



Linguistic representation of social fear in Abdulla Qodiriy's O'tkan kunlar and Nathaniel Hawthorne's The scarlet letter

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ABSTRACT

Fear, as a culturally loaded emotional concept, is encoded through language in distinct ways across literary traditions. This study compares the linguistic representation of fear in Abdulla Qodiriy's *O'tkan kunlar* (Uzbek, 1926) and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (American, 1850) through lexical-semantic, metaphorical, and stylistic analysis. Special attention is given to expressions of social fear—fear of public judgment, shame, punishment, and moral evaluation. Data include fear-related lexical units, idioms, culturally significant formulae, metaphors, and syntactic patterns. Findings reveal that Uzbek discourse foregrounds collective social surveillance and honor-based shame through formulaic expressions such as “el nima deydi,” “uyat,” “sharm,” “nomus,” “vijdon qiynadi”, while Puritan discourse emphasizes internal moral struggle and divine justice, expressed through lexemes such as guilt, dread, conscience, shame, sorrow, anguish, and symbolic imagery like the scarlet letter, scaffold, dark forest, fire. Linguistic evidence suggests two emotion models: collectivist honor-fear discourse vs individual moral-guilt discourse. The study contributes to cross-cultural stylistics and emotion linguistics by showing how fear is not merely psychological but linguistically and culturally constructed.

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Abdulla Qodiriyning “O’tkan kunlar” va Nataniel Gotorning “Qizil harf” asarlarida ijtimoiy qo’rquvning til orqali ifodalanishi

ANNOTATSIYA

Kalit so’zlar:

qo’rquv,
uyat,
ijtimoiy hukm,
ijtimoiy baho,
jamoaviy sha’n,
umumiy obro’,
lingvistik kodlash,
til orqali ifodalash,
metafora,
o’zbek adabiyoti.

Qo’rquv — madaniy jihatdan yuklangan hissiy tushuncha bo’lib, turli adabiy an’analarda til orqali turlicha ifodalanadi. Ushbu tadqiqot Abdulla Qodiriyning O’tkan kunlar (1926) va Nathaniel Hawthorne’ning The Scarlet Letter (1850) asarlarida qo’rquvning lingvistik ifodalanishini leksik-semantik, metaforik va uslubiy tahlil asosida o’rganadi. Tadqiqotda ijtimoiy qo’rquv — jamoatchilik bahosi, uyat, jazo va axloqiy baholashdan qo’rqish masalalariga alohida e’tibor qaratilgan. Ma’lumotlar bazasiga qo’rquvga oid so’z birliklari, idiomalar, madaniy ahamiyatga ega formulalik ifodalar, metaforalar va sintaktik modellarning namunalari kiritildi. Natijalar shuni ko’rsatadiki, o’zbek diskursida jamiyat nazorati va nomus-uyatga asoslangan kollektiv qo’rquv “el nima deydi”, “uyat”, “sharm”, “nomus”, “vijdon qiynadi” kabi barqaror iboralar orqali ifodalanadi. Puritan adabiy diskursida esa ichki axloqiy kurash va ilohiy jazodan qo’rqish guilt, dread, conscience, shame, sorrow, anguish kabi leksik birliklar hamda “qizil harf”, “osma darak”, “qorong’i o’rmon”, “olov” kabi ramziy obrazlar orqali yoritiladi. Tadqiqot ikki xil emotsional modelni yoritadi: o’zbek adabiyotida kollektiv nomus-uyat asosli qo’rquv tizimi, Puritan an’analarda esa shaxsiy axloqiy ayb va vijdon azobiga asoslangan qo’rquv tizimi. Mazkur tadqiqot kross-madaniy stilistika va emotsional lingvistika yo’nalishlariga hissa qo’shib, qo’rquv nafaqat psixologik hodisa, balki til va madaniyat orqali quriladigan kategoriya ekanini ko’rsatadi.

