THE CATEGORY OF GENDER IN MODERN ENGLISH

A. Y. Drabushevich

Belarusian State University, Minsk;
Alesya46d@gmail.com;
Scientific supervisor – L. N. Zagorskaya

This article discusses the grammatical category of gender in English language grammar, the influence of language on human thinking, the impact of language and some problems of tolerance. This article aims to get acquainted with modern changes in the grammar of a foreign language, as well as get acquainted with various options for using the acquired knowledge.

Key words: they; gender-neutral; tolerance; nonbinary person; gender-conforming; sexism.

For today, the topic of tolerance and gender-conformism is as relevant as ever, and to start this article we should mention, that this topic is incredibly deep, but we will try to keep to the most interesting parts of it. So, to start with we will briefly describe what is a category of gender is. This is a system is used in approximately one quarter of the world's languages. According to one definition: «Genders are classes of nouns reflected in the behavior of associated words. In simpler words, to define gender in our everyday life we use such pronouns as he, she, it, his, hers».

Some nouns which refer to living things can be marked for gender (e.g. actress, heroine). More commonly, words such as actor are used to refer to both male and female. Some nouns which used to end in –man are now neutral and are used to include both genders. There is always possibility to avoid this conflict by using synonyms, for example, instead of "chairman" you can use "chair", instead of "steward/stewardess" – flight attendant, instead of "spokesman" – "spokesperson". We can use the pronoun *it* to refer to very small children and babies when we speak generally about them, or when we do not know their gender. We also use it to refer to animals when they're not pets.

To further understanding of the problem that comes with gender grammatical system in modern English language we should get acquainted with the gender neutrality. *Gender neutrality* is the idea that policies, language, and other social institutions should avoid distinguishing roles according to people's sex or gender, in order to avoid discrimination arising from the impression that there are social roles for which one gender is more suited than another. In 1986, Joan Scott, who is an American historian of France with a huge contribution in gender history, wrote that gender is not just about sex, but is also «a primary way of signifying relationships of power». This may al-

so lead to an interesting conclusion – undoubtedly the language we use affects our way of thinking.

In everyday life anyone can meet some problems related to this grammar system. First – someone maybe offended by speaker using «policeman» or «waiter» referred to a female. You may also be confused while talking to a nonbinary or gender-neutral person. *Nonbinary* – those who don't identify with the binary genders of female and male to describe themselves

To avoid being sexist on practice, we can examine few examples. In writing, we can use (s)he, he/she, him/her or his/her to refer to both sexes at the same time. When speaking formally, we say he or she and his or her. Some nouns, adjectives and verbs which include man are considered sexist nowadays. We can often use neutral alternatives: fireman – fire-fighter; policeman/policewoman – police officer; headmaster/headmistress – headteacher/head; waiter/waitress – server; manpower – workers, staff

Second, instead of using pronouns «he» or «she» can be used pronoun «they». This is becoming more and more accepted in English-speaking countries. *«They»* is an extremely useful word, when we don't know (or don't need to know) the gender of the person we're talking about. It's also an extremely important, powerful, and useful way for people who are nonbinary - don't identify with the binary genders of female and male to describe themselves, because *they* and *them* are not explicitly gendered. You might identify as female and ask that people refer to you as *«she/her/hers»*. Or, maybe you identify as male and your friends use *«he/him/his»* when they talk about you. For people who are nonbinary, they may ask you to use *«they/them/their»* as pronouns for them. We can use they, them, their and theirs to refer to both sexes at the same time, even when a singular noun has been used. In present-day English this usage is becoming more and more accepted. Consider an example of using this word in practice:

«Every employee must show their identity card on entering the office», preferred to Every employee must show his identity card.

For using a nominative pronoun we should use «they», objective pronoun – «them», possessive pronoun – *«their/theirs»*. For a reflexive pronoun – «themself/themselves/theirself/theirselves».

In grammar, a *reflexive pronoun* is used when a subject and object are referring to the same thing or person. It is also used when the object of verb is referring back to the subject.

Another question is whether this system works not only in theory, but in practice, or whether any of native speakers use it. We did a research, where we asked young people aged 18–35 their opinion. We have questioned 50 people in general, 28 from United States of America, 12 from Unlighted Kingdom, 7 from Canada and 3 representing other countries. All of them are

native English speakers. The following statements are of the most interest and most accurately reflect the picture obtained during the survey. Authors grammar saved.

Alexanra Fleck, Canada: "I don't use it ("they"), but I respect other people's pronouns when they express them to me - one of my best friends is gender neutral and uses they/them pronouns. I think that people that refuse to use singular they and say it's 'wrong and weird' are being ignorant and not accepting of other people…' Paulo, Canada: "People will correct you if you make the mistake…starting with they or their or them is perfectly fine in my book" Narmin, Baku: "I think they as a pronoun is fine, it's proper English and it shares the same grammatical placement as she or he so I don't care either way. It's just gender neutral, doesn't really matter to me. If someone prefers it, then it's okay. If not then okay" Paulo Vizue, USA: "I use they with people who prefer it, sometimes even in situations naturally just due to habit. Most of my liberal friends, even some conservative friends of mine use it. It's often good to use it to begin with as you don't know how someone prefers to be called unless they specify it themselves" Tristan De Lange, USA: "Well using "they" as a gender-neutral pronoun is pretty common for many people I've known. Like I have a friend named Jayda that goes by they them"

Selmin Söyü, Unighted Kingdom: "I don't use it or anyone in my social groups don't use it so for me it is still not something that I use in daily life and I don't think that it will be the case in close future. Only some group of people who strongly believe in gender neutrality would use it now and close future I think".

We can see that most of an example given shows positive attitude towards gender-neutralism. 44 of interviewed gave a positive review on using gender-neutral grammar, 5 gave a neutral review and one spoke against. 34 of interviewed claimed about having at least one person they know using pronoun «they» towards themselves.

As a result, we can see, how important it may be to stay tolerant in our modern world, and how important it may be to keep your knowledge up to date.

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