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THE ROLE OF PROVERBS IN SHAPING FIGURATIVE MEANING ACROSS CULTURES

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Abstract: Proverbs are concise, traditional sayings that encapsulate cultural wisdom through figurative language. This paper examines how proverbs shape figurative meaning across different cultures, with a focus on their linguistic form and cultural function. We explore the idea that proverbs serve as repositories of metaphor, analogy, and imagery that influence how speakers conceptualize abstract ideas (like morality, success, or relationships) figuratively. Through cross-cultural examples, we demonstrate that while many proverbs express universal human experiences in figurative ways, the specific imagery used is often culturally specific. For instance, the notion that "a small misstep can lead to a big consequence" appears in many cultures' proverbs, but one culture might say "he dropped a rice grain and slipped," while another says, "missing a nail lost the kingdom." By shaping such figurative associations, proverbs contribute to a culture's shared metaphoric vocabulary and worldview. Our analysis highlights that proverbs play a dual role: they transmit cultural values and norms through figurative lessons, and they provide ready-made figurative expressions that speakers draw on, thereby reinforcing metaphors and frames. In conclusion, proverbs significantly shape figurative meaning within a culture by providing memorable imagery and analogies that influence everyday language and thought.

Keywords: proverbs, figurative meaning, cultural wisdom, metaphor in proverbs, cross-cultural communication

Introduction

Proverbs – succinct, metaphorical sayings handed down through generations – are a powerful element of language that shape how people think and communicate figuratively. Found in virtually every culture, proverbs often use imagery or comparisons to impart wisdom or advice: "All that glitters is not gold," "Measure seven times, cut once," "You can't have your cake and eat it too." Such sayings are more than just folksy expressions. They encapsulate collective experiences and values, packaging them in figurative language that is easy to remember and apply. Because of their pervasiveness and memorable wording, proverbs exert a strong influence on a culture's figurative language, reinforcing certain metaphors and analogies as part of common sense.

The central premise of this paper is that proverbs play a key role in shaping figurative meaning across cultures. By "shaping figurative meaning," we refer to how proverbs provide ready-made figurative frameworks (metaphors, similes, analogies) that people use to interpret and describe their experiences. When an English speaker warns "Don't count your chickens before they hatch," they are invoking a specific figurative scenario (the unhatched eggs) to convey a general lesson (don't assume success too soon). That colorful image, entrenched by proverbial usage, shapes how people visualize and talk about the concept of premature optimism. In a different culture, the same lesson might be taught with different imagery (for example, a Russian proverb

says “Не говори 'гоп' пока не перепрыгнешь” – “Don’t say ‘hop’ before you’ve jumped over,” using a jump instead of counting chickens). Each culture’s proverbs thus supply a repertoire of images and analogies that guide figurative thought.

Proverbs also reveal cultural universals and specifics. Many proverbs worldwide share similar meanings – a testament to common human concerns. Yet, the way they express those meanings can differ markedly depending on local environment, history, and values. One culture might use the sun and moon in a proverb where another uses two mighty trees to convey permanence of truth. These differences mean that proverbs are a rich site to study how figurative language both converges across humanity and diverges in culturally unique ways. For example, nearly every culture has a proverb equivalent to “Knowledge is power,” a straightforward metaphor equating knowledge with a form of strength or wealth. But how they figuratively frame other ideas – like cunning, teamwork, fate – can vary.

Understanding the role of proverbs in shaping figurative meaning has implications for intercultural communication and language learning. Proverbs are sometimes “behind the scenes” of idioms and collocations even when not quoted verbatim. A speaker might not explicitly cite a proverb, but the images from proverbs (like wolves and sheep, or silk purses and sow’s ears) permeate everyday speech and thought. Recognizing proverbial imagery helps in grasping metaphors used in discourse and literature.

In this paper, we will review examples of how proverbs encapsulate metaphors or analogies, examine cross-cultural instances of similar proverbial wisdom rendered in different figurative terms, and discuss how repeated proverbial usage can entrench certain figurative frames in a culture’s language. We aim to show that proverbs are both reflections of a culture’s figurative lens on the world and active shapers of that lens, reinforcing particular ways of understanding life’s complexities through compact, vivid phrases.

