

Language Discourse

General Rules for Acquiring a Gender Category in Early Childhood

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In Slavic languages there are few noticeable problems in acquiring gender of nouns. Both little children as well as foreign students of a language acquire this category automatically and mistakes occur only on rare occasions (e.g. *most*, m. and *mast*, f. etc.).

Variability can occur in other cases in analogy with the phenomenon of one noun having two genders: e.g. Mac. *pesok* 'sand', *sol* 'salt' etc. (m. and f., *pesok-ot* and *pesok-ta*, *sol-ot* and *sol-ta*)¹, with both forms normative in the standard language. In East Slavic languages there is a large set of words of the so-called common gender, e.g. *сирота* 'poor', *калека* 'invalid', *ханджа* 'hypocrite', which are, without derivation, understood as nouns of both masculine and feminine gender. Occurrences of this type can be found in other languages as well (cf. in German *der / die / das Joghurt*, and so on). This is similarly true in biaspectual verbs, which can be found in a great number of languages, cf. verbs ending in *-ira*, *-izira* – *telefonira(ti)*, *demonstrira(ti)*, *organizira(ti)*, etc.

In Indo-European languages, the grammatical category of gender has its origin in the semantic category of gender (gender, Lat. *genus* 'gender, origin'). In the historical development of the language, 'sex' is not the original meaning. It was developed as the result of the opposition of the active participant in the action (= agent, in the Nominative) versus other participants (in the Absolutive, later Accusative) (Dobrev: 167). Another opposition, from the viewpoint of activity (physically, activity is attributed to humans or animals), would be *human* : *nonhuman*, i.e. *personalia* : *impersonalia*, that is the opposition *animate* : *inanimate* (*animalia* : *inanimalia*). A person, as the doer of the action, is attributed with the quality of 'individuality' or 'countability', opposed to 'collectivity' or 'uncountability'. The morphological marking of this opposition can be found in nouns in several synthetic Slavic languages (and in the case of agreement, in adjectives as well, and so on): the Accusative form is the same as the Genitive form in nouns denoting animateness, and as the Nominative form in nouns denoting inanimateness. However, there is variability in some

¹ The number of these nouns is not large; except the ones we have already mentioned, there are the following in the standard language: *var*, *večer*, *žal*, *žar*, *kal*, *pamet*, *prav*, *sok*. There are some more nouns in the vernaculars, cf. *bolest*, *mozok*, *noč*, *den*, *reč*, cf. B. Koneski: 216.



languages, Ukrainian for example, *пасу коней / коні, гусей / гуси, корів / корови* (Bilodid 1969, 61). In Polish, this process relates only to masculine noun forms denoting people (though there are different varieties in the dialects) and are terminologically defined as masculine personal forms, cf. *Widzę tych panów profesorów : Widzę te wilki, konie*. There is a similar occurrence in Slovak as well: *Ňidim tie ňlky, kone*. In the Serbian languages masculine personal forms develop from dual forms. In Lower Serbian they are used regularly: *Wižim teju gosćowu* 'I am looking at these two guests' : *Wižim tej duba* 'I am looking at these two oaks'. Upper Serbian supplies a similar case: *Widžu teju hosćow : Widžu taj dubaj*. Today, the plural of these forms is lost in Lower Serbian², but it is retained in the Accusative in Upper Serbian: *Widžu tysh hosćow : Widžu te konje*. In Serbian, Croatian, east Slavic languages and so on, the form for animate versus inanimate is generalized, e.g. Russ. *Вижу город, камень, село : Вижу коня, человека, юношу* (cf. Serb. and Cro. *Vidim grad, kamen, selo : Vidim konja, čov(j)eka, mladića*). It thus becomes clear that gendered linguistic forms, whose basic function is the organization of text, contain a whole range of semantic categories in its historic development, among which we have mentioned: activity vs. inactivity, human vs. non-human, animate vs. inanimate, individual vs. collective, male vs. female, personal vs. impersonal, as well as concrete vs. abstract, among others.

The linguistic concept of gender in Slavic studies can be studied in multiple ways: as a lexico-semantic, semantic, derivational, morfosyntactic and formal-syntactic category. As a lexico-semantic and semantic category, gender is common to all languages and refers to above all, the natural or biological gender or sex of living beings. The semantic category of gender is primarily expressed with nominal roots *žen-*, *dev-*, *krav-* (semantic feminine) or *maž-/muž-*, *vo(l)-*, *konj-* (semantic masculine). Basic nominal lexemes and the greatest part of their derivatives agree with the adequate morphological gender assignment: *žena, devojka, devica, deva, krava* (formal-morphological feminine), or *maž/muž, vo(l), lav* (formal-morphological masculine). However, in one group of derivatives, especially those that have emotional, derogatory or diminutive meaning, formal grammatical gender does not agree with the semantic one, cf. in Macedonian and Bulgarian: (*edno*) *ženče, ženište, devojče, momiče*, but also (*edno*) *mažle, mažište, čoveče, vole* etc. Similar examples can also be found in other Slavic languages. The semantic category of gender,

² These forms were lost during the 20th century. Cf. *Wižim tyh gosćow : Wižim te duby*, at the beginning of the century and *Wižim te gosće : Wižim te duby*, in the second half of the century (Bogumil Śwela, *Grammatik der niedersorbischen Sprashe*, Bautzen, 1952: pp. 12-16).

therefore, refers to the biological gender, that is sex.

For nouns and pronouns, this category is selective. Common forms occur in some cases, e.g. in pronouns *što* (Russ. *što*, Br. *što*, Ukr. *що*, Serb. *što*, Cro. *što*); *koj* (*koj, kto, ko, tko, ko*); *sè* (*vse, sve, use*) and others, used for all three genders.

On the level of derivation, gender is assigned with certain suffixes and can also express other functions – derivational suffixes are added to stems which can be masculine or feminine in form but semantically neutral with regard to the category of gender. From the semantic point of view, the nouns with the selective masculine or feminine gender, e.g. *glušec/miš, kukavica, ververica* require additional information to express gender: female, male, an attribute, etc. If the basic, neutral form is masculine: *volk/vuk, zajak/zec, lav, magare/magarac* etc., the marked feminine form can be derived from it: *volčica/vučica, zajačica/zečica, lavica, magarića* etc. If the basic form is feminine (*ajkula, guska, kukavica* etc.), the masculine form is not derived. Exceptions are rare, cf. Pol. *geś* 'goose' and *geśior* 'gander', Mac. *žaba – žabak*, Pol. *gwiazda (filmowa)* 'a film star': *gwiazdazdar (filmowy)* (Pjanka 2002: 28). There are suppletive forms in certain cases: *kokoš(ka) – petel/petao, krava – vo(l), bik, konj – kobila, (j)elen – srna*. There is no gender assignment in terms of foreign origin, cf. *šimpanzo, poni, kakadu, kolibri*. When there is a need to identify the sex of the animal, it is additionally pointed out. In the language of poetry and in personification, sex is determined by the grammatical gender, e.g. in fables *Za Lisicata i Štrkot* (The Fox [m.] and the Stork [f.]) etc.

The category of gender is expressed morphosyntactically in adjectives and adjectival words in singular (in plural there is only the form for number with the exception of the numerals [*dva, dve/dvije* and *dvoje, oba, obe/obje, oboje*], participles, etc.). In these cases, the morphosyntactic category of gender is a formal category that has no connection with the semantic category because it cannot express sex directly. Adjectives and adjectival words always contain gender assignment because they agree with nouns in all formal-grammatical categories, except in cases of borrowed adjectives: *super kola* and *super čovek; bordo bluza* and *bordo kaput* as well as: *grao, mini, midi* etc.

The vocabulary of professions is a special subgroup in all Slavic languages. The basic form can be masculine: *asistent, sekretar, profesor* and the feminine form is derived from it using suffixes: *asistent-ka (-kinja, -ica), sekretar-ka (-ica), profesor-ka (-ica)*; or the masculine form is used as a noun of the common gender: *toj/on e/je inženier, profesor i taa/ona e/je inženier, profesor*, which then agrees with the verb in the feminine form: *ona je l(i)ječnik i ona je rekla ...*, Russ. *врач пришла и сказала*. Deriving feminine forms using suffixes has recently become



rather intensive; the tendency is especially prominent in Croatian and Slovene, it can be found in Macedonian, as well, and is evident in French, Italian and other languages. In East Slavic languages, nouns formed in that way have a derogatory meaning: *врачиха, професоршиа, деканшиа*, etc. In Macedonian, both the masculine and the feminine forms can be used in the predicative position, even in cases when the feminine form is known and neutral in style: *Jas sum student (studentka) na FF. Jas kako Makedonec (Makedonka) možam da kažam.*

Some words of foreign origin are treated as nouns of the common gender and therefore carry no information on the biological gender, e.g. *ataše, buržua, konferansie*; also *broker, diler, programer*, etc. Information on gender can be discerned from other parts of the sentence. This type of forms can be found in all Slavic languages, but only in Polish they are terminologically defined as feminine personal forms³ – a corresponding counterpart of the mentioned masculine personal forms. The nouns belonging to this group are homonymic with the corresponding masculine nouns: *ten doktor : ta doktor*, but differently from the masculine nouns, which are normally inflected in the oblique cases, the feminine nouns are uninflected: *Nasz doktor przyszedł : Nasza doktor przyszła*; Gen. *Nie ma tu naszego doktora : Nie ma tu naszej doctor*; Instr. *Pójdę tam z naszym doktorem : Pójdę tam z naszą doktor*, etc. All the words that are congruent with this type of nouns have corresponding categories (gender, number, case), except feminine personal nouns with zero ending, which neutralize the categories because they stand in opposition to the masculine personal nouns (Pjanka, 2002: 48). In this sense, the suffix *-ist, -ista* is of some interest – a productive, international suffix of Greek origin, used for deriving *nomina agentis* from Greek and Latin stems with the following meaning 'a person studying a specific scientific discipline', that is with the meaning of profession or status (*slavist, lingvist, romanist, germanist, violinist, violončelist, harfist, ekonomist*), or ideological and political affiliation (*komunist, socijalist, kapitalist, materijalist, idealist, secesionist*), view-point (*pesimist, optimist*), etc. Some modern European languages accept the form *-ist* (German, English, French, Russian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Slovene), while other prefer the form *-ista* (Polish and Czech). In Serbian, there is some variability, already attested in Vuk Karadžić's dictionary: *evangelist*, but *jurista*. In Daničić's dictionary one can only find *-ista*, while in modern Serbian both forms are used: *komunist(a), statist(a), ekonomist(a)* etc. Contemporary tendencies of deriving forms in both genders have in recent years resulted in deriving feminine forms using suffixes in Croatian,

³ This term has been used since the beginning of the 20th century. Cf. Pjanka, 2002: 47.

