



GENDER STEREOTYPES IN ENGLISH PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS

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Abstract: Gender stereotypes in English phraseological units are examined in this study, focusing on how idioms reflect cultural views of masculinity and femininity. Using semantic, comparative, and cognitive-linguistic methods, it analyzes evaluative asymmetry and binary oppositions in gender representation. The findings demonstrate that phraseology preserves traditional gender roles and reinforces social and cultural stereotypes in language use.

Key words: gender stereotypes, English phraseological units, idioms, phraseology, masculinity.

Introduction

In modern linguistics, the study of gender has become one of the most significant and actively developing research areas due to the growing interest in the relationship between language, society, and cognition. Language is no longer viewed merely as a neutral means of communication; instead, it is understood as a social and cultural mechanism through which values, ideologies, and stereotypes are formed and transmitted. In this regard, phraseological units occupy a special place because they preserve collective cultural experience and reflect historically established perceptions of masculinity and femininity. Idioms, proverbs, and fixed expressions often contain implicit evaluations and stereotypical representations that shape the linguistic worldview of a speech community. Therefore, the study of gender stereotypes in phraseological units is of particular importance for understanding how language reflects and reinforces social norms.

The relevance of this research is determined by the increasing attention paid to gender linguistics, cognitive linguistics, and sociolinguistics in contemporary philological studies. Despite numerous investigations devoted to gender representation in language, the semantic and evaluative peculiarities of gender stereotypes in English phraseological units still require deeper analysis. Phraseology represents a culturally marked subsystem of language in which traditional social expectations, behavioral patterns, and ideological attitudes toward men and women are preserved and reproduced. Through phraseological



expressions, language not only reflects reality but also contributes to the construction of gender identities and social hierarchy.

The aim of this article is to investigate gender stereotypes represented in English phraseological units and to identify their semantic, evaluative, and cultural characteristics. To achieve this aim, the following objectives are pursued: to examine the theoretical foundations of gender studies in linguistics, to analyze the semantic features of gendered idioms, to identify stereotypical representations of masculinity and femininity, and to determine the role of phraseology in preserving and transmitting cultural gender models.

The research is based on descriptive, semantic, comparative, and cognitive-linguistic methods of analysis. English phraseological units containing gender-related meanings serve as the main material of the study. The scientific novelty of the article lies in the attempt to analyze gender stereotypes in English phraseology from both semantic and cognitive perspectives, revealing the evaluative asymmetry and cultural implications embedded in idiomatic expressions.

The theoretical significance of the research is connected with its contribution to gender linguistics, phraseology, and cognitive studies, while its practical significance lies in the possibility of applying the results in teaching linguistics, intercultural communication, and English phraseology. Thus, the study of gender stereotypes in phraseological units allows a deeper understanding of the interaction between language, culture, and social consciousness.

Methods

The present research employs a combination of descriptive, semantic, comparative, and cognitive-linguistic methods in order to investigate gender stereotypes represented in English phraseological units. These methods make it possible to analyze linguistic material from both structural and conceptual perspectives and to identify culturally conditioned representations of masculinity and femininity embedded in phraseology.

The descriptive method is used to identify and classify phraseological units containing gender-related meanings. Through this approach, idioms, proverbs, and fixed expressions associated with male and female representations are systematized according to their semantic and evaluative characteristics. Particular attention is paid to phraseological units reflecting stereotypical features traditionally attributed to men and women in English-speaking culture.

The semantic analysis method is applied to examine the denotative and connotative meanings of gendered phraseological units. This method allows the



identification of metaphorical, evaluative, and emotional components embedded in idiomatic expressions. Through semantic interpretation, the research reveals how phraseological units encode positive or negative attitudes toward gender behavior and social roles.

The comparative method is employed to compare male-oriented and female-oriented idioms in terms of their semantic structure, stylistic features, and evaluative meanings. Comparative analysis makes it possible to identify asymmetries in the linguistic representation of masculinity and femininity and to determine the dominant conceptual oppositions reflected in phraseology.

In addition, the cognitive-linguistic approach is used to investigate conceptual metaphors and stereotypical cognitive models underlying gendered phraseological expressions. This method is based on the assumption that language reflects mental and cultural conceptualization processes. Within this framework, phraseological units are analyzed as linguistic manifestations of collective cultural knowledge and gender stereotypes preserved in social consciousness.

