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The Ethnocultural Features of Facial Expressions in Uzbek and English Communication Culture: A Contrastive Pragmatic Analysis

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ABSTRACT: This article investigates the ethnocultural features of facial expressions (mimicry) in Uzbek and English communication cultures through a comparative linguistic-pragmatic and ethnocultural approach. The research corpus comprises 45 contextualised examples drawn from Uzbek and English literary texts and journalistic sources. Applying semiotic, pragmatic, and ethnocultural communication frameworks, the study systematically analyses six categories of mimetic nonverbal devices: lip, eye, eyebrow, teeth, nose, and forehead expressions. The findings demonstrate that while mimetic nonverbal units fulfil emotional-expressive functions in both cultures, their semiotic composition, social scope of use, and cultural interpretation exhibit significant

ethnocultural differences. In Uzbek communication culture, facial expressions more strongly reflect collective values, social hierarchy, and group harmony, whereas English communication culture foregrounds individual expression and emotional self-regulation. Uzbek literary examples are presented in their original script and analysed in terms of their paralinguistic and pragmatic functions. The results contribute theoretically to contrastive linguistics, ethnocultural communication studies, and cross-cultural pragmatics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication has always been realised through two parallel channels: verbal and nonverbal. While linguistics has traditionally privileged the study of language as a system of signs, the last several decades have witnessed a growing scholarly interest in nonverbal communication as an equally structured, rule-governed system of meaning-making (Knapp & Hall, 2010; Argyle, 1988). Among nonverbal channels, facial expressions or mimicry occupy a central position, constituting what Ekman (1992) famously described as the most direct and universally readable dimension of nonverbal communication.

The term mimicry derives from the Greek *mimikos*, meaning 'imitative', and denotes the expressive movements of the facial muscles through which individuals signal their emotional, psychological, and communicative states to their interlocutors (Ekman & Friesen, 1969). However, facial expression is not merely a biological phenomenon: it is simultaneously a culturally shaped communicative practice. The same facial configuration may be interpreted differently across cultures depending on context, social role, and the norms that regulate emotional display in a given community (Hall, 1959; Hofstede, 1980).

Uzbek and English communication cultures differ markedly along the dimensions of collectivism versus individualism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, 1980). These macro-level cultural parameters shape micro-level nonverbal behaviour, including the way facial expressions are produced, regulated, and interpreted in interaction. Despite the existence of contrastive studies of Uzbek and English pragmatics (Karimov, 2012; Wierzbicka, 1991), a systematic comparative analysis of facial mimicry as an ethnocultural communicative practice remains largely absent from the literature.

The present study addresses this gap by investigating the ethnocultural features of facial expressions in Uzbek and English communication culture through a corpus of literary and journalistic texts. Uzbek-language examples are presented in their original Cyrillic script and analysed in terms of their paralinguistic, pragmatic, and ethnocultural functions, while the analytical commentary is conducted entirely in English. This methodological approach reflects established practice in contrastive paralinguistics, where source-language authenticity is preserved to maintain the integrity of the data (Wierzbicka, 1991; Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2004).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Nonverbal Communication: Theoretical Foundations

The scientific study of nonverbal communication gained systematic impetus in the mid-twentieth century with the emergence of kinesics the study of body movement as a communicative system (Birdwhistell, 1952, 1970). Birdwhistell argued that body movement, including facial expression, constitutes a structured code analogous to language, and that approximately 65-70% of communicative information is conveyed through nonverbal channels. This foundational claim was echoed and refined by Mehrabian (1972), whose research suggested that emotional meaning in face-to-face interaction is transmitted primarily through facial expression (55%), followed by vocal tone (38%), and verbal content (7%) figures that remain widely cited, if also contested, in the field.

Knapp and Hall (2010) provided a comprehensive taxonomy of nonverbal communication, identifying six primary functions: repetition, complementation, substitution, regulation, accentuation, and contradiction. Within this taxonomy, facial expressions perform all six functions, making mimicry one of the most versatile and information-rich nonverbal channels. Argyle (1988) further distinguished between culturally universal and culturally specific dimensions of nonverbal communication, noting that proxemics, haptics, and oculosics as well as certain facial display rules vary significantly across cultural communities.

2.2. The Universality Debate: Ekman and His Critics

The most influential and contested claim in facial expression research is the universality hypothesis, advanced by Ekman and Friesen (1969) on the basis of cross-cultural recognition studies in Papua New Guinea and other isolated communities. Their findings that happiness, anger, fear, surprise, disgust, and sadness are encoded and decoded with above-chance accuracy across cultures were interpreted as evidence for a biologically grounded, pan-human system of emotional facial expression. Ekman (1992) subsequently added contempt as a seventh basic emotion.