Slovene and other languages.

Little children acquire gender of nouns spontaneously with the natural gender, i.e. sex of living beings, and insert it into the sentence according to its ending, so that a further explanation is not needed, cf. Mac. *Eno nose, ena gaa, en vat...* (15 months of age), *Topka gomana, mama moja*, (18 months); Serb. *nosić mali, ustica mala* (21 months) (V. Vasić, 101), etc. Mistakes or variability occur in this early phase only when two or more words with the same meaning are used or when there is an exception from the general rule, cf.

- *Zemija, mamo!* (Lift her up, Mummy!)
- *Kogo da go zemam?* (Who should I lift up?)
- *Bebeto*. (1, 6)⁴ (The baby. Mac. *bebe* – n.)

In another case, the girl's name is used in the same context (1, 6). Variability of this type is however lost at the beginning or during the third year at the latest.

- *Mamo, zemija!* (Lift her up, f.)
- *Kaži mi ubavo što sakaš!*
- *Mamo, zemi go deteto!*
(Lift him up, m., Lift the child up)
- *Ušte poubavo.*
- *Mamo, zemi me, moim te.* (1, 10)
(Lift me up)

Cf. also *Evo ga ni(is)ki konj* (Prebeg – Vilke, 54); *Ne dam ni jednu igračku, ni ovog pajaca, što je moj, ni mog slona* (Prebeg – Vilke, 58). The following Serbian examples belong to the same type: *Pogledaj što će ova lutka biti lepa* (V. Vasić, 64); *Tu ima jedan miš* (V. Vasić, 67); *Mala, mala, malica, Slatka, slatka* (of a sister) (V. Vasić, 74); *Majmunice jedna* (Prebeg – Vilke, 47); *Evo ga krompir* (V. Vasić, 78); *Ja ću ti dati jednu lepu olovku* (V. Vasić, 80); *Evo ti onaj gliser što sam ga video u ...* (V. Vasić, 85); *Onaj bata doš'o sa biciklom ..., Onaj čika video da nema krušaka* (S. Savić, 52); *Ja sam pokijao (pokrio) Igoja* (Prebeg – Vilke, 48).

When learning to speak, more as an exception than as a rule, there are some children who prefer using masculine or feminine gender depending on their own sex, even at the age of three: *Eden bebe, eden stolče*, etc. However, these occurrences are mostly lost by the end of the child's third year. Furthermore, for four- and especially five-year-old children, the world is clearly divided into 'male' and 'female' parts, so that they go into the other extreme:

⁴ The numbers in brackets refer to the children's age (years and months).



- *Jas sum Makedonka, ti si Makedonka, tato e Makedon.* (3, 6)
- *Ova e vrabec, a drugoto e vrapka, neli?* (3, 6)
- *Majkata Barbika, tatkoto Barbik i deteto Barbiče.* (4, 6)
- *Ajde da igrame komšii. Jas ќе bidam komšika, a ti ќе bideš komšik.* (5)
- *Mamo, zošto mieš tolku jagodi?*
- *I nie so tato sme duši, neli?*
- *Da, duši ste. I ti si duša, i tato e duš.* (3, 8)

In M. Julafić, (20 and 46) we find a number of examples of the same type, cf. *Ljube se ljube ... praded i prababa, lončić i lončica, keks i keksica, oči i očice, Bosna i Šabac, pečat i pečatnica, Ćuprija i Paraćin, Mladenovac i Mladenovica, far i farica, Tuzla i Tuzlačica, Šabac i Šabica, beba i patuljak, koka i kokić* (20), also: from *lasta – lastan, lastican*; from *puhica – puh*; from *buva – buvan*; from *orao – orlovisa, orla*; *zmija – zmij, zmikanac, zmikac, foka – fokan, foks; osa – osan, osibac, oskan, osko; svinja – svinj, svinjkac; kokoška – kokoškanj; dažddevnjak – dažddevnjanka, dažddevica; pčela – pčelan, pčelko, pčelkan, mužopčel; pacov – pacovka, pacovica, pacica* (46), etc.

- *Kako može Ohrid da bide toj, a Bitola da bide taa. A Skopje? što e Skopje? Toa? Pa Skopje e najgolem grad!?!* (5, 6)

Cf. in Russian - *Папа - он? Надо бы пап, а не папа! Пшеница - мама, а пшено - ее деточка. - Папа, ты мужчин!* etc.; also - *У меня на пальце царап! Не царап а царапина. - это у Муси если, - царапина, а я мальчик! У меня царап!* (Čukovskij: 43, 44).

- *Ti si mi edno malečko vrapčence!*
- *Ne, vrapka. Neli taka treba da se kaže za devojče!* (5, 5)

There are a number of nouns of the so-called common gender, that is nouns with the same form for both masculine and feminine, in Russian. That phenomenon is repeated in other Slavic languages as well. The transformation is done according to the same pattern in all cases, cf. *Ты будешьмой слуг!* (3, 0); - *Тебя пьяниц сбил?* (3, 1), also - *Не командир, а командирка! Это же девочка!* (6, 0); - *Почему ты сказал, что это дворник? Это же тетя!* (4, 0), etc. (Cejtlin: 56-57). In analogy, - *Kako mo`e toj da bide pijanica?! Ne e tetka! Toj e pijanic.* (3, 0).

- *Mamo ne go sakam Nino, toj mi vika deka sum budala. Neli mamo toj e budal koga mi vika taka?* (3, 6)

Pijanica, sluga, budala (Russ. *дурак*), etc. would represent the same problem in most Slavic languages. In Old Slavonic, the number of masculine nouns ending in -a, -ja in Nominative singular (*vladika, sudija, sluga*) was limited in reference to feminine nouns. A large number of them were already attested in the 10th and 11th centuries. There are more than one thousand nouns of that type in modern Slavic languages, with a great number of expressive words among them: *palikuća, izdaica* (common gender), Europeanisms as *kolega*, adapted words of Turkish origin as *komšija, konduradžija, saatdžija* (with suffixal feminine derivatives: *komšijka/komšinica*), etc. A number of words belonging to this vocabulary, actively used until 30-40 years ago, are now considered archaisms, historical expressions, colloquialisms and so on, but they still form a part, whether active or passive, of the vocabulary of these languages.

Colours play the crucial part in this male-female world in some cases of gender, i.e. sex, assignment:

- *Ovaa kocka e majkata, zatoa e crvena.* (2, 10)
- *Jas ne sum maško da igram so plava topka!* (3, 1)
- *Imam eden crn pištol. Ovoj rozoviot e pištolka. A ova e pištolče. Vidi kolku e malečko.* (3, 2)
- *Ваня, какой цвет тебе больше нравится: красный или розовый?*
- *Голубой: я же не женщина, я - ребенок!* (2, 4)

Since the rule of analogy has great importance in children's language in their first five or six years of life, we should pay a special kind of attention to words which, because of their particular qualities exceed the usual limits set (or understood) as the norm. This, first and foremost, refers to the masculine nouns ending in -a, feminine nouns ending in a consonant, foreign words (loans), etc. Problems occurring in those cases are also found in foreign students of a second language, e.g.

- Eden den i eden nok.* (4); *Eden glupos(t) napraviv včera.* (3, 8); *Tuka se stava eden tečnost...!* (5, 6); *Mamo, izbriši mi go krvot!* (4, 6).

Analogous examples can be found in Russian children, as well: - *Печьсам топится?* (3); - *другим солем посоли!* (3), etc. (Cejtlin: 56).

- *Mamo, i Ljubiša beše so nas na Vodno.*
- *Koj Ljubiša? Tatko mu na Miro?*

- *Ne taa Ljubiša, druga.*
- *Ljubiša e žensko ili maško?*
- *Maško e.* (3, 4)

- *Sakam da ja vidam Novica!*
- *Što ti e tebe Novica?*
- *Dedo.* (2)

These examples may lead us to conclude that there is no variability in children's gender assignment, but agreement of masculine nouns ending in –a, and feminine nouns ending in a consonant is done analogically to feminine and masculine nouns, respectively.

Foreign words enter the system with their external formal characteristics and are normally used in speech, e.g. '*Ti pritisni go plejot*', '*Kade e plejot?*', '*Ni se rasipa videoto*', '*Ova e od printerot*', etc. Problems occur only in words with a peculiar form which don't fit the established system automatically, i.e. in words where the problem cannot be solved by using patterns already known: - *Mamo, ajde denes na plaža da go zememe kanu.* (3, 10) - *Rasipante videovi ne peat?* (4, 8).

Special attention should be given to an interesting characteristic not found in all children, but not rare either a conscious change of gender as the means of giving expressive meaning to the utterance. B. Szczepicska, writing of the extent of this phenomenon in Polish, concludes that it is not a local or national characteristic, but a characteristic that belongs to all children (B. Szczepicska: 249-263).

Examples of gender switch can be found in address and do not belong only to the children's language: *mamuš*, *babuš*, *Kikuš* (*Kiki* < *Kristina*), *Olič* (*Olga*), etc. Some children add the suffix *-an* when addressing: *maman*, *tatan*, *baban*, etc. (since 16 months of age), some *-ana*: *mamana*, *babana*, *tatana* (17 months), etc. In these forms there is a feeling of overly stressed expressive meaning, conveyed by the means available to a child in its first years. The agreement is done regarding the ending of the word: *moeto tatence*, *dedule*, *mojata bebuška*, i.e. non-agreement between the natural and grammatical gender is noticeable. Similar examples can be found in other languages as well, cf. Pol. *chłop* 'man, male' : *chłopina* (m.f.), *pies* 'dog' : (ten/ta) *psina* (m.f.), along *psisko* (neuter); *Maria* : *Marysia* : (*ta moja* / *ten mój*) *Maruś*; Mac. *Lena* : *Lenče(to)*, etc. But there are some opposite cases, as well. Cf. the following: a child listens to the 'Zemi momče Makedonče' song. It starts to sing, then stops to think and 'solves' the problem: - *Zemi momec Makedonec...* (5, 6) How can he be *momče* when he is supposed to be big?

