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The most problematic area of English gender is that of the sub–system which classifies nouns into personal (human) and nonpersonal (non–human) on a psychological basis. Owing to the flexible nature of such a demarcation line, the sub-system is dynamic. (This should be contrasted with the static nature of the grammatical gender in Arabic). According to the sub–system, a noun maybe considered either personal or nonpersonal depending on the psychological attitude of the writer or the speaker. The sub–system has a vital function – both stylistic and semantic in literary writings. These semantic and stylistic nuances are untranslatable, since Arabic has a grammatical gender system and does not recognize a psychological sub–system.

* * * * * * * * *

19.   XII . 79.

The translator's brave attempt is praiseworthy, but hardly adequate.

4. Conclusion

English gender poses a number of problems for the Arabic translator. These may be classified into :

(a) Ambiguities of personal reference
(b) Problems of personal dual gender
(c) Untranslatability of certain aspects of the sub–system of English gender.

Translating the three–gender system of English into the two–gender system of Arabic may result in ambiguous pronominal reference. Ambiguity usually occurs with the rendering of the singular pronouns, *he she* and *it*, which are based on the notional idea of gender. Their Arabic, equivalents, هو and هي are based on the grammatical notion of gender. Pronominal reference may be a source of another type of difficulty. The Arabic translator may be required to make gender distinctions in the target language which are irrelevant in the source language. Such difficulties are likely to be faced by the translator when rendering the second person pronouns (sg and pl) into Arabic.

Personal dual gender may be used for both male nouns and female nouns. In English contexts where the gender of these nouns is not indicated because it is irrelevant, the Arabic translator is faced with a serious problem; in the target language the gender of these nouns has to be specified .

A shift from personal to non-personal gender is no less problematic for the Arabic translator. The subtle difference between (a) and (b) in each of the following examples is untranslatable.

17. (a) The Prussian government refused the offer. *They dared not cut themselves off from German national feeling* [25]

   (b) .... *It dared not cut itself off from* ...

18. (a) The baby is crying – *She must be hungry.*

   (b) .... – *It must be hungry.* [26]

The following incident, taken from an English–speaking film, is significant; it epitomizes the dilemma of the Arabic translator vis–a–vis this shift in the sub–system. Stated briefly, the films shows how the main character undergoes a profound psychological change as a result of the death of his much–cherished dog. He actually identifies his girl friend with his beloved departed dog, and treats the poor girl exactly as he used to treat the animal. Naturally enough he uses *it* for the girl. The following dialogue takes place between him and one of his friends, in the presence of the girl.

Friend: Who is she?

The boy : It's my friend.

Friend (shocked): Don't say it is — say, she is my friend. The Arabic sub–titles read

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[25] 17. (a) regards government as personal· A Shift in gender here also involves a shift in number (sg to pl).

[26] 18. (b) is ususlly uttered by a stranger, not by the baby's mother, who would normally use (a).

13 *He* was twelve years old and had lately grown rather stout, but *he* was still a majestic–looking pig. [21]

14. The camel kneels to receive *her* load. [22]

15. Save where the beetle wheels *his* droning flight and drowsy tinkings lull the distant folds
Save that from yonder ivy–mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such as, wandering near *her* secret bower,

Molest *her* ancient solitay reign. [23]

In the following example from Virginia Woolf it should be noted that the use of *he* for the moth heightens the symphathetic , feelings of the writer and the reader for the little creature. This vivid pictuere, charged with warm fellow–feelings, presents a real challengs for the translator, and the problem is at least partly due to the shift in the gender.

16. One could not help watching *him* (the moth). One was, indeed, conscious of a queer feeling of pity for *him*. The possibilities of pleasure seemed that morning so enormous and so various that to have only a moth's part in life, and a day at that, appeared a hard fate, and *his* zest in enjoying *his* meagre opportunities to the full, pathetic ... [24]

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21. George Orwell, Animal Farm (Penguin, 1967), p.5.

22. Quoted by O. Jespersen, A Modern English Grammar On Historical Principles (George Allen & Unwin, 1967), VII, 211.

23. Thomas Gray, Elegy Written In a Country Church Yard

24. The Death of the Moth and Other Essays (Penguin, 1961) pp. 9–10

A few examples will illustrate the point. The nouns *dog* and *hen* in English are usually non-personal and are normally referred to by the pronouns *it*. However, in certain contexts, they can be treated as personal nouns, for which the pronouns *he* and *she* may be used. In theory, all non-personal nouns in English may be regarded as personal. Thus people use *he* or *she* for their pet animals; car and train lovers may do the same. There is also a trend in the opposite direction: personal nouns may be treated as non-personal, although in practice, with the exception of a few types of nouns (see Fig:2 D and E), this is less frequent.

