

An Lan , Shan Shiguo 

*Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan
(E-mail: 602926052@qq.com; shanshighi_95@mail.ru)*

An Analysis of Marriage and Love Concepts in English Proverbs

Abstract: English proverbs reflect the wisdom and experience of the people in English-speaking countries. We explore the views on marriage and love embodied in English proverbs, aiming to understand the cultural values and emotional attitudes behind these proverbs. Some proverbs advocate freedom of marriage and love, believing that love is predestined. Some emphasize the blindness of love, advocating a sober and rational attitude towards marriage and love, and more importantly, working hard to manage marriage. This paper collects and analyzes some representative English proverbs about love and marriage. These proverbs are not only linguistic expressions but also cultural wisdom inheritance. They show the complex and diverse understanding and practice of love and marriage among people in English-speaking countries. They reveal some common themes and values, such as individualism, rationalism, romanticism, realism, etc. They also reflect some historical and social changes, such as Christianity, feminism, etc. English proverbs about love and marriage are not only a rich source of linguistic and cultural information, but also a valuable resource for cross-cultural communication and education. Understanding the views on marriage and love in different cultures can promote the development of cultural intelligence, and also provide a reference for the establishment of a proverb corpus.

Keywords: English proverbs, views on marriage, views on love, culture, language, cross-cultural, corpus.

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Introduction

Marriage and love, as indispensable themes in human emotions and social life, have always attracted the attention of scholars. These topics have been widely discussed in literature, philosophy, sociology, and other fields, revealing people's understanding and attitude toward marriage and love in different cultures, historical periods, and social environments. English proverbs, as a form of expression that is ancient and full of wisdom, carry people's various ideas and emotions about marriage and love, providing us with a unique perspective window to understand the complexity of these relationships. They are also a mirror that can reflect culture and values.

English proverbs about marriage and love are usually concise, easy to remember, and philosophical. Although they seem simple, they contain rich cultural, historical, and social backgrounds. They are not only language expressions, but also the crystallization of cultural wisdom, part of the inheritance of life experience and wisdom passed down from generation to generation. By analyzing the views on marriage and love reflected in the proverbs, we can deeply understand the cultural characteristics and psychological features of a nation. In English

proverbs, the expressions of marriage and love are diverse, from romantic to realistic, from ideal to pragmatic, all of which are reflected in them. These proverbs play a role of guidance, encouragement, and reflection in emotions and interpersonal relationships, providing us with a unique cultural heritage, showing people's pursuit, understanding, and shaping of marriage and love.

In this study, we selected 105 English proverbs about marriage and love from four authoritative English proverb dictionaries and demonstrated some of them in the paper. From the two dimensions of the marriage view and love view, we classified the selected English proverbs and found that they have six characteristics, and explored the emotional, value, and cultural implications behind these proverbs. By studying English proverbs in-depth, we hope to better understand human emotions and cultural diversity, as well as the importance of marriage and love in social and individual life. We will provide a more comprehensive and in-depth perspective for understanding marriage and love views in the English context.

Literature Review

Many scholars have reached a consensus on the study of proverbs, believing that studying proverbs is an important aspect of studying language. Lan An (2024) believes that proverbs are the essence of a nation's language, and learning and studying proverbs can help us absorb the essence of English culture [1,p.39].

Many scholars have used comparative analysis as a research method in proverb studies. Cai Yang (2012) compared English and Chinese proverbs on marriage and argued that the Western view of marriage and love reflected in English proverbs is a microcosm of Western culture [2,p.95]. Yang Li (2016) believes that marriage affects the progress of human civilization, and analyzing the cultural connotations of proverbs from a cross-cultural perspective can promote cross-cultural communication [3,p.314].

Proverbs, as part of language, reflect culture and tradition well, embodying values. Tan Junlei (2010) believes that English proverbs on marriage and love are influenced by Christian culture, advocating personal independence, believing that love is predestined by heaven, and the focus of marriage and family relationships is the relationship between husband and wife; English proverbs reflect the unique marriage culture and cultural psychology of the nation[4,p.2].

