

Grammatical Gender Features in English and Arabic

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Abstract

Gender in language is like sex in the outside world . Sex is considered as the most important basis for gender distinction . Sex stands for either male or female creatures.

The main purpose behind this paper is to provide a comparative study between English and Arabic gender . It deals with gender as a grammatical category . The paper is divided into three sections: Section one gives an account of the term gender ; Section two deals with gender in Arabic while section three displays gender in English then the conclusion of the study is displayed . It reflects the main points of contrast between the two languages under study as far as gender is concerned .

The distinction of gender into feminine and masculine is an important feature in Arabic , Unlike English where the majority of words do not make this distinction clear .In addition, Languages differ in the number of gender they recognize . English has three genders masculine , feminine and neuter which stand respectively for male , female and neither sex . On the other hand , Arabic has two gender categories : masculine and feminine.

Both languages under study use the natural gender in classifying the nouns into masculine and feminine. i.e. every noun that belongs to the class of masculine nouns refers to male animate and vise versa.

In Arabic ,masculine nouns are considered as the basis from which feminine nouns can be derived through the addition of certain markers . These markers can be added to both nouns and adjectives , whereas , a few nouns in English are marked for gender . In Arabic , there are certain irregularities in considering and forming the feminine nouns whereas in English some pronouns are gender sensitive.

On the syntactic level , In Arabic , there should be an agreement between the noun that is marked for gender and the other elements of the sentence while in English such agreement can be manifested between the nouns and their pronouns in the singular case only.

Finally ,the inflection of the Arabic gender is applied to nouns , verbs , adjectives , pronouns and demonstratives while the inflection of the English gender is applied only to some of the nouns while the majority of the pronouns show gender distinction.

Introduction

The main purpose behind this paper is to provide a comparative study between English and Arabic gender.

Gender in language is like sex in the outside world .In many languages of the world , sex is considered the most important basis for gender distinction .The whole creatures can be divided into animate and inanimate. Sex stands for either male or female creatures while inanimate things have no sex . Gender is used to stand for one or more of these divisions.

Languages differ in the number of genders they recognize . English has three genders: masculine , feminine and neuter which stand for male , female and neither sex.

Arabic on the other hand , has two gender categories: masculine and feminine which can be distinguished through the use of certain morphological processes.

The paper is divided into three main sections : Section one deals with the term gender ; Section two displays gender in Arabic and section three deals with gender in English . Finally ,the conclusion of the study is displayed .It reflects the main points of contrast between the two languages.

Section One

What is Meant By Gender?

Grammatical gender is defined linguistically as a class of nouns within a language which trigger specific types of behavior in associated words , such as adjectives , verbs and other word.

The linguistic notion of the grammatical gender is distinguished from the biological and social notion of the natural gender , although they interact closely in many languages . Both grammatical and natural gender can have linguistic effects in a given language .

(Hockett ,1958:231)

English is rarely regarded as having grammatical gender , since it does not make gender distinction through inflection and does not require gender agreement between related words

A full system of grammatical gender requires two aspects:

- 1- Inflections : the words show different forms for different gender and having certain morphological markers for each gender
- 2- Agreement : the other parts of the sentence should be inflected to show gender distinction with the noun or pronoun which reflects certain gender class.

e.g.

Jane insisted that she would pay for her dinner.-1

In the above example , the gender of the subject is marked on both the personal pronoun she and the possessive pronoun her .

Almost all languages have certain sort of grammatical means of dividing up their noun lexicon into distinct classes . Gender is one of the devices.

Gender corresponds to sex in the outside world .Sex denotes male and female while gender denotes masculine and feminine . Sex refers to the biological differences between male and female just like chromosomes , hormonal profile and sex organs while gender refers to the distinction between M. and F. nouns . It is a grammatical category.

Section Two

Gender in The Arabic Language

In Arabic ,gender is used as a grammatical category which is considered of a great value for the linguistic demands as well for establishing and controlling the grammatical agreement between the noun and the other remaining elements of the sentence. (Aziz,1989:227)

The notional category (sex) corresponds to the grammatical category (gender) . Thus, in Arabic the natural gender is used to classify the nouns in to feminine and masculine. Every noun that belongs to the class of feminine nouns belongs to female creatures and every noun that belongs to the class of masculine nouns belongs to male creatures. (Ibrahim,1971)

In Arabic, the term which is used for gender is al-Jinsu, which literally means 'sex, race, kind'. The two genders in Arabic are expressed by pronominal as well as by verbal agreement . The terms that are used to denote masculine and feminine nouns in Arabic are:

- (a) Al-mudhakkar-u. is used to denote the Masculine nouns
- (b) Al-mu'annath-u. is used to denote the Feminine nouns

(Abu-Charca,2007:64)

In Arabic , there is no proform or marker to stand for the neuter category and all nouns must have a gender whether they refer to animate or inanimate objects. In addition, Gender is not only indicated in the nouns , it must also be indicated in all grammatical elements that accompany them such as adjectives , relative pronouns , personal pronouns , demonstratives etc .

