ETHNOCULTURAL CODING IN LANGUAGE STRUCTURES

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Abstract: This article focuses on the mechanisms by which ethnocultural information is encoded in the language structures of the Uzbek, Russian and English languages. Based on the theoretical foundations of cognitive linguistics, linguistic anthropology and cultural pragmatics, the study demonstrates how language embodies, preserves and transmits cultural knowledge. Particular attention is paid to vocabulary, phraseology, grammatical forms and speech etiquette as means of cultural identity. Comparing examples from three languages, the article reveals both universal and culture-specific strategies for encoding ethnocultural content.

Keywords: ethnocultural encoding, language structures, cognitive linguistics, Uzbek, Russian, English, speech etiquette, cultural identity

Language is not only a tool of communication, but also a repository of collective memory and a transmitter of cultural identity. Each linguistic unit - from phoneme to discourse - can carry ethnocultural content, shaping and reflecting the worldview of its speakers. This article examines how different languages encode ethnocultural meanings, focusing on three linguistic and cultural systems: Uzbek, Russian, and English.

Ethnocultural encoding refers to the process by which language expresses culturally specific knowledge, values, and behavioral norms [Kubryakova, 1996]. Cognitive linguistics emphasizes the conceptual basis of such encoding, in particular how metaphors, schemas, and categorization reflect cultural experience [Lakoff and Johnson, 1980]. Linguistic anthropology contributes the idea that language is part of the cultural matrix through which identity is realized and maintained [Duranti, 1997].

Lexicon often embodies direct cultural references. In Uzbek, the word "hayo, andisha" (shame/modesty) reflects social expectations of behavior, especially regarding gender roles. This example in Uzbek refers to a description of the character of a girl. For example, the sentence is given: "Ayolga shunday qadam hayosi yo'l qo'maydi", can be translated into English as "Piety does not allow a woman to act this way." This concept does not have a direct equivalent in English, but partially coincides with "honor" or "reputation" [Ermatova, 2018]. Here it is not just "shame" or "modesty", but a culturally rich concept that includes ideas about morality, decency, reputation, respect for social norms, especially in the context of female behavior. It is associated with the

traditional gender model, according to which a woman should be restrained, obedient, "not to show off". There is no exact equivalent of the word *hayo* in English. Similar words - *modesty*, *decency*, *honor*, *shame* - do not cover all the social and moral aspects inherent in this Uzbek concept. The gender component is especially important, which is not so central in Western culture. For example, in the Russian language, the word "soul" often appears in emotional, moral, and interpersonal contexts, forming cultural idioms such as "shirokaya dusha," which implies generosity and emotional depth, an idea deeply rooted in Russian cultural identity [Vezhbitskaya, 1992]. The English language, comparatively individualistic, reflects its values through idioms such as "mind your own business" or "speak your mind", which emphasize autonomy and openness rather than collective social codes.

Proverbs and idioms function as cultural script transmitters, encoding collective norms, values, and social expectations across generations. They are not only linguistic expressions, but also repositories of sociocultural knowledge that reflect the worldview and behavioral patterns of a community. In the Uzbek linguistic context, proverbs such as "Yaxshi otga bir qamchi, yomon otga ming qamchi" (a good horse needs one whip, a bad one a thousand) embody culturally ingrained norms regarding discipline, social hierarchy, and moral instruction. This expression not only encourages diligence and self-regulation, but also implies differential treatment based on perceived individual merit, which is a reflection of didactic pragmatism in traditional Uzbek socialization practices [Kadyrova, 2017].

Similarly, Russian proverbs such as "Without work you can't take a fish out of the pond" reflect a culturally ingrained emphasis on hard work and perseverance rooted in Russia's agrarian and communal heritage. These proverbs often serve as condensed narratives that promote endurance and self-sacrifice for the benefit of society or family, illustrating a cultural focus on collectivism and resilience [Wierzbicka, 1992].

In contrast, English idioms such as "The early bird catches the worm" promote a value system that focuses on initiative and individual action. Although they also promote hard work, the emphasis is often on personal success and competitive advantage, consistent with the more individualistic orientation of Anglo-American cultures [Hofstede, 2001]. The pragmatic function of such idioms in English-speaking societies reflects a preference for efficiency, time awareness, and goal-directed behavior.

Proverbs and idioms in different languages thus function as cultural frameworks—linguistic tools that crystallize culture-specific cognitive schemas, moral codes, and behavioral expectations.

Their comparative study allows for a deeper understanding of how language simultaneously reflects and perpetuates sociocultural structure.

Grammar can signal relationships of power and respect. Uzbek has a complex "you" system (e.g. "sen" versus "siz"), with "siz" conveying deference, especially toward elders or superiors. The verb morphology changes accordingly.

Russian also retains the "you" versus "you" distinction, but with nuanced sociolinguistic rules depending on age, context, and historical formality.

English, although lacking a grammatical "you" distinction, compensates for it with modal verbs ("could," "would") and euphemistic structures to indirectly encode politeness [Brown & Levinson, 1987].

Speech etiquette is a rich source of ethnocultural information. Uzbek culture emphasizes indirection and formulaic expressions such as "Yaxshi yuribsizmi?" (Are you feeling well?), which function not as literal questions but as relational gestures.

Russian etiquette often includes ritual greetings and forms of address that reflect social hierarchy and emotional closeness ("respected," "dear").

English, by contrast, is more flexible but encodes formality through tone, hedging, and context-sensitive expressions such as "if you don't mind" or "may I suggest."

Exploring ethnocultural encoding in linguistic structures reveals the profound relationship between language and culture. Although all three languages studied – Uzbek, Russian and English – encode cultural values, the mechanisms they employ differ significantly in terms of lexical choice, phraseology, grammar, politeness systems and metaphorical frameworks.

Understanding these encoding mechanisms is essential for intercultural communication, language teaching and sociolinguistic analysis. This reinforces the view that language is not a neutral channel but a culturally embedded system that actively shapes human thought and behaviour.

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