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By Muradova Ulviyya & Ahmadova Zulfiyya

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Quite a few languages are known to have grammatical gender in their noun classes, including inanimate objects. Russian, French, Spanish, and Arabic are all examples of this group. In French, for instance, coffee and salt are of masculine gender. In Arabic, cup, desk, and the calendar year are feminine. Native speakers of these languages should be responsible for using right definite articles and pronouns; even they alter adjectives for gender agreement.

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The Influence of Grammatical Gender in Languages to Thought

Muradova Ulviyya [α] & Ahmadova Zulfiyya [σ]

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In this article, it is studied that grammatical gender can have conspicuous and surprising influences on cognition. So linguistic gender can affect into other mental processes, such as to judge and categorize inanimate and abstract nouns as having a gender in real life. Results come from psycholinguistic experiments investigating grammatical gender effect in verbal and non-verbal communication, evaluating the interaction of grammatical gender with semantic information.

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I. Introduction

It is of prime importance to put words together in a group that shares common features to arrange a language accurately. It helps to acquire a determinate amount of grammar rules being applied to these word groups rather than learning every single word and its features related to the way of its usage in a sentence.

There are some general features in different languages that are taken as a core of grouping words together, such as morphological, syntactic, and semantic characteristics, one of which is gender category. That is, gender is simply another way of creating these noun classes. That is the reason why the terms "grammatical gender" and "noun class" are actually considered to be synonyms.

Nonetheless, grouping words together under this term is a far more fascinating way because ties to real-life about natural genders of nouns are conspicuously seen on some animate nouns like "girl," lioness," while this is not the case with most nouns, especially with inanimate ones such as "book," "dream." This makes it rather difficult to perceive the connection between word and its grammatical gender, thus assigning grammatical genders to words is often considered as a bizarre and somewhat random task.

Despite differences of opinions over the number of the languages existing on the Earth, philologists roughly calculate that nearly twenty-five percent of the languages in existence use grammatical genders. It can be perplexing for the speakers of genderless languages to encounter words with grammatical genders in other languages, yet this is, in fact, quite a common phenomenon. To illustrate most Indo-European languages make use of grammatical genders, so do some others in the Middle East and Africa. German, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, and Hebrew, among others, all differ in numbers of grammatical genders. A typical division often appears to be a male-female group. Another includes adding a third – neuter – gender.

For instance, most Romance languages today only have the male-female distinction, German, Dutch, and the Slavic languages can be a few examples for those that have introduced the additional neuter gender.

The Indo-European languages, all the modern Turkic languages, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Bengali, all the Austronesian languages, Persian and Central Kurdish, all the Uralic languages such as Hungarian, Finnish and Estonian include genderless languages.

Author α σ: e-mails: ulviyya.muradova@yahoo.com, ehmedovazulfiyye@gmail.com

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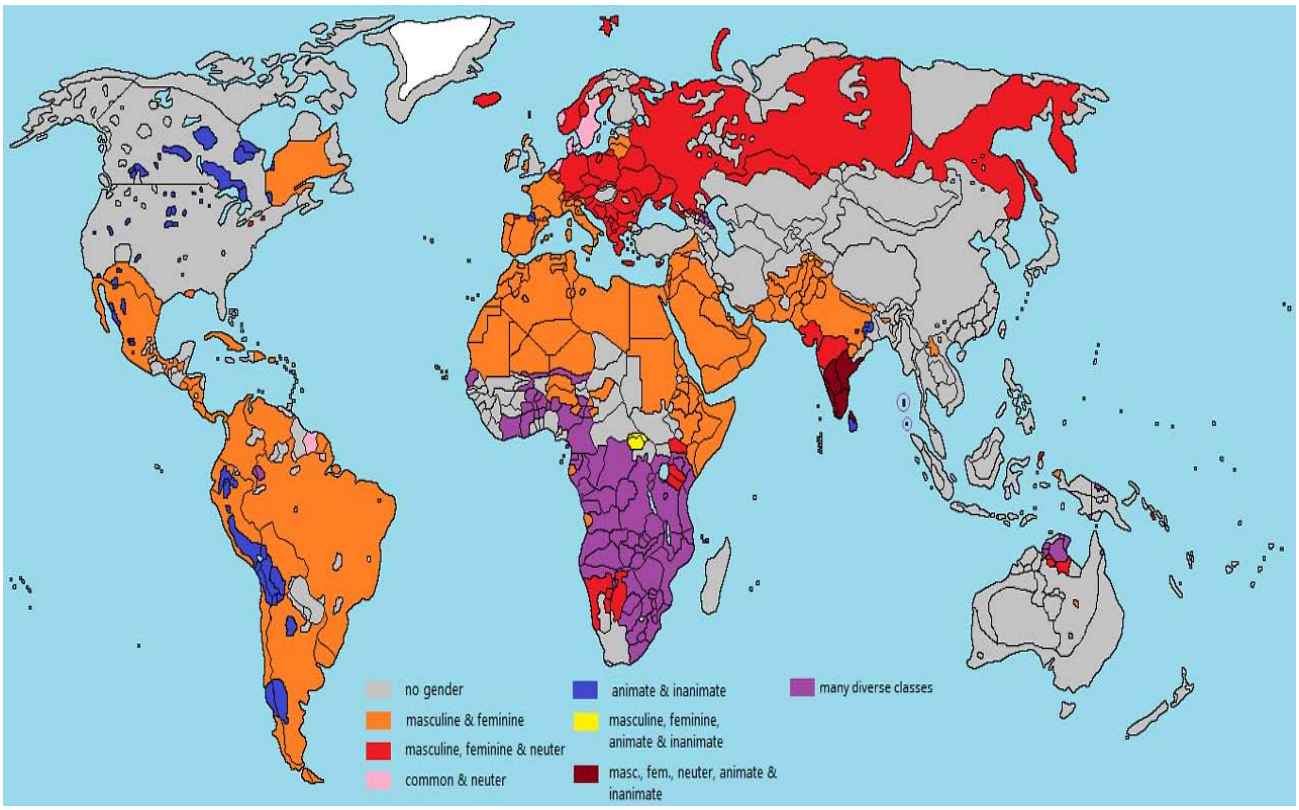