Special attention should also be paid to neologisms and

coined words, in which gender assignment is obviously not only a grammatical marker, but also has an additional meaning – the masculine represents something that is bigger, stronger, and, according to some examples, terrifying, unpleasant and negative, while the feminine represents something small, more delicate and more positive:

- *Zemi si go perničeto!*
- *Ne, sakam dadeš pe(r)nikot.* (1, 6)
- *Mamo, do(j)de medot?* (1, 8)
- *Vidi kakov drv!* (3, 5)

The examples of the type *pernikot* (<*pernica*, *perniče*, 'pillow'), *medot* (<*mečka*, *medo*), *drv* (<*drvo*) etc., are examples of the distinctive meaning: *medvjedić* (*meće*, in Mac. neuter) is something a child plays with and is not scared by, *medved* (*mečka*, in Mac. feminine) is something a child saw in the zoo, but has no relation towards it, i.e. the term is neutral, while *medot* (masculine coined word) is something big, terrifying, and, in this context, scares children. In the examples with the pillow and the tree, evidently, the form of the word implies the size of the object or concept.

The following examples are similar in type: *lažica – lažička – laža – laž*; *viluška – viluvče – viluša – viluš*; *kapka – kapkička – kapa – kap*; *praska – praskička – prasa pras*, etc. As can be seen, a child understands the basic form as a diminutive, but still not expressive enough, so it derives other forms. *Laža*, *viluša*, *kapa*, *prasa* have the function of the basic or neutral form, and in the next phase an augmentative is derived from it: *laž*, *viluš*, *kap*, *pras*. The Polish children derive new forms according to the same pattern: *śłomka – śłomeczka – śłoma – śłom*, *śłomek* (< *śłoma*, *śłomka*), *kredek* (<*kredka*), *szapuch* (<*czapka*), *filan* (< *firanka* 'curtain'), *gąb* (<*gąba* 'gaba'), *żelafek*; *żelafonek*, *żelafka*, *żelafoxa*, *żelafa*, etc. to denote a giraffe etc. (Szczepicska: 252-261). Similar examples can be found in H. Zgulkova: *gdzie jest moja łycha 'łyżka'*; *zaraz ubiorę te paputy*; *ja idę na baję*; *dobranocha* etc. (Zgółkova: 40-43), and are not unfamiliar to Russian children, cf. *балалайка – балалая*, *ложка – лога*; *подушка – подуха*, *одуванчик одуван*, etc.; also *коша* from *кошка*; *бела* from *белка*; *верева* from *веревка*; *игола с нитой* from *иголка с ниткой*⁵, etc. (Čukovskij: 15, 64).

In general, the masculine gender, like father, implies

⁵ The explanation of the last examples can be connected with a peculiarity of the Russian personal names, where, due to the tradition, the suffix *-ka* gives the utterance a derogatory meaning, cf. A. Menac, *Ruska imena u hrvatskom književnom jeziku*, *Onomastica Jugoslavica*, Zagreb 1982: pp. 129-134. An illustration can be found in Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy's *Resurrection*. At the



something big, even terrifying:

- *Kolku godini ima tatko ti?*
- *Mnogu.*
- *Kolku mnogu?*
- *Poveće od majka mi.*
- *Zošto taka?*
- *Zatoa što poveće jade.*
- *Kako taka?*
- *Pa takvi se tatkovcite.* (3, 6)

- *Gledaj, mamo, mnogu b(r)otčinja. Ovie malečkite se dečinia, ova, pogolemoto, e majkata, a ovoj što e najgolem e tatkoto.* (3, 4)

- *Jas prvo bev vo stomakot, pa izlegov malo, malo bebe, pa stanav golemo bebe, pa porasnav malo dete, ke porasnam i golemo dete, pa ke stanam majka... i najmnogu koga ke porasnam – ke stanam tatko!* (3)

There are three teapots of different sizes on the table.
(From Vanja's diary):

- *А это у них мама, а это у них папа.*
- *А это кто?*
- *А это чайник Ваня.* (2, 2)

Similar examples can be found among Serbian, Bulgarian, Czech and other Slavic children⁶, it is, therefore, a common children's characteristic. We have already seen that the analysis of a range of other characteristics of children's language can lead to the same conclusion. It is exactly this non-linguistic dimension of a range of questions referring to the characteristics of children's language that prompts us to see that in this field in general, or in concrete situations, we could study the issue considered in this part in an organized way, as a team. Systematic research can be conducted, as in the context of family, as a micro-community, and in institutions for children, the influence of which, according to the analyses

beginning of the novel, while introducing the main character, Katarina Maslova, Tolstoy writes: «Growing up [...] the girl turned out half servant, half young lady. They called her Katusha, which sounds less refined than Katinka, but is not quite so common as Katka». The same with: «Она коша, потому что хорошая; а когда она будет плохая, я назову ее кошка», K. Čukovskij: 64. However, the children's need for making new words seems more important in this case than the explanation itself.

⁶ We limit ourselves to Slavic children only, i.e. Slavic languages, so that we can draw parallels made possible by their common linguistic basis.

and conclusions of many eminent experts on this problem area⁷, is more significant than we would imagine, and, in any case, more significant than the influence of the family, so too in the interlingual, common Slavic level.

In the end, we can conclude that the category of gender, whose basic function is the organization of a text, has had a whole range of semantic categories in its historical development, among which we can mention: activity vs. inactivity, human vs. non-human, animate vs. inanimate, individual vs. collective, male vs. female, personal vs. impersonal, and concrete vs. abstract, among others.

From the linguistic point of view, the concept of gender in Slavic studies can be studied as a lexico-semantic, semantic, derivational, morphosyntactic and formal-syntactic category.

In Slavic languages the suffix -a is associated with the feminine gender because of a great number of nouns that are outside the semantic category of gender, i.e. as a formal label that requires the feminine gender assignment, while the consonantal ending of a word is associated with the masculine gender. In Macedonian, nouns that bear the semantic category of gender in the opposition female vs. male, can be represented in the following way: feminine nouns in all three groups (*majka*, *arhitekt*, *devojče*) and masculine nouns in only two (*čovek*, *momče*).

In acquiring their mother tongue, children have no difficulty in understanding the rules, but have problems with exceptions, because in the first phase they mainly form their linguistic expression in analogy. Deviations from the norm are dealt with without special problems until the beginning of school age. Problems of special semantic categories of different gender forms, additional meanings of some suffixes etc. are solved until that period.

All this, and especially the fact that the same innovations, the same meanings (or nuances of meanings) of words, different from those in a particular language, can be found in a large number of children with different mother tongues, leads us to think that in this field in general, or in some concrete situations, the issue considered in this paper should be studied further and that we should work as a team. This non-linguistic, non-national, even non-cultural, non-social, etc. dimension opens a whole range of

⁷ Slobin Dan, On the Nature of Talk to Children, in: E. Leneberg, *Foundations of Language Development*: pp. 283-298, points out that children do not always get the basic linguistic data from parents and that parental influence is in some cultures negligible in pre-school period when a child acquires the language actively. B. Blount is of the similar opinion: in: *Ethnography and caretaker – child interaction in talking to children. Language Input and Acquisition*, edited by Catherine E. Snow and Charles A. Ferguson, Cambridge University Press: pp. 297-309, he claims that the role of the educator is crucial in the development of speech in pre-school children.



questions and problems, which we could not have imagined. On the one hand, these are characteristic similarities and differences in acquiring languages in children with different Slavic languages as mother tongues. On the other hand, they are the connections between languages we are not aware of, and children, in acquiring a language as a strong framework, feel them, as well as the way of thinking, the relation towards different derivatives etc. In any case, a lot is yet to be done in that field.

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Gender in Finnish Language Code and Use

Liisa Tainio

Gender in Finnish language code

Finnish is one of the Uralic (Finno-Ugric) languages belonging to a group of languages with no grammatical gender system in code (Hellinger & Bussman 2001, Laakso 2005; for the description of Finnish language code and use, see Hakulinen et al. 2004). By grammatical gender system, linguists usually mean that the language does not have a nominal classification in terms of gender. That is, the words in Uralic languages are not divided into subclasses according to their more or less overt connection to sex or gender as (for example) in German, which has three classes of nouns, feminine, masculine and neutral. The Uralic languages also have only one personal pronoun in the 3rd person singular and plural: the Finnish singular personal pronoun is *hän*, which refers both to male and female persons, in contrast to, for example, English, which have two pronouns in singular, he and she. In addition, at least in Finnish, few words can be categorized as generic masculine forms.

Although this overall description of Finnish seems to give a picture of language that is able to serve the equality and the transgression of genders there are some asymmetric tendencies that could be mentioned concerning the status of genders in language structure. These asymmetric tendencies, however, can be seen as part of the lexicon, not as part of the grammatical system of the language. The features I would like to mention here include the feminine derivational suffixes; the lexically gendered masculine forms that are 'conventionally' used as gender neutral terms; gendered asymmetries in the lexicon referring to 'human beings'; and some syntactic phenomena that work between grammar and text (see also Laakso 2005). Some examples of these features of Finnish, are the following.

Feminine derivational suffixes

There are two feminine suffixes in Finnish, namely *-tAr* and *-kkO*, for example,

<i>opettaja</i>	'teacher'	<i>opettajatar</i>	'female teacher'
<i>nuori</i>	'young'	<i>nuorikko</i>	'young wife'

Even so, only the first one of the suffixes is currently somewhat productive, whereas the latter one (in addition to two even more rare suffixes which are not mentioned here) is even more obsolete than *-tAr* at the moment. Nevertheless, what should be mentioned is that the derivative system in Finnish is

highly asymmetric in terms of gender. For instance, there are absolutely no examples of masculine derivative suffixes in Finnish or in the other Uralic languages (Laakso 2005, 110-118).

From the point of view of gender equality, this asymmetry could be seen as partial evidence for the argument of male bias in the Finnish lexicon. It has also been suggested that in Finnish the male serves as the norm of the human being in the lexicon and in the language use, and that 'female' is always connected with sex / gender (Engelberg 2001; Niemikorpi 1998). There are other asymmetries that support this suggestion, and I will now present and analyze them in more detail.

Lexically gendered masculine

Although there are no derivative suffixes that mark the masculine gender, there are several compound words that end with the noun *mies* 'man'. These include occupational terms such as *putkimies* which literally translates as 'pipe-man', meaning 'pipe layer, plumber' and everyday terms such as *puuhamies*, literally 'activity-man', meaning 'somebody who is responsible for the organization of activities'. These kinds of words can refer both to males and to females (Engelberg 1998, 2002; Laakso 2005, 120). It should be noted, however, that there are no feminine counterparts for these terms, for example, the term *putkinainen* 'pipe-woman' meaning 'female plumber' is never used. The term *puuhanainen* 'activity-woman' has been used in contexts where it refers exclusively to a female person, and the term has a tinge of humor in it. On the other hand, terms such as *puuhanainen* could never refer to a male person. In general, in Finnish compound words, *mies*, 'man', is used most often as a head of a word, and as I pointed out, these words can be used in contexts where they also refer to women. Yet the reverse does not apply to the compound words with the word *nainen* 'woman' as the head word. Although most of the occupational terms with generic masculine have been replaced today by gender-neutral terms (for example, *lehtimies* 'newspaper-man' by the term *journalisti* 'journalist'), some have remained in use.