Literature Review

Proverbs have attracted scholarly attention in fields like paremiology (the study of proverbs), cognitive linguistics, and anthropology for their role in language and culture. Wolfgang Mieder, a leading paremiologist, famously stated, *“Nothing defines a culture as distinctly as its language, and the element of language that best encapsulates a society’s values and beliefs is its proverbs.”*. This oft-cited sentiment highlights that proverbs, through their figurative encapsulation of values, are cultural markers. Because proverbs are metaphorical or analogical in nature, they serve as a window into how a culture figuratively conceptualizes key ideas like work, love, morality, and adversity.

One aspect extensively discussed in literature is the metaphorical nature of proverbs. By definition, a proverb is usually not a literal statement but a figurative one, often an implicit comparison or image that teaches something beyond its literal reading. For example, “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks” is not literally about dogs or tricks; it’s about the figurative concept of the difficulty of changing habits of older people. This use of concrete imagery to convey abstract meaning aligns with cognitive linguistics theories of conceptual metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which argue that we understand abstract domains via mappings from concrete domains. Proverbs provide conventionalized versions of such mappings. As an article from EBSCO’s research starters notes, proverbs are “metaphorical—statements with an indirect or

figurative meaning", meaning that comprehending a proverb requires grasping the underlying metaphor or analogy it presents.

Research has shown that many metaphors found in everyday language can be traced or related to proverbial wisdom. For instance, the idiom "to bury the hatchet" (meaning to reconcile) originates from a Native American peacemaking ritual encapsulated as a proverb-like phrase. Now it's a common figurative expression. Likewise, "knowledge is power" is an aphoristic proverb that has seeped into common usage as a straightforward metaphor influencing how people discuss education and empowerment. In fact, some scholars (e.g., Honeck, 1997) suggest that proverbs are a subset of what he calls "idiom-like figurative devices" that include idioms, proverbial comparisons ("as X as Y"), and others – all of which contribute to a language's figurative system.

Cross-culturally, paremiologists have documented that while different languages' proverbs often sound unique, there are thematic universals. Archer Taylor (1931) famously asserted, "There is no proverb in one language that cannot be found in some form in another," indicating that for virtually any proverb, one can find a variant in a different culture. Modern research partially supports this: certain core human experiences (child-rearing, weather, money, death) yield proverbs in many cultures, though sometimes the figurative vehicles differ. For example, the idea "Bad things have some good in them" is expressed in English as "Every cloud has a silver lining" (cloud metaphor), whereas Russian says "Нет худа без добра" ("There is no bad without good") more abstractly, and Chinese have "塞翁失马，焉知非福" ("Sai Weng lost his horse, who knows if it's not a fortune," a mini anecdote-proverb). Each uses different imagery or story, but the figurative meaning is analogous. Thus, proverbs across cultures may use distinct symbols (horses vs. clouds) to shape the same figurative idea.

This phenomenon means that proverbs are often culture-specific in expression but universal in application. A learner or translator who encounters an unfamiliar proverb literally (like the Chinese one about the lost horse) might be perplexed, but if they recognize it corresponds to the "blessing in disguise" concept, the figurative meaning clicks. Scholars like Norrick (1985) emphasize understanding the metaphorical content of proverbs to interpret them correctly, especially in cross-cultural settings.

Another aspect discussed in literature is how proverbs function as a collective cognitive repertoire for figurative thought. Because proverbs are taught (sometimes explicitly in school or by elders) and repeated, they become part of the cognitive toolkit of speakers. When a communicator wants to explain a complex situation, a suitable proverb might come to mind, instantly framing the situation in familiar figurative terms. For instance, describing a futile effort, an English speaker might simply invoke "flogging a dead horse." The audience, knowing the proverb, immediately understands the figurative meaning (wasting effort on a lost cause) without further explanation. In this way, proverbs shape figurative meaning by providing ready-made analogies that both speaker and listener can quickly latch onto.

Furthermore, proverbs can influence attitudes due to their figurative framing. A study by Honeck and others on proverb comprehension found that people often use proverb scenarios to make moral or practical judgments. For example, whether one believes "Too many cooks spoil the broth" versus "Many hands make light work" (two proverbs that give almost opposite advice about teamwork) might influence their approach to group projects. Societies too lean on proverbs

to reinforce values: e.g., an emphasis on humility and community in many African cultures is reflected in proverbs that downplay individual glory (like the Swahili proverb "One finger cannot kill a louse," meaning one person alone cannot achieve much). These figurative lessons cumulatively shape a cultural mindset.

