



## STYLISTIC FEATURES OF GENDER-BASED PROVERBS

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**Abstract:** This article explores the stylistic and linguistic peculiarities of gender-based proverbs in the Uzbek language, emphasizing their cultural, communicative, and aesthetic dimensions. Proverbs reflecting gender relationships have been an essential part of the national linguistic worldview, encoding social norms, values, and the perception of men and women in society. Through the lens of stylistics, this research investigates how lexical, metaphorical, and syntactic features convey gender meanings. The study draws upon comparative examples from English, Russian, and Turkic proverb traditions to highlight universal and culture-specific aspects. The findings reveal that gender-based proverbs function as both linguistic art and ideological instruments that reflect and reproduce gender identities across generations.

**Keywords:** gender linguistics, stylistic features, proverbs, figurative language, national mentality, linguistic worldview, gender stereotypes, metaphor.

### Introduction

Proverbs are one of the most ancient and vibrant components of folklore that reflect a people's wisdom, experience, and moral worldview. They serve not only as linguistic expressions but also as cultural texts that encapsulate collective values. Among the thematic groups of proverbs, those with gender characteristics occupy a special place. They represent the social understanding of masculinity and femininity, express traditional attitudes toward men and women, and often reflect historical gender hierarchies and expectations.

In modern linguistics, gender studies have expanded to include not only sociological and psychological analyses but also linguistic and stylistic





dimensions. The emergence of gender linguistics as a separate discipline has brought attention to the way language encodes gendered perceptions. Proverbs, as condensed forms of folk speech, provide a rich material base for exploring how language contributes to gender representation.

In the Uzbek linguistic and cultural context, gender-based proverbs not only mirror social realities but also influence behavioral norms. Their stylistic structure — metaphorical imagery, parallelism, irony, and contrast — amplifies their communicative power and makes them memorable.

The main purpose of this article is to analyze the stylistic features of gender-related proverbs in Uzbek, explore their linguistic and cultural layers, and reveal how stylistic devices shape the perception of gender in the national consciousness.

### Main Part

Proverbs are concise, rhythmical, and metaphorical utterances that express universal truths derived from everyday life. According to Norrick (1985), proverbs are “self-contained, traditional statements that express a general truth or observation.” Stylistically, they are characterized by brevity, parallelism, and figurative language.

From the perspective of gender linguistics, language reflects gender ideology — the socially constructed perception of what is considered “male” and “female.” As Deborah Tannen (1990) and Robin Lakoff (1975) have shown, linguistic forms often encode gendered hierarchies and social expectations. In Uzbek culture, this encoding is especially visible in folklore, particularly in proverbs.

For example:

- “Er — elning suyanchi, ayol — oilaning ziynati.”  
(*A man is the pillar of the nation, a woman is the adornment of the family.*)
- “Erkak bosh, ayol tan.” (*Man is the head, woman is the body.*)

These examples reflect a traditional division of social roles. However, their stylistic beauty lies in metaphorical compression — turning abstract social norms into vivid images.





The Uzbek proverb system represents gender through contrast, complementarity, and hierarchy. Proverbs about men often emphasize bravery, responsibility, and leadership:

- “Er yigit so‘zida turar.” (*A brave man stands by his word.*)
- “Erkak ishlar, ayol yashatar.” (*The man works, the woman gives life.*)

Stylistically, these expressions rely on syntactic parallelism and lexical antithesis, forming balanced structures that symbolize gender interdependence.

By contrast, proverbs about women often highlight gentleness, patience, or moral purity:

- “Ayolning gapi bilan uy buzilar, gapi bilan tuzilar.” (*A woman’s word can ruin or build a home.*)
- “Ayol – oilaning yuragi.” (*The woman is the heart of the family.*)

The stylistic core of such expressions lies in personification and metaphoric transfer — assigning human emotion and vitality to social concepts.

Gendered proverbs derive much of their stylistic charm from metaphor, symbolism, and imagery. Metaphor transforms the abstract concept of “gender” into tangible imagery.

For instance:

- “Erkak tog‘, ayol daryo.” (*Man is a mountain, woman is a river.*)
- Here, metaphor constructs a symbolic contrast: the man represents stability and endurance; the woman represents flexibility and nurturing flow.

