

Expression of National Mentality through Somatic Units in Uzbek and English Proverbs

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Abstract. *Proverbs, often considered a mirror of a nation's cultural identity, encapsulate the values, beliefs, and worldview of its people. Somatic (body-related) expressions in proverbs are particularly insightful in revealing how bodily metaphors shape national mentalities. This paper explores the role of somatic units in Uzbek and English proverbs, comparing how body-related metaphors reflect cultural and social norms in both languages. The study examines how these expressions contribute to the understanding of mentality, focusing on similarities and differences in how bodily imagery is used to convey meaning, wisdom, and social expectations in both linguistic traditions. Furthermore, the paper discusses the cultural characteristics embedded in somatic proverbs and how they inform the larger concept of national mentality.*

Key words: *Somatic expressions, proverbs, metaphors, national mentality, cultural characteristics, Uzbek language, English language, linguistic worldview.*

Introduction

Proverbs are an essential element of a culture's linguistic and philosophical heritage, offering concise expressions of collective wisdom, social norms, and values. Through metaphorical language, they reflect how people perceive the world, shaping their understanding of life's complexities. Somatic (body-related) metaphors in proverbs are particularly revealing, as they use parts of the human body to express a wide range of ideas about morality, wisdom, emotions, and human behavior. These metaphors are not universal, however, as each culture brings its unique perspective to the bodily imagery used in its proverbs.

Both Uzbek and English proverbs are rich in somatic expressions that reflect national mentalities. While the body serves as a symbol of strength, resilience, and human capacity in both languages, how these qualities are emphasized or represented can vary significantly. This paper examines how somatic expressions in Uzbek and English proverbs are employed to express cultural values and beliefs, shedding light on how these expressions reflect the mentalities of each culture. Through this comparative study, the paper will explore the cultural significance of somatic proverbs and highlight the unique ways in which body-related metaphors are used to communicate complex ideas about human nature and society.

Main Part

Somatic metaphors are expressions that use parts of the body as symbols or representations to convey ideas, emotions, or moral lessons. In both Uzbek and English cultures, these metaphors reflect deeply ingrained values, beliefs, and views about the world. The human body, as a central part of our existence, is frequently used to convey concepts that are essential to understanding human nature,

society, and culture. Somatic expressions often serve as a reflection of how individuals perceive their physical, emotional, and intellectual selves in the context of the society they belong to.

In the context of proverbs, somatic metaphors are particularly significant because proverbs are succinct, culturally embedded expressions of wisdom and societal norms. The way the body is metaphorically portrayed in these proverbs provides a powerful lens through which we can examine the mentality of a culture, including how people understand qualities such as strength, morality, intelligence, and emotional resilience. While the basic human experience is universal, the cultural emphasis placed on different aspects of the body can reveal key differences in national mentality.

Uzbek Somatic Metaphors and National Mentality. In Uzbek culture, bodily metaphors in proverbs often emphasize qualities related to resilience, collective well-being, and emotional endurance. The body is portrayed as a tool for both survival and social cohesion, reflecting the importance of endurance in the face of adversity and the emphasis on maintaining social harmony.

For example, the proverb “*ko ‘zingni och*” (“open your eyes”) is a somatic metaphor that stresses the value of awareness, vigilance, and being alert to one’s surroundings. This expression goes beyond a simple call for attention and highlights a broader cultural value of perception and caution, especially in the context of community welfare. Awareness is seen as not only a personal trait but also a collective one, where being attentive to others’ needs and circumstances is vital for social unity.

Another common proverb, “*yuragingni qo ‘yma*” (“don’t lose heart”), utilizes the heart as a symbol of emotional resilience. In Uzbek culture, the heart is often seen as the seat of emotional strength. The proverb urges individuals to maintain emotional composure, signaling the value placed on inner strength and the ability to endure hardships. This mirrors the broader cultural mindset in which emotional resilience and perseverance are regarded as virtues necessary for both personal and collective well-being.

Somatic expressions like “*yaxshi qo ‘lga tayan*” (“rely on a strong hand”) reflect the communal aspect of Uzbek society, where physical strength and reliability are valued in interpersonal relationships. The body, in this case, represents both strength and trust, qualities that are crucial for fostering cooperation and support within the community. In Uzbek culture, these expressions reflect the broader social values of mutual aid, solidarity, and collective responsibility.

