



Gendered Terms for Women: Semantics, Asymmetry, and Sociocultural Reflections in the English Language

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Abstract. The article is a study on the representation of women in language and the impact of this representation on social perceptions and biases. It examines gendered terms used to refer to *woman*, such as a woman, a girl, a female, and a lady, exploring their meanings, connotations, and usage in English. The article highlights the asymmetry in the semantic content of women and men, noting that *man* can refer to any human being, whereas *woman* specifically refers to adult females, often with an implied association with childbearing potential. The author discusses various terms used to describe women in different contexts, including scientific, statistical, derogatory, and polite usages. The article also explores the evolution of the term *lady* and how its meaning has degraded when used in compound words or phrases referring to women engaged in low-paid, non-intellectual labor. Additionally, the study examines gender biases and sexism in language, analyzing how linguistic expressions and connotations related to women may reflect or reinforce societal prejudices. It discusses different forms of sexism, including overt and subtle sexism, and how historical and social factors have influenced the language used to describe women's professions and roles. The article also investigates the semantic fields associated with women's roles across various aspects of life, including domestic work, agriculture, crafts, trade, medicine, the arts, science, politics, etc. Examples of terms from each domain are provided to illustrate the diversity of ways women are referred to linguistically. The author emphasizes the importance of conscious and thoughtful language use to promote gender equality and avoid reinforcing gender-based discrimination.

Keywords: linguistic representation, women, impact of language, societal perceptions, gendered terms, meanings, semantic content, semantic representation, semantic asymmetry, women's roles, semantic domains

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Гендерные термины номинации женщин: семантика, асимметрия и социокультурное отражение в английском языке

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Аннотация. Статья представляет собой исследование репрезентации образа женщин в языке и влияния данной репрезентации на общественное восприятие и предубеждения (*а также языкового воздействия на них*). В работе исследуются гендерные термины номинации женщин, например, “woman”, “girl”, “female” и “lady”, значения и коннотации, с ними связанные, а также применение этих терминов в английском языке. В статье подчёркивается асимметрия в семантическом содержании терминов “woman” и “man”: отмечается, что “man” может относиться к любому человеку, в то время как “woman” конкретно относится к взрослым людям женского пола, которые потенциально способны рожать детей. Автором также обсуждаются разнообразие термины, используемые для обозначения женщин в различных контекстах, включая научные, статистические, уничижительные и вежливые употребления лексем; исследуется эволюция значений термина *lady* и деградация его значения при использовании в составных словах или словосочетаниях, обозначающих женщин, занимающихся неинтеллектуальным, низкооплачиваемым трудом. Кроме того, в статье рассматривается наличие гендерных предубеждений и сексизма в языке, которые могут отражаться в обозначениях и коннотациях, связанных с женщинами; обсуждаются различные формы сексизма, включая открытый и косвенный сексизм, и то, как они могут проявляться в использовании языка с учётом исторических и общественных факторов, влияющих на язык, используемый для описания профессий и ролей женщин. Кроме того, в статье исследуются семантические области, связанные с ролями женщин в различных аспектах жизни, включая домашнюю работу, сельское хозяйство, ремёсла, торговлю, медицину, искусство, науку, политику и многое другое. В тексте приводятся примеры терминов, связанных с каждой областью, чтобы проиллюстрировать разнообразие номинаций женщин, и подчёркивается необходимость осознанного и внимательного использования языка для того, чтобы способствовать установлению равноправия и избежать распространения гендерного неравенства.

Ключевые слова: языковое представление, женщины, влияние языка, общественное восприятие, гендерные термины, значения, семантическое содержание, семантическое представление, семантическая асимметрия, роли женщин, семантические области

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the latter part of the 1950s, the idea of “gender” emerged among modern scholars, largely thanks to the influential articles published by the American psychologist D. Money in the journal “Bulletin of the Johns Hopkins Hospital”. These pioneering articles introduced complex concepts such as gender, gender roles, and identity, which have since become crucial elements in our contemporary understanding of human identity and societal interactions [9].

