



## LINGUOCULTURAL AND PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK CHILDREN'S ANECDOTES

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**Abstract:** *This article examines English and Uzbek children's anecdotes as short humorous texts that encode culturally specific models of childhood, schooling, family communication, verbal creativity, politeness and social norms. The study adopts a comparative linguocultural and pragmalinguistic approach. It analyzes selected English and Uzbek children's jokes in terms of semantic opposition, pragmatic function, cultural code, image system and translation potential. The findings show that English children's anecdotes tend to rely more heavily on verbal play, idioms, polysemy, homophones, spelling-based ambiguity and the "smart kid" stereotype, whereas Uzbek children's anecdotes more often foreground family, respect, teacher-student relations, moral upbringing, hospitality, food symbolism, national clothing and everyday cultural realia. In both traditions, children are represented not as passive objects of laughter but as active interpreters of adult discourse. However, the English model emphasizes individual wit and verbal creativity, while the Uzbek model emphasizes polite playfulness and culturally regulated cleverness.*

*Keywords: children's anecdotes, Uzbek anecdotes, English anecdotes, linguoculturology, verbal humor, pragmatics, script opposition, cultural realia, comparative analysis.*

## **Introduction**

Children's anecdotes are short humorous texts in which children's worldview, language competence, cognitive flexibility and cultural experience are expressed in a condensed verbal form. Although they are often perceived as simple entertaining texts, they perform several important linguistic and cultural functions. They reveal how children understand adult language, how they reinterpret social rules, how they respond to school and family expectations, and how humor mediates between childhood experience and cultural norms.

In the English children's anecdotes analyzed in the dissertation material, recurrent cultural and semantic patterns include school code, teacher-student dialogue, smart kid, witty speaker, idiom, wordplay and literal-minded child. These elements show that English children's jokes frequently represent the child as an active speaker who detects ambiguity in adult speech and transforms it into a humorous response.

Uzbek children's anecdotes, by contrast, are strongly connected with oila 'family', ustoz 'teacher/mentor', mahalla 'neighborhood community', odob 'good manners', hurmat 'respect', non-rizq 'bread as sustenance/blessing', mehmon 'guest', tarbiya 'upbringing' and xalqona donolik 'folk wisdom'. These culturally marked units demonstrate that Uzbek children's anecdotes are not only humorous texts but also compact linguocultural expressions of family ethics, educational discipline, social hierarchy and moral upbringing.

The theoretical foundation of this article is based on the idea that humor emerges from semantic and pragmatic incongruity. V. Raskin's Semantic Script Theory of Humor explains humorous discourse through the collision of two opposite semantic scripts or meaning frames. This approach is particularly useful for analyzing children's anecdotes, where adult logic and child logic, figurative meaning and literal meaning, or social rule and child interpretation frequently collide.

S. Attardo and V. Raskin later expanded this model into the General Theory of Verbal Humor, according to which humor can be analyzed through six knowledge resources: script opposition, logical mechanism, situation, target, narrative strategy and language. This model is useful for comparing English and Uzbek children's jokes because it allows us to examine not only the linguistic form of the joke but also its situation, characters, cultural background and communicative function.

D. Chiaro's research on verbal play is also relevant to this study because many English children's jokes depend on puns, riddles, wordplay, idiomatic ambiguity and the listener's interpretive participation. In contrast, Uzbek children's anecdotes often involve phraseological literalization, cultural realia, moral instruction and situational humor. Therefore, a comparative approach makes it possible to identify how different languages and cultures organize children's humorous discourse.

The aim of this article is to compare English and Uzbek children's anecdotes from linguistic, pragmatic and linguocultural perspectives and to identify their major similarities and differences in humor mechanisms, cultural codes, character systems, image structures and translation challenges.

This study uses a qualitative comparative method. The primary material consists of selected English and Uzbek children's anecdotes. The English material includes teacher-student, idiom-based, school, literal interpretation and wordplay-based anecdotes. The Uzbek material includes family, teacher-student, phraseological, anecdotes involving national realia, moral-upbringing anecdotes and anecdotes based on culturally marked concepts such as non, ustoz, mahalla, odob and hurmat.

