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Comparative Analysis of the Concept of Death in Turkish and Japanese Proverbs

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Abstract

Death constitutes the last part of the life cycle. Although both being born and living are welcomed with joy by human beings, death brings pain and eternal unhappiness. This paper focuses on revealing how the concept of death, which contains deep sadness, is handled in Turkish and Japanese proverbs. Proverbs are stereotypes passed from one generation to another and are very important in reflecting the lifestyles and ways of thinking of the societies to which they belong. Proverbs are essential in transferring cultural knowledge because our ancestors created them with the accumulation and experience of many years. In this study, comparative analysis method is employed. Total of 127 proverbs, including 80 Turkish proverbs and 47 Japanese proverbs, are examined. They are grouped into death has causes, death as an unknown end, death has time to occur, grief for death, death is not welcomed, death occurs one time, death as a bad situation, understanding the value of things and people after death, death and animal, after death there is no meaning, comparing the wrong things with death, death relates to funerals and religious rituals, death is a relief and escape, and contradicting proverbs. As a conclusion, although Turkish and Japanese people have different cultural backgrounds, it is seen in proverbs that they have similar cultural values to death. All categories as mentioned above have similarities except the grief for death seen in Turkish proverbs but not in Japanese. The religious rituals that relate to death differ as both (Turks and Japanese) have different religions. Although there are expressions about Islam in Turkish

proverbs, expressions about Buddhism are seen in Japanese proverbs.

Keywords: Death, Turkish, Japanese, Proverb, Comparative Analysis

Introduction

No matter how normal it is to be born and live, the concept of “death” is considered a bad situation due to the end of life. It is a concept that is avoided in conversation. This study will discuss and analyze the concept of death in Turkish and Japanese proverbs. As a result of the analysis, the study aims to unveil the perspectives and beliefs of Turks and Japanese regarding the concept of death. Both societies have different belief systems and cultures, which is also reflected in the proverbs.

Proverbs give information about the way of thinking, living, and beliefs of the society to which they belong. Therefore, research on proverbs also has a vital place in understanding the socio-cultural structure of society.

They reflect national values. Regarding this issue, Aksoy (2020, p.25) mentions that “the proverbs of each nation are the mirror of its own being. The thoughts, lives, beliefs, and traditions of a nation can be seen. They are the most valuable examples of the sharpness of nations' intellect, the breadth of their dreams, and the delicacy of their feelings”.

To understand a proverb, it is necessary to have knowledge of the context in which it is said. When the context is known, it will become understandable to everyone. So, it is important that the cultural and social background of a society should be known. Every nation has proverb books as they are considered as a cultural heritage. Norrick (1985, p.31) provides proverb definition in his book titled “Proverbs are described as self-contained, pithy and traditional expressions with didactic context and fixed, poetic form”.

Many studies on proverbs have been done to date. Proverbs vary in subject in these studies because they are written about almost every field, starting from daily life, marriage, woman, man, wealth, poverty, health, illness, life, death, etc. Thus, this variety increases the number of studies on it. The word “*proverb*” corresponds to “*atasözü*” in Turkish. It is defined in the Türk Dil Kurumu (TDK) Dictionary¹ as “*a word of an advising nature that has been said based on long trials and observations and has become a public figure*”. “**Proverb**” is defined in the Cambridge Dictionary² as “*1. a famous phrase or sentence that gives you advice, 2. a well-known saying that gives good advice or expresses a supposed truth.*” The word “proverb” corresponds to 諺/ことわざ (*kotowaza*) in Japanese. It is defined in スーパー大辞林³

¹Turkish Language Association.

²<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/> (09.20.2023)

³三省堂, スーパー大辞林3.0 (Electronic dictionary)

(*Sūpādaijirin*) dictionary as “*[s]imple words that people have favored since ancient times with satire, lessons, knowledge, interests, etc.*”

As mentioned in the definitions above, proverbs are stereotyped expressions that are the product of many years of experience. These formulaic expressions are sarcastic and instructive and cannot be changed. *Proverbs are widely used in communication worldwide because they are memorable and scholarly. Proverbs fulfill the human need to summarize experiences and observations into nuggets of wisdom that provide ready-made comments on personal relationships and social affairs* (Mieder, 2004, p.1).

In the present study, the subject discussed in proverbs is “death.” Various definitions are given below.

In the TDK (Türk Dil Kurumu)⁴ Dictionary, “death/ölüm” is defined as “*[t]he complete and final end of a human life; Journey to the hereafter, end, eternal sleep, last journey, etc.*” In the Cambridge Dictionary, the word “death” is defined as “*to lose life; to stop living and become dead.*” In the Japanese Dictionary デジタル大辞泉⁵ (Dejitaru Daijisen), it is defined as “*[e]xtinction of life. The act of dying. Also, the absence of life.*” It is seen that death is expressed in the same way in all definitions.

Many studies on proverbs have been conducted to date. There are studies that deal with the concept of “death” seen in Turkish proverbs as shown below.

Duman (2012) analyzed death in Turkish proverbs, the attitude of Turkish society towards the concept of death, and how this attitude is reflected in proverbs. In addition, as a result of the changes in the perception of death of the Turks in the historical process, it has been tried to determine the meanings attributed to the concept of death, which emerged as a result of the expression of emotion in a more concrete way in parallel with the development of artistic discourse. However, the meanings attributed to the concept of death have been determined.