From the study of proverbs, we can also find some common problems in language, such as gender discrimination. Wang Qiaojie (2010) argues that gender discrimination, as a form of social inequality, is also fully reflected in English proverbs [5,p.136]. In traditional proverbs, many proverbs reflect the idea of preferring men over women and the tendency to commodify women.

Rong Nannan (2007) believes that studying gender discrimination in proverbs can reveal the discrimination against women in language through proverb analysis, thereby raising people's awareness of gender discrimination, and helping people reduce and eventually eliminate gender discrimination in daily life and language [6,p.4].

Methodology

In this study, we focus on the following research questions: How are the concepts of marriage and love expressed in English proverbs? What common ideas and values about marriage and love are reflected in these proverbs? How do these ideas and values influence the perception of marriage and love in English-speaking cultures? We hypothesize that the concepts of marriage and love in English proverbs reflect deep-seated understandings and values within English-speaking cultures regarding these two concepts. These proverbs not only mirror societal norms and expectations but also shape and reinforce cultural perceptions of marriage and love.

This study will be conducted in the following stages: First, we will collect English proverbs related to marriage and love from authoritative proverb dictionaries, corpora, and reputable online sources. Next, we will gather and organize 105 proverbs related to marriage and love, determining the theme, main ideas, and specific contexts of each proverb to ensure precise

classification and organization in subsequent analyses. In the quantitative analysis stage, we will perform statistical analysis on these proverbs to determine the frequency and distribution of different themes and concepts, showcasing the prevalence and representativeness of various views on marriage and love. In the qualitative analysis stage, we will conduct an in-depth semantic and cultural analysis to uncover the underlying concepts of marriage and love in these proverbs. This includes detailed explanations of the literal and implied meanings of each proverb, an analysis of the cultural values and beliefs they reflect, and an examination of their usage in different historical periods and social contexts. Finally, we will synthesize the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses to develop a comprehensive understanding of the ideas about marriage and love expressed in English proverbs. Using interdisciplinary approaches such as sociology, psychology, and cultural studies, we will further interpret how these proverbs influence the perception of marriage and love in English-speaking cultures. We will conclude by summarizing our findings, discussing the limitations of the study, and proposing suggestions for further research, exploring the practical applications of these findings in marriage and love studies, language teaching, and cross-cultural communication.

To achieve the objectives of this study, we will adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research. In the quantitative research, we will perform statistical analysis to quantify the occurrence of specific themes and concepts in the collected proverbs, presenting the prevalence of different themes and concepts through simple frequency statistics. In the qualitative research, we will provide detailed semantic analysis to interpret the meanings and cultural significance of the proverbs, conduct an in-depth reading of the texts to identify and categorize major themes and patterns, and use case study methods to analyze the specific meanings and cultural contexts of typical proverbs. By integrating these methods, this study aims to comprehensively understand the concepts of marriage and love in English proverbs and their cultural implications.

Analysis and Discussion

Marriage proverbs and love proverbs in English present distinctive features, which can be mainly divided into the following categories:

1. Believing in fate and that love and marriage are destined to happen

Some English proverbs reflect their belief that love is predestined by heaven, and they believe that there is a power beyond human will and reason that can make two mutually attractive and suitable people meet, know, and love each other. This also reflects their tendency towards romanticism and idealism in love. They are eager to find the perfect partner in their mind, also called soul mate or true love. They believe that only by finding such a person can they realize their highest level of happiness and fulfillment.

E.g. Love at first sight.

Marriage (Matrimony) is (comes by) destiny.

Marriages are made in heaven.

Hanging and wiving go by destiny.

Love cannot be compelled.

2. Praising the beautiful love that is free, faithful, and lasting, true love is priceless.

Many English proverbs reflect the beauty of love, believing that the power of love is great, and true love can transcend everything. Love cannot be shared with others, nor can it be hidden.

E.g. Long-lasting love is desirable.

Love asks faith, and faith (asks) firmness.

Love and lordship like no fellowship.

