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INGLIZ IDIOMATIK IBORALARIDA GENDERNING IFODALANISHI

ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИЕ ГЕНДЕРА В АНГЛИЙСКИХ ИДИОМАТИЧЕСКИХ ВЫРАЖЕНИЯХ

THE REPRESENTATION OF GENDER IN ENGLISH IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

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Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada gender rollari va stereotiplar keng tarqalgan ingliz iboralarida qanday aks ettirilganligi va mustahkamlanganligi misollari keltirilgan. Genderli til yoki tasvirni o'z ichiga olgan iboralarni aniqlash uchun ba'zi muhim idiomalar korpusi tahlil qilindi. Natijalar ayollar va ayollikka ishora qiluvchilarga nisbatan erkaklar va erkaklikka ishora qiluvchi idiomalarning ko'proq tarqalganligini ko'rsatadi. An'anaviy gender rollari va xususiyatlarini targ'ib qilish uchun ko'plab idiomalar topildi. Biroq, yaqinda yaratilgan ba'zi idiomalar gender stereotiplarini shubha ostiga qo'yadi. Natijalar tilning, jumladan, idiomalar kabi majoziy tilning gender haqidagi ijtimoiy va madaniy qarashlarni qanday aks ettirishi va davom ettirishi mumkinligini ta'kidlaydi. Keyingi tadqiqotlarda vaqt o'tishi bilan gender iboralaridan foydalanish qanday o'zgarishi o'rganilishi mumkin.

Аннотация

В этом исследовании рассматривается, как гендерные роли и стереотипы отражаются и усиливаются с помощью часто используемых английских идиом. Был проанализирован корпус некоторых основных идиом, чтобы выявить выражения, содержащие гендерные различия в языке или образах. Результаты показывают более высокую распространенность идиом, относящихся к мужчинам и маскулинности, по сравнению с идиомами, относящимися к женщинам и фемининности. Было обнаружено, что многие идиомы пропагандируют традиционные гендерные роли и черты характера. Однако некоторые идиомы, появившиеся совсем недавно, бросают вызов гендерным стереотипам. Полученные результаты показывают, как язык, включая такие образные выражения, как идиомы, может отражать и закреплять социальные и культурные представления о гендере. Дальнейшие исследования могут помочь выяснить, как меняется использование гендерных идиом с течением времени.

Abstract

This study examines how gender roles and stereotypes are reflected and reinforced through commonly used English idioms. A corpus of some essential idioms was analyzed to identify expressions containing gendered language or imagery. Results show a higher prevalence of idioms referencing men and masculinity compared to those referencing women and femininity. Many idioms were found to promote traditional gender roles and traits. However, some more recently coined idioms challenge gender stereotypes. The findings highlight how language, including figurative language like idioms, can reflect and perpetuate social and cultural views about gender. Further research could explore how the use of gendered idioms is changing over time.

Kalit so'zlar: gender vakillik, inglizcha idiomalar, majoziy til, korpus tahlili, sotsiolingvistika.
Ключевые слова: гендерная репрезентация, английские идиомы, образный язык, корпусной анализ, социолингвистика.
Key words: gender representation, English idioms, figurative language, corpus analysis, sociolinguistics.

INTRODUCTION

Idiomatic expressions are a ubiquitous part of language and communication. While idioms can make speech more colorful and engaging, they also provide insight into how a society perceives and represents different concepts, entities and groups [1]. Idioms often reflect cultural norms and beliefs, including attitudes surrounding gender [2]. A number of linguistic studies have examined how gender is represented in different facets of language [3], [4], [5]. However, the specific domain of English idioms has been comparatively underexplored through the lens of gender.

This study aims to analyze how gender roles, traits and stereotypes are reflected in commonly used English idioms. Identifying gendered ideas conveyed through figurative language

like idioms can shed light on subtle or subconscious social views about gender. Understanding if and how idioms might perpetuate gender biases is important for promoting more inclusive language use.

METHODS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

A corpus of some essential English idioms was compiled by aggregating lists of frequently used idioms from five ESL teaching websites. Only idioms that contained gendered nouns, pronouns or images were included for analysis. Gendered nouns included words like man, woman, boy, girl, gentleman, lady, etc. Gendered images referred to concepts, objects or activities closely associated with masculine or feminine stereotypes (e.g. wearing the pants, crying like a little girl).

Each gendered idiom was tagged as masculine (referencing men/boys), feminine (referencing women/girls) or neutral (referencing both genders). Idioms were also categorized based on the gender role, trait or stereotype they conveyed, such as leadership, weakness, attractiveness, talkativeness, etc. A qualitative analysis was performed to identify common themes and connotations across the gendered idioms.

