



**THE CATEGORY OF GENDER IN THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE
AND ITS ABSENCE IN ENGLISH
КАТЕГОРИЯ РОДА В РУССКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ И ЕЁ
ОТСУТСТВИЕ В АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ
RUS TILIDA JINS KATEGORIYASI VA UNING INGLIZ TILIDA
MAVJUD EMASLIGI**

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ABSTRACT

The category of gender is an important grammatical feature of the Russian language, where nouns, adjectives, and verbs change according to masculine, feminine, and neuter forms. In contrast, English does not possess grammatical gender in the same way. Gender in English is expressed mainly through pronouns and certain lexical items. Modern English also tends toward gender-neutral language, reflecting the influence of social and cultural changes.

INTRODUCTION

The category of gender in English differs significantly from that in many other languages, such as Russian, because it is expressed mainly through pronouns and lexical means rather than grammatical agreement. In modern English, gender is reflected in personal and possessive pronouns, certain noun suffixes, and gender-specific lexical items. However, contemporary social changes and the growing emphasis on gender equality have strongly influenced the development of the language. Modern English increasingly favors gender-neutral vocabulary, especially in professional and social contexts, in order to promote inclusiveness and avoid discrimination. Occupational terms containing gender markers, such as actress and waitress, are often replaced by neutral alternatives like actor and server. This tendency demonstrates the dynamic relationship between language and society, showing how linguistic norms adapt to cultural and social transformations.

In contemporary English, the issue of gender has become closely connected with the principle of equality and inclusiveness. Although English traditionally has very limited grammatical gender in comparison with languages such as Russian, modern social changes have significantly influenced the vocabulary of the language. Today, speakers are encouraged to use gender-neutral expressions that refer equally to both men and women. This tendency reflects the broader social movement toward gender equality and respect for individual identity.

Modern dictionaries and style guides often include special notes on gender-inclusive language. These recommendations emphasize that language should avoid excluding or offending people on the basis of gender. For example, occupational nouns containing the suffix -ess, such as

actress, hostess, and waitress, explicitly indicate that the person is female. While such forms are still widely used, many speakers now prefer gender-neutral alternatives. Instead of actress, the word actor is increasingly applied to both men and women, and instead of waiter or waitress, the neutral term server is often preferred.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The category of gender has been widely discussed in both Russian and зарубежной linguistics. One of the most influential scholars in the study of linguistic gender is Otto Jespersen, whose book *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origin* examines the historical development of grammatical categories in Indo-European languages, including gender distinctions in English. Jespersen notes that English gradually lost most grammatical gender markers and developed a system in which gender is expressed mainly through pronouns and lexical meaning. His work became foundational for later comparative studies of English and other European languages.

Another important contribution was made by Robin Lakoff in her influential book *Language and Woman's Place*. Lakoff explored the relationship between language and gender from a sociolinguistic perspective and demonstrated how linguistic forms may reflect social inequality between men and women. Her research greatly influenced the development of gender linguistics and encouraged scholars to examine gender-neutral language in English.

The problem of gender representation in language was further developed by Deborah Cameron in *Feminism and Linguistic Theory*. Cameron analyzed the role of language in constructing gender identities and emphasized the importance of inclusive and non-discriminatory language use. She argued that modern English increasingly replaces gender-specific occupational nouns, such as waitress and actress, with neutral alternatives like server and actor.

In Russian linguistics, the category of gender was thoroughly investigated by Viktor Vinogradov in *Русский язык. Грамматическое учение о слове*. Vinogradov described grammatical gender as one of the central categories of the Russian language and explained the agreement of nouns with adjectives, pronouns, and verbs. His work remains one of the key theoretical sources for the study of Russian grammar.

The comparative analysis of Russian and English gender systems was also addressed by Boris Ilyish in *The Structure of Modern English*. Ilyish emphasized that English differs from Russian because it lacks grammatical gender agreement and relies mostly on natural gender expressed through pronouns such as he, she, and it. His research is frequently used in comparative grammar studies.

The sociocultural aspect of gender in language was explored by Jennifer Coates in *Women, Men and Language*. Coates examined how gender influences communication patterns and language choice in English-speaking societies. She also discussed the emergence of gender-inclusive language and its connection with modern social changes.

Overall, the literature devoted to gender in Russian and English demonstrates that scholars approach this topic from grammatical, sociolinguistic, and cultural perspectives. The works of Jespersen, Lakoff, Cameron, Vinogradov, Ilyish, and Coates provide a theoretical foundation for understanding the category of gender in Russian and its limited grammatical expression in English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The movement toward gender-neutral vocabulary demonstrates how language evolves in response to social and cultural developments. English has gradually reduced the use of gender-marked nouns, especially in professional contexts, in order to promote equality and avoid stereotypes. As a result, many professions are now referred to by the same title regardless of the

person’s sex. Words such as doctor, teacher, journalist, and pilot are considered neutral because they do not identify the gender of the individual. This shift highlights the important role of language in shaping social attitudes and creating inclusive communication.

