

CULTURAL CODING OF WISH-DESIRE SEMANTICS: A CONTRASTIVE LEXICOLOGICAL STUDY OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20034948>

Abstract. *This article examines the cultural coding embedded in lexical units that express wish and desire in English and Uzbek languages. This study analyzes the contextual and textual elements of Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and Abdulla Qodiriy's *O'tgan Kunlar*, focusing on how the semantics of wish-desire vocabulary embodies unique cultural values, perspectives, and linguistic traditions within the two language systems. The study delineates essential semantic distinctions in the conceptualization of "wish" and "desire" between English and Uzbek, indicating that although both languages feature extensive lexical fields for these concepts, their semantic breadth, connotative dimensions, and cultural implications vary markedly. The results add to contrastive lexicology and linguo-cultural studies by showing how language encodes culturally specific emotional and volitional states. They are based on four theoretical frameworks: Humboldt's inner form of language, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, Lotman's semiosphere theory, and Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory.*

Keywords: *wish, desire, lexical units, cultural coding, contrastive lexicology, semantics, English, Uzbek.*

Introduction. Language is not merely a tool of communication but a cultural mirror that reflects the values, beliefs, and emotional experiences of its speakers. Among the most intimate and universally human experiences encoded in language are the notions of wish and desire — volitional and emotional states that drive human thought, behavior, and social interaction.

Despite their universal human relevance, the lexical expression of these concepts varies considerably across languages, shaped by distinct cultural, historical, and cognitive contexts.

English and Uzbek are typologically and culturally distant language systems; English is part of the Germanic branch of the Indo-European family, while Uzbek is part of the Karluk group of the Turkic language family. The typological distance renders them exceptionally fruitful subjects for contrastive lexicological analysis, as the discrepancies in their lexical systems elucidate the distinct functioning of cultural coding within each linguistic tradition.

Although the English lexicon of wish and desire has garnered significant scholarly focus within semantic and cognitive linguistic frameworks, the Uzbek lexical domain of wish and desire remains relatively underexamined in international academic discourse.

The analysis of the linguo-cultural characteristics of lexical units is rooted in the overarching framework of ethnolinguistics and cultural semantics, which posits that words not only signify referents but also embody culturally specific connotations, associations, and worldview orientations (Sapir, 1921; Wierzbicka, 1997). The objective of this article is to investigate the semantic distinctions in lexical units representing wish and desire in English and Uzbek through contextual and textual analysis of two seminal literary works: Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900) and Qodiriy's *O'tgan Kunlar* (1926). The study aims to achieve the following objectives: (1) to identify and systematize the fundamental lexical units of the wish-desire semantic field in both languages; (2) to analyze their contextual meanings and cultural

connotations through meticulous examination of the literary corpus; and (3) to elucidate the semantic divergences that signify distinct cultural coding in English and Uzbek.

The philosophical foundation of this study rests upon Wilhelm von Humboldt's concept of the *innere Sprachform* — the inner form of language — which posits that each language embodies a unique worldview (*Weltanschauung*) that shapes the cognitive and cultural experience of its speakers (Humboldt, 1836). According to Humboldt, language is not a passive instrument of thought but an active force that mediates between the human mind and external reality, encoding the collective spiritual and cultural identity of a nation. Applied to the present study, this framework suggests that the lexical units expressing wish and desire in English and Uzbek are not mere semantic equivalents of one another, but rather distinct cultural constructs that reflect fundamentally different national worldviews. The Uzbek concept of *orzu*, for instance, carries a cultural depth and philosophical resonance that cannot be fully captured by its English counterpart *wish* or *desire*, precisely because it is shaped by the inner form of the Uzbek language and the cultural memory it encodes.