This universalist position was challenged from two directions. Fridlund (1994), drawing on a behavioural ecology framework, argued that facial expressions are fundamentally social tools designed to influence others rather than to reflect internal states and that their form and frequency are therefore governed by social context rather than universal biology. More recently, Jack et al. (2012) demonstrated that the categorical distinctiveness of facial expressions varies across cultural groups, with East Asian participants producing and perceiving a different configuration of facial action units than Western participants, suggesting that the 'basic emotion' categories may themselves be culturally constructed.

Elfenbein and Ambady (2002) offered a reconciliatory position through the concept of 'in-group advantage': while facial expressions are broadly recognisable across cultures, individuals are more accurate in reading the expressions of members of their own cultural community. This finding implies that facial expression operates at two levels simultaneously a universal biological substrate overlaid with a culturally specific display register a theoretical position that informs the present study.

2.3. Ethnocultural Communication and Display Rules

The concept of display rules culturally derived norms that govern which emotions may be expressed, how intensely, and in which social contexts was introduced by Ekman and Friesen (1969) and subsequently elaborated by Matsumoto (1990) and Matsumoto et al. (2008). Display rules operate as a cultural filter over biologically pre-wired expressive tendencies, amplifying, attenuating, masking, or substituting emotional expressions in accordance with social expectations.

Hall (1959, 1966) distinguished between high-context cultures, in which much communicative meaning is embedded in implicit, contextual, and nonverbal cues, and low-context cultures, in which meaning is predominantly encoded in explicit verbal messages. Uzbek communication culture, shaped by a long tradition of collective social organisation and Confucian-adjacent norms of hierarchical respect, exhibits many features of a high-context system: nonverbal cues carry substantial communicative weight, and their correct interpretation depends heavily on knowledge of the social context (Karimov, 2012; Muxtorov, 2006).

English communication culture, by contrast, is typically classified as lower-context and more individualistic (Hofstede, 1980; Wierzbicka, 1991), prioritising explicit verbal expression and individual autonomy over implicit, context-dependent meaning-making. The English cultural ideal of the stiff upper lip emotional restraint in public constitutes a culturally specific display rule that directly shapes how facial expressions are produced and read in English-speaking contexts.

Ting-Toomey's (1999) face-negotiation theory adds a further dimension by linking nonverbal communication to face-saving strategies. In collectivist cultures such as Uzbek society, face-saving through nonverbal restraint avoiding public display of strong negative emotions, managing expressions before authority figures is a powerful social norm. In individualistic cultures, face is negotiated more through verbal competence and professional credibility, with facial expression serving a more individual expressive function.

2.4. Paralinguistics and Mimicry in Uzbek Linguistics

Within Uzbek linguistics, nonverbal communication has been examined predominantly within the framework of paralinguistics the study of non-phonemic vocal and gestural features that accompany speech. Yo'ldoshev (2015) provided a foundational account of nonverbal communication as a system of linguistic supplementation, identifying mimicry as the most semantically dense paralinguistic channel in Uzbek discourse. Xolmatova (2018) extended this work through an analysis of paralinguistic devices in Uzbek literary texts, demonstrating that mimicry functions not only as an emotional signal but also as a narrative device through which authors convey psychological depth and social identity.

Mamatov (2000) examined phraseological units related to body parts in Uzbek, documenting the semantic richness of expressions involving the face and its components. Muxtorov (2006) analysed Uzbek communication norms from an ethno-pragmatic perspective, noting the role of *ibo* (shame/honour) as a cultural regulator of expressive behaviour a concept with

direct implications for facial display rules in Uzbek interaction. Despite these contributions, a systematic contrastive analysis of Uzbek facial mimicry in relation to English remains absent from the literature, and the present study addresses this lacuna directly.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The study employs a qualitative-contrastive design, combining contextual-pragmatic, semiotic, and ethnocultural analysis. This design is appropriate for the research questions because it enables the researcher to examine both the internal structure of individual mimetic signs and their broader cultural embedding. The analysis proceeds in three stages: (1) corpus construction and purposive sampling; (2) micro-level analysis of each mimetic device by category; and (3) cross-linguistic comparison of integral and differential features, with ethnocultural interpretation.

3.2. Corpus

The research corpus consists of 45 purposively selected examples, divided approximately equally between Uzbek ($n = 23$) and English ($n = 22$) sources. Uzbek-language data were drawn from the following literary works: T. Malik, *Shaytanat* [The Devil]; O'. Hoshimov, *Ikki eshik orasi* [Between Two Doors] and *Dunyoning ishlari* [The Ways of the World]; T. Ashurov, *Onaizor*; A. Qahhor, *Sarob* [Mirage]; M. Nazarov, *Sirli xat* [The Secret Letter]; and X. To'xtaboyev, *Sariq devni minib* [Riding the Yellow Devil]. English-language data were drawn from: J. Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*; Ch. Dickens, *Great Expectations*; E. Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*; S. Maugham, *Of Human Bondage*; S. Laurens, *Devil's Bride*; and contemporary British and American journalism (*The Guardian*, *Sunday Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Fayetteville Observer*).