The analysis was conducted according to six criteria. First, the semantic mechanism of the joke was identified: whether the humorous effect arises from polysemy, idiom, homophone, phraseological literalization, cultural ambiguity or situational incongruity. Second, the script opposition was determined: for example, adult logic versus child logic, figurative meaning versus literal meaning, school rule versus child interpretation, or moral norm versus playful reinterpretation. Third, the pragmatic function of the child's reply was examined: whether it functions as self-defense, excuse, wit, face-saving, social adjustment or reinterpretation of adult speech. This criterion is connected with Sh. Safarov's pragmalinguistic view that speech activity should be studied in relation to communicative intention, social relations and situational context.

Fourth, the cultural code of each anecdote was analyzed. For English anecdotes, this includes school, teacher, homework, high school, math book, problem, umbrella, blazer and tie. For Uzbek anecdotes, this includes ustoz, ona, ota, buvi, non, rizq, mahalla, mehmon, do'ppi, chopon, daftar and kundalik. Fifth, the image system of the anecdotes was studied: child image, teacher image, parent image, grandparent

image, animal image, national clothing image, household object and school object. Sixth, the translation potential was assessed, especially whether the humorous effect can be preserved when translating from English into Uzbek or from Uzbek into English.

The theoretical basis includes Raskin's Semantic Script Theory of Humor, Attardo and Raskin's General Theory of Verbal Humor, Chiaro's theory of verbal play, Kramsch's language-and-culture theory, Wierzbicka's cultural key words approach, Safarov's pragmalinguistic approach, and Teliya's linguocultural interpretation of phraseological units. Maslova's interpretation of linguoculturology as a field situated at the intersection of language and culture also supports the methodological framework of the study.

The comparative analysis shows that English and Uzbek children's anecdotes share several universal features. First, both are usually brief and dialogic. A typical structure consists of a question, an expected response and an unexpected punchline. Second, both traditions frequently rely on the opposition between adult logic and child logic. Third, both use literal interpretation as a central comic device. Fourth, both present the child as an active speaker who transforms a serious communicative situation into a humorous one.

For example, in the English anecdote:

*Teacher: Why did you eat your homework?*

*Student: Because you said it was a piece of cake.*

the idiom a piece of cake is interpreted literally by the child. The expected script is "the homework was easy," while the child activates the unexpected script "the homework was edible." This is a clear example of script opposition in Raskin's sense.

A similar mechanism appears in the Uzbek anecdote:

*Ona: Bolam, boshingni ishlat.*

*Bola: Oyijon, boshimni ishlatsam, qo'llarim nima qiladi?*

Here, the phrase *boshingni ishlat* 'use your head' is intended figuratively as "think," but the child interprets it as a physical action. In both cases, the humorous effect arises from literalizing figurative language. The difference lies in the cultural setting: the English anecdote occurs in a school-homework context, whereas the Uzbek joke occurs in a family-upbringing context.

English children's jokes more frequently depend on language-internal mechanisms. These include pun, idiom, homophone, spelling play, hidden word structure and semantic ambiguity. Examples such as *smiles/mile*, *high school*, *a piece of cake* and *too many problems* depend on the formal and semantic structure of English words. This supports Chiaro's claim that jokes and riddles often depend on verbal play, listener interpretation and the creative exploitation of linguistic ambiguity.

For example:

*Teacher: What is the longest word in English?*

*Student: Smiles.*

*Teacher: Why?*

*Student: Because there is a mile between the first and last letters.*

The humorous effect is based on the internal graphic and semantic structure of the word *smiles*, in which the segment *mile* is reinterpreted as evidence of "length." The child does not answer according to ordinary lexical measurement but redefines the question through graphic wordplay. This confirms the importance of verbal creativity and metalinguistic awareness in English children's jokes.

Uzbek children's anecdotes, however, more often depend on culturally embedded situations, phraseological literalization and the contrast between social norms and child interpretation. For example:

*O'qituvchi: "Ko'zi ochildi" degani nimani anglatadi?*  
*Bola: Ehtimol, u avval uxlab yotgan bo'lsa kerak.*

The Uzbek phrase *ko'zi ochildi* usually means "became aware" or "understood reality," but the child interprets it literally as opening one's eyes after sleep. In this case, humor comes from the collision between a culturally established phraseological meaning and a child's concrete interpretation. Teliya's view that phraseological units preserve cultural memory and figurative thinking helps explain why such units are productive in humorous discourse.

Both English and Uzbek children's anecdotes frequently use school-related settings. However, the cultural function of school differs in each tradition. In English anecdotes, school often functions as a space of verbal creativity. The child uses school terms as linguistic material for wordplay.

