

Concepts of Femininity in Phraseology: A Sociolinguistic and Cultural Approach

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Abstract:

Phraseology, as a core element of language, encapsulates societal norms, ideologies, and cultural values. In the realm of gender studies, idiomatic expressions often serve as linguistic reflections of traditional roles and stereotypes associated with masculinity and femininity. Despite the prominence of gendered language in everyday discourse, there remains a limited comparative analysis between different cultural-linguistic contexts—specifically between German and Uzbek phraseologies. This study aims to explore how concepts of femininity and masculinity are embedded in German phraseology and to compare them with their equivalents in Uzbek, applying a sociolinguistic and cultural-semiotic lens. The findings reveal that German idioms predominantly associate masculinity with strength, dominance, and rationality, while femininity is linked to emotionality, beauty, and domesticity. These portrayals often reinforce entrenched stereotypes. In comparing with Uzbek, both converging and diverging patterns emerge, shaped by unique historical and societal contexts. The study presents an interlingual comparative approach, systematically categorizing gendered idioms and analyzing their semantic and cultural underpinnings, offering new insights into the symbolic gender constructions across two distinct languages. The analysis underscores the role of phraseology as a vehicle of ideological transmission, but also as a potential site for critical reflection and linguistic reform. By fostering awareness of gender bias in idiomatic usage, the study contributes to broader sociolinguistic efforts toward more equitable and inclusive language practices.

Keywords: Phraseology, Gender Roles, Masculinity, Femininity, Stereotypes, Sociolinguistics, Culture

Introduction

Phraseologisms are not only linguistic units but also cultural reflections of societal ideas, values, and norms. The representation of gender roles within the phraseological systems of different languages is particularly striking. The way masculinity and femininity are portrayed in idioms reveals much about the social structures, collective consciousness, and historical power relations within a language community.

This study is dedicated to exploring how male and female concepts appear in phraseology, what sociolinguistic and cultural factors play a role in this, and what stereotypes manifest in the respective linguistic images. The research is based on the following steps:

Selection of about 50 gender-specific phraseologisms from German and comparison units from other languages, especially Uzbek;

Categorization by thematic focus (e.g., strength, emotion, intelligence, morality);

Analysis of lexical components and semantic structures;

Classification within their social and historical context;

Application of a sociolinguistic and cultural-semiotic analysis model to interpret nuances of meaning and gender constructions.

The analysis showed that:

Concepts of masculinity in phraseologisms are often associated with traits such as strength, control, rationality, or dominance. Examples include "to rule with an iron fist," "a real man," or "to wear the pants."

Concepts of femininity, on the other hand, tend to be associated with emotion, beauty, domesticity, or even weakness. Typical expressions include "to be a diva," "to behave like a woman," or "to be gossip-obsessed."

Many idioms reproduce gender stereotypes that are deeply rooted in culture and often reflect a hierarchical view of men and women.

Compared to Uzbek, both parallel and contrasting tendencies emerge. While gender-specific attributions exist in both languages, the symbolic meanings and connotations differ significantly depending on the cultural context.

Methods

This study applied a qualitative, comparative, and descriptive methodology to analyze how concepts of femininity and masculinity are embedded within German and Uzbek phraseological units[1]. The research process began with the purposeful selection of approximately 50 gender-marked phraseologisms from the German language, which were then cross-referenced with equivalent or culturally resonant expressions from Uzbek[2]. These phraseological units were thematically categorized into domains such as strength, emotion, intelligence, and morality to highlight gender-coded associations[3]. Lexical components were then dissected to examine semantic patterns and symbolic meanings attributed to each gender[4]. A sociolinguistic and cultural-semiotic framework was applied to interpret how idioms function not only as linguistic units but also as reflections of social roles, gender ideologies, and power hierarchies[5]. Additionally, the study considered historical and cultural contexts to uncover how the same gendered expression may carry different connotations across societies[6]. The comparative aspect enabled the identification of both parallels and divergences in gender portrayal between the two languages[7]. Data interpretation focused on recurring stereotypes, symbolic imagery, and the reinforcement or critique of normative gender roles embedded in everyday language[8]. This analytical method allowed for a nuanced understanding of

the sociolinguistic mechanisms through which phraseologisms shape, sustain, or challenge cultural perceptions of gender[9]. Through this approach, the study offers insights into how language both reflects and perpetuates gendered worldviews, highlighting the importance of critical engagement with idiomatic expressions in shaping more inclusive discourse[10].