This seminal work sparked a surge of interest among scholars from various fields, leading to a remarkable growth in the study and analysis of gender-related topics. Over time, the concept of “gender” has undergone profound reinterpretation due to the efforts of numerous researchers. As a result, it has garnered multiple definitions that capture its complex nature. Gender is not merely a biological distinction but a complex category strongly linked with cultural, social, and psychological frameworks. It encompasses the intricate interplay between nature and nurture, highlighting the impact of societal factors on the development and expression of gender identity. Shapiro eloquently illustrates this by emphasizing how gender emerges from the interplay between biological differences and the social, cultural, and psychological contexts in which individuals exist [11, p. 449]. Moreover, gender is not an inherent or fixed attribute but a social construct shaped by human agency, as West and Zimmerman (1987) astutely point out [14]. Gender serves as a framework through which both individuals and societies shape and understand the concepts of femininity and masculinity. It involves exploring the varied aspects of gendered experiences and expectations [7, p. 6].

While considerable research has been conducted on the broad concept of gender, little attention has been paid specifically to the evolution of linguistic representations of women and their role in the shaping of societal gender norms. The goal of this article is to address this gap by presenting the linguistic categorization of gendered terms for women with the focus on the way the English language reflects and influences the understanding of gendered identities within different sociocultural contexts.

The field of linguistics provides fertile ground for in-depth gender research, as language and speech offer a rich tapestry of gender manifestations. Language, as a primary medium of communication, carries profound social and cultural meaning, reflecting and reinforcing gender norms, roles, and stereotypes. Analyzing the linguistic aspects of gender allows researchers to delve into the underlying mechanisms that shape and reinforce gendered ideologies and behaviors. A.V. Kirilina illuminates the intricate nature of gender as a “sociocultural construct, a conventional phenomenon, and a discursive factor of variable intensity” [5, p. 12]. This perspective highlights the multifaceted dimensions of gender and its dynamic interplay with society, culture, and discourse. Moreover, this connection of gender to cultural frameworks provides a basis for further exploration in numerous academic fields. In the next section, we take a close look at the existing research on the category of “woman,” examining how linguistic and sociocultural factors shape the representation and understanding of gender in different disciplines.

2. THE RESEARCH BACKGROUND

The category “woman” has been scrupulously examined and described in many research papers in fields ranging from linguistics, psycholinguistics, and communication studies to sociolinguistics, and others. Among these diverse fields, research on gender-marked concepts is the most advanced and developed field of study concerning the category of “woman” [8], [10]. These detailed studies span a broad spectrum, crossing numerous languages in polylingual and comparative studies, as well as focusing on a single language in monolingual studies [1], [8], [10]. Furthermore, research articles on specific linguistic areas, such as phraseology, focus on how language – particularly fixed expressions, collocations, and other multi-word combinations – reflects and reinforces the representation of women in society [6]. Besides, certain studies present examination of texts by specific authors, uncovering information on how the concept of “woman” is represented in their works [8]. In the extensive bibliography of research dedicated

to the examination of the concept of “woman”, there is a specific interest in explaining the axiological or cultural bases that determine and condition its representation [3], [4]. By drawing attention to these determining factors, researchers aim to provide an understanding of the complexity of femininity and its social implications. The category of “woman” has been delineated in linguistic, psycholinguistic, communicative, sociolinguistic, and other studies.

Linguistic gender studies have gained notably increasing relevance and importance in recent years due to their explanatory potential for the complex interaction between language, gender, and society. Some of the reasons for this include:

1. Gender equality and inclusivity: language has a significant impact on our perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Through the analysis of linguistic structures and patterns relating to gender, scholars are able to uncover and challenge linguistic stereotypes and biases reinforcing gender inequalities. This research area contributes to informing us about how language can be discriminating or marginalizing of some genders and provides insights on how to achieve more inclusive and equitable linguistic practices.
2. Language variation and comprehension: gender linguistic research observes the way in which gender influences language variation. It shows the way men and women, and individuals of different gender identities, may employ language differently, either through word, syntax, tone, or discourse strategy. In comprehending these differences, we recognize the different ways that individuals use language and portray themselves.
3. Language and power relations: language is closely connected with power relations in society. Gender linguistic studies analyze how the use of language can reinforce or reverse power disparities among genders. It analyzes how language strategies and choices can reflect and recreate unequal power relations, for example, through gendered insult, sexist talk, or gender discrimination. One needs to remain aware of such phenomena in order to enable more respectful and inclusive interaction.
4. Self-expression and identity: language remains a significant tool of expression and gender identity construction. Gender research in linguistics examines the use of language in defining one's gender identity by individuals and adhering to social norms. It explores how language can enable or restrict self-expression and identity construction, particularly for non-binary individuals. This research educates on a better understanding of how much language matters in affirming and respecting different gender identities.
5. Language practice and policy: gender linguistic research may help to change language policy and language planning. Through the establishment of gender bias in language, researchers can advance gender-sensitive language policies that facilitate gender equality. This may involve challenging gendered language norms in textbooks, laws, or work place policies, and advocating for the use of gender-neutral or inclusive language practices.
6. Intersectionality: much of the research in the field bleeds into other fields, i.e., race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and disability. Understanding the way gender intersects with these cross-cutting social categories in language use provides more profound understanding of how intersecting identities converge and impact patterns of communication and experience. Intersectionality raises greater sensitivity to the richness of social inequalities and richer, more inclusive perspectives.

