



GENDER NEUTRALITY IN TOURISM LANGUAGE: A LINGUISTIC APPROACH

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Abstract

This article analyzes the linguistic features of language used in the field of tourism in relation to gender neutrality. It examines the growing tendency to use neutral forms instead of gender-specific expressions in texts directed at guests and in promotional language. Furthermore, the article assesses the inclusivity level of tourism language based on gender sensitivity and cultural adaptability.

Keywords: gender neutrality, linguistics, tourism discourse, language policy, inclusive language, intercultural communication, terminology.

In the 21st century, gender issues have become one of the most pressing topics in linguistics. Particularly in the service and tourism industries, language is viewed not only as a means of communication but also as a cultural and ethical norm. While traditional language often included gender-specific expressions for men and women, modern language policy promotes a gender-neutral approach (Cameron, 1992). In the context of globalization, language has become a tool not only for communication but also for ensuring social equality and inclusivity. In the tourism sector — which involves cultural exchange and communication with a multinational audience — it is especially important for language to be gender-neutral. Therefore, gender neutrality has increasingly attracted the attention of linguists. This article analyzes how gender neutrality is expressed in tourism-related texts, what strategies are used in different languages, and how these relate to social factors. Gender neutrality refers to the use of language and expressions that are neutral regarding gender. In linguistics, this involves the use of non-gendered terms, pronouns, and job titles (Holmes, 2013). For example, in English,



instead of “steward” (male) or “stewardess” (female), the term “flight attendant” is used, which reflects a gender-neutral approach. Tourism texts often feature gender-specific expressions. For instance: In Uzbek: “hurmatli mehmonlarimiz, janoblar va xonimlar”

In English: “Ladies and gentlemen, welcome on board” However, modern language policy encourages replacing such expressions with gender-neutral forms, such as “Dear guests” or “Welcome everyone” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). These are considered inclusive and respectful.

In linguistics, gender neutrality is closely related to the concept of inclusive language — the use of expressions that include all genders without discrimination (Spender, 1980; Cameron, 2005). For instance, in English: “flight attendant” instead of “steward/stewardess” “server” instead of “waiter/waitress” “chairperson” instead of “chairman/chairwoman”

These are examples of the inclusive approach. In tourism, language serves to advertise, inform, and promote culture. Therefore, tourism texts should be as appealing, neutral, and inclusive as possible. For example: “Our guides are experienced professionals” – the word “guides” is gender-neutral. “Our hostess will welcome you” – gender-specific, not gender-neutral. In French, although gender is grammatically marked, new styles are being introduced: *les hôtes* (general for both genders) vs *les hôtesses* (female-specific). In Uzbek, although the language is grammatically gender-neutral, word choice can still reflect gender differences. For example: “Yo‘lboshchilarimiz sizga xizmat qiladi” – neutral. “Yo‘lboshchi ayol sizni kutib oladi” – gender-specific. In advertisements, expressions like “resort for women” or “adventures for men” are common. These reflect gender-based stereotypes and may be misleading or exclusionary (Crystal, 2010). In contrast, phrases such as “inclusive destination” or “relaxing space for everyone” are designed for a universal audience.

Strategies used to create gender-neutral language in tourism include: Neutral pronouns: “they/them” when gender is unknown. Job titles: “tour leader” or “host” instead of “guide”. Advertising expressions: “for everyone,” “inclusive,” “open to all” (Holmes, 2013). These tools make not only the language more inclusive but also promote cultural harmony. In linguistic approaches, both descriptive and prescriptive methods are used to implement gender neutrality



(Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). The descriptive method analyzes existing language tools, while the prescriptive method recommends new inclusive forms. Today, many international tourism agencies support the prescriptive model.

Gender-neutral language in tourism strengthens principles of inclusivity and respect. To include tourists from various cultural and social backgrounds, language must be free of stereotypes. This requires collaboration among linguists, translators, and marketing specialists. Gender-neutral approaches have become an integral part of modern language policy (Cameron, 1992).

Comparative Examples:

Form of Address	Uzbek	English	French
Gendered	Janoblar va xonimlar	Ladies and gentlemen	Mesdames et messieurs
Gender-neutral	Hurmatli mehmonlar / Azizlar	Dear guests / Everyone	Chers invités / Bonjour à tous
Job Titles	Uzbek	English	French
Gendered	Yo'lovchi ayol / erkak	Steward / Stewardess	Steward / Hôtesse
Gender-neutral	Ekipaj a'zosi	Flight attendant	Personnel de bord
Hotel Services	Uzbek	English	French
Gendered	Xonimlar uchun massaj xizmati	Massage service for ladies	Service de massage pour dames
Gender-neutral	Barchaga mo'ljallangan massaj	Massage service for all guests	Service de massage pour tous
Tour/Event Offers	Uzbek	English	French
Gendered	Ayollar uchun spa, erkaklar uchun golf	Spa for women, golf for men	Spa pour femmes, golf pour hommes
Gender-neutral	Har kim uchun mos dam olish dasturi	Relaxation program for everyone	Programme de détente pour tous
Announcements	Uzbek	English	French
Gendered	Mehmonxonamizda erkaklar uchun sauna	Men's sauna available in our hotel	Sauna pour hommes à l'hôtel
Gender-neutral	Sauna barcha mehmonlar uchun ochiq	Sauna available for all guests	Sauna accessible à tous les clients



These examples show that gender-neutral language enhances service quality and cultural inclusivity in tourism. While this trend is already widespread in English and French, it is gradually being introduced into Uzbek. Neutral expressions respect all genders, age groups, and social categories.

Key strategies for creating gender-neutral language in tourism

Avoid gendered terms (e.g., “waitress” → “server”)

Use general forms (e.g., “guide,” “staff,” “personnel”)

Use plural forms instead of singular gendered pronouns (“he/she” → “they”)

Visual neutrality – brochures should depict diverse groups rather than only men or women (Holmes, 2013)

Each language and society accepts gender neutrality differently. While it is widespread in Western languages, in Uzbek it is more context- and culture-dependent. Therefore, tourism texts should remain flexible and culturally sensitive. Gender neutrality in tourism discourse is viewed as an important social and linguistic principle. It contributes to making language more inclusive, encompassing all groups, and meeting modern communication standards. A comparative analysis of English, French, and Uzbek shows that using gender-neutral expressions plays a positive role in the development of tourism language.

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