Another stylistic device common in Uzbek proverbs is irony. Proverbs such as:

- “Erkakning ko‘ngli otday — jilovini mahkam ushla.” (*A man’s heart is like a horse — hold its reins tight.*)
- use playful irony to convey psychological insight through humor and exaggeration.

The stylistic compression of proverbs allows them to be simultaneously poetic and didactic. Their rhythm and sound organization — often based on assonance and alliteration — make them memorable oral texts.







Gender-based proverbs can both reflect and reinforce stereotypes. In Uzbek folklore, the man is associated with strength, logic, and authority, while the woman symbolizes emotion, compassion, and moral influence. Stylistically, this is expressed through contrasting imagery:

Masculine imagery

Feminine imagery

Mountain, sword, sun, head River, flower, moon, heart

This stylistic dichotomy creates aesthetic harmony but also reproduces traditional gender hierarchies. However, contemporary linguistic analysis allows us to reinterpret these contrasts as complementary dualism rather than inequality.

For example, in modern pedagogical contexts, the proverb “Ayol bosh bo‘lsa, ish farovon” (*If a woman leads, the work prospers*) is used to emphasize women’s leadership potential — a shift from traditional interpretation.

Gendered proverbs exist in every culture, and stylistic parallels can be observed across languages:

Uzbek

English

Russian

“Erkak ishlar, ayol yashatar.”  
“Man works, woman sustains life.”

“Мужчина строит дом, женщина делает его уютным.”

“Ayol – uy bekasi, erkak – el bekasi.”  
“Woman keeps the home, man rules the world.”

“Муж — голова, жена — шея.”

In all three, metaphorical parallelism serves as the main stylistic feature. Yet, the cultural implication differs: English proverbs tend to emphasize individuality, Russian proverbs – family unity, while Uzbek ones stress moral harmony and domestic balance.

With globalization and gender equality movements, many traditional proverbs are being reinterpreted or replaced with new ones that emphasize partnership and mutual respect. For instance:

- Old: “Erkak bosh, ayol oyog‘.” (*Man is the head, woman is the foot.*)





- Modern reinterpretation: “Erkak bilan ayol – hayotning ikki qanoti.” (*Man and woman are two wings of life.*)

This metaphor introduces symmetry instead of hierarchy — a stylistic and ideological shift towards equality.

Modern Uzbek writers and educators increasingly use reworked proverbs to promote balance, collaboration, and emotional intelligence. From a stylistic viewpoint, this reflects a transition from patriarchal symbolism to inclusive metaphors.

Gendered proverbs not only express cultural ideas but also influence behavior through pragmatic function — they serve as “linguistic instructions.” The stylistic compactness makes them effective tools of persuasion.

Cognitively, such proverbs are based on conceptual metaphors that link gender roles with natural phenomena. According to Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) theory of conceptual metaphor, our thinking is structured metaphorically; therefore, gendered proverbs act as cognitive frames shaping how people perceive men and women.

For instance, calling a woman a “river” or a “flower” evokes nurturing, fragility, and beauty, while calling a man a “mountain” or a “lion” evokes power and protection. Stylistically, these metaphors serve not only to describe but to prescribe behavior.

**Conclusion.** Gender-based proverbs in Uzbek are multifaceted linguistic units that combine aesthetic elegance with ideological content. Their stylistic richness stems from the use of metaphor, antithesis, irony, rhythm, and parallelism. Through these devices, proverbs encapsulate centuries of collective wisdom while also transmitting cultural attitudes toward gender.

In contemporary linguistics, these proverbs offer fertile ground for exploring the relationship between language, thought, and social structure. A stylistic analysis reveals that while traditional Uzbek proverbs often encode patriarchal





ideas, they also contain symbols of balance, harmony, and mutual dependence between the genders.

In the modern context, reinterpreting such proverbs through a gender-sensitive and stylistic lens allows for preserving their cultural value while promoting equality and respect. Language evolves, and so does its figurative system — ensuring that the aesthetic power of proverbs continues to educate, entertain, and enlighten new generations.

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