

The Anthropomorphic Representation of Masculine and Feminine Gender Semantics in English and Uzbek Phraseological Units

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Annotation. *This article explores the anthropomorphic representation of male and female figures in English and Uzbek phraseological units. It analyzes how idiomatic expressions reflect cultural perceptions of masculinity and femininity, highlighting the portrayal of men as strong and dominant, and women as nurturing and emotional, revealing how they reflect societal values and gender roles, offering insights into the intersection of language, culture, and gender.*

Key words: *Anthropomorphism, Phraseology, Gender Representation, English Phraseology, Uzbek Phraseology, Masculinity, Femininity, Linguistic Analysis, Gender Roles, Cultural Perceptions.*

Phraseology, as a field of linguistics, involves the study of fixed expressions that convey meaning beyond the literal interpretation of their components. These units are often culturally specific, shaped by societal norms, and reflect various worldviews, including those related to gender. Anthropomorphism, the attribution of human characteristics to non-human entities or abstract concepts, is a key feature in many phraseological units. This paper explores how the figures of men and women are anthropomorphized in both English and Uzbek phraseological units, analyzing the differences and similarities in these representations across the two languages. By examining these idiomatic expressions, we aim to understand the cultural and social perceptions of masculinity and femininity embedded within the languages, offering insight into the broader human experience of gender.

1. Anthropomorphism and Phraseology: A Linguistic Perspective

Anthropomorphism in linguistics refers to the linguistic process by which human characteristics are ascribed to non-human entities. In phraseology, anthropomorphic expressions often embody human-like traits assigned to objects, animals, or concepts, facilitating the conveyance of ideas and emotions that resonate on a human level[1]. In many languages, especially English and Uzbek, phraseological units featuring male and female figures anthropomorphize these gendered entities to reflect cultural values, social expectations, and stereotypes[2].

As such, phraseological units serve as a lens through which we can examine how gender roles are constructed and reinforced in different cultural contexts. In both English and Uzbek, the anthropomorphized depictions of men and women are deeply rooted in societal perceptions and gendered expectations. These expressions reveal not only how masculinity and femininity are understood in each culture but also how language shapes and reflects those perceptions.

2. The Representation of Male Figures in English and Uzbek phraseological units.

a. English Phraseological Units for Male Figures

In English, the male figure is frequently depicted as strong, assertive, and dominant. These traits are often associated with authority, resilience, and leadership. Expressions like “man of steel”[3]

(meaning an exceptionally strong or resilient man), “a man of his word” (someone who is reliable and keeps his promises), and “tough as nails” (a person with great toughness or strength) highlight the anthropomorphizing of men as durable, reliable, and unyielding figures.

“Clark Kent is often referred to as the 'Man of Steel' in Superman lore” (Action Comics, 1938).

“He had said he would do it, and he did—truly a man of his word.” (The Merchant of Venice, William Shakespeare, Act 1, Scene 3).

Furthermore, phrases such as “wearing the pants” or “the man in charge” anthropomorphize male figures as symbols of power and control, often in domestic or professional settings. These expressions reflect the traditional gender expectations of men as leaders, decision-makers, and authority figures within both public and private spheres[7][8].

The phrase “a man’s man” is another example of how English idioms depict masculinity. It implies a man who embodies traditional masculine virtues such as strength, independence, and toughness. This idiom attributes human qualities to masculinity itself, reinforcing societal norms that expect men to exhibit these traits.

b. Uzbek Phraseological Units for Male Figures

In Uzbek, the portrayal of male figures in phraseological units also emphasizes strength, authority, and responsibility, but often with a stronger focus on moral and familial leadership. Expressions like “temir qo‘l” (iron hand) and “boshliq kishi” (a man in charge) reflect the same strength and dominance that are central to male representations in English phraseology.

“Amir Temur ko‘pincha 'temir qo‘l' bilan boshqargan, bu esa tartib va barqarorlikni ta‘minlagan.” (Temurnoma, XV asr solnomalari).

However, in Uzbek, there is a deeper cultural context that associates men with guardianship and moral authority within the family structure. The phrase “ota o‘rnida” (in the place of the father) implies a man’s responsibility to care for and protect his family, indicating a moral leadership role beyond mere physical dominance.

Another common phrase is “yuzi ochiq” (a man who faces challenges with courage), which anthropomorphizes masculinity by associating it with honesty and bravery, underscoring the societal expectation that men must be forthright and courageous in the face of adversity.