Love is free.

Love is without reason.

Love is the true price of love.

Love needs no teaching.

Love and a cough (light) cannot be hid.

Lovers live by love, as larks live by leeks.

Love is not found in the market.

Love me little, (and) love me long.

Marry thy like.

3. Love and marriage are not always smooth

Many proverbs reflect that love and marriage are full of difficulties and challenges and that true love is not easy to encounter.

E.g. Love is sweet in the beginning but sour in the ending.

Love comes in at the window and goes out at the door.

Not every couple is a pair.

The course of true love never did run smooth.

As the best wine makes the sharpest vinegar, so the deepest love turns to the deadliest hatred.

The course of true love never did run smooth.

Love is full of trouble.

Love is a sweet torment.

4. Marriage and love should be treated with caution, and one should not choose a spouse blindly

Many proverbs reflect that one should treat love and marriage seriously and earnestly and that one should think carefully before making a decision, and be clear-headed. The choice of a spouse should be made by considering various conditions and circumstances, not impulsively. Financial conditions are important, but one should not marry only for money.

E.g. Love is blind.

Love does much, money does everything (or more).

Loving comes by looking.

Marry in haste, and you'll live to repent.

Marry with your match.

Marriage is honourable, but housekeeping is a shrew.

Marry not an old cove, or a fool, for money.

Marry, that I would see, quoth blind Hugh.

Marry in haste, repent at leisure.

Better be alone than in bad company.

Don't marry for money, but don't marry without money.

Never marry for money, but marry where money is.

5. Male superiority and male dominance in marriage

Some proverbs reflect a perception that men have more power, status, and freedom in marriage, while women are expected to obey, endure and sacrifice, and that women's greatest value in this context is to be a good helpmate to their husbands rather than to realize their self-worth. This value ignores women's feelings and dignity. Bingbing, H., & Kamensky, M. V. (2023) argue that proverbs contain gender stereotypes, conveying expected roles of women in the family, such as caregivers, submissive, and obedient roles [7, p. 241].

E.g. Marry your son when you will, your daughter when you can.

It's harder to marry a daughter well than to bring her up well.

A woman's place is in the home.

Behind every great man there's a great woman.

He wears the pants in the family.

The husband is the head of the wife.

A woman, a dog, and a walnut tree, the more you beat them, the better they be.

Language is a part of culture and culture influences language, so the inequality between men and women in English culture will also be fully reflected in English proverbs. In Western culture, the Bible plays an important role, and the values it contains have a broad social basis. According to the Bible, God first created Adam and then took one of his ribs and made Eve his

partner. Therefore, according to the Bible, from the day of the creation of mankind, women have rightfully been subordinate to men.

In English-speaking cultures, however, most women were required to take their husband's name upon marriage and had to discard their own surnames, which shows that women's social status at that time was far inferior to that of men. These proverbs faithfully reflect these social phenomena, but there has been a development trend in the elimination of sexism in the English language.

In the early 1970s, the feminist movement rose in the West, influenced by it, the English-speaking world set off a movement of textual reform aimed at eliminating sexism, and many programs for reforming and eliminating linguistic sexism appeared one after another, and the existence of sexist language has indeed changed. Government departments in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and other countries in the European Union have introduced relevant laws requiring the gradual elimination of sexism in public language. To summarize, there are three ways and means to reform and eliminate the phenomenon of sexism in language as follows: First, it is manifested in the creation of neutralized new words to replace the original masculine words, such as replacing spokesman with the spokesperson, chairman with the chairperson and mankind with humankind. The second is to use gender pronouns instead of masculine pronouns, such as he/she; his/her instead of he, his. The third is to use the masculine counterpart of feminine words, to eliminate linguistic sexism (especially in the U.S.), which has been an important part of the feminist movement in recent years. As feminism continues to grow, women are criticizing and fiercely changing the existing language, boldly experimenting with creativity, using new words, new spellings, and new imagery to stay away from the authoritative structure of patriarchal language, and seeking a new language for women. They are seeking a new discursive space for women. Wu, J., Zhou, W., & Shao, B. (2023) argue that the use of proverbs has undergone variations, and these variations are a form of linguistic creativity, reflecting the cognitive creativity of human beings [8,p.14].

