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NATIONAL CULTURE IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK PROVERBS: A COMPARATIVE LINGUOCULTURAL STUDY

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Abstract. This article examines English and Uzbek proverbs as compact cultural texts. Proverbs are treated not only as ready-made sayings, but also as verbal models of social experience, moral judgement and collective memory. The study compares several conceptual fields: work, time, home, family, community, speech etiquette, nature and fate. English proverbs tend to foreground personal responsibility, pragmatic calculation, economic value of time and individual self-control. Uzbek proverbs give broader space to family continuity, respect, hospitality, neighbourhood, patience and communal solidarity. The contrast is not absolute; both traditions share many universal moral ideas. Yet their imagery, pragmatic tone and axiological accents differ. The article also discusses translation problems and argues that proverb translation requires cultural equivalence, not merely lexical substitution.

Keywords: proverb, paremiology, English proverbs, Uzbek proverbs, national culture, cultural linguistics, values, translation, worldview

НАЦИОНАЛЬНАЯ КУЛЬТУРА В АНГЛИЙСКИХ И УЗБЕКСКИХ ПОСЛОВИЦАХ: СРАВНИТЕЛЬНОЕ ЛИНГВОКУЛЬТУРНОЕ ИЗУЧЕНИЕ

Аннотация: В данной статье рассматриваются английские и узбекские пословицы как компактные культурные тексты. Пословицы рассматриваются не только как готовые изречения, но и как вербальные модели социального опыта, морального суждения и коллективной памяти. В исследовании сравниваются несколько концептуальных областей: работа, время, дом, семья, сообщество, речевой этикет, природа и судьба. Английские пословицы склонны ставить на первый план личную ответственность, прагматический расчет, экономическую ценность времени и индивидуальный самоконтроль. Узбекские пословицы уделяют больше внимания семейной преемственности, уважению, гостеприимству, добрососедству, терпению и общинной солидарности. Контраст не является абсолютным; обе традиции разделяют множество универсальных моральных идей. Тем не менее, их образность, прагматический тон и аксиологические акценты различаются. В статье также рассматриваются проблемы перевода и утверждается, что перевод пословиц требует культурной эквивалентности, а не просто лексической замены.

Ключевые слова: пословица, паремиология, английские пословицы, узбекские пословицы, национальная культура, культурная лингвистика, ценности, перевод, мировоззрение



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INGLIZ VA O‘ZBEK MAQOLLARIDA MILLIY MADANIYAT: QIYOSIY LINGVOMADANIY TADQIQOT

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada ingliz va o‘zbek maqollari ixcham madaniy matnlar sifatida ko‘rib chiqiladi. Maqollarga nafaqat tayyor iboralar, balki ijtimoiy tajriba, axloqiy hukm va jamoaviy xotiraning og‘zaki modellari sifatida ham qaraladi. Tadqiqotda bir necha konseptual sohalar: ish, vaqt, uy, oila, jamoa, nutq odobi, tabiat va taqdir taqqoslanadi. Ingliz maqollari shaxsiy mas’uliyatni, pragmatik hisob-kitobni, vaqtning iqtisodiy qiymatini va shaxsiy o‘z-o‘zini nazorat qilishni birinchi o‘ringa qo‘yishga moyil. O‘zbek maqollarida oilaviy vorislik, hurmat, mehmondo‘stlik, yaxshi qo‘shnichilik, sabr-toqat va jamoa hamjihatligiga ko‘proq e’tibor qaratilgan. Qarama-qarshilik mutlaq emas; ikkala an’ana ham ko‘plab universal axloqiy g‘oyalarni baham ko‘radi. Shunga qaramay, ularning obrazlilik, pragmatik ohangi va aksiologik urg‘ulari farqlanadi. Maqolada, shuningdek, tarjima muammolari ko‘rib chiqiladi va maqollarning tarjimasi madaniy ekvivalentlikni talab qilishi, shunchaki leksik almashtirish.

