

COGNITIVE EXPRESSION OF THE CONCEPT OF WOMAN IN THE WORK OF  
CHARLOTTE BRONTE: ON THE EXAMPLE OF TRANSLATIONS OF “JANE EYRE”

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**Abstract.** This article examines how the concept of “woman” is cognitively constructed in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and how this conceptualization transforms across translations. Using a cognitive linguistic approach, the study explores metaphoric structures, narrative frames, and lexical choices that shape Brontë’s portrayal of female identity, focusing on attributes such as emotional depth, intellectual independence, and moral strength.

**Keywords:** Charlotte Bronte, Jane Eyre, cognitive linguistics, concept of woman, translation studies, metaphor.

### INTRODUCTION

Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* is not only a landmark of nineteenth-century English literature but also a profound exploration of the evolving concept of womanhood during the Victorian era. The novel, through its protagonist, challenges traditional gender expectations, foregrounding themes of independence, moral integrity, intellectual equality, and emotional depth. Beyond its literary significance, *Jane Eyre* provides a rich lens for cognitive linguistic and cultural analysis, as it encodes specific conceptualizations of femininity that reflect and resist the socio-cultural norms of its time [1]. When examined through the prism of translations, these conceptualizations become even more revealing, as the transformation of language, metaphor, and stylistic nuance across cultures often reshapes the cognitive image of “woman” embedded in the text. This study examines how Brontë’s construction of female identity is expressed cognitively in the original text and how it is transformed or preserved in translations, revealing the interplay between language, culture, and conceptual thought.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

Brontë’s portrayal of *Jane Eyre* reflects a cognitive model of womanhood that is multidimensional, blending qualities traditionally deemed feminine—such as compassion, emotional sensitivity, and moral steadfastness—with traits historically associated with masculinity, including intellectual agency, assertiveness, and autonomy. Cognitive linguistics allows us to interpret this model not merely as a set of traits but as a network of conceptual metaphors and frames. For example, recurring metaphors of light and fire—Jane as a “light-bringer” and her inner spirit as a “flame”—encode her passion and resilience, emphasizing that true femininity, in Brontë’s view, transcends passivity or submission [2]. These metaphors contrast sharply with the imagery surrounding other female figures, such as the ethereal, submissive Blanche Ingram or the destructive Bertha Mason, thereby situating Jane as a synthesis of balance, intellect, and moral courage.

The Victorian cultural backdrop reinforces the cognitive complexity of Brontë’s heroine. At a time when women were largely confined to domestic roles and denied legal or economic autonomy, *Jane Eyre* embodies a counter-discourse that advocates for intellectual equality and personal freedom. Her insistence on being Rochester’s “equal,” both morally and emotionally, articulates a conceptual redefinition of the female role—not as a dependent subordinate but as an autonomous partner. This

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representation anticipates the later feminist discourse, suggesting that Brontë's narrative functions as an early cognitive reshaping of gender constructs [3].

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Translations of Jane Eyre into various languages, including Russian, French, and Uzbek, illustrate how cognitive representations of womanhood are reshaped across linguistic and cultural contexts. Translators often face challenges in conveying Brontë's nuanced metaphoric structures and the stylistic tone that contributes to Jane's characterization. For instance, in several Russian translations, the metaphor of Jane as a "flame" is softened to "light" or "spark," diminishing the intensity of her inner strength and rebellious spirit. Similarly, idiomatic expressions that highlight Jane's assertiveness are frequently neutralized to align with the target culture's historical views on femininity, particularly in translations produced during periods when submissiveness and modesty were socially idealized traits.

These shifts reflect the broader phenomenon of "conceptual domestication," wherein translators adapt cognitive frames to align with the target audience's expectations and cultural schemas. While this may make the text more accessible, it risks diluting Brontë's revolutionary vision of female identity. Conversely, more recent translations, informed by feminist and cognitive linguistic approaches, strive to preserve Brontë's original metaphoric richness, ensuring that Jane's assertiveness, emotional intensity, and moral courage remain central to her cognitive portrayal.

Beyond metaphor, lexical choices in translation significantly shape the conceptualization of womanhood. Words denoting Jane's emotions—such as "fervor," "resolve," or "indignation"—are sometimes softened or replaced with more neutral terms, altering the reader's perception of her psychological depth. This linguistic moderation often reduces Jane's image from that of a dynamic, emotionally complex individual to a more conventional, subdued female archetype. The representation of her dialogues with Rochester is particularly telling, where Brontë's original emphasizes Jane's rhetorical strength and intellectual parity, some translations attenuate her assertive voice, inadvertently re-inscribing patriarchal hierarchies [3].

At the same time, the translation process can also amplify certain aspects of Brontë's concept of womanhood. In languages where emotional expressiveness is culturally valued, Jane's inner turmoil and resilience can appear even more striking, allowing readers to perceive her as a symbol of endurance and moral fortitude. This duality underscores the role of translation as both a mediator and a co-creator of cognitive cultural models.

Analyzing the cognitive expression of the concept of woman in Jane Eyre and its translations contributes to both cognitive linguistics and feminist literary criticism. Cognitively, it demonstrates how metaphors, narrative frames, and lexical choices construct complex gendered identities that resonate differently across cultures. From a feminist perspective, it highlights how translation can either perpetuate or challenge gender stereotypes, affecting the reception of Brontë's proto-feminist message [4].

#### CONCLUSION

Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre constructs a cognitively rich and culturally subversive concept of womanhood, one that unites emotional sensitivity with intellectual independence and moral strength. Through its metaphors, narrative voice, and character dynamics, the novel articulates a vision of femininity that defies the restrictive norms of its time. The translations of the novel reveal the complexities of preserving this vision across languages and cultures. Choices in metaphor, tone, and diction can either uphold Brontë's radical reimagining of the female identity or inadvertently diminish

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it by aligning with traditional gender expectations. Understanding these dynamics not only deepens appreciation for Brontë's work but also offers valuable insights into the interplay between cognition, language, and cultural conceptualization of gender.

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