Considering all these trends, there is no wonder why gender-related linguistic studies are carried out actively nowadays [1], [7], [13]. In the works dedicated to conceptualization of “woman” written over the last ten years, several studies stand out. Drozd, Matsuoka, and Gladkova explore how word embeddings and machine learning challenge traditional linguistic analogies, particularly in gendered conceptual structures [2]. Word embeddings are a type of word representation that allows words with similar meaning to have a similar representation. They are mathematical representations of words in a multi-dimensional space, in which words that are semantically similar are located near each other. For example, such words as “king” and “queen” would be close together in this space, just like “man” and “woman”.

Such representation helps machines process language in a more or less human-like manner by capturing semantic meaning from context. It also allows models to perform operations like finding analogies, e.g., “king – man + woman = queen”.

Mashoshina examines the representation of the concept of “woman” in Jack London’s novel *Little Lady of the Big House*, analyzing how the literary portrayal of the female protagonist reflects broader societal and cultural attitudes [4]. Kislitsyna and Melnichenko investigate metaphorical connotations shaping the image of female politicians in English-language media, showing underlying biases and ideological influences [6]. Ivanova studies gender representations in English anti-proverbs and highlights how these modified sayings reflect and subvert traditional gender roles [4]. Syskina, Kiselev, Lonoff, Matveenکو, and Aizikova focus on the translation of female characters in *Jane Eyre* and *The Woman in White* into Russian in the 1840s–1860s, demonstrating how linguistic and cultural shifts influence the perception of women in literature [12]. Finally, in our recent work we explore the cognitive and conceptual frame of “woman”, particularly its peripheral zones, where language encodes and structures gendered meanings [10].

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

This article presents a semantic examination of most widespread gendered terms for women relying on the British National Corpus (BNC) and other authoritative English language sources, for example: Collins Cobuild Advanced Learner’s English Dictionary [15], Kernerman English Multilingual Dictionary [16], Merriam-Webster Dictionary [17], Oxford Dictionary of English [18], Slang English Vocabulary [19], The American Heritage Book of English Usage [20] and Urban Dictionary [21].

Modern methods like semantic analysis, quantitative analysis, componential analysis, and critical analysis were employed to identify, classify, and illustrate gender-marked semantic domains. In the meanwhile, in our work we perceive *woman* as a conceptual cognitive frame, which implies a complex structured mental representation that organizes knowledge about women through interconnected concepts, reflecting societal, cultural, and linguistic perceptions. It functions as a hierarchical network of subframes, where central elements (like professional roles) and peripheral elements (e.g., stereotypes or situational roles) dynamically shape female identity in language and cognition.

Gendered terms which serve to name women encompass a range of commonly used nouns such as “girl”, “woman”, “lady” and “female”. These terms denote adult human beings who are biologically female and have the potential capability of giving birth to children. The term “woman” represents a broader gender concept and serves as the umbrella name of the conceptual-cognitive frame. It is often contrasted with the term “man”, which, despite having similar meanings (in the way that it also refers to a human adult), can refer to any human being regardless of gender, leading to an asymmetry in the semantic content of “woman” and “man”.

The term “female” is primarily used in scientific, medical, legal, and statistical texts, where an objective or biological distinction between sexes is required, serving as a neutral counterpart to the term “male”. However, in everyday speech, it can also carry derogatory connotations, especially in combinations like “a gossipy female”, where it reduces a woman to her biological sex and implies negative stereotypes.

