

LINGUOCULTURAL PECULIARITIES OF HUMOR IN ENGLISH  
AND UZBEK

Sevarakhon Dekhkonova

*Independent Researcher*

**Abstract:** This comparative study examines how humor is linguistically and culturally manifested in English and Uzbek. Drawing on recent research, we find that both languages utilize similar devices such as irony, satire, and wordplay to generate humor. However, the cultural contexts shape these expressions differently. English humor often relies on sarcasm, understatement, and explicit wordplay to reflect an individualistic ethos, whereas Uzbek humor tends to be more indirect, incorporating proverbs, metaphorical language, and hyperbole in keeping with a collectivist cultural framework. Shared themes (e.g. social norms, family) are communicated via distinct linguistic forms in each language. The findings underscore that what is humorous in one culture may not elicit the same effect in another, highlighting the need to consider both language and culture in humor analysis. This research contributes to linguocultural studies by detailing genre-specific differences, offering implications for translation and intercultural communication.

**Keywords:** Linguoculturology; Humor; English humor; Uzbek humor; Cross-cultural communication

**Introduction.** Humor is a universal human phenomenon that provides insight into a society's values, norms, and worldviews. Yet despite its universality, the way humor is expressed and perceived can vary dramatically across linguistic and cultural contexts. The field of linguoculturology explicitly examines how language and culture interact, and humor—deeply rooted in cultural context—is a prime example of this interplay. In English-language contexts, humor has evolved through diverse literary and conversational traditions, incorporating irony, sarcasm, and witty wordplay to often critique social hierarchies or celebrate cleverness. Uzbek humor, grounded in Central Asian folk traditions, frequently leverages oral genres such as proverbs, latifa (folk jokes), and askia (verbal wit contests) to impart moral lessons or reflect communal values.

Existing literature suggests that English humor tends to be more explicit and individual-focused, while Uzbek humor emphasizes indirectness and collectivist themes. For example, Mirabdullayeva (2025) notes that English jokes often feature nuclear family scenarios with ironic or understated punchlines, whereas Uzbek family jokes center on extended family hierarchies and traditional gender roles. Similarly, Rakhimova (2024) found both languages use irony and satire, but English texts often draw on class-based

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social commentary, whereas Uzbek humor is deeply influenced by folk wisdom and oral storytelling traditions.

Building on such comparative analyses, this article explores the linguocultural peculiarities of humor in English and Uzbek. Specifically, it reviews cross-cultural studies of humor genres, examines linguistic devices (e.g., idioms, proverbs, puns) that convey humor, and analyzes how underlying cultural values (individualism vs. collectivism, social norms, etc.) influence the content and form of humor in the two languages. Through this approach, we aim to delineate the particular features that distinguish English and Uzbek humor in language use, illustrating how each reflects its cultural milieu.

**Literature Review.** Research on humor often emphasizes its role as a mirror of cultural identity. Attardo (1994) argues that humor relies on shared knowledge and context; while irony, wordplay, and satire are recognized across cultures, their specific content depends on cultural norms. Within the English-Uzbek context, scholars have begun to compare these manifestations. Mirabdullayeva (2025) conducted a content analysis of 200 family jokes and found that English humor emphasizes individualism and nuclear-family issues through irony and understatement, while Uzbek humor highlights collectivist family honor and traditional gender roles. This underscores how English jokes often feature self-deprecation or irony within familiar settings, whereas Uzbek jokes draw on communal and moral themes.

In a comparative literary study, Rakhimova (2024) reviewed humorous works in both languages. She observed that both English and Uzbek writers employ similar comedic techniques (irony, satire, wordplay) to critique society. For example, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* satirizes English politics with sharp irony, while Uzbek author Abdulla Qahhor's *Anor* uses satire to comment on social norms. However, Rakhimova notes cultural influences: English humor often engages with class distinctions and individual rights, whereas Uzbek humor is steeped in folk narratives and moral lessons. Such findings align with Sodiqova (2025), who emphasizes that English, an individualistic language, frequently uses efficiency- and business-related metaphors, while Uzbek relies on natural imagery and social harmony metaphors due to its collectivist heritage.