The semantic and stylistic implications of the dynamic nature of this sub-system have not been fully studied. However, the system, serves as a vital means for expressing emotive and metaphorical language, which conveys fine shades of meanngs and is frequently (but not exclusively) exploited by authors of literary works..

This dynamic sub-system has no equivalent in Arabic, where gender is a purely linguisitc phenomenon governed by grammatical . Hence, the various fine nuances that it expresses often exceed the limits of translatability. Gender in the following sentences, for instance, presents a serious problem for the Arabic translator ·

11. Here's a fly – kill *him*.

12. I had a dog – at least I had *him* for a few days until *he* ran away. [20]

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20. *Scott Fitzgerald*, The Great Gatsby, *p. 9.*

16

In examples 8 and 9 gender may be functionally or semantically irrelevant. [18] In No 10, on the other hand, the gender of 'mourners' is semantically relevant since it is a historical fact that these mourners were women; but this fact has been obscured by the English word. (The Latin word *Praeficae* is marked for gender.) .

10 .   The procession was marshalled by a dissignator, and compr ised musicians, hired mourners, sometimes also mummers.[19]

3.3.   Untranslatability of Certain Aspects of the Subsystem

In addition to the main gender system in English, which classifies   nouns into   masculine, feminine   and   neuter by means of substitutional pronouns, *he, she,* and *it* respectively, it is important to recognize a subsystem wich classifies nouns into personal (human) and non-personal (non-human). The two classes are referred to by *he, she* and *who* (personal), and *it* and *which* (non-personal). In Fig: 2 the former covers A-E, the latter D-J. The dividing line between these two sub-classes is not purely linguistic but rather psychological. Hence, the division is not rigid or fixed , and the sub-system may be described as 'dynamic' in contrast with the static nature of a gender system which is governed completely by linguistic rules.

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18 .   *It is relevant to the Arabic text, at least from the linguistic point of view.*

19 .   *A. Petrie, An Introduction to Roman History, Literature and Antiquities (OUP, 1963), P. 122; translated into Arabic by Yowell Y. Aziz (Mosul University Press, 1977) . Other problematic nouns in that sentence are dissignator, musicians and mummers.*

15

The Arabic equivalents of the English nouns are normally explicitly marked for gender, e.g. كاتب : كاتبة , مدير : مديرة and صديق : صديقة . The problem is less acute when these nouns are used in the singular, since as often as not their gender is made clear by means of a substitutional pronoun. Thus, the gender of employer in the following example is indicated by the proform *his* in the second sentence.

7 . She was shown into her old employer's office, and immediately she saw on *his* face the look of the woman at the club. [15]

However, there is nothing to indicate the gender of 'central' in

8 . I called Gatsby's house a few minutes later, but the line was busy. I tried four times; finally an exasperated *central* told me the wire was being kept open for long distance from Detroit. [16]

واخيراً اخبرني رجل متبرم في البدالة المركزية ان الخط ...

Nouns of dual gender in the plural are more problematic since substitutional pronouns for these nouns are not gender--sensitive in English (see Fig: I). In the following example there is nothing which indicates the gender of 'friends', and the translator is left helpless.

9 . By the time she was twenty she had a good job, her own *friends* a niche in the life of the town. [17]

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15 . *Doris Lessing,* The Grass Is Singing (*Heinemann, London,* 1974), *p.* 123.

16 . *Scott Fitzgerald,* The Great Gatsby, *P.* 162; *translated by Najeeb Al-Mani'.*

17 . *Doris Lessing,* The Grass Is Singing, *p.* 41.

The pronominal reference in ضدها is vague; it may refer either to بروسيا (Prussia) or to خطط (plans). [12]

3.2. Problems of Personal Dual Gender

Personal dual gender (Fig: 2,C) is a large class in English, which comprises

  (a) Nearly all nouns derived from verbs to denote agents, e.g. writer, teacher, typist, etc.

  (b) Similar nouns derived from other nouns, e.g. librarian, musician, novelist, etc.

  (c) Other unmarked nouns, e.g. friends, cousin, criminal, neighbour, etc. [13]

Nouns belonging to this class are characterized by

  (a) Possessing semantically significant gender since they are personal nouns

  (b) Having no explicit , ender marker

  (c) Being of dual gender, i.e., they are used for both male and female persons.

