

LINGUOCULTURAL FEATURES OF PROVERBS RELATED TO “EMPATHY” IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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Annotation

This article examines the linguocultural characteristics of English and Uzbek proverbs connected to the concept of empathy. Proverbs are interpreted as cultural texts that transmit moral norms, emotional expectations, and traditional models of social behavior. Relying on theoretical insights from leading empathy scholars such as Carl Rogers, Martin Hoffman, Daniel Batson, Mark H. Davis, Jean Decety, and Jamil Zaki, the study demonstrates that English proverbs highlight individual moral responsibility and perspective-taking, whereas Uzbek proverbs emphasize collective solidarity, emotional closeness, and shared social obligations. The analysis confirms that empathy, although universal as a psychological capacity, is culturally shaped and linguistically embodied in different ways.

Keywords

Empathy, compassion, emotional resonance, proverbs, paremiology, linguoculture, cultural values, individualism, collectivism, moral norms.

Introduction. Empathy is a central concept in psychology and social sciences. It is usually defined as the capacity to understand and share another individual's emotional state. According to Rogers, empathy requires accurate and sensitive understanding of another's inner world. Hoffman explains empathy as a moral emotion formed through social development. Batson views empathy as a motivating force for altruistic behavior, while Davis distinguishes between emotional and cognitive components. Decety demonstrates that empathy has a neural basis and is shaped by cultural norms, and Zaki argues that empathy is not fixed but influenced by social expectations and values.

Proverbs are an essential part of linguistic culture. They preserve and transmit collective wisdom, emotional norms, and patterns of human interaction. Because

empathy plays a major role in shaping interpersonal relationships, it is naturally reflected in the proverb systems of different cultures. English and Uzbek communities possess rich proverbial traditions that encode their respective moral, emotional, and social values. The ways these proverbs express empathy reveal how each culture interprets moral responsibility, emotional closeness, and social cohesion. The purpose of this article is to analyze empathy-related proverbs in English and Uzbek and to identify the linguocultural features that shape their moral and emotional meaning. The study approaches proverbs not simply as fixed expressions, but as cultural signs rooted in historical experience and worldview.

Main Part. Empathy has been studied extensively in psychology and philosophy, and these theoretical perspectives help explain how cultures encode empathy in their linguistic traditions. Rogers emphasizes the importance of understanding another's experience "as if" it were one's own, which resonates with English proverbs that promote perspective-taking. Hoffman's view of empathy as a moral emotion shaped by social experience corresponds to Uzbek proverbs that highlight collective responsibility. Batson's theory that empathy leads to altruistic behavior is reflected in proverbs in both languages, while Davis's distinction between cognitive and emotional empathy appears in different cultural emphases: English proverbs often encourage imagining another's situation, whereas Uzbek proverbs tend to foreground emotional closeness. Decety and Zaki, who stress the cultural plasticity of empathy, provide a foundation for comparing the two linguistic traditions. In English linguistic culture, proverbs related to empathy generally highlight personal responsibility, fairness, and ethical decision-making. Many English proverbs encourage an individual to consciously adopt another's perspective. Expressions such as "Put yourself in someone else's shoes" illustrate the cognitive dimension of empathy described by Davis. These proverbs suggest that understanding others requires deliberate effort and mental flexibility. Another widely cited proverb, "A friend in need is a friend indeed," focuses on evaluating moral character through supportive behavior. Such expressions present empathy as a voluntary and morally commendable act that reflects personal integrity. English and Uzbek proverbs about empathy reflect the cultural worldview and social values of each community. In English culture, empathy is often expressed through individual experience and perspective-taking. English proverbs highlight emotional intelligence and the importance of supportive actions. Uzbek proverbs, on the other hand, reflect collectivism and the idea that a community shares both joy and hardship. Expressions such as "Bir boshga balo tushsa, ming boshga g'am" show that empathy is viewed as a shared social responsibility. Many Uzbek proverbs use metaphors of the heart, kindness, and spirituality to express

compassion. English proverbs tend to use concrete, everyday metaphors such as “shoes,” “path,” or “battle.” The difference in metaphors shows that English culture values personal experience, while Uzbek culture values unity and moral duty. Overall, proverbs in both languages serve as linguocultural tools that teach kindness, support, and understanding in socially meaningful ways.

