

Universal Characteristics Of Gender Categories In Language

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Abstract: This article examines the universal characteristics of gender categories in contemporary societies through comprehensive literature analysis. The study explores the nature of gender as a social construction, its cross-cultural commonalities, and transformations in modern contexts. Based on theoretical analysis of diverse scholarly works, the research reveals that despite cultural variations, gender categories possess certain universal characteristics manifested in social roles, identification processes, and linguistic expressions.

Keywords: Gender categories, universal characteristics, social construction, gender identification, cross-cultural analysis, language and gender.

Introduction: Gender categories are among the converging themes across the social sciences and humanities scholarship of our era. Gender has been conceptualized as a culturally diversified, socially constructed identity distinct from biological sex in the 21st century. Nevertheless, in light of the immense diversity in gender categories between societies and cultures, there exist certain universal features that can be observed across them. Identification and examination of these universal features are of crucial importance not only theoretically but also in social policy and educational practice.

The question of universal characteristics of gender categories is an interdisciplinary area of research situated at the intersection of various sciences such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, and linguistics. The work of researchers like Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, and Sandra Bem has established vast theoretical frameworks on the social construction of gender and its manifestations in cultural contexts. However, today, with globalisation processes and exacerbated intercultural relations, universal characteristics of gender categories have become increasingly important.

Contemporary linguistic research demonstrates that gender categories are not merely abstract social constructs but are in fact brought into existence

through language use, discourse practices, and communicative routines. The relationship between language and gender has been the subject of intense investigation, which illustrates the ways in which linguistic organization mirrors and creates gender identity. This linguistic dimension of gender provides significant insights into universal properties that span cultural divides while simultaneously acknowledging local variation and specificity.

The aim of the study is to establish the universal characteristics of gender categories through a recent analysis of literature and examine their modes of appearance in various cultures. The objectives of the research are to study theoretical foundations of gender categories, identify their cross-cultural commonalities, and analyze recent changes in circumstances with particular focus on linguistic expressions and social practices.

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on qualitative methodology, employing literature analysis methods. Judith Butler's performativity theory serves as the primary theoretical framework for studying universal characteristics of gender categories. Butler emphasizes that gender identification is formed through repetitive actions and is socially constructed, which enables understanding of the dynamic rather than static nature of gender

categories. This approach provides crucial insights into how gender categories function across different linguistic and cultural contexts.

Uzbek scholars have made significant contributions to understanding gender categories in Central Asian contexts. Mavluda Yuldasheva's research on gender discourse in Uzbek literature demonstrates how traditional gender roles are negotiated and transformed through linguistic practices. Her work reveals that even within culturally specific contexts, certain universal patterns of gender construction emerge through narrative structures and linguistic choices. Similarly, Nodira Azimova's studies on women's language use in contemporary Uzbekistan show how gender categories manifest through specific linguistic features while maintaining connections to broader universal patterns of gender expression.

Dilbar Usmanova's anthropological research provides valuable insights into the intersection of traditional gender roles and modern gender identities in Uzbek society. Her ethnographic work demonstrates how universal characteristics of gender categories, such as the binary classification system and associated social roles, persist even as specific cultural expressions evolve. This research highlights the tension between universal tendencies and local adaptations in gender category formation.

Margaret Mead's anthropological research provides important information about the diversity of gender roles across cultures. However, her work also indicates the existence of certain universal tendencies, particularly regarding the place gender categories occupy in social organization and their methods of expression through language. Cross-cultural studies consistently reveal that while specific gender roles vary significantly, the existence of gender categories as organizing principles of social life appears to be universal.

Russian scholars, including I.S. Kon and A.A. Temkina, have analyzed the specific characteristics of gender categories in Soviet and post-Soviet spaces. Their research indicates that gender categories are deeply influenced by cultural and historical contexts while maintaining certain structural similarities across different societies. The linguistic analysis of gender categories in Slavic languages provides additional evidence for universal patterns in gender expression.

Contemporary Western scholarship has emphasized the fluid and performative nature of gender categories. Joan Scott's historical analysis demonstrates how gender categories function as analytical categories that organize social relations and power structures. This perspective aligns with findings from Uzbek contexts,

where traditional gender categories are being renegotiated through modern social and economic changes while maintaining certain organizational functions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of diverse scholarly literature reveals several universal characteristics of gender categories that transcend cultural boundaries. First, the binary classification system appears as a fundamental organizing principle across cultures, though the specific content and boundaries of these categories vary significantly. Even in societies that recognize non-binary or third gender categories, the basic structural principle of categorical classification remains consistent.

Second, gender categories universally function as organizing principles for social roles and responsibilities. While the specific roles assigned to different gender categories vary dramatically across cultures, the use of gender as a basis for role differentiation appears universal. This pattern is particularly evident in linguistic practices, where gender categories often determine speaking patterns, vocabulary choices, and discourse styles.

The linguistic manifestation of gender categories represents another universal characteristic. Across diverse language families, gender categories are expressed through various linguistic mechanisms including pronouns, honorifics, speech styles, and vocabulary choices. Research in Uzbek linguistic contexts demonstrates how gender categories are embedded in language structure and use, reflecting broader social understandings while contributing to their reproduction and transformation.

Contemporary research reveals that gender categories exhibit universal tendencies toward both stability and change. Traditional gender categories provide social continuity and identity anchors, while simultaneously adapting to changing social conditions. This dynamic balance between stability and transformation appears consistent across different cultural contexts, suggesting a universal characteristic of gender category systems.

The performative aspect of gender categories represents another universal feature. Regardless of cultural context, gender categories require ongoing performance and reinforcement through daily practices, linguistic choices, and social interactions. This performative dimension highlights the active rather than passive nature of gender category membership and suggests universal psychological and social processes underlying gender identity formation.

Power relations constitute a final universal characteristic of gender categories. Across cultures, gender categories are embedded in hierarchical relationships that distribute resources, opportunities, and social recognition differentially. While the specific nature of these hierarchies varies, the existence of power differentials based on gender categories appears universal, manifesting through language use, social practices, and institutional structures.

CONCLUSION

This research has identified several universal characteristics of gender categories that persist across diverse cultural contexts while allowing for significant local variation. The binary classification principle, the organizational function for social roles, linguistic manifestation, the balance between stability and change, performative nature, and embedded power relations represent core universal features of gender category systems. The findings suggest that gender categories function as fundamental organizing principles of human societies, providing both stability and flexibility in social organization. The linguistic dimension of gender categories proves particularly important, as language serves both as a medium for expressing gender identities and as a mechanism for their construction and transformation.

For Uzbek contexts specifically, the research reveals how traditional gender categories are being negotiated within contemporary social changes while maintaining connections to universal patterns observed globally. This suggests that local cultural specificities and universal characteristics of gender categories can coexist and interact in complex ways. The implications of this research extend beyond academic discourse to practical applications in education, social policy, and intercultural understanding. Recognizing both universal characteristics and cultural specificities of gender categories can contribute to more nuanced and effective approaches to gender equality and social inclusion across diverse contexts.

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