

Литература

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Summary

The article deals with newspaper communication, its peculiarities and tendencies of development.

EXPRESSING GENDER IN ENGLISH AND ITS CULTURAL MEANING

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In grammar, gender is one of two or more classes inflected on the basis of such distinction as masculine, feminine and neuter, or animate and inanimate, and reflected in the behavior of associated words. The assignment of words, chiefly nouns and pronouns, to such classes is largely arbitrary but partly a reflection of observable characteristics.

Latin, Greek, German and Russian, as well as other languages have three genders – masculine, feminine, and neuter – while the modern Romance languages have only masculine and feminine. Most native North American languages classify words as animate or inanimate, other languages, chiefly those outside the Indo-European group, may make no gender distinctions (Japanese, Chinese), or a great many (e.g. Bantu). In English, gender is for the most part logical – i.e., a girl is she, a man is he, and a tree is it. This contrasts to German, in which a girl, *das Mädchen*, is assigned neuter gender. English belongs to the Anglo-Frisian group within the western branch of the Germanic languages, a subfamily of the Indo-European languages. It is related most closely to the Frisian language, to a lesser extent to Netherlandic (Dutch-Flemish) and the Low German (Plattdeutsch) dialects, and more distantly to Modern High German. According to Encyclopaedia Britannica [1980:880], grammatical gender persisted throughout the Old English period and the simplification of gender resulted from the fact that the gender of Old English substantives was not always indicated by the ending but rather by the termination of the adjectives and demonstrative pronouns used with the substantives. When these endings were lost, all outward marks of gender disappeared with them. Thus, the weakening of inflections and loss of gender occurred together.

“Gender is both a cultural and an individual concept” [Sunderland, 1994:2] The culture of a society forms the people in it according to their biological sex and the result is a conception of gender associated with males, i. e. “masculine” and with females, i. e. “feminine”. Language not only communicates immediate ideas; it also conveys the class, socialization, cultural background, morals, and social belief systems of its user. Consequently, language makes assumptions about the gender of its reader. Assumptions can be as small as using male gendered pronouns and male normatives (he, his, mankind) to refer to an entire audience, or as vast as assuming that a particular subject might appeal exclusively to one gender. Gendered language introduces enormous bias into the general perceptions of history and self.

It is necessary to take into consideration the obvious connection between language and worldview. This is not to suggest that language causes social bias. Language is an important part of culture, defined by the people who use it, and will most likely reflect the values of those who maintain social, cultural, and economic power.

Contemporary arguments around language focus less on why gender inclusive language should be used and more on what types of gender inclusive language are the most successful.

If assumed that gendered socio-cultural roles are learned and dynamic, then language should also reflect social conditions as they change. Since language finds its origins in speech, it is necessary to develop a set of rules so that language may be taught. However, one should consider that these rules are in danger of becoming static and out of step with spoken language and its contexts.

As Jacobson [1995] states, the practice of assigning masculine gender to neutral terms comes from the fact that every language reflects the prejudices and preconceptions of the society in which it evolved, and English evolved through most of its history in a male-centered, patriarchal society. Like any other language, however, English is always changing, developing. One only has to read aloud sentences from the

19th century books to sense the shifts that have occurred in the last 150 years. When readers pick up something to read, they expect different conventions depending on the time in which the material was written. The writers in the present time need to be not only aware of the conventions that the readers may expect, but also conscious of the responses their words may elicit. In addition, according to Jacobson [1995], they need to know how the shifting nature of language can make certain words awkward or misleading.

Using gender neutral language is an issue of audience and awareness. As Jacobson [1995] states, gender-neutral language has gained support from most major textbook publishers, and from professional and academic groups such as the American Psychological Association and the Associated Press. Newspapers like the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal avoid such language. Many law journals, psychology journals, and literature journals do not print articles or papers that use gender-inclusive language. Gender neutral language is used widely in written as well as oral texts.

Literature

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Summary

It is becoming an increasingly important issue to use non-sexist or gender neutral language in all occasions and forms. Most people, when writing and speaking informally, use often the singular "they", which has become the neutral solution to the pronoun problem. As the language is a part of the culture, it is also a task for the teachers of English language to teach their students to use non-sexist language, use the singular "they" and promote political correctness. However, it will take much time till the prejudice will be overcome. If it persists, then it will persist in the language use as well.