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Gender Stereotypes and Their Expression in Uzbek Proverbs

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A B S T R A C T
This article examines gender stereotypes and their expression in Uzbek proverbs, situating them within the broader field of gender linguistics and comparative cultural studies. The concept of "gender," which entered linguistics in the second half of the 20th century, has become a key analytical category for understanding differences in male and female speech behavior, social roles, and linguistic representations. Drawing on theories of dominance, deficiency, and differentiation, the article highlights how patriarchal values are embedded in language, often normalizing men's speech and marginalizing women's linguistic practices. Through the analysis of Uzbek proverbs, alongside Russian, English, and French examples, the study demonstrates how traditional folklore reflects and reinforces gender stereotypes. Proverbs portray women as emotional, talkative, dependent, and socially limited, while men are depicted as rational, dominant, and authoritative. At the same time, some proverbs elevate women's qualities of tenderness, beauty, and nurturing, serving as markers of cultural identity. The findings show that gender stereotypes, despite their apparent simplicity, are deeply entrenched in social consciousness and continue to influence perceptions of gender roles in modern society.

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Introduction

The study of gender linguistics emerged in Western scholarship in the second half of the 20th century, with fundamental works by scholars such as O. Jespersen, F. Mautner, and R. Lakoff, who examined the relationship between language, gender, and social inequality. Early approaches to gender linguistics were shaped by the paradigms of dominance, deficiency, and differentiation, where men's speech was viewed as the norm and women's language was assessed as a deviation. Later, with the development of linguistic relativity (Sapir-Whorf hypothesis), scholars recognized that worldviews are shaped by language structures, and that language not only reflects but also constructs social reality, including perceptions of gender roles.

In this context, proverbs represent an invaluable source for analyzing cultural attitudes toward men and women. As products of collective wisdom, proverbs encapsulate traditional worldviews and provide insight into how gender roles and stereotypes are encoded in language. They reflect both universal human experiences and culture-specific perceptions. Proverbs from different nations—including English, French, Russian, and Uzbek traditions—share recurring themes about women's talkativeness, men's authority, and gender-specific social roles. However, Uzbek proverbs, with their distinctive cultural imagery, reveal particularly entrenched patriarchal values that define women primarily through their roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers, while attributing leadership, strength, and rationality to men.

This article focuses on the expression of gender stereotypes in Uzbek proverbs, comparing them with those of other cultures, and analyzing their role as cultural codes that reinforce social hierarchies and

shape collective consciousness about gender. By approaching proverbs through the lens of gender linguistics, the study sheds light on the enduring influence of stereotypes in society and their implications for modern understandings of gender relations.

Main part. The concept of "gender" entered linguistics from the West in the second half of the 20th century and began to develop rapidly from the mid-1990s. Western linguistics, with its fundamental research, created a solid foundation for gender linguistics and served its promising development. As a result of familiarization with the methodology of the first scientific publications on gender linguistics, it became possible to think within the framework of several ideological paradigms that interpret the results of the speech behavior of men and women - dominance, deficiency and differentiation. Men's language was accepted as the norm, while women's language was assessed as a deviation from the norm. This approach is typical of the early works of Western researchers devoted to gender issues. In particular, the gender concepts of "male" and "female" were studied by O. Jespersen, F. Mautner and R. Lakoff. In the issue of dominance, language forms were seen as a manifestation of patriarchal values, and gender communication was interpreted as a factor confirming the superior position of men. Studies in this area explained the forms of gender inequality in society and the higher social value attached to women's speech creativity and communication than to men. Along with the study of the gender aspects of verbal behavior, worldviews were also studied through the analysis of language structures. American anthropologists, studying the languages of the Native Americans and comparing them with European languages, came to general conclusions about the division of experience, the relativity of concepts and forms of thinking in different languages at the beginning of the 20th century. This situation became the basis for the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity. According to him, languages \u200b\u200bdiffer from each other in the way they categorize the world. According to Sapir and Whorf, for humanity, the environment appears as a mosaic flow of impressions, which is regulated by the human mind. This consciousness is formed mainly through the language system. Thus, a person perceives the environment, understands it, and this understanding is organized through language tools. According to Whorf, this organization is fixed in the model of the language system belonging to a particular social group. Therefore, as a person acquires language, he also acquires a specific attitude towards the world and understands this world precisely through these language structures, speech constructions and concepts.[1]