In contrast, the word “lady” carries positive connotations and signifies a polite, refined woman. It is used as a term of approval and politeness, particularly when referring to a woman directly. When referring to a group of women, the term “ladies” is used instead of “women” in the plural form. However, the meaning of “lady” has somewhat deteriorated in compound words or phrases that describe women engaged in non-intellectual, low-paid labor, such as “cleaning lady” or “saleslady”.

Apart from these terms, various lexical units exist to refer to female individuals, covering a wide spectrum of descriptors. These include general terms like “dame”, “donna”, or simply “she”, as well as indicators of age such as “girl”, “moppet”, and “fille”. Family relationships are expressed through terms like “daughter”, “mother”, “niece”, “bride”, “wife”, and others such as “matriarch” and “mater”. Reproductive functions are denoted by words like “gravida” and “puerperal”, while social status is represented, for example, by

the word “queen”. Sexual orientation and behavior can be conveyed through terms like “cocotte”, “lesbian”, “tribade” and “virgin”. Racial and ethnic characteristics are captured by words such as “mestizo” and “mammy”, while women’s occupations are reflected in words like “nanny”, “matron” or “geisha”. The data hereinafter has been summarized from the dictionaries that served as sources for our article. We have also relied on our general knowledge and data from the BNC.

Forms of address include “ma’am”, “madam”, “miss”, “mademoiselle”, “ma”, “mama”, “mum”, and “momma”, among others. Some words carry gender connotations with stylistically marked meanings. They may be used in informal contexts that are archaic, or are specific to certain regions. Examples include “lass”, “Sheila”, “vrou”, “maiden”, “maid”, and “wench”.

Stylistically marked terms in English for a woman are “gal” (informal), “bird” (informal/disparaging) and “dame” (dated/slang), but there are also metaphorical terms for a woman, such as “chick” (informal), “skirt” (dated/informal), “houri” (dated/slang), “nymph” (dated/slang), “tart” (informal/disparaging), “Cinderella” (dated/slang), “vamp” (dated/slang), “maenad” (dated/slang), “jezebel” (informal/disparaging), “crone” (dated/disparaging), “hag” (informal/disparaging), which tend to have varying sexual connotations. The use and connotation of such terms reveal underlying attitudes toward women embedded in language.

Language plays diverse roles reflecting the presence of sexism in the intricate network of the social fabric, as well as providing a more acute lens for perceiving social realities. Sexist language as an expression of discriminatory tendencies favoring one sex and discriminating against the other in an unfair manner most frequently aims at women, perpetuating prejudices ingrained in society. In the English language, sexism creeps into designations used for women, into the very fabric of linguistic expression. The vocabulary inevitably becomes a cache for all instances of inequality, including gender discrimination, that permeate the wider societal context. Two types of sexism are seen: overt and indirect. Explicit sexism makes its presence known by clear methods, leaving no room for interpretation, while indirect gender discrimination thrives in the contextual interaction of seemingly neutral or unrelated statements but, being placed side by side, implying biased or discriminatory in meanings.

Two types of sexism are seen: overt and indirect. Explicit sexism makes its presence known by overt and clear methods, leaving no room for interpretation, while indirect gender discrimination thrives in the contextual interaction of proximate statements – that is, in how seemingly neutral or unrelated statements, when placed side by side, can imply biased or discriminatory meanings – and demands subtle insight for its recognition and understanding. The data is presented as lists of lexemes without frequency numbers indicating the number of entries in the British National Corpus, because both the British National Corpus and authoritative dictionaries served as sources for drawing examples. Having frequency numbers for one part of the examples and not for another would have caused inconsistency throughout the text.

Most words employed to denote women are subject to restriction or a lamentable erosion of their original sense. When parallel male and female names are compared, there is an unavoidable disparity, with lexemes for women that carry negative connotation not present in men. “Sir/dame”, “master/mistress”, and “bachelor/spinster” show semantic change over time that has led to the declining significance of a series of ‘female’ lexemes that have been followed by no male counterparts. Notably, the term “whore”, having originally conveyed the sense of “lover”, has also evolved to current explicitly mean “female prostitute”. Similarly, the term “girl”, from Middle English as “girle” for “young person of either sex”, has developed to acquire pejorative senses that encompass women of any age or female domestic workers doing hand-labour, for instance, “female servant/employee”, as still implying low status and marginality.

