Oguzname*, which contains nearly two thousand proverbs and proverbial sayings, and the 18th-century compilation *Əmsali-türkanə*, comprising more than one thousand proverbs and folk aphorisms, provide further evidence of the longstanding tradition of paremiological collection and preservation dating back to the 15th–16th centuries^[2].

Throughout different historical periods, Azerbaijani scholars and intellectuals have demonstrated considerable interest in the collection, classification, and publication of proverbs. A prominent example is Mirza Mammadveli Gamarli, an active figure in the literary and cultural milieu of Iravan. In 1899, he published a work titled *Proverbs*

in Iravan, which includes 750 proverbial expressions. The book opens with a preface by the author and concludes with a didactic poem on the benefits of knowledge. Despite its valuable content, the compilation lacks crucial scholarly apparatus, such as identification of the sources of the proverbs (i.e., specific regions, communities, or informants) and the systematic classification or cataloging of the material^[3].

This historical overview highlights the importance of proverbs in the Azerbaijani linguistic and cultural tradition and underlines the need for continued scholarly engagement with this rich and underexplored domain of folk literature.

Among the proverbs included in the aforementioned collection are several that incorporate phytonyms (plant names), such as:

“The partridge’s reign lasts until the millet is threshed.”^[3]

“A tree is eaten from within by worms.”^[3]

Proverbs, as condensed expressions of the life experience, worldview, and spiritual values accumulated by a people over millennia, constitute one of the most significant linguistic and cultural resources. They contribute to the enrichment of the language, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the transmission of traditional knowledge and ethical norms across generations. As a form of oral literature characterized by brevity and didacticism, proverbs reflect a nation’s relationship with nature, society, labor, and moral values, employing lexemes from various lexical, grammatical, and semantic domains.

Within this framework, phytonyms hold a distinctive place. Plant names are notable for their ubiquity in both natural and social contexts, as well as for their functional versatility, originality, and semantic richness. Their frequent presence in proverbs is not accidental but rather stems from the symbolic and practical significance that plants have held throughout human history.

Phytonyms embedded in proverbs serve as repositories of traditional ecological knowledge, agricultural practices,

and perceptions of the natural environment. They embody collective experiences passed down from generation to generation and across languages and cultures. Regardless of thematic orientation, proverbs enhance the figurative and semantic depth of language, contributing to its stylistic expressiveness and communicative power. As scholars have noted, “The most essential feature of this genre lies in its ability to condense the wisdom of entire volumes into a single, impactful sentence.”^[2]

In Azerbaijani linguistics and folklore studies, the scholarly examination of proverbs has consistently held an important place. Researchers emphasize the layered meaning and cultural function of proverbs, stating: “Proverbs, in fact, transcend their seemingly modest scope to reveal profound layers of meaning; they constitute an ethical code and a normative system that guides and educates individuals continuously. To regard them as a moral regulator of human life would not be an exaggeration. Proverbs represent one of the folklore genres that reflect nearly every dimension of human experience.”^[4]

Consequently, proverbs are not only linguistic units but also cultural artifacts of high ethnolinguistic value, offering insights into the worldview, ethical priorities, and symbolic systems of the communities that produce and transmit them.

The study of proverbs containing phytonyms contributes significantly to the advancement of ecological thinking, the identification of these units within the lexical-grammatical structure of the language, and the exploration of their semantic depth. As noted by researchers, “Today, the field of plant name research has expanded considerably, reaching a stage where all categories and systems of phytonyms are being examined. A substantial body of scholarly literature has emerged within this branch of linguistics. However, some studies still fall short of current scientific standards, primarily due to the absence of a systematic collection of plant names. One of the key objectives of linguistics is to compile a comprehensive inventory of plant names and subject them to rigorous scientific analysis.”^[5]

Existing research indicates that proverbs containing phytonyms, despite their linguistic, structural, and semantic richness, have not yet been examined in a comprehensive and systematic manner. In this regard, it is emphasized that “investigating the etymological, structural, and lexical-semantic features of phraseological units containing phytonyms within the language system, identifying the nature of the linguistic

imagery they contain, and analyzing their functional usage in speech are of great linguistic importance.”^[6]

It is true that both in Azerbaijani and international linguistic scholarship, various theoretical studies have been conducted on plant names, offering noteworthy perspectives and hypotheses. Nevertheless, there remains a pressing need for an in-depth analysis of the use of phytonyms specifically within proverbs and for the creation of a specialized lexicon that systematically documents such units.

