

CONTEXTUAL-STYLISTIC FEATURES OF THE CONCEPT FEAR IN UZBEK LITERARY TEXTS

G.F. Jabborova

*Senior Lecturer, Department of Pedagogy and Psychology,
Tashkent University of Social Innovation. Tashkent*

Abstract

This article examines the contextual and stylistic mechanisms through which the emotional concept of FEAR (qo'rquv) is verbalized in Uzbek literary discourse. Drawing on cognitive linguistics and stylistics, the study analyzes the lexical-semantic field associated with fear in Uzbek (including qo'rquv, vahima, dahshat, hadik, qo'rqinch, cho'chish, titrash), as well as the figurative and syntactic devices writers employ to render this emotion within narrative contexts. The analysis demonstrates that fear in Uzbek prose and poetry is rarely expressed through a single lexeme; rather, it emerges as a complex configuration of physiological imagery, somatic metaphors, syntactic fragmentation, and culturally specific symbols. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of how emotion concepts are linguistically and cognitively structured within a particular ethnocultural discourse.

Keywords: *concept, FEAR, qo'rquv, contextual-stylistic analysis, Uzbek literary discourse, cognitive linguistics, emotive vocabulary, stylistic devices*

Introduction

The study of emotion concepts has become one of the central concerns of cognitive linguistics, as emotions are not merely psychological phenomena but are also culturally and linguistically constructed categories. Among the so-called "basic emotions," fear occupies a particularly significant place, since it is universally experienced yet expressed through language in ways that vary considerably across cultures and literary traditions.

In Uzbek literary discourse, the concept of FEAR is realized through a rich and stratified vocabulary, ranging from neutral designations of fear to highly expressive, evaluative, and stylistically marked units. The way fear is verbalized in a literary text depends not only on the lexical choices of the author but also on the broader context — narrative situation, character psychology, cultural background, and the stylistic register of the work. This article focuses specifically on the contextual-stylistic features of fear-related vocabulary in Uzbek artistic (badiiy) texts, that is, on how context shapes the meaning, connotation, and stylistic function of fear-denoting units.

The relevance of this research lies in the fact that, despite numerous studies devoted to emotion concepts in English, Russian, and other languages, the concept of FEAR in Uzbek literary discourse has not received sufficient systematic attention from a lingvocognitive and stylistic perspective.

A concept is understood as a mental unit that organizes knowledge, experience, and evaluative attitudes related to a particular fragment of reality. Emotion concepts, such as FEAR, JOY, ANGER, and SADNESS, are considered especially complex, since they combine a universal physiological-psychological core with culturally specific layers of meaning, associations, and symbols.

FEAR is typically described in cognitive linguistics as a concept with a layered structure consisting of:

- a core (basic) component — the prototypical experience of danger and the instinctive reaction to it;
- physiological manifestations — trembling, paleness, rapid heartbeat, cold sweat, frozen movements;
- behavioral reactions — fleeing, hiding, screaming, becoming motionless;
- evaluative and cultural associations — fear as weakness, fear as a sign of conscience, fear of the supernatural, fear of authority, and so on.

Literary discourse differs from other discourse types in that it allows — and even requires — a high degree of individual, author-specific conceptualization. Writers do not simply name emotions; they construct them through imagery, rhythm, syntax, and narrative perspective. This makes literary texts an especially rich source for studying how a concept such as FEAR is linguistically packaged and stylistically intensified or modified.

The study employs a combination of:

- conceptual analysis, to identify the core and peripheral components of the FEAR concept in Uzbek;
- componential (semantic) analysis, to describe the lexical-semantic field of fear-denoting units;
- contextual analysis, to examine how meaning and connotation shift depending on the surrounding text;
- stylistic analysis, to identify figurative devices (metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification, repetition) used to intensify or particularize the expression of fear.

The material consists of excerpts from Uzbek prose and poetry, including works representative of classical and modern Uzbek literature, in which fear-related vocabulary occurs in narratively significant contexts. Contextual-Stylistic Features of FEAR in Uzbek Literary Texts

The Uzbek language possesses a broad inventory of lexemes denoting various degrees and types of fear:

- qo'rquv — the most general, neutral term for "fear";
- hadik — a subtler form of anxious apprehension or foreboding, often anticipatory;
- vahima — panic, alarm, often associated with collective or sudden fear;
- dahshat — horror, dread, a more intense and often morally or aesthetically charged form of fear;
- qo'rqinch — fearfulness, frightfulness, often used adjectivally to characterize an object or situation as fear-inducing;
- cho'chish — to startle, to flinch, denoting a sudden, momentary fear reaction;
- titrash, qaltirash — trembling, shivering, representing the physiological dimension of fear.

