

**English and Arabic Gender:
A Contrastive Study**
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List of Abbreviation

Abbreviation	The Full Form
1- F.	Feminine
2- M.	Masculine

Arabic Phonemic Symbols

a- Consonants

1	/ p /	ء	13	/ d /	ض
2	/ b /	ب	14	/ t /	ط
3	/ t /	ت	15	/ ʒ /	ع
4	/ θ /	ث	16	/ f /	ف
5	/ dʒ /	ج	17	/ ʒ /	ق
6	/ h /	ح	18	/ k /	ك
7	/ x /	خ	19	/ l /	ل
8	/ d /	د	20	/ m /	م
9	/ ʒ /	ذ	21	/ n /	ن
10	/ r /	ر	22	/ h /	هـ
11	/ s /	س	23	/ w /	و
12	/ s /	ش	24	/ z /	ي

b- Vowels

1	/ a /	الفتحة
2	/ i /	الكسرة
3	/ u /	الضمة
4	/ aa /	الألف

Introduction

The main purpose behind this paper is to provide a comparative study between English and Arabic gender.

Gender in language is like sex in the outside world. In many languages of the world sex is considered as the most important basis for gender distinction. The whole creatures can be divided into animate and inanimate. Sex stands for either male or female creatures while inanimate things have no sex. Gender is used to stand for one or more of these divisions.

Languages differ in the number of genders they recognize. English has three genders: masculine, feminine and neuter, which stand for male, female and either male or female.

Arabic on the other hand, has two gender categories masculine and feminine which can be distinguished through the use of some morphological processes.

Section One

Arabic Gender

In Arabic, gender is used as a grammatical category which is considered of a great value for the linguistic demands as well as for establishing and controlling the grammatical agreement between the noun and the other remaining elements of the sentence (Aziz, 1989: 227).

Notional category (sex) corresponds to the grammatical category (gender), thus, Arabic follows natural gender in classifying the nouns M and F. Every noun that belongs to the class of M. nouns is used to refer to male animate and every noun that belongs to the class of F. nouns belong to female creature and vice versa (Ibrahim, 1971).

In Arabic, there is no proform or marker to stand for the neuter category. (Al-Mashta, 1977:11)

Morphologically speaking, in Arabic, M. nouns are considered the basis from which F. nouns can be derived through the addition of certain markers. These markers can be added to the M. nouns as well as M. adjectives, besides they are used to distinguish the F. nouns from the M. ones. These markers are of three types:

1- ة → at

e.g. طالب (/ taalib /) male student (nouns)
 طالبة (/ Taalibat/) female student

جديد (/ d3adid/) new is considered as a M. Adjective

and جديدة (/ d3adidat/) new is the F. form of the adjective.

2- ت (ناء التانيث) → T

The above marker is used to derive the F. nouns from the M. when the later consist of one syllable, e.g.:

أخ (/pax/) brother, the F. of which is أخت (/puxut/) sister. (Ibrahim, 1971:48)

3- ي → (الألف المقصورة) a which is used to derive the F. adjectives from the M. ones especially those adjectives that have measure of افعل (/pfaal/) and فعلان (/faqlaan/).

When they are used for M. referents while their F. counterparts that accept this marker have the measure of فعلی (/faqla/)

e.g. the M. adjective أكبر (/pkbar/) bigger, the F. Of which is كبرى (/kubra/) and the M. adjective عطشان (/qtsaan/) thirsty whose F. form is عطشى (/qtfaa/).

Arabic language isn't restricted to the three markers that are mentioned above. There are many irregularities in considering and forming the F. nouns. For example, certain nouns which do not have F. marker but are treated as F. nouns simply because the ancient Arabs used these nouns as F. e.g. أرض (/pard/) earth - Other nouns are treated once as M. And other time as F. e.g. لسان (/lisaan/) tongue. (Ibid : 48).