In this context, the study of proverbs containing phytonyms acquires particular academic relevance. It not only fills an existing research gap in the field of paremiology and ethnolinguistics but also contributes to the broader understanding of the symbolic and cultural functions of plant-related vocabulary in the Azerbaijani linguistic landscape.

2. Materials and Methods

This research employed a combination of qualitative, descriptive, and comparative methods grounded in the theoretical frameworks of ethnolinguistics, cognitive semantics, and folklore studies. Additionally, intercultural analysis was partially utilized to identify elements that reflect national-cultural specificity in the metaphorical use of plant names within Azerbaijani proverbs.

The implementation of these methods allowed for the systematic exploration of the following research questions:

1. What linguistic and semantic functions do phytonyms perform in proverbs?
2. How do phytonymic proverbs reflect traditional ecological and cultural knowledge?
3. Which figurative and symbolic associations are linked to various plant names?
4. How do Azerbaijani phytonymic proverbs compare with analogous proverbs from other languages and cultures?

The primary materials for this study consisted of published collections of Azerbaijani proverbs, phraseological dictionaries, and other folklore sources that document oral traditions.

3. Discussion

Phytonyms represent one of the most ancient lexical strata in the Azerbaijani language, reflecting layers of cul-

tural heritage, traditional worldview, and economic practices. Their presence in proverbs and phraseological expressions is indicative of their conceptual and symbolic relevance in folk discourse. Therefore, comprehensive research into the etymology, semantic classification, and structural features of phytonyms, particularly their roles in figurative language and proverbial expressions is essential.

Moreover, statistical analyses based on lexicographic and folklore sources are necessary to determine the frequency, productivity, and contextual variation of phytonyms in the Azerbaijani lexicon. Such data will help elucidate both the linguistic significance and cultural salience of plant-based vocabulary.

The study of phytonyms holds importance not only for descriptive linguistics but also for interdisciplinary fields such as ethnolinguistics, cultural anthropology, and lexicography. Given the central role of plants in daily life, agriculture, medicine, rituals, and traditional practices, plant names form a rich and diversified lexical-semantic field in most languages. In Azerbaijani, phytonyms are well-represented in dialectal speech, oral folklore, and classical literature.

Of particular importance is the analysis of the figurative, symbolic, and metaphorical meanings encoded in phytonyms used in proverbs. Additionally, identifying their distributional patterns and quantitative occurrence across various regional and stylistic layers of the Azerbaijani language remains a priority for future research.

In global linguistic scholarship, phytonyms have been examined in relation to ethnolinguistics, botany, mythology, and phraseology, with studies clarifying their symbolic, cultural, and mythopoetic dimensions. Within the context of Turkic linguistics, the semantic models and cognitive structures of plant names have been actively investigated. In Azerbaijani linguistics, research on phytonyms has primarily appeared in lexicographic studies, phraseological dictionaries, and folklore research, confirming that plant names occupy a distinct place in the Azerbaijani lexical system and perform multifunctional roles in communicative and cultural contexts^[7–10].

Although certain aspects of plant names particularly their role in reflecting cultural heritage, worldview, and aspects of economic life have been partially addressed in existing studies of this ancient lexical layer, comprehensive and systematic linguistic research in this area remains lim-

ited. Terminologically, the study of plant names falls under phytonymy, a specialized branch of onomastics. The term *phytonym* encompasses a broad range of plant-related lexemes, including wild and cultivated plants, fruits and vegetables, medicinal herbs, and ornamental flora.

The acquisition of figurative and symbolic meanings by phytonyms is most prominently observed in the context of proverbs, where such terms frequently serve as metaphors or carriers of cultural imagery.

The vocabulary of Turkic languages, including Azerbaijani, constitutes a valuable linguistic and cultural resource for preserving historical, spiritual, and ethnonational identity. As scholars have observed, “Language is a mirror in which the history of a people is reflected in one way or another.”^[11] From this perspective, the richness of a language is often measured by the breadth and diversity of its lexical stock. “The richness of any language is determined, first of all, by the abundance of its lexical inventory.”^[12]

Proverbs, in particular, reveal how plant names operate as cultural, emotional, and symbolic elements within language. Through their use in fixed expressions, plant terms acquire layered meanings that reflect both material realities and spiritual values.

