



ANALYZING CULTURAL DISCOURSE IN JADID WRITINGS THROUGH CORPUS METHODS

Madina Dalieva

DSc, Associate Professor

Uzbek State World Languages University

Abstract

The Jadid movement in Central Asia, flourishing during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, sought to reform Muslim society through new educational methodologies, sociocultural modernity, and linguistic innovations. While scholarship on the Jadids has often focused on political and educational changes, relatively less attention has been paid to the cultural discourse embedded in their writings. This article examines cultural themes in Uzbek Jadid texts, drawing on corpus-based methods such as keyword analysis, collocation, and concordance. By analyzing references to family life, moral norms, and communal identity, we show how Jadid authors navigated tradition and modernity, advocating for both reform and continuity with Islamic-Turkic cultural roots. The findings underscore the importance of integrating computational text analysis with historical-linguistic approaches to reveal how reformist discourse shaped and reflected broader cultural values in early 20th-century Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Jadid movement; corpus linguistics; Uzbek; cultural discourse; digital humanities; collocation analysis.

Introduction

The Jadid movement of late 19th–early 20th century Central Asia has long been recognized as a catalyst for educational, social, and linguistic reforms (Khalid, 1998). Proponents of *usul-i jadid* (“new-method”) schooling introduced modern curricula and championed new forms of literary expression in vernacular Uzbek. Historians have explored these reformist strategies in sociopolitical contexts (Alimova, 2018). However, the **cultural discourse** animating Jadid texts – references to family, moral frameworks, customs, and social etiquette – remains a relatively underexamined facet of their literary legacy. Such cultural themes reveal



how the Jadids negotiated continuity with established Islamic-Turkic traditions while also embracing the modernity of their era.

Recently, **digital humanities** methods, especially corpus linguistics, have enabled a more nuanced perspective on historical texts (Anthony, 2019; Sinclair, 1991). Applying computational tools – such as keyword extraction, collocation, and qualitative concordance analysis – allows scholars to uncover patterns of word usage and rhetorical strategies that inform cultural meaning (Biber, 1998). This study builds upon previous corpus-driven research on Jadid writings (e.g., Dalieva, 2024; Saidov, 2016) to focus specifically on the ways cultural discourse is constructed. By examining references to morality, tradition, and communal norms within a digitized corpus of Jadid Uzbek texts, we aim to clarify how the Jadids framed their calls for reform alongside the cultural dimensions of everyday life.

Methods

Corpus Construction

A specialized corpus of **Uzbek Jadid texts** was compiled, including newspapers (Taraqqiy, Oyna), educational essays, and literary works (plays, short stories, poetry) from prominent Jadid authors such as Mahmud Khoja Behbudiy, Munawwar Qori, and Abdurauf Fitrat. The texts, spanning roughly **1895–1920**, were sourced from digital archives and transliterated from the original Arabic script into modern Uzbek Latin script following standard guidelines (Saidov, 2016). In total, the corpus comprised approximately **1.2 million words** after cleaning and de-duplication.

For reference and comparative analysis, an additional smaller corpus of pre-Jadid Chagatai texts was assembled. This **control corpus** (c. 1800–1880) included select classical literary and didactic works, allowing us to identify which lexical and thematic patterns were characteristic of the Jadid cultural discourse rather than generic to earlier Central Asian Turkic texts.

Analytical Tools

We employed **AntConc** (Anthony, 2019) and **Python-based** natural language processing libraries to perform:



1. **Keyword Analysis:** Identifying words statistically more frequent in the Jadid corpus compared to the control corpus. This highlights culturally salient concepts unique to Jadid discourse.
2. **Collocation Analysis:** Using measures like mutual information (MI) and t-scores to find frequent co-occurrences around key cultural terms (e.g., “family”, “women”, “tradition”, “customs”). This reveals how these words are framed or discussed (Sinclair, 1991).
3. **Concordance and Qualitative Review:** Close reading of selected concordance lines to contextualize patterns in usage (Fairclough, 1995). This helps interpret the cultural significance of frequent keywords and collocations.

Criteria for Cultural Terms

A preliminary reading of texts identified likely cultural terms (family-related words, social virtues, communal practices). We also let the data “speak” by applying an open-ended keyword extraction. Terms that surfaced with significant frequency – e.g., millat (“nation”), axloq (“morals”), odamlar (“people”) – were investigated further to discern their cultural connotations.