Sometimes, an object may have two names, one of them has the F. Marker and the other does not have this marker, therefore; one of them is considered as a F. Noun and the other is the M. e.g. شباك (/subbaak/) window is a M. Noun because it does not have the F. Marker while the word نافذة (/naafizat/) window is a F. noun simply because it has the F. marker (at) (Ibid:54 and Ibrahim Al-Ataki, 1969 :33).

Not all nouns that have the F. marker ة-(t) are treated as F. Nouns but there are certain nouns that have the F. Marker but are treated as M. nouns simply because they refer to male creature (according to the rule which states that any noun that refers to Female creature should be considered as F. noun and any noun that refers to male creature should be considered as M. noun) e.g. خليفة (/xalifat/) caliph.

In addition, all names of cities and towns are F. and the majority of the names of countries and states are treated as F. nouns e.g. جمهورية العراق (/dZumhuriyat pal ʕaraq/) republic of Iraq دولة (/dawlat/) state and مملكة (/memlakat/) Kingdom - yet, very few names of countries can be treated as M. as in فلسطين (/Falastin/) Palestine.

The names of all mountains and rivers are considered as M. nouns according to the title of the nouns e.g. نهر (/nahar/) river and جبل (/dZabal/) mountain. as in نهر بردی (/nahar barada/) Baradah river. Despite the name of the river has the F. ending ي(a), it is considered as M. Due to its title river نهر (/ nahar /).

Collective nouns that are unmarked for F. Nouns are considered as M. nouns e.g. عائلة (/ʔaaʔilat /) family.

Thus, Arabic Language doesn't restrict to a specific rule in deriving the F. nouns from the M. nouns and it has many irregularities as it is mentioned earlier.

1.1. The Effect of Gender on The Syntactic Level

In Arabic, there should be a kind of concord between the nouns that are marked for gender whether M. or F. and the other elements of the sentence whether demonstratives, verbs, adjectives... etc. (Ibrahim, 1971 : 40).

The verb should be marked for تاء التانيث (/ʔaaʔ ʔalʔaaʔniθ /) The Feminine marker t to fulfill the concord between the F. Subject and the verb e.g. جاء علي (/dʒaʔa ʔli /) Ali came and - جاءت سهي (/dʒaʔat suha /) Suha came.

- اشتهر الممثلون (/ʔistaharat ʔlmuθlwn /) The actors become well - known.

- اشتهرت الممثلات (/ʔistaharat ʔlmuθlaat /) The actress become well - known .

From the above examples, one can conclude that there should be a kind of agreement between the verb and the subject (in gender) if the verb comes before the noun and if it comes after the noun, the verb should agree in gender and number with the noun e.g. :

- الممثلون اشتهروا (/ʔlmuθlwn ʔstaharw /) The actors became well - known .

- الممثلات اشتهرن (/ʔlmuθlaat ʔstaharna /) The actress became well - known

In addition, there should be a sort of concord between the demonstrative and nouns. The demonstratives that are used with the F. nouns differ from those that are used with M. ones. These demonstratives are :

1- هذا (/haʒaa /) this is used with singular nearby M. referents as in :

هذا الولد ذكي (/haʒaa ʔlwalad ʒakj /) This boy is clever .

2- هذه (/haʒihi /) This is used with singular nearby F. referents as in :

هذه الفتاة ذكية (/haʒihi ʔlfataat ʒakjia /) This girl is clever .

3- ذلك (/ʔalika /) that is used with singular distant M. referent as in :

ذلك الرجل طبيب (/ʔalika ʔlraʒul ʔabjib /) That man is a doctor .

4- تلك (/ʔilka /) that is used with singular distant F. reference as in :

تلك الفتاة ذكية (/ʔilka ʔlfataat ʒakjia /) That girl is clever .