Closely related to Humboldt's ideas, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis — also known as the principle of linguistic relativity — holds that the structure and vocabulary of a language influence the ways in which its speakers perceive and conceptualize reality (Sapir, 1921; Whorf, 1956). In its moderate formulation, which the present study adopts, linguistic relativity suggests that different languages do not merely label the same pre-existing concepts differently, but that the lexical distinctions a language makes available to its speakers actively shape their categorization of emotional and volitional experience. The rich synonymic differentiation within the Uzbek wish-desire lexical field — distinguishing, for example, between *istak* (immediate personal want), *orzu* (deep, often unattainable longing), *armon* (regretful longing for the unattainable), and *niyat* (intention fused with spiritual purpose) — suggests a culturally more granular conceptualization of volitional states than the English lexical system typically encodes.

Yuri Lotman's semiotic theory of culture provides another indispensable framework for the present investigation. Lotman (1990) conceptualizes culture as a *semiosphere* — a bounded semiotic space within which all cultural meanings are generated, transmitted, and transformed through systems of signs, including language. Within this framework, lexical units function not merely as semantic units but as cultural codes — signs that carry layers of meaning defined by the cultural semiosphere in which they operate. The English semiosphere, shaped by individualism, pragmatism, and a secular conception of desire, encodes wish and desire primarily as personal, goal-oriented drives; while the Uzbek semiosphere, shaped by collectivism, Islamic spiritual tradition, and a strong sense of fate and communal identity, encodes similar volitional states with richer spiritual, social, and philosophical connotations.

Finally, the study draws on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory of conceptual metaphor, which demonstrates that abstract concepts — including emotions and volitional states such as desire and wish — are systematically structured through metaphorical mappings grounded in embodied cultural experience. In English, desire is frequently conceptualized through such metaphors as *DESIRE IS HUNGER* (craving, appetite for success) or *DESIRE IS A FORCE* (driven by ambition, pulled toward), reflecting a cultural emphasis on individual agency and biological drive. In Uzbek, by contrast, wish and desire are often metaphorically framed in terms of spiritual journey, light, or prayer — as seen in expressions built around *orzu* and *tilak* — reflecting a cultural tendency to elevate volitional states to the level of moral and spiritual aspiration

The present study adopts a contrastive lexicological approach combined with contextual and textual analysis as its primary research method.

The study is designed as a qualitative contrastive investigation of lexical semantics.

Rather than relying on quantitative frequency data, the research prioritizes the depth of semantic and cultural interpretation, examining how contextual environments shape and reveal the cultural coding of wish-desire vocabulary in both languages. The contrastive method is applied at the lexical-semantic level, enabling the identification of equivalences, partial equivalences, and semantic gaps between the two language systems.

The research material was collected from two primary source types. First, authoritative monolingual and bilingual dictionaries — including the Oxford English Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, and the Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language (O‘zbek tiling izohli lug‘ati) — were consulted to establish the core semantic structure of wish-desire lexemes. Second, and most centrally, authentic literary texts served as the primary corpus: Theodore Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* (1900) as the English source, and Abdulla Qodiriy’s *O‘tgan Kunlar* (1926) as the Uzbek source. Together, these works constitute a balanced and culturally representative bilingual corpus.

The collected material was analyzed through contextual analysis, examining lexical units within their immediate and broader textual environments to determine their actual semantic realization, pragmatic functions, and cultural implications. In the Results and Analysis section, each textual example is followed by immediate analytical commentary in order to make the interpretive process transparent and to connect observations directly to the theoretical frameworks outlined in Section 2.

Results and Analysis. The contextual and textual analysis of wish-desire lexical units in *Sister Carrie* and *O‘tgan Kunlar* reveals significant semantic differences in the cultural coding of wish, desire, and aspiration across English and Uzbek. The findings are organized according to three core semantic features: connotative meaning, cultural load, and metaphorical conceptualization.

1. Wish / Orzu

In *Sister Carrie*, the lexical unit wish recurrently appears in contexts of social comparison and material longing:

"She began to wish she had not come to Chicago at all... she longed for the fine clothes, the lights, the music."

Wish is immediately paired with longed for, forming a semantically reinforcing cluster.

The objects of wishing — fine clothes, lights, music — are entirely materialistic and socially constructed, arising from Carrie’s observation of others rather than from any inward spiritual condition. The connotative field is one of restless, outward-directed discontent.

