



PROVERBS AS MEANS OF EXPRESSING NATIONAL- CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS IN ENGLISH

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Mirbabayeva A.D.¹

Atkamova S.A.²

¹ Master at UzSWLU,

² Senior teacher Of UzSWLU

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to analyze the national and cultural specificity of the English language through the proverbs used in the newspaper media text. Since modern linguistics pays much attention to the issue of interaction between language and culture, it is a newspaper text that is one of the well-known means of knowledge of this or that culture.

There is no single description of the British national character. Different authors and researchers describe it differently. However, there are general descriptions as well. The British are true patriots of their country, despite the fact that they are a relatively small state. Hence the feeling of one's own superiority over other powers. A couple of centuries ago, Britain was called «the ruler of the seas», but basically, only the British themselves called themselves that. Each resident of this state can be in terrible social conditions, he can be defeated or suppressed, and nevertheless, he will consider his state the safest, cleanest and most correct in the world.

Considering and analyzing proverbs and sayings in English nation, it is possible to identify some features characteristic of

their culture and mentality. It is intolerable to say about the discipline of the British, about their manners, about the ethics of communication, the British know how to behave in society, at the table, at social events, etc. Curiosity is also an important feature of the English people. And yet, having learned the customs, traditions, cuisine, etc. other peoples, they still remain true to their traditions, customs, and foundations. The British try to stay away from foreigners, and sometimes communicate with them with undisguised coldness, however, in fact, they can turn out to be very friendly and sociable people.

The first and perhaps most obvious feature of English character is self-control, to some extent resembling a certain coldness and isolation. A typical Englishman will not tell an unfamiliar



person anything about himself beyond what the conversation requires. In the language itself there are a number of sayings condemning excessive talkativeness and praising the ability to listen and draw conclusions: «Tattler is worse than a thief», «Hear much, speak little», «A man of words and not of deeds is like a garden full of weeds», etc.

It should not be forgotten that the British have an unprecedented passion for betting. Also, in Britain there are a huge number of different clubs of interest. And for each of the members of such a club, this place is rightfully considered a second home, with its own rules, secrets, foundations that no one should know about. Being kicked out of a club like this is like being fired from a job and a great shame for any Brit. And although for any resident of Britain an important component will be the need for constant company and the support of others, nevertheless, it is the British who know what it means to be alone with them. And even while being in company, the British man can immerse himself in his thoughts and think about what he wants.

Even in the matter of bringing up children, the British tend to be strict. They are convinced that an excessive display of love and tenderness can harm the character of the child. This fact is also hinted at by a well-known English proverb: «Spare the rod and spoil the child». Emotional moderation, discipline, rigor is a kind of three pillars in the upbringing of the younger generations of England.

The moderation of the English is also shown in their frugal attitude to money. They are prudent, therefore, the Englishman will not litter money, if

possible, will deny himself something. Accurate English the proverb «A penny saved is a penny gained» reveals this side of the nation as capaciously as possible. The British are no less frugal with time. «Time is money» says their wise proverb. Being invited by an Englishman to a business lunch, you are likely to be asked about the accessible availability of free time and will not be delayed longer than it should be¹. E.g.: ***All that glitters is not gold.** Peter Fincham delivered a pitch-perfect MacTaggart speech, but after closer analysis, the audience at Edinburgh were left wondering what the ITV director of television really wanted* (The Guard., Mon 25 Aug 2008).

Consequently, in the English language there is a wide range of proverbs and sayings that convey the most significant features of the mentality, lifestyle and culture of the people. Their study helps us, language learners, not only to expand our vocabulary, to make our speech livelier, more natural, but also to feel the spirit of the people whose property they are.

