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Comparative Analysis of Similar Narratives, Motifs, and Characters in English and Uzbek Children’s Folklore

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***Abstract:** This study examines the shared narratives, motifs, and characters in English and Uzbek children’s folklore. By analyzing clapping games, object-based games, role-play activities, and verbal folklore, the paper highlights striking similarities despite cultural and linguistic differences. Through textual examples and thematic analysis, we demonstrate how both traditions emphasize education, creativity, and social interaction while reflecting distinct historical and cultural influences.*

***Key words:** Children’s folklore, clapping games, object-based games, narratives, cultural motifs, comparative analysis.*

Introduction. Children’s folklore represents an essential aspect of intangible cultural heritage, serving as a medium for transmitting values, traditions, and social norms across generations. Embedded within games, songs, and narratives, it reflects both universal human experiences and unique cultural identities. Through playful activities, children learn about their communities, build social bonds, and acquire critical life skills in an engaging and interactive way. This paper examines the shared narratives, motifs, and characters in English and Uzbek children’s folklore, with a particular focus on clapping games, object-based play, and role-playing traditions. Despite cultural and linguistic differences, both traditions showcase remarkable parallels in themes and structures, such as rhythmic coordination, collective participation, and moral storytelling. These similarities highlight the universal function of folklore in childhood as a tool for fostering creativity, resilience, and social integration.

While English folklore often emphasizes individuality and historical narratives, Uzbek folklore reflects a strong sense of community and collective values. For instance, English games like “*London Bridge is Falling Down*” incorporate historical events into playful activities, whereas Uzbek games such as “*Oq terakmi, ko’k terak*” emphasize teamwork and communal bonds. At the same time, differences in cultural and geographical contexts reveal the diverse ways in which societies adapt folklore to their unique environments. In an era of rapid modernization and digital transformation, traditional folklore

faces challenges in maintaining its relevance. However, its core elements-such as the use of rhythm, storytelling, and play-continue to evolve in new forms, demonstrating its adaptability and resilience. By analyzing specific examples of English and Uzbek children's games and narratives, this study aims to uncover not only their shared elements but also the cultural richness that defines them. Understanding these traditions fosters cross-cultural appreciation and highlights the importance of preserving these practices in a globalized world.

Materials and Methods. This research adopts a qualitative comparative method. The data comprises documented examples of children's games, songs, and narratives from English and Uzbek traditions. Textual analysis was employed to identify recurrent motifs, structural similarities, and unique elements. Primary sources include field collections, published folklore anthologies, and academic studies.

Results. Clapping Games. Clapping games are integral to children's play culture, promoting rhythm, coordination, and social interaction. English examples like "Double This!", "Miss Mary Mack", and "Mama, Mama, Can't You See" echo similar practices in Uzbek folklore, such as "Tapur-tupur qayrag'och". Both traditions use repetitive lyrics and rhythm to engage participants:

In "Double This!":

Double, double this this,

Double, double that that.

Double this,

Double that,

Double, double this that.

In "Tapur-tupur qayrag'och", the group recites:

Tapur-tupur qayrag'och,

Xohlaganingni olib qoch.

The repetitive patterns facilitate learning and enhance the communal aspect of play.

Object-Based Games. Object-based games such as "Hopscotch" (English) and "Mak-mak" (Uzbek) highlight cross-cultural adaptability of rules and tools. In both traditions, children use simple objects like stones or chalk-drawn grids to structure the game. Another notable comparison is "Hacky Sack" in English folklore and "Lanka" in Uzbek folklore, emphasizing agility and precision.

Narrative and Role-Play Games. Role-playing games in both cultures reflect societal structures and historical narratives. For instance:

➤ In English folklore, "London Bridge is Falling Down" recounts historical events through song and play:

London Bridge is falling down,

Falling down, falling down.

London Bridge is falling down,

My fair lady.

- Similarly, Uzbek children play “Oq terakmi, ko‘k terak”, a game that mirrors cooperative strategies and negotiation. This involves players attempting to “break” through a human chain, akin to the physical challenges in English “Red Rover”.

Dangerous Games. Certain games in both cultures test bravery, often bordering on risky behavior. In English folklore, “Railroad Chicken” involves players lying on railway tracks, jumping off as the train approaches. Uzbek counterparts include “Ko‘chada yotish”, where children lie on streets, moving away at the last moment to avoid vehicles. These games underscore the universal adolescent need for testing boundaries and asserting courage.

Motifs in Songs and Games. Recurring motifs in both traditions reveal shared cultural values:

Animal Imagery:

- English: “Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear” narrates a day in the life of a teddy bear, paralleling Uzbek “Quyuncham” (Little Rabbit), both of which anthropomorphize animals to teach routines and moral lessons.

Teddy bear, teddy bear,

Turn around.

Teddy bear, teddy bear,

Touch the ground.

Family and Domestic Life:

- English songs like “My Little Babby” often address familial bonds:

My little babby,

Dance to your daddy.

- In Uzbek games, narratives frequently depict family roles and communal values.

Historical and Eschatological Themes:

- English: The apocalyptic imagery in “Ring-A-Round the Rosie” stems from plague-era fears:
Ring-a-ring-a-rosies,

A pocket full of posies.

Ashes, ashes,

We all fall down!

Uzbek games reflect historical resilience, as in “O‘yinboshi”, where a leader navigates challenges to guide their team to victory.

Discussion. The similarities in English and Uzbek children’s folklore suggest shared human experiences in childhood—a blend of playfulness, learning, and community bonding. These universalities indicate that certain themes, such as rhythm-based play and storytelling, fulfill developmental and socialization needs across cultures. However, the distinctions are equally significant. For instance, English children’s games often prioritize individuality, emphasizing the child’s role as an independent actor, while Uzbek children’s games more frequently reflect collective and familial values, promoting teamwork and community bonding.

The role of historical and environmental factors in shaping these traditions cannot be overlooked. English games like “*London Bridge*” reflect the historical backdrop of urbanization and conflict, while Uzbek games like “*Oq terakmi, ko‘k terak*” mirror rural and agrarian settings with a focus on cooperation. Dangerous games such as “*Railroad Chicken*” and “*Ko‘chada yotish*” also reveal how children across cultures seek to challenge boundaries and test their resilience, albeit through different contexts and levels of risk.

Modernization poses challenges to preserving these traditional games. As children increasingly engage with digital media, opportunities for outdoor play and oral transmission of folklore diminish. However, the adaptability of folklore is evident in the way traditional themes are reimagined in digital and contemporary forms, such as video games and online storytelling platforms. Future research should explore how these transitions affect cultural identity and the intergenerational transmission of values.

Conclusion. English and Uzbek children’s folklore, while diverse in expression, reveals profound commonalities in structure, theme, and purpose. These traditions are not merely games or songs; they are vehicles of cultural transmission, tools for moral and social education, and reflections of the human experience. By examining these shared and unique elements, we gain a deeper appreciation of how childhood folklore shapes identities and fosters intercultural understanding.

This comparative study underscores the importance of preserving such traditions in an increasingly globalized world, where digital media often eclipses oral and communal practices. Future research should investigate how these traditional forms adapt to contemporary contexts, particularly in digital formats, to ensure their survival and relevance for future generations.

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