

Linguopragmatic Features of Gender Stereotypes in Erkin A'zam's Novella *Zabarjad*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the linguistic and pragmatic features of Erkin A'zam's novella Zabarjad. Descriptive, contextual, and linguopragmatic methods were employed in the analysis. Gender-related units in the text were classified into direct gender markers, gender-associated units, and contextual-pragmatic units. The study also analyzed implicit meaning relations that activate gender meanings in the characters' speech. The findings demonstrate that gender stereotypes are not confined to nominations denoting sex and marital status; they are also constructed through views concerning physical appearance, occupational and domestic activities, marriage, social status, and communicative relations. The protagonist's speech and behavior simultaneously reveal the acceptance of traditional gender expectations, their ironic evaluation, and resistance to them. The combination of determination, independence, and emotional sensitivity in the character indicates that she cannot be assessed through a one-dimensional feminine or masculine framework. The study substantiates the need to examine gender stereotypes in literary texts not only in terms of lexical meaning but also with reference to textual context and communicative function.

Keywords: Gender stereotypes, literary text, linguopragmatics, gender markers, gender-associated units, implicit meaning, presupposition, implicature.

INTRODUCTION

Human communication is not limited to the exchange of information. Every utterance embodies the speaker's intention, attitude, evaluation, and particular social conceptions. Consequently, contemporary linguistics increasingly examines linguistic phenomena not only in terms of their immediate linguistic structure but also in close relation to their conditions of use, communicative function, and context. This approach makes it possible to investigate layers of meaning that are not explicitly expressed in speech but are nevertheless inferred by participants in communication.

A literary text is a complex phenomenon that embodies an artistic interpretation of socially established conceptions, values, and stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are manifested through the author's communicative intention, the characters' verbal behavior, and the relationships between them. However, an interpretation based solely on linguistic units is not always sufficient to account for the meaning expressed in a literary text. Rather, implicit layers of discourse, context, presupposition, implicature, and other pragmatic factors play a significant role in its full comprehension. From this perspective, literary texts constitute an important source for investigating not only the linguistic but also the linguopragmatic features of gender stereotypes.

Gender stereotypes have been widely investigated from various perspectives in gender studies, including sociology, psychology, and linguistics. Nevertheless, research based on literary texts has not sufficiently explored, particularly in Uzbek prose, the pragmatic mechanisms through which such stereotypes are constructed in literary communication, how they are realized in characters' speech, and how they are interpreted by readers. This gap necessitates a linguopragmatic study of gender stereotypes and determines the relevance of the present research.

The purpose of this study is to identify the linguopragmatic features of gender stereotypes in Erkin A'zam's *Zabarjad* and to analyze the communicative means through which they are realized in the literary text. The object of the study comprises

speech units and communicative situations that express gender stereotypes in the novella. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which gender stereotypes are constructed in literary discourse and enrich scholarly approaches to the linguopragmatic study of Uzbek prose.

The study of gender stereotypes is an interdisciplinary field that has attracted increasing attention in linguistics. Existing research indicates that gender stereotypes are not merely transmitted through language; they are also constructed, reinforced, and passed from one generation to another by linguistic means. Accordingly, contemporary linguistic research interprets gender not only at the grammatical and lexical levels of language but also in relation to its pragmatic, cognitive, and discursive dimensions. Such an approach enables a deeper understanding of how gender stereotypes emerge in discourse and what communicative functions they perform.

The scholarly foundations of social stereotype theory are primarily associated with the American journalist and political scientist Walter Lippmann. He interprets stereotypes as stable conceptions that represent reality in a simplified form in the human mind [1: 59-60]. Robin Lakoff was among the first scholars to investigate systematically the relationship between gender and language. She argues that women experience linguistic discrimination in two ways: first, through being taught to use language in a particular manner; and second, through the attitudes toward women embedded in the linguistic system and in general language use. In Lakoff's view, both processes contribute to assigning women a secondary role in society [2: 45-46]. At a subsequent stage in the development of gender linguistics, the research of A. V. Kirilina became particularly significant. She defines gender as an important characteristic encompassing a person's biological sex and its social consequences, one that influences both individual self-perception and how a speaker is perceived by other members of society [3: 8-9].

Linguopragmatics emerged as a field concerned with the use of linguistic units in communication and their relation to communicative purpose. Its theoretical foundations are

associated with the work of several scholars. Charles Morris divided semiotics into syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics, defining pragmatics as the study of the relationship between signs and their users. In doing so, he established the general theoretical boundaries of pragmatic inquiry [4: 6-7]. J. L. Austin subsequently demonstrated that linguistic units serve not only to convey information but also to perform particular actions, thereby laying the foundations of speech act theory [5: 94-108]. John Searle systematically developed Austin's ideas, classified speech acts into several types, and specified the conditions under which speech acts are successfully performed [6: 10-16].