Kalit so‘zlar: maqol, paremiologiya, ingliz maqollari, o‘zbek maqollari, milliy madaniyat, madaniy tilshunoslik, qadriyatlar, tarjima, dunyoqarash.

1. Introduction

A proverb looks simple because it is short. That simplicity is deceptive. A proverb compresses experience, social judgement, rhythm and cultural memory into a small verbal form. Paremiologists usually describe proverbs as traditional, concise and didactic units, but their real force appears only in use [1, b. 3-16; 2, b. 5-21]. English and Uzbek proverbs are especially productive for comparison because both traditions contain large collections of moral, practical and metaphorical sayings. At the same time, they arrange values differently. The same life lesson may be stated through a market metaphor in English and through a family or agricultural image in Uzbek.

The topic matters for linguistics and for intercultural communication. A learner may understand the lexical meaning of a proverb and still miss its cultural implication. “Time is money” is not just a statement about time; it is a formula of economic discipline and practical self-management [8, b. 312-315; 11, b. 167-171]. The Uzbek proverb “Mehmon otangdan ulug‘” cannot be reduced to the literal claim that a guest is greater than one’s father. It evokes hospitality, respect, blessing and the social obligation to receive the guest properly [19, b. 301-309; 24, b. 97-118]. These two examples already reveal different cultural grammars.

This article uses the term national culture carefully. It does not mean a closed or unchanging essence. Culture is historically layered, internally diverse and constantly reinterpreted. Still, proverbial systems preserve durable patterns of valuation. They keep traces of economic life, religious ethics, family structure, communicative etiquette and local geography [12, b. 3-18; 17, b. 24-52]. English proverbs often value autonomy, foresight and moderation. Uzbek proverbs often value respect, patience, kinship and



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collective harmony. The distinction is analytical, not absolute. There are communal English proverbs and highly pragmatic Uzbek proverbs as well.

The main aim of the article is to identify how English and Uzbek proverbs encode cultural values through conceptual fields and imagery. The analysis avoids mechanical matching. It is tempting to place “No pain, no gain” beside “Mehnat qilsang, rohat ko‘rasan” and stop there [8, b. 231-232; 19, b. 126-128]. Such pairs are useful, but they do not exhaust the problem. One must ask how work is morally framed, what kind of person is praised, which social relations are assumed and what type of future is imagined. Proverbs give answers, though in a condensed and sometimes indirect way.

2. Theoretical framework

The classical study of proverbs has always faced one difficulty: everyone recognizes a proverb, but a strict definition is hard to formulate. Taylor pointed to this problem early in paremiology [2, b. 3-12]. Mieder later proposed a practical definition based on traditionality, brevity, fixed form, wisdom and common use [1, b. 7-14]. Norrick shifted attention to semantic mechanisms: metaphor, generalization, ellipsis and the relation between literal and figurative meaning [3, b. 42-68]. These approaches are complementary. A proverb is a linguistic form, a semantic structure and a social act at the same time.

Cultural linguistics gives a useful frame for the present comparison. Sharifian’s idea of cultural conceptualisations helps explain why the same domain may be structured differently in different speech communities [13, b. 5-35]. Kramsch treats language as a symbolic system through which cultural experience is stored and negotiated [12, b. 3-18]. From this perspective, English and Uzbek proverbs are not merely two sets of sayings. They are two repertoires of culturally preferred reasoning. A proverb tells the speaker what is wise, shameful, risky, honourable, premature, excessive or socially acceptable.

Cognitive metaphor theory also matters. Lakoff and Johnson argue that everyday thought is shaped by conceptual metaphors [15, b. 3-32]. Kövecses adds that metaphors vary according to cultural experience [14, b. 62-89]. This is visible in proverbs. English proverbial imagery frequently uses money, time, home, road, bird, dog, sea and weather. Uzbek imagery often relies on bread, guest, father, mother, neighbourhood, land, horse, sheep and harvest [19, b. 3-12; 24, b. 85-118]. The images are not random ornaments. They are cultural shortcuts.

