

## Gender Stereotype of Femininity in The Thesaurus of Modern Russian and English Press

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### Abstract

*This study was carried out at the intersection of two branches of linguistics (linguistics of the English-language and Russian-language media and linguistic genderology), which is relevant and demanded in modern science. The purpose of the article is to conduct a gender linguistic analysis of printed English-language journals, which will help clarify the distribution of gender roles in English-speaking society and the femininity stereotypes that mass media form in public consciousness. The material of the study was excerpts from printed Russian and English publications in which the image of a woman is realized. A list of the most common images that are verbalized in the Russian and English-language media and based on stereotypes of female behavior; thinking and the role of women in modern society is compiled. A gender analysis of modern and Russian-language and English-language press revealed a tendency to change in the hierarchy of gender stereotypes of femininity, in which a shift in emphasis towards the actualization of female business activity and dominance in the professional sphere is clearly observed. The following methods were used in the study: continuous sampling method, content analysis, classification method, comparison, statistical data processing.*

**Keywords:** Language, Linguistics, Gender Linguistics, Gender Stereotype, Femininity, Press.

### Introduction

Any newspaper text is designed to realize a specific communicative goal: to convey information to the recipient and act on it in a certain way. Modern journalism cannot be imagined without stereotypes, which are reflected even in the headlines of articles: "Women's weaknesses cannot be defeated," "Look for a woman in all problems," "Blondes rule the world," and so on. Stereotypes are changing in parallel with public opinion. Political changes, the coronavirus pandemic, the transition to distance education, economic reforms are what directly change stereotypical thinking.

The problem of this article reveals new trends in stereotypical thinking associated with a person's gender. Traditionally, we are used to distinguishing 2 genders: male and female. However, times are changing and the approach to dividing society into men and women has also changed. For example, in an attempt to destroy traditional ideas about the discreteness (division) of sexes in 2014, on the eve of Valentine's Day (February 14), the social network Facebook for users of the English-language version in the United States introduced the possibility of choosing at least 58 variants of social gender (gender) when registering.

Gender representations in Russian journalism at the end of the last century reflected a public discussion about the emancipation of women, about women's education and social activities, respectively dividing newspapers and magazines into two camps – supporters and opponents of changing the traditional place of women in Russian society [11].

The specifics of the research problem led to an appeal to scientific articles on various topics: the features of the national consciousness and thinking of the Russian people, studies of the peculiarities of the English character, discourse issues, the style of the modern press, the way of thinking of men and women in the sphere of IT, and many others [1, 16, 17, 22, 27].

### History of The Study of Gender Stereotype in Linguistics

Our world is developing day after day, and after it the possibilities of mass communication. Over the past few years, the press, as an integral part of it, has become one of the main subjects of linguistic research. The mass-media have a certain impact on the formation of public consciousness. They are able to fix certain concepts and stereotypes in the opinion of society. Today, the pace of life has markedly increased in the world, and with it the flow of informa-

tion has increased, so stereotypes are of great importance for the normal functioning of society and the person in it. Their role in the communication process is extremely large: they consolidate information about homogeneous phenomena, facts, objects, processes, people, etc.; allow people to exchange information, understand each other, participate in joint activities, develop common views, the same value orientation, a common worldview.

A stereotype is a “standardized, schematized, usually brightly emotionally colored image of a socio-political object (phenomenon, process), which has significant stability, but captures only some, sometimes irrelevant, features. It is sometimes defined as an inaccurate, irrational, overly general idea” [19]. The term “social stereotype” came into use thanks to the talented American politician and journalist Walter Lippmann. He became famous for his book “Public Opinion”. The book was written by him at the age of 33, and immediately became a bestseller in the field of sociology. The main valuable idea of the book was the idea that a person is not born with an adequate idea of the world around him, since it is very vast and diverse. A person learns him through the prism of stereotypes that are imposed on him from birth. At the same time, stereotypes are formed over time and become simply viral.

By definition of A.V. Kirilina, stereotypes are “special forms of storage of knowledge and assessments, i.e. concepts of orienting behavior” [12]. Stereotypes are constantly present in the speaker’s mind and have explicit (explicit, openly expressed) or implicit (implied, hidden) language expression. The source of the formation of stereotypes, according to some researchers, are the media [18].

