GENDER IDENTIFICATION THROUGH DIMINUTIVE AND ENDEARING AFFIXES IN UZBEK ANTHROPONYMY: A LINGUISTIC AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This article presents an in-depth linguistic and sociolinguistic analysis of diminutive and endearing affixes used in Uzbek personal names, particularly: –bonu, –boy, –poshsha, –xo'ja, –jon, and –toy. These affixes are examined as linguistic units that reflect not only morphological and semantic roles but also the gendered worldview and cultural ideology of Uzbek society. Relying on frameworks of gender linguistics, poststructuralist theory, and cultural semiotics, the study views affixes not merely as grammatical tools but as ideological markers embedded in language use.

Keywords: gender linguistics, Uzbek anthroponymy, affix analysis, –bonu, –boy, –poshsha, –xo'ja, –jon, –toy, morphological semantics, personal names, sociolinguistics, cultural cognition, gender stereotypes, language and ideology, poststructuralism, gender construction

1. Introduction

Language is not merely a communicative medium; it is a central force in shaping social consciousness. The morphological structure of personal names, in particular, reflects layers of cultural values and gender ideologies. In Uzbek, affixes such as –bonu, –boy, –poshsha, –xo'ja, –jon, and –toy serve as markers of gender identity. This article analyzes how such affixes reinforce culturally constructed notions of masculinity and femininity and contribute to the maintenance of gender-based stereotypes and social hierarchies.

2. Affixes and their gender codes: Systematic analysis

Affix	Usage Domain	Gender Marker	Semantic Load	Stereotype
–bonu	Female names	Femininity	Beauty, delicacy, obedience	Women = beautiful and gentle

–boy	Male names	Masculinity	Wealth, strength, social status	Men = protectors, powerful
–poshsha	Primarily female	Femininity (often ironic)	Royalty, often ironic or humorous	Female power is mocked
–xo'ja	Male-exclusive	Masculinity	Knowledge, religious authority	Knowledge = male dominance
–jon	Both genders	Mainly masculine	Affection, intimacy	Azizjon = pride; Oyijon = servitude
–toy	Male-exclusive	Masculinity	Sweetness, childhood	Only boys receive this affection

3. Analysis and Discussion

The table above reveals that Uzbek affix usage contributes to the reinforcement of gender-based social hierarchies. Affixes like –boy and –xo'ja are associated with traits considered socially superior, such as power, wealth, and religious status. In contrast, affixes like –bonu and –poshsha connote stereotypically feminine attributes such as obedience, delicacy, or ironic authority. Notably, the affix –toy is exclusively used in male names, suggesting that emotional investment and affection are more culturally accepted toward boys. The absence of this affix in female names implies a lack of such sentimental emphasis for girls. Similarly, –jon occurs in both male and female names but carries different connotations: while O'g'iljon implies pride and protection, Oyijon signifies servitude and maternal devotion.

This analysis demonstrates that affixes are not merely grammatical units but ideological vehicles reflecting gender codes rooted in culture. From a poststructuralist perspective, gender is a discursive construct, not a biological given, and affixes serve as potent sites where this construction is actively negotiated and reproduced through language.

4. Conclusion

The affixes –bonu, –boy, –poshsha, –xo'ja, –jon, and –toy used in Uzbek anthroponymy are not merely morphological constructions but deeply embedded signs of gendered social cognition.

They reflect and reproduce societal expectations surrounding masculinity and femininity by encoding roles, status, and values into the structure of names.

The analysis shows that gender identity, as constructed through these affixes, is tied to specific cultural stereotypes. While male affixes emphasize strength, leadership, and worth, female affixes highlight beauty, delicacy, or servitude—often within a passive framework. This linguistic encoding reinforces patriarchal ideology and challenges the principle of gender equality.

In promoting gender inclusivity, educators, linguists, cultural experts, and policymakers must cooperate in revising how language represents gender. This includes reconsidering how personal names are formed and interpreted in both formal and informal registers. Addressing the ideological implications of affixes can contribute to dismantling invisible yet powerful mechanisms of gender-based discrimination.

Thus, studying affixes not only enhances our understanding of grammatical structures but also uncovers how language perpetuates and sustains social ideologies. It is a call for deeper linguistic awareness in the pursuit of gender equity in discourse and inclusive language policy.

References

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