

PAREMIOLOGY AS A BRANCH OF LINGUISTICS: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS, METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS, AND CONTEMPORARY DIRECTIONS**Rustamova Nazokat Abdullayevna**

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Abstract

Paremiology, the scientific study of proverbs and related fixed expressions, constitutes a distinct and vital branch of linguistics with deep historical roots and contemporary relevance. This article examines the theoretical foundations, methodological frameworks, and disciplinary boundaries of paremiology within the broader linguistic sciences. Drawing upon historical and contemporary scholarship, the analysis explores the relationship between paremiology and phraseology, the structural and semantic properties of paremias, and the interdisciplinary connections between linguistic paremiology and folklore studies, cultural linguistics, and cognitive science. The study addresses contemporary debates regarding the definition and scope of paremiological units, including the status of tongue twisters and other peripheral genres. The article argues that paremiology offers unique insights into the relationship between language, culture, and cognition, serving as an essential methodology for understanding how linguistic communities encode collective wisdom, moral values, and cultural identity in conventionalized verbal forms.

Keywords

paremiology, phraseology, proverbs, fixed expressions, cultural linguistics, cognitive linguistics, linguistic folklore, paremias, proverb variation

Paremiology, derived from the Greek *paroimia* (parable, proverb) and *logos* (study, science), is formally defined as the scientific study of proverbs, idioms, and related fixed expressions within linguistic systems [Mieder, 2004]. As a branch of linguistics, paremiology occupies a distinctive position at the intersection of lexicology, semantics, pragmatics, and cultural studies, examining how linguistic communities encode collective wisdom, moral values, and cultural identity in conventionalized verbal forms [Akbarova, 2024].

The disciplinary status of paremiology has evolved significantly over the past century. While traditionally subsumed under folklore studies or literary analysis, contemporary paremiology has established itself as an autonomous linguistic discipline with systematic methodologies and theoretical frameworks [Gotthardt and Varga, 2015]. Mieder [2004] defines paremiology as "a science that studies proverbs and idioms in relation to their origin, use, social and cultural context" [Mieder, 2004], while Permyakov [1988] characterizes it as "a science that studies paremial units, i.e. proverbs, sayings and idioms" [Permyakov, 1988]. These definitions emphasize the dual focus on linguistic form and sociocultural function that distinguishes paremiology from purely literary or anthropological approaches to proverb study.

The fundamental significance of paremiology within linguistics stems from its capacity to reveal the "cultural soul of a language and all layers of knowledge cultivated by its speakers" [Akbarova, 2024]. By examining how proverbs reflect historical processes, semantic conceptions, and cultural relationships, paremiology provides insights into the cognitive and social dimensions of language use that are not accessible through other linguistic methodologies [Akbarova, 2024].

The history of paremiology extends to ancient civilizations, with systematic proverb collection documented in classical Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic traditions [Gotthardt and Varga, 2015]. In European scholarship, the formal establishment of paremiology as a scientific discipline is typically associated with the work of scholars such as Archer Taylor, whose 1931 monograph *The Proverb* established the foundational principles for modern proverb analysis [Taylor, 1931].

In German linguistics, paremiological studies trace their origins to medieval textual traditions, with proverbs and idioms documented in written sources since the early Middle Ages [Akbarova, 2024]. Tacitus's *Germania* provides early evidence of Germanic fixed expressions, while the medieval genres of Minnesang and Meistersang preserved rich collections of proverbial materials that reflect the life and thinking of German-speaking peoples [Akbarova, 2024]. The systematic study of these materials developed through the integration of Germanistics, folklore studies, psychology, and cognitive science, establishing paremiology as an indispensable subject within German linguistics [Akbarova, 2024].

Russian paremiology emerged as a distinct scholarly tradition in the early twentieth century, with significant contributions from scholars such as Permyakov, who developed structural-semantic classification systems for proverb analysis. The Russian tradition has emphasized the relationship between paremiology and cultural linguistics, examining how proverbs encode national character and worldview [Permyakov, 1988].