Axiological analysis asks what a proverb praises or criticizes. Hofstede’s cultural dimensions are not sufficient for close textual interpretation, but they offer a rough comparative vocabulary for individualism, collectivism and social distance [16, b. 91-116]. English proverbs such as “God helps those who help themselves” and “Every man is the architect of his own fortune” prioritize self-initiative [8, b. 176-178; 10, b. 423-424]. Uzbek proverbs such as “El bilan bo‘lgan yutadi” and “Birlik bor joyda tiriklik bor” give stronger moral weight to collective support [19, b. 74-82; 21, b. 43-56]. The contrast should not be exaggerated, but it is recurrent.

3. Material and method



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The material was selected from major proverb dictionaries and Uzbek proverb collections. English examples were taken mainly from Oxford and Wordsworth sources [8, b. 11-18; 10, b. 19-27]. Uzbek examples were drawn from “O‘zbek xalq maqollari” and related folklore studies [19, b. 3-12; 20, b. 15-40; 21, b. 143-156; 22, b. 192-208]. The method combines comparative semantics, conceptual analysis and cultural interpretation. Proverbs were grouped according to thematic fields, then examined in terms of imagery, evaluative meaning and pragmatic function.

Three levels of equivalence were distinguished. The first level includes close equivalents: “A friend in need is a friend indeed” and “Do‘st boshga kulfat tushganda bilinadi” [8, b. 150-151; 19, b. 236-240]. The second level includes semantic analogues with different imagery: “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush” and “Naqdning nasiyasi yo‘q” [9, b. 38-39; 19, b. 214-216]. The third level contains culture-specific proverbs, for example “An Englishman’s home is his castle” or “Mehmon otangdan ulug‘” [10, b. 276-277; 19, b. 301-309]. This classification is useful for both analysis and translation.

The study also considers pragmatic use. A proverb can advise, warn, comfort, criticize, mock or close an argument. Honeck emphasizes that understanding a proverb requires the activation of contextual meaning, not just retrieval of a dictionary definition [6, b. 105-138]. This point is important in comparison. “Don’t count your chickens before they hatch” and “Jo‘jani kuzda sana” are close not only semantically but also pragmatically: both warn against premature confidence [8, b. 84-86; 19, b. 152-154]. In other cases, a proverb with similar literal content may perform a different social function.

The analysis is qualitative. It does not claim that every English speaker or every Uzbek speaker uses proverbs in the same way. Proverbs are historical materials, but they live in current speech unevenly. Some are active, some sound old-fashioned, some are used ironically. Still, stable collections are valuable because they preserve the cultural memory of a speech community [1, b. 91-115; 20, b. 15-40]. The article therefore treats proverb collections as a reliable starting point, not as a complete description of living usage.

4. Work, time and responsibility

Work is one of the strongest shared domains. English proverbs praise effort, discipline and persistence: “No pain, no gain”, “Practice makes perfect”, “Industry is the mother of good luck” [8, b. 231-232; 10, b. 501-503]. Uzbek proverbs express similar values: “Mehnat qilsang, rohat ko‘rasan”, “Mehnatning tagi rohat”, “Ishlagan tishlaydi” [19, b. 122-132; 20, b. 233-240]. The common moral idea is clear. Yet English proverbs often present work as personal efficiency and self-improvement. Uzbek proverbs more often connect work with honest livelihood, dignity and social respect.

The Uzbek notion of honest labour has a dense moral vocabulary. Words such as “halol”, “non”, “rizq” and “baraka” create a field where work is not only productive but also ethically clean [23, b. 542-544; 24, b. 85-97]. English has strong honesty proverbs too, especially “Honesty is the best policy” [8, b. 188-189]. The word “policy”, however, carries a pragmatic nuance. Honesty appears as the wisest practical strategy. Uzbek



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sayings tend to place honesty in a more communal and spiritual frame. The difference is subtle, but it matters for translation and cultural reading.