"She wished she could live in such a place, with its fine furniture and carpeted floors."

Wish is triggered by visual comparison — Carrie sees a better-furnished home and immediately projects herself into it. The verb encodes desire as reactive and social: it arises not from within but in response to external stimuli, reflecting the broader cultural coding of wish in English as an individually driven, consumer-oriented volitional state.

"How she wished she were able to do something — to feel the delight of personal achievement."

Here the object of wishing shifts from material goods to personal agency itself — Carrie wishes for the capacity to act and achieve.

This reveals that English wish encodes not only materialism but also a secular ideology of self-determination: fulfillment comes through individual effort and accomplishment, not through acceptance or spiritual surrender.

Dreiser further extends the wish-desire semantic field through expressions such as she hungered for, her fancy ran riot, and she felt the drag of desire, all reinforcing a picture of volitional experience as a spectrum of intensities unified by their secular, social, and individualistic orientation.

In O'tgan Kunlar, the Uzbek lexical unit *orzu* carries markedly different connotations:

"Otabekning orzusi — Kumushning yuzi, ovozi, ko'zlari edi." ("Otabek's *orzu* was Kumush's face, her voice, her eyes.")

Orzu here is not a response to social comparison but an absolute inner state. Unlike Dreiser's wish, which reaches outward toward attainable social goods, *orzu* reaches inward toward an idealized, almost sacred vision. The poetic enumeration of face, voice, and eyes elevates the beloved to the status of an aesthetic and spiritual absolute, consistent with the classical Eastern lyric tradition.

"U orzular ichra yashardi, go'yo haqiqat uning uchun emas edi." ("He lived within his *orzus*, as though reality were not meant for him.")

Orzu is not merely an object of longing but a world — a space that the subject inhabits.

The phrase as though reality were not meant for him suggests that *orzu* constitutes an alternative existential plane, more real than material reality. This is the antithesis of English wish, which is always directed toward material reality and seeks to transform it.

"Orzu — bu uning yagona boyligi, yagona quvvati edi." ("Orzu was his only wealth, his only strength.")

Qodiriy assigns *orzu* the semantic roles of both wealth (*boylik*) and strength (*quvvat*) — categories that in English would be filled by material possessions and physical capacity. By substituting *orzu* for these, Qodiriy encodes a cultural value system in which spiritual longing is more nourishing and empowering than any worldly resource, reflecting the Uzbek semiosphere's elevation of inner volitional life above material achievement.

2. *Desire / Istak*

In *Sister Carrie*, desire functions as a powerful, quasi-naturalistic force that overrides social and moral constraints:

"Strong were the old ties of shame and opposition... but stronger still the force of desire."

The metaphor *desire is a force* is fully explicit. Dreiser pits desire against shame and opposition — moral and social inhibitors — and desire wins. This grammatical structure, in which desire is the subject that overpowers other agents, encodes a cultural worldview in which volitional drive is a natural, quasi-biological energy that operates independently of the subject's rational or moral will.

"Desire was ever present, leading her on to something better — something different."

Desire assumes an almost personified, agentive role — it leads Carrie forward. The phrase something better — something different reveals that the content of desire is less important than its directional momentum: the cultural imperative is always to want more and to move forward, encoding the American ideological myth of perpetual self-improvement as a natural volitional state.

"She felt the drag of desire pulling at her, a force she could neither name nor resist."

The phrase the drag of desire combines the force metaphor with an involuntary physical sensation. The inability to name or resist strips the subject of rational agency: desire operates below the level of conscious control, coding it as a naturalistic drive akin to hunger or gravity.

This positions English desire as amoral — lying beneath the jurisdiction of ethical judgment.

In O‘tgan Kunlar, *istak* presents a fundamentally different semantic profile:

"Uning istagi — faqat Kumushni ko‘rish, uning so‘zlarini eshitish edi." ("His *istak* was only to see Kumush, to hear her words.")