There are some competing arguments around the interpretation and semantics of these kinds of words. Some say that, for instance, words like *marjamies* 'berry picker', literally 'berry-man', and *virkamies* 'officer, official', literally 'office-man' are definitely gender-neutral and thereby refer both to males and females (Eronen 1999). However, there is some evidence against this view. It has been shown, for example, that in reading the sentence *Hän on tavallinen valtion virkamies* 'One is a typical civil servant (lit. 'office-man') of the state' as many as 80% of the interviewees said that the word *virkamies* refers solely to men or mostly to men (Engelberg 1993). This is even more peculiar in the



light of the fact that in Finland, most of the workers who hold the title *virkamies* are women.

On the use of lexically gendered masculine words and their interpretation in texts, the following is an example, an extract from a popular basic textbook for sociologists:

Professoria arvioivat tutkijana niin toiset tiedemiehet, opettajana hänen oppilaansa ja ehkä hallintomiehenä tai juonittelijana hänen virkaveljensä tiedekunnassa (Allardt & Littunen 1964, 15).

The professor is assessed as a researcher by other scientists (lit. 'science men'), as a teacher by his/her students, and maybe as a bureaucrat (lit. 'administrative man') or an intriguer by his/her colleagues (lit. 'office brothers') in the faculty.

From the point of view of the reader, the reference to the human being in question gets specified and gendered step-by-step. In the beginning of the clause, women are also able to identify with the group referred to, namely, with the group of professors (general reference marked with a singular form). However, later on, the choice of the vocabulary referred to the persons in question reveals the presumed gender of the group of professors: they are all men. Although *tiedemies* (lit. 'science man') can refer also to female scientists in some contexts (Husu & Tainio 2004), the terms *hallintomies* (lit. 'administrative man') and *virkaaveli* (lit. 'office brother') cannot be interpreted as referring to women.

The lexicon still has one asymmetry that should be mentioned in the group of compound words containing a noun that refers to a human being with gender. In contrast to the word *mies*- 'man', the word *nainen*, *nais*- 'woman' usually serves as a modifier of the compound words, for example, *naiskirjailija* 'female-writer', while the compound words form *mieskirjailija* 'male-writer' are far more frequent. This means that the term *kirjailija* 'writer' is inherently interpreted as referring to male persons (Karppinen 2002, Tainio 2005). This can be interpreted, once again, in terms of the prevalent male gender bias in the Finnish lexicon, and it shows neatly how the discourse in society permeates the structures of the language.

Gendered asymmetries on lexicon

The studies on gender in language usually begin with observations on lexicon. This is also the case in Fennistic studies (Tainio 2001a). One of the first observations was that there are asymmetries in basic Finnish words referring to male and female

persons (Karlsson 1974). There are, for example, fewer names for males than for females:

<i>mies</i> 'man, husband'	<i>nainen</i> 'woman'
<i>poika</i> 'boy, son, (male) virgin'	<i>vaimo</i> 'wife'
	<i>tyttö</i> 'girl'
	<i>tytär</i> 'daughter'
	<i>neitsyt</i> '(female) virgin'

In addition to this, the words referring to females are vulnerable to negative connotations (Karlsson 1974).

All in all, linguists consider the masculine nouns in Finnish to be more generic in semantics and more frequent in use than the feminine ones. It has been noted, for example, that in dictionaries, the words referring to men are given three times more space than words referring to females. Furthermore, the frequency word lists indicate that the word *mies* 'man' is the most common word marking the sex of the referent, and that even *poika* 'boy' is more common than *nainen* 'woman'¹ (Niemikorpi 1998). Similarly, the quantitative studies, for example on language in newspapers, have shown that the word *mies* 'man' is three times more frequent than the word *nainen* 'woman' (Karppinen 2002). This also has been reported to be the case in other genres of language use, for instance, in school textbooks on mother tongue (Palmu 2003).

In addition to the asymmetries mentioned above, other asymmetries arise in the semantics and in the semantic shifts of words that contain reference to a person's sex or gender (Laakso 2005, 121-126). This tendency also marks genders in the Finnish language as unequal.

Between grammar and text

Finally, I will take a look at some of the textual strategies used in Finnish grammar to specify implicitly the gender of the person referred to. If you want to refer to an unspecified person or group of actors, you do not have to choose generic masculine forms, as in many Indo-European languages, for example in Spanish or English (man). Instead, in Finnish, it is possible to use the passive voice or what is referred to as the 'zero person formula', as both of these are completely gender-neutral forms of reference. The first option mentioned, the passive voice (or the personal passive, as it is sometimes called) refers always to

¹ This can also be seen in the language used on the internet. For fun, I used the internet search engine [Google](http://www.google.com) to find out the frequency of some basic words referring to a gendered person. The results were following: *mies* 'man' 3 680 000; *nainen* 'woman' 1 420 000; *poika* 'boy' 949 000; *tyttö* 'girl' 278 000 (last accessed 20 September 2005).



human actors in the plural. The other option, the zero person formula, means that you are able to use the finite verb in the third person singular form and omit the grammatical subject.

PASSIVE VOICE

Kirjastossa luetaan. 'They read in the library.'
 library+INE read (PASS)

THE ZERO PERSON FORMULA

Jos lukee, oppii. 'If one reads one learns.'
 If read (Sg3) learn (Sg3)

This offers very practical options for the writing of texts without imbalanced references to either sex. However, these options can also be used for other kinds of more or less accidental purposes to highlight one gender over another, as will be seen in the next example of the use of the passive voice in text. In the next extract, the references in the first clauses can be regarded as gender neutral, but later on, the sex of the agents is specified. This example comes from a textbook for sociologists:

Käytännössä suhtaudutaan tietenkin erilaisiin ominaisuuksiin eri tavoin. Etsitään eräiltä ominaisuuksiltaan mahdollisimman sopivaa puolisoa, esim, tietyn pituista, tietyllä älykkyystasolla olevaa puolisoa jne. Harvat haluavat saada aviopuolison, joka on paljon pitempi kuin itse, ja monet saattavat pelätä ajatusta, että saisivat itseään älykkäämmän vaimon (Allardt & Littunen 1964, 106).

In everyday life one (pl.) naturally perceives different characteristics in different ways. One (pl.) seeks the most appropriate partner who is for example tall enough, clever enough, etc. Rarely do people want to have spouses who are much taller than themselves, and many fear the possibility that they might get wives who are more intelligent than themselves.

The reference to wives in the last sentence tells us that the actors in question are men. However, by specifying the social actors as men, this extract tells us not only about the textual means in the Finnish language, but unfortunately also about sociological textbooks in general (Lempiäinen 2003).

The grammatically genderless system of the Uralic languages, including Finnish, is often mentioned as reflecting or supporting gender equality between the speakers (see Laakso 2005, 103-104). We might want to keep in mind the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis («the structure and the semantic categorization of the

language you learn can affect your ways of seeing and thinking») when we talk about the connection between grammar and the perceptions and cognitive strategies of language users. Nonetheless, although there is some support for the suggestions that, for example, children who learn and speak languages with a grammatical gender system pay more attention to the sex / gender of the persons, the empirical evidence for these ideas is rather vague (see Laakso 2005, 104).

As for transgressing genders in language use generally, no matter how many genders there are to be expected, Finnish can be seen as a language with a possibility for success. This is because Finnish can be used in ways that take into account all the different genders, or vice versa, while not paying attention to any of the genders in terms of the grammar or even lexicon.

Even so, this kind of language use might not be as easy as could be expected. In spite of the gender-neutral grammatical and lexical options in Finnish, there still are ways to specify the gender of the person or the persons in question, according to the binary system of gender. Sometimes the gender of the referents becomes specified in the vocabulary, sometimes in the course of the reading process, from interpreting the covert presuppositions and implications that are constructed with the help of the syntactic and semantic elements of the clause. This is why it is argued that although, in many respects, Finnish can be considered as a gender-neutral language in code, Finnish has extensive covert masculinity (see also Hakulinen 1992, Engelberg 2002).

Gender in language use: written texts

After having reviewed the 'genderless' code of Finnish, I will turn now to the language use. These studies show even more clearly that the features of the code do not determine the (ideological) use of the language. In my own linguistic studies, I have combined the perspectives of the analysis of written texts and the analysis of conversational talk-in-interaction, applying the methods of critical discourse analysis (see f.ex. Lee 1992, Mills 1999) and ethnomethodological conversation analysis (see f.ex. Hutchby & Wooffitt 1998, Kitzinger 2000). In this section, I analyze examples of language use collected from the Finnish self-help books on relationships. With the help of this analysis, I will discuss the 'dominant' discourse of gender as represented in self-help books. I will analyze, for example, titles containing reference to sex / gender and descriptions of men and women as speakers. This analysis is presented so as to provide an example of the possible ways and focuses that covert / overt ideologies exploit in written texts.

Example 1: Constructing ideology of gender inequality in self-help books for relationships

It seems to be quite common that (linguistic) communities seek to differentiate the two sexes (Garfinkel 1967, Goffman 1977, Cameron 1985). This seems, unfortunately, also to be the case in Finland. As a linguist interested in gender and talk-in-interaction, I have been interested in finding out how this differentiation is manifested in the stereotypes of men and woman as language users and as participants in conversations. In order to analyze the Finnish stereotypes of a talking woman and a talking man, I decided to study Finnish self-help books for relationships (Tainio 2001a); I was inspired by the analyses of Deborah Cameron (1995, 166-211) and Mary Crawford (1995, 86-128). I analyzed thirteen books by Finnish authors published in the 1990s. In the context of these books there exist only heterosexual relationships. In this respect, the studies I have conducted are also studies about the heterosexual discourse (or heterosexism) in Finland. The popular Western arguments about 'men being from Mars, women from Venus' were and still are also popular in Finland. In addition, the Finnish self-help books argue that men and women are different, and it is in our best interest to admit it.

At first, I started by analyzing the titles of the books and the chapters in them. Since I wanted to explore the balance between the women's and the men's point of view, I decided to analyze all the titles that refer to gender (45 all together). The following are some of my findings presented as a selection of the titles of the chapters or books.

