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The Image of Women in English and Uzbek Literature and its Lingua Cultural Context

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Abstract: This article is about the portrayal of women in literature and how they carry significant intercultural and theoretical importance. Female characters reflect both the author's artistic vision and the social perception of women. This article compares "Bygone Days" by Abdulla Qodiriy and "Pride and Prejudice" by Jane Austen through linguocultural and cognitive-linguistic perspectives. Qodiriy realistically depicts the fate of Uzbek women during the national awakening, while Austen uses irony to critique women's roles in Regency-era England. The study explores how language encodes cultural values and concepts. The concept of "woman" is analyzed in terms of the connection between language and culture. This approach reveals the deeper cultural and conceptual meanings embedded in literary texts.

Keys words: female image, linguocultural analysis, cognitive-linguistic approach, concept, language and thought, literature, intercultural study.

Introduction: The portrayal and interpretation of women in literature is a subject of significant intercultural and theoretical interest. Female characters in literary works serve not only as indicators of an author's aesthetic sensibility but also as reflections of societal attitudes towards women and the spirit of the times. Analyzing how women are constructed in literature from both linguocultural (language and culture) and cognitive linguistic (language and thought) perspectives has become a vital direction in both literary and linguistic studies. Language acts as both a mirror of cultural values and a representation of the conceptual system within human cognition.

The interrelation of language and culture—linguocultural context—highlights how societal norms, values, traditions, and gender roles are embedded in the linguistic choices authors make when crafting female characters. Similarly, cognitive linguistic analysis allows scholars to examine how language reflects mental constructs and conceptualizations of gender, particularly the formation of the "woman" concept in a specific cultural framework. This interdisciplinary approach sheds light on how literature functions not only as an artistic form but also as a cultural archive.

Furthermore, in many literary traditions, women characters have been both idealized and marginalized, often portrayed through the lens of cultural expectations. These portrayals serve as powerful indicators of gender ideologies, making literature a valuable site for feminist and sociolinguistic inquiry. In both English and Uzbek literature, the image of women has evolved alongside changing historical, political, and social contexts, providing fertile ground for comparative research.

This paper examines the representation of women in two culturally distant literary traditions: Abdulla Qodiriy's historical novel "O'tkan kunlar" (1925) and Jane Austen's regency-era novel "Pride and

Prejudice." (1813). While Qodiriy provides a vivid, realistic depiction of women in the context of Uzbek national awakening, Austen portrays female identity with satirical undertones within the framework of early 19th-century English society. Through a linguocultural and cognitive linguistic lens, this study seeks to elucidate how female images function as cultural and conceptual constructs across distinct societies.

Methods: This study adopts a comparative linguocultural and cognitive linguistic methodology. It draws on linguocultural theory, which treats language as a mirror of cultural norms and practices (Stepanov, 2001; Telia, 1996), and cognitive linguistics, which views language as a reflection of conceptual structures in the human mind (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Gender studies and narrative discourse theory are also used to examine how female speech patterns and social roles are constructed and interpreted (Tannen, 1990; Butler, 1990).

Primary data includes selected passages from *O'tkan kunlar* and *Pride and Prejudice*, focusing on female protagonists—Kumush and Elizabeth Bennet. These are analyzed for lexical choices, metaphor usage, forms of address, speech strategies, and culturally coded expressions. The comparative analysis highlights how cultural values shape linguistic choices and conceptual models of femininity.

1. Text Selection and Justification

The two novels were selected for their:

- ✓ Literary and historical value in representing Uzbek and English cultures;
- ✓ Thematic focus on women's roles, identity, and social constraints;
- ✓ Rich linguistic and stylistic features that lend themselves to linguocultural and cognitive analysis.

A. Qodiriy's O'tkan kunlar (1925) is one of the earliest Uzbek historical novels, portraying the socio-political and gender dynamics of 19th-century Turkestan. *J. Austen's Pride and Prejudice* (1813), a cornerstone of English literature, reflects the class-based and gendered constraints of Regency England. Both texts offer valuable insight into how female identity is conceptualized within specific cultural and temporal frameworks.

a. Linguocultural Analysis

This dimension investigates how cultural values and gender norms are reflected in language. Key linguistic units examined include:

- ✓ Proverbs, idioms, metaphors, and formulaic expressions;
- ✓ Forms of address, politeness strategies, and culturally bound lexical items;
- ✓ Narrative descriptions that reflect social expectations or moral judgments.

The focus is on identifying cultural codes embedded in language, such as how respect, obedience, modesty, or independence are linguistically marked. Particular attention is given to scenes in which cultural identity is highlighted through verbal behavior or social interaction, such as honorifics ("oyim" in Qodiriy) or etiquette-related speech acts (as in Austen's dialogues).

b. Cognitive Linguistic Analysis

This aspect centers on how language reflects mental models or **concepts** associated with women. Using tools from conceptual metaphor theory and frame semantics, the study identifies:

- ✓ Conceptual metaphors used to structure female identity (e.g., WOMAN AS ANGEL, WOMAN AS PROPERTY, WOMAN AS THINKER);
- ✓ Character roles and mental frames (e.g., obedient wife, rival, modern intellectual);
- ✓ Cognitive shifts in character development, such as transitions from passive to active roles or from societal conformity to personal agency.