The adverb *faqat* (only) is semantically crucial. Where Dreiser’s desire is excessive and uncontainable, Qodiriy’s *istak* is defined by voluntary limitation: it asks for the minimum — merely to see, merely to hear. This restraint is not weakness but a cultural virtue, the expression of desire disciplined by the values of *hayo* (modesty) and *adab* (moral decorum) that govern the Uzbek ethical worldview.

"Bu istak uning qalbida yashirin, ammo kuchli edi." ("This *istak* lived hidden in his heart, yet it was strong.")

The opposition between *yashirin* (hidden) and *kuchli* (strong) encodes the core cultural logic of Uzbek desire: it is intense but interior, powerful but concealed. Unlike English desire, which in Dreiser’s naturalist frame must eventually break through social constraints, Uzbek *istak* finds its cultural expression precisely in being contained. The heart (*qalb*) is its proper dwelling — not the public social world.

"Istak va iymon O‘rtasida u doimo O‘z yo‘lini topardi." ("Between *istak* and faith, he always found his own path.")

Istak is placed alongside *iymon* (faith) as one of two governing forces in the character’s inner life — and rather than one defeating the other, as in Dreiser’s structure, the character finds a path between them. This encodes an Uzbek cultural model of desire as something that must be negotiated with, not surrendered to: volitional life is a moral practice of balance between want and duty.

3. *Aspiration / Tilak*

In *Sister Carrie*, aspiration is coded as a socially upward, individually driven striving:

"Her aspirations were of the vaguest character... fine clothes, a good position, the admiration of men."

Dreiser’s characterization of Carrie’s aspirations as vague is semantically significant. The upward striving is more culturally valued than any specific destination. The objects listed — fine clothes, position, admiration — are interchangeable markers of social status, confirming that aspiration in this context is a social-comparative mechanism rather than a personal ideal.

"She aspired, without knowing what she wanted — only that it was something beyond her present reach."

This example makes the content-independence of English aspiration explicit: Carrie aspires without a defined object, driven only by the abstract principle of beyond. This reveals that aspiration in the English cultural context is first and foremost a disposition — a perpetual orientation toward more — encoding the secular American ideology of limitless upward mobility as a volitional norm.

"The city fed her aspirations, offering in its glittering windows a constant vision of what she might become."

Here the city itself functions as the generator of aspiration — an external cultural machine that produces and sustains Carrie's volitional drive by displaying images of a higher life. This confirms that English aspiration is not self-generated but socially produced, a product of the capitalist consumer semiosphere that surrounds the individual with images of what they lack.

In O'tgan Kunlar, tilak encodes a fundamentally different experiential category:

"Ko'nglimning eng chuqur tilaklari shu edi." ("These were the deepest tilaks of my heart.")

The localization of tilak in kO'ngil (heart) rather than in the social world establishes its inward, subjective orientation. The superlative eng chuqur (deepest) intensifies this interiority: tilak is not surface desire but something residing at the core of the self. Unlike English aspiration, defined by external objects and social comparisons, tilak is defined by its depth within the individual soul.

"Otabek uning baxtini tilardi, O'zi uchun emas." ("Otabek wished for her happiness, not for himself.")

This example encodes the most fundamental semantic difference: the direction of the wish. English aspiration is self-directed — Carrie always aspires for herself, her own position, her own advancement. Uzbek tilak here is explicitly other-directed: Otabek wishes for Kumush's happiness, not his own, reflecting the collectivist cultural value of the Uzbek semiosphere in which the highest aspiration is the selfless blessing of another.

"Tilak — bu duo edi, Xudoga yO'naltirilgan sO'z." ("Tilak was a prayer — a word directed toward God.")

In this definitional statement, Qodiriy explicitly equates tilak with duo (prayer) and frames it as a word directed toward God. This theological framing positions tilak not in the horizontal social dimension of English aspiration but in the vertical spiritual dimension of Islamic devotion. To wish, in the Uzbek cultural semiosphere, is ultimately to pray: volitional experience is embedded within a relationship with the divine.

