

GENDER CATEGORY IN ARABIC: CLASSIFICATION, CHARACTERISTICS, AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF MUZAKKAR AND MUANNAS

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Abstract. This article examines one of the important grammatical categories of the Arabic language: the gender category. The article analyzes the masculine (مُذَكَّر - muzakkar) and feminine (مُؤَنَّث - mu'annas) forms in Arabic based on their definitions, characteristics, formation methods, and practical examples. The external (phonetic) and internal types of the feminine gender, as well as its features such as ta' marbutah, alif maqsura, and alif mamduda, are discussed separately. Furthermore, common nouns that have the same form for both genders and the interrelationship of the gender category with the categories of quality, quantity, and pronouns are examined.

Keywords: Arabic language, gender category, masculine, feminine, ta' marbutah, literal feminine, mental feminine, alif maqsura, alif mamduda, grammatical gender.

INTRODUCTION

In Arabic grammar, the gender category is a grammatical category that expresses the masculine (مُذَكَّر - muzakkar) or feminine (مُؤَنَّث - mu'annas) gender of nouns. This category is reflected not only in nouns but also in other parts of speech such as adjectives, pronouns, verbs, and numbers. According to A. Abdujborov, there are two grammatical genders in Arabic: masculine (مُذَكَّر - muzakkar) and feminine (مُؤَنَّث - mu'annas) ("The Arabic Language," 2015, p. 66). In the book "Lessons of the Arabic Language" by M. Hasanov and M. Abzalova, the gender category is described as follows: xml-ph-0000@deepl.in 2015, p. 66). In M. Hasanov and M. Abzalova's book "Lessons of the Arabic Language," as shown in , words in the Arabic language come in two genders: feminine (mu'annas) and masculine (muzakkar). As these definitions show, the gender category is one of the most fundamental grammatical categories of the Arabic language, and it is impossible to properly master the language without knowing it.

Unlike in Uzbek, the gender category is grammatically mandatory in Arabic, and every noun belongs to either the masculine or feminine gender. As indicated in N. Ibrohimov and M. Yusupov's textbook "Arabic Grammar" (Volume 2, pages 22-24), a correct knowledge of this category is a necessary condition for proper sentence construction and for coordinating words with each other.

The main purpose of this article is to systematically analyze the gender category in the Arabic language based on four important sources: (1) the definition and types of the gender category; (2) the characteristics of the feminine gender; (3) the verbal and substantive types of the feminine gender; (4) nouns that have the same form for both genders; (5) the relationship of the gender category to number, adjectives, and pronouns.

1. Definition of the gender category and its role in the Arabic language

According to A. Abdujabborov, the Arabic language has two grammatical genders: masculine (muzakkar) and feminine (mu'annas) ("Arab tili", 2015, p. 66)¹. These two genders are distinguished from each other by clear morphological and semantic markers. According to M. Hasanov and M. Abzalova, the gender of a noun is invariable, meaning it is either masculine or feminine ("Lessons in the Arabic Language," p. 93)². As this definition shows, gender is an invariable characteristic of Arabic nouns, meaning that a noun, as a lexical unit, always belongs to one gender. There is no separate marker for the masculine gender—that is, the masculine form appears without any suffix. In A. Abdujabborov's examples ("Arabic Language," p. 66):

أَبٌ - father ، أَخٌ - brother ، دَيْكٌ - rooster ، كَبْشٌ - ram³

As you can see, these words do not have any special suffix, but they are all masculine.

2. Masculine nouns

As A. Abdujabborov points out, all nouns denoting the masculine gender, regardless of their form, belong to the masculine gender ("Arabic Language," 2015, p. 66)⁴. In our view, this rule is one of the most important and practical rules of the Arabic language. Below are the main types of nouns belonging to the masculine gender:

1. Nouns denoting male living beings:

رَجُلٌ - man, أَبٌ - father, أَخٌ - brother, مُعَلِّمٌ - teacher (male)

2. Some adjectives in certain special patterns are masculine in gender as well. According to A. Abdujabborov, adjectives in the فَعُولٌ pattern and those in the فَعِيلٌ pattern derived from transitive verbs are the same for both genders. For example:

جَسُورٌ - brave (masculine, feminine), عَجُوزٌ - old (old man, old woman), قَتِيلٌ - killed (masculine, feminine)⁵

3. Names of countries traditionally considered masculine. As indicated in the textbook by N. Ibrohimov and M. Yusupov (Vol. 2, p. 23):

Al-Yaman - Yemen, Al-Maghrib - Morocco, Al-'Irāq - Iraq, As-Sūdān - Sudan⁶

3. Nouns of the feminine gender and their markers

According to M. Hasanov and M. Abzalova, there are three external (morphological) signs in the spelling that indicate the feminine gender of a word ("Arabic Language Lessons," pp. 39-40)⁷. In our opinion, these three signs serve as a fundamental basis for every student learning the Arabic language:

Sign 1: Ta marbuta (ة) - the word ending with "ta marbutah". Such words are common (Hasanov & Abzalova, p. 39)⁸. A. Abdujabborov also notes that this suffix is used to form the feminine gender forms of adjectives, participles, and ordinal numbers ("Arabic Language," 2015, p. 67). Examples:

¹ Abdujabborov A. Arabic Language. – Tashkent, 2015. – 308 p.