Лингвистическая репрезентация социального страха в произведениях Абдуллы Кадыри “Минувшие дни” и Натаниэля Готорна

АННОТАЦИЯ

Ключевые слова:

страх,
стыд,
социальное суждение,
общественная оценка,
коллективная честь,
общее достоинство,
лингвистическое
кодирование,
выражение через язык,
метафора,

Страх, являясь культурно обусловленной эмоциональной категорией, по-разному кодируется в языке различных литературных традиций. Данное исследование сравнивает лингвистическое выражение страха в романе Абдуллы Кадыри «Минувшие дни» (Узбекистан, 1926) и романе Натаниэля Готорна «The Scarlet Letter» (США, 1850) посредством лексико-семантического, метафорического и стилистического анализа. Особое внимание уделяется выражению социального страха — страха перед общественным осуждением, стыдом, наказанием и моральной оценкой. Материал исследования включает

узбекская литература.

лексемы со значением страха, идиомы, культурно значимые формулы, метафоры и синтаксические структуры. Результаты показывают, что в узбекском дискурсе превалируют коллективный социальный контроль и стыд, основанный на чести, выраженные устойчивыми выражениями типа «что скажут люди», «стыд», «позор», «честь», «мучила совесть». В пуританском дискурсе, напротив, доминируют внутренняя моральная борьба и страх Божьего наказания, выраженные такими лексемами, как *guilt, dread, conscience, shame, sorrow, anguish*, а также символическими образами — алой буквы, виселицы, тёмного леса, огня. Исследование выявляет две эмоциональные модели: коллективный дискурс страха-стыда в узбекской традиции и индивидуальный дискурс вины и совести в пуританской культуре. Работа вносит вклад в межкультурную стилистику и лингвистику эмоций, демонстрируя, что страх является не только психологическим явлением, но и языково-культурной конструкцией.

INTRODUCTION

The study of emotions in language has developed into a distinct branch of linguistic inquiry, where emotion is understood not as a purely psychological phenomenon but as a semantic, pragmatic, and discourse category encoded through language. According to cognitive linguistics and linguistic anthropology, emotions are conceptualized, structured, and communicated through lexical choice, metaphor, grammatical forms, evaluative expressions, and culturally shaped discourse strategies. Hence, examining linguistic representations of fear in literary texts offers insight into how language reflects social norms, value systems, communicative conventions, and cultural worldviews.

This research investigates the linguistic encoding of fear in Abdulla Qodiriy's *O'tkan kunlar* and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* by analyzing the lexical, semantic, metaphorical, and stylistic means through which fear of social judgment is linguistically constructed. Both novels contain intense emotional experiences tied to moral regulation and collective or institutional authority. However, the emphasis of this study is strictly on how those emotional experiences are linguistically verbalized—through specific lexemes, culturally marked idioms, metaphorical templates, discourse markers, and narrative strategies.

The central concern of this research is not psychological fear as an internal experience but fear as a linguistic phenomenon manifested through lexical units denoting fear, shame, honor, judgment, formulaic expressions and idioms reflecting cultural norms, evaluative adjectives and verbs signaling fear-related attitudes, metaphorical conceptualizations of fear and shame, syntactic constructions and discourse structures enhancing emotional effect. Therefore, this work approaches fear as a linguistically signaled category, not as a psychological state.

O'tkan kunlar and *The Scarlet Letter* are suitable for comparative linguistic analysis because both texts depict communities where moral codes are enforced through discourse practices. Yet, they differ fundamentally in how language encodes that enforcement. In

Qodiriy's text, fear is articulated through communal and formulaic expressions, emphasizing social evaluation and collective voice: *el nima deydi, uyat bo'ladi, sharmanda bo'lamiz, nomusga dog' tushadi, obro'sin yo'qotadi*. In Hawthorne's novel, fear is verbalized through moral-religious lexicon and introspective narrative structures, foregrounding internalized judgment: shame, guilt, sin, burden, stain, punishment, dread, anguish, trembling, repent. This contrast is not psychological but linguistic and cultural-semantic: Uzbek emotional discourse relies on socially patterned linguistic formulas, whereas Puritan English emotional discourse uses introspective moral vocabulary and symbolic metaphors.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Before turning to textual studies, several cognitive-linguistic accounts establish how emotion is encoded in language. Lakoff & Johnson's conceptual metaphor approach (widely used in literary stylistics) shows that abstract emotional states are systematically mapped onto concrete source domains (e.g., fear is darkness, shame is a stain). Kövecses extends this to emotion domains specifically and argues that emotion metaphors reflect both embodied experience and cultural models. These theoretical accounts provide the backbone for treating "fear" as a linguistic-semantic construct rather than only a private feeling.

