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Time for Equal Opportunities”**

Исследовательская работа (эссе)

Пословицы и поговорки разных стран как отражение национально-культурных  
сходств и различий

*Proverbs and sayings of different countries, and how they reflect national and cultural  
similarities and differences*

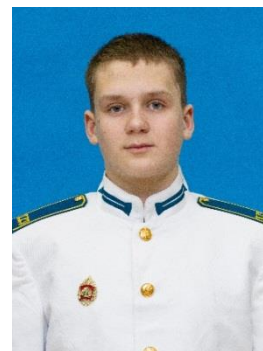
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## **Outline**

1. The correlation of language and culture.
2. Definition of proverbs and sayings: differentiating the terms.
3. Popular topics of proverbs and sayings in Russian and English.
4. Proverbs and sayings are the reflection of the mentality of people.

## **Abstract:**

Language and culture are closely connected. Language serves both as a means of communication and a cultural code of a nation; it reflects cultural specifics of people.

Culture is manifested through proverbs and sayings. Though different nations may share values, they are expressed differently in various languages.

In spite of the absence of a generally-accepted definition of proverbs and sayings, linguists single out the features that help differentiate them. Structurally, a saying is shorter than a proverb as it lacks the second part which usually contains a judgment. Sayings are grammatically and semantically incomplete and may be transformed according to the context. Proverbs are longer emotionally charged expressions of moralistic character. At the same time, both proverbs and sayings are cliché phrases which people actively use in speech and writing to make their speech more expressive or to describe something in a figurative way.

There are certain topics which are widely used in the two languages. As far as animals are concerned, English proverbs are centered on domestic animals like cats, dogs and horses. Russian proverbs contain names of wild animals abundant in taiga forests such as bears, wolves, foxes and hares, which represents different attitude of the two nations to animals in general and their characteristic features in particular. The English use the names of animals to denote some natural phenomena, activities of people; the Russians employ them as a stylistic device of personification to show positive and negative traits of human character.

Other popular topics include way of life, relationships and behavior. Though people of Russia and Britain may have similar problems, they use different concepts to express their concerns, which proves the fact that proverbs and sayings help us better understand the mentality of the people of other countries because language serves as a cultural code of a nation.

## **Proverbs and sayings of different countries, and how they reflect national and cultural similarities and differences**

Every language has proven over time to be robustly influenced by culture and history of the people who speak it. In fact, a language is not only a means of communication, it is “a cultural code of a nation which reflects the whole potential of this or that ethnic group“. Language and culture are closely connected in such a way that “a language being one of the foundational features of a nation is the main form of the existence and expression of national culture“. Bagiyan et al., (2017, p. 19).

One of the most vivid examples of the manifestation of national culture by means of language is proverbs. Being diverse, they tend to express similar ideas present in various languages, though in different ways. Proverbs and sayings have a great impact on our way of speaking, our perception of ourselves as a nation and the unique character of our culture. Bearing this in mind, we cannot help being surprised by how easy it becomes for some of us to feel connected on a spiritual level because we share not only the language but the culture as well.

Let us start by defining proverbs and sayings from the perspective of linguistics. Despite the fact that many scholars have been studying them for a long time, there is still no generally accepted definition of either of the notions. Another problem concerns differentiating the two terms.

There are different definitions of both terms in modern linguistics which reflect diverse opinions of scholars on the independence of each term. Nevertheless, linguists come to conclusion that proverbs and sayings are different in the way they express judgments. Vladimir Dal', a famous Russian writer, ethnographer and lexicographer, proposes the following definition: “A proverb is a short parable. It is a judgment, a verdict, a sermon expressed in a roundabout way and put into use as if it is traditional. A proverb is an equivocal relevant of the situation, understood and generally accepted“. Dal', (1957, p. 35). In contrast to a proverb, “a saying only substitutes direct speech with indirect, does not finish the thought, sometimes does not nominate things but hypothetically, quite understandably hints“. Dal', (1957, p. 11). The major difference between a saying and a proverb is that a saying expresses a notion while a proverb expresses a moralistic judgment. One more distinctive feature of a proverb is its structural composition. Every

proverb consists of two parts – an equivoque, i.e. a judgment in broad terms and a supplement, i.e. an interpretation, a sermon. A saying, on the contrary, is an equivoque with no parable, no conclusion, it is just the first part of a proverb.