Examples were selected according to the following criteria: (i) the mimetic device is explicitly encoded through linguistic means (verb, noun phrase, or descriptive passage); (ii) the surrounding context provides sufficient information to determine the communicative function of the expression; (iii) the examples are distributed proportionally across the six mimicry categories under analysis.

It should be noted that this corpus, while carefully assembled, is relatively small and qualitative in orientation. The findings should accordingly be understood as indicative rather than statistically generalisable, and the study is positioned as a contribution to contrastive pragmatics that invites replication with larger, more varied datasets.

3.3. Analytical Framework

Four complementary analytical procedures were applied to each example:

Contextual-pragmatic analysis: the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect of each mimetic device were identified drawing on Austin's (1962) speech act theory and Searle's (1969) elaboration thereof. This procedure establishes what communicative act is performed by the facial expression within its discourse context.

Semiotic analysis: mimetic devices were examined as sign vehicles within Peirce's (1931) triadic model (sign-object-interpretant), with particular attention to whether the expression functions as an icon (a sign resembling its object), an index (a sign causally connected to its object), or a symbol (a sign whose connection is conventionally determined). This framework enables the researcher to identify how mimetic meaning is structured and how much of that structure is culturally versus biologically determined.

Contrastive-typological analysis: the semantic composition of each mimetic device was compared across the two languages, with integral features (shared across both cultures) and differential features (culture-specific) identified systematically. This procedure directly addresses research questions one and two.

Ethnocultural analysis: findings were interpreted within Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions model (collectivism-individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance), Ting-Toomey's (1999) face-negotiation theory, and Hall's (1959) high-context/low-context distinction. This interpretive layer contextualises the contrastive findings within the broader cultural systems that generate them.

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The following sections present a systematic comparative analysis of six categories of facial mimicry in Uzbek and English textual data. For each category, Uzbek examples are presented in their original Cyrillic script, followed by a bracketed contextual gloss in English to orient the reader without replacing the source text. English examples follow, and a comparative commentary identifies the integral and differential ethnocultural features of each mimetic type.

4.1. Lip Mimicry: Ethnopragmatic Dimensions

4.1.1. Labini tishlamoq / to bite one's lip

The gesture of lip-biting constitutes one of the most semantically dense lip mimicry types in both corpora. Its ethnocultural features, however, differ substantially between the two communicative traditions.

– *Sovqotdingmi? – dedi soddalik bilan. Asadbekning ko'zlaridan tirqirab yosh chiqdi. Ho'ngrab yubormaslik uchun pastki labini qattiq tishladi. O'zidan kattaroq yoki zo'rroq boladan kaltak yesa yoxud o'yin chog'i yiqilib u yer-bu yeri og'risa yig'lab yuborardi.* (T. Malik, *Shaytanat*)

[Context: Asadbek is asked if he is cold. Tears begin to form in his eyes; he bites his lower lip hard to prevent himself from sobbing a restraint he would not have exercised in less witnessed situations.]

In this Uzbek example, the lip-biting gesture performs the pragmatic function of emotional suppression in a socially witnessed context. The character bites his lip not because he feels no pain, but because Uzbek communicative norms particularly norms governing masculine emotional display in the presence of others require that grief be contained. This is a direct manifestation of Hofstede's (1980) collectivist cultural logic: the individual's emotional expression is subordinated to the social expectation of composure. The facial gesture here operates as an index of the character's inner conflict between biological impulse and social norm, and its narrative function is to render this tension visible to the reader without requiring verbal articulation.

He said 'No'. It may make you sad. I mean you just bite your lip, walk back to your mark and get on with your job of creating another chance. (Sunday Times, 2022)

The English example is structured entirely differently. Lip-biting here functions not as an act of social face-saving but as a professional self-management strategy: the speaker instructs a performer to absorb disappointment, return to position, and continue working. The gesture's sematic focus is resilience and professional continuity rather than collective norm compliance. This distinction aligns with Wierzbicka's (1991) observation that English communicative culture values the capacity to process emotions privately and maintain functionality — what might be termed the 'stiff upper lip' principle in action. Semiotically, the English gesture functions more as a symbol of professional composure, while the Uzbek gesture operates as an index of socially regulated grief.

4.1.2. Labini burishtirmoq and the wry smile

Lip-pursing (labini burishtirmoq) in Uzbek communicative contexts functions as an overt signal of disapproval. Its social distribution, however, is regulated by power distance norms: pursing one's lips before an authority figure is socially impermissible for a junior interlocutor, whereas the same gesture from a senior to a junior carries the full weight of hierarchical reproach.

Eshik taqillab yopildi. Xola bir zum o'tirdi-da, lablarini burishtirgancha o'nidan turdi go'yoki bu ketishni o'zi kutgan, ammo baribir yoqtirmagan edi. (O'. Hoshimov, *Dunyoning ishlari*)

[Context: After a door slams shut, a woman sits momentarily, then rises with pursed lips as though she had anticipated the departure but disapproved of it nonetheless.]