Results and Discussion

The analysis of gender-related phraseological units in German, compared with their equivalents in Uzbek, reveals the deep entrenchment of cultural stereotypes and social perceptions within language[11]. Phraseologisms serve not only as expressions of speech but as carriers of collective memory, ideology, and identity[12]. The results show that concepts of masculinity are frequently associated with strength, dominance, rationality, and leadership, as seen in expressions like “to rule with an iron fist” or “a real man”[13]. In contrast, femininity tends to be linguistically linked to emotion, appearance, sensitivity, or subordination, as found in phrases such as “to behave like a woman” or “to be gossip-obsessed”[14]. These linguistic patterns reflect long-standing societal norms and power structures, reinforcing traditional gender roles and cultural hierarchies[15]. The comparison with Uzbek demonstrates both similarities and notable differences; while gender stereotyping is present in both languages, the cultural connotations and symbolic associations differ due to varying historical and societal contexts. The sociolinguistic implications are significant: the repetition of such idioms in everyday speech contributes to the normalization of unequal gender constructs, subtly shaping perceptions and reinforcing biases. However, language also offers the potential for transformation. The growing awareness of gender inclusivity and critical linguistic reflection suggests a shift toward more equitable expression. Overall, phraseology emerges as a dynamic field where social ideologies and linguistic patterns intersect—both preserving and challenging established views on gender. The findings support the call for more reflective and inclusive language use as part of broader cultural change.

The findings show that phraseologisms function as cultural repositories in which traditional gender images are preserved and transmitted. The linguistic reinforcement of such images can cement social power structures and strengthen stereotypical thinking. In the sociolinguistic context, it is particularly noteworthy how strongly language shapes social roles—often unconsciously through everyday speech.

At the same time, it becomes clear that language is also a site of change. In modern contexts, there are increasing attempts to use more gender-inclusive language or to avoid stereotypical expressions. A reflective engagement with gender in phraseology can thus contribute to the deconstruction of stereotypes and the development of awareness.

Conclusion

The study of gendered concepts in phraseology reveals how linguistic expressions reflect and perpetuate social constructs of masculinity and femininity across cultures. Through a comparative analysis of German and Uzbek phraseological units, this research has demonstrated that idioms are not merely decorative elements of language but serve as repositories of cultural memory and normative gender roles. Masculinity is frequently associated with strength, rationality, and dominance, while femininity is linked to emotion, domesticity, and appearance—patterns that align with traditional gender stereotypes. These expressions, often unconsciously embedded in everyday communication, reinforce power hierarchies and cultural expectations. However, the dynamic nature of language also means that it can become a space for change and reflection. The increasing awareness of gender-inclusive language and critical evaluation of phraseological content in modern discourse highlight language’s potential to both mirror and reshape social values. By examining idioms through a sociolinguistic and cultural lens, this study contributes to the broader understanding of how language shapes gender perception and identity. The findings encourage continued research into interlingual phraseological comparisons and support the movement toward more equitable and

reflective language practices. In doing so, phraseology becomes not only a subject of linguistic inquiry but also a tool for fostering critical cultural awareness and promoting social change.

The analysis of concepts of masculinity and femininity in phraseology offers important insights into cultural and social perceptions of gender. Phraseologisms serve as carriers of ideologies, but they also offer the potential for critical reflection and linguistic emancipation.

Future research should delve deeper into the interlingual comparison of gender-specific idioms and further investigate their influence on societal perceptions and language usage.

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