

GENDER AND SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION FACTORS IN CLOTHING LEXICON: A COMPARATIVE LINGUOCULTURAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of gender and social identification factors in the clothing lexicon of Uzbek and English. The research examines how lexical units related to clothing encode social roles, gender norms, and cultural identity. By analyzing both core and peripheral elements of clothing-related words, the study highlights the interplay between language, cognition, and societal perception. Comparative analysis reveals differences and similarities in how Uzbek and English lexicons convey social hierarchy, gender expectations, and cultural symbolism. The findings demonstrate that clothing vocabulary functions as a linguocultural code reflecting both universal human needs and culture-specific norms. This research contributes to the fields of cognitive linguistics, sociolinguistics, and linguoculturology by providing insights into how language structures reflect social and cultural realities.

Keywords

clothing lexicon, gender roles, social identification, linguocultural code, Uzbek, English

Introduction. Language is more than just a communication tool; it reflects how people think, their cultural values, and social identity. Clothing terms are a perfect example of this: they are not only names for objects we wear but also carry rich social and cultural meanings. Words for clothing can tell us about gender roles, social class, occupation, and even participation in ceremonies or everyday life.

For instance, in Uzbek, a **do'ppi** signifies male identity, maturity, and social respect, while **atlas libos** highlights femininity, beauty, and traditional aesthetics. In English, words like **suit** or **tie** communicate professional status, and items like **dress** or **heels** carry gendered associations influenced by cultural norms.

This study explores how clothing-related words in Uzbek and English work as **linguocultural codes**, revealing societal norms and gendered identities. Specifically, it addresses:

1. How gender roles are reflected in clothing vocabulary in both languages.
2. How clothing terms indicate social status and identity.
3. Which aspects of clothing vocabulary are universal, and which are culture-specific.

Literature Review

2.1 Cognitive Linguistics Perspective

Cognitive linguistics suggests that language mirrors how humans conceptualize the world. Lakoff and Johnson (1980)[1] argued that metaphors hidden in words reveal how societies think. Clothing words are a great example: they are functional, but they also carry metaphorical meanings—like protection, identity, and social presentation. Words such as **armor**, **coat of many colors**, or **dress for success** encode cultural beliefs and expectations.

Kövecses (2010) adds that metaphors in clothing terms can show gender norms and social roles. For example, the Uzbek expression **ko'ylak etagiga kirish** (“enter under the hem of a coat”) signals respect and humility, while in English, **to wear many hats** suggests taking on multiple social roles[2].

2.2 Sociolinguistic and Linguocultural Approaches

From a sociolinguistic perspective, clothing vocabulary reflects social hierarchy and cultural values. Vereshchagin and Kostomarov (1990) emphasized that language encodes cultural norms, and clothing terms often function as **linguocultural markers**[3].

In Uzbek, items like **chapan**, **do'ppi**, and **atlas libos** express social status, ceremonial roles, and gender identity. In English, words such as **uniform**, **tuxedo**, and **jeans** reflect professional roles, social hierarchy, and personal style.

Comparisons show clear differences: English terms often focus on individuality, career identity, and fashion, whereas Uzbek terms highlight tradition, collective norms, and gender-specific roles. Clothing vocabulary, therefore, provides a lens into the cultural understanding of social and gender identity.

Methodology

3.1 Data Sources

The study analyzed over 200 clothing-related words and expressions from diverse sources:

- **Dictionaries:** Oxford English Dictionary[4], O'zbek tilining izohli lug'ati[5].
- **Corpora:** COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English)[6], Uzbek National Corpus[7].

- **Literary and ethnographic texts:** folklore, proverbs, modern literature, and ethnographic reports

This mix ensured both traditional and contemporary uses of clothing words were captured, reflecting gender and social meanings in different contexts.

3.2 Analytical Methods

- **Cognitive Analysis:** Identifying core/prototypical items[8] (e.g., **ko'ylak, shirt**) versus peripheral items like ceremonial garments.

- **Semantic Analysis:** Examining literal, cultural, and metaphorical meanings.

- **Sociolinguistic Analysis:** Looking at gender roles, social hierarchy, and ceremonial significance.

- **Comparative Linguocultural Analysis:** Highlighting similarities and differences in Uzbek and English clothing lexicons regarding gender and social coding.

4. Analysis and Findings

4.1 Gender Representation

Clothing terms clearly carry gender associations:

- **Uzbek:**

- **chapan** – male, respect, authority
- **atlas libos** – female, elegance, beauty

- **English:**

- **dress** – female, cultural expectations of femininity
- **suit** – male, professionalism, authority

These examples show how words encode culturally specific gender norms. Ceremonial male clothing in Uzbek emphasizes authority, while female clothing emphasizes beauty and social visibility.

4.2 Social Status and Identity

Clothing also signals social rank and identity:

- **Uzbek: do'ppi** – maturity and male identity; ceremonial clothes mark special occasions.

- **English: uniform** – professional role; **tuxedo** – formal social events and high-status gatherings.

These terms act as linguocultural codes, revealing social hierarchies and collective norms.

4.3 Comparative Analysis

- **Universal Elements:** Both languages include terms for protection (coat, chapan), adornment (dress, atlas), and utility (shirt, lozim).

- **Culture-Specific Elements:** Uzbek terms emphasize tradition and collective norms, English terms highlight individuality, career identity, and social hierarchy.

5. Discussion

Clothing vocabulary forms a bridge between language, cognition, and society. Words encode gender and social identity in culturally specific ways. Core items, like **ko'ylak** and **shirt**, guide cognitive categorization, while peripheral items convey regional, ceremonial, or symbolic meanings.

Metaphors further enhance these social and gendered representations. For example:

- Uzbek **do'ppisini osmonga otmoq** – respect and honor
- English **to wear one's heart on one's sleeve** – personal expression and individuality

Conclusion

The clothing lexicon in Uzbek and English acts as a linguocultural code, encoding universal needs and culturally specific social and gender identities. Uzbek words emphasize tradition, ceremonial roles, and collective norms. English words foreground individuality, professional identity, and social hierarchy.

Overall, clothing terms are more than labels—they reflect social cognition, cultural values, and gender expectations. This research contributes to cognitive linguistics, sociolinguistics, and linguoculturology by providing a comparative framework for understanding how language encodes culture, society, and identity.

Clothing vocabulary is not merely a set of labels for material objects—it also reflects **cognitive processes**, **social cognition**, and the **cultural frameworks** through which people interpret the world. These terms carry metaphorical, aesthetic, and symbolic meanings that inform how individuals understand gender roles, social positions, and community expectations.

The comparative analysis shows that while some concepts are **universal**, such as protection, adornment, and functional utility, many elements are **culture-specific**, shaped by historical, social, and ideological contexts. Uzbek terms like **chapan** and **do'ppi** encode ceremonial, gendered, and communal meanings, whereas English words like **suit**, **tie**, and **jeans** highlight professional, personal, and fashion-related aspects of social life.

This study demonstrates that clothing terminology serves as a **window into cultural identity** and **social cognition**, bridging the disciplines of **cognitive linguistics**, **sociolinguistics**, and **linguoculturology**. It underscores the intricate ways in which language encodes **cultural values**, **social norms**, and **gender expectations**, offering scholars a **comparative framework** for understanding the interplay between language, thought, and society.

Future research could explore **cross-cultural changes in clothing lexicons over time**, the influence of globalization on gendered and social norms in clothing terminology, and the ways in which digital communication platforms reshape the perception and use of clothing-related language. Such studies would further illuminate how **language, culture, and identity continue to interact dynamically** in an increasingly interconnected world.

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