

ОСОБЛИВОСТІ СЕМАНТИЧНОГО ЗНАЧЕННЯ РОДУ В АНГЛІЙСЬКОМУ МОВОЗНАВСТВІ

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fedorkiv0@mail.ru**PECULARITIES OF THE SEMANTIC MEANING OF GENDER IN ENGLISH LINGUISTICS**

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Скрыцкая Н.В. Особенности семантического значения рода в английском языкознании. Категория рода в английском языкознании является едва ли не самой сложной структурой, которая наиболее подверглась воздействиям в ее культурно-семантическом выражении. Цель статьи заключается в исследовании особенностей семантического значения мужского, женского и среднего родов в английском языкознании и их языковое выражение в историческом контексте сквозь призму “ Old English Speakers – Modern English Speakers”. Грамматическое и семантическое значения рода в истории языка изучалось Платзером, Джереми Смитом, Хокстоном, Догласом, Купером и многими другими исследователями.

Категория рода в английском языкознании имеет свои структурные особенности, исходя из референтов выражения – мужского, женского и среднего. Кроме того, изменения и переход одного рода в другой ученые связывают с психологическими особенностями людей, общественными факторами, которые формируют языковую среду в целом.

Ключевые слова: мужской, женский, средний роды, референт, пол, лицо.

Introduction. Gender can be complicated the category of language, and language change. To help clarify the issue, it is important to distinguish two types of gender systems, one according to grammatical conventions, the other according to natural conventions. The traditional theory holds that at one time English had a grammatical gender system, but made the transition to a natural gender system “in the East Midlands of England by the early twelfth century”¹. However, recent scholarship by Hans Platzer reviews the traditional theory, revealing that the issue is much more complex. Rather than a systematic transition from a homogeneous grammatical gender system in OE to a natural gender system by ME, Platzer reveals that the history of English gender marking has always been characterized with “conflicting tendencies”². The acute insights of Platzer’s research will be discussed below, but first a definition of grammatical and natural gender and their importance to the history and structure of the English language will be given.

A grammatical gender system uses inflections to indicate whether a referent’s gender in masculine, feminine and neuter. Inflections are affix-tags attached to words, and involve a more complex system of declensions for nouns, pronouns, adjectives and determiners, which must agree, or concord, with the noun’s gender.

The **topicality** of article is to determine the necessity of a detailed description within the paradigm of nouns belonging to a feminine, masculine and neuter genders and the lack of works dealing with the structural and functional peculiarities of nouns of the above mentioned genders.

The **aim** of article is to investigate the structural and functional peculiarities of nouns belonging to feminine,

masculine and neuter gender. The aim of the investigation presupposes the solution of the following **tasks**:

to investigate the problem of gender in Modern linguistics;

to study the phenomenon of gender from the historical point of view;

to show the structural peculiarities of nouns belonging to feminine, masculine and neuter genders;

to study the functional peculiarities of nouns of the three genders.

Main part. For instance, if a noun is grammatically masculine, such as *cyning* (king), it requires a corresponding masculine inflection, and any determiner, pronoun or adjective related to the masculine noun must also take the appropriate declension. Hence, *se cwic cyning* (the living king) is grammatically correct, whereas *seo cwicu cyning* is incorrect because *seo* is a feminine determiner and the *u* on *cwicu* is a feminine inflection for the adjective.

Rather *seo cwicu cwen* (the living queen) is grammatically correct. It should be noted that in the above examples, the grammatical gender for the nouns happens to correspond to the natural gender of their referents – make-king, female-queen.

A natural gender system, on the other hand, indicates gender according to its referent’s biological sign. In a sense, in a natural gender system, gender is hardly even a category³, for nouns and pronouns reveal the referent’s gender themselves, and determiners and adjectives take the same form, whether modifying a masculine, feminine or neuter referent – hence, *the happy woman*, *the happy man*, *the happy animal* – she, he. It is happy. It must be further, how-

¹ Crystal David. The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language, Cambridge UP, 1995, P. 130.

² Classen E. On the Origin of Natural Gender in Middle English. Modern English Review, 1919, P. 97.