Time is one of the clearest points of contrast. English proverbs often conceptualize time as a scarce economic resource. “Time is money” is the most obvious example [8, b. 312-313]. “A stitch in time saves nine” frames timely action as prevention of future loss [9, b. 256-258]. Uzbek proverbs also value timely action: “Bugungi ishni ertaga qo‘yima” and “Vaqting ketdi, naqding ketdi” [19, b. 118-124]. Yet Uzbek proverbial thought often joins time with patience: “Sabr tagi sariq oltin” [20, b. 244-251]. English pragmatism and Uzbek patience are not enemies. They are different answers to uncertainty.

Responsibility appears through cause and consequence. English sayings such as “You reap what you sow” and “As you make your bed, so you must lie on it” make the agent answerable for the result [8, b. 288-290; 10, b. 57-58]. Uzbek parallels are direct: “Nima eksang, shuni o‘rasan”, “Qilmishingga yarasha olarsan” [19, b. 160-164]. Agricultural metaphor is shared, but its cultural resonance differs. In Uzbek, sowing and reaping are close to a long agrarian memory. In English, the same image often works as a generalized moral formula. The image survives in both cases because it is cognitively transparent and morally strong.

5. Home, family and community

Home is a central cultural concept in both traditions, but it is not organized identically. “An Englishman’s home is his castle” links home with privacy, autonomy and legal-personal space [10, b. 276-277; 11, b. 59-74]. Uzbek proverbs about home often connect it with people, hospitality and emotional belonging: “O‘z uying — o‘lan to‘shaging”, “Uy ko‘rki odam bilan” [19, b. 287-290; 24, b. 37-52]. The English image of the castle protects the individual household. The Uzbek image of home is warmer and more relational. It is not only a shelter, but a place where kinship and hospitality are enacted.

Family is perhaps the richest Uzbek field. Proverbs about father, mother, child, elder and kinship form a dense normative system: “Ota rozi — Xudo rozi”, “Onaning ko‘ngli bolada”, “Kattaga hurmat, kichikka izzat” [19, b. 265-286; 24, b. 53-68]. English proverbs also value family: “Charity begins at home”, “Blood is thicker than water” [8, b. 64-65; 9, b. 42-43]. The difference lies in the degree of social extension. Uzbek family proverbs usually lead outward to respect, lineage and communal responsibility. English family proverbs often mark the home as the first sphere of duty, then leave more room for individual autonomy.

Community is another key field. Uzbek proverbs such as “El kuchi — sel kuchi”, “Yolg‘iz otning changi chiqmas” and “Birlik bor joyda tiriklik bor” make collective force a moral and practical value [19, b. 74-82; 21, b. 43-56]. English has “Union is strength” and “Many hands make light work” [8, b. 218-219; 10, b. 687-688]. Yet English proverbial wisdom also warns against excessive collective interference: “Too many cooks spoil the broth” [8, b. 316-317]. This does not mean English culture rejects community. It means that order, role clarity and personal responsibility are strongly valued alongside cooperation.



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Neighbourhood and hospitality create a particularly Uzbek semantic zone. “Yon qo‘shning — jon qo‘shning” turns the neighbour into a near-life companion [19, b. 301-304]. “Mehmon kelar eshikdan, rizqi kelar teshikdan” frames the guest as a bearer of blessing [19, b. 305-309; 24, b. 97-118]. English proverbs about neighbours may stress caution and boundaries: “Good fences make good neighbours” [8, b. 174-175]. The contrast is striking. Uzbek proverbial culture tends to moralize openness; English proverbial culture often balances friendliness with personal boundaries. Both models are socially rational within their own histories.

6. Nature, animals and everyday imagery

Animal imagery is common in both languages. English uses birds, dogs, cats, horses and chickens: “Every dog has his day”, “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush”, “Don’t count your chickens before they hatch” [8, b. 38-39; 9, b. 84-86]. Uzbek uses horses, sheep, wolves, camels, dogs and ants: “Ot aylanib qozig‘ini topar”, “Bo‘rining og‘zi yesa ham qon, yemasa ham qon”, “Chumoli hamjihat bo‘lsa, arslonni yengar” [19, b. 330-346; 20, b. 112-130]. These images are connected to older economic life and to the symbolic habits of each culture.

