

A Syntactic Analysis of Gender in Arabic and English

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Abstract

This research is an attempt to analyze in detail the phenomenon of gender in both languages Arabic and English . The research occurs in three main parts, the first and second parts deal with gender in Arabic and English respectively . The third part deals with the aspects of similarity and difference that may be found out between the two languages as far as gender is concerned.

1- Introduction

The distinction between male and female in nature is usually called (Sex). The difference in grammar between male and female is called gender. 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. Gender is usually defined as a grammatical device whereby a noun, a pronoun, an article or an adjective is masculine, feminine , common or neutral .

(http://wiki.answers.com/Q/what_does_gender_mean_in_grammar?)

According to grammatical gender every noun must belong to one of the previous divisions (masculine, feminine ,common or neutral) and there should be very few that belong to several classes at once .

In fact not all languages recognize gender in the same way. Some languages do not recognize any gender , other languages have more than one. Gender in English is considered by some grammarians as unimportant grammatical area since nouns and determiners cannot be inflected for the masculine and feminine distinction (Biber et al., 2002: 85). Yet, semantically it is important since English speakers actually make gender distinction (masculine, feminine and neutral) when they speak.

Arabic , on the other hand , recognizes two genders ; masculine and feminine . These two types include both animate and inanimate things. Every noun in Arabic is either masculine or feminine (<http://Arabic.trpod.com/Nouns1.htm>)

2- Aims of the study

The aim of the present study is to investigate syntactically the area of grammatical gender in both languages, i.e Arabic and English . Another important aim is to make a comparison between the gender of the two languages in order to find out aspects of similarity and difference between the two languages .

3- Hypothesis

Since Arabic and English are two different languages descending from different origins, it is hypothesized that some aspects of gender in Arabic and English would be similar and others would be different .

4- Gender in Arabic

Gender in Arabic is said to be a very important grammatical category. There are only two genders in Arabic, masculine and feminine .

There is no neuter gender in Arabic (Wright, 1971: 177). All Arabic nouns carry grammatical gender whether they refer to animate or inanimate objects. In other words, Arabic grammatical gender corresponds exactly to biological gender, e.g:-

<u>Macs</u>	<u>Fem</u>
رجل (man)	امراة (woman)
ولد (boy)	بنت (girl)

The relation between biological and grammatical genders, in Arabic is arbitrary , for example:-

<u>Macs.</u>	<u>Fem</u>
كرسي (chair)	طاولة (table)

([http:// www.arabic_language.org/Arabic/grammar.asp](http://www.arabic_language.org/Arabic/grammar.asp))

4.1 Gender of Nouns in Arabic

All Arabic nouns have inherent grammatical gender. Many nouns are not marked for gender , but they have a consistent gender and a consistent gender association , just as the marked nouns do. The masculine gender, is regarded as the unmarked form, while the feminine gender is the marked form (Aziz, 1989: 123) . As for the feminine markers, the (تاء مربوطة) (taa marbuta) is the usual feminine ending . Most of the feminine nouns are formed by adding this marker to the end of masculine nouns, for example :-

	<u>Macs.</u>	<u>Fem</u>
Teacher	معلم	معلمة
Professor/ teacher	أستاذ	أستاذة

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Student	طالب	طالبة
Friend	صديق	صديقة
Colleague	زميل	زميلة
Muslim	مسلم	مسلمة
Thinker	مفكر	مفكرة
Beginner	مبتدئ	مبتدئة
Reporter	مراسل	مراسلة
Writer/author	مؤلف	مؤلفة

([http:// www.Arabic.tripod.com/Nouns.htm](http://www.Arabic.tripod.com/Nouns.htm))

The other feminine marker is (ى) (alif maqsura). Unlike the (ة) (taa marbuta) which is added to masculine nouns in order to derive the feminine ones, the (alif maqsura) is part of the original word (Wright, 1971: 179), for example:-