Arabic has few nouns which belong to personal dual gender (زوج : husband, wife; عجوز old man or woman).[14]

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12 . *In this particular example the problem may probably be solved if* العمل ضدها *is replaced ,by, for example* لافسادها *or* لافشالها

13 . *For a full discussion of these nouns, see O. Jespersen, Essentials, PP. 191-2.*

14 . *Strictly speaking* عجوز *is an adjective; but it can be used substantively. In all these words the tendency in Arabic is to use a feminine suffix in words referring to the female sex*

Most probably the Arabic reader would regard همساتها as refer-ring to ديزي (Daisy) and not to(همساتها)(murmur), although grammatically the reference may be to either of them.

Such ambiguities however are not really serious. They may be avoided if the translator is prepared to look for alternatives, even though this may sometimes mean sacrificing elegance of style. An obvious solution is to retain the noun : ذكريات البيت الى كرستين and حلاوة همساتها

Arabic has a better means of disambiguation were reference concerns the second person (singular and plural) and the third person plural, since these pronouns are gender-sensitive (see Fig: 3). The following examples can be problematic unless the gender of *you* and *they* is indicated somewhere in the larger context.

4 . 'Who are you?' I asked.   سالت : من انت، انت، انتما، انتم انتن
5 . Hardly had we walked for two minutes, when he said to me: 'They are my friends.[11]

ما ان مشينا دقيقتين حتى قال لي : اهما، انهم، انهن ...

The last example of ambiguity may arise from the fact that the third person singular feminine personal is also used for the third person plural non-personal in Arabic, as in the translation of
6 . If Prussia would not support French plans, the obvious alternative was to work with Austria against *them*.

اذا رفضت بروسيا مساندة خطط فرنسا، فالبديل الواضح لذلك هو الاتفاق مع النمسا للعمل ضدها.

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11 . *For problems of dual gender, see 3.2. below.*

12

English	Masculine (he)	Neuter (it)	Feminine (she)
Arabic	Masculine (هو)		Feminine (هي)

Figure: 4

In the following examples the pronominal reference is ambiguous in the Arabic translation.

1 . Then Christine took out the picture and the police inspector looked at *her*.

ثم اخرجت كرستين الصورة فنظر اليها ضابط الشرطة.

It is not clear whether اليها refers to كرستين (Christine) or to الصورة (the picture).

2 . As we approached the village, I began to think: This is the house where my uncle lived. *Its* sad memories had never left me for a moment.

ولما اقتربنا من القرية اخذت افكر : هذا هو البيت الذي كان يسكن فيه عمي. فقد عاشت ذكرياته الحزينة معي دائما.

The possessive pronoun in ذكرياته is ambiguous; it may refer to either عمي (my uncle) or البيت (the house).

3 . I've heard it said that Daisy's murmur was only to make people lean toward her; an irrelevant criticism that made *it* no less charming. [10]

لقد سمعتهم يقولون ان همهمات ديزي تجعل الناس يميلون الى الامام بغية الاصغاء اليها وهو انتقاد لا اهمية له سوى انه لا ينتقص من حلاوتها.

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10 . *Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (Penguin, 1968), P. 15; translated by Najeeb Al-Mani' (Baghdad, 1962)*

Masculine	Feminine	Both Genders
انتَ (you sg)	اﻧﺖ (you sg)	انا (I)
اﻧﺘﻢ (you pl)	اﻧﺘﻦ (you pl)	نحن (we)
ﻫﻮ (he, it) ﻫﻲ (she, they non-human)		انتما (you two)
ﻫﻢ (they human)	ﻫﻦ (they human)	ﻫﻤﺎ (they two)

Figure: 3

Concord involves verbs, adjectives and certain determiners, namely demonstrative pronouns and the numerals (cardinal and ordinal numbers).

3 . Areas of Difficulty

There are three areas of difficulty with regard to translating English gender into Arabic: ambiguities resulting from pronominal reference, problems of personal dual gender and untranslatability of certain semantic aspects of the subsystem of English gender.

3.1. Ambiguities of pronominal Reference

'Stylistically, gender can be a valuable tool of disambiguation and permits more freedom of word ordering.[9] Thus, the three--gender system (masculine, feminine and neuter) in English possesses greater potentialities for disambiguation than does Arabic with its two gender system (masculine and feminine). Figure 4 shows that ambiguities may occur with the translation of singular nouns.

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9   *Muhammad Hassan Ibrahim, Grammatical Gender, p. 28.*

Figure 2 shows that , besides the main gender system, there is a sub-system which classifies nouns into personal (human) and non-personal (non-human). For an Arabic translator this sub-system is highly significant probably more significant than the main system, a point which will be discussed in detail in 3.3.

