Gender Across Languages
Impact: Studies in language and society

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Volume 10
Gender Across Languages: The linguistic representation of women and men
Volume II
Edited by Marlis Hellinger and Hadumod Bußmann
Gender Across Languages
The linguistic representation of women and men

VOLUME 2

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Preface

The series *Gender across languages* is an ongoing project with potential follow-up publications. Our main goal has been to provide a comprehensive collection of in-depth descriptions of gender-related issues in languages with very diverse structural foundations and socio-cultural backgrounds. The project is designed to have an explicit contrastive orientation in that basically the same issues are discussed for each language within the same terminological and methodological framework. This framework, whose central notion is, of course, the multidimensional concept of “gender”, is discussed in the introductory chapter of “Gender across languages – The linguistic representation of women and men”. Care has been taken not to impose a narrow western perspective on other languages.

This is the second of three volumes which comprise a total of thirty languages: (Moroccan) Arabic, Belizean Creole, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Eastern Maroon Creole, English, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Icelandic, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Oriya, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Turkish, Vietnamese, and Welsh. All contributions were specifically written for this project, in close collaboration with the editors over a period of three years. Unfortunately, a few languages (Bulgarian, Hungarian, Korean, Portuguese, and one Native American language) dropped out of the project for various reasons. These languages should be included in a potential future volume.

The basis on which particular languages should be brought together in one volume has been a problematic one to define. Rather than categorizing languages according to language family (areal, typological or historical), or according to whether the language has or does not have grammatical gender, or using an overall alphabetical ordering, we decided – in agreement with the publisher – that each volume should contain a balanced selection of languages, so that each volume will provide readers with sufficient material to illustrate the diversity and complexity of linguistic representations of gender across languages. Thus, each volume will contain both languages with grammatical gender as well as “genderless” languages, and languages with different areal, typological and historical affiliations.
“Gender across languages” is, of course, a selection, and no claims can be made that the three volumes will cover all language groups adequately. Critics will find it easy to identify those language areas or families that are under-represented in the project. In particular, future work should consider the immense number of African, Asian and Austronesian languages which have so far received little or no attention from a gender perspective.

Though we are aware of the fact that most languages of the project have developed a number of regional and social varieties, with different implications for the representation and communication of “gender”, we supported authors in their unanimous decision to concentrate on standard varieties (where these exist). This decision is particularly well-founded for those languages for which gender-related issues are being described here for the very first time. Only in the case of English, which has developed major regional standards with considerable differences in usage, did we decide to make explicit reference to four different varieties (British English, American English, New Zealand English and Australian English).

We took care that each chapter did address most of the questions we had formulated as original guidelines which, however, were not intended (nor interpreted by authors) to impose our own expectations of how “gender” is represented in a particular culture. Thus, chapters basically have the same overall structure, with variation due to language-specific properties as well as to the state of research on language and gender in the respective country. In some cases, we encouraged authors to include some of their own empirical research where this has implications for the analysis of “gender” in the respective language.

Marlis Hellinger
Hadumod Bußmann
Acknowledgments

Assembling a work of this scope requires the collaboration of many. The editors were the fortunate recipients of a large amount of support: financial, scholarly, technical, and moral. Therefore, it is a pleasure to record our gratitude to all those who have been generous with their time, attention and expertise in providing advice, references, and data, or have supplied helpful comments on particular languages. We wish to thank specifically

– all contributors for their active cooperation and patience with our ongoing demands during the preparation period over four years. Particularly those colleagues who sent in their papers early had to endure a long wait for the publication;
– all anonymous native-speaker reviewers, mainly members of the Board, for their thorough data check und thoughtful council;
– our colleague Dr. Friederike Braun of the University of Kiel, Germany, a professional general linguist and, in addition, a specialist on linguistic gender studies, for her meticulous reading, expert editorial assistance and insightful comments;
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– the staff of the Linguistics Department of the Institute of English and American Studies at the University of Frankfurt: Helena McKenzie, Dr. Bettina Migge, Dr. Susanne Mühleisen, Raimund Schieß, MA, Stephanie Schnurr, MA, and Eva Tripp, MA, for their assistance with the final preparation of the manuscripts;
– the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) for financial support over the period of two years.

Finally we would like to thank the team of John Benjamins Publishing Company, especially Cornelis H. J. Vaes (acquisition editor), and the General Editor of IMPACT, Annick De Houwer, PhD. (University of Antwerp), who were both
demanding and encouraging editors, and from whose sympathetic enthusiasm and efficient expertise the final processing of the text has profited tremendously.

Marlis Hellinger, Frankfurt am Main
Hadumod Bußmann, München

Winter 2001
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Gender across languages
The linguistic representation of women and men*

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1. **Aims and scope of “Gender across languages”**

“Gender across languages” systematically investigates the linguistic representation of women and men in 30 languages of very different structural and socio-cultural backgrounds. Fundamental to the project is the hypothesis that the formal and functional manifestations of gender in the area of human reference follow general, and perhaps universal principles in the world’s languages. We will outline these principles and specify the theoretical and empirical foundations on which statements about gendered structures in languages can be made.

A major concern of “Gender across languages” is with the structural properties of the individual language:

– Does the language have grammatical gender, and – if so – what are the consequences for agreement, coordination, pronominalization and word-formation, and more specifically, for the linguistic representation of women and men?

– In the absence of grammatical gender, what are possible ways of expressing female-specific, male-specific or gender-indefinite personal reference?

– Can asymmetries be identified in the area of human reference which may be interpreted as the result of the choice of the masculine/male as the default gender?

– What is the empirical evidence for the claim that in neutral contexts masculine/male expressions are perceived as generic and bias-free?

– Does the language contain idiomatic expressions, metaphors, proverbs and the like which are indicative of gender-related socio-cultural hierarchies or stereotypes?

In addition, the project will outline gender-related tendencies of variation and change, and – where applicable – language reform, seeking to identify the ways in which the structural/linguistic prerequisites interact with the respective social, cultural and political conditions that determine the relationships between women and men in a community.

“Gender across languages” will focus on personal nouns and pronouns, which have emerged as a central issue in debates about language and gender. In any language, personal nouns constitute a basic and culturally significant lexical field. They are needed to communicate about the self and others, they are used to identify people as individuals or members of various groups, and they may transmit positive or negative attitudes. In addition, they contain schemata of, e.g., occupational activities and (proto- or stereotypical) performers of such
activities. On a psychological level, an appropriate use of personal nouns may contribute towards the maintenance of an individual’s identity, while inappropriate use, for example identifying someone repeatedly (either by mistake or by intention) by a false name, by using derogatory or discriminatory language, or by not addressing someone at all, may cause irritation, anger or feelings of inferiority. And since an individual’s sense of self includes an awareness of being female or male, it is important to develop an understanding of the ways in which gender is negotiated in a language. This understanding must, of course, be based on adequate descriptions of the relevant structural and functional properties of the respective language.

In communication, parameters like ethnicity, culture, social status, setting, and discourse functions may in fact be as important as extra-linguistic gender, and none of these parameters is represented in a language in any direct or unambiguous way (cf. Bing & Bergvall 1996:5). Only a multidimensional theory of communication will be able to spell out the ways in which these parameters interact with linguistic expressions. By interpreting linguistic manifestations of gender as the discursive result of “doing gender” in specific socio-cultural contexts, the analysis of gender across languages can contribute to such a theory.

Structure-oriented gender research has focused primarily on formal, semantic and historical issues. On a formal level, systems of gender and nominal classification were analyzed, with an emphasis on the phonological and morphological conditions of gender assignment and agreement (cf. Section 4.2).1

From a semantic perspective, a major issue was the question as to whether the classification of nouns in a language follows semantic principles rather than being arbitrary.2 While gender assignment in the field of personal nouns is at least partially non-arbitrary, the classification of inanimate nouns, e.g., words denoting celestial bodies, varies across languages. Thus, the word for ‘sun’ is grammatically feminine in German and Lithuanian, but masculine in Greek, Latin and the Romance languages, and neuter gender in Old Indic, Old Iranian and Russian. Correspondingly, metaphorical conceptualizations of the sun and the moon as female or male deities, or as the stereotypical human couple, will also show variation.

Nominal class membership may be determined by conceptual principles according to which speakers categorize the objects of their universe. The underlying principles may not be immediately comprehensible to outsiders to a particular culture. For example, the words for female humans, water, fire and
fighting are all in one nominal category in Dyirbal, an Australian language (cf. Dixon 1972). The assignment of, say, some birds’ names to the same category can only be explained by recourse to mythological association. Finally, historical issues in the study of linguistic gender concerned the origin, change and loss of gender categories.

Corbett’s account of over 200 languages is a major source for any discussion of gender as a formal category. However, since Corbett analyzes entire noun class systems, while we concentrate on personal nouns and pronouns, “sexism in language” (Corbett 1991:3) is not one of his concerns. But Corbett does in fact contribute to that debate in various ways, in particular, by introducing richness and diversity to a field which has been dominated by the study of a few Western languages.

2. Gender classes as a special case of noun classes

Considering the lack of terminological precision and consistency in the debate about language and gender, the terms “gender class” and “gender language” need to be defined more precisely and with a more explicit reference to the wider framework of nominal classification. Of course, it must be noted that not all languages possess a system of nominal classification. In the project, Belizean Creole, Eastern Maroon Creole, English, Finnish and Turkish represent this group of languages. Other languages may divide their nominal lexicon into groups or classes according to various criteria. Among the languages which exhibit such nominal classification, classifier languages and noun class languages (including languages with grammatical gender) constitute the two major types.

2.1 Classifier languages

A prototypical case of classifier systems are numeral classifiers. In languages with such a system, a numeral (e.g. ‘three’) cannot be combined with a noun (e.g. ‘book’) directly, but requires the additional use of a classifier. Classifiers are separate words which often indicate the shape of the quantified object(s). The resulting phrase of numeral, classifier, and noun could, for example, be translated as ‘three flat-object book’ (cf. Greenberg 1972:5). Numeral classifiers are thus independent functional elements which specify the noun’s class membership in certain contexts. In addition, the use of classifiers may be indicative of stylistic variation.
In languages with (numeral) classifiers, nouns do not show agreement with other word classes, although classifiers may perform discourse functions such as reference-tracking, which in gender languages are achieved by agreement. On average, classifier languages have from 50 to 100 classifiers (cf. Dixon 1982: 215). Classifier systems are rather frequent in East Asian languages, and in “Gender across languages” are represented by Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, Oriya and Vietnamese.

2.2 Noun class languages

While in numeral classifier systems the class membership of nouns is marked only in restricted syntactic contexts (mainly in the area of quantification), class membership in noun class languages triggers agreement on a range of elements inside and outside the noun phrase. Noun class languages have a comparatively small number of classes (hardly more than 20). These classes consistently structure the entire nominal lexicon, i.e. each noun belongs to one of these classes (there are exceptional cases of double or multiple class membership). French, German, Swahili and many others are noun class languages, but we find these languages also referred to as “gender languages”. In accordance with Craig (1994), we will not use the terms “gender language” and “noun class language” synonymously, but will define them as two different types of noun class languages based on grammatical and semantic considerations. This distinction is also motivated by our interest in the linguistic representation of the categories “female” and “male”.

“Gender languages”

This type is illustrated by many Indo-European languages, but also Semitic languages. These languages have only a very small number of “gender classes”, typically two or three. Nouns do not necessarily carry markers of class membership, but, of course, there is (obligatory) agreement with other word classes, both inside and outside the noun phrase. Most importantly – for our distinction – class membership is anything but arbitrary in the field of animate/personal reference.

For a large number of personal nouns there is a correspondence between the “feminine” and the “masculine” gender class and the lexical specification of a noun as female-specific or male-specific. Languages of this type will be called “gender languages” or “languages with grammatical gender”. The majority of languages included in the project belong to this group: Arabic, Czech, Danish,
Dutch, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Icelandic, Italian, Norwegian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian, Spanish, Swedish, and Welsh. As the examples of Oriya and English show, a gender system of this type can erode (Oriya) and eventually be lost (English); cf. also Section 3.1.

“Noun class languages”
This type displays no obvious correspondence between class membership and a noun’s specification as female-specific or male-specific in the field of personal nouns. These languages, represented in the project by Swahili, have a larger number of classes than gender languages. Often class membership is explicitly marked on the noun itself (cf. the class prefixes in Bantu languages), and there is extensive agreement on other word classes.

To summarize, we will speak of a “gender language” when there are just two or three gender classes, with considerable correspondence between the class membership and lexical/referential gender in the field of animate/personal nouns. Languages with grammatical gender represent only one type of nominal classification requiring the interaction of at least two elements, i.e. of the noun itself and some satellite element that expresses the class to which the noun belongs.

The lack of grammatical gender in a language does not mean that “gender” in the broader sense cannot be communicated. There are various other categories of gender, e.g., “lexical” and “social” gender, which may be employed to transmit gendered messages. Thus, “gender languages”, languages with classifiers or noun classes, as well as those languages that lack noun classification completely (English, Finnish, Turkish), can resort to a variety of linguistic means to construct gender-related messages.

3. Categories of gender

Having established the difference between the more comprehensive concept of “noun class language” and the concept of “gender language”, it is necessary to introduce a number of terminological distinctions beyond the typological level which will focus more directly on the representation of women and men in a language: grammatical gender, lexical gender, referential gender and social gender.
3.1 Grammatical gender

A central issue in any cross-linguistic analysis of gender is, of course, the category of grammatical gender. Typically, gender languages as defined in Section 2.2 have two or three gender classes — among them frequently “feminine” and “masculine”. Sometimes the emergence of new subclasses presents problems of analysis, examples being Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian and Russian (cf. Corbett 1991: 161–168). By contrast, a language may reduce the number of its grammatical gender classes, as in the case of some Germanic, Romance, and most Iranian languages, or lose its original gender system completely, as happened in English and Persian.11

Unlike case or number, grammatical gender is an inherent property of the noun which controls agreement between the noun (the controller) and some (gender-variable) satellite element (the target) which may be an article, adjective, pronoun, verb, numeral or preposition. Nominal gender typically has only one value, which is determined by an interaction of formal and semantic assignment rules.

3.2 Lexical gender

In debates on language and gender, the term “gender” usually relates to the property of extra-linguistic (i.e. “natural” or “biological”) femaleness or maleness. Thus, in English, personal nouns such as mother, sister, son and boy are lexically specified as carrying the semantic property [female] or [male] respectively, which may in turn relate to the extra-linguistic category of referential gender (or “sex of referent”). Such nouns may be described as “gender-specific” (female-specific or male-specific), in contrast to nouns such as citizen, patient or individual, which are considered to be “gender-indefinite” or “gender-neutral”. Typically, gender-specific terms require the choice of semantically corresponding satellite forms, e.g., the English anaphoric pronouns she or he, while in the case of gender-indefinite nouns, pronominal choice may be determined by reference (e.g., to a known individual), tradition (choice of “false generics”; cf. Section 3.4) or speaker attitude (as evident, e.g., from a positive evaluation of “gender-fair” language). In languages with grammatical gender, a considerable correspondence can be observed between a noun’s grammatical gender class and its lexical specification, most consistently in the field of kinship terms: Germ. Tante (f) ‘aunt’ and Onkel (m) ‘uncle’ have a lexical specification as [female] and [male], respectively. Such nouns require the
use of the corresponding pronouns *sie* (f) and *er* (m). For terms without lexical gender, i.e. gender-indefinite nouns such as *Individuum* (n) ‘individual’ or *Person* (f) ‘person’, pronominal choice is usually, but not always, determined by the grammatical gender of the antecedent (see Bußmann & Hellinger, vol. III).

We do not wish to imply that the terms “female-specific” and “male-specific” correspond to a binary objectivist view that categorizes people neatly into females and males. For example, anthropologists have discussed the Hindi-speaking *hijras* as a “third gender”: “[…] most *hijras* were raised as boys before taking up residence in one of India’s many hijra communities and adopting the feminine dress, speech, and mannerisms associated with membership” (Hall, this vol.). Although the terms “female” and “male” contribute to the construction of people’s everyday experience, they might perhaps be more adequately placed on a continuum, which allows for variation, fuzzy category boundaries, and prototype effects (cf. Lakoff 1987). In spite of this insight, we will continue to use the terms “female” and “male” as valuable descriptive tools.

In any language, lexical gender is an important parameter in the structure of kinship terminologies, address terms, and a number of basic, i.e. frequently used personal nouns. Lexical gender may or may not be marked morphologically. In English, most human nouns are not formally marked for lexical gender, with exceptions such as *widow–widower* or *steward–stewardess*, which show overt gender marking by suffixation. Only in principle is such markedness independent of grammatical gender. Languages with grammatical gender generally possess a much larger number of devices of overt gender marking. Thus, in the highly inflected Slavic languages, overt lexical gender marking (as a result of the correspondence with grammatical gender) is much more visible than in most Germanic languages, simply because satellite elements have more gender-variable forms.

### 3.3 Referential gender

“Referential gender” relates linguistic expressions to the non-linguistic reality; more specifically, referential gender identifies a referent as “female”, “male” or “gender-indefinite”. For example, a personal noun like Germ. *Mädchen* ‘girl’ is grammatically neuter, has a lexical-semantic specification as [female], and is generally used to refer to females. However, an idiomatic expression like *Mädchen für alles* lit. ‘girl for everything’; ‘maid of all work’, may be used to refer to males also. In this example, while the metaphor seems to neutralize the lexical specificity of *Mädchen*, a gendered message is nevertheless transmitted: the expression has explicitly derogatory connotations.
In gender languages, a complex relationship between grammatical gender and referential gender obtains for the majority of personal nouns, with typical gender-related asymmetries in pronominalization and coordination (cf. Sections 4.3 and 4.4 below). For example, when reference is made to a particular known individual, the choice of anaphoric pronouns may be referentially motivated and may thus override the noun’s grammatical gender, as in Germ. *Tennisstar (m) … sie (f)* (cf. Oelkers 1996).

3.4 “False generics”: Generic masculines and male generics

All the gender languages of the project illustrate the traditional (and often prescriptive) practice which requires the use of so-called “generic masculines” to refer to males as well as females. With reference to languages with grammatical gender we will talk about “generic masculines” (where “masculine” denotes grammatical gender), while for languages without grammatical gender, such as English or Japanese, the term “male generics” (with “male” denoting a lexical-semantic property) is more appropriate. This terminological distinction reflects on the different typological affiliations of the respective languages as explained in Section 2.

Grammatically feminine personal nouns tend to be female-specific (with only a few exceptions), while grammatically masculine nouns have a wider lexical and referential potential. For example, masculine nouns such as Russ. *vра́ч* (m) ‘physician’, Fr. *ministre* (m) ‘minister’, or Arab. *мухаммад* (m) ‘lawyer’ may be used to refer to males, groups of people whose gender is unknown or unimportant in the context, or even female referents, illustrating the function of the so-called “generic masculine” usage. The reverse, i.e. the use of feminine nouns with gender-indefinite reference, is the rare exception. For example, in Seneca, an Iroquoian language, the feminine has been attested for indefinite reference to people in general (cf. Chafe 1967). In Oneida, also an Iroquoian language, gender-indefinite reference may be achieved by feminine pronouns. But then, speakers may make other choices (including the masculine gender) which are determined by highly complex semantic and pragmatic constraints (cf. Abbott 1984:126). In a number of Australian Aboriginal languages, the feminine is used as the unmarked gender – in restricted contexts –, while other languages from the same family exhibit the opposite configuration (Alpher 1987:175). Clearly, further research is necessary which must bring together the anthropological and linguistic evidence. Of primary importance will be the question in which way a relationship can be identified between the existence of feminine/female generics and underlying matriarchal structures.
In languages without grammatical gender, but with some gender-variable pronouns, male generic usage is the traditional androcentric practice in cases of gender-indefinite reference. E.g., in English, where gendered third person singular pronominal distinctions remain of an original grammatical gender system, “generic he” – including him(slef) – is the prescriptive choice in such cases as an American drinks his coffee black. Since the use of male-biased pronouns may create referential ambiguities and misunderstandings, alternative formulations have been suggested to replace male generic expressions, e.g., Americans drink their coffee black (cf. Section 6). In languages without pronominal gender distinctions, male generic usage is found with the nouns themselves. In Finnish, for example, occupational terms ending in -mies ‘man’ are used for men as well as women (e.g., lakimies lit. ‘law-man’, ‘lawyer’) and are officially claimed to be gender-neutral. Empirical findings reported by Engelberg (this vol.), however, show that this claim is more than doubtful.

The prescription of “generic masculines” or “male generics” has long been the center of debates about linguistic sexism in English and other languages. The asymmetries involved here, i.e. the choice of masculine/male expressions as the normal or “unmarked” case with the resulting invisibility of feminine/female expressions are reflections of an underlying gender belief system, which in turn creates expectations about appropriate female and male behavior. Such expectations will prevent a genuinely generic interpretation of gender-indefinite personal nouns, and can also be related to the fact that masculine/male pronouns occur three times as frequently as the corresponding feminine/female pronouns in some languages, e.g., in English and Russian. There is empirical evidence for English, but also for Turkish, Finnish, and German, that most human nouns are in fact not neutral, which supports the assumption that gender-related socio-cultural parameters are a powerful force in shaping the semantics of personal reference.

3.5 Social gender

“Social gender” is a category that refers “to the socially imposed dichotomy of masculine and feminine roles and character traits” (Kramarae & Treichler 1985:173). Personal nouns are specified for social gender if the behavior of associated words can neither be explained by grammatical nor by lexical gender. An illustration of social gender in English is the fact that many higher-status occupational terms such as lawyer, surgeon, or scientist will frequently be pronominalized by the male-specific pronoun he in contexts where referential
gender is either not known or irrelevant. On the other hand, low-status occupational titles such as secretary, nurse, or schoolteacher will often be followed by anaphoric she. But even for general human nouns such as pedestrian, consumer or patient, traditional practice prescribes the choice of he in neutral contexts.

Social gender has to do with stereotypical assumptions about what are appropriate social roles for women and men, including expectations about who will be a typical member of the class of, say, surgeon or nurse. Deviations from such assumptions will often require overt formal markings, as in Engl. female surgeon or male nurse. However, since the majority of general personal nouns can be assumed to have a male bias, it seems plausible to suggest that – irrespective of whether the language does or does not have grammatical gender – underlying is the principle “male as norm”.

Social gender is a particularly salient category in a language like Turkish which lacks even gender-variable pronouns. Frequently, gender-related associations remain hidden on a deeper semantic level. E.g., the Turkish occupational term kuyumcu ‘goldseller’ is lexically gender-indefinite, but is invariably associated with male referents, although theoretically, a female goldseller could also be referred to as kuyumcu. The word can be said to have a covert male bias which derives from sociocultural assumptions and expectations about the relationships between women and men (cf. Braun, vol. I, Section 3.1).

4. Gender-related structures

4.1 Word-formation

Word-formation is a particularly sensitive area in which gender may be communicated. In languages with or without grammatical gender, processes of derivation and compounding have an important function in the formation of gendered personal nouns, particularly in the use of existing and the creation of new feminine/female terms, e.g., in the area of occupational terms, cf. (1) and (2):

(1) Derivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Masculine/male</th>
<th>Feminine/female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norw.</td>
<td>forfatter</td>
<td>forfatter-inne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab.</td>
<td>kātib</td>
<td>kātib-ā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rom.</td>
<td>pictor</td>
<td>pictor-ītā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engl.</td>
<td>steward</td>
<td>steward-ess</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘author’  ‘secretary’  ‘painter’
Compounding

Masculine/male Feminine/female
Germ. Geschäftsmann Geschäftsfrau ‘business man/woman’
Norw. politi-mann politi-kvinne ‘police officer’
lit. ‘police man’ lit. ‘police woman’
EMC seli-man seli-uman ‘trader’
lit. ‘sell-man’ lit. ‘sell-woman’
Indon. dokter dokter perempuan ‘doctor’
lit. ‘doctor’ lit. ‘doctor woman’

Typically, female gender-specification occurs with reference to a particular individual (Congresswoman Maxine Waters) or in contexts of contrastive emphasis (male and female delegates). Female linguistic visibility is often a marked and loaded concept, and we find considerable variation concerning the status and productivity of feminine/female word-formation processes across languages. Thus, German has a well-established and extremely productive process for the formation of personal feminines ending in -in: Punkerin ‘female punk’, Bundeskanzlerin ‘female chancellor’, Bischöfin ‘female bishop’, etc. By contrast, Welsh, also a gender language, has no such instrument for morphological gender-specification. Very few derived feminines exist, i.e. most occupational and other personal nouns in Welsh are grammatically masculine and have no feminine counterparts.

In English, the few derivational patterns that exist for the formation of female-specific terms have low productivity, and more often than not produce semantically asymmetric pairs in which the female represents the lesser category, illustrating what Schulz (1975) has called “semantic derogation”. Notorious examples are Engl. governor/governess, major/majorette. Of course, such asymmetric pairs also occur in languages with grammatical gender, cf. (3):

Fr. couturier (m) ‘fashion designer’
    couturière (f) ‘seamstress, female tailor’
Germ. Sekretär (m) ‘secretary of an administration, trade union or the like’
    Sekretärin (f) ‘secretary in an office’

Feminine/female terms are not consistently derived nor used in case of female reference; their use may be stylistically marked and in many languages carries negative connotations, which makes them unacceptable in neutral contexts. Thus, in Russian or Polish, where masculinity is highly valued, feminine/female
counterparts of terms denoting prestigious occupations are avoided. By contrast, masculine/male terms are either neutral or carry positive connotations.

4.2 Agreement

In agreement, concern is with overt representations of gender. On a formal level, agreement establishes a syntactic relationship between a noun’s satellite element, e.g., an article, adjective, pronominal or verbal form, and the noun’s gender class. Satellite elements must be gender-variable, i.e., they must allow for a choice between at least two values (e.g., feminine and masculine, as in French and Italian, or feminine, masculine and neuter, as in Russian and German). In some languages, e.g., in Russian, discourse categories such as the gender of speaker, addressee or person talked about may all be marked morphologically on some verbal forms (cf. Doleschal & Schmid, vol. I, Section 2.2):

(4) Prišl-a moj-a byvš-aja studentka,
came-fem my-fem former-fem student.fem
 kotor-aja očen’ umn-aja. On-a mogl-a by pomoc ˇ’.
who-fem very intelligent-fem she-fem might-fem cond help
‘A former student of mine, who is very intelligent, has come. She might help.’

In traditional grammars, agreement is described as a primarily formal and predictable phenomenon, one of whose major functions is reference-tracking. Contrary to this view, we believe that agreement may add semantic and social information to the discourse, thus taking on symbolic functions. This claim is based on the observation that agreement tends to affect masculine and feminine nouns in different ways, mainly due to the principle “male as norm”: Agreement will favor the masculine in coordination (cf. Section 4.4), and, generally, masculine agreement predominates; feminine agreement is female-specific and, in many contexts, non-obligatory and irregular, depending on extralinguistic factors such as tradition, prescription or speaker attitude.

4.3 Pronominalization

Gendered pronouns are overt representations of gender both in languages with and without grammatical gender. Anaphoric gendered pronouns reveal the semantic specification of nouns with lexical gender, they may express referential gender in contradiction to grammatical gender, they may function as a means
to either specify or abstract from (intended) referential gender, and they may emphasize traditional or reformed practices, as when a speaker chooses between a “false generic” (e.g., Engl. he) or a more gender-neutral alternative (such as Engl. “singular they”). Generally, pronominalization is a powerful strategy of communicating gender.

The interpretation of pronominalization as one type of agreement remains controversial. English exemplifies a type of relation between noun and pronoun which is not syntactically motivated. Only reflexes of the original grammatical gender system remain in third person singular pronouns (he/she/it), and the choice of anaphoric pronouns is controlled by lexical-semantic properties of the antecedent, by referential gender (including intended reference), or social gender. Corbett (1991:169) concludes that pronouns “may be the means by which particular languages divide nouns into different agreement classes”. However, this classification is semantically based, and English is, of course, not a “gender language” as defined in Section 2.2.

4.4 Coordination

When a noun phrase conjoins a masculine and a feminine noun, the choice of a related target form may create a conflict between two competing genders. An example from Romanian (cf. Maurice, vol. I, Section 2.3) illustrates the strategy of what Corbett (1991:279) calls “syntactic gender resolution”, where agreement occurs with one conjunct only, namely the masculine, albeit in the plural:16

(5) un vizitator și o turistă mult interesată
a visitor.masc and a tourist.fem very interested.masc.pl
‘a very interested (male) visitor and a very interested (female) tourist’

Corbett claims that the choice of masculine agreement forms in such cases is “evidently of the syntactic type” (Corbett 1991:ibid.), since what determines agreement is independent of the meaning of the nouns involved. In our view, however, the example illustrates the prescriptive practice that if at least one conjunct is headed by a masculine noun, masculine agreement forms are used. Another illustration of this practice involving inanimate nouns is the Hebrew example (6), cf. Tobin (vol. I, Section 2.3):

(6) Ha-sefer ve-ha-maxberet nimtsaim kan.
the-book.masc.sg and-the-notebook.fem.sg are.found.masc.pl here
‘The book and the notebook are here.’
There are a number of exceptions to this regularity. For example, in some languages with three grammatical genders, the neuter gender may be employed to resolve the gender conflict in coordination, as in this example from Icelandic (cf. Grönberg, this vol., Section 2.3):

(7) Óli og Elsa eru ung.
    Óli, masc and Elsa, fem are young, neut, pl
    ‘Óli and Elsa are young.’

In some cases the choice of the masculine target gender may be motivated by the vicinity of the nearest controller noun when this is also masculine (cf. Corbett 1991:265). However, “Gender across languages” provides numerous counter-examples. For example, in Arabic, if word order in a conjoined noun phrase is reversed to masculine first and feminine second, the choice of the feminine, as a response to the nearest controller gender, is ungrammatical; the masculine must still be chosen (cf. Hachimi, vol. I, Section 4.3):

(8) Lab u bnat-u yan-in.
    father, masc, sg and daughter, fem, pl-his tired, masc, pl
    ‘The father and his daughters are tired.’

Underlying such syntactic conventions may be a gender hierarchy which defines the masculine as the “most worthy gender” (Baron 1986:97).17 As a result, masculine nouns are highly visible in gender languages and carry considerably more weight and emphasis than feminine nouns.

5. Gender-related messages

The communication of gender-related messages may be performed by many other devices in addition to the ones discussed so far. Of primary importance in the context of “Gender across languages” are address forms, idiomatic and metaphorical expressions, proverbs, and, of course, female/male discourse.

5.1 Address terms

Languages differ considerably in the type of obligatory and optional information they encode in their address systems. English can be characterized as a language with only moderate distinctions, lacking even the tu/vous-distinction that is characteristic, e.g., for German, French or Russian, while languages such as Vietnamese, Japanese or Javanese have extremely complex address systems.18
For example, on the basis of the underlying, all-pervasive concept of *hormat* ‘respect’, Indonesian as spoken in Java has lexicalized numerous socio-cultural and interactional dimensions such as age, gender, social status, participant relationship, and formality of the situation, which will determine a speaker’s selection of an item from one of several speech styles and terms (cf. Kuntjara, vol. I, Section 3). Gender will be performed in asymmetric and non-reciprocal practices. Thus, the traditional Javanese husband will address his wife by her first name or by the kinship term *dik* ‘younger sister’, but will receive the term *mas* ‘older brother’, irrespective of his age. Lexical choices generally are less constrained for males, while women are expected to use a higher, more deferential style.

Changes in address practices may be indicative of underlying changes in the social relationships between women and men. In language planning such changes will be supported as contributing to more symmetry in address systems. An example is the legislation establishing Germ. *Frau* as the only acceptable official term of address for adult women to abolish the traditional distinction between *Frau* ‘Mrs’ and *Fräulein* ‘Miss’ (cf. Bußmann & Hellinger, vol. III). Similarly, in English the address term *Ms* was introduced to abolish the distinction between *Mrs* and *Miss*. However, such a term may also be appropriated by mainstream usage to transmit (originally) unintended messages, as in the case of Australian English *Ms* ‘divorced’ or ‘feminist’ (cf. Pauwels, vol. I, Section 2.1).

### 5.2 Idiomatic expressions and proverbs

Another area of the implicit discursive negotiation of gender, irrespective of whether the language does or does not have grammatical gender, are frozen expressions such as idioms, metaphors, and proverbs. Descriptions of or terms for women – when these are part of such expressions – tend to have negative, and frequently sexual and moral implications which are not found for corresponding male terms (where these exist).

For example, Moroccan Arabic provides a number of honorific terms, phrases, and proverbs which are indicative of the glorification of the mother-concept in Moroccan culture, as in ‘the mother is the light of the house’ or ‘paradise lies under mothers’ feet’. At the same time, mothers of daughters are evaluated negatively, reflecting on the unequal status of girls and boys (cf. Hachimi, vol. I, Section 7). Representative of the genre of proverbs is the following Turkish example (cf. Braun, vol. I, Section 6):
The message of numerous idiomatic expressions and proverbs from many languages of “Gender across languages”: Arabic, Chinese, Danish, Finnish, Italian, Norwegian, Russian, and Turkish.

In Russian, the woman-as-mother concept is practically the only positive female image in proverbs (cf. Doleschal & Schmid, vol. I, Section 6.1). The extreme opposite is obscene language with expressions of “mother-fucking”, a misogynist practice which has also been attested for many languages, with Russian, Chinese, Turkish, and Danish representing examples in “Gender across languages”. Such frozen expressions embody fundamental collective beliefs and stereotypes which are available for continued practices of communicating gender.

5.3 Female and male discourse

A major concern of studies on language and gender in the 1990s has been the search for an empirical foundation on which statements could be made on discourse practices in diverse types of interaction (cf. Wodak & Benke 1997).

On a theoretical level the inadequacy of binary categories (women vs. men, female vs. male) has been criticized. These categories show internal diversification and must be described to a considerable extent as social constructs. Also statements about female and male verbal behavior have been criticized for making inappropriate generalizations. Explanatory theories (cf. the deficit, dominance, difference, and diversity models) developed with reference to English cannot be applied to other languages without taking into account dimensions of sociocultural difference (cf. also Pauwels 1998, Bergvall 1999).

Investigations of gender and discourse have primarily focussed on the identification of differences between female and male speech. For a number of languages, among them English, Chinese and Japanese, some differences were indeed found, but quantitative evidence remains controversial. For example, higher frequencies of “uncertainty phenomena” were found in some types of discourse (typically in experimental or more formal situations), but not in others. More importantly, the occurrence of tag-questions (e.g. in English) or sentence-final particles (e.g. in Chinese) may have various communicative functions in actual discourse, so that an explanation in terms of uncertainty or
tentativeness is only one among several possibilities (cf. Holmes 1995). This is also true for categories of turn-taking, where a higher frequency of interruptions and overlaps as performed by male speakers is widely interpreted as indicative of conversational dominance (cf. West & Zimmerman 1983). However, Bergvall (1999) has repeatedly warned against immediately approaching discourse in terms of gender differences, suggesting that rather than categorizing people and their verbal behavior into seemingly dichotomous and opposed groups, it would be more appropriate to interpret the data in terms of a linguistic and behavioral continuum.

In “Gender across languages”, discourse analysis features more prominently for those languages where – in the absence of substantial structural representations of gender – discourse emerges as a central field in which gender is negotiated, e.g., in Chinese, Japanese, English, and Belizean Creole.

6. Language change and language reform

In all the languages represented in “Gender across languages”, tendencies of variation and change in the area of personal reference can be observed. In some languages (e.g., English, German, French, Dutch and Spanish) such tendencies have been supported by language planning measures, including the publication of recommendations and guidelines, while for other languages an awareness of gendered asymmetries is only beginning to develop in both academia and the media (e.g., in Czech or Polish). To a large extent, the emergence of public discourse on language and gender depends on the socio-political background, in particular the state of the women’s movement in the respective country.

Language as a tool of social practice may serve referential functions (e.g., the exchange of information); it has social-psychological functions in that it reflects social hierarchies and mechanisms of identification, and it contributes to the construction and communication of gender. More specifically, language is assumed to codify an androcentric worldview. Recommendations and guidelines for non-discriminatory language identify areas of conventional language use as sexist and offer alternatives aiming at a gender-fair (and symmetric) representation of women and men. As an instrument of language planning they reinforce tendencies of linguistic change by means of explicit directions (cf. Frank 1989:197; Pauwels 1998, 1999; Hellinger 1995).

Gender-related language reform is a reaction to changes in the relationships between women and men, which have caused overt conflicts on the level of
language comprehension and production. Reformed usage symbolizes the
dissonance between traditional prescriptions such as the use of masculine/male
generics and innovative alternatives. In most cases it explicitly articulates its
political foundation by emphasizing that equal treatment of women and men
must also be realized on the level of communication.

Guidelines are based on the assumption that a change in behavior, i.e.,
using more instances of non-sexist language, will be attended by a change in
attitude so that positive attitudes towards non-sexist alternatives will develop
(cf. Smith 1973:97). Conversely, positive attitudes will motivate speakers to use
more non-sexist language. This is not necessarily what happens in actual cases
of language reform. Reformed usage has sometimes been appropriated by
speakers who will use alternatives in ways that were not intended, thereby
redefining and depoliticizing feminist meanings (cf. Ehrlich & King 1994).

7. Conclusion

The central function of linguistic gender in the domain of human reference is
the communication of gendered messages of various types. The linguistic
representation of gender is one of the dimensions on which languages can be
compared, irrespective of individual structural properties and sociolinguistic
diversities. However, even apparently straightforward categories such as
grammatical or referential gender cannot be fully described in terms that
abstract from the cultural and sociopolitical specifics of individual languages.
And once the study of gender is taken beyond the level of formal manifestation
to include discourse practices, the concept of gender becomes increasingly
complex and multi-dimensional.

The general tendencies we have identified all center around one fundamen-
tal principle: masculine/male expressions (and practices) are the default choice
for human reference in almost any context. The assumption may be plausible
that gender languages offer the larger potential for the avoidance of male-biased
language – simply because female visibility is more easily achieved on the level
of expression. At the same time, advocating an increase in female visibility may
create problematic and potentially adverse effects in languages like Russian or
Hebrew, where masculine/male terms for female reference are evaluated
positively even by women. In addition, consistent splitting, i.e. the explicit use of
both feminine and masculine expressions when reference is made to both women
and men, is considered to be stylistically cumbersome by many speakers, esp. in
languages with case. Thus, a comparative view would have to investigate the ways in which structural prerequisites interact with sociolinguistic tendencies of change.

By contrast, “genderless” languages seem to provide more possibilities for egalitarian and gender-neutral expressions, by avoiding the dominant visibility of masculine terms, and stereotypical associations of feminine terms with secondary or exceptional status. However, in genderless languages it may be even more difficult to challenge the covert male bias and the exclusion of female imagery in many personal nouns.

In the study of language and gender, there is an urgent need for comparative analyses based on adequate descriptions of a large number of languages of diverse structural and sociocultural backgrounds. This includes an awareness of the fact that white middle class North American English cannot be regarded as representative for other languages also. “Gender across languages” contributes towards the goal of a more global view of gender by presenting a wealth of data and language-specific analyses that will allow for cross-linguistic statements on manifestations of gender. In addition, the material presented in “Gender across languages” can be expected to enrich the debate of a number of interdisciplinary issues:

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the tremendous variation found in the exchange of gendered messages must be placed more explicitly in a wider framework of communities of practice (CoP), considering the interaction between “gender” and age, ethnic membership, social status and religion.22

From a text-linguistic perspective, comparative investigations of gender-related structures will identify the stylistic and rhetorical potentials of grammatical gender in a given language, in particular for the construction of cohesion and textuality by a less constrained word order and for disambiguation (reference tracking).

From a historical perspective, the analysis of ongoing structural changes may shed light on the question of why manifestations of gender in historically or typologically related languages have developed in very different directions, as in the case of Germanic languages which may have two or three categories of grammatical gender – or none at all.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, further empirical evidence is needed from more languages that might contribute towards an understanding of how gendered messages are interpreted, and more generally, in which ways the perception and construction of the universe is influenced by linguistic, social and cultural parameters.
Notes

* In accordance with the publisher’s policy of publishing “Gender across languages” as three separate and independent volumes, this chapter is a reprint from volume I. Of course, references to chapters in the other two volumes have been adjusted.


5. This ignores the very rudimentary numeral classification found in Turkish.


7. Thus, for Vietnamese over 200 such classifiers have been identified, cf. Pham (this vol., Section 2); on classifier languages cf. also Craig (1994).

8. For example, Corbett (1991: ch. 3.1) discusses morphological gender assignment jointly for Russian, Swahili and other Bantu languages; cf. also Hurskainen (2000).

9. This is the approach taken by Dixon (1982:160); cf. also Braun (2000:32).

10. Swahili (cf. Beck, vol. III) is one of perhaps 600 African languages with noun classes (cf. Heine 1982:190); on noun classes in African languages cf. Hurskainen (2000). Large numbers of noun class languages are also found among Dravidian and New Guinean languages.


13. The term “false generics” was used by Kramarae & Treichler (1985:150, 175) to refer to “generic masculines”. Romaine (vol. I, Section 3.2) uses the term “androcentric generics”.

14. There are statistical data for English (Graham 1975) and Russian (Francis & Kučera 1967).


16. Coordination is no problem in German which has no corresponding gender-variable satellite forms in the plural (cf. Bußmann & Hellinger, vol. III).
For Vietnamese, cf. Pham, this volume.

References


Since Chinese is a classifier language without grammatical gender, many of the issues that have serious implications for the description of gender in languages such as Russian, German or Italian, are irrelevant for Chinese: nominal classes and their gender-variable satellites, agreement, gender-resolution, so-called generic masculines, or morphological processes of gender-specification. Nevertheless, gender-related asymmetries can also be identified in Chinese, where gender has more representations of a covert nature. Considering the fact that Chinese, with its five major dialect groups, is spoken by approximately one-fourth of the world’s population, and that – unlike in English – gender is only beginning to be recognized as a serious (socio)linguistic issue, we have chosen three perspectives from which gender has recently been analysed in Chinese. Charles Ettner provides a general overview of the various gender-related aspects in Chinese, focussing on the graphic system, word order, and the semantic derogation of women. Marjorie Chan takes an empirical approach to the gendered use of sentence-final particles, based on a corpus of spoken colloquial Cantonese, while Hong Zhang analyses Chinese proverbs as a linguistic representation of traditional cultural expectations as well as a challenge to dominant gender ideology.
In Chinese, men and women are equal – or – women and men are equal?
男女平等還是女男平等

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1. Introduction

The Chinese language (Putonghua) has more than one billion native speakers, more than any other language in the world, and roughly fifty percent of that
number are women. It is, therefore, unfortunate that little has been written on
gender in Chinese language. As a partial remedy, in this chapter several infor-
mative examples will be discussed which reflect extant male-dominant social
attitudes embedded in Chinese idiomatic phrases and terms of address and
reference, the Chinese writing system (graph/character composition), and Chinese
syntax. Herein, the language phenomena discussed are situated in the sociopoliti-
cal context of contemporary mainland China’s fifty years of socialist history, its
associated language reforms and language planning projects, emphasizing
successes and failures with regard to the socialist task of leveling the social
position or social status of Chinese women as compared to men. An overview
of certain relevant features of Chinese language precedes the topic discussions.

2. What is Chinese language?

“Chinese language”, in the political sense, usually refers to the seven or eight
major dialects that constitute the native spoken language of China’s majority
‘Han ethnic group’ 漢族. However, the term “Chinese language” challenges
linguistic sensibilities in that its major spoken dialects are mutually unintelli-
gible. Even within many of the major dialects, there exist numerous sub-dialects
which may also be mutually unintelligible. Thus, claims of a unified Chinese
language are based on political and ethnocentric rather than on linguistic
grounds. In contrast with the spoken forms of Chinese, the writing system for
representing all Chinese dialects is essentially the same and mutually intelligible.
Dialect-specific writing systems do exist, though they are rarely used (Norman
1988:3), and there may exist other differences. Such particularities, however, lie
beyond the scope of this discussion.

Geographically, Chinese language communities were once confined to the
Yellow river region of northern China. Over the last three millennia, the
language and its native speakers have spread across the whole of present day
China’s mainland (approx. 1 billion speakers) and Taiwan (22 million speak-
ers), and there are now expatriate Chinese communities (in total 55 million
speakers) existing in virtually every part of the globe.

2.1 Standard Chinese language

The concept of a “Standard Chinese language” is very much a recent develop-
ment that gained import only this century (Norman 1988: 133ff). The standard
or national language of mainland China (The People’s Republic of China),
officially sanctioned in 1955, is known as 普通话 pǔtōnghuà. Defined as “the
common language of China, based on the northern dialects, with the Peking
phonological system as its norm of pronunciation”, it is virtually identical to its
1930s 国语 guóyǔ ’national language’ predecessor – the official designation of
the Republic of China government, presently in Taiwan. In English, the term
“Mandarin Chinese” serves to identify both pǔtōnghuà and guóyǔ, as linguistic
differences between the two are negligible. The focal dialect in the present
article is Mandarin Chinese (hereafter, “Chinese”). However, with the exception
of pronunciation differences and a certain few lexical items, most of the
gender-related discussions have relevance to all dialects of Chinese.

2.2 Structural properties of Chinese

All dialects of Chinese are tonal and range from Mandarin, which has four
tones, to the 粤语 Yuè dialect group (often labeled “Cantonese”), the members
of which can possess as many as eight or nine tones. Tones are phonemic, in
that they distinguish meaning among like syllables. Each tone has a fixed pitch
pattern and should not be confused with intonation or stress. Intonation also
occurs in Chinese, but its impact on tones is limited. Conversely, unstressed
syllables, especially in Chinese disyllabic words, usually drop their tone.

Chinese is essentially a monosyllabic language in which “almost every
syllable can be analyzed as an independent morpheme” (Norman 1988:154).
However, the lexicon of modern Chinese is largely polysyllabic. Polysyllabic
words have long existed in the Chinese language and are gradually increasing in
number, especially as new technologies bring about the need for new and more
complex terminologies. Chinese is an aspect language in which completion of an
action or the perfective aspect is identified by the verbal suffix -le (also called
an aspect particle). Tense, however, is not marked in Chinese, but is understood
either by the context of the utterance or by a specific expression of time such as
今天 xiànzáì ’today’, 明天 míngtiān ’tomorrow’, 現在 xiànzxài ’now’, or 以後
yǐhòu ’later’, etc. Chinese possesses a rich system of some 200 or more “measure
words” or numeral classifiers (cl) for indicating a specific number of items as
in ‘one person’ 一個人 yī gè rén (one cl. person), ‘three books’ 三本書 sān běn
shū (three cl. book), or ‘six horses’ 六匹馬 liù pǐ mǎ (six cl. horse). Lexical
gender exists in many Chinese terms of address and reference, terms for males
and females, and in certain pronominal forms. However, gender is not marked
as a grammatical category, as Chinese is not a gender language.
2.3 The Chinese writing system

The earliest Chinese graphs were primarily pictographic forms, but they gradually developed ideographic and logographic forms to include various combinations, all of which are traditionally divided into six classes. Chinese graphs are predominantly morpho-syllabic, that is, each graph represents one morpheme which is at the same time a single syllable. However, modern standard Chinese does possess a relatively small set of the lexicon which utilizes two graphs to represent one syllable, such as in the word ‘picture’, which contains the graphs 画 and 人.

One of the most productive groups of script forms that have developed is phonetic compounds. Each phonetic compound is composed of two elements (e.g. 媽 ma ‘mother’): one (女) ‘woman/female’ which is known as the “signific” (sometimes called the “radical”), and the other (馬 /ma/) which is referred to as the “phonetic” component. Furthermore, each of the two respective elements may, in itself, be composed of one or more individual graphs (e.g. 言 yu ‘language’, which has the signific 言 and the phonetic 言/wu/, the latter consisting of the two graphs 言 and 人). The signific tends to be located in the leftmost half of the compound, though this is not always the case. The signific element may and often does contribute semantic meaning to the compound as the element ‘woman’ in the ‘mother’ graph, but this is not a hard and fast rule. The phonetic component usually contributes sound value indicating the pronunciation, to some degree, of the medial and possibly final segments of the word/compound graph.

The system of graphs used in the Chinese written language differs from that of the Latin or Cyrillic alphabet and of other similar writing systems primarily in the specific “level of representation” of the script units. While alphabets are phonographic systems, Chinese writing is logographic, i.e. refers to the morphemic level (cf. Sampson 1985). Kratochvil (1968:153f) explains this phenomenon as follows:

While in the case of the Latin alphabet the language units which script units were ultimately assigned to were more or less phonemes, the units of the Chinese writing system were assigned to language units of, so to speak, a higher level. The two systems thus differ in nothing less and nothing more than the level of representation of language units by script units. […] Chinese script is pictographic by its origin, but it is not pictographic in its present function, since characters are not used as pictures of objects and acts but as ‘pictures’ of certain language units, and it is not ideographic, since characters are not direct symbols of ideas or abstract concepts but symbols of certain language units.
A particularly important point of Kratochvil’s discussion is the fact that graph/character “units of the Chinese writing system” continue to be “partly characterized by specific features of meaning”. The further significance of these linguistic features as it pertains to gender and the relevant social relationships they inform is elaborated specifically in the discussion that follows. It should also be noted that the romanizing system for Chinese characters most popular today is mainland China’s “Pinyin” system, which is also used in this chapter.

3. Aspects of gender in Chinese

The lexical and structural properties of Chinese language display evidence of ancient – and, I suggest, still extant – social attitudes which exhibit a distinct relationship of language and gender. Such evidence exists particularly among groups of Chinese graphs (characters), pronominal word forms, and in the specific word order constraints for separate terms denoting female and male in the context of a noun phrase. Notably, certain linguistic remnants shed light on a long forgotten China antedating all known Chinese written history.

Chinese orthography (the manner in which graphs are constructed) provides interesting clues about the nature of ancient Chinese social structure, and about attitudes and values concerning the status of women at various historical periods. Evidence exists to suggest that during the earliest formative period of the Chinese written language, ancient China may have been a matri-lineal society. Remnants of the social character of ancient Chinese are preserved in particular words like 始 shǐ ‘ancestor’ and 姓 xìng ‘surname’, both of which contain the signific (the element which often provides semantic meaning) 女 nǚ ‘female’. That words referring to family origins and familial ties should contain an element specifically denoting female can hardly be seen as insignificant, coincidental, or arbitrary. Similarly, a number of the more ancient surnames: 姚 Yăo, 姬 Ji, 姜 Jāng, and 姻 Lóu, for example, also incorporate the 女 nǚ signific within the graph (Tang 1988: 61). This sign and symbol relationship is also exemplified by other graph groups within the Chinese language.\(^6\)
3.1 The ‘woman’ signific and its connotations

Chinese compound graphs contain a signific component which often contributes meaning to the lexical item it helps to form. Tang surveyed the Chinese lexicon for words containing the signific 女 nǚ ‘female/woman’. The results of the survey were divided into four semantic categories: (1) Words relating to marriage or giving birth, (2) kinship terms and terms regarding family relationships, (3) words referring to beauty, and (4) derogatory words or words with negative connotations (Tang 1988:62).

In a survey I conducted using a modern Chinese dictionary, of the more than 500 entries comprised of compound graphs with the 女 nǚ ‘female/woman’ signific, approximately 20% were of the above fourth category, “derogatory words or words with negative connotations”. Subsequently, I made additional surveys of earlier published and other contemporary Chinese language dictionaries, and all yielded similar results. Unfortunately, it was not as easy to contrast the Chinese graph for ‘man/male’ 男 nán in my surveys due to the fact that it is, in itself, not a signific. Rather, it is but a compound graph comprised of the 土 tián ‘field’ and 力 lì ‘strength’ graphs. Furthermore, of the twenty-odd listed compound graphs with a 男 nán graph component, only one 嚎 ‘angry’ communicates a derogatory or negative meaning. However, the other component of that one graph is the 女 nǚ female signific! Going one step further, of the forty-seven Chinese compound words containing a 男 nán graph component, only two listings, 大男子主義 dànxízǔzhìyì ‘male chauvinism’ and 奴男 jīnán ‘male prostitute’, have negative connotations. In the latter of these two, once again, one finds a compound graph with the 女 nǚ female signific. Nonetheless, it is important to also note that, isolated as a single graph, 女 nǚ connotes neither positive nor negative meaning.

In some Chinese compound graphs, meaning is contributed not only by the signific, but also by the phonetic element. An example can be found in the word 愤 nù in which the signific 心 xīn ‘heart, mind, feeling’ or ‘intention’ is combined with the phonetic 奴 nǔ ‘slave’ or ‘enslave’ to yield the meaning of ‘anger, rage’, or ‘fury’. Again, there exists a significant number of this type of compound graphs containing 女 nǚ as part of the phonetic component and connoting negativity. And although the 女 nǚ graph combines variously with other graphs to form different phonetic elements, the majority of these phonetic elements are not homonyms of /nǔ/ and, therefore, are only visibly recognizable as implicitly related to female/woman. There are also numerous related compound words of the same type.
A short list of example words containing the 女 nǚ signific element that I identified in the survey as “derogatory” or “with negative connotations” are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graph</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Graph</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>嫉</td>
<td>chǐ</td>
<td>ugly</td>
<td>嫉</td>
<td>mán</td>
<td>scorn, humiliate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>妒</td>
<td>dù</td>
<td>jealous, envy</td>
<td>妒</td>
<td>nú</td>
<td>slave, enslave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>妨</td>
<td>fàng</td>
<td>hinder, hamper, impede</td>
<td>妨</td>
<td>pìn</td>
<td>to have illicit relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嫂</td>
<td>sōng</td>
<td>to have illicit relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嫉</td>
<td>jí</td>
<td>jealous, hate</td>
<td>要</td>
<td>yāo</td>
<td>force, coerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>妖</td>
<td>jiān</td>
<td>wicked, evil, treacherous</td>
<td>妖</td>
<td>yāo</td>
<td>goblin, demon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table displays lexical items consisting of single morphemes and single “compound graph” forms. However, there also exist compound word forms in Chinese language, that is, lexical items consisting of two or more morphemes and hence two or more graphs. The significance of this fact is that the effect of each negative root is multiplied by the number of compound word forms it may yield. Examples of compound word forms of this nature can be seen in Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graph</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>嫉臣</td>
<td>jiāncén</td>
<td>treacherous court official</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嫉隠</td>
<td>jiānxián</td>
<td>wicked and crafty, treacherous, malicious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嫉兇</td>
<td>jiānxīng</td>
<td>a person who achieves high position by unscrupulous scheming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嫉商</td>
<td>jiānshāng</td>
<td>unscrupulous merchant, profiteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嫉淫</td>
<td>jiānyín</td>
<td>illicit sexual relations; adultery, rape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嫉污</td>
<td>jiānwū</td>
<td>rape or seduce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嫉詐</td>
<td>jiānzéi</td>
<td>traitor, conspirator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嫉細</td>
<td>jiānxi</td>
<td>spy, enemy agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>嫉詐</td>
<td>jiānzhā</td>
<td>fraudulent, crafty, treacherous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summarizing the discussion thus far, there is ample evidence to suggest that a visually apparent connection exists in the graph forms of the Chinese writing
system between the representation of females/women and various negative or derogatory concepts. The evidence presented earlier also suggests that this connection is very likely a derived representation of ancient Chinese societal conceptions and attitudes about women. Furthermore, there is little, if any, evidence to suggest that contemporary Chinese society has effectively or adequately divorced itself from these same traditional conceptions and attitudes.

3.2 Nouns and pronouns

Contemporary Chinese language displays a gender distinction only in second and third person pronoun forms. There also exist the lexical gender nouns 男 nán ‘male’ and 女 nǚ ‘female’ for humans, 公 gōng ‘male’ and 母 mǔ ‘female’ for animals, and a generic form 人 rén ‘person’ or ‘people’. The pronominals 你 nǐ ‘you’ and 他 tā ‘he’ or ‘she’ were historically devoid of gender distinctions until recent times.

Around the late 1910s writers began to use three separate graphs to distinguish ‘he’, ‘she’, and ‘it’ [他, 她, and 她, respectively]. All three characters were pronounced exactly the same way [tā][…] But the use of separate graphs gave the illusion that Chinese had the same kind of gender distinction that many Western languages did. (Ramsey 1987:50)

Nonetheless, it is still true that when oral communication is non-specific or uncertain with regard to gender, native speakers will normally assume the pronominal referent of 他 to be a male person. Note also that the ‘male’ pronoun is identical with the undifferentiated pronoun and is written with the ‘person’ signific. Similarly, the supposed gender-neutral term ‘person’ or ‘people’ 人 rén might better be characterized as a male generic term. In other words, nǐ, tā, and rén have a supposed generic quality in oral contexts (and historically, in written contexts as well), but each connote the male gender by default.

The second person pronoun 你 nǐ ‘you’ also acquired a complementary female graph form 她 sometime during this century, although it has yet to enjoy significant usage among the general populace. Curiously, the second person polite pronoun 你 nǐ ‘you’ still has but a solitary, and supposedly, gender-neutral graph form.

3.3 Gender specification and gender abstraction

As noted above, the inherent nature of the pronominals 他/s/he’ and 他们 ‘they’ is such that each can produce gender ambiguity in spoken communication.
Moreover, they are the primary resource for achieving intentional gender abstraction, in other words, for neutralizing gender in spoken Chinese. On the other hand,  tà and t à m en each have the same level of specificity (or lack thereof) as their subject or object referents; cf. examples (1) and (2):

(1) 王 太太是 我的 老师；她 是中国 人。

Wáng tàitài shì wǒ-de lǎoshi. Tà shì Zhōngguó rén.

‘Mrs. Wang is my teacher.’ ‘She is Chinese.’

(2) 学生 都 考完 了。他们 快要 下课。

Xuéshēng dōu kǎo wán le. Tà-men kuài yào xiàkè.

‘The students all finished the test.’ ‘Their class will soon be over.’

Often nouns can be gender-marked simply by preposing either 女 nǚ ‘female’ or 男 nán ‘male’ to the noun, thus, effectually yielding a gendered compound noun; cf. examples in (3):

(3) 人 女人 男女

rén nǚ-rén nán-rén

‘person’ ‘woman’ ‘man’

学生 女生 男生

xué-shēng nǚ-shēng nán-shēng

‘student’ ‘female student’ ‘male student’

男 女 男

nán nǚ nán

‘boy’ ‘girl’ ‘boy’

As Chinese is not a gender language, structurally and historically, nouns and pronouns are inherently ambiguous with respect to gender. Only by preposing lexical gender words to such word classes, either as noun modifiers or pronominal antecedents, does gender specificity obtain.

3.4 Gendered word order in Chinese

Chinese syntax provides an interesting illustration of the archaic hierarchical attitudes that have become embedded in word order constraints for Chinese
spoken and written language. This phenomenon exists as a grammatical rule which, in essence, requires that gender-specific words be ordered within noun phrases (NP) so that the male-gendered constituent precedes the female-gendered constituent. To reverse the prescribed order and place female ahead of male renders the sentence ungrammatical. Consider the sample sentences in (4):

(4) a. 男 女 平等
    nán nù píng.děng
    'Men and women are equal.'

b.  '女 男 平等
    nù nán píng.děng
    *'Women and men are equal.'

Chinese graphs may be written vertically, from top to bottom, or horizontally, from right to left or left to right (but never from bottom to top). However, the male-precedes-female word ordering is required regardless of the direction in which the graphs are written. Furthermore, the same gender ordering constraints obtain for several gender-specific words/graphs pertaining to the animal kingdom such as 公母 gōngmǔ 'male and female' (of animals), 凤凰 fénghuáng 'phoenix' (male and female), and 鴛鴦 yuānyang 'Mandarin ducks' (male and female). Still, the rule as I have formulated it is somewhat oversimplified, as the following example illustrates:

(5) 我 家 有 爸爸 媽媽 姐姐 妹妹
    wò jiā yǒu bāba māma jiējie měimei
    'In my family, there is my father, mother, older sister, younger sister,'

弟弟能 和 我
    dìdì hé wǒ
    younger brother and me

    'In my family, there is my father, mother, older sister, younger sister, younger brother, and me.'

Example (5) reveals a more fundamental hierarchy of NP constituent ordering which, by no mere coincidence, mirrors the essence of the Confucian social order of the propriety of relationships (i.e., 天地 tiāndì 'heaven and earth', 君臣 jūn-chén 'sovereign and subject', 父子 fù-zǐ 'father and son', 夫妻 fūqī 'husband and wife', and 兄弟 xiōngdì 'older brother and younger brother'). This propriety of social relationships reduces to three ordered levels of hierarchy
which permeate much, if not most, of Chinese social culture, including Chinese language. The three ordered levels are: first, social position (e.g., sovereign before subject); second, generation/age (e.g., father before son); third, gender (e.g., husband before wife). This same ordering of relationships exists in the syntactic phrase structure of NP constituents in Chinese language: The noun constituents in an NP proceed from highest to lowest in hierarchical order. Hierarchical ordering proceeds according to ranked categories: (1) highest social rank or position; (2) same-gender siblings; (3) eldest generation/age; (4) gender (male precedes female).

The above grammar accounts for the three categories of social order and an additional “same-gender siblings” category that is not necessarily part of the prescribed Confucian social order, but is very much an element of the traditional and extant Chinese social order. Table 3 below illustrates the grammatical constraints of Chinese NP constituent ordering using an optimality theory schematic (cf. Prince & Smolensky 1993).

A notable exception to the above NP constraint rule is the term 阴陽 (essentially, 'female-male'). While it may be possible that the extreme antiquity of the term antedates Chinese male social hierarchy, Chan (1998) offers evidence of competing phonological constraints involving a “preferred prosodic sequence” of NP constituents “with respect to the historical four-tone categories of Ping, Shang, Qu and Ru (平上入去)” and voiceless and voiced initial phonemes (Chan 1998:46; cf. Ting 1969, Lien 1989). In some instances both prosody and semantics converge in supporting the gender-sensitive arrangement of NP constituents. However, the additional evidence of ‘voiceless precedes voiced initial’ is particularly useful in accounting for rare exceptions such as 阴陽 (yin-yang), and two instances of animal terms 牛 牛 'cow and bull' and 雞 雞 'hen and rooster', all of which had voiceless and voiced initials, respectively, in Middle Chinese (i.e. pre-modern Chinese): “In coordinate compounds […] the syllable with a voiceless (qing 清) initial typically precedes that with a voiced (zhuo 淤) initial” (Ting 1969). The sequence of the constituents in 阴陽 (yin-yang) ‘yin and yang', a historically well-established compound, obeys this phonological constraint of ‘qing-before-zhuo', and not the semantic one of ‘male-before-female’ (Chan 1998:46; cf. also Lien 1989).
Table 3. Word order constraints in Chinese NPs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order of noun constituents</th>
<th>Rank superior &gt;&gt; subordinate</th>
<th>Gender pairs same gender &gt;&gt; not same</th>
<th>Generation elder gen &gt;&gt; younger gen</th>
<th>Gender male &gt;&gt; female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ king – peasant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ peasant – king</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ father – son</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ son – father</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ husband – wife</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ wife – husband</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ elder bro – yngr bro</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ yngr bro – elder bro</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ elder bro – elder sis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ elder sis – elder bro</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ elder sis – yngr bro</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ yngr bro – elder sis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ eld&amp;yngr bro – elder sis</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ elder bro&amp;sis – yngr bro</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ elder sis – yngr bro&amp;sis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(✓) indicates preferred order
(*) indicates category conflict

4. Social attitudes reflected in Chinese language

That remnants of the social character of ancient Chinese society are preserved in certain features of contemporary Chinese language is not surprising. Such is likewise true of many other languages throughout the world. How such remnants – notably, male-dominant, Confucian social attitudes – came to be embedded in Chinese language may be explained within the framework of
linguistic relativity as suggested by Sapir (1933:17), who stated that “[t]he language habits of people are by no means irrelevant as unconscious indicators of the more important traits of their [social] personalities […].” Sapir makes the further point that these are embedded in a variety of linguistic forms which endure through time:

A great deal of the cultural stock in trade of a […] society is presented in a more or less well defined linguistic form. Proverbs, medicine formulae, standardized prayers, folk tales, standardized speeches, song texts, genealogies are some of the more overt forms which language takes as a culture-preserving instrument. (Sapir 1933:16f)

For Chinese language, this “cultural stock” took the form of the dominant social attitudes and values that were embodied in Confucian ideology, and which embraced a hegemonic, patriarchal social system.

Stacey (1983:30) points out that “[f]ew patriarchal systems approach the degree of explication, elaboration of hegemony Confucianism achieved in imperial China”. Moreover, this particular system applied not only to commoners, but to the emperor and all his subjects, and it became the model for both the social and political hierarchy in China.

In essence, Confucianism was a protocol for proper family life. It prescribed a patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal family system. Sex, age, and generation were the coordinates that defined an individual’s status, role privileges, duties, and liabilities within the family order. Men officially dominated women; the old dominated the young. (Stacey 1983:31)

In codifying the Confucian system, it was incorporated into the ‘code of ethics’ 禮教 lijiao, and eventually became part of Chinese jurisprudence. “Li and law were the major vehicles through which Confucian doctrines were promulgated and transmitted” (Stacey 1983:35). Over time, Confucian doctrine became embedded in virtually every aspect of Chinese society, including language, as the force of these social attitudes became more deeply enveloped in Chinese law. “The law served to codify and reinforce the basic authority principles of Confucian patriarchy. Patriarchal authority was officially recognized, strengthened, and occasionally implemented by the dynastic legal codes” (Stacey 1983:37). Not until the advent of socialist doctrine and the newly established People’s Republic of China (PRC) government was Confucian doctrine ever seriously challenged.

Not unrelated to patriarchy and male dominance, a certain disparate valuation between Chinese males and females is often reflected in the tradition-
gender-stereotyped ways of naming children as well as in the terms of address and reference for 'husband' and 'wife'. Most often, the naming of females accords with the notion that women are expected to be "virtuous", "beautiful", and like "nature". Therefore, females often receive names such as 舒 'good virtue', 陳 'chastity', 慎 'prudence', 瞳 'obey', 惠 'kindness', 雅 'beauty', 雅 yǎ 'elegant', 媛 yuàn 'beautiful girl', 婉 wăn 'gentle', 姗 xiān 'refined' or 'demure', 蘭 lán 'orchid', 菊 jú 'chrysanthemum', 風 fēng 'wind', 花 huā 'flower', 雪 xuě 'snow', 月 yuè 'moon', 金 jīn 'gold', 銀 yín 'silver', 寶 bǎo 'treasure' or 'precious', 玉 yù 'jade', and 珍 zhēn 'treasure' (Tang 1988:61).

By contrast, males usually receive names like 長 chóng 'prosperous', 榮 róng 'glorify', 輝 huī 'glorious', 揚 huáng 'bright', 燈 lóng 'great', 燈 yào 'bright light', 雄 xióng 'heroic', 侷 jié 'heroic', 範 fàn 'exemplify', 宗 zōng 'respect ancestry', and 祖 zǔ 'ancestry'. In all, a male's given name serves to signify the hope that he will "glorify the family or become prosperous" as is his expected role in Chinese society (Tang 1988:61f). Conversely, there are few such glorious expectations attached to the lives of Chinese females.

Chinese terms used in addressing or referring to one's wife or husband even more vividly denote the social positions and relative values traditional Chinese society assigned to males and females, respectively. Historically, a female spouse referred to herself as 奴家 nújiā (literally) 'house slave' or 妾 qiē 'concubine', while, on the other hand, she referred to and addressed her husband as 富家的 dàngjiāde which denotes 'master of the family'. There also exists a host of terms that simply translate as 'husband', but many of these terms also connote respect and/or authority as well (Tang 1988:62). Consider the following examples: 先生 xiānshēng 'gentleman, husband' or 'teacher', 丈夫 zhàngfu 'husband' or 'manliness'; and 良人 liángrén 'good person' or 'husband'.