Titles with 'man' (22 titles)

<i>Mies sairastaa</i>	'Men/man feel/s ill'
<i>Miksi mies ei puhu</i>	'Why does man/do men not talk'
<i>Kiltin miehen viha</i>	'A kind man's hate'
<i>Onko miehellä sielu?</i>	'Does man have a soul?'
<i>Mies, kypsymätön nahjus</i>	'Man, an immature weakling'
<i>Miehetkin tuntevat</i>	'Men have feelings, too'
<i>Itkeekö mies sittenkin</i>	'Do/es men/man cry, after all'
<i>Mikä mies!</i>	'What a man!'
<i>Miesten mies</i>	(lit.) 'A man's man'; 'The best of men' / 'Manly men'

Titles with 'woman' (8 titles)

<i>Nainen karriäärirylyssä</i>	'Woman in the vicious circle of her career'
<i>Äiti</i>	'Mother'
<i>Treffit vaimon kanssa</i>	'A date with the wife'
<i>Alkoholistien vaimot</i>	'The wives of alcoholics'

Anoppi, parisuhteen paha haltijatar 'Mother-in-law, the goblin of the relationship'

Titles with 'man and woman' (15 titles)

<i>Mies ja nainen</i>	'Man and woman'
<i>Miehen ja naisen erilaisuus</i>	'The difference between a man and a woman'
<i>Teorioita miehen ja naisen erilaisuudesta</i>	'Theories on the differences between man and woman'
<i>Naisen ja miehen maailma</i>	'The world of man and woman'
<i>Miten mies naista katsoo?</i>	'How does a man look at a woman?'
<i>Mies naisen silmin</i> man woman (GEN) eyes (INS)	'A man through woman's eyes'

As it is evident, male referents are clearly dominant in the titles. Furthermore, these titles show that the reference is mostly *mies* 'man', in the singular, which means that the statements about these references can be seen almost as 'inborn' characteristics of the described person (Vilkuna 1999). By contrast, the references to females were mostly those who view the woman in relation to another person, for example, as a wife, a mother, or a mother-in-law.

Furthermore, the titles that refer both to males and females, place the order of the sexes as the man first, the woman second. This order was also found in all correlative noun phrases: in the texts of the 13 books, approximately 80% of all phrases containing *mies ja nainen* 'man and woman' when the order was the mentioned. Although there are some phonological reasons for this order, the reason might also be a semantic one. It has been argued that the order of nominal phrases in co-ordination also reflects the importance of the elements. According to this argument, writers usually place the more typical and more important one of the two phrases in the beginning of the correlatives (Cooper & Ross 1975, Tainio 2001a). This is why the dominance of the order of the phrases in co-ordination is worth mentioning. In addition, the last two 'man and woman' titles

<i>Miten mies naista katsoo?</i>	'How does a man look at a woman?'
<i>Mies naisen silmin</i> man woman (GEN) eyes (INS)	'A man through woman's eyes'



are good examples of the ideology behind this: they both take the category men as their starting point (see Chafe 1994) although at least the last one of them should be a comment about women. The order 'men first, then women' also held true for the other levels of the texts: the men's problems received the space in the beginning of the clauses, of the paragraphs and of the longer passages in the books.

The order of sexes seems to neatly serve the hidden purposes of the advice given in the books. Although they mention the 'silent man' as the most severe problem in the relationships between men and women, it was stated that the solution to the problem lies in the woman's hands. The main argument is that women are the ones whose communicative competence is excellent, and owing to their abilities, women also ought to learn to better understand their husbands' silent messages. Let us now take a look at the descriptions of men's and women's verbal capabilities presented in books:

Sadat vaimot ovat kysyneet, miksi mies ei puhu (Nyman & Nyman 1995, 50).

Hundreds of wives have been asking why the man does not talk.

Mies kaipaa toimintaa edesauttavia selkeitä viestejä. Jos asioita ei sanota suoraan vaan kaarrellen ja kokeilevasti, mies voi kokea tämän ajanhaaskauksena eikä jaksa keskittyä viestittäjän – usein naisen – sanomaan (Dunderfelt 1996, 23).

The man wants to hear clear messages that help him to act. If one does not speak directly but indirectly, the man may feel that listening to unclear messages is waste of time – and usually the ones who speak indirectly are women.

Niitten naisten, jotka käyttävät hyvinkin moniselitteistä kieltä, tulisi ymmärtää, että useimpien miesten maailmassa kuultu ymmärretään yleensä niin kuin se sanotaan (Nyman & Nyman 1995, 55).

Those women who use very complicated language should understand that in the world of most men the message is usually understood in the same way as it is said.

The message is, whereas men do not talk, women do, but usually they talk too much and in overly complicated ways. The advice in the extracts above is directed to women: women should understand that if they want to be heard, they should change their language use. No advice is directed to men. Although these

extracts form only a fraction of the whole data, they show clearly the tendencies of the addressee and the content of the advice.

Gender in language use: spoken interaction

I had in mind these findings of the language structures and arguments in self-help books when I started to analyze couples' talk in order to determine how – or if – these different gendered strategies in speech are manifested in the data. The studies of gender in interaction offer many controversial arguments about the existence of 'women's talk' versus 'men's talk' and about the features of the talk and interaction that should be counted as elements of these 'genderlects' (see f.ex. Eckert & McConnel-Ginet 2003). As a conversation analyst, I have had doubts concerning the studies that take, for example, the hypothesis of genderlects as a starting point for analysis (see f.ex. Goodwin 1990, Schegloff 1997). Instead, I would rather study empirically how the participants in interaction orient to different characteristics and the roles of the other participants (see f.ex. McIlvenny 2002).

To discover the practices that reveal the orientations to gender in the conversation between the two sexes, I analyzed the conversational interviews of couples (Tainio 2001a, Tainio 2002). The couples in my data were elderly spouses who had been married to each other for decades, so they were well rehearsed in the art of couple's talk. The data corpus (11 hours together) consists of very everyday-like conversational interviews that were originally made for the purposes of dialectology.

Example 2: Exploring gendered interactional practices in couple's talk

In analyzing the conversations between the spouses, I found many interactional practices through which the spouses showed and re-established their partnership: they talked as a team whose members knew each other very well – they told stories together, they argued about the most truthful versions of the past, they even acted as an authority on the most personal experiences of their partner. They not only talked together and about each other, but also on behalf of each other. When looking at the differences between the talk of wives and husbands, I noticed that the husbands interrupted their wives, husbands corrected the stories of their wives – but this was true also *vice versa*: the wives also interrupted, silenced and ignored their husband's turns of talk. So, to be honest, I did not find any basis for the claims for the existence of gendered conversational practices: the men and women did indeed talk quite alike.

Studies on gender and interaction have observed that this



image of women's style – commonly described, for instance, in the popular psychological literature – is only a cultural belief, a stereotype (Bucholtz & Hall 1995). These stereotypes are available in the media and in the covert ideologies of our culture. In the process of learning interactional competence as members of our communities, we also have to learn beliefs about the characteristics of the sexes (Sacks 1992, 40–49). Gender is one of the basic elements through which we start to create our relationship with each other. It has been shown that when a person meets somebody, the first aspect that she or he notices in the other person is the sex of the person (Hyypä 1995; Kessler & McKenna 1978). The effect of the first categorization is fundamental: if you are categorized as a woman, all of your subsequent speech is heard as woman's talk, no matter how you talk (Kessler & McKenna 1978, Garfinkel 1967, 116–185). It has been shown that almost all of the features of language use said to be typical only of women can be found as well in the talk of men (see f.ex. Cameron & Coates 1986). Usually, both men and women incorporate in their everyday talk variation of the styles categorized in the community as feminine or masculine (Tainio 2001b). However, even if we use language in the same ways, the sex / gender of the language user does make a difference for participants in interaction: you are heard, assessed, and rated as a woman or a man. I will now show you some examples of the ways in which this occurs.

In my data, the participants of the conversations were the spouses and the interviewers, young men. During their conversations, the spouses often ended up disagreeing with each other; they could even quarrel a bit, for example, concerning the details of their shared memories. One of the things that they constantly negotiated were the norms of the situation: what are the appropriate topics or ways to talk in this kind of a conversation. But, interestingly enough, when the spouses disagreed on the norms, the interviewers always agreed with the husband: through this, the two male participants created a mutual male perspective (see also Tainio 2002). In the next extracts, the male interviewer reacts to the wife's queries, and the topic is the appropriateness of the husband's talk. As usual, the male interviewer (MI) disagrees with her and supports her husband's line of talk:

(SKNA:13551:1; Ylihärmä; B:16–19)

Husband: —>on oli< sellaasia noita: ö- sellaasia köyhiä
 jolla ei ollu mitään
 - - there >are were< the kind of: poor people
 who had nothing s- so

n- niin (.) .hhh hh oli niinkun y:ö: ja taloon,=

they (.) .hhh hh stayed like one night in one household,=

Wife: =°**mutta jos me ei nyt (.) puhutakkaat [tä:s:tä°**
 ==> =°maybe we won't now (.) talk about [this°

MI: [**juu kyllä se, (.)**]
 —> [oh yes it is, (.)

[**sopii tähän, (.) hy]vin,=**
 [fine to talk (.) ab]out it,=

Wife: [**jaa:.,=sopiiko.**]
 [I see,=is it so.]

MI: =**juo.**
 =sure.

Wife: [**juo:.**]
 [I see.

Husband: [**nii. (.) .hh että ne oli aina niinkun yhyre- yhyren vuorokauden niin:**]
 [yea. (.) .hh so that they stayed like one- one day and night and they

ne oli m- mie:hiä tavallisesti - -
 were usually men - -

(SKNA 8808:1; Kaustinen; A:160-168)

Husband: .hhh s'on **mennys [siihen hamalle.**
 .hhh it is like [that nowadays.

Wife: [**toimit:a vain nyt: mitä: (.) kysythään**]
 ==> [just talk about the things that (.) are asked

sulta: (0.8) ei n_uita sulta he he he
k(h)ysytäk(h)ään he
 you: (0.8) those were not the things you were he he he
 he ask(h)ed

[**heh**]
 [ab(h)out.

MI: [**kyllä se sopii,**]
 —> [it is okay,



(.)

Wife: **j(h)a(h)a ha [ha**
 l s(h)ee ha [ha

MI: [**ei se nyt niin kauhiasti oo väliä että.**
 [it is not so restricted what you ((can talk about)).