A claim	دعوى
A secret	نجوى
A blame	لومى
Goat	معزى
Good news	بشرى
A fever	حمى

The third feminine marker is the (اء) (alif hamza) as in:-

A plain desert	بيداء، صحراء
Harm	ضراء
Hatred	بغضاء
Pride	كبرياء
Arrogance	خيلاء

This category also involves some personal names which are considered feminine but with out feminine markers , for example:

Mary	مريم	Su'ad	سعاد
Hind	هند	Zeineb	زينب

Some Arabic nouns, although lacking any of the previous mentioned feminine gender markers , are considered feminine .This category is called by Arab grammarians as :

(مؤنث مجازي) , for example:-

House	دار	Fire	نار	Axe	فأس
Sun	شمس	Soul	نفس	Paradise	فردوس
Wine	خمر	Cup	كأس	War	حرب

Sometimes in Arabic the same noun can be treated both as a masculine and a feminine noun; for example:-

Horse	فرس	Way	سبيل
Snake	حية	Road	طريق
Neck	عنق	Door	باب
Animal	دابة	Market	سوق
Arm	ذراع	Tongue	لسان

(<http://www.arabicienie.com/blog/free-arabiv.resources/arabicgrammar>)

4.2 Gender of adjectives in Arabic

Like nouns , adjectives are either masculine or feminine. Adjectives in Arabic are morphologically marked for gender and they should have gender agreement with the nouns the modify , for example:-

	<u>Fem.</u>	<u>Macs.</u>
New	جديدة	جديد
Thirsty	ظمأى	ظمآن

Full	ملأى	ملأن
The largest	الكبرى	الأكبر
Old	قديمة	قديم
A water –carrier	سقاءة، سقاية	سقاء
Drunk	سكرى	سكران
Sated	شبعى	شبعان
Fearing	خشيا	خشيان

4.3 Gender of verbs in Arabic

in Arabic, gender agreement is also required between the subject and its verb. In other words, a masculine subject requires a masculine verb and a feminine subject requires a feminine verb, for example:

- 1- جاء الرجل the man came
- 2- جاءت المرأة the woman came

In sentence (1) both the verb and the subject are masculine, whereas in sentence (2) the verb takes the feminine marker (ta'a altaneeth) in order to correspond with the feminine gender of the subject.

(<http://www.arabic-language.org/arabic/grammar.asp>)

4.4 Gender of pronouns in Arabic

4.4.1 Relative Pronouns

Arabic relative pronouns are said to be gender sensitive so they can be inflected for gender. Gender distinctions are made in the singular, dual, and plural forms. Hence, the feminine relative pronouns have three forms. The following are the masculine and the feminine forms of the relative pronouns:

Macs.

الذي
اللذان
الذين
الذين

Fem

التي
اللتان
اللتين
اللائي، اللواتي، اللاتي

(<http://Arabic.tripod.com/Nouns1.htm>)

4.4.2 Demonstrative pronouns

Arabic demonstrative pronouns are also gender sensitive as it is illustrated in the following :-

Macs.

هذا
ذلك
ذاك
هذان
هذين
هؤلاء
اولئك

Fem

هذه
تلك
تلك
هاتان
هاتين
هؤلاء
اولئك

(Farghal and Shunnaq, 1999: 86)

5- Gender in English

Gender in English is usually described as extremely simple if compared with languages exhibiting grammatical gender such as French. English gender is also said to be natural (Muir, 1972: 125). It is based primarily on sex , i.e . male nouns are masculine and female nouns are feminine. This classification result in one large class of neuter nouns and two relatively small classes of masculine and feminine nouns.

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(<http://classiclit-about.com/library/bl-etexts/wmbaskervill/bl>)

5.1 English gender classes

It has been mentioned earlier that English gender is completely natural , it follows that there would be three gender classes as shown below:-

1. Masculine nouns correlating with he For example:- actor, man
 2. Feminine nouns correlating with she for example actress, woman
 3. Natural nouns correlating with it for example:- table, box
- (Muir, 1972: 126)

However, this classification comes to a failure when a neutral nouns like (baby-substituted by "it") can be substituted by (he or she), and a bull (a name of an animal substituted by it) can be substituted by (he).