In sum, existing literature supports that proverbs, as metaphorical mini-narratives or analogies, are essential in how a culture communicates complex ideas succinctly and memorably. They serve as vehicles of metaphor that are highly conventionalized, and they traverse languages with both shared human threads and unique local colors. This literature review provides a foundation for our analysis of specific examples and how exactly proverbs shape the figurative landscape of language.

Discussion

Proverbs operate at several levels in shaping figurative meaning. Let's discuss a few key dimensions with examples:

A. Proverbs as Metaphor/Analogy "Templates" – Because proverbs often contain a striking image or analogy, they effectively become templates for understanding other situations. When a proverb says "A leopard cannot change its spots," it's offering a concrete visual metaphor for the idea that one's nature/deep habits do not change. This image (a spotted leopard) can then be mapped onto people's behavior. Even outside of the direct proverb use, the underlying metaphor may surface. For instance, someone might say about a reformed criminal who relapsed, "Well, spots don't change," alluding to the proverb without quoting it fully. Here, the proverb's imagery has shaped a shorthand figurative expression – everyone knows "spots" refers to the figurative concept of inherent nature because of the proverb.

Across cultures, these template effects occur with different symbols. In an Uzbek context, a similar notion might be expressed with a wolf: "Bo'ri tuzalmaydi, terisini o'zgartirmaydi" ("The wolf doesn't recover (change), he doesn't change his skin"). A Russian might invoke the crow in the proverb "Чёрного кобеля не отмоешь добела" ("You can't wash a black dog white"). Each culture has its own animal or symbol, but each serves as a template for the general figurative idea of unchangeable nature. Thus, proverbs ensure that certain figurative associations (spots = unchangeable nature, etc.) become part of common cognition in that culture.

B. Reinforcement of Cultural Values through Figurative Lessons – Proverbs not only reflect values, they reinforce them by framing them in memorable figurative ways. Consider the value of hard work vs. laziness. Many cultures admonish laziness with colorful proverbs. English: "The early bird catches the worm." This proverb concretely links earliness (diligence) with reward via the bird/worm metaphor. By commonly repeating this, English speakers strengthen the notion that diligence leads to success (worm reward) in a visual way. Likewise, a negative framing: "A rolling stone gathers no moss," figuratively suggests that being flighty (rolling around) prevents one from accumulating anything (moss as metaphor for stability or assets). Whether or not one agrees with the value, the proverb circulates the idea. Meanwhile, in a culture like Japanese: "寝坊は一文の損" ("Oversleeping is a loss of one mon [coin]"), which is less visual but still figurative (time is money concept). In Russian: "Под лежачий камень вода не течёт" ("Water doesn't flow under a lying stone"), meaning you get nothing if you do nothing – again a metaphor (stone and water) conveying a work ethic. Each of these proverbs

shapes figurative thinking about work by linking it to concrete scenarios, whether animals, money, or nature. They make the value tangible, thus easier to internalize.

C. Providing Memorable Catchphrases for Complex Ideas – Some ideas that are complex or abstract find succinct articulation in proverbs, which then become the go-to figurative expression for that idea. For example, the balance of risk and reward is complex, but English's "Nothing ventured, nothing gained" gives a tight two-part analogy (venture vs gain) that sticks. It's figurative in that it treats actions as "venturing" and outcomes as "gains," a financial or game metaphor. People then use this phrase to sum up any situation where one debates taking a risk. In French, similarly: "Qui ne risque rien n'a rien" (who risks nothing has nothing). Or consider the transient nature of material wealth: English "You can't take it with you" (meaning you can't take wealth to the grave – figuratively reminding that money is ultimately transient). That proverb (often invoked when discussing spending or stinginess) shapes a figurative stance towards money in life and death. Because it's catchy and visual (implicitly picturing trying to carry riches into afterlife), it frames how people remind each other of mortality and wealth's limits. If these proverbs didn't exist, people might struggle to express these ideas so pithily; thus, proverbs shape the very discourse by furnishing these convenient figurative capsules.