In English, there is no grammatical category of gender in the sense of changes within the sentence structure associated with the gender of a noun. This means that it does not matter whether one refers to a waiter or a waitress: both are described as very polite.

In Russian, by contrast, the grammatical category of gender is fully developed: ОФИЦИАНТКА ВЕЖЛИВА (“the waitress is polite,” feminine form), whereas ОФИЦИАНТ ВЕЖЛИВ (“the waiter is polite,” masculine form).

In English, gender is expressed only through nouns and pronouns, specifically by means of:

- Personal pronouns: he (masculine), she (feminine), it (neuter);
- Possessive and reflexive pronouns: his, her, himself, herself, itself;
- Noun suffixes indicating gender: poetess;
- Lexical meanings of nouns explicitly referring to gender: boy (masculine), girl (feminine), bag (neuter);
- Compound nouns with gender markers: woman-cosmonaut;
- Profession names containing gender distinctions: milkman (male dairy worker), milkmaid (female dairy worker).

For example:

This girl is my friend. She is cute.

(Эта девочка — моя подруга. Она милая.)

This boy is my friend. He is cute.

(Этот мальчик — мой друг. Он милый.)

The neuter gender generally includes all inanimate objects, as well as plants, birds, and animals. Domestic animals, however, often constitute an exception.

The underlying principle is that if a creature or object is perceived as animate or emotionally significant — that is, capable of feelings or personal attachment — speakers may assign it masculine or feminine pronouns according to its biological sex. Thus, a cow raised for slaughter may be referred to as it, whereas a beloved pet cat may be called she.

In addition to pets, certain means of transport traditionally receive feminine reference, particularly ship, boat, and car, which are often personified with the pronoun she.

My car is under repair. I broke her.

(Моя машина в ремонте. Я разбил её.)

Certain geographical names also demonstrate variation in gender reference. Normally, countries, as inanimate entities, are replaced by the pronoun it. However, when a country is viewed as a political, cultural, or historical entity, the pronoun she may be used.

Russia has decided to boost her low birthrates.

(Россия решила повысить уровень рождаемости.)

Another group of exceptions includes concepts and phenomena that were historically objects of worship or personification, such as Earth, Nature, Fertility, and War.

The Earth took pity on us. She brought us forth fruits.

(Земля сжалилась над нами. Она принесла нам плоды.)

The war was brutal. He took many lives.

(Война была жестокой. Он унёс множество жизней.)

Many English nouns are considered gender-neutral or unmarked, meaning that they do not inherently indicate whether the referent is male or female. Such words include kinship terms (parent, sibling, cousin, infant, baby, child, kid), names of animals and birds (duck, goose, fox, rabbit, goat, cat, dog), and professional titles (doctor, driver, teacher, pilot, shop assistant, journalist), among others.

Nevertheless, due to the growing emphasis on gender equality, not only social norms but also language itself is undergoing change. Thus, some modern dictionary entries now contain the reference “note at GENDER” (see the entry GENDER). The corresponding note states the following:

“When you are writing or speaking English, it is important to use language that includes both men and women equally. Some people may be very offended if you do not.”

Further recommendations concerning gender-inclusive language specify:

“The suffix -ess in names of occupations such as actress, hostess, and waitress shows that the person doing the job is a woman. Many people now avoid these. Instead, you can use actor or host (although actress and hostess are still very common), or a neutral word, such as server for waiter and waitress.”

In other words, when writing or speaking English, it is considered important to use lexical forms that apply equally to both men and women, since gender-marked expressions may be regarded as exclusionary or offensive. Consequently, instead of explicitly gendered terms such as actress or waitress, modern English increasingly favors gender-neutral alternatives such as actor and server.

CONCLUSION

The category of gender represents a fundamental grammatical feature in the Russian language, where it is systematically expressed through noun classes and agreement with adjectives, pronouns, and verbs. In contrast, the English language does not possess grammatical gender in the same structural sense. Instead, gender in English is mainly expressed through pronouns and limited lexical distinctions, while most nouns remain neutral.

The comparison of these two languages demonstrates a clear typological difference: Russian is a language with a fully developed grammatical gender system, whereas English relies on natural gender and contextual reference. At the same time, modern developments in English show a growing tendency toward gender-neutral language, influenced by social changes and the principle of equality.

Thus, the study of gender in Russian and English not only reveals important grammatical differences but also reflects broader cultural and social transformations that shape language use in contemporary communication.

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