



Article

Linguocultural Code As A Means of Understanding A Literary Text

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Abstract: Behind every artistic and expressive means used in a literary text lie the linguocultural codes of a particular nation, formed over centuries. Investigating the cultural and linguistic foundations of these means at the intersection of linguistics and literary studies is the key to fully understanding the conceptual world of the text and the author's idiolect. Although artistic and expressive means have been quite extensively studied and somewhat systematized in Uzbek literary studies and linguopoetics, their connection with cultural codes remains virtually unexplored.

Keywords: literary studies, cultural code, linguistic foundations, language and culture, ethnolinguistics, national-cultural feature.

1. Introduction

Literature functions as a repository of cultural memory because it preserves historical experience, collective worldview, and nationally specific patterns of evaluation. A linguocultural approach therefore treats language not only as a formal system but also as a medium through which cultural conceptualizations are stored and communicated [1]. In literary discourse, this relationship becomes especially visible because figurative language transforms shared cultural knowledge into images, evaluations, and emotional effects [2].

The interpretation of artistic language requires attention to both linguistic form and cultural context. Cultural keywords, recurrent symbols, and conventional images can activate meanings that are not recoverable from dictionary definitions alone [3]. Semiotic and cultural-linguistic scholarship likewise shows that a literary sign participates in broader systems of memory, convention, and interpretation [4], [5]. Accordingly, artistic devices should be examined as vehicles through which cultural codes structure the author's conceptual world and guide the reader's inference.

Uzbek literary studies has described numerous means of artistic depiction and expression, yet their systematic relation to linguocultural codes remains insufficiently integrated. Traditional accounts usually distinguish tropes from stylistic figures: tropes involve semantic transfer, whereas stylistic figures derive expressive force from syntactic organization and rhetorical patterning [6]. This distinction is useful, but it does not fully accommodate phonetic, lexical, and morphological resources that also carry cultural and aesthetic meaning. The present study addresses that gap by combining a level-based linguopoetic classification with linguocultural interpretation.

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Linguocultural inquiry explains how culturally shared conceptualizations are embodied in language. Sharifian describes cultural conceptualizations as distributed schemas, categories, and metaphors that members of a community negotiate through discourse [1]. Kramsch similarly emphasizes that language indexes cultural memory and social membership [2], while Wierzbicka demonstrates that culturally salient words provide access to community-specific norms and values [3]. These approaches support the view that the meaning of a literary image emerges through interaction between textual form and culturally available knowledge.

From a semiotic perspective, culture supplies codes that make signs interpretable. Lotman treats artistic texts as meaning-generating structures within cultural memory [4], and Eco explains that signification depends on conventions that connect expressions with culturally recognizable content [5]. In literary analysis, a cultural code can therefore be understood as an interpretive pattern through which natural objects, artifacts, names, colors, numbers, or social practices acquire meanings beyond their immediate denotation.

Stylistics provides the linguistic tools required to identify how those codes are textualized. Leech and Short show that foregrounding may be produced through deviation and parallelism across phonological, lexical, grammatical, and semantic levels [7]. Jakobson's account of the poetic function further establishes that patterned equivalence and recurrence make linguistic form itself meaningful [8]. Cognitive poetics extends this position by examining how textual cues prompt readers to construct mental representations and contextual inferences [9], [10].

Metaphor is especially important because it maps one conceptual domain onto another. Conceptual metaphor theory presents metaphor as a fundamental mode of thought rather than a merely ornamental device [11], and subsequent work demonstrates that metaphor varies across cultural settings and discourse communities [12]. In literary texts, metaphors can therefore combine broadly embodied experience with nationally specific symbolic associations. An image such as the sun, moon, horse, robe, curtain, or amulet may retain a concrete referent while simultaneously activating social memory, moral evaluation, and emotional stance.

Uzbek scholarship has traditionally divided artistic and expressive means into tropes and figures, but descriptions also acknowledge deviations at phonetic, morphological, lexical, semantic, and syntactic levels [6], [13]. The limitation of a two-part model is that it can leave sound patterning, historically marked vocabulary, dialectal forms, and grammatical selection outside the main system. A more comprehensive framework should therefore recognize five interrelated groups: phonopoetic, lexicopoetic, morphopoetic, semantic or tropological, and syntactic or stylistic means. Such a framework connects the structure of the linguistic sign with the cultural knowledge activated during interpretation.

2. Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design combining linguocultural analysis, stylistic analysis, and close reading. Qualitative inquiry is appropriate when the objective is to explain how meanings are constructed in context rather than to measure their statistical frequency [14]. The analytical corpus comprised the literary excerpts explicitly discussed in the study, including poems by Muhammad Yusuf and Azam O'ktam and a prose passage by S. Rahmon. The units of analysis were culturally marked words, images, names, numerical expressions, sound patterns, tropes, and syntactic figures that contributed to interpretation.

The data were selected purposively according to three criteria: the excerpt contained a recognizable artistic device; the device activated a culturally relevant association beyond literal meaning; and sufficient textual context was available to explain its function. Analysis proceeded in four stages. First, the relevant linguistic form was identified and located at the phonetic, lexical, morphological, semantic, or syntactic level. Second, its denotative and contextual meanings were distinguished. Third, the cultural domain represented by the expression—such as nature, material culture, clothing, anthroponymy, animal imagery, or numerals—was coded. Fourth, the relationship among linguistic form,

cultural connotation, and aesthetic-pragmatic function was interpreted through iterative comparison across excerpts.

Coding followed a structured yet interpretive procedure: initial labels were assigned to textual features, related labels were grouped into broader cultural-code categories, and the resulting interpretation was checked against the surrounding passage and the proposed level-based classification. This approach is consistent with systematic qualitative coding and thematic interpretation [15], [16]. Because the study focuses on a small purposively selected corpus, its claims are analytical rather than statistical; the findings describe how the examined examples function and do not imply frequency across all Uzbek literature.

3. Result

The analysis confirms that artistic depiction and expression operate across five mutually reinforcing levels. Phonopoetic means include alliteration, assonance, rhyme, onomatopoeia, and sound-based anaphora or epiphora; these organize acoustic recurrence and can intensify emotion. Lexicopoetic means include archaisms, historicisms, neologisms, dialectisms, jargon, vulgarisms, and foreign words whose literal meanings remain intact while their social, historical, or regional coloring becomes foregrounded. Morphopoetic means include marked uses of tense, case, possession, conjunction, asyndeton, and polysyndeton. Tropes arise from semantic transfer and include metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, periphrasis, allegory, and symbol. Syntactic or stylistic means arise from sentence architecture and include inversion, parallelism, ellipsis, chiasmus, parceling, rhetorical questions and addresses, antithesis, gradation, oxymoron, and aposiopesis [7], [8].

This classification shows that cultural coding is not confined to metaphor. Sound organization may reinforce the salience of a culturally marked word; lexical choice may locate a scene in a historical or social world; morphology may create an unusual stance or rhythm; and syntax may direct emphasis and emotional progression. The five groups therefore constitute an integrated linguopoetic system rather than isolated inventories of devices.

Metaphorical analysis revealed that natural and material images frequently function as compressed cultural models. In the lines "You are the sun I found in the heavens, / My amulet (ko'zmunchoq) lost on the earth," the nature code sun foregrounds illumination and emotional centrality, while the culturally marked amulet evokes preciousness, protection, and intimacy. The mapping is understandable through conceptual metaphor, but its full force depends on culturally specific knowledge associated with the ko'zmunchoq [11], [12].

"You are the sun I found in the heavens, / My amulet (ko'zmunchoq) lost on the earth." — M. Yusuf, "The Sound of Love"

A comparable interaction between literal scene and cultural connotation appears in Azam O'ktam's poem "The Blow." The image of a curtain being lifted preserves a physical meaning while activating the idiomatic sense of removing separation or revealing what had been concealed. The reader decodes the passage by connecting the object code curtain with an established cultural scenario of distance, privacy, and disclosure.

"A delicate shadow / Struck hard against the face. / Suddenly, a shudder / Ran through my inner self. / After all, this is / The edge of a curtain / Lifted away from between us / Unnoticed." — Azam O'ktam, "The Blow"

Animal and plant imagery likewise encode culturally recognized qualities. Within Uzbek cultural interpretation, the horse can symbolize bravery and loyalty, while the flower may represent the beloved or transient beauty; the cypress suggests uprightness and elegant stature; the thorn represents rivalry or hardship; the moon evokes beauty and purity; and the wind may function as a messenger between lovers. These images demonstrate how metaphorical meaning combines embodied perception with traditions of literary usage [12], [17].

Material culture is especially visible in the treatment of national clothing. In Muhammad Yusuf's "Ballad about the Uzbek," the robe (to'n) becomes more than a garment: it signifies hospitality, care for descendants, and self-sacrifice. The surrounding alliteration intensifies the prominence of the culturally coded object, showing how phonopoetic and semantic resources cooperate within the same passage.

