

A Comparative Linguocultural Analysis of the Concept of “Happiness” in Abdulla Qodiriy’s “O‘tkan kunlar” and Jack London’s “Martin Eden”

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Abstract. *This article provides a comparative linguocultural analysis of the concept of “happiness” in Abdulla Qodiriy’s “O‘tkan Kunlar” and Jack London’s “Martin Eden”. The study examines how happiness is conceptualized within Uzbek and Western cultural contexts through the protagonists’ destinies and the authors’ perspectives. The findings show that in “O‘tkan Kunlar”, happiness is associated with family harmony, moral values, and social responsibility, whereas in “Martin Eden”, it is linked to individual achievement and self-realization, ultimately leading to existential disillusionment. The research contributes to contemporary linguocultural and conceptual studies by highlighting the cultural specificity of value-based concepts in literary discourse.*

Key words: *concept, happiness, linguoculture, comparative analysis, national worldview, literary discourse, traditional values, individualism, collectivism.*

Introduction

In modern linguistics, the concept is regarded as an essential scientific category for understanding human cognition and culture[1]. Concepts are verbalized through language and embody a nation’s historical experience, values, and worldview. Abstract notions such as “happiness” are particularly significant, as they reveal culture-specific interpretations of universal human experiences[2].

Although the concept of happiness is universal, its semantic structure and axiological content vary across cultures. In Uzbek national consciousness, happiness is interpreted less as individual success or material prosperity and more as family harmony, moral integrity, patience, and social conformity[3]. In contrast, Western individualistic traditions often associate happiness with self-realization, personal freedom, and individual achievement[4]. A comparative analysis of Abdulla Qodiriy’s “O‘tkan Kunlar” and Jack London’s “Martin Eden” allows us to examine how the concept of happiness functions within two distinct linguocultural systems[5].

Methodology

In linguoculturology, a concept is understood as a semantic unit formed through the interaction of language, thought, and culture. V.A.Maslova defines a concept as “the linguistic expression of culture in human consciousness”. However, A.Wierzbicka considers concepts to be fundamental semantic units reflecting national mentality[6].

The “Concept” is an abstract unit in which the knowledge and experience of a person are represented and with which he operates in his activities. Following N.Y.Shvedova, we regard the concept as “the substantial side of the verbal sign, behind which is the concept (that is, an idea that fixes the essential “intelligible” properties of realities and phenomena, as well as the relationship between them), belonging to the mental, spiritual or the vital material sphere of man’s existence, developed and consolidated by the public experience of the people, having historical roots in his life, socially subjectively comprehended and - through the stage of such understanding - correlated with other concepts, closest to related to them or, in many cases, opposed to him ”[7].

In “O‘tkan Kunlar”, the concept of happiness is primarily revealed through the characters of Otabek and Kumush. For Otabek, happiness is associated with honest labor, social justice, and sincere love[8]. His love for Kumush symbolizes personal and spiritual fulfillment. However, his understanding of happiness conflicts with social traditions and patriarchal norms, revealing the tension between individual desire and collective expectations. Forced into a second marriage, Otabek experiences inner suffering, which demonstrates the contradiction between dream and social reality. Thus, happiness in the novel appears as a morally grounded yet socially constrained concept[9].

Result and Discussion

Through Kumush’s image, the feminine and national interpretation of happiness is expressed. For her, happiness lies in loyalty, family harmony, and devotion to her beloved. Her patience, sacrifice, and willingness to endure hardship reflect the Uzbek cultural perception of happiness as closely connected with fate and endurance. At the same time, the tragic fragility of her destiny shows how vulnerable personal happiness can be within rigid social structures[10].

In contrast, the character of Zaynab presents a distorted understanding of happiness, shaped by jealousy and possessiveness. Her example demonstrates that when happiness is detached from moral values, it becomes destructive. Overall, the novel conceptualizes happiness not as an individualistic pursuit but as a value inseparably linked to social environment, ethical norms, and national worldview[11].

By contrast, in Jack London’s “Martin Eden”, the concept of happiness is constructed within an individualistic and achievement-oriented framework. For Martin, happiness is equated with intellectual growth, literary success, and social recognition[12]. His aspiration for self-education and artistic achievement reflects the Western ideal of self-made success. Unlike Otabek, whose happiness is rooted in harmonious relationships, Martin perceives happiness as personal triumph and upward social mobility[13].

However, the novel ultimately deconstructs this understanding. After achieving fame and financial success, Martin realizes that recognition does not bring emotional fulfillment. His alienation from society and disillusionment with bourgeois values reveal the existential emptiness underlying externally defined success[14]. In this sense, Jack London problematizes the Western model of happiness, suggesting that individual achievement without spiritual or emotional connection leads to isolation. Martin’s tragic end underscores the fragility of a happiness model based solely on ambition and self-assertion.

A comparative perspective demonstrates that while both novels portray happiness as a complex and often tragic pursuit, they differ significantly in conceptual emphasis. In “O‘tkan Kunlar”, happiness is socially embedded and morally conditioned; it depends on family cohesion, ethical responsibility, and cultural continuity. In “Martin Eden”, happiness initially appears as self-realization and intellectual independence but ultimately reveals its existential instability when detached from authentic human connection. Thus, the concept of happiness in Uzbek and Western literary traditions reflects broader cultural paradigms: collectivism versus individualism, moral duty versus personal ambition, harmony versus self-assertion. Both Abdulla Qodiriy and Jack London present happiness

not as a stable state but as a dynamic, value-laden construct shaped by historical and social contexts[15].

Conclusion

In conclusion, the linguocultural analysis of “O‘tkan Kunlar” and “Martin Eden” demonstrates that the concept of “happiness” carries profound cultural specificity despite its universal character. In Uzbek literature, happiness is predominantly relational and ethically grounded, while in Western modernist discourse it is frequently associated with personal autonomy and self-realization, though not without existential tension. This comparative study contributes to the theoretical development of conceptual and linguocultural research and provides a foundation for further cross-cultural investigations of value-based concepts in world literature.

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