H. P. Grice's work was especially important for the study of layers of pragmatic meaning that are not directly expressed. His theory of implicature made it possible to explain meanings inferred implicitly in discourse on the basis of the communicative situation and the interlocutors' shared knowledge [7: 41-58]. Stephen Levinson further systematized the scope of pragmatics, identifying deixis, presupposition, implicature, speech acts, and conversational structure as its principal objects of inquiry [8: 5-35]. George Yule synthesized these theoretical directions and explained pragmatic meaning in relation to the speaker's communicative intention, context, hearer inference, and the social distance between participants [9: 3-4]. Accordingly, the present article analyzes gender stereotypes within this linguopragmatic framework.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Erkin A'zam's novella *Zabarjad* was selected as the material for this study. The analysis identified lexemes and nominal phrases denoting a person's sex, age, family or kinship relations, and social status. Units relating to occupational and domestic activities, physical appearance, clothing, communicative settings, and marriage rituals were also included because, although they contain no inherent gender seme, they activate nationally and culturally specific conceptions of masculinity and femininity within the context of the novella. Units that evaluate the characters' behavior and social status according to gender norms

were examined as a separate contextual-pragmatic group. A linguopragmatic approach formed the basis for identifying and describing gender stereotypes in the text. Descriptive, contextual, and semantic-pragmatic methods were employed. Descriptive analysis was used to identify gender-related units and characterize their lexical-semantic properties. Contextual analysis considered who used each unit, with reference to whom, in what speech situation, and for what communicative purpose. Semantic-pragmatic analysis identified gender meanings that were not explicitly stated in the characters' speech but were inferred from context, shared knowledge, and sociocultural conceptions. Linguistic units expressing gender stereotypes were analyzed in terms of their communicative functions, implicit meanings, presuppositions, and implicatures. The results made it possible to determine how gender stereotypes are realized in literary texts through pragmatic means.

RESULTS

The analysis of Erkin A'zam's *Zabarjad* shows that gender stereotypes are expressed through a range of distinct linguistic and pragmatic means. Some units directly nominate a person's sex, age, kinship relations, or marital status, whereas others activate gender meanings through national and cultural associations, context, and subjective evaluation. Presuppositions and implicatures in the characters' speech further intensify the pragmatic effect of these units. In particular, *Zabarjad*'s attitude toward traditional norms of femininity indicates that gender stereotypes are not merely reproduced in the novella but are, in certain situations, reinterpreted. The findings were therefore analyzed according to their forms of expression and their functions in the text.

1. *Expression of gender-related lexical and nominal units*

The nominal units extracted from the novella do not express gender meaning in a uniform manner. In some words, meaning related to a person's sex is directly encoded in their semantic structure; in others, it is constructed under the influence of

particular social views, national and cultural experience, or the speech situation. Positive and negative evaluations of the characters also activate stereotypical conceptions of masculinity and femininity. On this basis, the gender-related lexical units identified in the novella were classified as direct gender nominations, gender-associated units, and evaluative-contextual units.

Table 1. *Classification of gender-related lexical and nominal units in the novella Zabbarjad*

Main category	Subcategory	Units identified in the novella	Expression of gender meaning
Gender markers	Sex and age markers	<i>qiz</i> (girl), <i>juvon</i> (young woman), <i>kampir</i> (old woman), <i>xotin-xalaj</i> (women folk), <i>bola</i> (child/boy), <i>o'g'il</i> (son), <i>yigit</i> (young man), <i>er</i> (husband/man), <i>erkak</i> (man)	Directly indicate a person's sex and stage of life.
	Family and kinship markers	<i>er</i> (husband), <i>dada</i> (father), <i>aya/ena</i> (mother), <i>amma</i> (paternal aunt), <i>amaki</i> (uncle), <i>uka/ini</i> (younger brother), <i>singil</i> (younger sister), <i>opa</i> (older sister), <i>kennoyi</i> (sister-in-law), <i>kelin</i> (bride/daughter-in-law), <i>kuyov</i> (groom/son-in-law), <i>qayliq</i> (betrothed)	Express a person's gender together with family status and kinship relation.
	Social and occupational markers	<i>kotiba</i> (female secretary), <i>uy bekasi</i> (housewife), <i>artist ayol</i> (actress/female artist), <i>haydovchi yigit</i> (young male driver), <i>vrach</i>	Directly express gender affiliation by adding a sex-denoting component to