² Hasanov M., Abzalova M. Arabic Language Lessons. – Tashkent, 2019.

³ Abdujabborov A. Arabic Language. – Tashkent, 2015. – 308 p.

⁴ Abdujabborov A. Arabic Language. – Tashkent, 2015. – 308 p.

⁵ Abdujabborov A. Arabic Language. – Tashkent, 2015. – 308 p.

⁶ Ibrohimov N., Yusupov M. Grammar of the Arabic Language. Volume 2. – Tashkent

⁷ (Lessons in the Arabic Language, pp. 39-40)⁷.

⁸ Hasanov M., Abzalova M. Lessons in the Arabic Language. – Tashkent, 2019.

mudarris → mudarrisa, talib → taliba, jamil → jamila, rab' → rab'a⁹
That is: teacher (male) → teacher (female); student (male) → student (female); beautiful (male) → beautiful (female); fourth (male) → fourth (female). As can be seen, the suffix ta' marbutah serves as a universal marker for forming the feminine form across different parts of speech.

Sign 2: Alif and hamza (ء) - the word ending in alif and hamza. According to Hasanov and Abzalova, such words are rare ("Arabic Language Lessons," p. 40). Examples:

صَحْرَاءٌ - desert, زُرْقَاءٌ - blue color, حَمْرَاءٌ - red color

3rd sign: Alif maqsura (ى) – a word ending in alif maqsura. According to Hasanov and Abzalova, such words are very rare ("Lessons in the Arabic Language," p. 40)¹⁰. Examples:

بُشْرَى - good news, سَلْوَى - comfort, مُسْتَشْفَى - hospital¹¹

4. Spiritual feminine: feminine words without an external sign

According to A. Abdujabborov, in addition to the external signs listed above, a number of words belong to the feminine gender in terms of meaning. Their femininity must be understood not through form, but through meaning ("Arabic Language," pp. 66–67)¹². In our view, studying semantically feminine words is the most difficult aspect of teaching the Arabic language. According to the groups the author presents:

Group 1: Nouns denoting the female gender – According to A. Abdujabborov, all nouns denoting the female gender belong to the feminine gender. For example:

Umm - mother, Ukhth - sister, Arous - bride, Baqara - cow, Zaynab - Zaynab (name)¹³.

Group 2: Pair of body parts - According to A. Abdujabborov, body parts that are paired are feminine ("Arabic Language," 2015, p. 66). M. Hasanov and M. Abzalova also specifically highlight this group. For example:

yad - hand, rijl - foot, 'ayn - eye, udhun - ear, khad - cheek

Group 3: Geographic Names – According to A. Abdujabborov, geographic names belong to the feminine gender. For example:

Tashkent, Egypt, Moscow, the Nile River

3rd group: Geographic names - According to A. Abdujabborov, geographic names belong to the feminine gender. For example:

The textbook by N. Ibrohimov and M. Yusupov (Vol. 2, p. 23) also provides a list of feminine state names: مِصْرٌ (Egypt), سُورِيَا (Syria), الْكُوَيْت (Kuwait), لِيْبِيَا (Libya), تُونِس (Tunisia). As can be seen, although these state names are ta' marbutah-less, they belong to the feminine gender.

Group 4: Names of Nations - According to A. Abdujabborov, the names of nations also fall into the feminine gender. For example:

The Uzbeks, the Arabs, the Russians

Group 5: Words considered feminine by convention - According to A. Abdujabborov, some words are considered feminine by convention ("Arabic Language," 2015, p. 67). In our opinion, this group is the most difficult for learners and must be memorized:

أَرْضٌ - land, شَمْسٌ - sun, رِيْحٌ - wind, نَارٌ - fire, بَيْْرٌ - well, نَفْسٌ - soul, spirit, حَرْبٌ - war

5. Nouns that have the same form for both genders

⁹ Abdujabborov A. Arabic Language. – Tashkent, 2015. – 308 p.

¹⁰ Hasanov M., Abzalova M. Lessons in Arabic. – Tashkent, 2019.

¹¹ (Lessons in Arabic, p. 40).

¹² Hasanov M., Abzalova M. Lessons in Arabic. – Tashkent, 2019.

¹³ Abdujabborov A. Arabic Language. – Tashkent, 2015. – 308 p.

