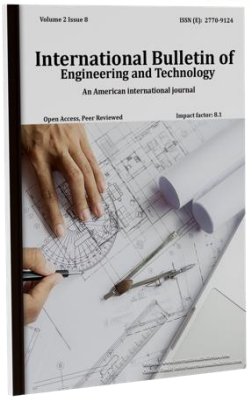

NATIONAL MENTALITY IN PROVERBS TRANSLATION: A LINGUOCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK HOSPITALITY AND FAMILY PROVERBS

Najmiddinova Mekhrigul Najmiddin qizi
Teacher of Navoi State University
Email: mehrigul@nspi.uz
Tel: +998907313080
Orcid ID: 0009-0007-8449-3373
https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18298257

Abstract

Proverbs serve as succinct expressions of a culture's worldview, embedding national mentality through culturally specific imagery and moral perspectives. This study undertakes a linguocultural analysis of English and Uzbek proverbs related to hospitality and family, exploring how national mentality shapes their meaning and the implications for translation. English proverbs often reflect individualistic and pragmatic values, emphasizing self-reliance and family priority. In contrast, Uzbek proverbs highlight communal harmony, respect for elders, and spiritual or ethical principles, with hospitality extending beyond familial bounds to honor guests as quasi-family members. The research involves a comparative examination of proverb pairs collected from authoritative phraseological dictionaries and scholarly compilations in both languages. The study applies Eugene Nida's dynamic equivalence framework to evaluate formal (literal) versus dynamic (sense-for-sense) translations, complemented by an analysis of cultural translation strategies such as domestication, foreignization, paraphrase, and explicitation. The goal is to identify the extent to which translation can faithfully convey not only semantic content but also deeply rooted cultural and moral values. Findings reveal that while both languages address similar themes—such as temporal limits on hospitality or the significance of family bonds—their expressions use culturally distinct imagery and priorities. For example, English hospitality proverbs like "Fish and guests smell after three days" emphasize practicality through metaphor, whereas Uzbek counterparts focus on honor and respect, as in "Mehmonning izzati – uch kun" ("A guest's honor lasts three days"). On family, English proverbs stress blood ties and loyalty ("Blood is thicker than water"), while Uzbek sayings underscore moral guidance and parental blessings ("Otaning duosi – farzandga yorug' yo'l"). Such differences reveal the contrast between Anglo-American individualism and Uzbek collectivism. The study highlights the challenges translators face in conveying proverbs that carry rich cultural connotations. Literal translations risk obscuring meaning or sounding unnatural, necessitating adaptive approaches that preserve cultural resonance for the target audience. Strategies may include cultural substitution, added explanation, or maintaining foreignness to retain cultural depth. The analysis confirms that proverb translation is a complex interplay between semantics and pragmatics, requiring sensitivity to national mentality to ensure the target reader experiences comparable cultural significance. Ultimately, this research underscores the crucial role of national mentality in shaping proverbial expression and the imperative for translators to balance fidelity to both meaning and cultural context. Effective translation of hospitality and family proverbs demands a dynamic, culturally informed approach that bridges linguistic and cultural divides, enriching cross-cultural understanding.

Keywords: proverbs, hospitality, family, paremiology, cultural translation, culture, linguocultural analysis, cultural concepts, comparative analysis, society, values, idioms, phraseological units, pragmatic norms.

Introduction

Proverbs encapsulate a culture's worldview and values, serving as concise vessels of collective wisdom. They mirror national mentality through culturally specific imagery and morals. English proverbs often reflect individualistic, pragmatic norms, whereas Uzbek proverbs tend to emphasize communal harmony, respect for elders and spiritual values. For example, Bread in English symbolizes knowledge or temptation, but in Uzbek culture bread (non) is sacred sustenance, so Uzbek sayings like "*Non bor – jon bor*" ("Where there is bread, there is life") have no direct English equivalent. Such divergences pose challenges in translation. Translators seek both semantic equivalence and cultural fidelity. As Alshammari notes, rendering proverbs requires transferring not only literal meaning but also "cultural and religious values," which are often partly lost. Eugene Nida's framework suggests seeking *dynamic equivalence* so that the target text elicits an equivalent response from the reader. In practice, this means translators may need to adapt metaphors, add explanations, or even substitute different imagery to bridge cultural gaps. This paper compares English and Uzbek proverbs on **hospitality and family**, examining how national mentality shapes their form and meaning and how these factors constrain translation.

