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## **THE PECULIARITIES OF SEXISM FREE WORDS USE IN MODERN PUBLICIST DISCOURSE**

*Стаття зосереджується на особливостях репрезентації гендерних стереотипів у сучасному англomовному публіцистичному дискурсі. Розкрито питання зсуву формально-семантичних гендерних ознак іменників на позначення чоловічо-орієнтованих професій до повної нейтралізації гендерних ознак чоловічої статі або їхнього часткового заміщення жіночими.*

**Ключові слова:** *гендерно-марковані лексичні елементи, чоловічо / жіночо орієнтована морфема, соціальний стереотип, семантичний маркер.*

*В статье рассматриваются особенности репрезентации гендерных стереотипов в современном англоязычном публицистическом дискурсе. Раскрыт вопрос смещения формально-семантических гендерных признаков имен существительных на определение профессий, ориентированных на мужчин, до полной нейтрализации гендерных признаков мужского рода или их частичного замещения женским.*

**Ключевые слова:** *гендерно-маркированные лексические элементы, морфема ориентированная на мужчин / женщин, социальный стереотип, семантический маркер.*

*The article focuses on the peculiarities of generic stereotypes representation in modern English-speaking publicist discourse. The issue it reveals is a shifting of formal-semantic gender features of masculine-oriented occupational nouns and job titles either to neutral or female-marked terms which we identify as partial or full gender demarking.*

**Key words:** *gender marked lexical elements, male / female-oriented morpheme, social stereotype, semantic marker.*

Anthropocentrism in contemporary linguistic studies focuses researchers' attention on the human factor and problems of language which are closely related to biosocial characteristics of people and their gender. In light of this, one of the most relevant issues is the question of political correctness [3, p. 72]. For instance, statements emphasizing ethnicity or nationality, physical or mental abilities, or differences in gender in explicit or implicit ways are considered to be inappropriate.

Throughout the history of mankind a woman's functions stretched to household and childcare. She completely depended on a man as a center of family and more significant representative of society [8]; [2]. Consequently, it is no wonder that a woman has been seen through the perspective of man's social status.

In the scope of this, there are two conspicuous but somewhat polar paradigms in modern linguistics, that, basing on their own purposes, have specific lines of inquiry. Firstly, it is gender linguistics which considers a category of gender as a key factor engaged in the process of forming, structuring, modifying and verbal representing of a speaker's language consciousness [1, p. 3]. Also, there are feminism-oriented studies [2] the grounds of which are based on the concepts of critical linguistics connected to W. von Humboldt's ideas and the Sapir-

Whorf language relativity hypothesis. According to them the reality is a specific «language trick» – a socially and linguistically constructed form by which we perceive a state of existing things. It aims to impose a system of values and viewpoints exclusively through the male ideology predominating in society [2]. Hence it appears that a speaker's language picture is fully influenced by existing stereotypes and this, in turn, determines the peculiarities of both language and social behavior of every single human. Thus, collective language consciousness represents females as the weaker sex and males as the stronger one, differentiating their roles in society accordingly. It explains why different occupational nouns and job titles are sometimes referred to men's or women's only.

Similar issues are in the scope of sociolinguistic inquiries. Discussing the differences between men and women, and reflexes of gender differences in language, B. Spolsky [7, p. 36] shows social stereotypes to be of primary importance. Children, for instance, picking up the social stereotypes that underline this discrimination, soon learn that women's talk is associated with the home and domestic activities, while men's is related to outside world and economic activities. Despite numerous empirical results of researches showing no difference in neurophysiological process that could account for any differences between male and female language, the prejudice as for females often remains in the face of contrary evidence. For example, a *poet* is taken more seriously than a *poetess* [7, p. 37–38]. Therefore, on the one hand the use of generic-marked masculine forms is determined by more prestigious status of male-oriented lexical units compared to female's. It is the fact that explains why on the basis of compound nouns formation there is a completely male-oriented morpheme *man*, explicitly accentuating the domination of men. It can be found in the following words *fireman*, *newsman*, *strongman*, *middleman*, *crawfisherman*, *longshoreman*, *weatherman* etc. [6, p. 40].

On the other hand, the use of male-oriented language elements reinforces the secondary status of women. In the historical perspective this type of words used to cramp women's cognitive activities keeping them from such important social spheres as education, politics, sport and the like.

