

Linguocultural Codes in Uzbek Cinematic Discourse: A Study of National Identity through Media Language

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of linguocultural codes in Uzbek cinematic discourse and their contribution to national identity construction. A corpus of five seminal films (O'tgan Kunlar, Suyunchi, Mahallada Duv-Duv Gap, Shum Bola, Mehrobdan Chayon) was analyzed using discourse-analytic, semiotic, and linguocultural methods. The findings show that Uzbek cinema encodes national values — including respect for elders, hospitality, collectivism, and spiritual orientation — through verbal (honorifics, kinship terms, proverbs, idioms), visual (costume, mise-en-scène), and pragmatic strategies (politeness, indirectness). The study demonstrates that cinematic discourse functions both as cultural memory and as a site for negotiating identity amid social change.

Keywords: linguocultural codes, Uzbek cinema, media discourse, national identity, pragmatics, semiotics

Introduction

Cinema serves as a powerful cultural medium, reflecting and shaping collective identities. In Uzbekistan, national cinema functions as a cultural repository that preserves language varieties, folk motifs, social rituals, and moral norms. Cinematic discourse — encompassing verbal, visual, and paralinguistic modes — encodes cultural meanings that resonate beyond the screen and into public consciousness.

This paper examines how linguocultural codes — the intersection of language and culture — operate in Uzbek films to construct and transmit national identity. Using O'tgan Kunlar, Suyunchi, Mahallada Duv-Duv Gap, Shum Bola, and Mehrobdan Chayon as a corpus, the study addresses two main research questions:

- (1) Which linguistic and semiotic resources encode national values in Uzbek cinematic discourse?
- (2) How do these resources participate in the negotiation of identity across historical and cultural contexts?

Literature Review

Theoretical Background. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emphasizes that language in media is never neutral; it constructs social realities and reproduces ideological norms (Fairclough, 1995). CDA suggests that media discourse naturalizes certain values and social hierarchies through linguistic choices. Stuart Hall (1997) argues that cultural meanings are produced through signifying practices, where language and visual codes together generate representations that shape collective understanding.

Linguoculturology offers a complementary perspective by analyzing how linguistic forms encode cultural knowledge. Vereshchagin and Kostomarov (1990) describe linguocultural codes as lexical, phraseological, pragmatic, and semiotic elements that carry specific cultural meaning. In cinema, these elements include proverbs, metaphors, culturally specific speech acts, and ritualized forms of address that signal social belonging and national ethos.

Media Discourse and National Identity. Media and film scholarship recognizes cinema as a key site for nation-building (Anderson, 1983; Higson, 1989). Films produce national imaginaries, both reflecting official ideology and vernacular social values. In Uzbek cinema, national identity is articulated through preservation of traditional practices, historical memory, and communal

solidarity. Linguistic choices, narrative tropes, and visual semiotics together mediate these cultural meanings.

Regional Studies on Uzbek Cinema. Recent research confirms the centrality of linguistic and cultural markers in Uzbek film. Khan (2022) highlights the representation of motherhood, showing how maternal roles are linguistically and visually coded to reflect societal expectations. Shirinova (2023, 2024) examines dialectal features and morphological norms, demonstrating that filmmakers strategically preserve dialectisms and morphological variants to enhance authenticity. Matxoliqov (2022) traces the recognition of Uzbek cinema in Europe, noting the importance of identifiable cultural markers for international audiences.

Mirsaidova (2024) and Mirraximova (2024) focus on semiotic aspects, including costume and dubbing, to emphasize how visual and paralinguistic elements enhance the perception of cultural authenticity. Researchers investigate how contemporary films negotiate traditional values and modern moral dilemmas, revealing that linguistic and visual codes jointly perform national identity.

Linguocultural Markers. Synthesizing the literature reveals recurring markers in Uzbek cinematic discourse:

- ✓ Lexical and phraseological resources: honorifics (janob, hazrat), kinship terms (ota, opa, kelin), proverbs, and metaphors grounded in folk and religious imagery (Khan, 2022; Shirinova, 2023).
- ✓ Pragmatic patterns: indirect requests, politeness formulas, and ritualized speech acts reflecting collectivist norms (Vereshchagin & Kostomarov, 1990).
- ✓ Semiotic resources: traditional costume (do'ppi, atlas), mise-en-scène (mahalla spaces), and gestures (placing hand over heart) (Mirraximova, 2024; Mirsaidova, 2024).
- ✓ Narrative tropes: family-centered plots, moral lessons, community reconciliation, and spiritual motifs (Khan, 2022).