Several Hawthorne scholars treat shame/guilt and public judgment as central motifs; more recent stylistic work explicitly links these motifs to concrete linguistic devices. Michael J. Colacurcio (and related Hawthorne critics) emphasize the public, ritualized nature of punishment and the social discourse that constructs shame in the novel. Critics in this tradition locate fear in the novel's public discourse (scaffold scenes, public naming, courtroom/prison settings) and in the novel's performative descriptive language that stages exposure and judgement. Linguistically, this translates into explicit evaluative lexis and recurrent public-domain metaphors (e.g., stain, mark, burn). Harold Bloom and other anglophone critics emphasize symbolic vocabulary (the scarlet "A", scaffold, forest) and the novel's evaluative adjectives and narrative focalization that make inner guilt linguistically salient. Bloom's readings support the idea that Hawthorne's fear-related language is constructed through symbolic lexemes and evaluative narrative voice rather than only through overt formulae of social gossip. Stylistic/semantic studies (e.g., "Words of Pain in Hawthorne's Novel" and other semantic analyses) identify a cluster of pain-/guilt-related lexis (burn, stain, burden, torment, dread) and show these words operate metaphorically (guilt is a burden; shame is a stain), producing the textual effect of internalized moral fear. These investigations point to repeated metaphorical patterns and syntactic choices (passives, reflective clauses) that foreground interiority. Comparative essays focused on guilt vs shame explicitly argue that Hawthorne lexicalizes guilt (internal, conscience-based) more than public-gossip style shame; several student and MA theses supporting this claim show how Hawthorne's choice of verbs, adjectives, and symbol vocabulary encodes an inward, moral-legal concept of fear. Works in Uzbek literary linguistics and phraseology (recent conference papers and articles) approach Qodiriy from a lexical/phraseological angle, highlighting formulaic social idioms and honor lexicon as the prime vehicles for fear-valuation in the novel. A phraseological study of *O'tkan kunlar* (conference and journal pieces available in 2024–2025) shows that emotion and evaluative meaning in Qodiriy's prose are often encoded by fixed idioms and social deixis (e.g., *el nima deydi, uyat, nomusga dog' tushmasin*). The author(s) argue these recurring

phraseologisms function as socially indexed fear markers: they are community-addressed, prescriptive, and trigger behavioral regulation. In short, fear is linguistically packaged as formulaic social admonitions rather than psychological introspection. Comparative phraseology work (English–Uzbek idioms studies) identifies direct equivalents and contrasts between Uzbek formulae of shame (collective, honor-centered) and English idioms that encode individual distress. Such work explicitly notes that Uzbek literary language frequently uses idiomatic social-evaluation units (e.g., mentions of “people,” “village talk,” reputation verbs) as the primary means to encode fear of social consequences. This supports a linguistic reading of *O’tkan kunlar* where fear = discursive social pressure. Local philological overviews of Uzbek emotional lexis highlight “nomus,” “uyat,” “sharm,” and related collocational patterns as central; the authors emphasize pragmatic functions (imperatives, hortatory clauses, presuppositions) accompanying those lexemes, which produce social regulation effects in discourse. These studies make the specific point that fear in Qodiriy is routinized in community speech acts (warns, scolds, gossips) rather than being enacted by introspective metaphorical language. A number of comparative and stylistic papers (including student theses and conference proceedings) make two convergent claims:

Hawthorne’s fear language is dominated by symbolic, embodied metaphors and evaluative adjectives that produce an inward, moralized fear (guilt is a burden; shame is a stain). These studies connect semantic clusters (burn, stain, burden, torment) with syntactic choices (passive voice, reflective clauses) that highlight internalization. Qodiriy’s fear language is dominated by formulaic social idioms and honor vocabulary (e.g., *el nima deydi*, *nomus*, *uyat*). Recent Uzbek phraseology research shows these items are performative (they function as directives and social predictions) and thus encode fear as social surveillance and reputational risk.