³ Ibid., P. 97-103.

ever, that neither gender system is less ambiguous than the other, and neither is universally used⁴. Traditional theories attribute the origin of grammatical gender systems to the non-human tendency to anthropomorphize nature, when one endows human qualities to non-human creatures and objects.

Another theory raised by James Frazier of Golden Bough fame is that early men and women spoke a differently inflected form of the language from one another⁵. However, these kinds of speculations assume a universal tendency in human linguistic relations to the world, and break down with the fact that many languages have never had a grammatical gender system.

Rather, Ibrahim argues that grammatical gender is an "accidental outcome of the linguistic development of some languages"⁶. Indeed, studying the human-animate nouns of OE, one finds that nearly all of their grammatical genders correspond to their natural genders to begin with instances like *se wifmann* are exception and not the rule, and even then such words often took the natural gender rather than their original grammatical gender.

As such, there is a gender consensus that "at some stage in its development, [grammatical gender] must have been an extension of natural gender into the sphere of language"⁷, allowing for a more articulate distinction of gender in human-animate nouns. The main function and advantage of grammatical gender, therefore, is its ability to clarify syntactic agreement in otherwise ambiguous cases

Thus, a language based on grammatical gender can indicate the gender of an unsexed noun with inflections, whereas the English natural gender system must add the words "mail" or "female" to make the referent's sign clear, such as "a male Canadian" instead of "a Canadinat". But if grammatical gender is so effective as a Linguistically, "the most obvious explanation is that it became increasingly difficult to hear inflections"⁸, because the most words had the stress at the beginning. This initial "readily gave rise to an auditory problem at the end especially when there were several endings which were phonetically very similar, as *-en*, *-on*, and *-an*".

The primary explanation is that, in addition to linguistic-phonetic ambiguity, social-historical conditions in the late Old English period facilitated the loss of inflections. Baugh argues that the Norman Conquest "brought about conditions favorable to such changes"⁹. By making French the language of prestige, and "English the language mainly of uneducated people, the Norman Conquest made it easier for grammatical changes to go forward unchecked"¹⁰. As English writing institutions were supplanted, grammatical features altered according to speech patterns that may have otherwise been maintained by clerical custodians of the language. Hence, with the loss of inflections and the further leveling of determiner-forms unmarked for gender, English came to rely on the referent's natural sex to indicate gender,

implying that the loss of grammatical gender was already underway in spoken Old English.

However, although this traditional theory makes sense, many contemporary scholars believe that more personal and psychological factors were involved. The above reasons of inflectional loss and determiner leveling were no doubt influential factors and products of the transition from grammatical to natural gender system, but many scholars feel they are not the main reasons. For instance, Classen contests the theory "that natural gender sets in after the confusion arising from the loss of inflections"¹¹.

Such theory teats natural gender as a substitute for a lost grammatical system, when, as mentioned above, grammatical gender is an extension of natural gender. Instead, Classen argues that "the evidence which is available goes to show that natural gender came in by way of the personal pronoun"¹², positing that Old English speakers made a strong distinction between human and non-human categories, including sexless and non-living things. This is not to say that, personal pronouns did not exist in Old English, but that as OE gender pronoun distinctions between human and non-human categories.

As such, in addition to linguistic tendencies, and social conditions, Classen believes that psychological choices played the key role in the transition from grammatical to natural gender system.

Platzer takes Classen's critique a step further, arguing that the notion that OE ever had a homogenous grammatical gender system, which became natural after the loss of the inflectional system, is simplistic and deceiving. Focusing on human animate nouns, he argues that "in contradistinction to the rest of the system, human animates show a marked tendency towards natural gender assignment"¹³.

Indeed, as a result of the conflicting tendencies, Platzer argues that even the natural gender system "does not equate the gender of the noun with the sex (person) of its referent. Rather, gender is merely related to the class of referent involved so that human animates take masculine or feminine gender while all of the classes of referents (animals, plants, objects, abstracts) receive neuter gender"¹⁴. Therefore, the English gender system general is not so much based on natural sex (person), or grammar, but on the class distinction between (human) animate and (non-human) non-animate referents.

