THE REFLECTION OF ETHNOCULTURAL STEREOTYPES RELATED TO THE CONCEPT OF AGE IN LANGUAGE

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Annotation

This article explores the reflection of ethnocultural stereotypes related to age in English and Uzbek languages. By analyzing idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and culturally embedded language, the study reveals how each language encodes societal attitudes toward youth, adulthood, and old age. The comparison highlights the differing perspectives of Western individualistic societies and Central Asian collectivist cultures, particularly in how they value wisdom, experience, and generational roles. The article also includes a comparative analysis and visual representation to underline the distribution of positive and negative age-related stereotypes.

Keywords: ethnocultural stereotype, age, language, English, Uzbek, idioms, cultural perception, ageism, wisdom, youth

INTRODUCTION

In social sciences, a stereotype is considered a set of stable, simplified generalizations about a group of individuals, allowing members of the group to be categorized and perceived globally according to these expectations [1; P.313]. Stereotypes are based on insufficient information, on the limited personal experience of an individual, and therefore are often false. As a rule, stereotypes are understood as generalizations based on random observations and are extremely necessary for navigating reality, since in everyday life we all operate with stereotypes.

Etymologically, the word "stereotype" in Greek meant "solid," "hardened," "immobile." The term "stereotype" was introduced into scientific discourse in the European context by American journalist and political scientist W. Lippmann in 1922, as a strong sociocultural and ideological concept, and is interpreted as a "mental image." W. Lippmann believed that stereotypes are organized, schematic, culturally determined "pictures of the world" in a person's mind that save their effort when perceiving complex aspects of the world. First, according to Lippmann, a stereotype is always a reduced image of reality, because only through reduction does it allow a person to cope with a reality that is too complex for an individual. Secondly, a stereotype (when applied to social reality) usually contains an evaluative aspect, as it is not just a statement of fact, but a guideline pointing in a certain direction. Thus, the

reduction and evaluative nature of stereotypes gave rise to the desire to be freed from them [2; P.222–223].

Leading English dictionaries provide comparable definitions of the term *stereotype*, reinforcing its interpretation as a fixed and oversimplified mental construct. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines a stereotype as a "fixed mental impression," emphasizing its rigid and unchanging nature. Similarly, the *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture* offers the definition: "a fixed set of ideas about what a particular type of person is like, which is (wrongly) believed to be true in all cases." This highlights the generalized and often inaccurate character of stereotypes, as well as their tendency to be accepted as universal truths, regardless of individual variation.

These dictionary definitions align with the scholarly view that stereotypes are not only cognitive shortcuts but also social constructs deeply embedded in cultural narratives. They influence perception, interaction, and communication across various contexts, often reinforcing existing power structures and social hierarchies.

In the English language, age-related stereotypes often carry both positive and negative connotations. Phrases such as *"over the hill," "you can't teach an old dog new tricks,"* or *"senile old man"* imply decline, rigidity, or cognitive deterioration associated with aging. On the other hand, expressions like *"wise old man"* or *"elder statesman"* suggest respect, wisdom, and experience. Youth is commonly linked to energy, inexperience, or recklessness, as seen in expressions like *"young and foolish"* or *"wet behind the ears."* These linguistic markers highlight the dual nature of age stereotypes—oscillating between reverence and prejudice.

In the Uzbek language, age-related stereotypes are similarly prominent and closely tied to traditional cultural values. Old age is generally viewed with high respect and is associated with wisdom, dignity, and authority. Common Uzbek expressions such as *"keksalarga hurmat – kattalarga izzat"* (respect the elderly – honor the elders) and *"choyxonada oqsoqol gapirsa, yoshlar tinglaydi"* (when the elder speaks in the teahouse, the youth listen) underscore the cultural reverence for seniority. At the same time, youth may be portrayed as inexperienced or needing guidance, as in the phrase *"yosh – ko'cha, qari – so'qmoq"* (youth is a road, the old is a path), suggesting that the elderly possess the wisdom carved from life experience, while the young are still on a journey of learning.

English expressions reflect a balance between positive and negative views of age. Uzbek expressions are entirely positive, highlighting respect and wisdom with no negative connotations.
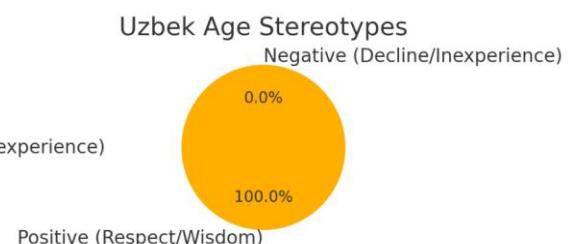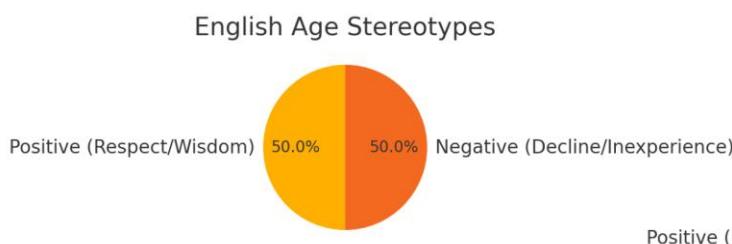
The pie charts above illustrate the distribution of positive and negative age-related stereotypes as reflected in commonly used expressions in English and Uzbek. This comparison highlights not just linguistic variation, but also deeper cultural attitudes toward aging.

In English, age-related idioms are often ambivalent. While some expressions convey respect (*"wise beyond their years"*), others suggest limitation or decline (*"over the hill," "can't teach an old dog new tricks"*). This duality reflects a culture where youth is idealized and aging may be viewed with apprehension. The balance between wisdom and obsolescence in these expressions aligns with more individualistic and fast-paced societal values, where adaptability and innovation are often prioritized [7;P.34].

In contrast, Uzbek language expressions overwhelmingly carry positive stereotypes about aging. Elders are portrayed as bearers of knowledge (*"Oq soch – hayot maktabi"*), and age is associated with life experience and authority. Youth is acknowledged as a stage of development, needing the guidance of elders (*"Yosh – yo'l, qari – so'qmoq"*). These expressions reflect the Uzbek culture's collectivist orientation, where respect for elders and traditional wisdom is deeply rooted in family and community life.

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis of English and Uzbek expressions reveals that language serves as a powerful vehicle for transmitting ethnocultural stereotypes related to age. While English idioms often reflect ambivalence—oscillating between admiration for wisdom and discomfort with aging—Uzbek expressions consistently emphasize respect, dignity, and life experience associated with old age. This difference mirrors broader cultural patterns: Western cultures, influenced by individualism and rapid change, tend to idealize youth and innovation, whereas Uzbek culture, rooted in collectivism and tradition, places a higher value on age, experience, and generational hierarchy. Understanding these linguistic reflections of age stereotypes not only enhances intercultural communication but also contributes to a broader awareness of how ageism and respect are linguistically constructed.

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