Pilten Ufuk (2016) analyzed Turkish proverbs through the theme of death and the title of the study is “*Turks and the Concept of Death: An Analytical Survey Among Turkish Proverbs*”. It is aimed identifying, analyzing, and systematizing ideas on death in Turkish culture and determining how they reflect customs, traditions, and rituals from past to present.

Furthermore, other works related to death and proverbs are given below. Tekin (2021a) analyzed the beliefs and practices related to the meaning of death and its features, before death, near death, and after death in Kazan-Tatar Turks. This study is titled as “Death in the Traditional World view of

⁴<https://sozluk.gov.tr/> (09.20.2023)

⁵<https://ejje.weblio.jp/> (09.20.2023)

Kazan-Tatar Turks with examples from proverbs”. Another work of Tekin (2021b) relates to “A Study on Turks' Proverbs About Death”. In the traditional worldview of the Turkish nation, the phenomenon of death, the meaning of death, its characteristics, and the beliefs and practices of the before, during, and after death processes have been determined from proverbs.

There are many studies related to death in the aspect of comparative analysis. Proverbs of two languages or more are the subject of these studies. For example, Ramazanova (2022) dealt with Turkish and Russian and the title of the study is “*An Overview of the Concept of Death in Turkish and Russian Proverbs*”. The changes in the perception of death of Turks and Russians throughout history, the development of artistic discourse over the centuries, and the emotionally expressed forms of the concept of death are revealed.

After screening, it is seen that there are a few studies that relates directly to death and Japanese proverbs. Xin (2003) analyzed the concept of life and death in Japanese and Chinese. It is aimed to reveal the characteristics of the Japanese and Chinese people’s views on life and death. It also compares the two cultures.

As mentioned above, there are a few studies about death related Japanese proverbs. This study will contribute to the works of Japanese and Turkish proverbs in dealing with the concept of death. Moreover, this study also aims to reveal the similarities and differences between Turks and Japanese as they have different cultural backgrounds.

Methods

In this study, comparative analysis method is used to examine how the concept of death is handled in Turkish and Japanese proverbs. As it is explained above, it is important to reveal differences and similarities of proverbs in both languages. The word “comparative” involves comparing two or more entities or things to identify similarities, differences, and patterns. Comparative analysis means describing and explaining the similarities and differences of situations or consequences among large scale of social units such as regions, nations, societies, and cultures. This definition reflects traditions such as cross-cultural analysis in anthropology, cross-societal analysis in sociology, cross-national analysis in political science, comparative historical analysis in history, and psychological analysis (Smelser, 1973).

Kaneko (1986) 日本のことわざ (上・中・上) (Nihon no Kotowaza (jou-chuu-ge)), Hinata (2001) ことわざ新辞典(Kotowaza Shinjiten), Yonetsu (1997) ことわざ辞典 (Kotowaza Jiten), and onlineことわざ辞典 (kotowaza jiten) dictionaries are used for collecting Japanese data.

Aksoy (2020) Atasözleri Sözlüğü⁶ and Türk Dil Kurumu (TDK) Atasözleri ve Deyimler Sözlüğü⁷ (online dictionary) are used in this study to collect the Turkish data.

However, the words that correspond to the word “death” in both languages are listed below, and these words will be compiled and analyzed.

	Death (noun)	Die (verb)	Dead (person) (noun)
Japanese	死(<i>shi</i>)	死ぬ (<i>shinu</i>) 死す (<i>shisu</i>)	死者 (<i>shisha</i>) 死人(<i>shinin</i>)
Turkish	ölüm/ ecel	ölmek/gebermek	ölü

The Turkish word “**ecel**” will also be used in this study as it means death (end of life, time of death) in TDK (Türk Dil Kurumu) Dictionary. Dealing with death but not containing the word ‘dead’ in both languages were excluded. In this study, idiomatic expressions expressing death were not included. For example, words of “*göçmek* (to migrate)”, “*ayrılmak* (to leave)”, and “*gitmek* (to go)” have idiomatic meanings of “*to die*”.

In Japanese and Turkish usage of rhyme, prosody has been ignored to preserve meaning and has been translated close to the original proverbs.

In this study, proverbs with the word “death” were scanned, and a total of 127 proverbs, including 80 Turkish proverbs and 47 Japanese proverbs, were examined. These proverbs were grouped according to their subjects.

Therefore, this study aims to answer the following question:

- How is the concept of death grouped in proverbs?
- How is the concept of death handled in Turkish proverbs?
- How is the concept of death handled in Japanese proverbs?
- What are the similarities and differences in both languages related to death?

Discussion

After analyzing all the proverbs in both languages, the concept of death seen in proverbs were grouped as shown below. Turkish and Japanese proverbs that relate to the topic will be placed under each group.

**Death as an inevitable end*

**Death has causes*

**Death has time to occur*

**Death is not welcomed*

**Death as a bad situation*

**Death and animal*

**After death, there is no meaning*

**Death as an unknown end*

**Grief for death*

**Death occurs one time*

**Understanding the value of things and people after death*

** Comparing the wrong things with*

⁶Dictionary of Proverbs.

⁷Dictionary of Proverbs and Idioms.

**Death relates to funerals and religious rituals death*

**Contradicting proverbs*

**Death is a relief and escape*

Death as an Inevitable End

Death is seen as an inevitable end that all people accept. God determines life and death, and it cannot be controlled by human power. All living things experience death, and there is no cure or remedy for it.