Methods

A corpus of Uzbek and English proverbs on hospitality and family was assembled from standard sources (e.g. phraseological dictionaries and proverb collections). Uzbek examples were drawn from Muratova and Mamasoliyeva's compilation of hospitality proverbs and from scholarly analyses of Uzbek paremiology. Corresponding English proverbs were selected from common sources (e.g. Grammarly's proverb list and reference works). Each proverb pair was compared thematically. The analysis applied Nida's notion of equivalence: we examined both *formal* (word-for-word) and *dynamic* (sense-for-sense) translations. Cultural translation strategies (e.g. domestication vs. foreignization, paraphrase, explicitation) were considered when no direct equivalent exists. In sum, the approach follows a comparative linguocultural analysis: identifying semantic content, cultural concepts, and translation strategies for each proverb pair, as in Alshammari (2015).

Individualism and Collectivism:

Uzbek Culture: Uzbek society leans heavily towards collectivism. Decisions are often made considering the family's or community`s welfare rather than individual preferences. Public image, or obro', halollik (honesty) is crucial, affecting personal choices (Saidov, 2010).

English Culture: England exemplifies individualism, promoting personal freedom, self-expression, and privacy (Hofstede, 2001). Success is often measured through personal achievements rather than collective recognition.

Difference: This divergence creates contrasting approaches to career choices, marriage, and in Uzbekistan, decisions in these areas frequently involve familial input, whereas in England, individuals often act independently.[1]

Results

[1] Najmiddinova M.N. Similarities and differences between values of Uzbek and English cultures // Tanqidiy nazar, tahliliy tafakkur va innovatsion g'oyalar. 2025. -P.107-111. https://phoenixpublication.net/index.php/TANQ/article/view/3802

The comparative analysis revealed clear contrasts rooted in cultural mentality. Under the hospitality theme, both languages acknowledge that even welcome guests should not overstay, but they phrase it differently. For example, English has *"Fish and guests smell after three days"*, warning that visitors become unwelcome if they linger too long. The Uzbek equivalent is *"Mehmonning izzati – uch kun."* (literally, "A guest's honor lasts three days"). Both proverbs impose a three-day limit, but the imagery differs (English uses *fish*, Uzbek uses the concept of *honor*). A literal translation of the English proverb into Uzbek would be odd (Uzbeks typically do not use *baliq* in this proverb), so the Uzbek saying instead foregrounds *respect* for the guest and its temporal limit. Similarly, English recommends focusing on family first with *"Charity begins at home"*. The Uzbek hospitality proverb *"Mehmon – otangdan ulug'"* ("A guest is as great as your father") conveys almost the opposite: it elevates a stranger above one's own father.

- "Would you like something to drink?" - "Biror narsa ichishni xohlaysizmi?" (Mehmondo'stlikni yumshoq, ta'sirchan tarzda taklif qilish.)

- "Feel free to help yourself to anything in the fridge." - "Sovutgichdagi biror narsaga ehtiyojingiz bo`lsa o'zingizni erkin his eting."(Mehmonga mustaqillikni taklif qilish.)

- "You're always welcome here!" - "xush kelibsiz!" (Mehmondo'stlikning do'stona ifodasi).[2] This juxtaposition highlights a key difference: the English proverb reflects a family-first mentality (duty begins at home), whereas the Uzbek proverb arises from a tradition of extraordinary guest honor, indicating that hospitality to outsiders can surpass even filial duty.

Under the family theme, English proverbs emphasize blood ties and individual responsibility, while Uzbek proverbs invoke filial piety and community. For instance, the English saying *"Blood is thicker than water"* affirms that family relationships are paramount. In Uzbek culture, the emphasis is on moral guidance within the family. One common Uzbek proverb is *"Otaning duosi – farzandga yorug' yo'l."* ("A father's prayer lights the child's path"). Both proverbs express high regard for family bonds, but differently: the English one stresses loyalty to kin, whereas the Uzbek one stresses the ethical and even spiritual support parents give children. A literal translation of the Uzbek proverb retains basic meaning, but its cultural nuance (the blessing aspect) may be lost on English readers without explanation. Another Uzbek maxim is *"Yaxshilik qil – daryoga ot, xalq bilmasa ham xalqing biladi."* ("Do good – throw it in the river; even if the people don't know, your own people will"), which underscores community reputation and reciprocity.

