



## GENDER DIFFERENCES IN MALE AND FEMALE SPEECH

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**Abstract.** *Gender linguistics examines how language reflects and constructs social gender roles, focusing on differences in male and female communication. Gender, internalized from childhood through norms and stereotypes, shapes both speech and written language, influencing vocabulary, sentence structure, emotional expression, and intonation. Research shows men tend to use more abstract and categorical language, while women employ evaluative, concrete, and expressive forms. These differences reflect broader cultural and social factors rather than biology alone. The study highlights the importance of cross-cultural and comparative research in understanding gendered language phenomena and emphasizes gender as both a cognitive framework and a dynamic cultural construct that evolves with societal norms.*

**Key words:** *Gender linguistics, language and gender, gender stereotypes, social roles, communication differences, pragmatics, sociolinguistics*

Gender linguistics examines the expression of gender in language, studies the representation of men and women in communication, identifies the linguistic mechanisms underlying gender relations, and contributes to understanding the nature of phenomena occurring in language and society.

Sex differentiation is one of the universal phenomena studied by all human sciences in one way or another. It permeates all spheres of human knowledge and culture. Until recently, it was believed that sex differentiation had no direct relation to language, and little attention was paid to it in linguistics. However, recent studies have created a solid foundation for developing theoretical models of male and female

behavior, although many issues remain controversial and require further research.

Gender is one of the fundamental dimensions of the social structure of society, alongside class and age. It is embedded in social institutions and therefore acquires a stable and enduring character. Gender becomes rooted in human consciousness from early childhood in the form of gender perceptions and stereotypes.

Children internalize the norms, rules, and values of gender culture, within which socially determined ideas about masculinity and femininity, the distribution of social roles between men and women, and the correlation of their social statuses are already established. From childhood and throughout all stages



of life, individuals reproduce gender stereotypes and gender perceptions.

In this regard, there is a need for a more detailed interpretation of the concepts of “gender,” “gender perceptions,” and “gender stereotypes”.

In recent decades, new research directions based on an anthropocentric approach to the study of linguistic phenomena have been actively developing in linguistics. A special place among these approaches is occupied by gender studies. The key concept of gender studies is gender, which is understood as a specific set of cultural characteristics that determine the social behavior of men and women and their relationships with each other. [3]

The focus of gender studies is on cultural and social factors that shape society’s attitudes toward men and women, individuals’ behavior in relation to their gender, and stereotypical perceptions of masculine and feminine qualities — all of which shift the issue of sex from the domain of biology to the sphere of social life and culture.

The concept of “gender” entered modern linguistic paradigms much later than in other humanities, namely in the second half of the twentieth century. In 1975, the anthropologist G. Rubin published the work “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex”, in which gender is defined as “a set of arrangements by which biological sex is transformed into an object of social activity.” This

definition later became the foundation for many theoretical frameworks.

The first references to the concept of gender in language date back to antiquity, when the category of grammatical gender was examined and analyzed. According to the symbolic-semantic hypothesis of that time, grammatical gender was believed to have arisen due to the existence of people of different sexes. Masculine nouns were associated with meanings of activity and strength, while feminine nouns were endowed with semantics of passivity. However, it was also recognized that the category of gender could influence the perception of words and concepts (for example, in Russian, days of the week are perceived in accordance with the grammatical gender of the words that denote them).

The next stage in the study of the influence of gender on language was the discovery by travelers of primitive languages in America and Africa (12th–13th centuries), which were divided into male and female variants. In most cases, female speech was regarded as a deviation from the norm, i.e., the male language. Further studies of the gender factor in language were based on the belief that all differences between male and female speech were determined by biological sex.