(Al-Mashta,1977:11)

Morphologically speaking , Nouns are inflected for gender explicitly . To switch from one gender to another is achieved by inflecting the appropriate words . Thus ,masculine nouns are considered the basis from which feminine nouns can be derived through the addition of certain markers . These markers can be added to the masculine nouns as well as masculine adjectives ,moreover;

these markers are used to distinguish the feminine. nouns from the masculine. ones.

These markers are of three types:

1- at

This marker is added to some masculine nouns or adjectives to derive the feminine nouns or adjectives.

1- Talib (male student)----- talibat(female student)

In the above example talib and talibat are nouns

2- Jadeed – new is an adjective which stands for masculine things.

- jadeedat –new is an adjective which stands for feminine things. It is the feminine form of jadeed

2- Feminine –T : It is used to derive the feminine nouns from the masculine ones when the latter consist of one syllable e.g.:

A?X – brother is masculine ,the feminine . of which is ?uXut - sister

(Ibrahim , 1971:48)

3- Al- Alif AL-Maqsoura : is used to derive the feminine adjectives from the masculine ones especially those adjectives that have the measure of ?fal and Fa?laan

When they are used for masculine referents while their F. counterparts have the measure of (Faala)

e.g. ?akbar – bigger is a M. adjective , the F. of which is kubra and the M. adjective Atshan - thirsty whose F. form is Atsha.

Arabic language is not restricted to the three markers that are mentioned above . There are many irregularities in considering and forming the feminine nouns . For example , certain nouns do not have feminine marker but are treated as feminine nouns simply because the ancient Arabs used these nouns as feminine e.g. Ardhun - earth .

Other nouns are treated once as masculine nouns and other time as feminine nouns e.g. lisan - tongue.

(Ibid:49)

Sometimes , an object may have two names , one of them has the feminine marker and the other does not have this marker , therefore , one which has the feminine marker is considered as a feminine noun and the other is the masculine form. e.g Shubak - window is a masculine noun because it does not have the feminine marker while the word nafithat - window is a feminine noun simply because it has the feminine marker (at) .

Not all nouns that have the feminine marker (/ t /) are treated as feminine nouns but there are certain nouns that have the feminine marker but are treated as masculine nouns simply because they refer to male creature

(according to the rule which states that any noun that refer to female creatures should be considered as a feminine noun and any noun that refers to male creature should be considered as a masculine noun) e.g. khalifat (/ t /) Caliph.

In addition , all names of cities and towns are feminine and the majority of the names of countries and states are treated as feminine nouns e.g. Jumhuriyat Al-Iraq - Republic of Iraq , dawlat - state and mamlakat - kingdom. Yet, very few names of countries can be treated as masculine nouns as in falastin - Palestine.

The names of all mountains and rivers are considered M. nouns according to title of the nouns e.g. nahar - river and jabel -mountain as in : nahar barada - Baradah river . In spite of the fact that the name of the river has the feminine ending (a) , it is considered as M. due to its title nahar -river .

Collective nouns that are unmarked for feminine nouns are considered as masculine nouns e.g. Fareeq -team

Thus, Arabic language is not restricted to a specific rule in deriving the feminine nouns from the masculine nouns and it has many irregularities as it is mentioned earlier.

2.1 The Effect of Gender on the Syntactic Level

Ibrahim (1971 :40) states that in Arabic , there should be a kind of concord between the noun that is marked for gender whether masculine or feminine and the other elements of the sentence whether demonstratives , verbs , adjectivesetc.

The verb should be marked for feminine / T/ taa altaaneeth to fulfill the concord between the feminine subject and the verb e.g.

2- Jaa Ali. Ali came .

3- Jaat Sawsan Sawsan came.

4- Ishtahara almumathiloon the actors become well- known.

5- Ishtaharat almumathilat the actress became well- known.

6- Almumathiloon ishtaharu The actors became well – known.

7- Almumathilat ishtaharna The actress became well- known.

From the above examples , one can conclude that if the verb comes before the noun there should be an agreement between the verb and the subject (in gender) as in examples No. 2,3,4,5 and if it comes after the noun , it should agree with the noun in both number and gender as in examples No. 6 and 7.