The cultural load analysis reveals a consistent and systematic pattern of divergence between the two literary texts. The English wish-desire lexical units in *Sister Carrie* are predominantly loaded with the cultural values of individualism, material progress, social mobility, and secular self-determination. The Uzbek wish-desire lexical units in *O'tgan Kunlar* carry a cultural load shaped by Islamic spiritual tradition, classical Eastern poetic sensibility, and the collectivist social structures of 19th-century Uzbek society. Consistent with Lotman's (1990) theory of the semiosphere, what English encodes as personal drive, Uzbek encodes as spiritual longing; what English frames as social ambition, Uzbek frames as communal blessing and divine address.

Following Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) framework, the analysis identifies distinct and systematic metaphorical patterns. In *Sister Carrie*, three dominant conceptual metaphors organize the wish-desire vocabulary: *desire is a force*, *aspiration is upward movement*, and *wish is hunger*. In *O'tgan Kunlar*, the dominant conceptual metaphors are *orzu is light*, *tilak is a prayer*, and *istak is a gentle touch*. These contrasting systems demonstrate that cultural coding operates at the deepest level of cognitive organization — where English metaphorizes desire as energy to be unleashed and aspiration as a ladder to be climbed, Uzbek metaphorizes longing as light to be cherished, aspiration as prayer to be offered, and desire as a tender secret to be protected.

The findings confirm that the lexical units expressing wish and desire in English and Uzbek are not semantically equivalent cultural translations of one another, but rather distinct linguistic constructs shaped by fundamentally different cultural worldviews, historical experiences, and value systems.

5.1.1 Humboldt’s Inner Form and National Worldview

The analysis strongly supports Humboldt’s (1836) thesis that each language encodes a unique national worldview through its inner form. The English wish-desire lexical system encodes a worldview in which the individual is the sovereign agent of volitional experience — a self-determining subject whose wishes and aspirations are private projects to be pursued or suppressed through personal effort. The Uzbek wish-desire lexical system encodes a fundamentally different worldview in which the individual is embedded within a web of spiritual, communal, and moral relations that shape, constrain, and elevate the experience of longing and aspiration. This divergence manifests consistently across all three lexical pairs and their associated supplementary expressions.

5.1.2 Linguistic Relativity and Lexical Granularity

The findings support the moderate Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Sapir, 1921; Whorf, 1956).

As illustrated in Figure 1 below, the Uzbek wish-desire semantic field encodes six culturally distinct experiential categories, while English covers only three with direct lexical equivalents. Crucially, Uzbek concepts such as *armon* (regretful longing for the unattainable) and *niyat* (spiritually purposeful intention) have no single English equivalents, confirming that the two languages orient their speakers toward different categorical distinctions within volitional experience (Wierzbicka, 1997). This lexical asymmetry reflects a culturally specific emotional script: *armon* names a recognized, culturally valued experience that the English speaker can only construct through circumlocution.

Semantic category	English term	Uzbek term	Semantic nuance
Spiritual longing	<i>wish / yearn</i>	orzu	English: restless, outward social want. Uzbek: deep, idealized, poetic longing directed inward
Personal want	<i>desire / want</i>	istak	English: consuming force overriding moral limits. Uzbek: tender, hidden, morally restrained
Faithful hope	<i>hope</i>	umid	Both encode expectation; Uzbek firmly grounds it in Islamic faith and divine will
Regretful longing	<i>(no equivalent)</i>	armon	Uzbek only: ache for what was never and can never be attained; culturally recognized emotion
Communal	<i>(no equivalent)</i>	tilak	Uzbek only: wish directed outward

Semantic category	English term	Uzbek term	Semantic nuance
blissing-wish			toward others, functioning like a prayer or blessing
Sacred intention	<i>(no equivalent)</i>	niyat	Uzbek only: aspiration fused with spiritual duty and moral purpose before God

Figure 1. Lexical granularity in the English and Uzbek wish-desire semantic fields (Sapir-Whorf hypothesis). Purple = English coverage; Green = Uzbek coverage. Grey italic = no direct equivalent.