It should be taken into consideration, while looking at the culture and art of Britain: to the size of the bridges, extensive beautiful parks, huge monuments, one can accept that the British people prefer magnificence of buildings. As in many countries, in Britain pets and creatures are well accepted by people, they are animal lovers. People treat their pets as their friends, real family members. They feed them with special food, special own place, take care of them, let them be close even at

¹ Фразеологизмы как отражение менталитета англичан. URL: <https://videouroki.net/razrabotki/statia-frazeologhizmy-kak-otrazhieniie-mentalitieta-anghlichan.html>.



the dinner table. That belongs to animals as cats or dogs.

If talking about land owners, it should be mentioned that most of them have horses, and horse riding is a typical ability. Amongst cattle breeding among the British, pig breeding stands out in particular. Each family from the past times has had several heads of this animal, in order to feed the family, produce meat, and cash property. The pig, as one of the main types of animal husbandry, replaces the British need for meat products. It is one of the major creatures that can be found almost in every cottage with farmyard.

There is one of the most common stereotypes - the British people love pets more than their own children. And although, of course, this is an exaggeration, as in any joke, there is a considerable amount of truth here. For example, the Cruelty to Animals Act was passed in England in 1654. It was aimed primarily at bloody forms of entertainment: bull-baiting with dogs, cockfights, throwing a rooster with sticks, etc. And the law to protect children from cruel treatment did not appear in Britain until more than two hundred years later, in 1889. According to statistics, more than a third of the British keep dogs or other animals at home. This is a whole army of 26 million animals. And there are only 14 million children in the kingdom.

Animal care is a whole industry, with its own hairdressers, beauticians and ateliers. The UK's first cat cafe has recently opened in London. Its popularity is huge, it is extremely difficult to book a table. This is one of the few places where you can come with your beloved cat. And while you drink

coffee, your cat will be able to have fun in the company of a dozen of the same as him.

There are many pet shops in Britain, which indicates a great demand for pet products and for the animals themselves. One can go to these shops like a zoo, which many do. Here we can see not only traditional hamsters and guinea pigs, but also all kinds of lizards and snakes. Surprisingly, rabbits and chickens are considered pets here. They are sold in the same pet stores. Moreover, they are unlikely to be eaten, because, firstly, the store vaccinates animals with drugs that are not suitable for agricultural use, and secondly, a subscription is taken from the buyer that he will not treat the pet cruelly. Such paper is signed even when buying aquarium fish. The document indicates the address and contact details of the new owner, so in which case the rabbit lover can be held administratively liable.

One of the features of the English character is the traditional character – many call this trait conservatism. Indeed, the desire to find in its original form the features of life and behavior, rituals and observations, often brought to the point of absurdity, distinguishes the British from all other peoples. But it is the English tradition that attracts crowds of tourists from all over the world.

By the word “tradition” the British people mean something that has stood the test of time, and therefore it should certainly be preserved, for example: bright red mailboxes, double-decker red buses, furry bear hats on royal guards, which they do not take off even in 30 degree heat, green hedges.

Judges still sit in robes and powdered wigs of the eighteenth century, and



professors of the oldest universities in England wear black robes lined with scarlet and square caps, the royal guard is still dressed in the uniform of the 16th century, but none of the English people expresses dissatisfaction with obsolete form. Members of Parliament don antediluvian folding top hats when they announce the agenda in the House of Commons, and it looks natural.

It is not easy for a normal person to survive in an English house. And today, in the 21st century, about a third of English homes do not have central heating. Moreover, their inhabitants often do not seek to acquire central heating. They use electric heaters. And in those cases when there is central heating, the British also use it not humanly: they set a special mode when the boiler works only a few hours a day - only in the morning or in the evening. And at night it usually turns off, because it is already warm in the bed under the feather bed, and there is no need to heat the room in vain when everyone is sleeping.

All progressive mankind uses a heating pad exclusively for illnesses. Therefore, they are sold in pharmacies. In England, a heating pad is a familiar everyday item (in winter), every house has a special locker where they are stored, each family member has his own, and a few more in reserve for guests. Everyone takes a heating pad with them when they go to bed, because climbing into an icy bed without a heating pad is really impossible. The British are sure: "It must be cold in winter, because it is winter".

