

Verbalization of the Concepts “Happiness” and “Unhappiness” in Uzbek Folktales: A Corpus-Based Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Happiness and unhappiness are deeply shaped universal emotions. As collections of cultural values, folktales are ideal sample to examine how these concepts are verbalized within a specific tradition. While corpus linguistics has been applied to study emotion concepts, its focused application to the structured narrative world of folktales remains limited. This study aims to conduct a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the verbalization of “happiness” and “unhappiness” in a specialized corpus of Uzbek folktales. It seeks to identify the key linguistic markers, their collocations, and narrative distribution to uncover the cultural model of emotions embedded within this genre. The methods included frequency, collocation, concordance plot analysis in the corpus of Uzbek folktales via Ant.Conc. The analysis revealed a higher total frequency of “unhappiness” verbalizers, underscoring the narrative journey from adversity to triumph. Core happiness markers included xursand (happy) and the concluding phrase murod-maqsadigaytibdi (achieved their goals). Collocation analysis confirmed cross-cultural conceptual metaphors, such as “Happiness is up” and “unhappiness is down.” A key finding was the symbolic use of numbers, with 7 and 40 marking celebratory periods and 3 preceding moments of resolution. We conclude that the verbalization of happiness and unhappiness in Uzbek folktales is a highly conventionalized system that aligns with a universal narrative arc while employing culture-specific imagery and symbols.

Keywords: Happiness, unhappiness, conceptual verbalization, Uzbek folktales, corpus linguistics, Ant.Conc toolkit.

INTRODUCTION

The concepts of “happiness” and “unhappiness” are fundamental concepts. While studied across disciplines from philosophy to neuroscience, the linguistic focus is on how these abstract emotions are encoded and realized through language. The ancient philosopher Aristotle (1895) described happiness as “the best, the most honourable, and the most pleasant of all things.” In contrast, Harari (2015) highlights its biochemical basis, noting it is a reaction to “hormones coursing through our bloodstream”. Beyond these individual perspectives, large-scale projects like the annual World Happiness Report track well-being on a societal level. In linguistics, the focus shifts to verbalization. Several linguists have worked on the representation of happiness in various languages, including its translation between Uzbek and English (Karimova 2023; Tuxtaxodjayeva 2017), its expression in Chinese phraseology (Valiyeva 2023), and the verbalization of its binary opposition with unhappiness in English (Raxmonova 2024; Kosimova 2021). These works have contributed to forming lists of relevant language units and analyzing their semantic relations. However, the application of this framework to specific, culturally-rich genres like folktales remains an underexplored area. This study distinguishes itself by analyzing folktales, which are cultural cornerstones that reflect shared community values rather than a single author's idiolect. They are full of conventionalized structures where happiness is often signaled by fixed formulas. This research aims to bridge this gap by applying a predetermined list of verbalizers to a specialized corpus of Uzbek folktales. The study is guided by the following questions: What is the frequency and distribution of key lexical verbalizers for “happiness” and “unhappiness” in the corpus? What are the primary collocational patterns and semantic profiles of these verbalizers? How is the narrative positioning of these markers realized, and what does it reveal about the emotional arc of Uzbek folktales?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on the conceptualization of happiness spans multiple traditions. For instance, Suiyerkul and Chakyroglu (2014) found that factors like religion influence its conceptualization in Kazakh proverbs. Yan and Zhang (2023) identified metaphorical models and characteristic features among Russian speakers, aiding psycholinguistic studies. A significant methodological advancement comes from corpus-based approaches. Moreno-Ortiz et al. (2022), analyzing the “Happy DB” corpus, found that the language of happiness includes not only positive but also neutral and negative words, they additionally found sources like “newness” and “food” as common signals for happiness. In folkloristics, scholars have established that folktales follow predictable patterns. Propp (1968) demonstrated that these narratives typically move from a state of deficiency to a resolution that restores moral order – a pattern manifest through contrasting lexical fields. Bettelheim (1989) emphasized the unique psychological impact of folktales, that is, the language expressing emotions in them might differ from other textual forms due to their simplicity and directness for a child’s understanding. Despite these insights, a significant gap exists in combining corpus linguistic methods with the analysis of emotional concepts in folktales. This study seeks to integrate these strands, using empirical data to explore how cultural models of happiness and unhappiness are linguistically constructed within Uzbek folktales.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research uses a ready-made list of linguistic units verbalizing happiness and unhappiness as queries for a corpus analysis. A specialized digital corpus was constructed for this study, consisting of 44 Uzbek folktales digitalized from the collection *O‘zbekxalqertaklari* (Afzalov et al. 2014). The corpus comprises 118,575 tokens. The analysis was conducted using the Ant.Conc software (Anthony 2024). The following procedures were employed:

- **Frequency analysis:** The “KWIC” (Key-Word-In-Context), “word list” and “keyword” tools were used to identify and quantify the most salient verbalizers.
- **Collocation analysis:** The “collocates,” “cluster,” and “n-gram” tools were used with a span of 5 words to the left and right (L5-R5) to identify significant co-occurring words.
- **Narrative positioning analysis:** The “Plot” tool was used to generate a visual representation of the distribution of each verbalizer throughout the corpus.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The **frequency analysis** reveals an important finding: the total frequency of verbalizers for “unhappiness” (190 instances) is higher than for “happiness” (174 instances). This contradicts the notion that folktales always end with happiness and instead highlights the cultural view of happiness as an achievement earned through overcoming difficulties. This aligns with Moreno-Ortiz et al., (2022)’s finding that negative words can also contextualize the description of happy moments.