Results

Salient Cultural Themes and Keywords

Keyword analysis revealed that notions of **morality**, **community**, and **family** loomed large in Jadid writings. For instance, words like axloq (morals/ethics) were approximately 2.5 times more frequent in the Jadid corpus than in the pre-Jadid corpus, often paired with calls for personal reform and education. Another high-frequency term was odamlar (people), connoting collective responsibility and communal well-being. Significantly, the term millat (nation) also occurred more often in Jadid texts, corroborating prior observations of an emergent national consciousness (Khalid, 1998). Yet, references to everyday cultural practices and social roles – e.g., ota-ona (parents), urfon (cultural knowledge), urf-odat (custom/tradition) – were surprisingly prominent, appearing in contexts such as moral guidance for children or critiques of outdated societal norms.



Collocations: Morality, Family, and Tradition

Collocation analysis clarified how these keywords clustered to shape cultural discourse. Words linked to *axloq* (morality) frequently co-occurred with references to **Islamic values** (e.g., *iman* “faith”, *halol* “permissible”) and **education** (*tarbiya* “upbringing”). This suggests that Jadid authors positioned ethical growth at the intersection of religious principles and modern schooling – implying that moral improvement and cultural refinement were inseparable from the new-method approach. Similarly, *ota-ona* (parents) often clustered with “raising children,” “responsibility,” and “enlightenment” (*ma’rifat*), reinforcing the Jadids’ stance that **domestic upbringing** was a cornerstone of social progress.

Another notable set of collocates surrounded *urf-odat* (custom/tradition), which co-occurred with terms for **reform** and **improvement** (*islah*, *taraqqiyot*). This pattern indicates the Jadid practice of **critiquing certain traditional customs** – such as lavish weddings or superstition – while simultaneously praising traditions consistent with morality and communal unity. In short, the collocations suggest a **nuanced approach**: Jadids wanted to preserve beneficial cultural elements while rejecting those deemed backward or detrimental. These textual patterns refine the common portrayal of Jadids as purely “modernist” by showing their selective engagement with tradition.

Thematic Sub-Corpus Insights

A closer look at **literary works** revealed recurring motifs of **family drama**, often depicting generational tensions. In Fitrat’s educational plays, for example, younger characters challenge parental reluctance toward new-school education, while maintaining respect for core Islamic and cultural values (Saidov, 2016). Concordance lines around father/son or mother/daughter interactions frequently intertwine appeals to moral duty, Islam, and the utility of modern education – emphasizing a continuity between cultural tradition and reformist ideals. Meanwhile, **journalistic texts** showed a higher frequency of collective terms – like “people,” “society,” “nation” – underscoring broader communal concerns over family-level intricacies.



Discussion

The results highlight the **dual orientation** of Jadid authors, who upheld cultural continuity while advocating social and moral evolution. By framing morality and education as mutually reinforcing – rooted in faith and tradition but aligned with modern “progress” – the Jadids crafted a discourse that sought to harmonize Islamic identity with reformist aspirations (Alimova, 2018; Khalid, 1998). They neither dismissed cultural norms outright nor accepted them uncritically: the repeated co-occurrence of *urf-odat* (custom) with *islah* (reform) exemplifies this approach.

From a **methodological standpoint**, the corpus-based methods applied here illuminate patterns that might remain hidden under conventional close reading.

Keyword analysis quantitatively foregrounds major cultural themes (family, morality, communal identity). **Collocation** uncovers how these themes interlace with religious, moral, and educational rhetoric. And **qualitative concordance** demonstrates the pragmatic contexts in which Jadid authors mobilized cultural references to persuade their audience – e.g., portraying mothers and fathers as guardians of moral education for their children, thus bridging traditional respect for elders with calls for progressive change. These findings echo broader scholarship on discourse in historical texts (Fairclough, 1995) and confirm that the Jadids’ reform message was deeply embedded in cultural idioms rather than a purely top-down, Westernizing agenda.

Moreover, the analysis underscores how **digital humanities** can enrich Central Asian studies by offering empirical evidence about textual patterns (Anthony, 2019). In a region where older texts are often overshadowed by state narratives, computational linguistics provides a robust way to re-examine primary sources and highlight the complexities of cultural discourse. Future work might expand the corpus to incorporate Tatar or Kazakh Jadid writings, enabling comparative analysis of how cultural discourse varied or converged across different Turkic communities. Researchers could also integrate sentiment analysis or narrative structure modeling to explore the **emotional resonance** and **persuasive strategies** in Jadid texts (Dalieva, 2024).

Ultimately, situating cultural discourse at the heart of Jadid reform activity broadens our understanding of how these thinkers strove to transform society. Rather than merely advocating modern education, they reconfigured the daily practices, moral obligations, and communal ties that bound Central Asian Muslims



together. As such, the Jadid movement's cultural discourse functioned as a powerful medium of change – one which corpus methods help us see in sharper relief.

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