In order to get rid of any associations and overcome biological reductionism, scientists introduced the concept of “gender” into science. In English, this word denotes a grammatical gender that applies to animate beings and has nothing to do with gender. But, for example, in the Russian language there are three kinds: female, male and middle. The grammatical gender of the word and the sex of the object designated by it often do not match.

Many scientists studied the question of the relationship between the concepts of “gender” and “sex” which, in accordance, led to the discovery of different approaches to the consideration of these phenomena. It should be noted that these concepts are considered relative to each other. Sex is a biological definition, while gender is what people think about sex, within their sociocultural environment. Therefore, these phenomena are not separate concepts, since the element of sex is present in gender. Gender identity is constructed through the interaction of natural data (sex of a person) and socialization. M. L. Butovskaya in her work “Anthropology of Sex” defines the semantic component of the concepts of “sex” and “gender”.

In Russian, the word “sex” means two separate categories: “man” and “woman.” By the definition of M. L. Butovskaya, gender is a “sociocultural construct denoting the social aspects of the relationship between the sexes”. This term refers to psychological and behavioral characteristics “associated with masculinity and femininity, which in turn distinguishes men from women” [6].

Etymologically, gender was often seen as sex. Modern human

sciences consider gender from the perspective of sociology and the social role of a person. The essence of the differences boils down to different behaviors of men and women, different mentality, different emotional reactions, different social roles of men and women, and stereotypes of femininity and masculinity accepted in society. At the same time, the term “gender” does not reflect the individual personality characteristics of an individual, but reinforces the stereotypes imposed by collective thinking. Savelyeva O. considers gender as “those components of sexual differentiation that are predetermined by society (for example, men and women have different clothes, a different set of familiar professions, etc.)” [23].

The concept of gender differences has developed over time and has evolved along with society. Male and female are clearly distinguished in different world cultures, especially traditional ones. We can say that gender is a socio-cultural concept of femininity and masculinity.

As a rule, public opinion is reflected in the cultural realities of each nation: fairy tales, proverbs, omens, riddles, traditions, clothes, and so on. From early childhood, each child is told about this, therefore, parents and relatives, the school, the surrounding society teach them stereotypical perception of men and women, and do not allow the child to form his own opinion.

In the collective consciousness there are gender stereotypes – “simplified and pointed ideas about the properties and qualities of persons of one gender or another” [12].

At the same time, stereotyping and the value scale of gender are not the same in different cultures. The social roles of men and women are also generally fixed. For example, Russian legislation contains a list of professions that women are prohibited from engaging in at the state level. This is, for example, the profession of a miner. There are statistics that also indicate male or female occupations, for example, a nurse is necessarily a woman, and a firefighter is necessarily a man, although this distribution is not regulated by law. Therefore, we can say that the stereotype serves as a program of behavior.

The modern world is on the verge of major social changes, and at the same time the consciousness of people is changing. Ideas about men and women can no longer be the same as 20 or even 10 years ago. Modern technologies change not only the sex of a person, but also the idea of a man and a woman. Social upheavals, for example, war, financial crisis forced a woman to be morally stable, strong, energetic, to succeed in business, that is, to have all the qualities that were previously characteristic of men.

In the broadest sense, feminism is “an active desire of women to change their position in society” [8]. A feminist is any person, man or woman whose ideas and actions satisfy three criteria: 1) they recognize the possibility of a woman interpreting their life experience; 2) they are not satisfied with a situation in which there is an institutional inequality of women; 3) they seek to end this inequality [15].

Feminism can be understood as the “struggle of women, and the ideology of equality of rights, and social change, and the deliverance of men and women from stereotypical roles, and the improve-

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ment of the way of life, and active actions” [21].