Linguocultural analyses further highlight stylistic differences. Sodiqova (2025) explicitly compares "humor styles" in both languages, finding that English humor "often relies on sarcasm, understatement, and wordplay," exemplified by sarcastic phrases like "Oh great, another meeting," whereas Uzbek humor "tends to incorporate indirectness, proverbs, and metaphorical language," conveying meaning through context rather than explicit statements. This supports Isakova's observation that Uzbek irony is subtle and implicit, contrasting with the more direct English mode of humor. Likewise, Mamadaliyeva (2025) examines humor in idiomatic expressions, noting that Uzbek

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phraseology encodes humor through culturally-loaded proverbs and anecdotes, while English idioms allow puns and multiple meanings.

Studies of specific genres provide concrete illustrations. Rustamov (2017) compares the Uzbek latifa (folk joke) with the English anecdote or “joke.” He defines a latifa as “a brief humorous story, mainly in the form of dialogue... [with] a satirical episode” featuring “a witty resourceful person, defending truth and justice”. Latifas are delivered in colloquial Uzbek and often climax with an unexpected twist. In contrast, English jokes are defined as “short funny oral stories about a fictitious event with an unexpected witty ending”. English jokes include subgenres like knock-knock jokes, shaggy-dog stories, and ethnic anecdotes, many of which play on wordplay or stereotypes. Uzbek humor also has askia (riddle contests) and lof (exaggerative humor), emphasizing communal performance and competitive wit. These genre differences underscore how context (e.g., social gathering vs. one-on-one conversation) influences the humor style.

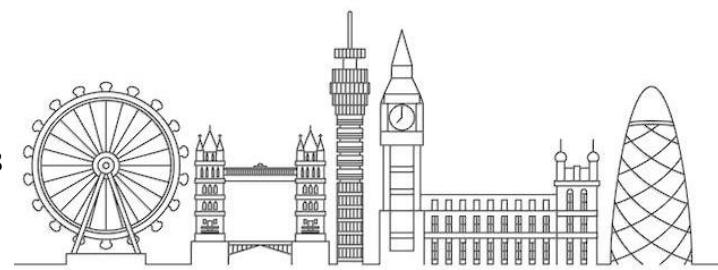
Overall, the literature suggests that while English and Uzbek humor share general linguistic mechanisms, the linguocultural peculiarities — rooted in history, social structure, and values — distinguish their usage. English humor tends to foreground the individual speaker’s wit and social critique, often with overt irony. Uzbek humor, shaped by an oral tradition, frequently embeds moral lessons and collective wisdom in more indirect language. The following analysis further elaborates these cross-cultural patterns and their implications.

### Main Analysis

#### Humor Genres and Cultural Contexts

English and Uzbek humor encompass various genres, each reflecting cultural contexts. In English, jokes and anecdotes range from one-liners and wordplay to longer narrative jokes and limericks. Many English jokes involve puns or sarcasm aimed at “outing” societal absurdities (e.g., the famous Cary Grant telegram joke). English humor also widely uses ethnically- or occupationally-tinted jokes (e.g., an Englishman, Scotsman, and Irishman joke), indicating a tradition of playfully comparing social groups. Such humor often assumes familiarity with Western social stereotypes and idiomatic language.

In Uzbek culture, humor is richly embedded in folk traditions. The latifa is the closest Uzbek counterpart to the English joke. As Rustamov explains, a latifa is concise, dialogic, and serves as “folk satire” with a “witty resourceful person” as the protagonist. Latifas are often performed in settings where oral storytelling thrives, such as family gatherings or festivals. They typically feature everyday scenarios—sometimes with exaggerated characters—to impart wisdom or highlight communal values. Similarly, the askia is a verbal joust of wits, essentially a humorous riddle competition performed during celebrations. The lof genre involves outrageous exaggeration for comic effect. These forms illustrate that Uzbek humor often functions within a collective performance context, emphasizing shared experience rather than individual cleverness.



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Furthermore, cultural events and social norms influence thematic content.

Mirabdullayeva (2025) found that Uzbek family jokes frequently reference extended family hierarchy and community honor (e.g., jokes about in-laws or respected elders). In contrast, English family humor tends to revolve around the nuclear family and personal quirks (using irony or self-deprecation). This reflects broader cultural priorities: Uzbek humor valorizes respect, hospitality, and social harmony (as seen in common proverbs), while English humor often values individual freedom and egalitarian banter. The differences in genre and context demonstrate that although both cultures have "joke" traditions, the settings, characters, and social rules of humor are aligned with their respective cultural frameworks.

