LINGUISTIC EXPRESSION OF FEMALE IDENTITY IN MODERN BRITISH FICTION

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Abstract

The study of the relationship between gender and language is carried out by applying general linguistic, psycholinguistic, and pragmatic principles. The interdisciplinary examination of gender and language is perhaps due to the fact that gender discourse touches upon such urgent issues as women's equality and their position in society.

This part of the research refers to all the theoretical propositions, thanks to which the relationship between gender and language is covered, defining the features by which the communication tactics of women and men are determined.

A thorough research and analysis of factual material were carried out. In other words, examining the word units, grammatical patterns, and syntax used by British authors to describe a woman's identity, an attempt was made to present the general characteristics of the image of a woman and her communication tactics. The obtained results can be used in theoretical and practical courses studying gender discourse.

Keywords and phrases: gender, sex, discourse, interconnection of gender and sex, gender equality, linguistic characteristics of female identity.

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ԱՍՊՐԱՄ ԳԱԲՈՅԱՆ
ՀՀ գիտությունների ազգային ակադեմիա,
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Համառոտագիր

Գենդերի և լեզվի փոխկապակցվածության ուսումնասիրությունն իրականացվում է հանրալեզվաբանական, հոգելեզվաբանական, գործաբանական դրույթների կիրառմամբ: Գենդերի և լեզվի միջգիտակարգային քննությունը, թերևս, պայմանավորված է այն փաստով, որ գենդերային դիսկուրսն անդրառնում է այնպիսի հրատապ խնդիրների, ինչպիսիք են՝ կանանց իրավահավասարությունը և նրանց զբաղեցրած դիրքը հասարակության մեջ:

Աշխատանքի որոշ հատված անդրադարձ է կատարում բոլոր այն տեսական դրույթներին, որոնց շնորհիվ գենդեր և լեզու փոխհարաբերությունները լուսաբանվում են՝ սահմանելով այն առանձնահատկությունները, որոնց միջոցով կանանց և տղամարդկանց հաղորդակցական մարտավարությունները որոշարկվում են:

Կատարվել է փաստական նյութի մանրակրկիտ ուսումնասիրություն և վերլուծություն: Այլ կերպ՝ քննության առնելով բրիտանացի հեղինակների կողմից կիրառված կնոջ ինքնությունը նկարագրող բառային միավորները, քերականական կաղապարները և ոճական հնարները՝ փորձ է արվել ներկայացնելու կնոջ կերպարի, նրա հաղորդակցական մարտավարությունների ընդհանուր բնութագիրը: Ստացված ադյունքները կարող են կիրառվել գենդերային դիսկուրսն ուսումնասիրող տեսական և գործնական դասընթացներում:

Բանալի բառեր և բառակապակցություններ. գենդեր, սեռ, դիսկուրս, գենդերի և լեզվի փոխկապակցվածություն, սեռերի իրավահավասարություն, կնոջ ինքնության լեզվական առանձնահատկություններ:

ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКОЕ ВЫРАЖЕНИЕ ЖЕНСКОЙ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ В СОВРЕМЕННОЙ БРИТАНСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ

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Аннотация

Изучение взаимосвязи пола и языка осуществляется с использованием общелингвистических, психолингвистических и прагматических принципов. Междисциплинарное рассмотрение гендера и языка, возможно, связано с тем, что гендерный дискурс затрагивает такие актуальные вопросы, как равноправие женщин и их положение в обществе.

Часть работы рассматриваются все те теоретические положения, благодаря которым освещаются взаимоотношения пола и языка, определяются особенности, которыми определяется тактика общения женщин и мужчин.

Проведено тщательное изучение и анализ фактического материала.. Иными словами, исследуя словесные единицы, грамматические конструкции и стилистические приемы, используемые британскими авторами для описания личности женщины, была предпринята попытка представить общую характеристику образа женщины, ее коммуникативную тактику. Полученные результаты могут быть использованы в теоретических и практических курсах по изучению гендерного дискурса.