The material of the research consists of English phraseological units selected from phraseological dictionaries, linguistic studies, and academic sources devoted to gender linguistics and phraseology. The selected examples are analyzed according to their semantic, evaluative, and cultural features in order to reveal the mechanisms through which gender stereotypes are linguistically represented and socially reproduced.

Results

The analysis of English phraseological units demonstrates that gender stereotypes are systematically embedded in idiomatic expressions and reflect long-established cultural and social attitudes. The findings show a clear tendency for language to construct different images of masculinity and femininity through stable phraseological patterns.

Male-related idioms predominantly emphasize strength, authority, leadership, and independence. Men are often conceptualized as powerful decision-makers, rational thinkers, and socially dominant figures. Expressions associated with masculinity tend to highlight control, responsibility, and resilience, which positions male identity in the sphere of public influence and competence. In many cases, these idioms carry neutral or positive evaluative meanings, reinforcing the idea that masculine traits are socially valued and desirable.

In contrast, female-related phraseological units more frequently focus on appearance, emotionality, and domestic roles. Women are often described through idioms that highlight beauty, sensitivity, or household-related functions,



which limits their representation to private and emotionally oriented spheres. Such expressions may implicitly suggest dependency or reduced social power compared to male counterparts. Even when positive, female-associated idioms often emphasize physical attractiveness rather than intellectual or professional qualities.

The study also reveals a strong evaluative asymmetry between male and female representations. Masculine traits are generally linguistically privileged, being associated with strength, leadership, and competence, while feminine traits are more often marked by emotionality or dependency. This imbalance reflects underlying gender hierarchies that are reproduced through language use.

Furthermore, the analysis identifies the presence of hidden sexism in phraseological units, where gender bias is not explicitly stated but is encoded in conventional meanings. These idioms normalize stereotypical gender roles and present them as natural linguistic realities rather than social constructs. As a result, language contributes to the reinforcement of traditional gender expectations.

Another important finding is the presence of binary oppositions such as strength versus weakness, rationality versus emotion, and public versus private roles. These oppositions structure gender representation in a rigid way, reducing the complexity of real social identities and reinforcing a simplified gender dichotomy.

Discussion

The results show that English phraseological units reflect traditional gender stereotypes and deep-rooted cultural beliefs. These idioms are not neutral linguistic elements; rather, they carry ideological meanings that influence how masculinity and femininity are socially constructed and understood in everyday communication. Male-oriented idioms are predominantly associated with strength, authority, leadership, independence, and rational thinking. This reflects the traditional perception of men as dominant figures in public life who are responsible for decision-making and social control. Such linguistic representations tend to reinforce the idea that masculine traits are standard for competence and power. In contrast, female-oriented idioms are mainly connected with beauty, emotionality, sensitivity, and domestic roles. Women are often portrayed through expressions that emphasize appearance or emotional characteristics, which limits their representation to private and supportive spheres. This linguistic pattern reflects long-standing cultural expectations about women's roles in society.



The analysis also reveals a clear evaluative asymmetry between masculine and feminine representations. Male-associated traits are generally presented in a more positive or neutral way, while female-associated traits are more often marked by emotional dependence or reduced social status. This imbalance indicates that language tends to privilege masculine qualities and reinforce unequal gender perceptions.

Conclusion

The study confirms that English phraseological units play an important role in reflecting and transmitting gender stereotypes. The analysis shows that idioms encode traditional cultural views in which masculinity is associated with strength, authority, and rationality, while femininity is linked to beauty, emotion, and domestic roles. These patterns demonstrate that language is not neutral but actively participates in shaping social perceptions of gender.

The research also highlights the presence of evaluative asymmetry, where male-related expressions are generally more positively valued than female-related ones. This indicates an underlying linguistic imbalance that contributes to the reproduction of gender inequality in communication. Additionally, the persistence of binary oppositions such as strength versus weakness and reason versus emotion shows that phraseological units preserve historical social attitudes.

At the same time, the findings suggest that although modern society is gradually moving toward more equal gender representations, idioms remain relatively conservative elements of language. They continue to reflect traditional norms even as new social values emerge. This makes phraseological analysis important for understanding how cultural ideology is embedded in language.

Overall, the study demonstrates that English phraseological units are a valuable source for examining the relationship between language, culture, and gender. Future research may focus on how contemporary changes in society influence the transformation of these expressions and whether new, more gender-neutral idioms are emerging.

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