### Linguistic Devices and Style

The specific language tools used to achieve comic effect also differ. English humor prominently employs sarcasm, understatement, and wordplay. For instance, self-deprecating humor and irony are staples in British-American comedy, as exemplified by clichés like "I'm not lazy, I'm on energy-saving mode". Such expressions rely on dual meanings (a person literally not moving vs. laziness as a "mode") and presume the listener's understanding of the sarcastic intent. Rakhimova's review notes that irony and satire are pervasive in English literature (e.g., Oscar Wilde's epigrams). The English idiomatic system is replete with puns (e.g., knock-knock jokes) and ambiguous phrases (e.g., "break a leg") whose humor arises from the unexpected interpretation. These devices require strong cultural-linguistic competence to decode the intended wit.

In Uzbek, however, humor tends to be more indirect and context-dependent. Sodiqova (2025) highlights that Uzbek humor "incorporates indirectness, proverbs, and metaphorical language," with meaning often hinging on cultural subtext. For example, a jocular Uzbek proverb such as "Yetti o'lchab, bir kes" (literally "Measure seven times, cut once") imparts prudence but is often used humorously to chide a hasty person. Such humor presupposes knowledge of proverbs and their pragmatic uses. Exaggeration (as in *lof*) is common: describing something trivially large as "Otni kallasiday" ("as big as a horse's head") creates humor through hyperbole rooted in familiar imagery.

Moreover, formality and honorifics shape humor delivery. Uzbek language has formal titles and polite address that can be played with humorously; for instance, addressing someone in overly grand terms can create a comic effect through incongruity. English, by contrast, lacks a similar honorific system, so humor there often relies on vocabulary with double meanings or on syntax (e.g., the famous "Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana," which plays on word ambiguity). In sum, English speakers often make the humor explicit through linguistic inversion or punning, while Uzbek speakers rely on shared proverbs, metaphor, and situational exaggeration to hint at the joke.

These stylistic tendencies align with the concept that English humor is often explicit and direct, whereas Uzbek humor is elliptical. Sodiqova's study provides data for this: it notes English speakers use sarcasm and wordplay, but Uzbek speakers prefer storytelling



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with implicitly humorous twists. Mamadaliyeva (2025) similarly shows that English phraseology can carry multiple levels of meaning (enabling puns), while Uzbek idiomatic expressions tend to encode cultural knowledge (making them funny to insiders).

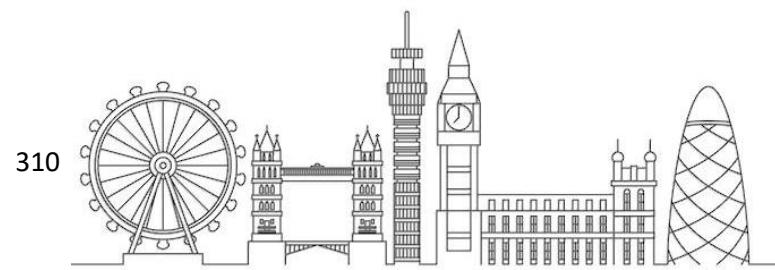
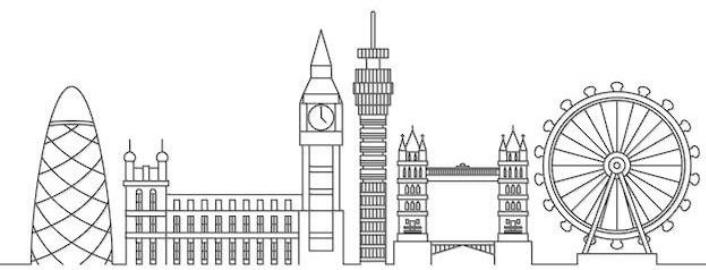
### Cultural Themes and Values

Underpinning these linguistic differences are divergent cultural values. English culture, particularly in its modern Western form, emphasizes individualism and skepticism toward authority. Humor often reinforces this by mocking social pretensions or by exalting the clever outsider. For instance, witty retorts and stand-up comedy often revolve around an individual's perspective on society. Sodiqova (2025) notes that English idioms frequently involve achievement and autonomy metaphors (e.g., "time is money") reflecting capitalist values. In humor, this translates to lampooning bureaucracy ("Oh great, another meeting") or subverting social norms.

Uzbek culture, rooted in collectivism and tradition, uses humor to reinforce community values and norms. Proverbs and jokes frequently highlight hospitality, respect, and perseverance. The example proverbs "Ilm boylikdan afzal" (Knowledge is better than wealth) and "Do'st achitib gapiradi, dushman kuldirib" (A true friend tells the truth even if it hurts, while an enemy flatters) capture Uzbek moral priorities. When such sayings are used humorously, they assert social teachings. Similarly, humor about family or elders often admonishes or praises social duty. These cultural undercurrents mean that some English-style humor (e.g., aggressive sarcasm or taboo jokes) may not translate easily into Uzbek, as Sodiqova suggests: a joke relying on explicit irony might confuse Uzbek audiences expecting a moral lesson instead.