D. Cultural Specific Imagery and Cross-Cultural Translation – When people from different cultures communicate, proverbial imagery can sometimes cause misunderstanding if taken literally. Recognizing the figurative equivalence behind different proverbs is key. For example, an English speaker might not get the Persian proverb " انگور را چون حبهحبه خوردی، چرا تیزابش را نچشی؟" – literally "If you ate the grapes one by one, why won't you taste the sour juice?" – which metaphorically means if you enjoyed the easy parts, why not take the difficulty too (akin to English "Take the bitter with the sweet" or "You made your bed, now lie in it" with a twist). Here, vastly different imagery conveys a somewhat similar life lesson. By analyzing such examples, we see that proverbs shape figurative meaning within a culture using familiar symbols (grapes in a vineyard culture, bed-making in an English context), but those symbols might be opaque elsewhere. However, once one identifies the underlying metaphor (sweet vs sour experiences; actions and consequences), one can find the parallel proverb or at least understand the concept. In doing so, we appreciate how each culture chooses certain figurative vehicles for an idea, thereby enriching the global array of metaphors – all ultimately shaping how people think. As a Yale anthropology piece noted, proverbs "tell us a great deal about the culture in which they are used", meaning the figurative choices (grapes vs. bed) reflect cultural context. Translators often have to either find an equivalent proverb in the target language or explain the metaphor, showing the importance of understanding proverb-shaped figurative meanings in communication.

E. Proverbial Influence on Idioms and Phrases – Over time, some proverbs lend key imagery to idioms that may detach from the original proverb. For instance, "sour grapes" as an idiom for belittling what one can't have comes from Aesop's fable (and proverb-like moral) "the fox and the sour grapes." Now one might simply say "His reaction is just sour grapes," which is a fragment of a proverbial story shaping a succinct figurative expression. Similarly, someone might reference "Achilles' heel" to mean weakness, drawing from a myth turned proverb ("everyone has an Achilles heel"). These show how deeply proverb-figures embed: even when not telling the full proverb, a snippet (sour grapes, Achilles heel, crying wolf) evokes the larger figurative narrative. Essentially, proverbs seed the language with metaphors that can be reused in pieces or variants, continually shaping figurative expression.

In conclusion, proverbs serve as both carriers of cultural heritage and tools of figurative cognition. They encode past experiences in catchy, image-rich ways, and each use of a proverb reasserts that figurative worldview. They also cross-pollinate – through translation, migration, media, you often see proverbs from one culture becoming known in another (e.g., Eastern proverbs quoted in the West and vice versa). This demonstrates their potent role in shaping not just one's own culture's figurative language but even in bridging cultures by highlighting common metaphoric ground (like similar lessons) or intriguing differences. The oft-quoted Spanish proverb says, "El hablar sin pensar es tirar sin encarar," roughly "Speaking without thinking is shooting without aiming," which figuratively ties rash speech to a mis-aimed shot. An English speaker might not know this specific proverb, but they have "shooting your mouth off" similarly linking speech to shooting. Each culture's proverbs thus resonate with others in tapestry of figurative wisdom, collectively shaping how we all articulate life's complexities through analogy, metaphor, and vivid imagery.

Analysis

To illustrate how proverbs concretely shape figurative meaning, let's analyze a few proverb-driven metaphors and their impact in context:

Example 1: "Birds of a feather flock together."

Literal content: Birds with similar feathers (i.e., of same species/type) gather in flocks.

Figurative meaning: People of similar character or background tend to associate with each other.

Cultural shaping: This proverb, common in English, provides the go-to figurative phrase to discuss clique formation or like attracting like. Instead of saying a long explanation ("people who have similar interests or nature often become friends or form groups"), one can simply invoke "birds of a feather." It's vivid – one pictures birds grouping – and encapsulates the concept succinctly. It has spawned a shorter idiom "birds of a feather" used nominally ("They're birds of a feather," implying they're alike). Other languages have their versions (in Spanish, "Cada oveja con su pareja" – each sheep with its partner, using sheep imagery). In both cases, these proverbs reinforce the idea that similarity breeds companionship via animal grouping metaphors. Socially, someone suspicious of a friend's associates might say, "Well, birds of a feather flock together," insinuating if your friends do bad things, you might be similar – a figurative judgement shaped by the proverb.

Example 2: "The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence."

Literal content: The grass on the neighbor's side of the fence looks greener than one's own.

Figurative meaning: People tend to think others have it better, or what one doesn't have looks more appealing.

