

Lexical Expression of Gender in English

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Abstract:

The gender category in English is less important than in other languages. The gender category is manifested in the gender of the referent and in the matching of objects mainly with rhymes. "These are, first of all, personal pronouns (he, she, it), possessive (his, her, its) and personal (himself, himself, himself) pronouns, or their substitutes. Pronouns correspond to the sex of the creatures, or represent convincing objects.

English nouns *are* concerned with gender (even though not with grammatical gender), in the sense that they include in their definition a gender semantic feature (/ -HUMAN/ or / +HUMAN/, and, in some cases, / +MALE/ or / + FEMALE/). A noun therefore classifies a referent as either human or not human; the relation between gender and categorization applies to English in the sense that gender is a structuring principle of the lexicon. This is a crucial characteristic of the nominal category as it holds for nouns *only* (not for any other part of speech). Adjectives, prepositions, adverbs, etc. do not include such a feature. Some adjectives, such as 'blonde' may occur preferentially with animate nouns but, in the case of 'blonde' as in that of all adjectives it cannot really be said that / +HUMAN/ is a semantic feature of 'blonde' itself but of the noun it is predicated of.

In the same way, some verbs, such as walk are more likely to be predicated of a human referent, but cannot be said to include the / +ANIMATE/ semantic feature.

Another reason why this is a crucial characteristic of nouns is that it holds for virtually *all* nouns.

For some nouns, that gender feature can be morphologically coded as a suffix, e.g. -ess for the feminine in *actress*, but this should not obscure the fact that simple nouns also include a gender semantic feature. Words such as *book, chair, table, story, bottle, envelope, paper, card, magazine, picture or chair* unambiguously denote inanimate referents.

King, woman, neighbour, doctor, nurse, teacher, husband on the contrary, unambiguously denote human animates. This is quite a remarkable fact as there is no other feature that can be said to be *systematically* used in the lexicon. The feature / +FURNITURE/, for example, which is part of the

definition of ‘table’, cannot be said to be a categorizing principle applying throughout the lexicon, as the semantic features of other items such as e.g. *flower* or *pen* do not include /- FURNITURE /.

In addition, the semantic feature of gender seems to be amongst the very few that are easy to describe. In fact it is now established that definitions in terms of semantic features (such as the transformational-generative approach of Katz and Fodor (1963), Katz and Postal (1964), or the ‘componential analysis’ of Leech (1981)) are at least partially inadequate (Taylor 2003: 27-39), to the extent that this was one of the reasons for the development of alternative approaches such as the prototype theory (Rosch 1978).

Contrary to what is sometimes said, then, there are few epicenes in English, if the primary gender criterion is taken to be the human vs. not human distinction. Note that what holds for common nouns also holds for proper nouns: Manhattan denotes a place and includes the /- HUMAN/ semantic feature, while ‘John’ denotes a person and conveys the /+HUMAN/ semantic feature. Most first names include an additional /+MASCULINE/ or /+FEMININE/ semantic feature, but if they do not, they at least always include a /+HUMAN/ semantic feature.

The absence of epicenes is even more striking if we take into consideration the fact that the meaning of many nouns includes a locative relation, a process, or the attribution of a characteristic that could potentially apply to humans as well as non-humans. The noun *neighbour*, for instance, can only be applied to a human being. If an object is located near another one, it cannot be called a neighbour.

Nouns that denote an entity in relation to a process differ when they denote animates or inanimates.

For example, a *view* denotes an inanimate. A person can be looked at, but is not called a *view*. In the same way, a person can be used for some purpose, but it cannot be called a *device*; a *need* is something that is needed, but not a person who is needed; *relics*, *remains*, *leftovers* denote inanimates only, although people may stay behind or be forgotten;

a *surprise* is a concrete object, or an event, but not a person (if someone arrives unexpectedly you cannot say that he or she is a *surprise*);

the default meaning of *group* is group of people (if I group books together I’m not likely to call them a *group*);

a *couple* denotes two people (if I have two books in my bag I do not call them a *couple*- of course I may say that I have a couple of books, but in that expression *couple* is part of a complex determiner);

news denotes an inanimate (a person that has just arrived is not *news*);

a person cannot be called the end or a side even if he or she is at the end of a line, or at the side of a group;

a *relative* is a person, not, say, a book that is related in some way to another, or a printer that is connected to a computer);

a *movie* is an inanimate (if a person moves, he or she isn’t a *movie*);

the 1970s’ denotes a period of time, not people born in 1970;

an *annexe* is an inanimate (if a person is added to a team, it is not called an *annexe*);

although both *doctors* and *drugs* (or *medicine*) cure people, the fact that we have two different words (‘*drug*’ and ‘*doctor*’) reflect the relevance of the human vs. non human distinction.