In Azerbaijani, phytonyms may be categorized into the following semantic groups:

- Wild plants: nettle, wormwood, etc.
- Cereals: wheat, barley, etc.
- Fruits and vegetables: apple, pear, cucumber, etc.
- Medicinal plants: mint, sage, etc.
- Ornamental plants: rose, lily, carnation, etc.

Within the Azerbaijani lexical system, plant names function as a distinct subgroup of lexemes that are notable for their semantic versatility and grammatical productivity. These units occupy a significant position in the lexical-grammatical structure of the language and contribute to its expressive capacity and cultural depth.

This lexical field also draws scholarly attention due to its rich semantic spectrum, encompassing literal, symbolic, and culturally loaded meanings. As one researcher notes, “Plant names express a nation’s perspective on nature and its way of understanding life. The reason for the significant role of plant names in Turkic languages lies in the close interaction between humans and nature and their engagement in agriculture and animal husbandry since ancient times.”^[5]

The earliest known references to plant names in the history of the Turkic peoples can be traced back to the 11th century, in the monumental work of Mahmud al-Kashgari. The phytonyms recorded in his *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk* have, despite undergoing phonetic changes over time, remained in use to this day. As noted by scholars, “From the moment humans began to develop as social beings and acquired speech, they started naming each other, the objects they lived among, the animals and birds they hunted and later domesticated, natural and divine forces, as well as the plants and fruits they consumed for food. As their knowledge of life and nature expanded, the number of names also increased.”^[13]

Beyond the general lexicon of the Azerbaijani language, a considerable number of plant names are attested in proverbial language. Proverbs that incorporate plant names or originate from plant-related imagery are categorized as phytonymic proverbs. These units are particularly prevalent in literary language and artistic expression. As noted in linguistic scholarship, “One of the most significant contexts in which lexical units are realized is literary texts.”^[14] Consequently, many studies have emphasized the role of phytonyms as stylistically and semantically significant elements within artistic works.

While some research views phytonyms as “rarely encountered plant names,”^[15] the majority of linguistic studies affirm their active and productive role in the language system. As stated in one analysis, “Plant names form a complex system in every language.”^[6] Phytonyms represent a noteworthy group within onomastics, functioning primarily as nominative units. However, when embedded in proverbial structures, phytonyms frequently assume metaphorical and symbolic meanings.

Proverbs are recognized as a universal and timeless component of folk heritage. As researchers have observed, “Proverbs, regardless of time, place, or ethnic affiliation, are an inseparable component of the folklore of all nations.”^[16] In many cases, moral, ethical, and philosophical concepts are encoded through plant imagery, which enriches the expressive capacity of the language.

Furthermore, phytonyms play an active role in word formation processes. In his work *The Fundamentals of Azerbaijani Anthroponymy*, M. Chobanov highlights the significant influence of phytonyms in the formation of personal names, pointing to the deep-seated symbolic and cultural link

between humans and the plant world^[17]. This connection illustrates the anthropocentric understanding of nature in traditional thought. As another scholar notes, “A person who does not learn about nature, who does not know it or establish communication with it, will hardly be able to communicate and build relationships with other people.”^[18]

It is also important to emphasize that the presence of phytonyms is not limited to proverbs. These lexical units are frequently encountered in other genres of folk literature, particularly in lullabies (*laylalar*) and *bayati verses*, where they contribute both to poetic imagery and to the transmission of cultural values.

The following Azerbaijani proverb exemplifies the symbolic use of plant imagery and valorizes courage and generosity:

*“Pick a rose, give it to the brave;
If you have wealth, share it with the brave.
In hard times, in troubled days,
A horse is a brother to the brave.”*^[19]

This proverb metaphorically associates the rose with honor and reward, emphasizing the cultural valorization of bravery and solidarity during adversity.