According to A. Abdujborov, some nouns can be considered both masculine and feminine ("Arabic Language," 2015, p. 68). In our opinion, this category of words is determined by context. For example:

طَرِيقٌ - way, سَمَاءٌ - sky, سُوقٌ - market, خَمْرٌ - wine, حَالٌ - state, condition

M. Hasanov and M. Abzalova also pay special attention to this phenomenon, emphasizing that context and tradition play an important role in such words.

Moreover, as A. Abdujborov points out, adjectives in the فَعُولٌ meter and those in the فَعِيلٌ meter derived from transitive verbs are identical for both genders. For example:

جَسُورٌ - brave (male, female), عَجُورٌ - old (old man, old woman), جَرِيحٌ - wounded (male, female), قَتِيلٌ - killed (male, female)

6. The relationship of the gender category with quality

According to M. Hasanov and M. Abzalova, the adjective changes its gender according to the gender of the noun (Arabic Language Lessons, p. 34). The author writes that an adjective adapted to the gender of the noun is called a "matched determiner," and this adaptation is mandatory in Arabic.

According to examples in A. Abdujborov's textbook ("Arabic Language," 2015, p. 67):¹⁴

حَسَنٌ ← حَسَنَةٌ - beautiful (masc.) ↔ beautiful (fem.)
جَمِيلٌ ← جَمِيلَةٌ - beautiful (masc.) ↔ beautiful (fem.)
مُدْرَسٌ ← مُدْرَسَةٌ - teacher (masculine) ↔ teacher (feminine)

As can be seen, the addition of the ta' marbutah to a quality results in its feminine form. In our view, this rule is very regular and consistent, and the agreement of a quality with gender is one of the first rules to be mastered when learning Arabic.

7. The connection of the gender category with pronouns and number

According to M. Hasanov and M. Abzalova, in Arabic, personal pronouns have singular, dual, plural, and masculine and feminine forms ("Arabic Language Lessons," p. 28). Also, demonstrative pronouns also agree with the gender category. As seen in the table provided by the author:

هَذَا - this (masculine), هَذِهِ - this (feminine), هَذَانِ - these two (masculine), هَاتَانِ - these two (feminine)

According to A. Abdujborov, demonstrative pronouns can be used as any part of speech. Demonstrative pronouns functioning as modified modifiers, if the head they modify takes the article "al," appear before it; otherwise, they appear after it ("Arabic Language," 2015, p. 93). Regarding numbers, as is separately emphasized in the textbook by N. Ibrohimov and M. Yusupov, the Arabic language has masculine and feminine forms for numbers, which demonstrates the direct connection between the category of gender and the category of number.

8. The Practical Importance of the Gender Category

If we analyze all the information presented above, the practical importance of the gender category manifests itself in the following areas:

1. The agreement of nouns and adjectives. As the author emphasizes, an adjective must agree with its noun in gender and number. This rule forms the basis of the rules of conciseness in Arabic.
2. Verb-subject agreement. In Arabic, the verb also changes according to the gender of its subject. For example: دَهَبَ - he went (masculine); دَهَبَتْ - she went (feminine).

¹⁴ Ibrohimov N., Yusupov M. Grammar of the Arabic Language. Volume 2. – Tashkent:

3. Correct use of pronouns. Personal pronouns and demonstrative pronouns take different forms depending on gender.

4. Correct formation of plural forms. As N. Ibrohimov and M. Yusupov point out, gender plays an important role in healthy plural forms: the suffix *ون/ين* is used for the masculine plural (*muzakkar salim*), and the suffix *ات* is used for the feminine plural (*muannas salim*).

As is evident, it is impossible to speak or write correctly in Arabic without knowing the gender category. A. Abdujabborov, M. Hasanov and M. Abzalova, N. Ibrohimov and M. Yusupov – it is no coincidence that all three sources have paid special attention to the gender category.¹⁵

Conclusion: In this article, the gender category of the Arabic language is analyzed broadly and systematically based on A. Abdujabborov's "The Arabic Language" (2015), M. Hasanov and M. Abzalova's "Lessons in the Arabic Language," and N. Ibrohimov and M. Yusupov's "Grammar of the Arabic Language" (Volume 2) were conducted. The analysis shows that Arabic has two grammatical genders: masculine and feminine. There is no separate external sign for the masculine gender; the feminine gender, however, is primarily expressed through three external signs: the *ta marbutah* (ة), the *alif and hamza* (ة), and the *alif maqṣūra* (ى). However, in words that are semantically feminine, these markers are not present, and they must be memorized.

Spiritually feminine words are divided into the following groups: female living beings, paired body parts, geographical names, names of peoples, and words traditionally considered feminine. Additionally, some words can be used for both genders.

The gender category is directly related to the categories of number, quality, pronoun, and verb, and is considered an essential requirement for correctly constructing an Arabic sentence. Therefore, for every student of the Arabic language, mastering the gender category thoroughly should be one of the top priorities.

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¹⁵ G'ofur G'ulom Publishing House, 2004. – 648 pp.