Among the more common terms of address and reference a husband might use regarding his wife are (apart from terms strictly denoting 'wife') 为人 nèirén 'inside (the house) person', 賤 Jiànrén 'literally' 'inferior inside', 室 zhù 'inside help', 婦 woman huáng liàn pò 'yellow faced woman' ('yellow faced' implies an old and, thus, ugly face), 長舌夫 zhǎngshé fū 'long tongue woman' (implies a gossip), 煮飯的 zǔ fàn de 'rice cooker' or 'a cook', and 孩子的 mā 'mother of the children/the children's mother' (Tang 1988:62). These and all of the foregoing examples well illustrate the fact that belittling and demeaning terms of address and reference in Chinese language predominantly concern females, while respectful and honorific terminologies conversely pertain to males.
5. Chinese language reform and contemporary gender politics

Leaving linguistics for the moment, the specific discussion of gender issues concerning Chinese women has been increasingly gaining a public voice and public attention throughout the Chinese speaking world. In mainland China, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) affiliated “All-China Women’s Federation” has, for some fifty years, been responsible for much, if not practically all, of the country’s research and problem solving efforts regarding women and women’s issues (Jacka 1997:7). The Women’s Federation, with some 90,000 professional cadre and 56,879 branches, is China’s largest non-governmental organization (Hall 1997:173). However, its existence has always been dependent on a favorable rapport with the CCP. The federation’s various publications, the magazine *New Women of China*, the monthly periodical *Chinese Women*, the newspaper *Chinese Women’s Daily*, and the internal periodical *Woman-work* serve to inform and educate the Chinese public about required reforms and of recent progress toward such ends. However, the Women’s Federation has continually struggled with its “dual task […] to mobilize mass support of CCP policies, and to defend and further the interests of women”. This real conflict, which both the Women’s Federation and the CCP leadership deny, has “sometimes resulted in an acceptance by the Women’s Federation of Party policies that are in fact detrimental to women’s interest, and a failure, on its part, to tackle problems for women that the Party itself does not acknowledge, or regards as unimportant” (Hall 1997:30ff).15

Gender politics in mainland China have largely focused on issues of inequality in the workplace, in hiring practices, in access to education, in marriage and divorce practices, and in land ownership laws. Seldom have they engaged the linguistic realm such as language planning policies or language change, and only fleetingly has attention been given to sexism in Chinese common speech or within Chinese language specifically. Not surprisingly, labor and other subsistence-related issues continue to draw a much higher political priority in China, at both the individual and official levels, than do most concerns for language policy and other language reforms. Notable exceptions include the Chinese script or character simplification project and certain socialist-flavored language reforms of the 1950’s. The latter group of socialist-inspired reforms focused upon specific terminologies, terms of address, and idiomatic phrases regarding women.

The state of contemporary gender politics in most other Chinese communities, such as in Singapore, Taiwan, and in the now repatriated Hong Kong
community appears similar to that of mainland China. Taiwan, for example, has numerous feminist groups that actively campaign for reforms, and with little fear of coercion or interference from the Taiwanese government. Yet, the bulk of feminist reform projects and popular feminist issues publicized in Taiwan mirrors many of the subject issues of its mainland Chinese neighbor. Again, labor and other subsistence-related issues list among the most important of Taiwanese feminist concerns while, again, attention to Chinese language reform, language planning policy, and other areas of linguistic concern have been slight, if at all existing.\(^{16}\)

5.1 Social language reform in a socialist China

The new PRC government set out almost immediately to reorder Chinese society and to establish a more egalitarian environment by ordering a massive redistribution of all Chinese land holdings and by legislating changes such as a marriage reform law designed, in part, to improve women’s rights and to level their social status with men. The land reform of 1950–1953 brought with it not only the redistribution of some 47 million hectares of farmland among 300 million peasants (Gao 1987:374), but a new social political awareness concerning class, social status, education, and socialist ideologies. The 1950 Constitution asserted the equality of all Chinese citizens, including women and all Chinese Minority Nationalities: “The marriage law of the same year gave women the right to choose their own marriage partners and to demand a divorce. Women’s feet were no longer bound, even in remote villages; girls were given at least limited access to education, and more” (Honig & Hershatter 1988:3; see also Stacey 1983:176, 181). However,

[di]rect campaigns to implement the marriage law came to an end in 1953 mainly because the fundamental goals of family policy of the new democracy had been achieved. These always had subordinated women’s liberation to the priorities of the class struggle. (Stacey 1983:181f, emphasis added)

The CCP was steadfast in its belief that “class struggle” was the methodology by which the Chinese people’s socialist, egalitarian reforms would be realized, presumably effecting women’s “liberation”. As a product of these socialist reforms, “new terms and expressions necessitated or motivated under new political and social conditions” were increasingly added to public vernacular to explain and reinforce the PRC’s Marxist/socialist project (Tai 1975:234).

Yet, even before the founding of the People’s Republic of China, the
Chinese Communist Party had adopted various terms of reference and address essentially devoid of either social status or gender-specific connotations. Probably, the best known of these is the socialist term 同志 tóngzhì 'comrade', which is added post-positionally to one's full or surname, as in 王同志 'Comrade Wang'. Tónghēi had originally meant 'having the same will or interest'. In the early period of the PRC, from 1949–1965, Chinese people resisted replacing honorific titles with newly re-defined terms. But, from the start of the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution (GPCR) onward, the use of tóngzhì gained popularity. Towards the end of the GPCR, on June 2, 1975, the Rénmín Rìbào (People’s Daily) carried an article admonishing the Chinese people to refrain from using terms of rank or position and to revitalize their use of tóngzhì. The impetus for the article came from the concern of the Party Central Committee and the State Council over the increasing re-emergence of hierarchical terms of address (Fang & Heng 1983:499). In 1976, after the defeat of the Gang of Four, official and professional positions were re-established, and their original titles regained use. However, in 1977, the government reaffirmed its former position in favor of tóngzhì, an attitude it has maintained ever since (Scotton & Wanjin 1983:479f).

In recent years, use of the term tóngzhì, once commonplace in mainland China, has seen a substantial decline, except in highly public and official forums. The same holds true for most of the many redefined socialist terminologies. Conversely, one of the most successful socialist-born terms of address is that of 愛人 àirén, used to denote ‘husband’ or ‘wife’. Ironically, the original meaning of àirén is ‘lover’, and that remains unchanged for Chinese speakers outside of mainland China. Not surprisingly, the rest of the Chinese-speaking world has shown little interest in adopting any of China’s various redefined socialist terms of address or terms of reference.

5.2 Reproaching sexist language

The 1950s onslaught of socialist projects provided ample impetus for the emergence of an offensive against a number of Chinese words, titles, and labels denoting non-socialist hierarchy or stratification, as well as against sexist language. As a result, socialist replacement terms came into being, while the words they replaced, along with a host of sexist idioms, were summarily abolished from public and, allegedly, private use. The following examples typify the general character of the sexist idioms and proverbs that the PRC’s socialist reforms targeted:
Language reforms concerning spoken language lacked formal names or campaigns, but were undeniably a part of the socialist project. Particular attention was given by cadre, Party officials, the press, and by other believers in the socialist project to eliminate any language form that conflicted with socialist ideology both in the whole of the period preceding, and even more so during the GPCR. One of the areas of focus concerned non-egalitarian language:

Egalitarianism is one of the most emphasized aspects of the Chinese communist ideology. As a result, most expressions making hierarchical distinctions have been dropped [...]. Egalitarianism has also caused the abolition of expressions praising exploiting and bourgeois classes, expressions contemptuous of the working class [...]. Similarly, the egalitarianism has made obsolete
expressions discriminating against women, juniors, and minority nationalities. For example, *nuziwucai bianshi de* 女子無才便是德 (a woman is virtuous when she is incapable), *nianshao wuzhi* 年少無知 (ignorant because of young age), and *nanman* 南蛮 (southern uncivilized races) […] While terms implying traditional hierarchical distinctions have been demoted, terms of class distinctions based on Marx’s theory of class struggle have been promoted. (Tai 1975:236f; cf. also Shih 1984, Farris 1988, and Tan 1990)

5.3 China’s socialist methods for achieving reform

Changing the speech habits, even more, the worldview of an entire country – and particularly of a nation the size of China – is by no means a simple task. Moreover, these specific reforms were not the well-orchestrated project of any formalized Chinese language planning efforts. Rather, they derived from the essentially non-linguistic political project of socialist reformation. Nonetheless, gaining compliance with these as with most of the PRC’s socialist reform efforts was, perhaps, the government’s least area of difficulty. The primary reason for this is that compliance through coercion was then, and has long been, typical of the PRC’s numerous social and political campaigns, the most well-known being the infamous Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution.

The Chinese people’s acceptance of a new Chinese lexicon of political and socialist terms and slogans was a direct result of “the deliberate manipulation of the [Chinese] language as a tool to achieve socio-political reforms, and [to stimulate] the emergence of new social values and new modes of thought” (Tai 1975:239f). Public confession meetings inspired the acceptance of the egalitarian reforms and the abolition of non-egalitarian language. “People were encouraged [under duress] to confess publicly errors of ‘feudal’ thought” (Stacey 1983:180). Note that while “feudal thought” (and language derived from feudal thought) was a genuine concern of the socialist movement, it was equally a convenient candidate for the frequent exaggerations of coerced, public “struggle meetings”.¹⁸ Thus, one can reasonably deduce that the social decline of sexist idioms in Chinese speech may, at least in part, be due to the deplorable and reckless nature of the struggle meetings themselves.

Unfortunately, this tool of coercion, which was used to stimulate new modes of thought and compliance for the benefit of Chinese women, later became a double-edged sword that was used to suppress them:

*After the 1950 Constitution guaranteed equality between men and women, and after sweeping attacks were made in the 1950’s on the abuses and injustices*
suffered by women in the "old society", Chinese government publications generally asserted that the task of liberating women had been accomplished. (Honig & Hershatter 1988:309)

With the political tables turned, the impetus for further feminist reform, including language reform, was not only absent but contrary to the party line. "[W]omen were primarily mobilized not to fight for gender equality, but to contribute to socialist construction. It was widely accepted that the establishment of socialism would automatically result in the liberation of women" (Honig & Hershatter 1988:3).

In the years that followed, the political campaigns grew more intense. By the onset of the GPCR in 1966, the political thrust of "class struggle took precedence over all other issues, including those of gender equality […] In fact, recognition of gender as a category distinct from class was regarded as reactionary" (Honig & Hershatter 1988:3f). The most interesting aspect, in regard to these statements, is not that gender equality issues and their related reforms were no longer touted as socialist concerns, but that the PRC government has yet, following the end of the GPCR period, to enthusiastically support or reassert the importance of gender equality in China as once again constituting a substantive socialist concern. Conversely, the government did reassert concern for maintaining the use of socialist-inspired egalitarian terms of address such as 同志 tóngzhì 'comrade', and other terms.

5.4 Promoting literacy – a double-edged sword for women

The PRC government, from its inception, promulgated what turned out to be a very successful campaign to instill at least some degree of literacy amongst a high percentage of the Chinese populace, and thereby established a vehicle for disseminating socialist education. This same literacy vehicle, however, also provided the Chinese people with access to the visually symbolic representations of females in written forms of the Chinese language, and likewise to the equally obvious demeaning association of the 女 nǚ graph with words having negative connotations. As Sapir (1933:28) explains: "Not only a language or a terminology but the mere external form in which it is written may become important as a symbol of sentimental or social distinction." Thus, I submit that it would be virtually impossible to acquire literacy in Chinese without also gaining at least a matter-of-fact realization of the symbolic, semantic association of 'female' with socially negative traits or characteristics.
5.5 Language reform and the Script Reform Committee

The evidence above suggests that the socialist reforms of the formative PRC period did make some attempts to eradicate sexist idioms and establish gender-leveling, egalitarian language amongst the Chinese people. However, these few attempts had only limited, short-term success with most of the new terms of address or reference, and virtually no lasting success with regard to commonly used sexist idioms, save for in political or otherwise highly public forums. Still other government attempts at Chinese language reform were orchestrated by the 文字改革委员会 wénzì gǎigé wèiyuánhuì ‘Script Reform Committee’ (SRC)\(^{19}\) which focused upon simplifying Chinese characters, spreading the use of the standard vernacular, and devising and disseminating a phonetic alphabet for use as a tool for learning Chinese.\(^{20}\)

The SRC’s efforts, with regard to its threefold task, were relatively successful, though not without difficulties.\(^{21}\) Lehmann (1975:45) found troubling the rather “ad hoc nature of the main language planning agency and the exclusion of lexicography and technical vocabulary development from its responsibilities”. Seybolt & Chiang (1979:11) also pointed out that the SRC had “no formal principles for simplifying characters”.\(^{22}\) Furthermore, a first article in 中国语文 ‘Chinese Language’ made public these issues stressing a need for scientific studies in lexicology, sociolinguistics, language and communication, and other neglected areas (Cheng 1986:89). Also excluded from the SRC’s agenda were the various socio-political and egalitarian language reforms, which seems particularly odd in view of statements like “The language reform which we are now carrying out is part and parcel of our socialist revolution and construction and serves to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat” (Wen 1973:12 “On Reforming Written Chinese” as quoted in DeFrancis 1984:267). Similarly, Chang Hsi-jo, the former Minister of Education, maintains that “language reform is a serious political mission which must be carried out in order to strengthen the solidarity of the people of the whole country” (quoted in Tarantino 1975:107).

This Chinese “socialist revolution” and “dictatorship of the proletariat” was never intended to exclude Chinese females; however, the project of the SRC effectively did so! Script reform might well have addressed reforming 女 nǚ signific-type graphs connoting negativity by, perhaps, replacing it with the 歹 dài ‘evil’\(^{23}\) or 人 rén ‘person’ signific or with some other simplification or design of their choosing. This might not be possible for all such graph forms, but it surely could reduce significantly the volume of word forms of this nature.
Yet, the failure to address this problem should not reflect on the SRC members, per se, but rather on the body politic directing them.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, an attempt was made to show that certain features of contemporary Chinese language reflect male-dominant social attitudes and, conversely, notions of female inferiority still extant in Chinese society. The evidence above suggests, for example, that Chinese terms of reference and address do exhibit gender disparity between husbands and wives much like Chinese naming practices for infant children illustrate the asymmetric, stereotyped expectations attached to males and females, respectively. The PRC’s short-lived socialist reforms aimed at abolishing sexist idiomatic phrases offer yet further evidence of the extremely male-dominant social attitudes that still abound.

The fact that nearly 20% of Chinese words containing the ndef ‘female’ signify connote negativity and no similar words contain the graph ndef ‘male’ suggests that female debasement also extends to visual representations in the very orthography of Chinese language. And, in both spoken and written Chinese, the male-precedes-female word order constraints illustrate a male-dominant hierarchical set of rules operating on the syntactic structure of Chinese language.

The above discussions also surveyed the character of the PRC’s socialist reform projects and, particularly, the sociopolitical environment of its formal and informal language reforms since 1949. An attempt has been to explicate the interplay of these many reforms and reform projects, the degree and manner in which they addressed or sought to redress sexism in Chinese language, and the resulting success or failure they have achieved in promoting the equality of Chinese women.

China’s attempts at socialist language reform and the monumental accomplishments of the SRC are certainly to be applauded. At the same time, the Chinese government’s failure to coordinate and/or conjoin a reform of male-dominant features in Chinese language and other aspects of socialist language reform with the SRC’s formalized three-fold project seems no less worthy of criticism. The fact that the SRC’s project tasks did not include socialist language reform makes for a weak defense since that in itself belies the precept that language reform is part of the Chinese “social revolution” and a “serious political mission”. Serruys (1962:57) explains that...
For the Communists language reform is needed to serve the demands of mass information and mass propaganda among the people and to further the cause of the continuing Communist revolution and the realization of the true Communist society.

How then could Chinese language reform “further the cause” by neglecting the social revolution of fully one-half of “the true Communist society”, namely, Chinese females?

The potential argument that a reform of the male-dominant features in Chinese language would be too difficult to implement effectively also runs counter to Chinese experience. The very effective coercive compliance tactics of the Chinese government are documented as well as the campaigns and projects they have been used in – this being the government’s chosen method, not my own. In other instances, charismatic government leaders have by word alone induced the Chinese people to take on and carry out even ultra-radical reforms such as the ten-year Cultural Revolution. Methodologies notwithstanding, effecting public compliance with PRC government directives historically has not been problematic. Therefore, had the Chinese government fostered within its language reform campaign countermeasures to the male-dominant features in Chinese language, the evidence suggests that the campaign would have succeeded, at least to a noticeable degree. Similarly, one can only fathom the effect, had Mao espoused a reform campaign of the Chinese populace directed against all forms of sexism in Chinese language, in the interest of socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Elsewhere in the world, no movement or campaign has yet effected the total elimination of sexist language among its subject people. And yet, success in each instance exists not merely in the resulting reduced usage of sexist language forms, but also in the people’s newly increased awareness and heightened sensitivity to sexist language, and especially in the irrevocable seeds of language change and reform that were planted. For similar reasons, the above hypothetical Chinese language campaign would not have required total compliance for it to have achieved success. Mao once stated “The day all Chinese women stand up will be the time of victory of the Chinese Revolution” (Croll 1976:87). However, such hypothetical victories will continue to be unrealized so long as the requisite reforms preceding them remain likewise hypothetical.

The struggles of Chinese women to attain gender parity in the workplace, equal pay for equal work, and equal access to jobs, to quality education, and to the Chinese business arena are all important, ongoing projects. And yet, these subsistence-oriented struggles seem one-sided in that, metaphorically speaking,
they aim to aid or repair the ills of the body, but not those of the soul. It is the sociocultural attitudes of a people that make up that soul. And as Sapir once noted, “[v]ocabulary is a very sensitive index of the culture of a people […]” (Sapir 1933:27). Therefore, a reform of the Chinese people’s vocabulary (i.e., Chinese language), must also be a part of the struggle. For as long as it is wrong to say in Chinese *women and men are equal*, it is not yet right to say of Chinese *men and women are equal*.

Notes


2. “The term Cantonese, which is sometimes used interchangeably with Yuè, should be reserved for the dialect of the city of Guangzhou (Canton) and not used as a general name for the group as a whole.” (Norman 1988:214)

3. The suffix *le* and the particle *le* are presently written with the same Chinese character and both are pronounced exactly alike, yet they are distinct morphemes, see Ramsey (1987:55f, 65, 76–78, 272), also DeFrancis (1984:48) and Norman (1988:123, 157, 163).

4. Kratochvil (1968:148) writes: “The traditional Chinese division of characters (that is, units of an already developed writing system) into six different classes (this division was first made around 1100 B.C. in the book of classics known as Zhou li ‘The Rites of [the state] Chou’), does, however, indicate some kind of historical process, since it is based on the concept that some classes of characters developed from others, their primary classes being represented by pictures.” See also Norman (1988:58–61, 67f). The six classes referred to consisted of 360 pictographs (*xiang xing*), 80 demonstrations (*zhi shi*), 110 ideographs (*hui yi*), 7,600 ideophones (*xing sheng*), 80 meta-ideophones (*zhuang zhu*), and 20,000 loan characters (*jia zhe*).

5. Cf. Norman (1988:60f), Kratochvil (1968:151f). The phonetic component usually contributes the medial vowel and final syllabic ending to the pronunciation of the syllable (not all Chinese words possess final consonants).

6. In ancient Chinese society, the horse 马 *má* played an essential role in transportation and in maintaining communication, and it was particularly important to the military forces. Thus, the ancient Chinese lexicon had a plethora of very specific and detailed terms concerning horses. Modern Chinese society, however, has much less use for the horse and thus, much of the lexicon involving horses is now used as verbs such as 骑 *qi* ‘to ride’, 跳 *jiāo* ‘to drive’, 跑 *chāo* ‘to speed’, along with other word forms pertaining to the movement of vehicles and human beings (Tang 1988:59f).

7. The dictionary I used for the survey was Beijing (1988). This dictionary was particularly appropriate in that it provided for a survey of the more modern Chinese lexicon, given that
it was published both officially and subsequent to most of the major language reforms in the People’s Republic of China.

8. One of the more notable dictionaries I surveyed was Mathews (1993).

9. “Pinyin” romanizations appear, with tonemarkers, following the standard four level scheme for the northern (Mandarin) dialect. Some Chinese graphs have more than one pronunciation or more than one tone. In either instance, it constitutes a different word with a different meaning.

10. To describe animals as 农 and 奴 is absolutely unacceptable to Chinese speakers. Errors of this nature are seldom tolerated and invariably corrected.

11. The writings of Confucius (551–479 BC), a most famous philosopher of ancient China, discuss at great length notions of propriety of relationships, rights and duties, and many other moral concepts. These fundamental building blocks of Chinese social order are contained in a collection of Confucius’ sayings, compiled by his pupils shortly after his death, now commonly known as ‘The Analects’.

12. Chan (1998:42) also notes that these factors influence certain areas of Chinese language: “The Chinese system of kinship terms of reference and address takes such variables as sex, generation, and lineage into consideration […].”


15. So unimportant was the Women’s Federation in the government’s eyes that the former was disbanded in the late 1960s, not to be re-established until 1973 when the main thrust of the Cultural Revolution had fairly declined.

16. Cf. Chan (1998:35): “Studies devoted specifically to issues involving language and gender were rare. Notable exceptions include Light (1982), probably the very first to approach the subject and primarily on Cantonese; Shih (1984), the first general overview (in Chinese); and Farris (1988), the second overview (in English).”

17. The data for these examples was drawn from Tang (1988). On Chinese proverbs see also Zhang, this volume.

18. Cf. Chan & Madsen & Unger (1984:20, 51, 55–61, 149–151, 157–160, 207–209). Struggle meetings were brutal, public forums where local individuals were publicly accused of real or imagined socio-political errors from any given time in their life, and were then required, under duress, to confess and to castigate themselves. The public’s attendance and participation was also mandatory.

19. The name 文字改革委员会 is also variously translated as ‘Language Reform Committee’, ‘Character Reform Committee’, or ‘Writing Reform Committee’.

20. Premier Zhou Enlai outlined the three tasks of the SRC in a January 1958 speech he delivered to the National Political Consultative Conference “The Immediate Tasks in Writing Reform”; see Seybolt & Chiang (1979:5 and 228–243).

21. For a fuller examination of the SRC’s language reforms, see Ettner (1993), Seybolt & Chiang (1979), Lehmann (1975), and Norman (1988).

23. Hodge & Kam (1998:57) note that “the ‘woman’ radical 女 is a component of many characters which connote negative values. Throughout this century, language reform committees have been alerted to this fact, and a group of women have even suggested changing all such characters by replacing 女 with the ‘evil’ radical 歹. But these pleas have been consistently ignored on the grounds that while the script may have originally expressed an ideological stance, it is now beyond ideology. We believe the opposite is the case.”

References


Gender-related use of sentence-final particles in Cantonese

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1. Introduction

In modern colloquial Cantonese, casual conversations among close friends and relatives abound in sentence-final particles. While some have primarily grammatical function, such as turning a declarative sentence into an interrogative one, most have affective use, reflecting the attitude or emotion of the speaker. There has been very little research to date on language and gender with respect to the Chinese language, whether referring to Mandarin, Cantonese, or some other variety of Chinese (Chan 1996, 1998a, 1998b). This section focuses on the gender-related use of some sentence-final particles in Cantonese, a variety of Chinese that is spoken in Guangdong Province in southern China, as well as in Hong Kong and Macao, and numerous overseas communities all over the world, including Singapore, Malaysia, Viet Nam, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. Dialects of the Yue group (which includes Cantonese) are spoken by some 66 million speakers in the world today, based on estimates given in the Summer Institute of Linguistics’ Ethnologue: Languages of the World (Grimes 1996), which also ranks Yue as sixteenth in its list of top 100 languages by population.
Standard Cantonese, the prestige subvariety, is spoken in Guangzhou (Canton City) and Hong Kong. It will be shown that general distribution patterns may obscure some interesting behavior by males with respect to particle usage in different sociocultural contexts. The research findings emphasize the need to recognize the complexity of both sociocultural settings and the ramifications of multiple roles that individuals play in their interaction and communication with others.

The Cantonese variety of Chinese is particularly interesting to investigate because it is a tone language with three contrastive level tones in addition to two rising tones and one or two falling tones (two for those speakers who make a contrast between a high level tone and a high-falling tone on some lexical items), and no stress accent system. Hence, every syllable has a tone, including sentence-final particles. This, it should be noted, is not true of Mandarin Chinese, where sentence-final particles are toneless, and thus are in the so-called “neutral tone”. The tonal system in Cantonese, with its contour tones and tonal register, further curtails the use of intonation to overall raised pitch (Wu 1989: 174ff, cited in Matthews & Yip 1994: 409) and simple rising intonation for most types of interrogative sentences. As a result, sentence-final particles in Cantonese often function similarly to intonation in a language such as English, which has a full-fledged system of stress and no lexical tones. Cantonese also relies more heavily on sentence-final particles than does Mandarin. The latter has only four lexical tones, and thus fewer tones to constrain pitch height and pitch contour, and it has a partially developed stress system. As unstressed syllables are toneless, they can more readily accommodate pitch changes demanded by intonation patterns. In contrast to Mandarin, Cantonese has more sentence-final particles, its speakers use them more frequently in speech, and produce them with a greater range of pitch and duration differences. Chan (1998c: 103) notes, for example, that open syllables in Cantonese average 300 milliseconds, while sentence-final particles can have a duration of up to one full second! When two or three sentence-final particles are concatenated at the end of an utterance, they can easily exceed one second. This dramatic syllable-lengthening is not observed in Mandarin. Thus, the striking differences between these two varieties of Chinese offer great potential for further research with respect to the study of pragmatic meanings of sentence-final particles in general, and their gender-differentiated usage in current sociocultural settings in particular, as part of a larger study of gender across languages.

Sentence-final particles are ubiquitous in colloquial spoken Cantonese. There are some thirty basic forms (Kwok 1984, Ouyang 1993), which may occur
individually or in clusters of two or three at the end of an utterance. Mandarin, in contrast, has only between seven and at most about seventeen common sentence-final particles (cf. Matthews & Yip 1994:338, Chao 1968:795ff). Sentence-final particles serve to add further nuance to what the speaker is saying beyond the actual content words themselves. Consider, for example, the following two pairs of interrogative sentences in Cantonese (extracted from sample Chinese sentences given in Deng (1991:132)). Transcription here is in Yale romanization minus tone diacritics. For tones on sentence-final particles, tone numbers 1 through 5 are used, with 5 for highest pitch and 1 for lowest pitch.

(1) a. Neih sik keuih ma.33?
   you know him/her
   ‘Do you know him/her?’

   b. Neih sik keuih me.55?
   you know him/her
   ‘Do you know him/her?’

(2) a. Neih geisih faan laih a.33?
   you when return come
   ‘When are you coming back?’

   b. Neih geisih faan laih jek.5?
   you when return come
   ‘When are you coming back?’

In the first pair, sentence (1a) is a fairly neutral, information-seeking question. It is formed by adding the yes-no question particle, ma.33 (mid-level tone), at the end of the declarative sentence. In changing the particle to me.55 (high-level tone), sentence (1b) conveys the speaker’s startled reaction or surprise. The context in which it is uttered is not neutral; the speaker is seeking some kind of confirmation. It might, for instance, be asked by a young woman with a hint of jealousy to her boyfriend upon seeing an attractive stranger wave to them. In English, the two sentences are translated identically. One way of conveying the difference might be the differential use of intonation. Alternatively, using the above scenario, (1b) could be made into an echo question in English: “You know her?”, and perhaps further adding an interjection: “Oh, you know her?” Sentence-final particles such as me.55 that have illocutionary force are not used in formal situations; they are absent in public speeches and news broadcasts. Affective use of sentence-final particles is generally limited to informal settings. Moreover, some particles, such as me.55, are found primarily in casual or intimate conversations among close friends and relatives.
The second pair of sentences consists of two interrogatives. Sentence (2a) contains the particle \(a.33\) (with phonetic variants, \(ya.33\) and \(wa.33\)). It is optionally added to declaratives, interrogatives, as well as imperatives, functioning to soften the tone of voice, thereby conveying greater politeness. This particle is common to Cantonese and Mandarin in both pronunciation and pragmatic function. While sentence (2a) is also grammatical without the particle, its omission makes the sentence sound more abrupt and potentially more severe. A father might say the sentence without the final particle sternly to his son as the young man bolts out through the door. Sentence (2b), with \(jek.5\) (high tone) poses a question and at the same time conveys the speaker’s impatience. Obviously, the two particles, \(a.33\) and \(jek.5\), are not interchangeable. Use of \(jek.5\) here may also be mixed with some feelings of displeasure, as the addressee heads out through the door. Sentence (2b) would normally be used only between people who know each other well, such as between spouses. And, given traditional gender roles in Chinese culture and society, such a sentence would stereotypically be viewed as a sentence uttered by the wife rather than the husband. The pair of sentences in (2) are translated identically into English, since neither particle has any lexical meaning of its own.

2. The Cantonese sentence-final particles \(je.55\), \(jek.5\), \(ho.35\), and \(wo.33\)

Among the thirty or so Cantonese sentence-final particles, \(je.55\) and \(jek.5\) (hereafter simply \(je\) and \(jek\)) have been studied in detail for gender-related differences by Chan (1996), based on a survey of twentieth-century textbooks, dictionaries, and linguistic studies, together with a corpus of twelve videotaped episodes of a very popular, half-hour weekly television series, Maanfa Tung ‘Kaleidoscope’. Chan (1998a) is a follow-up study of \(je\) and \(jek\) using the same corpus. The Kaleidoscope television series was filmed in the mid-1980s by the Guangdong Television Company on location in Guangzhou (Canton City), China, in an actual residential area that is referred to in the episodes as Maanfa Hong ‘Maanfa Lane’. That television series is known for being the first mainland Chinese television production that used everyday, colloquial Cantonese. The spirit underlying the series was that it be “as close to real life as possible”. As a result, the language used is very natural and full of sentence-final particles.

Chan (1996) suggests that the particles \(je\) and \(jek\) did not emerge at the same time. Most likely, the original particle was \(je\), with a delimitative function and a core meaning of ‘only, merely’. That function is especially obvious in
sentences containing some kind of quantification. The affective use of this particle by children is noted in Wang (1957:92), who states that young children like to use je. It conveys a sense of bragging on the part of the child. Qiao (1966) may have been the first to identify a gender-related usage of je, noting that it often occurs as a modal particle in interrogatives in female speech of the kind that conveys a sense of being affectedly sweet. Decline in usage of this affective sense, and its gradual replacement by jek is reported by Light (1982), who makes it clear, however, that he does not identify jek as gender-exclusive. Rather, it is viewed by his informants as a form that is used between lovers, among family members, or among very close working companions.

While native Cantonese speakers associate jek with female usage, Chan (1996) observes that both males and females in the Kaleidoscope corpus use je and jek. Although in absolute terms, males use more je/jek sentence-final particles than females in the corpus, males use them proportionately less frequently than females, when one takes into consideration that males produce a higher proportion of the overall corpus. That is, the twelve episodes contain a total of 3,657 sentences, of which 1,440 (39.4%) are produced by females, and 2,217 (60.6%) are produced by males. Table 1 (from Chan 1996) gives a total of 206 je and jek sentences in the corpus. As shown, females produce a total of 96 je/jek sentences. This constitutes 6.67% of their total sentence production, or a 1:15 ratio. In the case of the males, even though they produce more je/jek sentences, their 110 such sentences constitute only 4.96% of the total male production of je/jek sentences. Note also that there is a gender-linked difference in proportion of je and jek sentences.

Table 1. Distribution of je and jek sentences across gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females (n = 1440)*</th>
<th>Males (n = 2217)</th>
<th>Total (n = 3657)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JE Sentences</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEK Sentences</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96 (6.67%)</td>
<td>110 (4.96%)</td>
<td>206 (5.63%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .01 level for distribution of JE vs. JEK sentences by females

Females use jek twice as often as they do je, and the results are statistically significant. Males, on the other hand, produce an equal proportion of both particles. Furthermore, females’ production of the 66 jek sentences constitutes 4.6% of the total female production of sentences, contrasting with the 55 jek sentences for males constituting only 2.5% of the total male production of
sentences in the corpus. In other words, females produce jek sentences almost twice as frequently as males do. The distribution patterns thus clearly support native speakers’ intuition and perception that jek is more associated with female speech in today’s spoken Cantonese.

There may also be generational differences in the use of jek. Gao (1980:196f), who does not mention je at all, discusses two uses of jek: the first is to attract the hearers’ attention. The second usage of jek he identifies as occurring commonly between relatives and very close friends. He further suggests that jek is used by the younger generation, in speaking to someone of the older generation, as in children to their parents, and siblings to their elder brothers and sisters. That usage carries with it some degree of coyness, or associations of a spoilt child. Gao does not mention gender. Perhaps for girls, the coyness and affected sweetness of this usage in childhood continues into early adulthood, and is used with those who have some perceived dominance over them, in a society that remains patriarchal despite socialist reforms. Boys, on the other hand, may have been socialized to outgrow that style of speaking, at least in the public arena. The Kaleidoscope corpus hints at the possibility of some generation-linked differences in the use of je and jek. Further research is required to determine whether the differences represent an instance of language change or stable variation across the generations.

Even though in the series there are no intimate scenes between spouses, there is an interesting difference between the way men speak to their wives and how they speak to their friends or neighbors. As shown in Table 2, the wives use jek proportionately more frequently than je, in fact, almost three times more frequently than je to their husbands: 37 jek’s to 13 je’s. To their wives, the husbands also use jek more frequently than je: 18 jek’s to 10 je’s, which is in sharp contrast to the equal proportion of je and jek in the overall male corpus.

The results suggest that men speak quite differently in private with their spouses than they do in public settings. A study of the husbands and their communication with neighbors confirms this. As Table 3 shows, the same individuals use 27 je’s to 25 jek’s in conversing with their neighbors. The remaining 30 instances of je and jek (out of a total of 110) are uttered by other males in the episodes who are either bachelors or not yet of marriageable age. Correspondingly, for the females, the remaining 39 instances of je and jek (out of a total of 96) are produced by those who are either widows or not yet of marriageable age.

What is rarely found in the corpus is the use of jek for affected sweetness or coyness. Perhaps this is in part due to the absence of truly intimate conversations
between young lovers or scenes with stereotypical, spoilt daughters and doting fathers. It may also be part of the egalitarian rhetoric and ideology of post-1949 mainland China, which have discouraged the more strongly feminine-marked speech and demeanor. Instead, jek is often used to convey a complex mixture of many different emotions that range from tactfulness and intimate seeking and sharing of information to those of impatience, exasperation, and dismay.

A follow-up study of the utterances produced by males and females in the Kaleidoscope corpus (Chan 1998b) reveals that women and men do not produce proportionately the same amount of declarative sentences and interrogative sentences using je and jek. This is shown in Table 4.

Table 2. Distribution of je/jek in wife-husband conversations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wives to husbands*</th>
<th>Husbands to wives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>je</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jek</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .01 level for wives’ use of JE vs. JEK to their husbands

Table 3. Distribution of je/jek in wives’/husbands’ conversations with friends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wives to friends</th>
<th>Husbands to friends</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>je</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jek</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Total          | 7                | 52                  

Table 4. Distribution of declarative vs. interrogative sentences across gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Females*</th>
<th>Males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Declaratives</td>
<td>Interrogatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>je</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jek</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32 (33%)</td>
<td>64 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .01
For females, two thirds (67%) of their *je/jek* productions are in interrogative sentences and one third (33%) in declarative sentences. Almost all interrogative sentences (61 out of 64) contain *jek* rather than *je*. Males, in contrast, produce half (49%) of their *je/jek* utterances as interrogatives, and the other half (51%) as declaratives. Compared to females, males also show more willingness to utter *jek* in declaratives (13 out of 56) and *je* in interrogatives (12 out of 54). Despite a pattern of distribution that is not as sharply delineated in male use of *je* and *jek* as in the females’ use of these two particles, the distribution is nonetheless statistically significant (p < .01).

Some pragmatic functions are neutral, whereas others are linked to males or to females in the use of *je* and *jek*. This is summarized in Table 5 (from Chan 1998b).

Both women and men use *je* in declarative sentences for delimiting an amount or downplaying. They also use it for conveying tact and agreeableness. For gender-linked usages, females use *je* in declaratives for coaxing, while males use *je* in declaratives where they are refuting something or boasting.

For *jek* in declaratives, there were no clearly neutral usages. Females use *jek* for downplaying, with an added note of exasperation at times. They may also use *jek* for saying something tactfully or in a complimentary fashion. Males, on the other hand, sometimes use *jek* as a stronger variant of *je* for downplaying something, a usage that is absent in females’ production of *jek*. Males also use *jek* in declaratives to express impatience or exasperation (cf. also Fung 2000:50ff).

For interrogatives, *je* is used almost entirely by males in the corpus, for reasons that require further research. This has not been noted in the previous literature: *Je* is used in information-seeking WH-questions, including those uttered with impatience, and in tag-questions. On the other hand, both female and male speakers use *jek* in interrogatives, and both use it in general information-seeking questions as well as in rhetorical questions that contain some element of sarcasm or exasperation. Besides these gender-neutral uses of *jek* in interrogatives, there are also uses that are gender-linked. Females use *jek* in more soft-spoken or more intimate information-seeking questions, and in some rare instances, to express dismay, the most marked female use of *jek* in the corpus. For males, in lieu of using *jek* in interrogatives to show dismay, the marked usage seems to be that of expressing protest (e.g., a husband’s protest: ‘So many (pieces of stereo equipment), how can I carry all that by myself?!’). It would normally only be used with someone very familiar or close to the speaker. This male-linked usage of *jek* has not been noted in the literature either. Thus, one finds male-linked uses of *je* and *jek* in addition to neutral uses
Table 5. Distribution of gender-neutral and gender-linked uses of *je/jek* across gender and sentence types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>je</th>
<th>jek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. Declaratives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-neutral</td>
<td></td>
<td>(F: 27, M: 43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• delimiting ('just, only')</td>
<td>• downplaying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• downplaying</td>
<td>• explaining, clarifying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• explaining, clarifying</td>
<td>• being tactful, agreeable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-linked</td>
<td>• coaxing</td>
<td>• downplaying with exasperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• being tactful, complimentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• intimate relating of news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male-linked</td>
<td>• refuting</td>
<td>• being impatient, exasperated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• turn in course of events</td>
<td>• <em>jek</em> as a stronger variant of <em>je</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• boasting</td>
<td>for downplaying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Interrogatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-neutral</td>
<td></td>
<td>(F: 3, M: 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(none)*</td>
<td>• general info-seeking**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• rhetorical questions with sarcasm, exasperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-linked</td>
<td></td>
<td>(none)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• dismay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• intimate info-seeking with both genders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• soft-spoken info-seeking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male-linked</td>
<td>• WH-questions for info-seeking</td>
<td>• protest and other forms of complaint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• rhetorical questions, incl. with impatient tone of voice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <em>je</em> embedded in tag-questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* There are only two cases of rhetorical questions and one case of *je* embedded in a tag-question.

** There are three cases of intimate info-seeking by males, but posed to females only.

and those that are female-linked. Moreover, despite the perception that it is females who are associated with the use of *jek*, males also use it, albeit to a much lesser extent, and for different purposes, namely, as a stronger variant of *je* and to lodge their protest and unwillingness to perform some task. For
precisely these reasons, neither *je* nor *jek* would fit easily into a framework that would associate the two particles with politeness. It may be plausible to analyze *jek* as occurring in contexts of subordination of the speaker, but that usage is not restricted to females.

In addition to *je* and *jek*, another Cantonese particle that has been linked to gender-differentiated usage is *ho*.35 (with phonetic variants of smooth or glottal stop onset), presented in Light (1982:26), who analyzes *ho*.35 as a confirmatory particle that is heard more frequently from women in all stations of life. However, he notes that it is also heard frequently among men in a lower social or professional position than their conversational partner. In addition, Light indicates that *ho*.35 “is also heard in situations where the speaker is of superior status and wants to ‘draw out’ his inferior-status listeners by creating an atmosphere suggestive of free exchange”, and is hence a conscious effort on the part of the speaker to elicit comments from subordinates.

Light (1982:30) also discusses the sentence-final particle *wo*.33, used for reporting, in which the speaker takes no personal responsibility for the accuracy of the statement. Here, Light finds that *wo*.33 is used with noticeable frequency by domestic servants, secretaries, and clerks in Hong Kong; but these positions are primarily occupied by women, and hence, “the most that one can say is that women’s use of *wo* exceeds that of men in rough proportion to the greater number of women in social roles which call for utterances using *wo*”. Light does identify the pronunciation of this particle with lengthened duration and rising-falling intonation as gender-linked. That adds a “baby-talk suggestion to the reporting” and is thus generally perceived as the province of women.


A systematic study of the Kaleidoscope corpus has not yet been conducted for particles other than *je* and *jek*. Nevertheless, a preliminary study is made of two of the episodes to determine which additional gender-linked sentence-final particles might be found in that corpus. Episodes 3 and 8 are chosen because, for both episodes, there exists not only a romanized transcription of the actual television production (in Fung 1996a), but also a corresponding Cantonese script, prepared by the Guangdong Television Company and typed in Chinese (i.e., monosyllabic, monomorphemic Chinese characters). Of significance is the fact that the wording in the romanized and character versions of the episodes is
not identical, and the differences are particularly notable with respect to those innocuous-looking sentence-final particles. In addition to the romanized and character scripts, the Kaleidoscope project also produced video- and audiotapes of these two episodes as part of the Kaleidoscope multimedia course materials (see Note 3).

The study of the sentence-final particles in the two television episodes yielded some interesting differences in the production by males and females. A comparison was made between the Cantonese (character) script and the romanized transcript with respect to what sentence-final particles surface in Episodes 3 and 8. These two episodes contain a total of 6,088 Chinese characters (each corresponding to a syllable) in the Cantonese script, and 6,742 syllables in the romanized transcript. Hence, more syllables are uttered in the television production than appear in the script, and some of the increase is in sentence-final particles.

Noteworthy for the comparison of sentence-final particles is the fact that females in the two episodes speak only a little less than males do: Females produce 47% of the total corpus in the two Cantonese scripts, a proportion fairly matched by the 46% in the romanized transcriptions for the actual shows. Four sentence-final particles are selected for discussion: la.33, la.55, a.33, and a.55. They occur frequently in the two episodes, and they form a near minimal set, differing from each other only with respect to presence or absence of a lateral onset, and high versus mid-level tone.  

The two particles, la.33 and la.55, which differ only in tone, may be paired together because in the Cantonese scripts, only one Chinese character is used to represent the two particles, with the performers selecting a mid or high level tone in the television production. Fung (1996b:97) identifies two functions for la.33: The particle may indicate certainty and change of situation (i.e., an aspectual marker of change of state), or it may be used to tell the listener to do something, and not simply to suggest it, while she describes la.55 as “a sentence-final particle implying a casual suggestion or request”.

Table 6 shows that in the two character scripts, females were scripted with 70 instances of the la particle, while males were scripted with 72 of them, yielding a total of 142 particles, roughly the same number for each gender. On the other hand, the romanized transcripts, based on transcribing the actual television production, yield a higher total of occurrences, namely 173, of which females produced 85 and males 88, again roughly about the same number for each gender.

From Table 6, a further breakdown is given in Table 7 to show which of the
two particles, \textit{la.33} and \textit{la.55}, are produced by female and male speakers. As a separation of the two particles cannot be made from the Cantonese script (since only one Chinese character is used), we focus on the romanized scripts for these two episodes. For females, of the 85 tokens, about three quarter (74\%) represent the particle \textit{la.33} and only one quarter (26\%) the particle \textit{la.55}. Males show a much less skewed distribution pattern. Although they produce roughly the same number of tokens, only three fifths (59\%) are \textit{la.33} and two fifths (36\%) \textit{la.55}. Interestingly, the results for females are contrary to stereotypical expectations that females might produce more of the high-tone particles.

Table 6. Distribution of \textit{la} (\textit{la.33}/\textit{la.55}) in the scripts across gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripts</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character scripts</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanized scripts</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the literature, Kwok (1984: 80f) pairs \textit{a.55} with \textit{la.55}. She notes that in imperative sentences, there are many cases where these two particles are interchangeable. In cases involving the first person (singular or plural), \textit{a.55} “seems to be more consultative and more lively in tone, inviting the addressee to agree to the action proposed […] while \textit{la.55} does not seem to be so concerned with the addressee’s reactions or feelings”. Again, one may here observe a potential gender-linked difference that may reflect the stereotypical behavior expected of women and men. The two Kaleidoscope episodes show a tendency of gender-linked differences in the production of \textit{a.55}: Females utter 13 of the 20 tokens and males only 7. With respect to sentence-final particles \textit{a.55} and \textit{la.55}, the corpus also suggests the possibility of gender-differentiated usage: \textit{a.55} is uttered more frequently by females, and \textit{la.55} more so by males. A larger corpus with more tokens of these two particles is required for a more detailed investigation.

Table 7. Distribution of \textit{la.33} and \textit{la.55} in the romanized scripts across gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Romanized scripts</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>\textit{la.33}</td>
<td>63 (74%)</td>
<td>52 (59%)</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{la.55}</td>
<td>22 (26%)</td>
<td>36 (41%)</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .01
Finally, the most common sentence-final particle in Cantonese, namely, *a.33*, will be discussed and summarized in Table 8. The particle *a.33*, illustrated in sentence (2a), serves to soften the utterance, making it less abrupt and less assertive. In imperative sentences, *a.33* lends a more intimate, gentler tone to a command, as in the case of a parent telling a child to play nicely. If females are stereotypically expected to be more polite and more soft-spoken, then these expectations are met in the two episodes. Females produce this particle proportionately more frequently than males: Of the total production of 126 *a.33*'s, 60% are uttered by females, and only 40% are uttered by males.

Table 8. Distribution of *a.33* in the scripts across gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripts</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character scripts</td>
<td>47 (51%)</td>
<td>45 (49%)</td>
<td>92 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanized scripts*</td>
<td>75 (60%)</td>
<td>51 (40%)</td>
<td>126 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05

Interestingly, the Cantonese scripts, on the other hand, distributed *a.33* almost equally between women and men. Hence, what appears to be a fairly neutral sentence-final particle based on the Cantonese script reveals gender differentiation in what is actually said. This sentence-final particle is ubiquitous and so frequently used by all speakers in colloquial speech that no obvious gender-linked differences had been noted in the literature.

4. Concluding remarks

In this chapter, several Cantonese sentence-final particles have been presented, based on what limited research there is to date. The results suggest that females tend to use sentence-final particles more than males do. Moreover, there are gender-linked differences in the choice of particles and in their usage in sentence types. The distribution patterns that emerge in this paper provide a window into societal expectations of gender-appropriate use of some of the sentence-final particles in modern Cantonese, and, by extension, provide a glimpse into gender construction and the socialization process in one region of China today. The dialogues in the Kaleidoscope series sound natural to viewers precisely because they conform to stereotypical expectations of male/female speech behavior.
There remain many issues that need to be addressed in the future; these include questions of the extent to which gender-linked uses of the particles in the television series reflect stereotypical uses. Cross-linguistic studies may also trigger questions on the degree to which cultural differences might play a role in the amount of gap between stereotypical uses of linguistic forms that might be found in television series and real-life uses of such forms by the two genders. It is important to keep in mind that Chinese society has traditionally been patriarchal, with strongly prescribed gender roles and norms for behavior. Today, despite the rhetoric of the People’s Republic of China that women “hold up half the sky”, gender inequality not only continues to exist in educational opportunities and access to political and economic power, but social, economic and political changes in China during the 1980’s and 1990’s have increased the gender gap (cf. Jacka 1997, Chan 1998c). Chinese society, both modern and traditional, expects conformity, and with such expectations, the gap between real-life behavior and stereotypical behavior that reflects social norms may turn out to be narrower than that found in cultures and societies where creativity and individualism are encouraged.

Notes


2. The most neutral form of the yes-no question is the disjunctive, A-not-A form, e.g., Keuih sik-mh-sik ngo a.33? (S/he know-not-know me PRT?) ‘Does s/he know me?’. Young Hong Kong Cantonese speakers, for example, rarely use the ma-particle question form.

3. Thanks go to Professor Xiaobin Jian, who was the first Project Director of the Ohio State University Cantonese Project (1993–1996), and provided the author with additional background information on the television series. The author takes this opportunity to thank her colleague, Professor Galal Walker, Principal Investigator of the OSU Cantonese Project, for enabling her to use the Kaleidoscope materials for her research. She also thanks Roxana Fung for discussions and help on the project. Thanks also go to Marlis Hellinger and Hadumod Bußmann, editors of this set of volumes, Gender across Languages, for their enthusiasm, dedication, and painstaking efforts.

4. Hence, not surprisingly, studies such as Cheung (1972), Gao (1980), and Matthews & Yip (1994) only refer to jek and not to je as having affective use. Je is not even mentioned in Gao
(1980), while Cheung (1972) and Matthews & Yip (1994) treat it as primarily a particle with a delimitative, downplaying function of 'just, only'. Cheung (1972) allows je/jek as variants in that context, and includes examples of jek conveying some sense of pride or boastfulness.

5. There were no imperative sentences containing je or jek in the corpus.

6. Neither ho.35 nor wo.33 is included in the two Cantonese scripts although they do surface in the actual television production of the episodes and in the romanized transcripts. However, there are only two tokens of ho.35, both uttered by females. The two episodes show no obvious gender-differentiated usage of wo.33, of which 10 tokens are produced by females and 12 by males. These preliminary results support Light's (1982) suggestion that wo.33 is not gender-linked. There are no instances of wo uttered with rising, or rising-falling, pitch in the two episodes.

References

Cheung, Samuel Hung-nin. 1972. Xianggang Yueyu Yufade Yanjiu [Cantonese as spoken in Hong Kong]. Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong Press.


1. Introduction

In their concise form and authoritative style, proverbs provide us with rich linguistic data for the study of the cultural beliefs and social values of a particular society. In Chinese proverbial lore, almost every aspect of women’s lives is commented on and evaluated. There are proverbs echoing the dominant social rules and norms concerning women’s behaviors and familial roles, and proverbs emphasizing the necessity of male control over women. By contrast, there are very few proverbs specifically portraying men in stereotypical, male roles or images. Where we have proverbs addressing a male audience, they often appear as pragmatic advice either telling men which woman to marry, or warning men to exercise control over women. Women as a group obviously become a marked category, and are subject to society’s close scrutiny. In this sense, Chinese proverbs recapture cultural paradigms of gender relations and appear to reaffirm a gender-related social and cultural hierarchy in a patriarchal and patrilineal society. However, within the same repertoire of proverbs, we also find expressions that contradict the dominant cultural ideology of such a
gender hierarchy, and thus suggest a disjunction between reality and representation, or the existence of different “realities”. I will argue that contradictions in representation among various proverbs demonstrate that it is only to a certain degree that dominant cultural values are shared by the populace at large. And because they are an oral form of popular culture at the level of local society, proverbs also provide a means by which gender-based power relations are renegotiated in everyday life. In the following, examples from Mandarin Chinese will serve as an illustration of the gendered structures of proverbs (on Mandarin Chinese, cf. Ettner, this vol.).

2. Proverbs as embodiment of traditional gender ideology

Traditional Chinese society was organized by the patrilineal and patriarchal kinship system wherein the family name and family estate were transferred along the male line and marriage was patrilocal. Within this male-centered system, Chinese women inevitably occupied a marginal status. In their natal home, women were often regarded as temporary members, and a future loss to their natal family. Upon marriage, they were then viewed as “stranger-intruders” by their husband’s kin. The low social status of women and negative attitudes toward them are clearly embodied in the following proverbs:

(1) Jia chuqu de nü, po chuqu de shui.
    marry out daughter throw out water
    ‘A daughter married out is like water thrown out.’

(2) Nü'er shi peiqian huo.
    daughter be lose money commodity
    ‘A daughter is a commodity on which money is lost.’

(3) Xifu jin le men, quanjia bu an’ning.
    daughter.in.law enter door whole.family neg peaceful
    ‘Once a daughter-in-law comes in, there is no peace in the household.’

(4) Xiongdi ru shouzu, qizi ru yifu.
    brothers be like arms.legs wife be like clothes
    ‘Brothers are like one's arms and legs, a wife is like one's clothes.’

(5) Sheng nan yi dahuan, sheng nü tian youfan.
    produce male one big joy produce female add worry
    ‘Giving birth to a boy is a great joy, giving birth to a girl adds worries.’
In proverb (1), a woman who is married out is compared to water thrown out, the implication being that just as one cannot take water back once it is discarded, a woman is of no use to her natal family once she is married. In a straightforward way, proverb (2) tells us that one will be on the losing end in raising a daughter, since eventually she will leave her parents and become useful only to her husband’s family by perpetuating his patriline. An extended family with several generations living under one roof was considered the Chinese ideal. But in reality, joint families were often short-lived, and family division often took place soon after new conjugal families were formed. Women were often blamed as the “culprit” who weakened the joint family and caused it to split up. Thus, in proverb (3), we are told that ‘there is no peace once a daughter-in-law enters into the household’. The peripheral nature of Chinese women in the Chinese kinship system is perhaps most graphically described in proverb (4), where a man’s brothers are said to be his ‘arms and legs’, while his wife is only his ‘clothes’. This proverb warns men that patrilineal solidarity among blood brothers supersedes the conjugal relation between husband and wife. The contrastive images in this proverb clearly imply that brothers constitute one unity in the family and are thus indispensable to each other, just as one cannot part with one’s arms and legs, whereas a wife assumes only a peripheral place and can be changed and replaced, just as one can change one’s clothes.

The Chinese patrilineal system inevitably inclined parents to value sons over daughters, as parents depended on their sons to carry on the family line, to provide labor for the family, and to support them in their old age. Thus, in proverb (5), we find that parents are overjoyed when a boy is born but only grow worried when a girl is born. The contrasting images in proverbs (6) and (7) are quite telling as well; a son is compared to a ‘treasure’ and a ‘gold wall’, while a daughter is compared to a ‘weed’ and a ‘clay wall’.
3. Challenging the dominant view in proverbial lore

The previous proverbs clearly demonstrate that the gender hierarchy in Chinese society and its kinship system finds its expression in the proverbial lore. In this way, proverbs seem to validate the dominant cultural values and conform to the view that women are inferior and subordinate in a patriarchal society. However, in the same repertoire of proverbs we also find some examples that contradict the images pictured previously, proverbs that seem to redefine women’s roles in a positive and constructive way that one rarely sees in other texts and contexts. One area in which we find women positively depicted is in the role of a wife. In the Confucian social order of hierarchy, a wife was in a position subordinate to her husband. The age-old saying *fuchang fusui*, ‘husband sings, wife echoes’, could be seen as crystallizing the Confucian ideal regarding the relationship between husband and wife. However, in the following proverbs, a wife’s importance is highlighted.

(8) **Jia you xianqi, nan’er bu zuo hunshi.**

‘With a good wife at home, the husband does no foolish acts.’

(9) **Yang hao yiban gu, qi hao yiban fu.**

‘Good seedlings guarantee half of one’s crops; a good wife guarantees half of one’s fortune.’

(10) **Miao zhong bu hao yinian qiong, qu qi bu hao yishi qiong.**

‘A man is poor only for one year if he does not plant his seedlings well; he is poor all his life if he does not marry a good wife.’

(11) **Long li wu ji bu zhi tian liang, chuang shang wu qi mei ren shangliang.**

‘If there is no rooster in the chicken house, one does not know when the dawn breaks; if there is no wife in bed, one has nobody to consult with.’

In proverb (8), a good wife is said to make a man become a good person, while proverb (9) emphasizes that just as good crops depend on good seedlings, a man’s fortune depends on him having a good wife. This same message is reflected in proverb (10), where the parallel comparison suggests that a man
only suffers a one-year loss if he fails to plant his crops well, but that he will pass his whole life in poverty if he fails to marry a good wife. There are clearly two readings of the above proverbs. On the one hand, these proverbs recognize the vital role a woman can play in a man's life and give credit to such a role. On the other hand, as is inevitable in a patriarchal society, the importance and social value of a woman are defined and acknowledged only through her usefulness and service to her husband. However, if proverbs (8), (9), and (10) still define the importance of a wife from a man's point of view, proverb (11) vividly conveys the message that a man's wife is his significant other; here the wife is treated as an equal partner, a confidant whose opinion is sought after. Moreover, this proverb also reveals to some extent male vulnerability and dependence which are usually not acknowledged. In a male-dominant society like traditional China, such a proverb truly voices a different perspective on the interdependent nature of husband and wife in their daily life.

Another area of contradiction between reality and representation in proverbs has to do with the conjugal relationship. In the Chinese patrilineal system, the conjugal relationship between husband and wife is downplayed, while the vertical parent-child relationship is emphasized. As Levy (1949:110) points out, “throughout Chinese society, the consideration of feelings went in one direction – from children to parents, from youth to their elders. One did not concern oneself with the son’s happiness; his father’s happiness was what mattered”. Filial piety not only constituted a fundamental ethical concept of Confucianism, it had manifestations in all aspects of Chinese life from the process of socialization to the practice of ancestor worship to the regulation of state laws. The classical collection of The Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Piety records a filial story about a man who expelled his wife on the grounds that she did not pay proper worship to his ancestors (Tang 1844).5 According to Francis Hsu (1948), in Chinese society, “the husband-wife relationship is strictly held to be supplementary and subordinate to the parent-son relationship”, and the development of a close relationship between woman and man is strongly discouraged because it is considered “detrimental to the supremacy of filial piety” (Hsu 1948:57, 209). The distance between husband and wife has to be maintained for the sake of the vertical parent-son relation and patrilineal unity. From a psychological perspective, Margery Wolf (1972) argues that conjugal affection was discouraged in a Chinese family because it endangered the mother-in-law’s sense of security and threatened to dismember her “uterine family”.

However, peasant proverbs undermining such dominant ideologies abound; here the conjugal relation is exalted and celebrated. Proverb (12)
emphasizes the bonding effect of husband and wife, while proverb (13) highlights the importance of unity between husband and wife. In proverb (14), conjugal love is even placed ahead of filial piety.

(12) Yi ri fuqi bai ri en,
    one day husband.wife hundred day devotion
    bai ri fuqi si hai shen.
    hundred day husband.wife as sea deep
    ‘One day together as husband and wife brings a hundred days of devotion to each other, a hundred days together brings devotion as deep as the sea.’

(13) Jiaren bu he linshe qi,
    family.member NEG harmony neighbor bully
    fuqi bu he liuchu qi.
    husband.wife NEG harmony domestic.animal bully
    ‘When family members do not unite, they will be bullied by their neighbors; when couples do not unite, they will be bullied by their domestic animals.’

(14) Fumu en’ai zhong you bie,
    parents gratitude.love eventually have separation
    fuqi yishi ai mo fen.
    husband.wife whole.life love NEG parting
    ‘No matter how deep one’s gratitude toward his/her parents, it is going to end; but the tie between husband and wife is as everlasting as a lifetime.’

In traditional China, having many children (especially sons) was considered good fortune, since, among other things, a person’s old age support was guaranteed; as the saying goes yang er fanglao ‘to raise sons is to secure one’s old age.’ On the other hand, a second marriage was regretted as a misfortune, as it indicated that a person’s first marriage failed to last his/her entire life. However, by nonetheless favoring a second marriage, proverb (15) foregrounds the conjugal bond and the interdependence between husband and wife.

(15) Man tang ernu bi bushang banlu
    whole house son.daughter COMP NEG half.way
    fuqi.
    husband.wife
    ‘Even a second marriage is better than a houseful of children.’
4. Conclusion

This study has shown that as an oral form of popular culture, Chinese proverbs on the one hand reaffirm the gender hierarchy legitimized by the dominant male-centered cultural system, and thus appear to lend support to the view that folklore validates culture (Bascom 1965). However, on the other hand, there are also proverbs that are in opposition to the norms and values advocated by the orthodox elite, indicating that at the level of local society, the hegemonial control of the state culture was only partial and that peasant acceptance of orthodox values was limited. According to Elmslie (1917), contradicting proverbs reflect different worldviews by different classes of people, indicating the heterodox nature of proverbs. In his study of twentieth-century Chinese peasant proverbs, Arkush (1990) finds that both elements of orthodoxy and heterodoxy exist; while some proverbs reflect shared ideas and beliefs that are in accord with the elite values of Confucian orthodoxy, some other proverbs suggest “a spirit of resentment toward the elite, a sort of proto-class consciousness or implicit questioning of the legitimacy of the orthodox ideas of social hierarchy” (Arkush 1990:329).

The contradictions in the proverbs discussed previously suggest that although Chinese women occupied an inferior social position within the dominant cultural hierarchy, in everyday life experiences gender relations might have been much more fluid and variable than what is implied by the male-centered social system. The images of women as worthy and competent partners, and of a more intimate relation between spouses might have deviated from the norms of cultural expectation, they nevertheless constituted the living social reality to a certain degree. Owing to their oral nature utilized mostly by illiterate peasants, proverbs thus allow us to view some of the concrete cultural practices which demonstrate that peasant culture partakes of the elite culture, sharing its norms and values. At the same time, these practices also constitute an arena that provide room for local variations, renegotiations, and challenges to elite norms.

Notes

1. I have surveyed three large collections of Chinese proverbs: Suyu [Popular Sayings] (Beijing Folklore Editorial Board 1983), Zhonghua Yanyu Zhi [Records of Chinese Proverbs] (Zhu 1989), and Zhongxiang Minjian Wenxue Zuopin Xuanji: Yanyu Fence [Collection of Zhongxiang County Folklore: Proverbs] (Zhongxiang Folklore Board 1991). These three
volumes contain 40,000 to 60,000 Chinese proverbs, of which approximately 500 proverbs deal with women and their familial roles and social behaviors specifically, while there are less than 30 proverbs specifically depicting men and the male gender role.

2. During the second half of the 20th century, great social and economic changes have taken place in China. Although today in rural China most marriages are still patrilocal, the patrilineal kinship system which is the basis of traditional Chinese society has almost disappeared. With more and more people now living in nuclear families, women’s status at home and in the community has increased considerably. Throughout this chapter, the past tense is used to indicate that this is how the traditional social order was reflected and re-enacted in proverbs dealing with gender relations.

3. The element de should be characterized as ATT (attributive) rather than GEN (genitive).

4. The reason why there are so few classifiers in the proverbs listed here is that proverbial language is more succinct and elliptical. While in ordinary language many nouns will carry a classifier, in a proverb the same nouns may not function as countable or individualized, but become uncountable or abstract, and therefore do not carry a classifier.

5. The Twenty-Four Examples of Filial Piety (known as Er-shi-si xiao) is a collection of stories citing examples of exceptional sacrifices made by children for their parents. The earliest collection was circulated during the Song Dynasty (980–1280), and since then it has been revised and edited constantly as one of the most widely used sources for teaching children filial piety and proper behavior.

References


Towards a more gender-fair usage in Netherlands Dutch

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   2.3 The morphology of personal nouns
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Notes
References
1. Introduction

Modern Standard Dutch (Nederlands) is the official language of the Netherlands and one of the official languages of Belgium (cf. Kooij 1987). In the Netherlands, the number of speakers of Dutch is approximately 15.4 million, while ca. 4.6 million use it in Belgium. Dutch is also the official language of Suriname and the Dutch Antilles. In addition, Dutch is spoken by smaller groups of speakers in Australia, Indonesia and elsewhere (cf. de Vries & Willemys & Burger 1993). In the Republic of South Africa, a descendant from 17th century Dutch has developed into Afrikaans, which is now regarded as a separate language.

Dutch belongs to the West Germanic branch of the Germanic languages. Early written documents date from the period of Middle Dutch (1100–1500). Most of these were written in the dialects of the leading southern provinces, Flanders and Brabant. Modern Dutch developed from the dialects spoken in the western part of the Netherlands and the Brabantian area in Belgium. Compared to German (and similar to English), Modern Dutch has lost most of its case distinctions and inflectional morphology.¹

Gender bias in the varieties of Dutch as used in Suriname, the Dutch Antilles and Indonesia is politically and linguistically so different from the situation in the Netherlands that it cannot be dealt with here. Nor can the issue of gender bias in Dutch as it is used in Belgium be discussed. In Belgium, Dutch competes with French and German and is often called Flemish, or Vlaams in Dutch. There are some differences in morphological structure between Belgian and Netherlands Dutch that especially affect gender, so that the Belgians have partly used other linguistic and political means to solve the problem of gender bias.²

2. Selected structural properties of Dutch

2.1 Grammatical gender

Dutch holds an intermediate position between English and German regarding grammatical gender distinctions in nouns: It has more distinctions than English, but fewer than German (Kooij 1987:145).³ Nouns can be divided into two classes: nouns which in the singular take the definite article de, and nouns which take the definite article het. Nouns belonging to the de-class are either
masculine or feminine. For instance de tafel ‘the table’ is feminine and requires
the feminine personal pronouns zij ‘she’ and haar ‘her’, and the feminine
possessive pronoun haar ‘her’ (cf. 1a). De stoel ‘the chair’ is masculine and
requires the masculine personal pronouns hij ‘he’ and hem ‘him’, and the
possessive pronoun zijn ‘his’ (cf. 1b). Nouns in the het-class are neuter, e.g., het
bed ‘the bed’; they require the same possessive pronoun as masculine nouns.
They take two personal pronouns, either the masculine personal pronouns or
het ‘it’ (cf. 1c). For nouns in the plural no gender distinctions are made: The
article for all three genders is de, the possessive pronoun is hun ‘their’, and the
personal pronouns are zij ‘they’ and hen/hun/ze ‘them’ (cf. 1d). The factors
conditioning the variation between hen/ze and hun are complex, but not
relevant to gender.

(1) a. De tafel (f) met haar poten. Zij is mooi. Ik zie haar.

‘The table with its (her) legs. It (she) is beautiful. I see it (her).’

b. De stoel (m) met zijn poten. Hij is mooi. Ik zie hem.

‘The chair with its (his) legs. It (he) is beautiful. I see it (him).’

c. Het bed (n) met zijn poten. Hij/het is mooi. Ik zie hem/het.

‘The bed with its (his) legs. It (he/it) is beautiful. I see it (him/it).’


‘The tables with their legs. They are beautiful. I see them.’

Table 1 summarises the use of articles, possessive and personal pronouns for
masculine, feminine and neuter nouns in both singular and plural. It is clear
that the distinction between the genders is only represented in the singular. The
difference between masculine and feminine nouns is expressed in possessive
and personal pronouns (but see also Section 3.2), and the difference between
neuter and masculine nouns is expressed in the definite article.

The distinction between neuter gender on the one hand, and masculine and
feminine gender on the other, is expressed in the singular in two other word
classes: demonstratives and adjectives. Dat ‘that’ and dit ‘this’ (dat bed ‘that
bed’, dit bed ‘this bed’) are neuter gender, while die ‘that’ and deze ‘this’ (die
stoel ‘that chair’, die tafel ‘that table’, deze stoel ‘this chair’, deze tafel ‘this table’)
are masculine and feminine. The attributive adjective ends in -e before nouns
of all genders, singular and plural. The only exception occurs with singular
neuter nouns in indefinite contexts, where the adjective is uninflected (een
nieuw bed ‘a new bed’).

Grammatical gender is not expressed by other means in Dutch, neither in
verb agreement as in a number of Romance languages, nor in case inflection as
Marinel Gerritsen

Table 1. Grammatical gender distinctions in Dutch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Def. article</th>
<th>Poss. pronoun</th>
<th>Pers. pronoun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nom</td>
<td>Acc/Dat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Singular</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td><em>de</em></td>
<td><em>zijn</em></td>
<td><em>hij</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td><em>de</em></td>
<td><em>haar</em></td>
<td><em>zij</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuter</td>
<td><em>het</em></td>
<td><em>zijn</em></td>
<td><em>hij</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plural</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td><em>de</em></td>
<td><em>hun</em></td>
<td><em>zij</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

in German. Nominative, dative and accusative case are not expressed in Dutch nouns. The distinction is only expressed in personal pronouns (cf. Table 1) and in some archaic expressions. Again, the Dutch situation is in between that of English and German. In the English language, neither case nor gender is expressed, while both case and gender are expressed in German (cf. 2a, b). In Dutch, the distinction between neuter gender and masculine/feminine gender is expressed in the article, but case is not:

(2) a. *The woman gave the apple to the child.*
    c. *De vrouw gaf de appel aan het kind.*

2.2 Gender-specific vs. gender-indefinite personal nouns

Dutch has nouns with lexical gender, such as *vrouw* ‘woman’, *echtgenote* ‘wife’, *mevrouw* ‘Mrs’, *juffrouw* ‘Miss’, *wijf* ‘bitch’, *tante* ‘aunt’ or *nicht* ‘niece, cousin’ for females (which are feminine) and *man* ‘man’, *echtgenoot* ‘husband’, *meneer* ‘sir’, *oom* ‘uncle’ or *neef* ‘nephew, cousin’ for males (which are masculine). However, grammatical gender does not always coincide with lexical gender. Thus, *meisje* ‘girl’ and *jongerje* ‘boy’ are female and male, respectively, but grammatically neuter; of course, both are diminutives carrying the respective derivational suffix.

Not all professional titles in Dutch have a masculine and a feminine counterpart, which is different, e.g., from German. Dutch has two types of professional titles: terms that indicate the gender of the person who practises the profession and terms that do not.
We can distinguish two categories of professional terms that have a male and a female counterpart. First, there are terms that semantically differ only in the referential gender that is indicated:

(3) Terms for women  Terms for men  Translation

[Feminine]  [Masculine]  
lerares  leraar  "teacher"  
schrijfster  schrijver  "author"  
actrice  acteur  "actress/actor"  
componiste  componist  "composer"  
assistente  assistent  "assistant"

Second, there are terms that not only indicate a difference in referential gender, but also include other semantic asymmetries:

(4) Terms for women  Terms for men  Translation

[Feminine]  [Masculine]  
secretaresse  secretaris  "secretary"  
masseuse  masseur  "masseur"  
directrice  directeur  "director"  
caissière  kassier  "cashier"

In most cases the professional term indicating a woman refers to a job with a lower social status than the term indicating a man. A secretaresse earns far less than a secretaris. A secretaris very often has a secretaresse, who works for him/her but a secretaresse never has a secretaris who works for her. There is a clear difference in function, and women who have the function of secretaris will never call themselves secretaresse. Examples of men who have the function of secretaresse hardly occur. As far as I know men with this function call themselves administratief medewerker "white-collar worker". Similarly, the term masseuse is associated with a whoreshouse, but the term masseur with a physiotherapeutic centre. A directrice can be the head of a pre-school kindergarden, or home for the elderly, but when a woman becomes the director of a grammar school or a large organisation she calls herself directeur. The caissière works in a store, the kassier in a bank.