Proverbs constitute an essential component of a nation’s linguistic, cultural, and philosophical heritage. As manifestations of spiritual culture, they encapsulate the moral values, collective memory, and worldview of a people. As defined by scholars, “Spiritual culture is a form of culture created by human intellect, reflecting one’s inner world and arising from desires and aspirations, without a clear boundary separating it from material culture.”^[20]

Within the diverse semantic landscape of proverbs, those containing phytonyms stand out for their deep symbolic meaning and their reflection of the interrelationship between humans and nature. These expressions serve not only as vehicles of practical wisdom but also as repositories of ecological knowledge, cultural symbolism, and linguistic creativity. Phytonymic proverbs represent a rich and underexplored source for the analysis of linguistic features, metaphorical constructions, and sociocultural functions.

In linguistic terms, phytonyms refer to lexical units denoting the names of plants. These units retain traces of traditional knowledge related to the natural environment, agricultural practices, and aesthetic perceptions. As researchers note, “The widespread use of plants in various spheres and

their exceptional role in human life lead to the frequent employment of these lexical units in communication.”^[21]

In linguistic classification, trees, herbs, flowers, and fruit-bearing plants are grouped under phytonyms and are often examined within the framework of onomastics. These plant names function not only as referential elements but also as carriers of cultural and symbolic meaning. As emphasized in onomastic studies, “The study of onomastic units, which create a spiritual bridge between our historical past and the present and preserve the cultural mindset of our ancestors, holds great scientific significance for understanding the position of proper names in the lexical system of the language and their lexical-semantic features.”^[22]

In some scholarly works, phytonyms are considered to function as proper names assigned to particular plants^[23]. However, their role is not confined to mere nomination. Phytonyms often serve poetic, metaphorical, and symbolic purposes, enriching the stylistic and cultural layers of discourse. As stated by researchers, “Plant names differ according to their origin, meaning, and existing form. Materials related to plant names provide valuable data for studying the history and culture of any nation because they preserve traces of that nation’s historical periods, everyday life, customs, and traditions.”^[24]

Thus, the study of phytonymic proverbs offers a multidimensional perspective for exploring the intersections of language, culture, and ecological consciousness, and it contributes to a deeper understanding of how traditional societies encoded their relationship with the natural world into verbal art.

Within proverbs, phytonyms often carry figurative and symbolic meanings, reinforcing established social norms, ethical principles, and collective values. Their presence serves not only a decorative or descriptive function but also reflects deeply rooted aesthetic and moral ideals shaped by a metaphorical perception of nature within folk consciousness. Proverbs containing plant names hold a distinct position in the cultural and linguistic system, illustrating the close relationship between humans and the plant world. As noted by scholars, “Even in ancient times, social production was impossible without animals and plants.”^[25]

In this context, phytonyms in proverbs transcend the limitations of mere botanical terminology and function as cultural, poetic, and philosophical metaphors. Their high

frequency and semantic diversity underscore the profound symbolic connection between human life and the natural environment. From a linguistic perspective, phytonyms in proverbs serve multiple functions: they denote specific plant species, associate plants with culturally assigned characteristics, and employ plant imagery as metaphors for human behavior, ethical instruction, and societal norms.

The following examples illustrate the multifaceted role of phytonyms in Azerbaijani proverbs:

A tree is a support for the dam, a good son is a support for the village.

A tree drinks water from its roots.

He who plants a tree will live a long life.

When a tree bends, it breaks; when a brave man bows, he dies.

A tree cannot exist without shade, nor a human without love.

A tree must be protected from harsh winds when it is young.

A tree decays from its worms, a fence from its stakes.

A tree withers, times change.

A tree nurtures the fruit until it ripens.^[26]

The core semantic function of these proverbs lies in the symbolic use of the tree as a universal metaphor for stability, resilience, rootedness, nurturing, and human development. Through such imagery, these expressions emphasize the necessity of mutual support, the importance of early care and protection, the inevitability of change, and the value of labor and continuity.

In essence, language here serves as a vehicle for internalizing ecological awareness and for conveying ethical and philosophical insights. The use of phytonyms enables the articulation of abstract concepts through concrete, familiar, and culturally resonant imagery, thereby ensuring both memorability and intergenerational transmission of cultural values.

Phytonymic proverbs are notable for their transmission of cultural knowledge and their integral role within folkloric tradition. These proverbs characteristically reflect traditional agricultural practices, local flora, and ecological consciousness, thus serving as valuable carriers of both material and spiritual heritage. Alongside the agrarian worldview, they preserve ecological wisdom rooted in generational experi-

ence and communal observation.

