

FEATURES OF THE USAGE OF GENDER TERMS IN THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

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Abstract: This article analyzes gender-specific vocabulary (gender lexis) in the Russian language as a complex, dynamic, and multi-layered phenomenon reflecting cultural, social, and historical changes. The work examines the key features of this vocabulary: the presence of explicit gender markers (suffixes such as *-ka*, *-itsa*) and the growing trend towards using gender-neutral terms (*преподаватель* - 'lecturer/teacher', *менеджер* - 'manager') in the context of the pursuit of inclusivity. Particular attention is paid to the influence of gender stereotypes (*мужская работа* - 'men's work', *слабый* - 'weak') on lexis and phraseology, as well as the dynamism of the language as a response to social changes (the rise of the feminist movement), which leads to the emergence of new terms (*гендерная идентичность* - 'gender identity', *неконформный* - 'non-conforming'). The article notes the variability in the use of gender-specific vocabulary depending on the region, social group, and sphere of communication. It is emphasized that gender-specific vocabulary is not only a reflection but also an active instrument for shaping public opinion, identity, and educational norms, requiring conscious use to create a more equitable and respectful environment.

Keywords: gender lexis, Russian language, gender markers, gender-neutral terms, gender stereotypes, feminism, gender identity, social changes, language dynamics.

Gender-specific vocabulary (gender lexis) in the Russian language is a complex and multi-layered phenomenon that reflects not only linguistic but also cultural, social, and historical aspects of societal life. In recent decades, there has been significant attention paid to gender issues, which, in turn, influences the language and its use. In Russian, gender-specific vocabulary includes words and expressions that denote people based on their biological sex, as well as terms that reflect gender roles, stereotypes, and expectations.

One of the defining features of gender-specific vocabulary in the Russian language is the presence of gender markers, which can be both explicit and implicit. Explicit markers, such as the suffixes *-ka*, *-itsa*, *-inya*, *-evna*, *-ovna*, allow for easy determination of a person's sex. For instance, the words *учитель* ('male teacher') and *учительница* ('female teacher') have clear gender marking, making their usage unambiguous and definite. However, in recent years, a tendency towards using neutral forms, such as *преподаватель* ('lecturer/teacher'), which can refer to both a man and a woman, has been observed. This is linked to changing social norms and a pursuit of more correct language that does not emphasize biological sex.

An equally important aspect of gender-specific vocabulary is the use of gender-neutral terms, which help avoid stereotypes and biases. For example, in the professional sphere, there is a rising popularity of words such as *менеджер* ('manager') or *специалист* ('specialist'), which do not indicate sex but maintain the professional context. This contributes to the creation of a more equitable environment where gender does not become the determining factor in professional identity. It is worth noting, however, that not all native speakers perceive such changes positively. There are opinions that the use of gender-neutral terms might lead to a loss of traditional meanings and cultural identity.

Stereotypes related to gender are also reflected in the lexis. Many words and expressions carry gender connotations, which can be both positive and negative. For example, the words *сильный* ('strong') and *слабый* ('weak') are often associated with men and women, respectively, which can create certain expectations and limitations on behavior. Such stereotypes can manifest not only in individual words but also in phraseological units, such as *мужская работа* ('men's work') or *женская забота* ('women's care'). These expressions highlight the traditional roles that society imposes on men and women and can limit individual opportunities.

A crucial aspect of gender-specific vocabulary is also its dynamism and variability. Language is constantly evolving, and gender-specific vocabulary is no exception. New terms and expressions emerge in response to changes in society, such as the growth of the feminist movement and other social shifts. For example, terms such as *феминизм* ('feminism') and *гендерная идентичность* ('gender identity') are becoming increasingly widespread and discussed in society. This indicates that language not only reflects reality but also actively participates in shaping public opinion and the perception of gender issues.

It should also be noted that gender-specific vocabulary in the Russian language can vary depending on the region, social group, and level of education. In some regions, the use of traditional gender markers may be more prevalent, while in large cities, such as Moscow or St. Petersburg, a tendency towards more inclusive and neutral language is observed. This may be linked to a higher level of education and greater openness to new ideas and concepts.

Furthermore, gender-specific vocabulary in the Russian language has specific features depending on the sphere of usage. In formal and business lexis, there is a drive towards using more neutral forms, while traditional gender markers may prevail in colloquial speech. This underscores the difference between formal and informal communication and demonstrates how social norms and expectations can influence word choice.

Gender-specific vocabulary also touches upon issues of identity and self-determination. In recent years, there has been a rising interest in issues of gender identity and self-expression, leading to the emergence of new terms and concepts. For example, the words *неконформный* ('non-conforming') or *гендерквир* ('genderqueer') are becoming increasingly common, reflecting the human desire to seek and affirm identity outside of traditional gender frameworks. This also testifies that language is becoming an instrument for expressing non-standard individuality and breaking traditional norms.

At the level of education and science, gender-specific vocabulary also plays an important role. Issues of gender equality are increasingly discussed in educational institutions, which requires both teachers and students to be aware of and use gender-sensitive language. This may include both the use of neutral forms and an awareness of the gender stereotypes that can manifest in educational materials. Thus, gender-specific vocabulary becomes a vital element of the educational process and the formation of critical thinking among future specialists.

In conclusion, gender-specific vocabulary in the Russian language is a multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon that reflects changes in society and cultural norms. It includes both traditional gender markers and new terms that help to create a more inclusive and equitable society. Gender-specific vocabulary not only reflects reality but also actively participates in shaping public opinion, identity, and social norms. It is important to continue researching and discussing these issues to contribute to a deeper understanding and respect for the diversity of gender identities and roles in the contemporary world.

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