Contemporary paremiology has been transformed by the development of electronic corpora and computational analytical methods. Access to large electronic corpora has fostered myriad corpus-based phraseological studies that have contributed to the development of the discipline and its international status [Steyer, 2015]. These technological advances have enabled systematic analysis of proverb variation, distribution, and usage patterns across languages and cultures.

A fundamental theoretical issue in contemporary linguistics concerns the relationship between paremiology and phraseology. While some scholars treat paremiology as a subfield of phraseology, others argue for its disciplinary autonomy based on the distinctive properties of proverbial units [Zulu, 2022].

Phraseology, as the umbrella term, encompasses all word combinations presenting varying degrees of fixedness and idiomaticity, ranging from collocations to proverbs [Steyer, 2015]. Within this framework, paremiology focuses exclusively on the scientific study of proverbs as specific types of phrasemes characterized by sentential structure, semantic completeness, and pragmatic functions [Gotthardt and Varga, 2015].

The distinction between paremiology and phraseology rests on several criteria. Proverbs, as the primary object of paremiological study, are characterized by:

➤ **Sentential structure:** Proverbs constitute complete sentences rather than phrasal units [Nortojeva, 2024]

➤ **Semantic completeness:** They express complete propositions with truth-value status [Gotthardt and Varga, 2015]

➤ **Conventional wisdom:** They encode collectively recognized moral or practical knowledge [Taylor, 1931]

➤ **Fixed form:** They exhibit greater structural rigidity than other phrasemes [Nortojeva, 2024]

➤ **Oral tradition:** They are typically transmitted through oral rather than written channels [Isakova, 2026]

However, the boundaries between paremiology and phraseology remain contested. Recent research has expanded the scope of paremiology to include units traditionally considered peripheral, such as tongue twisters [Isakova, 2026]. Isakova [2026] argues that tongue twisters possess paremiological features including stability, reproducibility, cultural embeddedness, and

collective authorship, justifying their classification within paremiology despite their primarily phonetic function [Isakova, 2026].

Contemporary paremiology employs diverse theoretical frameworks drawn from cognitive linguistics, cultural linguistics, and pragmatics. These frameworks address different dimensions of proverb structure, meaning, and use.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory provides a foundation for understanding the semantic structure of proverbs. This approach, developed by Lakoff and Johnson [1980] and applied to proverb studies by scholars such as Dobrovolskij and Piirainen [2005], analyzes proverbs as linguistic manifestations of underlying conceptual metaphors. For example, the English proverb "There are two sides to every coin" instantiates the conceptual metaphor *DUALITY IS A COIN WITH TWO SIDES*, mapping abstract conceptual structure onto concrete physical experience [Nortojeva, 2024].

Ethnopragmatics examines how proverbs function as cultural scripts encoding community-specific norms and values. This framework, associated with the work of Anna Wierzbicka and Cliff Goddard, analyzes proverbs as reflections of cultural attitudes and communicative practices [Soshanguve, 2025]. Research applying ethnopragmatic methods to African, Asian, and European proverbs has revealed significant cross-cultural variation in proverb use and interpretation [Soshanguve, 2025].

Linguocultural Analysis investigates the relationship between proverbial expressions and cultural concepts. This approach, prominent in Russian and Eastern European scholarship, examines how proverbs encode cultural values, historical experiences, and worldview [Tolibov, 2020]. Studies applying linguocultural analysis have examined concepts such as "wisdom" across different cultural traditions, revealing both universal patterns and culture-specific features in proverbial expression [Tolibov, 2020].

Cognitive Linguistics approaches examine the mental representations and processing of proverbs. Research in this tradition investigates how proverbs are stored in mental lexicon, how they are processed during comprehension, and how they can be creatively manipulated in discourse [Nortojeva, 2024]. Studies of proverb variation demonstrate that while proverbs are conventionally fixed, they permit systematic modifications that reflect cognitive creativity and contextual adaptation [Nortojeva, 2024].

