

Cultural-Cognitive Analysis of Aphorisms Expressing the National Picture of the World

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Abstract. Aphorisms are linguistic condensations of cultural experience and collective wisdom that encode the cognitive and axiological orientations of a nation. This study investigates how aphorisms reflect and shape the national picture of the world through cultural-cognitive mechanisms. Drawing on cognitive linguistic and cultural linguistics frameworks, the paper explores the ways in which English and Uzbek aphorisms express worldviews, values, and conceptual metaphors unique to their speech communities. The findings demonstrate that aphorisms serve as a linguistic mirror of national mentality, representing how people conceptualize reality, time, morality, and human relationships.

Key words: aphorism, linguistic worldview, cultural cognition, national picture of the world, English, Uzbek.

Introduction. Language is not a neutral medium of communication; it is a reflection of a community's way of perceiving and interpreting the world. The concept of the *national picture of the world* (NPW), or *linguistic worldview*, refers to the collective mental model through which a people understand reality and organize experience (Alefrenko & Dekhnich, 2019). Aphorisms, as short, memorable expressions that capture general truths or moral principles, play a crucial role in representing this worldview linguistically and cognitively.

Unlike idioms or proverbs that often rely on situational imagery, aphorisms tend to express universal or philosophical truths. However, their linguistic form and conceptual background are still deeply rooted in a national culture. For instance, aphorisms about patience or wisdom in English often rely on metaphors of *time* and *reason*, while in Uzbek they frequently invoke *community*, *honor*, and *moral duty*. These linguistic preferences reflect cognitive and cultural differences in conceptualizing life and social relations.

Aphorisms have been studied in linguistics as concise linguistic units that carry philosophical and cultural significance. Ivanov (2020) categorizes aphorisms as linguistic constructs performing cognitive, cumulative, and axiological functions. The *cognitive function* enables them to encapsulate human experience in abstract thought; the *cumulative function* preserves collective knowledge; and the *axiological function* transmits moral values across generations.

According to Alefrenko and Dekhnich (2019), cognitive metaphors serve as the foundation for constructing linguistic pictures of the world. They argue that metaphorical conceptualization, such as "*life is a journey*" or "*knowledge is light*", reflects stable patterns of thinking within a cultural community. Similarly, Mamatov et al. highlight that phraseological and aphoristic units are culturally coded forms of cognition, revealing a people's worldview through their lexical and figurative content.

Baratova conducted a comparative study on English and Uzbek aphorisms, concluding that although both languages share universal themes—like labor, family, and destiny—their expression varies due to differing national experiences and moral priorities. Tashpulatova further demonstrated that the pragmatic use of aphorisms in both languages aligns with cultural norms of politeness, wisdom-sharing, and social harmony.

Together, these works emphasize that aphorisms embody the cognitive and cultural essence of a nation, functioning as verbal crystallizations of its worldview. Cognitive linguistics views language as a reflection of mental structures and conceptual systems (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). According to this theory, meaning is not purely linguistic but grounded in conceptual metaphors, schemas, and frames derived from human experience. When we say “time is money” or “life is a road,” we employ cognitive metaphors that structure how we understand abstract concepts.

Applying this framework to aphorisms means viewing them as linguistic manifestations of shared cognitive models. For example, the English aphorism “*Time is money*” reveals a utilitarian and productivity-oriented worldview, while the Uzbek aphorism “*Vaqt oltindan qimmat*” (“Time is more precious than gold”) reflects a similar conceptualization of time’s value but rooted in moral and spiritual evaluation rather than economic productivity.

Cultural linguistics (Sharifian, 2017) focuses on how language encodes cultural conceptualizations—shared ideas, values, and traditions embedded in a linguistic community. The *national picture of the world* arises from these conceptualizations, forming a framework of perception and expression unique to each nation. As Jazindia (2022) notes, each culture interprets reality through its historical experience, environment, and collective mentality.

Aphorisms serve as compact cultural-cognitive units. They fulfill:

- **Cognitive functions**, expressing general insights about life or human nature.
- **Cumulative functions**, storing cultural memory and transmitting traditional wisdom.
- **Axiological functions**, promoting value systems and moral attitudes (Ivanov, 2020).