Yet, gender distinction can not be manifested with the plural demonstratives because اولئك (/ʔulaʔika /) those can be used to refer to both male and female distant referents and هؤلاء (/haʔulaaʔ /) is

used to refer to both male and female near by referents as in :
 هؤلاء الفتيات طبيبات (/hapulaap ʔifatajot /) These girls are
doctors.
 هؤلاء الرجال أطباء (/hapulaap ʔiridʒaal /) These men are doctors .
 أولئك الفتيات طبيبات (/ʔulaapika ʔifatajot /) Those girls are
doctors.
 أولئك الرجال أطباء (/ʔulaapika ʔiridʒaal ʔatibaab /) Those men are
doctors.

The adjectives should bear an agreement in gender with the nouns that they modify. The majority of the adjectives should take the F. endings when they are used to modify the F. nouns and they should correspond to the nouns which are M. in gender as in :

القائد شجاع (/ʔalqaaʔid sudʒaaʔ /) M. The leader is courageous .

الحديقة واسعة (/ʔal hadʒqat waasiʔ /) F. The garden is large .

In addition, F. adjectives are used with inanimate plural nouns e.g.
 هذه الجبال عالية (/haaʔihi ʔaldʒibaal /) These mountains are high .

Some adjectives are only F. because they are used only with F. referents e.g.

حامل (/haami /) pregnant . (Ibid : 78)

هو (/huwa /) he is the personal pronoun that is used for third person singular

M. nouns and هي (/hija /) she is used for F. nouns e.g.

هو رجل وسيم (/huwa radʒul wasjim /) he is a handsome man .

هي فتاة جميلة (/hija fataat dzamjlaʔ /) she is a beautiful lady .

While انت (/ʔanta /) you is used to address the second person male human

beings and انت (/ʔanti /) you is used to address the second person female

human beings. Yet, انتم (/ʔantum /) both of you is used to refer to a dual

number which denotes two, it does not show an agreement for gender. It can

be used for both male and female human beings as in:

انتم اخوان متعاونان (/ʔantum ʔaxawaan /) you are two

cooperative brothers .

انتم اخوات جميلتان (/ʔantum ʔuxtaan /) you are two

beautiful sisters .

While an agreement for gender can be manifested with plural pronouns. Thus,

انتم (/ʔantum /) you is used to refer to plural male human beings and

انتن (/ʔantum /) you used to refer to plural female human beings.

Relative Pronouns reflects gender distinction, for example, الذي (/ʔaladʒi /) who \ which is used to refer to M. referents and التي (/ʔalatʒi /) who \ which is used to refer to female referents while الذين (/ʔaladʒina /) who is used for plural male referent and اللواتي (/ʔallaatʒi /) who is used for female plural referents.

اللواتي (/ʔallaatʒi /) who is used for female plural referents.

اللواتي (/ʔallaatʒi /) who is used for female plural referents.

اللواتي (/ʔallaatʒi /) who is used for female plural referents.

اللواتي (/ʔallaatʒi /) who is used for female plural referents.

Agreement in gender can be manifested between the possessive pronouns and the nouns, for example, ذو (/ ʔaw /) of \ with is used with male human creatures while ذات (/ ʔaat /) of \ with is used with female human creatures as in: الولد ذو الرداء الأسود (/ ʔalwalad ʔw ʔalriɖaaʔ /) the boy with the black dress .
PalPaswad
الفتاة ذات الحقيبة البيضاء (/ ʔafataat ʔaat ʔalbajɖaʔ /) the girl with white bag .
Palbajɖaʔ

Finally, Gender distinction can not be manifested with comparative and interrogative cases.

Section Two

Gender in English

English makes very few gender distinctions: The natural sex distinction is used to determine gender distinction.

English has three gender categories M. , F. And neuter which correspond to male, female and neither sex. There is no special markers to be used to mark gender distinction.

Very few nouns marked for gender i.e. there is a derivational relationship between the M. and the F. nouns e.g. god (M.) → goddess (F.) whereas, other nouns are unmarked for gender, i.e. they are morphologically unmarked e.g. brother (M.) → sister (F.) and man (M.) → woman (F.) i.e. each sex of the same creature is referred to by using a word form which is different from the other. The other group contains nouns that are of dual gender, i.e. nouns that are used to denote animate beings regardless of their sex, e.g. friend which can be used to refer to either boy or girl, thus, the words boy or girl , male or female can be used before nouns of dual gender for purpose of clarity.