There are of course some counter-examples to this distribution of the lexicon across gender lines. *Companion* or *reader* for instance, may denote a person or a (reference) book. About *reader* it can be noted however that *read* is not used in the same way when the noun denotes a book or a person: a person reads but a book is read. This different orientation (active vs. passive) may account for the

two uses. A similar remark can be made about diner (a person who dines or a place where people dine / eat).

Another apparent counter-example is eccentric, which may denote a person or an inanimate (an eccentric, i.e. not central, hub). But in that case the meanings are quite different:

when the noun denotes an inanimate its meaning is literal (or: compositional), i.e. away from the center, whereas when it denotes a human it is not. This example therefore supports my hypothesis that it is difficult for one and the same meaning to be distributed across the gender line.

Other counter-examples to the tendency for nouns to either denote an animate or an inanimate are to be found in nouns such as party: a political party may be seen as a group of people or as an abstract (inanimate) entity. I suggest however that even when they refer to groups of people these nouns actually denote inanimates, as the representation of a group involves the representation of an entity 'above' the individuals that constitute the group, i.e. an objectification. The unity of the group is more important than the addition of the people that constitute it, as illustrated by the possibility of singular agreement; if one adds humans together the result is of course a collection of humans but the new unit is probably of another kind.

Other examples are meeting which can either denote an inanimate (the fact that people meet) or the group of people that meet, household which may denote the people that form a household but can also be understood as referring to a more abstract entity, or government. A noun like top, which normally designates an inanimate but can also be used in a phrase such as the top of the company (i.e. the leaders), illustrates the same phenomenon, as it can only designate humans if it designates several humans (the default interpretation of the top of the company is the group of people that lead the company, not the managing director of the company).

This tendency for nouns to designate either a human or a non-human referent (not both) is particularly striking when one takes a look at derived nouns, such as nouns ending with the -er suffix. Although they can potentially denote both types of entities (people or machines, typically), some are restricted to humans even though in terms of meaning potential they may also denote inanimates.

For example, a hairdresser is a person, not a comb; a hairdryer is a thing, not the person who dries your hair at the hairdresser's, a baker is a person, not an oven. Again, just like for simple words, I notice that for one and the same process we have different lexicalizations (baker vs. oven, hairdresser vs. comb, etc.) depending on the gender of the participant who (or which) bakes / combs, etc.

Others, such as *record player*, *cassette recorder*, *computer*, *calculator* are restricted to non-humans. Someone whose role is to calculate (or compute) is not a calculator or a computer, but e.g. a mathematician. A typewriter is a machine, not a person who types;

a scanner is also a machine, not the person who operates the machine. "Word-processor" denotes an inanimate, even though when I write I process words.

These remarks hold for deadjectival '-er' nouns: a stranger is *someone* I don't know but not *something* I don't know. (I can say 'this man is a stranger to me but not this book is a stranger to me). A foreigner is a person, not e.g. a foreign habit.

This phenomenon is admittedly not true of *all* -er nouns, i.e. some may denote humans and non-humans. For instance smoker may denote a person (who smokes) or a train carriage where it is allowed to smoke. But the second meaning is only likely to occur in a specific context, where train carriages are differentiated according to their function (diner, sleeper, etc.), which amounts to saying that the 'person' meaning seems to be the default one (the one that first springs to mind in the absence of a particular context). I therefore observe a fairly big discrepancy between what is

possible in theory and what actually happens in language, which again points to a specialization of the lexicon along gender lines.

It appears that gender is relevant in English, and that it has to do with categorization. As mentioned before this link between gender and categorization is only relevant for the nominal category, not for any other parts of speech.

Accordingly, the concept of "natural sex" prevails over its formal expression, that is, in a gender not only the words themselves, but to a certain extent, the objects represented by these words are classified¹.

In modern English, the gender index mainly refers to the feminine gender words, which belong to the horse word family and are mainly made up of masculine gender words. Masculine gender noun on the other hand, are only considered as gender-specific words in some cases because they are generally accepted as common words. Thus, it can be said that "feminine gender noun plays an incomparably more important role than masculine gender noun in keeping the rod in the languages².

In English, gender-indexed noun are formed in three different ways:

- 1) affixation (аффиксация) (teacher - teacheress);
- 2) lexical expression (leksik ifoda) (boy/girl);
- 3) adaptation by forming a syntactic compound (sintaktik birikma hosil qilish yo‘li bilan moslashuv), (male nurse, he dog).

Lexical pairs with a gender index are mainly family relationships (father - mother, uncle - aunt, daughter - son, etc.),

Social roles (king - queen, lord - lady, etc.) and **animals** (bull -cow, cock - hen, etc.).