Figure 1

Even a complex system of grammatical gender existed in Old-English, the forefather of the modern-day version. At the same time most features of this classification vanished throughout the history. However, some remaining still stick around in modern English, the most obvious example of which are the personal pronouns ("he," "she," "it") and a few words in use that have distinct male-female forms such as "steward – stewardess," "waiter-waitress," "god-goddess."

Interestingly enough, although Scandinavian languages share familiar linguistic peculiarities, to some extent, different gender systems are used in the aforementioned languages. That is to say, while the masculine, feminine, and neuter division is specific to Norwegian words, the masculine and feminine have merged into one *common* gender being used to ascribing to people in Swedish and Danish.

Despite the limited number of the gender classes with these languages, counting only two or three categories, but there exist far more extreme examples of grouping nouns according to the gender. For instance, the Zande language of Africa allocates nouns into four gender classes: masculine, feminine, animal, and inanimate. Interestingly, some inanimate objects that are of prime importance in Zande mythology include animate nouns. Besides, genders in the Fula language add up to approximately twenty. Natural sex does not serve a function in the classification –one common gender includes both human males and females, which is stunning enough.

It is not the items themselves that have the gender assigned to them. Namely, it is not the hat (un chapeau in French) itself that's masculine. In this day and age, the differentness between masculine and feminine words might be considered erratic, but it stands to a reason that there must have been an essential justification for such systems to build up. The words could merely have been grouped together based on some characteristics that were crystal clear to our ancestors but are known no more. It calls for scrutiny in the field of linguistics, since allocating to one might show up some very apparent real-world outcomes.

In the Ket language of Siberia, nouns of no account to the Ket society are feminine, whereas objects of importance such as fish, wood appear to be masculine. It is more likely to have been a sign of women's status in Ket society.

It appears from the abovementioned example about Ket Language that grammatical gender in a language can has considerable and perplexing effects on cognizance. If we consider about a language where each word having a positive connotation is included in the female gender and everything negative unlikable is masculine, for sure it would imbue the members of that society with the idea that feminine is equal to good, but masculine to evil, to some extent it would reflect the way how members of that society deem men and women. (*Dul'son*, *A. P. 1968)*

Furthermore, the existence of grammatical genders in languages seems to influence the way how

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people view and perceive the notions around. As mentioned above, while genders appear to be a way of grouping words together, allocation of them into feminine and masculine will, without a shadow of a doubt, engenders a tie to real-world females and males.

Some initiatory evidence asserts that it is most likely to be (Jacokbson 1966, Konishi 1993, Sera, Berge, and del Castillo 1994). Russian speakers (a language with grammatical genders) were asked to impersonate days of the week in one study (reported in Jackobson 1966). Once they were requested to do the abovementioned task, the subjects continuously imagined grammatically masculine days as male and grammatically feminine days as female, without bringing a reasonable explanation as to how they put such a characterization forward.

As can be viewed from the above-mentioned example, influencing human cerebral processes linguistic gender can orientate speakers to categorize inanimate and abstract nouns as if they genuinely have a gender, which is beyond the bounds of possibility.

