

## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ENGLISH IDIOMS

### INGLIZ TILI IDIOMLARDAGI GENDER FARQLANISH

### ГЕНДЕРНЫЕ РАЗЛИЧИЯ В АНГЛИЙСКИХ ИДИОМАХ

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**Annotation:** An idiom is phrase that, when taken as a whole has a meaning you wouldn't be able to deduce from the meanings of the individual words. There are many idioms which are based on both of gender types that they have been contributing for ornamenting linguistic features for many centuries. In this article, it will expound about how there are aspects of idioms between genders, how there are differences of idiom in types of genders and it will give contributing examples.

**Annotatsiya:** Idioma - bu yaxlit ma'noga ega bo'lgan ibora bo'lib, siz alohida so'zlarning ma'nolaridan xulosa chiqara olmaysiz. Nutqimizda ikkala jins vakillariga tegishli bo'lgan juda ham ko'p iboralar ko'p asrlar davomida til xususiyatlarini bezashga hissa qo'shib kelmoqda. Ushbu maqolada jinlar o'rtasida idiomalarning qanday jihatlari borligi, jinlar turlari bo'yicha idiomalarning qanday farqlari borligi haqida ma'lumot beriladi va misollar keltiriladi.

**Аннотация:** Идиома – это фраза, которая, взятая в целом, имеет значение, которое вы не сможете вывести из значений отдельных слов. На самом деле, существует множество идиом, основанных на признаках обоих полов. типы, которые они вносили в украшение языковых особенностей на протяжении многих

столетий. В этой статье будет рассказано о том, как существуют аспекты идиом между полами, как существуют различия в идиомах разных полов, а также приводятся полезные примеры.

**Key words:** Idiom, gender, gender-specific traits, gender marked differences , male and female language

**Kalit so'zlar:** Idioma, jins, jinsga xos xususiyatlar, jinsga xos farqlar, erkak va ayol tili

**Ключевые слова:** Идиома, гендер, гендерно-специфические черты, гендерно-выраженные различия, мужской и женский язык

**Introduction.** Idioms are among the most vivid and culturally loaded units of language, encapsulating collective experiences, values, and social attitudes. As fixed expressions with figurative meanings, idioms often outlast the historical and cultural circumstances in which they emerged, functioning as linguistic “time capsules” that transmit traditions, worldviews, and social stereotypes to subsequent generations. Because of their high cultural density, idioms serve as a valuable resource for exploring how gender roles and identities are conceptualized in a given linguistic community.

In English, as in many other languages, idiomatic expressions frequently include explicit gender markers such as man, woman, boy, or girl. These lexical components are not merely grammatical indicators of gender but carriers of culturally specific connotations. For example, male-associated idioms often emphasize agency, authority, and public life, while female-associated idioms may highlight domesticity, emotional qualities, or relational status. Such patterns reflect broader societal structures and ideologies, demonstrating how language both mirrors and perpetuates social norms.

The study of gender differences in idioms has gained momentum in recent decades due to the growing influence of linguocultural and cognitive linguistic approaches in gender studies. These frameworks allow researchers to examine idioms not only as linguistic artifacts but also as conceptual metaphors, cultural models, and indicators of social cognition. By analyzing gender-marked idioms through these lenses, it becomes possible to reveal the underlying conceptual structures that shape gender perceptions in English-speaking societies.

The present research aims to analyze a corpus of gender-marked English idioms in order to identify the most frequent lexical components, categorize them according to thematic domains, and interpret their cultural and cognitive implications. Through quantitative ranking and qualitative interpretation, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how gender is embedded in English phraseology and to highlight the role of idioms as carriers of gendered cultural knowledge.

**Methods.** This study employed a corpus-based approach to examine the gender semantics of English idioms through linguocultural and cognitive linguistic frameworks. The research was conducted in several stages: data collection, lexical component identification, frequency ranking, and semantic categorization.

The corpus of gender-marked idioms was compiled from both British and American English lexicographic sources, ensuring a broad coverage of contemporary and traditional idiomatic usage. The primary references included Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, Longman Idioms Dictionary, New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English (ed. A. S. Hornby), Macmillan English Dictionary, Selected dictionaries by A. V. Kunin.

Idioms were selected according to two main criteria:

- a) the presence of explicit gender-marked lexical components (man, woman, girl, boy, etc.);
- b) inclusion in authoritative dictionary entries with established idiomatic status.

Only idioms with clear figurative meaning and culturally embedded usage were retained, resulting in a final sample of 312 idioms.

The integration of linguocultural and cognitive linguistic approaches allowed for interpreting idioms not only as linguistic units but also as carriers of cultural knowledge and gender-based conceptualization

**Results.** The corpus-based investigation of gender-marked English idioms yielded a total of 312 idiomatic expressions containing explicit gender components. The sampling was drawn from authoritative lexicographic sources, including Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, Longman Idioms Dictionary, New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language, Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Macmillan English Dictionary, selected works by A. V. Kunin, and various online idiom databases.