The semantic field of the conceptual-cognitive frame “women” usually carries a covert but strong sexual undertone. The words “woman”, “girl”, and “madam”, being at the center of the lexical-semantic group encompassing “woman”, may, under certain circumstances, develop pejorative connotations with a contemptible loss of their initial meaning, turning women into a woman offering sexual services for money, thereby becoming associated with the word “prostitutes”. Rather strangely, however, no corresponding

connotations are inherent in the respective terms for men, i.e., “man”, “boy”, and “sir”, which retain their neutrality in any situation. This disparity is to be accounted for by the faint echoes of social dynamics existing in the very fabric of language itself, since it truly mirrors and echoes the traces of social and power relations.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a) Woman

The lexical and semantic field of the conceptual-cognitive frame “women” houses the rich tapestry of profession words. Unveiling an underlying historical truth, the conspicuous visibility of the majority of these words in relation to male models is a reminder of when women’s entry into a career beyond their domestic sphere was the prerogative of a few. Even now, when women have progressed so much in such careers as law and medicine, they are recognized and referred to as “women lawyers” or “women doctors”, in effect highlighting their gender as a determining characteristic. Consequently, the scarcity of original terms intrinsically linked to female professions, with many derived from corresponding male designations, perpetuates a lingering sense of diminished prestige and recognition.

Throughout history, women have tirelessly toiled alongside their male counterparts, undertaking comparable tasks while having unjust salary. Their labor spanned diverse industries, including mining, factories, and domestic service. Yet, profession terms assigned to women became tainted with stigmatization, invariably associated with manual or “dirty” work. A meticulous linguistic analysis of female names reveals complex semantic domains associated with the multifaceted roles women have undertaken throughout history, spanning various spheres including household chores, farming, craftsmanship, commerce, fishing, entrepreneurship, healthcare, artistic pursuits, scientific work, political engagement, legal practice, administrative duties, aviation, construction work, military service, law enforcement and other spheres.

The conclusion that women have consistently performed diverse, sometimes difficult roles across many industries and sectors is rooted in both historical evidence and gender linguistic studies. The classification of examples from BNC presented in this paragraph includes such sectors as healthcare, education, agriculture, domestic labor, trade etc. The fact that women have often been assigned stigmatized roles or terms that associate their work with manual or “dirty” tasks is well-documented – and proven by the examples taken from BNC by us: cleaning woman, slave-girl, laundrywoman etc.

The identification of women is deeply influenced by a complex interplay of various factors, including familial connections, gender expression, physical attributes, sexual orientation, societal standing, ethnic and racial background, as well as economic resources, geographical location, and religious affiliation. A woman’s identity is an intricate tapestry interwoven with a mosaic of elements, intricately intertwined with her societal standing, ethnic and racial heritage, financial resources, place of residence, and religious convictions. Moreover, axiological characteristics serve as a reflection of society’s evaluative lens, providing a framework through which external and internal qualities, as well as behaviors ascribed to women, are assessed, dissected, and appraised. Here are some examples of semantic categories related to the social position:

Trade: apple-woman, shopwoman, tradeswoman, herb-woman, saleswoman, fishwoman, butter woman, counterwoman.

Household work: daywoman, doorwoman, washwoman, charwoman, scrubwoman, washerwoman, tire-woman, laundrywoman, cleaning woman, milkwoman, handywoman, workwoman, washer woman.

Medicine: ambulance woman, medicine woman, midwife.

There is no point in enumerating all the examples in this work, but overall, a quantitative study indicates that the word unit “woman”, whose high combinatory valence explains numerous instances of its combination with other parts of speech, features in a huge number of compound words and noun phrases (148 units), around 50% of which represent women profession words (BNC data).

Quantitatively, it can be hypothesized that the widespread use of the element “woman” in complex words and noun compounds suggests its strong combinatory valence. With a number of 148 units, it is clear that this element is responsible for the formation of a vast number of lexical expressions, while, nearly 50% of these formations refer to terms of profession exclusively linked to women.

This finding indicates that the term womanhood is closely associated with different professional fields, highlighting the importance of gender identity in occupational settings. The frequency of such profession terms supports the idea that women’s contributions and roles in different fields are a part of linguistic usage.