Wife: **.h(h) e:ik(h)ö, hö he [he**
 .h(h) it is n(h)ot, he [he

MI: [e:i,
 [no:,

Transcription conventions

—	(underline) stressed syllable / sound
.	low final pitch
;	non-low final pitch
-	word cut off abruptly
:	lengthening
><	faster talk
°	quieter talk
(.)	pause (<.> c. 0.2s)
(0.5)	measured pause of 0.5s
h	exhalation
.h	inhalation
(())	transcriber's comment
[start of talk in overlap
]	end of talk in overlap
=	immediate start / end of turn
→	relevant line in the extract
(h)	said laughingly
he he	laugh particles

Several occasions also arise where the husband or the male interviewer sequentially deletes the turns of his wife, and consequently forms his subsequent turn as appropriate next to the other male's prior one (Tainio 2001a). However, I do not think that the male interviewer intended to do this. The gender of the recipient or recipients can affect one's verbal behavior in unexpected ways. To give another example, a study on doctor-patient interaction (Raevaara 2002) demonstrates that when asking their patients about their drinking habits, male and female doctors form their questions differently depending on the sex of

the patient. When the doctors ask women about their drinking habits, the questions are formed as *Käytättekö alkoholia?* 'Do you consume alcohol?'. When they ask men about their drinking, the question is formed: *Kuinka paljon käytätte alkoholia?* 'How much alcohol do you consume?'.

Consequences and discussion

In this article I first discussed the 'genderless' code of the Finnish language, and presented some of my reservations concerning the claim that Finnish is gender-neutral. Despite these reservations, it remains possible to refer to persons in Finnish without specifying the gender of the person(s) in question. This gives more space in the Finnish language for different kinds of genders; to those genders that do not want to be included to the binary system, which, at the moment, is still the dominant gender discourse also in the Finnish society. After discussing the grammatical and lexical features of Finnish, I turned to language use. At first, I showed by the analysis of Finnish self-help books for relationships that the gendered ideologies of the writers or the surrounding (linguistic) community affect a writer's textual strategies. Next, I analyzed one type of conversational interaction, the talk between spouses. With the help of this analysis, I argued further that no separate 'genderlects' exist for men and women. To summarize, the genders use language in the same ways in the same situations; their language use is highly dependent on the context, the situation, the task as well as on the other participants in the interaction.

However, evidence suggests that there are serious asymmetries in the reception and interpretation of written and spoken texts in terms of gender. It has been shown that even identical texts such as constructed university exams (see Poynton 1989, 38), applications and references for jobs or academic positions (Valian 1998, 127-129, Wennerås & Wold 1997, Trix & Psenka 2003), are systematically assessed to be better when the writer of the text was assumed to be a man than when the writer was assumed to be a woman. Consequently, it can be argued that it makes a difference if you are talking or writing as a man or as a woman.

Furthermore, although Finnish society has a reputation for being democratic and equal, there are many different reasons for these asymmetries, and many arguments supporting gender differentiation are communicated through the media. I have explored together with science studies scholar Liisa Husu the images and representations of female scientists in the Finnish print media (2004, forthcoming). Finland is a country with well-educated women, and women participate in research actively. In general, they also seem to be treated as experts in their fields



outside academia. However, the personal interviews of the top female scientists in the print media reveal that it is quite appropriate to write comments such as following:

Ensi elokuussa työnsä aloittava kansleri on pieni ja siro. Hän on pukeutunut hyvin istuvaan harmaaseen housupukuun.

The Chancellor starting her work next August is small and delicate. She is dressed in a well-tailored grey trouser suit.

(Chancellor, Professor, Leena Kartio, [Helsingin Sanomat](#)², 20 May 2000)

Tummakutrinen Niemi käy hyvinkin sirosta espanjattaresta.

The dark-haired Niemi would easily pass for a delicate Spanish lady.

(Professor in Education, Hannele Niemi, [Helsingin Sanomat](#), 17 January 1998)

Thus, in spite of their respected position in the academia, the female scientists were also commonly presented as part of their families; that is, not only as experts in their fields but also as mothers, wives, and, furthermore, as female persons with female looks and feelings (Husu & Tainio 2004).

The significant question is whether linguists and other scientists can actually do anything about the unequal positions of women and men in language structure and in language uses. As a linguist, I see one of my aims as remaining active in uncovering the asymmetries of the grammar, lexicon, and the use of language – the asymmetries that are created in the texts with the help of the 'gender-neutral' Finnish language. Furthermore, in my opinion, it is very important to discuss the supposed differences of the language use of women and men, and of persons who do not want to categorize themselves in this binary gender system. It should be stressed that the gendered stereotypes are merely stereotypes and that in the 'real' world a range of variation in actual language use is evident even among the same sex / gender group. However, the most important aspect is to make visible for everyone the fact that we are treated and assessed differently according to our sex / gender, no matter how we actually do, for example, speak and write.

Studying the interaction between gender and language has made me alarmed every time I hear or read about the 'differences of women and men'. Granted, there are differences. I do not deny that, although I am not sure exactly what these

² [Helsingin Sanomat](#) is the biggest daily newspaper in Finland.

differences really are. Nevertheless, the main question is not what these differences are, but why they are underlined in different contexts (Cameron 1985). One of the consequences clearly is the establishment of the binary system of genders in society. In addition, my experience at least is that highlighting the fact that women and men are different leads the sexes / genders to different kinds of duties and privileges. Unfortunately, even in 'equal' Finland, the different privileges and duties usually seem to give men the advantage over women.

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On the Language Transgression of the Sex / Gender Binary and Linguistics: A Very Brief Overview

Mislava Bertoša

«Language is a guide to social reality.»

Edward Sapir

On the language transgression of the sex / gender binary

The aim of this paper is to stress the fact that until recently the linguistic disciplines which study issues of relationship between language and sex / gender identities – sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, feminist linguistics, anthropological linguistics and discourse analysis, among others – often marginalized, or even ignored the manifestations of language constructions of identities transgressing the dominant male / female model, as well as the fact that the relatively recent inclusion of these topics into linguistic study demanded more intensive changes in approach and perspective which have now resulted in new areas of inquiry in the study of language. The starting point is provided by these two facts:

1.) Language transgression of the sex / gender binary is a real, heterogeneous and well-attested phenomenon occurring in certain groups of speakers¹, although (for the time being) it cannot be realized in all areas of human communication, and is, in the so-called Western culture which is dealt with in this paper, mostly limited to the private domain and informal situations on the one side and the artistic *milieu* on the other.

2.) Since its beginnings, linguistics has sought to establish itself as a descriptive science describing «all manifestations of human language» (de Saussure, 2000 [1916]: 51) and refraining «from picking and choosing among the facts in the light of certain aesthetic or moral principles» (Martinet, 1982 [1980]: 1). Similar calls were coming from the other side of the Atlantic: «It is peculiarly important that linguists, who are often accused, and accused justly, of failure to look beyond the pretty patterns of their subject matter, should become aware of what their science may mean for the interpretation of human conduct in general. Whether they like it or not, they must become increasingly concerned with many anthropological, sociological, and psychological problems which invade the field of language» (Sapir, 1972 [1929]: 63-64).

¹ This term is common in linguistics and actually means 'persons using language, speaking language, using language to speak'. However, as is sometimes emphasized, it marginalizes other possibilities of language uses, sign language in the first place (cf. Bucholtz, 2003: 412), which though not spoken is still a language.

By 'the language transgression of the sex / gender binary' we mean those language uses that serve to construct and represent sex and gender identities that do not fit into the traditional model presupposing two identities only – male and female – and the rules of language behaviour attributed to them. It would also mean a sort of language gender b(l)ending that covers the language uses and behaviours of transgendered, transsexual and intersexual people, language performatives of drag queens and drag kings, as well as of other speakers considered exceptional from the traditional (linguistic) point of view. It would also include the language behaviours of people who simply do not identify themselves according to sex / gender and those who do not accept language 'labels' or wish to identify with any of the categories at their disposal in their own languages². Although it can be assumed that people not fitting into the dominant binary sex / gender system would be interested in those kinds of language uses in the first place, since the existing language system in some of its segments does not suit their language needs, we should also take into consideration other speakers who might have a variety of reasons for employing such language uses, among which the most important are those that arise in communication with other people who refuse to identify as women or men.

Using that term, in addition, we want to avoid to some extent problematic terms like, for example, 'language of transgendered people', 'language of transsexuals' etc., which point to the analogy with also problematic and arguable terms 'women's language', 'gay language' and 'lesbian language', that have lately become the topic of some heated debates on the relationship of language and identity on the one hand, and language and desire on the other, and on their position within the field that is commonly known as queer linguistics (cf. e.g. Bucholtz & Hall, 2003; Cameron & Kulick, 2003; Cameron & Kulick, 2003a; Hall, 2003; Valentine, 2003; Hall, 2004). Although there are fundamental differences between transgender identities (both female and male) on the one hand, and homosexual (also bisexual and heterosexual) identities on the other, the former having their origin in the category of gender, and the latter in the category of sexuality, their 'ontological status' being therefore different, all mentioned constructions may lead to similar circular linguistic definitions. People who are lesbians, gay men, women or transgendered speak in a way that is defined as the language of lesbians, gay men, women or transgendered people; people who

² Rejecting language 'labels', such as gay, lesbian, etc., a phenomenon that has lately, according to some authors, become very frequent especially among younger population, was the topic of an article recently published in the popular magazine *The Advocate* (see Spillane, 2005).



use the language of lesbians, gay men, women or transgendered people therefore must be lesbians, gay men, women, transgendered³.

Language uses, language behaviours and communications can be put together under the umbrella term of language practices, which emphasizes the social aspect of individual language uses, choices and behaviours. The social aspect is essential, since language practices always take place in strictly defined historical, social, cultural and local / situational contexts⁴. As indicated by M. Rose and D. Sharma, language practices are points of arising tensions «between imagination and impossibility, individual agency and social constraint» (Rose & Sharma, 2002: 2). In that sense, practices can be defined as «acts that are subject to particular interpretations based on their contexts of occurrence» (ibid.). This definition, accordingly, emphasizes two important aspects of the term: language acts are individual on the one hand, but on the other hand language forms are always given their meanings in relation to social contexts, because only in them can they take their place and be used for «supporting or criticizing a vision of the world and a system of belief» (Semprini, 2003: 19). From that perspective meanings are always objects of social conflicts and powers (op. cit. 23; cf. also Landowski, 1999), and language practices are dynamic activities and discourse performatives (Rose & Sharma, 2002: 2), which can, among other, express different types of resisting the language norm, as well as the socially desirable rules of language behaviour in general⁵.

Resisting⁶ a particular vision of the world is essential in dealing with the transgression of the binary sex / gender model. Whether it is called a heretical discourse (Bourdieu, 1992),

³ Similar tautological definitions are pointed out by e.g. Cameron & Kulick, 2003; Cameron & Kulick, 2003a; Valentine, 2003. Some newer, so to speak, sociolinguistic approaches are against accepting the categories of identity *a priori* and emphasize their constructionist nature, stressing that models developed for language and gender study should document and explain various language repertoires developed within strictly defined contexts, and not study the ways in which the language uses of women differ from those of men or the ways in which the language uses of homosexuals differ from those of heterosexuals (Hall, 2003: 375-376; cf. also Cameron, 1998; Barrett, 2002: 28; Kiesling, 2002; Kulick, 2002; Livia, 2002; Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Hall, 2004).