In addition , there should be certain sort of concord between the demonstrative and the noun . The demonstratives that are used with feminine nouns are different from those that are used with masculine nouns as in:

a- Hatha - this is used with singular nearby masculine referents as in:

8- Hatha waladun thakiyun This boy is clever.

b- Hathihi - this is used with singular nearby feminine referents as in:

9- Hathihi fatatun thakiyah This girl is clever.

c- thalika - that is used with singular distant masculine referents as in:

10 - Thalika alrajulu tabeebun. That man is a doctor.

d- Tilka - that is used with singular distant feminine referents as in:

11- Tilka alfatatu thakiyatun That girl is clever.

e- hathan - those is used with dual nearby masculine referents as in:

12- hathan waladanun thakiyanun Those two boys are clever.

f- Hatan - those is used with dual nearby feminine referents as in:

13 - Hatan fatatan thakiyatan Those two girls are clever.

Yet , gender distinction can not be manifested with the plural demonstratives because Ulaeka - those can be used to refer to both male and female referents and these - haulaa is used to refer to both male and female nearby referents as in:

14- haulaa alfatayatu tabebatun - These girls are doctors.

15- Haulaa alrijalu atibaaun. These men are doctors.

16 -Ulaeka alfatayatu tabebatun. Those girls are doctors.

17- Ulaeka alrijalu atibaun. Those men are doctors.

The Arabic adjectives should bear an agreement in gender with the nouns that they modify . The majority of the adjectives should take the feminine endings when they are used to modify the feminine nouns and they should correspond to the nouns which are masculine in gender as in :

18- Alqaedu shujaaun -masculine The leader is courageous .

19- Al-hadiqatu wasiatun. - feminine The garden is large.

In addition , feminine adjectives are used with inanimate plural nouns:

e.g.

20- Hathihi aljibalu aliyatun. These mountains are high.

Some adjectives are only F. because they are used with feminine. referents

e.g. hubla - Pregnant .

(ibid:78)

Gender can be manifested through the use of the personal pronouns as in:

- anta ----- 2nd person singular masculine.

21- Anta katabta aldrsa -You wrote the lesson.

- anti----- 2nd person singular feminine

22- Anti katabti aldrsa -You wrote the lesson.

- antum----- 2nd person plural masculine

23- Antum katabtum aldrsa -You wrote the lesson.

- antunna----- 2nd person plural feminine

24- Antunna katabtunna aldrsa -You wrote the lesson.

- huwa----- 3rd person singular masculine.

25- Huwa kataba aldrsa - He wrote the lesson.

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- hiya----- 3rd person singular feminine .
26- Hiya katabat aldrsa -She wrote the lesson.
- hum----- 3rd person plural masculine
27- Hum Katabu aldrsa - They wrote the lesson.
- hunna----- 3rd person plural feminine.
28- Hunna katabna aldrsa - They wrote the lesson.
- antuma – both of you -----is used to refer to a dual number which denote two. It does not show agreement for gender and it can be used for both male and female human beings as in:
29- Antuma Akhawan mutaawinan - You are two cooperative brothers.
30- Antuma Ukhtan jamilatan. You are two beautiful sisters.

Yet, an agreement for gender can be manifested with plural pronouns .
Thus,

Antum - you is used to refer to plural male human beings and antuna - you is used to refer to plural female human beings.

Relative pronouns reflects gender distinction , for example ,

- Allathi -Who/ which is used to refer to M. referents
- Allati - who/ which is used to refer to female referents
- Allatheena - who is used to refer to Male plural referents
- Allati – Allae - who is used to refer to female plural referents

Agreement in gender can also be manifested between the possessive pronouns and the nouns , for examples , thu - of/with is used with male human creatures while that - of/with is used with female human creatures as in:

- 31- Alwaladu thu alridaau alawadu . The boy with the black dress.
32- Alfatu that alhaqibat albaydhaa. The girl with white bag.

Finally , gender distinction can not be manifested with comparative and interrogative cases.

Section Three

Gender in English

Quirk et al (1982: 85) point out that English makes very few gender distinction where they are made : the connection between the biological category "sex" and the grammatical category "gender" is very close while many other linguists do not recognize English gender as a grammatical category but also define it according to the biological sex distinctions . It is stated that nouns denoting things , phenomena , plants and animals are neuter and nouns referring to human beings can be either M. or F.

Greenbaum and Quirk (1990:99) state that English gender is not a feature of nouns themselves rather it relates directly to the meanings of nouns with particular reference to the biological sex.

