



The Expression of National Mentality through Irony in English and Uzbek Literature

Выражение национального менталитета через иронию в английской и узбекской литературе

Ingliz va o'zbek adabiyotida kinoya orqali milliy mentalitetning ifodalanishi

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Annotation. This study examines how irony functions as a literary tool to convey national identity in both English and Uzbek literary traditions. Focusing on the writings of William Shakespeare and Hamid Olimjon Uygun, the research highlights how each author reflects the moral and cultural values of their societies through different types of irony. Shakespeare's works use irony to question power structures and social appearances in the Elizabethan context, while Uygun applies metaphorical and symbolic irony to comment on societal issues under Soviet limitations. The paper also explores the linguistic and cultural challenges involved in translating irony between English and Uzbek, showing how deeply it is rooted in national ways of thinking and expression.

Key words: Irony, national identity, Shakespeare, Uygun, literary translation, cultural context, allegory, Soviet censorship, dialogic irony, Linda Hutcheon.

Аннотация. В этом исследовании рассматривается использование иронии как литературного приёма для выражения национальной идентичности в английской и узбекской литературе. На примере произведений Уильяма Шекспира и Хаида Олимджона Уйгуна показано, как авторы через различные формы иронии отражают нравственные и культурные ценности своего времени. Шекспир применяет иронию для критики власти и общественных масок в эпоху Елизаветы, тогда как Уйгун использует символику и метафоры, чтобы мягко критиковать общество в условиях советской цензуры. Также рассматриваются трудности перевода иронии между английским и узбекским языками, подчёркивая её связь с национальным мышлением и выразительными средствами.

Ключевые слова: Ирония, национальная идентичность, Шекспир, Уйгун, литературный перевод, культурный контекст, аллегория, советская цензура, диалогическая ирония, Линда Хатчеон.

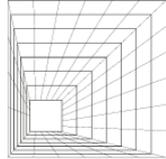
Annotatsiya. Ushbu tadqiqot ingliz va o'zbek adabiyotida kinoya orqali milliy o'zlik qanday ifodalanishini o'rganadi. William Shekspir va Hamid Olimjon Uyg'un ijodiga asoslangan holda, har ikki yozuvchining kinoya orqali o'z jamiyatining axloqiy va madaniy qadriyatlarini qanday aks ettirgani ko'rsatiladi. Shekspir asarlarida kinoya orqali hokimiyat va tashqi ko'rinishlar savol ostiga olinadi, Uyg'un esa ramziy va metaforik kinoya vositasida sovet davri ijtimoiy cheklovlari fonida tanqidiy fikrlar bildiradi. Tadqiqot, shuningdek, ingliz va o'zbek tillari o'rtasida kinoyani tarjima qilishdagi madaniy va tilshunoslikdagi qiyinchiliklarni yoritadi.



Kalit so'zlar: Kinoya, milliy o'zlik, Shekspir, Uyg'un, adabiy tarjima, madaniy kontekst, ramziylik, sovet senzura, dialogik kinoya, Linda Xatchen.

Introduction. Irony, as a rhetorical and literary device, has long served as a sophisticated method for writers to convey layered meanings, critique dominant ideologies, and reflect the complexities of human experience. More than just a stylistic feature, irony often reveals the deeper values, contradictions, and cultural assumptions that shape national identity. In the context of literature, it becomes a bridge between language and thought, between what is said and what is meant. This study focuses on the use of irony in two distinct literary traditions—English and Uzbek—to explore how it functions as a means of expressing national mentality. Through the works of William Shakespeare and Hamid Olimjon Uyg'un, the paper examines how irony is shaped by cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts, and how it communicates the unique worldview of each society. In English literature, few authors demonstrate the depth and versatility of irony more than William Shakespeare.[2] His plays—whether tragic, comic, or historical—employ irony as a central narrative and rhetorical device. Shakespearean irony often operates on multiple levels: it may reveal a character's hidden motives, highlight the gap between appearance and reality, or expose the limitations of human perception. In *Julius Caesar*, for instance, Mark Antony's repeated reference to Brutus as "an honourable man" is a clear example of verbal irony. While the words appear respectful, the context reveals Antony's true intent: to question Brutus's actions and sway public opinion against him. This type of irony is not only clever but also politically charged, revealing how language can be manipulated to influence power and provoke social reflection. In this way, Shakespeare's use of irony reflects the political tensions and philosophical concerns of Elizabethan England—a society deeply engaged with questions of hierarchy, legitimacy, and moral ambiguity.