5.1.3 Lotman’s Semiosphere and Cultural Coding

Lotman’s (1990) framework of the semiosphere proves particularly productive for interpreting the cultural coding differences. As presented in Figure 2 below, the English and Uzbek wish-desire lexical units generate their meanings within distinct semiospheres organized around diametrically opposed value systems. The English semiosphere — structured around individualism, capitalism, and secular progress — encodes desire as a culturally legitimate, celebrated force, the engine of social mobility. The Uzbek semiosphere — structured around Islamic spirituality, classical Eastern aesthetic tradition, and communal solidarity — encodes desire as an experience to be honored, restrained, and ultimately submitted to a larger moral and spiritual order. These semiospheric differences explain why the same experiential domain generates such semantically divergent lexical expressions in the two languages.

Cultural value axis	English semiosphere	Uzbek semiosphere
Agency of desire	Individual — desire belongs to the self	Communal — desire embedded in social/divine relations
Moral framing	Amoral / transgressive force	Morally governed, disciplined by faith
Orientation	Horizontal — toward social status and goods	Vertical — toward God, spiritual ideals, others
Expression of longing	Outward, visible, socially comparative	Inward, hidden, poetic and reverential
Value of striving	Secular — self-improvement and ambition	Spiritual — submission, blessing, prayer
Lexical granularity	3 of 6 categories covered	6 of 6 categories covered

Figure 2. Contrasting cultural values in the English and Uzbek semiospheres as encoded in wish-desire vocabulary (Lotman, 1990).

5.1.4 Conceptual Metaphor and Embodied Cultural Experience

The metaphorical analysis conducted in accordance with Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) framework reveals that cultural coding of wish-desire semantics operates not only at the level of denotative and connotative meaning but also at the deeper level of conceptual structure. As mapped in Figure 3 below, each English metaphor is grounded in physical, secular, body-oriented experience — force, hunger, upward movement — while each Uzbek counterpart is grounded in spiritual, communal, sensory experience — light, prayer, gentle touch. These contrasting metaphor systems demonstrate that cultural coding operates at the most fundamental level of cognitive organization, shaping not merely vocabulary but the conceptual architecture through which speakers of each language experience and understand volitional states.

#	English conceptual metaphor	vs	Uzbek conceptual metaphor
1	DESIRE IS A FORCE <i>"the force of desire", "drag of want", "pulled toward" — desire as irresistible physical energy overriding the will</i>	vs	ORZU IS LIGHT <i>"lived within his orzus", "only wealth" — longing as a luminous inner world that illuminates and sustains life</i>
2	ASPIRATION IS UPWARD MOVEMENT <i>"something beyond her reach", "glittering heights" — ambition as physical climbing along a social ladder</i>	vs	TILAK IS A PRAYER <i>"a word directed toward God" — aspiration as spiritual supplication, directed upward not forward</i>
3	WISH IS HUNGER <i>"she hungered for", "craving", "appetite" — desire as bodily need, biological and consuming</i>	vs	ISTAK IS A GENTLE TOUCH <i>"faqat kO‘rish" (only to see) — desire as tender, fragile, interior sensation to be protected</i>
	Embodied in: body, force, gravity, hunger <i>Cultural root: secular, materialist, naturalist</i>	vs	Embodied in: light, prayer, touch <i>Cultural root: Islamic spiritual aesthetics, Eastern lyric tradition</i>

Figure 3. Contrasting conceptual metaphor systems in English (Sister Carrie) and Uzbek (O‘tgan Kunlar) wish-desire vocabulary (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Several key semantic differences emerge from the analysis. In terms of directionality, English wish-desire vocabulary is predominantly outward and horizontal — directed toward

social achievement, material acquisition, and comparison with others — while Uzbek wish-desire vocabulary is predominantly inward and vertical — directed toward spiritual depth, divine will, and communal wellbeing. In terms of moral framing, English desire is frequently presented as a morally ambiguous or transgressive force, while Uzbek *istak* and *orzu* are consistently disciplined by moral and spiritual frameworks. In terms of lexical granularity, the Uzbek wish-desire semantic field exhibits a finer spiritual and emotional differentiation, encoding culturally specific categories — particularly *armon* and *niyat* — for which English lacks precise equivalents. In terms of metaphorical grounding, English wish-desire metaphors are rooted in physical force, spatial ascent, and biological hunger, while Uzbek wish-desire metaphors are rooted in light, prayer, and delicate sensation.