Ключевые слова и словосочетания: гендер, пол, дискурс, взаимосвязь пола и языка, гендерное равенство, языковые особенности женской идентичности.

Introduction

The terms *sex* and *gender* are used as synonyms and are sometimes employed interchangeably. The term sex is defined as physiological, and gender as a cultural or social construct. Therefore, sex is ascribed to physiological and anatomical differences, while gender refers to features assigned to sex. Nowadays, gender theories suggest that people indulge in "gendering" or "doing gender." Jespersen made claims about gender differences whereby women use more adverbs to intensify the meaning of the sentence, whereas men have a great variety of vocabulary. Trudgill revealed that in both casual and formal speeches, women use non-standard forms (multiple negations) and are more status-conscious than men. Since gender and language study became more and more complicated, the questions discussed were switched to a broader consideration of language and social practice **[7, pp. 10-13]**. From the semantic perspective, the main problem is the question as to whether the classification of nouns is exposed to several principles rather than being arbitrary. While gender assignment in the field of personal nouns is at least non-arbitrary, the classification of inanimate nouns, e.g. words denoting celestial bodies, is quite different. The word for "sun" is grammatically feminine in German but masculine in Greek, Latin and Romance languages **[8, p. 3]**.

There has been a controversy on language and gender by many linguists. The term "gender" generally relates to the property of extra-linguistic (i.e. "natural" or "biological") femaleness or maleness. Hence, in English, personal nouns such as mother, sister and son are lexically specified as carrying the semantic property "female" or "male", respectively. Such nouns may be described as "gender specific" (female-specific or male-specific), in contrast to nouns such as citizen, patient or individual, which are considered to be "gender-indefinite" or "gender-neutral". In any language, lexical gender is an essential parameter in the structure of kinship terminologies, address terms, and a number of basic, i.e. frequently used personal nouns. Lexical gender may or may not be marked morphologically. For instance, in English, most human nouns are not formally marked for lexical gender, with exceptions such as widow- widower or steward- stewardess, which show overt gender marking by suffixation. Only in principle is such markedness independent of grammatical gender. Languages with grammatical gender have a much larger number of devices of overt gender marking. Social gender is a category that refers "to the socially imposed dichotomy of masculine and feminine roles and character traits" **[4, p. 173]**.

It has been shown that female terms might start but become out of use as opposed to male terms. For example, the word *Lord* maintains its original meaning, whereas *lady* is no longer used for women of high rank. In the 17th century, *lady* could be used as a synonym for a prostitute. Likewise, *master* has not lost its original meaning, but *mistress* has come to have sexual connotations and no longer refers to the woman who had control over a household **[9, pp. 64-70]**.

The middle classes emerged when the British nation became wealthy and powerful during the Victorian era, filling the gap between rich and poor. The term

gentleman became a term of social approval; ladies were of the middle class and women of the working class **[10, pp. 68-172]**.

According to several linguists, female language is considered to be inferior compared to that of male language. They have arrived at the conclusion that, generally, women's speech tends to be indecisive. It sometimes lacks confidence and includes adjectives, colors, and weak expletives. The words are considered an apology for asserting at all ([6, p. 53). Even nowadays, when women fail to fulfil their household chores, they are likely to ask their men to come to the rescue:

e.g. "Would you please help me with the kitchen?"

"Would you please make breakfast today?"

"Would you please clean up the kitchen? I would really appreciate that." **[3, p. 17]**.

Male doctors consistently highlighted women's reproductive obligations to society, noting that "woman's work was clearly motherhood, which fulfilled and exercised her nature as it also served the needs of society and the race," firmly believing that "women were mentally constituted to take care of children, as well as physically constituted to give birth" **[2, p. 123]**. If women strove for definitions outside of the roles of wife and mother, doctors warned them that pursuing such opportunities would lead to sickness, sterility, and race suicide, motivating women, through fear, to fulfil their biologically ordained roles in life **[1, p. 121]**.