Furthermore, Dutch has professional terms that either do not have any equivalents referring to men, as in (5a), or equivalents referring to women (5b), although the morphological equivalents could be built. In both cases, new names are invented when men enter the jobs mentioned in (5a), for example huishoudelijke hulp 'domestic help' for werker, and when women enter the jobs in (5b).
A fourth category are the so-called “gender-neutral” terms which are grammatically masculine:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms for women and men</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dokter</td>
<td>‘doctor’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professor</td>
<td>‘professor’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>psychiater</td>
<td>‘psychiatrist’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consul</td>
<td>‘consul’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bediende</td>
<td>‘servant’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beambte</td>
<td>‘official’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>notaris</td>
<td>‘notary’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minister</td>
<td>‘minister’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informaticus</td>
<td>‘information scientist’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fysicus</td>
<td>‘physicist’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ingenieur</td>
<td>‘engineer’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dominee</td>
<td>‘clergyman’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are terms to which a feminine suffix cannot easily be added. This is partly due to the fact that the addition of such suffixes would result in homonyms of existing (usually non-personal) terms, e.g., *informatica* ‘information science’, *fysica* ‘physics’, or in forms which are already in use for the wives of the men with the said profession, as in *domineese* ‘clergyman’s wife’.\(^4\) In addition, it seems that female-specific suffixes cannot easily be added to these terms because they are loanwords.

2.3 The morphology of personal nouns

2.3.1 Derivation

As indicated in Section 2.2, not all personal masculines have a feminine counterpart. In this respect Dutch differs substantially from German, where
almost all personal nouns referring to men can be transformed into feminine equivalents by adding the suffix *-in* (cf. Bußmann & Hellinger, vol. III). In Dutch, the number of suffixes that can be used to feminize personal nouns denoting men is much larger than in German. The following list of female-specific suffixes starts with the productive suffixes and ends with the unproductive suffixes. The data presented here are based on ANS (1997:668–672) and Brouwer (1985).

The suffix *-e*. Feminine personal nouns can be derived from masculine personal nouns by adding the suffix *-e*. This productive process especially occurs with loans (7a), nouns ending in *-ing* (7b) and some other nouns (7c):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine terms</th>
<th>Feminine terms</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. assistent</td>
<td>assistente</td>
<td>‘assistant’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spion</td>
<td>spionne</td>
<td>‘spy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student</td>
<td>studente</td>
<td>‘student’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advocaat</td>
<td>advocate</td>
<td>‘lawyer’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. leerling</td>
<td>leerlinge</td>
<td>‘pupil’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. echtgenoot</td>
<td>echtgenote</td>
<td>‘spouse’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gast</td>
<td>gaste</td>
<td>‘guest’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The suffix *-ster*. Masculine personal nouns that are derived from verbs can be transformed into feminine personal nouns by changing the suffix *-er* to *-ster* (cf. 8a). The suffix *-ster* is also used to transform masculine personal nouns ending in *-aar* or *-ier* into feminine nouns (cf. 8b). Both derivational processes are productive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine terms</th>
<th>Feminine terms</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. arbeider</td>
<td>arbeidster</td>
<td>‘worker’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voorzitter</td>
<td>voorzitster</td>
<td>‘chairperson’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. bedelaar</td>
<td>bedelaarster</td>
<td>‘beggar’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tuinier</td>
<td>tuinierster</td>
<td>‘gardener’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The suffixes *-euse* and *-trice*. Masculine personal nouns ending in *-eur* or *-tor* can be transformed into feminine nouns by replacing *-eur* with *-euse* (9a) and *-tor* with *-trice* (9b). This process is productive; however, both masculine suffixes only occur in loanwords which are not frequently borrowed today.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine terms</th>
<th>Feminine terms</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. adviseur</td>
<td>adviseuse</td>
<td>‘advisor’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chauffeur</td>
<td>chauffeuse</td>
<td>‘chauffeur’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. illustrateur</td>
<td>illustratrice</td>
<td>‘illustrator’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The suffix -a. Masculine personal nouns ending in -us can be transformed into feminine nouns by changing -us to -a. This process is still productive, but the suffix -us only occurs in loanwords from Latin, and today not many Latin words enter the Dutch language.

(10) Masculine term | Feminine term | Translation
--- | --- | ---
**historicus** | **historica** | 'historian'

The suffixes -es and -esse. Feminine personal nouns may be derived from masculine nouns by adding the suffixes -es or -esse (11a) or by changing the suffix -is of masculine personal nouns into -esse (11b). Both processes are no longer productive in Dutch. For some feminine personal nouns, two forms exist. In those cases the -esse-variant is more prestigious than the -es-form.

(11) Masculine terms | Feminine terms | Translation
--- | --- | ---
a. **baron** | **barones**, **baronesse** | 'baron, baroness'
**prins** | **prinses** | 'prince, princess'
b. **archivaris** | **archivaresse** | 'archivist'
**jubilaris** | **jubilaresse** | 'person celebrating a jubilee'

The suffix -in. Derivation by -in from masculine personal nouns is no longer productive.

(12) Masculine terms | Feminine terms | Translation
--- | --- | ---
**boer** | **boerin** | 'farmer'
**held** | **heldin** | 'hero'

The suffix -se. Derivation by -se is no longer productive. Respective feminine personal nouns are archaic. Most of these words not only denote a female person, but have the additional meaning 'wife of', except for kasteleinse, which has both meanings: 'female innkeeper' and 'wife of innkeeper'.

(13) Masculine terms | Feminine terms | Translation
--- | --- | ---
**dominee** | **domineeze** | 'wife of minister'
**schipper** | **schipperse** | 'wife of shipmaster'
**kastelein** | **kasteleinse** | '(wife of) innkeeper'

Since the Middle Ages, substantial changes have taken place in the derivation of feminine personal nouns from masculine personal nouns (cf. Brouwer 1980, 1985). Both the number of suffixes that can be used to this end – Middle Dutch had three other suffixes (-egge, -sche, -nede) – and the degree of productivity have decreased: The currently unproductive suffixes -in and -es/-esse were
productive in Middle Dutch, and -ster was more productive than it is in current Dutch (cf. also the parallel development in Norwegian described by Bull & Swan, this vol.). The possibilities of deriving feminine nouns from masculine nouns in Dutch have generally decreased.

2.3.2 Compounding
Compounding is another process by which masculine personal nouns can be feminised. A noun that has the word man 'man' as a last part can be transformed into a noun denoting a woman by replacing man with vrouw 'woman' (cf. 14). However, it was indicated in Section 2.2 that not all masculine personal nouns ending in -man can be changed into a feminine personal noun.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine terms</th>
<th>Feminine terms</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bloemenman</td>
<td>bloemenvrouw</td>
<td>'flower-seller'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cameraman</td>
<td>cameravrouw</td>
<td>'cameraman, camerawoman'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Words such as persoon (m) 'person' are rarely used in the singular as a neutral alternative. However, in the plural personen or mensen 'people' are sometimes used as such: ambtspersonen 'officials', zeemensen 'sailors' (lit. sea-people).

3. Gender-biased usage: Variation and tendencies of change

3.1 Historical background
The fight for a less gender-biased Dutch language dates from the beginning of the second feminist movement, which in the Netherlands is marked by the appearance of Kool-Smit (1967), an article entitled Het onbehagen bij de vrouw ‘The discontentment of women’, published in the prestigious Dutch literary journal De Gids. Kool-Smit (1933–1981) showed that women were considered as secondary to men in nearly all sectors of life. Her passionate plea for equality centred around three main points:

a. The fair division of “inside” and “outside” services (household and professional life);
b. Redistribution of power between women and men;
c. The removal of the segmentation between women’s and men’s professions.

The impact of this article on Dutch women was enormous. Many appeared to have the same feelings and joined forces in several feminist unions. The two
most important women’s liberation movements were the Dolle Mina’s ‘Crazy Minas’ and Man Vrouw Maatschappij ‘Men Women Society’, which were founded by Kool-Smit. Whereas the former fought against inequality by means of happenings such as tying purple ribbons to pissoirs, Man Vrouw Maatschappij used more serious means: Their members exposed the inequality by analysing socio-economic policies and legislation of the Dutch government. It was also this movement that made suggestions for gender-fair professional titles in Dutch.

However, during the first years of the second feminist movement gender-biased language was not an issue in the Netherlands. It was only in 1975 that Annie Romein-Verschoor (1895–1978), a historian and specialist in Dutch, published a comprehensive article about the second feminist movement in which she also paid attention to linguistic problems. She mentioned three different fields: gender bias in the usage of Dutch, reference to generic nouns with masculine pronouns and gender-specific terms for professions.

Most aspects of gender bias in Dutch to which Romein-Verschoor (1975) drew attention were discussed vehemently in the Netherlands in subsequent years. It is striking that she herself does not make any suggestions for change. She demonstrates that gender bias in Dutch was largely a symptom of the inequality in Dutch society, but she also emphasised that this society is changing and that the Dutch language lags behind the social developments. She warns that the gender bias in Dutch might slow down the progress of women’s liberation and states that it is therefore important to find solutions, which, of course, is not easy to effectuate: “It is easy to protest, but to find solutions is difficult because language develops in its own way and is not determined by committees of linguists” (Romein-Verschoor 1977:14).

Although Romein-Verschoor did not herself solve the problem of gender bias in Dutch, she was the prime mover. It was, however, not her comprehensive 1975 article in De Gids, which also dealt with many other problems of sexism, but a paper she had planned to deliver at the 1977 meeting of the Vereniging voor Vrouwen met een Wetenschappelijke Opleiding (VVAO) ’Society for Women with an Academic Education’ (Romein-Verschoor 1977). Regarding gender bias in language the content of this paper was similar to that of Romein-Verschoor (1975). The executive committee of the VVAO considered the topics raised in this presentation so important that they placed a request in the feminist magazine Opzij in which they asked linguists to form a committee to find solutions to the gender bias in Dutch as observed by Romein-Verschoor. A number of women – among others Agnes Verbist, Dédé Brouwer and the
author of the present article – answered this call and set to work. Apart from this group, which was called Research Group Language Sexism of the VVAO, other people, both linguists and non-linguists, also dealt with one or more of the three different aspects of gender bias in Dutch as raised by Romein-Verschoor. At the time the topic of “language and sex”, as it was called, was popular among students of linguistics. This was partly due to Lakoff (1975) and developments in sociolinguistics, which increasingly demonstrated that women and men differed in language use. Although this was a different topic than gender bias in language, it raised the interest in sexism in language.

Below the major issues in the debate will be discussed: generic masculine nouns and pronominalisation, terms of address and family names, idiomatic expressions and stereotypical descriptions of women and men, and occupational terms.

3.2 Generic masculine nouns and pronominalisation

3.2.1 Problems in traditional usage

For nouns denoting animate entities, grammatical and referential gender sometimes coincide: *vrouw* ‘woman’ and *weduwe* ‘widow’ are feminine, while *man* ‘man’, *weduwnaar* ‘widower’ are masculine. The choice of anaphoric pronouns presents no problems in these cases:

(15) a. de weduwe en haar kinderen
    ‘the widow and her children’
b. de weduwnaar en zijn kinderen
    ‘the widower and his children’

However, for a large number of nouns, referential and grammatical gender do not correspond. There are gender-indefinite nouns that refer to both female and male beings: *persoon* (m) ‘person’, *kind* (n) ‘child’, *arts* (m) ‘doctor’, where the grammar of Dutch requires masculine personal/possessive pronouns when they are used generically, with the consequence that referential gender remains ambiguous. This also applies to indefinite pronouns such as *iedereen* ‘everybody’. Due to the grammatical structure of Dutch and prescriptive attitudes (ANS 1997:230–235, Woordenlijst Nederlandse Taal 1995:41–43), women are not visible in these cases:

(16) a. de mens (m) en zijn kinderen
    ‘man and his children’
b. *Een arts (m) moet naar zijn patiënten luisteren.*  
‘A doctor must listen to his patients.’

c. *Iedereen (m) wil graag begrijpen wat hij leest.*  
‘Everybody wants to understand what he reads.’

3.2.2 *Tendencies of variation and change*

No solution has been found for the problem of masculine pronominal agreement with potentially generic antecedents in contexts in which the referents’ gender is either not known or unimportant. Some have proposed using the word *zaar*, a mixture of feminine *haar* and masculine *zijn* in sentences such as (17). However, this alternative is not frequently used.

(17) *de mens en zaar kinderen*  
‘the human being and his/her children’

Instead of trying to introduce new gender-neutral pronouns, other solutions have been proposed (cf. Renkema 1995 and Van Gessel et al. 1992): the use of plurals, since plural pronouns have no gender distinction (cf. (18)), the use of pronominal splitting (19), or the use of a paraphrase (20):

(18) *de mensen en hun kinderen*  
‘humankind and their children’

(19) *Iedereen wil graag begrijpen wat hij of zij leest.*  
‘Everybody wants to understand what he or she reads.’

(20) *Wie leest, wil ook begrijpen.*  
‘Who reads wants to understand.’

However, if people feel that they cannot avoid masculine pronouns, they sometimes mention in a note that *hij* ‘he’, *hem* ‘him’ and *zijn* ‘his’ are supposed to include *zij* ‘she’ and *haar* ‘her’; or, they use the feminine pronouns and state in a note that these also refer to males. Again, this occurs only rarely.

The nominal gender system of Dutch is not static, but in a process of change, and women are becoming more visible in the language. For many speakers in the western and northern parts of the Netherlands, the masculine/feminine distinction in nouns no longer exists, contrary to Dutch as spoken in Belgium, where the distinction is fully alive (ANS 1997:161). In spoken Dutch, the “wrong” anaphoric pronouns are often used and referential gender may override grammatical gender. In written Dutch, the “correct” anaphoric pronouns are required.
However, practices of spoken language have recently led to important changes in Dutch dictionaries and grammars: Grammatical gender is gradually being replaced by a natural gender system (cf. Schutz 1998:294f). There are changes in both the assignment of a noun to a gender class and the use of pronouns. A number of personal nouns which in former editions of dictionaries only had one grammatical gender (masculine), such as zieke ‘patient’ and blinde ‘blind person’, are assigned two grammatical genders (masculine and feminine) in recent editions (cf. Koenen 1986). Since the last edition of the most authoritative dictionary of Dutch, Van Dale (1999), grammatical gender no longer overrides referential gender. A whole section of the grammatical description is devoted to the problem of incongruity of grammatical and referential gender, and the solution suggested is that “designations for persons such as arts (doctor), deskundige (expert) have a grammatical gender, but the natural gender of the referent determines which personal pronouns have to be used” (Van Dale 1999:xviii). When the gender of the referent is unclear, however, the masculine pronouns hij, hem and zijn are used. The most authoritative grammar of the Netherlands, ANS (1997:161), makes similar suggestions.

The change from grammatical to referential gender does not remove the problem of gender bias from the Dutch pronominal system, but it indicates a development of the language in which women become more visible.

3.3 Terms of address and family names

In the area of address terms and family names, traditional practice is illustrated by the following examples:

(21) Terms of address

Mevrouw: Term of address for married women and unmarried women with a very high social or professional status (‘Mrs’)
Juffrouw: Term of address for unmarried women (‘Miss’)
Mijnheer: Term of address for men, regardless of marital and social status (‘Mr’)

(22) Family names

Mevrouw Kool-Smit, Mevrouw Romein-Verschoor
Mevrouw Gerritsen, Mevrouw Jansen
Mijnheer Kool, Mijnheer Romein, Mijnheer Gerritsen, Mijnheer Jansen

Married women traditionally used their husband’s family name (e.g., Kool, Romein) together with their own family name (e.g., Smit, Verschoor), or they
only used the family name of their husband (e.g., *Gerritsen, Jansen*). Married men only used their own family name: *Mijnheer Kool* ‘Mr Kool’, *Mijnheer Romein*, *Mijnheer Gerritsen*. Children received the family name of their father:

\[(23) \quad \text{Frank Jansen, child of Mr Jansen and Mrs Jansen-Bezema}\]

### 3.3.1 Terms of address

Gender bias in terms of address has changed dramatically since 1975. There has been an adaptation to the forms of address that were used for men. The difference between a married and an unmarried woman – *mevrouw* versus *juffrouw* – has disappeared completely. All women, irrespective of marital and social status, are now *mevrouw*. The change began at the beginning of the seventies in Amsterdam and spread all over the Netherlands within a decade, starting in the towns of the western part and among the higher social classes. Although no legal steps were taken to change traditional practices of addressing, today there are no official forms any more in which the address form *juffrouw* occurs. In 1993 a letter appeared in the feminist magazine *Opzij* in which an unmarried woman of 80 complained that the term *juffrouw* was no longer in use. She drew attention to the many questions she had to answer when she introduced herself as *mevrouw* to the people in the home for the elderly where she had been living for two years: When did your husband die? How many children do you have?

It is remarkable that the disappearance of *juffrouw* went very smoothly. The change had already taken place when the work groups on language sexism in Dutch were founded. The groups did not have to struggle in order to terminate its use.

Another example of the decrease of gender-biased language use is the treatment of address terms in the dictionary by Van Dale. The edition of 1984 describes the correct ways of addressing the queen, a widow of noble birth, a princess, a baroness, a countess, a nun, a sister, a lady, and eight other women with a title. For these, an address form with *vrouwe* ‘madam’ is advised. All other 67 (male) persons with a title should be addressed with a form of *heer* ‘sir’. This was all the more surprising since there were professions that even in 1984 were practised by women: lawyer, official, pharmacist, student, dentist. The gender bias was solved in the edition of 1992, which states that women have to be addressed with a form of *vrouwe* and men with a form of *heer*. 
3.3.2 Family names

For women, there has been a change from the use of the husband’s family name to only their own maiden name. Before 1975, most women used both names only in official documents, e.g., Kool-Smit, Romein-Verschoor. Some women did it in more situations in order to express their own roots or facilitate the change to re-using their maiden name. Most married women continued to use the family name of their husband in everyday situations: mevrouw Gerritsen ‘Mrs Gerritsen.’ The change from using the husband’s name to the use of the woman’s maiden name can only be described tentatively, since it has never been investigated systematically. It has been conditioned by regional, social and age factors. The change started just after World War II in Amsterdam among married women in artist circles and spread to other groups during the sixties. At the end of the seventies, nearly all women from the higher social classes who were born after 1945 and lived in towns in the western part of the Netherlands kept their maiden name or were going to take it again after having used their husband’s name for some years. Some older women from the same group, but born before 1945, also discarded the name of their husband, and used only their own name; e.g., Joke Kool-Smit became Joke Smit. In many cases, the re-use of the maiden name was related to divorce. Women born before 1930 kept the name of their husband, even if they were divorced.

It was not until the beginning of the 1990s that married women could use their maiden name in official forms. The change from using the family name of the husband to using the maiden name is not complete yet, especially not among the lower social classes, people living in rural areas and in the eastern part of the Netherlands.

As was the case with the change from juffrouw to mevrouw, the change in the use of family names proceeded rather smoothly. It was hardly an issue for the work groups on language sexism. Nowadays, both possibilities are employed side by side and there is no discussion about it. By using her maiden name a woman can show that she is an emancipated woman. If she takes the name of her husband, she indicates an adherence to more traditional norms.

Related to the use of the maiden name is the children’s family name. Until 1994, children received the father’s family name if the father and mother were married. This was also the case when they were not married but the father had officially recognised the child. Children with an unmarried mother and not recognised by the father got the mother’s family name. In 1998, the law regarding family names was changed and parents could choose between the mother’s and the official father’s family name. The only condition was that children from
the same parents should have the same family name. Unfortunately, there are no data yet about the choices made.5

3.4 Idiomatic expressions and stereotypical descriptions of women and men

The way Dutch was used before the second feminist movement resulted in an unequal linguistic treatment of women and men: the invisibility of women in idiomatic expressions (cf. 24, 25), portrayal of women and men in stereotypical gender roles (cf. 26, 27) and differences between women and men in how they are described. In (28), Engelien Jansen is a woman, and C. Jansen is a man.

(24) *Geen man over boord.*
  lit. no man over board
  ‘This is not a very big problem.’

(25) *Een man een man, een woord een woord.*
  lit. a man a man, a word a word
  ‘You have to do what you say.’

(26) *Zij heeft de boot gemist.*
  lit. she missed the boat
  ‘She did not marry.’

(27) *Hij is de dans ontsprongen.*
  lit. he had a lucky escape
  ‘He did not marry.’

(28) *Engelien Jansen, moeder van drie kinderen, en dr. C. Jansen zijn alle twee hoogleraar.*
  ‘Engelien Jansen, mother of three children, and Dr. C. Jansen are both professors.’

Regarding idiomatic expressions in which women are either invisible or portrayed in stereotypical gender-roles, the attitude of those people who advocated a more gender-fair usage has been rather pragmatic. They advised not to use such expressions or to use them also with the word *vrouw* ‘woman’ instead of *man*, or with ‘he’ instead of ‘she’ or ‘she’ instead of ‘he’ if required by context and situation. A woman who wants to express that she intends to keep a promise may use the expression ‘a woman a woman, a word a word’ instead of (25). It is difficult to investigate whether this advice has been successful, but it seems that the majority of the Dutch handle these expressions in a bias-free
manner or at least try to do so." I have often observed that expressions such as (24) and (25) slip out and are corrected immediately.

Regarding gender bias in the description of women and men, people with a positive attitude towards a more gender-fair Dutch have demonstrated how this sort of gender bias can be identified: Usually there is none if one can replace male forms by female forms and vice versa. These suggestions have aroused a keen interest and are discussed in prominent Dutch composition books. In addition, differences in descriptions of women and men have been investigated systematically in a number of genres: dictionaries, schoolbooks, television, advertising, and newspapers (Brouwer 1991; Verbiest 1997, 1999). An indication of the change towards a more gender-fair usage is the fact that in the prestigious dictionary of Van Dale, many sexist descriptions of words have disappeared since the 10th printing (1976):

(29) a. Van Dale (1976)
   *Zij is aan de afwas.*
   'She is washing the dishes.'
   *De meid heeft de afwas weer laten staan.*
   'The maid has again not washed the dishes.'

   *Hij is aan de afwas.*
   'He is washing the dishes.'

c. Van Dale (1992)
   *Hij heeft de afwas weer laten staan.*
   'He has again not washed the dishes.'

To summarise, overt gender bias in Dutch has mostly disappeared since 1975. Recent investigations of texts show that gender bias still occurs, although it is far less noticeable.

3.5 Occupational terms: A case of Dutch language politics

3.5.1 Problems in traditional usage

As mentioned earlier, the beginning of the second feminist movement in the Netherlands is marked by the appearance of Kool-Smit (1967), where it was argued that the segregation between women's and men's professions had to be removed. This required two major changes: First, it had to be made possible for women to practise so-called men's professions (e.g. carpenter) and for men to
practise so-called women’s professions (e.g. midwife), and second, since some names for professions only referred to men and others only to women, new professional titles had to be created.

Romein-Verschoor (1975) observed a tendency in Dutch towards gender-specification of occupational titles; e.g., a female psychologist is called *psycholoog* and a male *psychologe*. Furthermore, she shows that for some professions only female-specific terms exist, e.g., *verpleegster* ‘nurse’, or *vroedvrouw* ‘midwife’, while only male-specific terms exist for other professions, e.g., *timmerman* ‘carpenter’. In addition, she shows that when a presumably neutral term such as *arts* ‘doctor’ is used, people only have a male person in mind.

The discussion about the problem of gender bias in professional names in Dutch gained momentum when the law of *Gelijke behandeling van mannen en vrouwen bij de arbeid* ‘Equal treatment for men and women regarding labour’ was established in 1980. In this law it was laid down that advertisements for the recruitment of personnel had to be formulated in such a way that it was clear that both women and men could apply. Advertisements that did not state this clearly were legally forbidden. This law led to chaotic practices in the use of names for professions, e.g., in job advertisements. Numerous solutions were suggested, some organisations only added *v/m*, i.e. the abbreviation of *vrouw* ‘woman’/ *man* ‘man’, to the professional term. This sometimes resulted in amusing constructions such as (30), in which a term with a component that clearly indicates a woman (-*vrouw* and - *esse*) got an addition that indicated that men could also apply. By contrast, in (31) the names of the professions include - *man* and - *is*, with additions that show that women could also apply:

(30)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>vroedvrouw</em> (m/v)</td>
<td>midwife (m/f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>secretaresse</em> (m/v)</td>
<td>female secretary (m/f)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>timmerman</em> (m/v)</td>
<td>male carpenter (m/f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>secretaris</em> (m/v)</td>
<td>male secretary (m/f)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Others tried to solve the problem through constructions such as (32), which is a combination of the male/masculine suffix - *eur* and the female/feminine suffix - *ice*, or a complicated combination of *psycholoog* ‘psychologist’ and *psychologe* ‘female psychologist’:

(32)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>directeur/trice</em></td>
<td>male/female director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>psycholo(o)g/e</em></td>
<td>male/female psychologist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Ministry for Social Affairs felt the need to intervene and set up a committee called “Work Group Modification of Names for Professions” that was to write
guidelines for the use of occupational terms which would address both women and men. The work group consisted of members of the feminist movement Man Vrouw Maatschappij and officials from the Ministry of Social Affairs. They analysed the problem and published their directions in the brochure Gevraagd which appeared in 1982 (Werkgroep 1982).

3.5.2 The recommendations and the public debate
On the basis of an analysis of Dutch professional titles, the “Work Group Modification of Names for Professions” recommended the use of so-called neutral terms as listed in (6) above. For stereotypically female (or male) terms as in (5) they suggested new neutralising forms, for example timmer for timmerman, huishoudelijke hulp for werkster or formations with neutral suffixes such as -kracht and -wacht. The choice of the neutral names was motivated as follows:

– In line with Romein-Verschoor (1975) the group stated that it was in principle unimportant to know the gender of a person who practises a profession.
– On a social level, gender differentiation in professions would not be present any more and many women would practise professions that were hitherto mainly performed by men. As a consequence, the tendency to think only of a man when perceiving the occupational term would disappear.
– On a linguistic level, if separate professional titles were introduced for women and men, it was likely that a functional differentiation would occur soon, the terms referring to women gaining lower social prestige than the terms referring to men.
– When no neutral term was available, the term for men was chosen because that was the more prestigious term.
– When neutral terms were used or masculine terms were already being used for both men and women, it was not necessary to introduce new variants such as hoogleraar ‘professor’; schrijfster ‘author’.

The choice of neutral terms is in line with the change in the Dutch language, which shows a decrease in number of productive suffixes referring to women (for example -in, -es have disappeared) from the Middle Ages on.

The brochure Gevraagd (cf. Werkgroep 1982) and the guidelines resulted in an avalanche of reactions in the media as well as in linguistic circles. The discussion centred around three issues:
a. New formations such as timmer were considered ridiculous. Both lay-persons and linguists were convinced that they would never gain a firm foothold in Dutch.

b. Some linguists argued that the new terms were not neutral at all, but only referred to men. Since not many women had practised professions such as consul, dominee, minister, notaris, people would not immediately understand that the respective job advertisements were also addressed to women. This group, including van Alphen (1983) and Huisman (1985), advocated gender-specific names for professions. Every name for a profession should have a morphological equivalent for women. If such a name was not present in Dutch, it had to be created, as in (33):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terms for women</th>
<th>Terms for men</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hooglerares</td>
<td>hoogleraar</td>
<td>‘professor’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loodgieterster</td>
<td>loodgieter</td>
<td>‘plumber’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

c. According to Adriaens (1982) there was indeed a decrease in the number of productive suffixes referring to women in Dutch, but some suffixes (-e, -euse, -trice) were used more frequently. Besides, he observed a tendency to introduce the gender distinction also in the plural terms, which until now did not have such a distinction: assistent and assistente both have the plural assistenten, but a special plural for women assistentes was increasingly being used. Based on an analysis of job advertisements in Dutch-speaking Belgium and in the Netherlands he believes that two conflicting tendencies can be observed: a tendency to use gender-specific terms for professions and at the same time, a tendency to use so-called neutral ones.

The “Work Group Language Sexism” of the VVAO largely supported the advice of the “Work Group Modification of Names for Professions”. Regarding pairs such as secretaresse and secretaris, they suggested using the terms as indicators of different functions regardless of whether the person who practised the function was male or female. They disapproved of forms like timmer, but did not suggest any alternatives.

In the end, neither the guidelines of the “Work Group Modification of Names for Professions” and the Ministry of Social Affairs, nor the proposals by the group headed by Ingrid van Alphen and Joke Huisman, nor those of the “Work Group Language Sexism” have become official guidelines. The discussions in the first half of the 1980s were so controversial that no decisions could be made.
3.5.3 The manual for professional terms of the Dutch Language Union (2000)

In 1992, the Belgian Ministry of Employment and Labour, which also includes the Department of the Emancipation of Society, commissioned the linguist Patricia Niedzwiecki to develop guidelines for the feminisation of professional terms in the three languages spoken in Belgium: French, Dutch and German. Niedzwiecki recommended a long list of female-specific names for professions, which was adopted by the government of the French-speaking part of Belgium. It even issued a decree that gender-specific names for professions must be used in official documents. However, the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium protested. The linguist Willy van Langendonck argued that the proposal of Niedzwiecki would lead to unwanted new formations such as ministerinne 'female minister', and modification of words that had already been in use for a long time, e.g., lerarenopleiding 'secondary teacher training course' for which the variant leraressenopleiding would be unwelcome. Besides, in his opinion the proposal would end in confusion: The “best docente ‘female teacher’ of the year” is not necessarily the same person as the “best docent’(male) teacher’ of the year”. The Ministry also involved the linguist Johan de Caluwe, who warned against the use of gender-specific terms for professions. Thus, no solution was found in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium.

In 1995, De Nederlandse Taalunie (Dutch Language Union) entered the discussion (cf. Duynstee & Polak 1995). This is an official body of the government of the Netherlands and the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium that prepares and implements Dutch language and culture policy, with the objective to advance the integration of the language and culture of the Netherlands and Dutch-speaking Belgium. De Taalunie came to the conclusion that the choice between the two alternatives, i.e. feminisation vs. neutralisation, was so charged politically that no advice could be given at the time. The solution of the Taalunie is – in line with its aim to develop a common knowledge and use of Dutch – to make people aware of the problems and to suggest possible solutions. It commissioned two linguists, the Dutch Ariane van Santen and the Belgian Johan de Caluwe, to write a book entitled Gezocht: Functiebenamingen (m/v). Wegwijzer voor vorming en gebruik van Nederlandse functiebenamingen ‘Requested: Professional titles (m/v). Manual for the formation and use of Dutch names for professions’ (2001), which presents information about the social and linguistic background of the issue and the various possibilities of avoiding linguistic sexism. The handbook is merely meant to help people make their own choice and to describe the political and linguistic implications of alternatives.
4. The use of occupational titles in advertising: An empirical study

The question remains, then, of how professional titles are actually used. Adriaens (1982) stated that only the future would show whether the tendency to use neutralising terms or the tendency to use gender-specific terms would win. In order to find an answer to this question, I analysed professional titles in personnel advertisements in some of the 1999 issues of the same journals that Snijders (1989) had examined in 1989, i.e. de Telegraaf and Intermediair.

Snijders only studied advertisements for professions for which a middle or high education was required. She found 225 advertisements for such professions in one issue of Intermediair and two of de Telegraaf. In 1999, I found 573 of such advertisements in one issue of Intermediair and one of de Telegraaf. The overall numerical difference between 1989 and 1999 is the result of an increasing labour shortage during the last decade. It is difficult for companies to find employees.

Table 2 shows the occurrence of four types of occupational titles in headings of personnel advertisements in 1989 and 1999:

- use of masculine terms only (e.g. medewerker ‘co-worker’) in cases where a feminine counterpart exists (medewerkster)
- use of “neutral” terms which refer to both women and men, e.g. arts (m) ‘doctor’
- use of feminine terms which only refer to women, e.g. secretaresse ‘female secretary’
- use of mixed forms such as medewerk(st)er ‘(fe)male co-operator’

Table 2. Occupational titles in personnel advertisements in 1989 and 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1989</th>
<th>1999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=225 ads</td>
<td>N=573 ads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine terms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type: medewerker</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type:</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral terms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type: arts (m)</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type:</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine terms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type: secretaresse</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type:</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed forms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type: medewerk(st)er</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type:</td>
<td>1,7%</td>
<td>0,2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 shows that masculine and neutral forms predominate in the headings of most advertisements, while feminine and mixed forms occur only rarely. This is a strong indication that the tendency to use neutralising names will be the preferred strategy. We even see an increase in the use of neutral names, but this change is not yet statistically significant.

In Table 3, a distinction was made between the two types of neutral terms for professions that were found in the data: Dutch terms and English terms. I regarded terms as English if the word did not occur in Dutch. Terms that could be both English and Dutch, for example *accountant or supervisor*, were considered Dutch, except when they occurred together with an English word, for example *people supervisor*.

Table 3. Dutch and English “neutral” terms for professions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>1989 N=117 terms</th>
<th>1999 N=323 terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch [masculine terms]</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>hoofd</em> ‘head’, <em>arts</em> ‘doctor’</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engineer, director</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows a clear decrease in the use of Dutch neutral terms between 1989 and 1999 and an increase in the use of English terms. Not only were English terms used more frequently in 1999, but also many new ones were borrowed. In addition to the terms found by Snijders in 1989, we also found: *designer, developer, director, employee, floor broker, market maker, marketeer, officer, professional, researcher, technician, telemarketeer, trader*. It seems that the use of English terms is one way of achieving gender-neutral expressions in Dutch. This tendency is in line with the Anglicisation of Dutch society: English is used in an increasing number of domains, e.g., in business, science, school (cf. Nickerson 2000), and Dutch words are increasingly ousted by English words, for example *stomerij* by *dry cleaning*, *uitverkoop* by *sale* (cf. Gerritsen & Korzilius & Van Meurs & Gijsbers 2000).

The frequent occurrence of masculine and neutral professional titles in the headings in advertisements indicates that neutralisation is increasingly used. The question is whether the people who wrote these advertisements considered the terms to be neutral, referring to both men and women, or whether they...
Marinel Gerritsen

indicated this in another manner. In the data, we found four different ways of expressing that an advertisement was meant for both women and men:

- adding \textit{M/V} (meaning \textit{Man/Vrouw} ‘man/woman’) after the term
- using the pronouns \textit{hij/zij} ‘he/she’ or \textit{zijn/haar} ‘his/her’ as anaphoric pronouns in the text
- adding a female-specific term in the text, e.g. \textit{kandidate} ‘female candidate’ (a feminine term)
- explicitly asking women to apply.

Table 4 shows how often these strategies occur in advertisements with masculine or neutral headings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Addition of \textit{M/V}</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{hij/zij} or \textit{zijn/haar}</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addition of female-specific term</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit mention</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows an enormous decrease in the use of the addition of \textit{M/V} between 1989 and 1999. In 1999 only 35% of the masculine and neutral terms had an addition \textit{M/V}, whereas this was the case in 71% in 1989. This is an indication that the masculine and the neutralising terms are increasingly considered to refer to both women and men. With regard to the other possibilities of explicitly making reference to women, we only have the data for 1999, which show that the anaphoric pronouns \textit{hij/zij} occur relatively frequently, that is to say, in 14% of the cases, but it is not very often that it is stated in the description of the candidate that a woman is meant. Moreover, women are not often asked to apply explicitly. In 58% of all advertisements with a masculine or neutral heading (\textit{N=566}) of the 1999 corpus we did not find any of the four
strategies to indicate that the advertisement was also meant for women. This could be interpreted as a sign that the masculine and neutralising terms are considered to be neutral. The change from grammatical to referential gender in nouns such as *arts* 'doctor', or *blinde* 'blind person' supports this interpretation. However, we doubt whether this is indeed the case. Psycholinguistic studies in the line of Braun & Gottburgsen & Szcesny & Stahlberg (1998) and Braun (vol.I) are needed to discover whether masculine professional titles such as *medewerker* 'co-operator' and neutralising titles such as *arts* 'doctor' are indeed perceived as referring to both women and men.

5. Conclusion

Obviously, there has been a decrease in the use of gender-biased language in the Netherlands since 1975. From a language-political point of view it is amazing that so many changes have taken place in such a short time. First of all, it shows that if changes in society require changes in language, these changes can be effectuated quickly, even on a grammatical level, such as the switch from a grammatical to a natural gender system. Secondly, the change towards more gender-fair usage in the Netherlands shows that the introduction of legal steps, such as the law which forbids gender-biased advertising for the recruitment of personnel, may have a considerable impact on language use and language change. Last but not least, the changes in the Dutch language show that it is worth the effort to fight against gender-bias in language use.

Notes

2. Except for some older people, speakers of Standard Dutch as spoken in the Netherlands do not know which nouns are masculine and which are feminine, which affects their choice of pronouns. Speakers of Standard Dutch as spoken in Belgium (also called Flemish) can still distinguish between grammatical genders (cf. ANS 1997:234). With regard to names for professions, the Dutch mainly use the same terms for both women and men, but the Flemish use different terms (cf. Section 3.5.3).
3. The following discussion is based on Donaldson (1983:58ff), Kooij (1987), and ANS (1997).
4. The term *domina* meaning 'female clergyman' is archaic; today, the word means 'female lover'.
5. Officials of the registration of birth office told us in the summer of 1999 that the family name of the mother is seldom chosen.

6. I do, of course, not know whether people do so only when I am present – they know that I am a supporter of Dutch that is free of gender bias – or whether they habitually correct their sexist language use in other situations as well.

References


Werkgroep Wijziging Beroepsbemanning. 1982. Gevraagd. Aanzet tot een discussie over het wijzigen van den beroepsbemanning in het kader van de wet gelijke behandeling mannen en

The communication of gender in Finnish

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University of Helsinki, Finland

1. Introduction
2. Women’s position in Finland
3. Research on gender in Finnish
4. Gender in Finnish
   4.1 Personal nouns: Referential and morphological aspects
   4.2 Male generics
   4.3 Female generics
5. The interpretation of male generics: Empirical evidence
6. The empirical investigation of covert male bias
   6.1 The prototypical human being
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7. Gender in Finnish proverbs
8. Gendered terms of abuse
9. Female/male discourse
10. Language reform
11. Conclusion

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References

1. Introduction

Finnish (suomi or suomen kieli) is a Finno-Ugric language spoken by about five million people in Finland. In addition, there are some 300,000 speakers of Finnish in Sweden, 12,000 in Northern Norway, as well as Finnish-speaking minorities in Eastern Karelia, Ingria, in the USA, Australia and Canada.

Finland belonged to Sweden until it became an autonomous Grand Duchy within Russia (from 1809–1917). Finland declared its independence in 1917.
In 1863, Finnish was given official and equal status with Swedish, and today Finland has two national languages, Finnish and Swedish. The history of written Finnish is relatively short; the first books published in Finnish dating from the beginning of the 16th century. There are eight regional dialects of Finnish, the standard language being primarily based on the southwestern dialects.

Finnish is an agglutinating language with various markers and clitics, fifteen cases and about 150–200 derivational affixes which are typically added to the word stem. The word in (1) illustrates the morphological complexity and also the morphotactics of Finnish: root–derivational affixes–inflectional affixes–clitics:

\[(1)\] \textit{juo} -\textit{pu} -\textit{isi} -\textit{vat} -\textit{ko}  
\text{drink} -\text{der} -\text{cond} -3\text{pl} -\text{question.prt}  

‘would they become drunk?’

Another characteristic feature of the language is the morphophonemic alternation of various kinds caused, among other things, by vowel harmony. The unmarked word order is Subject-Verb-Object-Adverbial. Finno-Ugric languages have had repeated language contact with Indo-European languages. Basic vocabulary differs from that of Indo-European languages, but due to historical reasons Finnish has incorporated hundreds of loanwords and loan translations mainly from Swedish (cf. Karlsson 1983:10f; Lehikoinen & Kiuru 1991:1–10; Sulkala & Karjalainen 1992:xiv f).\(^1\)

2. Women’s position in Finland

Finnish society is usually considered to be relatively gender-equal. It is often pointed out that Finnish women were the first in Europe to receive the right to vote in 1906. In addition, the first female parliament members in the world were elected in Finland in 1907. Women hold 37% of the seats in the parliament elected in 1999. Seven cabinet ministers out of 18 are women. The first female president of Finland was elected in 2000. At the same time, such political decision-making bodies as the parliament are losing their power in Finland. It seems that, once again, “power escapes women”.

Education as well as the labour market are gender-segregated. Most women are wage earners but still carry a double burden, performing 65% of the household chores. The same level of education does not guarantee women equal positions with men in the labour market. Sensitive issues such as sexual
harassment and violence against women became public issues in the late 1980s. The economic crisis in the early 1990s weakened the pro-women Finnish welfare state, and feminists have begun to talk about a backlash against women (cf. Husu & Niemelä 1993).

3. Research on gender in Finnish

In Finland, gender mainly became an object of linguistic analysis in the early 1980s as a factor in sociolinguistic research on speech variation (cf. Hakulinen & Laitinen 1993). For instance, Nuolijärvi (1986) in her research on linguistic adaptation of those speakers moving to Helsinki from southern Ostrobothnia and northern Savo found that women were more colloquial than men, while men used both more standard language and more dialectal features than women. Research has also brought out the interdependence of gender and other extralinguistic factors such as age, level of education and occupation (e.g. Mielikäinen 1988). During the 1990s, researchers became interested in a more interactional approach and the method of conversation analysis (see Section 9 below).

The absence of grammatical gender in Finnish (cf. Section 4.1) has contributed to the perception of Finnish as a comparatively gender-neutral language. This may explain why the issue of gendered or sexist language has received less attention in Finnish than in French or German, for example. In a recent study, Kangas (1997) investigated the otherness of woman in Beauvoirian terms in written language use and found that both female and male university students refer to women more often than to men in relation to other people: Expressions such as äiti ‘mother’ or Leila-täti ‘aunt Leila’ were more frequent than for example poikakaveri ‘boyfriend’ or Heikki-setä ‘uncle Heikki’. Engelberg (1998a) examined gendered occupational terms in Finnish (e.g., bingoemäntä ‘bingo hostess’) from the directory of occupations published by the Central Statistical Office of Finland in 1950, 1970 and 1990. One of the major findings was the infrequency of compounds with nainen ‘woman’ in all three directories in comparison to hundreds of titles with mies ‘man’. One explanation for this asymmetry may be the argument that a greater productivity of nainen in occupational titles would highlight the complementary opposition of nainen/mies and narrow the meaning of many titles with mies, making them more male-specific, and thus weakening their apparent genericity.
In the following I shall discuss gender in the Finnish language system, as well as various features of gendered language as these are manifested in Finnish, including proverbs and terms of abuse. I will focus on lexical androcentricity in the so-called male generics and in the covert male bias of terms with human reference.

4. Gender in Finnish

4.1 Personal nouns: Referential and morphological aspects

Like other Finno-Ugric languages, Finnish lacks grammatical gender (on Turkish, cf. Braun, vol.1). The personal pronoun system does not distinguish female and male forms. The nominative forms of personal pronouns are shown in Table 1.

| Table 1. Finnish personal pronouns (nominative form) |
|-------------|-------------|
| **Singular** |             |
| Person 1    | minä        |
|             | ’I’         |
| Person 2    | sinä; Te   |
|             | ’you; you-formal’ |
| Person 3    | hän (se, tämä, tuo) |
|             | ’he/she (it, this, that)’ |
| **Plural**  |             |
| Person 1    | me          |
|             | ’we’        |
| Person 2    | te          |
|             | ’you’       |
| Person 3    | he (ne, nämä, nuo) |
|             | ’they (they-inanimate, these, those)’ |

As Table 1 illustrates, not even 3rd person singular pronouns are differentiated for gender. The semantic feature that distinguishes hän ‘she/he’ from se, tämä, tuo ‘it, this, that’ is [±animate].

As Braun (1995:11) points out, the Finnish possessive expression lääkäринnsä ‘doctor-3ross’ can denote ‘her (female) doctor/her (male) doctor/his (female) doctor/his (male) doctor’. Unlike man in English or homme in French, the Finnish word for ‘man, male’, mies, denotes male gender only. However, ihminen ‘human [being], man’ and ihmiskunta ‘mankind, humanity’ are gender-neutral. ‘Man is mortal’ is translated as Ihminen on kuolevainen, not *Mies on kuolevainen (cf. German Mann ‘male person, man’ vs. Mensch ‘human being’).

In Finnish, referential gender can be indicated by nouns with lexical gender as well as by compounding and to some extent by derivation. In addition to such frequently used words as nainen ‘woman’, tytö ‘girl’ and mies ‘man, male’,
human nouns with lexical gender typically belong to the domain of kinship terminology. Certain kinship terms such as leski 'widow, widower' can refer to both women and men. Some of the basic kinship terms are shown in Table 2.

Gendered terms of address have become rare during the last two or three decades, although they can still be used in polite speech. A man is addressed with the title herr 'Mr, sir', e.g., Herr Presidentti 'Mr President', antecki herr 'excuse me, sir'. Terms with female reference comment on the woman's marital status: neiti 'Miss' and rouva 'Madam, Mrs'. The president elected in 2000 is addressed as Rouva Presidentti 'Madam President'.

Referential gender can also be specified by modifiers such as nais(puolinen) 'female' or mies(puolinen) 'male' in compounds:

(2) liikenainen 'business woman'
laivapoika 'ship lad'
naispoliisi 'woman police officer'
miesmalli 'male model'
naispuolinen väestö 'female population'
miespuolinen jälkeläinen 'male offspring', leg. 'male issue'

Finnish has four female suffixes, none of which is fully productive (Kyrölä 1990, Vesikansa 1978). The affix -kkO (O is realized as ő or o according to vowel harmony) is of Finnish origin and can be used in the formation of nouns with female reference, e.g., sisäkkö (from sisä 'interior') 'parlourmaid', venäkkö (from Venäjä 'Russia') 'a Russian woman' and a recent, jocular formation sihteeri-kkö (from sihteeri 'secretary') 'secretary'. The suffix -tAr (A stands for ä or a) originates from the word tytär 'daughter'. Nouns with this suffix often refer to dignitaries or inhabitants of certain areas, e.g., kreivi-tär 'countess' and parisi-tar 'Parisienne'; lexicalised forms include kauno-tar 'beauty, belle' and rakastaja-tar 'mistress'. Occupational titles such as opettaja-tar 'female teacher' have not been in official use since the 1970s (Engelberg 1998a). Titles with -tAr can often be found in the sports pages, e.g., hiihtäjä-tär 'female skier'. Folk poetry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>äiti</td>
<td>isä</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sisar, sisko</td>
<td>veli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tytär</td>
<td>poika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anoppi</td>
<td>appi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tätti</td>
<td>setä</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'mother'</td>
<td>'father'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'sister'</td>
<td>'brother'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'daughter'</td>
<td>'son, boy'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'mother-in-law'</td>
<td>'father-in-law'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'aunt' (mother's/father's sister)</td>
<td>'father’s brother'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Finnish kinship terms
also knows such mythical female creatures as **luonno-tar** ‘nature’ (from **luonto** ‘nature-FEM’). The derivatives with **-skA** and **-nna** are of Swedish origin and have now become archaic or colloquial. Both suffixes were previously used in reference to civil servants’ wives, e.g. **professor-ska** ‘professor’s wife’ and **eversti-nna** ‘colonel’s wife’; **-skA** also appears in such female workers’ titles as **huusholler-ska** (coll.) ‘house keeper’ and in married women’s last names, e.g., **Aalto-ska** (coll.) ‘wife of Aaltonen’.

### 4.2 Male generics

The perception of people as male (or male as people) is made explicit in male generics, i.e. generic expressions which contain an element with the semantic specification [male], in particular **-mies** ‘man’ or **-isä** ‘father’. Finnish male generics are compounds, derivations and idioms (cf. Karlsson 1974). “Generic” human nouns in particular are often described as a logical reflection of (originally) male-dominated reference groups. Many titles do in fact refer to traditionally male activities in the Finnish culture, as in (3). Note that hyphens are used to indicate morphological structure; they do not correspond to orthographic conventions.

(3)  
**metsä-mies**  
**tupakka-mies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>lit.</th>
<th>‘forest-man’</th>
<th>‘hunter, sportsman’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>tupakka-mies</strong></td>
<td>lit. ‘cigarette-man’</td>
<td>‘smoker’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, male generics are not solely a product of extralinguistic gender segregation. Expressions such as (4) rather reflect an androcentric conceptualization of reality:

(4)  
**joka-mies**  
**joka-miehen oikeudet**  
**esi-isä**  
**viikate-mies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>lit.</th>
<th>‘every-man’</th>
<th>‘every-man’s rights’</th>
<th>‘fore-father’</th>
<th>‘scythe-man’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>joka-miehen oikeudet</strong></td>
<td>lit. ‘public right of access’</td>
<td>‘ancestor’</td>
<td>‘the Grim Reaper, Death’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compounds with non-human reference include **isäntä-maa** ‘host country’ and **veljes-sota** (< **veli** ‘brother’) ‘brother-war, civil war’.

Male generics can also be formed by derivation:

(5)  
**isäntä** ‘host’ + **-O1 > verb isännöidä**  
**mies** ‘man’ + **-istO > collectives noun miehistö**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>isäntä</strong></th>
<th><strong>isännöidä</strong></th>
<th>‘act as a host’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>mies</strong></td>
<td><strong>miekistö</strong></td>
<td>‘the crew, the men’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Common idiomatic expressions are **miesmuistii** lit. ‘in man’s memory, in living memory’ and **olla oma herransa** ‘be one’s own master’. Idioms and phrases referring to men often have a positive connotation, e.g.:6
Juho toimi miehen lailla tiukassa tilanteessa.

‘Juho acted like a man in a tough situation.’

(From a TV program in 1998; refers to a seven-year-old boy who called the emergency number after a fire had broken out at his home.)

Politician Marjatta Väänänen writes in her memoirs about the time when she was acting as the minister of cultural affairs and in 1974 rejected a political attack from leftist cultural radicals. A male newspaper columnist commented that the minister had acted like a man. Another male journalist wrote: “There is at least one man in the Finnish government: Marjatta Väänänen” (Väänänen 1996:144f). During the 1994 presidential election campaign the candidate Elisabeth Rehn was praised by a male radio reporter: “Rehn oli ainoa, joka osoitti miehistä suoraselkäisyyttä” ‘Rehn was the only one who showed manly uprightness’. Nowadays a woman can also be given credit for being hyvä jättä ‘a good guy’.

4.3 Female generics

Female generic expressions form a more homogeneous group than male generic forms. They are usually compounds referring to genealogical relations, e.g., sisaryhtiö ‘sister company’ (cf. Karlsson 1974:27). According to Karlsson, this may reflect associations of a female fertility cult which in other languages is sometimes manifested in some grammatically feminine nouns denoting the earth or plants; cf. German (die) Erde, Latin terra. Other Finnish examples are tytärsolu ‘daughter cell’, äidinkieli ‘mother tongue’ and Suomi-neito ‘maiden Finland’, a metaphor for Finland. Female generics usually do not have human reference. One of the exceptions is sisarus ‘sibling’ or sisarukset ‘siblings’ (from sisar ‘sister’). According to my experience, sisarukset is not readily used when referring to brothers only (see also Rautala 1988:33). Another female generic expression with human reference is morsius-pari ‘bridal-pair; bride and groom’, although it may be giving way to hääpari ‘wedding-couple’, which is clearly more common on congratulation cards, for instance.

Female occupational terms are not used generically. The first male flight attendants did not inherit the existing title lentoemäntä ‘flight-hostess, stewardess’, but were called stuurtti ‘steward’ from the beginning. Similarly, male
workers were not called karja-kko (lit. ‘cattle-female’) ‘cattle maid’ or meijeri-kkō (lit. ‘dairy-female’) ‘dairy maid’ but karjanhoitaja ‘cattle tender’ and meijeristi ‘dairy man’, respectively.

5. The interpretation of male generics: Empirical evidence

It seems that speakers are aware of the ambiguity and the limited generic potential of male generics. A foundation for legal research announces that their research grants for the year 1993 are available for lakimiehelle tai naiselle ‘for a law-man or a law-woman’. Had the announcement used the morphologically gender-neutral synonym juristi, a specification such as this would hardly have been necessary. Unless otherwise stated, research grants are available for male as well as female applicants. To give another example, an ad for a skiing magazine uses the following phrase: Autamme miestä mäessä. Ja naista ‘We will help a man up the hill. And a woman.’

Empirical research on male generics in Finnish is, however, only in its beginnings. In Engelberg (1993, 1995; cf. also Braun 1997b:41–43), 76 female and 74 male university students (mean age 23.5 years) were presented with sentences containing male generic forms, e.g.:

(7) Tavallinen kadunmies ei juuri jaksa seurata budjettikeskustelua.
‘The man in the street doesn’t really have the energy to follow the discussion about the budget.’

Informants rated these sentences as referring to men significantly more often than (otherwise identical) sentences containing morphologically neutral expressions, e.g.:

(8) Tavallinen kadunkulkija …
‘The average person …’

The target sentences included one pair of verbs, veljeillä ‘to fraternize’ vs. kaveerata ‘to pal around with somebody’, and two pairs of idioms, as in (9):

(9) a. joutua maksu-miehe-ksi
end.up pay-man-trans
b. joutua maksaja-ksi
end.up payer-trans
‘to end up paying’
Male participants rated "generic" expressions as referring to men significantly more often than female participants did. The participants in the male generic condition gave a total of 949 responses; the referents were perceived as male in 56%, as gender-neutral in 42% and as female in less than 3% of the responses.

Two further studies on male generics were designed to elicit unmonitored responses from participants (for a detailed discussion see Engelberg 1998b). All subjects had Finnish as their native tongue and participated voluntarily. Thirty-eight female and sixty male students from two high schools specializing in arts education in Espoo participated in the first study. They were presented with five sentences referring to workers. The sentences had been adapted from the collective bargaining contract for government officials and the corresponding contract for municipal employees. The texts consisted of various concrete terms and conditions of employment: sick leave, coffee breaks, uniforms, medical examination, or lecture fee for a worker giving a lecture. Two of the sentences were fillers and contained the word *työntekijä* 'worker'. The three other texts were target sentences and referred to the 'worker' with the generic male title *virkamies* 'office-man, civil servant'. The participants were instructed to illustrate each sentence and make a drawing of the worker mentioned in the sentence, using the ideas that first came to their minds. In addition, they were instructed to give a first name to each character. Of the 291 responses codable by gender, 80% described *virkamies* as male. Boys interpreted *virkamies* significantly more often as male than as female in all three paragraphs, girls only in one of the three paragraphs. Overall, 65% of the characters produced by girls and 90% of those created by boys were men.

The second experiment was carried out in eleven schools in Helsinki. Participants were 275 high school students (175 women, 100 men; mean age 16.3) and 231 students from the upper level of a comprehensive school (126 girls, 105 boys; mean age 12.8).

The participants were presented with a form displaying 22 sentences which referred to workers in various occupations. Three of the sentences were target sentences, including a generic male title in the experimental group and a morphologically neutral synonym in the control group, e.g.:

(10) *Myymlä-esimies* 'shop-foreman' / *Myymlä-n-hoitaja* 'shop-gen-tender' *tilasi uuden erän Leviä.*

‘The shop manager ordered a new lot of Levi’s.’

The other target sentence pairs included the titles *ammattiliiton luottamusmies* ‘trade union’s trust-man’/ *ammattiliiton luottamushenkilö* ‘trade union’s trust-
person, trustee’ and lakimies ‘lawman’/juristi ‘lawyer’. All occupational titles appeared in subject position.

The filler sentences referred to occupations in which neither women nor men represent less than 40% of the employees (Central Statistical Office of Finland 1996, unpublished statistics) and/or which have prominent female as well as male figures (e.g., Uutistenlukija luetteli pääuutisaiheet ‘The newscaster read the main headlines’).

The participants were instructed to try to picture in their minds the person referred to in the sentence and then give this person a first name. The purpose of the study was said to be the analysis of the connotations of first names.

Myyrmäläesimies ‘shop-foreman’ elicited significantly more men’s names than myymälänhoitaja ‘shop-tender’ from male as well as female participants. The referent of luottamusmies ‘trust-man’ was interpreted as male significantly more often than the referent of luottamushenkilö ‘trust-person’ by female, but not by male participants. The sentence with lakimies ‘lawman’ did not produce significantly more men’s names than the corresponding sentence with juristi ‘lawyer’ (but the difference did approach significance among comprehensive school girls).10

The data from the second experiment show how the semantic gender neutrality or gender bias of the neutral equivalents as opposed to the male generics may vary.11 At the same time, however, the unmonitored responses in the study replicate the male bias in the interpretation of male generic agent nouns: 85–89% of all names given in response to the generic male sentences were men’s names. In conclusion, none of the three studies above supports the description of male generic expressions in Finnish as indeed generic and unmarked.

The interpretation of male generics in the first and second study does not necessarily reflect the distribution of women and men in the corresponding referent groups. For example, women have had the majority in the referent group denoted by virkamies, the public sector employees, at least since the beginning of the 1980s.12

6. The empirical investigation of covert male bias

Researchers on gendered language have found that not only generic masculine/male expressions, but also morphologically gender-neutral human nouns (which contain no gender-specific element) can have a male connotation (e.g.,
Braun 1995, 1997a, cf. also the contribution by Braun, vol. I; Hamilton 1991). I shall refer to this phenomenon as covert male bias. A reanalysis of the gender-neutral sentences and their perceived referents in Engelberg (1993) reveals a covert male bias in the participants’ reactions. The referents of the “gender-neutral” sentences were judged as male in 30% and as female in 6% of the responses. The referent was perceived as female equally often by female and male participants. The actual percentage of women and men in the referent groups (as far as this was possible to specify) did not explain the participants’ responses. For example, the referent of the word kolleega ‘colleague’ in the sentence Tapasitko eilen ruotsalaisen kolleegasi? ‘Did you meet your Swedish colleague yesterday?’ was perceived as male in 37% and as female in 2% of the responses.

Covertly male language use is not uncommon in the media, for example. In some instances, the androcentricity is blatant, in others the message is more hidden. Consider examples (11–14) below:

(11) Punar-armeijon nais-komissaari Klavdia Vavilova [...] Red-Army-female-commissar Klavdia Vavilova [...] huomaa tul-lee-nsa raskaaksi. notice.3SG come-PART-poss pregnant-trns

‘Female Red Army commissar Klavdia Vavilova […] finds out that she is pregnant.’

The woman’s title komissaari in example (11) clearly denotes a male-dominated group and contains a male connotation. The need to specify the female referent’s gender with the modifier nais- ‘female’ has, however, led to a pleonastic expression. The referent’s gender is evident from the proper name as well as from her pregnancy.

Unlike in the case above, covert masculinity in the following example cannot be explained by extralinguistic factors:


hyvin pukeutu-ne-i-ta perhee-n-is-i-ä well dress-PART-PL-PARTT family-GEN-father-PL-PARTT
vaimo-i-neen ja laps-i-neen.
wife-pl-com and child-pl-com
‘The tables in a nearby fish restaurant are filled with shrimps […] The customers are Chinese, well-dressed family men with their wives and children.’

Example (13) demonstrates that the prototypical meaning of suomalainen ‘a Finn’ also has a male bias:

(13) “Suomalaiselle alkoholi tarkoittaa pari-a
Finn-allat alcohol mean-3sg couple-partt
pullo-a keski-olut-ia sauna-n jälke-en.
bottle-partt middle-beer-partt sauna-gen trace-illat
Ne nauti-taan koto-na vaimo-n kanssa
they enjoy-pass home-ess wife-gen with
lotto-tuloks-i-a odotel-le-ssa”, Piispa sano-o.
lotto-result-pl-partt wait-inf-iness Piispa say-3sg
“For a Finn alcohol means a couple of bottles of beer after the sauna.
They are consumed at home together with the wife while waiting for the Lotto results”, says Piispa.

During the presidential election campaign in 1994, a male TV-reporter asked the pro-feminist candidate Elisabeth Rehn: “Olette kotenaienvaihminen?” ‘Are you a woman or a human being?’ The meanings of ihminen and nainen are also differentiated in example (14):

(14) Highway-n ihmis- ja nais-suhtee-t o-vat
Highway-gen human- and woman-relation-pl be-3pl
pala-nee-t tieteenkin karre-ille.
burn-part-pl of.course snuff-allat
‘Highway’s relationships with people and women have of course stranded.’
(Highway is a personal name.)

In the following I shall report on the major findings from two empirical studies on covert gender in morphologically neutral human nouns in Finnish (see Engelberg 2001 for a detailed discussion).

6.1 The prototypical human being

109 high school students (74 women, 35 men; mean age 17.5) and 111 university students (72 women, 39 men; mean age 20) volunteered in the first experiment.
85% of the high school students and 31% of the university students were from the capital area, the rest from different parts of Finland.\textsuperscript{14}

The participants were presented with a list of thirteen noun phrases consisting of the word tyypillinen ‘typical’ as the modifier and a morphologically neutral human noun as the head, e.g., tyypillinen peruskoululainen ‘a typical comprehensive school pupil’, vammainen ‘disabled/handicapped person’, naapuri ‘neighbour’, lomailija ‘holidaymaker’.\textsuperscript{15}

The participants were told to imagine the referent of the expression and then to give a first name to the referent as quickly as possible. They were instructed to use the same name only once and to handle each category name individually, without comparing it to other expressions.

Female participants gave significantly more men’s than women’s names to only two categories out of thirteen: tyypillinen suomalainen ‘typical Finn’ and tyypillinen televisiokatselija ‘typical TV viewer’. In addition, female university but not high school students gave significantly more men’s names to tyypillinen lottoottaja ‘typical lotto winner’ and tyypillinen työntekijä ‘typical worker’. The distribution of men’s and women’s names in seven of the thirteen categories fell short of statistical significance, e.g., tyypillinen lapsi ‘typical child’ and tyypillinen helsinkiläinen ‘typical citizen of Helsinki’. On the other hand, women produced significantly more women’s than men’s names to tyypillinen potilas ‘typical patient’ and tyypillinen kristitty ‘typical Christian’.

The male participants, on the other hand, attributed significantly more men’s than women’s names to nine of the thirteen categories. Overall, the proportion of men’s names given for the nine categories was 86%. The male bias was further augmented by the younger boys: Male high school students produced significantly more men’s than women’s names for tyypillinen lapsi ‘typical child’, tyypillinen potilas ‘typical patient’ and tyypillinen kuopus ‘typical youngest child’. None of the thirteen category names elicited significantly more women’s than men’s names from the male participants.

The pilot for the second study was carried out in two high schools specialized in arts education in Helsinki. Fifty-six students (37 women, 19 men; mean age 17.2) participated voluntarily. The participants were presented with four short paragraphs describing ihminen ‘human being, man’ as a species, e.g., the human being as an ‘animal capable of learning, thinking and deduction’ or the human being as an ‘animal seeking beauty, enjoying beauty’.\textsuperscript{16}

The participants were instructed to draw the ihminen featured in each paragraph based on the images and ideas that would first come to their minds. Secondly, they were told to give a first name to the person they had drawn
Male participants perceived *ihminen* as ‘male’ significantly more often than as ‘female’ in three paragraphs out of four. Two paragraphs elicited exclusively male responses. *Ihminen* was male in 73% of all the responses given by men. The women’s responses showed more contextual variation than the men’s responses. Only in one paragraph was *ihminen* perceived significantly more often as ‘male’ than as ‘female’ by women. 89% of both women and men regarded ‘human being seeking beauty’ as ‘female’. None of the four paragraphs elicited exclusively female characters either by male or by female participants.

The results from the two studies are consonant with previous research on covert gender and covert masculinity. The referents of both the superordinate term *ihminen* and many of its morphologically gender-neutral hyponyms are more likely to be perceived as male than as female. The interpretations are not explicable with extralinguistic factors (cf. *komissaari* ‘commissar’ in example 11) or the morphological structure of the category names (cf. *tavallinen kadunmies* ‘the man in the street’). Participants’ gender clearly affects interpretation, however. Boys and men tend to perceive women as peripheral and atypical members of the category ‘human’. The data indicate that the androcentric culture and all the relevant social information has had some effect on girls and women as well, but they do not regard themselves as atypical humans to the same extent as males do.

6.2 *Ihminen* as ‘woman’

The dictionary of Finnish dialects (Suomen murteiden sanakirja 1994; cf. also Länsimäki 1986:263, Rautala 1988:33, Vilppula 1996) gives ‘woman, wife’ as one of the meanings of *ihminen* ‘human being’. *Ihminen* denotes ‘woman’ in addition to ‘human being’ especially in the south-western and Häme area of Finland. It has been suggested (Vilppula 1996) that the origin of the female connotation of *ihminen* in certain dialects is partly due to an association between *nainen* ‘woman’ and the colloquial meaning of the verb *naida* ‘1. marry, get married, 2. screw, fuck’, the first syllables of the words being identical. According to this view, such Finnish words as *naisihminen* (coll., dial.) ‘female human being’ are euphemisms for a sexualized *nainen* and act as a base for an abbreviated form *ihminen* ‘woman’. Reasoning of this kind would seem to require a rather conscious effort on the part of the native speaker (cf. also Rautala 1990:214f).
Referring to a woman as *ihminen* (instead of *nainen*) is more likely to originate from the conceptual and cultural category of ‘woman,’ the sexual and derogatory connotations of which speakers wish to avoid in this euphemistic manner. As Mills (1995:111) puts it: “People do not find the term *man* when used for adult males potentially insulting as they do *woman* used for an adult female. The term ‘woman’ itself has acquired connotations of low status and sexuality.” The same may well apply to *nainen* in Finnish.

Rautala (1988:34f) examined birth announcements in the Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* from August 1986 till May 1987 and found that none of the announcements of a birth of a girl (*N* = 127) referred to the baby as *pikku nainen* ‘little woman’ or *naisenalku* lit. ‘beginning of a woman’, ‘little woman’, whereas expressions such as *pikku mies*, *pieni mies* ‘little man’ or *miehenalku* lit. ‘beginning of a man’, ‘little man’, “were not uncommon” in announcements of the birth of a boy (*N* = 154). In Rautala’s view, this reflects the unmarkedness of *man* and the markedness of *woman*. Similarly, sentence (15a) is acceptable, whereas (15b) evokes associations of biological and sexual characteristics:

(15) a. Niko on nyt seitsemän-vuotias urhea miehe-n-alku.
   Niko be.3sg now seven-year brave man-gen-beginning
   ‘Niko is now a seven-year-old brave little man.’

   b. Maria on nyt seitsemän-vuotias urhea
   Maria be.3sg now seven-year brave
   naise-n-alku.
   woman-gen-beginning
   ‘Maria is now a seven-year-old brave little woman.’

Compounds with *-nainen* in old literary Finnish often have a derogatory and sometimes a sexual connotation: *jalkanainen* ‘concubine’, *murhanainen* ‘murderwoman’, *velhonainen* ‘wizardwoman, sorceress, witch’ and *huorinainen* ‘whorewoman’ (Kiuru 1993, Engelberg 1998a). *Nainen* may still be more acceptable in reference to low status groups or individuals, as in example (16):

(16) *Hiv-naise-n* vangitsemis-ta jatke-ttiin
   hiv-woman-gen arrest-partt continue-ppf.pass
   ‘HIV woman still held in captivity (referring to an HIV positive Thai woman suspected of intentionally transmitting HIV to several men)’

At the same time, it is important to note the group of compounds denoting women where the modifier has a female reference and *ihminen* is the main element: *akkaihminen* ‘hag’, *emäntäihminen* ‘matron, lady of the house,
hostess', *likkaihminen* 'a slip of a girl', *piikaihminen* 'maid', *työttÖihminen* 'girl' and *vainoihminen* 'wife' (Suomen murteiden sanakirja 1994). Finnish has no *miesihminen* 'male human being', *poikaihminen* 'boy-human being', *ukkoihminen* 'old man-human being' or *tiintäihminen* 'master, head of the house-human being', for instance. As Koski (1983:165f) points out, certain occupational terms have a connotation or a component [male] or [female], and they are not normally accompanied by a modifier denoting the same gender, e.g., *miesteurastaja* 'male butcher', *naiskätilö* 'female midwife'.

