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VERBAL AND NONVERBAL MARKERS OF GENDER IDENTIFICATION IN PIRIMQUL QODIROV'S NOVELS

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Abstract. This article analyses verbal and nonverbal markers of gender identification in Pirimqul Qodirov's novels *Yulduzli tunlar* and *Avlodlar dovoni* from linguopragmatic and discursive perspectives. Gender identification is interpreted as a discursive phenomenon produced through speech and embodied behaviour within the contexts of social roles, power relations, family status and communicative situations, rather than as a predetermined and immutable attribute of a character's biological sex. The verbal markers examined include forms of address, modal and evaluative resources, speech acts, advice, commands, requests, refusals, epistolary discourse and narrative agency. Nonverbal markers include gaze, silence, bowing, lowering the head, hand gestures, crying, smiling, spatial positioning, clothing and physical activity. The comparative analysis shows that gender identification in *Yulduzli tunlar* is shaped primarily by court etiquette, kinship hierarchy and political authority. In *Avlodlar dovoni*, it expands through new discursive roles involving female characters' physical activity, letter writing, independent choice and the creation of historical memory. The findings establish that verbal and nonverbal signs construct gender identity as a complementary semiotic system, rather than simply duplicating one another.

Keywords: Pirimqul Qodirov, gender identification, verbal markers, nonverbal markers, literary discourse, pragmatics, gender performativity, *Yulduzli tunlar*, *Avlodlar dovoni*.

1. Introduction

Contemporary linguistics does not limit the study of language and gender to an enumeration of biological differences. Gender identity is understood as a system of social meanings produced through recurrent linguistic, pragmatic and semiotic practices in everyday and literary discourse. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) emphasise the role of language in producing and renegotiating gendered meanings through social practice, rather than merely reflecting them in a predetermined form. Meyerhoff and Ehrlich (2019) likewise caution against treating 'women's speech' and 'men's speech' as universal and immutable categories, stressing the importance of context, agency and performativity. Accordingly, an analysis of a literary character's gender identification must consider bodily movement, gaze, silence, dress, spatial positioning and capacity for action alongside the character's words.

Verbal and nonverbal resources in a literary text do not constitute two separate layers. A character's words interact with bodily posture, distance from other characters, gaze and silence to convey social status and gendered expectations. For example, expressions of request and permission, together with forms of address such as hazrat ('Your Highness') and begim ('my lady'), encode hierarchy linguistically, while bowing, lowering the head or looking down may

reproduce that hierarchy nonverbally. Conversely, active physical movement, a direct gaze or independent speech in a public setting can redefine a social role.

Pirimqul Qodirov's novels *Yulduzli tunlar* and *Avlodlar dovoni* provide substantial material for this integrated analysis. In *Yulduzli tunlar*, characters such as Qutlugh Nigar Khanum and Khanzada Begum reveal the complexity of female identity through their advice, influence on political decisions, observance of court etiquette and occasional expressions of attitude through silence or emotional behaviour. In *Avlodlar dovoni*, new forms of gender identification emerge through Hamida Banu's participation in polo, her encounter with Khanzada Begum governed by court etiquette, her negotiations with Humayun, and Gulbadan Begum's emergence as an active voice through correspondence and historical writing.

This article aims to systematise the verbal and nonverbal markers that produce gender identification in these novels, identify their interrelationships and demonstrate the discursive dynamics of gender identity through a comparison of the two works. The study does not assume that every gender-associated form of speech or behaviour reflects a 'natural' difference. Such signs are interpreted in relation to the historical and social norms, court etiquette, family hierarchy and authorial strategies operating within the novels.

Butler's concept of performativity, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's social practice approach, and Stokoe and Smithson's account of how gender categories become 'relevant' in interaction provide important theoretical foundations for studying gender identification through language. These approaches make it possible to view gender as an identity stabilised through recurrent linguistic and social practices rather than as a pre-existing essence. This perspective is particularly productive in the analysis of historical fiction, where a character's gender identification intersects with social rank, kinship, state authority and moral norms.

Research on nonverbal communication demonstrates the role of facial expression, gaze, posture, smiling, interpersonal distance and gestures in producing social meaning. Hall, Carter and Horgan analyse the relationship between nonverbal emotional expression and gendered expectations. In literary texts, however, these signals are not directly observed; they exist as 'second-order' semiotic information represented verbally by the author. Analysing nonverbal gender markers in novels therefore requires identifying the pragmatic functions of the embodied behaviour described by the author.