Regardless of the validity or unfoundedness of stereotypes, their truth or falsehood, any stereotype is an integral part of any culture and has the ability to influence the perception of another nation in the process of international intercultural communication. Gender stereotypes are a set of internal views on the role of men and women in society, their functions and social tasks. Gender stereotypes are not only stable combinations in language (For example: *Hamma xotin-qizlar – aqlsiz; Sochi uzun – aqli qisqa; Ayol – avvalo ona; Erkak – oilaning boshlig'i*), but also through general perceptions of men and women. For example: *Erkaklar – aql-idrokli, ayollar – hissiyotli; Erkaklar bosh bilan o'ylaydi, ayollar – yurak bilan; Erkaklar – beparvo, mas'uliyatsiz mavjudotlar, ularni faqat ayolgina me'yorda ushlay oladi; Erkak – kuch-qudrat timsoli, ayol – zaiflik ifodasi*.

Humanity has noticed that the speech of women and men differs since ancient times. The results of the first observations in this regard were expressed in proverbs and sayings. For example, *"A woman's tongue wags like lamb's tail."*[2] *Ayolning tili qo'y dumini silkitganday harakatda bo'ladi.* (English proverb); *"Ou femme y a, silence n'y a." Ayol bor joyda – sukunat bo'lmaydi.* (French proverb); *"The North Sea will be found wanting in water than a woman at loss for a word."*[3] *Shimoliy dengiz qurib qolishi mumkin, lekin ayol so'zsiz qolmaydi.* (Yutland peninsula proverb); *"Бабий язык и смирно лежит, а как пой дет вертеться, так что три топора: и рубит, и колет, и лыки дерет." Ayolning tili bir qarashda tinch yotadi, ammo bir harakatga kelsa, uch bolta bo'lib chiqadi: chopadi, teshib o'tadi va hatto to'qmoqni ham parchalab tashlaydi; "Коса до пояса, язык до колен." Sochi*

[1] Sapir, Edward. *Selected Writings in Language, Culture, and Personality*. University of California Press. – 1986;
Whorf, Benjamin Lee. *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. MIT Press, 1956.

[2] The Oxford dictionary of English Proverbs / compiled by W.G. Smith. – Clarendon Press, 1935.

[3] Jespersen O. Language, its nature development origin. George Allen & Unwin Ltd. L., 1922. P. 253.

bellariga yetadi, tili esa tizzalarga. (Russian proverbs).[4]

Gender stereotypes greatly simplify the real situation, but they are firmly rooted in the social consciousness and change very slowly. To some extent, such stereotypes, especially those that are close to superstitions, affect every person. According to the views that are firmly rooted in society, women are assigned a lower social value than men. Gender stereotypes are a system of generalized ideas about the behavior of men and women, formed in a culture.[5] According to the definition of A.V. Kirilina, gender stereotypes are "culturally and socially conditioned ideas about the qualities and norms of behavior of representatives of both sexes and their expression through language." Gender stereotypes are reinforced through language, are closely related to the expression of judgment, and influence the formation of a pattern of behavior expected of representatives of a particular sex.[6]

As I.S. Kletsina noted, a gender stereotype is "a simplified, schematized, and emotionally colored image of a man and a woman."[7]

When studying the communicative strategies of men and women, first of all, differences in their speech styles are taken into account. These differences are mainly associated with upbringing and social differentiation of communicators. Most psychologists, sociologists and linguists believe that differences in communicative strategies between the sexes are formed from childhood. Men and women first acquire language in different "worlds" - that is, in the environment of boys and girls. As a person grows up, society makes certain demands on him, forms gender-specific stereotypes and norms of behavior. A woman is allowed to express her feelings directly, as a result of which emotional instability, emotionality and sentimentality are more pronounced in their speech behavior.[8] On the contrary, a typical feature of male speech behavior is emotional restraint, a desire not to reveal feelings, and to behave as a "mysterious being". Women's speech, compared to men's speech, is more enriched with emotional assessments, exaggerations, comparisons, and often tends to move on to topics that are not directly related to the communicative situation. Men's speech behavior is usually aimed at maintaining independence and maintaining a high social status. Women often strive to establish contact through communication, while men - to solve a problem.[9]

The difference in communicative strategies is also significantly influenced by the nature of the social functions of men and women in society. Male communicators participate more in the social sphere, while women are mainly limited to the framework of family and personal relationships. Since men and women belong to different social groups, they perform different social roles in society, as a result of which society expects certain models of speech behavior from them.[10]

E.I. Goroshko also examines the differences in the written speech of men and women. [11] According to the results of his experiments, texts written by women are longer, have a greater number of words in a sentence, and are less lexically diverse, but verbs and predicates, socially evaluative and emotional lexical units prevail, and are distinguished by the imperative mood, simple sentences, connecting links and definite nouns. Men, on the contrary, are grammatically less literate, tend to realistic evaluation, and they

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[4] Подобин В.М. Русские пословицы и поговорки: Из собрания В.М. Подобина и И.П. Зиминой. Л., 1956.