Arabic, on the other hand, has a fully developed grammatical gender, which classifies nouns into masculine and feminine. Morphologically, the feminine form is considered the marked item and is usually derived from the masculine base by using

(a) the suffixal morpheme ة (-a, - at), e.g. معلم : معلمة (teacher),

(b) the replacive morpheme ending in ا or ى e.g. صفراء : اصفر (yellow), الصغرى : الاصغر smaller or smallest,

(c) zero morpheme, e.g. عجوز (رجل) : عجوز (امرأة) (old man or woman) .

Semantically, all nouns connected with male beings are masculine, those related to femlale beings are feminine. Gender in inanimate (sexless) objects is normally determined by gender markers. [8]

Arabic gender has the two syntactic functions of pronominal reference and concord. With regard to the former, all personal pronouns, with the exception of the first person (نحن أنا) and the dual forms (هما انتما) are gender-sensitive A further complication is presented by the fact that the reference for the plural non-human is the same as that of the feminine singular.

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8 . *For a full discussion of Arabic gender, see* W. Wright, A Grammar Of the Arabic Language, (CUP, 1971), pp. 177-87.

The relative pronouns *who* and *which* are also gender- sensitive, but the distinction is between human and non-human.

Thus, on the basis of the pronominal reference English , gender is usually classified into (a) masculine, (b) feminine and (c) neuter. However, since the correspondence between these three genders and the conditioning classes of nouns is not one to one, grammarians usually recognize, more than three classes .B. Strang, for instance, mentions seven[6]; whereas Quirk et al[7] distinguish ten classes, which will be reproduced here since the classification is significant for this study and will be referred to occasionally.
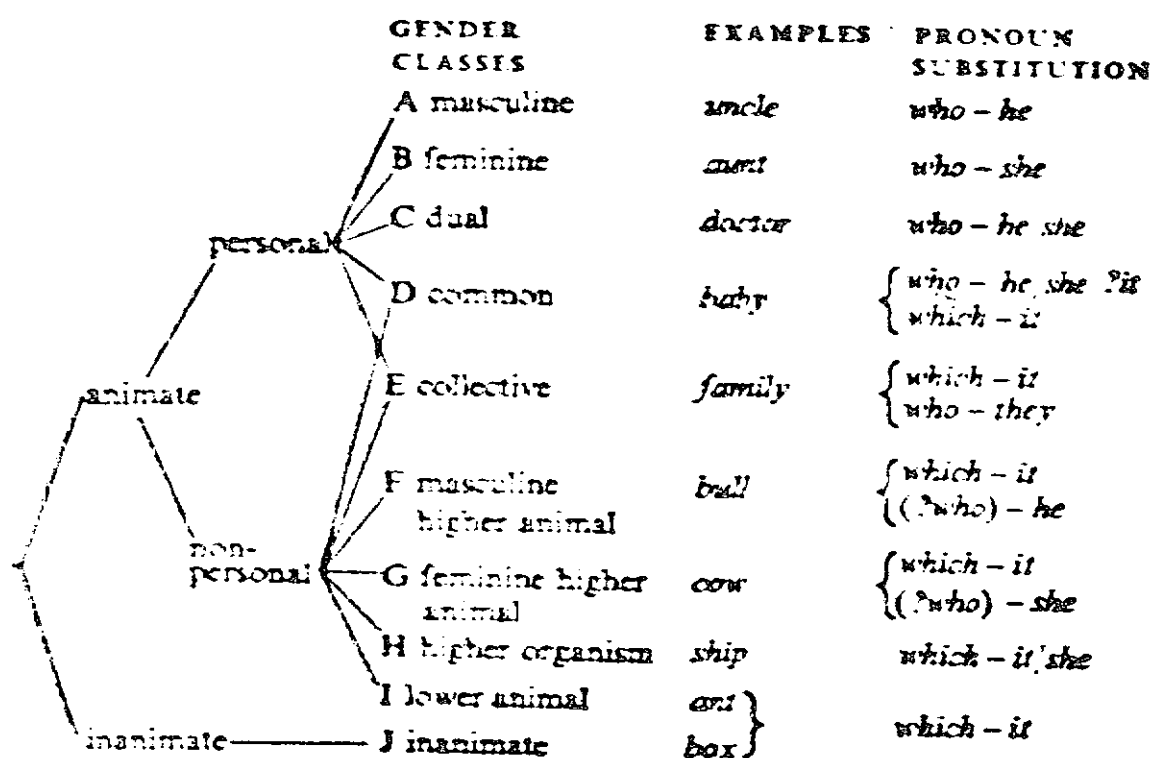
GENDER CLASSES	EXAMPLES	PRONOUN SUBSTITUTION
A masculine	uncle	who – he
B feminine	aunt	who – she
C dual	doctor	who – he she
D common	baby	who – he she ?it / which – it
E collective	family	which – it / who – they
F masculine higher animal	bull	which – it / (?who) – he
G feminine higher animal	cow	which – it / (?who) – she
H higher organism	ship	which – it she
I lower animal	ant	which – it
J inanimate	box	