Lyons(1968:283) states that gender plays a relatively minor part in the grammar of English.

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Thus, Some grammarians argue that English has three gender categories masculine , feminine and neuter which correspond to male , female and neither sex. There is no special markers that can be used to mark gender distinction. Others state that English has four kinds of gender : masculine , feminine, common and neuter in which masculine nouns include only male referents like boy , man etc. ; feminine nouns include only female referents like girl , woman , etc. ; Common nouns include nouns and pronouns that are either male or female but the type of gender is not of the main concern like friend , doctor etc ;and the last type is the neuter in which all nouns and pronouns which refer to neither sex like material things like table , stone and all abstract nouns like intelligence , childhood etc..

English has no live productive gender marker i.e. there is no derivational suffixes defining gender but there are a few traces of gender marking in English . Some of the borrowed words are inflected for gender such as :

Actor/ masculine – Actress/ feminine

God / masculine – goddess/ feminine

Hero / masculine- heroine / feminine

Host / masculine – hostess/ feminine

Steward/ masculine – steward/ feminine

Widower/ masculine – widow/ feminine

Such morphological markers are not regular .Thus, it is impossible to use -ess to derive the feminine nouns from the masculine ones as in :

- friend – *friendess

Very few nouns marked for gender i.e. there is a derivational relationship between the masculine and feminine nouns e.g.

god / masculine – goddess/ feminine

Other group contains nouns that are of dual gender i.e. nouns that are used to denote animate beings regardless of their sex i.e. nouns which denote both masculine and feminine referents

e.g. friend which can be used to refer to either boy or girl , male or female can be used before nouns of dual gender for purpose of clarity.

Although gender marking is not significant in modern English , some distinctions in personal pronouns have been inherited from old English . These gendered pronouns are used according to the physical sex of the items to which they refer rather than a linguistic classification. e.g.

Jane said that she would visit her uncle.-1

In the above example , the gender of the subject is marked on both the personal pronoun she and the possessive pronoun her . Thus, Personal pronouns have different forms based on gender. English still distinguishes between he which is applied for a male person and she which is applied for a female person and it for object , abstraction or animal .Thus , English pronouns can be divided into

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feminine gender pronouns like she , her and hers; masculine gender pronouns like he , his , him ;and gender neuter pronouns like you , your , they , their and them.

Other group of nouns is of a common gender in which he is used to stand for words which denote male referents and she for words which denote female referents

Collective nouns do not show any gender distinction because these nouns take as a substitution pronoun either it when singular or they when they are plural e.g.

Committee , family the usual relative pronouns that are used with such nouns are either which when the noun is substituted by it or who when it is substituted by they.

e.g. The families / who / they
the family / which / it

Common nouns that refer to non – personal animate nouns can be substituted by (it – which) but sometimes he – she – who are used for certain nouns such as horse – cat – tiger when the sex is known . Some of these nouns are marked for gender e.g.

Tiger – tigress and others have feminine forms that differ completely from the masculine . one , e.g. grand / masculine – goose / feminine

Names of countries are considered as feminine nouns if they are used as political or economic units and they are considered as inanimate if they are used to refer to geographical units. e.g.,

33-Looking at the map , we see Iraq here.

34- Iraq is one of the best countries – (it – inanimate)

Besides , these nouns are treated as collective nouns when they are used with sport e.g.

35- The players represent the Iraq country.

Lower animals and inanimate nouns are represented by it and which as pronouns . Gender markers can be used with lower animals to show distinction e.g.

She goat (feminine) and He goat (masculine)

While inanimate nouns can have sometimes the pronouns she or he as a substitute pronouns. This use of the pronouns reflects the emotional influence of the owner .

Besides, The masculine form of pronouns is usually used or employed by default to refer to persons of unknown gender .

(Quirk , 1974:91-93)

The pronouns he and she can be used with human beings and animals whose sex is unknown . Besides , it is used to reflect lower animals. Sometimes , the owner of the animal may use he or she to refer to his animal but the one who

does not own this animal may refer to it by using the pronoun it . In addition , it can be used to refer to human being especially when addressing the baby , child . In general , if it is used with non – personal nouns , which is considered the usual relative pronoun to be used and if it is used with personal nouns , who is considered as the usual pronoun to be used with these nouns.

English gender does not have any influence on the parts of the sentence on the syntactic level.

36-She always comes late. (feminine)

37-He always comes late (masculine).