In relating communicative behaviour in literary texts to gender identity, Adamenko and Klymenko show that characters' speech is stylised under the influence of social and cultural factors. In 2026, Shchyhlo and colleagues similarly observed that the verbal expression of gender roles in literary discourse is constructed through lexical, stylistic and semantic resources. These studies indicate that gender identification should be linked to a broader discursive configuration rather than to isolated words.

Studies of Pirimqul Qodirov's work have paid particular attention to the social and moral roles of female characters. Abdullayeva (2024) examines the positions of Qutlugh Nigar Khanum and Khanzada Begum within the family and society in *Yulduzli tunlar*. Sharipova (2025) shows that historical novels portray Timurid princesses through political counsel, courage and self-sacrifice as well as their inner worlds. Nevertheless, the comparative study of gender identification in Qodirov's novels through an integrated system of verbal and nonverbal markers remains insufficiently systematised. This article seeks to address that gap.

The article employs qualitative discourse analysis, linguopragmatic analysis, contextual analysis and multimodal semiotic interpretation. The primary corpus comprises communicative episodes relevant to gender in Pirimqul Qodirov's novels *Yulduzli tunlar* and *Avlodlar dovoni*. Verbal

markers were coded according to speech acts, forms of address, modal expressions, evaluative vocabulary, turn-taking, advice and commands, epistolary discourse and narrative agency. Nonverbal markers were grouped by gaze, facial expression, silence, bowing, lowering the head, hand movements, bodily posture, crying, smiling, clothing, spatial positioning and physical action.

The analysis avoids a deterministic correspondence of 'one marker = one gender'. Silence, for example, was not automatically treated as a sign of femininity, nor was a command automatically classified as a sign of masculinity. Each item was interpreted in conjunction with the character's social status, the distribution of power in the situation, kinship role and communicative purpose. This approach establishes the interrelationships among the verbal, nonverbal and contextual dimensions of gender identification.

At the comparative stage, differences between the two novels were assessed along the axes of 'normativity–agency', 'court etiquette–active social participation', 'oral speech–written or epistolary voice' and 'hierarchical body language–autonomous physical action'. This model helps reveal historical and discursive transformations in gender identification beyond the traits of individual characters.

The system of address is one of the most stable verbal markers of gender identification in Qodirov's novels. Expressions such as hazrat ('Your Highness'), amirzodam ('my prince'), begim ('my lady'), onam hazratlari ('my honoured mother'), qizim ('my daughter') and og'ajon ('dear elder brother') encode rank, kinship and emotional closeness as well as biological sex. In *Yulduzli tunlar*, Babur's requests for Qutlugh Nigar Khanum's approval before making important decisions extend the maternal role beyond the private household into a position of political and moral counsel. Here, the designation 'mother' functions as a legitimate source of advice as well as a gender marker.

Gender identification also intersects with social role in Khanzada Begum's forms of address to Babur. Her advice to her younger brother concerning the country's development, justice and the consequences of war challenges the absolute validity of the stereotype 'woman = passive listener'. However, because her advice is often framed through kinship and politeness, her discursive agency remains balanced by court etiquette. Advice and moral evaluation predominate as verbal markers in these interactions, rather than commands.

In *Avlodlar dovoni*, the functional range of women's speech expands further. Hamida Banu's conversations with Humayun frequently include speech acts such as questions, refusals, expressions of hesitation and conditional agreement. Within these communicative situations, she becomes an active participant in decision-making rather than merely a respondent. Gulbadan Begum's letters indicate the movement of the female voice from private conversation into the written sphere of political communication. Letters become a means of reporting social threats, requesting assistance, recording historical events and subsequently producing memory.