One of the strange facts of the everyday life of the British people is the peculiar use of water in the household. The

English people do not wash under running water. To wash hands, it is suggested to plug the sink with a cork, fill it with water and wash your hands with soap and water in this water. Then remove the cork and dry your hands with a towel without rinsing. The English never rinse anything. They do not rinse the dishes - they wash them in a sink plugged with a cork and put them on the dryer as they are - in shreds of melting foam. They do not rinse themselves - they just get out of the soapy bath and wrap themselves in a towel. And they wash their hair in the same water, sitting in the bath, and also do not rinse. That's why they don't have mixers. Both the bathtub, and the sink, and even the kitchen sinks are equipped with two taps, separately hot and cold. E.g.: *"Water under the Bridge: time to put Glenn Hoddle back on the case Like Nordic detective Saga Noren, the former England manager lacked a certain tact. But should his foibles have been accommodated to allow the visionary in him to flourish?"* (The Guard., Wed 23 May 2012).

The British have great respect for their history. Museum business in this country is at the highest level. At every corner, around every turn, in every backwoods there is a museum, and it is never empty, and it is filled primarily by the inhabitants of the country themselves, who study with unflinching interest the peculiarities of the life and life of their ancestors. The tradition of visiting historic houses and castles appeared in England in the era of Elizabeth I, when the rest of Europe had no idea what a tour was, and these properties themselves were in private hands. The number of films about Henry VIII and his many wives is growing from year to year to the needs of the



English public, which does not get tired of admiring their loving idol. The memory of the British Empire, which ruled the seas and lands around the world, has not faded away either, boasting of this, of course, is not accepted and not modern, but they have not forgotten about it either.

While communicating the English people are naturally polite and never get tired of saying "Please" and "Thank you". They are disciplined and do not talk loudly in the street. They don't push around to get a seat on the bus or train and queue up at the bus stop. The British do not shake hands when meeting. They try not to show emotions in public even in tragic circumstances. They do not lose their temper and remain optimistic in difficult situations.

The English people are a nation of homebodies. They say: "My house is my fortress" and do not like neighbors to interfere in their lives. The British prefer small single-family houses. The fireplace is the heart of the English home. While residents of other countries go to cafes or cocktail bars in the evenings, the British prefer to gather in the living room and sit by the fire, discussing the events of the past day. In many houses, you can still find fireplaces today, sometimes with columns on the sides and an upper shelf where there is a clock, a mirror or family photos. E.g.: *"No place like home: illegal evictions in 'shadow' sector soar in lockdown. The government has extended the ban on removing tenants by a month, but they still face harassment and violence from landlords in unregulated market"* (The Guard., Sun 23 Aug 2020).

Tea is another national passion of English people. Although many, especially

in large cities, today drink coffee or brew tea with a bag, still maintaining a feeling and special attitude towards this drink is considered an important part of English culture. English literature testifies to the enormous role that tea drinking had in the life of the country. In detective stories, a cup of tea is offered to those who find a corpse to maintain strength, in romance novels, broken hearts are treated, friends drink it, celebrating a meeting, and enemies to defuse the situation. There are number of proverbs indicating 'tea' as element of national culture: *"Tea will take you there"*, *"Tea to the English is really a picnic indoors"*, *"Sometimes all you need is a good cup of Tea"*, *"The Adventure begins with Tea"*, *"Tea is always a good idea"*, *"A cup of Tea makes everything better"*, *"Tea is liquid wisdom"*, etc.

Another English weakness is the weather. All the jokes and ridicule they are subjected to for this are completely justified. Any English conversation really revolves around this topic, even semi-official letters from organizations contain references to good or bad weather. The main problem is that the British are convinced that they have very bad, changeable and unpredictable weather, which, in their opinion, determines many aspects of their life and character. E.g.: *"It was raining cats and dogs over the weekend. So, what did you catch at the cinema? Whether it was big screen or small, trashy or flashy, we want to know what you watched over the weekend"* (The Guard., Mon 21 Oct 2013).