Comparative analyses of jokes further illustrate these value differences. Mirabdullayeva's findings show that English family jokes might poke fun at individual folly or marital spats with a light tone, while Uzbek family jokes could mock someone failing to live up to communal expectations. Another study comparing anecdotes found Uzbek jokes often reinforce traditional gender roles and respect for elders, whereas American jokes may challenge such roles. Even in political or professional contexts, English humor is comfortable with self-deprecation and dissent (e.g., satire of leaders), whereas Uzbek humor may be more cautious or allegorical due to social deference.

In summary, the content of what is being laughed at differs: English humor frequently targets external authority or absurdity ("the system is ridiculous"), reflecting a value of self-expression. Uzbek humor, conversely, often derives from communal narratives or folklore, embedding laughter within collective identity. This means that the same humorous scenario may be constructed very differently: an English joke about a boss might use direct ridicule or sarcasm, while an Uzbek joke on the same topic might use a proverb or fable to imply the criticism. These distinctions in theme and value illustrate the linguocultural particularities of each humor system.



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Discussion. The differences identified have important implications for cross-cultural understanding and communication. First, humor can serve as a bridge when used with cultural sensitivity: recognizing that both languages share universal themes (irony, exaggeration), educators and translators can find common ground. However, the explicit strategies that generate humor in one language may not “translate” in the other without adaptation. As Sodiqova points out, effective intercultural communication “requires an understanding of how humor operates within different linguistic and cultural frameworks”. For example, a direct sarcastic comment used for comic effect in English could be misread by Uzbek listeners, who may find it rude or confusing. Conversely, a humorous Uzbek proverb could seem overly indirect to an English speaker.

For translators and language learners, this means linguistic competence alone is insufficient; one must also grasp the cultural scripts behind jokes. Mamadaliyeva (2025) emphasizes that phraseological humor is laden with cultural context. Educationally, exposing learners to the way native speakers joke can improve pragmatic competence. For instance, teaching English idioms like “break a leg” with their origins prevents literal misunderstandings. Teaching Uzbek learners about English sarcasm and self-deprecation helps them decode unfamiliar humor, while showing English learners Uzbek poetic expressions (like humorous proverbs) can deepen cross-cultural empathy.

Additionally, recognizing these humor styles can aid international discourse. In diplomacy or business, a well-timed joke can ease tension, but only if the audience understands its intent. Misusing humor risks offense or misunderstanding. The research suggests that effective intercultural humor requires not only language translation but cultural adaptation (e.g., substituting culturally equivalent jokes or explaining context).

Finally, the study of English-Uzbek humor also contributes to theoretical linguistics. It validates the view that humor is partly “embedded in linguistic expressions, idioms, and discourse structures” specific to each culture. Understanding the “humor styles” of each language enriches our knowledge of pragmatics and semiotics. Future research might apply corpus tools to examine frequency of humor markers in each language (as suggested by technological trends), or explore humor in digital media like memes, which can transcend some cultural barriers (e.g., the study of English-Uzbek memes).

**Conclusion.** This analysis highlights that while English and Uzbek humor share common ground (e.g., use of incongruity and narrative surprise), their linguocultural characteristics diverge significantly. English humor typically manifests explicitly through irony, sarcasm, and clever wordplay, reflecting an individualistic cultural orientation. Uzbek humor, in contrast, tends to be delivered indirectly—through proverbs, allegory, and communal storytelling—reflecting collectivist values and folk tradition. These differences shape not only the form but the topics of humor: family dynamics, social status, and gender roles are treated differently in each culture’s jokes.

For linguists, educators, and communicators, appreciating these peculiarities is essential. It enables better translation strategies (e.g., substituting culturally equivalent



idioms) and fosters cross-cultural appreciation. As one researcher notes, an appreciation of humor across cultures “necessitates a deep understanding of both linguistic and cultural frameworks”. Ultimately, studying humor in a linguocultural framework reveals more than just what makes people laugh; it exposes how language carries the weight of history, tradition, and collective psyche. This comparative perspective encourages further research into other language pairs and genres, ensuring that cultural nuance is respected in our increasingly connected world.

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