Corpus Linguistics methodologies have transformed empirical paremiology through the analysis of large electronic text collections. Corpus-based approaches enable systematic investigation of proverb frequency, distribution, collocation patterns, and variation across genres and contexts [Steyer, 2015]. These methods provide quantitative foundations for theoretical claims about proverb structure and use.

Premias exhibit distinctive structural and semantic properties that differentiate them from other linguistic units and justify their status as objects of specialized study.

Structural Properties. Proverbs typically exhibit:

Syntactic completeness: They constitute grammatically complete sentences capable of independent use [Gotthardt and Varga, 2015]

Rhythmic and prosodic regularity: Many proverbs employ parallelism, alliteration, and other phonological patterns that enhance memorability [Taylor, 1931]

Structural fixedness: While permitting variation, proverbs maintain core structural patterns that identify them as specific expressions [Nortojeva, 2024]

Brevity: They condense complex meanings into compact linguistic forms [Taylor, 1931]

Semantic Properties. The semantics of proverbs involves multiple layers:

Literal meaning: The compositional meaning derived from individual lexical items and syntactic structure

Figurative meaning: The non-compositional meaning arising from metaphorical, metonymic, or symbolic interpretation [Taylor, 1931]

Pragmatic meaning: The situational and interpersonal functions performed by proverb use in discourse [Mieder, 2004]

Cultural meaning: The values, beliefs, and cultural knowledge encoded in proverbial content [Tolibov, 2020]

The relationship between these semantic layers is complex and has been analyzed through various theoretical models. The "paremiological minimum" concept, developed by Permyakov and elaborated by subsequent scholars, identifies the core semantic components shared across proverb traditions [Permyakov, 1988]. Research on this minimum explores which proverbs are universally known within speech communities and which constitute essential cultural knowledge.

Contemporary paremiology debates the scope of its object of study, with particular attention to the status of peripheral categories beyond canonical proverbs.

Core Categories include:

Proverbs (*paroimia*): Complete sentences expressing conventional wisdom through metaphorical or literal statements [Mieder, 2004]

Sayings (*apothegmata*): Fixed expressions similar to proverbs but often more colloquial and less metaphorically complex [Mieder, 2004]

Aphorisms: Concise statements of general truth or principle, often associated with specific authors [Mieder, 2004]

Peripheral Categories whose status remains debated include:

Tongue twisters: While primarily phonetic exercises, recent research argues for their paremiological status based on stability, cultural transmission, and collective authorship [Isakova, 2026]. Isakova [2026] demonstrates that tongue twisters "bridge the gap between formal linguistic structures and the informal, playful nature of everyday speech" [Isakova, 2026].

Riddles: Questions or statements with veiled meanings, sharing with proverbs the features of traditional transmission and cultural embeddedness [Mieder, 2004]

Slogans and mottos: Brief expressions of principles or goals, which may acquire proverbial status through widespread use [Mieder, 2004]

Anti-proverbs: Humorous or ironic modifications of canonical proverbs, representing creative variations on traditional forms [Mieder, 2004]

The expansion of paremiology to include these peripheral categories reflects broader trends in linguistics toward recognition of the fluid boundaries between linguistic categories and the importance of studying language in its social and cultural contexts.

Paremiology maintains productive relationships with multiple disciplines, contributing to and benefiting from interdisciplinary exchange.

Folklore Studies represents the traditional disciplinary home of proverb research. Paremiology shares with folklore studies attention to oral tradition, cultural transmission, and the collective creation of verbal art. However, linguistic paremiology distinguishes itself through systematic attention to linguistic form and structure rather than purely cultural or aesthetic analysis [Akbarova, 2024].

Cultural Linguistics examines the relationship between language and cultural conceptualization. Paremiology contributes to this field by providing data on how cultural values are encoded in linguistic form. Studies of "wisdom" as a cultural concept across languages demonstrate how paremiological analysis illuminates cultural differences in the valuation of knowledge, experience, and practical intelligence [Tolibov, 2020].