Furthermore, the prevalence of “woman” in compound nouns and noun phrases indicates that there is a fertile semantic field of knowledge regarding women’s professions. This kind of linguistic environment signals both the diversity of work women are involved in and society’s recognition and acceptance of women’s involvement in a broad spectrum of professional fields.

However, additional research would be required to examine the specific character and pattern of these profession words and the accompanying social and cultural forces that propel their use and interpretation. Such an investigation would provide more insight into dynamics of the gender representation, occupational rankings, and social perceptions of women in the language terrain.

b) Girl

The etymology of the term “girl” shows that it was first used to address children of both sexes until the close of the 15th century. It was later applied more specifically to a female child or a little girl. In the lexicon, a comprehensive analysis finds numerous compound words and phrases with the term, including 66 instances. These lexical patterns embrace various personal and social features associated with girls such as their profession, role, work, lifestyle, social status, family relationship, interpersonal gender relationship, age characteristics, location, group affiliation, education, and judgments.

These linguistic forms cover a range of social and personal aspects relating to girls, including their job, way of life, social standing, family relations, gender relations with others, age, place, group memberships, education, and assessments. Some examples are given below:

Job, role, occupation: workgirl, bargirl, shopgirl, salesgirl, flowergirl, milk-girl, farm girl, callgirl, showgirl.

Way of life: playgirl.

Social standing: slave-girl.

Family relations: bachelor girl, hitched-girl.

Interpersonal gender relations: girlfriend, ex-girl.

Age characteristics: little girl.

Place: landgirl.

Group membership: gang-girl, choirgirl, g-girl, Campfire Girl.

Education: scholarship-girl, schoolgirl.

Assessments: sweetgirl, wondergirl, dream-girl.

Examples showing profession, position, and occupation include words such as “bargirl”, “shopgirl”, “salesgirl”, “workgirl”, “flowergirl”, “milk-girl”, “farmgirl”, “callgirl”, and “showgirl”. Each of the above words is a reference to the vocational function of a girl’s identity.

The word “playgirl” is applied within the context of lifestyle, naming a particular method of living or engaging in recreations.

“Slave-girl” refers to social role or status that belongs to a girl within a context.

Phrases like “bachelor girl” and “hitched-girl” explore family relationships, highlighting a girl’s relation to bachelorhood or wedlock.

Personal gender relations are reflected in phrases like “girlfriend” and “ex-girl”, to denote romantic or past romantic involvement with another person.

“Little girl” points to age qualities, emphasizing youth or tender years.

Specific locations or memberships are represented by terms like “gang-girl”, “landgirl”, “g-girl”, “choir-girl”, and “crewgirl”, which account for the identification of girls with specific locations, groups, or activities.

The educational dimension is represented by terms like “schoolgirl” and “scholarship-girl”, which suggest a girl’s engagement in school activities or scholarship.

Finally, lexical units such as “funnygirl”, “wondergirl”, “sweetgirl” and “dream-girl” identify subjective opinion or impressions of girls, placing strong emphasis upon their unique attributes, qualities, or beauty.

The etymology of the term “girl” ranging from its origins as a generic term referring to children in general to being used more as a specific designation for a girl or young woman demonstrates the existence of gendered identity and social expectation. This shows that gender is a relevant component in specifying the experiences and perceptions of subjects during their younger years.

The prevalence of numerous composite words and expressions linked to professions, positions, and occupations reflects the recognition of girls’ involvement in most fields of employment. The use of terms like “workgirl”, “shopgirl”, and “salesgirl” reinforces the recognition of girls’ active participation in the workforce, yet with a specific gendered distinction.

On the other hand, the application of terms such as “slave-girl” suggests the existence of hierarchies and social statuses which girls may be in certain situations. This is indicative of the importance attached to social status and how this influences the opportunities open to girls.

Terms such as “hitched” and “bachelor” girl place emphasis on familial relationships as well as the girl roles. This means that girl identity and expectation are closely tied to the families, such as their status being unmarried or married women.

Terms such as “gang-girl”, “landgirl”, “g-girl”, “choirgirl”, and “crewgirl” are evidence of the association of girls with places, groups, or activities. This suggests that girls are likely to form social relationships and participate in group affairs that create their sense of belonging and identity.