6. Aspiring to a harmonious and beautiful marriage and advocating the joint efforts of both husband and wife

With the increasing status of women, proverbs increasingly reflect the promotion of equality between men and women in marriage and emphasize more on the husband's responsibilities in the family. Husbands and wives can influence each other in marriage, so they should be tolerant of each other, respect each other, cherish their marriage, and work together to create a good married life.

E.g. Marriage is honourable.

Marriage halves our griefs, doubles our joys, and quadruples our expenses.

A happy marriage is a long conversation which always seems too short.

Happy is the man who finds a true friend, and far happier is he who finds that true friend in his wife.

A good Jack makes a good Jill.

A good husband makes a good wife.

Keep your eyes wide open before marriage, half shut afterward.

A deaf husband and a blind wife are always a happy couple.

As the good man saith, so say we; but as the good woman saith, so must it be.

Conclusion

The concepts of love and marriage in English proverbs reflect some of the prevailing values and beliefs in English-speaking cultures. Love is a personal choice and freedom, not a social constraint or obligation. People can choose their partners according to their own wishes. At the same time, marriage is no longer a purely economic, political, or social union, but is based on love. Love and marriage are important parts of life. They believe that falling in love brings people closer to the object of their affection and that marriage leads to greater stability and happiness.

The idea of marriage in Proverbs reveals how two people can pursue harmony, mutual understanding, and mutual growth in their life together. Whether it is about tolerance, giving, or working together to meet challenges, they express expectations and advice for marriage. Love proverbs, on the other hand, direct us to the essence of love, emphasizing its power and importance, its intangible treasures, and the deep connection between hearts.

Both *The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* by Wilson, F. P., and Smith, W. G. (1982) [9], and the *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Proverbs* by John Simpson and Jennifer Speake (2015) [10] are authoritative sources for English proverbs. All the proverb examples in our study are sourced from these dictionaries. By analyzing these proverbs, we find that the concepts of love and marriage in English culture are characterized by the following: belief in fate, love, and marriage are destined; love is a powerful emotion that can overcome difficulties and challenges, and true love is priceless; love and marriage are not smooth sailings; marriage is a serious commitment that requires careful consideration and choice; men are dominant in marriage; desire for a harmonious and beautiful marriage; marriage is a mutual relationship that requires effort and cooperation from both parties.

English proverbs believe that marriage and love should be a combination of rationality and sensibility, not an impulsive and blind behavior, which is a more rational and sober, and advanced concept of choosing a spouse. At the same time, the proverbs also reflect the increasing status of women in English-speaking regions. In this digital age, these old proverbs still have powerful meanings. They provide us with new perspectives for thinking about relationships, emotions, and intimacy, and they reveal to us the changing views of marriage and love in different historical periods, as well as providing us with valuable lessons about human emotions and ways of getting along. In addition, most dictionaries of English proverbs are categorized in alphabetical order and lack a specialized corpus. The collection of proverbs has made the study very difficult. This kind of research can provide a reference for the establishment of a corpus of proverbs.

These proverbs are not only a combination of words, but also the light of wisdom passed down from generation to generation, which will continue to shine in people's hearts and provide inspiration for future research and practice.

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Ань Лань, Шань Шиго

Казахский национальный университет им. аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан

