



THE CONCEPT OF FRIENDSHIP AND ITS LINGUOCULTURAL FEATURES IN UZBEK AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES

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Abstract

This research explores the concept of friendship and its particular linguistic and cultural features in Uzbek and English. Friendship exists as a universal human bond that is influenced by social values, historical context, culture, language, and varies between different societies. This paper seeks to analyse “friendship” through proverbs and idioms from both cultures, exploring its meaning and usage, emphasising the individualistic traits of English culture juxtaposed with the collectivist nature dominant in Uzbek culture regarding perception, formation, and maintenance of friendships. Additionally, it highlights distinctive cultural boundaries such as specific words or phrases that mark these differences, which reveal possibilities of difficulty in intercultural communication concerning friendship, along with approaches to overcome them.

Keywords: Friend, friendship, comparison, differences, collectivism, mutual understanding, betrayal, linguistic differences.

Introduction

Friendship is one of two essential forms of human relationships that offer help, company, togetherness, and enable people to feel belongingness. While affection is mutual among humans, this may have implications in the form of expression that differ from one society to another. (Leontyeva & Mokienko, 2022). Friendship is a fundamental human relationship, encompassing support, affection, and a sense of belonging. Although the basic concept of mutual love and respect is the same globally, concepts and interpretations may vary widely between cultures. (Lu et



al., 2021). This is a comparative linguocultural analysis of concepts of friendship in (Humoyiddin & Komola, 2024) the two different linguistic and cultural systems—Uzbek and English. “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet” – but is that always true for friendship in English-speaking contexts whose individualism is associated with the West, where autonomy is valued? In contrast, Uzbek culture draws a lot from Central Asian culture, which is collective – friendship may mean more than people partying all night or all week, but with elements of whether they could be part of a family or clan. Analyse the language and culture, especially proverbs and everyday usage, and similarities will be discussed.

Ideas of Friendship in Uzbek Culture

Uzbek culture places a profound emphasis on friendship, often elevating it to a status akin to family ties. Proverbs and sayings frequently highlight the deep emotional, moral, and social duties associated with being a friend. (Mardiyev)

Cultural Nuances

Familial Bonds: In Uzbek culture, a friend is often considered “family” or “brother.” Proverbs like “Do‘stni oila deb bil” (Consider a friend as family) underscore this deep sense of inclusivity and loyalty. This reflects the collective nature of Central Asian society, where individuals thrive within a strong network of support.

Mutual Support and Loyalty: Uzbek proverbs frequently stress the importance of standing by friends in adversity. “Do‘st boshga kulfat tushganda bilinadi” (A friend is known in trouble) is a prominent example, emphasising that true friends reveal their worth during difficult times. This highlights a strong expectation of unwavering support and reliability.

Sincerity and Authenticity: The value of genuine connection over superficiality is also a recurring theme. “Do‘st o‘zingni ko‘rsatgan paytda do‘st” (A friend is a friend when they show you who they truly are) and “Do‘st achitib gapirar-dushman kuldirib” (You cannot become friends with just beautiful words) suggest that actions and sincerity are paramount.



Social Obligation and Community: Friendship in Uzbek culture is often framed in terms of mutual exchange and social obligation. “Do‘stlik–burchdir” (Friendship is an obligation) indicates that it is viewed as a socially embedded relationship where both parties have a duty to one another, contributing to social harmony and collective well-being.

Long-lasting Bonds: Old friendships are highly valued. The proverb “Qadim do‘stlik zanglamas” (Old friendship does not rust) signifies the enduring nature and esteemed quality of long-standing friendships, often equated to precious metals like gold.

Linguistic Features

The Uzbek language employs a rich lexicon and an abundance of phraseological units, proverbs, and sayings to express the concept of friendship.

Lexeme “Do‘st”: The core lexeme “do‘st” (friend) is central to numerous expressions.

Metaphorical Language: Uzbek proverbs often utilise nature-based or agricultural metaphors. For instance, “Agar quyosh havoni isitsa, do‘stlik yurakni isitadi” (If the sun warms the air, then friendship warms the heart) links friendship to warmth and comfort. Similarly, “Ildiz daraxtni himoya qiladi, insonni do‘st himoya qiladi” (The root protects the tree, a person is protected by a friend) highlights the protective and foundational role of friendship.

Anthropomorphic Metaphors: While less common than in English, friendship can be described with human-like qualities, such as “Do not break the thread of friendship, if you die, the knot will remain,” implying its fragility and enduring impact.

Comparison to Essential Elements: Friendship is often compared to essential elements like salt in food in Uzbek culture such as “Do‘stsiz boshim-tuzsiz oshim”



(My head without friend - my food without salt), indicating its indispensable nature for a fulfilling life.

Emphasis on Action over Words: The proverb “Bir so‘z bilan do‘stni topib, bir so‘z bilan yo‘qotasiz” (With one word, you can find a friend; with one word, you can lose a friend) underscores the delicate nature of friendships and the importance of respectful communication and actions.

