# THE CATEGORY OF GENDER IN MODERN ENGLISH

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**Abstract**

During its evolution, English, unlike other Germanic languages, underwent radical changes, transforming from a synthetic language into an analytical one. This article deals how the grammatical gender which was widely used in Old English, gradually abandoned the language and was replaced by natural gender, and the features of the use of the gender category in Modern English.

**Key words:** *evolution, synthetic language, analytical language, the category of gender, masculine gender, feminine gender, neuter gender, common gender, lingua franca, gender neutral language*

## Introduction

Today, English as a global language is used as the main means of communication between people who speak different languages. People living in different parts of the world have the opportunity to communicate through both the accessibility created by modern innovative technologies and the common language of English. Currently, English is used on all continents as a means of serving with its own linguistic values, communication in society, and meeting the information exchange of people living on different continents.

D. Crystal, who studies the history of the development of the English language from diachronic and synchronic aspects, writes about the current widespread use of this language: *"Although English as a global language did not appear until 1997, it was actually written in 1995, which in 2002 seems a very long time ago, as far as global linguistic developments are concerned. The 1990s were a revolutionary decade, in that respect, with a proliferation of new linguistic varieties arising out of*

*the worldwide implementation of the Internet, an emerging awareness of te crisis affecting the world's endangered languages, and an increasing public recognition of the global position of English"* [2, p.9]. Along with all the changes that have occurred in the evolution of the English language, the disappearance of grammatical gender has still remained a topic of wide debate in linguistics for many years.

The use of English as a global language has given rise to different scientific opinions. Along with linguists who approach the issue from a political perspective and associate it with the colonial policy of the British Empire, there have also been linguists who consider the internal linguistic qualities of the English language, its simple grammatical structure, clear pronunciation system, and rich vocabulary to be the basis. For example, O. Jespersen in his concept of *"The Theory of Progress"*, particularly values the fact that English differs from other members of the Germanic language subgroup to which it belongs and that it has evolved to have a simpler grammatical structure and a richer vocabulary than them, and writes about English as follows: *"It is, of course, impossible to characterize a language in one formula; languages, like men, are too composite to have their whole essence summed up in one short expression. Nevertheless, there is one expression that continually comes to my mind whenever I think of the English language and compare it with others: it seems to me positively and expressly masculine, it is the language of a grown-up man and has very little childish or feminine about it"* [4, p.2]. O. Jespersen particularly valued the internal, special qualities of the English language, the potential possibilities of the language in expressing ideas, and the presence of a vocabulary with a cosmopolitan composition.

When the issue is viewed in a broader ampoule from a diachronic perspective, it is true that the fundamental changes that have occurred in the internal grammatical structure of the English language with evolution and the dictates of the political conditions surrounding the language, its spread across national borders to all continents, have turned English into a global language. English has both enriched all the languages it has come into contact with and a large number of words have

entered the English language from these languages. However, one thing should be noted that there have been many colonial countries in the world, and even before England became a powerful empire, there were powerful colonial states on the European continent such as France, Spain, Holland, and Portugal. Although the languages of these countries were used as colonial languages in state institutions and in the upper classes, they never became national languages. In a certain sense, Spanish is widespread in Latin American countries and has become the mother tongue of the people, but in terms of the vastness of the geographical area, none of the languages of these countries can be compared with English. Even representatives from these countries use English at international meetings. Today, English is used as the first language in the large geographical area of the world.

The study of the evolution of the English language from a diachronic perspective proves that Old English, which was used in the British Isles in the 5th-11th centuries (450-1066), was a suffixed, synthetic language like other Germanic languages, and was rich in the categories of person, number, gender, tense, degrees of comparison of adjectives, and the grammatical suffixes that expressed them. In particular, the gender category of nouns in English was classified on the basis of the semantics and morphological characteristics of nouns, as in Modern German. In Old English, articles and endings that distinguished nouns by gender were used towards the Middle Ages. For example, the articles *se, sēo,* and *þæt* were used with nouns of the masculine, feminine, and neuter genders, respectively: *se cyning – king, se stān – stone, se broðōr – bother; sēo talu – tale, sēo glōf – glove, sēo bōt – advantage, sēo brycg – bridge; þæt scip –ship, þæt land – land, þæt bearn – child etc.* [5, p.20-26].

Old English was not a rich language until it was influenced by other languages, but the grammatical system of the language was rich in numerous grammatical suffixes. In the later stages of development, English underwent radical changes due to the influence of  Scandinavian languages, French, the grammatical system of the language was simplified, and the case and gender suffixes that created syncretism

left the language. As a result, towards the end of the Middle Ages (11th-15th centuries), English became an analytical language.