These two patterns form the main comparative insight currently emerging in the literature: collective/formulaic vs. individual/metaphorical linguistic encodings of fear.

This study employs a qualitative linguistic methodology, grounded in close textual analysis and comparative stylistics. Since the objective is to explore fear as a linguistically encoded category, the research relies on detailed examination of lexical units, idiomatic expressions, metaphorical constructions, and discourse strategies found in both novels. Rather than quantifying occurrences mechanically, the analysis prioritizes semantic depth, contextual relevance, and cultural motivation behind linguistic choices.

The corpus of the study consists of key narrative segments and dialogues from *O’tkan kunlar* and *The Scarlet Letter* where fear, shame, reputation, or social judgment are made linguistically explicit. Extracted examples include direct speech, narrator commentary, evaluative descriptions, and culturally formulaic expressions. These data were examined in their original languages: Uzbek quotations from Qodiriy’s text were retained to preserve cultural connotation and linguistic authenticity, and when necessary, literal translations accompanied them to ensure interpretive clarity. Similarly, relevant English lines from Hawthorne’s novel were analyzed without paraphrasing to avoid distorting the emotional-semantic nuances specific to Puritan discourse.

The analysis follows the principles of lexico-semantic interpretation, paying attention to the emotional lexicon associated with fear and honor, such as *uyat*, *nomus*, *sharm*, *vijdon*, *gap-so’z* in the Uzbek text and guilt, shame, dread, conscience, punishment in the English text. These lexical choices are examined not simply as vocabulary items but

as indicators of cultural models embedded in language. Their collocational patterns, pragmatic intentions, and syntactic positioning are treated as evidence of how each literary tradition conceptualizes fear.

A key dimension of the methodology involves metaphor and figurative language analysis, inspired by cognitive semantics. Fear metaphors—whether realized through imagery of weight, heat, stain, darkness, or public gaze—are studied for their conceptual role in each text. Qodiriy’s narrative often encodes fear through socially performative phrases and collective gaze imagery, while Hawthorne relies on introspective metaphors and religious-moral symbolism. Identifying such conceptual patterns allows the study to link individual lexical choices to broader emotional schemata.

In addition to semantic and metaphorical analysis, the research includes pragmatic and discourse-functional interpretation. Uzbek fear expressions frequently appear in directive, admonishing, or evaluative speech acts, signalling communal pressure and verbal regulation of behavior. Hawthorne’s language, conversely, favors introspection, internal narration, and morally reflective discourse. Observing how fear-related expressions operate within speech acts, sentence structures, and narrative perspective helps reveal how emotional meaning is constructed pragmatically in each literary system.

Throughout the study, attention is given to culture-specific formulaic language, particularly in the Uzbek text, where idioms and set phrases function as emotional-discursive units. These forms are not simply linguistic ornamentation; they perform social control by projecting anticipated public reaction. Conversely, the English text privileges individualized moral vocabulary and evaluative adjectives that signify inner torment. Recognizing such differences allows for cross-cultural contrast without imposing external categories on either tradition.

Finally, although the research does not rely on corpus frequency statistics, it maintains systematic rigor by ensuring consistency in selection, annotation, and interpretation of textual data. Each example is examined within its narrative environment and cultural context, making the methodology interpretive yet grounded, qualitative yet systematic, and linguistic rather than thematic or psychological.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The linguistic representation of fear in O’tkan kunlar reveals that Qodiriy encodes emotion primarily through socially-fixed expressions and collective evaluative language. Fear does not emerge as a private psychological state but as a socially constructed discourse grounded in communal surveillance and honor-based norms. When a character declares, “El nima deydi? Sharmanda bo’lamiz” (“What will people say? We will be disgraced”), fear appears as a linguistic act of anticipating collective judgment. The lexical pairing of *el* (the people) and *sharmanda* (disgraced) foregrounds the social audience as the central authority. The morphological future form *bo’lamiz* communicates not simply prediction but inevitability, thereby reinforcing communal opinion as a binding force. Thus, fear is linguistically activated through presupposed collective evaluation rather than internal emotional turbulence.