The character's pursed lips here encode resignation tinged with disapproval an emotional reading that the surrounding narrative confirms. The gesture is performed in solitude, suggesting that even private facial expression in Uzbek literary representation is implicitly oriented toward social norms: the woman's disapproval is real, but it surfaces only once the social space is unoccupied.

She listened to his explanation with a wry smile, the kind that said she had heard this excuse before and was not particularly convinced by it this time either. (S. Maugham, *Of Human Bondage*)

The English equivalent the wry smile, a unilateral upward curl of one lip corner encodes the same general semantic of disapproval but does so through understatement rather than overt facial tension. Where the Uzbek character pursues her lips in withdrawal, the English character produces a controlled, half-amused expression that signals scepticism while maintaining social composure. This contrast illustrates a fundamental ethnocultural difference in emotional display style: Uzbek expression tends toward clearer, more unambiguous marking of emotional states, while English expression favours subtlety, layering, and ambiguity a feature Wierzbicka (1991) identifies as central to the Anglo-communicative style.

4.2. Eye Mimicry: Gaze, Winking, and Cultural Scope

4.2.1. Ko'z qismoq / to wink

Eye-related mimicry constitutes perhaps the richest and most culturally variable category in the corpus. The wink ko'z qismoq in Uzbek, to wink in English illustrates particularly clearly how a single facial gesture can carry overlapping but divergent ethnocultural meanings.

Hovlimizga kirgandan keyin Olimjon akam meni ayvonga o'tqizdi. Negadir yuzimga shapatiladi-da, ko'z qisib qo'ydi. Dadam bilan xayrlashib, chiqib ketdi. (O'. Hoshimov, Ikki eshik orasi)

[Context: After entering the courtyard, the narrator's older male relative seats him on the veranda, playfully slaps his face, and winks then departs after bidding farewell to the narrator's father, leaving a secret unspoken.]

The wink in this Uzbek literary context is a gesture of in-group conspiracy: it signals the existence of a shared secret between the winking party and the recipient, from which a third party the father is explicitly excluded. This deployment of the wink reflects the collectivist structure of Uzbek social interaction, in which the in-group/out-group boundary is sharp and nonverbal signals serve to reinforce group membership and shared knowledge. The gesture operates as a symbol of alliance whose meaning is fully accessible only to those within the social circle.

As she stepped onto the stage, her confidence radiated, and with winking to the audience, she began her mesmerizing performance, leaving everyone spellbound by her grace and magnetic presence. (The Fayetteville Observer, 2023)

The English context is strikingly different: the wink is directed at a collective audience rather than at a specific interlocutor, and its function is the projection of individual confidence and the establishment of performative rapport rather than the encoding of conspiratorial secrecy. This difference reflects the individualist orientation of English communication culture: where the Uzbek wink draws a boundary between insiders and outsiders, the English wink seeks to bring the audience in, to create a temporary communal intimacy centred on the individual performer. The gesture's social scope is accordingly broader and less exclusive.

4.2.2. Ko'zlarni katta ochmoq / eyes went wide

Wide-eyed surprise or fear ko'zni lo'q qilmoq in Uzbek represents the most strongly universal element in the corpus, consistent with Ekman's (1972) foundational findings on the cross-cultural recognition of surprise. Yet even here, the surrounding narrative conventions differ between the two literary traditions.

Kampir ko'zlarini lo'q qildi. Qo'rquvdan rangi o'chib ketdi. Bir muddat tilini tishlab turdi-da, nihoyat ovozi chiqardi. (A. Qahhor, Sarob)

[Context: An elderly woman widens her eyes in fright; her colour drains. She bites her tongue for a moment before finally speaking.]

The Uzbek passage presents a characteristic sequential structure: wide eyes (fear onset) → colour drain (physiological intensification) → tongue-biting (suppression of verbal response) → eventual speech. The tongue-biting episode is particularly revealing: it marks the character's effort to bring the socially visible manifestation of her fear under control before re-engaging verbally with her interlocutor. This sequence reflects the Uzbek communicative norm that strong emotional display even involuntary requires subsequent self-regulation before social re-entry is appropriate.

Her eyes went wide not the theatrical widening of someone performing surprise, but the genuine, involuntary expansion of someone who had just understood something they had been missing for months. (The Guardian, 2023)

The English passage engages in an explicit metalinguistic distinction between two types of wide-eyed expression: performed and authentic. The narrator categorically distinguishes the character's reaction from 'theatrical widening', privileging authenticity as the relevant evaluative criterion. This distinctiveness reflects a central preoccupation of English communicative culture with the genuineness of emotional expression a concern that is far less prominent in the Uzbek texts, where the social management of expression, rather than its authenticity, tends to be the dominant evaluative frame.