⁴ This idea is, however, not new in linguistics: it was, for example, pointed out by Dell Hymes long ago (Hymes, 1974).

⁵ Support or resistance, of course, does not have to be (and most often is not) articulated only through language, but also with the help of non-verbal codes – olfactory, gestural, visual and many other complex code systems – which only in their interactions construct complete and complex meanings. Thereby we leave the area of the science of language and enter the field known as socio-semiotics (mainly within French and Italian tradition) or social semiotics (mainly within Anglo-American tradition).

⁶ Resistance, naturally, does not always have to be intentional.

«reverse» discourse (Foucault, 1994) or tactics⁷ (de Certeau, 2002), the last of which would be my choice, this «art of the weak» (ibid, 90) articulates the voices of marginalized, suppressed and ignored people who, with their everyday practices, constantly construct and express non-normative variants of sex / gender identities. This has led some authors from different fields to re-think and problematize the binary model and its stable status institutionalized in politics, law, medicine and everyday life of 'ordinary' human beings (see Hester, 2003; also Besnier, 1994; Bing & Bergvall, 1998; Gilbert, 2000; Cealey Harrison & Hood-Williams, 2002 and their bibliographies) and has also led to the calls to replace the idea of the polarized model with the idea of the gender / sex «spectrum» (see e.g. Poštić, Mamula, & Hodžić, 2005: 7), which is better in describing the sex / gender diversity in all its manifestations.

Language resistance of «the normative gender binary» (Pustianaz, 2004) can take place in different language domains:

- 1.) phonetic, in which phonetic features of speech stereotyped as 'male' or 'female' are broken (the stereotyping is manifold, since it includes the inevitable 'heterosexualization'; cf. also Cameron & Kulick, 2003: 52-53);
- 2.) morphosyntactic, in which, in languages that have one, the system of grammatical gender especially stands out, which may empower the image of the world as inherently 'gendered' (cf. Livia & Hall, 1997: 14) on the one hand, but on the other it offers the possibilities for heterogeneous creative playing and for constructing non-normative gender identities; on the topic of grammatical gender more will be said later on;
- 3.) lexical, which also powerfully manifests the ludic and the creative aspect of language, reflected in constructing new, gender neutral forms and forms that specially refer to transgendered people, in rejecting existing terms as inadequate and making new ones, in modifying meanings ...;
- 4.) anthroponomastic, the importance of which results from the fact that names are considered essential determinants of personal identity (Mitterauer, 2001: 436); and together with surnames perform the legal and social legalization of a person as well and that certain wishes, values and images are attributed to them⁸. This domain includes, for example, changing first names into gender neutral or gender opposite, making up names

⁷ Unfortunately, I cannot go into detailed explanations and analyses of differences and similarities in the meanings of these three terms in the mentioned authors' works.

⁸ Two thoughts from the novel *Ime mi je Damjan* by Suzana Tratnik may be quoted by way of illustration (and in accordance with the topic and context): 1. «Once a girl in a club told me that she would like to kiss me since she thought I was as cute as some Damjan. I don't know, in fact, who that pretty face Damjan was and what she



consisting of two parts that are gender opposite (that is, two-part formulas in which one name is socially defined as 'male', and the other as 'female'⁹) and making up of nicknames;

5.) discourse, which is undoubtedly the most complex one, since it includes all mentioned domains, but also much more, if discourse is defined by three main dimensions – language use, communication of beliefs, ideas, mental images (cognition) and interaction in social situations (cf. van Dijk, 1997: 2) and if we emphasize its historicity, a very important role in constructing, maintaining and transforming the social reality and the burden of its ideological dimension (cf. Fairclough & Wodak, 1997: 273-280; Coupland & Jaworski, 2001)¹⁰. The complexity of this domain, however, gives greater possibilities of choice on the one hand, and makes possible greater visibility, recognizability and efficiency in subversive tactics employed on the other.

In an interesting article on deconstructing the category of gender in theory and everyday life S. Kessler and W. McKenna discuss the term 'transgender' in English and single out three basic meanings of the prefix 'trans-' in the English form of transgender: 1. 'change', as in the word transform; 2. 'across', as in the word transcontinental; 3. 'beyond', as in the word transcutaneous (Kessler & McKenna, 2000). Among them, it is claimed by the authors, the third meaning is the most radical, since it is the only one that implies that gender as a category ceases to exist, while in other two it remains both real and dichotomous, and to a certain extent clearly defined category. In the end, S. Kessler and W. McKenna, somewhat pessimistically, conclude that, although there are transgendered people for whom there is no gender, they still live in the world which recognizes only

really meant by that, but it seemed to me that my life would be easier if my name were Damjan. I don't know, that name sounded right and that's why I chose it. I suddenly felt that with another name everything would be nicer and better, or that everything would run smoothly». 2. «Even a greater joke was when it occurred to my friend to change his name into Roki... [...] He could have made up a better name – say, Roman or Gorazd or Stanko – probably no Roki has ever driven in a Mercedes through Moste. You could attribute only rollers or a stolen bike to a kid named Roki». These thoughts are interesting, because they show that attributing certain wishes, values and images to a personal name is a process which much the same pertains to one's own perceptions of personal identity (first example), as well as the perceptions of any other person (using the generic form 'you') in relation to which is the observed individual necessarily put (second example).

⁹ Here it may be useful to note that the tendency of distinguishing between 'male' and 'female' personal names is not a socially universal phenomenon: anthroponyms from Tahiti, for example, are gender neutral (see Besnier, 1994: 304).

¹⁰ All that can be further complicated by including other sign systems as well (visual, gestural, auditory ...) which necessarily imply a shift from linguistics towards semiotics (and its currents), where language loses its privileged position and becomes only one of the systems used to construct and communicate complex meanings.

two standard genders and in which the public continues to have the tendency of attributing either male or female gender to people whose appearance is gender ambiguous or even contradictory. Because of it all, materializing the third sense is «extraordinarily difficult and might be impossible» (ibid). If we try to apply these thoughts to language practices of transgressing the conventional genders, we could single out three corresponding basic possibilities:

- 1.) tactics with which a person changes his/her language habits on the whole and, independently of the extralinguistic context, on all language fields (from phonetic, through morphosyntactic to lexical and anthroponomastic) 'goes' into the gender opposite to the one attributed by birth (that is: modulates her/his voice, constantly speaks about herself/himself using either masculine or feminine gender, refers to herself/himself as to a man or a woman, changes her/his personal name into a male or a female one);
- 2.) tactics with which a person mixes all mentioned language possibilities (phonetic, morphosyntactic, lexical, anthroponomastic) or some of them only; choices can depend on the extralinguistic contexts and on estimates, intentions, wishes, momentary possibilities of the individual; here the constant 'switching' from one gender into the other is, therefore, essential; these sort of practices imply dynamism, changeability and fluidity which blur clear borders between male and female and can serve as a support to the constructionist theoretical concept of sex and gender;
- 3.) tactics which manifest the ludic aspect of language creativity and with which people intentionally change the existing forms, make new ones, play with meanings etc., thus adapting language to their needs; one of the best well-known is probably the invention of gender neutral pronouns for the third person, corresponding masculine and feminine pronouns (in languages that distinguish gender in pronouns), used by people who do not wish to be identified either as male or as female; in these cases the binary gender model is really rejected and a sort of 'third' gender is introduced which is, naturally, not 'neuter'.

What apparently distinguishes these tactics in relation to everyday life and real world about which Kessler and McKenna speak, stems from the semiotic aspect of language, its nonmaterialness (and therefore its un-real-ity) and some features of the linguistic sign: on the one hand, it is thus possible to coin terms for unreal categories (as, perhaps, fairies, angels or dragons?) and derive terms that are not socially and legally recognized (for example, notwithstanding the fact that in the Roman Catholic Church a woman cannot be elected as its head,

Croatian has the form *papisa* with that precise meaning)¹¹. On the other hand, the symbolic power of language is emphasized and an important role in constructing reality is attributed to it. However, although the statement that 'existing' in language enables existing in reality in a way, because it is only by naming that a category is really 'established' in the extralinguistic universe as well, which then can lead to a question about its visibility, social and legal recognition, rights etc., is to some extent correct, naming is nevertheless not all that powerful and does not necessarily result in 'establishing' a category, even with categories referring to people who (albeit unnamed) do exist in the extralinguistic reality. In addition, many categories can simply be ignored and marginalized (although to some extent tacitly 'tolerated') in the social reality. Thus the third language tactics – rejecting the binary model by introducing forms that refer to people who do not wish to be identified either as male or as female – are subjects to rules that 'govern' the world that does not easily tolerate gender diversity. And these rules come down to the fact that in public and official communication and in formal language, these tactics are hard to use. It would follow that the pessimism expressed by S. Kessler and W. McKenna can be applied to this area as well, and it would surely to some extent be true. However, on some microlevels, in informal and private communication¹², tactics of this sort are used among certain groups, in certain contexts on a daily basis, they are common and expected and can be formed according to the rules of desirable language behaviour. They, in addition, represent ways of mutual empowerment and forming awareness of one's difference, the power and efficiency of which, it seems to me, should not be underestimated.

On the system of grammatical gender, mostly on examples from the Croatian language

In different language families, the category of grammatical gender has different characteristics and governs different ways of syntactic agreement between nouns and adjoining pronouns, adjectives or verbs. But in the cases when their referents are animate beings, especially human beings, who in most societies are divided into males and females as sole and unchangeable categories, a direct link with their sex / gender is established. That is the way children learn 'language rules' from the very beginning of acquiring their first language, according to

¹¹ However, the question of their real existence is most often not important to linguistics: it is enough that such concepts are in the speakers' minds, have a definable meaning and exist in texts and their universes.

¹² The relation between public and private, formal and informal communication, naturally, is much more dynamic and stratified than is suggested by these observations, and the situations where interactions of micro- and macro-social levels are realized are especially interesting (Landowski, 1999: 277-278).

which boys use the masculine gender when talking about themselves and in addressing other male people, e.g. in Cro. *Ja sam dječak; Ja sam žedan; Jesi li ti žedan?* (Eng. I am a boy [m.]; I am thirsty [m.]; Are you thirsty? [m.]), whereas girls have to learn to use the feminine gender, e.g. in Cro. *Ja sam djevojčica; Ja sam žedna; Jesi li ti žedna?* (Eng. I am a girl [f.]; I am thirsty [f.]; Are you thirsty? [f.]).

