

A LINGUOCULTURAL ANALYSIS OF MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE SHORT STORIES OF UZBEK WRITER SALOMAT VAFO AND CANADIAN WRITER MARGARET ATWOOD

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Abstract: The male and female character depictions in a few short works by Canadian author Margaret Atwood and Uzbek author Salomat Vafo are compared linguaculturally in this article. The study looks at how social structures, gender expectations, and cultural norms influence the language used to represent men and women via the lens of linguacultural studies. The study focuses on gender roles that are ingrained in culture, metaphorical representation, narrative voice, and character speech patterns. It contends that although both writers emphasize gendered societal limitations, Atwood's characters emphasize psychological tension, feminist critique, and sociopolitical control, while Vafo's characters represent the moral, familial, and spiritual aspects of Uzbek society. The article's conclusion is that while linguistic variations have a big impact on how gender identities are portrayed, both writers emphasize women's agency. The article concludes that linguocultural differences significantly influence the portrayal of gender identities, yet both authors converge in their focus on women's agency, resilience, and internal conflicts.

Introduction

Gender representation has long been a central subject of literary and cultural studies. In recent decades, **linguacultural analysis**—a methodology examining the relationship between language, culture, and worldview—has become an effective tool for analyzing literary gender identities. This approach considers not only narrative content but also how linguistic choices reflect cultural norms and values.

Uzbek literature and Canadian literature arise from different historical experiences, ideological frameworks, and cultural traditions. Yet both have produced powerful female voices who use fiction to explore sociocultural tensions. **Salomat Vafo**, a prominent contemporary Uzbek writer, often centers her stories on everyday struggles, moral dilemmas, and the psychological world of women in a traditional society. **Margaret Atwood**, one of the most influential Canadian authors, addresses patriarchy, state control, and female autonomy through psychologically rich narratives.

Despite the geographical and cultural distance, both authors employ distinct linguistic strategies to express gender dynamics. This article compares the representation of male and female characters in selected short stories through the prism of linguocultural theory. The analysis aims to uncover how language reflects cultural concepts of gender and how such representations contribute to broader discussions about societal roles, power relations, and identity.

Theoretical Framework: Linguocultural Perspective

Linguocultural studies investigate how language encodes cultural values and social practices. In literary texts, gendered linguistic features—such as forms of address, metaphorical imagery,

emotional lexicon, and narrative point of view—provide insight into cultural expectations surrounding masculinity and femininity.

For this research, the following concepts are central:

- **Linguocultural markers:** words and phrases that reflect cultural worldview (e.g., notions of honor, modesty, freedom, or individuality).
- **Gendered discursive strategies:** linguistic patterns associated with male or female speech.
- **Cultural scripts:** socially accepted behaviours encoded in language.

These tools allow a comparative analysis of how Vafo and Atwood linguistically construct their characters.

Representation of Female Characters

Salomat Vafo: Women between Tradition and Emotional Resilience

In Vafo's stories, female characters often embody **moral strength, sacrifice, and patience**, values deeply rooted in Uzbek cultural tradition. Linguistically, this is reflected in:

- frequent use of **emotionally rich adjectives** (e.g., “silent suffering,” “gentle patience”);
- **dialogue shaped by cultural politeness formulas**, emphasizing respect and restraint;
- **metaphorical associations** linking women with nature, motherhood, or spirituality.

Vafo's female protagonists rarely express anger directly; instead, emotional tension is conveyed through inner monologue, pauses, and metaphorical imagery. This aligns with cultural norms that encourage women to maintain dignity and harmony.

Margaret Atwood: Women in Conflict with Power Structures

Atwood's female characters, by contrast, speak with **psychological sharpness**, often challenging social restrictions. Her linguistic strategies include:

- **ironic or sarcastic internal monologues** exposing societal hypocrisy;
- **lexical fields of surveillance, fear, and resistance**, reflecting sociopolitical tension;
- **fragmented narrative structures** signalling psychological complexity.

Female characters in Atwood's stories typically resist control—whether from men, institutions, or internalized norms. Their speech often contains assertive, critical expressions, highlighting a feminist and individualistic worldview.

Representation of Male Characters

Vafo: Men as Bearers of Responsibility and Authority

In Vafo's works, male characters typically represent:

- family responsibility,
- traditional authority,
- moral duty.

Their linguistic portrayal often uses titles and respectful terms indicating hierarchical relations ("aka," "ota," "domla"). Their speech tends to be concise, authoritative, and culturally formal. Even when flawed, men are depicted within moral frameworks tied to societal expectations of leadership.

Atwood: Men as Complex Figures of Power, Control, or Vulnerability

Atwood's male characters range from emotionally distant partners to aggressive authority figures. Linguistically, they are often associated with:

- **dominant speech acts** (commands, interruptions, rhetorical questioning);
- **symbolic metaphors of control** (walls, locks, rules);
- or in some stories, **vulnerability expressed through silence and uncertainty**.

Unlike Vafo, Atwood does not treat male authority as culturally inevitable; instead, she critiques or deconstructs it.

Comparative Linguocultural Insights

Cultural Influence on Gendered Language

- **Uzbek linguoculture**, as reflected in Vafo's stories, emphasizes **family unity, respect hierarchies, and emotional endurance**, shaping characters' speech into more polite, indirect forms.
- **Canadian linguoculture**, reflected in Atwood's narrative, foregrounds **individual rights, critical introspection, and gender equality debates**, resulting in more confrontational or self-reflective language.

Feminine Identity

Both authors center women's inner lives but differ in tone:

- Vafo: **quiet resilience, moral fortitude, culturally embedded femininity**.
- Atwood: **assertiveness, psychological rebellion, feminist critique**.

Masculine Identity

Masculinity in the two traditions reveals contrasting cultural views:

- Vafo: **protector-leader archetype** grounded in tradition.
- Atwood: **ambivalent or oppressive figure**, often questioned or destabilized.

Shared Themes

Despite cultural differences, both writers highlight:

- emotional struggles of women,
- societal pressure shaping gender behaviour,
- tension between personal desire and social expectation.

These commonalities show that gender issues transcend cultural boundaries, even when expressed through distinct linguistic systems.

Conclusion

The linguocultural analysis of Salomat Vafo's and Margaret Atwood's short stories demonstrates that gender representation is deeply tied to cultural worldview and linguistic tradition. Vafo's writing reflects the values of Uzbek society, where women's moral strength and men's responsibility are expressed through respectful and metaphorically rich language. Atwood, however, employs a more confrontational, psychologically intricate linguistic style, revealing the complexities of gender relations in Western society.

Although the two authors come from vastly different cultural contexts, their works intersect in portraying women's emotional depth, societal pressures, and search for autonomy. This comparative study underscores the importance of linguocultural factors in shaping literary gender identities and reveals how literature from diverse cultures can engage with universal human concerns through different linguistic and cultural lenses.

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