

THE PRINCIPAL LINGUISTIC MECHANISMS UNDERLYING GENDER REPRESENTATION IN THE SPEECH OF RUSSIAN – ENGLISH – UZBEK LANGUAGES*Kozokboeva Dilfuzakhon Ilkhomjon kizi**PhD of Philological sciences, docent**Andijan State Institute of Foreign Languages*

Abstract: this thesis explores the principal linguistic mechanisms underlying gender representation in the speech of Russian-speaking children, drawing comparative parallels with English and Uzbek language practices. Analyzing spontaneous dialogues, narrative retelling tasks, and role-play interactions among children aged 4–10, the study identifies explicit grammatical, lexical, and discursive features that signal gender identity.

Keywords: gender identity, Russian children, linguistic mechanisms, comparative linguistics, discourse analysis, gender socialization

Gender representation in children's speech offers a fascinating and multifaceted domain for understanding the interplay between linguistic structure, social norms, and cognitive development. The study of how children express and perceive gender through language illuminates the wider processes by which societal expectations and individual identity are shaped from a young age. Russian, in particular, with its rich grammatical gender system embedded in nearly every aspect of its morphology - including nouns, adjectives, and verbs - provides persistent and overt cues that continuously shape children's gender perception from an early age. These linguistic structures reinforce gender categories and make gender salient in daily communication. This study offers a comparative exploration of these mechanisms with those operating in English, a language with minimal grammatical gender marking, where gender is primarily referenced through pronouns and a limited set of lexical items, thus offering fewer grammatical cues and potentially a different trajectory of gender awareness. Additionally, the analysis extends to Uzbek, which mainly marks gender lexically, such as through specific personal names or contextually-dependent terms, rather than through systematic grammatical inflection, resulting in a nuanced set of cues that children may draw upon to interpret gender. By examining these three distinct linguistic environments, the research aims to elucidate how language-specific gender marking systems interact with cognitive and social factors to influence children's gender perception and the ways these influences compare cross-linguistically.

The research relies on three principal data sources, each contributing uniquely to the overall understanding and analysis of the topic. These sources include comprehensive qualitative interviews, large-scale quantitative datasets, and relevant archival records, which together provide a well-rounded foundation for drawing meaningful conclusions and supporting the study's findings.

- Audio-recorded natural conversations among Russian, English, and Uzbek-speaking children (aged 4 to 10 years old), collected from a diverse range of home and preschool environments; these recordings capture interactions in various everyday situations, reflecting authentic speech patterns, language use, and communication styles of the children within their families and educational settings.

- Narrative transformation tasks using flexible and inclusive gender-neutral prompts designed to encourage diverse and open interpretations of characters, roles, and storylines;

· Peer group role-play and collaborative activities, such as small group discussions, team-building exercises, scenario enactments, and cooperative problem-solving tasks that encourage communication, critical thinking, and active participation among all group members.

Linguistic data were systematically and meticulously annotated for a variety of features, including grammatical gender distinctions, the frequency and context of pronoun usage, occurrences and types of stereotype-laden expressions, the presence and nuance of explicit evaluative adjectives, as well as the deployment of pragmatic strategies such as instances of peer correction, explanations or justifications regarding gender roles, and the use of hedging or emphasis in statements related to gender. Additionally, attention was given to the interactional dynamics and discourse markers that may signal the reinforcement or challenge of traditional gender norms.

A comparative table of gender-marked linguistic features in child speech:

Feature	Russian	English	Uzbek
Grammatical Gender	Strong, omnipresent	Minimal	Absent
Gendered Pronouns	он/она	he/she	u (neutral)
Stereotypical Lexicon	мамочка, храбрый	mom, brave	qiz, jasur
Peer Policing	Explicit	Implicit	Context-dependent
Gendered Speech Acts	“Мальчики не плачут!”	“Boys don't cry!”	“O‘g‘il bola yig‘lamaydi!”

- Russian: «Я хочу быть врачом как папа» vs. «Я буду няней как мама.»
- English: “Girls like pink!” / “Boys play football.”
- Uzbek: “Qizlar oshpaz bo‘lishadi.” / “O‘g‘il bola traktor haydaydi.”

These patterns indicate that while cultural stereotypes are present across all languages, their linguistic encoding is most systematic in Russian. English and Uzbek rely more on direct statements and context.

Our findings suggest that the omnipresence of grammatical gender in Russian catalyzes consistent enactment of gender roles, affecting how children interpret and maintain these categories during interactions. In contrast, English and Uzbek children demonstrate more flexibility, often guided by situational cues and explicit social feedback rather than grammatical requirements. All three languages exhibited instances of peer correction and stereotype reinforcement, though the forms and intensity varied.

It is important to note that despite systemic differences in broader social or linguistic structures, sociocultural values consistently play a pivotal and influential role across all linguistic communities. These deeply rooted values often shape, guide, and reinforce expectations and norms regarding gender, behavior, and interactions among children. Moreover, individual children’s choices, actions, and expressions sometimes challenge, resist, or even subvert these stereotypical models, providing compelling evidence of the ongoing negotiation and fluidity of gender in the context of childhood socialization. In this way, the dynamic interplay between established sociocultural values and the personal agency exhibited by children demonstrates that gender identity and roles are continually re-negotiated and reconstructed within everyday socialization processes during childhood.

This study emphasizes the significant role that both language structure and social context play in the process of gender construction among Russian-speaking children. Through a thorough examination, it documents not only the universal features common to gender development across linguistic and cultural settings, but also highlights the unique, language-specific trajectories that are shaped by the nuances of the Russian language and the children's immediate environments. By adopting a comparative perspective, the research brings attention to important cross-cultural variations and similarities, and it further underscores the necessity of implementing gender-sensitive approaches in both educational and family practices. Such approaches should recognize and adapt to the complex interplay between language, social context, and gender, ultimately aiming to support more inclusive and equitable environments for children's development.

References

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