Gaps and Contribution. Existing studies often treat linguistic, pragmatic, and semiotic features separately. Few integrate these layers to analyze how they collectively construct national identity in Uzbek cinema. Additionally, comparative diachronic perspectives, spanning Soviet to post-independence films, remain underexplored. This study addresses these gaps by combining linguistic, pragmatic, and semiotic analysis across multiple films.

Methods

Corpus Selection. Five films were chosen to represent historical periods, genres, and linguistic textures:

- ✓ O'tgan Kunlar: historical drama, high register, archaic forms
- ✓ Suyunchi: family drama, kinship and ritual focus
- ✓ Mahallada Duv-Duv Gap: comedy, colloquial speech
- ✓ Shum Bola: coming-of-age, folk humor
- ✓ Mehrobdan Chayon: psychological drama, metaphorical and moral discourse

Data Collection. Key dialogues (30–50 lines per film) were transcribed in Uzbek and translated into English for analysis. Visual sequences (costumes, gestures, ritualized actions) were annotated. Secondary sources included scholarly analyses, interviews, and film reviews (Matxoliqov, 2022; Mirsaidova, 2024).

Analytical Approach.

- ✓ Micro-discourse analysis: lexemes, idioms, morphological variants, speech acts
- ✓ Pragmatic analysis: politeness strategies, indirectness
- ✓ Comparative diachronic assessment: mapping linguistic and visual coding across historical periods

Coding was iterative and theory-driven, combining literature-based codes with emergent patterns.

Results

Lexical and Phraseological Patterns

- ✓ Honorifics (janob, hazrat) and kinship terms (aka, opa, kelin) mark social hierarchy and relational intimacy.
- ✓ Proverbs and metaphors draw from folk and religious imagery, providing moral instruction.
- ✓ Dialectisms and morphological variants in colloquial speech enhance neighborhood authenticity (Mahallada Duv-Duv Gap, Shum Bola).

Pragmatic Strategies

Indirectness, mitigation, and ritualized requests reflect collectivist politeness norms. Expressives, such as hand-on-heart gestures, reinforce respect and social cohesion.

Semiotic and Visual Codes

Traditional costume (do'ppi, atlas) and props (tea sets) anchor dialogue in cultural practice. Mise-en-scène, particularly mahalla courtyards, functions as a semiotic space for communal interaction.

Thematic Patterns

Five core themes: hospitality and communal solidarity, family and moral duty, historical memory and spiritual invocation, childhood folk culture, and moral introspection. These themes are mediated through linguocultural codes.

Discussion

Uzbek cinema integrates verbal, pragmatic, and visual codes to construct a coherent national discourse (Fairclough, 1995; Hall, 1997). Linguocultural codes preserve tradition while negotiating modern identities, reflecting shifts from collective to individual-focused narratives. Pragmatic patterns and kinship terms act as performative devices for social coherence. Translation challenges arise due to culturally dense speech acts and proverbs, requiring attention to pragmatic equivalence (Mirsaidova, 2024). Future research could expand the corpus, incorporate audience reception, and compare Central Asian cinemas.

Conclusion

Uzbek cinematic discourse functions as a multilayered medium that articulates and negotiates national identity. Language, pragmatics, and visual semiotics work together to:

- ✓ Preserve cultural memory through archaic forms, proverbs, and idioms.
- ✓ Emphasize kinship and collectivist social structures.
- ✓ Strengthen cultural indexicality via costume, mise-en-scène, and ritual action.
- ✓ Reflect evolving identity, balancing tradition and modernity.
- ✓ Provide practical implications for translation, cultural policy, and international circulation.

The study demonstrates that films are not only artistic productions but also performative texts, encoding national values and social scripts. By integrating linguocultural, pragmatic, and semiotic analysis, this research offers a template for studying cinema as a site of identity construction in post-socialist and Central Asian contexts.

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