This means that the correlation between nouns and their 3rd person singular pronouns is not one-to-one correlation. This is mainly because gender is not always determined by the sex of the referent. Hence , the correlation between nouns and pronouns that refer to them may result in more than three- genders classification . Quirk et al. (1985: 314) give us a set of nine gender classes illustrated in the following figure :

Fig (1)
Gender Classes

		Gender class	Example	Pronoun <u>Coreference</u>
<u>animate</u>	<u>personal</u>	(a) male	Brother	Who- he
		(b) female	Sister	Who- she
		(c) dual	Doctor	Who-he/she
		(d) Common	Baby	Who-he/she/it
				Which- it
	<u>Non personal</u>	(e) collective	Family	Which –it
				Who- they
		(f) higher	Bull	Which – it
		Male		
		Animal		(who)- he
		(h) higher	Cow	(which- it)
		Female		
		Animal		(who)-she
	<u>inanimate</u>	(h) lower	Ant	Which –it
		Animal		(he/she)
		(i) inanimate	Box	Which- it

(a/b) Personal Masculine and Feminine Nouns:-

These two genders refer to male and female beings respectively. This class is of two kinds:-

- A.** Different or separate words which are morphologically unmarked for gender. In other words , gender here in this class is indicated by using different words which have no relationship, for example:

Masc.	Fem
Boy	Girl
Husband	Wife
Sir	Madam
Son	Daughter
Monk	Nun
Uncle	Aunt

Gender of the pervious nouns and many other nouns of the same class is made by means of their correlation with the 3rd person singular pronouns . The masculine personal nouns correlate with he and the feminine personal nouns correlate with she.

- B.** Derivational suffixes:- the words in this type are morphologically marked for gender (Quirk et al., 1985: 315) This following are all masculine nouns changed to be feminine means of certain suffixes:

<u>Masc.</u>	<u>Fem.</u>
Host	Hostess
Duke	Duchess
Prince	Princess

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Poet	Poetess
Author	authoress

Exception: in the following two pairs the male nouns are marked for gender:

<u>Masc.</u>	<u>Fem.</u>
Bridegroom	Bride
Widower	Widow

Jespersen (1965: 186) states that the reason for this exception is probably social. Some nouns belonging to this class may undergo certain morphological changes when the feminine suffixes are added:

<u>Masc.</u>	<u>Fem.</u>
actor	actress
murder	murderess
mister	mistress
Hero	Heroin
Joseph	Josephine
Don	Donna
Sultan	Sultana
Angelo	Angela
Fiancé	Fiancée

(Schibsby, 1979:111)

(C) Personal dual gender:- This category includes nouns which can be either masculine or feminine. The most important feature of these nouns is that they have inherent gender which cannot be shown explicitly, for example:

Masc./Fem	Masc./Fem
Teacher	Criminal
Driver	Doctor
Reader	Engineer
Typist	Cousin
Musician	Friend
Novelist	Slave

Gender distinction of nouns belonging to this class can be shown by using some adjectives as prefixes (Jespersen, 1972: 192), for example:

<u>Masc.</u>	<u>Fem.</u>
A male student	A female student
A man engineer	A woman engineer

(D). Common gender nouns

Quirk et al (1985: 316) state that nouns belonging to this category are intermediate between personal and non-personal. Common gender nouns correlate with (who- he/she or which-it). The most important of these nouns are names of animals and non – adult humans (Thomson and Martinet, 1975: 78). For example: deer, dog ,cat, cow, baby, child

(E) collective nouns

Nouns belonging to this class take as their substitutes either it or they. Like common nouns , collective nouns are intermediate between personal and non-personal. When collective nouns are treated as personal, they are considered plural and consequently replaced by they . when it is considered non-personal, the collective

noun correlates with it and considered singular (Aziz, 1989: 120-121) :

For example:

The family are ~ (they) (personal- plural)

The family is ~ (it) (non- personal- singular)