Table 1. *Frequency of key lexical verbalizers of “happiness”*

S. No	Verbalizer in Uzbek	English translation	Frequency
1	<i>Xursand</i>	Happy/pleased	73
2	<i>Murod-maqsad*</i>	Desired goal	37
3	<i>Kulib</i>	Laugh	33
4	<i>Baxt</i>	Happiness	10
5	<i>Baxtli</i>	Happy	4
6	<i>Shodlik</i>	Joy	5
7	<i>Tabassum</i>	Smile	3
8	<i>Farog‘at</i>	Satisfaction	3
9	<i>Kuldi</i>	Laughed	3
10	<i>Xursandchilik</i>	Joy/gladness	2
11	<i>Jilmaydi</i>	Smiled	1

*Note: *Murod-maqsad* has no exact English equivalent. The phrase *murod-maqsadigayetibdi* functions as the conventional happy ending, similar to “and they lived happily ever after.”

The most frequent word is *xursand* (happy/pleased), which in 73 instances collocates with *bo'lib* (being). The high frequency of *murod-maqsad* (found in 37 of 44 tales) illustrates the truth of Bettelheim (1989)'s assertion that folktales provide a happy outcome.

Table 2. *Frequency of key lexical verbalizers of "unhappiness"*

S. No.	Verbalizator	English version	Frequency
1	<i>Yig'lab</i>	Crying	87
2	<i>Xafa</i>	Sad/unhappy	80
3	<i>Qayg'u</i>	Sadness	13
4	<i>Badbaxt</i>	Unfortunate	3
5	<i>Afsus</i>	Disappointment	2
6	<i>Mungli</i>	Sad	2
7	<i>Yuragiezilib</i>	Heartbroken	2
8	<i>Dardli</i>	Painful	1

The collocation analysis provides valid insight into the specific scenarios that trigger happiness and unhappiness in the folktale world. The verbalizator *baxt* (happiness) exhibits strong collocational bonds with: *baxtqushi* (bird of happiness), *baxtinisinamoq* (test one's happiness), *baxtiochilmoq* (be happy), *baxtlibo'lmoq* (being happy), *baxtlihayot* (happy life), *baxtlikuyov* (happy bridegroom), *baxtliturmush* (happy marriage). This profile indicates that happiness is predominantly conceptualized as a social emotion, achieved through marriage, acceptance, and communal celebration, and often triggered by the actions of others. The phrase *baxtqushi* (bird of happiness) illustrates that Lakoff (2003)'s metaphor "happiness is up" is also universal for Uzbek tradition, too. This is because birds usually fly, in accordance with the examples in the folktales the birds usually made fly to find out someone who is happy and fortunate. If somebody is happy, they are described as *baxtqushiboshigaqo'ngan* (the bird of happiness is on his head).

Hits: 4 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 4 of 4 hits

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
34_Qora...	yeriga qarab jo'nabdi. Bu mamlakat xalqi podsho o'lsa,	Baxt qushi"	degan qushni uchirib, shu qush kimning boshiga qo'
34_Qora...	tning xalqi kabi, otdan tushib bir yerda turibdi, uchirilgan "	Baxt qushi"	to'g'ri qizning boshiga kelib qo'nbdi.
34_Qora...	iga qarshilik ko'rsatib, qushni uchirib yuboribdilar. Ammo "	Baxt qushi"	uch marta uchirilsa ham hech kimga qo'nmay,
34_Qora...	ekan. Erkakcha kiyim kiygan qizning shaharga kirish vaqti "	Baxt qushi"	ni uchirish vaqtiga to'g'ri kelgan ekan.

Figure 1. *The concordance line of baxtqushi (bird of happiness)*

Preliminary analysis for *g'am* (sadness) and *qayg'u* (unhappiness) shows their strong association with: *hafabo'lmoq* (being unhappy), *hafako'rinmoq* (seem unhappy), *munqliovoz* (sad voice), *bag'riezilib* (heartbroken), *eybadbaxt* (), *yig'labturgan* (stood crying), *yig'labytgan* (lied crying), *yig'labo'tirgan* (sat crying). These results show the correspondence of Lakoff (2003)'s¹ metaphor "unhappiness is down" as these examples show sitting down or lying down while crying. The patterns frame unhappiness as a state caused by poverty, loss of somebody or having no children according to the results of N-Grams tool.