For example:

*Teacher: Why did the student bring a ladder to school?*  
*Student: Because he wanted to go to high school.*

The phrase *high school* is reinterpreted literally as "a school that is high." The joke depends on polysemy and the child's playful interpretation of a school term. Thus, school is not only an educational institution but also a source of linguistic ambiguity and humorous reinterpretation.

In Uzbek anecdotes, school is more often connected with responsibility, discipline and teacher authority:

*O'qituvchi: Bolalar, kim darsga tayyor?*

*Bola: Men tayyorman, ustoz. Faqat daftarim tayyor emas.*

Here, humor comes from the contradiction between the child's claim of being ready and the absence of an essential school object – the notebook. The cultural implication is clear: readiness for school is not merely physical presence but responsibility, preparation and discipline. The Uzbek researches identifies ustoz-shogird munosabatlari, darsga tayyorgarlik, uy vazifasi, daftar, kundalik, baho, mas'uliyat and intizom as culturally active elements in Uzbek children's anecdotes.

Uzbek children's anecdotes show a stronger family-centered structure than English children's anecdotes. The characters ona 'mother', ota 'father', buvi 'grandmother' and bobo 'grandfather' often represent moral instruction, affection, discipline and cultural transmission.

For example:

*Buvi: Bolam, nonni yerga tashlama, u rizq.*

*Bola: Unda uni balandroq joyga qo'yaylik, yerga tushib ketmasin.*

The grandmother transmits the cultural value of bread as rizq – blessing, sustenance and respect. The child does not reject the value but literalizes it. The humor arises from the collision between moral-symbolic meaning and concrete child logic. This example shows that Uzbek children's anecdotes often combine humor with moral and didactic meaning.

English children's anecdotes also contain family dialogues, but they more often focus on the child's individual wit rather than collective moral instruction:

*Mother: Why don't you read more books?*

*Child: I do. I read all the messages on my phone.*

In this model, the verb read is semantically expanded by the child. The joke reflects contemporary digital experience and verbal reinterpretation. Compared with Uzbek family anecdotes, the moral instruction is less explicit, while individual wit and reinterpretation are more prominent.

The child image is central in both traditions. In English children's anecdotes, the child is often represented as a smart kid, witty speaker or clever pupil. The child notices ambiguity, manipulates language and gives an unexpected response. This reflects the cultural value of verbal independence and wit in English humorous discourse.

In Uzbek children's anecdotes, the child is also clever and playful, but the humorous behavior is culturally moderated by odoḡ and hurmat. The child may give an unexpected answer, but usually does not openly destroy the authority of parents, grandparents or teachers. Thus, the Uzbek child figure may be described as a polite playful child or socially regulated witty child.

This difference is important. English anecdotes often value the child's verbal independence, while Uzbek anecdotes value wit within the moral boundaries of respect, family hierarchy and social responsibility. The English model foregrounds individual verbal creativity, whereas the Uzbek model foregrounds socially regulated cleverness.

Uzbek children's jokes contain many culturally marked images and objects: do'ppi 'skullcap', chopon/to'n 'traditional robe', salla 'turban', ro'mol 'headscarf', non 'bread', choy 'tea', mahalla 'neighborhood', hovli 'courtyard', tandir 'clay oven', qozon 'cauldron' and eshak 'donkey'. These units are not merely nouns; they function as cultural signs. For example, do'ppi may symbolize national identity and respect, chopon may signal

age, dignity or social status, while non symbolizes sustenance and blessing.

English children's anecdotes, by contrast, more frequently use school and everyday objects as humorous images: homework, math book, school sign, ladder, umbrella, blazer, tie and school cap. These objects often become comic because they are connected to idioms or literal interpretations.

For example:

*Child: I took an umbrella to school.*

*Teacher: Was it raining?*

*Child: No, but you said we would have a storm of questions.*

Here, umbrella becomes humorous through the literal interpretation of the idiom storm of questions. The object itself is ordinary, but the child's literal understanding transfers it into a school context. In contrast, Uzbek cultural objects often carry a stronger national-symbolic load, especially when connected with food, clothing, family hierarchy or social rituals.

Translation is one of the most important areas where differences between English and Uzbek children's anecdotes become visible. English anecdotes based on puns and homophones are difficult to translate directly into Uzbek. For example, lettuce/let us, smiles/mile, piece of cake or high school cannot always preserve their comic force in Uzbek because the humor depends on English sound structure, spelling or idiomatic meaning.