Turkish Proverbs	English Translation
Dünya ölümlü, gün akşamlı. (Aksoy, 2020, p. 250)	The world is mortal; the day has evening.
Gelin girmedik ev olur, ölüm girmedik ev olmaz. (Aksoy, 2020, p. 284)	There can be a home a bride has not entered, but there is no home death does not enter.
Ecele (ölüme) çare bulunmaz. (Aksoy, 2020, p. 254)	There is no cure for death.
Ölüme çare bulunmaz. (Aksoy, 2020, p. 405)	There is no cure for death.
Olacakla öleceğe çare bulunmaz. (Aksoy, 2020, p. 398)	There is no remedy for what will happen and who will die.
Ölüm dirim (kalım) bizim için. (Aksoy, 2020, p. 405)	Death and life are for us.
Ölüm var, dirim (kalım) var. (Aksoy, 2020, p. 406)	There is death; there is life.
Ölüm hak, miras helal. (Aksoy, 2020, p. 406)	Death is right; inheritance is halal.⁸
Ölüm bir kara devedir ki herkesin kapısına çöker. (TDK)	Death is a black camel that descends on everyone's doorstep.
Korkunun ecele faydası yoktur. (Aksoy, 2020, p. 367)	Fear is useless for death.

It is stated above that there is no way to get rid of death in Turkish proverbs, and death is accepted as a natural condition which has no remedy.

Japanese Proverbs	English Translation
生き身は死に身 (<i>Iki mi wa shini mi</i>)	Living is dying.
生ある者は死あり (<i>Sei aru mono wa shi ari</i>)	The living has death.
生は死の始はじめ (<i>Sei wa shi no hajime</i>)	Life is the beginning of death.
死生命あり (<i>Shisei mei ari</i>)	Life and death have a fate.
災難なら畳の上で死ぬ (<i>Sainan nara tatami no uedemo shinu</i>)	If disaster comes, one could die on the <i>tatami</i>⁹ mats.

⁸*Halal* is defined in Oxford Learner's Dictionary as "acceptable according to Islamic law."

⁹*Tatami* is defined in the Oxford Learner's Dictionary as "a traditional Japanese mat made from dried rushes and used to cover a floor."

In Japanese proverbs, death is accepted as all living people/things are dying.

The life and death of a person cannot be changed by human power. It is difficult to know when and where disaster will occur. Even on the safety of tatami mats, one can slip and fall, which will be the cause of death. So, it can be considered as an inevitable end. Thus, it can be seen that both languages have similarities.

Death has Causes

There are many causes of death seen in daily life. For example, one can die of disease, bad habits and old age, die from wounds and injures, die in an accident, etc. The causes are the reason for death.

Turkish Proverbs	English Translation
Ecel geldi cihane, baş ağrısı bahane. (Aksoy, 2020, p.54)	Death came to people; headache is the excuse. (illness)
Bahanesiz ölüm olmaz. (Aksoy, 2020, p.174)	There is no death without excuses.
Ölüm gelmiş bu cane, baş ağrısı bahane. (Aksoy, 2020, p. 406)	Death has come to people; headache is the excuse. (illness)
Eden bulur, inleyen ölür. (Aksoy, 2020, p. 255)	People cause bad things, pay the penalty, and the suffering patients die. (illness)
Etme bulursun, inleme (inleye inleye) ölürsün. (Aksoy, 2020, p.275)	Do not do bad things; you can pay the penalty and die moaning. (illness)
Eviden bir ölü çıkacak demişler, herkes hizmetçinin yüzüne bakmış. (Aksoy, 2020, p.276)	It is told that one person in the house will die; everybody looks at the servant's face. (being lower-class)
Görmemiş görmüş, gülmeden (güle güle) ölmüş. (Aksoy, 2020, p.290)	A vulgar person become successful; he died of laughing. (upstart)
Hasta ol benim için, öleyim senin için. (Aksoy, 2020, p.301)	Be sick for me; I would die for you. (fidelity)
İki karılı bitten, iki analı sütten ölür. (Aksoy, 2020, p.320)	A man with two wives dies due to lice; a baby with two mother dies because of milk. (no authority)
Kuduz ölür ama daladığı da ölür. (Aksoy, 2020, p.374)	A rapid¹⁰ person dies but the person who was bitten (by the rapid person) dies too. (fury)
İnsan kendini beğenmezse çatlar. (ölür)	If a person does not like himself, he cracks. (dies) (not loving oneself)

¹⁰Rapid is explained as 1. [usually before noun] (disapproving) (of feelings or opinions) violent or extreme, 2. "(of an animal) having rabies, a rabid dog" in Oxford Learner's Dictionary. (<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english> (01.28.2024))

Rakip ölsün de ne yüzden ölürsen ölsün. (Aksoy, 2020, p.413)	I wish the rival dies, no matter what the cause. (rivalry)
Aç ölmez, gözü kararır; susuz ölmez, benzi sararır. (Aksoy, 2020, p.111)	The hungry one does not die; he feels dizzy; the thirsty one does not die; his face turns pale. (people do not die but fall sick from hunger and thirst)
Tamah varken müflis acıdan ölmez. (Aksoy, 2020, p.439)	As long as greed exists, the bankrupt will not perish by hunger. (greedy)
Ananın bastığı yavru (civciv) incinmez (ölmez). (Aksoy, 2020, p.145)	The cub (chick) stepped on by the mother does not hurt (die). (motherly love)

Subsequently, many causes of death can be seen in Turkish proverbs. They include illness, headache, moaning, no authority, fury, not liking himself/herself, being lower class, upstart, fidelity, rivalry, hunger and thirst. Being a greedy person is a negative character that keeps people alive. Motherly love is considered important for the chick not to die.

