

**USAGE OF THE WORD BETRAYAL IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS: AN ENGLISH-
UZBEK LINGUOCULTURAL COMPARISON**

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Annotation: This paper explores the concept of betrayal from a cross-linguistic and cultural perspective, analyzing its usage in different contexts, including friendship, family, professional settings, and loyalty to the motherland. By comparing English and Uzbek linguistic expressions, the study highlights the role of cultural values in shaping the semantic and pragmatic aspects of betrayal. The analysis draws on cognitive-linguistic and linguocultural approaches, illustrating how the concept is encoded in language and interpreted within social and moral frameworks.

Key words: Betrayal, “xiyonat”, linguacultural analysis, cognitive linguistics, cross-linguistic comparison.

The concept of betrayal is linguistically and cognitively significant because it denotes a violation of trust or confidence in a wide range of interpersonal and social relationships. In English, betrayal refers to the act of violating trust, loyalty, or faith placed in someone or something (Merriam-Webster, 2025; Cambridge Dictionary, 2025). This definition highlights both the emotional and moral dimensions of the concept. In Uzbek, the closest equivalent is *xiyonat*, which similarly denotes a breach of trust or loyalty in personal, social, and national contexts (Goong, 2025).

Betrayal in Friendship

In interpersonal relationships, betrayal often involves the breaking of trust between friends. In English, betrayal in friendship can be expressed as “the betrayal of a friend” or “betraying a friend’s trust,” which underscores the emotional harm caused when expectations of loyalty are violated (Merriam-Webster, 2025). For example, “She felt betrayed when her best friend revealed her secrets,” demonstrates how the term can indicate personal relational breakdowns.

In Uzbek, the expression “do‘stlikda xiyonat” or “do‘stga xiyonat qilish” conveys the same idea. For instance, “U eng yaqin do‘sti uning sirlarini oshkor qilgani uchun xiyonat qilganini his qildi”. (She felt betrayed because her closest friend disclosed her secrets). In Uzbek culture, where interpersonal trust is highly valued, such betrayals carry strong moral weight and often feature in proverbs and folk speech, reflecting a collectivist emphasis on loyalty to close social circles.

Betrayal of the Motherland

In political and civic contexts, betrayal often takes on a more severe social and legal meaning. In English, betrayal of one’s country or treason refers to actions that harm a nation by supporting its enemies or abandoning national duties (Merriam-Webster, 2025). This use highlights the gravity of loyalty obligations at the societal level.

In Uzbek, the phrase “vatan xiyonati” or “davlatga xiyonat” similarly expresses disloyalty toward the homeland. For example, “Urush vaqtida u o‘z vataniga xiyonat qildi” (During the war, he betrayed his homeland). In Uzbek cultural discourse, betrayal of the motherland is often framed as a profound ethical and historical violation, as seen in literary and national narratives that emphasize resistance against external domination.

Betrayal of Family or Close Relations

Betrayal within family contexts combines both personal and social dimensions. In English, these betrayals are described with phrases such as “betraying one’s family” or “the betrayal of familial trust”. Such usage often evokes emotional consequences similar to those in friendships, but with additional normative weight given the strong social expectations surrounding family loyalty (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025).

In Uzbek, the expression “oilada xiyonat” or “yaqinlarga xiyonat qilish” is used to describe similar breaches of trust. An example could be: “Ota-onalarining ishonchini poymol qilib, u oilada xiyonat qilgani uchun tanqidlandi” (He was criticized for betraying his family by violating his parents’ trust). In Uzbek society, where family ties are culturally central, such betrayals are often perceived as deeply unethical behavior with lasting social repercussions.

Betrayal in Professional Contexts

In professional or occupational settings, betrayal may involve unethical conduct or breach of professional trust. In English, phrases such as “betrayal of professional trust” or “betraying one’s colleagues” emphasize ethical responsibilities and expectations within work environments. In such contexts, betrayal often overlaps with notions of dishonesty, corruption, or failure to uphold professional standards (Dictionary.com, 2025).

In Uzbek, these cases are expressed through “kasbda xiyonat” or “hamkasblarni xiyonat qilish” reflecting breaches of responsibility among peers and within organizations. For example, “U hamkasblariga xiyonat qilib, uchinchi tomon manfaatlari uchun ma’lumot berdi” (He betrayed his colleagues by providing information for a third party’s benefit). Uzbek linguistic practices here reveal how betrayal extends beyond personal relationships into institutional and professional domains, in line with culturally grounded expectations of integrity and communal responsibility.

Cross-Linguistic and Cultural Observations

Comparative analysis shows that English and Uzbek both encode betrayal as a violation of trust but differ in how context and cultural norms shape usage. English uses a variety of synonyms and related expressions (e.g., treachery, treason) to specify types of betrayal under different circumstances (Merriam-Webster, 2025). In contrast, Uzbek relies heavily on the contextual use of the root term xiyonat, with modifiers such as do‘stlikda, oilada, or vatan to indicate the specific domain of betrayal. This reflects a linguocultural pattern wherein Uzbek social values surrounding collective loyalty and social harmony inform the lexical expression of betrayal.

Thus, understanding betrayal requires not only a semantic analysis of individual lexical items but also an appreciation of cultural norms and pragmatic implications in context.

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