



The Relationship Between Mentality And Proverbs

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Abstract: Proverbs are succinct, culturally rich statements that reflect the wisdom, values, and worldview of a people. This article examines how proverbs serve as a mirror of a nation's mentality — the collective way of thinking, attitudes, traditions and social norms of a group. It explores theoretical definitions of mentality, the nature and functions of proverbs, the ways in which they encode mentality, and comparative examples from English, Uzbek and other languages. Implications for language teaching and cultural awareness are also discussed.

Keywords: Mentality, proverb, implication, culture, discuss.

Introduction: Proverbs, Language and culture are deeply intertwined: language not only conveys information but also embodies the worldview and mentality of its users. The concept of mentality is often defined as a people's characteristic mindset, value system, and worldview shaped by history, culture and social experience. Among the linguistic forms that most clearly reflect these cultural-mental features are proverbs and sayings. Because proverbs are short, memorable, and widely used across generations, they provide insight into how a society thinks, what it values, and how it interprets its world.

This article aims to explore the link between mentality and proverbs: how proverbs encapsulate national mentality, how they differ across cultures, and how they can be used to study mentality linguistically and culturally. First, the article defines key terms — mentality and proverb. Next, it investigates how proverbs function as carriers of mentality, using examples and comparative data from English, Uzbek and other languages. Finally, it discusses pedagogical implications and concludes on the value of such an approach.

Mentality

The term "mentality" refers to the collective mindset,

worldview or habitual way of thinking characteristic of a social group or nation. Ruda notes that “mentality is an integral picture of the world in its value-orientations, existing for a long time... based on ethnic predispositions and historical traditions.” In other words, mentality is shaped by the shared experiences, beliefs and traditions of a people, and it manifests in language, behaviour, values and cultural artefacts.

Proverbs are fixed, traditional expressions, often metaphorical, which express general truths, moral lessons or culturally valued insights. As Azimov writes, “A proverb ... is a short statement showing in condensed form the accumulated life experience of the community and serving as a conventional practical symbol for abstract ideas.” journaloi.com+1 Proverbs, therefore, are linguistic units that serve both communicative and cultural functions: they convey wisdom, reinforce values, and preserve cultural memory.

Proverbs reflect mentality because they embed social norms, value judgments, beliefs about human nature, morality, work, relationships, and life in general. For example, Orlova and Nikulina’s study of English and Russian proverbs on good and evil finds that while there are universal features in how good/evil is conceived, differences reflect national types of mentality. In this way, one can read the worldview of a people by analysing their proverbs.

Thematic domains of mentality in proverbs

Typical domains where mentality shows up via proverbs include:

- Attitude to work and effort (e.g., “No pain, no gain”)
- Relationships and social bonds (“Blood is thicker than water”)
- Fate, luck and self-agency (“Fortune favours the bold”)
- Time and life stages (“Time waits for no man”)

Different cultures emphasise different attitudes. For example, in Uzbek proverbs there may be stronger emphasis on communal solidarity, respect for elders, patience and respect for nature — reflecting a particular national mentality. Studies compare English, Uzbek and Russian proverbs and find differences rooted in historical, social and value systems. in-academy.uz+2Neliti+2

Structural and metaphorical indicators of mentality

Beyond thematic content, the structure and metaphors used in proverbs can reveal mentality. For instance, zoonymic proverbs (those using animal metaphors) in both Uzbek and English reflect how

people view animals and human traits, thus indirectly pointing to mentality. Uralova’s article analyses English and Uzbek proverbs with zoonym components, showing how mental features are revealed via metaphorical animal imagery. Also, cognitive-linguistic studies show that the mental imagery evoked by proverbs changes with age and cultural background: Duthie et al. show how metaphorical imagery becomes more developed with age in proverb comprehension. Hence, the metaphor structures, imagery and cultural referencing in proverbs all speak to mentality.

Comparative studies and mentality

Comparative studies of proverbs across languages yield insights into differing mentalities. For example, the article by Abdullaeva shows how “proverbial mentality” is one variant of national mentality — thus comparing English and Uzbek proverbs reveals distinct mentalities. Another study examines Uzbek and English phraseological units and finds that many English PUs reflect values like individualism and pragmatism — again, revealing the underlying Anglo-Saxon mentality. Therefore, comparing proverbs across languages helps uncover cultural-mental contrasts and universals.

Case Studies

1 English vs Uzbek proverbs

The study “The Expression of Mentality and National Character in the Proverbs of English and Uzbek People” examines how proverbs in these two cultures encode their distinct national character. For example, an Uzbek proverb might emphasise collective benefit, patience or deference (“Birga yurish — yurakka yorilik”), while an English proverb might emphasise self-reliance or competition (“He who hesitates is lost”). Such comparisons show how mentality influences the choice and usage of proverbs.

2 Zoonymic proverbs in English and Uzbek

As noted above, Uralova’s study shows how animal metaphors used in proverbs (e.g., “wolf and lamb drink water together” in Uzbek) express both shared human themes and culturally-specific mental representations. The fact that different animals may feature and carry different traits in different languages (e.g., the fox representing cunning in English vs. perhaps another animal in Uzbek) speaks to differing mentalities.

3 Good & Evil in English and Russian proverbs

The Orlova & Nikulina article examines how English and Russian proverbs treat the concepts of good and evil, and how their structural-semantic differences reflect national mentalities. For instance, Russian proverbs may emphasise collective moral responsibility, while English reflect individual morals — thus revealing differences in mental outlook.

Implications for Language Teaching and Cultural Awareness

1 Teaching proverbs in ESL/EFL

Since proverbs carry cultural and mental content, teaching them can help learners gain insight into the target culture's mentality. Mammadova's article shows how integrating proverbs into language instruction fosters both cognitive and cultural competence. Teachers should not only teach the literal meaning of proverbs but also their cultural connotations, values, and mentality behind them.

2 Enhancing intercultural competence

Understanding proverbs from different languages gives learners insight into the worldview and mentality of others, reducing cultural bias and improving empathy. Comparative proverb study (English vs other languages) can thus be a useful tool in cross-cultural communication.

3 Research and further reflection

From a research perspective, studying proverbs helps linguists, anthropologists and cognitive scientists trace patterns of mentality, cultural change, value shifts and language-culture interaction. The complexity of metaphorical imagery, mental processing of proverbs (e.g., imagery, metaphors, cultural knowledge) as shown in Duthie et al.'s study, points to rich cognitive dynamics.

Limitations and Considerations

While proverbs offer a window into mentality, there are caveats. First, proverbs belong to a past or traditional register — they may reflect older mentalities rather than contemporary ones. Second, translation and cultural mismatches complicate direct comparison across languages. Third, mentality is multifaceted and dynamic; proverbs capture only parts of it. Hence, results must be interpreted cautiously and supplemented by broader cultural data.

CONCLUSION

Proverbs are more than mere sayings; they are cultural encapsulations of a people's mentality — their values, attitudes, worldview and social norms. By analysing their themes, metaphors, structure and usage, one can gain insight into national mentalities. Comparative studies reveal both universal human features and culture-specific traits. For language teaching and intercultural understanding, proverbs provide a valuable tool. While not exhaustive, this approach offers a meaningful bridge between language, culture and mental outlook.

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