English proverbs also emphasize kindness and prosocial behavior as a sign of individual maturity. For example, the saying “Kindness costs nothing” promotes compassion as a universally accessible and socially valued form of support. The Golden Rule, expressed proverbially as “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” represents a foundational moral principle in Western ethics. These expressions show that empathy in English culture is frequently framed as a personal ethical choice anchored in fairness, reciprocity, and responsibility. At the same time, some proverbs highlight emotional boundaries, such as “Mind your own business,” indicating that empathy must coexist with respect for personal privacy and autonomy.

In contrast, Uzbek proverbs present empathy as an integral part of communal life and social cohesion. These expressions often reflect the cultural emphasis on collective solidarity, emotional interconnectedness, and shared experience. Proverbs such as “G’am bir bo’lsa yengil bo’lur” (Sorrow is lighter when shared) embody the idea that emotional burdens are collectively supported. This reflects Hoffman’s view that empathy develops within social relationships. Another proverb, “Bir boshga kulfat, ming boshga g’am,” expresses the belief that when one member of the community suffers, others naturally share the emotional impact. This view aligns with the Uzbek cultural model in which empathy is not an individual decision but a communal expectation. Uzbek proverbs often highlight loyalty, mutual responsibility, and emotional closeness. A traditional saying states, “Yaxshi kunda do’st ko’p, yomon kunda sinaladi,” emphasizing that true friendships are revealed in times of hardship. Empathy is thus connected to reliability and moral strength. The proverb “Inson kishiga kulfatda kerak” suggests that a person’s value is expressed through their ability to support others in difficult circumstances. Emotional unity is captured in expressions like “Ko’ngil ko’ngildan suv ichar,” which conveys the belief that emotional understanding occurs naturally between sincere hearts. These proverbs reflect a worldview in which empathy is deeply integrated into social identity and communal duty.

From a linguocultural perspective, the differences between the two traditions arise from contrasting social orientations. English-speaking cultures generally emphasize individual autonomy, personal ethical reasoning, and controlled emotional expression. Their proverbs therefore encourage empathy through

personal initiative and moral consideration. Uzbek culture places stronger emphasis on community, interdependence, and emotional openness, so its proverbs highlight shared sorrow, collective care, and heartfelt support. Both traditions value empathy, but they express it through different cultural frameworks. The figurative language of proverbs also illustrates distinct cultural imagery. English proverbs frequently employ metaphors related to movement, burdens, and personal space, reflecting the conceptual model of empathy as “stepping into another’s situation.” Uzbek proverbs, in contrast, rely on imagery of the heart, unity, and shared experience, reinforcing emotional closeness and spiritual connection as key elements of empathy. Such differences show how cultural values shape both the linguistic form and conceptual structure of proverbs.

Conclusion. The analysis of English and Uzbek proverbs related to empathy demonstrates that these linguistic units reflect broader cultural orientations toward human relationships and moral behavior. Proverbs in English and Uzbek languages reflect the values and cultural worldview of each society. English proverbs emphasize personal understanding and individual empathy, while Uzbek proverbs highlight collective responsibility and moral duty. Both use metaphors to teach kindness and compassion, but their imagery reflects different cultural priorities. Overall, these proverbs act as linguocultural tools, guiding people to understand and support others in socially meaningful ways. English proverbs tend to portray empathy as a personal ethical choice grounded in perspective-taking, fairness, and individual responsibility. Uzbek proverbs depict empathy as a collective moral obligation rooted in emotional unity, shared social experience, and community support. The theoretical perspectives of Rogers, Hoffman, Batson, Davis, Decety, and Zaki help explain these differences, showing that empathy, although universal, is culturally framed and linguistically encoded in distinct ways. Understanding these linguistic and cultural representations deepens our knowledge of how societies cultivate moral values and express emotional attitudes through traditional wisdom.

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