Uzbek anecdotes, on the other hand, often create translation difficulties because of culturally loaded realia. Words such as uvol, rizq,

mahalla, ustoz, odob, do'ppi, chopon and non have no complete one-word equivalents in English.

For example:

*Buvi: Nonni uvol qilma.*

*Bola: Uvol bo'lmasin deb yeb qo'ydim.*

The word uvol carries moral, religious and cultural associations that are not fully conveyed by the English word waste. Therefore, the translation of Uzbek children's anecdotes often requires explanation, adaptation or functional equivalence. English jokes usually require recreation of wordplay, while Uzbek anecdotes require preservation or explanation of cultural realia.

The findings confirm that children's anecdotes function as condensed cultural texts. They reveal not only how children understand language but also how each culture organizes childhood, authority, playfulness and social norms.

The first major difference concerns the source of humor. In English children's anecdotes, humor is predominantly language-centered. The child's wit is expressed through manipulating idioms, spelling, homophones and polysemy. This reflects a cultural pattern in which verbal creativity and individual cleverness are positively valued. In Uzbek children's anecdotes, humor is more situation-centered and culture-centered. The child's wit is expressed through reinterpreting adult expectations, moral instructions, family rules and social values.

The second difference concerns the role of adults. In English anecdotes, the teacher or parent often functions as a questioner whose expectation is overturned by the child's linguistic creativity. In Uzbek anecdotes, adults more often function as transmitters of values: the

mother teaches manners, the father demands responsibility, the grandmother explains respect for bread, and the teacher represents discipline and knowledge. Therefore, Uzbek anecdotes carry a stronger didactic and moral undertone.

The third difference concerns cultural realia. Uzbek children's anecdotes are deeply connected with national-cultural objects such as non, choy, mahalla, do'ppi, chopon and ustoz. English children's jokes are more closely associated with school, homework, teacher, math book, sign, umbrella, blazer and tie. This does not mean that English anecdotes lack culture; rather, their culturality is often embedded in school discourse, linguistic play and idiomatic expressions.

The fourth difference concerns politeness and hierarchy. Uzbek jokes preserve social hierarchy more visibly. Even when the child gives a comic answer, the cultural frame of respect remains. English anecdotes, by contrast, allow more open verbal play with adult authority, particularly in teacher–student settings. However, English children's humor is also usually non-aggressive and may be described as “safe humor” based on intellectual or linguistic surprise rather than direct insult.

These findings support the broader linguocultural claim that language is a cultural index. Kramsch's view that language embodies cultural reality and Wierzbicka's idea of culturally significant key words are both confirmed by the repeated occurrence of culturally marked units in the jokes. In Uzbek, words such as odob, ustoz, non, rizq, mahalla and hurmat reveal cultural priorities. In English, words and expressions such as school, homework, problem, high school, piece of cake and smart kid reveal the centrality of schooling, individual wit and verbal play.

## Conclusion

The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek children's anecdotes demonstrates that both traditions use humor to represent the child's encounter with adult language and social expectations. In both languages, children's jokes are short, dialogic and based on an unexpected response. In both traditions, the child is an active interpreter of adult speech rather than a passive object of laughter.

At the same time, the two traditions differ significantly in their dominant humor mechanisms and cultural codes. English children's anecdotes are more strongly associated with verbal play, idiomatic ambiguity, homophones, spelling-based humor and the image of the verbally clever child. Uzbek children's anecdotes are more strongly associated with family, respect, moral upbringing, teacher authority, national realia, phraseological literalization and the balance between playfulness and politeness.

Thus, English children's anecdotes tend to construct childhood through the model of individual verbal creativity, while Uzbek children's anecdotes tend to construct childhood through the model of polite playfulness and culturally regulated wit. These differences reveal broader cultural patterns: English humorous discourse emphasizes linguistic flexibility and individual cleverness, whereas Uzbek humorous discourse emphasizes social harmony, respect, moral education and collective cultural values.

The study also shows that the translation of children's anecdotes requires more than lexical equivalence. English anecdotes often require the recreation of wordplay, while Uzbek anecdotes require the explanation or adaptation of cultural realia. Therefore, children's anecdotes are valuable material not only for humor studies but also for

linguoculturology, pragmatics, translation studies and cross-cultural childhood studies.

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Maslova defines linguoculturology as a discipline studying the relationship between language and culture.