Such proverbs often encode human virtues such as diligence, patience, and humility, demonstrating the way in which language conveys moral and behavioral norms. In Azerbaijani proverbial discourse, plant names frequently symbolize spiritual and ethical ideals, thereby revealing the symbolic worldview of the society.

Although the cultural meanings attributed to specific plants may vary across regions and nations, the use of phytonyms in proverbial language is a universal linguistic phenomenon. For instance, the oak tree often symbolizes strength and endurance, the olive tree denotes peace and abundance, while the cypress is associated with grandeur and solemnity — symbolic associations that explain their frequent appearance in proverbs.

In Azerbaijani, proverbs incorporating the lexical component “tree” (*ağac*) are particularly prevalent. A selection of such examples includes:

There are more people who grab the tree than those who cut it.

A tree bends when it is young.

A colt that eats trees does not come to the threshing floor.

The kid of a goat that climbs a tree watches the cliff.

A village with many trees has fewer graves.

If you cut the tree, it falls at its root.

A tree is eaten from the inside by worms.

Cut the tree long, make the iron short.

A tree has two tops.

Eat the fruit of the tree, do not peel its skin.

The worm eats the soft part of the tree.

The man with trees took his trees so the guilty may understand his crime.

A village with many trees is not flooded.

The worm of a tree comes from itself.^[26]

Beyond common plant names, proprietary or metaphorical names are also assigned to flora. As noted by scholars, “The tools and methods people use to name various concepts provide information about their lifestyle, worldview, and perspective.”^[27] For instance, in Azerbaijani, a cactus species is colloquially known as “*mother-in-law’s tongue*” due to its sharp thorns, while a popular grape variety is affectionately referred to as “*lady’s finger*”, reflecting both visual

resemblance and cultural associations.

Proverbs containing phytonyms function not merely as poetic or rhetorical devices but, more significantly, as repositories of ecological wisdom, mirrors of cultural identity, and instruments of moral instruction. As one researcher observes, “These examples are used during communication to express a concept more precisely and vividly.”^[28] Phytonymic proverbs illustrate how language shapes, reflects, and internalizes humanity’s interaction with the natural world. At a time of intensifying ecological crises, revisiting such plant-based expressions signals a renewed cultural sensitivity to environmental values.

From a structural perspective, phytonymic proverbs also present significant grammatical interest. Their syntactic and morphological properties contribute to the expressiveness, rhythm, and communicative impact of proverbial speech. These grammatical features are particularly important in understanding how metaphorical meaning is constructed and transmitted. In this context, analyzing the syntactic organization and morphological markers of phytonymic proverbs may yield novel insights into the structure and function of proverbial language.

Plant names, as core lexical components, directly influence the grammatical architecture of proverbs. For instance, the use of derivational suffixes with plant nouns (e.g., flower → flower garden) enhances the semantic density of the expression. While *gül* denotes an individual flower, *güllüstan* evokes abundance, cultivation, and beauty. Similarly, plant names often form part of compound nouns or adjectival constructions, enriching the descriptive capacity of the language.

The syntax of plant-based proverbs, particularly in Azerbaijani, typically adheres to the SOV (Subject, Object, Verb) word order common to Turkic languages. However, this fixed order may vary in poetic usage to achieve specific stylistic or communicative effects. Thus, syntactic flexibility plays a role in the memorability and emotive strength of these expressions.

Various grammatical mechanisms are employed to increase the didactic and artistic power of phytonymic proverbs. Their semantic richness, coupled with carefully structured grammatical patterns, enhances their capacity for cultural transmission, ethical instruction, and linguistic preservation. A comprehensive grammatical analysis of such proverbs deepens our understanding of their syntactic structure and

reinforces their value as both linguistic artifacts and cultural expressions.

One study identified approximately ninety phytonyms in the form of noun compounds extracted from various Azerbaijani dictionaries, based on their grammatical composition^[29]. Phytonymic proverbs provide clear insight into the grammatical structures of the Azerbaijani language. Research indicates that although these proverbs typically exhibit stable and formulaic grammatical constructions, they also allow for the realization of various grammatical categories.

