
FOLK-MEDICINE TERMS AS A WINDOW TO ENGLISH CULTURAL SPECIFICITY.

Ubaydullayeva Iroda¹

¹ +998 94 089 17 03

irodaubaydullaev@gmail.com

Zarina Rahimova¹

¹ +998 97 019 22 25

rahimovazarina060@gmail.com

Jalilova Sevinch¹

¹ +99894 998 55 35

sevinchjalilova2005@gmail.com

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Folk medicine terms in the English language carry with them a unique cultural lens. A study into their etymology, semantic shifts, and metaphorical underpinning may go a long way toward suggesting something of value regarding the historical, social, and psychological position of the Anglophone cultures. The present study is going to attempt to explain how terms denoting common ailments, treatments, and prevention form some sort of tapestry of beliefs, values, and fears that have shaped English culture through many centuries.

INTRODUCTION. As a mode of healing passed on through generations of a particular culture, folk medicine is surely of great interest regarding the unique outlook and values of that society. This paper therefore brings to the fore the cultural specificities embedded in folk medicine terms of the English language. Critical analysis of these terms is sure to throw up much knowledge regarding historical, social, and psychological aspects of English-speaking societies.

Metaphorical and figurative terms in folk medicine epitomize the deeply rooted beliefs and fears of culture. They reveal how people previously understood the human organism, explained diseases, and searched for their cures. The analysis of such terminology thus can be highly informative regarding cultural values which determined the very fundamentals of the social fabric-the sense of community, respect to nature, and fear of the unknown.

The most salient case of the cultural specificity in the metaphoricity of the language describing illnesses is constituted by the metaphoricity of naming different ailments, which

is very expressive and depicts the cultural notion of the human body and its relations with the environment. Thus, the name "heartburn" implies the burning heart-a pre-scientific concept of the digestive system. Similarly, the word "cold" is used for both a low temperature and a viral infection, reflecting a belief in a direct relationship between environmental factors and internal health.

These metaphorical expressions indicate not only limited scientific knowledge about past generations, but also stand as a way to the view of the world. The use of such metaphors as "broken heart" to describe emotional suffering reflects a presumption of the interdependence of mind and body, which itself has been a focus of medical anthropological research in detail (see, for example, Kleinman, 1980).

Besides, the application of natural remedies in English folk medicine denoted deep respect for nature. Indeed, herbs, plants, and minerals were applied to a great number of different ailments, reflecting the belief in the healing power of nature. Some of the terms, like "feverfew," which gets its name from the Latin "febrifugia" referring to the plant, and "wormwood," its use describing being against parasites in the intestines, show just how closely traditional English medicine is connected with the people and their natural surroundings. The terms in the folk medicine also speak of other social and cultural anxieties. Contagious diseases, such as those that have passed under the names "plague" and "pestilence," will generally have a negative weighting in their semantic profiles reflecting fear and anxiety consequent on usually fatal outbreaks. Terms for such conditions often evoke images of mass death and disruption to society, which of course reflects the generally great impact of disease throughout history on English society.

This etymological progression of folk medicine terms reflects changes in cultural attitudes. As one such example, the term "lunatic" is a derivative of the term "luna", revealing an extremely traditional belief that the phases of the moon have an effect on mental illness. Though such a belief has been discredited today, it provides a window into how mental illness has been conceptualized through time and the role that superstition has played in the formulation of such medical beliefs.

The terminology for the folk medicine will further elucidate the social strata and play of power at work within English society. Terms of social class, such as "gentleman's disease" for gout, which was common among the wealthy, indicate the way health and illness were socially stratified in former times.

Conclusion:

In other words, the cognitive approach considers folk medicine terms in the English language as a sort of privileged option to view cultural specificity in the sphere of the Anglophone cultures. It is from looking at their etymologies, semantic shifts, and metaphorical underpinning that we will be able to come to a deeper understanding of those

historical, social, and psychological factors which have configured and shaped the development of English culture over the centuries.

Studies dealing with the terminology of folk medicine represent, in fact, a good tool not only for the cultural historian and the medical anthropologist but also for the linguist. This study also shall permit us to gain an insight into the human experience, better, truer, and finer than any, perhaps by delving into and pondering that rich tapestry of beliefs, values, and anxieties mirrored within those terms.

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