In contrast, irony in Uzbek literature, particularly in the works of Hamid Olimjon Uyg'un, takes on a more subtle and allegorical form. Uyg'un, writing in the Soviet period, had to navigate strict censorship and ideological control. [1] Direct criticism of authority or societal injustice was rarely permissible, so Uzbek writers often turned to poetic and symbolic forms of expression. For Uyg'un, irony became a way to voice dissent, question norms, and highlight contradictions within society—all without overt confrontation. His works, influenced by classical Eastern literature and Sufi poetic traditions, often employ metaphor, contradiction, and symbolic opposition to convey deeper meanings. Unlike the direct sarcasm or theatrical irony of Shakespeare, Uyg'un's irony whispers rather than shouts. It invites the reader to look beyond the surface, to decode meaning embedded in allegory and metaphor, and to engage with the underlying critique of social and political realities. These differences are not merely stylistic—they reflect fundamental aspects of national mentality. English literary tradition, especially during Shakespeare's time, encouraged open public discourse, satire, and dramatic performance. Irony was a performative act, often used in public settings like the theater to challenge norms and entertain audiences. In Uzbek literature, especially during the 20th century, the literary environment demanded discretion and restraint. Irony had to be encoded within culturally acceptable forms, drawing on historical styles that emphasized indirectness, elegance, and layered meaning. This speaks to a broader cultural disposition toward subtlety, respect for authority, and the use of art as a means of quiet resistance. Another important dimension explored in this study is the translation of irony across languages and cultures. Irony does not always survive translation intact. Its effect depends heavily on tone, cultural knowledge, and shared assumptions between writer and reader. When rendering Shakespeare's irony into Uzbek or Uyg'un's poetic irony into English, translators face the challenge of preserving not just meaning, but also emotional and rhetorical nuance. This requires a deep understanding of both the source and target cultures. In many cases, irony must be adapted,



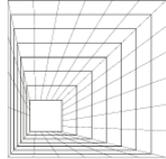
rephrased, or entirely reimagined to retain its intended impact. As such, the translator becomes not just a linguistic mediator, but a cultural interpreter—a vital figure in the transmission of national mentality through literature. In examining the works of Shakespeare and Uygun, this paper aims to highlight how irony operates both universally and locally. It shows how authors from vastly different backgrounds can use similar literary strategies to express the distinct voices of their people. Ultimately, irony becomes a tool for revealing truth, challenging authority, and articulating the soul of a nation—whether through the grand soliloquies of the Globe Theatre or the allegorical verses of Uzbek poetry.

Literature review. Irony has long attracted scholarly attention due to its complex nature and its powerful function in literary discourse. It serves not only as a stylistic or rhetorical tool but also as a means of cultural and ideological reflection. Researchers across literary theory, stylistics, and translation studies have examined how irony operates differently across languages and traditions, often shaped by social, historical, and political contexts.[1] For example, without knowing the context — the betrayal and the moral conflict — a reader might take Antony's words at face value and completely miss the irony. In Uygun – Poem "Adolat qani?" ("Where is Justice?") Uygun writes lines like:

"Baxtli zamon, bu yorug' kunlarimiz" ("Our happy era, these bright days of ours") — which appears to praise the Soviet regime. But Uzbek readers of the time, familiar with censorship, injustice, and daily hardship, would recognize the sarcasm beneath the praise. The irony lies in the contrast between the words and the reader's real-life experience. Without knowledge of Soviet repression, a foreign reader or literal translator might assume the poem is genuinely positive. [6] But within the Uzbek context, this is sharp, coded criticism — a classic example of allegorical irony shaped by political constraint. We think that Linda Hutcheon's point is both accurate and essential to understanding how irony functions in literature. Her argument — that irony is context-dependent and dialogic — highlights why irony is not simply a matter of clever wording, but a complex exchange between the writer and the reader. I fully agree with her. Irony, by its nature, depends on what is not said directly — the hidden meaning behind the surface. That hidden meaning can only be uncovered if the reader shares the same knowledge, cultural codes, or emotional experience as the writer. Without that shared context, irony often fails or is misunderstood. In Uygun's case, his readers — living under Soviet censorship — had to learn how to read between the lines to recognize criticism masked as praise. These aren't just literary tricks — they are forms of cultural communication. That's why we believe Hutcheon is absolutely right to call irony dialogic: it works only when there is a "conversation" between writer and reader, rooted in shared experience. Linda Hutcheon in her seminal work *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, argues that irony is fundamentally context-dependent and dialogic.[2] It requires shared knowledge between the author and audience to be understood, and its meaning can shift depending on social positioning. This insight is particularly relevant when comparing authors like Shakespeare and Uygun, who operated in radically different cultural and political landscapes. In Shakespeare – Julius Caesar When Mark Antony says, "And Brutus is an honourable man," during Caesar's funeral, the irony only works if the audience understands that Antony is not actually praising Brutus. Instead, he is implying the opposite — that Brutus is, in fact, a traitor. [7] This verbal irony relies on shared political awareness and the audience's understanding of Caesar's assassination. When we start to look at the example,