“Qishloq ahli uni hurmat qilishardi, chunki u har doim qiyinchiliklar oldida 'yuzi ochiq' edi.” (O‘zbek Maqollari To‘plami, 1978).

3. The Representation of Female Figures in English and Uzbek Phraseological Units

a. English Phraseological Units for Female Figures

In contrast to the robust and authoritative depiction of men, the anthropomorphized representation of women in English phraseological units often centers on beauty, emotional sensitivity, and nurturing qualities. For instance, expressions like “a woman of grace” or “the weaker sex” emphasize femininity as delicate and emotionally driven. “A lady’s touch”[4] (suggesting a gentle and refined approach to handling situations) anthropomorphizes femininity as soft and compassionate, reinforcing traditional stereotypes of women as caregivers and homemakers.

“She carried herself with the elegance of a woman of grace.” (Pride and Prejudice, Jane Austen, 1813).

“The weaker sex, as they are called, have shown remarkable resilience in wartime.” (Hard Times, Charles Dickens, 1854).

However, there are idiomatic expressions in English that counteract this delicate portrayal and associate women with power and influence. The phrase “behind every great man is a great woman” [6] recognizes the strength and support of women, even though they may not be in the limelight. This expression acknowledges that women, though sometimes seen as secondary in traditional gender roles, are essential to the success of men and, by extension, society.

Furthermore, phrases like “she wears the pants” are used to describe women who take on traditionally male roles, particularly in the context of authority and leadership within the family or workplace. This phrase symbolizes women’s growing empowerment and challenges the notion of male dominance in familial or societal matters.

b. Uzbek Phraseological Units for Female Figures

In Uzbek, women are often anthropomorphized as symbols of beauty, tenderness, and emotional depth. The phrase “go‘zallik timsoli” (a symbol of beauty) illustrates the way femininity is associated with aesthetic qualities. Women are frequently seen as the bearers of grace and gentleness, with expressions like “ayolning mehribonligi” (the tenderness of a woman) emphasizing nurturing qualities. The phrase “ona ko‘zi bilan qarash” (to look through a mother’s eyes) exemplifies the deep emotional connection women are believed to have with their families, particularly their children.

Despite this emphasis on nurturing, there are also phrases that highlight the power and resilience of women in Uzbek. For example, “ayol kuchi” (the strength of a woman) acknowledges the underlying strength that women possess, often in difficult circumstances. This phrase reflects the cultural value placed on women’s ability to endure hardship and provide for their families, especially in challenging situations.

“To‘rt nafar bolani yolg‘iz katta qilishi uning ‘ayol kuchi’ga yorqin misol edi.” (Zamonaviy O‘zbek Ayollari Adabiyotda, 2001).

Additionally, expressions such as “ayolning qudrati” (the power of a woman) reflect a more subtle but deeply ingrained respect for women’s resilience, especially in their roles as mothers and caregivers.

4. Comparative Analysis of Male and Female Representations in English and Uzbek

The comparison of male and female representations in English and Uzbek phraseology reveals both shared cultural themes and unique differences. In both languages, male figures are often portrayed as strong, authoritative, and protective, though the focus in English is more on external traits like toughness and power, while Uzbek expressions emphasize moral authority and familial responsibility.

On the other hand, female representations in both languages often focus on beauty, emotional sensitivity, and nurturing, yet there are important nuances. English phraseological units tend to recognize female strength more subtly, often within the context of supporting roles (e.g., “behind every great man”), while Uzbek phrases often imbue women with a more inherent, quiet strength, symbolized through maternal and familial roles.

In both cultures, however, there is a recognition of women's power, though in different forms. While English idioms like “she wears the pants” reflect an empowerment of women within male-dominated spheres, Uzbek phrases like “ayol kuchi” suggest a more nuanced form of strength, often associated with perseverance and resilience in the domestic sphere.

The anthropomorphic representation of male and female figures in English and Uzbek phraseological units serves as a window into the cultural and societal values surrounding gender. While both languages emphasize male strength, leadership, and authority, and female beauty, nurturing, and emotional intelligence, the ways in which these figures are represented offer distinct reflections of cultural perceptions of masculinity and femininity. English idioms tend to highlight external strength and leadership, whereas Uzbek expressions often focus on moral authority and familial roles. Both languages, however, acknowledge the power and importance of both genders, albeit in different ways. Ultimately, the study of these anthropomorphized figures in language provides valuable insight into the complex intersection of culture, gender, and language.

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