Perhaps expressions such as *miesteurastaja* and *miesihminen* would both seem tautological. Since butchers are usually male and people=males, there is normally no need to specify the referent’s gender. On the other hand, the possible tautology of nouns such as *miesihminen* may originate from the male=people principle: Since men are primarily perceived as human beings and people (not as representatives of their gender class), they are not likely to be categorized as 'human human beings'. *Naisihminen* and similar expressions are acceptable because of the non-typicality of women as human beings and because there is nothing gender-neutral about the concept “woman”. *Ihminen* in reference to women in particular does not imply that women are perceived as exceptionally humanlike in Finnish or in the Finnish culture.

Gender and sexism in Finnish is for the most part an unexplored area, and further analysis is required on various levels of language and language use. Research on generic masculinity needs to be supplemented with more experiments on expressions other than occupational terms. The empirical studies reported here on the comprehension of morphologically gender-neutral human nouns in Finnish explored the tendency to perceive human beings as male rather than female. Future (experimental) research should examine the other side of the coin as well, namely the tendency to perceive men as human rather than male. The recurrent semantic variation produced by the participants’ gender merits further study of the more unconscious and automatic level of processing, for instance by using methods of semantic priming and reaction time measurement.

7. **Gender in Finnish proverbs**

Gender and gender opposition can also be constructed and communicated through various normative and descriptive proverbs. It is hardly surprising that the evaluation of women from a male point of view is far more common in
proverbs than the evaluation of men from women’s perspective. In his sample of Finnish proverbs, Kuusi (1994) found that they usually evaluate women negatively (cf. also Majapuro 1996). For example, the value of a daughter is usually considered to be lower than that of a son:17

(17) Tytär syntyi, tyhjä syntyi, poika syntyi, kaski kaatui.
‘A daughter was born, nothing was born; a son was born, he will become a woodland clearer.’

The “natural” power relation between women and men is spelt out in several proverbs, e.g.:

(18) Missä akka miehen edellä, siellä reki hevosen edellä.
‘Where women go before men, there sledges go before horses.’

Majapuro’s (1997) analysis of Finnish proverbs shows that both women’s laughter and weeping are often considered as false and calculating. Example (19) demonstrates how a laughing woman can also be perceived as frivolous:

(19) Naisen nauru navan alta.
‘A woman’s laughter [comes] from under the belly.’

Some proverbs reflect the dominant group’s ambivalent attitude towards women. Despite all her faults woman is still man’s life companion:

(20) Akaton mies on kuin hännätön koira.
‘A man without a woman is like a dog without a tail.’

Also, the proverbs expressing the value of a mother for her children often convey respect or affection, e.g.:

(21) Puoliorpo isäton, koko-orpo äiditön.
‘Half-orphaned without a father, whole-orphaned without a mother.’

In Kuusi’s (1994:157) view, some proverbs dating from the 20th century may “indicate a change in attitude” in the portrayal of women in Finnish proverbs. Example (22) was first collected in 1844, the adaptation in (23) is from the 1950s:

(22) Ei niin huonoja housuja, jottei hametta vastaa.
‘No trousers [are] so bad that they are not the equal of a skirt.’

(23) Ei niin huonoo hametta jottei housuja vastook.
(dial.) ‘No skirt [is] so bad that it isn’t worth a pair of trousers.’
8. Gendered terms of abuse

An exception to man's greater lexical visibility as compared to woman's is found in derogatory sexual vocabulary. Jussila & Länsimäki (1994) have recorded 400 words for 'promiscuous woman' and 120 terms for 'promiscuous man'. Words denoting men often have tolerant, admiring or playful connotations, e.g., *mela-mies* 'paddle-man', *puukko-sankari* '[sheath-]knife-hero'. Many animal metaphors imply strength and potency: *karju* 'boar', *orhi, ori* 'stallion'. In contrast, the words for women are usually dysphemistic and more directly derogatory: *kylähuora* 'village whore', *kiertopalkinto* 'challenge cup' and *irto-liha* 'loose-flesh'. A promiscuous woman is usually conceptualized as an object of public use.

Virtanen (1990) gathered information on the use of *huora* 'whore' in traditional Finnish country villages based on people's personal experience (51 women, 45 men; average age 72 years). The data were supplemented with a small sample of university students’ responses from the 1980s. Virtanen (1990:158) concludes that "A whore can be a woman in general, a girl who rejects a boy's company, a prostitute or a woman seeing several men as well as an unwed mother or a girl who has lost her virginity." Virtanen also reports how the use of *huora* has become more common as an expression for 'prostitute' in the media.

Examples of pejorization of words with female reference include *akka* 1. 'hag, old woman'; 2. coll., dial. 'wife' and *ämmä* 'hag, old woman' which both have denoted 'grandmother'. *Ämmä* is one of the most negative words denoting 'woman' in contemporary Finnish (excluding sexual slurs like *huora*). Compounds and phrases include *noita-akka* 'witch-hag, witch', *juoruaakka/ juoruumma* 'gossipmonger, gossip' and *akkavalta* 'hag-power, petticoat rule'. *Piika* 'maid, hired girl' is an old occupational title which originally meant 'girl, maiden' and has now acquired a pejorative (although not a sexual) sense. The original meaning has survived in *vanhapiika* 'old maid, spinster' and *piikuus* 'maidenhood, virginity' (Vilppula 1997).

The asymmetrical pejorization of words with female and male reference is shown in the derivative pair *naikko-nen* lit. 'woman-diminutive, trollop' and *miekkonenen* lit. ‘man-diminutive, little man’ (in reference to an adult man). *Miekkonen* can be used jocularly, whereas *naikkonen* is clearly derogatory. Furthermore, the male word does not comment on the referent’s sexual morals even when used pejoratively. Insults aimed at a man sometimes compare him to a woman, e.g., the female title *neiti* 'miss, young lady' referring to an effemi-
nate man or the adjectives *akkamainen* ‘(old-)womanish, unmanly’ and *naismainen* ‘womanish, effeminate’. A man can also be told to *vetää hame päälle* ‘to put on a skirt’.

9. **Female/male discourse**

Women’s and men’s behaviour in interaction cannot be described on the basis of gender alone. For example, Leiwo (1991:158) concludes from his study on classroom talk and gender that ‘Male or female dominance seems to depend on the grade, the subject, the individual characteristics and age of the speakers and the culture, i.e. the context.’ Tainio (1996, 2001) explored shared cultural beliefs in everyday stories and found that the relation between generations may play a more significant role than gender relations. Other studies on interaction have discussed, for instance, gossipping (Hakulinen 1988; Pöysä 1988), female bonding in a conversation between young women (Haakana & Mäntynen 1993), and the relevance of gender in a TV interview (Hakulinen 1993).

10. **Language reform**

Gendered language has not been a public issue in Finland to the same extent as in the United States, for example. The Union of Journalists in Finland has no specific recommendations on avoiding sexist language in its guidelines for good journalistic practice. When the XVIth Scandinavian Conference of Linguistics was held in Finland in 1996, the call for papers formulated by the Finnish organizing committee gave the following instructions: “[…] the name of the speaker, and *his* university address should be given on top of the page” [italics added].

However, sensitivity towards gendered or discriminatory language may have increased somewhat lately and every now and then issues such as occupational titles with *mies* ‘man’ as the main element are discussed in the media. Formation of morphologically neutral alternatives to gendered (occupational) titles is in fact comparatively simple, using the suffix -jä ‘agent’, which is highly productive in Finnish, e.g., *sivota* (verb) ‘to clean’ > *sivoo-ja* (agent noun) ‘cleaner’ or *näyttellä* ‘to act’ > *näytteli-jä* ‘actor’. Similarly, a male generic title such as *marja-mies* ‘berry-man, berry picker’ can be replaced with *marjasta-ja* ‘berry picker’ (< *marjastaa* ‘to pick berries’).
Since Finnish lacks grammatical gender, it is not possible to use female pro/nouns “to emphasise women’s presence in the world” the way Deborah Cameron (1992:126) seeks to do in “Feminism and linguistic theory”. In Finnish, the formation of morphologically gender-neutral alternatives to gendered expressions is a more likely strategy than the so-called feminization of language and explicit, symmetrical gender marking in a gender-language such as German. Finnish women themselves may regard the formation of titles with nainen ‘woman’, for instance, as discriminatory highlighting.18

11. Conclusion

A fundamental principle of the cultural, social and linguistic gender system is androcentricity, the perception of people as male and male as people. Androcentricity implicates and is based upon gender difference and gender polarization (cf. Bem 1993). After gender classes have been conceptualized as separate and opposite categories, ‘male’ can be defined as more humanlike than ‘female’ and ‘human’ as more ‘male’ than ‘female’. Although the category of gender is not grammaticalized in the structure of Finnish, the prototypicality of ‘male’ in the lexicon and in the semantic system indicates that Finnish does distinguish gender also linguistically. The more covert or implicit nature of this gender distinction in Finnish as opposed to languages such as, e.g., French or German does not make Finnish less gendered. Androcentricity in a genderless language may even increase the lexical, semantic and conceptual invisibility of women.

Notes

2. The term “male” generics is preferred to “masculine” generics because Finnish lacks grammatical gender.
3. The forms within parentheses are often used instead of hän and he, respectively.
4. The suffix -kkO is very productive in other types of derivations, e.g., politikko ‘politician’, which do not specify gender. Cf. also inanimate examples such as unikko ‘poppy’.
5. The suffix -tAr has persisted in the arts, e.g., laulaja-tar ‘female singer’; kirjailija-tar ‘female author’ is restricted to popular literature, e.g., kirjailijatar Barbara Cartland (Kyrölä 1990:10).

7. In addition, there is a spelling mistake – the phrase should read lakimiehelle tai -naiselle.

8. The collective bargaining contract for government officials (1998) consistently uses the title virkamies and contains expressions like raskaana oleva virkamies ‘a pregnant office-man’ and directions for virkamies ‘taking maternity leave’. The corresponding contract for municipal employees (1998), however, uses the morphologically neutral equivalent viranhaltija ‘office-holder, civil servant’ throughout (but has retained luottamus-mies ‘trust-man, trustee, employee representative’).

9. The acceptability of virkamies was brought upon an official level in 1986 when the law on civil servants was being reformed and the committee for constitutional law suggested they should look for alternatives to gender biased titles such as virkamies. Four members of the committee, including the chair, expressed a dissenting opinion, arguing that virkamies is “in fact gender-neutral, established and extremely apt otherwise as well” (Engelberg 1993:45).

10. Female participants’ tendency to interpret the referents of male generics as women more often than male participants in both studies may partly result from conscious choices. During a debriefing of the myymäläesimies/myymälänhoitaja study in the generic male condition, a thirteen-year-old boy said that "obviously the man part at the end of the word highlights it [the gender bias], one thinks of a male", to which two girls in the class replied that they had thought of a man at first but then given a woman’s name precisely because of that. It is not possible to conclude from the data, however, how commonly deliberate choices of this kind are made.

11. Experimental research on male generics in a language like Finnish is complicated by the fact that close synonyms are not always readily available (cf. generic he vs. singular they vs. he or she in English).

12. The participants were also asked about their parents’ occupations, since this could have influenced the responses. The proportion of housewives among both the high school and the comprehensive school students’ parents turned out to be less than ten percent. Most of the pupils were therefore likely to be accustomed to the idea of women in paid work.

13. One participant did not answer the age question.

14. Five high school students were from other European countries, but reported Finnish as their native tongue.

15. Four additional noun phrases included the component [female] or [male] (tyyppilinen äiti ‘a typical mother’, tyyppilinen isä ‘a typical father’) or a pronounced gender bias (tyyppilinen sairaanhoitaja ‘a typical nurse’, tyyppilinen taksinkuljettaja ‘a typical taxi driver’). Four animal category names were included as fillers.

16. The paragraphs were adapted from social policy researcher Pekka Kuusi’s (1991) book Ihmisen eloonjäämisoppi. Porvoo: WSOY.

17. The English translations in proverbs (17–18) and (20–23) are by Kuusi (1994).

18. After it became possible for Finnish women to enter voluntary military service, the media began to use the title varusnainen ‘national servicewoman’ as opposed to the male form varusmies ‘national serviceman’. When female draftees participating in a course at the air
force technical school were informally asked about their preferences for terms of address, they unanimously objected to any gendered references, including varusnainen 'national servicewoman' and the title rouva 'madam, ma'am, Mrs' as in rouva kokelas 'madam cadet'. In fact, the women wished to be addressed in exactly the same way as the male servicemen. For instance, they wanted to be called herra tykkimies 'Mr artilleryman/gunner' (Major General Pentti Lehtimäki, personal communication 1997).

References


Kangas, Kea. 1997. *Toisen kautta vai suoraan – henkilön määrittäminen viittauksissa* [In relation to other or directly – how are persons defined in human references?]. MA thesis, Department of General Linguistics, Helsinki University, Finland.


Mänttä: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura. (English abstract).


1. Introduction

Hindi (हिंदी), adopted by the Indian constitution as a national-official language, is an Indo-Aryan language that is claimed as a mother tongue by roughly 40% of the Indian population.¹ Boasting over 450 million first- and second-language speakers worldwide, Hindi is one of the three most widely spoken languages in the world today, along with English and Mandarin Chinese. When speakers of Urdu are included in this estimate, a language that shares the same basic syntax as Hindi but in certain registers draws much of its vocabulary from Perso-Arabic sources as opposed to Sanskrit, this number is even greater. Hindi has also been designated the official language of several states, among them Bihar, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Delhi; the central government has endorsed its use along with English (identified
Kira Hall

as the “associate official language”) in administrative functions. But these facts obscure the complex internal politics regarding the position of Hindi in the Indian social landscape, where several sectors of the population oppose its ascendancy in politics and government, particularly in southern India where the Dravidian languages Tamil and Telugu are dominant. Opposition to Hindi has also steadily increased among Urdu speakers in response to nationalist embraces of a suddh or ‘pure’ Sanskritic Hindi by various Hindu fundamentalist groups, whose leaders reject Perso-Arabic influences on the language as part of an anti-Muslim political platform. The linguistic correlate, according to some scholars, has been an ever-increasing divergence between Hindi on the one hand and Urdu on the other, with noncomprehensibility sometimes existing between radical versions of each (see Shapiro & Schiffman 1983, King 1999).

Modern grammars of the many dialects now grouped together under the label “Hindi” grew out of 18th and 19th century attempts to link Sanskrit to the known classical and vernacular languages of Europe. Beames’ Comparative grammar of the modern Aryan languages of India (1872–79) offers the first taxonomy of Indo-Aryan languages and the position of Hindi therein, followed by Kellogg’s A grammar of the Hindi language (1875) and Grierson’s highly influential Linguistic survey of India (1903–28). Since the publication of these early surveys, there has been constant debate regarding the appropriate taxonomy of the languages and dialects of Indo-Aryan, a debate that points to the impossibility of defining the difference between “language” and “dialect” in purely linguistic terms (see Shapiro & Schiffman 1983 for an engaging summary of this debate in the Indian context). For the state of Uttar Pradesh, where I conducted my fieldwork, contemporary scholars generally categorize dialects of Hindi as belonging to either Eastern Hindi or Western Hindi. The eastern group includes the dialects of Avadhi, Baghel, Bhojpuri, and Chattisgarhi, and the western group Braj, Bundeli, Kanauji, and Bangru. Standard Hindi is based on a Western Hindi dialect referred to by academics as khaṛi boli, though only a small percentage of Hindi speakers can be said to have spoken this variety as a mother tongue. In addition to these dialects, there are also several local varieties of Hindi that have developed as lingua francas or pidgins, most notably bambaiyā hindi in Bombay (Chernyshev 1971, Apte 1974) and bāzāri hindi in Calcutta (Chatterji 1931). For traditional grammars of regional dialects of Hindi and their classification see Guru (1920), Vaipey (1967, 1968) and Sharma (1958); for more contemporary descriptions of Hindi written in English see McGregor (1972), Mohanan (1994), Shapiro (1989), and Srivastava (1969).
Although India has been an important center of sociolinguistic research since the 1950s, fostering insightful debate on the complex relationship between language and social identity, discussions of gender are largely absent in the literature. This has less to do with scholarly neglect than it does with the way in which sociolinguistics has developed on the Indian subcontinent, where caste was established early on as the central variable of concern for the study of linguistic variation. Following Bloch’s pioneering study “Castes et dialectes en Tamoul” at the beginning of the 20th century (Bloch 1910), much of the early scholarship on social stratification focused on Dravidian languages, particularly Tamil, Tulu, and Kannada. But sociolinguistic research on Hindi also helped to further the preoccupation with caste, when prominent linguistic anthropologists like Gumperz (1958) called our attention to caste influences on Hindi with his important article “Dialect differences and social stratification in a North Indian village”. Gumperz’s work stands out from many of the studies that preceded it in that he argues for the consideration of other variables in addition to caste, among them place of residence, religion, informal friendship contacts, and occupation. Most critically, he brings the notion of “context” into the sociolinguistic literature when he stresses the importance of studying patterns of individual and group interaction.

But gender takes the backseat in Gumperz’s study, as it does in the majority of variationist studies that followed, even when sociolinguistic scholarship on South Asian languages broadened its focus to include variables like urbanization, education, economic status, literacy, and age. While we might want to blame this gap on the intellectual climate at the time – after all, the field of language and gender did not really emerge until after the publication of Lakoff’s “Language and Woman’s Place” in 1973 – it should be noted that Bloch himself considered the role of gender in language use as early as 1910. He notes, for example, that Tamil-speaking women exerted conservative influences on the social dialects of their time, attributing this to their comparative lack of education. In fact, Bloch points to the speech of women and men in early Sanskrit theatre as evidence for a long history of dialect stratification in South Asia, which often represents men of high varnas (e.g. Brāhmaṇa and Kṣatriya) as speaking Sanskrit and men of low varṇas, servants, and women as speaking Prakrit. Nevertheless, few articles to date have explored gender differentiation with respect to language choice, with the notable exception of Simon’s recent work (1993, 1996) on gendered attitudes toward the use of Hindi vs. Banarsi Bhojpuri in Banaras.
Certainly the sociolinguistic literature on Hindi has involved much more than variationist studies, especially in the past two decades where we find a boom of research on topics ranging from code-switching and bilingualism to language and nationalism. When we consider these other areas of inquiry, among them the feminist analysis of sexist language (e.g. Valentine 1987) and the pragmatic analysis of terms of address, pronoun choice, greetings, and kinship terminology (e.g. Jain 1969, 1973; Khubchandani 1978; Mehrotra 1977, 1985a, 1985b; Vatuk 1969a, 1969b; Misra 1977), we do find a few discussions of gender as a grammatical and as a social category. The study of address terminology is noteworthy in this respect, particularly as its emphasis on language in context has taken Hindi sociolinguistics in more dynamic directions. The fact that Hindi has three second-person pronouns, for instance, whose employment is dependent on a complex array of social considerations, disallows descriptions of language that rely on a static conception of social role or identity. The choice of address forms in Hindi, as the authors named above all illustrate, is not simply a function of the social positions of addresser and addressee, predetermined by the gender, marital status, and age of the conversational participants. It is also dependent on how these social positions interact with the context of the speech event, where the topic of discourse, intention of the speaker, degree of intimacy and solidarity between interlocutors, emotional attitudes, and linguistic creativity all play a role.

The study of address terminology, then, moves us squarely into the field of discourse analysis. Yet even with this shift in research direction, there has been little subsequent scholarship on how gender materializes in conversational practice. Valentine’s work in the mid-1980s (1985, 1986) remains one of the few attempts to apply contemporary interactional sociolinguistics to the Indian context, though the bulk of her data comes from contemporary Hindi novels, plays, and short stories. Paralleling research results for middle-class speakers of English in the United States, Valentine finds, for example, that male speakers of Hindi successfully initiate more conversational topics while female speakers do more of the conversational maintenance work. But her appropriation of a two-cultures model of gender to explain the discursive practices of communication in mixed groups won her sharp criticism from Singh & Lele (1990), who disagree with the way she conceptualizes power in structural-functional rather than hierarchical terms.4

I offer this description of the speech patterns of Hindi-speaking hijras as an example of how discourse analysis, when applied to a particular community of practice, can reveal profound insights about the workings of gender in society.
Given that the speech patterns of women and men have been so little studied in Hindi sociolinguistics, some may disagree with my choice to focus on a group of speakers who themselves identify as "na mard na aurat 'neither man nor woman'. Often discussed as a “third gender” by anthropologists, most hijras were raised as boys before taking up residence in one of India’s many hijra communities and adopting the feminine dress, speech, and mannerisms associated with membership. Yet the gendered liminality of these speakers is precisely what provoked my initial interest in their language habits, since the hijras alternate between feminine and masculine linguistic reference in ways that reflect both local and dominant ideologies regarding the position of women and men in north Indian society. Since 1993 I have been visiting and researching a variety of hijra communities in northern India. Most of the data are taken from my fieldwork in the city of Banaras, where I conducted extensive interviews with hijras from four different communities and recorded their everyday conversations. Constrained by a linguistic system which allows for only two morphological genders, i.e., feminine and masculine, Banaras hijras must gender themselves and fellow community members as either feminine/female or masculine/male. Because nouns, verbs, adjectives, and postpositions in Hindi are marked for feminine and masculine gender, with verbs being marked in all three persons, the hijras’ attempts at alternating constructions of female and male selves becomes apparent in quite basic choices of feminine and masculine forms.

In this chapter I explore how we might go about analyzing these alternations, particularly given the traditional linguistic distinction between “grammatical gender” on the one hand and “natural gender” on the other. In the first kind of system, according to conventional linguistic thought, gender is an arbitrary grammatical category that has syntactic consequences throughout the grammar; in the second, gender is a “natural” category that merely reflects the “biological sex” of the referent. Feminist linguists since the 1970s (early articles include Bodine 1975; Martyna 1980a, 1980b) have argued against the first of these classifications, illustrating, sometimes quite convincingly, that grammatical gender is not a purely arbitrary phenomenon. Others have argued against the second of these classifications, suggesting that no classification system is purely “natural”. English, for instance, while often discussed as a language exhibiting natural gender, not only allows the usage of male generics for female referents, it also permits the assignment of metaphorical gender to inanimates, as when a ship, boat, or car is referred to as she. But I want to move beyond these arguments in order to challenge the very assumption implicit in the term...
“natural gender”, i.e. that gender is a fixed phenomenon, rooted in biology and therefore free of ideological influences. What happens to a language’s classification system in instances when the referent’s gender can no longer be assumed as either male or female? And what might these instances of “unnatural gender” tell us about the relationship between gender in language and gender in society?

2. Gender in the Hindi language system

2.1 Grammatical gender: Assignment and agreement

Any discussion of the workings of gender in the Hindi language system requires a few disclaimers. While a two-way gender system of masculine and feminine is present in all dialects (with the exception of lingua franca or pidginized varieties where grammatical gender is often lost altogether), the specifics of the system materialize differently. Instantiations of grammatical gender for inanimate nouns vary from dialect to dialect, with nouns treated as feminine in one sometimes appearing as masculine in another, and vice versa (see Nespital 1990:8–9 for several examples). The noun dahi ‘yogurt’, for example, is often marked as masculine in eastern dialects and feminine in western ones, a difference most likely caused by a western reinterpretation of the final vowel -ı as a feminine morphological marker. And in many of the Hindi dialects emerging in urban areas as a result of contact with other languages, only animate nouns referring to female individuals are treated as feminine. Originally feminine nouns such as hindi ‘Hindi’, nadi ‘river’, and sādi ‘marriage’ are classified as masculine, a phenomenon Bhatia (1992:174) attributes to a “weakening of grammatical gender and the preference for the natural gender”. In other words, nouns in these dialects are normally not feminine unless they specifically reference female persons.

Moreover, while speakers of Hindi in the khari boli area most closely produce the kind of gender agreement outlined in instructional grammars, speakers of certain eastern varieties often perceive this same gender agreement as stylistically marked when employed across syntactic distance. Because Hindi is a kind of “communication amalgam” (Khubchandani 1991:273), speakers generally exhibit neutral attitudes toward variations in speech, grammatical gender notwithstanding. But the gender variability described above leads Simon (ms.) to make the interesting claim that the employment or non-employment of standard gender agreement sometimes serves as a register marker, indexing
the speaker’s gender, linguistic proficiency, education level, and/or insider/outside status. Thus in the western Hindi area, according to Simon, elite speakers of standard Hindi will often perceive a speaker who uses non-standard gender agreement as purbi (a person from eastern Uttar Pradesh) or dehati (a villager, a rural illiterate). But in Banaras, where the local dialect of Banarsi Bhojpuri is spoken along with standard Hindi, it is the use of standard gender agreement that is sometimes deemed suspect. Simon offers evidence that this is particularly the case among uneducated female speakers of the local dialect, who frequently perceive speakers who maintain the strict gender agreement of standard Hindi as either foreign or over-educated.

Simon’s observations regarding Banarsi Bhojpuri cannot easily be applied to the Banaras hijra community, however, since its members rarely come from the city. Hijras are notorious travelers, moving from state to state, city to city, and community to community for years before they settle in any one place. Indeed, their life narratives are constructed around movement: Because so many of them were forced out of their homes at an early age for exhibiting behavior deemed to be “hijra-like” or effeminate, their stories reveal an ongoing state of homelessness and displacement. Those hijras that eventually come to settle in Banaras, then, are rarely native speakers of Banarsi Bhojpuri, and its employment in the community is usually quite marked. What we find instead is a kind of lingua franca loosely based on standard Hindi, which facilitates communication among speakers from a variety of regional and linguistic backgrounds. The hijras’ language, which they call hijra boli in Banaras, most closely parallels those varieties of Hindi designated by some Hindi speakers as khicri or milijhuli (see, for example, Sachdeva 1982), terms which translate roughly as ‘mixed’. Such varieties, among them the Panjabi-ized Hindustani spoken around Delhi, usually develop on the borders of language or dialect areas and reflect features from the divergent bordering varieties. In this context, Hijra Boli might best be thought of as a kind of sadhukkar, a term coined by the medieval mystical poet Kabir for the ‘mixed’ language of travelers (literally, the language of sādhus or religious mendicants). This term is especially fitting for the hijras’ language, given the hijras’ traditional religious role at birth and wedding celebrations, where their blessing is thought to secure a long and fruitful lineage of sons for the recipient.

But where Hijra Boli differs from the lingua francas or pidgins reported for, say, the streets of Bombay and Calcutta is in the use of grammatical gender. In contrast to those varieties, which exhibit a loss of grammatical gender, the variety of Hindi adopted by the hijras tends to overemphasize gender, using
masculine and feminine gender in places where it would normally not appear in kхарди bolи, or treating nouns that are masculine in standard Hindi as feminine and vice versa. To give one illuminating example: The word hijrā is grammatically masculine in standard Hindi, but the hijras frequently treat the noun as feminine through verbal agreement when it acts as the subject of a sentence. As I argue here, this usage reflects a kind of gender overcompensation or even hypercorrection. Upon entering the community, Banaras hijras work to distance themselves from masculine representations, with many of them even choosing to undergo a ritualized penectomy and castration operation. The fact that the term hijrā is grammatically masculine sometimes gets in the way of this communal distancing, so hijras will mark the noun as feminine as part and parcel of “doing gender”. The two-gender system exhibited in standard Hindi, then, is quite relevant to a discussion of the language practices of this community, since grammatical gender is most often overemphasized, not underemphasized, in the hijras’ constructions of a more feminine self.

The alternation between feminine and masculine reference in standard Hindi is quite easy to discern linguistically, since many nouns, verbs, postpositions, and adjectival modifiers inflect for gender. Nominals, for instance, exhibit both a two-way gender system of masculine and feminine as well as a two-way number system of singular and plural. While the gender of animate nouns to a certain extent corresponds to the referent’s gender (i.e. exhibiting “natural gender”), gender designation in inanimate nouns is comparatively arbitrary (though see Valentine 1987 for a discussion of the sexist basis of some of these designations, and Börner-Westphal 1989 for a discussion of lexical gaps in the gender system). Hindi nominal forms are classified as either direct (nominative) or oblique (non-nominative), with the latter normally signaled by the presence of a postposition. For the majority of nouns in the direct case, the -a ending signals masculine singular, -e masculine plural, -i feminine singular, and -iyā feminine plural; in the oblique case these endings become -e, -ā, -ī, and -iyō, respectively. Not all adjectival modifiers exhibit inflection, but those that do agree with their head noun in gender, number, and case. Masculine forms of inflecting adjectives end in -ā in the singular direct and -e in the plural direct, singular oblique, and plural oblique cases; the feminine forms always end in -i, whether singular or plural, direct or oblique. Examples illustrating gender agreement in nominals are given in (1) and (2):
(1) **Masculine agreement**

a. \( \text{acchā} \)  \( \text{larkā} \)
   
   good.nom.masc.sg boy.nom.masc.sg
   
   'good boy'

b. \( \text{acche} \)  \( \text{larkē} \)
   
   good.nom.masc.pl boy.nom.masc.pl
   
   'good boys'

c. \( \text{acche} \)  \( \text{larkē} \)  \( \text{ko} \)
   
   good.obl.masc.sg boy.obl.masc.sg to
   
   'to the good boy'

d. \( \text{acche} \)  \( \text{larkō} \)  \( \text{ko} \)
   
   good.obl.masc.pl boy.obl.masc.pl to
   
   'to the good boys'

(2) **Feminine agreement**

a. \( \text{acchī} \)  \( \text{larkī} \)
   
   good.nom.fem.sg girl.nom.fem.sg
   
   'good girl'

b. \( \text{acchī} \)  \( \text{larkiyā} \)
   
   good.nom.fem.pl girl.nom.fem.pl
   
   'good girls'

c. \( \text{acchī} \)  \( \text{larkī} \)  \( \text{ko} \)
   
   good.obl.fem.sg girl.obl.fem.sg to
   
   'to the good girl'

d. \( \text{acchī} \)  \( \text{larkiyō} \)  \( \text{ko} \)
   
   good.obl.fem.pl girl.obl.fem.pl to
   
   'to the good girls'

The genitive postposition also agrees with the gender of the head noun, appearing as \( \text{kā} \) when modifying a singular masculine noun, \( \text{ke} \) when modifying a plural masculine noun, and \( \text{kī} \) when modifying a singular or plural feminine noun. For concentrated discussions of grammatical gender in Hindi nominals, see Pathak (1976) and Gosvāmī (1979).

Verbals in standard Hindi also show gender agreement, agreeing with the subject in gender, number, and person if it is in the nominative case. If the subject is in an oblique case – i.e. ergative, dative, instrumental, locative, or genitive – the verb agrees with the object when it is nominative. In general, the appearance of one of the vowels -\( \text{ā} \), -\( \text{e} \), -\( \text{i} \), or -\( \text{ī} \) on the verb signals number and gender, with -\( \text{ā} \) used for masculine singular, -\( \text{e} \) for masculine plural, -\( \text{i} \) for feminine singular, and -\( \text{ī} \) for feminine plural. For example, the intransitive verb
honā ‘to be’ is realized as thā with masculine singular controllers, the with masculine plural controllers, thī with feminine singular controllers, and thī with feminine plural controllers, as illustrated in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SG 1</td>
<td>maṅ thā</td>
<td>I was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>tuṅ thā</td>
<td>you (intimate) were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>vah thā</td>
<td>he was/she was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL 1</td>
<td>ham thē</td>
<td>we were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>tum thē</td>
<td>you (familiar) were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ve/ap thē</td>
<td>they/you (polite) were</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I should add that many speakers of standard Hindi do not employ the feminine plural ending -ī with any regularity, particularly when the subject of the sentence is in the oblique case and the verb therefore agrees with the object, as in the sentence reproduced in example (3):

(3) a. **Standard Hindi**

āp-ne kitnī kitābê
you.pol-erg how.many.nom.fem book.nom.fem.pl
parh-ī? read.pf-fem.pl
‘How many books did you read?’

b. **Colloquial Hindi**

āp-ne kitnī kitāb
you.pol-erg how.many.nom.fem book.nom.fem.sg
parh-i/parh-ī? read.pf-fem.sg/pl
‘How many books did you read?’

Here, where the second person subject is in the ergative case, even standard Hindi speakers will frequently say ‘book’ (kitāb) instead of ‘books’ (kitābē) and employ the singular feminine verbal ending in agreement, as in (3b). Again, examples like this point to the fact that when it comes to conversational practice, there is no singular way to explain “gender in Hindi”.

I can only hint at the complexity of the Hindi verbal system, since auxiliaries and modals combine in various ways with either the verb root or its inflected
forms to yield numerous distinctions of tense, aspect, mood, and voice. In the
imperfective, continuous, and perfective verb forms, aspect is indicated through
the addition of explicit markers of various kinds to the stem while tense is
indicated through the presence of one of the basic forms of honâ ‘to be’ (i.e.
present, past, presumptive, subjunctive). Here, too, the appearance of one of the
vowels -a, -e, -i, or -ı will signal the gender and number of the NP with which the
verb agrees, and each element in the complex that is not in the root form will
reflect these agreement features. First-person feminine and masculine agreement
for several tenses of the verb jānâ ‘to go’ are illustrated in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb Tense</th>
<th>1st Person Masculine</th>
<th>1st Person Feminine</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>mai jāugu</td>
<td>mai jāugi</td>
<td>I will go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past</td>
<td>mai gayā</td>
<td>mai gayī</td>
<td>I went (definite)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Present</td>
<td>mai jāitu hā</td>
<td>mai jāitu hā</td>
<td>I go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperfective Past</td>
<td>mai jāitu thā</td>
<td>mai jāitu thī</td>
<td>I went (indefinite)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Past</td>
<td>mai jā rahti hā</td>
<td>mai jā rahti hī</td>
<td>I am going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Past</td>
<td>mai jā rahti thā</td>
<td>mai jā rahti thī</td>
<td>I was going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfective Present</td>
<td>mai gayā hā</td>
<td>mai gayī hā</td>
<td>I have gone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfective Past</td>
<td>mai gayā thā</td>
<td>mai gayī thī</td>
<td>I had gone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The import of this kind of verbal morphology for the hijras, of course, is
that even when pronouncing simple first-person statements like ‘I am going’,
hijras must gender themselves as either feminine or masculine.

2.2 Generic masculines

The hijras’ alternating uses of feminine and masculine morphological forms for
the same referent appears in very limited contexts in non-hijra Hindi-speaking
communities. With perhaps the exception of second language learners unfamil-
iar with the gender system, Hindi speakers rarely, if ever, betray their “natural”
gender when referring to themselves. Likewise, they generally respect the gender
of the referent or addressee in question – except, of course, when the generic
masculine is used as inclusive of both female and male persons, as in the nouns
reproduced in (4):
Feminine counterparts to many of the masculine nouns in (4) exist, such as *saheli* for ‘female friend’, but these terms are never used generically; rather, their usage expresses specific reference to a female individual. Most females will use *saheli* for their female friends, for instance, and will rarely call a female friend *dost*. The same is true with respect to verbal agreement with a pronoun like *koī* ‘someone’. As the two sentences in (5) illustrate, masculine verbal agreement with *koī* could point to either a male or female subject, but feminine verbal agreement will always denote a female subject.

(5) a. *koī ayā hai*  
'Someone (male or female) has come.'

b. *koī ayī hai*  
'Someone (female) has come.'

And so it is that we find the generic masculine in proverbs such as those reproduced in (6):

(6) a. *sab ādmi barābar hai*  
'All men are equal (i.e. all people are equal).'</n
b. *har manusya kā*  
'duty.NOM.MASC.SG be.PRES
'Every man has his duty (i.e. every person has his/her duty).'</n
c. *jo boyegā so kategā*  
'He who sows will reap.'

There is a limited set of feminine epicene terms in standard Hindi, among them the term *savārī* (f) ‘passenger’ which is used for both male and female referents, but this is comparatively rare, cf. (7):
As with many of the languages discussed in *Gender across Languages*, such examples point to an asymmetry in the grammatical gender system of Hindi, a point Valentine (1987) made over a decade ago from a feminist perspective. This asymmetry is also reflected in the verbal agreement in sentences with a complex subject that includes both a masculine and a feminine animate noun; in such cases, the masculine form is always used. When the complex subject involves inanimate objects of different genders, however, the verb will normally agree with the noun nearest to it in word order.

2.3 Gender reversal: Terms of endearment and insult

Outside of these uses of the generic masculine, however, speakers generally match morphological gender with referential gender. But there are a few notable exceptions. One of these is the occasional use of the masculine term *beṭā* (m) ‘boy’ instead of the feminine *beṭi* (f) ‘girl’ in direct address to a younger woman or daughter. When used in this way, particularly by parents to their children, the term becomes a term of endearment and best translates as ‘dear’. One might argue that this gender reversal works as endearment because of the traditional value given to sons, as opposed to daughters, in Indian culture. When masculine terms are used for female persons, then, they tend to elevate the status of the referent. So when women use the term *bhāī* (m) ‘brother’ for one another, as often happens between intimates, it signals equality and informality (cf. also Tobin, vol. I for gender switch in Hebrew). A parallel might be drawn here with the honorific masculine term *sāhab* (m) ‘sir’, which is frequently used in reference to women, as in *meneśāhab* (m) ‘lady’, *dākṭar sāhab* (m) ‘doctor’, and *profesāsāhab* (m) ‘professor’ (see Valentine 1987 for further discussion). These masculine address terms are highly respectful when used for women, underscoring the recipient’s social status. When Indian journalists referred to Mrs. Gandhi as “the only man in the cabinet”, they were highlighting her ability to run the affairs of the state (and the inability of male cabinet members to do so).

But male persons are rarely addressed or referenced in the feminine gender. There are a number of insult terms which “imply” effeminacy and act as an insult to the recipient’s masculinity, among them the term *hiḍrā* when used by
non-hijra men. The term, which literally means ‘impotent’, is frequently employed either in joking or anger to indicate the ineffectiveness of the referent in question. Other masculine terms of insult that connote effeminacy are included in (8). The hijras I knew in Banaras all, with much grief, reported having been called several of these names as young children (see Hall 1997).

(8) Selected masculine insult terms used for males

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hijra</td>
<td>‘eunuch, impotent’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nacaniyā</td>
<td>‘little dancer’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhosṛi valā</td>
<td>‘vagina-owner’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chakkā</td>
<td>‘a set of six, effeminate man’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chah nambar</td>
<td>‘number six, effeminate man’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gāndū</td>
<td>‘passive partner in sodomy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jankhā</td>
<td>‘effeminate man’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These terms are all grammatically masculine, and this again points to an asymmetry in the Hindi gender system. While the use of masculine terms for female persons does occur and tends to carry positive implications, the use of feminine terms for male persons is virtually non-existent,13 and when femininity (or effeminacy) is implied, as in the terms listed in (8) above, the connotations are extremely negative.

It is much less common for a male speaker to make use of the first-person feminine or a female speaker to employ the first-person masculine. There are infrequent accounts of young girls who, as a result of spending their formative years playing in predominantly male environments, speak in the masculine until taught to do otherwise in the Indian school system. But it is much rarer to find a boy speaking as a girl, particularly when there is such stigma attached to doing so. This might explain why the Hindi speakers in Banaras who reviewed my transcripts of hijra conversations were shocked at the hijras’ use of feminine forms for themselves and other community members. Although the hijras produce an exaggerated feminine ideal in their mannerisms and dress, most non-hijras nevertheless consider them male and normally refer to them in the masculine gender (see Hall & O’Donovan 1996). The idea that hijras use feminine self-reference comes as a complete surprise to many Hindi speakers, who see the claiming of feminine morphology by speakers they identify as male (albeit “inadequately” male) as highly abnormal.14 As I argue in the subsequent two sections, the hijras’ varied uses of feminine and masculine first, second, and third person verbal forms reflects a unique dual-gender position in a society that views them as neither fully female nor fully male.
3. Uses of the gender system by Hindi-speaking hijras

When a hijra joins a Banaras hijra community, she quickly learns a variety of ways to distance herself from the masculine semiotics in which she was raised: She begins to wear traditional feminine dress (e.g. saris, jewelry, make-up), adopt hijra gestures (such as their distinctive flat-handed clap), sing and dance like a hijra, and most critically for this article, speak in a more feminine manner. Language is a critical component of this second gender socialization process, so much so that the hijras readily distinguish between what they refer to as *mardānā boli* ‘masculine speech’ on the one hand and *zānānā boli* ‘feminine speech’ on the other, with the latter variety accepted as the preferred way of speaking. The precise definition of these two terms varies among the hijra communities I worked with in Banaras, but members generally agree that *mardānā boli* involves direct speech, “stronger” curses, and masculine first person verb forms, while *zānānā boli* entails indirect speech (and is therefore deemed more polite), “weaker” curses, and feminine first-person verb forms. Whether or not these qualities play out in the ordinary speech of non-hijra men and women has not yet been studied, but the hijras are no doubt identifying stereotypical perceptions of masculine and feminine behaviors in dominant north Indian culture (which, incidentally, are not altogether different from those identified for many middle-class European-American communities). But the hijras accept these distinctions as fact, and use them to instruct each other on how to build a “less masculine” gender presentation.

3.1 Language in hijra socialization

The hijras’ discussions of their socialization into the community is extensive in my data, but I offer typical excerpts from these discussions here so as to give some indication of the importance of language to this process. The first is taken from Rupa,15 a Banaras hijra who came to the community at the comparatively late age of 18 and found the change from *mardānā to zānānā boli* particularly difficult. Raised in a prestigious Brahman family, Rupa spent all of her boyhood conforming to masculine roles and representations. But she never felt comfortable with her gender and ultimately decided to join the hijra community, undergo a castration operation, and take on the religious role of *pujārī* (Hindu priest). As she describes in the following passage (9), the acquisition of “feminine speech” was an especially long and laborious process. (The transcription symbols used here are identified in the Appendix.)
“Changing that takes time” Rupa 1993

Rupa: ghar mé, to –
mardaná rahatem them,
to mardaná bolte-boltem hai.
jab hire ko jánà partà hai
to parivartan karna partà hai. …
vahì to bolá, na betá –
jab ghar se calem, –
jab ghar se aye,
to ghar ki bolí mardaná to mé,
to mardaná bolí bolí. (3.0)

R: At home –
they wereíí livingíí in a mardaná way,
so they’re always speakingíí mardaná bolí.
When a hijra has to leave,
then a change has to be made. …
That’s exactly what I told you, right dear? –
When I leftíí home, –
when I cameíí from home,
the speech at home was mardaná so I,
so I spokeíí mardaná bolí.

Kira: lajó kí tarah se apas mé vyavhár karte the?
Rupa: há, bhaiyám ko “bhaiyám” bol rhám hai, –
cacíí ko “cacíí” bol rhám hai, –
aíí bol rhám hai. (2.0)
to usko parivartan karne mé
to tám lagta hi hai. (2.0)
to usko parivartan karne mé
tám lagta hai. –
bolte-bolte bolte-bolte,
àdat ho gayíí (1.5)
sür-chah mahíne mé.

K: You behaved like boys with each other!
R: Yes, they’re callingíí brothersíí “brothersíí”.
They’re callingíí their uncleíí “uncleíí”.
They’re speakingíí like that.
So changing that
just takes time.
Changing that
takes time.
But gradually after speaking continously,
it became a habit
in about six or seven months.

Here, Rupa is in part illustrating the same-sex nature of socializing in her home village, where men associate with men (e.g. brothers and uncles) and women with women. Her entry into the hijra community involved a shift in play-group, so to speak, as she suddenly found her primary companions identifying as feminine and shunning masculine self-reference altogether. Rupa’s transition from masculine to feminine speech, then, was a highly conscious process, one that required several months of practice. In Rupa’s own words, it was only after bolte-bolte bolte-bolte ‘speaking and speaking, speaking and speaking’ before it àdat ho gayiíí ‘became a habit’.

What is even more interesting in the hijrasíí discussions of this socialization process, however, is their frequent conflation of zanánà bolíí with intimacy and solidarity and mardaná bolíí with social distance. In their discussions with me, the hijras often offered examples of how they talk with one another, listing a host of feminine-marked first and second person verb forms. But in many of these discussions, the hijras also point to the use of the intimate second person pronoun tú as an example of zanánà bolíí, a juxtaposition that suggests an association of feminine speech with intimacy. In excerpt (10), for example,
Megha lists both kinds of phrases as examples of what she calls *auratō kī boli*, literally the 'speech of women':

(10) “We always speak women’s speech” Megha 1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Megha:</th>
<th>M:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hā, hameśā auratō kī boli bolī hāi</td>
<td>Yes, we always speak women’s speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kabhi bhi ādmī ke jaisā nahī boli bolī hai, – jaise,</td>
<td>We never ever speak like a man.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“maī jā rahī hū ā “jī”, “maī rahī bahan”, “tū”khā le”, “tū”pakā le”, “maī abhī ā rahī hū”.</td>
<td>It’s like, “I’m going’ sir/mam” , “Sister is going’”, “You (intimate) eat!” “You (intimate) cook!” “I’m coming’ now”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike Rupa, who lives in a house with an Indian family and dresses like a man in her “off-hours”, Megha lives with a community of hijras and sees any admission of masculinity as a threat to her already marginalized status as a hijra (hence the strength of her assertion “we always speak women’s speech; we never speak like men”). The very fact that Rupa in excerpt (9) refers to both herself and fellow community members in the masculine undermines Megha’s claim, and points to divergent embraces of feminine self-reference by community members. Although speaking *zanānā boli* is clearly the norm for hijras living in the four Banaras communities I researched (even Rupa uses feminine self-reference when discussing her activities with the community), members do not always use feminine forms for themselves and others, as Megha claims here. When a speaker wishes to express social distance between herself and another community member, whether it be out of respect (as for her guru) or disgust (as for an estranged hijra), she will often refer to that member in the masculine. Moreover, the hijras will sometimes use the first-person masculine for reasons of emphasis – for example, when angry or upset, when stressing a particular point, or when referring to their pre-hijra selves.

This again reminds us of the care we must take with folk-linguistic observations, as perceived speech patterns rarely match actual language use. But the hijras’ perceptions of their language habits are nevertheless worthy of study, for the ideologies of gender uncovered therein influence their discursive interactions in important ways. In excerpt (11), for instance, we find Sulekha erroneously claiming that she speaks like a woman when speaking with a woman and like a man when speaking with a man:
"I do the same speech of the person I meet" Sulekha 1993

By the end of the passage it becomes clear that what Sulekha means is that she makes her speech correspond to the social distance she perceives as existing between herself and her addressee. Women, for Sulekha, appear to represent intimacy and informality, and so she quotes herself as using familiar terms of address like didi and bahan when speaking with them, both of which translate as 'sister' (the first suggesting respect and intimacy, the second equality and informality). In contrast, men appear to represent distance and formality, hence Sulekha's repeated uses of the polite second person plural aap when reproducing her conversations with them. This short passage, even though it reveals little (if anything) about Sulekha's actual language use, does suggest that Sulekha, like Megha, associates feminine speech with intimacy and masculine speech with social distance.

It is this association that governs the choice of feminine or masculine forms among community members. Because hijras are considered "neither men nor women", they have at their disposal an added resource for marking social relations – that of grammatical gender. Indeed, their use of the gender system in many respects parallels the use of second person pronouns in the general population, where the choice of intimate tū, familiar tum, or polite aap indicates the respective social positions of addressee and addressee, as well as a host of other social attitudes and dimensions dependent on the context of the speech event. The pronoun tū, for example, is used in cases of heightened intimacy, e.g. to address a god, to address a close friend of equal status, to call a small child, to express anger or disgust. On the opposite end of the relational scale, the pronoun aap is used in situations involving any degree of formality, particularly in situations of social inequality when the speaker wishes to signal
respect for the addressee – e.g. for a guru, an elder, a parent, an employer. Between these two extremes we find the pronoun tum, a form most often used in informal situations by friends and colleagues but also in situations of social inequality; for example, when an individual addresses someone of lesser status. Gender also plays an important role in pronominal choice: A classic example comes from the traditional Hindu family, where the husband will use the intimate tu or tum when addressing his wife while she will use the formal āp when addressing him. As this brief discussion suggests, the social rules governing the varying employments of these three pronouns are terribly complex, and speakers create social relations with pronominal choice as much as they affirm them. The same is true with the hijras’ choice of feminine or masculine reference for members of their own community. Equipped with an extra linguistic resource, the hijras have developed their own system for marking social relations, one that has gender at its center.

3.2 The exploitation of grammatical gender in everyday hijra conversation

In the next few pages, I offer selected examples of how the hijras exploit the grammatical gender system in their everyday conversations. Since feminine reference is expected within the community (the hijras even take on female names when initiated), I focus on those conversational excerpts which diverge from this expectation – that is, when the hijras use masculine reference for themselves and for one another. The hijras regularly use feminine reference to express solidarity with the referent in question, in the same manner that the familiar pronoun tum is used among good friends. Fellow celâ’s ‘disciples’ quickly learn to use feminine reference for one another after joining the community; they will also use feminine reference for a superior or inferior when wishing to show affection. But when status is a point of emphasis, masculine reference is favored. The hijra community relies upon elaborate familial structures which delegate various feminine roles to different members of the group, among them dådi ‘paternal grandmother’, nāni ‘maternal grandmother’, mausī ‘mother’s sister’, cācī ‘uncle’s wife’, and bahin ‘sister’. But these designations are also extremely hierarchical, with elders enjoying the respect of newcomers and both young and old members deferring to the community guru. The guru-chela relationship is fundamental to the hijra kinship system, and in any given group one will find a guru surrounded by a hierarchy of chelas, grand-chelas, great grand-chelas, and great great grand-chelas. While chelas will
normally use feminine forms when addressing a superior directly, they will often use masculine reference when talking about her in the third person so as to mark their respect for her position. Conversely, hijras will frequently refer to newer chelas in the masculine, first to differentiate them as inferiors and second to indicate that they are still in the learning stages of hijrahood. This use of masculine reference, then, could be said to parallel the use of the intimate second person pronoun *tū* in the larger population, which can be used to address both a god and a servant. What we have here, then, is a neat linguistic pattern whereby feminine forms are used for hijras considered social equals and masculine forms are used for hijras of either higher or lower status.

Because the hijras associate the masculine with both hierarchy and social distance, they also employ it to express their dissatisfaction with other hijras. This kind of masculine reference can readily be seen in their uses of the hijra naming system. When a new member enters the hijra community, she is given a woman’s name to replace the name of her former, more male self. The hijras are discouraged from referring to each other with these remnants of their previous lives, yet tellingly, they often employ them in disputes. If a hijra is in a fierce argument with another member of her community, one of the most incisive insults she can give is to question her addressee’s femininity by using her male name. Likewise, in example (12), we see Sulekha insulting Muslim hijras by referring to them in the third-person masculine. Although Muslims and Hindu hijras often live together harmoniously in the same communities—a arrangement rarely found in mainstream Banaras where the tension between Muslims and Hindus is quite pervasive—Sulekha, raised Hindu, feels somewhat threatened by Muslim hijras, as they hold powerful positions within the Banaras hijra network, and indeed, throughout all of northern India. The distance Sulekha feels towards Muslim hijras is reflected in her use of third-person masculine verb forms when Muslim hijras act as subjects, as in the following exchange between her and my research assistant Vinita:
"I’d be a small mouth with big talk" Sulekha 1993

Sulekha: bazarďihā mē jo channū hai, to vah bhi ādīmī hai. hijrā to hai nahī. … ve buzurg hai. vah sab se mālīkī vahī hai. (1.0) sab se mālīkī vahī hai. bazarďihā kāmī. - ye vo channū ise sab ādīmī hai, sab āte"hai jāte" hai. kurtā lungī pahan lete āmī hai, nānce samay sārī pahan lete āmī hai, - sabhī āmī āmī. (2.0) mat hamko kahne se kyā? Vinita: lekin vo sab āpresan karāye hue hai? Sulekha: nahī! Vinita: kuch nahī <hai?> Sulekha: <nahī.> Vinita: tabhī aisi <hai?> Sulekha: <hā.> Vinita: oc:-h. (1.0) acchā? Sulekha: usko- unko mai kaise kahū? usko kahūgī to merā bāt kāt āgē <...> mai kah āgē (0.5) to ((softly)) mai chote mūh bāri bāti, hamko īsī mā rahā hai. (0.5) sab mārengī pītegī āmī kāt āgē <...>. V: But haven’t they all had operations? S: No. V: Nothing at all? S: No. V: So they’re just that way? S: Yes. V: O:-h. Really? S: How can I say anything about them? If I’d say anything, they’d just contradict me anyway. If I’d give anything away then ((softly)) I’d be a small mouth with big talk. I have to live in this [community], after all. They’d all hit me, beat me up, cut my hair.

Sulekha’s use of the third-person masculine to describe the 78-year-old Channu stands in stark contrast to her repeated use of feminine forms for herself and fellow community members in other conversations. But Sulekha appears to view Muslims as below her on the social hierarchy, evidenced in her insistence throughout her interviews with us that Hindu hijras existed long before Muslim hijras, and moreover, that it is only hijras from low caste backgrounds who convert to Islam and eat meat. Displeased with her own “smallness” relative to these Muslim hijras, Sulekha refuses to grant the entire community any acknowledgement of femininity, whether it be linguistic or anatomical.16

A comparable instance of such distancing can be found in Megha’s references to Sulekha. After a fairly serious argument with Megha, Sulekha left Megha’s community in Banaras and went to live with a male partner in a neighboring village outside the city. In a manner consistent with her claims in (10), Megha almost always uses feminine forms when referring to other hijras;
yet when she refers to Sulekha, who apparently insulted her authority as *mālkin* (f) ‘chief’ of her community, Megha uses the masculine. Two examples of this employment are reproduced in excerpt (13):

(13) “Now he left” Megha 1993

Megha:

> bacpan se yahī kām hai, –
> ab jākar [place name] mē rāh rāhārām hai, –
> mērā jajmānī hai, to mai un logō ko de det hū.

M: He belonged to this household since childhood, now he left and is living in [place name]. I had clients there, but I transferred those people to him.

Through the use of masculine postpositions like *kā* (m) ‘of(m)’ and masculine verb forms like *raḥ rahā* (m) ‘he is living (m)’, Megha signals that Sulekha is estranged from her.

### 3.3 The use of masculine self-reference

Even more interesting than the above uses of the third-person masculine is the hijras’ use of the first-person masculine. While this rarely surfaces in conversation, there are at least three situations in which the Banaras hijras do use it. The first of these is perhaps the most predictable: The hijras will regularly use the first-person masculine when referring to themselves as boys or telling of their childhoods. This linguistic shift follows from the fact that many hijras have what might be called a discontinuous gender identity which gradually changes from male to non-male after arrival in the hijra community. It is perhaps for this reason that the hijras sometimes refer to fellow hijras as masculine when referring to them in a pre-hijra state, such as when they tell of each other’s childhoods. Here masculine marking will often perform as a tense marker, suggesting a time period prior to the hijra’s entry into the community. Nanda (1990:xviii) alludes to similar linguistic shifts in the preface to her ethnography of the hijras when she explains her translation techniques, pointing out that she translates pronouns which refer to the hijras as feminine, unless “referring to the hijra in the past, when he considered himself a male”. A hijra’s use of the masculine in such instances seems to reflect her own distancing from a previous self, a self that continuously provides an unpleasant reminder that her femininity is appropriated instead of genuine.

A second kind of masculine self-reference occurs when hijras wish to add emphasis to a particular conversational statement. A beautiful example of this is reproduced in excerpt (14), when Sulekha wants to express her disagreement
with Megha’s portrayal of the hijra community. As I mentioned earlier, Megha is very protective of her community’s reputation, and as a result, she painted for us a rather conservative portrait of the hijra lifestyle. Many hijras supplement their income through sex-work, particularly now that their traditional role as the blessers of newborns has become suspect in some segments of the general population. Many educated middle-class Indians, for instance, no longer believe in the hijras’ power over procreation, and refuse to pay them money for their song and dance performances at birth celebrations. But Megha nevertheless denied any community involvement with prostitution, and insisted throughout her conversations with us that hijras were nothing but respected religious ascetics. In the excerpt below, Sulekha contradicts Megha’s claims, punctuating her opposition with the first-person masculine singular:

(14) “No, I don’t tell lies!” Sulekha 1993

Vinita: kaise kah rahi thi
“ham log ko dukh hota hai,
ham log ka parivar naahi rahti,
ham log ka sambandhi naahi rahti,
ham log bhi sote uhtie baithte”.

Sulekha: nahi, ye galat bai hai. —
galat bai hai.
mai isko nahi manti. —
galat bai hai.
adi ke saath karti hai sab. —
jaise aurat "mard" sambandhi hota hai, —
usi tarah "hijra" mard ke saath sambandhi hota hai. kintu "hijra".
kintu hijra rakhi lete hai admi ko, —
kintu peyavar hota hai, (1.0) pey karti,
tab (1.0) *sau, pacas, do sau, car sau,
*sakh pey karti hai. —
mai jhoot kahtin hui?
nahi kahtin hui.

V: Then why was [Megha] saying,
“We have a lot of sadness.
We no longer have a family.
We no longer have relationships.
All we do is sleep, get up, sit around”?

S: No, that’s wrong.
That’s wrong.
I don’t believe that.
That’s wrong.
They all have relationships with men.
*Hijras have relationships with men just like women have relationships with "men."
So many "hijras-.
So many hijras keep men.
So many are professionals.
Those who do it as a profession charge *100, 50, 200, 400,
*anything they can get. Do I tell lies? No, I don’t tell lies.

Here, Sulekha also repeatedly employs the infamous hijra flat-palmed clap, indicated in my transcription system by an asterisk. Clapping five times in this short passage (and the hijras’ clap, incidentally, is extremely sharp and loud), Sulekha denies everything Megha has told us: “Yes, we have relationships with men; yes, we work as prostitutes; yes, we charge anything we can get.” Use of the first-person masculine helps to bring her point home, and as this is highly
uncharacteristic for Sulekha, she commands our attention: “maïjḥūṭh kahtā
(m) hū? nahī kahtā (m) hū!” ‘Do I tell (m) lies? No, I don’t tell (m) lies!’

A final example of the hijras’ use of the first-person masculine comes from
a hijra community on the outskirts of the city. The four hijras who make up
this comparatively isolated community, all born into Hindu families who
ostracized them, have now adopted the religious practices of the Muslim
families they live beside – families who in many ways suffer a similar marginal-
ization as residents of a city that is thought of throughout northern India as the
“holy Hindu city”. The 80 year old Shashi is the guru of the group, and after 69
years of speaking like a woman (she became a hijra when she was eleven years
old), we rarely heard her use masculine self-reference. But during one visit we
accidentally instigated a family dispute that disrupted this small community.
We often gave gifts to the hijras the first few times we met with them, so as to
express our gratitude for the time they spent with us and show respect for their
profession. On this day, however, we decided to give a gift of 101 rupees to
Shashi’s chela Mohan, since we had given Shashi a colorful saree on our
previous visit. But this is not how the hijra hierarchy works: Only the guru is
allowed to accept gifts, and the guru then distributes the group’s earnings
among her chelas. By giving Mohan a gift, we inadvertently (and regrettably)
upset the community balance. After we left that day, Mohan apparently
refused to hand over the rupees to her guru, and when confronted with
Shashi’s rage, she fled back to her home village outside of Delhi.

When we returned a week later, we immediately sensed that something was
wrong. The hijras’ house was deserted except for Shashi, who we found sitting
on a small cot, slumped against a wall. She was devastated by Mohan’s depart-
ture, and was grieving for the loss of her favorite chela. No apology we gave
could remedy the situation or sufficiently express our regret, so we sat with her
nervously and listened to what she had to say. Wailing merā beṭā, merā beṭā ‘my
son, my son’ and clapping in anger, Shashi screamed about what had happened,
vent ing her anger entirely through use of the masculine first- and third- person.
It would seem that for Shashi, anger is an emotion best expressed in the
masculine. Perhaps rage is a gut-level reaction that recalls the masculine forms
she produced prior to her entry into the community, or perhaps rage requires
the kind of emphatic masculinity used by Sulekha in the previous passage.
Whatever the case, Shashi’s use of masculine self-reference became a dramatic
and forceful tool for venting this rage, and it remains with me as a painful
reminder of the inherent imbalance between a researcher and her subject.
4. Conclusions

But what has this discussion of what we might call “unnatural” gender by Hindi-speaking hijras told us about gender in non-hijra Hindi-speaking communities? Although the morphological shifting exhibited here is perhaps unique to the hijra community, I suggest that the conversations of women and men are also subject to comparable kinds of “gendered negotiations”. As language and gender theorists have begun to demonstrate (see the articles in Hall & Bucholtz 1995, for instance), men and women in a variety of communities exploit cultural expectations of femininity and masculinity in order to establish positions of power and solidarity. The hijras have an added resource for accomplishing this, as their between male- and female-position allows them to access and claim both sides of the grammatical gender divide. But non-hijras “do gender” in conversational interaction too, working with and against ideologies of feminine and masculine speech that are themselves rooted in cultural expectations of gender-appropriate behavior. It is here that Judith Butler’s (1990, 1993) Derridean reworking of J.L. Austin’s concept of performativity becomes useful. Her argument that gender works as a performativa, constituting the very act that it performs, leads us away from sociolinguistic approaches to identity that view the way we talk as directly indexing a prediscurive self. For Butler, there is no prediscursive self, as even our understanding of “biological sex” is discursively produced. This theoretical perspective throws a decisive wrench in the distinction between “natural gender” and “grammatical gender”, since there is no “natural” in Butlerian theory. Without the concept of natural gender to fall back on, sociolinguists can no longer make the circular claim that speaker X speaks like X because he is male or that speaker Y speaks like Y because she is female. Rather, we must turn our focus to the speech event itself, uncovering how speakers manipulate ideologies of femininity and masculinity in the ongoing production of gender.

In the case of the hijras, we located some of these ideologies in the association of mardan boli with directness, hierarchy, and anger, and zanin boli with indirectness, solidarity, and intimacy. The Banaras hijras at times challenge such associations in their creative employments of masculine and feminine self-reference, but their use of grammatical gender is nevertheless constrained by a rather traditional and dichotomous understanding of gender. While the hijras tend to use the masculine when speaking to a superior or inferior, emphasizing particular points, recalling their past selves as non-hijras, or expressing intense anger, they are more likely to employ the feminine when expressing solidarity.
and intimacy with fellow community members. Because they occupy an ambiguous gender position in a city that continues to marginalize them, Banaras hijras are perhaps more attentive to the role speech plays in the performance of gender. With a heightened awareness of how language can index gender identity, they enact and contest ideologies of gendered speech in their daily interactions. The research is not yet here to tell us whether “monosexual” Hindi-speaking communities in India share these same expectations of male and female verbal behavior; nor do we yet know how such expectations might influence the actual language practices of men and women in specific communities of practice. I offer this analysis of a rather unusual community to excite more research on gender in Hindi sociolinguistics. The language practices of these Banaras hijras, extraordinary as they are, are not created in a cultural vacuum. Their discursive choices are influenced by dominant ideologies of gender in northern India—ideologies that no doubt affect linguistic behavior in a variety of Hindi-speaking communities.

Appendix

The transcription conventions used for the Hindi passages in this article include the following: I have not used all of these conventions in the English translations since extra-linguistic features like intonation and emphasis are not parallel.

- $x^f$: superscripted $f$ indicates feminine morphological marking in the Hindi
- $y^m$: superscripted $m$ indicates masculine morphological marking in the Hindi
- (0.5): indicates length of pause within and between utterances, timed in tenths of a second
- a – a dash with spaces before and after indicates a short pause, less than 0.5 seconds
- but- a hyphen immediately following a letter indicates an abrupt cutoff in speaking
- ([ ]) double parentheses enclose nonverbal movements and extralinguistic commentary
- [ ] brackets enclose words added to clarify the meaning of the text
- what bold print indicates syllabic stress
- : a colon indicates a lengthening of a sound (the more colons, the longer the sound)
- , a comma indicates continuing intonation
- ? a question mark indicates rising intonation at the end of a syllable or word
- … deletion of some portion of the original text
- “a” quotation marks enclose quoted or reported speech
- * flat-palmed clap characteristic of the hijras
- <> overlapping talk
Notes

* I began this field research in a joint project with Veronica O’Donovan after concluding an advanced language program during the 1992–1993 academic year in Banaras, India. I am grateful to the American Institute of Indian Studies for sponsoring my participation in the program. Some of the data discussed in this essay also appears in Hall & O’Donovan (1996). My thanks are extended to the many people who helped me with this project in both India and America, to my friend and Hindi teacher Ved Prakash Vatuk, and to the Banaras hijras who participated in these discussions.

1. This percentage is taken from the 1991 Census of India, in which 4022 of every 10,000 people listed Hindi as their primary language and another 518 listed Urdu. These and other language statistics are available at the Census of India website: www.censusindia.net.


3. There are, however, a number of insightful studies on women’s uses of various South Asian oral traditions, such as Raheja & Gold’s (1994) ethnography on the poetics of women’s resistance in the songs, stories, and personal narratives of women in northern India.

4. For a more extensive discussion of Valentine’s work, see Hall (forthcoming).


6. The standard Hindi khaṭi bolī area is generally said to be located in western Uttar Pradesh between the Ganges and Jumna rivers, stretching from Dehradun in the north to Bulandshahar in the south.

7. In Delhi the hijras have named their language Farsi. While their “hijralect” has very little, if anything, to do with what is generally known as Farsi, the term is fitting given that the hijras see themselves as descended from the eunuchs of the medieval Moghul courts, where Farsi was the dominant language.

8. I am grateful to Ved Vatuk for bringing to my attention the parallel between sadhukkaṭi and hijṭa bolī.

9. I use the term subject in the sense of syntactic subject, not morphological subject. The syntactic subject may be in an oblique case form and does not necessarily determine agreement. The term is usually used for the NP which corresponds to the subject of the English translation.

10. In recent years, however, parents in some Hindi-speaking areas have begun to use the feminine term beṭī in direct address to a son, also for reasons of endearment (Ved Vatuk, personal communication).

11. The term bhāī, like the masculine term yaṛ ‘friend’, is used in a variety of contexts to index informality. Wives, for instance, will sometimes refer to their husbands as bhāī.


13. Except, of course, in theatrical situations when men play women’s roles, as in folk-dramas known as nautankī or sāṅg.
14. A similar reaction would most likely occur towards women using masculine self-reference, except for the fact that there has recently been a number of public female figures who have challenged the assumption of “natural” linguistic gender by assuming a male speaking voice. Most notable in this regard is one of the lead characters in the sitcom *Ham Panch*, whose use of the masculine first-person is intended to reflect her tomboyish personality. Moreover, the popular singer Milan Singh, who is known for singing both male and female parts of traditional Bollywood film songs, regularly speaks in the first person plural when interviewed so as to keep her gender ambiguous before the public.

15. I have chosen pseudonyms for all of the hijras appearing in this article and have avoided giving the names of the four hijra communities mentioned to protect their anonymity. I have also chosen to use *her* and *she* to refer to the hijras since they prefer to be referred to and addressed in the feminine.

16. It could also be quite possible that the group of people Sulekha is referring to here are actually *jankhās* (as called in Banaras) or *kotīs* (as called in Delhi), i.e. men who dress and dance as women but do not publicly identify as hijras or officially belong to the hijra community. As these “non-castrated” men continue to remain in their extended family structures, undergoing arranged marriages and bearing children, they sometimes receive a certain amount of animosity from the hijras. See Hall (forthcoming) for a more lengthy discussion of these different groups.

References


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(“Modes of greeting in Hindi: A sociolinguistic statement”, 80–122)


ICELANDIC

Masculine generics in current Icelandic

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1. Introduction
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   2.1 Grammatical gender
   2.2 Grammatical gender and personal reference
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Notes
References

1. Introduction

Icelandic (Íslenska) is a North Germanic language closely related to Faroese, Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish. Iceland was settled by Norwegians in the 9th century. The country was self-governed during the first centuries, but from the middle of the 13th century it was ruled by the Norwegian king, and later by the Danish king, when Norway became part of Denmark in the 15th century. In 1944 Iceland became an independent republic. During the time of Danish rule, Danish was the language used by authorities (Haugen 1976:351), but Icelandic appears to have been used in all other domains. During the centuries of self-government and Norwegian rule, a literary tradition had flourished which produced texts such as the Family Sagas, and the language had developed from Old Norse (Norwegian) into what is now recognized as Icelandic. Icelandic was used for writing during the Danish rule (Vikør 1995:57), and the Icelandic
translation of the Bible, published after the Lutheran Reformation in the 16th century, was of great importance for the status of Icelandic. Danicisms and semi-Danish orthography were combated successfully during the 18th and 19th centuries (Haugen 1976:398).

Icelandic underwent extensive phonetic changes during the Middle Ages, and during the 20th century the vocabulary has expanded dramatically. What remains of the earlier stages of Icelandic is mainly the orthography, the morphological and syntactic structures, and the basic vocabulary (Iceland 1986:59f). Icelanders have cultivated a tradition of puristic language planning, and when modern times require new words, e.g. technical terminology, loanwords are mostly rejected and new words coined from existing indigenous elements, or old words are given a new meaning. Since Iceland is a small nation with approximately 280,000 inhabitants (cf. Year Book 2000:1768), and since it was under foreign rule for hundreds of years, the arguments for linguistic purism are in many ways nationalistic: “[…] drastic changes in the structure and/or the vocabulary of the language would estrange Icelanders from their cultural heritage and thus fatally weaken their sense of being a separate people” (Vikør 1995:210–211).