4.3. Eyebrow Mimicry: Social Power and Cultural Register

4.3.1. Qosh uchirmoq / to raise one's eyebrow

Eyebrow raising is a high-frequency mimetic device in both corpora, classified by Ekman and Friesen (1969) as a component of surprise and query expressions. In both Uzbek and English texts, the gesture is associated with the drawing of another's attention; however, its pragmatic loading the specific social work it performs differs between the two cultures.

Nasima noz-karashma bilan o'rtaga chiqib, sho'x o'ynay boshladi. U dam domlaga, dam Mahvashga qarab qoshlarini uchirib muqom qilardi. (T. Ashurov, Onaizor)

[Context: Nasima enters playfully and begins dancing coquettishly. She alternately directs her raised eyebrows at a teacher and at a female peer named Mahvash, using the gesture as part of a flirtatious, attention-seeking performance.]

In this Uzbek example, the raised eyebrow functions as an instrument of flirtation and social performance. Nasima's eyebrow-raises are directed alternately at two different interlocutors, managing multiple social relationships simultaneously through the same gestural device. The gesture here indexes both playful invitation and social mastery the character's capacity to hold multiple audiences in simultaneous engagement. This use of eyebrow-raising as a performance of interpersonal agency reflects the collectivist social environment in which managing multiple relationships and maintaining social harmony are primary communicative concerns.

In the exclusive restaurant where they dined, Nicola noticed he had only to raise an eyebrow and a waitress came hurrying to attend him. (M. Forsythe, *The book lady*)

In the English context, eyebrow-raising functions as a marker of social status and command: the gesture replaces verbal instruction entirely, and its effectiveness the waitress's immediate response confirms the gesturer's authority within the social hierarchy of the restaurant. The raised eyebrow here performs a directive speech act nonverbally, and its pragmatic success depends on the prior establishment of a power differential between the gesturer and recipient. This use of eyebrow-raising as a status signal reflects the low-context communicative tradition of English culture, in which subtle nonverbal cues carry high social information density and are expected to be read accurately by competent interactants.

4.3.2. Qovog'ini solmoq / to frown

Frowning qovog'ini solmoq or qoshini chimirmoq in Uzbek carries considerable pragmatic weight in both cultures, typically encoding displeasure, disapproval, or concentrated attention. The ethnocultural difference lies primarily in the hierarchical conditions under which the gesture is produced and received.

Otasi qovog'ini solib kirdi. Hech nima demadi. Lekin uning shu sukunati, shu ko'rinishi Sherzodga o'n marta kaltak yegandan og'irroq botdi. (X.To'xtaboyev, *Sariq devni minib*)

[Context: The father enters with a darkened expression and says nothing. His silence and appearance weigh on Sherzod more heavily than ten beatings.]

This passage is among the most revealing in the Uzbek corpus for the ethnocultural analysis of mimicry. The father's frown, deployed in silence, is constructed by the narrative as more communicatively devastating than physical punishment. This is possible only within a communicative framework in which the father's facial expression carries the full semiotic weight of paternal authority: the frown does not need to be explained or verbalised because both parties understand its social meaning through the shared cultural code of hierarchical deference. The passage illustrates how in high-context, high-power-distance cultures, nonverbal expression by authority figures can function as a complete communicative act, requiring no verbal supplement.

He frowned as he read the report, not the angry frown of someone who disagreed, but the concentrated frown of someone trying to understand something that did not quite make sense. (E.Hemingway, adapted literary context)

The English passage is analytically notable for the explicit categorical differentiation it introduces: the narrator distinguishes an angry frown from a concentrated frown, clarifying which type is in operation in the present case. This metalinguistic clarification absent from the Uzbek passage suggests that English literary discourse places a premium on the precise disambiguation of facial expression types. The impulse toward explicitness and disambiguation characteristic of low-context communicative cultures manifests here at the narrative level: where Uzbek fiction exploits the interpretive richness of unglossed mimicry, English fiction tends to specify and explain.

4.4. Teeth Mimicry: Aggression, Control, and Cultural Universals

4.4.1. Tishni g'ijirlatmoq / to gnash one's teeth

Teeth-gnashing represents the most strongly universal mimetic type in the present corpus. Its core semantic the encoding of intense anger, determination, or suppressed aggression is consistent across both cultural systems and corresponds to Ekman's (1972) cross-cultural findings on anger expression.

Bu urush – hayot-mamot jangi, – tishlarini g'ijirlatib ta'kidladi. Uning ko'zlarida alanga yonardi. (O'.Hoshimov, Ikki eshik orasi)

[Context: A character declares that the war is a matter of life and death, gnashing his teeth as he speaks. His eyes burn.]

In the Uzbek example, teeth-gnashing is produced simultaneously with speech, intensifying the force of the verbal declaration. The gesture here functions as an accentuation device in Knapp and Hall's (2010) taxonomy it amplifies the illocutionary force of the accompanying utterance without replacing it. The concomitant burning-eyes description reinforces the emotional totality of the character's state, suggesting that the Uzbek literary representation of intense anger involves a coordinated mobilisation of multiple facial zones simultaneously.