[5] Коноплева, Н. А. Гендерные стереотипы / Н. А. Коноплева // Словарь гендерных терминов. М. : Информация – XXI век, 2002. – С. 62.

[6] Кирилина, А. В. Словарь гендерных терминов / А. В. Кирилина. – Режим доступа: http: // www. lib.vsu.ru/project/golossary.phtml.

[7] Клецина, А. С. Гендерная социализация / А. С. Клецина. – СПб. : Изд-во РГПУ, 1998. – С.188.

[8] Токарева, Е. Н. Специфика выражения оцен ки в гендерном дискурсе (на материале совр. англ. яз): автореф. дис. ... канд. филол. наук / Е. Н. Токаре ва. – Уфа : Башк. гос. ун-т, 2005. – С.11.

[9] Таннен, Д. Ты меня не понимаешь! Поче му женщины и мужчины не понимают друг друга : пер. с англ. / Д. Таннен. – М. : Вече : Персей : АСТ, 1996. – С.13.

[10] Маслова, В. А. Лингвокультурология / В. А. Маслова. – М. : Изд. центр «Академия», 2004. – С.126.

[11] Горошко, Е. И. Особенности мужского и женского стиля письма / Е. И. Горошко // Гендерный фактор в языке и коммуникации : сб. науч. тр. Вып. 446. – М. : МГЛУ, 1999. – С. 54.

use more nouns, adjectives, numerals, imperative mood, complex sentences, adverbial conjunctions and abstract nouns. According to E.I. Goroshko, men describe the world more through qualitative properties, variety and other qualities.[12]

In a language that reflects a patriarchal worldview, stereotypes that attribute many vices to women are firmly entrenched. Therefore, when a man is compared to a woman, it often takes on a negative connotation. There can be examples as, *ayol kabi g'iybatchi, qiziquvchan, nazokatli, o'ziga maftun, o'jarlik qiluvchi, jazavaga tushgan, ayollarcha mantiq*. Conversely, when a woman is compared to a man, words like *erkakona aql, erkakona tutum, erkakona xarakter* can be used. As for a woman such adjectives as *do'stlikka noloyiq, sir saqlashga qodir emas, aqlsiz, mantiqsiz* are used and are expressed in spoken language. For example, *"Ayolning yo'li oshxonadan eshikgacha", "Ayollar aqli uyni buzadi", "Sochi uzun, aqli qisqa".* Ayollar haqidagi ko'plab maqol va matallarda bepisandlik va patronaj ohang seziladi: *"Mening ishim bir chetda, erim haq", "Erning gunohi eshik tashqarisida qoladi, ayol esa hammasini uyga olib kiradi", "Ayol maqtasa – yomonlikni niyat qiladi".*[13]

According to the stereotype formed in the minds of the Russian people, all good qualities in a woman come from a man. Therefore, there are such expressions as "masculine intelligence" (about a smart woman), "masculine attitude" (about a happy woman), "masculine character" (about a determined woman). Nekrasov's line "He stops the galloping horse, enters the burning house" is not just a masculine act, but an expression reinforced by the archetype.[14]

Deborah Tannen argues that men and women use language for different purposes. Women approach conversation as an important part of interpersonal relationships, while men, on the contrary, use it to demonstrate control over the situation, which allows them to maintain independence and strengthen their status.[15]

Men are more sensitive to innovations in the language. New words and terms are more common in their speech. Women's speech is relatively neutral, and their lexicon contains more obsolete words and expressions. Women's speech is more emotional, which is manifested in the use of more exclamations, metaphors, comparisons, epithets. Women's lexicon contains more words expressing feelings and emotions. They are more likely to use euphemisms. Women's speech uses more second-person singular and plural verbs (do you remember, hear, know, etc.) than men's.