2. Gender in the linguistic structure of Icelandic

2.1 Grammatical gender

Icelandic is a mainly synthetic language where inflectional suffixes are attached to stems, marking linguistic categories such as tense, mood, person, number, gender, or case (cf. Jónsson 1927, Einarsson 1945, Kress 1982, and Svavarsdóttir & Jónsdóttir 1998). In addition to suffixes, grammatical categories can also be realized by zero morphemes or vowel changes in the root, i.e. by umlaut and ablaut.

Nouns in Icelandic have grammatical gender: masculine, feminine or neuter. Nouns are inflected for number (singular and plural) and case (nominative, genitive, dative and accusative). Depending on gender and case endings, nouns can be divided into two main inflectional classes, the so-called strong and weak declensions. Since Icelandic is a strongly inflectional language, there is a vast number of word forms. However, besides some irregular forms, most of the inflectional paradigms share a large amount of features. Examples of common morphemes are -ur, -inn (strong) or -i (weak) for masculine singular nomi-
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tive, -Ø, -in (strong) or -a (weak) for feminine singular nominative, and -Ø, -ið, -t (strong) or -a (weak) for neuter singular nominative. Apart from inflectional endings, there is an umlaut (a>e, a>ð) in some cases in which the ending is zero or contains /i/, /u/.

Pronouns (except relative pronouns),1 free definite articles, adjectives, past participles,2 and certain numerals (ordinals and the cardinals from one to four) must agree in gender, case and number with their nouns (or referents, if there is no noun present in the co-text). This is the case when they are in a construction with a noun within a noun phrase, if they are used anaphorically, if they are predicative complements, and if they act independently as subjects. Examples (1a–f) show gender and number agreement of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and numerals.

(1) a. Þessi strák-ur er this.masc.sg.nom boy-masc.sg.nom is svang-ur. hungry-masc.sg.nom 'This boy is hungry.'

b. Þessi stelp-a er svöng. this.fem.sg.nom girl-fem.sg.nom is hungry.fem.sg.nom 'This girl is hungry.'

c. Þetta barn-Ø er svang-t. this.neut.sg.nom child-neut.sg.nom is hungry-neut.sg.nom 'This child is hungry.'

d. Tveir strák-ar eru svang-ir. two.masc.nom boy-masc.pl.nom are hungry-masc.pl.nom 'Two boys are hungry.'

e. Tvær stelp-ur eru svang-ar. two.fem.nom girl-fem.pl.nom are hungry-fem.pl.nom 'Two girls are hungry.'

f. Tvö börn eru svöng. two.neut.nom child.neut.pl.nom are hungry.neut.pl.nom 'Two children are hungry.'

2.2 Grammatical gender and personal reference

Gender assignment in Icelandic is considered to be arbitrary. Even animate nouns denoting living creatures or human beings do not necessarily show a correspondence between grammatical gender and referential gender.
In two standard grammars of Icelandic, Guðmundsson (1922) and Kress (1982), the three-gender system is taken for granted and no comments are made upon how or why nouns are divided into three gender classes. In two major university textbooks the gender system is presented as “mostly grammatical” (Einarsson 1945:32) and “principally grammatical” (Friðjónsson 1978:16), as opposed to what they call the natural gender of English, but no further comments are made upon gender assignment. Jónsson (1927:14) writes that “in the case of names or appellations of persons and animals the gender is generally determined by the natural sex. Otherwise it mainly depends upon the termination of the noun, but universal rules for all cases cannot be given.” In a more recent textbook, Svavarsdóttir & Jónsdóttir (1998) discuss the relationship between grammatical gender and referential gender:

The gender of words is grammatical, it depends on the form of a word rather than its meaning. The gender of a word and sex of its referent need not necessarily correspond. It is possible to use a masculine word when referring to a woman, a feminine word when referring to a man, and words used for living creatures – either people or animals – could be neuter. However, there is mostly a correspondence between sex and gender when a word refers to living individuals. Words that refer to inanimate objects, thoughts or other things that are sexless, can be masculine or feminine, just as well as neuter. (Svavarsdóttir & Jónsdóttir 1998:3, my translation)

Table 1 illustrates the partial correspondence between grammatical gender and referential gender in personal nouns (cf. Svavarsdóttir & Jónsdóttir 1998:3). As can be seen here, the most frequent nominative endings of personal nouns are -ur and -i for masculine, -a for feminine, and -Ø and -i for neuter.

Most kinship terms are inherently gender-specific with agreement between grammatical and lexical gender. Examples of feminine/females: móðir ‘mother’, systir ‘sister’, frænka ‘female cousin or relative; aunt’; masculines/males: faðir ‘father’, bróðir ‘brother’, frændi ‘male cousin or relative; uncle’. One exception is ‘parent(s)’, which is neuter in the singular (foreldri) and masculine in the plural (foreldrar).

In the area of other common nouns there are a number of examples which contradict a straightforward relationship between masculine/male and feminine/female. Examples are: kvenmáður (m) ‘woman’, kvenkostur (m) ‘nice woman, good match (for a man)’, skáld (n) ‘poet’, mörðkvendi (n) ‘murderess’ manskepna (f) ‘evil man, mankind’, hetja (f) ‘hero’ and lögga (f) ‘cop’ (there are still very few female police officers in Iceland). Kvenmáður and kvenkostur are compounds with kven ‘female’, which comes from the same root as kona.
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‘woman’, but the female denotation of the compounds does not change their gender assignment, since their base lexemes maður ‘man, human’ and kostur ‘choice’ remain masculine. The use of feminine nouns with male reference is rather uncommon, though (examples are hetja and lögga, feminine epicenes, which are most likely to have male referents); there are far more masculine nouns referring to women than vice-versa.

In cases where grammatical and referential gender do not correspond, grammatical gender determines the choice of the personal pronoun. When talking about a poet, for instance, as skáld (n), without mentioning any particular female or male poet, it is correct to refer to her/him with það ‘it’. Such is also the case with the slang word lögga (f) ‘cop’, which requires feminine anaphoric pronouns such as hún ‘she’. However, in contexts that refer to a specific male individual, a masculine pronoun may be used. Semantics then overrides grammatical agreement. Similarly, when Vigdis Finnbogadóttir was president of Iceland (1980–1996), she received the masculine title forseti (m) ‘president’,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>Neuter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>maður ‘man, human’</td>
<td>manneskö ‘human’</td>
<td>göðmenni ‘altruist’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>einstaklingur ‘individual’</td>
<td>persóna ‘person’</td>
<td>allmenni ‘villain’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karl-maður ‘man’</td>
<td>kon ‘woman’</td>
<td>ungmenni ‘youth’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>karl ‘man, old man’</td>
<td>kerling ‘old woman’</td>
<td>barn ‘child’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ken-maður ‘woman’</td>
<td>mæðg-ur (pl) ‘mother and daughter/s’</td>
<td>mæðg-in (pl) ‘mother and son/s’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feðg-ar (pl) ‘father and son/s’</td>
<td>stelpa ‘girl’</td>
<td>feðg-in (pl) ‘father and daughter/s’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foreldr-ar (pl) ‘parents’</td>
<td>stülka ‘girl’</td>
<td>foreldri ‘parent’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stríkur ‘boy’</td>
<td>mey ‘maid’</td>
<td>hjón ‘couple’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drengur ‘boy’</td>
<td>mar ‘maid’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>krakki ‘child’</td>
<td>kennslu-kona ‘woman teacher’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>túnningur ‘teenager’</td>
<td>hjúkrunar-kona ‘(woman) nurse’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kennari ‘teacher’</td>
<td>skáld-kona ‘poetess’</td>
<td>skáld ‘poet’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hjúkrunar-fræðingur ‘physician’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lekur ‘author’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>höfundur ‘patient’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sjúklingur ‘citizen’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>landi ‘compatriot’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ríkis)borgari ‘citizen’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biljóri ‘driver’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viðskiptavinur ‘customer’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nemandi ‘student’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þáttakandi ‘participant’</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
which requires the male personal pronoun hann ‘he’. However, the female pronoun hún ‘she’ could also be used, resulting in a choice between feminine agreement (referring to Vigdís Finnbogadóttir) and masculine agreement (referring to forseti). In written language, examples of this kind are not very frequent, since language users seem to avoid constructions where they should refer to a person with a pronoun that contradicts referential gender. In a questionnaire, Theódórsdóttir (1985) observed that informants disfavored constructions of this kind:

 [...] there is a strong tendency that sex determines the gender assignment of a personal pronoun or the form of a verb [i.e. participles], which refers to the subject, if there is a disagreement between the gender of the subject and the sex of the referent. Especially if something within the sentence reveals the sex of the person to whom the subject is referring.  
(Theódórsdóttir 1985:39, my translation)

There were no clear examples of disagreement between gender of a pronoun and referential gender in the analyzed issue of the newspaper Morgunblaðið (cf. Section 4), but such examples can be found in other sources. In example (2), taken from a novel, a neuter pronoun refers to a prince, when he is referred to by a neuter noun, keisaraefni ‘emperor-to-be’:

(2) þau (n.pl) höfðu hist í skóginum þegar kerlingin (f.sg) var ung stúlka og keisarin (m.sg) óbreyttur prins. Keisaraefnið (n.sg) hafði verið á þrasta-veiðum með mönnum sínum þegar það (n.sg) kom auga á ref sem […]
‘They (n.pl) had met in the forest when the old woman (f.sg) was a young girl and the emperor (m.sg) was only a prince. The future emperor (n.sg) had been hunting thrushes with his (‘its’) men when he (‘it’ n.sg) saw a fox that […]’
(Sjón 1994:75, my translation)

In example (3), the writer makes different choices of gender agreement when referring to a group of interviewed school nurses. They are never mentioned by their names, only referred to by the masculine noun (skóla-)hjúkrunarfræðingur ‘(school) nurse’, but it is also stated that they are all women. The first sentence of example (3) is comparable with the second sentence of example (2). In both cases a noun (keisaraefni/hjúkrunarfræðingur) of a gender different from the gender of its referent is introduced in the first clause. In example (2), the anaphoric pronoun það agrees grammatically with the neuter noun. In example (3), however, the anaphoric pronoun þær agrees semantically with the gender of its female referents:
Ályktanir minar af þessum viðtölum við hjúkrunarfæðinga (m.pl) er að þær (f.pl) eru mjög áhugasamar (f.pl) um störf sín en kvarta margar (f.pl) yfir […] Flestir (m.pl) hjúkrunarfæðingarnir (m.pl) tala um tímaskort og sumir (m.pl) segja […]

Flestir (f.pl) bentu þá á að sú samræming sem verið er að gera um störf skólahjúkrunarfæðinga (m.pl) verði mun til bóta. það er mitt mat að hjúkrunarfæðingar (m.pl) séu mjög til þess fallnir (m.pl) að […].

‘My conclusions from these interviews with nurses (m.pl) is that they (f.pl) are very interested (f.pl) in their work, but many (f.pl) of them complain about […] Most (m.pl) of the nurses (m.pl) talk about lack of time, and some (m.pl) of them say […] Most (f.pl) of them emphasized that the new coordination of the work of school nurses (m.pl) will improve the situation. It is my opinion that nurses (m.pl) are well suited (m.pl) for […]’

(Bjarnadóttir 1996:19, my translation)

When comparing the different sentences of example (3), gender agreement appears to depend on the position of the pronoun or adjective within the clause. Predicative (áhugasamar, f; fallnir, m) and attributive (flestir, m) adjectives agree grammatically with their headwords. The adjectives margar (f) and flestar (f), which are in independent subject positions and not in the same clause as the masculine noun, show semantic referential agreement with the text-external individuals. Accordingly, semantic agreement is possible when an adjective holds an independent position, but not when it is predicative or attributive.

When a pronoun has an independent position, gender agreement seems to depend on the sort of pronoun. The personal pronoun þær (f) ‘they’ agrees semantically with the referents’ gender instead of with the preceding noun, but the indefinite pronoun sumir (m) ‘some’ agrees with the grammatical gender of hjúkrunarfæðingur (m) ‘nurse’. This can be compared to example (5) in Section 2.3. Indefinite pronouns, which will be further discussed in a later section, are often generically masculine. Even if sumir holds an independent position similar to þær and flestar and refers to the group of interviewed women (which becomes clear from the wider co-text), the generic masculine is chosen.

2.3 Masculine generics

The fact that grammatical and referential gender do not always correspond in current language use leads to another aspect of grammatical gender – neutrality, or the question which gender is unmarked within a given system, i.e., a linguistic
system as a whole or language use in a particular context. This aspect of gender has, as far as I can tell, hardly been discussed in Iceland until recently. Rögnvaldsson (1990:62; first published in 1983) seems to be the first to treat markedness of gender, number and case in an educational book on Icelandic morphology for university students:

There are three gender classes, masculine, feminine and neuter, and we may most likely regard neuter as unmarked; it appears in adjectival predicates if the subject is a sentence (Að María skuli eða Jón er ótrélegt [n]) ‘That Mary could love John is incredible’ or in an oblique case (Stelpunni [dative; an impersonal construction] er kalt (n)) ‘The girl is cold’. Neuter also appears when genera are mixed; hann + hún ‘he + she’ is neither þeir ‘they’ (m) nor þær ‘they’ (f), but þey ‘they’ (n).

(Rögnvaldsson 1990:62, my translation; boldface, except in first line, is mine.)

In an analysis of current Icelandic noun inflection, Svavarsdóttir (1993a; first published in 1987) comments that:

Greenberg […] [1966:75] mentions on the one hand examples of references to a heterogeneous group or gathering, e.g., people of both sexes, and assumes that the plural of the unmarked category is generally applied in those cases. In connection with this I could call attention to the neuter plural which is applied in such circumstances in Icelandic (þau [n.pl] eru farin [n.pl] ‘They are gone’; Komð þið [pl] sæl [n.pl] ‘How do you do?’, lit. ‘come you blessed’) and, in fact, Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson (1986:69–70 [1990:62–63]) supposes, by similar arguments, that neuter is the most unmarked gender.

(Svavarsdóttir 1993a:33, my translation; boldface is mine.)

Rögnvaldsson and Svavarsdóttir come to the conclusion that the neuter is the most unmarked gender, feminine the most marked and masculine somewhere in between. This position is controversial, however. There is sufficient evidence that, on the contrary, masculine is used as the most unmarked gender in most contexts in modern Iceland, at least as concerns references to human beings. In fact, Rögnvaldsson also calls attention to the fact that masculine pronouns often refer to both men and women in generic statements and indefinite pronouns such as Enginn (m.sg) má yfirgefa húsið ‘Nobody (m.sg) is allowed to leave the house’ and Allir (m.pl) graða á verðbólgunni ‘Everybody (m.pl) profits from inflation’ (examples from Rögnvaldsson 1990:63).

In addition, the masculine is not only unmarked with respect to the feminine when referring to humans, but also with respect to the neuter. This conclusion comes from an observation of the widespread use of the masculine
in generic statements like those with enginn and allir above. Even though the neuter could be used when referring to a person of unknown gender or a heterogeneous group of people, the masculine is normally applied in such cases. Clear examples are ten advertisements about meetings with Christian congregations, which appeared in Morgunblaðið (January 29, 1995: B24). Nine churches wish 'everybody welcome' with a masculine pronoun, Allir (m.pl) velkomin (m.pl), and only one uses the neuter form, Öll (n.pl) velkomin (n.pl). There is a semantic difference between these sentences: Allir velkomin is generic, while Öll velkomin has an individualizing function.

There seems to be an unwritten “rule” of language use which is very productive among speakers of Icelandic: The neuter plural can only be used for personal and demonstrative pronouns when referring to a number of persons who are known (and preferably recently mentioned) in the context. When referring to a group of unspecified individuals or making a generic statement, the masculine plural is normally used. This is especially important for indefinite pronouns, where the masculine is to be preferred even when referring to a group of known individuals (see examples (3) above and (5) below).

Support for the first part of the unwritten “rule” can be found in many places. In a study on number, case and gender agreement with composite subjects, Friðjónsson (1990/1991) shows that there is great variation in current practices of agreement with abstract and uncountable nouns, but when two or more concrete and countable nouns are composite within a noun phrase, the gender and number of the predicative complements are neuter plural in most cases: Konan (f.sg) og barnið (n.sg) eru bæði (n.pl) veik (n.pl). ‘The woman (f.sg) and the child (n.sg) are both (n.pl) ill (n.pl).’ (Friðjónsson 1990/1991:89). Svavarðsdóttir & Jónsdóttir (1998:11) give a rule for adjectival inflection, when referring to two or more nouns of different gender: “Note that when the nouns are not of the same gender, when they are heterogeneous, then the adjective will mostly be in the neuter plural” (my translation), illustrated by the following example: Óli (m) og Elsa (f) eru ung (n.pl). ‘Óli (m) and Elsa (f) are young (n.pl).’ The same rule and similar examples are given by Jónsson (1927:14) and Einarsson (1945:133). Jónsson and Einarsson are also quoted by Corbett (1991:283), who writes that “neuter plural is used for any mixture of gender”.

The second part of the unwritten rule above, regarding the usage of masculine plural indefinite pronouns, is not discussed in grammars and textbooks of Icelandic (cf. Guðmundsson 1922, Jónsson 1927, Einarsson 1945, Kress 1982, Friðjónsson 1978, Svavarðsdóttir & Jónsdóttir 1998), but nevertheless grammarians seem to act according to this unwritten rule. Since the issue
is not discussed, the word “rule” may be an overstatement, but the usage of generic masculine indefinite pronouns is as regular as if there were a rule. When describing the usage of indefinite pronouns, the grammars mentioned give no advice for the use of gender when referring to two or more persons of different or unspecified gender. But the examples given illustrate the observation that when a noun is present in the sentence, the gender of the pronoun is in agreement with the noun, whereas when pronouns are used generically and have an independent subject position, the gender chosen is always masculine. Cf. the following examples:

(4) a. *Sumir* (m.pl) hafa þann sild að tala við sjálfa (m.pl) sig. ‘Some people have the habit of talking to themselves.’ (Jónsson 1927:80, my translation)

b. *Það eru ýmist allir* (m.pl) eða *enginn* (m.sg) heima. ‘Sometimes everybody is at home, sometimes no one is.’ (Svavarsdóttir & Jónsdóttir 1998:153, my translation)

Example (5) illustrates how this rule can be realized in a wider context. The neuter plural personal pronoun þau ‘they’ is only used when referring directly to the two parents, while the indefinite masculine plural pronoun allir ‘everybody’ refers to the whole family:

(5) *Í dag er laugardagur og þau* (n.pl) Páll (m) og Disa (f) ákveða aðfara í ferðalag með börnum sinum (n.pl) […] þau (n.pl) aka eftir sléttum malbikuðum vegi og allir (m.pl) eru í góðu skapi. Á leiðinni aka þau (n.pl) framhjá […] ‘Today it is Saturday and they (n.pl), Páll (m) [father] and Disa (f) [mother], decide to set out on a trip with their children (n.pl) [a daughter and two sons] […] They (n.pl) [Páll and Disa] drive along a smooth asphalted road and everybody (m.pl) [the whole family] is in a good mood. On their way they (n.pl) [Páll and Disa] drive past […]’ (Sigmundsson 1998:34, my translation)

Corbett (1991:218f) does not comment on Icelandic specifically in his discussion of agreement conflicts. But he asserts that a common strategy in Indo-European languages is to choose masculine agreement when the gender of the referent is not known (Corbett 1991:219), which is well in accordance with Icelandic use of the generic masculine.
2.4 Occupational titles for women

An argument for the unmarkedness of the masculine is that there are very few feminine words that can be used to refer to men and relatively few neuter words denoting human beings, but a large number of masculine words which can refer to women. Many of these are occupational titles, like leikari ‘actor’, prestur ‘priest’ and verkamaður ‘worker, workman’. A few female-marked equivalents with -kona or kven- (leikkona, kvenprestur, verkakona) do exist, but mostly women have masculine job titles when the original title is masculine.

The most productive patterns for the formation of feminine human nouns are compounds with -kona and kven-. Kona- is the word for ‘woman’, and kven- comes from the same root (cf. kven-na, pl. gen. of kona). These two elements have a similar function and meaning. E.g., words beginning with kven- can also denote something intended for or pertaining to women, such as kvenfátndur ‘women’s clothes’ or kvenrétindi ‘women’s rights’, and while a kvenprestur is a woman priest, a kvenlæknir is a gynecologist rather than a woman doctor (there is no established feminine form of læknir ‘doctor’). At the same time, a woman vicar, kvenprestur, could not be called prestakona, since that title was already used for vicars’ wives when women began studying theology. In other words, which element to choose may depend on already existing established compounds with other meanings. It can also depend on the structure of the noun at issue: If the male form ends with -maður ‘man, human’, it is natural to exchange this element with -kona ‘woman’. The masculine suffix -ari also seems interchangeable with -kona, as in söngvari/söngkona ‘male singer/female singer’. Nouns ending in -ur seem more likely to form compounds with kven-, like kvenhöfundur ‘authoress’. However, masculine nouns to which kven- is prefixed still remain grammatically masculine.

Another possible, but still very rarely used, way of forming feminine nouns is to change the masculine endings -ur or -i to the feminine -a. One example is the established form þula (f) ‘female announcer’ (on TV), derived from the same base form as the masculine þulur (m) ‘announcer’. More recent examples can be found in Vera, a magazine published by the feminist political party Samtök um kvennalista ‘organization for a women’s list’. Since 1993 the editors and the office manager are called ristýrur (f.pl) and skrifstofustýra (f.sg), respectively. These two words are new compounds with a feminine form of -stjóri (m) ‘somebody governing something’ in the established words riststjóri ‘editor’ and skrifstofustjóri ‘office manager’. The masculine -i is changed to feminine -a, which causes an umlaut, and the result is -stýra. This is in full
agreement with productive morpho-phonological rules of Icelandic and analogous with two older words: skólastýra ‘headmistress’, derived from skólastjóri ‘headmaster’, and bústýra ‘housekeeper’, which has the masculine equivalent bústjóri. The two new compounds have not been established in other contexts, and they are likely not to be widespread, since the two older feminine compounds are seldom used nowadays. Skólastýra was considered to be discriminating against women, and a bústýra would mainly be found in the older rural culture.

The fact that women often bear masculine occupational titles is considered normal, since gender is regarded as a strictly grammatical category. But this does not seem particularly consistent, if we take a title like hjúkrunarkona ‘nurse’, lit. ‘nursing woman’ into consideration. When the nurses’ training school was incorporated into the university and more men chose this training course, the occupational title was changed to hjúkrunarfræðingur (m) ‘with nursing education’. The new title is a compound with fræðingur (m), a word which seldom appears on its own but has a function similar to a derivative suffix, meaning ‘a person who is educated in a special field’, similar to English -logist, -logian, -ist, etc. It is derived from freði ‘-logy’, cf. guðfræði/guðfræðingur ‘theology/theologian’ (guð ‘god’), líffræði/líffræðingur ‘biology/biologist’ (líf ‘life’). Other words have recently undergone a similar development. Skúrin-gakona ‘cleaning lady’ was judged as pejorative and changed to raestiteknir (m) ‘sanitary technician’, and the feminine form fóstra ‘nursery school teacher’, lit. ‘fosterer, educator’ has been changed to the masculine gender leikskólakennari lit. ‘nursery school teacher’ to give the education higher status. If gender were strictly grammatical, there would be no hindrance for calling a man X-kona ‘X-woman’, since it is considered natural to call a woman X-maður ‘X-man’. This practice can be interpreted as illustrating the rule of masculine as unmarked in current Icelandic; at the same time it shows that referential gender has a tendency to overrule grammatical gender in the area of personal reference.

The use of the generic masculine can be interpreted as making women invisible. However, it is not language itself that is sexist, but language use. This suggests that masculine/male is the norm in language as well as in society. Rögnvaldsson makes the following observation:

Here there also appears a considerable sex inequality which it is correct to point out, though it is of a social nature rather than linguistic. A word such as skáld ‘poet’ is neuter, as the definite article shows, skáldið, still people have found a reason for coining the word skáldkona lit. ‘poet-woman’, but nobody finds skáldmaður lit. ‘poet-man’ or karlaskáld lit. ‘man-poet’ necessary. An
Language and society are not isolated phenomena – language is a product of and reflects society. When society changes it often influences language, and it is plausible to assume that language changes can have an influence on society. Iceland has changed rapidly from an agricultural country at the beginning of the century to a modern industrialized society especially dependent on the fishing industry. Most changes have taken place in the short period from World War II until today, and it seems that society has changed so rapidly that these changes are not yet represented in the language.

On the lexical level the Icelandic language has undergone major changes: The lexicon has increased considerably as new technologies, new professions, the sciences, computerization etc. have required new words. But the fact that women are becoming more active and visible in politics, business, education and other areas of Icelandic society has not had a major impact on the lexicon. A popular example of women taking part in public life is that during a period in the 1980s the three most powerful positions in Iceland were held by women: the President, the Speaker of Parliament and the chair of the Supreme Court. These changes have led to few noticeable changes in language. For instance, one could expect that women would demand female/feminine or neuter job titles or protest against generic masculine pronouns, but this has not been the case.5

3. Language and gender in Iceland

Iceland is a comparatively small nation with a small university and relatively few researchers. Most graduate students need to go abroad for their doctoral degree. This has the positive effect that Icelandic scholars are well-informed about international research and open to new theories and methods. However, feminist theories and research are at this stage only partially integrated in Icelandic academia. There are several feminist researchers and a tradition of gender studies within some fields, particularly the social sciences, history and literature, but there are no linguists involved in larger studies on language and gender. The two main forums for gender research in Iceland are Kvennasögusafn Íslands (the Icelandic library for women's history), founded by the historian Anna Sigurðardóttir, who has done groundbreaking research on women's
history (e.g. Sigurðardóttir 1985), and Rannsóknastofa í kvennafræðum (Centre for Women's Studies) at the University of Iceland. For examples of women's studies in Iceland see Kress & Traustadóttir (1997).

There are a small number of Icelandic articles and student papers on language and gender issues. The leading researchers in the departments of linguistics and Icelandic at the University of Iceland are mainly specialized in the fields of philology, generative grammar, lexicography and language cultivation, and therefore there has not been much scope for either sociolinguistics in a broad sense (e.g. discourse or conversation analysis), or research on language and gender. Recent exceptions are a study on relationships between gender and attitudes in a case of dialect change (Hjartardóttir 1997 and 1998) and Hilmisdóttirs (2001) study on youth language.

In addition, many active Icelandic feminists consider language change irrelevant to the struggle for women's rights (Kirstin Didriksen, p.c.). This fact is connected with the Icelandic tradition of puristic language planning, which has solid grass-roots support (Vikør 1995:209ff). There has been sporadic discussion during the last decades about how to make women more visible in the language, but there has been no strong support for language reforms. For a time it was not allowed to make job advertisements gender-specific, but in reality this meant that feminine forms were forbidden, since masculine forms were used generically (Theódórsdóttir 1985:28). There have been a few feminine occupational titles, like skólastýra, but the tendency is that they are used less and less, and replaced by masculine titles. The common opinion today, even among feminists, is that linguistic gender is strictly grammatical and has no correspondence with gender bias.

Hornscheidt (1998) discusses different contexts that are of importance in feminist language change: the linguistic, the cultural, the feminist, and the political context. Purist language attitudes are characteristic of the cultural context in Iceland, part of the explanation of avoiding feminization lies there. Another part of the explanation is linguistic; if the masculine is the most unmarked gender, it is apprehended by language users as having a weaker male bias than is the case in German or English. If compared to German, which has a similar three-gender system, and Swedish, which may use gender-indefinite forms, Icelandic has a different strategy of avoiding gender bias in language. Where German may employ feminization, e.g., Zuhörerinnen (f.pl) and Zuhörer (m.pl) ‘listeners’, and Swedish tends to neutralization, i.e. åhörare ‘listeners’ (common gender.pl) (Magnusson & Jobin 1997:156), the main tendency in Icelandic is masculinization: áheyrendur (m.pl).
However, a few tendencies toward feminist attitudes to linguistic change may be observed. In Vera, the following development can be found: In the first issue in 1982, the legally responsible publisher was called ábyrgðarmaður (m) lit. ‘responsibility-man’; later this was changed to the non-personal noun ábyrgð (f) ‘responsibility’, then back to ábyrgðarmaður, and since 1994 the title is ábyrgð-arkona (f) lit. ‘responsibility-woman’. In the same way designations for the other staff members have changed from starfsmáður (m) lit. ‘work-man’ to starfskona (f) lit. ‘work-woman’. Since 1993 the titles rístýra (f) ‘female editor’ and skrifstofustýra (f) ‘female office manager’, which have been commented upon earlier, are also used.

On the other hand, this development of feminine word forms does not have a parallel in the yearbook of the Icelandic women’s rights organization. The yearbook, called 19. júní (Yearbook 1979–1997), has used the masculine titles rístjóri ‘editor’ and ábyrgðarmaður ‘responsible publisher’ in every issue since the first in 1979. This variation in language use suggests that linguistic change is far from being a crucial issue in the feminist debate in Iceland.

4. The use of Icelandic occupational titles: A pilot study

In the following, one issue of the daily newspaper Morgunblaðið (January 29, 1995) will be analyzed. This newspaper’s political profile is independent liberal, and with a circulation of approximately 50,000 it is the largest in Iceland. The material was chosen with the intention of identifying a language use that is widely regarded as “correct” current Icelandic use.

“Generic” masculine nouns are used to refer to women in current Icelandic media discourse. Occupational titles and other nouns with a similar function, such as nationalities and words denoting people skilled at or engaged in some activity, like bílstjóri ‘driver’ or lesandi ‘reader’, are analyzed.

Occupational titles and nouns with a similar function were excerpted from Morgunblaðið January 29, 1995, parts A, B and C, excluding cinema advertisements and TV and radio programs. Table 2 shows how the words are distributed in subcategories according to gender and, in some cases, compound elements. Numbers in the tables count all written instances, many lexemes appear repeatedly and in different inflected forms, and each instance was counted.

Men with occupations were mentioned three times as often as women in the issue in question (147 instances of females and 429 instances of males). Didriksen (1986) made a similar observation in a study of Faroese media
Table 2. Occupational titles in Morgunblaðið January 29, 1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational titles and other personal nouns</th>
<th>Female referent</th>
<th>Male referent</th>
<th>Generic or unspecified referent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neuter occupational titles:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compounds with -fólk, e.g. starfsfólk (pl) 'staff'</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compound with kven-: kvenskáld 'poetess'</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other neuter occupational titles</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 79</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine occupational titles:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compounds with -kona, e.g. leikkona 'actress'</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other feminine occupational titles, e.g. lögga 'cop'</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 60</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine occupational titles:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compounds with -maður, e.g. starfsmáður 'employee'</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compounds with kven-</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other masculine occupational titles, e.g. bílstjóri 'driver'</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 1,304</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational titles total 1,443</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>867</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

discourse. The Faroese and Icelandic societies have much in common; also, there are structural linguistic similarities.

Women are precluded and neglected both at the visual and linguistic level in the newspapers. It is only the men’s world that is described and verbalized, while the women’s world is only mentioned a few times.

(Didriksen 1986:103, my translation)

In Table 2 there were 79 instances of neuter occupational titles, 60 instances of feminines and 1,304 instances of masculines. There were 376 different masculine titles to be found (in a total of 1,304 instances), 22 feminine and 30 neuter (in a total of 60 and 79 instances, respectively). Among the feminines are seven feminine epicenes (such as au pair, fyllibytta ‘drunkard’, hetja ‘hero’ and lögga ‘cop’), but the others are compounds with, for example, -kona. Most neuter nouns are collective words, there are 37 compounds with fólk ‘people’, such as starfsfólk ‘staff’, launafólk ‘employees’ and listafólk ‘artists’. Most neuter nouns are not specified for referential gender, but there is one example of the word kvenskáld ‘female poet’, which is similar to the word skáldkona, observed by
Rögnvaldsson. This is strong evidence that maleness is regarded as the unmarked case, since even a neuter occupational title is regarded as socially male.

The group of compounds with maður is remarkably large within the category of job titles. There are in total 389 examples of such compounds (16 referring to females, 93 referring to males and 280 unspecific). In those words maður has the function of “a suffix meaning 'a person in a particular function, role etc.’” (Webster's Desk Dictionary 1983:677), similar to -man and -person in English. Compare, for instance, verkamaður to workman, worker and talsmaður to spokesman, spokesperson. According to monolingual and etymological Icelandic dictionaries (Íslensk Orðabók 1988, Magnússon 1989) maður has at least two different elementary denotations: 'human being' and 'male adult human being'. In compounds, the generic meaning of maður is regarded as the correct meaning without any male connotations (cf. Íslensk Orðabók 1988:614f).

Svavarsdóttir comments on these different denotations and asserts that:

Thereby there is a semantic opposition between the words maður and kona, which denote human beings of opposite sexes. On the other hand, maður sometimes has a wider reference. In the sentence Maðurinn er spendýr 'Man is a mammal' the word maður denotes 'human, human being' and is therefore not in opposition to kona in this case; on the contrary, it includes this meaning.

(Svavarsdóttir 1993a:47, my translation)

Maður has a central role in Icelandic word coinage, it is a component of such different words as mammamót 'meeting, gathering', almenningsg 'general public', menninn 'education', ungmenni 'younger', and sjömannska 'seamanship, fishing'. An interesting case is the masculine noun kvenmaður 'woman', which is derived from maður in its generic meaning 'human'. Instead of making a distinction between maður and kona, it is possible to make the distinction between karlmaður 'male human' and kvenmaður 'female human'.

Many occupational titles were coined at a time when women had no access to being educated or to professions or occupations, other than vinnukonur 'maids', bústýrar 'housekeepers' etc., and therefore it was natural that all titles were masculine, like lögmaður 'lawyer' and sjómaður 'sailor'. New occupational titles are often coined by adding a personal suffix to a noun or verb. They do not always contain maður, but all of them are still masculine, like hönnmaður 'designer' from hanna 'design' (v) or hönnun 'design' (n), or tölvu 'computer expert' from töltva 'computer', or lögfræðingur lit. 'with law education, lawyer' from lag 'law' and fræðingur 'educated person'. Although there are many female professionals today, most of them do not seem to consider it discriminating that
they have masculine titles. Example (6) is taken from an article about SÍB, i.e. Samband Íslenksra Bankamanna ‘The Icelandic Bank Clerks Union’:

(6) Árið 1977 voru konur 64% af starfsmönnum (m.pl) bankanna […] Á afmælisárinu 1995 eru konur um 75% félagsmanna (m.pl) SÍB […] I aðalstjórn SÍB sitja sjó manns (m.sg). [5 menn og 2 konur]
‘In 1977 64% of bank employees (m.pl) were women […] In 1995 women make up 75% of the members (m.pl) of SÍB […] Seven people (m.sg) [5 men and 2 women] sit on the SÍB governing committee.’
(Morgunblaðið January 29, 1995: A19, my translation)

Women make up 75% of SÍB members, but they are referred to three times with words containing maður, and female bank clerks call themselves bankamenn and never bankakonur. Nevertheless, there is a slight tendency to coin female alternatives. In my material I found one alþingiskona (‘woman MP’, from alþingismaður ‘MP’), six leikkonur (‘actresses’, from leikari ‘actor’), and two verkakonur (‘female workers’, as opposed to verkamaður ‘worker, workman’).

The fact that some words with kona do exist indicates that some people regard maður as marked and male-specific. In other contexts feminine compounds with -stýra and derivatives with -kven have been observed.

Typical examples of generic masculines other than occupational titles are to be found in job advertisements, such as that in example (7), where the masculine plural indefinite pronoun þeir is used generically, when the company explicitly encourages both men and women to apply for the job. In addition, the inflectional ending of the adjective háskólamennðum (m.sg.dat) ‘with an academic degree’ agrees grammatically only with manni (m.sg.dat), but not with konu (f.sg.dat). In such cases of gender conflict in compound subjects, agreement with the attributive adjective is normally determined by the element nearest to the subject, and in that respect the sentence is grammatically correct. At the same time, it is an example of the generic and unmarked masculine, since the masculine element of the compound is placed before the feminine element and thereby governs the gender of the adjective.

(7) […] auglýsir eftir háskólamennðum (m.sg.) manni (m.sg) /konu (f.sg) […] Peir (m.pl), sem hafa áhuga á þessu verkefni […]
‘[…] advertises for a man (m.sg)/woman (f.sg) with an academic degree (m.sg) […] Those (m.pl) who are interested in this project […]’
(Morgunblaðið January 29, 1995: B20, my translation)
5. Conclusion

In the analysis of Morgunblaðið January 29, 1995, masculine nouns and pronouns constitute the vast majority of words denoting human beings. A plausible interpretation of this is that the masculine functions as the most unmarked gender when referring to human beings. Contemporary Icelandic grammarians, Rögnvaldsson (1990) and Svakarsdóttir (1993a), propose that the neuter is the most unmarked gender, but this study suggests that there may be a difference in markedness between human and non-human referents.

Another conclusion of the analysis is that the linguistic unmarkedness of the masculine reflects a society where masculine/male is considered the norm, since males are more visible in the media discourse and occupational titles are masculine. These results tally well with Didriksen’s (1986) analysis of Faroese media discourse. There has been sporadic discussion in Iceland during the last decades about how to make women more visible in the language, but there has been no strong support for language reforms. Explanations for this may be found in the cultural and linguistic context. The common opinion today, even among feminists, is that linguistic gender is strictly grammatical and has no correspondence with gender bias. Still, Icelandic word coinage with -kona and the recent feminine neologism -stýra, and instances of referential gender agreement overruling grammatical agreement (as in example 3), indicate that future change is not inconceivable if a small group of language users no longer consider the generic masculine as generic or unmarked.

Notes

* I would like to thank Deborah Cameron and Kristinn Jóhannesson for valuable commentary on previous versions of this paper (cf. Grönberg 1995). Special thanks to Maria Bonner for thorough reading and useful information. I would also like to thank Katrín Helga Andrésdóttir, Guðrún Haraldsdóttir and Dagný Kristjánsdóttir, Icelandic language users, for encouraging the realization of this study.

1. Icelandic has four invariant particles (sem, er, and the archaic að, eð) that introduce relative clauses. (In current Icelandic, eð is only used as part of the conjunction hvort eð er ‘anyway.’) In traditional grammars (Einarsson 1945:70), they are treated as relative pronouns, but in later works they are regarded as particles (Kress 1982:113) or conjunctions (Íslensk orðabók 1988:3, 819) with relative functions. In modern Icelandic grammar they are always treated as conjunctions.
2. The past participle has two main meanings in Icelandic, a verbal meaning and an adjectival meaning (Friðjónsson 1989:52f). Past participles in the neuter singular form the so-called supine, which has a verbal meaning, in construction with hafa 'have' and a few other auxiliaries: Hún hefur lokð (n.sg.nom) hurðinni (f.sg.dat) 'She has closed the door'. After vera 'be' and verða 'become' the past principle often has an adjectival meaning. Then it is inflected for gender and number: Hurðin (f.pl.nom) er lokð (f.sg.nom) 'The door is closed'. The past participle also forms a resultative-situative verb meaning in construction with vera 'be' and verða 'become' (Kress 1982:152f). There is a semantic difference between the supine Hún hefur farð (n.sg) 'She has left; she has accomplished the act of leaving' and Hún (f.sg.nom) er farin (f.sg.nom) 'She is gone; she is in the state of being somewhere else'.

3. Information from Maria Bonner.

4. Compare with example (3). It implies that even though the grammatical gender of the Icelandic word for 'nurse' is masculine, it may still be regarded as socially female, since there are instances of feminine pronominalization in certain syntactic positions.

5. There still are considerable differences between women and men in working life. For example, in 1995, women in full-time employment in the public sector earned only 73% of the income of men in full-time employment in the same sector (Gender equality in Iceland 1995:42), and an article in Morgunblaðið (March 3, 1995) reported that women with higher education had only 64% of the salaries of men in similar positions.


7. Another example is words for office employees: skrifstofustúlka (f) lit. 'office-girl' was used until the 1960’s. Then skrifstofukona (f) lit. 'office-woman' was used for a brief period, but today mostly ritari (m) lit. 'writer' is used (information from Maria Bonner).

8. Common gender (called “utrum” in Swedish) combines the historical masculine and feminine. For further discussion, see Hornscheidt, vol. III.

9. The yearbook derives its name from the date of the Icelandic Women’s Rights Day. In 1915, women (and men with a low income) were given suffrage on June 19th.

10. Maður consists of the root mað- and the masc. sg. nom. ending -ur. Depending on morpho-phonological and historical factors, the root changes into mönn-, menn- and mann- in certain surroundings (sg. dat. mann-i, pl. nom. menn-Ø, pl. gen. mann-a). These forms can be found in related words, such as mannamót ‘gathering, celebration’ and almenningur ‘general public’.

11. In 1886, Icelandic women were allowed by law to attend higher education under special conditions. In 1897 the first woman in Iceland graduated from upper secondary school, see Jónsson (1977:25 and 48).
References


Hjartardóttir, Þóra Björk. 1998. "Varianben ‘a’ í islandsk i relation til køn og holdninger" [The variable ‘a’ in Icelandic in relation to gender and attitudes]. In Sprog, køn – og...
Anna Gunnarsdotter Grönberg


ITALIAN

Gender and female visibility in Italian

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   2.1 Grammatical gender
   2.2 The structure of Italian human nouns
   2.3 Derivation
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Notes
References
1. Introduction

Italian (Italiano) belongs to the eastern Romance languages of the Indo-European language family (cf. Lockwood 1972). It is the national language of Italy, and also an official language in Switzerland, i.e. in the Canton of Ticino. Italian is also used in Corsica, Istria, Dalmatia, Monaco, Malta, Greece, and Tunisia. Italian has some 63 million speakers of which ca. 40 million are native speakers. Italo-phone communities outside Italy owe their origin to successive waves of emigration over the last centuries: There are more than 6 million speakers of Italian in the United States, Argentina and Australia, and also numerically significant sections of the population in Belgium, Germany, Great Britain and France.

The modern standard language derives from the dialect of Florence, and owes much to the literary prestige of Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch. The political unification of Italy in 1861 laid the basis for the development of the national language; the spoken language developed largely independently of the written variety, manifesting a large number of dialects and regional varieties (cf. Lepschy & Lepschy 1978). Although in the 20th century, especially after the Second World War, an overall process of homogenisation – mostly due to the influence of the mass-media – has been observable, the presence of a wide range of spoken varieties is still a notable characteristic of modern Italian, and most speakers betray their regional origin to some degree in their accent and/or use of vocabulary. Dialectologists stress that contemporary Italian is still based on the coexistence of and continuous exchange between the standard literary language and systems of dialects (cf. Pellegrini 1980).

Italian, one of the modern-day descendants of Latin, shows, for obvious reasons, that the lexis is deeply influenced by Latin. There are cases of direct continuity, where the standard Latin word for a given concept persists until the present day. Also, from the Middle Ages on, Latin words have entered Italian indirectly as a result of borrowing from external sources, such as other Romance languages, or English and German. Of course, Ancient Greek is another important source of lexical borrowing.

In morphology, Italian reflects the clear separation of verbal and nominal inflection characteristic of Latin, the latter inflection also including pronouns, determiners and adjectives. Nouns belong to one of two grammatical gender classes (feminine and masculine); they inflect for number (singular and plural), but not for case (cf. Vincent 1988: 289).
Italian is a pro-drop language; the rich inflectional morphology of Italian verbs systematically signals person and number of the subject in all finite paradigms. Personal pronouns are not used, except for emphasis. It follows that gender has no direct morphological representation in the Italian verb, except in participial forms, which may show gender agreement with the object (when this is a clitic, for example) in active structures, and with the subject in ergative and passive structures, even when this subject is not explicitly represented by a noun or a gendered pronoun, e.g., sei arrivata (f.sg) ‘you (female) arrived’, sei arrivato (m.sg) ‘you (male) arrived’, i prezzi sono aumentati (m.pl) ‘the prices have risen’ (ergative), and la mela è stata mangiata (f.sg) ‘the apple was eaten’ (passive).

An important and very common morphological process in Italian involves the use of evaluative nominal suffixes indicating the speaker’s attitude to the entity in question, e.g.: ragazza ‘girl’, ragazzina, ragazzetta, ragazzuccia ‘little girl’, ragazzona ‘big girl’, ragazzaccia ‘nasty girl’, ragazzotta ‘sturdy girl’.

Gender marking in Italian occurs on nouns, definite or indefinite articles, demonstratives, possessives, numerals and quantifiers. Most of these categories show morphological variation for gender and number.

2. Categories of gender in Italian

2.1 Grammatical gender

Grammatical gender has specific linguistic functions, but at the same time it is related to people’s perception and experience of reality. Language is therefore not neutral, because it influences the symbolic systems of speakers. And it is precisely grammatical gender which is the principal category through which the difference between female and male may be represented symbolically: “Gender is not merely a grammatical category that regulates purely mechanical matters of agreement, but is, on the contrary, a semantic category which reveals a profound symbolism within language […]” (Violi 1986:41, our transl.). Violi demonstrates that in descriptions of categories of gender in linguistic theory there is a persistent reduction of this semantic dimension to primarily formal aspects. An examination of the most authoritative and widely-used Italian grammars, such as Dardano & Trifone (1985), Renzi (1988), Schwarze (1988), and Serianni (1989), reveals that this tendency continues to this day (cf. Burr 1995).

The categorisation of nouns in Indo-European languages was primarily based on the semantic opposition between animate and inanimate, which is of
more ancient origin than that between masculine (male) and feminine (female).
Inanimate nouns were represented by the neuter grammatical gender, while the opposition between feminine and masculine appears to have been a subcategory of the animative gender. In the Romance languages the neuter gender gradually disappeared and the original tripartite system evolved into one with only two genders, masculine and feminine. This opposition has subsequently been maintained and extended to include inanimate nouns (cf. Meillet 1921). As a consequence, the Italian gender system is characterised by this basic distinction between masculine and feminine, which are commonly thought to represent “natural” categories.

Within the class of inanimate entities in current Italian, gender is an inflectional phenomenon and gender assignment is semantically arbitrary; within the class of animate entities a further semantic distinction is made between human and non-human entities.

In the majority of cases, non-human nouns behave like inanimates: la tigre (f) ‘the tiger’, la volpe (f) ‘the fox’, il bisonte (m) ‘the buffalo’, il castoro (m) ‘the beaver’; in these cases of epicene nouns, if it is necessary to specify whether the animal is female or male, this is achieved by female/male modifiers: la tigre maschio ‘the male tiger’, il bisonte femmina ‘the female buffalo’. There are, however, many cases of so-called natural gender assignment, in which grammatical gender expresses whether the particular animal is female or male. In these cases, distinctions may be made in exactly the same way as within the class of human beings, i.e. through different lexical roots, as in la vacca/la mucca (f) ‘the cow’, il toro/il bue (m) ‘the bull/ox’, or by unambiguous morphological marking, e.g., by the feminine suffix -a or the masculine suffix -o: la gatta/il gatto ‘the cat’.

2.2 The structure of Italian human nouns

The system of human nouns allows for the differentiation of feminine or masculine gender both through inflectional morphology of the nouns themselves or through the use of satellite elements such as determiners and adjectives.

Regarding morphological distinctions, three subtypes can be identified. First, there is a closed class of nouns where referential gender is expressed by different lexical roots, which have the corresponding grammatical gender and may, in addition, be followed by gender-specific endings. Many kinship terms and agentive nouns belong to this class:
Table 1. Human nouns with lexical gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female-feminine (sg/pl)</th>
<th>Male-masculine (sg/pl)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nuora/nuore 'daughter-in-law'</td>
<td>genero/generi 'son-in-law'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>madre/madri 'mother'</td>
<td>padre/padri 'father'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suora/suore 'religious sister'</td>
<td>frate/frati 'religious brother'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondly, there is a nominal class, sometimes called mobile gender nouns, where feminine and masculine terms share the same lexical root, which is then specified by means of the suffixes -a or -o in the singular, and -e or -i in the plural, according to whether the referent is female or male, singular or plural. The suffixes are bifunctional in that they represent gender and number at the same time.

Table 2. “Mobile gender” nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female-feminine (sg/pl)</th>
<th>Male-masculine (sg/pl)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>figlia/figlie 'daughter'</td>
<td>figlio/figli 'son'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ragazza/ragazze 'girl'</td>
<td>ragazzo/ragazzi 'boy'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impiegata/impiegate 'female employee'</td>
<td>impiegato/impieghi 'male employee'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cuoca/cuochi 'female cook'</td>
<td>cuoco/cuochi 'male cook'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a limited number of cases, the suffix for the masculine singular is -e.

Table 3. “Mobile gender” with the masculine suffix -e

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female-feminine (sg/pl)</th>
<th>Male-masculine (sg/pl)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>signora/signore 'lady'</td>
<td>signore/signori 'gentleman'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirdly, in the innumerable cases in which the nominal root does not permit gender-specification by the suffixes -a and -o/-e, satellite elements, e.g., determiners or adjectives, have to be used in order to achieve the overt marking of referential gender. This class contains nouns such as nipote/nipoti (sg/pl) 'niece, nephew' or 'granddaughter, grandson', or giudice/giudici (sg/pl) 'judge', and nouns derived from present participial forms, such as insegnante/insegnanti (sg/pl) 'teacher' (cf. Section 2.3). In these cases, the suffixes -e and -i only have the function of signalling number. Again, many agentive nouns can be found in this class.
2.3 Derivation

Personal nouns may be derived from verbs, nouns or adjectives. In many cases, the adjective and the derived noun share the same word form. Thus, an adjective like *contadina/o* ‘peasant-like’ can easily be changed into a noun: *la contadina/il contadino* (f/m) ‘the peasant farmer’. If the origin of the agentive is a verb, the basis for the personal noun is a gerund (*la diplomanda/il diplomando*, f/m ‘pupil in last year of high school’), a present participle (*la presidente/il presidente*, f/m ‘the president’), or a past participle (*la delegata/il delegato*, f/m ‘the delegate’).

One type of nominal derivation which is particularly associated with agentive nouns specifies gender with the feminine suffixes -a/-e (sg/pl) or the masculine suffixes -o/-i (sg/pl). Pairs of such nouns share the same lexical root and the agentive suffix (-ai-, -aiol-, -an-, etc.):

**Table 4. Nouns with the gender suffixes -a and -o**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agentive suffix</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-ai-</td>
<td><em>la giornalaia</em></td>
<td><em>il giornalai</em></td>
<td>‘the newsagent’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-aiol-</td>
<td><em>la pizzaiola</em></td>
<td><em>il pizzaiolo</em></td>
<td>‘the pizzachef’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-an-</td>
<td><em>l’ortolana</em></td>
<td><em>l’ortolano</em></td>
<td>‘the greengrocer’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ar-</td>
<td><em>la panchinara</em></td>
<td><em>il panchinaro</em></td>
<td>‘the reserve (player)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-in-</td>
<td><em>la postina</em></td>
<td><em>il postino</em></td>
<td>‘the postwoman/ the postman’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A second type of derived agentives has the suffixes -a/-e (f/m.sg) or -e/-i (f/m.pl), which are also bifunctional:

**Table 5. Nouns with the gender suffixes -a and -e**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agentive suffix</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-ier-</td>
<td><em>la consigliera</em></td>
<td><em>il consigliere</em></td>
<td>‘the councillor’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-on-</td>
<td><em>la terrona</em></td>
<td><em>il terrone</em></td>
<td>‘the southerner’ (offensive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tor-</td>
<td><em>la pastora</em></td>
<td><em>il pastore</em></td>
<td>‘the shepherd’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-or-</td>
<td><em>l’assessora</em></td>
<td><em>l’assessore</em></td>
<td>‘the town councillor’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are a number of suffixes that form common nouns which have the same form for both genders. In these cases, referential gender is specified by external modifiers, e.g., definite articles:
Table 6. Gender distinction by article only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agentive suffix</th>
<th>Article + noun</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-iatra</td>
<td>la/lo psichiatra</td>
<td>'the psychiatrist'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ista</td>
<td>la/il farmacista</td>
<td>'the pharmacist'²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ante</td>
<td>la/il bracciante</td>
<td>'the farm worker'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One very particular type of derivation of personal nouns is by means of the highly productive suffixes -trice/-tore, as in l’attrice/l’attore ‘the actress/the actor’, l’ambasciatrice/l’ambasciatore ‘the ambassador’. This represents a special case, because gender is already unambiguously expressed by the agentive suffix, while the final endings only specify number.

Another female-specific suffix is -essa, as in terms such as la studentessa/lo studente ‘the student’, la professoressa/il professore. The problematical nature of this suffix was already noted by Sabatini (1986:116f), in that -essa, more often than other feminine suffixes bears derogatory connotations (cf. also Cortelazzo 1995). Hence the existence of alternative forms which follow the morphological patterns described above (l’avvocata, la presidente, la studente), which are used alongside the -essa forms. Indeed, -essa is the only case of a feminine suffix in Italian which has no masculine equivalent; the corresponding masculine terms belong to one of many derivational classes, for example, the classes ending in -o (l’avvocato ‘the lawyer’) and -e (il conte ‘the count’). Historically, morphological feminines ending in -essa referred to the wife of the person denoted by the masculine lexical base (la baronessa ‘the wife of the baron’), or to the female counterpart of the referent denoted by the masculine term (la papessa ‘the female pope’, from il papa ‘the pope’).

2.4 Compounding

While derivation is the traditional morphological pattern for the formation of agentives, gender-specification can also be achieved by two more recent types of compounding which combine a personal feminine noun with a (masculine) nominal modifier (cf. Serianni 1989:120). Examples of the type la donna x are:

Table 7. Donna + occupational term

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compound</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>la donna (f) magistrato (m)</td>
<td>'the woman magistrate'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la donna (f) medico (m)</td>
<td>'the woman doctor'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here, the grammatical gender of the compound is feminine and controlled by the noun donna ‘woman’. Examples of the type il x donna are grammatically masculine; they combine the masculine agentive il x and the feminine modifier donna:

Table 8. Occupational term + donna

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compound</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>il medico (m) donna (f)</td>
<td>‘the woman doctor’ (lit. the doctor woman)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>il giudice (m) donna (f)</td>
<td>‘the woman judge’ (lit. the judge woman)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One interpretation of the difference between these two female-specific forms is that donna in the form la donna x emphasises the female component, while the form il x donna highlights the “professional” component. 3 Sabatini (1986:120) recommended avoidance of either compound type, because both types involve a masculine component and thus fail to take advantage of the morphological possibilities of inherently female-specific derivations (la magistrata, la giudice). 4 Despite Sabatini’s recommendations, more and more examples of the types il medico donna/la donna medico (for the more colloquial la dottoressa) can be found (cf. Stewart 1987). Significantly, there are no parallel male-specific expressions in Italian, such as, for example, il medico uomo.

2.5 Agreement

The gender of the noun has morphological consequences for other constituents of the sentence. In Italian, there must be agreement between the noun and other elements of the nominal group, such as articles, adjectives, and determiners. Agreement must also be established between the noun and predicative adjectives, cf. (1) and (2).

(1)  
a. la ragazz-a alt-a  
   the.FEM.SG girl-FEM.SG tall-FEM.SG  
   ‘the tall girl’
b. il ragazz-o alt-o  
   the.MASC.SG boy-MASC.SG tall-MASC.SG  
   ‘the tall boy’

(2)  
a. La zi-a è bell-a.  
   the.FEM.SG aunt-FEM.SG is beautiful-FEM.SG  
   ‘The aunt is beautiful.’
b. Lo zio è bell-o.
   the.masc.sg uncle-masc.sg is beautiful-masc.sg
   ‘The uncle is good-looking.’
   
Agreement with gender in predication is also obligatory when there is a
compound verb requiring the auxiliary essere ‘to be’ as in (3):

(3) a. Simona è andat-a a Pisa.
    Simona (female) is gone-fem to Pisa
    ‘Simona has gone to Pisa.’

    b. Gianni è venut-o a Firenze.
    Gianni (male) is come-masc to Florence
    ‘Gianni has come to Florence.’

The gender and number of the noun also have morphological effects on any
modifier that may be present in the nominal group, for example, relative clauses
(introduced by il quale/la quale ‘who, whom’) or participial verb forms (present
or past). Example (4) contains singular forms, example (5) contains plural
forms. Note that (5b) is ambiguous with respect to referential gender.

(4) a. La bambin-a della quale ti hanno parlato
    the.fem.pl child-fem about.the.fem whom to.you have spoken
    Lucia e Marina è stat-a dimess-a oggi
    Lucia and Marina is been-fem discharged-fem today
    dall’ospedale.
    from.the.hospital
    ‘The girl Lucia and Marina spoke to you about was discharged from
    hospital today.’

    b. Il bambin-o del quale ti hanno parlato
    the.masc.pl child-masc about.the.masc whom to.you have spoken
    Lucia e Marina è stat-o dimess-o oggi dall’ospedale.
    Lucia and Marina is been-masc discharged-masc today
    from.the.hospital
    ‘The boy Lucia and Marina spoke to you about was discharged from
    hospital today.’

(5) a. Le turist-e, essendo arrivat-e in.ritardo,
    the.fem.pl tourist-fem.pl being arrived-fem.pl late
    hanno perso il treno.
    have missed the train
    ‘The (female) tourists, having arrived late, missed the train.’
b. I turist-i, essendo arrivat-i
the.MASC.PL tourist-MASC.PL being arrived-MASC.PL
in.ritardo, hanno perso il treno.
late have missed the train
‘The (male) tourists, having arrived late, missed the train.’
‘The (male and female) tourists, having arrived late, missed the train.’

In the case of coordinate nouns, Marcantonio & Pretto (1988:323) make an
interesting observation, stating that when groups of nouns with which the
modifiers must agree are predominantly feminine, but also include one or more
masculine terms, agreement with the feminine is possible in the case of inani-
mate entities, as in (6), but the masculine is required with human nouns (7), cf.
also the corresponding priority of the masculine in Romanian (cf. Maurice,
vol.1) and Spanish (cf. Nissen, this vol.):

(6) La ros-a, la viol-a, il tulip-an-o,
the.FEM rose-FEM the.FEM violet-FEM the.MASC tulip-MASC
la primul-a e la mimos-a, tutt-e
the.FEM primula-FEM and the.FEM mimosa-FEM all-FEM.PL
profumat-e.
sweet.smelling-FEM.PL
‘The rose, the violet, the tulip, the primula and the mimosa, are all
sweet-smelling.’

(7) Simona, Franco, Francesca e Renza, sempre
Simona (f) Franco (m) Francesca (f) and Renza (f) always
simpatic-i.
pleasant-MASC.PL
‘Simona, Franco, Francesca and Renza are always pleasant.’

Generally, with coordinate plural nouns of contrasting gender the agreement of
the adjective is typically masculine, as in (8):

(8) ragazz-e e ragazz-i svegl-i
girl-FEM.PL and boy-MASC.PL intelligent-MASC.PL
‘intelligent girls and boys’

Example (8) would seem to confirm the rule according to which gender
agreement is controlled by the last noun of the series. Serianni (1989:199)
mencions examples like una sedia (f.sg) e un tavolo (m.sg) rossi (m.pl) ‘a red
chair and a (red) table’ vs. i minerali (m.pl) e le sostanze (f.pl) ferrose (f.pl)
‘minerals and substances containing iron’. However, this “rule” seems to hold
only for inanimate entities, but not for human beings. When the masculine noun precedes the feminine noun, agreement is excluded both with the feminine (9a) and with the masculine (9b). In this case, the only correct solution is to repeat the adjective with each noun (9c):

(9) a. *ragazz-i e ragazz-e svegli-e  
    boy-MASC.PL and girl-FEM.PL intelligent-FEM.PL 
  b. ?ragazz-i e ragazz-e svegl-i  
    boy-MASC.PL and girl-FEM.PL intelligent-MASC.PL 
  c. ragazz-e svegli-e e ragazz-i  
    girl-FEM.PL intelligent-FEM.PL and boy-MASC.PL 
    svegl-i  
    intelligent-MASC.PL 
    ‘intelligent boys and girls’

2.6 Pronominalisation

Within the Italian pronominal system, only personal, demonstrative and possessive pronouns (third person singular and plural) have gender-variable forms. As regards personal pronouns, the situation is complicated by the fact that there are two (incomplete) sets of pronominal forms, the free (stressed) forms and the clitic (unstressed) forms. The latter are pronounced as if they were unstressed affixes of the verb, representing the unmarked pronominal realisations of direct and indirect objects, e.g., non lo vedo (lit. ‘not it I see’, ‘I don’t see it/him’).

Free (tonic) pronouns occur in both subject and (direct and indirect) object function, whereas clitics (atonic) are restricted to the latter function. The free pronouns display gender-variable forms only in the third person singular: lei/lui (f/m) ‘she, her/he, him’ and essa/esso (f/m) ‘it’. The latter pair, also occurring in the plural (esse, f/essi, m ‘them’), is stylistically marked and syntactically restricted to non-focal positions, which are found mainly in written texts, for example in scientific, administrative or literary language.

As regards the clitic set, gender is marked explicitly and systematically only in the third person singular and plural direct object forms: la/lo (singular), le/li (plural), cf. (10):

(10) a. La vedo stasera.  
    3SG.FEM.ACC I see this.evening 
    ‘I see her this evening.’
b. Lo vedo stasera.
   3SG.MASC.ACC I see this evening
   ‘I see him this evening.’

The same distinction may in principle be made for the singular indirect object forms (le/gli), but in practice the masculine form is preferred even in cases of female reference. In colloquial speech, gli may replace standard le (f.sg.dat) or loro (m/f.pl.dat), cf. (11):

(11) a. Le devo telefonare.
   3SG.FEM.DAT I have to call
   ‘I have to call her.’ (female-specific)

b. Gli devo telefonare.
   3SG.MASC.DAT I have to call
   ‘I have to call him/her/them.’ (male-specific and generic)

The use of personal pronouns in subject function represents the marked case in Italian, because the subject is normally marked on the verbal forms. There are, however, contexts in which explicit pronouns must be used, for example, when emphasis is placed on the referent to which the pronoun refers:

(12) Lei ha scritto il testo, non Pietro!
    she has written the text not Pietro
    ‘She wrote the text, not Pietro!’

Possessive pronouns agree in gender and number with the related noun (the “possessed” entity); consequently, they do not reflect the possessor’s gender, but behave like other nominal modifiers, cf. (13):

(13) a. Gianni mi ha presentato
    Gianni (male) 1SG.DAT has presented
    su-a mogli-e.
    POSS.3SG.FEM.SG wife-FEM.SG
    ‘Gianni presented his wife to me.’

b. Simona mi ha presentato
    Simona (female) 1SG.DAT has presented
    su-o marit-o.
    POSS.3SG.MASC.SG husband-MASC.SG
    ‘Simona presented her husband to me.’

Generally, in gender-specific contexts the choice of gendered pronouns is unambiguous. In gender-indefinite contexts, where masculine forms are the
traditional prescription, referential ambiguities may arise.

Again, as in the case of indefinite pronouns, the choice of masculine forms requires further masculine agreement forms in other word classes:

(14) Non è venut-o nessun-o.
    not is come-masc.sg nobody-masc.sg
    ‘No one came.’

Quantifiers are inflected like adjectives and can indicate referential gender:

(15) Non ho visto nessun-a dell-e tu-e
    not I have seen none-fem.sg of.the-fem.pl poss.2sg-fem.pl
    amich-e.
    friend-fem.pl
    ‘I haven’t seen any of your (female) friends.’

In adjectival function quantifiers relate to the head noun’s gender:

(16) a. Ciascun-a ragazz-a ha portato un libro.
    each-fem girl-fem has brought a book
    ‘Each girl brought a book.’

b. I ragazz-i hanno portato un libro ciascun-o.
    the.masc.pl boy-masc.pl have brought a book each-masc.sg
    ‘Each boy brought a book.’

3. The semantics of human nouns

3.1 Semantic loading

In Italian, semantic loading is found in pairs of lexical items and idiomatic expressions that appear to be parallel from a denotational point of view. Overtly, the two members of the pair are only differentiated with respect to referential gender, but in addition the female-specific term generally carries a semantic loading which derives from underlying gender-related cultural values and expectations.

The following examples are taken from Riolo (1995) and Secco (1995); they include expressions drawn from various Italian dialects:

dare in sposa ‘to give in marriage’: dari in the Sicilian dialect has the same principal meaning as Standard Italian dare ‘to give’; in extended use dari can have the meaning ‘to give a girl to someone for marriage’: ti dugnu a mè figghia
‘I’ll give you my daughter in marriage’, *m’ata a dari a vostra figghia* ‘you must give me your daughter in marriage’. In Venetian, some expressions exist that underline the drama of young women married off (to an ill-matched partner) purely for the economic interests of the family: *destrigare na puta* ‘get rid of a girl’, *negar una fia*, which literally means ‘to drown a daughter’, but the expression signifies ‘marry off a daughter badly’; *romper el colo a una puta* has the same meaning, its literal meaning being ‘to break a young girl’s neck’. *partorire* ‘to give birth’: *figghiàri* is used in Sicily to mean ‘to give birth to a baby girl’, while the verb *parturiri*, a refined word which derives from Standard Italian, denotes giving birth to a baby boy (cf. Riolo 1995:378). In Venetian, this differentiation was taken a step further: the expression *la ga fato na sépa*, which literally means ‘she’s produced a cuttlefish’, is an insulting way of saying ‘she’s given birth to a baby girl’.

*puttana* ‘prostitute’, *buttana* in Sicilian: there is no corresponding male term, either in Sicilian or in other dialects, or in the national language. Yet, from a purely lexical point of view, this would seem to go against the trend of what is generally considered to be a common process in Standard Italian, that is, the tendency to create a masculine term when men begin to assume a role (especially a professional one) that was once carried out by women only.5 *Maschiaccio* ‘bad man’, *masculazzu* ‘bad man’, if referring to a man, preserves and reinforces in Sicilian, as it does in a great deal of Italian oral usage, all the positive associations of “masculinity”, while in the corresponding term *fimminazza*, in Standard Italian *femminaccia* or *donna* ‘bad woman, prostitute’, the process of semantic degradation introduced by the suffix is unmistakable.

*oltraggiare*: the verb, derived from the noun *oltraggio*, means ‘to offend outrageously and abusively’ (cf. Cortelazzo & Zolli 1979–1988). Etymologically, it means simply ‘to go beyond’. In legal language, it has a more precise definition; here, it denotes ‘to commit an offence to the honour or prestige of a public official or a public sector worker’. But if the word refers to a woman, it is confined to the sphere of “decency”, in other words, it bears a clear sexual connotation (cf. Marcato 1995b:259–260).

There is no shortage of cases where it is actually overt lexical symmetry which transmits the cultural difference relating to gender. An example is the opposition, found in Sicilian, between *figghiu masculu* ‘male child’ and *figghiu femmina* ‘female child’ (cf. Riolo 1995:378). Strictly speaking, the adjectives in these expressions are redundant, since the male-female distinction is already encoded
in the gendered nouns. The adjectives arguably serve to activate the usual connotations, positive for *masculu*, negative for *femmina*. On the formal level, the two expressions are perfectly symmetrical, but in fact a clear gender-bias is created. This example suggests that, if one wishes to discover the bias built into the language, it may not be sufficient to focus on overt lexical asymmetries.

3.2 Semantic asymmetries

Another usage which displays semantic asymmetries is the ambiguous use of *uomo/uomini* 'man/men' to denote either males or humans irrespective of gender. Significantly, there is a tendency for nouns denoting abstract concepts such as *fratellanza* or *fraternità* 'brotherliness, brotherhood', as well as for collectives such as *fratelli* 'brothers, siblings' to exploit male expressions, rather than equivalent female terms such as *sorellanza* 'sisterhood' (a parallel term for 'brotherliness' is lacking), and *sorelle* 'sisters', which also means 'religious sisters'. At the same time, a tendency can be observed to expressly include women in complex expressions such as *madre e padre* 'mother and father', *maternità e paternità* 'motherhood and fatherhood'. In order to find gender-neutral personal nouns in Italian, it is necessary to resort to lexical forms such as *le persone* (f) 'the persons', *gli individui* (m) 'the individuals' or *gli esseri umani* (m) 'the human beings'. Irrespective of grammatical gender, these terms have a gender-neutral lexical meaning.

3.3 Masculine generics

As has already been noted, Italian has quite a varied range of morphological and lexical resources at its disposal for the specification of gender. But, in actual use, the feminine forms tend to be eclipsed by the masculine ones: The unmarked generic term is always masculine, and the feminine is frequently morphologically derived, as in *professore/professoressa*. This constitutes traditional usage, and, obviously, once such use is established, it acquires the value of a norm. However, it represents only a partial realisation of the potential offered by the language itself. The principle of the masculine generic is present at all levels of the language, because singular and plural masculine nouns are used to represent either exclusively male referents or both male and female ones; for example, *i cittadini* (m) 'citizens' can signify both 'male citizens' and 'male and female citizens'. This is a case of what Alma Sabatini (1987: 25) has described as "grammatical asymmetries", i.e. the disparity in the treatment of men and
women in grammatical forms, as opposed to “semantic asymmetries”, which relate to discursive differences and lexical usage.