The second half of the 20th century is remembered by mankind as a period of reforms and revolutions, including in the human mind. The democratization of society in the West contributed to the emergence of new socio-philosophical hypotheses. The student revolution of 1968 spawned new ideas of feminism that were designed to combat the traditional male dominance in all spheres of human life. The new gender concept has become a means of political struggle. In addition, at the end of the 60s, a new branch of science was born in the USA and Germany – feminist criticism of language, or feminist linguistics. Feminist linguistics criticized language for sexism, androcentricity, and female discrimination in the language. First of all, this was due to the lack of feminines in many languages, negative characteristics expressed by the feminine gender, the secondary nature of women in relation to men, etc. Feminists also argued that gender has a very important influence on the very process of communication, therefore representatives of feminist linguistics sought to reform not only the communication process, but also the language itself. The reasoning behind the argument was the Sapir-Whorf linguistic relativity hypothesis: language structures and directs our thinking, therefore, the consciousness of people exists in direct relationship with the functioning of the language, therefore feminist linguistics has proposed a number of transformations of the language.

Feminist criticism of the language (feminist linguistics) represents linguistics, which is designed to neutralize male dominance in the minds of people and, accordingly, in all spheres of human activity: culture, art, professions, language and literature. This direction has gained fame in the early 1970s “in connection with the emergence of the New Women's Movement in the USA and Germany” [9].

The first loud statement against androcentrism in language was the work “The Language and the Place of a Woman” by R. Lakoff. The specifics of feminist criticism of the language include its pronounced polemical nature, the development of its own linguistic methodology, as well as a number of attempts to influence language policy and reform the language towards eliminating the sexism contained in it [13].

Originating in the USA, feminist criticism of the language became most widespread in Europe in Germany with the advent of the works of S. Tremel-Plotz and L. Pusch. A significant role was also played in the dissemination of feminist criticism of the language of the works of Y. Kristeva.

The main goal of feminist literary criticism is to reassess the classic canon of "large" literary texts in terms of:

1. female authorship;
2. female reading;
3. the so-called female writing styles.

On the whole, feminist literary criticism can be philosophically and theoretically oriented in different ways, but one thing remains common to all its varieties – this is recognition of the special way women are in the world and their corresponding female representative strategies. Hence the main requirement of feminist literary criticism about the need for a feminist revision of traditional views on literature and the practice of writing, as well as the thesis about

the need to create a social history of female literature [8].

The aim of the feminist criticism of language is to identify the asymmetry in the projection of the image of a man and a woman in the language. In linguistics, this phenomenon has acquired the name "sexism". The emergence of sexism is due to the long-term dominance of the patriarchal way of society, in which men played a leading role, who could infringe on women's rights with impunity. It is investigated which images of women are recorded in the language, in which semantic fields women are represented, and what connotations accompany this representation. Proceeding from this, “feminist criticism of the language insists on rethinking and changing linguistic norms, considering conscious rationing of the language and language policy the goal of its research” [5].

The Stereotype of Femininity and Methods for Its Verbalization in The Language

Femininity is a complex of psychological characteristics traditionally attributed to a woman. These are the characterological features of gentleness, willingness to help, etc.

The severe restrictions placed on women by these stereotypes often lead to stress and failure. For example, a study by Marta Horner found an explanation of why girls, who in almost all countries are leading in school grades and tests (it has been empirically established that girls develop much faster than boys in terms of mental and physical parameters) start in worse grades study. However, patriarchal stereotypes lead to the appearance of many complexes in teenage girls around the age of 15. Marta Horner called the “fear of success”. Since success in the career sphere belongs only to men, as is commonly believed in a patriarchal society, girls are afraid to become successful and lose their femininity in the eyes of society. That is why many women remain unrealized in their careers, although they can fully compete with men in many professions.

Women's access to expressing their opinions and interests in the media is extremely difficult. As a rule, men are the spokesmen for the interests of women - they are very fond of asking what women's happiness is, and they confidently answer: “In men”. Women who managed to say something in the media are usually two extremes: on the one hand, they are those who peddle their natural female specifics (it does not matter whether they are mothers or getters); on the other, those who are afraid of everything feminine and deny their gender affiliation.

But besides them, there are others – women who say that the “myth of femininity” serves as a means of masking sexism and that the only way to be a real woman (like a real man) is to freely choose your own path and not be the object of manipulation. These women are practically deprived of the right to present their opinions in the media – here we are faced with gender censorship.