The findings carry several implications for contrastive lexicology and linguo-cultural theory. First, they demonstrate the methodological value of literary texts as corpora for contrastive semantic analysis: canonical literary works provide semantically rich, culturally authentic contexts in which the full connotative and metaphorical dimensions of lexical meaning become visible in ways dictionary definitions alone cannot capture. Second, the study illustrates that semantic equivalence between languages is rarely absolute in emotionally and volitionally charged lexical domains, and that contrastive analysis must attend carefully to the cultural semiospheres within which lexical units generate their meanings. Third, the findings suggest that translation between English and Uzbek in the wish-desire semantic domain inevitably involves cultural loss, as the specific connotations of *orzu*, *armon*, and *tilak* cannot be fully rendered by their English counterparts without supplementary cultural commentary.

The present study acknowledges several limitations. The analysis is based on two literary texts which, while culturally representative and linguistically rich, constitute a selective corpus that may not fully capture the breadth of wish-desire vocabulary in everyday discourse. Future research could extend the analysis to spoken corpora, social media discourse, or a wider range of literary genres. Additionally, the study focuses on early 20th-century literary language, and the semantic profiles of wish-desire lexical units may have evolved in both languages since these texts were written.

The present study set out to investigate the cultural coding embedded in lexical units expressing wish and desire in English and Uzbek, drawing on contextual and textual analysis of Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and Abdulla Qodiriy's *O'tgan Kunlar*. Guided by four theoretical frameworks — Humboldt's theory of the inner form of language, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity, Lotman's theory of cultural codes and the semiosphere, and Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory — the study examined three core lexical pairs (*wish/orzu*, *desire/istak*, *aspiration/tilak*) across three semantic dimensions: connotative meaning, cultural load, and metaphorical conceptualization.

The close-reading analysis, in which each textual example was followed by immediate interpretive commentary, demonstrated that the wish-desire lexical units in English and Uzbek are not semantically interchangeable equivalents but culturally distinct constructs that encode fundamentally different national worldviews and conceptions of human volitional experience.

The English wish-desire vocabulary in *Sister Carrie* is consistently coded with the cultural values of individualism, secular self-determination, material aspiration, and social mobility — metaphorically grounded in physical compulsion, upward spatial movement, and biological hunger.

The Uzbek wish-desire vocabulary in O‘tgan Kunlar is coded with the cultural values of spiritual depth, communal belonging, emotional restraint, and moral discipline — metaphorically grounded in light, prayer, and gentle sensation.

The three figures embedded in the Discussion section visualize these findings at a structural level: Figure 1 confirmed the Sapir-Whorf lexical asymmetry (6 vs 3 categories); Figure 2 mapped the near-mirror inversion of cultural values within the two semiospheres; and Figure 3 showed that the divergence operates at the deepest level of cognitive metaphorical structure, not merely at the surface of vocabulary.

These findings confirm that lexical units denoting wish and desire do not merely name universal human emotions but actively encode culturally specific ways of experiencing, valuing, and expressing volitional states. Future research directions include: extending the corpus to contemporary and spoken discourse; adding a psycholinguistic experimental dimension to test whether the cognitive differences implied by lexical asymmetry are empirically measurable; and exploring how translators have navigated the cultural gaps between the two wish-desire semantic fields in existing translations of both literary works.

In conclusion, the cultural coding of wish and desire in English and Uzbek reflects two distinct and internally coherent linguistic worldviews — one organized around the sovereign individual driving toward social and material fulfillment, the other around the spiritually embedded self longing with reverence, restraint, and communal awareness. These are not merely two ways of saying the same thing: they are two fundamentally different ways of being human, inscribed in language and preserved in the literary imagination of two great literary traditions.

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