		<i>yigit</i> (young male doctor)	an occupational, social-role, or status designation.
Gender-associated units	Associations of appearance, clothing, and objects	<i>o'sma-surma</i> (traditional cosmetics), <i>kulgich</i> (dimple), <i>figura</i> (figure), <i>ko'zgu</i> (mirror), <i>so'mkacha</i> (handbag), <i>ro'mol</i> (headscarf), <i>kostyum-shim</i> (suit and trousers), <i>galstuk</i> (tie), <i>harbiy libos</i> (military uniform), <i>tilla zanjir</i> (gold chain)	Activate cultural conceptions of masculine or feminine images through appearance, clothing, and objects.
	Occupational and domestic activity associations	<i>chevar</i> (seamstress), <i>haydovchi</i> (driver), <i>oshxona</i> (kitchen), <i>tikuv-bichuv</i> (sewing and dressmaking), <i>o'choqboshi</i> (hearth/kitchen work), <i>qozon</i> (cooking pot), <i>supurib-sidirmoq</i> (to sweep and clean), <i>dalada ketmon chopmoq</i> (to hoe in the fields), <i>gullarga suv quymoq</i> (to water flowers)	Associate household and occupational activities with traditional gender roles.
	Communication and lifestyle associations	<i>dugona</i> (female friend), <i>ulfat</i> (male companion), <i>oshna</i> (male friend), <i>g'iybat</i> (gossip), <i>konyak</i> (cognac), <i>sigaret</i> (cigarette), <i>domino</i> <i>o'ynash</i> (playing dominoes)	Represent communicative settings, habits, and activities conventionally regarded as characteristic of men or women.

	Marriage and ritual associations	<i>to'y</i> (wedding), <i>sovchi</i> (matchmaker), <i>chimildiq</i> (bridal curtain), <i>kuyovko'rar</i> (ritual viewing of the groom), <i>kelin-kuyovlik surati</i> (wedding portrait), <i>vakil ota</i> (ceremonial representative/father)	Activate the marital and family roles of men and women through national and cultural associations.
Contextual-pragmatic gender units	Positive evaluative units	<i>jonon</i> (beauty), <i>nozanin</i> (graceful beauty), <i>farishta/malak</i> (angel), <i>avliyo</i> (saint), <i>suqsur</i> (elegant beauty), <i>husn-u malohat</i> (beauty and charm)	Express positive aesthetic and moral evaluations of male or female characters.
	Negative evaluative units	<i>sulloh</i> (rogue), <i>alvasti</i> (hag/witch), <i>yosuman</i> (scheming old woman), <i>qariqiz</i> (spinster), <i>uyatsiz</i> (shameless), <i>marjabozlik</i> (womanizing)	Negatively evaluate a character's behavior or social status according to gender norms.
	Emotional-expressive units	<i>oshiq</i> (lover), <i>jabrdiyda</i> (sufferer/victim), <i>sho'rlik</i> (poor thing), <i>badbaxt</i> (wretched person), <i>yetimcha</i> (poor orphan), <i>nola</i> (lament), <i>hasrat</i> (sorrow), <i>nigoh</i> (gaze)	Express love, pity, anguish, and other emotional attitudes in a gendered context.
	Ironical units	<i>tannoz xonim</i> (coquettish lady), <i>hur-u g'ilmon</i> (houris and heavenly youths), <i>shifobaxsh suv bekasi</i> (mistress of healing)	Convey covert criticism, mockery, or irony through expressions that are nominally

		waters), diplomat (diplomat), <i>kashanda</i> (heavy smoker)	positive or neutral.
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The gender-associated units presented in the table are not gendered in their dictionary meanings. Their feminine or masculine associations arise from the context of the novella, the character's sex and behavior, and the social evaluation attached to the relevant activity. Although the three principal groups show how gender meanings are activated, certain units also perform additional pragmatic functions in the text. In particular, characterizing words such as *shaddod* ("bold, spirited"), *bebosh* ("unruly"), and *shahdli* ("resolute") used with reference to *Zabarjad*; her father's statement, "Zabar, you were actually supposed to be born a boy; something must have gone wrong" [10: 45], and Azamat's assessment, "Even if you are not a husband, you are like a man!" [10: 70] all indicate that the protagonist does not fully conform to traditional feminine patterns. This interpretation is further supported by her role as the family breadwinner, her assumption of responsibility for her younger brother's treatment, her personal handling of the sale of land in the village, her intention to raise her future child without burdening her father, and some of her actions, including drinking with her father's friends and attempting to smoke when distressed. Nevertheless, these features do not justify interpreting *Zabarjad* exclusively as the bearer of masculine traits. Alongside determination and severity, her character displays emotional sensitivity, affection, anguish, and a desire to establish a family. She therefore cannot be contained within a one-dimensional gender framework. The novella does not entirely reject traditional stereotypes; rather, it reinterprets them through *Zabarjad*'s complex and individual character.