AntConc

File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus

Name: temp

Files: 44

Tokens: 118575

KWIC Plot File View Cluster N-Gram Collocate Word Keyword Wordcloud ChatAI

Total Hits: 78 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 78 of 78 hits

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
uz001_Abdulaziz.txt	zali bo'lgan bir qiz oltin sandiqqa suyangan holda	yig'lab	o'tirgan emish. Yigit uni ko'ribdi-yu.
uz002_Ahmoq podsho.	qolgan haligi bitta tovug'i bilan bitta xo'rozi kelib,	yig'lab	o'tirgan qizga yordam beribdi: bir nafasda moshni
uz003_Ajdar qush.txt	zir masjid bor ekan. Masjidida qalandarlar zikr qilib	yig'lab	o'tiribdi. — Hoy aka, bu nima gap, nima
uz004_Ajraspohvon.txt	Bir vaqtda akasi ikki quyonni ushlab kelsa, singlisi	yig'lab	o'tiribdi. — Ha, singlim, senga nima bo'ldi,
uz005_Besh qiz.txt	deb devnikiga qarab yo'l olibdi. Podsho yig'lab-	yig'lab	o'g'il, kelinlari va odamlari bilan o'
uz006_Boyvachcha bila	ii. Enaga aytibdi: — Bo'lmasa, akang kelganida sen	yig'lab	o'tir. Akang "Nega yig'layapsan?" desa, menga "
uz007_Choloq bo'ri.txt	jaytib kelsa, bog'-rog'i yo'q, kuchugi bilan mushugi	yig'lab	o'tirar ekan. Yigit bu ishlarni ko'rib,
uz008_Davlat bilan Ahr	ia haydab yuboribdi. Ko'z yoshlarini oqizib zor-zor	yig'lab	o'tirdilar. Yana rahmim kelib oramizga qo'shdim.
uz009_Devbachcha.txt	ilika ham chiqib qarasa, bir kampir darvoza oldida	yig'lab	o'tiribdi. Malika kampiridan: "Nima bo'ldi, ena,
uz010_Dunyoda yo'q'hi	o'ramikanman yoki ko'chada qolarmikanman, deb	yig'lab	o'tiribman, — debdi. Malikaning kampiriga rahmi ki
uz011_Erkajon.txt	Malika kampiridan: "Nima bo'ldi, ena, nega muncha	yig'lab	o'tiribsiz", deb so'rabdi. Kampir: — Ey, bolam,
uz012_Erkenja.txt	shikni ochib kirdi. Har ikkalasi bir-birini quchoqlab,	yig'lab	ko'rishdi. Yigit malikasiz juda qiynalganini yoriga bi

Search Query Words Case Regex Results Set [All hits] Context Size [10 token(s)]

Figure 2. *The collocates of yig'lab (crying) which represents unhappiness*

Conversely, the collocates of *yig'lab* (crying) are mostly *o'tiribdi*, *yotibdi* (sat, lied), providing strong linguistic evidence

for the universal metaphor "Unhappiness is down" (Lakoff & Johnson 2003).

The concordance plot analysis yields one of the most striking findings. Most Uzbek folktales end with the phrase *murod-maqsadigayetibdi*: the corpus illustrates 37 instances of such ending which means 37 folktales of 44 folktales end with this phrase. The phrase verbalizes happiness of folktale characters which is functionally equivalent with "happily lived ever after" and positions in the end of the folktale texts. This visually confirms the genre's conventional "happily ever after" structure. While the plot tool showed a less clear distribution for individual words, this macro-level pattern is definitive.

An unexpected finding was **the symbolic use of numbers**. The numbers 7 and 40 are used to mark periods of happiness and celebration (e.g., *yettikechayukunduzto'y*), with a combined frequency of over 140 instances. In contrast, the number 3 predominantly precedes moments of resolution, often marking a period of trial. This numerical symbolism adds a deeper layer of cultural structure to the emotional narrative.

CONCLUSION

This corpus-assisted study demonstrates that the verbalization of "happiness" and "unhappiness" in Uzbek folktales is a structured, culturally-coded system. The empirical data leads to several key conclusions. Firstly, the higher aggregate frequency of "unhappiness" verbalizers quantitatively validates the classic narrative arc where sorrow is a necessary precursor to triumph. This journey is linguistically cemented by the highly conventionalized closing phrase *murod-maqsadigayetibdi* (and lived happily). Secondly, the collocational patterns provide deep insight into the cultural conceptualization of these emotions, confirming universal conceptual metaphors like "Happiness is up" and "Unhappiness is down" within the Uzbek context. Finally, the discovery of the symbolic numbers 3, 7, and 40 adds a unique layer to our understanding, revealing how numerical symbolism is woven into the emotional fabric of the tales. This research validates the application of a predefined verbalizer

framework combined with corpus tools as a powerful methodology for the data-driven analysis of cultural schemas. Future work will involve a complete analysis of the verbalizer inventory and a comparative study with folktales from other traditions to further illuminate the interplay between universal narrative structures and unique cultural expressions.

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