The British are a secretive people and carefully guard their personal space from strangers. They never boast of their merits and even less their dignity. Residents of the



UK delight many - who else has such endurance, self-esteem and such an ability to control their emotions. Here are number of main qualities of British nation:

Compassion – the English are a very compassionate people. They never offend those who are weaker and more vulnerable than them. Residents of England do everything to ensure that the elderly, the disabled and people with disabilities live with dignity. Almost all public places are equipped with elevators and ramps. In England, volunteer and charitable organizations are flourishing - you can make donations or become a volunteer. Most English people do charity work on a daily basis, but they do not advertise it. E.g.: *“A friend in need is a friend indeed, but a friend who asks permission to talk is better. That’s at least according to Melissa Fabello, a US-based activist and writer who posted a screengrab of a text message she’d received from a friend, asking if Fabello had the “capacity” to listen to her “vent about something medical/weight-related”*” (The Guard., Mon 25 Nov 2019).

Courtesy – people in the UK are very patriotic, but they never talk about it. In addition, they respect other people’s customs, traditions and norms of behavior. If the habits of another people seem wild to them, they will never ridicule or say so. Even though the British really dislike rude and ill-mannered people, their opponent is unlikely to find out about this if he behaves rudely. Of course, this point depends on the character of the person - someone may not like the behavior of another so much that he points to it. E.g.: *“Karl had the politeness of a king, though not the punctuality. But whenever he arrived on set, he always looked everyone in the eye and thanked*

them, including every assistant and crew member” (The Guard., Sat 14 Dec 2019). In the following example it’s noticed transformable form of the proverb “Punctuality is the politeness of kings”.

Style – the British people are the legislators of new trends in fashion. If you see a strange man with long hair and a fur coat will be thrown over him from outerwear, rubber slippers on his feet, most likely he is an Englishman. “I wear what I want and what I take out of the closet first” is the motto of the British people. Combining the incongruous and wearing what they want, the people of Britain, because of their eccentricity, are considered one of the most stylish nations in the whole world. E.g.: *“Elegance is good taste plus a dash of daring”*. So said Carmel Snow, the famously chic editor of Harper’s Bazaar, three-quarters of a century ago. *It sounds so simple, put like that ... and yet, this morning, as I opened my wardrobe and recited Ms. Snow’s words, I was still stumped. But it is a useful rule, especially when dealing with the challenge that, from my observations, seems to be stumping most of us this season: proportion* (The Guard., Sat 18 Mar 2006).

E.g.: *“Womenswear runs from the office-appropriate (tailoring) to flouncy cotton dresses for looking fresh when the temperatures climb. Stenciled on one wall is an Instagrammable quote from the American fashion designer Marc Jacobs. It reads: “Clothes mean nothing until someone lives in them”*” (The Guard., Sun 20 Sep 2020).

Restraint – another of the main advantages of the amazing Englishmen is their restraint. We are used to people expressing their emotions vividly: they



complain, get angry, shout, rejoice, etc. In England, such behavior is considered bad manners. The inhabitants of this country are very calm and restrained, they will never impose themselves, burden others with their life failures. The British people leave all the problems within their home and people carry them in themselves. Even if the Englishman is overwhelmed with emotions, outwardly he remains imperturbable, and puts opponent in his place with subtle English sarcastic humor. E.g.: *“Six Nations: Wales promise a ‘battle royal’ against injury-hit Scotland. Shaun Edwards expects physical encounter against Scotland. ‘Wales will try to bully us mentally,’ says Gordon Reid”* (The Guard., Tue 21 Feb 2017).

