



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE GRAMMATICAL GENDER OF NOUNS IN STANDARD SPANISH AND RUSSIAN

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Abstract: *This article presents the comparative analysis of the morphological features of the grammatical category of gender of nouns in Spanish and Russian literary languages. According to the traditional grammar, standard Spanish nouns are distinguished as masculine, feminine, and common gender, while in Russian language nouns are classified as masculine, feminine, neuter, and common gender. We identify specific linguistic features by comparing the gender of Spanish and Russian nouns.*

Key words: *masculine, feminine, neuter, common gender, flexion, coordinated word, article.*

The concept of a grammatical gender should be defined in the first place. This is an unalterable syntagmatically derived morphological category, expressed in the ability of the noun to be selective of the generic forms of the coordinated word in the singular forms. There are three genders in Russian: masculine (м.р.), feminine (ж.р.), and neuter (ср.р.) as well as a special group of common gender nouns [4: 463]. In contrast to Russian, in Spanish language nouns can only be masculine (m) or feminine (f), while the neuter gender is fixed to adjectives, determinatives and also pronouns [1: 31]. Such a distribution of generic meaning by parts of speech reveals a fundamental structural difference between two systems: Russian triple system of gender is opposed by Spanish binary system.

The gender of Russian nouns is revealed syntagmatically through coordination with singular adjectives or verbs, so flexions -ой/-ий/-ый indicate on the masculine: весёлый молодой парень (м.р.), but flexions -ая /-яя indicate on the feminine: синяя лента, новая ученица пришла (ж.р.). Nouns that end in а/ -я in singular Nominative usually refer to a female gender: весна, змея (ж.р.), although there are exceptions: дядя, юноша (м.р.) [5:440]. Masculine nouns also include nouns with zero-ending in consonants: дом, корень; feminine nouns involve nouns with zero-ending in soft consonants: рожь, дочь [4: 464]. Masculine nouns are formed by adding the suffixes, such as -тель/ -чик/-ик: строитель, переводчик, домик (м.р.); feminine nouns are formed by adding the suffixes, such as -ниц(а), -к(а), -ость: художница, студентка, молодость (ж.р.). It should be noted that the assignment of inanimate nouns to the male or female gender is semantically conditional.



On the other hand, the traditional correlation between final word markers -o (for masculine in conjunction with the indefinite article un or the definite article el, e.g. el libro bueno, un ramo hermoso) /-a (for feminine in conjunction with the indefinite article una or the definite article la, e.g. una casa bonita, una ventana pequeña, la puerta abierta) and grammatical gender lies at the heart of Spanish binary system [6]. However, from both rules there are exceptions: la mano, la radio, la foto (f), and nouns of Greek origin on -ma, -ta: el problema, el sistema, el tema (m) [3: 31]. Nouns endings in -dad, -ión are usually in feminine form: la ciudad, la estación, la felicidad, la unión (exceptions are el avión, el camión).

In most cases a fixed gender is assigned, but some nouns depending on their denotation such as amigo 'male friend', and amiga 'female friend': el medico (m) – la médica (f), el pintor (m) – la pintura (f), el profesor (m) – la profesora (f). Surprisingly, in Spanish, the gender of nouns retains its expression in plural form: amigos, libros (m), whereas amigas, casas (f). Unlike in Russian, gender differences in plural is not denoted by the system of flections of the nouns themselves, nor by the forms of words corresponding to them: новые столы, новые картины. Consequently, the gender differences between plural nouns are shown differently in two languages [2: 23].

There is no neuter gender in Spanish. In contrast, the neuter gender in Russian is formally determined by the ending -o/-e in singular Nominative, however, there are exceptions to this rule with the same ending belong to the masculine gender (e.g. домишко, домище) [5: 440]. Semantically, the neuter gender is associated primarily with the names of inanimate objects; among animate objects, it applies only to a limited range of words, e.g. существо, животное, as well as the names of zoological species and subspecies. The assignment of inanimate nouns to the neuter gender is semantically conditionally: there is no clear basis for the words окно, зеркало to belong to the neuter gender, while стул, стол – masculine, and ночь, лампа – feminine. The distribution of inanimate nouns by gender is determined by the system of case flections and syntactic factors [4: 464-465].

Importantly, nouns of common gender play a special role in the generic systems of both languages. In Russian, the category of common gender includes nouns with the flection -a in singular Nominative designating persons by a characteristic action or trait, for instance: плакса, зубрила, злюка (общ.р.) – typically colloquial or vernacular in register. In Spanish, the common gender (sustantivos de género común) unites nouns with a single invariable form for referents of both genders, but encompasses a considerably broader and stylistically neutral stratum of vocabulary. It includes nouns with a wide range of endings: -ista (el/la dentista, el/la periodista, el/la pianista, el/la turista), -ante (el/la estudiante, el/la cantante, el/la representante), -iente (el/la cliente), -a (el/la atleta, el/la guía, el/la policía), -o (el/la soldado, el/la piloto), a final consonant (el/la líder, el/la aprendiz), -e (el/la conserje), as well as the names of nationalities: el/la canadiense, el/la marroquí, el/la iraní [2: 23].

In addition to this, the common gender operates on a similar principle in both languages: the form of the noun remains unchanged, while grammatical gender is revealed through the coordination of dependent words with the biological gender of the referent. In Russian, this is expressed through the coordination of adjectives and other coordinated



forms: весёл -ый (м) /-ая (ж) простофиля. Spanish operates by the same mechanism of adjectival coordination, but with the additional gender marker provided by the article, which has no equivalent in Russian: un estudiante italiano/ una estudiante italiana, un artista famoso — una artista famosa. Although this pattern is not a strict grammatical rule in Russian. Therefore, the common gender of nouns may coordinate with biological gender that does not correspond to the referent, and such usage is considered normative: «Ты, конечно, страшная задира, но умён и проникателен». The stylistic status of this category also differs between the two languages: in Russian it is close to colloquial and vernacular speech, whereas in Spanish it represents a grammatically productive norm.

In conclusion, it can be said that in both languages, masculine and feminine genders are the main and most productive categories, but the ways of their formal expression are different. In Russian, gender is determined by flections of nouns. In Spanish, nouns are generally not declined and do not have a case system, so gender is marked primarily by the final syllable of the word in its singular, unchangeable form and the article. At the same time, what both languages have in common is that the gender of a noun is expressed through coordination with other parts of speech, which take on corresponding gender forms depending on the noun to which they are related.

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