Gender reversals (cases in which a male person uses the 1st P. f. and female person the 1st P. m.) and gender mixings (using both m. and f. in the same sentence or discourse, which can – although not necessarily – include examples of non-agreement with 'opposite' referents, e.g. in Cro. *Dječak je žedna; Djevojčica je žedan* (Eng. A boy is thirsty [f.]; A girl is thirsty [m.]) are not tolerated in principle (and are regarded 'wrong' by the standard norm). This shows that the connection between the morphological (grammatical) gender and the gender of the referent is very strong and in most language uses cannot be changed.

Naturally, there are exceptions attested by language use, which are, however, always pragmatically marked in a way, and sometimes bear extremely negative connotations. Gender reversals are manifested in two basic situations:

- 1.) when offence or ridicule is intended or when expressing irony; e.g. in Eng. addressing men as 'girls' – often in sport or army films; it has extremely derogatory and sexist meaning;
- 2.) when showing affection and tender feelings or addressing somebody in a protective manner, e.g. in Cro. addressing girls as *sine / sinko* ('son'); on the one hand, the form *sine* has positive connotations and can be interchangeably used with e.g. *dušo, zlato, sunce* ('dear, darling'); but on the other, the form *sinko* is not necessarily used with a positive meaning – it can also have the connotation of addressing someone patronizingly and can express exaggerated 'paternalistic' attitude, whether it is used in addressing children or even adults of either sex (with a relation between gender reversal and age reversal).

Asymmetry and patriarchal conditioning can be inferred from these examples: the form with positive values is always *sine*, while in Croatian – for the time being – there is no (that is, I am not familiar with its being attested / written down) possibility of addressing boys with *kćeri* ('daughter') with the same positive connotations¹³. Likewise, these are examples of reversals that do

¹³ Naturally, since language practices are a dynamic, fluid and changeable area, temporary situation is not given once and for all; a good example of the possibility of change can be found among language practices of Hindi speakers: it is attested that parents have recently started to use the feminine form 'girl' (Hind. *betī*) when addressing a boy and with the connotation of love and affection at that (quoted from Hall, 2002: 159).



not transgress the binary model, but their meaning actually confirms its legitimacy more strongly.

In this relation between gender as a grammatical category and sex / gender as a social construct, a question arises about what happens with the grammatical gender system in cases when the sex / gender of the referent is neither male nor female? Or in cases when a male person uses the 1st P. f., and female the 1st P. m., but without negative connotations or irony? Or when they use the 1st P. n. (if it exists)? Or when m. and f. (and n.) are used interchangeably? Or when using gender marked forms is avoided altogether? Or when speakers directly influence the grammatical gender system and adapt it to their communication needs by creating new 'transgendered' pronouns and deconstructing their paradigms? And what do these cases tell us about the relationship between gender in language and gender in society? The issue here is not how individuals confirm or deny their biological characteristics given in advance, because language uses are not, or do not have to be, the indicator of the speakers' sex, but how they activate / construct different identities in certain conversations and non-language contexts. Since language uses are never created in socially empty space and language choices are always influenced by the ruling systems of ideas which, among other things, influence language behaviour, by studying language uses it may be possible to shed some light on different aspects of the relationship of language and society. In addition, we should take into consideration the fact that in cases like these breaking the language norm is tightly linked to breaking the social norm and therefore exceptionally subversive.

And linguistics ...

Interest in this topic has grown only recently, despite early calls to establish linguistics as a descriptive science which would indiscriminately describe every manifestation occurring in language. Marginalizing and ignoring these topics impeded the development of models and paradigms appropriate for their study. This is especially true of language disciplines dealing with the issues of the relationship between language and sex / gender identities and taking into account the 'gender perspective' (until recently, binary only):

- 1.) sociolinguistics: it traditionally assumed that language only mirrored identity categories established in advance (most often conceived as inherent to the individual) and studied their reflection in language; as regards the sex / gender identities, it did not exceed the limits of binarism until recently;
- 2.) anthropological linguistics: although it studies faraway and unknown cultures, among which many recognize (or

recognized) greater gender diversity, language behaviour of people traditionally belonging to the third or fourth gender has not formed a part of its study. It is interesting to note that papers dealing with relations between language practices and transgendered identities (cf. e.g. Besnier, 2003; Hall & O'Donovan, 1996; Hall, 1997; Hall 2005) most often do not belong to the anthropological linguistics, but to a separate field known as queer linguistics;

3.) feminist linguistics / feministic critique of language: it started with describing 'women's language' from different perspectives and analysing sexism; later it shifted its interest to a wider study of language and gender, redefined the concept and started taking into account the language behaviour of men, and then of lesbians and gay men; but it has never (with some exceptions) reexamined the binary model from its own perspective;

4.) discourse analyses (critical discourse analysis and conversational analysis in the first place): in spite of its critical position, gender awareness and orientation towards different kinds of racism (including sexism) and towards the discourses of lesbians and gay men, it has not yet included transgender categories into its scope of interest.

Nevertheless, these disciplines have developed numerous models of description, which have, modified and combined with radically different theoretical and analytical models taken from non-linguistic areas and adapted to the 'needs' of the study of language, enabled new topics to be addressed and people and identities who do not fit into the dual man / woman model to be included into the study. This has ultimately established a new area of study known as 'the study of language and sexuality', that is queer linguistics, which has opened up a new chapter in the long study of the relationship between language, sex / gender identities and human sexuality.

And in the end...

... I would like to embrace in my mind all those people who in their everyday language practices and in different situations use various tactics to express their disagreement with the dominant binary sex / gender system. It is to them, their resisting and hoping, acting and wishing that I dedicate this paper.



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Gender Perspective in Public and Official Communication: Sociolinguistic, Legal, and Political Aspects

Zrinjka Glovacki Bernardi

The 2004 Report by Ombudswoman for Equality of Sexes of the Republic of Croatia clearly shows difficulties faced with when announcing job vacancies. In accordance with the Act 13, par. 2 of the Law on the Equality of Sexes of the Republic of Croatia, all announcements for vacant positions must state clearly that the position is open to persons of both sexes. The analysis of 162 newspaper advertisements showed that this legal provision is not complied with, so, for example, an advertisement for a Head of the Finance Department uses masculine, whereas an advertisement for an administrative secretary uses feminine form.

The solution to this problem is directly related to sociolinguistic and cultural conditions, which, as far as Croatian language is concerned, still haven't been explored or described. We are interested in different ways in which women can be included in or excluded from general statements, as well as in productive and receptive communicative and language behaviour. Equal opportunities for naming persons in official and public communication are closely related to the question of identity.

The social and psychological status of each person presupposes the possibility of identification. The fact that our society and partners in communication respect and confirm our identity is a precondition for the balance between inner and outer perceptions of one's identity. Each person perceives himself/herself as a sexed person, which partly determines their personal characteristics. However, these characteristics also depend on one's social status, which is to a great extent determined by one's sex. Our partners in communication and our society show that they respect our identity by naming it in a certain way. This project is aimed at demonstrating the lack of respect for identity in public and official communication.

Sociolinguistic aspect

Language is an open and dynamic polysystem which reflects social relations within a linguistic, i.e. cultural, community. Social structures affect language, and patterns of language use correlate with social attributes, including gender. Each society is responsible for its language, which means that it has control over customs and relations determining the functional distribution of linguistic forms in society, as well as control over interactions and language changes.

Insisting on linguistic action, that is, language adaptation, is necessary in those areas where language forms can be the



direct cause of real discrimination, as is the case with job vacancies announcements. Therefore, legislation and public administration are the first areas for possible intervention.

Legal aspect

Croatian legislation is based on the principles of the Roman law. The voluminous collection Corpus Iuris Civilis states: «*Pronuntiatio sermonis in sexu masculino ad utrum sexum plerumque porrigatur*». Loosely translated, this means, «If a legal provision uses masculine gender, it actually refers to both genders». Our research focuses on the markers for persons in legal texts and the application of the above principle of generic masculine forms in naming legal persons which is meant to cover both sexes. Legislators and jurists keep referring to this principle when dismissing accusations of having discriminatory intentions.

Political aspect

Due to the principles underlying legal definitions and a lack of linguistic research and possible normative solutions, Croatian politicians have paid no attention whatsoever to the problem of language equality. However, existence of a political will is a prerequisite for changes in official and public communication.

A proposition

In Croatian, generic use of nouns usually is considered to be sex neutral. For example:

slušatelj (listener) – denotes a category,
vuk (wolf) – denotes a species,
liječnik (physician) – denotes an occupation.

Nouns like the above examples are ambivalent – it is unclear whether they have male or female referents, and they commonly are used in contexts where the person's sex is irrelevant or if they refer to mixed groups. However, one thing immediately draws our attention: sex neutral usage is equivalent to masculine forms, even in cases when feminine forms exist. This clearly indicates that man is considered to be the prototype, a representative of humankind. This approach leads to women's invisibility in language; and it is for this reason that feminine forms for persons and occupational terms are of central importance.

If we are to name groups of people of both sexes, that is, both women and men, the discussion about the ways of naming is determined by two opposing views. On the one hand, masculine forms are perceived as gender neutral. Conversely, masculine

forms denote men and therefore are not gender neutral. This is a question of the level of language use. One group of linguists believes that the preference for masculine terms in legal discourse, of great importance to our project, is in no way disputable and cannot be the basis for changes in language use. They claim that gender as a grammatical category is determined by the principle of generalisation, and therefore masculine forms do not refer exclusively to men. This approach attributes semantic neutrality to generic masculine forms.

However, regarding masculine as neutral stems from its semantic qualities. In this context, generic masculine forms are interpreted as semantically marked, which means that we should find new ways or new forms of naming persons in legal texts.

We could state several other objections to the usage of masculine forms, to include that although a generic masculine form can refer to both men and women in its first sense; it also can have another sense in which it refers exclusively to men (we can take an example from the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia – the word «citizens» is only in masculine form, and in «citizens» for compulsory military service). Feminine forms of nouns cannot refer to both women and men («citizens» of Croatia, in feminine form).

In most cases, gender as a grammatical category and its meaning correlate, which means that when used for naming persons, the grammatical category of gender also implies sex.

The present situation in public and official communication in Croatia on the one hand demonstrates a breach of the Law on the Equality of Sexes, and on the other does not allow for the implementation of the principle of language equality. We believe that the existing asymmetry in language should encourage open criticism of language use and a systematic solution for adequate forms for women in Croatian language.

One of this project's main aims, which should unite experts, politicians and NGOs, is promoting the use of the adequate names and forms.

A consistent use of adequate forms for women in Croatian will have an impact on public consciousness, and in this way it will also affect social reality. This kind of language use will prevent the denial of women's rights through language. It will also prevent reinforcement of prejudices, denial of existing problems and counterfeiting reality – in other words, committing injustice.



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