English Somatic Metaphors and National Mentality. In English-speaking cultures, somatic metaphors in proverbs often focus on individualism, mental fortitude, and personal resilience. The human body is used metaphorically to reflect the cultural value of self-reliance, intellectual strength, and personal moral development. These metaphors highlight the importance of autonomy, personal control, and self-discipline—qualities that are highly valued in Western societies.

One well-known proverb, “*a heart of gold*”, uses the heart to symbolize kindness, generosity, and moral purity. This expression conveys the idea that someone with a “heart of gold” is emotionally generous and compassionate, underscoring the importance of kindness in English-speaking cultures. The focus here is on the moral qualities of the individual, highlighting the inner workings of the self rather than the external, social self.

In a similar vein, the proverb “*to have a finger in every pie*” uses the metaphor of the hand to represent control, influence, and involvement in multiple endeavors. This expression reflects the value placed on personal initiative and active participation in various aspects of life. It suggests that an individual should be engaged in different pursuits, demonstrating the importance of versatility, action, and agency in English-speaking cultures.

Expressions like “*keep a cool head*” or “*having a backbone*” further emphasize individual emotional control and mental strength. The head and backbone in these metaphors represent the mind and willpower, respectively, and they suggest that personal fortitude is a key to success. The body here symbolizes not just physical attributes but also mental attributes—such as composure and determination—highlighting the cultural premium placed on emotional regulation and self-discipline in English-speaking societies.

Comparison of Somatic Metaphors in Uzbek and English Proverbs. While both Uzbek and English proverbs use somatic metaphors to express ideas about strength, resilience, and morality, the differences in these expressions reveal contrasting aspects of national mentality.

In Uzbek culture, bodily metaphors often highlight the communal aspects of life. The body is a symbol of collective endurance and emotional strength, and there is a strong emphasis on the importance of social cohesion and emotional resilience in overcoming challenges. The cultural value placed on unity, trust, and emotional endurance shapes the way somatic metaphors are used, focusing on communal well-being.

In contrast, English proverbs tend to emphasize individualism, autonomy, and personal emotional control. The body in English metaphors often represents personal strength, intellectual capability, and moral development. This reflects the Western cultural focus on individual achievement, self-reliance, and emotional self-regulation. While both cultures value resilience, the focus in English proverbs is on personal traits that enhance individual success and moral character, whereas in Uzbek proverbs, the emphasis is more on qualities that contribute to social harmony and collective strength.

Cultural Characteristics of Somatic Proverbs. The way somatic metaphors are used in proverbs also reflects the distinct cultural characteristics of the societies that produce them. In Uzbek proverbs, bodily metaphors often center around collective well-being and communal values. The emphasis is on social harmony, emotional strength, and resilience as essential components of Uzbek identity. For instance, expressions like *"yaxshi qo'lga tayan"* (*"rely on a strong hand"*) highlight the importance of physical strength and reliable support in a community.

In contrast, English proverbs tend to emphasize self-reliance and personal resilience. The body in English proverbs often represents independence and mental fortitude. For example, *"keep a cool head"* and *"having a backbone"* are expressions that underscore individual emotional control and determination. These metaphors are deeply tied to Western ideals of independence and self-sufficiency.

Impact of Somatic Expressions on Understanding National Mentality

Through the lens of somatic metaphors, it becomes clear that body-related expressions offer insight into each culture's approach to human nature, social relations, and personal growth. In Uzbek proverbs, bodily metaphors are used to communicate values such as emotional endurance, collective responsibility, and strength in adversity. Meanwhile, in English proverbs, the focus is on individual control, intellect, and resilience. These differences reflect the varying ways in which each culture prioritizes social harmony and individualism, respectively.

Conclusion

Somatic expressions in proverbs provide a fascinating insight into the mentalities of different cultures. In both Uzbek and English, bodily metaphors serve as powerful symbols for conveying universal human experiences, yet they reflect distinct cultural attitudes toward resilience, wisdom, and morality. While Uzbek proverbs emphasize collective values and emotional endurance, English proverbs place greater emphasis on individualism and intellectual strength. By studying these somatic proverbs, we can better understand how language, culture, and national mentality are intertwined. These expressions not only preserve the cultural identity of each society but also shape the way people in these cultures interpret the world and their place within it.

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