Differences between femininity and masculinity can also be expressed through formal indicators that are syntactically related:

Prepositive gender indicators: *female officer, Mr. John, Miss Thorburn, lady doctor, girl graduate, male nurse.*

Conjunctions with the gender indicator element: *an Englishman, a Scotsman.*

Derivative gender indicators: *Actress Julia.*

Derivative gender index words formed through personal pronouns: *he lion, she lion, he - goat, she - goat³.*

Of the indicators cited, *ess* is undoubtedly an indicator of femininity, but *-or / -er* is not always a masculine indicator. Because *-or / -er* is a masculine gender. indicator that has a common meaning and is formed by the feminine gender.

This figure indicates that English language representatives and writers use words ending in *woman* less than words ending in *man*. Almost all of the *Woman-shaped* words are used side-by-side - with a *man-shaped* double word - *man-shaped* words are often used in a general sense.

Also in the dictionary - *woman* does not have a pair of words - *man* additional words are given: *airman, alderman, ambulanceman, anchorman, barman, boatman, cabman, cameraman, churchman, clergyman, coalman, conman, countryman, craftsman.*

¹ Расулова М.И. Основы лексической категоризации в лингвистике. – Ташкент: Фан, 2005. – 268с.

² Григорян А.А. Гендерная маркированность имен существительных в современном английском языке // Гендер: язык, культура, коммуникация. Москва: МГЛУ, 2002. – С. 89-90.

³ Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English. Pearson Educated Limited, 2004. – 613p.

The data presented reflect the linguistic reflection of gender differences that exist in society. Men still have power and dominance. L. Push explains the reason for the persistence of gender inequality in language:

1. Society in most cases prefers to use horses belonging to the masculine rod in a general sense.
2. Masculine terms perform two functions. they both can be applied to both women and men. A masculine term if there is no indicator indicating the gender of the referent applied.

During our analysis, it was also found that the word madwoman (mad woman) does not have a man-shaped double word. Furthermore, when comparing words cited as feminine / masculine pairs, it was observed that feminine terms do not have the same power over masculinity in terms of social equality. They are:

Spinster/bachelor *Spinster* 1) йиғирувчи; 2) турмушга чиқмаган аёл; 3) қари қиз. *Bachelor* 1) бўйдоқ; 2) ёш рицарь; 3) бакалавр.

Governess/governor *Governess* murabbiya, tarbiyachi xotin, farzand tarbiyasi uchun yollangan tarbiyachi xotin, rahbar (eskirgan).

Governor rahbar, hokim; 2) ota, boshliq, ish beruvchi.

Mayoress/mayor *Mayoress* (mer xotini, ayol mer, ayol merning yordamchisi). *Mayor* (shahar, hokimi).

Mistress/master *Mistress* - uy bekasi, jazman, ma'shuqa, mahbuba, mohir usta, o'qituvchi.

Master - xo'jayin, sohib, boshliq, yerdor, zamindor, quldor, uy egasi, oila boshlig'i, mutaxassis, o'z ishining ustasi, o'qituvchi, asosiy, bosh, hukmron, asl, yuqori sifatli, g'olib.

Tigeress/tiger *Tigress* - shafqatsiz, qahri qattiq ayol.

Tiger - kuchli, dadil, jasur, qo'rqmas, qahri qattiq odam.

Witch/wizard *Witch* - jodugar ayol, yalmog'iz, alvasti.

Wizard - sehrigar, afsungar, fokus ko'rsatuvchi, magnat, geniy, sehrli, ajoyib, ekspert, o'z ishining ustasi.

Beggarwoman - tilanchi.

Catwoman, charwoman - yollangan uy yordamchisi, farrosh.

Ghostwoman - arvox ayol.

Needlewoman - tikuvchi.

Slavewoman - qul ayol.

Sweeperwoman - supuruvchi tozalovchi ayol

Here below, we gave some examples about their difference.

Spokeswoman	spokesman
Policewoman	policeman
Chairwoman	chairman
Congresswoman	congressman
Horsewoman	horseman

Thus, it can be said that feminine terms have been used to express social roles with low status, resulting in semantic inconsistencies in pairs of words such as *tiger-tigeress*.

When referring to nouns denoting a secondary (common) gender, we use this or that pronoun (he, his / she, her) according to the gender of the referent (friend, individual, student).

However, if the gender of the referent is unknown, masculine pronouns are usually used. *Each novelist aims to make a single novel of the material he has been given. Each individual is thus the recipient of the accumulated culture of the generations which have preceded him.*

In the following example, the gender of the speaker is not clear, so the term masculinity is used in a general sense: The lack of a specific formal motivation for women and men also indicates that the gender issue has not yet been adequately studied in Uzbek linguistics.

In most cases, women are referred to as "Nazira opa" and men as "Kamil aka". Older women are referred to as "aunts and uncles", while men are referred to as "dads, uncles". However, if we translate these words into Russian or English, we can see the derivation of words that express kinship.

Analysis of the lexical expression of the gender confirmed the idea that feminine rod horses were made from masculine rod horses and allowed us to observe another manifestation of linguistic androcentrism.