Japanese Proverbs	English Translation
千金の子は市に死せず (Senkin no ko wa ichi ni shi sezu) (Hinata, 2001, p.164)	The child of a wealthy man (thousand money holder) does not die in the city. (wealthy) Meaning: The rich man's son does not die in the city. Even if a rich child commits an evil deed, he escapes punishment by the power of money, and his corpse is not exposed to the prison in the city.
泳ぎ上手は川で死ぬ (Oyogi jōzu wa kawa de shinu) (Kaneko, 1986a, p.274)	A good swimmer dies in the river. (overconfidence) Meaning: When you're good at something, you tend to let your guard down or be overconfident about it, so you have to be careful.
餓えて死ぬは一人、飲んで死ぬは千人 (Katsuette shinu wa hitori, nonde shinu wa sennin)	Dying from starvation is one person; dying from drinking (alcohol) is a thousand people.
畳の上で死ぬ (Tatami no ue de shinu)	Dying on the tatami mat. Meaning: It is not an accidental death or a strange death, but a peaceful death in one's own home on the tatami mat.

In Japanese proverbs, being a wealthy person is seen as a way to escape from punishment and death. Peaceful death and alcohol are seen as other causes, and overconfidence also could be a reason for the loss of life. When compared to Japanese proverbs, Turkish have more causes that both do not have in common.

Death has a Time to Occur

There is a time for each living person decided by God for death. Turkish and Japanese proverbs emphasize that death is unpredictable and has a time to occur. Even if it is desirable to die, it cannot just happen.

Turkish Proverbs	English Translation
Her inleyen ölmez. (Aksoy, 2020, p.306)	Not every moaner dies.
Hasta yatan ölmez, eceli yeten ölür. (Aksoy, 2020, p.301)	The patient who is in a sick bed does not die; the one whose death comes dies.
Kırk yıl ecel yağsa, eceli gelen ölür.	If death rains for forty years, the one dies who death comes.
Kırk yılda bir ölet olur, eceli gelen ölür. (Kırk yıl kıran olmuş, eceli gelen ölmüş.) (Aksoy, 2020, p.358)	Once in forty years, there is a lethal epidemic, and the person whose time has come dies.
Vasiyet ölüm getirmez. (Aksoy,2020, p.458)	A will/probate does not bring death.

Death is considered as an inevitable end. However, not all kinds of troubles lead to death. In the proverbs above, it is stated that not every sick person will die and this means that she/he has a time to die.

Japanese Proverbs	English Translation
死ぬ死ぬというものに死んだ例(ためし)がない (Shinu shinu to iu mono ni shinda tameshi ga nai)	There is no example of death in who says, 'I am dying.'
朝に道を聞かば夕べに死すとも可なり (Ashita ni michi wo kikaba yūbe ni shi sutomo ka nari) (Hinata, 2001,p. 11)	If you ask for directions in the morning, you can die in the evening.
江戸と背中が見て死にたい (Edo to senaka ga mite shinitai) (Kaneko, 1986a, p. 203)	I want to die after seeing Edo and my back. Meaning: One can see one's back in the mirror but cannot see his/her own back directly. Edo ¹¹ can also be seen through pictures and stories, but it is unlikely that a poor person from a distant countryside will be able to go to see Edo.
死なば四八月 (Shinaba shi hachi gatsu)	If it could be possible to die; it is the month of April and August.

In the Japanese proverbs above, it is emphasized that one cannot arrange the death time. If it is possible, the month of April and August would be considered as the best months. Even if one says "I am dying," she/he cannot die so easily.

Both proverbs have similarities. Thus, they accept that death has a time to occur and it cannot be arranged by human beings.

¹¹ Edo is the old name of Tokyo and the capital city.

Death is not Welcomed

Death is considered a cold thing and is not welcomed by people.

Turkish Proverb:	English Translation
Ölümün yüzü soğuktur.	The face of death is cold.
Japanese Proverb	English Translation
死中に活を求む (Shichū ni katsu wo motomu)	Seeking life in death.
死にたいと麦飯食いたいほど大きな嘘はない (Shinitai to mugimeshi kuitai hodo ooki na uso wa nai.)	There is no lie so big that you want to die and eat barley.

In Turkish proverb, death is expressed as a cold face. In Japanese, even during dying, seeking life is considered essential. As nobody likes to eat barley and do not want to die, there is no meaning to say you want to eat barley and die. Proverbs in both languages emphasizes that death is not welcomed.

Death as a Bad Situation

Death is accepted as an undesirable and dire situation.