Among these, the most frequently observed grammatical category is the noun. Phytonyms are primarily used as nouns in the nominative case, as illustrated by the following examples:

*"Where there is no garden, bramble grows.
The gardener hurries, yet the pear ripens in its time.
For one rose, the gardener serves a thousand thorns."*^[26]

In these proverbs, the phytonyms *bramble*, *rose*, and *pear* function as nouns in the nominative case. Additionally, phytonyms appear in other grammatical cases:

*"In the garden, they look after the rose.
The bee knows the flower that gives honey."*^[26]

In some instances, phytonyms are accompanied by adjectives, which serve to expand their descriptive potential:

*"They do not strike with an axe the tree that bears fruit.
They do not throw stones at the tree that gives fruit.
They cut down the tree that bears no fruit.
They circle around the tree full of fruit.
A fruitless tree is like an ignorant man.
A garden without fruit is like a mountain without snow."*^[26]

In these examples, the modifiers preceding *tree* and *garden* contribute to the semantic depth of the phytonyms, enriching their conceptual scope and expressiveness.

Proverbs are generally built on simple but semantically rich grammatical models and fully reflect the functional capabilities of the language. Their grammatical structure is essential for understanding the mechanisms of proverb for-

mation and their role in the linguistic system.

Phytonymic proverbs also display elliptical and antithetical structures, which contribute to their stylistic impact and rhetorical effectiveness. F. Veysəlli emphasizes that ellipsis is a potent stylistic device for producing linguistically and emotionally charged texts^[30].

For example:

*"The gardener eats the garden, the shepherd – the sheep.
From one tree comes both a shovel and a spade.
One eye picks the plum, the other the cherry."*^[26]

In phytonymic proverbs, the syntactic relationship between subject and predicate is typically characterized by logical clarity and cohesion. Predicates are most often expressed through verbs and carry a judgmental or evaluative tone. Declarative sentence structures are particularly prevalent in phytonymic proverbs, typically exhibiting neutral intonation and conveying factual or generalized ideas:

*"He who sows barley reaps barley; he who sows wheat, wheat.
He who sows barley does not reap wheat.
What the ancestors have sown, the sons reap.
A horse not fed with barley will not walk by the power of the whip.
A horse fed on barley will reach its destination."*^[26]

In addition to declarative forms, imperative constructions are also common in phytonymic proverbs, often used to convey moral prescriptions or satirical warnings:

*"May your name be mentioned with a rotten walnut.
Either kill the branch or leave the twig on it."*^[26]

Proverbs formulated as interrogative sentences aim primarily to provoke reflection and critical thinking:

"Your father is an onion, your mother is garlic – where did you come from, sugar rose?"^[26]

The grammatical structure of these proverbs enables the concise and effective communication of complex ideas.

Their morphological richness, syntactic simplicity, and grammatical coherence render proverbs a powerful means of conveying ethical values and ensuring their transmission across generations. The structure of these expressions reflects the linguistic intuition, cognitive worldview, and aesthetic sensibility of the people.

Linguists have observed that syntactic parallelism in paremiological units functions as a rhetorical-syntactic figure that enhances the expressiveness, emotional resonance, and persuasive strength of the utterance. It also facilitates the cohesion of syntactic wholes and the integration of their constituent parts^[31,32].

The syntax of phytonymic proverbs reveals their internal structural logic and cohesion. Most of these proverbs are composed of simple sentence structures, which are generally concise and unambiguous. Linguistic analysis confirms that phytonyms in colloquial usage possess not only lexical but also grammatical value. Their application in proverbs highlights the stability of syntactic models and exemplifies the aesthetic and functional potential of the language.

These proverbs express profound philosophical insights into human life through grammatically precise constructions rooted in botanical imagery. Although variation in word order is a recognized feature of spoken language, research into Azerbaijani phytonymic proverbs indicates that their syntactic structure generally adheres to fixed word order patterns, with deviations being infrequent:

"It cannot be known – it is like an uncut watermelon."^[26]

The semantic and artistic connotations carried by plant and flower names within these proverbs deserve special attention. Phytonymic proverbs fulfill several key functions, which may be summarized as follows:

3.1. Metaphorical Function

Through the use of plant and flower names, proverbs symbolically convey human qualities, behavioral traits, and attitudes toward social and natural phenomena:

*"Wood cannot be made from a rose tree."
 "The rose withdraws from the nightingale, a person withdraws from another's hand."
 "There is no rose without thorns."
 "If the rose is precious, the rose garden is even*

more precious."