Similarly, the statement “Nomusimga dog’ tushmasin” (“Let no stain fall on my honor”) illustrates how fear is conceptualized through metaphoric mapping. Honor functions as a “clean surface,” and shame becomes a “stain,” forming a culturally established conceptual metaphor. The optative form *-masin* encodes prohibition and dread of moral transgression, while the noun *nomus* invokes a collective moral code. Fear

in this instance operates as linguistic reinforcement of cultural expectations, showing that the emotional meaning is inseparable from the normative discourse that shapes it.

Qodiriy also constructs fear through somatic imagery and bodily stance, as in “Uyatdan odam bosh ko’tara olmay qoladi” (“One cannot lift one’s head from shame”). Here the inability to “raise one’s head” conceptualizes fear and shame as physical burden and submission. The lowered head metonymically signals loss of social dignity and public legitimacy. Likewise, when characters fear exposure — “Bu gapni eshitib qolishsa, tamom bo’lamiz” (“If they hear this, we are finished”) — the anonymized plural “they” functions as a vague but omnipresent social audience. Deictically, “they” indexes the community as an ever-watchful, punitive collective. Fear, therefore, materializes through language as an external, socially distributed force embedded in speech.

In *The Scarlet Letter*, by contrast, fear emerges from introspection and internalized moral law. Hawthorne linguistically frames fear as moral burden and spiritual anguish rather than immediate social surveillance. When the narrator states, “Her sin and shame were ever before her eyes,” shame appears as a persistent internal vision rather than public threat. The emotional terms sin and shame are treated as visible, almost tangible psychological entities. This lexical treatment renders fear as internal self-scrutiny. In a later passage, “The scarlet letter burned on her bosom,” Hawthorne employs somatic metaphor: the mark does not merely exist, it “burns,” transferring moral anguish into physical sensation. The conceptual metaphor GUILT AS FIRE reinforces the idea that fear is embodied and inwardly consuming.

Dimmesdale’s torment exemplifies Hawthorne’s inward fear lexicon: “A terrible weight pressed upon his soul.” Guilt is expressed as heaviness, echoing the metaphor GUILT IS A BURDEN. The passive construction “pressed upon” positions the subject as acted upon by invisible moral force. Fear thus becomes an internal judicial mechanism rather than external social threat. Elsewhere, the line “He trembled lest the secret be revealed” blends somatic response (trembled) with archaic fear modality (lest), suggesting deep-rooted anxiety about inner truth emerging. Fear is articulated not through public discourse but through internal narrative syntax and moral introspection.

Taken together, the novels illustrate two divergent linguistic constructions of fear. In *O’tkan kunlar*, fear is predominantly collective, ritualized through formulaic idioms, communal pronouns, and evaluative speech acts that project judgment outward. Language functions as a medium of social control, and fear is “heard” in the voice of the community. By contrast, *The Scarlet Letter* internalizes fear through symbolic metaphor, religious vocabulary, passive syntax, and somatic imagery that foreground internal struggle and conscience. Fear here is “voiced” through inner narrative and embodied moral pain.

Thus, while both texts treat fear of judgment as central to the human experience, they arrive at this representation through different linguistic pathways: Qodiriy through fixed communal expressions and discourse patterns of honor, and Hawthorne through introspective metaphor and spiritual lexicon. In both cases, emotion does not exist prior to language; rather, language constructs and performs the emotional experience, giving form to culturally specific models of fear.

The comparative analysis demonstrates that fear, while a universal human emotion, is not linguistically universal; instead, it is shaped, mediated, and culturally encoded through the linguistic systems available within each literary tradition. In *O’tkan kunlar*, fear emerges as a product of collective consciousness and is expressed through socially

sanctioned formulas that foreground communal authority. The frequent recourse to idiomatic expressions such as “El nima deydi” positions the community as an omnipresent evaluator, and characters’ speech becomes a vehicle through which cultural norms regulate behavior. Fear is not introspected but spoken; not individual but social; not symbolized but articulated through shared linguistic templates. Language, therefore, does not simply describe emotional anxiety — it performs it, turning utterances into acts of conformity and warning. In the Uzbek sociolinguistic universe that Qodiriy portrays, emotional restraint and moral conduct are inseparable from the verbal structures that encode collective approval and shame.