Table 1. Principal verbal markers of gender identification

Verbal marker	Pragmatic function	Role in gender identification	Context in the novels
Form of address	Indicating rank and intimacy	Jointly encoding gender and social role	Begim, hazrat, amirzodam, onam
Advice / request	Indirect influence	Reconciling female agency with the hierarchy of etiquette	Qutlugh Nigar Khanum, Khanzada Begum

Verbal marker	Pragmatic function	Role in gender identification	Context in the novels
Command / decree	Institutional authority	More closely associated with male political roles, although not exclusive to them	Babur, Humayun, Akbar
Question / refusal	Negotiation and articulation of a position	Verbalising women's right to choose and decide	Hamida Banu
Letter	Influence at a distance and production of memory	Extending the female voice into the public and political sphere	Gulbadan Begum, Hamida Banu

In *Yulduzli tunlar*, nonverbal signs are often associated with court etiquette and family hierarchy. Khanzada Begum's 'meaningful glance' at her mother, or her responses through silence, tears and a lowered head instead of words in certain situations, reveal a tension between inner resistance and outward standards of decorum. Her silent weeping and departure with her head lowered in response to Babur's decree are not merely signs of passivity. They combine emotional resistance, familial intimacy and submission to political hierarchy. The meaning of nonverbal action thus emerges within power relations rather than independently of the situation.

Gaze is also an important semiotic resource in the construction of gender. Khanzada Begum's affectionate gaze at her younger brother, Hamida Banu's brief glance at Humayun and her downward gaze clarify the characters' emotional and social positions. In literary texts, 'looking' conveys more than an emotional state: it serves as a nonverbal equivalent of the right to speak, refusal, trust or caution.

The polo episode at the beginning of *Avlodlar dovoni* is particularly significant for nonverbal gender identification. Hamida Banu's active physical movement broadens the notion of composure conventionally associated with femininity at court. Yet her concern about her clothing, bowing, respectful positioning of her hands and decorous manner of sitting when entering Khanzada Begum's presence after the game combine active movement with etiquette. Her gender identity therefore cannot be reduced to a single trait such as 'active' or 'obedient'; it is constructed through the joint performance of athletic courage and ceremonial grace.

Descriptions of clothing and hair also perform a secondary but stable semiotic function in nonverbal identification. The author describes certain female characters' clothing, hair and headwear in detail, relating them to aesthetic and social codes. These outward signs do not negate the characters' discursive agency. In the cases of Hamida Banu and Gulbadan Begum, an external code of 'femininity' coexists with active decision-making, political correspondence and historical writing.

Table 2. Principal nonverbal markers of gender identification

Nonverbal marker	Contextual meaning	Discursive function	Illustrative contexts
Gaze	Affection, objection, caution, trust	Expressing a position without words	Khanzada–Babur; Hamida–Humayun
Silence / lowered head	Inner resistance and outward submission	Acknowledging hierarchy or expressing emotional strain	Khanzada Begum
Bowing / hand gesture	Etiquette and rank	Indexing social roles through bodily behaviour	Hamida–Khanzada
Crying / smiling	Emotional evaluation	Revealing emotional agency and relationships	Familial and political episodes
Physical activity	Freedom of movement and courage	Expanding normative gender roles	Hamida Banu's polo playing
Clothing / appearance	Court conventions and gendered aesthetic codes	Visual representation of social identity	Depictions of the begums

In *Yulduzli tunlar*, gender identification is often produced through the integration of verbal and nonverbal signs. When Qutlugh Nigar Khanum offers advice on political matters, her moral standing as a 'mother' legitimises the verbal content. Khanzada Begum likewise advises and evaluates her younger brother's actions, but her speech is constrained by kinship, respect and court etiquette. By incorporating their nonverbal reactions, including facial expressions, gaze, silence and tears, the author also prevents female identification from being confined to 'gentle speech'.

Among male characters, verbal identification is more closely associated with political decisions, decrees, military counsel and public accountability. Alongside commands and judgements, Babur's requests for his mother's approval and his willingness to hear his sister's views preclude an interpretation of masculinity as a monolithic model of domination. Although the ruler's identity intersects with masculinity, it is moderated by kinship, moral responsibility and emotional ties.

The novel uses nonverbal resources to convey conflicting emotional states in particular. A character may express submission verbally while bodily movement reveals an inward objection; conversely, politically bold advice may be offered while outward decorum is maintained. A deeper understanding of gender identification therefore requires examining the 'congruence' and 'incongruence' between verbal and nonverbal layers, rather than reading either layer in isolation.

In *Avlodlar dovoni*, verbal and nonverbal gender markers appear more dynamic. Hamida Banu's participation in polo, her acclaim as a sherqiz ('lion-hearted girl') and her subsequent negotiation of her position with Humayun demonstrate the integration of physical and verbal agency within a single character. At the same time, she observes etiquette in Khanzada Begum's presence. Active physical behaviour thus does not abolish historically and culturally defined decorum; gender identification is formed through the simultaneous operation of several social codes.