Turkish Proverbs	English Translation
Ölme bayılmaya benzemez. (Aksoy, 2020, p.405)	Death is not like being unconscious.
Uyku ölümün (küçük) kardeşidir. (Aksoy, 2020, p.452)	Sleep is the younger sibling of death.
Yerinden oynayan yetmiş kazaya uğrar; en küçük ölüm	Displaced people suffer seventy accidents; the least is death.
Adama dayanma ölür, ağaca dayanma kurur. (Aksoy, 2020, p.113)	Do not rely on the man; he dies; do not lean on the tree; it dries.
Anamın (babamın) öleceğini bilseydim kulağı dolu darıya satardım. (Aksoy, 2020, p.145)	If I had known that my mother (my father) was going to die, I would have sold my ears for a bit of money.
Hısım hısımın ne öldüğünü ister, ne onduğunu. (Aksoy, 2020:313)	The relatives want their relatives to die or not die.
Ölüm ile öç alınmaz. (Aksoy, 2020, p.406)	Cannot be taken revenge with death.

In Turkish proverbs, death is considered as a bad thing and cannot be compared to being unconscious and sleep. During sleep, one cannot control things and it is akin to death at this point. The inability to wake up from sleep is equated with death.

Japanese Proverbs	English Translation
垢で死んだ者はない (Aka de shinda mono wa nai).	No one died from dirt.
往に跡へ行くとともに死に跡へ行くな (I ni ato e ikutomo shi ni ato e ikuna) (Yonetsu, 1997, p. 57)	Go after whose ex-wife has left home, but do not go after whose ex-wife died.

九死に一生を得る (<i>Kyuushi ni isshou wo eru.</i>) (Hinata, 2001, p.97)	Get a lifetime to nine deaths. (To have a narrow escape from death).
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In Japanese proverbs, death is considered as a bad situation. Although dirt is normally regarded as a bad thing, no one has died from it. If someone lost his wife, it is a very hard thing to overcome. So, it can be hard for the next who comes as a wife. Thus, both languages share the common view that death is a bad situation.

Death as an Unknown End

Death is considered as an unknown end. There is uncertainty about after-death. No one could come back and tell us what the after-death looks like.

Turkish Proverbs	English Translation
Ölümden öte(-ye) köy yoktur. (Aksoy, 2020, p.405)	There is no village ahead to death.

Japanese Proverbs	English Translation
死んだ先を見たものはない(<i>Shinda saki wo mita mono wa nai</i>)	No one saw the after-death.

Both languages have the same meaning of proverbs which relate to the unknown about the after-death.

Grief for Death

Death and grief related proverbs are listed below. One cannot die with the lost one. Feeling grief about a loss is a normal thing in life, but it is also essential to continue living.

Turkish Proverbs	English Translation
Ölenle (birlikte) ölünmez. (Aksoy, 2020, p.405)	You cannot die (with) the dead.
Dün öleni dün gömerler. (TDK)	The one who died yesterday, they buried yesterday.

In Turkish proverbs, it is emphasized that grief cannot be lifelong. After losing someone, one cannot change the truth. Hence, it is better for she/he to continue living. After screening Japanese proverbs, it was found that there are no proverbs related to grief.

Death Occurs One Time

It is stated that death is the last point reached in human life, and it is a road of no return. It occurs just once in life.

Turkish Proverbs	English Translation
İnsan iki kere ölmez.	People do not die twice.

Japanese Proverbs	English Translation
一度死ねば二度死なぬ (<i>Ichi do shineba ni do shinanu</i>)	If you die once, you will not die twice.

Both languages have the same meaning of proverbs that death occurs once in a lifetime. One cannot die twice.

Understanding the Value of Things and People after Death

Some proverbs are related to the fact that things or people with no value while living become valuable after death, or their value is understood too late.

Turkish proverbs	English Translation
Ölü ölür ballanır.	The dead, after death, become honey.
Ölü ölünce tatlanır.	The dead, after death, become sweet.
Ölmüş siğir sütlü olur.	Dead cattle become milky.
Ölen inek sütlü olur.	The dead cow becomes milky.
Kör ölür badem gözlü olur, kel ölür sırma saçlı olur. (Aksoy, 2020,p.355)	The blind dead become almond eyes; the bald dead become glazed hair.

In Turkish proverbs, the value of things can be understood in a positive way after death.

Japanese Proverbs	English Translation
死んだ子は賢い (<i>Shinda ko wa kashikoi</i>) (Kaneko, 1986b, p.182)	The dead child is bright.
死んだ子には悪い子はない (<i>Shinda ko ni wa warui ko wa nai</i>)	There is no bad child in a dead child.
死んだら褒められる (<i>Shindara homerareru</i>) (Kaneko, 1986b, p.185)	When you die, you will be praised.

In the Japanese proverbs above, it is stated that the dead child is bright. Although she/he has bad traits while alive, she/he is not considered bad after death. It is also mentioned that people are praised when they die. Both languages have the same point of view about understanding the value of things and people after death in a positive way.

Death and Animal

Proverbs do not always deal with the subject of human being. There are also proverbs about animals and death. The animals seen in proverbs in both languages have variety.