(f/g/h) Animals and gender in English

Quirk et al. (1985: 316) classify animals under two labels ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ animals . Higher animals are either masculine or feminine , for example:

<u>Masc.</u>	<u>Fem.</u>
buck	doe
Lion	lioness
Bull	cow
Ram	ewe
Dog	bitch
Stallion	mare
Gander	goose
Tiger	tigress

Lower animals , on the other hand, do not differ from inanimate nouns since both ‘snake’ and ‘box’ have it as a patterning pronoun. Although these nouns are treated as inanimate , this does not mean that such nouns, have no sex. On the contrary their sex difference can be indicated by certain gender markers (Ibid: 317) for example:-

<u>Masc.</u>	<u>Fem.</u>
male frog	female frog
He- goat	she- goat

2- English pronouns and gender

All English pronouns work equally for either sex except the 3rd person singular pronouns.

(http://wiki-susans.org/index.php/gender_natural-pronouns) .

Those pronouns (i.e 3rd person singular pronouns) he /she / it and their variants in the objective and possessive cases with their reflexive forms (himself , herself, itself) express their gender clearly. Nouns that can be replaced or substituted by he are masculine, those which can be replaced by she are feminine and finally nouns substituted by it are neutral . The following is a table of English personal and reflexive pronouns that are marked for gender.

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/gender-specific-pronoun>):

English Personal Pronouns

Table (1)

No .	Person	Personal			reflexive	Gender
		Subjective	Objective	Possessive		
Sg.	1 st	I	Me	My, mine	Myself	M/F
	2 nd	You	You	Your(s)	Yourself	M/F
	3 rd	He	Him	His	Himself	M
	3 rd	She	Her	Her(s)	Herself	F
	3 rd	It	It	It (s)	Itself	N
Pl.	1 st	We	Us	Our (s)	Ourselves	M/F
	2 nd	You	Your	Your (s)	Yourselves	M/F
	3 rd	They	Them	Their (s)	Themselves	M/F

English gender- sensitive pronouns (i.e 3rd person singular pronouns) can act syntactically as gender indicator. In other words , he, she and it correspond to masculine , feminine and neutral respectively. However, this is not always the case; the correlation of gender and sex is sometimes broken especially in cases of personification ,i.e. when a ship is substituted by she instead of it (Muir, 1972: 126). Depending on the pattern of pronoun substitution a large number of gender classes can be found , e.g:-

The patterning pronouns

Nouns

man	He
woman	She
table	It
bull	he/ it
baby/ child	he/ she/ it
cat /dog	he/ she/ it
Family	They/it
Ship	She/ it
Ant	She/it

On the other hand. 1 st and 2 nd person pronouns for both singular and plural numbers do not make gender distinction . for example:-

3- I need a pen.

4- What do you need ?

5- We need some books.

Here the gender of I, you and we are not known; it could be masculine or feminine .

English also makes gender concord between the subject and the reflexive pronouns. If the subject is masculine , feminine or neuter,

the reflexive pronouns are "himself", "herself" and "itself" respectively (<http://www.edu/medievl/resources/IOE/inflpron.htm>.)

For example :

6- The boy hurts himself

7- The girl hurts herself.

8- The cat hurts itself

Third person singular pronouns should also have gender concord with their antecedents, for example:-

9- John saw his father in the office.

10- Jane met her father in the circus.

11-the dog raised its tail.

(http://www.medibrary.org/medwiki/English_personal_pronouns)

5.3 Ways of Showing Gender in English

English has three ways to distinguish genders:-

1- By using a different word for each gender

<u>Masc.</u>	<u>Fem</u>
bachelor	Maid
boy	Girl
brother	Sister
father	mother
hart	Roe
horse	Mare
husband	Wife
king	Queen
lord	Lady
nephew	Niece
sir	Madam
son	Daughter
uncle	Aunt

bull
man

Cow
Woman

(Thomson and Martinet, 1975:24)

2- **By prefixes:** gender may be shown by a noun, pronouns, or adjective being prefixed to neuter words:-

Masc.
a cock-sparrow
a man-servant
a he- goat
a male – child
a boy friend
a man student

Fem.
a her- sparrow
a maid- servant
a she- goat
a female- child
a girl- friend
a woman- student

3- **By adding a suffix to a masculine words:**

Suffixes in such a case can be divided into two categories:-

a- Native suffixes: (- en) and (-ster)

Masc.
Fox
Spinner

Fem.
Vixen
Spinster

(vixen and spinster) are the only words carrying these suffixes , though both words have lost their original meanings.