With the growth of social awareness in contemporary society over the past decades influenced mainly by the feminism, there have been many attempts to overcome this prejudicial use of language [5, p. 10–106]. Surely English, like any other language, being a system with its constantly shifty nature, is showing the practice of assigning masculine gender to neutral terms. As some sociolinguistic studies state it [7, p. 38]; [4, p. 133], a good number of modern English publishers and journals adhere to guidelines to avoid gender stereotyping and gender-prejudiced or even gender-inclusive language use.

Thus, the issues of our particular concern are the ways the native speakers' social consciousness eliminate generic features i. e. the process of gender demarking in the publicist discourse. For this reason, let us review existing tendencies as for the ways gender demarking is being carried through. Nowadays, there is quite a spread tendency to displace a bound morpheme *man* by *woman*, for example: *Just ask Jeff Johnson, a successful businessman in a family-owned company in the D.C. area* (Newsweek, Oct. 15, 2012). *Her Wikipedia biography distills her new occupations: «Kim Kardashina is an American socialite, television personality, businesswoman, fashion designer, [...]»* (Newsweek, Jan. 11, 2013).

Some English words, usually naming professions, are basically of common gender: *engineer, professor, doctor, lawyer, reporter, officer* etc. Therefore, they can be referred to both sexes. However, as people are used to associating them with male, there is a tendency to add *female* to those names applying to women. We can observe it in the following examples: *I'm a 38-year-old female executive who is embarrassed to admit that I cannot remember the last time I voted* (Newsweek, May 12, 2008). *Case in point: a meet-and-greet at a diner in Ohio, at which Biden was photographed getting cozy with a female motorcyclist who appeared to be sitting on his lap* (Newsweek, Jan. 18, 2013).

At the same time, it is believed [8, p. 94] that the use of *woman* concerning occupational nouns and job titles which refer to women without being opposed to a male object should be avoided. For example, from the fragment given below, where the author emphasizes the increase of women's membership in political activities, it is quite

obvious that gender specification is determined contextually. It is achieved exclusively by the use of *women candidates*.

*In many countries, like Sweden, political parties have adopted rules that force them to field a set number of women candidates (Newsweek, Nov. 28, 2008). Similar we can see in this example: *Her status as a female officer would make her a rarity at many companies, but not at Xerox* (Newsweek, Nov. 14, 2008).*

Otherwise, as the author states it [8], that could implicitly hint on the view that in the sphere the noun denotes that she is less competent, or dependent up on, or derived from men's status. That caused a tendency the result of which is a wide use of neutral lexical elements i. e. free from sexist associations. Such replacement includes job titles and occupational nouns with such gender marked suffixes as *-ess* or *-er* that highlight either male or female gender, for instance *steward / stewardess = flight attendant; headmaster / headmistress = headteacher* and the like. The following example represents the use of *letter carrier* replacing male oriented *postman*: *The son of a factory worker and a rural letter carrier, Edwards was the first person in his family to go to college* (The Christian Science Monitor, Sep. 29–Oct. 5, 2007).

Another widely used word is *person* which is irrelevant to sex. Redistribution of semantic markers of this lexeme under the influence of generic correctness results in forming alternative, gender free lexical elements: *businessman / businesswoman = businessperson; spokesman / spokeswoman = spokesperson; chairman / chairwoman = chairperson; policeman / policewoman = police officer* etc.

In fact, there are many different ways of lexical and grammatical adaptations which provide male-oriented lexical elements replacement without distorting the message, its readability or style. They include recasting the sentence in the plural, leaving out the pronoun, repeating the noun, using *he / she* or *they* instead of *he*, recasting the sentence to avoid pronouns and many others [3, p. 75]. However, summarizing the above mentioned we come to the conclusion that there are at least two ways of representing female in discourse i.e. full and partial gender demarking. Moreover, the second one, in many researchers' opinion, seems to be more preferable.

