

## Proverbs from the Lezgi People

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Lezgi people of the Caucasus Region have many interesting and useful proverbs. They are used by wise people in many situations to communicate morals, pragmatic action, or truth in life (whether good or bad). Being able to say a proverb in the right situation quickly and clearly is a valued skill among the Lezgi.

In February 2011, a proverbs workshop was held in Baku, Azerbaijan by the linguistic company Ufuq-S. There, among members of other Caucasian languages, a Lezgi team explored the characteristics of Lezgi proverbs, learned how to analyze them, and thought about ways to present them to the world. One of the results was a small video featuring Lezgi proverbs about wisdom and foolishness.

More than 400 Lezgi proverbs have been collected through books, people, internet, and the Samur newspaper. Only a few hundred have been fully translated, categorized, and analyzed. Here are some interesting examples:

307	Инсан	кволах	авурла	чир	жезва
	insan	iş	edəndə	öyrən	olur
	человек	работа	делая	научись	бывает
	man	work	when doing	learning	happens

Literal Translation (LT): When a person works, learning happens.

Meaning (M): To know a person - it is necessary to work with him. Through work, it's possible to learn more about its character and habits. By his work you understand how diligent, patient, and responsible, etc. he is.

Meaning-based Translation (MBT): You can know a person better by how he does work.

310	Кипикдин	къадир	чизвачирдаз	манатдини	къадирни	чиржедиш
	qəriyin	qədir	bilməyən,	manatın da	qədrini	bilməz
	копейки	цена	не знающий	манат	цену	не узнает
	kopek's	price	one not knowing	manat's	price	must not know

LT: The one not knowing the price of a kopek will not know the price of the manat.

M: The fool who can't manage small amounts of money cannot possibly manage large amounts of money. Such person is foolish. They can't spend money correctly and consequently will never have enough. The broader meaning is this: the person who isn't happy with small, won't be happy also with the big.

MBT: If you want big things, manage well in the small things.

401a	гъин	тлүб	атлайтлани	тал	сад я.
	hansı	barmaq	kəssə də	ağrı	birdi
	какой	палец	порежешь	боль	одна
	whichever	finger	cut maybe also	pain	same

LT: Whichever finger is cut, the pain is the same.

M: The hand is a metaphor for the parent, and fingers are their children. All children are equally loved and precious to parents. If any of them is injured or sick – it hurts the parents too. Even troubled children touch their parent’s heart.

MBT: Parents suffer too, when any of their children suffer.

401	Чарадан	балкандилай	жуван	лам	хъсан	я
	Başqasının	atından	öz	eşşəyin	yaхşı	-dir
	Чужого	лошади чем	свой	ишак	хорошо	-
	Another’s	horse than	own	donkey	better	is

LT: A donkey of your own is better than another’s horse

M: Some people like to use other people's things. But it’s not polite in Lezgi culture (unless you are good friends) and it’s better to use what you have. A thing which you have borrowed can break or be lost, and you will feel bad; this will damage your relationship with the owner. Also, you will have to buy it new and replace it.

MBT: It is better to use what you yourself have.

402	Члехидаз	яб	тагайди	члехи	баладик	акатда
	Böyügə	qulaq	verməyən	böyük	bəlaya	düşər
	Старшего	ухо	не дающего	большой	несчастье	попадёт
	To elder	ear	the one not giving	big	misfortune	will fall

LT: One who doesn’t listen to elders will fall in great trouble.

M: To listen to elders means to consult with parents or with those who are older. And it is necessary to listen to the opinion of wise people. They have lived longer on the earth, seen and heard more, and know more than young men. Some young men don't like to listen to council, and consequently, get to difficulties and big trouble.

MBT: Heed the wisdom of elders.

416	Дуст	вилериз ,	душманди	кIвачериз	килигда
	Dost	gözlərə	düşmən	ayaqlara	baxır
	друг	в глаза	враг	на ноги	смотрит
	friend	in eyes	enemy	on foot	looks

LT: A friend looks in the eyes; an enemy looks at the feet.

Meaning: Lezgis understand something about a person by the way they carry themselves in conversation. If a person is honest and has done right, they will look 'in your eyes'. If the person hides their sight, he shouldn't be trusted.

MBT: An honest person is not ashamed to look you in the face.

422	Гъурбатда	авайдаз,	ватан	ширин жеда
	Qürbətdə	olana	vətən	şirindir
	на чужбине	живущий	родина	сладка
	in a foreign place	living	homeland	sweet makes

LT: Living in a foreign place makes the homeland sweet.

M: When you live far-off in another country, you miss your home land. You have good memories and you want to go home. Living in a foreign land helps you to appreciate your homeland.