Changes in Hamida Banu's status are also reflected in forms of address. Following Akbar's birth, the increased use of expressions such as hazrat begim ('Your Highness') indicates the conversion

of motherhood into social capital at court. This verbal shift shows that gender identification depends on the social interpretation of a biological event and its conversion into rank, rather than on the event alone.

Gulbadan Begum's character clearly demonstrates the transfer of verbal agency into writing. Her letters serve to communicate dangers, exert political influence and subsequently translate historical memory into text. In *Avlodlar dovoni*, an important verbal marker of gender identification consequently extends to authorship and documentation. The female character becomes a subject who records historical reality as well as one who expresses personal feelings.

Masculine identification is also reconfigured in *Avlodlar dovoni*. Although the political speech of rulers such as Humayun and Akbar is associated with decrees and authority, their dialogues with female characters also include requests, advice, emotional acknowledgement and cooperation. This associates masculinity with managing relationships and assuming responsibility as well as with commands and force.

The analysis identifies five interrelated layers of gender identification in Pirimqul Qodirov's novels: (1) a nominative layer comprising forms of address and titles of rank; (2) a pragmatic layer comprising speech acts, modality and interactional strategies; (3) a kinesic layer comprising gestures, gaze, posture and physical action; (4) a spatial and visual layer comprising clothing, positioning, entrances and exits, and court etiquette; and (5) a narrative layer concerning who speaks, who decides and whose words affect the course of events. Gender identification is stabilised through the recurrent, context-dependent coordination of these layers.

This model makes it possible to distinguish gender stereotypes from identity itself. Crying, for example, may be a stereotypical marker of 'femininity', but in the novel it functions as tragic resistance to a political decision or as a pragmatic expression of familial bonds. Similarly, a command may appear to signify 'masculinity', although its meaning is directly connected to the institution of rulership. The gendered meaning of any marker therefore always intersects with other social categories, including rank, age, kinship, power and historical circumstances.

The comparative analysis shows that, in the transition from *Yulduzli tunlar* to *Avlodlar dovoni*, markers of gender identification become more complex functionally rather than numerically. In the first novel, court etiquette, kinship and political authority define the principal framework of verbal and nonverbal identification. In the second, physical activity, correspondence, independent choice, the political value of maternal status and historical writing open new channels for female identity.

This change can be explained through the performativity approach in contemporary gender theory. In the novels, gender identity appears as a category recognised through recurrent actions and linguistic strategies, yet renegotiated as circumstances change. In one episode, Hamida Banu complies with court etiquette; in another, she plays polo; in a third, she defends her personal choice. This multilayered characterisation demonstrates that a character cannot be represented adequately by a single stereotype.

At the same time, nonverbal signs in literary discourse must be recognised as verbal representations produced by the author. Markers such as 'gaze', 'lowering the head', 'crying' and 'placing a hand on the chest' are narrative details selected by the author rather than direct observations. They should therefore be read both in relation to the character's psychological state and as part of the writer's organisation of social and aesthetic codes associated with gender.

The findings show that gender identification in Pirimqul Qodirov's novels is constructed through the interaction of verbal and nonverbal signs. Forms of address, speech acts, modality, advice, decrees, refusals, letters and narrative agency constitute the verbal layer, while gaze, silence,

posture, bowing, crying, smiling, clothing and physical activity constitute the nonverbal layer. These resources operate in relation to social roles and situations rather than in isolation.

In *Yulduzli tunlar*, gender identification is regulated primarily by court etiquette, kinship and political hierarchy. Qutlugh Nigar Khanum's and Khanzada Begum's counsel, moral influence and emotional positioning constitute significant forms of female agency. In *Avlodlar dovoni*, this framework expands through Hamida Banu's physical activity and negotiations, Gulbadan Begum's letters and historical writing, and changing forms of address that reflect shifts in female characters' status.

The article's methodological conclusion is that compiling a 'list of signs', whether verbal or nonverbal, is insufficient for analysing gender in literary texts. It is necessary to identify each marker's pragmatic function, who uses it in relation to whom, the social position in which it occurs and its interaction with other semiotic signs. Future research could use this model to construct separate corpora for individual characters, calculate the frequencies of verbal and nonverbal markers and compare gender identification in *Yulduzli tunlar* and *Avlodlar dovoni* through a combined quantitative and qualitative approach.

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