The real situation with the representation of women in the media can be qualified as a violation of freedom of speech for women for at least two reasons: inaccurate information in the media about women (stereotyped image) and lack of access of women as a gender group to the media.

In general, in the regular media, the topic of women is not very popular. At the end of the 80s, much more was written about

women, and everything was in the critically discriminating manner characteristic of that era. Women in press publications were represented through the stereotypes of “female destiny” (family, children, cuisine), human second-rate, immorality, “dirt” and sexuality.

In the 90s, the stereotyping of women in the media intensified: a woman appears either as a detail of the interior of the kitchen and the nursery, or as a sexual object. This is especially evident in the so-called women's magazines such as "*Women's Club*", "*Lisa*" and others, which make up 31% of the total volume of mass magazines. In fact, all these magazines are devoted to how to teach a woman to be a beautiful, well-groomed and sexy doll whose life purpose is to be a man's fun and to be able to give him pleasure. Social or moral problems, stories about real life of real women are completely absent. In these magazines there is often no place even for pedagogical advice – that is, not only the profession, but also the role of the mother (which can distract the woman's attention from serving the man) is secondary. In this sense, we can say that most “women's” magazines are generally one solid stereotype. Foreign “*Vogue*”, “*Elle*”, “*Cosmopolitan*” are very similar to our magazines, although publications on social topics sometimes appear there. Magazines for teenage girls like “*Cool*” or “*Cool girl*”, where they are taught to be sexually uninhibited, are especially worried about their poppies and “emancipation”.

It should be noted that the peculiarity of the Russian media with regard to women is “normality”, the permissibility of demonstration on the pages of hatred, contempt, sharp aggression against women as such. Often in such cases, famous people are quoted, choosing those whose statements are abruptly. The newspaper “*Vzglyad*”, which was once issued by the VID corporation, with relish on the best spot on the first page of the March issue (for you women) quoted Nietzsche: “Woman ... Oh, what a dangerous, slippery underground little predatory animal! And so sweet at the same time! ... A woman is incomparably meaner than a man and smarter than him, kindness in a woman is already a form of degeneration ...” (F. Nietzsche) (“*Glance*”, No. 8, March 1992). And so that the newspaper is not accused of bias, these quotes are “balanced” by others: “Respecting women is a duty that every honest man must obey from birth” (Lope de Vega). “There are few such perfect women whose husbands at least once in their life ... did not envy the bachelors” (J. Labruyer).

Often the concept of “people” refers only to men, and women are either not included in it (for example, in the pseudo-humanist slogan “All people are brothers”), or even opposed to this concept. For example, the headline “Our people are better and women are more beautiful” (international newspaper “24”, No. 69, December 15, 1992). Or the presenter's comment at a meeting with Zhirinovsky: “You have unlimited power not only over people, but also over women” (March 7, 1993, TV channel 4, at approximately 11.30 p.m.). Moreover, the more hidden, veiled language sexism is, the more sophisticated it is and the more it affects the human subconscious.

In the book “Language: its nature, development and origin”, O. Jespersen included the chapter “Woman”, which summarizes the studies of female language that existed at that time in different parts of the world. In this chapter, the scientist also included a

section on the vocabulary of the language [11].

So, O. Jespersen noted a greater tendency of women to use euphemisms and a lesser tendency to foul language. Studies of Russian linguists also confirmed that “women do not use strong words like men” [26]. V.I. Zhelvis studied in detail a layer of reduced (including obscene) vocabulary and paid great attention to which invectives women prefer to use. His conclusion coincides with the data indicated above “where men resort to very sharp and vulgar invectives, women, as a rule, prefer to use softer turns or outwardly very modest-sounding interjections” [27].

E.A. Zemskaya, M.V. Kitaygorodskaya, N.N. Rozanova came to the conclusion that the woman's speech is much more emotional. To convey their emotions, women use, firstly, adverbs-intensifiers so (so, so), such (such), awfully (terribly meaning very), terribly (scary), and secondly, semantically empty adjectives gorgeous (magnificent), divine (amazing), splendid (excellent). In addition to adverbs and empty adjectives, women are characterized by the use of interjections “as a means of expressing meanings associated with a person's emotional reaction” [4].