"The rose is gone, the thorn remains; from the rose, only a memory remains."^[26]

These expressions evoke aesthetic beauty while simultaneously implying that beauty is not without risk. The rose symbolizes beauty, while the thorn represents caution. As one scholar notes: "The Azerbaijani people have shown special attention and sensitivity to flowers, skillfully utilizing their semantic meanings in literary and artistic language. In literary works, the reverence for nature and its flowers is perceived as an integral part of patriotism."^[33]

Among Turkic peoples, the historical appreciation of flowers is deeply rooted. The word *çiçək* (flower), used with slight variations across the Oghuz branch of Turkic languages, has its earliest attestation in Buddhist-Uyghur texts as *çeçek*^[34]. However, the term *gül* (rose) has not always held a positive connotation. In *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk*, the word *çeçek* is used alongside *gül* and can also denote disease^[35].

Plant names appear in various communicative contexts. "Phytonyms attract attention due to their wide presence in society, their functional dynamism, originality, quantitative and semantic richness, diversity of meaning, and their naming based on living conditions, lifestyle, geography, and medicinal value."^[36]

3.2. Didactic Function

Proverbs often serve to convey advice, moral instruction, or collective life experience:

*"Where there is a tree, a branch will break."
 "The tree falls according to the direction."
 "When a tree breaks, it falls with or without an axe."*^[26]

These proverbs emphasize unity, responsibility, and the importance of helping those in need. They function as moral guides and play a role in social communication and persuasion:

"When there were apricots in the garden, there were greetings; when the apricots were gone, the greetings were gone too."^[26]

This expression criticizes selfishness and highlights the role of reciprocity in social relationships.

3.3. Aesthetic Function

Phytonymic proverbs enhance speech through rhythm, metaphor, and imagery. They serve as aesthetically rich expressions of folk wisdom and contribute to the preservation of national-cultural values. These proverbs carry not only practical advice but also poetic and artistic resonance:

"Whoever wants a rose must be patient."

"Whoever wants a rose must also want its thorn."

"A rose cannot be without thorns, a valley without snakes, nor joy without hardship."

"Where there are many flowers, there will be bees and honey too."^[26]

Here, *thorn* (Azerbaijani: *tikan*), although a basic plant name, is metaphorically used to represent hardship and danger. The antithesis of *rose* and *thorn* juxtaposes beauty and adversity, symbolizing the dualities of good and evil, love and suffering. The rose symbolizes beauty, love, and constancy; the thorn signifies difficulty and pain. These proverbs underscore the idea that beauty is often born of struggle.

"A grape darkens by the company of other grapes."

"See the grape in the hand, its stem on the ground."^[26]

In these examples, *grape* symbolizes abundance and the collective. More broadly, trees and fruits are portrayed not just as agricultural entities but as symbols of human growth, discipline, and labor. The use of phytonyms reveals the intrinsic link between aesthetic and ethical values. Their selection is influenced by lifestyle, farming practices, and the cultural worldview of the people. The aesthetic function of phytonymic proverbs lies in their ability to evoke imagery, generate emotional resonance, and express national identity. These units contribute not only to stylistic beauty but also to the artistic preservation of philosophical thought and historical consciousness.

3.4. Cognitive Function

Phytonymic proverbs encode collective knowledge and experience. As brief, widespread, and culturally embedded expressions, proverbs communicate general truths and life

lessons. Their rhythmic, formulaic structure reflects the cognitive habits of a people. Cognitive linguistics affirms that language is not merely a communicative tool but also a medium of thought. Proverbs represent cognitively encoded samples of communal consciousness.

Phytonymic proverbs embody metaphorical and symbolic associations with natural elements (e.g., plants) and their meanings in human cognition. In this regard, phytonyms serve as conceptual categories reflecting the worldview of a people and the interaction between nature and society. These proverbs create parallels between environmental and social realities, transforming plants from concrete entities into conceptual symbols.

"The village with many trees is not flooded."