Apart from asymmetries that have to do with the rich agreement system of Italian, another important area in which asymmetries are evident is in the use of indefinite and impersonal pronouns. The masculine form is prevalent in the use of pronouns, not only when reference is made to mixed groups, but also in cases where referential gender is indeterminate, as in, for example: *Chi ha visto (m) questo spettacolo si è accorto […]* ‘Everyone who has seen (m) this show has realized […]’. And it is very unusual when addressing an audience – though it can occur when addressing an exclusively female audience – to use expressions such as: *Chi è interessata (f) al dibattito […]* ‘Anyone who is interested (f) in the debate […]’.

3.4 Proper names

Asymmetrical use also occurs in the sphere of proper names. While common nouns have a classificatory function, proper names have an exclusively referential function in that they are used to designate specific individuals. Part of this designation is reference to the gender of the person in question.

The descriptions of proper names in various grammars (e.g., Dardano & Trifone 1985, Renzi 1988, Schwarze 1988, Serianni 1989) do not convey a homogeneous picture. The only point on which these grammars agree concerns the definite article, depending on whether a man’s or a woman’s surname is involved: *La Thatcher e Brandt* (cf. Sabatini 1987:110).

From the lexical count conducted by Burr (1997), it emerges that the use of the surname without a preceding article is the norm in reference to men, while in referring to women the article is almost always used. A possible interpretation of this is that at some underlying level even proper nouns (i.e. surnames) tend to have a gender bias in that female names are felt to be the exception which must therefore be marked.

Sabatini (1987) criticised another aspect of the usage of proper names, that is, the use of *Signora* ‘Ms, Mrs’ as a way of specifying reference to women while men may be accorded a professional title, e.g., *ai lavori coordinati dalla Signora Roubet partecipa anche il Professor Ceccaldi* ‘Professor Ceccaldi is also participating in the work coordinated by Ms Roubet’ (Sabatini 1987:111; cf. also Burr 1997). In the corresponding expression for a man, the address term *Signor* would rather be omitted: *ai lavori coordinati dal Roubet […]*. 
4. The representation of women and men in selected text types

4.1 Grammars

Studies on this issue are as yet generally lacking. Tatjana von Bonkewitz (1995) conducted research on the use of the masculine generic in Italian grammars used in schools. Bonkewitz’s aim was to find out whether Sabatini’s *Raccomandazioni per un uso non-sessista della lingua italiana* ‘Recommendations for the non-sexist use of the Italian language’ (1986) had been taken into consideration in the writing of grammars. The analysis therefore included grammars published before and after the *Raccomandazioni*.7

The findings demonstrate that women are poorly represented, partly as a result of the prevalence of masculine generics and partly due to the vast number of nouns (74.4%) referring to men only (of a total of 13,895):

The majority of examples are oriented towards men, the authors exclusively address male pupils, the games that are cited are for boys, and women, if present at all, have a subordinate role. There is a lack of positive and up-to-date models for girls, and there is a lack of feminine forms for professions. (Bonkewitz 1995:108, our translation).

4.2 Teaching materials

To date very few critical analyses of existing teaching materials have been carried out.8 Samson (2000) conducted research about gender representation in textbooks for children between three and five years of age (*scuola materna*, ‘kindergarten’) and for children attending the compulsory years of schooling between six and ten years (*scuola elementare*). The textbooks were selected from the area of the humanities. The analysis was divided into a linguistic and a contextual part. The former was based on the recommendations of Sabatini (1986), the latter was subdivided into six sections: themes, people, illustrations, settings, authors/authorities and exercises. The results show that there is a disparate representation of gender in Italian school textbooks. First of all, there is a predominant use of linguistic elements that subsume women under the supposedly generic masculine form; this is accompanied by a lack of prominent female characters in the illustrations. Secondly, a distinctly androcentric view of society is presented due to a lack of female-related topics that go beyond mere stereotypes. A similar difference in gender presentation emerged from an analysis of grammar exercises in the textbooks, where it was found that the vast
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The majority of sentence subjects were boys (2,090 in comparison to 841 girls).

There are also studies on gender-based differences in education, which have been promoted since 1989 by the *Gruppo di pedagogia della differenza sessuale* ‘Group on gender difference in pedagogy’ of the University of Verona, edited by the educationalist Anna Maria Piussi. The aim of the group is above all to present reflections on, and experience of, teaching with attention to gender difference. For the first time the importance of female relationships and the essential role of mediation that female teachers (the majority of teachers in Italy) can offer, has been recognised.

The concept of a mother-tongue, in the sense of the first language the child acquires in a communicative environment, thus becomes central (cf. Muraro 1989, Zamboni 1998), as regards both the use of language in schools on the part of female and male teachers and students, and its symbolic value in the search for a language which more closely depicts women’s real experience of life.

These studies throw light on a specific approach in the Italian scene, represented especially by the group of philosophers, pedagogues, and linguists in the group *Diotima* at the University of Verona. Philosophers like Luisa Muraro (1981) and Chiara Zamboni (1995) point out that it is not sufficient to reform the language at a political level only, because this merely touches on one single aspect of the representation of women in language.

4.3 Newspapers

The first systematic analysis of newspapers was carried out by Alma Sabatini (1987). The study was based on an examination of newspapers and magazines from 1984, focussing particularly on the wording of job advertisements. Various forms of grammatical and semantic asymmetry were identified: For example, in the political pages, the constant use of a grammatically marked structure involving the use of a determiner before the surname (e.g., *la Falcucci*) was notable; significantly, this was never used for men. Generally, what emerges from Sabatini’s work is the contrast in the linguistic representation of women’s participation in society on the one hand, and the actual political roles that in recent years have increasingly been filled by women, on the other. One need only consider the persistent use of masculine terms such as *il sindaco* ‘the mayor’, even in cases where the office is held by a woman. Inevitably, the use of such terms leads to a whole series of morphological and semantic distortions. It also becomes clear from Sabatini’s analysis that the majority of articles concerning women were relegated to less prominent positions in the newspapers.
Finally, the designation of women as a separate category observed by Sabatini (1987) is still frequent in both spoken and written language; cf. the following example: "Questi popoli […] si spostavano con le donne, i vecchi e i bambini […] cercando regioni più fertili. 'These peoples […] moved together with the women, the elderly and the children […] searching for more fertile regions' (Sabatini 1987:109).

Burr (1995, 1997) conducted an empirical analysis based on a corpus of Italian newspapers published in 1989, focussing on the occurrence and use of agentives and proper nouns. Her results confirm the findings of Sabatini, but with some interesting variations: The system of the Italian language is not an inherently sexist system (Burr 1995:154), because it has at its disposal the morphological means and derivational procedures necessary to achieve a balanced representation of all agentives. In actual fact, the extended use of the masculine form applied to female agents amounts to less than 1% of references; the feminine agentive appears in 85.9% (of a total of 15,385) of the cases where reference is to women, while the use of masculine terms (7.37%) or agentives with external modifiers like donna (6.73%) is relatively rare (cf. Burr 1995:155). Thus in the majority of cases the linguistic system allows for an appropriately transparent term to be used. What is striking, however, is that the occurrence of agentive nouns with female reference in the whole corpus represents only a small fraction of the total: 5.75%. Burr concludes that it is usage – not the language itself – which is sexist. Consequently Burr judges the situation to be “even more serious than the one previously described by Alma Sabatini” (Burr 1995:156), because although in real life the situation has improved noticeably in recent decades, in journalistic texts women still do not make news, unless in traditional roles.

Research undertaken by Burns (1996) was also aimed at establishing the extent to which Sabatini’s recommendations had taken effect in Italian usage. The study was based on a corpus of magazine articles compiled in 1996. Following a further suggestion of Sabatini (1987), Burns extended her study to include a quantitative survey of the presence of men and women in pictures. The result of Burns’s research confirmed the original findings of the study conducted by Sabatini (1987).

Today, in the light particularly of recent editions of the Zingarelli dictionary (from the 1995 edition onwards), a more diversified situation regarding reference to women and men can be observed. On the one hand, recent dictionaries display greater care, providing feminine forms and recording neologisms generated by the changed role of women in society. On the other
hand, Chiantera (1999) has pointed out that many of these neologisms continue to present a stereotyped image of women, and the explanations themselves given in dictionaries remain wedded to a predominantly androcentric view of the world.

The situation in Italian is thus contradictory (cf. Thüne 1995), because alongside masculine generic forms there is also a growing sensitivity towards the use of gender-specific agentives. However, it still remains true that in the field of agentives, women and men continue to use masculine forms even when referring to female subjects, especially in reference to prestigious occupations (e.g., *Elisabetta Rasy, critico letterario e scrittrice* ‘Elisabetta Rasy, literary critic (m) and writer (f)’, *Il Tirreno*, 6 June, 1998). Using masculine forms alongside female-specific ones in these situations is often an indication of a changing social situation, which naturally produces a certain lack of clarity in the use of the language and the degree of instability that feminine agentives continue to display.

4.4 Literary texts

The analysis of the use of feminine agentives in a literary corpus conducted by Stefania Spina (1995) involved the examination of the *LIZ – Letteratura Italiana Zanichelli*, which contains the fundamental texts of a large part of Italian literature from the 13th to the 20th century (500 works by 113 authors from Francesco d’Assisi to Gabriele D’Annunzio). Spina’s analysis adopted both linguistic/stylistic and social parameters.

Spina found that the most productive feminine suffix was *-trice* (50% of a total of 182), followed by *-essa* and *-aia.* The most frequent agentives correspond to jobs linked to small-scale trading, such as *bottegaia* ‘female shopkeeper’, *erbolaia* ‘female greengrocer’, *fruttolaia* ‘female greengrocer’. These are followed by agentives from the sphere of domestic work, e.g., *massaia* ‘housewife’. Spina stressed particularly the fact that the agentives from the first group refer mainly to jobs of a low social status or even to jobs regarded with disdain (*bettoliera, ostessa, tavernara* all meaning ‘pub landlady’). It is also interesting to note that in the 19th century there is a noticeable increase of terms referring to women in the field of education, with feminine terms like *professoressa* ‘female professor’ and *studentessa* ‘female student’ first occurring in the literature at this time (Spina 1995: 137–139).
4.5 Proverbs

Riolo (1995) and Secco (1995) have studied regional corpora, from Sicily and the Veneto respectively, and both have emphasised a pattern of semantically encoded misogyny in idioms and proverbs, which also emerges in current standard usage. What is most interesting is the observation that in the use of normative traditional linguistic formulae regarding marriage, or, more generally in male–female relationships, the privileged partner is always the male. This can be illustrated by the following examples:

a. Expressions which justify male harassment and violence:

*L’omo è cacciaturi, la fimmina è gaddina e s’aggiucca.*
‘Man is a hunter, women are hens, and they perch.’ (R)

b. Expressions which underline men’s dominant position in the family:

*Ogni gaddu canta nta lu so numizzaru.*
‘Every cockerel (husband) crows (dominates) on his own dung-heap (in his own house).’ (R)

c. Expressions which accord to wives a deficient character:

*A relòio, caval e sposa ghe manca sempre qualcosa.*
‘A watch, a horse and a wife always have something missing.’ (S)

d. Expressions which maintain that it is an evil for a woman to remain unmarried:

*Maritu bbonu e maritu tintu, amara a ccu num’avi nì bbonu e nì tintu.*
‘Good husband or bad, if a woman hasn’t got one, she’ll be sad.’ (R)

e. Expressions which maintain female unreliability and perilousness:

*A donna non si può credere, etiam poi che è morta.*
‘You can’t trust a woman, not even after she’s dead.’ (B)

f. Expressions which contain advice on characteristics to look for or to avoid in choosing a woman:

*La deve eser matrona in strada, modesta in cesa, massera in casa e mata in let.*
‘She should be a matron in the street, modest in church, a housewife in the house, and wild in bed.’ (S)

g. Expressions which stress maternity as the only socially valued role of women:

*essiri in statu nteresànti* ‘to be pregnant’ (R)

h. Expressions which suggest gender differences through asymmetrical judgements:

*Le chiacchere son femmine e i fatti son maschi.*
‘Women chatter and men act.’ (B)
Sometimes prejudice, continually marked by lexical asymmetries, is more radically ingrained, and involves the use of terms for which there is no neutral alternative in normal use. Thus, a supposedly neutral approach ends up perpetuating traditional views on what it is to be male and female. Examples of this process can be found in the metaphorical use of terms relating to the lexical field of sexuality. Males are presented in positive terms, while females are metaphorically linked not only to weakness, but also to a general sense of negativity. *Fari fimmina*, which literally means ‘to give birth to a baby girl’, in some Sicilian dialects signifies ‘not to succeed in any given activity/business, to fail’. *A fimminìnna* (R), literally ‘in the way of women’, can signify ‘simply, roughly’, ‘to do something clumsily, imprecisely’; cf. an expression such as *fàrisi i cunti a fimminìnna* (R) ‘do the sums/accounts inaccurately’. Although these expressions have no relation to the social reality of women, they undoubtedly perpetuate a certain stereotypical view of the world, and in particular, have the power to transmit a distorted view of femaleness. Significantly, parallel expressions such as *a masculina* ‘in the way of men’ do not exist, presumably because male behaviour is considered normal and therefore need not be signalled specifically through language.11

5. **Female and male discourse**

As far as male and female speech is concerned, both at the level of classical studies and at the level of oral traditions, recommendations about “speaking” versus that of “keeping silent” appear to differ strongly depending on gender. The constant advice to a woman is to “keep silent”, although by definition she is the guardian of the mother-tongue, she is the one for whom the danger of speaking is most strongly emphasised. 12

In treatises of the 16th century, the reason for which women were encouraged to keep silent was that “a woman is half a man” (cf. Chiantera 1995:330) and was therefore unsuited to anything other than the courtesies that render relationships polite and the graceful conversation in which nothing substantial is communicated: “like Echo, who never begins to speak of her own initiative, but who, when someone speaks, is always ready to respond” (cf. Speroni 1560). Her role is that of being a faithful mirror of her husband, a chameleon who assumes the colours of her husband.

In popular culture, proverbs tend to perpetuate the idea that women talk too much, and that they irritate males. In both cases, what is clearly involved are
communicative strategies aimed at limiting the opportunities for women to express themselves.

From the 1970s onwards, the theme of gender differences in ways of speaking began to be studied in Italian. Attili (1977) suggested that female/male conversation could be interpreted as a collection of linguistic acts capable of reflecting the way in which social relationships between individuals are structured: Female language, uncertain, anxious and less logical, is contrasted with male language, didactic, authoritative and evaluative. This question was discussed in terms of cultural diversity (cf. Tannen 1989). Attili & Benigni (1977, 1979) aimed to demonstrate the different hierarchy of aims and the different pragmatic means exploited by the two communicative patterns. The male-female linguistic relationship is seen in terms of a relationship between a majority and a minority, and is interpreted as a communicative process that tends to create marginality, insecurity, the need for rules, and leads to frustration (cf. Attili 1977, Attili & Benigni 1977, 1979). In the same studies, the authors point out that the strategies of male discourse reveal men’s desire to keep women, and also children, dependent on their authority.

More recent approaches to speaking strategies show greater reluctance to make generalisations that cannot be fully sustained. An important contribution relating to the use of attenuating forms by women is that of Bazzanella & Fornara (1995), which is based on an extensive conversational corpus. It shows that there is no substance to this view: Women’s conversation is in fact not characterised by more than average indecision, frequent attenuations and an absence of “power”. Indeed, what emerges from a more careful analysis of variables such as context and conversational role is that women are generally more deeply involved in conversation.

The research reported in De Marco (1995) rejects the idea that the use of the diminutive is characteristic of female speech, demonstrating that it is also used in male speech, and stressing that if anything it is more extensive contact with children that accounts for the quantitively greater use of such terms. The choice of the diminutive is thus no more than a strategic choice in a given communicative situation.

6. Language politics

The major source for the development of gender-neutral language in Italy is the *Raccomandazioni per un uso non sessista della lingua italiana* ‘Recommendations
Gianna Marcato and Eva-Maria Thüne

for the non-sexist use of the Italian language’ for schools and educational publishers, published by Alma Sabatini in 1986 and adopted by the Prime Minister’s office. In 1987 Sabatini published another work, *Il sessismo nella lingua italiana* ‘Sexism in the Italian language’. As yet, the *Commissione nazionale per la realizzazione delle pari opportunità tra uomo e donna* ‘The National Commission for Equal Opportunities’ (i.e., the organisation which was originally responsible for the publication of both works) has failed to develop a coherent strategy for the solution of the linguistic issues involved.

There may be three reasons for the current lack of progress. One may simply be that, although potentially the linguistic (or more specifically the morphological) structure of Italian might allow for gender to be expressed systematically throughout the language, the traditional norms of usage seem to resist such a development. Secondly, it is possible that socio-cultural developments over the last thirty years have encouraged the adoption of Anglo-American models, which have then brought in their wake a certain preference for solutions typical of that linguistic culture, such as the adoption of “unmarked” masculine forms. A third, and perhaps not unimportant, reason is the sarcasm with which, even in learned circles, Sabatini’s recommendations were received.

6.1 Language use and language politics

It is interesting to note the initiative launched by the daily newspaper *Il Sole – 24 ore*, which in 1994 published an article entitled *La grammatica della chiarezza trasforma moduli e documenti* ‘Grammatical clarity transforms official forms and documents’, subtitled *Il Codice di stile del dipartimento della funzione pubblica indica le regole per facilitare la comunicazione scritta con i cittadini* ‘The Manual of Style of the Department of Public Affairs sets out rules to improve written communication with citizens’.

Citing a law dated 9th December 1977 (no. 903,1), the article stresses the need to make an effort so that the ban on “any form of discrimination founded on sex regarding access to jobs” is actually respected, even if such discrimination is activated in “an indirect way, through press advertising, or any other form of advertising, which indicates as a job requirement being a member of one or the other of the two sexes” (our transl.). Emphasis is placed on avoiding the spread of negative stereotypes, especially through automatic use of the masculine on the assumption that this is the unmarked gender, and thus applicable to both males and females. Many departments in public administration have
distributed the text of these recommendations to their personnel, but there is no information available about the effects.

In recent years, especially Italian universities have increasingly been showing signs of directing their attention to the problem, organising seminars and training courses orientated towards the issue, for example at the University of Bologna. One example worthy of note is the inter-faculty seminar held at the University of Padua, _Studi delle donne_, as part of the European Community’s Socrates project. This was aimed at establishing the _Rete Tematica Athena_ of Women’s Studies, which in the academic year 1997–98 devoted a number of sessions to female writing.

In the south, the _Archivio delle donne_ ‘Women’s archive’ at one of the two Neapolitan universities (Istituto Universitario Orientale) is worthy of mention. A sizeable specialist library has been assembled, which contains the largest collection of periodicals relating to Gender Studies available in the south.

In the north, particularly important and well established is the work of _Diotima_, a community of female philosophers established at the University of Verona in 1984.

In 1997, the National Council of Research (CNR) financed an inter-university research project entitled _Segni linguistici al femminile nella storia, nella tradizione orale, nella letteratura_ ‘Feminine linguistic signs in history, in oral traditions, and in literature’. This project, which is coordinated by Gianna Marcato of the Linguistics Department of the University of Padua, includes numerous participants from Italian and other European universities. It also has didactic aims, and discusses in a concise, but at the same time thorough and critical way, the different issues connected to the theme of Women and Language.

6.2 Splitting

Sabatini (1987) recommended the consistent use of splitting, i.e. the use of feminine as well as masculine forms, in order to avoid the use of the so-called masculine generics.

Examples of long splitting are _le parlamentari e i parlamentari_ ‘the female and the male MPs’ and _le senatrici e i senatori_ ‘the female and male senators’. Abbreviated splitting can be realised only on the level of the determiner, for example, _la/lo studente_ (f/m, singular) ‘the student’ and _le/gli studenti_ (f/m, plural) ‘the students’.
6.3 Formation of new agentives

The formation of new agentives reflects a general tendency to eliminate connotations that are felt to be derogatory or socially discriminating. For example, alongside the term *spazzina/o* (f/m) 'street cleaner', there is now the job title *operatrice ecologica* (f)/*operatore ecologico* (m) 'ecology worker'. Recent formations of this type tend to encounter some degree of resistance in everyday usage. Sabatini (1985:67) already pointed to the fact that for certain jobs which were traditionally done by women, but are now also held by men, there is a greater willingness to accept masculine forms which make the gender reference clear. One example is *levatrice* 'midwife'; instead of creating the morphological parallel *levatore*, coining a new masculine term *ostetrico* was felt to be preferable, which in turn led to the formation of the feminine *ostetrica*.

7. Conclusion

The problem of gender-fair usage in Italian remains unsolved. From this point of view, the position of Chiara Zamboni (1995) and the research group *Diotima* is particularly interesting, for they insist that concentrating on linguistic signs is not sufficient in itself, but has to be accompanied by social and political changes. A similar view has been put forward by the Italian linguist Patrizia Violi (1986). In the course of her discussion of alternatives to female linguistic invisibility, Violi (1997) notes that the language system is characterised by a high degree of both inertia and internal flexibility. Thus, the introduction (or elimination) of a given term may fail to produce the desired results; instead, the linguistic system will tend to restructure the new semantic field on the same lines as the preceding one (cf. Violi 1997:92).

It does not appear that the discussion which started back in 1986 has led to extensive changes in language use. Indeed, there seem to be two conflicting strategies in current Italian, female visibility versus neutralisation (cf. Hellinger 1990). As regards gender-specific linguistic usage and the overt representation of the female element, it seems that the situation is actually deteriorating, not so much because of resistance to the introduction of new terms intended to denote new female occupations and activities, but rather because of the tendency to give up those gender differences that were traditionally well-established in the Italian language, masking the new female roles with linguistic signs of male gender. This goes against both tradition and the historically established grammatical rules of Italian.
When Sabatini’s study appeared, there were many people who were reluctant to regard it as an invitation to engage in serious reflection on the problem. Instead, attention tended to focus on certain provocative proposals in Sabatini’s work, which aroused endless discussions about whether these were aesthetically acceptable or not. Problems of this type concerned the proposed use of dottora ‘woman doctor’ and avvocata ‘woman lawyer’ rather than dottoressa and avvocatessa, or of medica ‘female physician’ vs. medico ‘male physician’.

One must be aware that there is a difference between using a masculine plural noun such as alunni ‘pupils’ so as to also include female pupils (alunne) on the one hand and using a masculine noun as an outright substitute for a feminine one, as in the case of direttore used to refer to a female director, on the other. In the first case, the masculine plural can be understood in the traditional way as including reference to the female element, while in the second case the masculine noun simply masks the underlying female reality and obliterates it.

Thus many have been led to the rejection of certain morphologically acceptable feminines in -e (such as assessore), on the grounds that in Italian their gender denotation is not realised in the ending (which provides information only about number), but in the morphology of the article and of any modifiers and participles that happen to be present and agree with the noun.

Nor is it any more productive to insist on the forced adoption of complicated forms, such as extensive splitting, acceptance of which is clearly problematical. In fact, it is important to distinguish those cases in which language actually obscures important distinctions from cases in which it simply “does not mark” them explicitly.

Notes


2. The suffixes -iatra and -ista obviate the gender distinction only in the singular, for in the plural they have distinct forms for the feminine (le psichiatrie/le farmaciste) and the masculine (gli psichiatri/i farmacisti).

3. The use of the lexicalised component in compound-agentives is limited almost exclusively to women. Besides this form, there is also the pair ‘female/male’, which, however, is used more frequently for non-human animate entities, for example, il gorilla femmina/maschio ‘the female/male gorilla’.
4. It is certainly quite remarkable that in cases where a feminine form actually exists, e.g., lavoratrice/lavoratrici ‘female worker/s’, the need is felt to resort to an even more strongly marked form, i.e. lavoratrice donna ‘female woman worker’.

5. Consider, however, the admittedly jocular denomination of mamma for a ‘father who assumes the role of mother’ cited by Cortelazzo (1995:51).

6. Dardano & Trifone (1985:133) write: “Such a preference is explained by the fact that the masculine is closer than the feminine to being ‘neutral’ in value” (our transl.).

7. The following grammars were examined: Dardano & Trifone (1989), Della Casa (1988), Pressini & Ravizza (1993), Sabatini (1980).

8. One exception are the reflections of Mirella Scriboni (1993) on the teaching of Italian as a foreign language.

9. This once again raises the question of the non-stability of certain forms, in contrast to others which are evidently more widely accepted (cf. Burr 1995).

10. The examples are taken from the cited texts: (B) indicates that the source is Bierbach (1995), while (R) indicates Riolo (1995), and (S) Secco (1995).

11. Here we make reference to examples taken from Riolo (1995); these come from work done on a specific corpus whose aim was to demonstrate asymmetries linked to gender in Sicilian idiomatic lexis. However, a similar corpus based on a collection of the principal dialect glossaries and the main historical dictionaries of the Italian language would undoubtedly confirm that these findings are valid for Italy as a whole.

12. This is clearly emphasised in Bierbach (1995), and for the 16th and 17th centuries, in Chiantera (1995); it is also confirmed by Ceretta (1995:360–363) for the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.

References


The representation of gender in Norwegian

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1. Introduction

Metaphorically, Norway has often been referred to as a laboratory of language policy and planning. Many linguists consider the country particularly interesting as an example of a modern national state where official language standardisation
in general and politically controlled language planning in particular have had a great impact on the development of the written language from the late 19th century onwards. As far as language and gender is concerned, however, Norway is neither more, nor less of a laboratory than any other European country. The question of language and gender did not – at least not in a significant way – enter the agenda of any language planning agency or committee in Norway till the 1980s, long after it had started to evoke the interest of the general public. Why there is such a discrepancy between general Norwegian language planning and feminist language reform is worth discussing.

During the 1970s, the international development of sociolinguistics and the accompanying interest in language and gender (gender being considered a sociolinguistic variable) led to a reorientation within Norwegian linguistics. Sociolinguistics was gradually being taught at university level, and young feminist linguists addressed the topic of the relationship between language and sexism (cf. Ryen 1976). Questions such as “Is the Norwegian language sexist?” and “Is there a separate women’s language?” were raised and discussed among the “new” feminists who got organised during the 1970s. The first person to focus on questions like these, however, was neither a woman, nor a linguist. Rolf Mikkel Blakar, a psychologist, published several books and papers on topics of language, gender and power, and his work received a great deal of attention during these first very active years (cf., e.g., Blakar 1973, 1975).

Out of this interest, two fields of study emerged: firstly, the linguistic and communicative behaviour of men and women, and secondly, the linguistic representation of gender in language. The latter area covers the study of linguistic sexism and of non-sexist language planning. Although interrelated, the two fields have nevertheless developed separately. Norwegian research in these areas cannot be discussed or presented in isolation; it is part and parcel of an international tradition.

As far as gender representation in language is concerned, research on typologically more or less related languages shows many common features and aspects, despite other interlingual differences. Firstly, the use of the masculine gender for generic purposes seems to be universal. Thus, the noun or pronoun referring to a man can also refer to human beings in generic contexts. This, of course, may contribute to the idea that the generic or typical human being is male. Consequently, it leads to the linguistic invisibility of women, by assuming that male includes female, but not vice versa.

Secondly, almost everywhere the concept ‘male’ and/or the masculine form is considered to be unmarked, while the concept ‘female’ or the feminine form
is seen as the marked exception. Thirdly, female terms are likely to be derived from male ones, e.g., through suffixation, and finally, female terms and agent nouns have a greater susceptibility to semantic derogation. All these aspects are relevant to Norwegian.

The documentation of linguistic sexism led to calls for change, in Norway as elsewhere. The Norwegian discussion as to what type of changes to advocate had much in common with the solutions suggested in other language communities where linguistic sexism had been put on the agenda. As for the problem of how to find appropriate ways to refer to females and males, individually and generically, there was an option between two principally different solutions: gender-neutralisation versus gender-specification. Gender-neutralisation aims at eliminating differential treatment. Thus, any gender marking, grammatical or lexical, should be eradicated or at least minimised in all generic contexts. In practise, this means elimination of gender suffixes, to detract attention away from the category of gender. The strategy of gender specification, on the other hand, aims at making women linguistically visible by feminisation of human agent nouns, through suffixation or lexically.

Norwegian women hold a leading political position compared to most other western countries. The position of women is particularly noticeable in national politics. Women have voted for 85 years: Norway was the second nation in the world to introduce the vote for women in 1913. Some other important dates with respect to women should be mentioned: the first professor in 1912, the first minister (member of the King’s cabinet) in 1945, the first vicar in 1961, the first bishop in 1993. To some extent, then, Norway has for a long time had at least token women in most parts of the nation’s life. And as far as the present is concerned, while there might be differences as to the extent of optimism, no one would deny that Norwegian women have indeed come a long way, and would seem to have an enviable position compared to women in many other countries.

Thus while Norway is not entirely a country where women are truly represented in every sphere, we would claim that this process is well under way. If we compare the Norway of the 1950s and 1960s with today’s Norway, it is obvious that not only are there fewer housewives (45% of the entire workforce are women), there are also relatively large proportions of women in many high-status professions, and almost entire equality of numbers in national politics. Women are important in a way they certainly weren’t in the 1950s and 1960s.
2. Historical and sociolinguistic background

Norwegian is a Germanic language, belonging to the North Germanic (Scandinavian) branch, with approximately 4.5 million speakers. Since 1885 Norwegian has had two officially recognised forms, nynorsk 'New Norwegian' and bokmål lit. 'book language', both of which have developed into conservative and more progressive or "radical" varieties in the course of the 20th century. Bokmål is the written standard of the majority, while nynorsk is used by some 17% of the population (cf. Vikør 1995). The names bokmål and nynorsk normally refer to the written standards and not to any spoken varieties of Norwegian. There is actually a third variety, essentially a very conservative variety of bokmål, called riksmål 'national language'; this is, however, not an official standard.1

Officially, there is no standardised form of spoken Norwegian. People are free to speak their local dialects anywhere and in any situation or context. Teachers are not allowed to correct or standardise the spoken language of students in schools, nor would most of them probably want to. Dialects are used in the media, the universities, and in the government administration. Thus, the linguistic situation of Norway is rather different from that of the rest of Europe.

The reasons for the division into two written standards are rooted in the earlier influence of Danish. Over a period of 400 years, Norway formed a so-called personal union with Denmark and was under Danish rule until 1814. Thus, bokmål was more or less directly derived from Danish, while nynorsk was constructed as some sort of common denominator of the Norwegian dialects, with an emphasis on the dialects in the western and central parts of southern Norway. In a series of reforms, bokmål has gone through a process of Norwegianisation, and similarly nynorsk has undergone a process of modernisation; the result is that over the years the linguistic distance between the two standards has grown smaller. Today, the two standards are very similar, indeed, and understanding one means understanding the other, even if there are grammatical as well as lexical differences. Examples in the text are from both varieties, or from dialects, but mostly from bokmål, the written variety most extensively used.

3. The representation of gender in Norwegian

Like several of its Germanic cognates, Norwegian has inherited from Indo-European a tripartite gender system (cf. Beekes 1995:174). In present-day
Norwegian, the system of grammatical gender is fairly simple, and mainly involves the definite and indefinite articles. More forms exist in the dialects than in the standard languages, and more forms exist in nynorsk than in bokmål. Norwegian also has natural, i.e. semantic gender, and there is some interaction between these two types. Nouns may be marked for referential gender with compounding elements or suffixes, the latter being mainly [+ female]. This type of suffixation has been undergoing a rather drastic change over the past decades in that the suffixes are disappearing.

There are, then, two types of gender-related marking: grammatical markers, i.e. suffixed definite articles (or freestanding articles), and derivational suffixes such as -ske, -inne (which, e.g., correspond to Engl. -ess).

3.1 Grammatical gender

The grammatical gender system of most dialects and the standard varieties nynorsk and bokmål is basically tripartite: masculine, feminine, neuter. The Bergen dialect as well as conservative bokmål and riksmål have a two-part NP-system, with neuter and common gender, i.e. the collapse of masculine and feminine into one common gender class. The common gender-marking article is identical to the earlier masculine form (cf. Corbett 1991:124). Norwegian nouns neither have grammatical case inflections (except for the genitive marker -s) nor true gender inflections (as was the case in Old Norse). Mostly, it is impossible to tell what gender a noun belongs to from the form of the word (Faarlund & Lie & Vannebo 1997:150). A few nominal endings, however, denote (grammatically) feminine or masculine words. Thus, words ending in -er and -eri are always masculine and neuter respectively; nynorsk words in -skap, -nad, and -leik are always masculine, while -ing is often feminine (cf. Faarlund & Lie & Vannebo 1997:96f).

Grammatical gender is a property of the noun, with agreement marked on variable forms of articles and adjectives. The indefinite articles en (m), ei (f), et (n) precede the noun and are freestanding. Norwegian has two sets of definite articles, one of which is suffixed to the noun, and thus looks like an inflection. Bokmål may have common gender -en versus neuter -et or a three-way system: masculine -en, feminine -a, and neuter -et. Nynorsk patterns as the latter. The other definite articles den (masculine/feminine) and det (neuter) precede the noun phrase and are freestanding; however, the suffixed definite article is used in a wider set of contexts than the freestanding one. Thus “feminine noun” means that the noun must be used with a feminine article (or, that the word has
The gendered indefinite articles are shown in (1a), and the definite articles in (1b,1c):

(1) a. en gutt (m)  ‘a boy’
    ei jente (f)  ‘a girl’
    et barn (n)  ‘a child’

b. gutten (m)  ‘the boy’
    jenta (f)  ‘the girl’
    barnet (n)  ‘the child’

c. den lille gutten (m)  ‘the small boy’
    den lille jente/en (f)  ‘the small girl’
    det lille barnet (n)  ‘the small child’

In the plural, gender is neutralised in bokmål (2a), but not in the dialects and nynorsk (2b):

(2) a. (de) guttene  ‘(the) boys’
    (de) jentene  ‘(the) girls’
    (de) skipene/skipa  ‘(the) ships’

b. (dei) gutane  ‘(the) boys’
    (dei) jentene  ‘(the) girls’
    (dei) skipa  ‘(the) ships’

The grammatical gender of basic human nouns such as kvinne ‘woman’ or gutt ‘boy’, i.e. words referring directly to people, but not, for instance, to occupations, tends to correlate with their lexical gender, and frequently such personal nouns have a generic term as well (which is often grammatically neuter):

(3) a. en mann (m)  ‘a man’
    ei kvinne (f)  ‘a woman’
    et menneske (n)  ‘a human being’

b. en gutt (m)  ‘a boy’
    ei jente (f)  ‘a girl’
    et barn (n)  ‘a child’

Every noun with a feminine suffix or basic nouns referring to women may be used with the feminine article (but may also have the common gender article, which is identical with the masculine): kone ‘wife’, dame ‘lady’, kjerring ‘wife/woman’, prinsesse ‘princess’, sangerinne ‘singer’. There are, however, feminine nouns denoting animals or inanimates as well: kråke ‘crow’, ku ‘cow’, ugler ‘owl’, bok ‘book’, sol ‘sun’, kvise ‘pimple’, penn ‘pen’, dør ‘door’, hytte ‘cottage’.
Masculine articles are used with male-specific human nouns such as *mann* ‘man’ or *bror* ‘brother’. In addition, nouns referring to both women and men (*arving* ‘heir’, *professor* ‘professor’, *lege* ‘doctor’, etc.) tend to be grammatically masculine. As with the other gender classes, there are masculine nouns in all semantic categories: *baby* ‘baby’, *oter* ‘otter’, *kylling* ‘chicken’, *bil* ‘car’, *måne* ‘moon’, *storm* ‘storm’, *reklame* ‘advertising/commercial’.


Masculine nouns have the highest frequency: More than half of all nouns are masculine (cf. Beito 1986, Heggstad 1982), but there are no particular semantic regularities involved: An inanimate noun such as *måne* ‘moon’ is masculine, as is ‘storm’, while the Norwegian equivalent for Engl. ‘rain’ and ‘sunshine’ are neuter, and ‘sun’ is feminine. Nouns referring to animals are mostly masculine, but may occasionally be neuter or feminine. To summarise, all grammatical genders include nouns referring to persons, although the neuter class comprises very few such nouns.

Grammatical and natural gender may interact, for instance in epicene nouns (i.e. nouns with a fixed gender whose referent may be male or female); most of these will be grammatically masculine, but may be used in conjunction with feminine as well as masculine pronouns (cf. example 4):

(4) *Professoren* (m) kom inn i rommet. Hun/Han så ingen.

‘The professor came into the room. She/He saw nobody.’

The opposite situation will hardly ever occur, for the simple reason that there are very few feminine epicones. There are a couple of nouns, however, which are invariably feminine in *nynorsk*, while in *bokmål* they may be feminine or masculine, e.g., *kjempe* ‘giant’ and *nattevakt* ‘guard’. With these nouns, a masculine personal pronoun would be used if they referred to males, and a feminine pronoun if the referent was a woman.

3.2 Agreement: Pronouns and adjectives

Unlike English, but like German, Norwegian reflexive pronouns are not gendered:
(5)  

Hun/ han vask- et  seg.  
shel/ he  wash- IPP REFPL  
‘She/he washed her/himself.’

Personal and possessive pronouns are gendered, but in the third person singular only; there is no gender marking in first and second person pronouns or in the plural, cf. Table 1:

Table 1a. Third person pronouns, personal and possessive in *bokmål*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masc</td>
<td>han (ham)</td>
<td>hans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fem</td>
<td>hun (henne)</td>
<td>hennes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neut</td>
<td>det</td>
<td>dets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masc/fem  (inanimate)</td>
<td>den</td>
<td>dens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>all genders</td>
<td>de (dem)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Forms in brackets are oblique forms that differ from the nominative.

Table 1b. Third person pronouns, personal and possessive in *nynorsk*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masc</td>
<td>han</td>
<td>hans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fem</td>
<td>ho (henne)</td>
<td>hennar</td>
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<tr>
<td>neut</td>
<td>det</td>
<td>dets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masc/fem  (inanimate)</td>
<td>den (hans, hennar)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plural</td>
<td>all genders</td>
<td>de (dem)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Forms in brackets are oblique forms that differ from the nominative.

In addition to pronouns meaning ‘he’, ‘she’ and ‘it’, there is a third person singular pronoun *den*, which is common gender, and used with reference to non-human feminine as well as masculine nouns:

(6)  

a.  
Den boka (f)/vasen (m) der, gi meg den.  
‘The book/vase over there, give it to me.’

b.  
Mannen (m)/dama (f)/barnet (n)  er ikke her, *den er i stuen.  
‘The man/lady/child, isn’t here, *it is in the living room.’

In *bokmål*, inanimates may not generally be referred to with *han or hun* – unlike in *nynorsk*, and most dialects, where grammatical gender governs the choice of
pronouns; in these varieties, stolen (m) ‘the chair’ would be referred to as han ‘he’, while matta (f) ‘the rug’ would be ho ‘she’.

Pronominal reference to animals may be chosen either according to the noun’s grammatical or to its referential gender, the latter being the normal choice especially in the case of pets. The word hund ‘dog’ is masculine, but if the animal referred to is female, she may be referred to as hun (or den):

(7) Hunden slikket hvalpene sine. Han/Den var tydelig stolt.
‘The dog licked her puppies. She/It was obviously proud.’

As mentioned above, nouns referring to both men and women that are normally grammatically masculine, such as botaniker ‘botanist’, forfatter ‘author’, and professor ‘professor’, may be referred to with either a masculine or feminine pronoun (constructio ad sensum), if the gender of the referent is known, as in (8a). Similarly, referential gender will also override grammatical gender in those cases where the latter is neuter, cf. (8b):

(8) a. Tannlegen kom inn. Han/Hun sa at …
‘The dentist came in. He/She said that …’
   b. Det kom et mannfolk (n)/ kvinnfolk (n) inn og han/hun sa at …
   ‘A man/woman came in and he/she said that …’

Traditionally, the masculine pronoun was used as the generic pronoun. Thus, in most dialects, if the gender of the dentist in (8) was unknown, han would be used as a generic form. In present-day Norwegian, feminine pronouns are now possible in generic contexts, too (cf. Section 7).

Unlike languages such as English, Norwegian does not seem to have a strong tendency to use the female/feminine pronouns for phenomena such as storms, nations, or ships (cf. Romaine 1999). In Norwegian, ‘storm’, being a masculine word, would be han if gendered at all. Ships, however, may be referred to as ‘she’ (cf. Faarlund & Lie & Vannebo 1997:326). In some dialects, especially along the Norwegian coast, han ‘he’ is used in a number of contexts where there is no referent at all, or no human referent; for instance, there are weather statements with so-called empty han, as in (9), where hun ‘she’ would be impossible:

(9) a. Han er fæl idag.
   he is horrible today
   ‘The weather is awful today.’
b. Han blæs godt idag.
   He blows well today
   ‘It is very windy today.’

c. Han er kald/varm idag.
   He is cold/warm today
   ‘It’s cold/warm today.’

d. Vi står han av.
   We stand him off
   ‘We’ll manage.’

Adjectives are normally not affected by the masculine–feminine gender distinction, but are marked grammatically for feminine/masculine vs. neuter gender (as well as for number). Thus we find all genders represented in the singular as in (10a–c) and the plural as in (11a–b). Plural adjectives show no gender variation at all.

(10) a. jenta er snill/ei snill jente/den snille jenta (f)
   ‘the girl is good/a good girl/the good girl’

   b. gutten er snill/en snill gutt/den snille gutten (m)
   ‘the boy is good/a good boy/the good boy’

   c. barnet er snilt, et snilt barn, det snille barnet (n)
   ‘the child is good/a good child/the good child’

(11) a. snille jenter og gutter og barn
   ‘good girls and boys and children’

   b. De er snille.
   ‘They are good.’

However, some particular adjectives may distinguish all genders in nynorsk, radical bokmål and most dialects, e.g., liten ‘small’, as shown in (12):

(12) gutten er liten/jenta er lita/barnet er lite
    ‘the boy is small/the girl is small/the child is small’

3.3 Lexical gender

As is the case in most languages, Norwegian has a group of nouns that inherently denote women or men, and whose grammatical gender generally corresponds to their referential gender, cf. (13):
Other inherently gendered nouns are kinship terms, words which denote personal relationships, and a few miscellaneous terms:

(14) Female/Feminine Male/Masculine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female/Feminine</th>
<th>Male/Masculine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mor</td>
<td>far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suster</td>
<td>bror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tante</td>
<td>onkel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kusine</td>
<td>fetter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niese</td>
<td>nevø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kone</td>
<td>mann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frue</td>
<td>mann, herre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hustru</td>
<td>ektemann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brud</td>
<td>brudgom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enke</td>
<td>enkemann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nonne</td>
<td>munk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hore</td>
<td>horebukk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>madonna</td>
<td>[?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dronning</td>
<td>konge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of these nouns are in current use, though kjerring is rather derogatory except in the meaning ‘wife’, which is widespread in the dialects (it is a derivation, now opaque, of the masculine noun karl ‘man’, which is the older form of kar. Kvinn is probably the most frequently used general term for women, though many speakers would prefer dame.

In Norwegian, like in many Indo-European languages, for instance German and English, if a personal noun is derived, the female/feminine word will normally be derived from a male/masculine form, not vice versa; the exceptions are brudgom ‘bridegroom’ and enkemann ‘widower’, which are derived from the feminine forms (cf. Bull 1985).
4. Word-formation

4.1 Compounding

In addition to lexical gender nouns, there are also a number of gendered compounds, where the last element, normally a word from either group (13) or (14), determines the referential gender denoted:

(15) a. karrierekvinne ‘career + woman’ = ‘careerwoman’
   yrkeskvinne ‘occupation/profession + woman’
       = ‘working woman’
   sjøkvinne ‘sea + woman’ = ‘sailor, seawoman’
   politikvinne ‘police + woman’ = ‘policewoman’
   vaskekjerring ‘wash + wife/woman’ = ‘cleaning lady’
   kontordame ‘office + lady’ = ‘clerk, typist’
   stuepike ‘parlor + girl’ = ‘housemaid’
   havfrue ‘ocean + lady’ = ‘mermaid’
   prestefru ‘vicar + wife’ = ‘vicar’s wife’

b. jordmor ‘earth + mother’ = ‘midwife’
   barnehavetante ‘kindergarten + aunt’ = ‘nurseryschool teacher’
   helsesøster ‘health + sister’ = ‘public health nurse’

c. mormor/farmor ‘mother’s/father’s mother’
   stemor ‘stepmother’
   svigermor/datter/søster ‘mother/daughter/sister-in-law’

Several of the words in (15) are archaic today, e.g., kontordame, vaskekjerring, due to changing social conditions or ideological pressure inspired by feminism, and have been replaced by terms which do not express gender. Karrierekvinne is new, replacing yrkeskvinne, as working outside of the home became the norm, not the exception for women. All too frequently, however, karrierekvinne has acquired negative connotations, as had yrkeskvinne previously; nowadays having a job is acceptable, but “having a career” is slightly more suspicious, especially if the careerwoman in question has children. In (15b), the nouns denote professions that used to be all female, but in which large numbers of males are now working. Jordmor and helsesøster, however, remain the official terms (newspapers might occasionally use the form jordfar, but more or less humorously). Barnehavetante (and -onkel) is replaced officially by førskolelærer ‘preschool teacher’, but may still be used informally. In (15c) a number of kinship compounds are listed.
4.2 Derivation

Gender suffixing in Norwegian characteristically has meant feminisation, i.e. the suffixes are mainly used to derive feminine words from masculine ones. However, gender suffixes are rapidly becoming extinct (cf. Swan 1992 and 1995). The masculine suffixes include -ør, -ist and -er, but the former two are not productive at all. In addition, several -ør nouns are epicene, and always have been: sjåfør ‘chauffeur’ – *sjåføse (but cf. massør ‘masseur’ – massøse ‘masseuse’, etc.). The suffix -er in present-day Norwegian forms grammatically masculine nouns, but is not generally regarded as a male suffix semantically (except by very old people who may also use a corresponding female word ending in the suffix -inne). The suffix -er derives agent nouns such as maler, from male ‘to paint’, sykepleier ‘nurse’ from pleie syke ‘care (for the) sick’. The major feminine suffixes are -inne and -ske, while -esse, -ine, and a few others may be considered minor suffixes (cf. 16 and 17):

(16) Major suffixes denoting women: -inne and -ske

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>forfatter-inne</td>
<td>‘author’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>venn-inne</td>
<td>‘friend’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lærer-inne</td>
<td>‘teacher’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sykepleier-ske</td>
<td>‘nurse’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forbryter-ske</td>
<td>‘criminal’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(17) Minor suffixes denoting women: -øse, -esse, -isse, -ine, -ise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mass-øse</td>
<td>‘masseuse’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>baron-esse</td>
<td>‘baroness’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abbed-isse</td>
<td>‘prioress’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stud-ine</td>
<td>‘female student’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>direktr-ise</td>
<td>‘directrice’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above forms are the traditional ways of gender marking in Norwegian. As to the grammatical gender of these suffixed forms, usage varies between feminine and common gender in nynorsk. However, the suffixes are undergoing a radical change in the language, i.e. not only are the feminine suffixes no longer productive, they have in fact almost died out; their extinction undoubtedly being a result of the ideological process Norway started undergoing in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As late as 1965, they were still going strong (cf. Swan 1992). The minor suffixes were never very productive in the first place.

Both -inne and -ske are borrowed from Middle Low German. They had very different connotations, however, since -ske was almost entirely restricted to
negative or low status contexts, e.g., syer-ske ‘seamstress’, hykler-ske ‘female hypocrite’. The suffix -inne was introduced in the Old Norse period. It was used well into the middle of the 20th century for terms for women in many artistic and intellectual professions or belonging to nationalities and ethnic groups, and also to designate the wife of a high-status professional (bispinne, the wife of a bisp ‘bishop’), and wives of various male members of the nobility and royalty (hertuginne ‘duchess’, wife of hertug ‘duke’). The latter terms are in fact still used today, and may also, of course, be titles not acquired by marriage but by birth. More rarely, -inne was used to designate the female of certain animals (ulvinne ‘she-wolf’ from ulv ‘wolf’); all of these are archaic as well. However, even though most -inne nouns are more or less archaic today, there are some present-day survivors, e.g., venninne ‘girlfriend’ (cf. venn ‘friend’), prestinne ‘priestess’ (cf. prest ‘priest’); the female word, however, is only used in the pagan sense, while the masculine word is in current use to denote a minister or priest), gudinne ‘goddess’ (cf. gud ‘god’), vertinne ‘hostess’ (cf. vert ‘host’), and perhaps to some extent elskerinne ‘mistress’ (which with its masculine counterpart elsker forms a symmetrical pair). For a complete account of such suffixes, cf. Swan (1992 and 1995).

The disappearance of the female/feminine suffixes in Norwegian represents a case of relatively rapid language change which is clearly related to changing social conditions; social and ideological pressures have indeed come to bear on linguistic structures. Nevertheless, it is a curious change, since it is only the suffixes that have come to be seen as trivialising and suspect, or even derogatory; it is not gender marking per se, since compounding with -kvinne is not suspect.

As far as words for men and women are concerned, official and feminist policy requires a basic generic term and, if necessary, adjectival modification by kvinnelig/mannlig ‘female/male’ or compounding with -kvinne/-mann. In fact, the nominal system has been disturbed twice, first when people started entering professions which had been dominated by either women or men – e.g., men becoming nurses, and women becoming priests – and then due to ideological pressure (cf. Section 7). Most terms for high-status or intellectual professions, however, may refer to both women and men. The fact that they are grammatically masculine is not significant with respect to pronouns, if the gender of the referent is known. Apparently Norwegians do not usually consider grammatical gender a salient feature – unlike the highly salient female/feminine suffixes – and for many people masculine and feminine nouns are in one common gender group. However, assumptions about the bearer of the title, if unknown, may
often be male-biased, e.g., in the high-status terms shown in (18), while titles such as sykepleier ‘nurse’ (also grammatically masculine) will be female-biased.

(18) statsminister ‘prime minister’  biskop ‘bishop’
    lege, doktor  ‘physician’  biolog ‘biologist’
    direktør  ‘director’  politisjef ‘police superintendent’
    dommer  ‘judge’  advokat ‘lawyer’
    politimester  ‘Commissioner of Police, chief of police’
(\ also professor, pilot, journalist, president, ambassador)

Like other Germanic languages, Norwegian has always had -mann words, such as those in (19). Official policy has largely been to eradicate gendered forms, including the -mann compounds. The ideal and extremely frequent pattern is a basic generic form, and then – if necessary – gendered forms for specific uses. Thus a stortingsrepresentant ‘member of Parliament’ may be a stortingskvinne or a stortingsmann, a leder ‘chair’ (lit. ’one who leads’) may be a formann or a forkvinnen.

(19) | Traditional usage | Modern usage |
    | tillitsmann  lit. ’confidence man’ | tillitsvalgt |
    | brannmann  ‘fireman’ | brannkonstabel ‘fire officer’ |
    | stortingsmann ‘parliament man’ | stortingsrepresentant ‘parliament member’ |
    | postmann  ‘postman’ | postbud ‘post carrier’ |
    | talsmann  ‘spokesman’ | talsperson ‘spokesperson’ |
    | formann  ‘chairman’ | leder ‘leader’ |
    | varaumann ‘substitute man’ | vara ‘substitute’ |
    | ombudsmann ‘ombudsman’ | ombud ‘ombud’ |

Some of the -mann words, however, have been resistant to changes (cf. 20):

(20) sysselmann  ‘(royally appointed) governor of Spitzbergen’
    embedsmann  ‘(royally appointed) higher civil servant’
    fylkesmann  ‘highest official of county’
    tjenerestemann ‘civil servant/state employee’
    lagmann  ‘judge (Superior Court)’
    styrmann  ‘first officer, co-pilot’
    nordmann  ‘(a) Norwegian’
    rådmann  ‘higher town official’
    meglingsmann ‘arbitrator/mediator’ (in wage disputes)
Words like postmann, brannmann and a few more do not have corresponding -kvinne forms, but have been entirely replaced with a gender-indefinite form plus an optional adjectival modifier (kvinnelig/mannlig). On the whole then, -mann words have died out, or are archaic/conservative. Once in a while, however, one may find examples of general -mann words in the newspapers. Thus a recent article quite unusually used ransmann 'robber man', riflemann ‘rifle man’ and gjerningsmann ‘perpetrator’ – as well as raner ‘robber’; all of these referred to the same man!

Interestingly, there is no sign of people using the generic forms for women only, as has frequently been the case in English (cf. Ehrlich & King 1994). On national TV and in the newspapers, the man is a ‘spokesman’ and the woman a ‘spokeswoman’, or they are both ‘spokespersons’. The case is similar for the other frequently used words such as tillitsvalgt, leder, etc. Those persons who still use the -mann words generally are old, or they do so as a political statement, and indeed they claim to use them generically. The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, for instance, uses the forms formann ‘leader, chair’ for both women and men, which has become very unusual; it so happens that in 1999, the two formenn were women.

However, there are in fact some -mann words that are quite alive and well, namely those listed in (20). These compounds will probably stay with us for a long time, and relatively frequently one encounters feminine counterparts as well (with -kvinne as a second element), and of course the form with premodifying kvinnelig. The legal and official form, however, is the -mann form, so they are the exception to the general trend and policy. The reason they are so resistant to change is that almost all of them refer to high-status positions, and in addition they are generally very old words, dating back to Old Norse times.

The word denoting ‘Norwegian’ is particularly difficult; the present authors and quite a few other women dislike being called nordmenn, but there is no alternative which seems acceptable. Similarly, landsmann ‘compatriot’ is problematic, but seems to be disappearing. Generally, however, the system of Norwegian personal nouns has become remarkably more generic or gender-neutral.

5. Names and honorifics

Naming practices and, not least, the honorific system, have been arenas where gendering has been extremely dominant, and traditionally full of inequalities. Norwegian has, however, changed a great deal in recent decades.
Norwegian first names are, with one or two exceptions, gendered, i.e. the last element will clearly identify a male or a female referent (-geir, -grim, -er vs. -vild, -hild, -a), or the entire name is defined as male or female (Tor, Bjørn vs. Tove, Gunn). The two exceptions are boys’ names (Tore, Inge) which occasionally are used for girls even though corresponding girls’ names exist (Tora, Inga).

With respect to last names the patriarchal tradition was strong until the early 1970s. Women, on becoming wives, always took their husbands’ names, as did their children. Per Ås, therefore, might marry Berit Li, who would become Berit Ås, and their children might be Ole Ås, Nina Ås, etc. (occasionally Nina Li Ås, i.e. with the mother’s maiden name as a middle name).

Since the 1960s, however, women have started to keep their own last names, or at least add their own names as middle names; children of the marriage might get their mother’s name. Indeed, since 1980, children automatically get their mother’s last name unless the authorities are specifically informed that they will use the father’s name. There are obvious class differences here, and educated women will be more likely to keep their own names. A man may also take his wife’s name, but this is rare. To some extent the type of name is also important. If the man has a name ending in -sen ‘-son’, and the woman does not, she is far less likely to change her name, since -sen names are more numerous and therefore looked upon as more ordinary.

Traditionally, upper or middle class women could use their husbands’ titles, a practice which is now archaic (though older people may retain it). The formula would either be husband’s title + suffix + last name, or fru + husband’s title + last name (cf. bispinne Ås ‘bishop-female Ås’; Fru doktor Ås ‘Mrs doctor Ås’). Such usage was still prevalent as late as the 1960s.

Some 40 years ago, when Norway’s first woman vicar was appointed in 1961, the papers were quite preoccupied with what title her husband would have (Herr sogneprest? ‘Mr Vicar’? Herr prestemannen? ‘the vicar’s husband’?). Conveniently, the bishop of Hamar, who is a woman, is unmarried.

With respect to this usage, social rank as well as referential gender is marked: The suffix -inne was used with high status wives (and is used to this day with certain royals or nobles, e.g., hertuginne ‘duchess’). Also upper to middle class is -frue (‘wife, married woman’; fru ‘Mrs’ is used as an honorific), and on a low status level we have -kjerring or -kone (‘wife, married woman’), the latter being more variable with respect to status (cf. 21). Prestekjerring and fiskerfrue would thus be equally anomalous, but prestekone would be acceptable:
Withincreasingnumbersofwomeninrelativelyhighpositions,andsocialvalues,suchpracticesseemoddtoday.Nevertheless,itisquiteclearthat
womenarefarlesslikelytobeadressedwiththeirtitlesthanarem.

Useoffirstnames,however,isverycommonforbothwomenandmen.For
instance,Norwegianstudentsaddresstheirprofessorsbyfirstname.Inthemedia,
referencetopoliticiansandotherwell-knownpersonswillnormallybedeterminedby
theperson’slikeabilityorwhethersheorheiswell-known,not
bygenderperse.GroHarlemBrundtland,thepreviousPrimeMinister,was
(andstillis)frequentlyreferredtoasGro,andincreasinglyfondlyastimewent
byandshabecameaveryvaluablelandsmoder‘thecountry’smother’(derivedform
landsfader,i.e.afatherly,oldpolitician).

Bothmenandwomenareoftenreferredtobylastnameinnewspaper
articles,thefullnamebeingmentionedfirst,andafterwardsthenickname.
Nevertheless,therusedtobeamuchstrongertendencyformentobereferred

Thetraditionalhonorificsystemincludedfrøken‘Miss’,fru‘Mrs’,herr‘Mr’,
butthisisrarelyusedtoday,andifathall,onlyinbusinesscorrespondence,in
whichcasefrwillbeusedforbothfrøkenandfru,similartoEngl.Ms(cf.
combinationswiththehusband’stitleinthecaseof(middleclass)women:FruprofessorBerg,FrudoktorPettersen,butnot*FrubondeHaug‘Mrsfarmer
Haug’.Frøkenandfruwouldoriginallybeusedonlyformiddleclassdaughters
orwives.Aslateas1911,evendeathannouncementswouldbeclassdifferentiat-
edinthisrespect(cf.Swan1991).Thelossofhonorifictitles,however,isnot
simply,orevenchiefly,amatteroffeministideology;rather,itisareesultofa
generaldemocratisationprocesswhichalsoincludesthelossofpolitepronouns.

Itshouldalsobementionedinthiscontextthatchangingsocialpracticesshouldalsoberememberedinthiscontextthatchangingsocialpractices
haveleadtovariousinnovationsinthelexicffieldofmarriageandrelationships.
The terms uekte barn/lausung ‘ungenuine child’/‘loose child’ (‘illegitimate
child’)have disappeared, and a large percentage of children are in fact born to
parents who are not legally married, but often samboere ‘with-livers’, i.e.
ekteskap ‘marriage’) is an established term; the participants are called et samboerpar ‘a with-liver couple’, or samboere (i.e. both man and woman call their partner min samboer ‘my with-liver’). The degree of commitment and stability varies, of course, but the term itself nevertheless confers a dignity wholly lacking in earlier terms for relationships outside of marriage. Samboere may enter into legal agreements designed to protect the parties involved (e.g., with respect to inheritance), especially if there are children, and in some contexts have rights and duties much like those in a marriage, but there is no ritual or ceremony. Homosexual couples may enter into partnerskap ‘partnership’ (since 1993); this involves a marriage ceremony in a judge’s office (but not, so far, a church ritual, as the Norwegian state church is extremely homophobic), and the rights and duties of the partners correspond exactly to those of heterosexual married partners, for instance with respect to inheritance.

Other new terms which may be mentioned, very unpleasant ones, are ekteskapsleir ‘marriage camp’, hentebrud (‘fetch + bride’) and, slightly older, postordrebrud ‘mail order bride’. Ekteskapsleir is a phenomenon which is entirely new, and a result of the recently opened borders between Norway and Russia. It refers to a camp arranged for Russian women and Norwegian men, providing opportunities for meeting potential partners; the women are (for economic and other reasons, as they themselves say) very interested in finding Norwegian husbands. Recently a women’s group pressed charges against the manager of one of these marriage camps, claiming that he was a hallik ‘pimp’; procuration, though not prostitution, is illegal. The Russian women’s response consists of a counter charge; they feel, not unnaturally, that calling the camp owner a pimp is tantamount to calling them prostitutes.

Hentebrud ‘fetch + bride’ and postordrebrud ‘mail order + bride’ are derogatory terms for foreign women (often from Thailand or the Philippines) who have married Norwegian men. Unfortunately, in some cases hentebrud is an all too correct term, since in certain circles a variation on the theme of sex holidays is to go abroad to get a wife, and has become very popular. These women are described by the men as uncontaminated by feminism (and therefore good wives, unlike the selfish and unfeminine Norwegian women); unfortunately many end up abused and/or abandoned, without knowing any Norwegian or having any friends. Divorce is often not an option, since they may be returned to their home countries if they do leave their husbands.
6. Gendered idioms and frozen expressions

Languages are repositories of the linguistic practices of countless generations, hence earlier social conditions may remain in the language long after they have ceased to exist in society. Thus, like many languages, Norwegian displays a great deal of asymmetry in the form and function of gendered phrases which reflect centuries of inequality.

6.1 Expressions with mann

The original meaning of the word mann ‘man’ was probably ‘human being’ (cf. also Latin homo; for an interesting account of the pairs homo/mulier and vir/femina, see L’Hoir 1992). In present-day Norwegian menneske is used; this word is neuter in Norwegian, while its Swedish cognate människa is feminine (cf. also cognates in the other Germanic languages). It is in fact very difficult to distinguish truly generic forms from masculine/male forms in various old sayings and frozen expressions. Obviously, in many cases the male bias has been reinforced because of social structures, even though the form itself may originally have been generic. Thus, since mannskap ‘crew’ used to consist entirely of men, the word had male connotations (grammatically, mannskap is neuter). Members of the crew would be called sjømann/-menn ‘seaman/men’; only recently has a corresponding word sjøkvinne ‘seawoman’ been created, and is an approved word, though very rarely used.

Norwegian contains numerous lexical items and idiomatic expressions with mann or its synonyms, while there are few with kvinne. In March 1999, the Norwegian consumer ombudsman decided that papers may use the phrase rett mann på rett plass ‘the right man in the right place’ in employment ads, since this is an old saying. Ships are said to gå ned med mann og mus ‘sink with man and mouse’ (sink with everyone on board), and if everyone went to attend an arrangement one might say that de gikk mann av huse ‘they left man from house’ (they all went). More depressingly, in the case of adverse events, people may ta det som en mann ‘take it like a man’, but not som en kvinne ‘like a woman’, or they may manne seg opp ‘to man oneself up’ (pull oneself together, pluck up courage). A job or a task may kreve sin mann ‘demand its man’, i.e. be a demanding job. When a man is mann for sin hatt ‘man for his hat’, he is what he promises to be. ‘Within living memory’ is called i manns minne ‘in man’s memory’, and a generation may be called en mannsalder ‘a man’s age’. Then, we have mannen i gata ‘the man in the street’ and menigmann, both meaning the
‘common man’. Finally there are, to mention but a few, manntall ‘census’ (lit. ‘man count’), mannevett ‘common sense’, altmuligmann ‘a jack of all trades’ (or simply a janitor), and many more. En overmann is a superior, one who is better at some skill, etc.; for many people, example (22) would not be anomalous at all. The verb overmanne means ‘to overpower, overwhelm’; this is often a physical overpowering by another person, but equally one may be overmannet by one’s happiness, grief, or other feelings.

(22) Hun var hans overmann på alle felt.
‘She was better than him in all areas.’

A man may also be a levemann ‘man about town’ or a hedersmann ‘a man of honour’. En viss mann ‘a certain man’, on the other hand, refers to the devil! A woman would rarely be described as a hederskvinne (and it is not a word listed in the dictionary) and never as a levekvinne (not even if she is mannbar ‘sexually mature’); she might, however, be a luksuskvinne ‘luxury woman’, a concept for which a male counterpart could hardly be found.

In addition to -mann formations, there are quite a few with herre/-herre ‘man, lord, gentleman’. Thus skapningens herre ‘the lord of creation’ may be used to refer to a man or to people in general (as opposed to animals). A person, perhaps even a woman, may leve som en herre ‘live like a lord’, cf. also leve som en greve ‘live like a baron’. A sumptuous meal is a herremåltid, and naturally, this is what a herre og mester ‘lord and master’ deserves. Things shared equitably are delt broderlig ‘shared brotherly’, but getting brorparten ‘the brother’s share’ means getting most of it. Å være herre over means ‘to master’, and herredømme is ‘command, mastery’, etc. A woman, too, might have herredømme over sine handlinger ‘be in command over her deeds’ (be in control – or in command over something else).

Most mann expressions, then, do not generally have kvinne or dame counterparts, though some women, including the present authors, will deliberately, but quite naturally, use terms such as i kvinnes minne ‘in woman’s memory’, å være overkvinnet ‘to be overpowered’ and å kvinne seg opp ‘pull oneself together’.

Some terms do have similar sounding opposites, but there is a difference in connotations. Mannevett ‘man’s sense’ means common sense, which is a good thing, whereas kvinnelist ‘female cunning’ is generally bad, and kvinnelogikk ‘woman’s logic’ is, of course, the opposite of “logic”.
6.2 Expressions with kvinne/dame

Searching for forms with kvinne and dame mainly yields forms like damesykkelen ‘ladies’ bike’, which refer to physical objects made for women (and to which there are corresponding herre-words). Otherwise there are few, but often curious items, cf. for instance damebrygge and damemønster ‘lady braid/feathering’ (light braid/feathering). Worse, a jentekast ‘girl’s throw’ is a clumsy way of throwing something. Strangely, the adjective or adverb jentete (derived from jente ‘girl’) is not used about girls, corresponding to girlish/lvly, but about men or boys being effeminate or doing something clumsily. A famous Norwegian skier told the media that he had skied jentete on a particular day, which caused quite a stir. Norwegian also has the expression kvinne er kvinne verst ‘woman is woman’s worst’ (women are other women’s worst enemy) – but also nød lærer naken kvinner å spinne ‘need teaches naked woman to spin’ (corresponding to English necessity is the mother of invention), which is colourful and rather attractive.

Kjerringa mot strømmen ‘woman against the current’ (a strongheaded woman) is a character from a fairytale and has become the prototype of wilful women. Traditionally, this expression was seen as bad, but is now also employed as a term of pride by feminists. Kvinnelitteratur ‘women’s literature’, kvinne-diskriminering ‘discrimination of women’, pikenavn ‘maiden name’, are terms that are quite expressive, and which have no masculine counterparts as yet; the former two are innovations in the language.

Finally, Norwegian has its share of words meaning ‘prostitute’ or ‘loose woman’, with few corresponding male terms. This phenomenon is well-documented universally (Schulz 1975). Examples from Norwegian are hore, skjøde, ladder, gatepike, and tøs for the women, and the single horebukk ‘whoremonger’ for men (though this is not really a true counterpart; cf. Bull 1990). Most of these words are archaic; the word in use in present-day Norwegian is prostituert, lit. ‘a prostituted one’. Note also the almost pleasant and comfortable sound of the female counterpart of hallik ‘pimp’ – horemamma ‘whore mummy’, i.e. a brothel keeper or Madam.

All of the above suggests that Norwegian traditionally has been heavily oriented in the direction of the male/masculine, except in negative, and particularly sexually illicit, contexts. Mann, herre, etc., are used (pseudo-) generically, or in positive contexts; kvinne, dame, etc., – to the extent that they exist – denote something weak or negative, with few exceptions.
6.3 Other asymmetrical expressions

Social conditions may be the cause of asymmetrical lexical expressions, and conversely, social changes may render the lexicon more symmetrical. One example will illustrate how a recent law led to more linguistic symmetry. In Norway, larger farmland properties (so-called *odelsgårder* ‘hereditary manors/farms’) were until quite recently inherited by the eldest son, *odelsgutten* ‘heir boy’, much like thrones are inherited by the eldest son (male primogeniture). Women could inherit, but only if there was no son at all; the daughter would then be *odelsjente* ‘heir girl’. In 1971, the *odelslov* ‘male primogeniture law’ was changed, and the previously asymmetrical pair *odelsgutt* – *odelsjente* became symmetrical, referring to the firstborn male or female heir, respectively. Now a girl may inherit the land or farm, even if she has younger brothers; it is age, not gender, that determines the line of succession.

Social changes have brought about lexical changes in many areas. The form *ugift mor* ‘unwed mother’ was used about women who had illegitimate children (until a couple of decades ago, this was very shameful indeed!); needless to say, there was no corresponding *ugift far* ‘unwed father’. In the 1970s, the form *alenemor* ‘single mother’ (lit. ‘alone + mother’) was introduced, a term used for both divorced and unmarried mothers, since the divorce rate was – and is – climbing steadily. There were also cases of *alenefar* ‘single father’, though these were quite rare. Nowadays, the masculine word *aleneforsørger* ‘single provider’ is the neutral, non-gendered form, with *alenemor* and *alenefar* as gendered forms. These terms are used properly and symmetrically, but of course the majority of *aleneforsørgere* are still women.