In summary, English proverbs about hospitality tend to frame guests in practical terms (e.g. fish that decay or moral obligations at home), whereas Uzbek hospitality proverbs use familial and ethical imagery (guests as comparable to fathers, honor/dignity, food, etc.). Family proverbs in English lean on blood kinship and self-reliance, while Uzbek ones highlight reverence, moral duty, and social harmony (respect for elders, communal awareness). These differences reflect underlying national mentalities: Uzbek society values hospitality, generosity and hierarchy, while Anglo-American culture prizes individualism and family privacy.

Discussion

These findings illustrate how national mentality shapes proverb content and complicates translation. The semantic mismatch of cultural symbols requires translators to go beyond

[2] Najmiddinova M.N. "Linguoculturalogical features of proverbs on "hospitality" in English and Uzbek", Tamaddun nuri // The light of civilization, ISSN 2181-8258, 10(61), 2024.-P.74-79. https://jurnal.tamaddunnuri.uz/index.php/tnj/article/view/972

literal equivalence. As Nida's theory suggests, the goal is to achieve equivalent *effect* on the target audience. In practice, this often means using a communicative (dynamic) approach rather than a word-for-word transfer. For example, rendering *"Mehmon – otangdan ulug'"* literally as "A guest is greater than your father" would sound hyperbolic and obscure to an English reader. A dynamic translation might paraphrase the intent ("A guest should be treated like family") or supply footnotes. Conversely, the English "Charity begins at home" might be conveyed in Uzbek with a saying like *"Avvalo oilangni yod ol"* (help your family first), since a direct Uzbek proverb for that notion is lacking.

In the semantic domain, many proverbs share universal themes, but their cultural framing differs. Both cultures use metaphors (animals, food, work) but assign different meanings. For instance, Uzbek bread-related sayings have no exact English counterpart. A translator might substitute a culturally analogous proverb (e.g. "Bread is the staff of life" in English to capture "Where there is bread, there is life") or simply explain the Uzbek proverb's meaning. Baker (1992) characterizes such culture-specific items as particularly challenging, requiring strategies like addition, cultural substitution, or even omission. Our analysis confirms this: idiomatic equivalence was often unattainable, so contextual glosses or reformulation would be needed.

From a cultural translation perspective, the choice between foreignization and domestication is salient. One could preserve an Uzbek proverb's foreignness to expose readers to Uzbek mentality (e.g. directly citing *"Mehmonning izzati – uch kun"* with translation), or adapt it to a familiar English proverb if one exists (though here often it does not).[3] Venuti's notions apply: a domesticated translation might risk erasing the Uzbek perspective, whereas a foreignized version maintains cultural depth.

Finally, the analysis reinforces that translating proverbs involves both semantic and pragmatic challenges. A translator must capture not only the propositional meaning (semantics) but also the connotative, pragmatic force (cultural context, etiquette, values). As one study of Arabic proverb translation observed, even good translators inevitably lose some cultural "color" when shifting languages. Our examples align with that: for instance, the moral dimension of *"Otaning duosi – farzandga yorug' yo'l"* extends beyond a surface blessing to imply filial reverence, a layer not easily conveyed in English.

Conclusion

The comparison of English and Uzbek proverbs shows that national mentality strongly influences proverbial content. English proverbs on hospitality and family emphasize individual duty and pragmatism (guests as transient, family first), whereas Uzbek proverbs foreground collective values (guests as quasi-family, elders' blessings). These differences demand careful translation. Translators must balance semantic accuracy with cultural resonance, often preferring dynamic strategies that adapt imagery or add explanation. In sum, effective proverb translation requires sensitivity to both the literal meaning and the national mentality embedded in each proverb, ensuring the target reader grasps its full cultural significance.