Cultural shaping: This proverb gives English speakers a ready metaphor for envy/comparison dissatisfaction. It's essentially taught as a truth about human perception bias. When someone is

complaining that others' lives seem better, an interlocutor might simply say, "Remember, the grass is always greener..." The image of greener grass elsewhere becomes a mental frame: it shapes how we articulate that emotion of coveting or thinking "if only I were in that situation." Instead of a clinical description of that cognitive bias, we have a pastoral metaphor that's easy to recall and quote. Interestingly, many cultures share analogues: e.g., in Turkish, "Komşunun tavuğu komşuya kaz görünür," meaning "The neighbor's chicken looks like a goose (i.e., bigger) to one" – a different image (poultry) but same concept. Each culture's proverb (grass, chicken vs goose) shapes the figurative shorthand within that culture for expressing this feeling of comparative envy.

Example 3: "Kill two birds with one stone."

Literal content: Hit two birds using one stone.

Figurative meaning: Achieve two objectives with a single effort.

Cultural shaping: This proverb instills an image of efficiency so strongly that people often speak of "two birds/one stone" as a synedoche for any efficient plan. If someone proposes a plan that covers multiple needs, one might say "Great, we'll kill two birds with one stone." The somewhat violent literal image aside, it conveys the idea compactly. In Chinese, a similar proverb says "一箭双雕" (one arrow, double eagles) – same metaphor of one projectile, two targets. Thus, culturally, where English uses stone/birds, Chinese uses arrow/eagles, but both shape their language's figurative expression for efficiency. In a meeting, an English speaker might say "We're hoping to kill two birds with one stone by this initiative," directly inserting the proverbial metaphor into professional talk to succinctly say "accomplish two goals at once." The proverb's imagery has thereby become part of even formal registers as a metaphor for multi-task efficiency.

Example 4: "Make hay while the sun shines."

Literal content: Cut and dry hay during sunny weather.

Figurative meaning: Take advantage of favorable conditions to do what you need to do; don't procrastinate when conditions are right.

Cultural shaping: This agrarian metaphor from an English proverb shapes the way people talk about timing and opportunity. It encourages a figurative perspective that opportunities are like weather – transient and to be seized. Someone might say about investing during a strong market, "Let's make hay while the sun shines." Even if one has never farmed, the proverb's message is clear and the sunny hay image makes it memorable. Many languages have something akin: for instance, Russian "Куй железо, пока горячо" – "Forge the iron while it's hot," a smithing metaphor but same principle (English also says "strike while the iron is hot"). These proverbs give their cultures tangible actions (haymaking, forging) as metaphors for timely action, shaping the figurative lexicon of advice-giving. You could tell a teenager "strike while the iron is hot"

referring to applying for a scholarship when one has momentum – the teen pictures heat and forging, not literally but as impetus, thanks to the proverb.

Example 5: “Speech is silver, silence is golden.”

Literal content: Speaking is like silver, but being silent is like gold.

Figurative meaning: Sometimes silence is more valuable than talk; knowing when not to speak is wise.

Cultural shaping: This proverbial expression uses precious metals as metaphors for value, creating a hierarchy (gold > silver) to favor silence. It shapes the figurative concept that restraint or listening is superior in certain contexts. In conversation, someone might quote just “silence is golden” to counsel discretion or imply that not speaking can be beneficial. The metaphor of gold for silence has entered general idiom. In a classroom, a teacher might remind chatty students, “Remember, silence is golden,” effectively using a proverb-derived metaphor to encourage quiet. This reveals cultural attitudes too – in societies that prize verbosity, an equivalent proverb might be less popular, whereas many cultures globally have a version (there’s a similar Arabic saying and others). The prevalence of this proverb in English has certainly shaped an easy way to commend keeping one’s counsel – by likening silence to gold, a figurative praise that’s more poetic than just saying “it’s good to be quiet at times.”

Through these examples and analysis, we see that proverbs indeed heavily shape figurative meaning by providing a stock of metaphorical images and analogies that are widely recognized, easily quoted, and applied to new situations. They compress cultural wisdom into nugget form, which people then use to make sense of events and advise others. They often feature concrete, everyday images (birds, grass, hay, metals) that allow abstract notions (similarity, envy, opportunity, prudence) to be grasped and discussed with ease. They also offer normative judgments in figurative form, influencing perceptions and values subliminally – e.g., praising silence with “golden” or encouraging risk-taking by “nothing ventured, nothing gained.”