Sense of humor – the British people are known for their ‘coldness’ and inability to express their emotions, including negative ones. But they found a great way for themselves - the British are skilled at sarcasm, and their specific humor is incomparable to anyone else. They believe that the pinnacle of wit is to make fun of someone, but they do it not out of evil motives, it seems to them that by making fun of their own and other people’s mistakes, it is easier to cope with failures and problems in life. If you decide to give an Englishman a compliment, then, most likely, he will treat him with self-irony and will only begin to joke with himself even more. With all this, the British people have a very subtle humor, and it is fundamentally different from the American one. E.g.: *“Another wolf in sheep’s clothing comes from the matriarchal heritage house, Elizabeth Arden. I’m a longtime fan of its unctuous ceramide*

capsules, and now there’s a retinol version too” (The Guard., Sat 1 Jun 2019).

Honesty – since childhood, the British people have been trying to be honest (first of all, with themselves) and if they take on any obligations, they fulfill them. Since ancient times, people have enjoyed a reputation as honest and reliable partners - here a man will not deceive a woman in order to get something from her, a business partner will not let you down, and in a store the seller will honestly tell you that this product is defective or cakes are not very fresh. Moreover, if the goods are returned to the store and the reason is described, the seller may not even check, but take his word for it. It is very pleasant, probably, to live in a country where you do not have to suspect people, but you can trust them. E.g.: *“Corporate transparency: why honesty is the best policy. With consumers, investors and employees increasingly interested in companies’ social and environmental performance, transparency is becoming a corporate necessity”* (The Guard., Mon 4 Aug 2014).

Love for children – in England, they love children very much and create favorable conditions for their development. It is unlikely that children will wander around idle here, even for kids there are special courses and sections, and many of them are completely free. For example, in Chelsea, you can visit the library, where every Thursday a couple of some mischievous guitarists play their favorite songs especially for children. Parents try to give their kids as much time as possible. And on Saturday (Fathers’ Day in England), fathers are happy to play with their children throughout the day. E.g.: *“Where do you go if you want a treat? Lush - I’m as*



happy as a sand boy there. Or the Body Shop - I believe in beauty without cruelty." (The Guard., Fri 21 Mar 2008).

Respect for privacy – this quality should be learned by other peoples. The British are the most restrained and understanding people who never climb into someone else's life with advice, especially since no one condemns anyone. For example, girlfriends never discuss their friend behind her back, they don't even think about it. One can never see grandmothers sitting on benches and discussing the life of their neighbors - they have more interesting activities. In England, everyone has the right to express themselves the way they want. As long as the matter does not concern the law, each person can do what he wants. E.g.: *"The impact of an apple a day in keeping the doctor away may be partly down to the beneficial bacteria it carries and their subsequent colonization of your gut, according to scientists"* (The Guard., Wed 24 Jul 2019).

Love to the animals – the British people, starting with royal family and continuing with ordinary people, love animals and have several cats and dogs at home. In England it is definitely impossible to see homeless animals. The Animal Welfare Organization always works, each animal is placed in a shelter and they try to find suitable owners for it. The choice of owners is treated very responsibly, a cat or a dog is never given into someone's hands, just to give it back. The British treat their animals like their own children. Even if a cat walks among the green spaces in England, then most likely it was simply let out for a walk in a collar and it has a house to which it returns after a walk. E.g.:

"Minerals Council says it will release a 'climate action plan' next year. 'A leopard doesn't change its spots,' says activist investor group, dismissing plan as effort to play for time. The Minerals Council has announced it will develop a "climate action plan" amid increasing" (The Guard., Thu 10 Oct 2019).

Good manners – British people and good manners are synonymous. Just before the child was born, his parents try to teach etiquette, table setting and good manners. It was in the UK that such a thing as a "true gentleman" was born, the inhabitants of this country impeccably observe all the norms, rules of etiquette and always try to be polite. They are not used to talking loudly, they never push in public places and transport. The British are not accustomed to showing their emotions, even if they are overwhelmed. Other peoples may consider them cold and devoid of feelings, but this is absolutely not the case. E.g.: *"There are so many trivial ways in which it is possible to commit some social sin." The current moment is a minefield, but as Crisp, my guru, also said: "Manners are love in a cool climate." The coolest of climates is one in which the breath of a stranger may be dangerous, so to talk of love may seem odd"* (The Guard., Mon 24 Aug 2020).