Quantity of Proverbs: The sheer number of proverbs related to friendship in Uzbek (over 400) compared to English (fewer than a hundred) underscores its pervasive importance in the cultural fabric.

The Concept of Friendship in English Culture

In English culture, friendship is generally viewed through a more individualistic lens, emphasising personal choice, shared interests, and mutual benefit. (Aru, 2021)

Cultural Nuances

Individualistic Approach: English culture tends to define friendship as a bond between individuals, where personal autonomy and choice play a significant role in forming and maintaining relationships. (Chang, 2021)

Trust and Reciprocity: Trust and mutual aid are cornerstones of English understandings of friendship. Proverbs like “A friend in need is a friend indeed” highlight the importance of support during difficult times, suggesting that true friends are those who prove their loyalty through actions.

Shared Interests and Companionship: Friendships often form around common interests, hobbies, or shared experiences. The idiom “Birds of a feather flock together” reflects this tendency.

Pragmatism and Relational Benefits: English proverbs sometimes reflect a more pragmatic approach, focusing on the benefits derived from friendship. “A



friend to all is a friend to none” suggests that genuine friendship requires a degree of exclusivity and focused trust.

Transparency and Constructive Criticism: The idea that friends should be transparent with each other and offer constructive criticism is also a component of defining true friendship in English culture.

Varied Levels of Closeness: English speakers often categorize friendships into varying degrees of closeness (e.g., acquaintances, friends, close friends, best friends), reflecting different levels of intimacy and commitment.

3.2. Linguistic Features

English employs a wide range of lexical items, idioms, and phrases to describe and characterize friendships.

Common Nouns and Adjectives: “Friend,” “buddy,” “pal,” “mate,” “chum,” “confidante” are common terms, often qualified by adjectives like “close,” “best,” “true,” “old,” “loyal,” “fake.”

Metaphorical Language: While less frequent than in Uzbek proverbs, English also uses metaphors. “Friendship is the only trustworthy fabric of the affections” suggests its strength and reliability.

Directness in expressing negativity: The concept of a “fake friend” is explicitly expressed and strongly disliked in English culture, reflected in proverbs like “One fake friend can do more damage than five enemies.” which has an Uzbek equivalent in this meaning as “Ablah do‘st dushmandan yomon, ne hiyla bilsa ishlatar oson”

4. Comparative Analysis and Intercultural Communication Challenges

The comparative analysis reveals both universal aspects and significant divergences in the concept of friendship between Uzbek and English cultures.



4.1. Commonalities

Trust and Mutual Aid: Both cultures value trust and mutual support as essential elements of friendship.

Loyalty: Loyalty is a highly prized quality in friends in both societies.

Support in Adversity: The idea that a true friend shows their worth in difficult times is universal.

4.2. Differences and Challenges

Individualism vs. Collectivism: This is a fundamental difference. English culture's emphasis on individual autonomy can be perceived as less communal or even distant by Uzbeks, who expect a more integrated and familial bond. (Humoyiddin & Komola, 2024). Conversely, the strong sense of obligation and collective responsibility in Uzbek friendships might be seen as overly demanding or intrusive by those from individualistic English-speaking backgrounds. (Soatova, 2025)

Expression of Emotion and Affection: Verbal and physical expressions of affection can differ. While English cultures may be more reserved in public displays of affection, Uzbek culture might involve more physical closeness or frequent verbal affirmations of deep friendship.

Directness vs. Indirectness: Communication styles vary. English communication tends to be more direct, while Uzbek communication can be more high-context, relying on implicit cues and shared understanding, especially in close relationships. This can lead to misunderstandings, where a direct English speaker might inadvertently offend an Uzbek friend, or an indirect Uzbek speaker might be perceived as unclear or evasive by an English friend.

Consequences of Betrayal: While both cultures condemn betrayal, the linguistic expressions and the societal impact of a "fake friend" might be perceived differently. (Umarova, 2022) In the Uzbek mentality, a friend's betrayal is harrowing and may lead to a loss of trust, but forgiveness may be sought for modesty's sake, even if trust is lost. The proverb "Dushman do'st orasidan chiqar" (An enemy emerges from among friends) highlights the profound impact of internal betrayal. (Razzakova, 2024)



5. Conclusion

The concept of friendship, while universally valued, is significantly shaped by the cultural and linguistic landscapes in which it is embedded. In Uzbek culture, friendship is often perceived as a profound, almost familial bond, characterized by strong mutual support, loyalty, and a sense of collective responsibility, reflected in its rich paremiological tradition. English culture, on the other hand, emphasizes individual choice, shared interests, and reciprocal support within more defined personal boundaries.

These distinct linguocultural features manifest in various linguistic expressions, from the prevalence and themes of proverbs to the nuances of everyday communication. Understanding these differences is crucial for fostering successful intercultural friendships. Challenges such as varying expectations of intimacy, communication styles, and the role of the individual versus the collective can be navigated through cultural awareness, empathy, active listening, and a willingness to adapt. Ultimately, recognizing the diverse ways friendship is conceptualized and expressed enriches our understanding of human connection and facilitates more meaningful interactions across linguistic and cultural divides.

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