For instance, Platzer cites statistical evidence that in the class of human animates; grammatical gender already coincided with natural gender in over 90% of the lexical types involved. Moreover, as Blake points out, "natural gender is therefore the rule in Old English human animates, while grammatical gender is the exception"¹⁵. However, Platzer goes on to point out that gender marking is still not clear-cut in the case of non-animate. For one, the class of animates includes only human animates "despite the fact that plants and animals are clearly animates as well"¹⁶.

⁴ Ibid., P. 97-103.

⁵ Crystal David. The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Lang. ..., op.cit, P. 515.

⁶ Ibrahim Muhammed Hasan. Grammatical Gender: Its Origin and Development. The Hague: Mouton, 1973, P. 316.

⁷ Classen E. On the Origin of Natural Gender in Middle Eng. ..., op.cit, P. 97.

⁸ Baugh Albert. A History of the English Language. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1957, P. 260.

⁹ Baugh Albert. A History of the English Lang. ..., op.cit P. 260.

¹⁰ Ibid., 260 p.

¹¹ Classen E. On the Origin of Natural Gender in Middle English. ..., op.cit, P. 97.

¹² Ibid., P. 97.

¹³ Crystal David. The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Lang. ..., op.cit, P. 515 .

¹⁴ Ibid., 515 p.

¹⁵ Moore Samuel. Grammatical and Natural Gender in Middle English. PMLA, 1999, P. 79.

¹⁶ Crystal David. The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Lang. ..., op.cit, P. 515 .

Moreover, were one would assume that non-animates should take the neuter as their natural gender, the opposite was in fact the case. In case of non-living things, “gender assignment in non-animates shows an active tendency away from natural gender”. For instance, rather than take the neuter gender, *se stan* (the stone) is masculine, and *seo duru* (the door) is feminine. This contradictory tendency created the “identical effects”¹⁷ of weakening the neuter in both classes.

The issue becomes more complicated in the case of animals, as they tended to “shift between the two classes of animate and non-animate depending on familiarity or involvement”¹⁸. In the case of animals, therefore, the attribution of gender depended more on pragmatics – the attitude of “the speaker rather than on the referent”. In many cases, moreover, the gender of an animal, especially mammals and birds, was often indicated by specific lexical types for male and female referents, hence *cow / bull*, *doe / buck*. In general, however, as Baugh argues, the use of masculine and feminine gender for non-animates is not function of grammatical or natural gender, but of attributive gender, a type of “personification and a matter of rhetoric, not grammar”¹⁹.

Nonetheless, Platzer succinctly points out that the conflicting tendencies of human animates toward natural gender, non-animates toward grammatical gender, and animals to shift between classes, leads to a difficult paradox: “The obvious trend towards natural gender in the animate nouns can only be fully realized by the loss of the neuters from this sub system. However, as soon as this weakening of neuters is extended to the whole system, i.e. to non-animates as well, it results in a

Reciprocal strengthening of grammatical gender in the subset of non-animates”²⁰.

So, what finally pushed the non-animates into the natural gender system? Unfortunately, most current theories do not have a development answer for this. One can only speculate that once the neuters were completely marginalized, the trend to keep the human animates separate from non-animates eventually collided with the trend to level determiners. Furthermore, as non-animates increasingly became excluded from the human animate use of masculine and feminine categories, they were eventually leveled to the neuter. Overall, the move from grammatical to natural gender involves diverse linguistic, social and psychological factors that still require active speculation and research.

In Latin, Greek, German, and many other languages, some general rules are given that names of male beings are usually masculine, and names of females are usually feminine. When, however, inanimate things are spoken of, these languages are totally unlike our own in determining the gender of words.

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

Many languages place each noun into one of three gender classes or genders: masculine gender: includes most words that refer to males; feminine gender: includes most words that refer to females; neuter gender: includes mostly words that do not refer to males or females.

A system of grammatical gender involves such phenomena as inflection: many words have different forms for different genders, and certain morphological markers are characteristic of each gender; and agreement: every noun is associated with one gender class. In a phrase or clause, words that refer to a given noun inflect to match the gender of that noun.

What are the peculiarities of gender sub categorization in Modern English? The category of gender is oppositional. It is formed by two oppositions related to each other a hierarchical basis. The other opposition functions in the subset of person nouns only, dividing them into masculine nouns and feminine nouns.