Section Four

Comparison Between English and Arabic Gender

This section is devoted to show the main points of contrast between the two languages as far as grammatical gender is concerned . It is manifested that :

- 1- In Arabic , there are two gender categories : masculine and feminine , while in English , there are three gender categories : masculine , feminine and neuter.
- 2- In Arabic , every noun whether belongs to animate or inanimate class must be either feminine or masculine while in English every noun that belongs to the class of feminine nouns belong to female creatures and that which belongs to the class of masculine nouns belongs to male creatures . Inanimate things have no gender .
- 3- In Arabic , masculine nouns are considered the bases from which the feminine nouns are derived through the use of certain markers which can be applied to both masculine nouns and adjectives while in English , there is no productive gender marker but there are certain borrowed words that are inflected for gender.
- 4- In Arabic , certain objects are referred to by using two separate forms, one of them is feminine and the other is masculine , while inanimate referents have no gender in English.
- 5- In Arabic , there should be certain kind of concord between the noun that is marked for gender whether masculine or feminine and the other elements of the sentence whether demonstratives , verbs , adjectives , pronouns (personal , possessive and relative) , Yet demonstratives that refer to plural do not show gender distinction and the personal pronoun which denotes dual number does not show gender agreement while in English personal pronouns show gender distinctions except for the plural third person and the 2nd person . In addition , gender distinction does not have any influence on the parts of the sentence on the syntactic level
- 6- In Arabic , names of countries , cities and towns are treated as feminine nouns while in English , names of countries are considered feminine nouns if they

are used as political or economic units and they are considered inanimate I,e, with out gender , if they are used to refer to geographical unit.

7- In Arabic , collective nouns that are unmarked for feminine are considered masculine nouns while in English collective nouns do not show any gender distinction.

Conclusion

Gender in language is like sex in the outside world . Sex is considered as the most important basis for gender distinction . Sex stands for either male or female creatures.

The distinction of gender into feminine and masculine is an important feature in Arabic , Unlike English where the majority of words do not make this distinction clear e.g. in English the word " student" does not imply the gender of person it refers to , while in Arabic the word " talib" is used to denote male referent while the inflected form " talibat" is used for female referent.

Languages differ in the number of gender they recognize . English has three genders M . F and neuter which stand respectively for male , female and neither sex . On the other hand , Arabic has two gender categories : M. and F. which can be distinguished through the use of some morphological processes.

Both languages under study use the natural gender in classifying the nouns into masculine and feminine . i.e. every noun that belongs to the class of masculine nouns refers to male animate and vise versa.

In Arabic , masculine nouns are considered as the basis from which feminine nouns can be derived through the addition of certain markers which can be added to both nouns and adjectives , whereas , a few nouns in English are marked for gender . In Arabic , there are certain irregularities in considering and forming the feminine nouns whereas in English some pronouns are gender sensitive.

On the syntactic level , In Arabic , there should be an agreement between the noun that is marked for gender and the other elements of the sentence while in English such agreement can be manifested between the nouns and their pronouns in the singular case only.

Finally ,Arabic gender is applied to nouns , verbs , adjectives , pronouns and demonstratives while English gender is applied only to some nouns and the majority of the personal pronouns.

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الخلاصة

هذا البحث هو محاولة لدراسة الخصائص النحوية للتذكير والتأنيث في اللغة الانكليزية واللغة العربية ان خصائص التذكير والتأنيث وتأثيرها على التراكيب النحوية يختلف من لغة الى اخرى وعليه فان الهدف الشامل من الدراسة الحالية هو دراسة التذكير والتأنيث في كل من اللغتين العربية والانكليزية اما الهدف الاكثر دقة هو ايجاد اوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين كل من اللغتين .

يقسم هذا البحث إلى اربعة اقسام رئيسية تتناول أهم المسائل المتعلقة بالتذكير والتأنيث في كل من اللغتين تحت الدراسة.

يسلط القسم الأول الضوء على التعاريف الأساسية لمصطلح (الجنس في كل من اللغتين) و التي هي كافية لتغطي الدراسة من وجهة نظر الباحث.

يتناول القسم الثاني التذكير والتأنيث في اللغة العربية وتأثيرها على التراكيب النحوية للجملة. بينما يتناول القسم الثالث التذكير والتأنيث في اللغة لانكليزية ويتفحص فيما اذا كان هناك أي تأثير لهما على التراكيب النحوية للجملة. اما القسم الرابع يتناول دراسة مقارنة بين اللغتين في ضوء ما تطرق اليه الباحث في القسمين الثاني والثالث.

و على ضوء ما تم بحثه من خلال هذه الدراسة ، تم وضع عدد من الاستنتاجات.