A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CATEGORY OF GENDER IN ENGLISH, ROUMANIAN, FRENCH, RUSSIAN AND TURKISH

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În articol este abordată categoria genului la nivelul formei substantivelor în limbile engleză, română, franceză, rusă și turcă. După părerea academicianului L.V. Șcerba, analiza comparat-contrastivă permite a depista trăsături ale limbilor comparate, care rămân neobservate la analiza descriptivă. În acest context, analizând categoria genului la substantive, s-a observat că există asemănări și deosebiri în ce privește manifestarea acestuia în limbile menționate. Sunt examinate existența categoriei respective ca atare, sistemele ei de distribuire, criteriile de identificare a genului substantivelor într-o limbă sau alta.

According to L.V. Scherba, a comparative analysis of a language enables to see its features that remain unobserved in case of its descriptive examination [1]. Concerning the category of gender, it is the manifestation form that was usually touched upon in the existent grammars, its existence being taken for granted and usually studied at the level of its forms of manifestation. It is analyzed either within a language or in comparison between two or more languages, those of the Indo-European family, as a rule. In this article, the representatives of the main Indo-European language groups – English (Germanic languages), Roumanian, French (Romance languages) and Russian (Slavonic languages) are compared on the level of the respective category not only between each other, but also with a language that does not belong to the Indo-European language family (Turkish). Through this, an attempt to answer the following questions is made: **1)** Is it generally possible for the given category not to exist as such in this or that language? **2)** In case of its non-existence, what are the ways of rendering the contents expressed by this category in the languages where it does exist? **3)** What are the common, similar and different features in the ways of expressing the respective contents, gender distribution and gender determination criteria in the languages mentioned above? These questions are answered by means of comparison in succession between the gender system in English and those of the other languages mentioned above. The dictionary determination of the notion of gender is included.

„Gender (lat. *genus*): a grammatical flexionary category based on the natural distinction between male and female beings among the animated concepts, between the animated and the inanimated notions. Initially imposed by the objective reality, that is, by the natural gender of the animated (that makes distinction bewteen the two sexes) upon the nouns that figured out this category, it gradually lost relation with the notions of sex, animated and inanimated, and analogically and traditionally extended upon the inanimated notions, as well as upon the words that were in concordance with the nouns (articles, adjectives, some numerals and participles of verbs)... *Grammatical gender* is linguistically expressed by means of noun denoted by a flexion or an article"[2]. Regarding gender generally as a grammatical category does not logically depend on any semantic association that could be established between the gender of noun and other features of persons or objects denoted by this noun. The correspondence degree between the classification of nouns according to grammatical genders and that of the denoted persons and objects, in accordance with the emphasized natural features, varies from a language to another.

The category of gender is expressed in English by the obligatory correlation of nouns with the personal pronouns of the third person. These serve as specific gender classifiers of nouns, being potentially reflected on each entry of the noun in speech. The category of gender is strictly oppositional. It is formed by two oppositions related to each other on a hierarchical basis: one opposition functions in the whole set of nouns, dividing them into person (human) nouns and non-person (non-human) nouns; the other opposition functions in the subset of person nouns only, dividing them into masculine nouns and feminine ones. As a result of double oppositional correlation, a specific system of three genders arises, which is somewhat misleadingly represented by the traditional terminology: the *neuter* (i.e. non-person) gender, the *masculine* (i.e. masculine person) gender, the *feminine* (i.e. feminine person) gender [3]. In spoken language there is a tendency to as-

sociate the names of animals with the feminine or masculine gender: when the sex of the animal is not indicated by the noun, nouns denoting the *larger* or *stronger* animals are generally associated with the masculine gender, nouns denoting the *smaller* or *weaker* with the feminine, e.g.: Masculine: *elephant, horse, dog, eagle*; Feminine: *cat, hare, parrot*; but: *canary, fly* – he [4]. In the plural, all the gender distinctions are neutralized in the immediate explicit expression, though they are rendered indirectly through the correlation with the singular [3].