MBT: You appreciate your homeland even more when you spend time away from it.

430	Мугъмандиз	чин	члурмир.
	Qonağa	üz	pis etmə
	Гостю	лицо	не порти
	To guest	face	do not spoil

LT: Don't spoil the face to the guest

M: Lezgi people are very hospitable. It is thought that the visitor has come from God and it is necessary to accept and serve him well. We must rejoice that a visitor has come, not show discontent by grimacing (even if you don't really like the fact that they came).

MBT: Be welcoming

500	Кьил	цава	аваз	къекъезвадан	кIвач	къванце	акьада
	Başı	göydə	olsa	gəzənin	ayağ	daşa	dəyər
	Голова	в небе	быть	ходящий	нога	о камень	споткнётся
	Head	in the sky	would	going person	foot	on stone	will stumble

LT: He who would go with his head to the sky will stumble on a stone.

M: Proud and self-confident people are always happy with themselves and it shows in the way they walk and in their behavior and manners. They go with their heads raised and not interested in anybody around them. But they can't avoid falling; and when they do, their fall is hard. It means they fail because of their pride.

MBT: Someone who continues in their pride will fail.

507	Гинерар	чуньухайда	палкани	чуньухда	.
	yəhərlər	oğurlayan	atı da	oğurlayar	
	уздечки	укравший	и коня	украдёт	
	bridles	stealing-person	the horse too	will steel	

LT: He who steals the bridle will also steal the horse.

M: For the thief there is no difference in what to steal. The thief starts to steal with small things, but then moves on to larger things. And, if the person has stolen once, he will likely steal again - and next time, something more expensive.

MBT: A thief will always be a thief and he gets progressively worse.

601.1

Деведлай	члехи	фил	ава
Верблюда	больше	слон	есть
Dəvədən	döyük	fil	var
Camel from	bigger	elephant	is

LT: An elephant is bigger than a camel.

M: The camel and elephant are compared to people. There are small people, big people, and very big people. But this isn't about growth and weight of people. This is about social status, influence, and weight in a society. In any society there are more or less influential people who are necessary to consider. It's important to understand this dynamic.

MBT: There is always someone more important, influential, and higher status than you.

601.2

Руфун	кишиндаз	ахвар	аквадач
Garın	ас.olan	ууху	görmür
Живот	голодный	сон	не.видит
Stomach	hungry	dream	doesn't see

LT: The hungry stomach doesn't dream

M: The hungry stomach is synecdoche for the hungry person or the poor person. The hungry person can't have dreams because it is difficult to fall asleep. It is much easier to fall asleep when the stomach is full. The poor person is always looking for something to eat, but for the rich there is always a meal, and his dreams are pleasant. Mothers might say this to their children so they will eat. Or we usually say this about poor people who are working or looking for food.

MBT: It's so difficult for the poor/hungry person to sleep.

612

Кьегьалар	халкъдин	лувар	я.
Igidlär	xalqın	ganadlarıdır	
Храбрецы	народа	крылья	-
Men of courage	people's	wings	are

LT: Men of courage are the wings of the people.

M: This is a metaphor where courageous men are compared to wings of a noble bird. If a country has men of courage, they will lift the country's reputation and it will be famous. (The Lezgi's symbol is an eagle.)

MBT: A country's courageous men uplift its reputation.

701

Чулав	пек	чухьуьдалди	лацу	жедиш
qara	paltar	yumaqdan	ağ	olmaz
чёрный	одежда	выстирывать	белой	не бывает

black clothing with washing white will not be

LT: Black clothes after washing will not be white.

M: The black clothes mean a sin. The person would like to wash off sins from himself, but it is impossible because sins can't be washed off by a person. Only God can take away the sins of the person. OR - This may have the meaning that a bad person will always be bad, no matter how you try to change them or tell them to stop. A person's difficult character cannot be changed because they are stupid or stubborn.

MBT: No matter how hard you try to cover your sins, they are still sins. OR - It is almost impossible to change a bad person.

803	Аллагъ	патал	каци	къифни	къадач
	Allah	olanda	pişik	siçanı da	tutmaz
	Бог	рядом	кошка	мышку даже	не ловит
	God	when there	cat	mouse even	must not catch

LT: With God a cat won't even catch a mouse.

M: The cat naturally catches the mouse because it should be that way. And it should not change. But there are exceptional cases when it does not occur. This expression is used, when we want to say that everything is in the hands of God, and there nothing we can do about it. OR - Also, we can use this proverb to say it is necessary to trust Him. When a person is facing a difficult or bad situation, it is necessary to continue to trust in God. Maybe he will cause a miracle.

MBT: If it's from God, it will turn out as he wills OR - Nothing occurs without God willing, so trust Him.