Previous studies have shown asymmetries in how men and women are represented through language [6]. Men are more likely to be mentioned first in paired phrases like "men and women", reflecting male primacy [7]. Analyses of job ad postings have found greater use of masculine-coded words, subtly favoring male applicants [8]. Differences have also been found in how metaphors and metonyms describe women versus men [9].

In the realm of idioms, some initial work has been done looking at gender representation. An analysis of Syrian Arabic idioms found that men were more frequently referenced and that idioms reinforced patriarchal cultural values [10]. A study of English and Persian metaphors for women showed more negative connotations compared to those for men [11]. The present study builds on this line of inquiry by conducting a systematic analysis of a large set of common English idioms.

RESULTS

A number of idioms analyzed, 27% of them contained masculine references, 8% contained feminine references, and 66% were gender neutral. The greater prevalence of idioms referring to men reflects a male bias, positioning men as the default human subjects.

The masculine idioms promoted stereotypical male gender roles and traits. Common themes included leadership (wear the pants, be in the driver's seat), risk-taking (go balls to the wall, throw caution to the wind), aggression (come out swinging, with guns blazing), and suppressing emotions (grow some balls, be a man about it).

Feminine idioms emphasized physical appearance and vanity (blonde bombshell, high maintenance), talkativeness (Chatty Cathy), weakness (weak as a girl, cry like a little girl), and perform domestic duties (Suzy Homemaker). These depictions are in line with traditional female stereotypes.

Some idioms, while not containing explicitly gendered words, still evoke masculine or feminine images. Phrases like "knight in shining armor" or "wearing the pants" call to mind male figures, while an idiom like "drama queen" has feminine associations.

A few neutral idioms were found that mention men and women in non-stereotypical ways, such as "a man/woman of his/her word". However, the specific phrasing often still assumes a male subject, e.g. "every man for himself". Truly gender-inclusive idioms were rare in the sample.

Interestingly, some recently coined idioms were identified that deliberately challenge or subvert gender clichés. For example, "fight like a girl" has been reappropriated to connote female strength and empowerment. Similarly, "who run the world – girls" celebrates female power and leadership. These idioms push back against male-centered language.

ANALYSIS

The predominance of idioms referencing men and masculinity aligns with previous findings of male-biased language [6], [7]. Even when idioms don't contain gendered words, the prototypical images and mental frames they evoke are often masculine in nature. This positions maleness as central and normative.

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The masculine and feminine idioms found tend to reinforce traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Male-oriented idioms emphasize strength, stoicism, and action, while female-oriented idioms focus more on appearance and emotionality. Very few idioms depict men and women in non-stereotypical ways. This likely reflects the cultural entrenchment of these gendered expectations.

Table 1 summarizes the key themes and examples of masculine and feminine idioms found in the analysis

Gender	Themes	Example Idioms
Masculine	Leadership, authority	wear the pants, be in the driver's seat
	Risk-taking, boldness	go balls to the wall, throw caution to the wind
	Aggression, violence	come out swinging, with guns blazing
	Suppressing emotions	grow some balls, be a man about it
Feminine	Physical appearance	blonde bomb shell, high maintenance
	Talkativeness	Chatty Cathy
	Weakness, emotionality	weak as a girl, cry like a little girl
	Domestic roles	Suzy Homemaker

That said, some idioms are starting to emerge that challenge outdated gender tropes and celebrate female empowerment. While still small in number, these expressions show how new idioms can be created to represent more progressive gender attitudes. As cultural views on gender evolve, it's likely that corresponding changes will appear in idiomatic language over time.

DISCUSSION

Idioms offer a window into how language encodes cultural beliefs and stereotypes about gender. The skewed gender representation and stereotypical depictions found highlight the importance of critically examining the idioms we use. While people often use idioms without much conscious thought, they can still subtly reinforce problematic gender biases.

Greater awareness of the gender stereotypes embedded in common idioms can help promote more inclusive language. While many established idioms are unlikely to disappear overnight, mindfully choosing to use gender neutral variations (e.g. "one for all" vs "every man for himself") can make a difference. There may also be opportunities to introduce new, egalitarian idioms into the lexicon.

Analyzing idioms is just one piece of the broader discourse around gender and language. More research is needed to understand how English speakers perceive and use gendered idioms in practice. Future studies could explore generational and regional differences in gendered idiom usage. As cultural attitudes toward gender shift over time, longitudinal studies could track how the gender representation in English idioms evolves.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates how gender roles and stereotypes are reflected in English idioms. Results show that idioms are more likely to reference men and masculinity and tend to reinforce traditional gender expectations. Critically examining the gender biases in figurative language is important for fostering more inclusive communication. Further research in this area can help track the evolving representation of gender in idiomatic expressions over time.

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