As a result of the double oppositional correlation, a specific system of three genders arises, which is represented by the neuter (inanimate, non-human) gender, the masculine (masculine person) gender, and the feminine (feminine person) gender.

So, there are a few traces of gender marking in Modern English: some foreign nouns inflect according to gender, such as *actor/actress*, where the suffix *-or* denotes the masculine, and the suffix *-ress* denotes the feminine; the third person singular pronouns (and their possessive forms) are gender specific: “he/its” (masculine gender, overall used for males), “she/her(s)” (feminine gender, for females), “it/its” (neuter gender, mainly for objects and abstractions), “one/one’s” (common gender, for anyone or anything), and “who/whose” (subordinate/vocative gender, for someone in question).

A glint of gender endings live on in the cultural memory of novel terms such as *fella* from “fellow” or *blonde* from “blond”. Neuter genders tend to end in *t*: *that*, *it*, *might*. But there are insignificant features compared to a typical language with grammatical gender.

The English nouns that inflect for gender are very small minority, typically loanwords from non-Germanic languages (the suffix *-ress* in the word “actress”, for instance, derives from Latin *-rix* via French *-rice*). In languages with grammatical gender, there are typically thousands of words which inflect for gender.

The third-person singular forms of the personal pronouns are the only modifiers that inflect according to gender.

It is also noteworthy that, with a few exceptions, the gender of an English pronoun coincides with the real gender of its referent, rather with the grammatical gender of its antecedent, frequently different from the former in languages with true grammatical gender. The choice between “he”, “she”, “it” invariable comes down to whether they designate a human male, a human female, or something else²¹.

A great many animate nouns in English are capable of express both feminine and masculine person genders. They are referred to as nouns of the “common gender”. Here belong such nouns as *person*, *parent*, *friend*, *doctor*, *president*, *cousin*, *teacher*, *architect*, *supervisor*, *cleaner*, ect. The sex of the referent is marked by the personal pronoun: e. g. *Debbie*, **editor-in-chief** of several magazines including “Men Only”, was being groomed to take over **her** father’s 80 million publishing and property business, including the *Raymond Revuebar* in London’s Soho²².

¹⁷ Ibid., P. 515.

¹⁸ Biber Douglas. Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English, Harlow: Longman, 1999, P. 416.

¹⁹ Ibid., P. 416.

²⁰ Platzer Hans. On Grammatical Gender in old English. View: Vienna English Working Papers, 2001, P. 34.

²¹ Bate Barbara. «What does “she” men? Nonsexist language use in transition» *Journal of Communication* № 28, P. 139-149.

²² Lawrence D.H. Women in Love, London: Everyman’s Library, 1992, P. 475.

As days turned into weeks, Ned's **owner** began thinking that **his** dog had developed an unhealthy obsession with his lump of rock²³. I went to see the **doctor** about my cough but **she** said there was nothing wrong with me²⁴. The man who is basically insecure in himself or the one looked to his **spouse** as a mother as well as a wife, may become bitterly jealous of his children²⁵. Smart's nephew and **biographer**, Christopher Hunter, records the fact that "After an interval of little more than two years, Mr. Smart appeared to be pretty well restored"²⁶.

When there is no special need to indicate the sex of the referent of these nouns, they are used neutrally as masculine.

e. g. ... he made the following annotation: "Change the **animal**: make it a **dog** instead of a **parrot**"²⁷.

"I'm spared the anxiety of being made the object of an attack if I can instead become the **attacker**..."²⁸.

Professor Wood has noted the paradox that in Normandy "the rights and powers or its rules so far exceeded those possessed by the king that it was desirable to maintain the duchy a territory apart, and provide for its continued semi-autonomous existence"²⁹.

About some structural peculiarities of nouns they belong to the group of those having masculine, feminine and neuter genders. They form with their pairs adding different words denoting feminine (e. g. boy – girl, monk – nun, husband – wife). e. g. *Err, mine died when I was nine and my **mother** has been my mother and a **father** to both myself my **brother** and **sister** and I feel she's done just as good a job as I could of as my father could have done*³⁰.