"If their descendants are gathered in a single home, / If there are not enough beds, an Uzbek spreads out his robe!" — M. Yusuf, "Ballad about the Uzbek"

Proper names also function as condensed cultural narratives. Majnun evokes absolute loyalty, self-devotion, and the boundary between worldly and divine love. Kumush and Zaynab recall recognizable literary histories and can be mobilized to create parallelism or represent emotional conflict. Such poetonyms perform both nominative and intertextual functions: a single name can reactivate an entire literary tradition in the reader's memory [4], [18].

Numerical expressions may carry a similarly coded function. In the prose statement "It's been a thousand years since we last met," the phrase thousand years is not a chronological claim but a conventional hyperbole that marks a very long separation. Its interpretation depends on the reader's ability to suppress literal calculation and recover the evaluative meaning intended by the speaker.

Oxymoron provides a different form of semantic tension. Unlike antithesis, which contrasts separate propositions or lexical items, an oxymoron joins conceptually incompatible meanings within a single construction, often in a modifier–modified relation. The contradiction produces a compact interpretive problem and forces the reader to search for a contextual level at which the expression becomes meaningful.



Figure 1. Carved wooden columns and ceiling structure as an analogy for ordered artistic architecture

As illustrated in Figure 1, the repeated beams, columns, and carved surfaces of a historical interior create an ordered visual architecture. The analogy is relevant to literary form: recurring sounds, lexical images, grammatical choices, tropes, and syntactic patterns can likewise be arranged as interdependent structures through which cultural meaning is organized and perceived.

4. Discussion

The findings indicate that linguocultural codes are activated through the interaction of textual foregrounding and culturally shared knowledge. This result supports the cultural-linguistic view that meanings are mediated by community-level conceptualizations [1] and the semiotic view that interpretation depends on codes connecting expressions to cultural content [4], [5]. It also extends conventional stylistic classification by demonstrating that culturally significant effects may arise at every linguistic level, not solely through semantic tropes or syntactic figures.

The proposed five-part system resolves a methodological inconsistency in accounts that recognize phonetic, lexical, and morphological deviation but place only tropes and figures at the center of artistic expression. In the analyzed excerpts, sound recurrence strengthens the salience of the clothing code; culturally marked vocabulary gives an artifact interpretive depth; metaphor maps concrete objects onto emotional and social meanings; and syntactic organization regulates focus and rhythm. These observations align with stylistic accounts of foregrounding across multiple linguistic levels [7] and with cognitive-poetic explanations of how readers integrate textual cues with background knowledge [9], [10].

The examples also show that metaphorical meaning is simultaneously cognitive and cultural. The sun and curtain draw on broadly accessible perceptual experience, but the *ko'zmunchoq*, *to'n*, *Majnun*, *Kumush*, and *Zaynab* depend more strongly on culturally situated knowledge. Thus, conceptual mappings do not operate in a cultural vacuum; they are shaped by recurrent narratives, artifacts, values, and discourse practices [11], [12]. The linguocultural code provides the bridge between the linguistic form visible in the text and the larger cultural model reconstructed by the reader.

The study is limited by its small, purposively selected corpus and by its interpretive design. The classification and readings should therefore be tested on broader corpora encompassing different periods, genres, authors, and reader communities. Future research could combine close reading with corpus stylistics, reader-response data, and comparative analysis across languages to determine how frequently particular codes occur, how interpretations vary, and which patterns are culturally specific or cross-cultural.

5. Conclusion

Linguocultural codes constitute a central mechanism through which literary language links artistic form to national-cultural experience. The examined texts show that these codes are realized through phonopoetic, lexicopoetic, morphopoetic, semantic, and syntactic resources, and that their effects emerge from the interaction of denotation, cultural connotation, textual position, and reader inference. Natural images, artifacts, clothing, poetonyms, animal and plant symbols, and numerical expressions become meaningful not merely as decorative elements but as carriers of memory, values, and worldview. A level-based linguopoetic classification therefore offers a coherent framework for analyzing how metaphor, hyperbole, apostrophe, oxymoron, parallelism, sound patterning, and related devices activate implicit meanings. Although broader empirical testing is required, the approach helps bridge traditional linguistics and literary studies and provides a systematic basis for decoding the national-cultural and aesthetic dimensions of literary texts.

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