Gender in English, is a category of pronoun substitution.

Other group of nouns is of a common gender in which 'he' is used to stand for words of male being and 'she' for words of female being.

Collective nouns do not show any gender distinction because these nouns take either it when singular or they when they are plural (when they are substituted by pronouns e.g. committee , family the usual relative pronouns that are used with such nouns are either which when the noun is substituted by it or who when it is substituted by they.

e.g. the families / who / they .

The family / which / it .

Common nouns that refer to non-personal animate nouns can be substituted by (it - which) but sometimes he , she , who are used for certain nouns such as horse - cat - tiger when the sex is known. Some of these nouns are marked for gender who are used for certain nouns such as horse - cat - tiger when the sex is known. Some of these nouns are marked for gender e.g.

tiger – tigress and others have feminine forms that differ completely from the M. e.g. gander (M.) – goose (F.)

Names of countries are considered as F. if they are used as political or economic units and they are considered as inanimate if they are used to refer to geographical units e.g.:

- Looking at the map, we see Iraq here:

- Iraq is one of the best countries – (it – inanimate).

Besides, these nouns are treated as collective nouns when they are used with sport e.g.: The players represent the Iraq country.

Lower animals and inanimate nouns are represented by it and which as pronouns. Gender markers can be used with lower animals to show distinction e.g. she – goat (F.) and he – goat (M.) while inanimate nouns can have sometimes the pronouns she, he as a substitute pronouns.

This use of the pronouns reflects emotional influence of the owner. (Quirk, 1974: 91-93).

The pronouns he and she can be used with human beings and animals whose sex is unknown – It can be used for inanimate. It is used to refer to the animals whose sex is unknown. Besides, it is used to reflect lower animals. Sometimes, the owner of the animal may use he or she to refer to his animal but the one who doesn't own this animal may refer to it by using the pronoun it. In addition, It can be used to refer to human being especially when addressing the baby, child. In general, if it is used with non – personal nouns, which is the usual relative pronoun to be used and if it is used with personal nouns, who is considered as the usual pronoun to be used with these nouns.

English gender doesn't have any influence on the parts of the sentence on the syntactic level.

- She always comes late. (F.)

- He always comes late. (M.)

Conclusion

Gender in language is like sex in the outside world. Sex is considered as the most important basis for gender distinction. Sex stands for either male or female animate creatures.

Languages differ in the number of gender they recognize. English has three genders M., F. and neuter, which stand respectively for male, female, and neither sex (dual). On the other hand, Arabic has two gender categories: M. an d F., which can be distinguished through the use of some morphological processes.

Both languages under study use natural gender in classifying the nouns into M. and F. i.e. every noun that belongs to the class of M. nouns refers to male animate and vice versa.

In Arabic, M. nouns are considered as the basis from which F. nouns can be derived through the addition of certain markers which can be added to both nouns and adjectives, whereas, a few nouns in English are marked for gender. In Arabic there are certain irregularities in considering and forming the F. nouns whereas in English some pronouns are gender sensitive.

On the syntactic level, in Arabic, there should be an agreement between the noun that is marked for gender and the other elements of the sentence while, in English such agreement can be manifested between the nouns and their pronouns in the singular case only.

Finally, Arabic gender is applied to nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns and demonstratives while English gender is applied only to nouns and pronouns.

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Conclusion

Gender in language is like sex in the outside world. Sex is considered as the most important basis for gender distinction. Sex stands for either male or female animate creatures.

Languages differ in the number of gender they recognize. English has three genders: M., F. and neuter, which stand respectively for male, female, and neither sex (dead). On the other hand, Arabic has two gender categories: M. and F., which can be distinguished through the use of some morphological processes.

Both languages under study use natural gender in classifying the nouns into M. and F. i.e. every noun that belongs to the class of M. nouns refers to male animate and vice versa.