personal — animate — non-personal — inanimate

Figure: 2

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6 . Modern English Structure (*Edward Arnold,* 1968), *p. III.*
7 . *R. Quirk, S. Greenbaum, G. Leech and J. Svartvik,* A Grammar of Contemporary English (*Longman Group,* 1972,), *p.* 187-92

8

gender respectively, but not because of any inflectional or derivaational morphemes. Their gender is inherent; it has a natural semantic basis, i.e., the correspondence between the notional category (sex) and the grammatical category (gender) is very close. This last characteristic is the rule in English gender. Very few nouns in English show explicit gender markers. These are nearly always male words with feminine derivational suffixes, e.g. fiance: fiancee, prince: princess, and Albert: Alberta.[4] These suffixes, with the exception of one or two, are either mildly productive or unproductive.

The syntactic function of gender in English is confined to pronominal reference and is found in the singular number of 3rd per son only. Figure I shows the basic system. (Cf. the subsystem in 3.3 below.)

Pronoun	Sex	Gender
I, we	male & female	masculine & feminine
you	male & female	masculine & feminine
he	male (human)	masculine
she	female (human)	feminine
it	—— (non-human)	neuter
they	male & female (human) (non-human)	masculine, feminine & neuter

Figure: I

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4 . *For a full account of these feminine morphemes, see O. Jespersen, Essentials of English Grammar (George Allen & Unwin, 1972), pp. 190-1.*

5 . *This suffix is not always a purely feminine marker; sometimes it denotes a pejorative sense as well, e.g. poet: poetess.*

7

In dealing with grammatical gender, we should take into consideration its morphological, syntactic and semantic aspects. The morphological aspect of gender is revealed by affixes added to various parts of speech. The syntactic function of gender concerns (1) concord (or agreement) and (2) reference achieved by substitutional pronouns sometimes referred to as proforms. Gender is semantically significant only in animate nouns.

The number of genders in languages which are characterised by grammatical gender ranges from two to thirty,[3] with two-and three-gender system being the most usual. Semitic languages usually have a two-gender system; whereas most of the Indo--European languages have two or three genders, and some have lost their grammatical gender completely (e.g. modern Persian). The main gender distinctions are usually made between **animate/inanimate, masculine/feminine/neuter, personal/non-personal** and **human/non-human**.

Gender is found in both English and Arabic; but the two languages show marked differences with regard to this category. Some of these differences pose a number of difficulties for translators. The present article attemps to point out the main problemsof translating English gender into Arabic.

2 . Gender in English and Arabic

There is little left of grammatical gender in modern English, and what remains of it is a purely selective category. Thus, *man, woman* and *book* belong to masculine, feminine and neuter

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3 . *Charles F. Hockett, A Course in Modern Linguistics (Macmillan,* 1958), *p.* 233.

6

PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATING ENGLISH GENDER INTO ARABIC

Yowell Y. Aziz *

I . Introduction

Gender is a secondary grammatical category [1] which classifies nouns for the purpose of pronominal reference and/or concord. It is not a universal category; it is not found in a number of languages and language families such as Finno-Ugric, Turkic and Mongolian. [2] It is important here to distinguish between grammatical categories and notional categories. Grammatical gender is a purely linguistic phenomenon with sex as the corresponding notional category. Moreover, these two are not necessarily always in complete harmony with each other. Thus, in German *das Weib* (woman) and *das Madchen* (girl) are neuter; in French *le professeur* (teacher) is masucline even when it refers to a woman. Nevertheless, it is a well-known fact that there is a high degree of correspondence between grammatical and notional gender, at least in the classification of animate nouns. Gender inanimate nouns is arbitrary.

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1 . *Other secondary categories are number and case; primary categories comprise parts of speech; see J. Lyons,* Introduction to Theoretical Lainguistics *(CUP, 1968), p. 274.*

2 . *Muhammad Hassan Ibrahim,* Grammatical Gender, Its Origins and Developments *(Mouton, 1973), p. 70.*