Gender meaning in the novella is not expressed solely through individual lexical units. The pragmatic potential of a unit is determined by who uses it, with reference to whom, in what speech situation, and for what communicative purpose. Identifying presuppositions and implicatures that construct gender stereotypes in the characters' speech therefore reveals

implicit meanings that extend beyond the lexical layer of the work.

2. *Expression of gender stereotypes through presupposition*

Gender-related presuppositions occur at several points in the novella. A clear example appears in Zabarjad's following statement about her life:

After meeting you, I no longer wanted to get married! [10: 58].

The construction "no longer wanted" denotes a change of state and presupposes that the desire had previously existed. In the broader context of the novella, this desire is connected with the social expectation that a woman should marry. Zabarjad's subsequent view of marriage thus appears as a departure from an expected life course. A similar pragmatic meaning occurs in her assessment:

Thank goodness I didn't get married! [10: 58]

The expression "thank goodness" presents Zabarjad's unmarried status as an existing fact while placing the primary emphasis on her positive evaluation of that status. Elsewhere in the novella, however, being unmarried is expressed through the negative nomination *qariqiz* ("spinster") in reference to Zabarjad. The same condition is consequently evaluated positively by the character but negatively by her social environment, producing a pronounced conflict between gender norms and personal choice.

3. *Expression of gender stereotypes through implicature*

A stereotype concerning a woman's suitability for marriage is expressed indirectly in the following utterance:

If there were nothing wrong with her, would she have remained unmarried until this age? [10: 58]

Although the utterance is interrogative in form, the speaker does not actually expect an answer. The rhetorical question

communicates the inference that an unmarried woman of advancing age must have some defect. The phrase “something wrong with her” does not name any specific characteristic of Zabarjad; rather, the negative evaluation is inferred from the fact that she is unmarried. The communicative meaning of the utterance thus extends beyond the information explicitly stated and relies on a stereotypical view that measures a woman’s social status through marriage.

A similar meaning is observed in the following response concerning Azamat’s prospective wife:

She’ll wait! If she’s a good girl, she’ll wait. [10: 70]

The utterance links Jamila’s willingness to wait with her evaluation as a “good girl.” Here the adjective good does not denote the full range of moral virtues; it refers specifically to patience and adaptation to a man’s circumstances. The implicature is therefore that a woman’s loyalty is measured by her willingness to wait. Although this conclusion is not stated as an explicit judgment, it is conveyed to the hearer through the conditional relation.

4. Expression of gender stereotypes through evaluative-pragmatic relations

An evaluative-pragmatic relation involves not only the dictionary meaning of a lexeme but also its function in a particular speech situation as an expression of a character’s position, irony, self-evaluation, or reformulation of a social norm. Gender-related evaluation occurs frequently both in the characters’ speech and in the authorial narration. Zabarjad states:

When you have neither a husband to beat and scold you nor a husband before whom you should feel ashamed, you gradually become this shameless, my friend! [10:45]

In this utterance, the word shameless does not function as an ordinary negative adjective. The character ironically reproduces the view that a woman’s behavior should be controlled by a

husband and children. Although Zabarjad applies this designation to herself, it should not be read as an unequivocal authorial judgment; rather, it is a social norm refracted through the character's speech. The unit's pragmatic meaning therefore contains both self-reproach and covert ridicule of the norm itself.

Zabarjad, normally spirited and vivacious, sat demurely at one end of the table, turning a crystal wineglass in her hand, like 'such a modest and bashful young bride' [10: 63]

In the author's description in the above example situational irony arises from the contrast between spirited and vivacious and the description of a modest and bashful young bride. It shows Zabarjad temporarily departing from her usual behavior in a matchmaking situation. The quoted description does not represent her natural character; it conveys the traditional feminine role required by the situation. Her demure posture is therefore interpreted not as an intrinsic quality but as a gender role performed in a particular social ritual. These examples demonstrate that gender evaluation in the novella is constructed not only through explicit nominations but also through contextual implicature and ironic stance.

