

# LEXICAL EXPRESSION OF GENDER IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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**Abstract.** This article provides a theoretical analysis of the lexical expression of gender in the English language, the reasons for the persistence of gender inequality in language, and the extent of usage of feminine terms. It examines how grammatical gender, referring to both animate and inanimate entities, is expressed in English through actual linguistic examples.

**Keywords:** English language, gender, lexical layer, national features, grammatical gender.

Compared to other languages, grammatical gender in English holds relatively little significance. It typically manifests in the agreement of pronouns with the gender of the referent or object. These are primarily personal pronouns (he, she, it), possessive pronouns (his, her, its), and reflexive pronouns (himself, herself, itself), or pronouns referring to the gender of animate beings or to inanimate objects. Thus, the concept of "natural gender" outweighs its formal expression. In other words, "gender applies not only to the words themselves but to some extent to the entities they refer to" [1].

In Modern English, gender markers mostly pertain to nouns, and feminine gender terms are generally derived from masculine ones. Masculine nouns are less often perceived as marked by gender since they are more commonly treated as general or neutral terms. Consequently, it can be stated that "feminine gender nouns play a crucial role in preserving gender distinctions in the language" [2].

In English, gender-specific nouns are formed in three main ways:

1. Affixation (e.g., teacher – teacheress);
2. Lexical differentiation (e.g., boy/girl);
3. Syntactic construction (e.g., male nurse, he-dog).

Gendered lexical pairs generally appear in the following categories: Family relations: father – mother, uncle – aunt, daughter – son, etc. Social roles: king – queen, lord – lady, etc. Animals: bull – cow, cock – hen, and so on.

Gender differences may also be expressed through formal syntactic indicators: Prepositive gender indicators: female officer, Mr. John, Miss Thorburn, lady doctor, girl graduate, male nurse;

Compound words with gender markers: Englishman, Scotsman;

Derived gender terms: actress Julia;

Derived forms with personal pronouns: he-lion, she-lion; he-goat, she-goat [3].

Among these markers, –ess is undoubtedly a feminine indicator, while –or/-er is not always a masculine marker. The suffixes –or/-er usually carry a general meaning and may form feminine nouns derived from masculine ones. According to the Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English (2004), the frequency of words ending in –man versus –woman is 620/4 per one million words [4]. This indicates that English speakers and writers use –woman terms far

less frequently than –man terms. Most –woman words have corresponding –man equivalents, which often function as general terms.

The dictionary also contains –man words without –woman counterparts, such as: airman, alderman, ambulanceman, anchorman, barman, boatman, cabman, cameraman, churchman, clergyman, coalman, conman, countryman, craftsman. Additionally, it was found that among words with the –ess suffix, only seamstress lacks a corresponding masculine form [4].

These examples reflect how gender differences in society are mirrored in language. Men continue to be associated with strength and dominance. Linguist L. Push explains the persistence of gender inequality in language as follows:

1. Society generally prefers using masculine nouns in a generic sense;
2. Masculine terms often serve dual functions, referring to both men and women. In the absence of a gender marker for the referent, a masculine term is typically used. During analysis, it was also noted that the word madwoman (an insane woman) lacks a –man equivalent. Furthermore, when comparing paired masculine/feminine terms, it becomes evident that feminine terms do not carry the same social prestige as their masculine counterparts. For example:

Spinster / bachelor

Spinster: 1) spinner; 2) unmarried woman; 3) old maid

Bachelor: 1) unmarried man; 2) young knight; 3) academic degree holder

Governess / governor

Governess: female private tutor or nanny (archaic as a leadership role)

Governor: leader, official, employer, father, authority figure

Mayoress / mayor

Mayoress: wife of a mayor, female mayor, or assistant to a male mayor

Mayor: city leader or administrator

Mistress / master

Mistress: housewife, lover, beloved, skilled woman, teacher

Master: owner, head, employer, landholder, slaveholder, expert, superior, teacher, ruler, nobleman, etc.

Tigress / tiger

Tigress: a cruel, fierce woman

Tiger: brave, strong, fearless person

Witch / wizard

Witch: female sorcerer, hag

Wizard: male sorcerer, genius, expert, magical figure

This shows that feminine terms are often associated with lower-status social roles, resulting in semantic inconsistencies, as seen in pairs like tiger – tigress.

When using gender-neutral nouns such as friend, individual, student, the appropriate pronoun (he/his or she/her) is chosen based on the referent's gender. However, when the gender is unknown, masculine pronouns are commonly 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 this example, the gender of the referent spokesman is unknown, so a masculine term is used in a generic sense.

The absence of formal gender-based address forms in Uzbek also suggests that the gender issue in Uzbek linguistics remains under-researched. Commonly, women are addressed as Nazira opa and men as Komil aka. Elder women are called opoqi or xola, while elder men are

called doda or amaki. However, translating these into Russian or English yields kinship terms. The analysis of the lexical expression of gender confirms the idea that feminine gender nouns are derived from masculine ones, reflecting another aspect of linguistic androcentrism.

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