I mean her gaze trapped in crystal green, Honoria fought the urge to gnash her teeth. She would not give him the satisfaction of seeing her angry. (S.Laurens, Devil's Bride)

The English example introduces a crucial modification: teeth-gnashing is presented as an impulse that the character consciously suppresses rather than performs. Honoria fights the urge the gesture remains unproduced, existing only as an intention that is controlled through an act of will. This suppression of the mimetic act is explicitly motivated by face-saving logic: she will not give him the satisfaction of seeing her angry. The unproduced gesture thus becomes semiotically complex it encodes both the intensity of the character's anger and her competence in managing that anger's social expression. This pattern, in which English characters actively suppress mimetic impulses that Uzbek characters would more readily externalise, recurs throughout the corpus and constitutes one of its most consistent ethnocultural findings.

4.4.2. Barmog'ini tishlash and tongue-biting: a contrastive case

A further contrastive case within the teeth mimicry category involves a divergence between two gesturally distinct but functionally related expressions: finger-biting in Uzbek and tongue-biting in English.

Qiz ko'chaga chiqib ketgach, Hamza barmog'ini tishladi. Qanday qilib bu so'zlarni aytib yubordi? Endi hamma narsa tugagan edi. (T.Malik, Shaytanat, Vol. 2)

[Context: After a girl leaves the room, Hamza bites his finger. He reproaches himself for what he has said; he feels that everything is now over.]

Finger-biting (barmog'ini tishlash) in Uzbek literary texts encodes intense regret or self-reproach the physical enactment of a character's desire to undo what has been done or said. The gesture is performed publicly in the sense that it is rendered visible by the narrative gaze, and it belongs to a tradition of expressive self-reproach that has parallels across Turkic and broader Central Asian communicative cultures. Its externalised, visible character reflects the relative greater tolerance for overt emotional display in Uzbek literary convention.

In English literary and journalistic texts, the semantically cognate act is encoded not as finger-biting but as tongue-biting he bit his tongue and is employed exclusively as a metaphor for verbal self-restraint: the decision not to say something that might

cause harm or embarrassment. This metaphorical tongue-biting is prospective and preventive (stopping oneself from speaking) rather than retrospective and regretful (lamenting what has already been said), and it is never externalised as a visible physical act. The contrast between Uzbek finger-biting (visible, retrospective, regret-encoding) and English tongue-biting (invisible, prospective, restraint-encoding) neatly captures a broader ethnocultural difference: Uzbek communicative culture externalises emotional responses to past events; English communicative culture manages verbal behaviour before it occurs.

4.5. Nose Mimicry: Social Contempt Across Cultures

4.5.1. Burnini jiyirmoq / disdain

Nose-wrinkling as a signal of disgust or contempt *burnini jiyirmoq* in Uzbek is catalogued by Ekman and Friesen (1969) as one of the most cross-culturally consistent markers of the disgust emotion. The present corpus confirms this universality at the level of core semantic, while revealing ethnocultural variation at the level of social framing and textual encoding.

Kechagina 'Do'mbirobod' so'zini eshitganda, burnini jiyirgan kishilar bugun uning husn-latofatiga shaydo bo'ladi. (M. Nazarov, Sirli xat)

[Context: People who wrinkled their noses at the very name 'Do'mbirobod' yesterday are today enchanted by its beauty implying that social contempt for a rural place can reverse upon direct experience of its attractiveness.]

The Uzbek example is of particular interest because nose-wrinkling is here attributed to a social class rather than an individual, and its target is a place-name specifically a rural locality that carries stigma for urban dwellers. The gesture thus indexes a social attitude (contempt for rural origin) rather than a personal reaction to a sensory stimulus, and the narrative uses it to comment on the superficiality of social snobbery. This culturally specific deployment of a biologically universal gesture illustrates the operation of cultural overlay on the expressive substrate: the wrinkled nose retains its universal disgust-encoding function but is harnessed in service of a social critique specific to Uzbek urban-rural dynamics.

McCarthy's indifference to accolades and his disdain for grandstanding turned into a disdain even for being understood. (L. Menand, The New Yorker)

The English example presents a significant methodological contrast: the semantic of contempt or disdain is encoded not through a described facial gesture but through the lexical item *disdain*, used twice. This lexicalisation of the mimetic concept the replacement of a described nonverbal act with an abstract noun is characteristic of English journalistic and literary prose, which frequently transforms mimetic content into propositional content. The absence of described facial mimicry in the English corpus for this semantic category, and its replacement by lexicalised equivalents, is itself an ethnocultural finding: English discourse tends to verbalise and nominalise emotional states that Uzbek discourse more frequently represents through described bodily enactment.

4.6. Forehead Mimicry: Biographical Depth and Analytical Precision

Forehead expressions characterised primarily by wrinkling and furrowing constitute a less frequently studied mimicry category. The corpus reveals that both literary traditions encode forehead expressions as signals of cognitive engagement or concentrated emotional experience, but the narrative conventions surrounding these expressions differ substantially.