Turkish Proverbs	English Translation
Atın ölümü arpadan olsun. (Aksoy, 2020, p.160)	Let the death of the horse be from barley.
At ölür, itlere bayram olur. (Aksoy, 2020, p.161)	When the horse dies, the dogs enjoy it.
Eceli (ölümü) gelen (yaklaşan) it cami (mescit) duvarına (avlusuna) siyer (işer). (Aksoy, 2020, p.254)	The dog, whose death is approaching, pees on the wall of the mosque.
At ölür meydan (nalı) kalır, yiğit ölür şanı (namı) kalır. (Aksoy, 2020:161)	When the horse dies, the horseshoe remains; when the valiant dies, his glory remains.
Gem almayan atın ölümü yakındır. (Aksoy, 2020, p.284)	Death is close to the horse that does not take the bit.
Horoz ölür, gözü çöplükte kalır. (Aksoy, 2020, p.314)	When the rooster dies, his eye looks to the garbage.
Ölüm bir kara devedir ki herkesin kapısına çöker. (TDK)	Death is a black camel that descends on everyone's doorstep.
Eşeğin ölümü köpeğe düğündür. (Aksoy, 2020, p.271)	The death of the donkey is a wedding to the dog.
Hıyar akçesiyle alınan eşeğin ölümü sudan olur. (Aksoy, 2020, p.313)	The death of the donkey taken with the little money dies from trivial things.
Karpuz kabuğuyla büyüyen (beslenen) eşeğin ölümü sudan olur. (Aksoy, 2020, p.345)	The donkey that grows (feeds) on watermelon peel dies from trivial things.
Ölmüş koyun (eşek) kurttan korkmaz. (Aksoy, 2020, p.405)	The dead sheep (donkey) is not afraid of the wolf.
Her zaman eşek ölmez, on köfte on paraya olmaz. (Aksoy, 2020, p.312)	Not always the donkey dies, ten kofta (meatballs)¹² do not cost ten coins.
Keçi geberse de kuyruğunu indirmez. (Aksoy, 2020, p. 351)	Even if the goat dies, it does not lower its tail.
İti (köpeği) öldürene sürütürler. (Aksoy, 2020, p. 331)	They drive the dog to the one who kills it.

Animals seen in Turkish proverbs are horses (4 times), dogs (3 times), rooster (1 time), camel (1 time), goat (1 time), donkeys (5 times), sheep (1 time), and wolf (1 time). The animals are considered because; horses are royal animal, wolfs are powerful, dogs are not valuable, and goat are very stubborn.

Japanese Proverbs	English Translation
死馬の骨を買う (Shiba no hone wo kau) (Hinata, 2001, p. 140)	Buy the death horse's bones. Meaning: A parable of giving preferential treatment to even boring people to attract excellent human resources

¹²“Kofta” is a Turkish traditional dish which is made from lamb or beef meatballs. It is defined in Oxford Learner’s Dictionary as “a Middle Eastern or South Asian dish of meat, fish or cheese mixed with spices and shaped into balls; one of these balls” (https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com (01.28.2024)).

死に馬に鍼刺す (<i>Shiniuma ni hari wo sasu</i>) (Hinata, 2001, p. 140)	Acupuncture on a dying horse. Meaning: It is useless to do something in a state where it can no longer be expected to be effective.
死馬に蹴られる (<i>Shiniuma ni kerareru</i>)	Kicked by a dead horse. Meaning: A parable of receiving great pain from an opponent who is in a state where recovery cannot be expected.
生きている犬は死んだライオンに勝る (<i>Ikiteiru inu wa shinda raion ni masaru</i>)	A living dog beats the dead lion.
虎は死して皮を留める人は死して名を残す (<i>Tora wa shi shite kawa wo todomeru hito wa shi shite na wo nokosu</i>) (Hinata, 2001, p. 216)	The tiger dies; the skin is fastened, and the man dies and leaves a name.
狡兔死して走狗烹らる (<i>Kōtō shi shite souku niraru</i>) (Hinata, 2001, p. 116)	Because a great rabbit is caught, the hound becomes useless and is boiled in a pot.

The animals seen in Japanese proverbs are horses (3 times), dog (1 time), lion (1 time), tiger (1 time), and rabbit (1 time). Lion is considered to be a powerful animal but the living unvaluable dog beats the dead lion. Common animals are also seen in proverbs such as horses and dog.

After Death, There is no Meaning

Death is considered the end of life. Things that are meaningful while alive lose their meaning after death.

Turkish Proverbs	English Translation
Ölü aşı neylesin, türbe taşı neylesin. (Aksoy, 2020:405)	What can a dead person do with food? What can a tomb do with a stone?

In this Turkish proverb, it is emphasized that after someone dies, she/he does not need food and the tomb do not need a stone. It is better to think all things as important while living.

Japanese Proverbs	English Translation
死んだ子の年を数える (Hinata, 2001, p. 153)	Counting the years of a dead child.
死児の齢を数える (<i>Shiji no yowai wo kazoeru</i>) (Yonetsu, 1997, p. 204)	Counting the age of the dead child.
死んで花実が咲くものか (<i>Shinde hanami ga saku mono ka</i>) (Hinata, 2001, p. 153)	Does the dried tree bloom?

死人に口なし (<i>Shinin ni kuchi nashi</i>) (Hinata, 2001, p. 140)	No mouth to the dead. Meaning: Even if the dead are accused of being innocent, they cannot be given any explanation.
生きての恨み死しての嘆き (<i>Ikite no urami shi shite no nageki</i>)	Resentment for the living and mourning for the dying.

In these Japanese proverbs, it is stated that there is no reason to count the years of a dead child. Based on the same point of view, dried tree does not bloom. It is too late to do something after death since it has no meaning. Both languages have similar point of view of doing something that have no meaning.

Comparing the Wrong Things with Death

Death is an undesirable thing in our lives. For this reason, it shows us how to compare unpleasant and bad events in our lives with death.