Thus, there are multiple aspects of girls’ identities, such as their career aspirations, social roles, family relationships, interpersonal relationships, age characteristics, affiliations, educational interests, and societal judgments. The analysis reveals the complex interaction between language, gender, social relationships, and personal identity construction.

c) **Lady**

The word “lady” started out as an indication of a woman of superior social status, traditionally used in connection with titles held by persons at the upper rungs of society. Examples include wives of marquises, barons, counts, viscounts, and peer’s daughters, dukes’, and counts’, aristocrats’, court ladies of rulers, and presidents’ wives. In addition, “lady” is used more broadly to cover women who are engaged in socially helpful pursuits, family members, or women who are on close or affectionate terms with men. In informal language, “lady” can be used to denote a mother, wife, or fiancée. In addition, it is used to indicate certain aspects of sex behavior, racial indexing, and citizenship: “lady of the evening”, “ladyboy”, “lady of color” etc.

In general, a semantic shift can be observed, as meanings are extended from objects associated with the upper class to those belonging to ranks lower on the social scale though it’s difficult to pinpoint exactly when the semantic shift began, on the one hand, because not all the texts are dated and, on the other hand, because a semantic shift typically happens over long time

A qualitative examination has identified as many as 51 collocations derived from the word “lady”. Out of them 17 units belong to women’s working profession. Hereinafter, below, we identify a few samples of categories that have the top index:

High social status and origin: “great lady”, “our sovereign lady”, “grandlady”, “milady”, “Lady of the Bedchamber”, “fine lady”, “First Lady”, and “lady-in-waiting”.

Low social status: “baglady”, “shopping-bag lady”.

Profession, position, occupation, or role: “saleslady”, “lady doctor”, “landlady”, “flower-lady”, “cleaning lady”, and others.

Family relations: “ex-lady”, “one’s good lady”, “someone’s young lady”, and “the old lady”.

Different collocations, with the word “lady” demonstrate its versatile usage across various fields and contexts. This illuminates the complicated way in which the word has been used to connote social status, occupational names, family relationships, and other facets of women’s lives.

The expanded use of “lady” to encompass women engaged in socially productive activities, family ties, and intimate associations with men shows the dominant gender roles and expectations in society. It indicates that women were generally defined and conceived in relation to their association with men and family and community roles.

The semantic shift observed in the application of “lady”, with titles extending from the upper class to lower ranks in the social hierarchy, indicates shifts in society and attitudes towards social status of a female. It could be a gradual process of accepting individuals from different sections and embracing their contributions, regardless of their initial social status.

The large percentage of words derived from “lady” in the domain of women’s professional careers shows the existence of gender-specific occupation and sensitivity towards women engaged in professional life. Nevertheless, the existence of high-prestige as well as low-prestige titles in the category also suggests the existence of social discrimination and bias in professional domains.

The diversity of word combinations derived from “lady” stresses the sophisticated way in which language represents and builds women’s identities. The use of these terms is not merely an indication of occupational roles but of family status, social standing, and evaluation, illustrating the intricate interaction of language, social observation, and individual self-conception.

d) Female

The term “female” originated from Middle French, borrowed in 1315 from that language, and traces its ultimate origin back to the Latin word “femella”, meaning a “young woman” and a diminutive of “femina” (woman). Used as both modifier and as headword in attributive-nominative phrases, “female” serves to give information about age boundaries, family affiliation, place and status, occupation or vocation of a woman, and interpersonal relationships between women. It must be added that in contemporary English, “female” is sometimes used with negative connotations, particularly when it is used in certain contexts, in such phrases as “female doctor”, “female leader”, or “female athlete”, where the gender is unnecessarily emphasized, potentially implying that being female is exceptional or noteworthy.

Feminine gender nouns in the English language can also reinforce traditional gender stereotypes and roles by implying that the female form of a word is a deviation from the “default” male one. This can contribute to the perception that women are “different” or inferior to men in certain roles.

We provide some examples exhibiting the diverse utilization of the word below:

Age-based characteristics: “female grownup”, “adult female”, “youthful female”, and “female child”. These express various stages in a woman’s life and create age-related distinctions.

Familial roles: “female parent”, “female successor”, “female offspring”, “female relations”. These words establish relations within the family, emphasizing the status and role of women in kinship relations.

High social status and origin: “female monarch”, “female ruler”. These examples present women in authoritative roles and emphasize their noble or royal origin.

Profession, position, occupation: “female doctor”, “female servant”, “female patient”. Such job titles indicate various professional roles and positions of women, demonstrating their participation and contribution in various fields.