Researchers also note that women use modal elements much more intensively, which are called qualifiers / hedges in English linguistics. They include modal verbs might, could; modal limiters, including such stable combinations as kind of, sort of, to some extent, particles just, only, somewhat; introductory sentences I suppose, I think, I guess, I mean, I'm afraid, I wonder, you know; adverbs maybe, possibly, probably, apparently, presumably and others [2]. Similar de-intensifiers have created female speech a reputation for uncertain and vacillating. However, they have well-defined functions, especially if you take into account the intonation design, they soften the categorization of the statement, thereby preventing a possible threat to the identity of the participants in communication.

In the study A.Yu. Belyaeva noted such a lexical feature of women as the preference to use approximate notations and the pronoun “this” (accompanied by an index gesture, a nod of the head or a movement of the hand, finger towards the desired subject) [3].

According to A.O. Laletina, women often use the pronoun we as a confirmation of the idea of a collective style of communication, as an index of personal experience and social rapprochement [14].

Regarding grammatical differences in the language of men and women, O. Jespersen argues that women often speak with unfinished sentences, in particular, with regard to exclamatory sentences. The scientist gives his explanation for this fact: “women are much more likely than men to break off a proposal without completing it, because they start a conversation without thinking about what they are going to say ...” [11].

Lakoff refers to the grammatical features of female speech the frequent use of tag questions (separation questions), which, in her opinion, creates a feeling of uncertainty and indecision among communicants [13]. However, J. Coates notes the multifunctional orientation of interrogative sentences: maintaining the conversation, the possibility of all speakers participating in the conversation, and also preventing threats to the negative / positive person.



This allowed researchers to establish that female communicative behavior is cooperative [10]. A woman chooses such language means by which she manages to maintain closeness and equality with the interlocutor, criticize using polite forms, and accurately convey the words of another person [24]. The author also introduces the concept of “double-voice discourse”, i.e. dialogue, during which the speaker is guided by the goals and interests of the interlocutor, without prejudice to his interests and his opinion” [24]. The author believes that “double-voice discourse” is characteristic of female communicative behavior.

In addition, J. Coates emphasizes the tendency of women to use rhetorical questions. O.L. Antineskul notes that “the rhetorical question expresses the emotionality of perception and the inability to find a rational solution” [2]. E.A. Zhigaykova calls interrogative sentences “the driving force of conversation”, considering them to be an integral part of the dialogue structure, involving the communicative effect of two interlocutors [28].

As a feature of female speech, J. Coates also emphasizes repetition, “which can be actualized at the lexical, grammatical and syntactic levels” [7].

### Typology of Female Images and Linguistic Features Reflecting the Femininity Stereotype in The Russian Press

When researching the Russian press, we relied on such publications, as *Vedomosti*, *Argumenty i Fakty*, *Kommersant*, *Cosmopolitan (in Russian)*, *Elle (in Russian)*, *Vogue (in Russian)*, *Glamor (in Russian)*, *Women's Health (in Russian)*. Using this material, we were able to identify the main images of women that are created by the media.

**Table 1. Images of Women in The Russian Press**

Image of a woman	Percentage ratio
Female politician	28%
Businesswoman	19%
Female leader	13%
Career oriented woman	11%
Female companion	10%
Family oriented woman	10%
Female performer	9%

Based on the table, the dominant media image is a female politician. Let us recall, for example, M. Thatcher, C. Rice or A. Merkel – a conservative image, high professionalism, rigidity and integrity, efficiency in resolving political issues. A number of myths have historically developed in the image of a woman politician, namely: if a woman as a politician makes mistakes, it is precisely because she is a woman; appearance always plays a decisive role in how a woman’s career develops in the political arena; a woman cannot be both a successful politician and a successful mother, wife; women do not come into politics on their own, etc.

Less dominant is the image of a businesswoman. A business woman with exclusively masculine features: a decisive, confident, tough, natural born leader. It is worth noting that business publi-

cations – “*Kommersant*” and “*Vedomosti*” – often see a business woman as a phenomenon. The businesswoman through the prism of these newspapers is definitely an outstanding woman.