There is, on the whole, a strong tendency to provide both male and female forms for terms like these; people tend to be much more aware of asymmetries. Thus example (23), though perhaps trivial, illustrates this trend.

(23) *Over femti festlovel og -løvinne har samlet seg i befalsbarakken.*

‘More than 50 male and female party animals have assembled in the officers’ barracks.’


*Løve/løvinne* ‘lion/lioness’ was used for male/female lions, respectively. The word *festlöve*, lit. ‘party lion’, means ‘party animal’, and used to be a frozen expression; it is probably modeled on *danselöve* ‘dance lion’, i.e. a good dancer or someone who is fond of dancing. The heading rendered in (24) is a feminised form of an earlier generic term *almuligmann*. As mentioned above, many
former and present -mann words can occur with -kvinne forms; embedskvinne and tjenestekvinne, both meaning 'civil servant', are feminine forms of -mann words which are the official, legal terms, and are found occasionally in newspaper language.

(24) Jazzens altmuligkvinne
’ve the Jill of all trades of jazz’
(Nordlys, 11 July 1998:19)

However, asymmetries still abound in numerous contexts. Thus while some adjectives used about women, many of which are derived from nouns, may have neutral or even positive connotations, namely kvinnelig 'womanly', pikeaktig 'girlish', and feminin ‘feminine’, others such as damete 'ladylike', kjerringaktig ‘(old)-wife-like’ and konete ‘wife-like’ are negative. In addition, a woman may be mannhaftig ‘mannish, masculine’ (a word not used for men); she may be jentete ‘girl-like’, however, this term is used more for men or boys. Many of the above words may be used derogatively about men, denoting effeminacy, weakness, etc. The corresponding male/masculine adjectives on the whole carry positive connotations. Thus a man may be mannlig, mandig or maskulin, i.e. ‘manly’, a very positive description. Men or boys may also be mannfolkaktig ‘manlike’, or guttete/gutteaktig ‘boyish’, and again these will have positive connotations. A girl may be called a guttejente ‘boy girl’ (tomboy). Finally, a man may ta en mandig beslutning ‘make a manly decision’; a woman cannot really do so, and neither man nor woman may *ta en kvinnelig beslutning ‘make a womanly decision’.

Exclamatory phrases like For en kjerring! ‘What a wife, woman!’ may be used about a man (a weak effeminate man) or a woman (a nasty, difficult woman), but the corresponding For en kar! ‘What a man, fellow!’ would normally be very positive for men, unless used ironically, and is not used about women at all except in sentences such as Hun ter seg som en kar ‘She behaves like a fellow’.

Other asymmetries include reference to royal couples. If the monarch is a king, as in Norway at present, the king and the queen may be, and frequently are, referred to collectively as kongeparet ‘the king couple’. In Denmark the reigning monarch is a woman, a dronning ‘queen’; however, she and her husband are never referred to in the Norwegian media as *dronningparet ‘the queen couple’. Instead, the term regentparet ‘the regent couple’ is used, or – as is normally the case in Denmark – dronningen og prinsen ‘the Queen and the Prince’. Typically, the Danish Queen’s husband is not King of Denmark, while
the wife of the King of Norway is Queen of Norway. Legally and socially, however, the Queen of Norway and the Queen of Denmark’s husband play the same roles, namely as consorts, and without any constitutional rights and duties. (Cf. also enkedronning ‘queen dowager’ but no corresponding *enkemannkonge ‘king dowager’.)

As mentioned above, phrases and compounds tend to have a male bias, and if there are any feminine counterparts or near-counterparts, these are almost invariably less positive. Men’s manhood (manndom) is mentioned and/or celebrated in various terms which do not have feminine counterparts, thus manndoms glans/prakt ‘the glory of manhood’ and manndomskraft ‘vigour of manhood’, but no *kvinnedomskraft, and å tilbringe sitt manndomsliv ‘to spend one’s manhood-life’, but no *kvinnedomsliv.

There are two sets of terms denoting ‘unmarried woman/man’, namely gammeljomfru ‘old maid’ and ungkar ‘young + fellow’ (bachelor), which are not symmetrical with respect to connotations, and also peppersvenn ‘pepper boy’ and peppermø ‘pepper maid’, used about individuals turning 30 without being married. The members of the latter pair seem to be used symmetrically for women and men; they are only used humorously in the present-day language, since marriage is no longer a prerequisite for a woman any more than for a man. The connotations of ungkar/gammeljomfru, however, are vastly different, and indeed only ungkar is ever used in present-day Norwegian (and, occasionally, an innovation ungkarskvinne ‘bachelor woman’).

Three terms for men and women deserve special mention. Gressenke ‘grass widow’ and gressenkemann ‘grass widower’ in fact form a symmetrical pair, although their use in this century had different motivations. Thus a woman would normally become a gressenke because her husband’s work took him away from their home; a man, however, traditionally was a gressenkemann because his wife and children went away for a holiday in the country, while he was left in town, working. The more recent fotballenke (wife left alone because her husband is a football player) seems to have no corresponding fotballenkemann, despite the fact that there are women football players. Finally, the term hanrei ‘cuckold’ is a term which has no feminine counterpart, obviously for the reason that a woman’s faithfulness was important, and her lack of it merited a shameful appellation for the husband. A man’s lack of faithfulness, on the other hand, needed no special terminology for the betrayed woman.

Not only may women and men be referred to differently, but there are also lingering and distinct differences with respect to how we talk about women and men. Thus both women and men may be strong (sterke menn ‘strong men’,
sterke kvinner ‘strong women’), yet strong women often risk being called dominerende ‘dominant’ or even maktgale ‘powermad’, while the men are simply strong, or perhaps har autoritet ‘have authority’. At the beginning of her career, Gro Harlem Brundtland (the previous Norwegian Prime Minister and now Head of the World Health Organization) was regularly called kjøftesmella fra Bygdøy ‘the shrewish chatterbox from Bygdøy’. The act of talking as such seems to be gender-differentiated as well. Women are said to skvalde, skravle, skvatre (all meaning ‘chatter’), or sladre ‘gossip’. Corresponding nouns abound, for instance: skravlekjerring ‘chatter woman’ (chatterbox), or sladrekjerring ‘gossipy woman’. Men’s talking is normally described as more sober, they are said to snakke ‘talk’ or diskutere ‘discuss’.

In conclusion it can be said that although Norwegian has undergone quite a few ideological feminist-inspired changes, asymmetries abound. However, there is every reason to expect that some of these will change over time. On the other hand, the fact that the language still may reflect a lack of equality even in a country where gender equality in fact has come a long way, is rather depressing.

7. Language change and feminist language planning

The recent history of the Norwegian language is a story about language planning and language reform, and indeed written Norwegian, both bokmål and nynorsk, has become very different today compared to the beginning of the 20th century. Initially, there was no gender consciousness in these reforms; they might, nevertheless, be regarded as sociolinguistic reforms, as they aimed at eliminating social or class differences in language by giving former vernacular forms the status of standard language.

All official language and gender interest has taken place over the last 20–30 years, as shown by the annual reports from the Norwegian Language Council and the former Norwegian Language Commission. The first time any official language planning agency or committee explicitly put the issue of language and gender on the agenda was in 1980 at the annual meeting of the Norwegian Language Council (cf. Bull 1992). Prior to 1980, however, similar questions had been raised by the Ministry of Church and Education.

The problems the ministry was interested in and wanted the Language Council’s advice on were twofold: 1) how to achieve gender neutrality in occupational and professional nouns and titles, such as formann ‘chairman’ and fylkesmann ‘highest official of county’ and 2) whether new legislation on gender
equality should include the use of generic *han* ‘he’. For a long time, however, the Language Council was not able to give the ministry any other advice than just reiterating that people’s opinions differed.

In the 1980s, the question of whether to accept generic use of *ho/hun* ‘she’ in schoolbooks was raised on several occasions. The annual report of 1981 includes general guidelines which mention possible substitutions for the generic masculine, but also advise the public and especially the authors of schoolbooks to avoid using this pronoun when the referent is a woman, or includes women, or when the gender is not known or relevant.

Gender-indefinite substitutes that were recommended were the pronoun *dei/de* ‘they’, i.e. the plural form, the indefinite pronoun *ein/en* ‘one’ (as opposed to indefinite *man* ‘one’, which is derived from *mann*), the noun *folk* ‘people’, or pluralisation of the noun phrase.

The public was advised not to use *han/ho* (or *han/hun*) or *han eller ho/hun* ‘he or she’; these expressions were said to be awkward, clumsy, and inelegant. While the Council lamented the fact that Norwegian has no gender-indefinite pronoun for the third person singular, they stated categorically that if a singular pronoun is unavoidable, *han* was the only correct alternative in gender-indefinite contexts, thus arguing that the masculine may comprise both masculine and feminine. *Ho/hun* ‘she’ was acceptable only in cases where the context showed that the referent was a woman (but then also with masculine nouns). If the Norwegian equivalent of a sentence like *The plumber must be ill today, she has not turned up* is found in a pre-1989 Norwegian schoolbook, we can be quite sure that the plumber in question is a woman, and this means that generic *ho/hun* ‘she’ actually was forbidden in Norwegian schoolbooks.

Thus the Language Council admitted that generic ‘he’ might cause problems for many Norwegians, but on the other hand they were unable to accept that for some the opposite solution, generic ‘she’, was a way of making the very problem visible.

In the years after 1980 the question of generic *han* was to haunt the Norwegian Language Council. There are many reasons for this. Of course, the time was ripe; the same questions of language and gender had been discussed internationally since the mid-seventies. More specifically, however, in Norway, the language as well as the content of all textbooks for use in school are subject to monitoring by control boards (a practice that is becoming increasingly controversial). The linguistic control is mostly a control of spelling, morphology, syntax, as well as style, whereas the content of textbooks is monitored with respect to rules advocating equality of women and men. Quite contrary to the
advice of the Language Council the members of the Equality Council urged writers of schoolbooks to use what they called non-traditional pronouns as a means to fight androcentrism and sexism. This precisely meant advocating the use of generic ‘she’, which was forbidden by the Language Council. Understandably, the disagreement between the two Councils turned out to be quite a delicate matter. In 1989, however, the Language Council again discussed this, and by a majority decision, generic ‘she’ was finally accepted for use in children’s schoolbooks.

In many ways generic (or pseudogeneric) use of ho/hun ‘she’ is a marginal problem, at least if we consider it quantitatively. Rather few make use of this option, probably fewer within the context of schoolbooks than in newspapers and periodicals. Still, it was a big issue during the years it was on the agenda of the Language Council, and by feminists interested in the problem the result was considered a great victory.

In 1994 the Language Council decided, if somewhat unenthusiastically, to publish guidelines on non-sexist language. The result was the publication in 1997 of a small brochure with the title Gender, language and equality (Kjonn 1997) – seventeen years after the question of language and gender had been raised for the first time. The brochure argues for the necessity of such guidelines, and then discusses fundamental rules for gender-balanced (inclusive) language. Thus they advocate the use of ungendered words for names of professions, and conversely non-use (or little use) of premodifying kvinnelig/ mannlig ‘female/male’ (as in kvinnelig tannlege ‘woman dentist’), except where strictly necessary. The guidelines recommend that women and men should be treated in the same way, and both should be made visible linguistically. The examples given under this point include the use of han eller ho (the previously despised ‘he or she’), and consistent use of pairs such as talsmann–talskvinne ‘spokesman–spokeswoman’. The brochure also warns against asymmetrical pairs such as ‘men and girls’, and even advocates variation in the sequencing in commonly used pairs, i.e. menn og kvinner ‘men and women’ and kvinner og menn ‘women and men’, jenter og gutter ‘girls and boys’ as well as gutter og jenter ‘boys and girls’. All gender discrimination and stereotyping should be avoided. The brochure points out that it is very common to use different expressions to describe women and men: ‘a man of principle’, and ‘a stubborn woman’. Finally, pronouns, titles and honorifics are also mentioned, and relevant and adequate recommendations are given.

These guidelines are distributed to Norwegian schools and to public institutions. There are, however, no reports on the use of the guidelines and
therefore no information about how successful they have been. In many ways, it is fair to say that the guidelines appeared so late that they barely were able to keep up with the factual language development. Thus, they may be looked upon as descriptions of language use as much as prescriptive guidelines.

8. Conclusion

On the whole, then, official Norwegian guidelines follow the strategy of gender-neutralisation rather than gender-specification, in line with what most Norwegian feminists choose, and in line with what Hellinger (1984) calls the “generic strategy”. Hellinger suggests that this strategy is typical of English as well as Norwegian, while German-speaking countries favour a “visibility strategy”. In other words, it has been the policy of Norwegian feminists as well as political authorities to attempt to eradicate gender marking from the language, except in those cases where specific persons are talked about. Visibility has been less important, although some feminists have in fact supported the “visibility strategy”. Thus, the use of pronominal splitting (han eller ho) as well as the use of some explicitly female-specific terms, esp. compounds with -kvinne as the second element, might perhaps be interpreted as indications of a “mixed” strategy.

Even though it is quite obvious that the changes described above are connected to ideology, the social aspects represent a very complex situation with partly conflicting goals and values. Norwegian women have lost some visibility in this process, but few people think of this as symbolic annihilation (cf. Tuchman 1978). Strangely enough, ideologically based changes have preceded language planning, or at least that of the Language Council.

Notes


2. Specification of lineage in terms for various relatives, such as moster ‘mother’s sister’ and faster ‘father’s sister’ were more common in earlier stages of Norwegian.

3. Gender marking may also take the form of adding the adjective kvinnelig/mannlig ‘female/male’, as in kvinnelig dommer (m) ‘female judge’ or mannlig advokat (m) ‘male lawyer’ – needless to say, in most professions the latter form would be unusual.
4. Actually the form norske (which is parallel to svenske ‘Swede’ and danske ‘Dane’) has been suggested several times as a replacement. The Language Council, however, remains staunch and calls this form “childish”.

5. Before the custom of proper inherited surnames gradually became normal usage in the 19th century – first in the upper strata of society – children might be called by their father’s first name plus -sønn (later levelled to -sen) ‘son’ or datter ‘daughter’. Thus Per Pettersen would be the son of Petter, and Randi Pettersdatter his daughter. The Name Act of 1923 regularised the use of inherited surnames.

6. As an example of variation we recently found a brief article about legefamilien Hans Nielsen Hauge ‘the doctor family H.N.H.’ in a local paper. It seemed very odd, indeed, and it would be totally impossible to create the female equivalent *legefamilien Nina Hauge. However, a few days later the same paper carried an article about familien Tomter/Stigen (i.e. a family identified with reference to the surnames of both spouses), and this certainly is the normal practice in present-day Norwegian. Nevertheless, it should be noted that to its (?) shame, Norway still considers the man the head of the family for tax purposes, while the home in a sense is defined as the woman’s domain. Thus married couples are taxed individually, but the wives are always filed under the husband’s birth date and name. Married couples must also by law be registered in the same municipality, even if they live and work in different cities; however, for tax purposes, the home community is where the woman lives.

7. Prestefruen was not just a title, but a concept in itself. Needless to say, the traditional prestefru has all but disappeared – her job was the unsalaried, but full-time, task of taking care of the prest as well as the parish.

8. This is still the case as far as the Norwegian monarchy is concerned, while in Sweden, the heir to the throne is a woman, even though she has a younger brother.

9. The Norwegian Language Council, which among other things is in charge of the language of Norwegian schoolbooks, was founded in 1972, replacing the Language Commission of 1952–1971. The Council has 38 members, and is divided into two sections, one each for nynorsk and bokmål. The members are appointed by different institutions and organisations: the universities, the teachers’ organisations, authors’ organisations, the national broadcasting system, the theatres, private organisations of language politics, etc.

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SPANISH

Gender in Spanish
Tradition and innovation

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1. Introduction

A member of the Romance family of languages, Spanish (Espanol) is the official language of Spain, almost all of Central and South America (except Brazil, Suriname and Guyana), and Equatorial Guinea; it is spoken by over 300 million people. A large number of first-language and bilingual speakers of Spanish live in the United States, Puerto Rico, Western Sahara and the Philippines. Although a number of local varieties exist due to regional influences, in general
two main “standard” norms are recognised: Peninsular (also called “Castilian”, originally the dialect spoken in the kingdom of Castile) and Latin American. Despite some morphosyntactic differences, mutual intelligibility between both is high. One reason for this uniformity is the work of La Real Academia de la Lengua Española (‘The Royal Academy of the Spanish Language’), located in Madrid and founded in 1713. Up until today, this authoritative and, more often than not, conservative Academy has the last word on linguistic issues that deal with Spanish.

Typologically, Spanish is a VO language; sentences need no overt subject, as this is traceable by means of verb morphology. When there is an overt subject, SV(O) is the rule, although this order is never obligatory. In general, modifiers (i.e. adjectival phrases and relative clauses) follow their syntactic heads, but some common adjectives precede them. Spanish is considered a synthetic rather than analytic language and its derivational processes predominantly use suffixation, although, especially in recent times, prefixation has been slightly increasing (Bright 1992:61). Apart from the verb system, inflection is found in pronouns, nouns, adjectives and determiners, where it marks number (i.e. plural -s) and gender (i.e. -o/-a), although – with respect to person reference – it has been debated whether the latter is, in fact, a derivational rather than inflectional process.

In the course of history, Spanish has been influenced by a variety of other languages, such as Arabic, Basque, Catalan, French, German, Italian, and English as well as – after the colonisation of the “New World” – indigenous languages of Latin America (e.g., Nahuatl, Quechua and Arawak).¹

Linguistic studies that treat aspects of “gender and language” are, in the majority of cases, either fostered in Spain or concentrate upon the Castilian variant. Research into this area from Latin America is scarce (cf. nevertheless, note 18). One possible explanation for this difference is the rapidity of social changes in post-Franco Spain influenced by European politics after Spain joined the European Common Market in 1983. Moreover, at the beginning of the 1980s Spain became more aware of women’s issues and experienced a growing feminist movement, which was strongly backed up by initiatives of the Socialist Party that won the general elections in 1982. For example, the Instituto de la Mujer ‘The Woman’s Institute’ was founded in 1983 as part of the Ministry of Science and Education (now the institute belongs to the Ministry of Social Affairs). At the same time, an increasing number of women joined the labour market and entered educational institutions. Naturally, these changes in society have had a considerable impact on the Spanish language; difficulties in finding
appropriate job titles for women are a paramount example of this. This article will concentrate on four main areas: grammatical gender (Section 2), the asymmetrical representation of women and men in the lexicon and in language reference material (Section 3), the communicative behaviour of women and men\(^2\) (Section 4), and non-sexist guidelines and language change (Section 5). For further reading on language and gender in Spanish, consult Calero Fernández (1999), García Mouton (1999), and Fernández de la Torre Madueño & Medina Guerra & Taillefer de Haya (2000).

2. Grammatical gender in Spanish

2.1 Masculine and feminine gender

Traditionally, the concept of gender in Spanish was defined on the basis of both semantic and morphological criteria of the noun class. Thus, the first grammar book on Spanish, written by Antonio Nebrija more than five centuries ago (Nebrija 1492), distinguished six different genders. Unfortunately, reminiscences of this classification have survived until today and the Academy, for example, still classifies nouns in its dictionary into three groups: m. for masculine, f. for feminine and com. for común (= those nouns that are both m and f), which apparently lead even experts on this matter to conclude that “Spanish has three genders for persons, the masculine, the feminine and the common” (García Meseguer 1977: 137).\(^3\) A more convincing approach seems to be that of Corbett (1991). According to him, a noun (in his terminology the “controller”) induces the same gender in other linguistic elements (the “targets”). As all targets in Spanish, e.g., determiners, adjectives, and predicates, vary morphologically according to the gender of the nouns, it is quite straightforward to conclude that the Spanish noun class has no more than two genders, namely masculine and feminine. However, at times, it appears convenient to categorise the nouns according to other criteria. Thus, one specific group of nouns in Spanish is invariant as to morphological changes due to gender, and, in isolated cases, where no modifier is present, one cannot tell whether the noun is feminine or masculine. For example, all words that end in -ista belong to this group and, therefore, e.g., marxista may refer either to a woman or a man. On the other hand, as both genders are intrinsic properties of these nouns, they are, when a gender-marking target is added, instantiated as either masculine or feminine – in the majority of the cases according to the referential gender. For these
reasons, the term *común* to indicate gender is not well-chosen and should be avoided. A more appropriate term is double gender (cf. Corbett 1991:181). Therefore, in this article, nouns like *periodista* ‘journalist’, *modelo* ‘model’, *policía* ‘police officer’, etc. are referred to as nouns of double gender.4

As gender is defined on the basis of agreement, special focus is placed on agreement-markers. For Spanish these are, in most cases, -o (m) and -a (f). Apart from some minor deviations (where the opposition, if it exists, is O vs. -a or -e vs. -a), most adjectives, determiners and pronouns follow this vowel distinction. With respect to the gender of the controllers, one also finds remarkable consistency, which underlines the morphosyntactic functioning of the Spanish gender system: 99.89% of the nouns ending in -o are masculine, 96.6% of the nouns ending in -a are feminine, and 89.35% of the nouns ending in -e are masculine (Teschner & Russel 1984:116–117). Although this categorisation appears to be formally motivated and semantically arbitrary for the noun class as a whole (e.g., libro vs. libra ‘book’ vs. ‘pound’), this is not the case for nouns that refer to animate entities.

If generic references and so-called epicene nouns (see Section 2.2) are not taken into consideration, feminine and masculine nouns referring to human beings in the majority of cases reflect the distinction between females and males (a few counter-examples exist that constantly reappear in the literature about this topic).5 In these cases the morphological distinction follows the same line: abogado vs. abogada ‘lawyer’, profesor vs. profesora ‘teacher’ (i.e. non -a vs. -a). That this pattern is strongly associated with ‘female’ and ‘male’ can also be deduced from examples that refer to animals where referential gender is not usually expressed. For example, an invariable noun6 such as el tigre (m) ‘the tiger’ would prompt a word like la tigra (f) or la tigresa (f), if speakers of Spanish were to make a distinction between female and male tigers. Metaphorical use also reflects the relation between ‘female’ and feminine, ‘male’ and masculine: Inanimate words like e.g., la muerte (f) ‘death’ will usually be portrayed by a female figure (by contrast, speakers of German associate der Tod (m) with a male figure). This association of morphology with the categories ‘female’ and ‘male’ is very deep-rooted, as can be demonstrated by the following example from the inanimate world. In 1977, the feminist journal *Vindicación Feminista* ridiculed another journal, *Telva*, which at that time was against the legalisation of abortion. The feminist journal urged *Telva* to change its name and slogan from *Telva, revista para mujeres* “Telva, journal for women” to *Telvo, revista para mujeros*. By means of this “masculinisation” the journalists wanted to emphasise that *Telva* was no longer a journal for women, but had taken the
opposite, anti-female/male position on this much debated issue (Vindicación Feminista 18, 1977:49).

There can hardly be any doubt that the endings -o vs. -a (or, rather, non -a vs. -a) linguistically serve as markers of maleness and femaleness when humans are involved and that these endings are also perceived as such markers by speakers of Spanish.7

An inconsistency with regard to the graphic representation of these endings is found in many dictionaries, in which feminine words are presented as if they were simply derived from the masculine forms, e.g.: niño/-a 'boy/girl'.8 Obviously, this cannot be the case. A more appropriate procedure would be to write: niñ/-o, -a or niñ/-a, -o.9 That this matter is not trivial can, for example, be seen in etymological dictionaries: These usually list only the masculine forms. Feminine forms and, hence, women, have no origin (a welcome exception is Müller 1987–2000).

Although today the suffix -a is the predominant productive derivational suffix, a few others still exist: -isa, -esa, -iz, -ina, -sa, all of which are feminine suffixes. Interestingly, Spanish has no masculine derivational suffix (if we discount instances of the type niñ-o, where a masculine marker is attached to the stem of a word). Whereas English, e.g., has -er, as in widow → widower, and likewise Danish has -mand as in enke 'widow' → enkemand 'widower', Spanish has nothing of this kind. In those cases where a masculine noun, for historical reasons, has “derived” from a feminine noun, as in enfermero from enfermera 'nurse', synchronically this can hardly be traced.10

Gender-marking by means of compounding does not exist; however, in those cases in which a derived word would be considered unusual, lexical modifications are used. Primarily the noun mujer 'woman' is used as a pre-modifier: e.g., mujer (f) obispo (m) 'female bishop' or mujer (f) torero (m) 'female bullfighter' instead of the morphologically possible derivations obispa (f) and torera (f).

A fundamental area in which gender distinctions, for various cultural reasons, are prominent, is kinship terms. While many European languages distinguish the gender of family members lexically, Spanish (like other languages derived from Latin) is characterised by alternating vowels to distinguish referential gender (cf. Table 1). Cf. also sobrina/sobrino 'niece/nephew' (exceptions are madre/padre 'father/ mother' and nuera/yerno 'daughter-in-law/son-in-law').

One feature Spanish shares with many (probably most) other languages is the fact that the masculine form functions as the so-called “unmarked” form,
i.e. when reference is made to a mixed group, the masculine has to be used. Even though many reference books of Spanish – and even publications that specifically address gender issues – treat this phenomenon as if it only applied to the plural, it is important to stress that the masculine also functions as the unmarked form in the singular. Thus, in a sentence such as (1) the singular form el obrero is supposed to cover female workers as well:

(1)  
El obrero (m) del siglo pasado trabajaba mucho.

‘The worker in the last century worked a lot.’

In principle, there is no difference (apart from stylistic variations) between this sentence and its plural version: Los obreros (m) del siglo pasado trabajaban mucho. In both cases the masculine form is ambiguous. No empirical study exists that specifically investigates which of the two is more inclusive.

2.2 Generic words and conflicts of agreement

Traditionally the problem of generic reference, i.e. referring to women and men at the same time in such a way that both the speaker and the hearer interpret the message as referring generically to human beings, has been related to the concept of markedness, the masculine form being the unmarked term. However, usually no explanation is given why it is the masculine and not the feminine that became the unmarked term. Lyons raised doubt about the concept of markedness by introducing a model of “dynamic marking” (Lyons 1977:305–311). He observed that some words in the same contexts are more marked than others. The following Spanish sentences will exemplify his observation. In (2a) and (2b) the word trabajadores (m) ‘workers’ is used as the unmarked term:

(2)  
a. Juan (m) y Pedro (m) son trabajadores (m) extraordinarios (m).

‘Juan and Pedro are extraordinary workers.’

b. Juana (f) y Pedro (m) son trabajadores (m) extraordinarios (m).

‘Juana and Pedro are extraordinary workers.’

Table 1. Kinship terms in some European languages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Daughter/Son</th>
<th>Sister/Brother</th>
<th>Aunt/Uncle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>daughter/son</td>
<td>sister/brother</td>
<td>aunt/uncle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>Tochter/Sohn</td>
<td>Schwester/Bruder</td>
<td>Tante/Onkel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danish</td>
<td>datter/søn</td>
<td>søster/bro</td>
<td>tante/onkel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>hija/hijo</td>
<td>hermana/hermano</td>
<td>tía/tío</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
However, by exchanging trabajadores with another supposedly unmarked (and hence generic) term, hombre 'man,' (3b) becomes unacceptable:

(3) a. Juan (m) y Pedro (m) son hombres (m) extraordinarios (m).
   b. *Juana (f) y Pedro (m) son hombres (m) extraordinarios (m).
   *'Juan and Pedro are extraordinary men.'

This suggests that in Spanish, too, “marked” and “unmarked” are not discrete categories, but should, instead, be viewed as instances on a scale (cf. Lyons 1977, Hellinger 1990).

In the domain of genericity, some terminological clarifications are required. Traditionally, both single gender nouns like e.g., personas (f) ‘persons’ and masculine nouns used generically, like e.g., padres (m) ‘parents, fathers’ are called “epicene” nouns (Real Academia Española 1977:175–176), supposedly because both forms may refer to women and men. It is, nevertheless, important to distinguish these two forms, as it is only the first group of nouns that can be claimed to be neutral. A neutral expression11 should be capable of referring to women and men, to men alone and to women alone (cf. Pusch 1980:181). With epicene nouns this is possible, cf. (4):

(4) a. Juan (m) y Juana (f) son personas (f) extraordinarias (f).
   *'Juan and Juana are extraordinary persons.'
   b. Juan (m) es una (f) persona (f) extraordinaria (f).
   c. Juana (f) es una (f) persona (f) extraordinaria (f).
   *'Juan/-a is an extraordinary person.'

In comparison, this is not the case with the masculine form:

(5) a. Juan (m) y Juana (f) son campesinos (m) extraordinarios (m).
   *'Juan and Juana are extraordinary farmers.'
   b. Juan (m) es un (m) campesino (m) extraordinario (m).
   c. *Juana (f) es un (m) campesino (m) extraordinario (m).
   *'Juan/-a is an extraordinary farmer.'

In general, masculine nouns for which a corresponding noun of the feminine gender exists, cannot refer to women alone, simply because a corresponding noun is available. Therefore, the term “epicene” should only be used when no counterpart of the opposite gender exists. This is true for both subgroups of epicene nouns: a) collectives such as gente (f) ‘people’, población (f) ‘population’, profesorado (m) ‘teaching staff’ and b) non-collectives like persona (f) ‘person’, individuo (m) ‘individual’, bebé (m) ‘baby’. In all these cases, the term can be
applied to a feminine and a masculine noun alike. An advantage of this procedure is that the concept of markedness becomes irrelevant for epicene nouns.

To distinguish the masculine form from the epicene is not a trivial matter, as can be seen from the reaction of one of the Academy members towards the first guidelines for non-sexist Spanish, in which it was proposed that the use of the masculine form for generic reference be avoided. He asks whether, if one has to avoid “epicene words like romanos (m) ‘the Romans’, hispanos (m) ‘the Hispanics’ and profesores (m) ‘the teachers’, should one not also avoid feminine words like la víctima ‘the victim’ and la persona ‘the person’ as well?” (Lázaro Carreter 1988:10). Naturally, the answer is no. In the latter cases no counterpart of the other gender exists: *el víctimo, *el persono and, subsequently, no item is unmarked (nor marked for that matter). Therefore, there is no reason to avoid them on the grounds of presumed sexism. Masculine words, on the contrary, function differently: When referring to human beings, the masculine word will automatically be unmarked and the feminine term marked.13

As the generic masculine, in contrast to the epicenes, may refer to men and women as well as to men alone, the term in many cases appears to be a misleading denomination. Therefore, I prefer, simply, to use the term “ambiguous masculine”.

One consequence of the masculine form being the unmarked term has to do with anaphora and agreement. For example, one single man in an audience will be sufficient for the speaker to address the listeners by masculine terms, e.g., vosotros (m) ‘you’ or los presentes (m) ‘the ones present’. To use feminine forms in such cases would be tantamount to breaking the rules of grammar. The same is true with respect to agreement. If a masculine word and a feminine word are co-ordinated, the modifying elements of the head have to be masculine. In some instances, when the nouns refer to animals or to inanimate entities, this general rule is suspended. For example, when an adjective is placed before two co-ordinated nouns of which the first is feminine and the second masculine, the adjective may agree with the feminine noun (= agreement between those elements that are closest). But, strikingly, when the nouns refer to human beings, this principle is not followed and the general rule is applied again (cf. also Marcato & Thüne, this vol.) on the corresponding phenomenon in Italian. Apparently, men cannot “be agreed with” by feminine modifications.14 The most plausible explanation for this phenomenon appears to be Spender’s “man-made-language” approach (1980).
2.3 The psycholinguistic reality of generics

Despite the fact that the masculine form overwhelmingly seems to dominate the structure of Spanish and, consequently, is claimed to make women linguistically less visible (see Suárez 1973, as well as Section 5), there are few empirical investigations which specifically address the question of how speakers interpret these forms.

One of the first investigations that dealt with Spanish generics set out to analyse the generic potential of the word *hombre* ‘man’ (Perissinotto 1983). The tests showed that most women and men in nearly all contexts interpreted *hombre* as specifically male. Another study by Perissinotto (1985) also proved *hombre* to be a poor generic. On a hierarchical scale informants placed *hombre* closest to the male-specific interpretation, whereas e.g., *gente* (f) ‘people’ and *persona* (f) ‘person’ were interpreted generically. Other epicene words, such as *individuo* (m) ‘individual’ and *ser humano* (m) ‘human being’ were placed in between these two poles.

The point of departure of the most recent study of this kind (Nissen 1997a) was the various guidelines for non-sexist language (cf. Section 5) which recommended that the ambiguous masculine form be replaced by other forms in order to assure a generic interpretation. Based on a blind test, three different types of almost identical questionnaires were distributed among some 300 native speakers in Spain, the majority of whom were students. One type contained forms of the ambiguous masculine, e.g., *los niños* (m) ‘the children’, the second one epicene forms, e.g., *la población infantil* (f) ‘the population of children’, and the third contained splitted forms, e.g., *los niños* (m) y *niñas* (f) ‘the boys and girls’. The participants were asked to insert proper names in the text following these forms. As there were always two gaps, responses could be entirely male (two male names), entirely female (two female names) or mixed (one female and one male name). As had been expected, the results show that the male bias is strongest in relation to the masculine form: In approximately one third of the cases, it is associated with male (i.e. only male names were used). In the case of splitted forms, this association is only made in one fifth of the occurrences. Furthermore, the splitted forms seem to provoke a stronger “generic thinking” in comparison to the masculine form (i.e. more mixed name pairs) and also a stronger association with female (i.e. higher percentage of female-only responses) so that the visibility of women increases. Surprisingly, and contrary to what had been expected, the epicene forms are not interpreted generically to a higher degree than the masculine forms, since the percentage of
“mixed” responses is about the same in both cases. When focus is placed on the gender-specific interpretations alone, another surprising result emerges: Both the masculine and the epicene forms are slightly male-biased, but the splitted forms are biased towards female (i.e. more female-only than male-only responses). Hence, if the aim is to make women more visible, this splitted construction is definitely the best candidate.

If the gender of the respondents is taken into account, the survey shows that, although for both women and men the visibility of women has increased with the use of the splitted forms (instead of the masculine), this increase is much higher for men. In a way, it seems as if men have to be “reminded” of the existence of women (by means of the splitted forms). On the other hand, all respondents who did not connect the splitted forms with genericity (almost 10%) did associate them with their own group (despite the fact that both females and males were explicitly mentioned).

To summarise, the investigation demonstrates that alternative forms to the masculine increase the visibility of women, but although the masculine forms indeed had a slight bias towards male, the claim that these forms automatically lead people to think ‘male’ was not substantially confirmed. It is nevertheless true that the masculine form is far from being a true generic, and certainly the shape of a word – and thereby its grammatical gender – does play a considerable role in its interpretation. Since this survey focused only upon certain nouns in isolated sentences, no information is available as to how these forms would be interpreted in texts, nor whether other gender marking devices interfere in this interpretation (e.g., in connection with pronoun substitution).15

3. The asymmetrical representation of women and men in Spanish

Lexical asymmetries in the Spanish lexicon with respect to human beings can be classified in the following way:

a. One type includes different designations for women and men, especially with respect to job titles: azafata ‘stewardess’ versus auxiliar de vuelo ‘flight attendant’. Moreover, apparently equivalent words such as e.g., señor ‘Mr, gentleman’ versus señora ‘Mrs, lady’ are not always symmetrical on a denotational level. For el señor del tango ‘master of the tango’ the equivalent is la reina del tango ‘queen of the tango’; *la señora del tango does not exist.  
b. A second type shows semantic differences of the same lexical item, depending on whether the item refers to a man or a woman: hombre público ‘man
in the public eye' versus mujer pública (traditionally) 'whore'.

c. Thirdly, there are lexical gaps: ama de casa ‘housewife’ (*amo de casa does not exist); soldado ‘soldier’ (*soldada ‘female soldier’ is rarely found); señorita ‘Miss’ (the word señorito does exist, but does not mean ‘unmarried young man’, but ‘young gentleman, master, rich kid’).

3.1 Hombre vs. mujer

With regard to the asymmetries as in group (b), the word hombre ‘man’ has been particularly subject to semantic analysis (García Meseguer 1984, Bierbach 1989). Two areas have received special attention: one, where hombre stands in contrast to mujer ‘woman’ and two, where hombre is used generically (cf. Section 2.3). The opposition hombre/mujer is highly asymmetrical in Spanish, as mujer more often than not contains implicit derogatory connotations that range from ‘sexual object’ to ‘prostitute’. It has been suggested that the word mujer has been constantly “contaminated” by the meaning of ‘prostitute’ (Fuertes Olivera 1992:122). During the Gulf war, a very influential newspaper in Spain, El País, wrote:

(6) Los soldados (m) estadounidenses en el frente echan de menos el alcohol y las mujeres (f).

‘The American soldiers at the front are longing for alcohol and women.’

(El País, 26 January 1991:8; cited by Fuertes Olivera 1992:122)

Considering that female soldiers actually were present during that war, the example suggests a connection of mujeres to “sexual encounter”. (Note that the masculine form los soldados cannot be interpreted generically). Other stereotypical connotations have also been noted. For example, an expression like actuar como un hombre ‘to act like a man’ will focus on strength, self-assertiveness and bravery, while actuar como una mujer means, when applied to a man, to be weak, devious and cowardly (Suardiaz 1973:56).

Another interesting point is the fact that mujer also means ‘wife’ (in more formal settings one would use esposa). In comparison, hombre does not mean ‘husband’ (except in vulgar language); instead, there exists a specific word: marido. To avoid confusion between the meanings ‘wife’ and ‘woman’, definiteness may help in some cases: tiene mujer means ‘he has a wife’ (i.e. ‘he is married’) whereas tiene una mujer means ‘he has a woman’ (who certainly is not his wife).
3.2 Occupational titles

Occupational titles for women and men seem to constitute an especially sensitive part of the vocabulary, as these titles are used to identify ourselves and others. To have the "correct" title is, therefore, not a trivial matter. For example, one or two decades ago, Spanish women did not agree upon whether a female minister should be called ministra (f) or ministro (m). Arguments in favour of the latter are, for example, the derogatory meaning of some feminine expressions (e.g., verdulería means not only a 'female vegetable seller' but also 'a shameless woman') and the possible reading 'wife of' (e.g., médica means 'female doctor' but also 'wife of the doctor'). After numerous disputes over this matter, not only in the media but also in linguistics circles (cf. the discussions between Olivares 1984, 1986, and Nissen 1986), opinion seems now to have settled clearly in favour of the feminine form.

Today it is difficult to find examples in newspapers and magazines such as la (f) ministro (m) 'the female minister' or similar constructions that were quite normal only 20 years ago. All guidelines for non-sexist Spanish recommend the use of the feminine form (cf. Section 5), and so do the editorial style manuals of the leading newspapers (cf. Lebsanft 1997). The Royal Academy also advocates the use of the feminine forms, and has, in fact, done so for many years. As early as 1947 one member of the Academy stated the Academy’s view: The syntactic clash between a feminine determiner and a masculine noun as e.g., in the title la (f) catedrático (m) 'the professor' “is absolutely impossible to swallow” (Casares 1947:303). This position was backed up by various members of the Academy years before women joined the labour market in massive numbers (cf. Berro-García 1952/53 and Bustamente y Rivero 1960). However, despite the Academy’s proclaimed intention to promote feminine job titles in the dictionary, it continues to be a much debated puzzle as to why this task is still today far from being realised (see also Section 3.4).16 Indeed, the Academy has suffered much criticism for not being up-to-date with the occupational titles in its dictionary and not being consistent in the explanations of the terms it gives.

Interestingly, due to the apparent reluctance of the Academy to make changes, a member of the Spanish Congreso in 1986 proposed a motion to abolish all sexist formulations in the Academy’s dictionary, but her motion was not approved. However, since institutions, especially in the educational sector, continued to be reluctant to introduce the use of feminine titles, the Ministry of Education and Science decreed in March 1995 that 21 academic titles should officially be feminised if the title holder was a woman (Errazu Colás 1995:81).
Thus, the long tradition of giving women academics their university diploma with masculine titles, e.g., doctor instead of doctora, is in the process of disappearing. Even those women who had already received a ‘male’ version of their diploma are now entitled to receive a new, feminised one.

Although today, in the majority of cases, the feminine forms are used in specific reference to females, this tendency sometimes appears to be overshadowed by a few examples that – for various morphological and phonological reasons – are reluctant to feminise and, therefore, constantly reappear in the discussions about feminisation. For example, currently both a noun of double gender, el/la juez ‘the judge’, and a feminised version, la juez, co-exist. Words ending in -ante, as in estudiante ‘student’, comerciante ‘merchant’ do not change into a feminine form as easily as others. However, especially in Latin American Spanish, la estudianta is used more frequently. Only ten years ago, the form la presidenta was used to refer to the chairwoman of associations, clubs, etc., while la presidenta referred to the female president. Today presidenta is used in both cases.

Another special case are occupational titles for men who take over jobs traditionally held by women. Often an entirely new lexeme is introduced, and sometimes it is even accompanied by an “upgrading” of the occupation designated by the masculine term. In this respect, the word modisto constitutes an interesting example, because modista originally belonged to the group of nouns of double gender (as all nouns ending in -ista do). However, the word modista ‘seamstress’, despite being an invariable noun, was transformed into modisto, now meaning a fashion designer (cf. Nissen 1986:735–736). Similarly, auxiliar de vuelo, lit. ‘flight assistant’, may connote a higher status than the morphological counterpart of azafata (f) ‘stewardess’, namely azafato (m).

3.3 Sexual terminology

In Section 3.1, the word mujer, meaning ‘prostitute’, was discussed. When regarding women as sexual objects, numerous other terms which usually denote females may also be “contaminated”: e.g., chica ‘girl’, as in chica de alquiler ‘girl to hire’ or chica fácil ‘easy girl’. One has to bear in mind, however, that given the change in gender roles, a few words exist today that show that men may also be regarded as sexual objects, e.g., the word tío (lit. ‘uncle’) may be used by women to denote a man as a sexual object, and the same counts for macho ‘male’ and chico de alterne ‘boyfriend to be exchanged’ (Fuertes Olivera 1992:126).

In accordance with the stereotypical picture of Hispanic culture as typically
machista, descriptions related to sexuality portray men as the active part and women as passive. As Suárez (1973:27) has pointed out, “[…] there are two kinds of verbs which refer to intercourse: those which accept only male subjects or both female and male subject”. No verb takes exclusively female subjects. Thus, cogieron ‘they fucked’ (in Latin America, coger usually means ‘fuck’, in Spain rather ‘seize, hold on to’) is seen from a joint perspective, while él la cogió ‘he fucked her’ and also the so-called ethical dative construction él se la cogió (where the male is not only the agent of the action, but also the beneficiary) are seen from a male perspective. Coger with a female subject does not exist. Even neutral expressions, as e.g., hacer el amor ‘to make love’, which from a structural point of view allow a female, male or a plural subject, still sound odd with a female agent: Ella le hizo el amor (a él) ‘She made love to him’.

Another characteristic that Spanish shares with other languages is the lack of a female counterpart to the word potente ‘potent’ referring to virility. Although for men there exists a semantic opposition, impotente/potente, this is not the case for women: frígida/Ø ‘frigid’. There are only few terms denoting the sexual capabilities of women with either neutral or positive connotations. Another aspect of this “double standard” is reflected by word pairs such as hombre honrado/ mujer honrada. The masculine expression simply means ‘honest’, whereas the feminine term may denote that the woman does not have sexual relations except with her husband. Furthermore, the traditional conception of the untouchableness of the mother figure can be exploited negatively: hijo de puta ‘son of a whore’ or la puta que te parió ‘the whore who gave you birth’ are highly insulting expressions in Spanish. The very typical Mexican expression chinga a tu madre ‘fuck your mother’ fits into this category (cf. also the Turkish parallels described by Braun, vol. I).17

The metaphorical use of terms referring to male genitals in Spanish can be interpreted as reflecting positive evaluations (Suárez 1973). It is well known, for example, that tiene cojones ‘he has balls’ is widely used (in very informal speech) to denote ‘brave’. Surprisingly, this expression can also be used nowadays for women: Thus, young electoral supporters backed up the female candidate for presidency in Colombia, Noemí Sanín, by slogans such as: ¡Noemí tiene cojones! (Cambio 16, 29 June 1998:64). For comparison, equivalent (?) metaphorical expressions of approval such as *tiene ovarios ‘she has ovaries’ or *tiene tetas ‘she has tits’ do not exist (and even if they did, they would not be applied to men).
3.4 Sexism in selected text types

3.4.1 School books
When discussions about gender and language emerged at the beginning of the 1980s in Spain, school textbooks were one of the first text types to be analysed for alleged sexism. As many schoolbooks at that time had either been published during the Franco period or had been written by authors that were brought up during that time, sexist and stereotypical examples were frequently encountered — not only in the texts, but also in the illustrations used. The fact that many schools during this period were only for boys or for girls and were now gradually being “merged” (the key term for this was coeducación), contributed to focussing on issues of sexism in the textbooks. However, even by 1992, textbooks published between 1987 and 1989 on language and literature for use in secondary school revealed surprising data about the representation of women and men: In all the texts that were analysed, women appeared only in 2.9% of the cases and men in 97.1%. In illustrations, women fared slightly better: 19.3% as compared to 80.7%. One book about Spanish literature mentions only one female author, but 79 male writers (Lledó & Otero 1994:374–375). Seen from this perspective, it comes as no surprise that the first official guidelines for non-sexist Spanish were published by the Ministry of Science and Education and distributed to teachers and authors of schoolbooks (cf. Section 5).

3.4.2 Dictionaries
Another object of study has been dictionaries, both mono- and bilingual. These, together with grammar books, are of special interest, as they are often drawn upon to settle disputes about language matters and serve as guides for “correct” language use. Although lexicographers’ sexist presentation of language material has often been confused with sexism in language, it is important, albeit difficult sometimes, to separate these two perspectives.

The first to deal with sexist lexicography in Spanish was Hampares (1976). She analysed 105 commonly used job denominations in the Royal Academy’s dictionary and in two Spanish-English dictionaries, classifying them according to lower/higher ranked jobs and suffixes (-o vs. -a). Her conclusion was that for higher ranked job titles only the masculine term was registered (e.g., científico ‘scientist’, diplomático ‘diplomat’), whereas lower ranked jobs did appear in the feminine form (e.g., asistenta ‘assistant’, sirvienta ‘servant’). Although many feminine denominations were listed in the dictionary, many of these only appeared in subsections of the masculine term by giving the explanation ‘wife
of . . . ’ (e.g., embajadora ‘wife of ambassador’). No feminine form was given for titles like ingeniero ‘engineer’, arquitecto ‘architect’ or mecánico ‘mechanic’.

García Meseguer’s (1977) book also deals with sexist lexicographic practices. The major part of this work is devoted to removing gender stereotypes from the Academy’s dictionary by listing alternative explanations for words. However, when the 20th edition of the dictionary was published in 1984, only a few of his proposals had been taken into consideration (cf. Forgas Berdet 1986).

The latest edition of the dictionary was published in 1992, but despite slight improvements in feminine occupational titles, no substantial changes were introduced (cf. the comprehensive critique of the Academy’s dictionary by Vargas et al. 1998). Still, numerous shortcomings and sexist practices remain, for example, about 60 (!) synonyms for the word ‘prostitute’ were considered worthy and important (?) enough to be included.

Naturally, the Academy has tried to defend itself by arguing that the dictionary does nothing but register actual language use (cf. Salvador 1990). However, the crucial question in this matter is not dealt with, namely where the data that is to reflect actual language use is taken from; women’s magazines or even feminist publications can hardly be said to be the Academy’s primary sources of reference.

Although the sexist lexicographical practices of the Academy are particularly obvious, it has to be borne in mind that other authoritative dictionaries do not necessarily fare much better. Thus, for example, in the two-volume dictionary by María Moliner (1967) the pair mujer and hombre are presented highly asymmetrically (see Bierbach 1989, 1992:289) and the explanations of words given sometimes resemble what García Meseguer had denounced in the Academy’s dictionary:

(7) Paternidad: Circunstancia de ser padre.
Maternidad: Circunstancia de ser madre: “Le prueba bien la maternidad”.
‘Paternity: Circumstance of being a father.’
‘Maternity: Circumstance of being mother: “Maternity is good for her”.’
(Moliner 1967:668; 366)

(8) Padrino: Hombre que …
Madrina: Femenino de “padrino”. Mujer que …
‘Godfather: Man who . . .’
‘Godmother: Feminine of “godfather”. Woman who . . .’
(Moliner 1967:602; 303)
While (7) reflects a stereotypical attitude as to the gender roles of women and men, in (8), the word madrina is presented as if it were derived from padrino, which, morphologically, is absurd. Even if it were not, the corresponding explanation for padrino, namely masculino de “madrina”, would still be missing.

Apart from the Academy’s dictionary, we know little about how sexist recently published mono- and bilingual dictionaries are. The study by Ham-pares (1976) dates back more than 20 years and more contemporary research would be welcome.

4. Female and male discourse

Contrary to what has been the case for many other languages, investigations that are based on authentic verbal behaviour of women and men are still very rare in Spanish,20 and most of the literature published in Spain on this topic draws primarily on results found for English (cf. e.g., Lozano Domingo 1995). However, the authors of the book Gramática femenina21 (López García & Morant 1991) have collected numerous examples (mainly from modern literature and magazines) that give an impression of the morphological and lexical features that stereotypically are related to either women or men.22 With respect to the use of interjections, the authors claim that e.g., ¡huy! often followed by ¡por Diós! is typical of women, as is ¡ya! As for obscene interjections, it was at one time assumed that women did not use them. Thus, vulgar interjections like ¡coño! ‘cunt’ or ¡leche! ‘sperm’, lit. ‘milk’ were reserved for men, while women “softened” these expressions by modifying the vowel or the consonant: ¡coñe! and ¡leñe! Today, however, younger women in particular do not shrink from using these or similar expressions, including feminised versions of ¡estoy hasta los huevos! ‘I am fed up with it [up to my balls! (lit. eggs)]’ as ¡estoy hasta los ovarios! ‘… up to my ovaries’ and ¡estoy hasta el coño! ‘… up to my cunt’ (cf. Section 3.3).

If religious dimensions are considered, men of the older generation were inclined to use blasphemous expressions, like ¡hostia puta! ‘damn it!’, lit. ‘consecrated wafer’ and ‘whore’, or ¡me cago en Dios! ‘I shit on God!’, whereas women usually made invocations to divine entities: ¡bendita sea Dios! ‘God be blessed!’ or ¡Virgen Santa! ‘Holy virgin!’. Women and men also differ in their use of forms of address. Expressions used by women to other women are typically cariño ‘love’, vida ‘life’ and corazón ‘heart’; men to men use, amongst others, tronco ‘trunk’, gachó ‘bloke, guy’ and jefe ‘chief’. A quite peculiar feature
is the fact that the word *hombre* ‘man’ may be used as an address form for both men and women (e.g., ¡Qué sí hombre! ‘Certainly I am right, man!’), whereas *mujer* ‘woman’ is used only with female interlocutors.

Word-formation patterns of female and male speakers seem to differ. Women tend to use prefixes like *super-* or *hiper-* more frequently than men (e.g., *super-enamorada* ‘super in love’, *hiper-excitado* ‘hyper-excited’), and the same seems true for diminutive forms. Thus, a female speaker presented a weather forecast in this way: *Hará calor-cillo. Seguiremos con rop-ita de verano.* (‘There will be a bit of warmth. We will go on wearing our nice, tiny summer clothes’). Men, by contrast, tend to use prefixes like *re-* or *so-* to intensify choleric interjections (as in e.g., ¡Rediós, estás quieto! ‘For [many] God’s sake, be quiet!’) or suffixes like -*men* or -*amen*, especially in relation to women’s and men’s erogenous zones (e.g., *Tu cul-amen me electriza!* ‘Your [nice, lovely] bottom electrifies me!’). Although the authors cautiously speak of “tendencies” only, and there is little doubt that the features presented are recognised as differences due to the speaker’s gender, the data given still lacks empirical support to determine whether women and men – in comparable situations – really behave in the way others presumably perceive them to do.

With regard to male-female communicative styles in authentic conversations, most studies until now have focused on “Anglo-American and Germanic speakers and languages, that is on ‘Northern’ (post-)industrial societies and their typical communication settings” (Bierbach 1997a:107) and Spanish has not received much attention. In fact, I know of only three investigations that specifically compare the communicative styles of women and men in Spanish (Bierbach 1997a, 1997b; Kähler 1997).23

The investigation by Bierbach (1997a) presents material from natural conversational interaction between working-class people in a neighbourhood organisation in Barcelona. By analysing the traditional conversational features of verbal interaction such as interruption, overlap, turn taking, etc., this investigation yields some surprising results. Contrary to what has been shown for other languages, the three female informants together talk more than the five men in the mixed interactions examined. In addition, the women do better than the men when it comes to self-selected turn-taking: In fact, almost twice as many women take the floor by themselves.

One feature of Spanish conversations that appears to be difficult to analyse in terms of “dominance” are interruptions, as these apparently follow different patterns than those found in non-Mediterranean settings (cf. Bierbach 1997a:119–122). For example, in Peninsular Spanish, overlaps are quite
frequent and considered normal: “Nobody ever complains of being interrupted or uses explicit floor defending formulae” (Bierbach 1997a:121f). Characteristically, “middle-aged women, especially in lower (working) class milieus in Spain, behave quite dominantly and self-assured, speaking in a loud voice, joking, commanding, swearing, etc.” (Bierbach 1997a:126).

As the overall results of this investigation run contrary to similar findings in other countries, Bierbach concludes that speakers of Spanish, indeed, behave differently. However, it should be remembered that the social groups typically used in other countries for similar experiments consist of people from the middle class. Therefore, the question asked in the title of Bierbach’s article (“Is Spain different?”), cannot be answered satisfactorily until data from corresponding “lower” classes in other countries are provided and analysed. The study by Kähler (1997) is based upon conversational interaction recorded from Spanish TV-debates, which has been analysed along parameters such as participation, moderator’s gender, etc. Contrary to Bierbach’s findings, Kähler’s results confirm, more or less, what has been found in similar studies in other countries: that men are quantitatively very dominant in mixed discussions, i.e. they have much longer turns, are more often called upon by the moderator as well as by the other participants and, in general, are treated as experts more often than women.

Interestingly, the investigations by Bierbach and Kähler reach different, almost opposite, conclusions, which suggests that general or even universal claims about women’s and men’s conversational style should be made with great caution, if at all. Certainly, Bierbach (1997a) has convincingly demonstrated that social group membership and situational settings are parameters which cannot be dispensed with.

5. Guidelines for a non-sexist use of Spanish

The first official guidelines for non-sexist language use – published by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science – did not appear until 1988 (Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia 1988). Soon afterwards, similar official publications followed, and today a number of regional institutions in Spain have published their own guidelines. To the best of my knowledge, no guidelines have been published in Latin America, but a Spanish version of the UNESCO guidelines exists (UNESCO 1990).
In general, and apart from some minor differences, all recommendations propose the same procedures:

a. Propagation of the feminisation of words that refer specifically to women.

b. Replacement of the masculine form for generic reference by epicene words or by splitted constructions.

c. Avoidance of certain asymmetrical words; e.g., *señorita* ‘Miss’ should be replaced by *señora* and *hombre* ‘man’ by *humanidad* ‘humanity’ or *ser humano* ‘human being’.

Although the guidelines clearly promote the feminisation of occupational titles, one has to bear in mind that their use and acceptance by speakers of Spanish vary considerably according to the title in question. A questionnaire investigation from 1991 conducted in Spain revealed, e.g., that almost half of the respondents preferred *primera ministra* to *primer ministro*, but only 17% preferred the (controversial) form *la jueza* ‘the female judge’ to *la juez*, a noun of double gender (Nissen 1991:180–182). On the other hand, attitudes towards specific job titles are changing rapidly, and it is very likely that results would be different today as there are, indeed, more female judges in Spain than male ones. Phonetic criteria and analogies to similar words also exert constraints on the acceptance of specific expressions.

A further aspect addressed by some of the guidelines is the order of words that refer to men and women. Except for certain direct forms of address (e.g., *Damas y caballeros* ‘Ladies and gentlemen’), the convention is to put the feminine after the masculine form. As the authors of the guidelines interpret this traditional word order as a reflection of the hierarchical (or patriarchal) structure of society, they recommend an inversion or variation of order, e.g., *las mujeres y los hombres* ‘women and men’, *las profesoras y los profesores* ‘female and male teachers’.

Despite their good intentions, the guidelines themselves continue to use the ambiguous masculine form as a generic, thereby revealing the difficulties the proposed changes may imply:

(9) … *sin dar por sentado que todas las mujeres tienen como objetivo único el matrimonio y los hijos (m).*

‘… without assuming that the only aim of all women is marriage and children (m).’

(*Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia* 1988:11)
Traditional practice may also explain why the usual *Varios autores* (m) ‘Various authors’ is used in the bibliographical section of a co-authored book instead of *Varías autoras* (f) even though the book concerned has only female contributors (Lasosa Zazu 1994:16).\textsuperscript{25}

Today, more than one decade after the first guidelines were published, it is still too early to say what impact these and similar publications have had on the Spanish language. Although words that refer to women in the vast majority of texts have been feminised, the substitution of masculine words used generically with alternative expressions is infrequent in ordinary texts.

Nonetheless, the guidelines have undoubtedly promoted the use of feminine forms for female referents and aided the process of making these words part of dictionaries and other language reference material. The consistent avoidance of the ambiguous masculine form can also be noted in public administration when official forms, applications, letters to clients, etc. are used, but apart from feminist journals and (some) publications by the *Instituto de la Mujer*, the masculine form prevails exuberantly for generic references in ordinary texts, such as books, newspapers, magazines, etc. Even many (female) authors of books which specifically address “language and gender” issues continue to use the masculine forms, often briefly commenting on their reasons for doing so in the introduction (cf., e.g., Lozano Domingo 1995).

As mentioned, in certain types of texts (e.g., official forms, documents, job advertisements), the masculine form is avoided and replaced by splitted expressions. In these texts, a variety of forms abbreviated and segmented by means of brackets, slashes or hyphens are used, e.g., *obrero(a); obrer(a); obrero-a* ‘worker’, although, paradoxically, none of these were ever mentioned in any of the published guidelines. Another phenomenon which indicates that language users can surpass the creativity of guidelines is a new version of the splitting procedure: Probably in accordance with the controversial so-called *Binnen-I* in German (as in *LehrerInnen* ‘female or male teachers’, cf. Bußmann & Hellinger, vol. III), some users of Spanish have graphically combined the word endings *-a* and *-o* to form *l@s alumn@s* ‘the pupils’ (Arias Barredo 1995:62). Being the most economical alternative, it is likely to spread rapidly (cf. also the critical analysis by Porto Dapena 1999).

Predictably, immediately after the publication of the guidelines, there were reactions against them. On the whole, feminisation of occupational titles was generally accepted for specific reference. However, when titles refer to a profession in general (as is the case on university diplomas), the administrations
of the institutions involved showed a remarkable reluctance to employ the feminine terms – an issue which frequently hit the newspaper headlines.

The main target of criticism was the procedure of splitting in order to avoid the masculine form. In the majority of cases, the critics managed to imagine contexts in which the splitting procedures appeared convincingly superfluous. For example, should people in an emergency situation really call for *una médica* or *un médico* 'a female or a male doctor' instead of just *un médico* 'a doctor' (López García & Morant 1991:56), or should the guests at a wedding party shout *¡Viva la novia y el novio!* ('Long live the bride and the bridegroom!') instead of *¡Vivan los novios* (m) 'Long live the couple!' (Lázaro Carreter 1988:10) and thus change a century old tradition? One member of the Academy claimed that it would be “superfluous and even ridiculous” to recast the phrase *Me acuerdo mucho de mis padres* (m) 'I often think of my parents' into *Me acuerdo mucho de mi padre y de mi madre* 'I often think of my father and of my mother' (Alarcos Llorach 1990:136). Naturally, many situational contexts will unmistakably disambiguate the masculine form (as e.g., in the latter case because nobody is likely to have two fathers).

6. **Conclusion**

The first book on language and gender was published in Spain more than twenty years ago (García Meseguer 1977), and one may be surprised at how much and how little has been achieved since. On the one hand, the wording in the Royal Academy’s dictionary continues to be a target for criticism by those who denounce sexist practices, but, as even today there is only one female member of the Academy, it is doubtful that radical changes will be made in the near future. On the other hand, and perhaps even due to the blatant conservatism of the Academy, language and gender matters have become commonplace in the newspapers, in letters to the editor and even, sometimes, on TV. For example, in March 1994, *Televisión Española* broadcast a chat show dedicated to the theme of *La Mujer y el Hombre en el Lenguaje* 'Woman and man in the language'.

As for linguistic reform, new guidelines for non-sexist language are being published even by local women’s institutes in the various regional autonomies in Spain. However, traditional language planning, which is associated with academia, is, more often than not, confronted with hostility and with counter-arguments to positions that none of the guidelines have ever claimed explicitly (e.g., that language reform can change society).
Despite this attitude towards official guidelines, publications about gender issues in Spanish within the last ten years have, at least, tripled in comparison to the decade before. However, many publications are not necessarily the fruit of academic labours in Spain (nor in other Spanish-speaking countries), but are frequently due to foreign language departments in other countries. Research on the discourse behaviour of women and men is still at its very beginnings in Spain and many recently published works on e.g., colloquial Spanish have had to draw heavily on publications that are more than 30 years old. Conversational analyses with a special focus on gender are practically non-existent in Spanish.

Similarly, there is a dearth of cross-linguistic and contrastive gender studies. Although numerous varieties of Spanish are spoken in the world, studies that compare gender issues in different countries are totally absent. Thus, it would be desirable, for example, to compare Spain and Mexico (the country that is often regarded as the stereotype with respect to machismo), in terms of male and female communicative behaviour, as more or less the same language is spoken in both countries.

Notes

1. For a general introduction to Spanish, see Asher (1994) or Bright (1992); useful grammar books are Butt & Benjamin (2000) and de Bruyne (1995); for contrastive studies see Whitley (1986). The most comprehensive monolingual dictionary is Moliner (1967). For regional varieties of Latin American Spanish see Lipski (1994); for Peninsular Spanish see Zamora Vicente (1970).


3. All translations are my own.

4. It should be mentioned that a consistent terminology, especially in relation to contrastive studies, is much needed. One example of this need is reflected in Fuertes Olivera's (1992) inspiring book about gender stereotypes in English and Spanish. He suggests substituting común with dual 'double' (Fuertes Olivera 1992:51, footnote 6), but – apart from not
following his own proposal as he continues to use *común* on the subsequent pages – he fails to notice the difference between a noun of double gender and an epicene noun (see Section 2.2) by classifying the word *profesorado* ‘staff of teachers’ as double (Fuertes Olivera 1992:165). Although both an epicene and a double gender noun may refer to both women and men, an epicene noun has one and only one gender (*profesorado*, m) and cannot, therefore, be a noun of double gender. Nouns of double gender, on the other hand, are always either masculine or feminine depending on the referent.

5. For a detailed categorisation see García Meseguer (1991).

6. Most animals do not have separate words for females and males. If necessary they are distinguished by adding *hembra* ‘female’ or *macho* ‘male’ to the noun.

7. For other examples see the appendix in Fuertes Olivera (1992), in which he presents more than 400 potential neologisms (i.e. words not registered in the dictionary of the Academy of 1984) that refer to human beings. All neologisms were formed according to the pattern non-*a* vs. -*a*.

8. García Meseguer (1977, 1984) also uses the same graphic procedure, when he proposes alternative, non-sexist formulations.

9. Surprisingly, the graphic representation of words that add -*a* is identical, e.g., *japones*, -*a* ('Japanese, male/female'). In fact, only knowledge of Spanish word formation in general prevents the production of non existing words like *niña* (from *niño*, -*a*, formed in analogy to e.g., *japonesa*).

10. However, for jobs that traditionally, and still today, are done by women, the masculine term does not automatically function as a generic. Thus, *Los enfermeros* (m) *están de huelga* ‘The nurses are on strike’ will for most speakers probably not include women. On the other hand, the feminine title will not be used for generic reference either; instead, *personal de enfermería* (‘staff of the infirmary’) is employed (cf. Fernández Lagunilla 1991:326).

11. The term *neutral* here stresses the semantic aspect and differs, therefore, from *gender-neutral* as used by Frank & Treichler (1989:18): “a gender-neutral term is formally, linguistically unmarked for gender”.

12. Interestingly, the word form *persona* exists in Esperanto (Wolfe 1980:789), where it is not a masculine but a genderless term.

13. Note that with respect to animals this is not true. For example, *abeja* (f) ‘bee’ and *gallina* (f) ‘hen’ are the generic terms for *abeja/zángano* and for *gallina/gallo* cf. *carne de gallina* (*carne de gallo*) ‘goose pimples’, *gallinero* (*gallero*) ‘hen run’. Similarly, zángano is usually defined on the basis of *abeja*, i.e. *abeja macho* ‘male bee’.

14. For a more detailed discussion of this matter and also on how agreement problems are solved in splitted constructions see Nissen (1997b). For other problems of agreement, see e.g., Wonder (1985).

15. A similar investigation for German showed that one sentence that happened to contain the masculine pronoun *er* ‘he’ scored the highest rating of “male bias” (Klein 1988:315).

16. For further reading on occupational titles see García Meseguer (1993) and DeMello (1990).
17. More information about sexual terminology can be obtained from Bierbach (1992:289–291), Suárez (1973), and López García & Morant (1991:139–156). Empirical studies, however, that deal with real language use are lacking. See also Castro (1982).

18. It should be noted that some earlier investigations on this matter had been carried out a few years previously in Puerto Rico, undoubtedly under the influence of gender discussions in the US. The results obtained agree almost entirely with those found later on in Spanish schoolbooks (cf. González 1985:49–50).

19. For further references see Careaga Castrillón & Garreta Torner (1987), Moreno (1986), Catalá González & García Pascual (1987), and Moreno Marimón (1994).

20. Exceptions are investigations that deal with purely phonological aspects or analyse the behaviour in bilingual settings, cf. note 2.

21. The title of the book is misleading, as no traditional grammatical aspects are addressed. Instead, the verbal (and nonverbal) behaviour of women and men is treated. Even if one considers these aspects as part of grammar, there still seems to be no reason to call the book Gramática femenina as both female and male behaviour is covered. The following examples are all from the second chapter of this book.

22. Although the line of demarcation can be somewhat arbitrary, I have left out those sections that do not specifically address verbal differences, but rather describe specific situations that are typical for women or men. For example, a sentence like 'I cannot go. I do not know what to put on.' (López García & Morant 1991:124) may be said more often by women, but is it, therefore, a characteristic feature of women’s language?

23. Another discourse study related to language and gender is Martín Rojo & Callejo Gallego (1995). However, the aim of the study is not to compare men’s and women’s conversational styles, but, instead, to show how men (in this case Spanish executives) speak about women, and how they implicitly favour discrimination in recruitment and promotion.

24. Although all guidelines recommend the avoidance of señorita ‘Miss’, there is no agreement as to the abbreviation of its substitute, i.e. señora. The Ministry for Social Affairs has tried to coin a new expression: Sa. (Ministerio de Asuntos Sociales 1991:9), equivalent to the English ‘Ms’, while the UNESCO (1990:14) prefers Sra. because it is known throughout the world – despite the fact that it traditionally only referred to a married woman.


26. Although there are no other possibilities in the Spanish-speaking countries, in Denmark the word novios (m) could refer to a gay male couple, since homosexuals are allowed to marry legally (although without approval of the Church).

27. Nevertheless, Alarcos Llorach’s example is not well chosen, as it differs from “ordinary” split expressions (e.g. obrera y obrero ‘worker’). In this case, two different lexemes are involved (madre and padre) and the construction may not, therefore, be felt to be as “awkward” as many split expressions in fact are. Furthermore, most people probably regard their parents as individual persons anyway and, therefore, an explicit mentioning of both persons may not be perceived as superfluous at all.
References


Gender in addressing and self-reference in Vietnamese
Variation and change*

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1. Introduction

Vietnamese, called Annam under Chinese domination, today known to its native speakers as tiếng Việt nam, is the official language of Vietnam and
belongs to the Viet-Muong branch of the Mon-Khmer subfamily of Austro-Asiatic languages. It is spoken by about 76 million people (Dodd & Lewis 1998). The Northern standard language is based on the Hanoi dialect. The Southern standard dialect is based on the speech of people living in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City). There is also a Central standard dialect focused on the speech of Hue. The Hanoi dialect is closest to the writing system, which encodes all those contrasts that are found in all dialects. The dialects form a continuum from north to south. With regard to tone, Northern and Southern dialects share many features, while Central dialects stand on their own. Vietnamese is spoken not only in Vietnam, but also in parts of Cambodia, Laos and Thailand. After the political victory of the North in 1975, people fled the country in great numbers. There are about two million Vietnamese people living all over the world, half of them in North America.