Interpersonal relationships: “a female lover”, “female sweetheart”. These terms are used to explain romantic relationships and close relationships with women, emphasizing the gendered aspect of these relationships.

Feminine qualities: “female weakness”, “female charm”. These collocations stress specific qualities or attributes pertaining to femininity, highlighting social attitudes and women stereotypes.

5. CONCLUSION

The conducted analysis made it possible for us to identify specific groups of gender-specific words appropriate for women: “woman”, “girl”, “female”, “lady” and other less common words that unambiguously refer to adult human beings, female in their biology and capable of child-bearing. Furthermore, there is a vast range of linguistic terms specifically used to label female individuals, classified within numerous groups with a wide semantic variety.

GENERAL WORDS FOR WOMEN include terms like “she”, “dame” and “donna”, which are general terms used to describe women in general, marking their gender identity and presence.

AGE-RELATED FEATURES include terms like “girl”, “fille”, and “moppet”, which suggest various stages in a woman’s life, referring to her youth or tender years.

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS are conveyed via such terms as “daughter”, “mother”, “sister”, “bride”, “mother”, “wife” and others. These terms illustrate the roles women have within their families. Moreover, they reflect the diverse aspects of female identity shaped by familial dynamics.

REPRODUCTIVE FUNCTIONS are represented by words like “gravida” and “puerperal”, which specifically pertain to the process of pregnancy and childbirth, highlighting the biological aspects of women’s reproductive capabilities.

SOCIAL STATUS is reflected in terms like “queen”, which denote women in positions of power and authority, highlighting their regal or noble standing.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND BEHAVIOR are addressed through terms such as “lesbian”, “tribade”, “harlot”, “cocotte” and “virgin”, which encompass aspects of women’s sexual identity, behavior, and relationships.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC TRAITS are indicated by terms like “mestizo” and “mammy”, which highlight specific racial or ethnic identities associated with women.

WOMEN’S PROFESSIONS are reflected in such terms as, for example “matron” and “nanny”, being related to different areas of work.

FORMS OF ADDRESS encompass a wide range of terms including “miss”, “madam”, “ma”, “mamma”, “momma” and “mum”, which serve as modes of addressing or referring to women in different social contexts and relationships.

Through semantic analysis of these terms, it is possible to identify typical domains associated with women’s involvement in public and productive life. These domains include domestic work (both personal and employed), rural work, craftsmanship, and commerce; business ventures; religious activities; medical practice; political engagement; legal matters; administrative duties; law enforcement etc. However, it is important to note that over time, many terms referring to women in specific professions may undergo semantic narrowing or lose their original meaning as societal contexts and gender roles evolve.

The analysis also shows that societal advancements in gender equality have sparked shifts in language. Lately, there has been an increasing acknowledgment of the need for inclusive language that respects and acknowledges the diversity of gender identities. This has resulted in a move away from some gendered terms and the creation of more inclusive alternatives.

Some people, for example, prefer to use “woman” as opposed to “girl” when referring to adult female because “girl” can be seen as infantilizing or diminishing their maturity. In addition, terms like “lady” can have social class or formality connotations not always appropriate or wanted.

In terms of familial relationships, while gendered terms like “mother”, “wife”, and “daughter” continue to be the most commonly used, there has been a tendency towards more neutral or inclusive terms. Some individuals might prefer to use terms like “parent”, “spouse”, or “child” instead of gendered terms so that one does not assume one’s gender or family structure.

In sexual orientation and behavior, one should be cautious when using stigmatizing words or derogative terms. Within women’s work, there has been a shift towards acknowledging and valuing the diversity of women’s work roles. Terms like “geisha” and “nanny” can be too constricting to encompass the professional skills of women. Instead, more descriptive phrases like “professional caregiver” or “childcare provider” can be used to encompass a greater range of activities.

With regard to terms of address, there is increasingly a recognition that gender-neutral words are needed, which can be applied to someone of any gender. Words such as “miss”, “mademoiselle”, and “ma’am” have been challenged for their assumption of marital status or age. Rather, gender-neutral words such as “person”, “individual”, or “friend” may be more inclusive and respectful.

Language reflects attitudes and values in society. As society moves toward greater gender equality and openness, it may be anticipated that gendered language will continue to evolve and be replaced by more neutral terms.

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