Анализ концептов “брак” и “любовь” в английских пословицах

Аннотация. Английские пословицы - это лаконичные и мудрые выражения, отражающие мудрость и опыт жителей англоязычных стран. В данной статье исследуются взгляды на брак и любовь, воплощенные в английских пословицах, с целью понять культурные ценности и эмоциональные установки, лежащие в основе этих пословиц. Некоторые пословицы выступают за свободу брака и любви, считая, что любовь предопределена, а настоящая любовь встречается редко. Некоторые подчеркивают слепоту любви, выделяя роль брака как пробуждения от реальности, выступая за трезвое и рациональное отношение к браку и любви, а главное - за то, чтобы усердно управлять браком. В данной статье собраны и проанализированы некоторые репрезентативные английские пословицы о любви и браке. Эти пословицы являются не только языковыми выражениями, но и наследием культурной мудрости. Эти пословицы демонстрируют сложное и разнообразное понимание и практику любви и брака среди жителей англоязычных стран. Они раскрывают некоторые общие темы и ценности, такие, как индивидуализм, рационализм, романтизм, реализм и т.д. Они также отражают некоторые исторические и социальные изменения, такие, как христианство, феминизм и т.д. Английские пословицы о любви и браке - это не только богатый источник лингвистической и культурной информации, но и ценный ресурс для межкультурной коммуникации и образования. Понимание взглядов на брак и любовь в разных культурах может способствовать развитию культурного интеллекта, а также послужить основой для создания корпуса пословиц.

Ключевые слова: английские пословицы; взгляды на брак; взгляды на любовь; культура; язык; кросс-культурный; корпус.

Ань Лань, Шань Шиго

Әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті, Алматы, Қазақстан

Ағылшын мақал-мәтелдеріндегі «неке» және «махаббат» ұғымдарына талдау жасау

Аңдатпа. Ағылшын мақал-мәтелдері ағылшын тілінде сөйлейтін елдер тұрғындарының даналығы мен тәжірибесін көрсететін қысқа және дана өрнектер. Бұл мақала осы мақал-мәтелдердің негізінде жатқан мәдени құндылықтар мен эмоционалдық көзқарастарды түсіну үшін ағылшын мақал-мәтелдерінде бейнеленген неке және махаббат көзқарастарын зерттейді. Кейбір мақал-мәтелдер неке мен махаббат бостандығын насихаттайды, махаббат алдын ала белгіленген және шынайы махаббат сирек кездеседі деп есептейді. Кейбіреулер махаббаттың соқырлығын атап өтіп, некенің шындықтан ояну рөлін атап өтеді, неке мен махаббатқа байсалды және парасатты көзқарасты насихаттайды, ең бастысы, некені ыждағаттылықпен басқарады. Бұл мақалада махаббат пен неке туралы кейбір ағылшын мақал-мәтелдері жинақталған және талданған. Бұл мақал-мәтелдер тек тілдік өрнек қана емес, мәдени даналықтың мұрасы. Бұл мақал-мәтелдер ағылшын тілінде сөйлейтін елдердегі адамдар арасындағы махаббат пен некенің күрделі және әртүрлі түсінігі мен тәжірибесін көрсетеді. Олар индивидуализм, рационализм, романтизм, реализм және т.б. сияқты кейбір ортақ тақырыптар мен құндылықтарды ашады. Олар сондай-ақ христиандық, феминизм және т.б. сияқты кейбір тарихи және әлеуметтік өзгерістерді көрсетеді. Махаббат пен неке туралы ағылшын мақал-мәтелдері тілдік және мәдени ақпараттың бай көзі ғана емес, сонымен қатар мәдениетаралық қарым-қатынас пен білім берудің құнды ресурсы болып табылады. Әртүрлі мәдениеттердегі неке және махаббат туралы көзқарастарды түсіну мәдени интеллекттің дамуына ықпал етеді, сонымен қатар мақал-мәтелдер корпусын жасауға негіз бола алады.

Түйін сөздер: ағылшын мақал-мәтелдері, неке туралы көзқарастар, махаббат туралы көзқарастар, мәдениет, тіл, мәдениетаралық, жақтау.

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Сведения об авторах:

Ань Лань – PhD, әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті, Алматы, Қазақстан.

Шань Шиго – PhD, әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ ұлттық университеті, Алматы, Қазақстан.

Ань Лань – PhD, Казахский национальный университет им. аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан.

Шань Шиго – PhD, Казахский национальный университет им. аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан.

An Lan – PhD, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Shan Shiguo – PhD, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan.



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