In Roumanian, all the nouns are divided into three genders: masculine, feminine and neuter. The formal means that denote gender are: the ending (in the Nominative, singular, unarticled), the noun article and the gender form of the noun determinants of adjectives. The nouns of all three genders have in the Nominative singular unarticulated form the following endigns: a) Masculine: consonant: *corb*; -u: *codru*; -e: *frate*; -i: *tei*; -ă: *tată*; b) Feminine: -ă: *frunză*; -e: *floare*, -a: *stea*; -i: *zi*; c) Neuter: consonant: *punct*, -u: *tablou*, -i: *obicei*; -e: *nume*. According to the article the nouns of all three genders are characterized in the following way: 1. Masculine nouns have the indefinite article *un* in singular and *nişte* in plural; the definite article *-l (-le,-a)* in singular and *-i* in plural; 1. Feminine nouns have the indefinite article *o* in singular and *nişte* in plural; the definite article *-a* in singular and *-le* in plural; 3. Neutral nouns have the masculine articles in singular and feminine articles in plural. The gender of the noun can be identified by the determinant form of the adjectival type. When accompanying noun, adjective will additionally mark the gender of the noun: *ochi albastru – ochi albaştri* (masc.); *floare albastră – flori albastre* (fem.); *creion albastru – creioane albastre* (neut). The last criterium to judge against is the corresponding personal pronoun: masculine nouns can be replaced by the pronouns *el – ei*; feminine nouns by *ea – ele*; and neutral nouns by *el – ele* [5].

As we can see, the common feature of gender systems in English and Roumanian is that in both languages masculine, feminine and neuter are present. However, gender determination criteria differ. Thus, in English it is based on the person vs. non-person nouns opposition (the former member of it being divided into masculine and feminine nouns), while in Roumanian we have a large range of signs, such as ending, article, adjectival determinants, that cannot play the gender determination role in English. Moreover, the Roumanian counterparts of some English neutral nouns are masculine and feminine (e.g.: *codru, tei* (masc.)*; frunză, floare* (fem.) etc.). Concerning neuter we can observe that in English, it has its special third person singular pronoun while in Roumanian, it has masculine forms in singular and feminine in plural (e.g.: *it* vs. *el-ele*). Another specific characteristics is that in Roumanian, the gender distinctions are not neutralized in plural (e.g.: *he, she, it* vs. *they* (Eng.)*; el, ea* vs. *ei, ele* (Roum.)).

In French, the expression of the grammatical gender mostly coincides with that of the biological one. It can be expressed by the following means: 1) Agglutination: *petit – petite*; 2) Flexion (alternance): *acteur-actrice*; 3) Analytical means with a word-instrument: *un élève – une élève*; 4) Suppletion: *taureau – vache.* It is true that there are no special gender flexions. A particular role is attributed to the article. The adjective also plays the gender determination role [6].

So French, unlike English, does not have the oppositional system of gender determination. Moreover, it does not have neuter as such, so the French counterparts of the English neutral nouns are either masculine or feminine. The gender distinctions are not neutralized in plural (e.g.: *he, she, it* vs. *they* (Eng.)*; il, elle* vs. *ils, elles* (Fr.)). The gender determination function of the article in French is valable only in singular, while in plural it is neutralized. However, the adjectival determinants can play the gender determination role both in singular and in plural, as well as ending in some cases, as it is shown above.

In Russian, the belonging of nouns to this or that gender is determined almost entirely morphologically: the first declension words refer to: a) Masculine, if they have no ending (zero-ending) in the Nominative singular; b) Neuter, if they have the endings *-o* or *-e* in nominative singular. The second and the third declension nouns refer to feminine. The no-declension nouns borrowed from other languages except personal names refer to neuter (*золочёное бра, шёлковое кашне*). The noun gender can also be determined syntactically, that is, by this or that form of the adjective that can be combined with the given noun: *большой дом, большая стена, большое окно* [7].

The first common feature is that both in Russian and in English, there is the same gender system: masculine, feminine and neuter are present. However, in English it is based on the oppositional system while in Russian it is the ending that plays the gender determination role. Thus, the Russian counterparts of some English neutral nouns are masculine and feminine (e.g.: *молоток, стол* (masc.)*; кровать, книга* (fem.) etc.) Another distinctive feature of gender in Russian is the adjectival form while in English we cannot determine the gen-

der by it. Concerning article it is not the gender determination feature in English and moreover this category does not exist as such in Russian. In the plural, all the gender distinctions are neutralized in both languages (*he, she, it* vs. *they* (Eng.) – *он, она, оно* vs. *они* (Russ.))