(<http://classiclit-about.com/library/bl-etexts/wmbaskervill/bl>)

b- Foreign suffixes: the feminine is formed by adding (-ess) to the masculine word. This ending (-ess) is sometimes added to masculine words without changing the ending of the masculine , for example:

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<u>Masc.</u>	<u>Fem.</u>
baron	Baroness
Count	Countess
Lion	Lioness
Jew	Jewess
Heir	Heiress
Host	Hostess
Priest	Priestess
Giant	Giantess

(Stageberg, 1981:101)

Sometimes the ending of the masculine word may be dropped before adding the feminine suffix (-ess) , for example:-

<u>Masc.</u>	<u>Fem.</u>
abbot	Abbess
Negro	Negress
Murderer	Murderess
Sorcerer	sorcerers

Adding this suffix may discard a vowel which in the masculine word, for example:

<u>Masc.</u>	<u>Fem</u>
Actor	Actress
Master	Mistress
Emperor	Empress
Tiger	Tigress
Enchanter	Enchantress

(http://www.lousywriter.com/nouns_gender.php)

6- Comparison

- 1) The most important difference between Arabic and English is that in Arabic there are only two genders masculine and feminine whereas English has three genders masculine, feminine common and neuter.
- 2) The other difference between Arabic and English is that, in Arabic gender usually follows the form of the word while in English gender follows the meaning .
- 3) Gender in Arabic is relatively stable , i.e nouns are either masculine or feminine . In English a noun can be easily moved from one type of gender to another because of certain emotional factors. The following examples illustrate the point:-

Masc.

The car it (he, she)

A dog it (he, she)

Fem.

السيارة- هي

الكلب- هو

- 4) Arabic adjectives are usually inflected for gender, while English adjectives are not.
- 5) Arabic verbs should have gender agreement with their subjects , whereas in English this is not required.
- 6) Arabic pronouns are said to be gender sensitive , this is very obvious with relative and demonstrative pronouns . In English only 3 rd person singular pronouns with their variants in the objective and passive cases with their reflexive forms are said to be gender sensitive.

7-Conclusion

After reviewing and comparing the category of grammatical gender in Arabic and English , one can conclude that there are some aspects shared between the two languages and some others which are restricted to one language rather than the other. The difference

between the two languages concerning gender distinction is perhaps due to language change through ages.

It is obvious that grammatical gender in Arabic is a very important category while in English gender is not so important . Arabic also differs from English in that it own a two- gender system (masculine and feminine) ,whereas English has a three – gender system(masculine , feminine and neuter). Gender distinction in Arabic is not a category of nouns only; adjectives, verbs and pronouns are also inflected for gender . In English gender is shown syntactically by means of the gender – sensitive pronouns (he, she, it) where he denotes a masculine noun, she a feminine noun and it a sexless object . Adjectives and verbs are not inflected for gender.

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دراسة تحليلية للجنس (التذكير والتأنيث) في اللغتين العربية والانكليزية

م. م هالة فاروق محمد

ملخص البحث

تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليلاً مفصلاً لظاهرة الجنس (التذكير والتأنيث) في اللغتين العربية والانكليزية . يقع البحث في ثلاثة أقسام رئيسة حيث يتناول القسم الأول والثاني ظاهرة الجنس (التذكير والتأنيث) في اللغتين العربية والانكليزية على التوالي في حين يتناول القسم الثالث جوانب التشابه والاختلاف التي قد تظهر بين اللغتين فيما يتعلق بظاهرة الجنس.