The method of identifying key lexical items allowed for ranking idioms according to the frequency of their gendered components. Analysis revealed that idioms containing the component man were the most frequent, with a total of 113 instances. These idioms covered a wide semantic range, including occupational roles (plain-clothes man), personal attributes (a man of action), and metaphorical types (a little man). Examples include:

a bad man – outlaw or villain;

best man – male assistant to the bridegroom at a wedding;

a liberty man – sailor on shore leave;

a strong-arm man – a bully or enforcer.

Idioms with the component woman were less frequent but exhibited a thematic concentration on domestic, relational, and moral domains. Examples include:

a woman's work is never done – continual domestic responsibilities;

make an honest woman of her – marry a woman;

a woman of her word – a reliable woman;

a woman of letters – an educated woman;

a woman on a mission – a determined woman.

In addition to frequency data, qualitative analysis showed distinct semantic trends:

Male-oriented idioms tended to emphasize strength, agency, and public life.

Female-oriented idioms often reflected relational status, moral standing, and domesticity.

The lexical ranking established in this study serves as the foundation for further cognitive and linguocultural analysis, enabling clearer mapping of gender semantics within the idiomatic corpus.

**Discussion.** The findings of this study confirm that English idioms with gender-marked components reflect both linguistic patterns and deeply rooted cultural perceptions of gender roles. The corpus-based analysis of over 300 idioms revealed a clear asymmetry in lexical frequency: idioms containing the component man significantly outnumber those with the component woman. This suggests that historically, male-associated terms have occupied a more prominent position in English idiomatic expression, both in variety and in frequency. Such prevalence may be attributed to the historically male-dominated nature of public life, literature, and idiom creation, resulting in a linguistic landscape where men are positioned as the default reference point.

The idioms analyzed also demonstrate how metaphorical representation of gender reinforces social stereotypes. Many male-oriented idioms, such as a man of action, best man, or a strong-arm man, highlight qualities linked to strength, decisiveness, authority, and public engagement. In contrast, idioms containing woman often focus on domestic roles, moral reputation, reliability, or emotional determination, as in make an honest woman of her, a woman of her word, and a woman's work is never done. Such contrasts point to the way idioms function as cultural signposts, preserving values and role expectations of the societies in which they originated.

Applying a linguocultural approach and cognitive linguistic methods has allowed us to not only identify these patterns but also to model the semantic fields of gender-marked idioms. The method of identifying key lexical items proved particularly effective for isolating dominant components and ranking them by frequency, thereby providing a clearer quantitative picture of gendered linguistic representation. However, the frequency

data alone does not fully capture the qualitative dimensions of idiomatic meaning. For instance, certain less frequent idioms may carry stronger evaluative or symbolic weight, exerting greater influence on social attitudes toward gender. The persistence of such idioms in contemporary English, despite evolving gender norms, indicates that idiomatic expressions serve as cultural repositories, often outlasting the contexts that gave rise to them. This has important implications for modern discourse: while some idioms have been reinterpreted or used in gender-neutral ways, many still transmit implicit biases and stereotypes. Consequently, the awareness of these linguistic patterns is crucial for both language learners and native speakers, as it opens possibilities for more critical and conscious language use.

**Conclusion.** The analysis of gender differences in English idioms reveals that figurative language not only reflects cultural values and historical attitudes but also reinforces gender-specific perceptions. Many idioms relating to women, especially those originating from older stages of English, tend to emphasize appearance, domestic roles, and emotionality, often carrying connotations that restrict agency or portray women stereotypically. In contrast, idioms associated with men more frequently highlight power, authority, rationality, and public life.

While modern English continues to preserve many of these traditional expressions, contemporary language use also shows signs of change. Some idioms have shifted in meaning or are used more neutrally, reflecting gradual shifts toward gender equality and inclusivity. Nevertheless, the persistence of idiomatic expressions rooted in historical gender norms reminds us that language is both a mirror and a moulder of social consciousness.

Recognizing these patterns is crucial for linguists, educators, and cultural analysts because idioms are not simply ornamental speech—they shape and transmit collective perceptions. By critically examining gendered idioms, speakers and writers can become more aware of implicit biases and consider alternatives that better align with modern values of equity and respect. This understanding not only enriches language competence

but also promotes a more balanced and inclusive linguistic environment. To sum up, analyzing the expression plane of English idioms, we have identified and ranked (on the basis of their frequency) the lexical items with gender semantics in the sampled English gender-marked idioms. The following conclusions can be drawn: first, the most common gender opposition in English idioms is man –woman; second, gender components in English idioms are expressed by proper nouns, terms reflecting kinship and other gender-marked lexical items. Third, the analysis of expression plane can be applied to the investigation of idioms with non-gender semantics.

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