Methodological bases

From the methodological point of view, the discourse analysis **[9, pp. 64-70]** was applied to examine the social and cultural framework where female identities are expressed through linguistic and extra-linguistic cues. It was crucially important to get an insight into the history and culture of British literature in the 19th century to highlight several characteristics pertaining to women's speech, identity, and behavior. The given research dwells upon the particular era and the particular authors' viewpoints, which served as contextual cues to reveal the characteristic features of women, examining their roles in their families as well as in public.

For the research, short stories by British female authors of the 19th century were selected: "The Awakening" (1899) by Kate Chopin and "Mrs Dalloway" (1925) by Virginia Woolf. While carrying out the research, content and textual analysis **[10, pp. 68-172]** served as a basis to explore the sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic aspects, which helped to discern the semantic elements and the linguistic means by the help of which the authors constructed the female identity.

The Main Features and Linguistic Means of Female Speech in "The Awakening" and in "Mrs. Dalloway"

"The Awakening," a novel by Kate Chopin, includes many passages where the main female character Edna experiences the discovery of her "self." She starts to operate freely, boldly and feels like an independent entity. The author aims to discover selfhood and freedom by containing various languages in the story. Edna is enchanted

by those different languages which attract and torture her. In the story, she sometimes gets confused and is strayed most of the time. Even her speech might seem less confident, and the tone of her voice might be deflated.

> *"Are you going bathing?" asked Robert of Mrs. Pontellier. It modified into not plenty a question as a reminder.*" **[p.31]** *"Oh, no*", *she responded with a tone of indecision. "I'm worn out; I anticipate no longer."* **[1, p. 31]**

Edna sometimes is doubtful about her actions and is always on a quest for her identity, character and duties. In her speech, she uses lexical hedges such as "perhaps", "maybe", and "I suppose."

- "*Forever, perhaps. I don't know. It depends upon a good many things."* **[1, p. 114]**
- *"Maybe she thinks you are pretty."* **[1, p. 86]**
- "*I suppose this is what you would call unwomanly, but I have got into a habit of expressing myself. It doesn't matter to me, and you may think me unwomanly if you like*." **[1, p. 277]**

Women also tend to use lexical fillers such as *"well," "you know."* When Edna is talking, she often takes what others think into consideration. She usually leaves a decision open rather than imposing her ideas or claims on others. When women want to get help from others, they express themselves in different ways as the followings:

- *"Well," agreed Mademoiselle Reisz."* **[1, p. 126]**
- "*I am white! Well, Look at my hair, it is brown, and my eyes are gray, Armand, you know they are gray. And my skin is fair, seizing his wrist. "Look!*" **[1, p. 155].**

Women's speech may sound rapid and incomplete since they always hasten when talking. As a result, they express a sentence in which the ellipsis is evident. In the following example, the subject of the sentence is omitted.

- "*Wrote to you?" repeated Edna in amazement, stirring her coffee absently*." **[1, p. 163]**

Another work from which the factual data were collected is "Mrs. Dalloway", written by Virginia Woolf. The narrative consists of the characters' thoughts, introspections, and reminiscences. The technique called "stream of consciousness" or "blood of consciousness", is generally connected with the Modernist movement. It offers a glimpse into the characters' feelings and emotions; it is a way to penetrate their thoughts and inner world.

To put it in specific terms, the technique makes use of unusual syntax, grammar, and repetition. The exclamations are used to better express the flow of thoughts, emotions, and feelings, which successively penetrate Clarissa's inner world. After the exclamations, Clarissa is drawn into the memory of the morning vibes, the morning air.

· "*What a morning!" "What a lark!" "What a plunge!*" **[12, p. 3]**

It is true of women to construct their speech, relying heavily on interrogative sentences, thereby expressing their fears. Sometimes they might cast doubts and think whether their actions are right or wrong.