The findings demonstrate that gender stereotypes in "Zabarjad" are expressed across several interconnected linguistic and pragmatic layers. Gender markers directly indicate the characters' sex, age, family status, and social position, whereas gender-associated units activate conceptions of femininity and masculinity through physical appearance, clothing, occupational and domestic activities, communicative settings, and marriage rituals. In contextual-pragmatic units, gender meaning is constructed through positive or negative evaluation, emotional-expressive attitudes, and irony. Presuppositions and implicatures in the characters' speech indirectly convey expectations that a woman should marry, remain patient and obedient, and derive her social status from marriage. From this perspective, the novella does not merely reproduce gender stereotypes; in certain passages, it questions and reinterprets them through Zabarjad's speech and actions.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that the gender stereotypes in the novella cannot adequately be regarded as a straightforward literary reproduction of socially established views. On the one hand, Erkin A'zam introduces into the characters' speech prevailing social norms concerning a woman's age, social and familial status, appearance, and behavior; on the other, he brings these norms into conflict with Zabbarjad's individual circumstances. As a result, stereotypes appear not as fixed judgments but as social views that different characters affirm, reject, or ironically reassess. The novella also shows that gender norms are perpetuated through the speech of women as well as men. This finding confirms, through literary material, Lakoff's view that language not only reflects gender relations in society but also contributes to their preservation [2: 45-46]. Zabbarjad's mother, Vazira, reproaches her: "At this rate, no one but mad Zokir will take you as his wife!" [10: 58]. The mother evaluates her daughter's character and way of life according to her eligibility for marriage. Gender stereotypes are thus represented not merely as external pressure but as social norms sustained when one woman regulates another woman's behavior.

Gender stereotypes in the novella are also closely connected with cultural views concerning marriage, material provision, and social status. In an attempt to arrange Zabbarjad's marriage to her father's friend Abdulaziz, Uncle Vosil promotes the match by saying: "He's very wealthy! You'll become a rich lady! He was deputy director at our institute. He even has a Zhiguli. You'll ride in it" [10: 62]. This speech situation shows that the proposed marriage is based on the man's financial resources rather than personal intimacy. The woman's future prosperity is linked not to her independent activity but to the wealth and social status of her prospective husband. The gender stereotype thus extends beyond an individual lexeme and emerges as a complex of cultural views regarding marriage, economic provision, and social status.

In some instances, social criteria related to marriage are expressed not through explicit judgments but through implicit conclusions arising from brief remarks. The following comments

are made by families who have come to seek Zabarjad's hand in marriage:

Apparently, she has no father"; "Their household is rather modest" [10: 58].

These statements do not explicitly identify the reason for rejecting the match or declare the young woman unsuitable for marriage. Nevertheless, the reference to her father's absence and the family's financial circumstances conveys the implicit conclusion that "this girl does not possess the family status we expected." To understand their full meaning, the hearer must draw on social knowledge that a young woman's father, family background, and material circumstances, rather than her personal qualities alone, are important criteria in marriage. This process can be explained through the implicative meaning that, in Grice's account, is inferred on the basis of context and communicative cooperation [7: 41-58]. Through these brief remarks, the author connects Zabarjad's unmarried status not only with her personal choice but also with social and economic criteria governing marriage.

Although the protagonist appears to accept conventional views of marriage and family in some situations, elsewhere she evaluates them ironically or rejects them. Interpreting her forceful, determined, and proactive behavior solely as a sign of masculinity would likewise fail to capture the emotional complexity of the character. Her speech expresses not only independence and resistance but also affection, anguish, loneliness, and a desire for family life. The analysis thus shows that qualities conventionally regarded as feminine and masculine coexist in Zabarjad and emerge in different combinations according to the situation. This finding indicates that the novella does not simply reinforce gender stereotypes; it reassesses them through the protagonist's distinctive speech, choices, and actions.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Erkin A'zam's *Zabarjad* demonstrates that gender stereotypes are expressed in literary texts through both

explicit and implicit layers of meaning. Lexical-semantic markers denoting sex, age, family status, and kinship relations establish the characters' social positions. Gender-associated units activate cultural conceptions concerning physical appearance, clothing, occupational and domestic activities, communicative settings, and marriage rituals. In contextual-pragmatic units, attitudes toward masculinity and femininity emerge through evaluation, emotional expressiveness, and irony.

Presuppositions and implicatures conveying implicit meaning in the characters' interactions reveal prevailing expectations concerning a woman's marital status, family background, social position, and behavior. At the same time, Zabarjad's ironic, forceful, and resistant speech demonstrates that these expectations are neither uniformly nor unquestioningly accepted within society. The coexistence in her character of determination and independence with emotional sensitivity, affection, and a desire for a family prevents her from being confined to a ready-made feminine or masculine framework. Gender stereotypes in the novella are therefore not merely represented; they are reassessed through the protagonist's personal position. This confirms the need to examine gender meanings in literary texts not only through lexical units but also in terms of their communicative functions and their contextual and implicit meanings.

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