The notion of **"concept"** is key—understood as a mental construct shaped by experience and culture and expressed through linguistic means. The analysis examines how the concept of "woman" varies between Eastern and Western literary narratives and how it is linguistically realized through descriptive, dialogic, and narrative strategies.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

- **Textual passages** featuring central female characters (Kumush and Elizabeth Bennet) were closely read and annotated.
- **Selected scenes** illustrating major themes—marriage, family, emotion, social norms—were coded for cultural and cognitive markers.
- **Comparative matrices** were used to contrast linguistic features across both texts, focusing on shared and divergent patterns in portraying women.
- **Secondary sources** in the fields of linguistics, gender studies, and literary theory were consulted to support interpretations.

Results and Analysis:

The analysis of *O'tkan kunlar* by Abdulla Qodiriy and *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen reveals both shared and contrasting features in the conceptualization and linguistic representation of female characters. The findings are organized around three primary themes: (1) linguistic realization of cultural codes; (2) conceptual models of femininity; and (3) character agency and gendered discourse.

1. Linguocultural Markers in Female Characterization

Both novels display a strong integration of culture-specific linguistic elements in the portrayal of women. However, the linguistic strategies differ according to the cultural background and genre conventions.

In *O'tkan kunlar*, female speech is often enriched with **proverbs, idioms, and respectful forms of address** that reflect traditional Uzbek values. For example, Kumush uses culturally loaded expressions that signal modesty, wisdom, and social decorum, such as invoking proverbs to express her emotions. Qodiriy embeds these linguistic features within narrative descriptions and dialogues to reinforce the ideal of the "obedient, intelligent wife." In contrast, Austen's characters—especially Elizabeth Bennet—employ a **refined but witty language**, marked by **satire, politeness strategies, and irony**. While idiomatic expressions and proverbs are rare, Elizabeth's verbal exchanges are full of **culturally appropriate restraint** coupled with **subtle resistance**, particularly in interactions with aristocratic figures like Lady Catherine.

2. Conceptual Models of Femininity

Using cognitive linguistic analysis, the study identifies different **concepts of womanhood** embedded in the two texts:

Kumush, in *O'tkan kunlar*, represents the **"Idealized Traditional Woman"**: modest, loyal, emotionally rich, but ultimately bound by societal expectations. Her mental model is framed by concepts such as DUTY, HONOR, SACRIFICE, and FAMILY. She accepts her fate with patience, embodying cultural virtues.

Zaynab, her rival, initially reflects the **"Submissive Wife"** concept, but transforms into a **"Jealous Avenger"** due to emotional neglect and social pressure. This shift in conceptual frame—from VICTIM to AGENT OF REVENGE—demonstrates the psychological complexity of female roles in traditional societies.

In Austen's novel, **Elizabeth Bennet** illustrates a more progressive **"Independent Thinker"** or **"Modern Woman"** concept. Her character is grounded in concepts like REASON, DIGNITY,

EQUALITY, and SELF-WORTH. Elizabeth questions societal norms and seeks a marriage based on mutual respect rather than social convenience.

3. Female Agency and Dialogic Identity

The linguistic choices made by each author highlight the degree of **agency** afforded to female characters within their respective cultural and narrative frameworks. In *O'tkan kunlar*, Kumush's agency is mostly **indirect and emotional**, expressed through inner thoughts, symbolic acts (e.g., delivering a letter to the Khan), and culturally sanctioned roles. Her linguistic identity is deeply tied to her social role as a dutiful wife and daughter-in-law. Despite her tragic fate, her portrayal elevates the spiritual and moral value of the Uzbek woman. In *Pride and Prejudice*, Elizabeth exhibits **explicit verbal agency**, engaging in assertive and sometimes confrontational dialogues. Her rejection of Mr. Collins's proposal and her debate with Lady Catherine de Bourgh showcase her ability to challenge patriarchal norms through language. The use of **first-person assertions**, **conditional structures**, and **indirect criticism** enables Elizabeth to navigate restrictive social rules while preserving her autonomy.

Discussion: This comparative study of *O'tkan kunlar* and *Pride and Prejudice* reveals how female images are shaped by cultural values and expressed through language. In Qodiriy's novel, women are portrayed within the framework of traditional Uzbek ideals, where concepts like duty, modesty, and sacrifice dominate. Linguocultural elements—such as proverbs, respectful address, and culturally rich descriptions—highlight the importance of social roles and collective values.

In contrast, Austen presents a more individualistic and progressive image of the woman, emphasizing intellect, independence, and moral agency. Elizabeth Bennet's speech patterns, cognitive autonomy, and critical stance toward societal norms reflect a Western ideal of equality and personal freedom.

Despite cultural differences, both texts center women as key figures whose experiences reveal deeper truths about society. The analysis shows that linguistic and cognitive tools can effectively uncover the implicit values encoded in literature and offer insight into how gender identity is constructed across cultures.

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