Thus, aphorisms are “miniature linguistic mirrors” of the national worldview, linking thought, language, and value in concise form.

Analysis: English and Uzbek Aphorisms as Expressions of Worldview. Metaphor is central to understanding aphoristic meaning. English aphorisms often employ metaphors of *journey*, *light*, *trade*, and *growth*—concepts rooted in Western rationalism and economic culture. For example:

- “*Time is money.*”
- “*Knowledge is power.*”
- “*The world is a stage.*”

These metaphors present life as an individual pursuit of success, knowledge, and progress—values characteristic of Anglo-Saxon modernity. In contrast, Uzbek aphorisms often use metaphors connected to *nature*, *community*, and *morality*. Examples include:

- “*Yaxshilik qil, suvgan tashla, baliq bilmasa, Xudo bilar.*” (“Do good and throw it into the water; if the fish does not know, God will.”)
- “*El bilan boshla, el bilan tugat.*” (“Begin with the people, finish with the people.”)

These examples show a collectivist, spiritually grounded worldview emphasizing moral action and divine justice over individual gain. Cognitive metaphors here map life not as a competitive journey but as a moral cycle governed by harmony and faith. The contrast in aphoristic themes between English and Uzbek reveals differing cultural axiologies. English aphorisms tend to promote *individualism, self-reliance, and pragmatic reasoning*:

- “*God helps those who help themselves.*”

- “Actions speak louder than words.”
- *Uzbek aphorisms emphasize community, morality, and humility:*
- “*Kattaga hurmat, kichikka izzat.*” (“*Respect the elder, honor the younger.*”)
- “*Til yarasi bitar, dil yarasi bitmas.*” (“*A wound of the tongue heals, but a wound of the heart does not.*”)

Such differences align with the cultural-cognitive principle that moral values are linguistically encoded in a nation’s speech practices (Mamatov et al., 2021). While English aphorisms prioritize rationality and self-mastery, Uzbek aphorisms foreground emotional intelligence, social harmony, and moral integrity. Aphorisms are stable units transmitted across generations, preserving cultural continuity. They represent the *collective memory* (Halbwachs, 1992) of a society, allowing values to persist even as language evolves. In both English and Uzbek, aphorisms serve as pedagogical tools: English speakers may cite “Honesty is the best policy” to instill integrity, while Uzbek parents invoke “Halol mehnat — oriyat kaliti” (“Honest labor is the key to dignity”) to encourage moral work ethics.

This cumulative function transforms aphorisms into mnemonic carriers of identity, integrating linguistic expression with moral heritage.

In both cultures, aphorisms enhance speech pragmatically by adding authority and rhetorical resonance. As Tashpulatova notes, Uzbek speakers use aphorisms to convey wisdom respectfully and indirectly, avoiding confrontation. Similarly, English speakers employ aphorisms for persuasion or emphasis in discourse. Thus, the use of aphorisms in communication reflects pragmatic norms: respect, politeness, and shared cultural literacy.

Discussion. The comparative analysis reveals that aphorisms, though universal in structure, are culturally and cognitively specific in content. English aphorisms articulate a worldview centered on rationalism, individualism, and practicality; Uzbek aphorisms foreground spirituality, collectivism, and moral duty. These contrasts mirror deeper cognitive orientations: analytic versus holistic thought, secular versus spiritual interpretation of reality, and individual versus communal agency.

From a linguistic perspective, aphorisms exemplify how metaphor, imagery, and syntax encode cultural cognition. The English use of nominal and declarative structures (“Time is money”) reflects a tendency toward logical reasoning, while the Uzbek preference for imperative or conditional structures (“Do good and throw it into the water”) reflects a moral and didactic orientation.

Conclusion. Aphorisms act as linguistic microcosms of a nation’s worldview. Through metaphorical, cultural, and axiological structures, they convey how communities conceptualize truth, morality, and life. English aphorisms emphasize reason, effort, and self-determination—hallmarks of Western thought—while Uzbek aphorisms embody spirituality, morality, and collective harmony—core values of Eastern mentality.

This cultural-cognitive approach demonstrates that understanding aphorisms offers insight not only into linguistic style but into the deep cultural logic of nations. Future research should include corpus-based quantitative analysis of aphorisms across languages to further explore the relationship between language, cognition, and cultural worldview.

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