Agricultural imagery is shared but differently coloured. English proverbs such as “Make hay while the sun shines” and “You reap what you sow” turn agricultural action into a practical rule [8, b. 202-203; 10, b. 581-582]. Uzbek sayings about land, water, bread and harvest often carry a stronger emotional and ethical tone: “Yer haydasang, kuz hayda”, “Suv bor joyda hayot bor”, “Non aziz” [19, b. 140-152; 24, b. 85-97]. Bread in Uzbek culture is not simply food. It is respect, blessing, labour and household dignity. This makes literal translation especially fragile.

Landscape also enters proverbial thought. English seafaring and weather images appear in “Any port in a storm” and “Don’t sail too close to the wind” [8, b. 24-25; 10, b. 594-596]. Uzbek proverbs more often use road, mountain, desert, spring and water images: “Yo‘l azobi — go‘r azobi”, “Bahorgi harakat — kuzgi barakat” [19, b. 150-156; 20, b. 252-260]. The images come from geography and livelihood. A proverb is therefore a small cultural map. It names familiar objects and turns them into moral orientation.

The logical function of imagery should not be underestimated. Permyakov treats proverbs as forms of metaphorical logic [7, b. 23-52]. A proverb does not only decorate an idea; it reasons through an image. “A rolling stone gathers no moss” evaluates movement and stability through a physical picture [8, b. 282-283]. Uzbek proverb imagery may evaluate the same theme differently depending on context, because movement can mean loss of roots or successful adaptation [19, b. 217-219]. This is why proverb comparison must move beyond literal equivalence. The image has its own cultural argument.

7. Speech etiquette and moral judgement

Speech etiquette is highly developed in Uzbek proverbs. “Avval o‘yla, keyin so‘yla”, “Yaxshi so‘z jon ozig‘i”, “Yomon so‘z bosh yorar” and “Til — dil kaliti” assign moral weight to speech [19, b. 360-374; 23, b. 44-48]. English proverbs also value restraint: “Speech is silver, silence is golden”, “Think before you speak” [8, b. 301-302; 10, b. 645-647]. The difference lies in emotional orientation. Uzbek sayings often link



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speech with heart, respect and social harmony. English sayings more often emphasize prudence, silence and self-control.

Moral judgement is concise and often severe. “Honesty is the best policy” and Uzbek proverbs such as “To‘g‘rilik — odam ko‘rki” or “Rost so‘z achchiq bo‘lar” both praise truthfulness [8, b. 188-189; 19, b. 392-398]. English proverbial morality frequently takes the form of practical advice. Uzbek morality often sounds like a social evaluation addressed to a person living among others. This is visible in proverbs about shame, respect, generosity and gratitude [24, b. 119-145]. The addressee is not an isolated individual. He or she is imagined inside a network of visible relations.

Friendship is one of the clearest universal domains. “A friend in need is a friend indeed” and “Do‘st boshga kulfat tushganda bilinadi” share almost the same ethical test [8, b. 150-151; 19, b. 236-240]. The value of loyalty is therefore not culture-specific in essence. What differs is the surrounding imagery and social use. Uzbek friendship proverbs often extend into hospitality, mutual aid and honour. English proverbs tend to be shorter and more direct in their evaluative structure. Norrick’s observations about proverbial ellipsis and semantic density are relevant here [3, b. 117-136].

Proverbs can also perform criticism indirectly. Instead of saying “you are careless”, a speaker may say “Look before you leap” [8, b. 198-199]. Uzbek speech may use “O‘ylamay bosgan qadam — boshga balo” in a similar function [19, b. 180-183]. Indirectness softens conflict but still delivers judgement. Duranti’s account of language as social action is useful: speech forms do things in social space [17, b. 121-153]. A proverb can end a dispute, authorize advice or allow criticism without open confrontation. This pragmatic role is central in both English and Uzbek.