- *"Horror! Horror! She wanted to cry. Why hadn't she stayed at home? She cried, twisting the knob of the iron railing."* **[12, p. 19]**

There is a controversy that women talk too much and are more likely to interrupt the speaker.

- "*What are you saying? Said Rezia suddenly, sitting down by him. Interrupted again! She was always interrupting."* **[12, p. 18]**

Women quite often tend to be noticed by their partners. They can repeat the same word or sentence once or twice, thereby sending their message to them.

- "*Look, she implored him, pointing at a little troop of boys carrying cricket stumps." "Look, she implored him, for Dr. Holmes had told her to make him notice the real thing." "Look, she repeated*." **[12, p. 18]**
- "*It might be possible; it might be possible that the world itself is without meaning."* **[12, p. 63]**

"And it came over me I might have married you." **[12, p. 85]**

Women's lexicon can sometimes sound colloquial, informal or incomplete.

- "*Ah, damn!" she cried; the needle had broken*." **[12, p. 104]**

Results
After investigating the linguistic expression of female identity, several results can be drawn:

- Women are sometimes helpless and indecisive about their actions. Hence, they tend to use interrogative sentences such as "*Would you please help me with…?".*
- Women are always hesitating when making their speech; they may produce general questions such as "*Are you going bathing?" What are you saying?"*
- Their mental perception is mainly based on sensory and visual tools. There is a strong bond between women and nature. *"What a morning!" "What a plunge!" "What a lark!".*
- Concerning vocabulary, women most of the time use hedges such as *"I suppose,"* "maybe," *"perhaps," and "It might be."*
- Since women are sometimes indecisive, they might fill pauses when searching for the next word. Therefore, lexical fillers are dominant in women's speech "well," "you know," and "ah."
- Women are inclined to produce sentences full of admiration; these are mostly exclamatory sentences *"What a morning!" "What a plunge!" "What a lark!".*
- Women's lexicon may sound colloquial, informal, or incomplete. They can utter phrases such as *"Ah", but thinking", or "ah" damn*".
- From the paralinguistic aspect, women's speech always seems to be less confident *"oh," "oh! dear no,"* and the tone of the voice is deflated.
- They sometimes use repetitions in their speech to be noticed by their partners *"Look; she implored him ….Look, she repeated."*

- Consciously or subconsciously, women very often make interruptions in their speech as they talk too much. *"What are you saying?"...." What are you saying?"*
- Women hasten while speaking, and as a result, there appear to be omissions of the main components in the sentence *"Wrote to you?"*

Conclusion

Gender and language can be traced to linguistic and feminist theory and political practice as well. Therefore, it can be considered as an explanation for all types of linguistic variation, such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and communication style. One should bear in mind that language is strongly connected with culture. Thus, in order to master the language thoroughly, it is mandatory to know the culture perfectly. The gender investigations evinced a great interest among scholars and led them to consider gender and sex more exhaustively, which promotes in mastering gender discourse. Discourse can manipulate people's ideas, which are acknowledged by society. The term *discourse* is an organized set of statements which makes the meaning more expressive and organizes and gives structure to the manner whereby a particular topic, object or process is to be discussed **[5, p. 6]**.

Some writers take advantage of the power of discourse and deliver hidden messages through discourse. Such intended messages may consist of punctuation, possibilities, suppositions, and some details in order to draw attention to female identity. The connection between gender and language has always grabbed scholars' attention. The latter has made a significant contribution to the academic sphere. This research has pointed out the striking features which describe women's emotional state, their psychology, and the way they communicate with the surrounding world. The same features can be encountered, and many women cannot be accepted by their partners, society, and colleges. However, women stand firmly in their beliefs that the social system will be improved, the mentality will be changed, and they can put an end to the biased approach towards them. Hopefully, they will improve their social status and gain the same rights as men.

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