"The worm in the tree originates from itself."

"No matter how much water you give to the plane tree, it will not bear fruit."

"There is no good shoot from the plane tree, no sage from the willow, no almond from the cornel, and no wise person from a fool."^[26]

These expressions reflect environmental knowledge, moral understanding, and social commentary. They exemplify how phytonyms serve as linguistic vessels for encoding cultural wisdom and transmitting it across generations.

The Symbolic and Cognitive Dimensions of Phytonymic Proverbs

These proverbs emphasize the importance of human experience and perception through phytonymic components such as *tree*, *plane tree*, and *willow*. In many cultures, the tree symbolizes notions such as strength, family, and lineage. Plants more broadly serve as culturally encoded symbols, representing diverse aspects of the human condition.

Phytonymic proverbs also reveal the artistic-aesthetic potential and figurative richness of language. In these expressions, phytonyms transcend their basic nominative function, operating as linguistic elements that embody both poetic imagery and semantic depth.

"What I did not sow, what I did not reap, I found ready-made."

"You reap what you sow."

"One does not stray far from the pear tree."^[26]

These examples convey a range of meanings: the resemblance of children to their elders; the importance of patience

as in “The pear ripens in its season” and “The patient one is in haste”; and the idea that individuals may sometimes attain fortune or success without effort, as in “The best pear is eaten by the bear in the forest.” Through such expressions, phytonymic proverbs shape human consciousness by enabling prediction, reflecting the interdependence of nature and human behavior, and establishing ethical norms derived from collective life experience.

As aptly noted by a scholar:

“Every folklore text is a medium between the speaker and the listener, the past and the future. The speaker conveys intended meanings to the audience through the text, while the listener assists in the creation of the text or in adding new motifs.”^[37]

4. Conclusions

1. Phytonymic proverbs reflect the ecological, moral, labor, and aesthetic value systems of the Azerbaijani people.
2. As mirrors of the folk artistic mindset, these proverbs enhance the metaphorical and symbolic capacity of the Azerbaijani language.
3. Proverbs containing phytonyms serve as a multidisciplinary research object, drawing interest from linguistics, folklore, cultural studies, and ethnobotany.
4. Phytonyms in Azerbaijani proverbs embody both universal and culture-specific symbolic meanings – for example, the rose denotes “beauty,” while wormwood signifies “grief” or “sorrow.” These meanings reveal deep ethnocultural patterns rooted in local tradition.
5. Phytonyms constitute a dynamic and culturally resonant layer of the Azerbaijani lexicon. Future research might include the development of a semantic classification system or digital corpus of Azerbaijani phytonyms, as well as comparative studies across Turkic and Indo-European languages.

This study demonstrates that plant names, far from serving merely scientific or botanical purposes, occupy a significant place within the expressive structure of artistic language. In proverbs, they acquire metaphorical, symbolic, and associative meanings, transforming into poetic vehicles of folk wisdom. Through phytonyms, human behaviors, char-

acter traits, social interactions, and life events are abstracted and meaningfully expressed.

Proverbs containing phytonyms constitute a rich linguistic and cultural repository. They articulate the people’s relationship with nature, their social values, worldview, and artistic sensibility. The collection, semantic-structural analysis, and inclusion of such proverbs in dictionaries and educational materials contribute to the preservation of the language’s ecological and aesthetic dimensions.

In educational contexts, the use of phytonymic proverbs enhances ecological awareness, metaphorical thinking, and cultural literacy. These proverbs serve as expressive tools revealing not only a people’s environmental consciousness but also their ethical and symbolic worldview. As such, they are valuable not only for linguistic analysis but also for ethnobotany, dialectology, and onomastics.

This research confirms that phytonymic proverbs function as sources of ethical reflection, ecological awareness, and cultural continuity. Their metaphorical richness creates a conceptual bridge between biological and cultural landscapes, thereby opening new avenues for interdisciplinary investigation.

Recommendations

1. Systematize phytonymic proverbs in a dedicated lexicographic format (e.g., dictionary or database).
2. Include these proverbs in secondary and higher education curricula, accompanied by semantic and cultural explanations.
3. Conduct diachronic and synchronic analyses to investigate the historical development and semantic evolution of phytonyms in Azerbaijani.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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