Turkish Proverbs	English Translation
Aç gezmekten tok ölmek yeğdir. (Aksoy, 2020, p. 108)	It is better to die full than to walk hungry.
Ağlama ölü için, ağla deli (diri) için. (Aksoy, 2020, p.120)	Do not cry for the dead, cry for the mad (living).
Ölüsü olan bir gün ağlar, delisi olan her gün ağlar. (TDK)	The one who is a relative of the dead cries one day, and the one who is a relative of the mad cries every day.
Borcun iyisi vermek, derdin iyisi ölmek. (TDK)	The best of debt is to give, the best of your problem is to die.
Ölüm ölüm de, hırlamaya ne borcum var? (TDK)	Death is death but what do I owe to suffer?
Ölümü gören hastalığa razı olur. (Aksoy, 2020, p. 406)	The person who sees death consents to illness.
Ölüme giden gelmiş, paraya giden gelmemiş. (Aksoy, 2020, p. 406)	The one who went to death came, the one who went to the money did not come.
In Turkish proverbs, it is preferable to die if you have problems. One can be preferring illness to death.	
Japanese Proverbs	English Translation
死せる孔明、生ける仲達を走らす (<i>Shiseru koumei ikeru chuutatsu wo hashirasu</i>) (Hinata, 2001, p.137)	Dead Koumei, make run the living companions.
親が死んでも食休み (<i>Oya ga shindemo jiki yasumi</i>)	Even if parents die, have a lunch break.
死別れより生別れ (<i>Shiwakare yori iki wakare</i>)	Farewell to living people rather than farewell to the dead.
運を待つは死を待つに等し (<i>Un wo matsu wa shi wo matsu ni hitoshi</i>)	Waiting for luck is like waiting for death.
死んでの長者より生きての貧乏 (<i>Shinde no chousha yori ikite no binbō</i>)	Poor living is better than a dead rich person.

人の子の死んだより我が子の転けた (<i>Hito no ko no shinda yori, waga ko no koketa</i>)	It is worse felling down of my son than dead children of others.
焼けたあとは立つが死んだあとは立たぬ (<i>Yaketa ato wa tatsu ga shinda ato wa tatanu.</i>)	One can stand after burning but cannot stand after death.

In Japanese proverbs, it is emphasized that living is important. Even if parents die, do not stop eating the lunch. One can stand after small bad situations but cannot stand after death.

Death Relates to Funerals and Religious Rituals

Turkish proverbs relate to Islam. In Islam, when a person dies, she/he is washed and shrouded and buried as soon as possible. It is considered not good to make the dead people wait, “If you wash too much the corpse, she/he will deform.” This proverb means being washed as a funeral ritual. “The one who died yesterday, they buried yesterday.” This proverb means the corpse is being buried the same day. Yesterday is considered as past, so it should be forgotten, and we should not be upset about dead people. “Everyone cries for their own dead.” This proverb means the relatives or families of the dead cry for their loss.

Turkish Proverbs	English Translation
Ölüyü çok yursan sıçağan olur. (Aksoy, 2020, p.407)	If you wash the corpse too much, he will deform.
Ölüyü örtekorlar (örtekomuşlar), deliğe dürtkorlar (dürtekomuşlar). (Aksoy, 2020, p.407)	They covered the funeral, put him in the grave, and left.
Dün öleni dün gömerler.	The one who died yesterday, they buried yesterday.
Hayıf ölene olur. (Aksoy, 2020, p.302)	The sorrow is to the dead person.
Herkes kendi ölüsü için ağlar. (Aksoy, 2020, p.309)	Everyone cries for their own dead.
Delî deliden hoşlanır, imam ölüden. (TDK)	The madman likes the madman; the <i>Imam</i>¹³ likes the dead.
İmam evinden aş, ölü gözünden yaş çıkmaz. (Aksoy, 2020, p.321)	From the house of the <i>Imam</i>, there will be no food; there will be no tears in the eyes of the dead.

In Turkish proverbs, “**Imam**” is a term of in Islam. It is defined as a *religious man who leads the prayers in a mosque*. So, Imam plays a significant role at the funeral and religious rituals.

¹³The *imam* is defined in The Oxford Learner's Dictionaries as “(in Islam) a religious man who leads the prayers in a mosque). A person likes what is similar or what he can benefit from.

Japanese Proverbs	English Translation
病め医者死ぬ坊主 (<i>Yame isha shine bōzu</i>) (Kaneko, 1986c, p.276)	If you are sick go to the doctor; If you die, go to the Monk.
阿闍梨死して事欠けず (<i>Ajari shishite koto kakezu</i>)	Even a great Monk dies, and work goes on.

In Japanese proverbs, it is stated that doctor who cures people's illnesses and the Monks are supposed to save people from suffering. However, the doctor wishes for people to get sick, and the Monks wish for the death of people. This is a parable that shows that everyone wants their business to prosper. It can be seen in the Buddhist words such as 坊主 (*bōzu*) and 阿闍梨 (*ajari*). 坊主 (*bōzu*)¹⁴ means *Monk, Buddhist priest*, and 阿闍梨 (*ajari*) means (*Acharya*), *high Monk (esp. one of correct conduct who acts as a role model for his pupils), high priest*.