References:

[3] Najmiddinova M.N. Linguopragmatic analysis of phraseological units and idioms relating to the concept of hospitality in English and Uzbek // FarDu, Ilmiy xabarlar jurnali, ISSN 2181-1571.Volume 31 Issue 4, 2025. -P.73-84. DOI: 10.56292/SJFSU/vol31_iss4/a94. https://journal.fdu.uz/

1. Baker, M. (1992). In Other Words: A Coursebook on Translation. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203327579
2. Bassnett, S. (2014). Translation Studies (4th ed.). London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203361337
3. Catford, J. C. (1965). A Linguistic Theory of Translation. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
4. Crystal, D. (2003). English as a Global Language (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511486999
5. Dundes, A. (1981). Interpreting Folklore. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
6. Dundes, A. (1989). Folklore Matters. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
7. Hatim, B., & Mason, I. (1997). The Translator as Communicator. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203359556
8. House, J. (2015). Translation Quality Assessment: Past and Present. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315752838
9. Katan, D. (2014). Translating Cultures: An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators (2nd ed.). London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315760031
10. Kuusi, M. (1972). Towards an International Type-System of Proverbs. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia.
11. Karimov, A. (2019). Family values in Uzbek folklore and language. Uzbek Journal of Linguistics, 3(2), 88–96.
12. Larson, M. L. (1984). Meaning-Based Translation: A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence. Lanham: University Press of America.
13. Mamasoliyeva, S. (2020). Linguocultural features of hospitality proverbs in Uzbek. Journal of Philological Studies, 5(1), 55–62.
14. Mieder, W. (2004). Proverbs: A Handbook. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
15. Mieder, W. (2007). Proverbs Speak Louder Than Words. New York: Peter Lang. https://doi.org/10.3726/978-1-4539-1504-1
16. Mieder, W. (2015). Proverbs Are Never Out of Season. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
17. Nida, E. A. (1964). Toward a Science of Translating. Leiden: Brill.
18. Nida, E. A., & Taber, C. (1969). The Theory and Practice of Translation. Leiden: Brill.
19. Najmiddinova M.N. “Linguocultural and linguopragmatic features of the concept of "hospitality" in English and Uzbek”//International conference Philology, Methodology, Translation Studies: Current Issues of Modern Science. -8-9.11.2024.-P.306-309. https://doi.org/10.2024/1xm0b673
20. Najmiddinova M.N. “Linguoculturalogical features of proverbs on “hospitality” in English and Uzbek”, Tamaddun nuri // The light of civilization, ISSN 2181-8258, 10(61), 2024.-P.74-79. https://jurnal.tamaddunnuri.uz/index.php/tnj/article/view/972
21. Najmiddinova M.N. Similarities and differences between values of Uzbek and English cultures // Tanqidiy nazar, tahliliy tafakkur va innovatsion g‘oyalar.2025.-P.107-111. https://phoenixpublication.net/index.php/TANQ/article/view/3802
22. Najmiddinova M.N., Rahmatova M.U. The role of Pragmatics in Intercultural Communication with an Emphasis on Politeness // Tamaddun Nuri/The light of civilization. -

ISSN 2181-8258 IF-9.347 DOI 10.69691,4-son (67) 2025.-P.237-240. https://doi.org/10.2024/1xm0b673

23. Najmiddinova M.N. Linguistic features of phraseological units with a common meaning "hospitality" // Qo‘qon DPI. Ilmiy xabarlar,3-son. ISBN: 978-9943-7182-7-2 “CLASSIC” nashriyoti.2025.-P.1886-1891. www.kspi.uz journal.kspi.uz

24. Najmiddinova M.N. Linguopragmatic analysis of phraseological units and idioms relating to the concept of hospitality in English and Uzbek // FarDu, Ilmiy xabarlar jurnali, ISSN 2181-1571.Volume 31 Issue 4, 2025. -P.73-84. DOI: 10.56292/SJFSU/vol31_iss4/a94. https://journal.fdu.uz/

25. Permyakov, G. L. (1988). From Proverb to Folk-Tale. Moscow: Nauka.

26. Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E., & McDaniel, E. R. (2010). Communication Between Cultures (7th ed.). Boston: Wadsworth.

27. Sharifian, F. (2017). Cultural Linguistics. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/celcr.8

28. Trench, R. C. (2003). On the Lessons in Proverbs. London: Kessinger Publishing.

29. Venuti, L. (2017). The Translator’s Invisibility (3rd ed.). London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315098745

30. Wierzbicka, A. (1997). Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

31. Yuldashev, F., & Nazarova, N. (2023). National identity and cultural codes in Uzbek paremiology. Cultura. International Journal of Philosophy of Culture and Axiology, 20(2), 145–160. https://doi.org/10.3726/CUL2023.02