In literary texts, the choice among these near-synonymous units is rarely arbitrary. The selection of hadik instead of qo'rquv, for instance, often signals a more introspective, psychologically nuanced form of fear, frequently associated with foreboding about the future or guilt about the past, whereas vahima tends to appear in scenes of crowd behavior or sudden external threat.

The same lexeme may acquire markedly different stylistic colorings depending on context. For example, qo'rquv in a context describing a child's fear of darkness carries connotations of innocence and vulnerability, evoking sympathy in the reader. The same word, used to describe an adult character's fear of social judgment or authority, may instead carry connotations of moral weakness, cowardice, or social pressure, often accompanied by an ironic or critical authorial tone.

This contextual sensitivity demonstrates that the FEAR concept in Uzbek literary discourse is not a fixed semantic unit but a dynamic structure whose evaluative charge — sympathetic, critical, ironic, or tragic — is activated by the surrounding narrative and characterological context.

Fear in Uzbek literary texts is frequently conceptualized through metaphors of cold, darkness, and constriction. Expressions describing the heart as "freezing," the chest as "tightening," or the body becoming "as if turned to stone" are common ways of rendering fear as a physical, almost tangible force acting upon the character. Such metaphors reflect the broader cognitive metaphor FEAR IS A PHYSICAL FORCE / FEAR IS COLD, which appears to have strong cross-cultural resonance while also being realized through culturally specific imagery (e.g., references to particular natural phenomena, household objects, or folk beliefs familiar to Uzbek readers).

Similes involving animals (a frightened bird, a trembling lamb), natural elements (leaves shaking in the wind), or sudden natural events (lightning, thunder) are frequently employed to externalize and visualize the internal state of fear. These similes anchor an abstract emotional experience in concrete, culturally familiar images drawn from rural and pastoral life, which remains a significant source of imagery in Uzbek literary tradition.

Hyperbolic expressions — describing a character's heart as "about to jump out," or fear as something that "froze the blood" — serve to intensify the emotional impact of a scene and to signal to the reader the critical, often turning-point nature of the narrative moment.

Fear itself, or the object of fear, is sometimes personified — described as "creeping," "approaching," or "gripping" the character — which transforms an internal psychological state into an external, almost agentive force. This stylistic strategy heightens the dramatic tension of the narrative and aligns with a broader tendency in literary discourse to externalize internal emotional processes.

Beyond lexical and figurative means, fear in Uzbek literary texts is often signaled through syntactic organization:

- short, fragmented sentences, mimicking the disrupted thought patterns of a frightened character;
- exclamatory and interrogative constructions, conveying panic, confusion, or desperate appeal;
- repetition of key words or structures, simulating obsessive or recurring fearful thoughts;
- asyndeton (the omission of conjunctions), creating a sense of breathless urgency;
- shifts to present tense within a generally past-tense narrative, bringing the fearful moment into sharper immediacy for the reader.

These syntactic strategies work together with lexical and figurative devices to create a multi-layered stylistic representation of fear that engages the reader not only intellectually but also emotionally and almost physically.

Certain contexts of fear in Uzbek literary discourse are inseparable from culturally specific beliefs and symbols — fear of the evil eye (ko'z tegishi), fear associated with certain times of day or places considered inauspicious, or fear rooted in respect for elders and authority figures, which in Uzbek cultural tradition is often closely intertwined with notions of hayo (modesty/shame) and andisha (consideration, caution). These culturally embedded layers of the FEAR concept distinguish its realization in Uzbek literary discourse from its realization in other linguocultures, even where the underlying physiological experience of fear is universal.

The analysis demonstrates that the contextual-stylistic realization of FEAR in Uzbek literary texts operates on several interrelated levels: lexical (the choice among near-synonyms with different intensity and connotation), figurative (metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification), syntactic (sentence length, repetition, punctuation), and cultural-symbolic (culturally specific beliefs and values). None of these levels functions in isolation; rather, they combine within a given context to produce a particular stylistic effect — whether sympathy, irony, tragedy, or suspense.

This layered structure supports the view that emotion concepts in literary discourse cannot be adequately described through dictionary definitions alone. Their full meaning is realized only in context, where lexical, stylistic, and cultural factors interact to shape the reader's emotional and cognitive response.

Conclusion

The contextual-stylistic analysis of the concept FEAR in Uzbek literary texts reveals a rich and culturally specific system of linguistic means for representing this emotion. While the core physiological and behavioral components of fear appear to be universal, their stylistic elaboration — through metaphor, simile, hyperbole, personification, and syntactic organization — is shaped by Uzbek literary tradition and cultural values. Further research comparing these findings with the realization of FEAR in other literary discourses, particularly English, would help to clarify which features of this concept are universal and which are culturally and linguistically specific — a question of particular relevance for translation studies and intercultural communication.

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