The most important event that occurred in English is the evolution of the grammatical gender, which was widely used in English, leaving the language and giving way to natural gender. In modern Russian, German, French, Spanish, etc. languages, the semantics and morphological features of nouns play a key role in the classification of gender categories. As H. Sweet noted, *"such a gender division was used in Old English"* [8, p.39]. However, with the changes that occurred in English, it developed in a completely different direction. As A.I.Smirnitsky noted, *"The initial changes in English began in the 10th century, with the invasion of the islands by the Vikings, and mainly in the territory of Danelaw"* [1, p.11]. According to the scientist, similar languages with suffixes came together in this area, and over a period of more than a century, a simplified language model was formed from the communication of foreign and local tribes. Thus English is the first national germanic language and it is called in linguistics with the term of *the vernacular language.* It is a simple language model that the inhabitants of a certain area will use and understand. Therefore, over time, grammatical simplification has occurred in English, and homonymous case and gender suffixes have left the language. Most importantly, English has become a language free from the grammatical gender category that complicates the language system. That's why the English language is not a creole language.

As the English language developed from the Middle Ages to the modern era, grammatical gender gave way to natural gender, and the pronouns *he, she,* and *it* were used instead of masculine, feminine, and neuter genders. In other words, in Modern English, the semantics of nouns is the main criterion for their gender classification. However, there is no such criterion for grammatical gender. In Modern English, words such as *father, son, nephew, king, husband* etc. are replaced by *he,* which are masculine in their lexical meaning; nouns such as *mother, sister, daughter, niece, queen, wife, and woman* are replaced by *she.* Nouns denoting all

inanimate objects are replaced by the pronoun *it*. However, the trend in the use of the gender category in Modern English has changed significantly compared to the 80s and 90s of the last century. Even at that time, the gender category of a noun was taught as a grammatical category. For example, by differentiating the gender of nouns with the suffixes *–ess, -ette, -ine* from French origin, gender was included in the object of study of grammar. However, the use of the mentioned suffixes or the pronouns *he, she, it* that distinguish gender in English is not sufficient for the existence of the grammatical gender category in the language. For example, the gender distinction of a group of words, such as *actor-actress, waiter – waitress, poet – poetess, baron – baronette, hero – heroine, usher – usherette, lion - lioness,* etc., does not create conditions for the establishment of a grammatical category in the language. As C.F.Hockett noted, *"Grammatical gender manifests itself when grammatical agreement is established between words within a sentence"* [3, p.231]. In Modern English, as in Turkic languages, such agreement according to gender is not noted. For example, we do not encounter any morphological signs that distinguish gender in the expressions *my clever sister, my clever brother, my clever doll.*

At the end of the last century, in English, the names of ships and countries were feminine, strong animals were masculine, and gentle creatures were feminine. For example:

*France has decided to increase her trade with Romania.*

*Go and find the cat and put him out* [7, p.259].

In the given sentences, the nouns *France, cat* have been replaced by the deixes *her* and *him*. According to S. Salvo, in the gender division of these nouns, *the personal attitudes of our ancestors to the living and inanimate creatures indicated by the nouns mentioned in those names were important* [6, p.770]. Because national-spiritual multicultural values also played a role in the cognitive formation of gender in human thinking.

However, in Modern English, the natural-biological characteristics of nouns play an important role in the gender classification of nouns. Nouns are divided into male and female; masculine and feminine genders according to their primary distinguishing attributes. Here, the semantics of nouns again plays a dominant role. Nouns expressing the feminine concept are now marked with *she,* nouns denoting masculine entities are marked with *he,* and nouns denoting the flora and fauna of nature, regardless of their male or femaleness, are marked with deixis *it* . Nouns such as *doctor, student, friend, professor, author, painter, neighbour,* etc., which can be attributed to both masculine and feminine genders, are attributed to *the common gender.* The determination of gender difference in these nouns is contextual in nature.

**Conclusion**

The article approaches the features of the development of the gender category in English from diachronic and synchronic aspects. The conducted analyses show that historically in English grammatical and natural gender were developed in parallel and this feature of the language was the same as in Modern German. However, in the later stages of the evolution of the English language, it turned into an analytical language free from the complex grammatical system and gender category inherent in Old English. In Modern English, nouns expressing the concepts of female and male are unambiguously marked with the deixes *she* and *he.* All nouns outside these genders are replaced by the pronoun *it* anaphorically or cataphorically. Modern English is called a gender neutral language.

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