Cognitive Science investigates mental processes underlying language use. Paremiological research contributes to cognitive science through analysis of how conventionalized expressions are stored, processed, and creatively manipulated in the mind. Studies of proverb variation reveal the interaction between fixed linguistic knowledge and creative cognitive processes [Nortojeva, 2024].

Anthropology examines the cultural contexts of human behavior. Paremiology provides anthropologists with tools for analyzing how communities encode and transmit cultural knowledge through language. The study of proverbs in traditional societies has illuminated social structures, value systems, and historical experiences [Soshanguve, 2025].

Literary Studies analyzes the use of proverbs in written texts. Research on proverbs in literature, mass media, and digital communication demonstrates the continued vitality of proverbial expression in contemporary culture [Gotthardt and Varga, 2015]. Studies of proverb use in political discourse, advertising, and social media reveal how traditional forms adapt to new communicative contexts.

Contemporary paremiology employs diverse methodologies corresponding to its theoretical frameworks.

Descriptive and Classificatory Methods involve the systematic collection, documentation, and classification of proverbs. Traditional paremiography (proverb collection) has been transformed by digital technologies, enabling creation of large-scale searchable databases [Gotthardt and Varga, 2015]. Classification systems address structural, semantic, thematic, and functional dimensions of proverb organization.

Structural-Semantic Analysis examines the internal organization of proverbs and their relationships to other linguistic units. This approach, developed in Russian scholarship, analyzes proverbs as syntactic-semantic structures with specific combinatorial properties [Permyakov, 1988].

Corpus-Based Analysis employs electronic text collections to investigate proverb use in authentic contexts. Corpus methods enable analysis of frequency, distribution, collocation, and variation patterns that are inaccessible through intuition or small-scale observation [Steyer, 2015].

Experimental Methods investigate proverb processing and comprehension through psycholinguistic techniques. These methods address questions of mental representation, processing difficulty, and the cognitive effects of figurative language.

Comparative and Contrastive Analysis examines proverbs across languages and cultures. Contrastive paremiology investigates similarities and differences in proverb traditions, addressing questions of universality and cultural specificity [Gotthardt and Varga, 2015]. This approach has been applied to translation studies, second language acquisition, and cross-cultural communication.

Paremiology continues to evolve in response to technological developments and changing theoretical priorities.

Digital Paremiology represents a major growth area, with projects developing electronic proverb collections, searchable databases, and computational analytical tools. These resources enable large-scale comparative studies and new forms of public engagement with proverb traditions [Soshanguve, 2025].

Cross-Cultural Paremiology addresses globalization and multiculturalism through systematic comparison of proverb traditions across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Research in this area contributes to intercultural understanding and the development of culturally responsive language education [Soshanguve, 2025].

Applied Paremiology explores practical applications of proverb research in education, language teaching, and cultural preservation. Studies demonstrate the value of proverbs for teaching cultural knowledge, developing pragmatic competence, and maintaining heritage languages [Akbarova, 2024].

Cognitive Paremiology investigates the neural and psychological bases of proverb processing. Neuroimaging studies and psycholinguistic experiments promise to illuminate how conventionalized expressions are represented and processed in the mind.

Paremiology, as a branch of linguistics dedicated to the study of proverbs and related fixed expressions, occupies a distinctive and valuable position within the language sciences. Its dual focus on linguistic form and cultural function enables insights into the relationship between language, cognition, and society that are not accessible through other methodological approaches.

The theoretical development of paremiology—from structural analysis through cognitive and cultural linguistic frameworks—reflects broader trends in linguistics toward integration of formal, psychological, and sociocultural perspectives. Contemporary paremiology's engagement with digital technologies, corpus methods, and interdisciplinary collaboration positions it for continued growth and relevance.

As global communication intensifies and cultural diversity becomes increasingly valued, paremiology offers essential tools for understanding how linguistic communities encode and transmit their collective wisdom. The study of proverbs reveals not only the formal properties of language but the values, beliefs, and historical experiences of the communities who create and use them. In this sense, paremiology fulfills the fundamental linguistic mission of understanding language as a human and cultural phenomenon.

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