"Yet Brutus says he was ambitious,

And Brutus is an honourable man." On the surface, this line appears respectful — but Shakespeare's intended irony is only understood if the audience is aware that, Brutus participated in Caesar's murder, claiming it was for the "good of Rome." Antony disagrees but



cannot say so directly without risking danger or public backlash. In one of Uygun's poems, he writes:

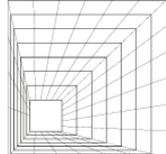
"Baxtli zamon, bizga nur olib kelgan tuzum..."

("A fortunate era, the system that brought us light...")

To a literal reader, this may sound like sincere praise of the Soviet regime.

But to Uzbek readers living under Soviet rule, the irony was clear, the poem describes light and happiness, while people were experiencing repression, fear, and poverty. The contrast between words and reality created allegorical irony. Because of censorship, Uygun couldn't criticize the system openly. But readers shared his experience and could decode the hidden message. We believe Linda Hutcheon's approach to irony is both insightful and highly relevant, especially when analyzing literature across cultures.[5] Her central claim—that irony is context-dependent and dialogic—captures the true complexity of how irony works. Irony is not a universal tool that carries the same meaning everywhere; rather, its success depends heavily on context, tone, and the reader's ability to interpret underlying meaning. One of the most valuable aspects of Hutcheon's theory is her emphasis on the reader's role. She argues that irony is not a monologue from the author, but a dialogue between author and audience, requiring shared understanding and cultural awareness. Whether a reader understands the ironic message depends on their social position, background knowledge, and cultural literacy. This makes irony a social and interpretive act—not just a literary technique. Her theory is especially useful when studying cross-cultural or politically sensitive literature. For example, it explains why Shakespeare's irony is bold and rhetorical, shaped by the open public discourse of Elizabethan England, while Uygun's irony is subtle and metaphorical, shaped by censorship in Soviet Uzbekistan. Both authors use irony effectively, but the way it is received depends entirely on the audience's familiarity with their respective social environments. Hutcheon's approach also proves valuable in translation studies, where irony is often lost or misunderstood due to differences in tone, cultural knowledge, or political sensitivity.[4] In this sense, Hutcheon moves irony beyond stylistic analysis and turns it into a powerful tool for understanding literature as a reflection of social and historical consciousness. Her work provides a practical and theoretical framework that is essential for anyone analyzing irony in global, multilingual, or historically layered texts.

Conclusion. Irony, as explored through the works of William Shakespeare and Hamid Olimjon Uygun, proves to be a powerful literary device for expressing national mentality, reflecting cultural values, and engaging with political realities. While Shakespeare uses irony openly to challenge authority, question morality, and expose societal contradictions in Elizabethan England, Uygun employs more subtle, allegorical forms of irony shaped by the constraints of Soviet censorship and Eastern poetic traditions.[3] This contrast illustrates how irony, though universal in its form, is deeply shaped by historical, cultural, and ideological contexts. Linda Hutcheon's theory — that irony is context-dependent and dialogic — offers a vital framework for understanding how meaning is constructed not just by the author, but in collaboration with the audience. Both Shakespeare's and Uygun's works show that irony can function as a form of coded communication, capable of conveying powerful messages to those who are culturally and socially positioned to receive them. Moreover, the challenge of translating irony across languages highlights the fragility and complexity of this device, as tone, subtext, and cultural meaning often resist direct conversion. Ultimately, this study confirms that irony is more than a stylistic ornament; it is a lens through which writers critique society, communicate dissent, and affirm cultural identity. By comparing two authors from vastly different literary and political traditions, we gain a deeper appreciation for the role of irony as both a creative and ideological force in world literature.



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