As revealed in the study of the use of word classes, complex adjectives, adverbs, and conjunctions are used more often in women's speech. In women's speech, definite nouns prevail, while in men's speech, abstract nouns prevail. Men use more definite verbs, while women use more indefinite verbs. This is explained by men's active approach to life. However, it turns out that as the level of education increases, the differences in speech gradually disappear.[16]

Proverbs and sayings convey traditional views on male and female beauty. In Russian culture, the main sign of female beauty was, first of all, hair. For example, *"Коса — девичья краса"* - *"Soch — qizning ziynati."* In ancient Russia, hair was given great importance. Women were forbidden to cut their hair, as it was believed that it served as a protective function. There was a belief that cut hair would ruin a girl's reputation. English proverbs and sayings, like their Russian counterparts, also consider hair to be a woman's wealth and adornment. For example, *"A woman's hair is her crowning glory"*[17] - *"Ayolning sochi — uning bosh bezagi va eng yuksak ziynati".*

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[12] Горошко, Е. И. Языковое сознание: гендер ная парадигма / Е. И. Горошко // Методология со временной психолингвистики : сб. науч. тр. – М. ; Барнаул : Изд-во Алт. ун-та, 2003. – С. 101.

[13] Войченко Виктория Муратовна. "Отражение гендерных стереотипов в языке и культуре" Вестник Волгоградского государственного университета. Серия 2: Языкознание, no. 1, 2009. – С.67.

[14] Маслова, В. А. Лингвокультурология / В. А. Маслова. – М. : Изд. центр «Академия», 2004. – С.128.

[15] Tannen, Deborah. *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*. William Morrow and Company, 1990.

[16] Маслова, В. А. Лингвокультурология / В. А. Маслова. – М. : Изд. центр «Академия», 2004. – С.129.

[17] Аносов Е. А. Лингвистическая репрезентация константных/динамических тендерных стереотипов в русской и англоязычной лингвокультурах.: дис. канд. филол. наук: 10.02.20: защищена 2013 г. – Челябинск – 2013. – С.11.

A compact and graceful figure was valued as a clear indicator of the beauty of Russian women. For example, *«Грудь лебедина, походка павлина, очи сокольи, брови собольи»* - *"Ko'kragi oqqushniki kabi, yurishi tovusniki singari, ko'zlari lochinkiday, qoshlari esa qoplonnikiday."* Women with rosy cheeks and a white, clear face were also considered beautiful: *«В праздник — белоличка, в будень — чумичка»* - *"Bayramda — oppoq yuzli, ish kunida esa sarg'aygan".* Often, based on external beauty, the conclusion that "a woman is not smart enough" is drawn, which at first seems wrong, but sometimes proves to be true. For example, *«Красива — ещё не умна»* - *"Chiroyli — hali aqlli degani emas", «Велика фигура, да дура»* - *"Qomati katta, ammo aqlsiz".*

The connection between a woman's intellectual potential and her appearance is also observed in English proverbs. The English recognize an ignorant woman by her excessively luxurious and conspicuous clothing: *"You may know a foolish woman by her finery"* - *"Ahmoq ayolni uning dabdabali libosidan bilsa bo'ladi"*. According to British observations, a woman always prefers to be beautiful rather than smart*: "Women are wacky, women are vain; they'd rather be pretty than have a good brain" – "Ayollar g'alati va o'ziga bino qo'ygan bo'ladilar; ular aqlli bo'lishdan ko'ra chiroyli bo'lishni afzal biladilar".*

When Uzbek proverbs are analyzed from the perspective of gender linguistics, they clearly reflect the social image of women and men, evaluation criteria, and stereotypical views. Structurally, proverbs mainly consist of two parts, the first part expresses a situation, quality, or assessment, and the second part serves as a comparison or explanation. Semantically, aesthetic and moral qualities such as beauty, tenderness, and kindness are often central to the image of women. Thus, this system of proverbs, on the one hand, reinforces the traditional roles of women and men, and on the other hand, acts as a cultural code that shapes social consciousness about gender through universal values.

Conclusion

Gender stereotypes expressed in Uzbek proverbs are deeply rooted in patriarchal traditions and linguistic practices. They consistently present women as emotional, talkative, and socially subordinate, while men are depicted as rational, dominant, and central to authority and decision-making. Such portrayals not only reflect but also reinforce social expectations about gender roles, shaping the collective consciousness of society. Although certain proverbs emphasize positive qualities of women, such as kindness, tenderness, and beauty, these attributes are often framed within traditional roles that limit women's social significance to the family sphere.

The comparative analysis with Russian, English, and French proverbs reveals the universality of gender stereotypes across cultures, while also highlighting specific cultural nuances in Uzbek folklore. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that proverbs, as carriers of collective cultural memory, serve both as tools of socialization and as mechanisms of gender-based value reinforcement. To challenge entrenched stereotypes and move toward gender equality, it is essential to critically reinterpret traditional linguistic forms and integrate alternative discourses that reflect evolving social realities.

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