



# THE ROLE OF FOLKLORE ELEMENTS IN THE PRESERVATION AND EVOLUTION OF FOLK MEDICINE TERMINOLOGY IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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**Abstract:** *This research article investigates the linguistic and cultural mechanisms through which folklore genres specifically proverbs, legends, incantations, and folk songs serve as repositories for folk medicine terminology in the English and Uzbek languages. While modern medical terminology has become increasingly standardized and Latinized in the West, and Russified or internationalized in Uzbekistan, archaic and culture-specific healing terms continue to thrive within the "living archive" of folklore. This study employs a comparative-historical analysis to examine how paremiological units (proverbs) and narrative folklore preserve lexical units related to herbalism, spiritual healing, and anatomy that have otherwise disappeared from active lexicon. The research addresses a significant gap in current linguo-culturological studies: while the derivational and etymological aspects of these terms have been studied, their functional existence within oral tradition remains under-explored.*

*By analyzing data drawn from English folklore anthologies (such as the Anglo-Saxon Nine Herbs Charm) and Uzbek oral traditions (Alpomish dastan, folk taboos), the study reveals that folklore does not merely preserve these terms but facilitates their semantic evolution. The findings demonstrate that English folklore often encases medical terms in rhyme for mnemonic purposes, whereas Uzbek folklore frequently embeds them within spiritual or ritualistic contexts (shamanism/bakhshi traditions). The article concludes that folklore elements act as a stabilizing factor, preventing the complete obsolescence of historic medical lexicon, and suggests that lexicographers must rely on these oral sources to compile comprehensive bilingual dictionaries of folk medicine.*

**Keywords:** *Folk medicine, terminology, ethnolinguistics, comparative linguistics, paremiology, English folklore, Uzbek folklore, semantic evolution, lexical preservation, archaisms.*

## INTRODUCTION.

Language is not merely a system of signs but a repository of a nation's historical experience and cultural memory. One of the most ancient and culturally rich layers of vocabulary in any language is the terminology of folk medicine. This lexicon, formed over centuries of empirical observation and spiritual practice, reflects the unique worldview of a people. However, with the advent of evidence-based scientific medicine, many traditional terms face the threat of obsolescence. In this context, folklore serves as a crucial linguistic vehicle that preserves these lexical units, shielding them from the erosive effects of time and standardization.

The study of folk medicine terminology has gained traction in recent years, with scholars analyzing the structural and morphological aspects of these words. For instance, recent research has extensively covered the derivational patterns of lexical units related to folk medicine in English and Uzbek, highlighting how suffixes and compound words form the basis of this terminology<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, the etymological roots of these terms have been traced, revealing a rich tapestry of cultural borrowing and historical evolution<sup>22</sup>.

Despite this progress, there remains a gap in understanding the functional environment of these terms. How do proverbs (paremiology), songs, and legends keep these words alive when they are no longer used in hospitals? This article aims to address this by conducting a comparative analysis of English and Uzbek folklore. The English tradition, influenced by Celtic, Germanic, and later Greco-Roman sources, offers a contrast to the



Uzbek tradition, which represents a synthesis of Turkic shamanism (Tengrism) and Islamic medical heritage (Avicenna).

By examining the role of folklore elements, we can better understand the cultural specificity of medical terminology<sup>3</sup> and how these terms evolve semantically within the oral tradition. This aligns with the broader goal of creating a comprehensive bilingual dictionary of folk medicine<sup>4</sup>, which requires deep contextual understanding.

**Materials and Methods.** This study utilizes a comparative-typological method to analyze lexical units selected from English and Uzbek folklore texts. The primary materials include:

Paremiological dictionaries: Collections of proverbs and sayings in both languages.

Folklore anthologies: Texts of English ballads, nursery rhymes, and charms (e.g., Lacnunga), and Uzbek dastans (epics), terma (songs), and irims (superstitions).

Existing lexicographical research: Previous studies on the derivation and etymology of these terms<sup>5</sup>.

The analysis proceeds in three stages:

Identification: Extracting medical terms (names of diseases, healers, plants, body parts, instruments) from folklore texts.

Contextual Analysis: Determining the semantic load of the term within the folklore unit (e.g., is the term used literally or metaphorically?).

Comparative Analysis: Contrasting the preservation mechanisms in English versus Uzbek.

### 3. Main Part: Folklore as a Preservative Mechanism

3.1. Paremiology: Proverbs as Medical Archives. Proverbs are arguably the most stable form of folklore, acting as "miniature encyclopedias" of traditional knowledge. In both English and Uzbek, proverbs preserve the names of medicinal plants and preventative concepts.

In English, the famous proverb "An apple a day keeps the doctor away" is a linguistic fossil preserving the concept of preventative dietetics. However, older, less common proverbs preserve specific phytonyms. For example, "He that would live for aye, Must eat Sage in May." Here, the plant name Sage (*Salvia officinalis*) is preserved not just as a botanical term but as a life-extending agent. The rhyme (aye/May) acts as a mnemonic device, locking the medical term into the language even if the medical practice fades.

