LINGUOCULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PROVERBS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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ABSTRACT: Proverbs are an important part of a language's cultural heritage because they preserve traditional knowledge, social expectations, and collective experience in concise linguistic forms. This paper examines the linguocultural characteristics of English and Uzbek proverbs, with particular attention to national mentality, traditional customs, hospitality, family values, collective responsibility, and practical wisdom. Through a comparative analysis of selected proverbs, the study identifies shared moral principles as well as differences in cultural imagery and communicative purpose. The discussion also considers the challenges of translating proverbs when their meanings are closely connected with culturally specific practices. Drawing on paremiological scholarship and research on cultural aspects of translation, the paper argues that proverbs should be interpreted within their social and historical contexts rather than treated as direct representations of an entire nation's mentality. The examples demonstrate the value of combining semantic comparison with cultural interpretation in language learning, translation, and intercultural communication.

Keywords: linguoculturology, English proverbs, Uzbek proverbs, national mentality, cultural values, traditional customs, paremiology, comparative analysis

Language does more than communicate information. It also preserves the ways in which people understand their surroundings, evaluate behaviour, and transmit experience from one generation to another. Proverbs are particularly valuable in this respect because they express complex observations in relatively short and memorable forms. A single proverb may communicate advice, reinforce a social expectation, or reveal how a community traditionally interprets a particular situation. For this reason, the study of proverbs occupies an important place in paremiology and linguoculturology. Wolfgang Mieder (2004), in Proverbs: A Handbook, examines proverbs as a significant part of folklore and everyday communication. His work provides a useful foundation for understanding why these expressions deserve attention beyond their literal meanings. From a linguocultural perspective, a proverb can be viewed as a meeting point between language and social experience: its wording carries meaning, while its use often depends on shared cultural knowledge. The comparison of English and Uzbek proverbs is particularly interesting because the two languages reflect different historical experiences and cultural traditions, yet frequently express similar concerns. Family relationships, responsible decision-making, cooperation, hospitality, and respect for others are relevant in both societies. Nevertheless, the ways these values are expressed may differ. Such differences should not automatically be interpreted as evidence that one culture possesses a value more strongly than another. Rather, they provide an opportunity to examine the images, assumptions, and communicative purposes associated with particular expressions.

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One important dimension of this comparison is the relationship between cultural values and everyday customs. In Uzbek proverbial tradition, family ties, the social significance of guests, and cooperation within a community occupy a prominent place in many familiar expressions. English proverbs also address home, work, relationships, and personal responsibility, although they may employ different images or emphasize different aspects of a situation. The comparison therefore requires more than identifying expressions with similar dictionary meanings; it requires attention to their cultural associations and the circumstances in which speakers use them. Consider the English proverb "East or west, home is best" and the Uzbek saying "O'z uying — o'lan to'shaging." Both associate home with comfort, belonging, and personal attachment. Their imagery, however, is not identical. The English expression uses the contrast between different directions to emphasize that home remains preferable regardless of where a person travels. The Uzbek proverb draws on a familiar image of one's own dwelling and bedding to express the comfort of a place that belongs to the individual. Although the wording differs, the underlying message is comparable: the value of home cannot be measured solely by external conditions. This example illustrates an important distinction between semantic similarity and cultural equivalence. Two proverbs may communicate a broadly similar idea without using the same metaphor or producing precisely the same effect.

Collective responsibility offers another useful point of comparison. The English proverb "Many hands make light work" presents cooperation through the practical image of a task becoming easier when several people contribute. The Uzbek expression "Hashar elga yarashar" connects collective effort with hashar, a traditional practice of people joining together to complete work for a shared benefit. Both expressions support the idea that cooperation can help a community achieve what might be difficult for an individual. However, the Uzbek proverb also evokes a culturally recognisable form of organised mutual assistance. Its significance therefore extends beyond the general principle that teamwork is useful.

This difference matters because cultural meaning often resides in the social practices associated with a word. The concept of hashar is not always fully conveyed by translating it simply as "teamwork" or "cooperation." Such translations communicate the general idea but may not preserve the traditional and communal associations of the Uzbek expression. A short explanation may be necessary when the intended audience is unfamiliar with the practice. A similar relationship between shared wisdom and distinctive expression can be observed in "Look before you leap" and "Yetti o'lchab, bir kes." Both encourage people to consider possible consequences before acting. The English proverb uses the image of a leap to suggest the risk of acting without sufficient thought. The Uzbek saying draws on measuring and cutting, a practical sequence in which careful preparation helps prevent mistakes.

These examples suggest that proverbial wisdom can cross linguistic boundaries even when its imagery remains culture-specific. This distinction prevents researchers from treating every pair of related proverbs as interchangeable. Hospitality provides an especially revealing example because the selected English and Uzbek sayings express noticeably different perspectives. The Uzbek proverb "Mehmon otangdan ulug'" assigns a high social and moral status to the guest, reflecting the traditional importance attached to welcoming visitors. By contrast, the English saying "Fish and guests smell after three days" humorously suggests that a guest's prolonged stay may become inconvenient. This gives a descriptive distribution of three out of four pairs (75%) showing thematic similarity and one out of four (25%) illustrating a contrasting emphasis. These figures apply exclusively to the selected examples. They are not evidence of the overall frequency of cultural values in English or Uzbek proverbial traditions, nor do

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they establish that either language is more individualistic or communal. Qualitative interpretation would remain necessary, since numerical frequency alone cannot explain the cultural significance of an expression. The relationship between language and culture is also central to translation. Bannopova and Ashurova (2025), in their discussion of cultural nuances and translation, address the difficulty of conveying culture-specific meanings and non-equivalent expressions between languages. Their perspective is relevant to proverb translation because a literal rendering may communicate the basic message while failing to reproduce the original expression's cultural associations or pragmatic effect. For example, translating "Hashar elga yarashar" simply as "Cooperation is beneficial" conveys its general principle but does not fully explain the cultural significance of hashar.

CONCLUSION

Research specifically concerned with English and Uzbek proverbs further provides a basis for examining how cultural values and traditional beliefs are reflected in proverbial language (Alikulov, 2023; Mirzayeva et al., 2024). Studies of hospitality in English and Uzbek proverbs also make this theme relevant to comparative linguocultural analysis (Jabborova, 2023). Taken together, these research directions support an approach that combines the examination of linguistic form with attention to cultural context. The practical value of this approach extends to foreign-language education. Comparing expressions from English and Uzbek can help learners recognise both shared human concerns and differences in how those concerns are communicated. It can also encourage a more careful attitude towards cultural generalisations, especially when a proverb appears to express a strong judgement about behaviour.

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