It's interesting to note that the majority of the above mentioned nouns are formed with help of the suffix *-er*, denoting the doer of the action, added to the verbal stem (teacher, murderer, widower, master, widower). However, the noun "pensioner" is formed from the nominal stem of the noun of neutral gender – "pension". e. g. "The dog seemed distressed and there was no sign of his **master**"³¹. "What is there about a **murderer** that can make him so irresistible?"³².

It should be noted that noun *murderer* in nowadays also uses as the noun of common gender, however, it has a feminine pair "murderess" – a woman, who murders another person. e. g. "I nearly became a **murderess** tonight"³³.

Also we can study the different endings of the nouns such as *-ee* (referee, trustee, refugee), *-ent* (president, resident), *-an* (musician, historian), *-ian* (politician). The separate group of the nouns is compound with the stem "man" spelled solidly (e. g. gentleman, sportsman, fireman, chairman and etc.). Some nouns that already have in their composition derivative stems combined with other noun stems. They can use its compositions the stems "man", "male", "father", "brother", "son" – father-in-law, brother-in-law, male-cousin, step-father, step-mother, step-sister and etc.

Conclusions. The traditional theory states that at one time English had a grammatical gender system, but made the transition to a natural gender system. Overall, the move

from grammatical to natural gender involves diverse linguistic, social and psychological factors that still require active speculation and research. In English as well as other in other languages with a natural gender system, gender is hardly even a category, for nouns and pronouns reveal the referents gender themselves, and determiners and adjectives take the same form, whether modifying a masculine, feminine or neuter referent. From the structural point of view masculine gender may be distinguished from the feminine in three ways: by the use of different words; by different endings (suffixation); by forming compound words.

Скрицька Н.В. Особливості семантичного значення роду в англійському мовознавстві. Категорія роду в англійському мовознавстві є, мабуть, чи не найскладнішою структурою, яка найбільше піддалася впливам та змінам в її мовно-семантичному вираженні. Категорія роду в англійському мовознавстві має свої структурні особливості, виходячи з референтів вираження – чоловічого, жіночого, середнього. В англійській мові рід є лексичним поняттям та співвідноситься зі статтю референта, а система роду в англійському мовознавстві значною мірою базується на природній статі. Крім того, зміни та перехід одного роду в інший вчені пов'язують з психологічними особливостями людей, суспільними чинниками, які формують мовне середовище в цілому.

Мета статті полягає в дослідженні особливостей семантичного значення чоловічого, жіночого та середнього родів в англійському мовознавстві та їх мовне вираження в історичному контексті крізь призму "Old English Speakers – Modern English Speakers".

Грамаітичне та семантичне значення роду в історії мови вивчалось Платзером, Джеремі Смітом, Хокстоном, Догласом, Купером, К. Девідом та багатьма іншими дослідниками. Розглядаючи грамаітичне вираження роду в іменниках, прикметниках, дієсловах, дослідники наголошують на трансформаціях, які відбулися в англомовному середовищі, починаючи з середніх віків та закінчуючи початком двадцятого століття. Чимало слів є застарілими та не використовуються в сучасному мовленні. Найбільших змін та нових шляхів вираження в лексичному та грамаітичному значенні зазнав іменник. Їхня специфіка полягає у відмінностях між живими та неживими предметами, родами та суфіксами (ress, er, наприклад). Неживі предмети виражаються, як правило, через середній рід, живі – через чоловічий або жіночий.

Ключові слова: чоловічий, жіночий, середній роду, референт, особа, стаття.

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Received: 26.05.2017

Advance Access Published: June, 2017

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²³ Ibid., P. 475.

²⁴ Ibid., P. 475.

²⁵ Kelly C. Never Too Late, London: Granddreams, 1995, P. 567.

²⁶ Lawrence D. H. Women in Love ..., op.cit, P. 475.

²⁷ Ibid., P. 475.

²⁸ Kelly C. Never Too Late ..., op.cit, P. 567.

²⁹ Lawrence D. H. Women in Love ..., op.cit, P. 475.

³⁰ Kelly C. Never Too Late ..., op.cit, P. 567.

³¹ Lawrence D. H. Women in Love ..., op.cit, P.475.

³² Kelly C. Never Too Late ..., op.cit, P. 567.

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