In Uzbek, proverbs play an even more vital role due to the strong oral tradition. The proverb "Dard borki, darmon bor" (Where there is pain, there is a cure) preserves the Persian-Tajik loanword darmon (cure/remedy), which competes with the Arabic shifo and the modern davolash. Furthermore, specific treatments are encoded: "Sarimsoq – ming dardga malham" (Garlic is a balm for a thousand ills). Here, the term malham (balm/ointment) is stabilized. As noted in previous studies on the rich tapestry of folk medicine terminology<sup>6</sup>, such terms reflect the specific cultural reliance on accessible herbal remedies.

3.2. Incantations and Ritual Terminology. A significant divergence appears when analyzing incantations. English folklore retains traces of Anglo-Saxon "leechcraft" (healing magic). Terms like "elf-shot" (sudden shooting pain, historically attributed to elves) were once medical diagnoses. While "elf-shot" has evolved into a metaphorical or fantasy term in modern English, folklore texts preserve its original medical semantics.

In Uzbek, the preservation of terms related to Kinna (the evil eye) and Dam solish (spiritual breathing/healing) is robust. The term Isiriq (*Peganum harmala*) is ubiquitous in folklore. It is not merely a plant name but a culturally loaded concept synonymous with spiritual protection. Unlike English, where terms like "mandrake" have become largely mythological, Uzbek terms like isiriq, chilonjiyda, and andiz retain active semantic value in rural areas because the folklore rituals (burning isiriq) are still practiced. This highlights the cultural specificity<sup>7</sup> where folklore and daily life remain intertwined.

3.3. The Evolution of Semantics in Folklore. Folklore does not just freeze terms; it evolves them.

English: The term "Humor" (as in the four humors: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, black bile) has evolved from a strictly medical term in medieval folklore to a psychological characteristic (mood), and finally to "something funny."



Uzbek: The term "Tabib" (healer). In classical folklore (e.g., Alpomish), the tabib is a highly respected figure of wisdom. In modern semi-folklore or anecdotes (askiya), the term can sometimes carry a connotation of a "quack" or uncertified doctor compared to the modern "doktor" or "vrach."

This semantic shift supports the findings of comparative-historical analysis<sup>8</sup>, which suggests that as society modernizes, folk terminology often undergoes a degradation of status or a shift to metaphorical usage.

Findings. The comparative analysis reveals distinct patterns in how English and Uzbek folklore elements classify and preserve medical terminology. The following table illustrates the distribution of folk medicine terms found across different folklore genres in the analyzed corpus.

**Table 1: Distribution of Folk Medicine Terminology in Folklore Genres**

| Folklore Genre                | English Terminology Focus                                                  | Uzbek Terminology Focus                                                                       | Preservation Mechanism    |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Proverbs (Paremiology)</b> | Dietetics, preventative advice, seasonal herbs (e.g., "feed a cold").      | Herbal remedies ( <i>giyohlar</i> ), moral aspects of health, inevitability of cure.          | Rhyme & Rhythm (Mnemonic) |
| <b>Incantations / Charms</b>  | Archaic names of diseases ( <i>wen, tetter</i> ), magical healing actions. | Spiritual healing ( <i>kuf-suf, dam solish</i> ), exorcism terminology ( <i>jin, pari</i> ).  | Ritual context            |
| <b>Folk Songs / Ballads</b>   | Narrative descriptions of wounds, poisons, and magical potions.            | Praise of nature's healing power, metaphorical use of body parts (somatic lexis).             | Emotional resonance       |
| <b>Legends / Epics</b>        | Names of mythological healers, magical tools.                              | <i>Tabib</i> figures, <i>Luqmoni Hakim</i> references, miraculous cures ( <i>Obi hayot</i> ). | Cultural archetypes       |

Analysis of Findings: Quantitative Difference: Uzbek folklore contains a higher frequency of religious-medical terminology (*shifo, dam, dua*) due to the integration of Islamic healing into daily life. English folklore separates the "magical" (charms) from the "practical" (herbal proverbs) more distinctly.

Derivational Stability: As noted in studies regarding derivation of lexical units<sup>9</sup>, folklore tends to preserve simple root words or archaic compounds. Complex modern derivatives are rarely found in folklore. For example, Uzbek folklore preserves the root *o't* (herb/fire) in various compounds that have disappeared from standard literary Uzbek.

Syntactic Function: In folklore, medical terms often function as the subject of the sentence (agents of power), whereas in medical discourse, they are objects (things to be studied). This aligns with the syntactic features of folk terminology<sup>10</sup>.

5. Conclusion. The research confirms that folklore elements are indispensable for the preservation and evolution of folk medicine terminology in both English and Uzbek.

Firstly, folklore acts as a "cold storage" for lexemes that have been displaced by scientific terminology. In English, this preserves Anglo-Saxon roots against the influx of Latin/Greek medical terms. In Uzbek, it preserves Turkic and Persian roots against the influence of Russian and international terminology.

Secondly, the study highlights a divergence: English folklore tends to preserve these terms as linguistic artifacts or superstitions, whereas Uzbek folklore maintains them as active functional vocabulary in rural and traditional settings.

Finally, this research supports the ongoing work in comparative-historical analysis<sup>11</sup> and emphasizes the need for lexicographers to include folklore citations in dictionaries. Without the context provided by proverbs and legends, the translation of folk medicine terminology remains incomplete and culturally hollow. Future



research should focus on the lexicographical principles of compiling a specialized bilingual dictionary that incorporates these folklore elements.

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