In Turkish, the grammatical gender **does not exist**. However, for making precise the natural gender the following means are used: a) Special words that distinguish masculine and feminine concepts and do not need any other criteria. For example: 1) Masculine: *baba – father; oğul – son; erkek – man, male; buğa – ox; koç – ram;* 2) Feminine: *ana – mother; kız – girl; kadın – woman; inek – cow; koyûn – sheep.* b) The term "erkek"("man, male") or "er" for male beings, "kadın"("kız") for female human beings and "dişi" for animals. For example: *erkek kardeş* (brother) – *kızkardeş* (sister); *(erkek) yazan* (writer, author) – *kadın yazan* (writer, authoress); *(erkek) kurd* (wolf) – *dişi kurd* (she-wolf); *er kedi* (tom-cat) – *dişi kedi* (cat) [8].

The common feature for English and Turkish is the oppositional system of gender division. All nouns that do not denote living beings refer to neuter. Those nouns that denote human beings are strictly divided into masculine and feminine, according to their natural gender. Concerning nouns denoting animals they are considered neuter in regular English and have a specific size and strength association tendency in spoken language, as it was mentioned above, while in Turkish special words that exactly indicate the natural gender belonging are used as it was shown above. Due to this fact the gender distinctions are not neutralized in Turkish in the plural while in English they are. The necessity of such words is also conditioned by the fact that in Turkish there is only one personal pronoun in the III-rd person singular while in English each gender has its own personal pronoun (e.g.: *o* (Turk.) vs. *he, she, it* (Eng.)).

On the basis of the data analysed above we can deduce the following gender determination criteria: a) Oppositional gender distribution system (person (human) nouns and inanimated nouns, the former member of the opposition being divided into masculine and feminine nouns), as in English and Turkish; b) Personal pronouns (the III-rd person) as in English, Roumanian, French and Russian; c) Article, as in Roumanian and French; d) Ending, as in Roumanian, Russian and in some cases in French; e) Adjectival determinants, as in Roumanian, French and Russian; f) Words having masculine or feminine meaning by themselves (occur in all the languages); g) Additional words meaning "male" and "female", as in Turkish. Taking into account the enumerated criteria, we can classify these languages in the following way: 1. According to the existance of the category of gender as such: *Turkish* (-) vs. *English, Roumanian, French, Russian* (+). 2. According to the correspondence between the natural and grammatical genders: *English, Turkish* (+) vs. *Roumanian, French, Russian* (-). 3. According to the neutralizing the gender distinctions in the plural: *English, Russian* (+) vs. *Roumanian, French, Turkish* (-). 4. According to the existance of the neuter as such: *French* (-) vs. *English, Roumanian, Russian, Turkish* (+). 5. According to the noun-adjective concord: *Roumanian, French, Russian* (+) vs. *English, Turkish* (-). The given types of classification can help us divide the respective languages into the following groups: **I.** According to the 2-nd and the 5-th types: 1. *English, Turkish*; 2. *Roumanian, French, Russian*; **II.** According to the 1-rst and the 4-th types: 1. *French, Turkish*; 2. *English, Roumanian, Russian*. It refers to the cases when one language is opposed to the others by this or that type of classification; **III.** According to the 3-rd type: 1. *English, Russian*; 2. *Roumanian, French, Turkish*. The plural gender neutralization is the major sign of determination here. As we can observe, English is in the same group with Roumanian according to the 1-rst and the 4-th types of classification, with French – according to the 1-rst type (although it was not mentioned separately), with Russian – according to the 1-rst, 3-rd and 4-th types, with Turkish – according to the 2-nd, 4-th and 5-th types. This situation is conditioned by the fact that in English, Russian and Turkish the gender belonging is figured out according to the natural gender situation (the highest degree in this respect occurs in Turkish, the lowest – in Russian where this fact is very relative), in Roumanian the neuter does not have its own form and manifests as masculine in singular and feminine in plural, in French it does not exist as such. So we can deduce the conclusion that the nearer the gender system of this or that language is to that of English the more common features occur.