8. Translation issues

Proverb translation requires more than linguistic competence. The translator must identify meaning, image, function and cultural tone. Some cases are easy. “A friend in need is a friend indeed” can be translated by the Uzbek equivalent “Do‘st boshga kulfat tushganda bilinadi” [8, b. 150-151; 19, b. 236-240]. Some require analogical translation: “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush” is better rendered as “Naqdning nasiyasi yo‘q” than as a literal bird image [9, b. 38-39; 19, b. 214-216]. The second version sounds culturally natural.

Culture-specific proverbs are more difficult. “An Englishman’s home is his castle” has no perfect Uzbek equivalent because its cultural core is private space protected from outside intrusion [10, b. 276-277; 11, b. 59-74]. “Mehmon otangdan ulug‘” has no exact English equivalent because its core is ritualized hospitality and respect [19, b. 301-309; 24, b. 97-118]. In such cases, the translator may preserve the proverb and add explanation, or replace it with a functionally similar saying. The choice depends on genre. Literary translation may keep cultural colour. Practical translation may prefer clarity.

Recent Uzbek studies of English and Uzbek proverbs also stress the distinction between universal and national-cultural features [25, b. 2-5; 26, b. 3-7; 27, b. 1-5]. This distinction is useful, though it should not become mechanical. A proverb may be universal in moral idea and national in imagery. “You reap what you sow” and “Nima eksang, shuni



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o‘rasan” share the same logic, but the cultural texture of agricultural imagery is not identical [8, b. 288-290; 19, b. 160-164]. Translation should preserve the moral force and, where possible, the imagery’s naturalness.

Teaching proverbs through comparison can develop cultural competence. Students should not only memorize equivalents. They should ask why a proverb uses a particular image, what it praises, what it condemns and when it is appropriate to say it. This approach connects language learning with cultural interpretation [12, b. 88-104; 13, b. 43-70]. It also prevents awkward literal translations. A proverb is not a detachable ornament. It belongs to a tradition of speaking, evaluating and remembering. That tradition must be heard, even when the translation is brief.

9. Conclusion

English and Uzbek proverbs share many moral concerns: work, honesty, friendship, caution, family, time and responsibility. These shared themes point to common human experience. Yet the proverbial expression of these themes differs. English proverbs often privilege personal initiative, pragmatic economy, boundary-consciousness and self-regulation. Uzbek proverbs more strongly foreground hospitality, respect for elders, family continuity, patience, communal solidarity and the moral value of speech. The difference is not a rigid opposition. It is a difference in emphasis, image and communicative habit.

National culture in proverbs appears through small details: bread, guest, castle, money, neighbour, bird, harvest, father, silence. Such details carry large cultural meanings. A proverb is therefore a miniature cultural text. It stores experience without explaining it at length. This is why proverbs remain useful in linguistic research, translation studies and intercultural pedagogy [1, b. 91-115; 14, b. 62-89]. They make values visible in a form that ordinary speakers can remember and reuse.

The translation of proverbs should be based on cultural equivalence. A literal rendering may preserve words but lose social force. A good translation considers the proverb’s conceptual field, imagery and pragmatic function. Close equivalents should be used where possible. Analogues are preferable when they sound more natural. Explanatory translation is necessary when the proverb contains a strongly culture-specific concept [3, b. 69-93; 26, b. 3-7]. This is especially important in literary translation, academic writing and language teaching.

Further research may use corpora, social media data and spoken discourse to see how old proverbs function today. Some proverbs may decline, others may acquire ironic force, and new proverbial formulas may appear. Still, the older collections remain valuable. They hold a memory of cultural reasoning. English and Uzbek proverbs, compared carefully, offer not a museum of fixed wisdom, but a living archive of how communities have judged work, time, family, speech and human conduct.



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