### Typology of Female Images and Language Features Reflecting the Femininity Stereotype in The English Press

In the study of the English press (in English), the articles themselves and their headings in the following publications were subject to accounting and analysis: *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *Women's Health*, *In Style*, *Blender*, *New York Times*, *People*, *USA Today*. We also tried to identify the main media images of women, but, unfortunately, the list was not so numerous.

**Table 2. Images of Women in The English Press**

Image of a woman	Percentage ratio
Female politician	58%
Female companion	29%
Career Oriented Woman	13%

Thus, we see that in the English press there are only 3 main female images, and the most common on the pages of publications is the image of a politician. The analysis also led us to the conclusion that the traditional patriarchal ideas of man as an agent subject and woman as a passive object are implicitly dominant.

First, in newspaper publications, women are more often referred to by their first names (e.g., *Hillary*), showing some leniency and familiarity, while men are named by their last names (e.g., *Brown*). Secondly, there is a tendency to mention the children or partner of a woman, which often does not allow portraying her as a full-fledged individual-figure. Thirdly, in the image of women, the emphasis is on their appearance, physical attractiveness, which also corresponds to the concept of a woman as an object. These trends, to one degree or another, can be traced through the example of articles on Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin.

It should be noted that the journalists themselves offer a completely different explanation. For example, consider the title of one of the articles: “*Vote Obama. He's black and he's not Hillary*”.

According to journalists, Hillary Clinton is so famous that, like Madonna, she can be called by name, and everyone will understand what Hillary is talking about. Perhaps Obama was at that time less famous than the former first lady, but you can also assume that he is called by his last name, since he is a man, and H. Clinton – by name, because she is a woman.

As for Sarah Palin, the press constantly emphasizes her role as a mother, using the following expressions: *hockey-mom*, *mother of five*, etc. Thus, the stereotype “woman – object” is actualized, in other words, the activities of women are justified only against the background of men.

Despite this, the press does not forget to focus readers on the appearance and physical attractiveness of politicians. This is much more clearly seen in the image of S. Palin – *diva*, *former beauty queen*. However, in articles about H. Clinton, one can notice sim-

ilar, but with a considerable share of irony. For instance: "There were as many ways to despise her as she had hairstyles".

The analysis shows that the English press portrays women politicians, emphasizing qualities such as determination, ambition, sanity and unpredictability.

## Conclusions

In the course of the study, we proved that the gender component, namely, the feminine component, is contained both in the oral and in the written discourse of the media. Under the influence of cultural, social and economic factors, the content of the concepts of masculinity and femininity is changing that has been accompanying mankind for many centuries. Media actively participate in this process, in particular, gender-oriented magazines and newspapers, in the discourse of which, in addition to reflecting modern gender norms and roles, certain models of gender behavior are actively constructed and broadcast.

When examining the vast material of the English and Russian press, general patterns of the manifestation of a stereotypical gender component were revealed, for example, linguistic mechanisms for constructing femininity that affect the image of a woman in mass media. The discursive gender component of print media is implemented by a specific set of language tools, including gender-marked nouns, adjectives, gender-relevant pronouns, verbs and verb forms that reflect female behavior, as well as various syntactic structures.

In addition, the study confirmed that the emotionality of women is quite strongly reflected in their speech. This is not surprising, since the weaker sex is more emotionally excitable, and also experiences a particular situation more intensely.

A comparative analysis of the discourse of English and Russian newspapers and magazines made it possible to identify the use of gender-relevant language tools in the context of social communication, to identify Pan-European trends in understanding modern gender concepts and to note the national features of their content. This study examines the possibilities of language tools in implementing the gender component in the discourse of English-Russian and Russian-language gender-oriented publications and is an example of an integrated approach to studying the problem of the relationship between language and gender, which can be applied to all types of discourse.

In conclusion, it should be noted that while continuing to influence people's ideas about the patterns of behavior and the specifics of women's speech, the media inflict enormous harm on their audience, forcing them to follow certain stereotypes, most often to the detriment of themselves. It is from the mass media, from the press in particular, which gender policy will be formed among readers. After all, this can subsequently lead to many problems.

At present, the nature of gender values of a society most often becomes a determining factor in its development. The key to the harmonious development of society is the participation of society in social life on equal terms.

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