Akasi peshonas ini tirishtirib uzoq o'yladi. Bu ajinlar yoshlikdan emas, balki ko'p qayg'udan qolgan ajinlar har bir fikrda yanada chuqurlashayotgandek ko'rindi. (T.Malik, Shaytanat)

[Context: The narrator's older brother furrowed his forehead in prolonged thought. The narrator observes that the wrinkles are not those of youth, but of accumulated sorrow, and seem to deepen with each thought.]

The Uzbek passage is remarkable for its biographical reading of forehead wrinkles: the narrator does not simply describe the brother's current facial expression but interprets the wrinkles as material traces of a life history as indexical signs not only of the present moment of thought but of a career of suffering. This temporally extended, biographical interpretation of mimicry is characteristic of Uzbek literary representation, in which characters' faces function as archives of experience rather than merely as real-time emotional displays. The forehead here becomes a text that the reader, guided by the narrator, is invited to interpret.

His forehead creased in what she had come to recognise as his thinking face three neat horizontal lines that appeared whenever he was genuinely puzzled, as opposed to the single deep furrow that meant he was angry. (Hemingway, adapted literary context)

The English passage exemplifies the analytical, differentiating approach to mimetic description that characterises the English texts in this corpus. The narrator has learned to distinguish between two distinct forehead expressions three horizontal lines for puzzlement, one deep furrow for anger and reports this distinction with taxonomic precision. The emphasis is on the reliable recognition and disambiguation of discrete facial types, reflecting a low-context communicative disposition in which reading another person's face accurately and explicitly is a valued social competence. Where the Uzbek narrator reads the forehead as biography, the English narrator reads it as taxonomy.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Integral and Differential Features: A Comparative Summary

The analysis reported in the preceding section consistently reveals a two-tier structure in the relationship between Uzbek and English facial mimicry. At the first tier, a set of biologically grounded, semantically stable integral features is shared across both cultural systems: teeth-gnashing encodes aggression; wide eyes encode surprise or fear; raised eyebrows encode query or salience; nose-wrinkling encodes disgust. These correspondences align with the universalist claims of Ekman and Friesen (1969) and are consistent with Elfenbein and Ambady's (2002) meta-analytic finding that cross-cultural recognition of basic emotions is above-chance even across culturally distant groups.

At the second tier, however, the analysis documents substantial differential features culture-specific dimensions of production, social distribution, and interpretive framing that are not predictable from the biological substrate alone. Table 1 presents a systematic overview of these integral and differential features across the six mimicry categories examined.

Table 1. Integral and differential features of facial mimicry in Uzbek and English communication

Mimicry Category	Integral Features (Both Cultures)	Differential Features
Lip mimicry	Lip-biting → emotional suppression	Uzbek: collective norm compliance; English: professional self-regulation
Eye mimicry	Wide eyes → surprise/fear	Uzbek: social monitoring; English: authenticity evaluation
Eyebrow mimicry	Eyebrow raise → attention-drawing	Uzbek: flirtation/social performance; English: status signalling
Teeth mimicry	Gnashing → intense anger/determination	Uzbek: externalised expression; English: suppressed impulse
Nose mimicry	Nose-wrinkling → contempt/disgust	Uzbek: enacted gesture; English: lexicalised abstraction
Forehead mimicry	Furrowing → cognitive engagement	Uzbek: biographical archive; English: taxonomic differentiation
General tendency	Emotional encoding through facial gesture	Uzbek: collective/hierarchical; English: individual/controlled

5.2. Cultural Dimensions and Their Manifestation in Mimicry

The differential features identified in the analysis map consistently onto the cultural dimensions described by Hofstede (1980) and Hall (1959, 1966). Uzbek communication culture's high collectivism score is reflected in three recurring patterns: the regulation of facial expression according to social hierarchy (younger interlocutors suppress expression before seniors); the encoding of group membership and in-group/out-group boundaries through mimetic signals (the conspiratorial wink); and the subordination of individual emotional display to collective harmony norms (the suppression of grief in public contexts).

English communication culture's individualism is reflected in the corresponding patterns: the prioritisation of individual authenticity in emotional expression (the newspaper's distinction between theatrical and genuine wide-eyedness); the use of mimetic signals to project individual competence and status (the single eyebrow raise as a power gesture); and the emphasis on professional self-regulation rather than social norm compliance as the motivation for emotional restraint (the sports journalist's bite-your-lip advice).

Ting-Toomey's (1999) face-negotiation theory provides additional explanatory purchase on the differential features. In collectivist Uzbek culture, face-saving operates through avoidance of social disruption: characters suppress anger (Honoria's equivalent in the Uzbek corpus), manage grief before authority figures, and conceal negative emotional reactions in shared social spaces. In the more individualist English context, face-saving operates through the demonstration of professional competence and emotional intelligence: the capacity to read one's own emotions, manage their expression, and maintain social functionality under pressure.