To a greater extent, there exist far more substantial examples, one of which is a *fatwa* (Muslim religious decree) issued by a cleric associated with the Muslim Brotherhood. *India Today* reports that this decree puts women a stop to swim in the sea. He exonerates this prohibition declaring the reason that the Arabic word for 'sea' (بحر) is grammatically masculine, and in case a woman goes swimming and "the water touches the woman's private parts, she becomes an 'adulteress' and should be punished." Then, what if a man goes into the sea? Should it be considered a homophile experience and punished? It is also worthy of noting that this *fatwa* implies the pre-eminence of Arabic in Islam. What about the fact that there exists an enormous number of non-grammatical gender-based languages spoken natively by large numbers of Muslims such as Turkish and other Turkic languages in Central Asia and the central Volga region of Russia, Persian or Indonesian? Does the very prohibition make a sense for many Muslims with regard to their native languages?

This fatwa may appear to be asserted by a man of religious extremism as an excuse thereof not considered genuine, but this issue is worth considering from the linguistic and cultural point of view.

Such literal construal of grammatical gender may seem nonsensical. Yet, several experiments in the field of psycholinguistics assert that grammatically masculine words in "gendered" languages are, in point of truth, associated with more "masculine" properties and grammatically feminine words with more "feminine" attributes by the native speakers of those languages.

A researcher team was also determined to answer this intriguing question with the assistance of an experiment conducted in 2002 in which German and Spanish speakers were involved, creating a list of two dozen objects that hold opposite genders in Spanish and German, thus in each language, half of the objects were masculine and half were feminine. All the participants were native Spanish speakers and native German speakers, all of whom were fluent in English. They were required to describe each item by three adjectives given on the list speaking and using materials written in English. To conclude, the grammatical gender category of affected participants' judgments. In other words, since the item "key" is of masculine gender in German and feminine in Spanish, German speakers in the study had a propensity to depict the very word using the following words: *hard, heavy, jagged, metal,* and *useful* while Spanish speakers used adjectives such as *golden, intricate, little, lovely*, and *tiny* when describing keys. The second word taken for the experiment was "bridge," which appears to be feminine in German and masculine in Spanish. Bridges were described with the assistance of the attributes such as *beautiful, elegant, fragile, pretty,* and *slender* German speakers, while Spanish speakers asserted that they were *big, dangerous, strong, sturdy*, and *towering*. (Lera Boroditsky, Lauren A. Schmidt & Webb Phillips 2003).

In the same experiment, German and Spanish speakers were asked to have a look at picture couples with no written labels, and participants did not converse during the assignment. Each pair contained of a picture of a person and an object, which should be rated how congruent with each other. Interestingly, both Spanish and German speakers deemed couples to be far more congruent if the biological sex of the person in the picture coincides with the grammatical gender of the object. To illustrate, a couple made up of a bridge and a man gives a Spanish speaker the impression of being similar, but not at all to a German speaker. (Lera Boroditsky, Lauren A. Schmidt & Webb Phillips 2002).

II. Conclusion

As can be shown, people's thinking can be affected by grammatical gender, either when one is speaking a language with no grammatical gender — or even when he is not speaking any language at all! While the aforementioned several examples might seem like very absurd assignment; it is lucid that filtering the universe through a lens of masculine versus feminine can lead to some *very deep-rooted prejudice.*

Scrutiny is, therefore, needed in grammatical genders in languages, since the majority of people suppose to live in a world being of no sex discrimination anymore, leaving the worst of gender biases behind. However, what if the language, a means we use every minute throughout the 50 years' life expectancy, can influence our way of thinking - taking a cleric as an example who declares the prohibition of the swimming of women in the sea due to the masculine gender of the word for "sea" in Arabic. That being the case, we seem

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not to be yet free of hackneyed ideas about biological sexes. It is like the butterfly effect, a part of chaos theory. Our thoughts are likely to be affected by small scale, inconspicuous aspects of a language, subsequently in more ways. It's not astonishing that some languages are likely to eliminate using grammatical genders undergoing such a kind of pressure. For instance, there are ideas that German is on the verge of limiting its use of genders and plans to go to a more neutral language.

A more considerable gender disparity is linked to the usage of grammatical genders according to several other studies. Surprisingly, quite a few societies in which non-grammatical gender-based languages are spoken more likely to observe gender inequality on a daily basis. It is, no doubt, necessary to bear in mind that a few studies can hardly be a stable basis for anything, but at least require further investigation.

Grammatical features of a language are supposed to influence people's mindset. Studies unveil the effects of grammatical gender on how people perceive the environment they live in, more specifically, how they depict the objects. It is striking that even gender disparity can be affected by the grammatical gender of the language of the speaker. Considering both the fact that languages differ, having quite a few different grammatical aspects, lexical sources, and semantic features and its effects of mind, it's no surprise to find a large number of differences even among people's thoughts.

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