At the beginning of the 20th century, gender aspects of language and communication attracted the attention of prominent linguists such as E. Sapir, O. Jespersen, and F. Mauthner, although at that time their works had not yet formed



an independent research field. Language began to be studied in connection with society and the individual within it; new branches of linguistics emerged, including sociolinguistics, pragmatics, psycholinguistics, and discourse and communication theory.[1]

In the late 1960s, communicative semantics and sociolinguistics began to develop intensively. Scholars gradually moved away from the structuralist view of language, conducting research within the framework of pragmatics and paying increasing attention to the influence of psychophysiological and social characteristics of individuals (such as gender, age, level of education, etc.) on language. [4]

The history of this field spans approximately three decades. In 1970, Mary Ritchie Key organized the first seminar on language and gender at the University of California, and in 1975 she published a book based on the materials of this seminar entitled “Male/Female Language”. Foundational works in feminist linguistic criticism include Robin Lakoff’s 1975 study “Language and Woman’s Place,” as well as the monographs by Luise Pusch “German as a Language of Men” and Senta Trömel-Plötz “Women’s Language – A Language of Change” based on German-language data. Since 1976, the journal *Women and Language* has been published in English, presenting the latest international and interdisciplinary research in feminist linguistics.

Differences in male and female speech styles manifest at two levels: speech behavior and language use. For example, men interrupt more often, tend to be more categorical, and strive to control the topic of conversation. Contrary to common belief, men often speak more than women. Male sentences are generally shorter than female ones. Men tend to use more abstract nouns, whereas women prefer concrete nouns (including proper names). Men more frequently use nouns and adjectives, while women use more verbs. Men also use more relational adjectives, while women tend to use qualitative adjectives, and men more often employ perfective verbs in the active voice.

Female speech contains a higher concentration of emotionally evaluative vocabulary, whereas male evaluative language is typically more stylistically neutral. Women often intensify positive evaluations, while men tend to use stronger negative evaluations, including slang, invective, and non-standard vocabulary.

A. Kirillina and M. Tomskaya, in their work “Linguistic Gender Studies” identified distinctive features of male and female written speech. [2]

Male written speech is characterized by:

1. use of military and prison slang;
2. frequent use of introductory words expressing certainty (e.g., obviously, undoubtedly, of course);
3. extensive use of abstract nouns;



4. minimal emotional expression and limited variety of expressive means;

5. combination of formal and emotionally marked vocabulary in addressing close people;

6. use of journalistic clichés;

7. frequent use of profanity, including as introductory elements, and predominance of active and transitive verb forms;

8. mismatch between punctuation and emotional intensity.

Female written speech is characterized by:

1. frequent use of introductory words, modifiers, pronouns, and modal constructions expressing uncertainty (e.g., perhaps, apparently, in my opinion);

2. tendency toward elevated, “prestigious” vocabulary and bookish expressions;

3. use of neutral expressions and euphemisms;

4. use of evaluative expressions with deictic elements instead of proper names;

5. greater imagery and expressive richness in describing emotions.

When analyzing intonation in male and female speech, attention is paid to factors such as communicative competence, emotionality, social status, and linguistic behavior. Studies show that educated women demonstrate the same level of intonational competence as men.

However, women tend to use falling tones more frequently (21.2% compared to 13.4% in men), suggesting a greater sensitivity to modern pronunciation trends and a leading role in phonetic innovation.

Many linguists, including V. V. Potapov, emphasize that one of the distinctive features of female speech is the use of evaluative adjectives. While men use them less frequently, women are more likely to say awful or pretty instead of very or so.

In conclusion, further cross-cultural, comparative, ethnolinguistic, and linguocultural studies of gender-related language phenomena across two or more languages appear highly prospective.

Gender, based on the archetypal opposition “male–female,” performs a dual function. On the one hand, it serves as a tool through which both individual and collective consciousness perceive and evaluate the world, reducing the complexity of human relations to the central dynamic between men and women. On the other hand, throughout historical and socio-cultural development, gender undergoes transformation, reshaping old stereotypes and forming new norms that reflect changing perceptions of the roles and functions of men and women in both specific societies and the global community.



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