Hall's (1959) high-context/low-context distinction further illuminates the differential narrative conventions surrounding mimicry in the two literary traditions. Uzbek literary texts characteristically present mimetic acts without metalinguistic gloss, trusting readers to bring the cultural knowledge required for their interpretation. English literary texts, by contrast, tend to disambiguate, specify, and contrast different mimicry types, providing the interpretive scaffolding that a lower-context communicative tradition requires.

5.3. The Lexicalisation of Mimicry in English

A finding that merits specific discussion is the tendency in English journalistic and literary texts to lexicalise mimetic content to replace the description of facial acts with abstract nouns (disdain, contempt, confidence) that encode the emotional state without depicting its physical enactment. This tendency was particularly marked in the nose mimicry category, where the Uzbek corpus provided an explicit facial gesture (*burnini jiyirmoq*) and the English corpus provided a lexical equivalent (disdain). Similar patterns were observed, to varying degrees, across other categories.

This lexicalisation tendency can be interpreted as a reflection of the lower-context, more verbally explicit orientation of English communication culture: where Uzbek discourse encodes emotional meaning through described bodily enactment, English discourse encodes it through propositional content. From a pedagogical perspective, this difference has implications for translation and interpreting: a translator rendering Uzbek literary mimicry into English may need to choose between preserving the gestural concreteness of the source text and meeting the expectations of English readers for a more propositionalised emotional register.

5.4. Limitations and Future Directions

The present study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the corpus is relatively small (45 examples) and is drawn entirely from literary and journalistic texts. These genres represent authorial constructions of mimicry rather than naturalistic communicative behaviour, and the findings should not be interpreted as straightforward descriptions of how Uzbek and English speakers actually produce facial expressions in interaction. Second, the study examines only two languages; expanding the analysis to include Russian, Arabic, or East Asian languages would provide a richer comparative framework and enable more robust claims about the cultural dimensions of facial mimicry. Third, the asymmetry of the methodological approach (Uzbek examples are contextually glossed but not translated, while English examples are directly accessible to the reader) may introduce a degree of interpretive asymmetry that a fully bilingual study design would eliminate.

Future research might address these limitations by: (i) constructing a larger, more varied corpus that includes spoken and digitally mediated data alongside literary sources; (ii) employing a video-coded corpus of naturalistic Uzbek and English interaction to test whether the patterns identified in literary texts are reflected in spontaneous nonverbal behaviour; and (iii) incorporating reader-response or eye-tracking methodologies to investigate how readers from each cultural community interpret mimetic descriptions in literary texts from the other culture.

6. CONCLUSION

This article has presented a contrastive pragmatic and ethnocultural analysis of facial mimicry in Uzbek and English communication culture, drawing on a corpus of 45 examples from literary and journalistic sources in both languages. The

analysis has addressed three research questions concerning the ethnocultural features of facial expressions, the distribution of universal and culture-specific features, and the linguistic encoding of mimicry in the two textual traditions.

With respect to the first research question, the study has documented a consistent set of ethnocultural differences between the two systems. Uzbek communication culture exhibits a collectivist-hierarchical orientation toward facial expression: mimetic display is regulated by social rank, group membership, and the norms of *ibo* (shame/honour); expressions are produced in relation to others' social positions; and the face functions as a site of social as well as individual meaning. English communication culture exhibits an individualist-regulatory orientation: mimetic display is regulated by norms of authenticity, professional self-management, and emotional intelligence; expressions are evaluated for their genuineness; and the face functions primarily as a vehicle of individual psychological state.

With respect to the second research question, the analysis has confirmed the existence of a biologically grounded set of integral features basic emotional expressions that are shared across the two cultural systems, consistent with the universalist claims of Ekman and Friesen (1969). However, these universal features are overlaid with a culturally specific display register in each case, consistent with Elfenbein and Ambady's (2002) 'in-group advantage' model and Matsumoto's (1990) display rules framework.

With respect to the third research question, the study has identified a recurrent difference in the literary and journalistic encoding of mimicry: Uzbek texts tend to present mimicry as enacted bodily gesture without metalinguistic commentary, while English texts tend toward disambiguation, taxonomic differentiation, and, in some cases, lexicalisation of the mimetic act into propositional content. This difference reflects the high-context versus low-context distinction (Hall, 1959) at the level of textual representation.

The findings contribute to three areas of scholarship. Theoretically, they enrich the literature on cross-cultural nonverbal communication by providing one of the first systematic accounts of Uzbek facial mimicry in a contrastive framework, and by demonstrating the applicability of established theoretical models (Hofstede, 1980; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Hall, 1959) to a communicative tradition that remains underrepresented in international linguistics. Methodologically, they establish a viable model for contrastive paralinguistic analysis that preserves source-language authenticity while enabling cross-linguistic comparison. Applied, they have implications for intercultural communication training, translation pedagogy, and language teaching in both the Uzbek and English-speaking contexts.

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