By contrast, *The Scarlet Letter* frames fear as an internal dialogue shaped by moral doctrine and religious metaphor. The emotional burden does not circulate through communal idioms but resides within the individual conscience. The text repeatedly narrates fear as a psychological imprint — “burning,” “pressing,” “tormenting,” “trembling” — suggesting an inward movement of meaning from external code to embodied experience. The scarlet letter functions as a linguistic symbol as much as a visual one: it speaks silently, governing Hester’s subjectivity and revealing how moral language can inhabit the individual psyche. Hawthorne’s prose transforms fear into a narrative of internal discipline, where metaphor and syntax replace external authority. The fear of public judgment remains present, yet it is absorbed and reproduced by the subject herself through self-surveillance and lexical embodiment.

These findings affirm that emotion is not merely reflected in language but actively constructed by it. In Qodiriy’s cultural-linguistic space, emotion is fundamentally social; the grammar of fear depends on speech acts directed toward imagined audiences. The emotional authority rests outside the individual, in the speech of “others,” real or presumed. Meanwhile, Hawthorne’s linguistic choices enact an internalization of power: his characters fear not only exposure but the moral decay that language inscribes upon the soul. The discursive movement, therefore, is opposite — O’tkan kunlar externalizes emotional control, whereas *The Scarlet Letter* internalizes it. What is public in one becomes private in the other; what is spoken aloud in one becomes silently metaphorized in the other.

This contrast illustrates broader typological tendencies in emotional discourse across cultures. Uzbek emotional language, as shown in the novel, privileges communal ethos and prescriptive idioms rooted in collective honor systems, whereas American Puritan emotionality, as represented by Hawthorne, privileges introspective lexicon and symbolic metaphors grounded in religious morality. Linguistically, one leans toward formulaic social expressions; the other toward introspective symbolic language. Crucially, these tendencies do not signal greater emotional intensity in either text but rather distinct linguistic pathways through which emotional concepts — particularly fear — acquire meaning, legitimacy, and expressive force.

CONCLUSION

This comparative linguistic analysis has demonstrated that fear, while universally experienced, becomes culturally and socially meaningful only when articulated through language. In O’tkan kunlar, fear is encoded through formulaic expressions tied to communal authority, moral honor, and collective surveillance. Qodiriy’s characters do not merely feel fear; they speak it as social obligation, invoking the imagined voice of the community through idioms such as “El nima deydi” and “Uyat bo’ladi.” Their emotional

world is external, regulated by spoken norms and socially shared linguistic rituals that continually reinforce collective values. In this discourse environment, fear functions as a cooperative cultural script sustained by repetition and communal presupposition. By contrast, *The Scarlet Letter* constructs fear through introspective moral language and symbolic metaphor. Hawthorne's lexicon does not rely on external admonition but on internalized ethical pain, expressed through metaphoric structures — fire, burden, stain — and through solemn narrative syntax. Here, fear is not an external command but an internalized moral voice, manifested in expressions such as “the burning shame” or “a terrible weight upon his soul.” Rather than fixity of social idioms, emotional meaning arises from metaphorical imagery, religious vocabulary, and subtle shifts in narrative perspective. The internal linguistic architecture of fear reflects a culture where authority appears not as communal speech but as internal conscience and theological judgment.

Thus, the research reveals two distinct emotional grammars: one communal and formulaic, the other introspective and metaphorical. In both novels, fear operates as a structuring force, but it is language that shapes its existence and direction. Qodiriy's characters fear being spoken about; Hawthorne's characters fear what cannot be spoken aloud. This study therefore reaffirms that emotion in literature is not merely narratively described but linguistically constructed through culturally situated semantic, metaphorical, and pragmatic resources. Such findings support broader claims in cognitive linguistics and discourse theory that emotional experience is inseparable from the linguistic frameworks through which societies conceptualize and regulate human behavior.

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