Thus, the issue of our concern in the scope of the investigation is the representation of generic stereotypes in English-speaking public discourse i. e. the process of shifting formal-semantic gender features to their partial or full demarking. As a result, generic accent focused on masculine gender is being replaced by the feminine one. By the first feature we understand the interchange of a lexeme denoting a certain male activity. In case of the partial demarking, we mean that male features are replaced by female ones in the semantics of this or that lexical unit. Thus, depending on the object of the magazine article the researched material has been divided into three groups: 1) male representative, 2) female representative and 3) representatives of both genders. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 1, which includes the most frequently used occupational nouns and job titles denoting different types of activities in economical, political and social fields. They appear in all three groups.

Activity denoting nouns \ Article object		Male	Female	Both
spo kes-	-man	38,46	-	-
	-woman	-	25,07	-
	-	7,62	-	7,78
	person/people	-	-	-
	-man and - woman	-	-	23,07
busi ness-	-man	40,47	-	-
	-woman	-	40,47	-
	-	-	-	19,06
	person/people	-	-	-
	-man and - woman	-	-	-
serv ice-	-man	25,00	-	3,57
	-woman	-	17,85	-
	-	-	-	-
	person/people	-	-	-
	-man and - woman	-	-	33,38

poli ce-	-man	33,00	-	-
	-woman	-	-	-
	-officer	-	17,00	30,00
	-man and - woman	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-
con gress-	-man	51,19	-	-
	-woman	-	25,00	-
	-	-	-	-
	person/people -man and - woman	-	-	23,81
	-	-	-	-

**Table 1. Data of the texts of magazine and newspaper articles analyses in regard to the realization of gender-marked lexical elements denoting occupational nouns and job titles (%)**

As it can be seen from the table, modern English-speaking periodic is primarily characterized by partial demarking of the generic features of the nouns denoting publicly important kinds of professional activities. The portion of the recurrence of the noun *spokesperson* in the articles with a male object and with those where both genders are mentioned do not exceed 7%. Instead of this fact, we can see the adjunction of a gender-marked morpheme *woman* to the lexical units that traditionally refer to a masculine gender. This tendency is relevant in the texts of political and social areas that can be seen in the following example: *More UK servicemen and women are reported to have committed suicide since the 1982 Falklands War than the 255 who died in the conflict* (Daily Star Sunday, Dec. 30, 2012).

Occupational nouns and job titles in business-oriented articles are tending to the full demarking of generic features, especially in those cases where the object represents both sexes, for example: *The only people benefiting from this business are the wholesalers of clothing and the wealthy businesspeople* (The Christian Science Monitor Nov. 3–9, 2007). At the same time, we should mention that texts the only object of which is a woman in most cases emphasize the fact, for example., *Citigroup spokeswoman Danielle Romero-Apsilos, who*

*declined to comment on the deal's terms, says the bank explored other options* (Bloomberg Businessweek, Jan. 7–13, 2013). Though, this doesn't extend to the police activity where the feminine gender is designated by the fully demarked noun *police officer*.

By the side of the existing tendency that quite clearly proves the shifting of formal semantic features of a masculine gender to a female one, we found out that the cases where the texts referred to representatives of both sexes still preserve the use of strongly masculine marked nouns. For example, *Angelica Luster, a junior who is African-American, says that sheltered freshmen who come to Central with limited experiences outside their own race develop a multiethnic set of friends by the time they graduate* (The Christian Science Monitor, Sep. 29–Oct. 5, 2007).

Another interesting example is an insignificant amount of cases (3,57%) where there is no masculine gender demarking of the noun *servicemen* in the texts referring to both men and women. We can see it in the following example: *Darren Lynch told the turmoil of post-traumatic stress disorder, the psychological condition blighting the lives of thousands of ex-servicemen* (Daily Star Sunday, Dec. 30, 2012).

It is important to say that the use of the morpheme *men* is typical for some articles where the object is only women. This can be observed in the example given below. It mainly concerns the noun *freshman*.

*During spring break her freshman year at Boston University, Lauren and her mother journeyed to Kenya and Uganda in East Africa* (The Christian Science Monitor, Jan. 5–11, 2008).

Thus, the analyses of such modern periodic as The Christian Science Monitor, Daily Star Sunday, Bloomberg Businessweek, Newsweek, Outlook, The Week, Daily Mail indicates the predomination of partial demarking of a male sex. As a result of this polarization the most frequent are the compound nouns including the bound morphemes *-women*, *-female* and the like compared to the generic neutral lexical elements *person*, *people*, *member* etc.



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