Contradicting Proverbs

Proverbs are stereotyped expressions obtained as a result of experience. There are proverbs written on various subjects. These proverbs do not always reflect the same point of view. In some proverbs, the subject mentioned is treated as opposites.

Turkish Proverbs	English Translation
Ölümler misafir ansızın gelir.	Death and guests come suddenly.
Ölüm bağırır bağırır gelmez.	Death does not come screaming.
Her inleyen ölmez. (Aksoy, 2020, p.306)	Not every moaner dies.
Hasta yatan ölmez, eceli yeten ölür. (Aksoy, 2020, p.301)	The patient who is in a sick bed does not die; the one whose death comes dies.
Kırk yıl ecel yağsa, eceli gelen ölür.	If death rains for forty years, the one dies whose death comes.

The proverbs above contradict each other. It is stated that death and guests come suddenly, while, in other proverbs, there might be occasions that death has a definite time to occur.

Japanese Proverbs	English Translation
死ぬ死ぬというものに死んだ例(ためし)がない (<i>Shinu shinu to iu mono ni shinda tameshi ga nai</i>)	There is no example of death in he who says, 'I am dying.'
病上手に死下手 (<i>Yamai jouzu ni shinibeta</i>) (Kaneko, 1986, p. 269)	Get sick easily; die hard.

¹⁴ <https://ejje.weblio.jp> (01.30.2024)

生は難く死は易し (Hinata, 2001, p. 161)	Life is hard; death is easy.
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It is stated in Japanese proverbs that it is easy to get sick but not easy to die. People who are frequently infected with disease might live a long life. So, the proverbs contradict each other in both languages.

Death is a Relief and Escape

Death means a relief and escape for the people who lived a shameful life.

Turkish Proverbs	English Translation
Ölüm yüz aklığı(-dır). (Aksoy, 2020, p. 406)	Death is a glory.
Can çekişmektense ölmek yeğdir. (TDK)	It is better to die than to suffer badly.
Japanese Proverbs	English Translation
死すべき時に死せざれば死にまさるあり (Shisubeki toki ni shisezareba shi ni masaru haji ari)	If you have to die at mortal time, you are better than death.

In the proverbs above, people are likely to prefer dying to suffering badly. One can consider death as a glory for the bad things she/he has done in life. Both languages considered death as a relief and escape.

Conclusion

Due to the analysis of the perception of death in Turkish and Japanese proverbs, it has been revealed that there is diversity in the perception of death. Firstly, after screening the key word of death in both languages, a total of 127 proverbs (80 Turkish proverbs and 47 Japanese proverbs) were examined. It emphasizes that Turkish proverbs are more than Japanese in number. This study aims to answer the questions below:

- *How is the concept of death grouped in proverbs?*

They are grouped into death has causes, death as an unknown end, death has time to occur, grief for death, death is not welcomed, death occurs one time, death as a bad situation, understanding the value of things and people after death, death and animal, after death there is no meaning, comparing the wrong things with death, death relates to funerals and religious rituals, death is a relief and escape, and contradicting proverbs.

- How is the concept of death handled in Turkish/Japanese proverbs?
- What are the similarities and differences in both languages relate to death?

In the proverbs in both languages, death is accepted as an inevitable end. It is believed that everyone will die one day. Although it is hard to live in the world, dying is difficult.

Death has an excuse, and something will be a reason for it. In Turkish proverbs, many causes of death can be seen when compared to Japanese. They include illness, headache, moaning, no authority, fury, not liking himself/herself, being lower class, upstart, fidelity, rivalry, hunger and thirst. Being a greedy person as a negative character, but it keeps people alive. In Japanese proverbs, being a wealthy person is seen as a way to escape from punishment and death. Peaceful death and alcohol are seen as other causes, and overconfidence also could be a reason for death. In comparison to Japanese proverbs, Turkish proverbs have more causes of death that both do not have in common.

Death has a time to occur; one cannot die if one wants to die. Death is the last journey of life with no return and occurs once only. Understanding the value of things and people after death is seen in both Turkish and Japanese proverbs. After death, there is no meaning; it is too late.

The groups mentioned above are common in both languages. However, proverbs relate to grief for deaths are found in Turkish but there is no grief that relates to proverbs in Japanese.

It is seen that there are proverbs that are related to funerals and religious rituals. Turkish proverbs relate to Islam, and Japanese proverbs include motifs related to Buddhism. In Japanese proverbs, the word of the Monk and Ajari can be seen. In Islam, the word of the “Imam” can be seen. Both Turkish and Japanese people do not welcome death, and they are afraid of dying. Death is seen as a negative situation and is compared with other negative things in life. However, death is sometimes seen as a relief and a way of escape from being in a worse situation and is acceptable.

Death is considered as an unknown ending in both languages. In Islam, there is an afterlife. So, in the Turkish proverbs, there are uncertainties about the afterlife. In the Japanese proverbs (relate to Buddhism), there is also uncertainty about this topic although they have different religions.

Proverbs include not only human beings but also animals. In Turkish proverbs, death-related animals are horses, donkeys, rooster, goat, camel, cats, dogs, wolf, and sheep. In Japanese, proverbs related to death and animals are horses, tigers, dog, lion, and rabbit.

In addition, there are contradictory proverbs related to death in both languages. In some proverbs, the subject mentioned is treated as opposites in another proverb.

In conclusion, Turkish and Japanese people have different cultural backgrounds, but they have similar expressions and share similar cultural values related to death.

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