Talking about nationalism of English proverbs, one should note the properties of the English people. This nation is distinguished by its pride and respect. As we have already discussed above, the character of this society is transmitted by the mentality and diversity of the cultural character. This aspect is also reflected in the following proverbs: *"Dead news, like dead love, has no phoenix in its ashes";*



“People Who Live in Glass Houses Should Not Throw Stones”; “The Forbidden Fruit is the Sweetest”; “The Grass Is Always Greener on the Other Side of the Fence”; “You Can’t Teach an Old Dog New Tricks; Don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater”; “A picture is worth ten thousand words”; “Newspapers are the world’s mirrors”.

In many statements summarizing everyday experience, the meaning of the words seems to have developed into the form of a proverb gradually, without any explicit announcement. The phrase “Make hay while the sun shines”, originating from the practice of field work, is an example of such a proverb. Any farmer feels the correctness of this thought, not necessarily expressed in these words. But after many hundreds of people expressed this thought in many different ways, after much trial and error, this thought finally acquired its memorized form and began its life as a proverb. Likewise, the saying “Don’t put all your eggs in one basket” arose from practical experience in trading relationships.

It is obvious that many proverbs were created by quite certain smart people. If this happened to smart people in the oral version, then, of course, there were no witness records left, but if this happened to a smart person who had the habit of writing down his thoughts, then in some cases you can get to the source of the proverb. In general, it would be fair to suggest that most abstract proverbs began their lives in this way. For example, “The end justifies the means”, which stems from the theological doctrine of the seventeenth century, or the golden thought “The wish is father to the thought”, which was first expressed by Julius Caesar, or the saying “A

soft answer turned away wrath”, undoubtedly, borrowed in its accomplished form from the Bible.

The use of proverbs reached its peak in Shakespeare’s time, and it is more than likely that many of the proverbs attributed to Shakespeare existed earlier, albeit in a less memorable form. The same with the Bible. The wisdom of her proverbs is certainly not original. Both sources folk and literary, are merged into one. Thanks to the spread of the printed word, the statements of smart people increasingly began to fall into the hands of ordinary people, who, if these thoughts were to their liking, turned them into proverbs.

Analyzing the traditions of a great historical country as Great Britain, it should be noted that they live not only in everyday life, they permeate the most diverse aspects of English life, particularly in educational system as well. Thus, universities take seriously the maintenance of rituals that arose, for example, in the 16th or 17th centuries. Until quite recently, at reputable universities, some professors allowed students to attend their lectures exclusively in robes, and for certain types of final exams, this form has survived to this day.

There are cases when both students and professors almost lost consciousness on a hot summer day, steaming in thick long decorative robes, but they never received permission from the leadership to take them off. The graduation ceremony is a lavish theatrical performance, which at the same time does not seem at all artificial or overly pompous. It seems that all these people were born in order to wear wigs, professorial caps, to pronounce formulas and words repeated for centuries.



No university in the world has so many conventions and historical traditions as in English. The issuance of robes for ceremonies is carried out in strictly defined rooms - separately for professors, separately for doctors, separately for employees without a degree, it is impossible to imagine any democracy here. A gala dinner on any important occasion is unthinkable without a tailcoat and a bow tie, even if many have to rent them. The beautiful green lawns at the University of Cambridge can only be trampled by those who belong to the teaching staff, as warning signs are placed everywhere, the rest should pass on paths.

Concluding the idea about characteristics of British life, we can say, that traditions live not only in everyday life; they permeate the most diverse aspects of English life. As folk wisdom says: "You need to know your friends and enemies by sight". Indeed, knowing the characteristic features of other nations, one can better understand the political and social views of their countries. That is why it is necessary to get acquainted with the culture of other peoples, with their customs and characters in order to improve international relations and simply for our own development, and also so that, by comparing the culture and customs of our country with them, we can change something, improve in them.

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