From the point of view of linguistic specifics of proverbs and sayings, some scholars believe that proverbs are grammatically and semantically complete, and emotionally charged while sayings may be altered and supplemented by the speaker according to the context.

Though proverbs and sayings are different in their structure and semantic features, they share some qualities, which allows considering them as the elements of the same language level, the level of culturally- and nationally-specific language units. Both proverbs and sayings are set phrases or word combinations; they are in a certain way cliché phrases actively used in the written and spoken language. Potapova, (2016, p. 359).

Proverbs and sayings are indispensable in the studies of the culture of a certain nation; they are the elements of folklore, and they are natural for any language. Although they may express universal values, they use different concepts in doing this, which is a clear reflection of national identity.

Admittedly, there are almost no proverbs or sayings that would be the same in two different languages. People create original expressions about what is close to them. A good example of such creativity is the use of animals in proverbs. For instance, the English are keen on horses, cats and dogs, and they tend to talk about them in a figurative way, which can be easily explained by their historically-sustained longstanding affection to them. It is a well-known fact that English royalty has traditionally been associated with horse-riding, keeping cats and dogs as pets. No wonder that Queen Elizabeth II has a collection of Corgis. It is really difficult to imagine such sayings in Russian as “Raining cats and dogs“ or „Hold your horses“. Similarly, the Russian language contains a lot of expressions connected with taiga forests which used to surround many Russian settlements in the past. Thus, the Russians tend to use foxes, bears, wolves, hares and other forest animals in their proverbs. For example, “The fox counts hens even in its sleep“.

Another topic widely employed in proverbs is the way of life. Everyday items or typical activities of people have become desired elements in many sayings. It can be explained by the fact that poor people both in Russia and England had similar problems, though they expressed their concerns differently. A good example is an English proverb

“No song no supper“. It means that you will not get paid if you do nothing. Supposedly, it originated from the activities performed by bards in English taverns, who were forced to sing for the sake of survival. In Russian there is a similar saying, “If you want to eat well, do not lie on the stove“. A Russian stove was a must-have in every poor home. It was always kept warm and used as the place where you could sleep. However, only a lazy person would spend the whole time lying on it.

Other popular topic of many proverbs and sayings include relationships and behavior. Both English and Russians have similar values as far as love, hatred, friendship are concerned. These values are undoubtedly universal for the mankind. Nevertheless, different nations interpret the values in their own ways.

For example, a Russian proverb “Trust in God, but do not blunder yourself“ means that, though you hope that God will help you, you cannot be passive, you need to find your own way to solve your problems. There is a proverb in English which at first seems to be similar to the Russian one: “Lord helps those who help themselves“. But if you think carefully, you will understand that the meaning is quite opposite – God will help you only if you make efforts yourself. We believe that it is a very vivid example of cultural differences between Russian and English people. The Russians put their faith and trust in God, and even if they do not succeed, their faith and trust will not disappear. The English have to prove that they are good enough to expect God to help them.

Having analysed the examples of proverbs and sayings in Russian and English, we may conclude that they are an important part of both languages as they most clearly, argumentatively and concisely express and reflect the mentality of people, their attitude to the world and nature, as well as the whole complex of cultural meanings comprising the cultural layer of Russian and British societies. Proverbs and sayings not only help better understand the soul of the people through language. They also encourage us to learn the historical background of the country, make us aware of the way of life and household activities, habits and values. By comparing and contrasting proverbs and sayings in two different languages, we perceive the specifics of the mentality of Russian and British people.

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**Supplement 1.**

**British Royal Family and Corgis**

(<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/25/31/24/253124bdfd519df46ac7802e09927e7a.jpg>)





**Supplement 2**

**British Royal Family and Horses**

<https://lurer.com/disc/21-04-22/f31dc807578339ef0981dddf91acf30a.jpg>





## Supplement 3.

### Popular Russian proverbs with the word “fox”

(<https://vslounge.ru/wp-content/uploads/a/d/7/ad71b94ed31ff3b860d1907fbc616682.jpeg>)

## \*Пословицы, поговорки

- Волка зубы кормят, лису хвост бережет.
- Сила льва не подходит лисице, хитрость лисы не подходит льву.
- Лисичка всегда сытней волка живет.
- Лисой пройти – хитростью взять.
- Лиса и во сне кур считает.
- Лиса дорогу перебежала, быть беде.
- Лисий лай услышать – к несчастью

В список слов