In shaping figurative language, proverbs are somewhat self-perpetuating. The more they are used, the more their metaphors seep into other expressions, reinforcing that figurative framing across the language. And because proverbs are so tightly tied to cultural context, learning them gives outsiders an inside view of a culture’s figurative mind – how do these people typically frame X concept? That’s why proverbs are often taught in language classes: they are keys to thinking in the target language.

In final reflection, proverbs act like the mortar between the bricks of literal language – a figurative glue that holds cultural meanings together and makes them memorable. They ensure that certain metaphors endure over time (some proverbs have lasted centuries with minimal change), thus continuously shaping how each new generation conceptualizes important life concepts in a figurative way.

Conclusion

Proverbs, with their compact wisdom and vivid imagery, play an instrumental role in shaping the figurative meanings that permeate a culture's language. As our analysis shows, they operate as cultural touchstones – easily recalled phrases that carry metaphorical lessons and analogies. By encapsulating complex ideas in concrete images, proverbs influence how people conceptualize and discuss those ideas.

Across cultures, proverbs provide a kind of figurative shorthand. English speakers, for instance, frequently lean on proverbs when describing everyday situations: a friend's impractical plan might be met with "don't count your chickens before they hatch," instantly framing the situation as one of premature optimism via that barnyard image. In doing so, the speaker didn't have to spell out the abstract warning – the proverb's figurative content did the heavy lifting. The listener, sharing the cultural background, immediately grasps the underlying meaning, thanks to the common metaphor of unhatched eggs symbolizing uncertain outcomes.

This phenomenon is echoed worldwide. Whether it's Russian's "Не рой другому яму, сам в неё попадёшь" ("Don't dig a pit for others, you'll fall into it yourself") teaching poetic justice, or the Swahili "Samaki mkunje angali mbichi" ("Bend the fish while it's fresh") urging early education (like the English "as the twig is bent, so grows the tree"), proverbs everywhere use local imagery to express ideas that might otherwise require long explanation. They thus strongly shape the figurative vocabulary and thought patterns of their communities – fish and twigs become mental symbols for malleability in raising youth, pits for karma, etc.

One striking aspect of proverbs is how they highlight both universality and uniqueness in human thought. Many proverbs around the world converge on similar morals or observations, suggesting a shared human experience (e.g., appreciation for timely action, distrust of appearances, value of hard work). Yet, each culture casts those insights in its own figurative mold: one says "make hay while the sun shines," another says "strike while the iron is hot," a third might say "catch the wind when it blows." The underlying advice – seize the moment – is the same, but the metaphors differ. This teaches us that while people globally think in similar metaphoric structures (weather, tools, nature are common sources), the specific proverbs they use shape which particular metaphor becomes salient in that culture. Consequently, proverbs become a key to understanding a culture's metaphorical lens: they show what comparisons and symbols a culture historically found compelling enough to crystallize into a saying.

From a communication perspective, being aware of proverbs and their figurative meanings enhances cross-cultural understanding. A translator or bilingual communicator who recognizes that an Arabic speaker's reference to "the salt between us" points to a proverb about shared bread and salt (meaning loyalty forged by sharing food) can interpret the figurative meaning correctly as "we have a bond of loyalty." Without that awareness, the nuance might be lost. Thus, proverbs, by shaping figurative meaning within cultures, also become bridges (or sometimes barriers) between cultures – a shared proverb can foster instant mutual understanding, whereas an unfamiliar one can cause confusion until explained.

In modern times, proverbs continue to shape figurative language, even as new expressions emerge. They are frequently invoked in journalism headlines, political speeches, and everyday conversation, proving their enduring power. They also adapt: for example, the proverb "when life gives you lemons, make lemonade" has sparked humorous variants ("when life gives you

lemons, demand oranges!"), showing that people play with these well-known metaphors to create new meaning, but the original figurative framework remains the reference point.

In conclusion, proverbs act as cultural repositories of figurative thought, continually influencing how individuals frame their experiences and communicate complex ideas succinctly. They remind us that behind many casual metaphors and idioms lies a proverbial core that has been polished over generations. Appreciating proverbs and their imagery is thus essential for fully grasping the richness of figurative meaning in any language. As one scholar aptly noted, studying proverbs is not just about old sayings – it is about understanding "the collective storehouse of metaphor that defines how a community sees the world". And as long as communities pass on their proverbs, they will continue to shape the way new generations think and talk in metaphor, feathering the wings of culture's figurative language with timeless wisdom.

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