And now, on the basis of what was expounded above, let us examine the following cases of coincidence and non-coincidence in gender: **I. The cases of coincidence:** *1. English – Roumanian:* a) Male human beings: *man* (masc.) – *bărbat* (masc.); *boy* (masc.) – *băiat* (masc.); *son* (masc.) – *fiu* (masc.); b) Female human beings: *woman* (fem.) – *femeie* (fem.); *girl* (fem.) – *fată* (fem.); *daughter* (fem.) – *fiică* (fem.); c) Neutral nouns: thing (neut.) – *lucru* (neut.); *pencil* (neut.) – *creion* (neut.); *habit* (neut.) – *obicei* (neut.); *2. English – French:* a) Male human beings: *man* (masc.) – *homme* (masc.); *boy* (masc.) – *garçon* (masc.); *son* (masc.) – *fils* (masc.);

b) Female human beings: *woman* (fem.) – *femme* (fem.); *girl* (fem.) – *fille* (fem.); *daughter* (fem.) – *fille* (fem.); *3. English – Russian:* a) Male human beings: *man* (masc.) – *мужчина* (masc.); *boy* (masc.) – *мальчик* (masc.); *son* (masc.) – *сын* (masc.); b) Female human beings: *woman* (fem.) – *женщина* (fem.); *girl* (fem.) – *девоч-ка* (fem.); *daughter* (fem.) – *дочь* (fem.); c) Some neutral nouns: *field* (neut.) – *поле* (neut.); *name* (neut.) – *имя* (neut.); *milk* (neut.) – *молоко* (neut.); *4. English – Turkish:* a) Male human beings: *man* (masc.) – *adam* (masc.); *brother* (masc.) – *kardeş* (masc.); *son* (masc.) – *oğul* (masc.); b) Female human beings: *girl* (fem.) – *kız* (fem.); *sister* (fem.) – *kızkardeş* (fem.); c) Neutral nouns: *key* (neut.) – *anahtar* (neut.); *school* (neut.) – *okul* (neut.); **II. The cases of non-coincidence:** *1. English – Roumanian:* a) Masculine nouns that do not de-note human beings: *year* (neut.) – *an* (masc.); *eye* (neut.) – *ochi* (masc.); b) Feminine nouns that do not deno-te human beings: *leaf* (neut.) – *frunză* (fem.); *table* (neut.) - *masă* (fem.); c) Nouns denoting animals: *wolf* (neut.) – *lup* (masc.); *cat* (neut.) – *pisică* (fem.); *2. English – French:* a) Masculine nouns that do not denote human beings: *eye* (neut.) – *oeil* (masc.); *nose* (neut.) - *nez* (masc.); b) Feminine nouns that do not denote human beings: *house* (neut.) – *maison* (fem.); *door* (neut.) – *porte* (fem.); c) Nouns denoting animals: *wolf* (neut.) – *loup* (masc.); *cat* (neut.) – *chatte* (fem.); *3. English – Russian:* a) Masculine nouns that do not deno-te human beings: *table* (neut.) – *стол* (masc.); *pencil* (neut.) – *карандаш* (masc.); b) Feminine nouns that do not denote human beings: *pan* (neut.) – *ручка* (fem.); *car* (neut.) – *машина* (fem.); c) Nouns denoting ani-mals: *wolf* (neut.) – *волк* (masc.); *cat* (neut.) – *кошка* (fem.); *4. English – Turkish:* a) Nouns denoting male animals: *cat* (neut.) – *er kedi* (masc.); *wolf* (neut.) – *erkek kurd* (masc.); b) Nouns denoting female animals: *cat* (neut.) – *dişi kedi* (fem.); *wolf* (neut.) – *dişi kurd* (fem.). On the basis of the facts examined and analysed above, we can observe the following regularity: the common feature for all the languages mentioned above is the fact that in the cases of coincidence between the natural and grammatical genders the latter coincides in all the languages. It refers first of all to nouns denoting human beings. Moreover in the languages where the-re exist neuter nouns that do not denote living beings they belong to it. However, it is relative and therefore common not for all these languages as far as not all such nouns are neutral in Roumanian and Russian. The major difference refers to nouns denoting animals: they are neutral in English (although there is a specific gender distribution tendency as it was mentioned before), strictly divided into masculine and feminine in Turkish, belong to different genders (to masculine or feminine, as a rule) in the other languages.

So we can see that the category of gender constitutes a very specific system in any of the mentioned lan-guages. The significance of this study consists in the fact that through the comparison between the represent-tatives of both Occidental and Oriental languages at the level of the given category, not only the question of the ways of its manifestation but also that of its existence as such is raised. It is important for studying fo-reign languages because before asking how this or that category from the native language is expressed in the studied language it would be better to ask whether it generally does have its counterpart there or the concept expressed by the respective category is reflected in a different way.

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