In the several centuries of Chinese domination, Vietnam used Chinese characters (chữ Hán) in education and official communication. By the 13th century, the Vietnamese had created their own writing system called chữ Nôm, based on Chinese characters with Sino-Vietnamese pronunciation (see Đào 1973:55). In the 16th century, Alexandre de Rhodes, a French Catholic missionary who was a gifted linguist, invented a new writing system based on Roman scripts, chữ Quốc ngữ 'national script', for religious texts. This system is phonological in nature. Since the beginning of the 20th century, it has served as the official writing system of Vietnamese.

### 2. Selected structural properties of Vietnamese

A large proportion of the vocabulary of Vietnamese is of Chinese origin as the result of the intensive Chinese cultural influence during ten centuries of Chinese rule. These lexical items are usually known as Sino-Vietnamese. Most Sino-Vietnamese (SV) items have Vietnamese (VN) counterparts, which are interchangeable in most cases, e.g., ðân bà (VN) / phụ nữ (SV) 'woman'. Except for many Sino-Vietnamese compounds where the usage of Vietnamese counterparts is considered inappropriate, Vietnamese forms can be used in almost any context, while Sino-Vietnamese forms occur mainly in formal contexts and written language. The overuse of Sino-Vietnamese is regarded as pompous and awkward; the overuse of Vietnamese forms for Sino-Vietnamese compounds is seen as uneducated and improper. However, there have been
concerted efforts by nationalists to replace Sino-Vietnamese forms with Vietnamese ones where possible.

Vietnamese does not have grammatical gender. It is a classifier language which demands the use of a classifier when a noun is combined with a numeral. The choice of classifier depends on features such as animateness, humanness, social position and attitude of the speaker, to name a few. For instance, con 'animal' is used for animals and insects (con kiến 'an ant'), and cái 'thing' for inanimate objects (cái bàn 'a table'). However, con also can be used for inanimate objects to emphasize motion, e.g., con thủy 'a boat'. Objects can have classifiers according to their shape, e.g., cây for stick-like objects (cây bút tree + pen 'a pen'), tờ for sheet-like objects (tờ giấy 'a piece of paper'), tập for books (tập vở 'a notebook'). A person can have different classifiers, including a common noun such as người (người lính person + soldier 'a soldier') or nhà (nhà thơ house + poetry 'a poet'), a kinship term (anh/chú/ông lính older brother/uncle/grandfather + soldier 'a soldier'), depending on the age of the speaker compared with that of the referent; or classifiers such as thằng 'fellow', tên 'name' exhibiting semantic derogation, e.g., thằng lính 'a soldier', tên cướp name + rob 'a robber'.

In a noun phrase with a numeral, a classifier must be used between the number and the noun: numeral-classifier-noun, e.g., ba người con three + person + offspring 'three children' (Nguyễn 1987; see also Löbel 2000 for a detailed description of the occurrence vs. non-occurrence of classifiers).

Vietnamese is a monosyllabic language. Each syllable usually constitutes a word. The canonical syllable structures are (C)(w)V(C), in which V, i.e., the only obligatory element, can be a vowel or a diphthong. Any consonant can occur initially, but only a limited number of consonants can occur finally. Every syllable has a tone. There are six phonemic tones (their Vietnamese names are ngang, huỳnh, sắc, nặng, hỏi and ngã) to distinguish words with identical consonant and vowel sequences. In Southern dialects, the tone nga merges with the tone hỏi.

Variation of the basic word order SVO is significant in Vietnamese, as might be expected in the virtual absence of other overt indicators to express the syntactic relations of words to each other. Vietnamese is morphologically isolating and makes use of modifiers rather than of affixes to express tense and voice of verb forms, e.g., nó ăn he/she + to eat 'he/she eats', nó đã (past morpheme) ăn 'he/she ate', nó ăn rồi (already) 'he/she has already eaten', nó chưa (not yet) ăn 'he/she has not eaten yet'. There are no case markers in Vietnamese, and thus a noun can function as subject, object, or any other syntactic role without changing its form (Nguyễn 1977, Thompson 1965, Ngô 1984).
3. Terms for human referents

This section is concerned with Vietnamese terms for person reference that are used in addressing, reference and self-reference. As there is no grammatical gender in Vietnamese, this is an important area where gender differences are expressed and constructed. The respective terms can be derived from personal nouns, common nouns, kinship terms, pronouns or proper nouns. In this section, I shall describe each subsystem separately, in order to establish what might be called a protosystem, against which I can then outline the changes that are taking place.

3.1 Personal nouns

A personal noun can be formed from a verb or adjective with a classifier. The classifier precedes the noun in Vietnamese forms and follows the noun in Sino-Vietnamese forms. For instance, Vietnamese forms such as người đọc person + read ‘a reader’, người bệnh person + sick ‘a patient’, thầy thuốc master + medicine ‘a physician’, thầy dạy master + teach ‘a teacher’ have the corresponding Sino-Vietnamese forms đọc giả ‘a reader’, bệnh nhân ‘a patient’, bác sĩ ‘a physician’, giáo sư ‘a professor’, respectively.

Some verbs, nouns or adjectives can function as nominal address forms for the interlocutor, e.g., đẻ ‘to give birth’ > ‘mother’, cưng ‘to dearly love’ > ‘sweetheart’, vú ‘breast’ > ‘wet-nurse’, nhỏ ‘small’ > ‘you’.

Except for lexical gender words such as vua ‘king’ vs. hoàng hậu ‘queen’, hoàng tử ‘prince’ vs. công chúa ‘princess’ and certain kinship terms (cf. Section 3.2), all human nouns and occupational terms are used for both women and men. As Vietnamese does not have affixes, gender-specification is achieved by special morphemes used as modifiers (e.g., Sino-Vietnamese trai/gái, nam/nữ ‘male/female’) or classifiers, e.g., bạn trai ‘a male friend/boyfriend’ vs. bạn gái ‘a female friend/girlfriend’; ông hiệu trưởng ‘Mr Principal’ vs. bà hiệu trưởng ‘Mrs Principal’; cậu giáo uncle + teach ‘a male teacher’ vs. cô giáo young lady + teach ‘a female teacher’; Sino-Vietnamese nam sinh ‘a male student’ vs. nữ sinh ‘a female student’. These forms are used in normal or formal contexts. There is no asymmetry in these ‘male’/‘female’ morphemes, but the two particular Vietnamese special designations, thì (male) and con (female) occur only in solidarity contexts and will be discussed in Section 5.4.
3.2 Kinship terms

The system of kinship terms that may be used as address terms is shown in Table 1, which represents the Southern dialect. In the table, the slash symbol marks a male-female couple of the same generation. For example, cậu is mother’s brother, and his wife is mụ. Three generations of relatives are shown in the table, separated by double lines.

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<td>chị</td>
<td>.older sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>con</td>
<td>.offspring (term of self-reference in speaking to older generations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>em</td>
<td>.younger brother or sister (term of self-reference in speaking to siblings)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows the terms as they would be if the speaker was a member of the youngest generation. In South Vietnam, a child can use the term con ‘offspring’ for self-reference when speaking to members of the older generations. In the third generation, younger brothers or sisters address their older brother and sister as anh or chị, respectively, and use the term em ‘younger brother/sister’ for themselves.

Kinship terms differentiate the grandparents by gender (grandmother and grandfather), but not by lineage (paternal or maternal). However, children usually use ông nội and bà nội to refer to their paternal grandfather and grandmother, and ông ngoại and bà ngoại to refer to their maternal grandfather and grandmother.
grandmother. Literally, nội and ngoại mean ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. These terms emphasize the dominant status given to the paternal side in a patrilineal society such as the Vietnamese.

Traditionally, a daughter is treated as an ‘outsider’ by her family, because sooner or later she will belong to her husband’s family when she marries, as reflected in the folk saying Con gái là con người ta, con dâu mới thất me cha mua về ‘Your daughter is someone else's daughter, your daughter-in-law is really the daughter that you bought’. This attitude also spreads to the generation of cousins, as seen in the saying Con cô con cậu thì xa, con chú con bác thất là anh em ‘Children of maternal siblings are not close relatives, but children of paternal brothers are true brothers’. Consequently, cháu bà nội, tôi bà ngoại means the child is a grandchild of the paternal grandmother, but taking care of the child is the maternal grandmother’s obligation.

Table 1 shows that generally the finest distinctions are made in the parents’ generation, where the parents’ siblings are differentiated by both gender (uncle/aunt) and lineage. The paternal uncles (but not the maternal uncles or paternal aunts) are also differentiated by relative age, with father’s older brother referred to as bác. The older brother’s wife is also referred to as bác. Unlike mẹ ‘mother/mom’, the term ba occurs only for address and not for reference. The common noun for ‘father’ is cha. Depending on the dialect and social background of the speaker, e.g., social class, urban vs. rural, youngsters can use many different expressions to address their parents, including bô, cha, thày, cậu, tía, bà, and bo for the father and me, mà, ma, mẹ, u, bu, and băm for the mother. Siblings of the speaker are differentiated by age, as older or younger siblings, and the older siblings (but not the younger) are further differentiated by gender. In a society that values social hierarchy, this shows the respect for people in a higher position.

The gender of relatives is distinguished by trai ‘male’ and gái ‘female’, e.g., bác trai ‘father’s older brother’, bác gái ‘father’s older brother’s wife’, em trai ‘younger brother’, em gái ‘younger sister’, cháu trai ‘nephew/grandson’, cháu gái ‘niece/granddaughter’. However, great-grandfather is ông cáo and great-grandmother is bà cáo.

Married couples often employ kinship terms in addressing one another. Typically, if the couple is young or middle-aged, the husband uses anh ‘older brother’ for self-reference and em ‘younger sibling’ to address his wife, and the wife uses em for self-reference and anh to address her husband. When the couples grow old and have grandchildren, they use more balanced terms to address each other. Wives use the expressions ông ‘grandfather’ or ông nó.
grandfather + he/she to refer to their husbands, and husbands refer to their wives as bà ‘grandmother’ or bà nó grandmother + he/she. Both husbands and wives use the pronoun tôi for self-reference. In urban settings, the couples often use the kinship terms anh and em until they have grandchildren or until they are very old. Other variations in address terms between couples are discussed in detail in Section 5.4.

3.3 Pronouns

The choice of pronouns depends partly on formality, i.e., some occur in formal contexts and others in colloquial contexts (spoken language, personal letters, and written dialogue) where the speaker has a close or egalitarian relationship with the addressees. The most common pronouns of Vietnamese are listed in Table 2.

The first person singular tôi is used in formal or polite contexts to demonstrate a considerable social distance between speaker and addressee; it originates from a noun meaning ‘servant of the king’. In formal contexts, only tôi and họ (3pl) can occur. The terms tui and hän are colloquial Southern versions of tôi and nó (3sg), respectively. The term ngài (2sg) is used in diplomatic and religious contexts. A few forms, such as ta ‘I’ and ngutori ‘you’ are archaic or old words which occur in classical literature (e.g., fairy tales, historical novels, etc.). The term ta can function as the first person plural inclusive, but usually in written language. Other terms, such as chàng ‘he’ or nàng ‘she’, occur only in

Table 2. Vietnamese personal pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Colloquial</th>
<th>Formal/Polite</th>
<th>Archaic/Literary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>tao</td>
<td>tôi / tui (S)</td>
<td>ta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>mây</td>
<td>ngãi</td>
<td>ngutori</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>nó / hän (S)</td>
<td></td>
<td>chàng (male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>nàng (female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ta / mình</td>
<td>ta</td>
<td>ta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>bay</td>
<td>bay</td>
<td>bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>họ</td>
<td>họ</td>
<td>Họ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(S) = Southern usage
Among the third person pronouns, the gender distinction is made only in the pair chàng/nàng. The rest can refer to both females and males. The third person singular pronoun hắn is used generically in spoken language, but in written language, it usually refers to males. Ngài is generic as a religious term, but in diplomatic contexts, the term ngài ‘you’ exclusively implies male. This is because certain important positions or occupations were taken only by men: politicians, physicians, professors, and lawyers. Today, if the addressee were female, ngài ‘you’ would not be employed; instead, the kinship term bà ‘grandmother’ would be used, as in bà thủ tướng ‘Mrs Prime Minister’, or bà Đại sứ ‘Mrs Ambassador’. There is a generic pronominal term that originates from a noun: mình ‘body’. In sentences such as the following mình is used as a reflexive pronoun:

(1) Mỗi học sinh phải mang sách của mình.

Each student must bring their own textbook.

Mình can serve as a personal pronoun for both genders meaning ‘I, you (sing)’ and ‘we (inclusive)’ in colloquial language. The special use of this term will be further discussed in Section 5.2.

Apart from the plural pronouns họ (3PL) and họ (2PL), plurality can also be indicated by the use of two plural markers, chúng and các. For instance, ngài is pluralized by các, i.e., các ngài. The other singular pronouns can be pluralized by chúng, e.g., chúng nó ‘they’, chúng ta ‘we (inclusive)’, chúng tôi ‘we (exclusive)’, chúng mày ‘you (pl)’; see Emeneau (1951) and Thompson (1965) for detailed discussions of personal pronouns.

The choice of a particular pronoun carries social significance beyond the denotative meaning of the pronoun. A child can tell how upset his or her parent is by the address term the parent uses. A husband can understand how his wife feels about what he has said by her choice of words. An observer can presume certain background information about the social class, education, individual traits and origin of a person when they first meet by the use of address terms.

Names can also serve as address terms. They can be used to refer to the speaker, the hearer or someone not present. Using proper names for self-reference occurs more in female speech than in male speech (cf. Lương 1990: 108). In many cases, proper names are seen as neutral terms to avoid embarrassment in situations where the social hierarchy is not clearly defined. This issue will be discussed in Section 5.
4. Male/female relations in idiomatic expressions

In Vietnamese, there are some idioms and folk sayings which denigrate women in certain situations, but no similar ones exist for men in the same situations. For instance, the abusive term gái già girl + old 'old girl, spinster’ refers to a woman who remains single after a certain age. If a married woman does not have children, she may receive the comment:

(2) Gái độc không con.
girl poisonous no offspring
'Only bad women cannot have children.'

Referring to a married woman who already has children, the term na dòng 'a woman having children' carries a negative meaning, something like 'a used-up woman', but there is no similar term for a married man. When a woman cheats on her husband, she is referred to as gái lốn chồng girl + mistaken + husband 'an unfaithful woman'. There is no comparable expression for a man in the same situation. These asymmetries clearly indicate a society where moral criteria are much more strictly applied to women than to men. Similarly, if a woman is left by her husband, something must be wrong with her, as indicated by the saying:

(3) Gái chồng rầy, phi chồng nó thì tật kia.
girl husband leave not bad lot this so bad habit that
'An abandoned wife must certainly have a bad character.'

Women are also judged by their physical attributes. For instance, a wide mouth is a good thing in men but a bad one in women:

(4) Đàn ông rỏng miệng thì tài, đàn bà
men wide mouth then talent women
rỏng miệng điều tài làng giềng.
wide mouth deaf ear neighbor
'A man with a wide mouth is stylish, a woman with a wide mouth is noisy.'

If a woman's hair is naturally curly, she must be a jealous person:

(5) Quần quanh tóc tran là người hay ghen.
curly hair forehead be person often jealous
'Women with curly hair are often jealous people.'
If she is fat, she eats on the sly and beats her children:

(6) Ăn vung như chớp đánh con cả ngày.
   eat on the sly like lightning beat offspring all day
   ‘(She) is very good at eating on the sly, beats her children all the time.’

These proverbs are taken from a compendium of Vietnamese folk sayings (Vũ 1994), but there are no such stereotypes about men’s obesity or their curly hair. For a man to have a naive wife is regarded a disaster:

(7) Thất nhất vợ dài trong nhà, thất nhi trâu chậm thút
   firstly wife stupid in house secondly ox slow
   ba rễ cùn.
   thirdly bush-hook blunt
   ‘The worst thing is having a stupid wife, the second worst is having a slow ox, and the third is having a blunt bush-hook.’

On the assumption that husbands are always smarter than their wives, the first thing a man should do when he gets married is educate his wife:

(8) Day con tử thuở con thơ, day vợ dạy thưở
   teach offspring since time still young teach wife teach time
   bố vợ mới về.
   forlorn/unprotected just come
   ‘Teach your child when he is still very young, teach your wife when she first comes to live with you.’

When a young man is widowed, social sympathy is shown to single fathers by the proverb gà trống nuôi con ‘the rooster must raise the chicks’, but for single mothers there is no comparable proverb, because this circumstance is seen as normal and natural. The mothers are blamed, if their children do not behave:

(9) Con hư tai mẹ.
   offspring bad due to mother
   ‘A child has bad behavior if its mother does not do a good job.’

Although some of those views showing gender-related stereotypes have changed, most of them still remain the same in the opinion of both men and women, especially in the rural areas.
5. Vietnamese terms of address, reference and self-reference

The Vietnamese system of address, reference and self-reference is a very important area of discourse and it, too, shows many interesting asymmetries related to gender. When people speak to one another in Vietnamese, they must gauge several social factors if they are to avoid embarrassment or bad manners in choosing terms of self-reference or reference to others. The following examples, in which a mother addresses her daughter using three different subsystems of address and self-reference, will give an impression of the complexities of the address system.

In (10a) the mother employs the pronominal pair *tao ... mày* 'I ... thou'. In (10b) the mother uses a kinship term *mother* to refer to herself and the proper name *Hiền* for her daughter. In (10c) the mother again refers to herself in the third person as *mẹ* 'mother', but uses the kinship term *con* 'offspring' for her daughter.

\[
\begin{align*}
(10) & \quad \text{a. } \textit{tao sê mua cho mày cái bút āy.} \\
& \quad \textit{I fut buy for thou cl pen that} \\
& \quad \text{‘I will buy that pen for you.’} \\
& \quad \text{b. } \textit{mẹ sê mua cho Hiền cái bút āy.} \\
& \quad \textit{mother fut buy for Hien cl pen that} \\
& \quad \text{‘mother will buy for Hien cl pen that’} \\
& \quad \text{c. } \textit{mẹ sê mua cho con cái bút āy.} \\
& \quad \textit{mother fut buy for offspring cl pen that} \\
\end{align*}
\]

All of these sentences mean ‘I will buy that pen for you’, although each uses different forms for person reference.

The pair *tao ... mày* usually occurs among close friends, children of the same age, and, as in (10a) in the family by the elders towards younger people. In (10b), the speaker uses the kinship term *mẹ* for herself and a proper name, *Hiền*, for her daughter. For parents, the use of proper names in addressing their children occurs mainly in urban or educated families. In a conversation, a change in reference terms from *mẹ ... con* ‘mother ... offspring’ in (10c) to *tao ... mày* in (10a) is usually a warning sign for the child that their parent is not pleased.

5.1 Sociopolitical background and characteristics of address terms

Up to the early decades of the 20th century, social relations in Vietnam were relatively static. People generally had a clear notion of their own status and of
the relative status of the people with whom they came into contact. The use of address terms, though complex, was relatively well-defined.

As the 20th century progressed, a number of social changes created a more fluid social system. Urbanization led to closer contacts among castes, classes and social groups, and occupational mobility resulted in greater flexibility in social status. Women, whose roles were formerly well-defined as largely domestic and reproductive, began participating in the more public spheres of education and later business, commerce, and politics. To some extent, these changes were a reflection of the influential French colonial system, which provided a European perspective for at least the upper echelon of Vietnamese society. Vietnam encountered additional social forces for change: Many years of civil war brought the country into close contact with occidental cultures, not only French, but also American. These contacts conspired with the other social changes to “democratize” Vietnamese society, which in turn affected the Vietnamese system of person reference.

Women are more restricted in the terms they use, and are thus more sensitive to their social effect. When choices of address terms change in any of the subsystems described above, those changes are more likely found in the speech of women than men.

One of the essential characteristics of the system is that the terms are highly context-sensitive. When speakers choose terms of address, self-reference and reference in Vietnamese, they must be aware of the social nuances of the situation. Consequently, there is a tendency to avoid certain terms in specific contexts. For example, in the first half of this century, in rural areas, a young wife might avoid using any specific terms to refer to herself or to her husband. The conversation below, which is a well-known witticism in Vietnam, illustrates this avoidance. In (11), the young wife addresses her husband using ai, an indefinite pronoun meaning ‘someone, everyone, anyone’ in a statement or ‘who’ in a question. In the husband’s reply, he teases his wife by using the literal meaning of the pronoun. In the last utterance, the first two aís refer to the wife and husband, respectively; the second two aís have the literal meaning of an interrogative pronoun ‘who’, which is perfectly understood.

(11) Wife:  
Ai ội, vè ăn cơm!
someone voc return eat rice  
‘Hey, someone, go home for lunch!’

Husband:  
Ai gọi ai đây?
who call who prt  
‘Who is calling whom?’
Wife:  Ai gọi ai chử còn ai gọi ai nữa? 
someone call someone PRT still who call who then 
'I (someone) am calling you (someone), who else (who) is 
calling you (who)?'

The use of some common nouns as terms of address or self-reference with 
special meanings is quite common. For instance, in (12), a young woman refers 
to herself as _người ta_ 'people' when speaking to her boyfriend:

(12) Hôm qua không tôi làm _người ta_ chờ mãi.
day pass not come make people wait ever 
'I (people) waited (for you) for a long time yesterday but (you) did 
not come.'

Here, the girl is blaming her boyfriend for not coming. She uses _người ta_ for 
self-reference and no term at all for the addressee. The unmarked use in this 
case would be the kinship terms _anh_ 'elder brother' for the addressee and _em_ 
'younger sibling' for self-reference (_Hôm qua anh không tôi làm _em_ chờ mãi_). 
These kinship terms would show normal intimacy, but that is not what the girl 
waants. She wants to convey the message that she is upset, so she chooses a term 
that literally refers to herself as a third party _người ta_ and omits any explicit 
reference to her boyfriend.

Depending on the context, _người ta_ can be used to refer to the addressee or 
a third person, as in (13). Here, a girl speaks to her boyfriend about another girl 
whom she considers her rival. She uses _tôi_ for self-reference to show aloofness 
and jealousy, the first _người ta_ for that girl (her rival), and the second _người ta_ for 
the addressee:

(13) Tôi đâu có đẹp như _người ta_ Đề đc _người ta_ 
I not have beauty like people in.order.to get people 
ngó thời! 
look.at PRT 
'I know that (I am) not as beautiful as her (people) to get your 
(people's) attention!'

Although the speaker in (12) and (13) can be female or male, women are more 
likely to speak this way than men. The speakers indicate a certain deliberate 
distance in a close relationship by referring to themselves or to the addressee 
with a common noun otherwise used for a third party, _người ta_ 'people/they', 
in intimate contexts.
5.2 Kinship terms and common nouns

With a limited set of personal pronouns speakers of Vietnamese have to use kinship terms and common nouns as address terms. Here, too, the address terms can easily cause communicative and social problems if they are used inappropriately.

Kinship terms can be used with people who are not the speaker’s relatives. In informal contexts, speakers must choose a kinship term appropriate to their age and relationship with the addressee. For example, in (14), the speaker addresses her older neighbor using the term cháu ‘grandchild/nephew/niece’ to refer to herself and dì ‘mother’s sister’ for her neighbor:

(14) Cháu mua cho dì Tú cái lông.

‘I (niece) have just bought you (mother’s sister Tu) a very cute comb.’

The addressee can be referred to as dì, if she is older than the speaker, but younger than her grandparents.

Among the kinship terms, the two that occur in the most formal contexts are ông ‘grandfather’ and bà ‘grandmother’. In addressing people a generation or more older, speakers use the terms ông with the general meaning ‘Mr, Sir’ or bà with the meaning ‘Mrs, Madam’. In addressing younger people or in less formal circumstances, speakers can make use of the expressions anh ‘elder brother’ or chị ‘elder sister’.

Kinship terms allow the speaker to convey various feelings or attitudes to addressees who are not relatives. Maternal terms are usually regarded as more intimate than paternal terms. For example, if dì ‘mother’s sister’ in (14) were replaced by cô ‘father’s sister’, the speaker would display a greater distance from the addressee. This is because for second and third generations, maternal relatives usually are associated with care, gentleness and unconditional love, while paternal relatives are seen as strict and powerful rulers.

Certain common nouns can serve as address terms. The speaker can refer to the addressee by a common noun, as in (15a) or by a noun indicating the occupation or status of the addressee, as in (15b). The addressee in these sentences might be the same person, but (15a) shows greater intimacy between the speaker and the addressee:

(15) a. Tôi thấy bạn không ngủ.

‘I see that you (friend) seem not to sleep enough.’
b. Tôi thấy bác sĩ có vẻ thiếu ngủ đó.

'I see that you (doctor) seem not to sleep enough.'

In (15a) the speaker uses bạn 'friend' to refer to the addressee, thereby showing the friendship that exists between the two of them. The speaker may be older or the same age, but not younger than the addressee. In (15b), the speaker uses the occupational term bác sĩ 'doctor' to refer to the addressee, displaying greater distance in their relationship. The speaker might be older or younger than the addressee, and is not necessarily a patient.

The term mình 'body' can occur in many different relationships, such as between friends and married couples. It is used as an address term among married couples and for self-reference in other relationships. The term occurs only in solidarity contexts or fairly non-formal contexts, such as between two employees who have worked with each other for a long time.

Between married couples, mình is used to address the spouse, by either the husband or wife. If the speaker is the husband, he uses anh 'elder brother' for self-reference. If the speaker is a wife, she uses em 'younger sibling' for self-reference. For example, in (16), the husband speaks to his wife:

16 Anh đã nói bà Phấn sáng mai gặp mình.

'I (elder brother) told Mrs Phan to see you (body) tomorrow morning.'

There are no age constraints for the term mình. This use is found mostly in urban settings. Among female and male friends, mình 'body' can function as self-reference when speaking to anyone who is younger or the same age. If the speaker were younger than the addressee and used this term for self-reference, it would be considered inappropriate and impolite. If the speaker were much older than the addressee, the speaker’s use of mình would show a greater degree of intimacy. For mình to be used when the ages differ, the speaker and the addressee usually have to share the same work environment, such as employees who do the same job in the same company, or professors and students. In the relationship between teachers and students, a young or “non-conservative” teacher might use mình for self-reference when speaking to students outside the classroom in senior high school, colleges or universities. In this context, the teacher wants to show solidarity with the students rather than authority. This use is not allowed in formal contexts.
Between females or when speaking to a person of the opposite gender, a speaker who uses *mình* for self-reference usually employs a proper name to address the interlocutor. This usage is common among young and middle-aged people in urban settings.

Between males, *mình* can be used for self-reference when speaking to a close friend, or to a person the speaker first meets in non-formal contexts who is younger or the same age. However, if the conversation is between a male and a female, they need to be close friends in order to use the term *mình* for self-reference. If they are not close friends, the man would be regarded as impolite regardless of his age, and the woman might be regarded as flirtatious if she was about the same age. However, this usage is acceptable if the woman is much older than the man.

In Southern dialects, except among married couples, speakers use the term *mình* only for self-reference, but in North Vietnam, *mình* can refer to either the speaker or the addressee. This leads to different possible meanings for sentences like (17):

(17) *Mình sẽ gặp ông Tam sáng mai.*

A Southerner would understand that it is the speaker who will meet Mr Tam tomorrow morning; but the sentence is ambiguous for a Northerner, since it can also mean ‘You will meet Mr Tam tomorrow morning’.

Among friends, *tổ* ‘servant’ can occur as the first person to show a close relationship. A friend speaks to another friend in (18):

(18) *Cậu đang nói nữa, tổ chán làm rồi!*

‘You should not speak any more, I (servant) am already fed up!’

Sentence (18) can be used by female as well as male speakers. The kinship term *cậu*, though it refers explicitly to a male, i.e. ‘mother’s brother’, can be employed in Northern dialects to address a female friend.

In Southern dialects, the term corresponding to Northern *cậu* and *dàng ấy* side + that ‘you’ is *bộ* ‘large basket’. It means something like English ‘buddy’. Generally this term is used between people of the same age and it is very common, especially in female speech, perhaps because women show intimacy more easily than men and are more open towards friends.

Another popular term among Saigonese youngsters is *nhỏ* ‘little’. It can be used to refer to someone who is younger or the same age. In (19), the speaker
is talking to her friend about another girl or woman who might not be their friend. The speaker uses tui for self-reference, nhỏ ‘little’ for the third person, and bò ‘large basket’ for the addressee:

(19) Tui thây nhỏ dô còi bò siêng hơgn. 
I see little that see appearance hard.working than 
bò large.basket prt
‘I think that girl (little) seems to be more hard-working than you (large basket).’

The term nhỏ ‘little’ can also refer to the interlocutor. For example, a female speaks to her female friend in (20):

(20) Mai nhỏ nhô chô ta đi học với nghe. 
tomorrow little remember wait.for I go study with prt
‘Tomorrow you (little) remember to wait for me to go to school.’

The pair ta … nhỏ ‘I … little’ as used in (20) is very common between female students. Male students do not use the term nhỏ to address male friends, but only to address close female friends or mostly girlfriends. In speaking to a lover, a male speaker can select the kinship term anh ‘elder brother’ for self-reference. In this case, nhỏ means something like ‘sweetheart’ or ‘honey’ in English. The term nhỏ in this situation can be replaced with bé ‘small’ with the same intimacy. The term bé resembles the meaning of English ‘baby’. Young children can also be addressed as bé.

In the next section, I will show that terms of address, self-reference and reference have changed in contemporary Vietnamese society, especially the terms women use in all types of relationships. Although the sociocultural organization of Vietnam differs from Western countries, the sociolinguistic behavior of females and males is susceptible to the same pressures for variation and change.

5.3 Terms of address and self-reference in various female–male encounters

Beginning in the first decades of the 20th century, partly under the influence of new values brought by the French, there was a social revolution against traditional values and rules. Its effects are especially noticeable in asymmetric power relationships such as those between masters and servants, teachers and
students, and husbands and wives. The differences also pervade symmetrical relationships, such as those between neighbors and work mates. People have been led to re-evaluate their traditional roles. Equality and inclusiveness, particularly for women, have been on the increase slowly but surely for several decades.

The beginnings of this revolution were vividly reflected in popular literature during the period of 1930–1945, in the first Vietnamese novels. The novels depicted the new social mores, sometimes through characters who were socially advanced but more often through characters who were intended to represent the contemporary urban class. Above all, the development of the Vietnamese novel introduced realism into literature. The interaction of the characters preserves their attitudes and, more important, the language they used to express those attitudes. Under the new view, some terms came to be considered old-fashioned, and are now nearly obsolete. New ways of address and self-reference, which are more relaxed and open, came into being. I will briefly discuss some ways in which these traditional subsystems have changed to accommodate social changes, especially in regard to gender roles.

5.3.1 Masters and housekeepers

In traditional society, relationships such as those between housekeepers and masters, students and teachers, or wives and husbands, were strictly hierarchical. The hierarchy was codified in the use of terms of address and self-reference.

Housekeepers usually employed con ‘offspring’ to refer to themselves when speaking to their masters, and used terms such as ông ‘grandfather’ or bà ‘grandmother’, or something similar, to address the master or mistress, regardless of the age of the individuals involved. They used cô ‘father’s sister’ or câu ‘mother’s brother’ to address the offspring of the master. Masters and their offspring, however, usually utilized the pair tao … mày ‘I … thou’ when speaking to their housekeepers.

In Vietnamese society before 1954, housekeeping was a common occupation. Middle class families might employ several people to do housework: women to cook, babysit, or clean the house, and men to garden and drive. Lower middle class families usually employed a woman as cook, nanny and cleaner in the house. The housekeeper was generally a woman or a girl, and housekeeping has always been and still is regarded as women’s work.

A short story from the 1930s, Cái Ve by Khải Huy, dramatizes the changing relations between servants and masters. An 18 year-old girl cooks for some tenants who are about the same age or a few years older. Some of them are workers, one is a young teacher. In (21a), the girl speaks to the teacher, whom
she likes very much. She uses con 'offspring' to refer to herself and thầy 'teacher' to address the teacher:

(21) a. Girl:  
Con đề dạy, thầy chờ một lát  
offspring put here teacher wait a moment  
chè ngâm đã rỗi hãy uống.  
teabrewed already then will drink  
'I (offspring) put (tea) here, you (teacher) should wait for a minute until it is ready.'

b. Teacher:  
Tôi bảo cô đừng xướng con  
I tell father's.sister not address.oneself offspring  
với tôi, sao cô không nghe?  
with me why father's.sister not listen  
'I have told you (father's sister) not to use 'offspring' when speaking to me, why don't you (father's sister) listen?' (Khải Hưng 1936:23)

In (21b), the teacher uses the pronoun tôi to refer to himself and cô 'father's sister' to refer to the girl.

In (21), the teacher, as an educated person, is attempting to bring the spirit of the social revolution to uneducated people like the girl. He expects the girl to use a more appropriate term to refer to herself according to her age, but not the term con which is regarded as self-deprecating. He uses the term cô 'father's sister' to address the girl. The literal meaning of this kinship term has been lost here. It is used to address young girls or women of the same class as the teacher. As the scene progresses, it becomes clear that this expression upsets the girl because she is not used to it. The novelist tells us that the girl thinks 'that term should be used only for elegant, beautiful people in noble and rich families. She first thought it was a bitter mockery' (Khải Hưng 1936:13). However, later in their relationship, the girl selects ông 'grandfather' to refer to the teacher and tôi 'I' to refer to herself.

After North Vietnam became the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1954, housekeeping positions were abolished. In South Vietnam, housekeeping was still considered a suitable job for young girls and women until 1975 when Vietnam was reunified. From 1954 to 1975, servants used terms appropriate to their age to refer to themselves when speaking to their masters. The female servants used the neutral term tôi 'I' if they were older or the same age as the masters, em 'younger sibling' if they were somewhat younger, and con 'offspring' if they were about the same age as the masters' offspring. Under present
economic reforms, housekeeping has again become a desirable job in Vietnam. Not only do housekeepers use terms appropriate to their age to refer to themselves, but their employers no longer use the pair tao … mày ‘I … thou’ when speaking to their housekeepers as they did before, unless the context is appropriate, i.e. when the speaker is older but wants to show familiarity between the two of them. Masters now, depending on their age, can use tôi ‘I’ or con ‘offspring’ to refer to themselves, and chị ‘elder sister’, dì ‘mother’s sister’ or something similar to refer to the servant. The servant can now use the term tôi or con to refer to herself when speaking to the masters. In addressing young masters, the housekeeper can use cô ‘father’s sister’ or cậu ‘mother’s brother’.

5.3.2 Teachers and students
When a teacher is talking to younger students in formal contexts, a male can use thày ‘master’ and a female can employ cô ‘father’s sister’ for self-reference. This usage reveals another asymmetry, because women cannot be referred to as thày even though the word literally means, simply, ‘teacher’. When the term is applied to women, it is for fortune-tellers instead of teachers, and in this instance it is always qualified as bà thày, that is, the gender must be specified as female even though the word is not marked as male.

In many places, when speaking to teachers who are as old as their parents, students use con ‘offspring’ for self-reference. The term con ‘offspring’ was very common before 1975 in South Vietnam, and especially before 1954 in both North and South Vietnam. Today, the most common term used by students for self-reference is em ‘younger sibling’. Using tôi ‘I’ when speaking to teachers is extremely rare, even among adult students, since it is considered too egalitarian in this relationship.

Currently, students can also refer to themselves by using proper names when speaking to their teachers. This use was not possible in the past when students used only con ‘offspring’ to refer to themselves. Using proper names for self-reference occurs mainly among young students and female students, but not among older male students in either North or South Vietnam, because this is considered “feminine”.

Under current social conditions, address and self-reference sometimes pose a problem for adult male students. Before 1945, it was very rare for Vietnamese women to receive higher education or any formal education at all. After 1954, when Vietnam became independent, women slowly achieved almost the same rights to education as men. Many young women now become post-secondary school teachers. At the same time, many people, especially men, have a chance
to go back to school in their middle age.

Adult male students can easily use the typical term em ‘younger sibling’ to refer to themselves when speaking to a male teacher, whether the teacher is older or younger. However, when the teacher is female and younger than the male student, it is extremely difficult for the student to choose a term for self-reference. The traditional term for addressing female teachers, cô ‘father’s sister’ is awkward. If the student is much older than the female teacher, the student can use tôi ‘I’ for self-reference. If the student is not very much older, the pronoun tôi does not sound polite enough, because the pair cô … tôi is usually employed by a male speaking to a younger girl when the man is socially superior. In this case, if he were to use the term em ‘younger sibling’, it would diminish his masculinity. Men in this position usually resort to either using their proper names or avoiding any terms at all for self-reference. Sometimes adult male students use the term cô giáo father’s sister + teach = ‘female teacher’ to refer to the female teacher and the term học trò study + person = ‘student’ to refer to themselves. This term shows intimacy in a pleasant and rather humorous way, because the term học trò is normally used only to refer to elementary students, not to adult or university students, and the term cô giáo ‘female teacher’ is an occupational term that is not normally used as an address term.

Female adult students have no problem using the term em when speaking to younger teachers, whether female or male. Avoidance usually occurs exclusively in the speech of male adult students in this case.

Teachers can also address their students by their proper names. Using proper names shows greater intimacy in this relationship. For instance, in (22), a teacher speaks to his student, Nam, by name:

(22) Ngày mai thầy sẽ đưa Nam ra bến đỗ.
‘Tomorrow I (teacher) will go with you (Nam) to the ferry-landing.’

The student in (22) might be a male or female, child or adult, but must be younger than the teacher. In referring to himself by his occupation, thầy ‘teacher’, the teacher is using the most neutral of all terms for self-reference. Female teachers use proper names more than male teachers; such usage is regarded as more gentle and intimate in solidarity contexts.

5.3.3 Neighbors and work mates

In informal contexts, saying em ‘younger sibling’ for self-reference when speaking to an acquaintance or neighbor is quite common among women in
both North and South Vietnam, particularly when speaking to men. Addressees usually receive bác ‘father’s elder brother’ in rural settings, and anh ‘elder brother’ or chị ‘elder sister’ in urban settings. Men, by contrast, rarely use the term em ‘younger sibling’ for self-reference when speaking to women, unless they are considerably younger than the women.

However, for many young women in urban South Vietnam, using the expression em for self-reference when speaking to a male with whom they are not very familiar might be considered to be humbling or indicate low self-esteem. In this situation, the term tôi, on the other hand, might be regarded as pompous or too formal. Again, proper names are usually preferred to avoid such difficulties. The term em is reserved for self-reference when people are talking to someone they really regard as an ‘older brother’: older men in close relationships, such as their close friends or their older brothers’ friends.

Women sometimes use both terms, em ‘younger sibling’ and tôi, in different styles. In (23a), a woman in her late 30s speaks to an older man in his 50s in the living room, after they have been introduced to each other by another man, a mutual friend, who is in his late 40s. The woman is a writer, and the man she is meeting is a magazine editor, and a potential publisher of her work. The woman uses em for self-reference, since the man is quite a bit older, and she wants to show intimacy in a relaxed context. She employs anh ‘elder brother’ to refer to both men:

(23) a. Em nghe anh Tán nói về anh
    younger.sibling hear elder.brother Tan talk about elder.brother
    hoài mà bùa nay mới gặp.
    all.the.time that today just meet
    ‘I (younger sibling) hear (elder brother) Tan talk about you (elder
    brother) all the time, so today we meet.’

In (23b), the man replies, using chị ‘elder sister’ to address the young woman and tôi for self-reference:

(23) b. Cảm ơn chị. Tôi cũng rất mong được
    thank elder.sister I also very look.forward get
    gặp chị.
    meet elder.sister
    ‘Thank you (elder sister). I also looked forward to seeing you (elder
    sister) very much.’

Later, when they discuss the possibilities of his publishing her article in his magazine, the woman changes the form of self-reference:
The woman changes from *em* for self-reference in a relaxed conversation as in (23a) to a formal term, *tôi*, when they talk about work in (24). This use of the term *tôi* is perfectly acceptable, because age does not play a crucial role at work.

Between women, however, using *tôi* for self-reference at work can sometimes create difficulties. This term is used in formal situations to maintain social distance. When a woman speaks to a younger woman or a woman occupying a lower social position, and wants to eliminate the distance, she is faced with a difficult situation: The speaker wants to avoid using the term *tôi*, but at the same time wishes to maintain a certain politeness and formality. Because of situations like these, a new pair of self-reference and address terms has been coined: *minh* … *chị* ‘body … elder sister’. In (25), a female family doctor speaks to her younger patient in her office in Toronto, using *minh* ‘body’ to refer to herself and *chị* ‘elder sister’ to address the patient:

(25) *Mình cho chị thử thuốc khác có có hơn không.*

body give elder.sister kind medicine different see have better

‘I (body) give you (elder sister) a different kind of medicine to see whether that works better.’

Politeness still remains a feature in the address term *chị* ‘elder sister’ the doctor uses to address the patient. The use of *minh* ‘body’ in this way is very recent and still not common, but it now seems to be accepted. It can be heard from time to time in relationships not only between a family physician and her patient but also, e.g., a pharmacist and her new customer, or two educated women who have common interests.

In the North, when communism became well established, a new expression, *đồng chí* ‘comrade’ (literally, one with the same purpose or will) became very common for addressing women and men of all ages and positions in order to show equal status. In many cases, this term even occurred in personal conversations between two friends, though never between family members.

The same ideological pressures led to traditional terms being regarded as “remnants of feudalism” or “bourgeois”. They were eliminated from daily life in public communication and school. Consequently, the diplomatic and very formal term *ngài* ‘you’ to address a male person was completely eradicated,
since it was considered to be an exclusive term for people of the dominant class. However, when the current Vietnamese socialist government had to carry out economic reforms and open its economy to the Western world in the late 1980s and especially in the 1990s, the term ngài ‘you’ returned as an address term in diplomatic contexts.

In the last two decades, the term döst cì ‘comrade’ has gradually disappeared. It became a relic of the war years. Instead, kin terms such as ông ‘grandfather’, bà ‘grandmother’, anh ‘older brother’ or chì ‘older sister’ are now used in public communication situations such as television, radio and newspapers.

5.4 Women and men as couples

Among married couples, more intimate address terms have come into common use. In traditional Vietnamese society, and still in many parts of present-day Vietnam, husbands were masters in their families. They made all the important decisions and had great power over their wives. Women were supposed to obey their husbands in every situation. When guests came to visit or to dine, wives worked in the kitchen and were not allowed to eat at the same table with their husbands and their guests.

Before 1945, husbands could legally have more than one wife. The first wife could buy a concubine for her husband in order to have a servant in the house or to bear her husband’s children if she herself as the first wife did not have any sons.

The asymmetry in the relationship between husband and wife was reflected in the terms of address, reference and self-reference they used. The husband generally could use the pair tao … mày ‘I … thou’ when speaking to his wife in normal situations, but a wife was never allowed to select that pair when speaking to her husband, since this was considered too familiar. In (26), taken from the 1939 novel Làng Lể (‘Being a concubine’), a husband speaks to his concubine about his first wife:

(26) Tao chi có thể, vì tiềnremium có mày
   I only have that since money salary father’s sister thou
   giữ cứ.
   keep all
   ‘I only have that much, because my first wife (your aunt) keeps all mon-
   ey.’ (Manh 1939:144)
Here the husband uses the term tao ‘I’ to refer to himself, mày ‘thou’ to refer to the concubine, and cô ‘father’s sister’ to refer to his first wife. The kinship term cô is also the term the concubine uses to address the first wife.

If the concubine had children, her children would be obliged to call the first wife mẹ ‘mother’ and they would call their biological mother chị ‘elder sister’, because the concubine’s role was to give birth for the husband and his first wife. In many cases, the children of the concubine use the term bé ‘little’ to refer to their biological mother, which is also the term the first wife employs to refer to the concubine.

Since 1954, there has been a law forbidding men to have more than one wife. However, mainly in the South, some men still have concubines. Today, children of the concubine use the term mẹ ‘mother’, not chị ‘elder sister’, to refer to their biological mother as well as to the first wife.

Another expression that reflects the asymmetry in the relationship between husbands and wives is the third person singular pronoun nó ‘he/she’. A man can use this term to refer to his wife in normal situations, but again it is forbidden for a wife to make use of it in referring to her husband. Even among many young and educated people, this asymmetry still holds. The husband’s use of nó ‘she’ in public might be a way to show off the power of the husband over his wife in front of a third party, or at least to show he is the decision-maker in his family, whether or not this is true. However, today men use the term nó less often. They usually employ polite terms to refer to their wives in the third person, such as nhà tôi ‘my house’, bà ây ‘that grandmother’. Sometimes they combine the two; for instance in (27), the man uses nhà tôi ‘my house’ and nó ‘he/she’ to refer to his wife:

(27) Tôi hỏi nhà tôi, nhưng nó bảo anh không muốn bán chiếc xe cũ.

‘I asked my wife (my house), but she said you (elder brother) did not want to sell the old vehicle.’

Among working class people, this use of terms is quite common and is considered polite. However, a wife cannot use the same terms in that way to refer to her husband, although both expressions, nhà tôi ‘my house’ and nó ‘he/she’, can be employed to refer to a husband and a man, respectively. Instead of the pronoun nó, she must say nhà tôi or ông ây ‘that grandfather’, or something similar. In this respect, the asymmetry between husbands and wives is preserved in the working class.
In Vietnamese, kinship terms may be used as terms of address. The degree of respect or intimacy in an address term depends on the kinship term used. A man can be referred to by a kinship term followed by his proper name. For example, ông Tam grandfather + Tam = ‘Mr Tam’. In (28), a speaker talks about a man he knows:

\[(28) \quad \text{Thứ bảy rủ tôi gặp ông Tảm ở câu lạc bộ.} \]

Saturday last I meet grandfather Tảm in club

‘Last Saturday I met Mr (grandfather) Tảm at the club.’

ông Tảm in (28) can be replaced by câu Tảm mother’s brother + Tảm, ‘uncle Tảm’, which shows a closer relationship between the speaker and the person talked about.

The kinship term in (28) may be replaced by special gender-specific designations, thằng for male and con for female. These terms can indicate intimacy between the speaker and the addressees or persons talked about, if the speaker is about the same age or older. For instance, in (29) a friend talks about a couple:

\[(29) \quad \text{Thằng Chín và con Hạnh chắc là thằng sau cười.} \]

male Chín with female Hạnh probably be month after marry

‘Chin and Hanh probably will get married next month.’

The speaker uses thằng and con to refer to the couple in (29), thereby displaying intimacy. However, if the speaker is younger than the couple, these designations indicate that the speaker does not like the couple. The two designations thằng and con can also be chosen by parents to refer to their children to show intimacy.

The special classifiers (cl.) thằng and con can be used to refer to people having low social status, such as con sen cl. + servant ‘a female servant’, con diêm cl. + prostitute ‘a female prostitute’, or disreputable people such as thằng ǎncáp cl. + steal ‘a male thief’. Sometimes speakers indicate their feelings by their use of these classifiers. For example, in (30), a woman speaks to her friend about a situation in her company:

\[(30) \quad \text{Thằng trước thằng đọc công tự ý nâng lương cho con Thu.} \]

month previous male manager self will raise salary for female Thu

‘Last month the manager himself increased the salary for Thu.’
The speaker uses thằng for the manager and con for the woman named Thu, and by doing so, demonstrates her disapproval of the manager and jealousy of the woman. In a normal situation, the speaker would use the kinship terms ông ‘grandfather’ and bà ‘grandmother’, or something similar, to refer to the manager and the woman, respectively.

The special classifiers thằng and con occur only in informal contexts. In 1975, Southerners were uncomfortable at first when officials of the new regime referred to the officials or leaders of the former government with thằng in public meetings and the media, as in thằng nguyệt cl + rebellious/illegal = ‘official of the former government’, thằng Thiệu cl + name of the president of South Vietnamese government. This use of the term quickly disappeared from public communication. However, the term thằng Mỹ cl + American ‘(male) Americans’ remained in use much longer.

Among married couples or lovers, men can use the con to refer to their wives or girlfriends. In (31), a man speaks to his neighbor who is sick:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(31) Đã cháu báo con Hạnh sang nấu cơm}
\end{align*}
\]

let nephew tell female Hạnh come cook rice
cho bác.
for father’s elder brother
‘Let me (nephew) tell Hạnh to come over to cook for you (father’s elder brother).’

The speaker employs the term con followed by a proper name, Hạnh, to refer to his wife. This use is regarded as normal, even among young and educated men in urban areas. However, if the speaker in (31) were a woman, she could not speak about her husband by using the term thằng followed by his name – even if she were about the same age as or older than him – because this would seem to overturn the family hierarchy. She would be regarded as impolite, because the designation implies lower status.

Today, using con to refer to a wife or girlfriend is less common. Instead, husbands often refer to their wives by the term vợ tôi wife + I ‘my wife’, or they use frozen metaphors such as nhà tôi house + I ‘my wife’ (lit. ‘my house’) or bà xã tôi grandmother + village + I ‘my wife’ (lit. ‘my village grandmother’). The metaphor ‘my house’ can also be used by a wife to refer to her husband. In the term bà xã and the equivalent term for ‘husband’, ông xã grandfather + village, the literal meanings are completely lost. These are relatively new expressions, and they have become very common in both urban and rural areas among young and middle-aged couples. They are used only in intimate contexts. For instance, the speaker in (32) tells his friend:
I think grandfather should ask again grandmother village matter this

'I think you (grandfather) should check with your wife (grandmother village) again about this.'

The speaker uses ông 'grandfather' to refer to his friend and bà xã 'grandmother + village 'wife' to refer to the friend’s wife. The speaker in (32) may be young or middle-aged.

In Vietnam, girls bear their father’s last names. Wives do not legally adopt their husbands’ names after they get married, but they are usually referred to by their husbands’ first names preceded by a kinship term: bà Vinh grandmother + Vinh ‘Mrs Vinh’ (the wife of Vinh), di Nhiệm mother’s sister + Nhiem ‘Mrs Nhiem’ (the wife of Nhiem). Today, when many women work outside the family, have a career and their own social status, wives are more often referred to by their maiden names (i.e., their former names).

In urban settings, husbands can use proper names without a kinship term or other qualifier to address their wives and also to refer to them when speaking to friends and acquaintances. In rural areas, where women either do housework or work in the field, husbands rarely use maiden names to refer to their wives, and this usage never occurs with middle-aged and old couples.

Among young and middle-aged couples, when the kinship terms anh and em are used for addressing each other, they do not pose any problem if husbands are older than their wives. When husbands are younger than their wives, we now find women changing the way in which they refer to their husbands and themselves. In years past, when wives were normally homemakers and their husbands were breadwinners, wives considered themselves to be under their husbands’ protection. Hence, using the term em ‘younger sibling’ to refer to herself was natural for a wife, whether or not she was the younger in the marriage. The wife automatically assumed a lower status in the family: That was a woman’s place. In urban settings now, if husbands are younger than their wives, wives – particularly educated ones – consider the term em for self-reference to be either humorous or embarrassing. In this case, proper names come to the rescue: Wives refer to their husbands and to themselves by proper names, or they use anh ‘elder brother’ to address their husbands and their own proper names to refer to themselves.

In referring to their girlfriends, men usually use only proper names without the special designation con. With young couples today, using proper names has
become very common so that among urban people, women sometimes use proper names to address older boyfriends and the term *em* ‘younger sibling’ for self-reference:

(33) **Chiều qua em tính tôi Hưng mà trời mưa quá.**

‘Yesterday afternoon I (younger sibling) wanted to come to see you (Hung), but it rained so heavily.’

The girl in (33) uses *em* ‘younger sibling’ to refer to herself, and the man’s name, *Hung*, to refer to her boyfriend. This use of proper names would have been regarded as inappropriate a generation ago, because when addressing an older person, the speaker was expected to use an appropriate kinship term followed by the proper name, such as *anh Hưng* ‘elder brother Hung’, *chú Hưng* ‘father’s younger brother Hung’. Proper names without a preceding kinship term were used only to address younger persons. In (33), by omitting a kinship term before her boyfriend’s name, the speaker erases the hierarchy implied in age differences and makes the relationship as between best friends. However, she shows her respect for her boyfriend in her use of *em* ‘younger sibling’ for self-reference. Her use of his proper name is innovative, and a positive indicator of equality.

Intimate address terms such as *cường* ‘sweetheart’ or *bé* ‘little, baby’ have also become common among young couples. Although these terms are mainly used by men to address their wives or girlfriends, young women sometimes use *cường* ‘sweetheart’ to address their men, something that was considered improper for women in the past.

To summarize, the asymmetry in the relationship between husbands and wives is partly reflected in the terms men use to refer to their wives. Men can use certain terms when speaking or referring to their wives. In contrast, wives are not allowed to make use of these terms when addressing or referring to their husbands. The privilege of being a man is shown in a familiar folk saying:

(34) **Không ngoan cũng thế đàn bà, đấu riêng vùng dại**

smart still be women although clumsy silly

**cùng là đàn ông.**

still be men

‘No matter how smart she is, she is still just a woman; no matter how clumsy and silly he is, he is still a man.’
This saying no longer has credence. Wives do not depend economically on their husbands as before. Today, women usually work for a living. They participate in decision-making about every matter, including their children’s education. Husbands and wives have almost equal roles to play in family matters. The terms they use for address and self-reference, therefore, have changed reflecting ongoing changes in the relationships between women and men.

6. Conclusion

Terms of address, self-reference and reference have changed in the last few decades with the change of women’s roles in society. Men have had to change the ways in which they refer to women, particularly their wives. They can no longer use terms which assume that men are more privileged than women, such as the pronouns tao … này ‘I … thou’, nó ‘she’ or the special designation con.

Women have become more sensitive about the terms they use for self-reference and for addressing, especially when they speak to men. They have more choices in different situations, such as using proper names for self-reference and more intimate terms in referring to husbands or boyfriends.

In other relationships, women also use more neutral and formal terms for self-reference when speaking to men, such as proper names and the pronoun tôi. Men, in contrast, employ more courteous and respectful terms to refer to women, such as chí ‘elder sister’ instead of cô ‘father’s sister’.

The context-sensitive characteristics of such terms, in turn, reflect social changes in the relationship between women and men. I have illustrated some of these changes through the terms women and men use in various relationships in urban settings among young or educated people. The changes seem to follow the trend toward more symmetric expression. Women are referred to by more polite expressions. They are allowed to express their feelings more freely by using relaxed and intimate terms to address men.

While the system provides a rich set of terms that is very context-sensitive and is also able to accommodate social changes, men and women in certain situations nevertheless find themselves confronted with some tricky problems. For example, adult male students must determine how to address younger female teachers, and older women must decide how to refer to themselves when speaking to their younger husbands, or educated young women must find suitable terms to refer to themselves when speaking to lesser educated men. These are all situations which arose very rarely, if at all, in Vietnamese society
before about 1950. Now these situations are not uncommon, and they are growing more common.

The traditional Vietnamese system of address terms was established, of course, over many generations of relatively static social relationships. With the increasing fluidity of social relationships in the second half of the 20th century, a new system of address and self-reference is necessarily evolving. One useful strategy is to avoid using traditional terms altogether. Another, which is more effective and has become widespread, is to use proper names. This change itself appears to be symbolic. Proper names help to characterize a person – to some extent, they identify a person as an individual. Perhaps the social changes in Vietnam reflect the loosening of traditional categories, in which people were considered members of groups with well-defined and invariant niches in the social order. The new order is much more flexible, and the changes we see in the use of terms of address, self-reference and reference are a clear indicator of social change.

Notes

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2. (w) is a labio-velar glide; it is the only segment which can occur in the position between initial consonant and vowel.

3. The two terms dực ‘male’ and cái ‘female’ are used for animals, e.g., s“If dực ‘lion’ vs. s“If cái ‘lioness’, chó dực ‘male dog’ vs. chó cái ‘female dog’. However, these terms occur in some abuse forms for human beings to show disapproval, e.g., d“If dực ‘a male prostitute’, lái cái return + female ‘a gay’.

4. In North Vietnam, children use con for self-reference only with their parents, and cháu ‘nephew, niece, grandchild’ with the others.

5. These words are Sino-Vietnamese and usually occur in compounds with other Sino-Vietnamese words. The Vietnamese words for the prepositions ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ are trong and ngoài, respectively. The term for addressing a great-grandparent irrespective of gender is cụ in Northern dialects and cô in Southern dialects. The term referring to the great-grandchild is chắt.

6. Some grammars claim that there are no personal pronouns in Vietnamese, because Vietnamese does not have words that can be used in all contexts with the meanings ‘I, you, he, she, we, they’ as in English, and because some words with pronominal functions originate from nouns.
References


The politics of language and gender in Wales

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1. Introduction

Welsh (Cymraeg) is an Indo-European language, a member of the Celtic subgroup. It is closely related to Breton and Cornish, and more distantly to Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Manx. It is currently spoken by approx. 500,000 speakers, i.e. 20% of the population of Wales, one of the countries which make up the British Isles. It has been under heavy pressure from English since the 16th century, but since the 1960s a growing demand for language rights has resulted in greater official status for the Welsh language, and it is now used in a wider range of domains than previously.
Welsh is a VSO language, adjectives follow a head noun, and there are prepositions rather than postpositions. It has two grammatical genders, traditionally referred to as masculine and feminine, but does not mark grammatical case. Verbs agree with a pronominal subject in number and person, but all nominal subjects require a third person singular verbal inflection. Prepositions agree with a following pronominal object in number, person and (in the third person singular) in gender, but show no agreement with a nominal object. Like all Celtic languages, Welsh has a complex system of Initial Mutation, whereby the initial phonological segment of a word is changed in certain lexical and grammatical environments.¹

It is important to understand issues of gender in relation to the Welsh language within the context of the politics of marginalised/minority languages. Welsh speakers constitute a language group that is also a social group, with its own markers of language and culture, and one which exists within a state where it lacks the political and ideological structures necessary to guarantee the relevance of the language to the everyday life of its members (European Commission 1996).

The emergence of the rational modern state in the 18th century was accompanied by an increasing rationalism in government and administration, together with a surge towards scientific and technological progress. In the UK, English, as the powerful state language, became identified with modernisation and progress, while Welsh, along with other autochthonous minority languages such as Scottish Gaelic, was deemed to be traditional and non-progressive, and by definition, therefore, unable to grapple with the demands of modern life. English consequently became acknowledged as the appropriate language for work, administration, education, science, and technology, while Welsh retreated into civil society, becoming the language of the family, religion, and community (Williams 1992).

From a gender aspect, the link that is often made between rationality/science and the male and, by contrast, irrationality/emotion and the female, is a further consideration. The subordination and marginalisation of women has been the prime struggle of the feminist movement, and similarly the subordination of the minority language has been the major issue for the Welsh language movement in Wales. The overlap between gender inequality and language inequality, and the linking of male/English/rationality and female/Welsh/irrationality, means that one type of inequality reinforces the other (Morris & Williams 1994:132), and it is this particular combination, with its resultant discriminatory effects, that led the Equal Opportunities Commission to

This chapter locates the recent attention paid to non-sexist language use in Welsh within the context of Welsh language politics. Section 2 outlines the history of the struggle for the survival of Welsh, in particular the campaigns of the Welsh Language Society, which had priority for most Welsh speaking feminists over issues about language and gender equality, as these issues were being debated with regard to English. The third section outlines the structural properties of Welsh. In the fourth section we explain how recent legislation regarding the use of Welsh in public sector institutions has brought the use of Welsh for job advertisements to the attention of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC). This section is followed by a summary of the EOC’s guidelines for non-discriminatory language use in Welsh job advertisements. Finally, we conclude this chapter with a brief account of the way the guidelines were disseminated and the reactions of the media and professionals in the field to the recommendations.

2. Welsh versus English: Language shift and the struggle for legitimacy in the public domain

In Wales, the discourse of language politics centres around the power struggle between Welsh and English, and the fight for the survival of Welsh as a viable language of social life in the face of socio-economic globalisation, and the pervasiveness of English in the public domain. In quantitative terms, successive Census of Population surveys have shown that, during the course of the century, the number of so-called Welsh speakers in Wales has almost halved, from 922,100 in 1921 to 508,000 by 1991 (OPCS 1994). Recently, there are signs of growth in the number of Welsh speakers amongst younger age categories within the population (Williams 1989:44, Davies 1993:67–72). However, the percentage of Welsh speakers in Wales as a whole deteriorated markedly between 1921 and 1991, with 37 per cent of the total population speaking Welsh in 1921, compared to 19 per cent seventy years later. This shift may be attributed partly to immense socio-economic changes during the course of the century which have led to massive inward and outward migration – the outward migration of Welsh speakers and inward migration of monoglot English speakers (cf. Osmond 1987). Other pertinent factors in the decline of the number and proportion of speakers are the two world wars, when thou-
sands of young male Welsh speakers were killed, and increasing secularisation, which has meant that the traditional nonconformist chapels have lost their role as reproducers of the Welsh language (Williams 1987, Price 1994). Similar problems have befallen other minority languages in Europe, like Basque and Frisian (Gardner n.d., van Langevelde 1994), as the usual agents of language transmission, particularly the community and family, have been eroded by changes in the economic structure. In the face of such an alarming decrease in the number of Welsh speakers and the consequent lack of opportunities for using Welsh as a language of social interaction, efforts to restrain the momentum of language shift have focused upon challenging the social and institutional hegemony of English.

English had gained domination over Welsh as the legitimate language of official life by the end of the 15th century (Davies 1993). This situation was cemented in 1536 by the legislation which unified Wales with England when the Act of Union stipulated that English, not Welsh, should be the only language of the courts and public office. The legitimacy of Welsh as a language of education was challenged when the Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales of 1847, popularly known as the Blue Books, vigorously condemned the use of Welsh. As a consequence of this report and the Education Act of 1870, a predominantly English-medium education system became established throughout Wales. Efforts to counteract the negative attitude towards Welsh instilled by the “Treachery” of the Blue Books, most notably the report Welsh in Education and Life (H.M.S.O. 1927) concentrated on re-legitimising Welsh as a language for education. The report called for increased resources to be allocated to training teachers and for the preparation of appropriate teaching materials through the medium of Welsh. By the mid-1940s, Welsh had become the main teaching medium in schools in the more Welsh-speaking areas, and attempts were made to teach some Welsh to monoglot English speakers in the more Anglicised parts of Wales. The rapid growth of Welsh-medium schools has perhaps been one of the most remarkable developments in recent years, from the first state school designated as Welsh-medium in Llanelli in 1947 to 444 Welsh-medium primary schools and some 52 Welsh-medium secondary schools by 2000 (The National Assembly for Wales 2001: Table 7.8, p. 49).

Efforts to re-establish Welsh as a legitimate language in public life have principally taken the form of campaigns organised by various social movements and pressure groups. Undeb y Cymdeithasau Cymraeg (The Union of Welsh Societies) was one such group which was responsible for galvanising public
support and organising a petition following the trial and subsequent imprison-
ment in 1936 of three leading Welsh nationalists, Saunders Lewis, Lewis
Valentine and D.J. Williams. The furore that accompanied the judge’s refusal
to allow the defendants to address the court in Welsh encouraged three-
quarters of a million people in Wales to sign a petition demanding that Welsh
be granted equal status with English. Although this was not achieved, the Welsh
Courts Act of 1942 noted that “the Welsh language may be used in any court in
Wales by any party or witness who considers that he [sic] would otherwise be at
a disadvantage by reason of his natural language of communication being
Welsh” (Davies 1993:64).

Despite this legislation, by the middle of the century Welsh held virtually
no status as a legitimate language in Welsh public life. Saunders Lewis’
renowned BBC broadcast on the “Fate of the Language” in 1962 proclaimed
the need to employ revolutionary means in order to prevent the demise of the
Welsh language and exhorted his audience to “make it impossible to conduct
local authority or central government business in Wales without the Welsh
language” (Davies 1993:94). This broadcast provided the impetus for the
founding of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (The Welsh Language Society). Since
its foundation in the summer of 1962, Cymdeithas yr Iaith members and
supporters have conducted numerous campaigns involving non-violent direct
action that regularly lead to police action, prosecution, fines and imprison-
ment. Their early campaigns concentrated on targeting public sector institu-
tions to secure, for example, printed forms in Welsh and bilingual roadsighs
throughout Wales. It was largely Cymdeithas yr Iaith’s members’ and support-
ers’ refusal to pay monolingual English bills and their demand for printed
forms in Welsh which galvanised the public pressure that eventually led to the
passing of the Welsh Language Act of 1967. This Act further improved the
status of Welsh in the courts and with regard to official and public administra-
whereby any act, documents or anything else done through the medium of
Welsh in Wales would have the same legal force as it would in English.
However, although the 1967 Act gave Ministers of the Crown the power to
provide Welsh and bilingual documents, they were not legally obliged to do so
and consequently in practice little change took place.

Campaigning for the right to use Welsh more extensively within the public
domain continued during the 1970s and 1980s. One of the major campaigns
was for a Welsh television channel which was finally established in 1982. The
extended use of Welsh in radio and television broadcasting has, on the one
hand, been credited with evolving a “suppler, more popular speech” (Davies 1993:63) and on the other hand, with undermining the accepted and recognised syntax of the Welsh language by introducing English syntax and idioms into general speech patterns. The ineffective implementation of the 1967 Act’s provisions also led to further campaigning, which eventually culminated in the most recent language legislation, the 1993 Welsh Language Act. This Act established a Welsh Language Board charged with the function of encouraging all public sector bodies in Wales to use Welsh on a basis of equality with English in all their dealings with the public. In spite of its limited powers, the 1993 Language Act has significant implications as a means of finally effecting some change in the status and use of Welsh in the public sector.

Given the focus on linguistic survival, the language and gender debate has played a relatively marginal role in Welsh language politics. In the 1970s, when feminists were challenging how women were represented and positioned linguistically in English, most Welsh feminists were more concerned with supporting Cymdeithas yr Iaith’s language campaigns, than fuelling public controversy about sexist language use in Welsh. This is not to say that Welsh speakers have not been sensitive to the representation of social gender identities in Welsh, but to emphasise the lack of prominence given to this issue publicly.

3. Selected structural properties of the Welsh language

Welsh, like many other languages, divides nouns into two sets, which behave differently with respect to various grammatical rules. To some extent this distinction corresponds to the real world difference between male and female, with nouns which refer to males being found in one set, and nouns which refer to females being found in the other. The two sets are traditionally said to be of masculine and feminine grammatical gender.

3.1 Grammatical gender and referential gender

The real world difference between male and female does not, however, align neatly with grammatical gender in every case, and there are a number of asymmetries. Where a noun refers specifically to a man or a woman (due to its lexical gender), its grammatical gender is normally masculine or feminine as appropriate: *tad* (m) ‘father’, *bachgen* (m) ‘boy’, *brawd* (m) ‘brother’, *mam* (f) ‘mother’, *merch* (f) ‘girl’, *chwaer* (f) ‘sister’. There are, however, many other
nouns without lexical gender which are grammatically masculine, but are used freely to refer to either a man or a woman: plentyn (m) ‘child’, cyfaill (m) ‘friend’, meddyg (m) ‘doctor’. Occasionally, and for the most part in a rather old fashioned style, a feminine suffix can be added to such forms to give a specifically feminine form, such as cyfeilles (f) ‘female friend’. This is not possible in all cases, and there is for instance no such form as *plentynes ‘female child’. Feminine forms such as these should be considered as marginal in the modern language. Forms such as plentyn, cyfaill and meddyg which can refer freely to both male and female referents may therefore be best referred to as masculine epicenes.2 In contrast, there are very few nouns which are grammatically of feminine gender and may be used to refer freely to either a man or a woman: cennad (f) ‘messenger’ and nyrs (f) ‘nurse’.


It is not possible, in most cases, to tell whether a noun is grammatically masculine or feminine in gender purely from its form. There is, for instance, nothing to mark taid (m) ‘grandfather’ or golau (m) ‘light’ as masculine in gender, and nothing to mark nain (f) ‘grandmother’ or gardd (f) ‘garden’ as feminine. There are some suffixes which are used to derive specifically masculine or feminine nouns, but they provide a clue only for a limited number of nouns. The suffix -ydd, for instance, is always masculine, as in cyfieith-ydd (m) ‘translator’, while -es is always feminine, as in actor-es (f) ‘actress’. There are also some instances of paired suffixes, one masculine and the other feminine. Pairs of this kind are -yn/-en, as in coch-yn (m) ‘a red-headed man’/coch-en (f) ‘a red-headed woman’ and -wr/-wraig, as in cyfarwydd-wr (m) ‘male director’/cyfarwydd-wraig (f) ‘female director’, though there is also evidence of such apparently masculine forms as cyfarwyddwr being used as a masculine epicene, referring equally to females.
A more certain indicator of the gender of a noun is its behaviour with respect to certain agreement rules, among them those which concern a noun following the definite article, and an adjective following a noun. Where the definite article precedes a noun, the form of the noun varies according to whether it is masculine or feminine in grammatical gender. A masculine noun such as *bachgen* (m) ‘boy’ retains its citation form, to give *y bachgen* ‘the boy’. A feminine noun such as *merch* (f) ‘girl’ is subject to an Initial Mutation Rule, which changes its initial consonant to give *y ferch* ‘the girl’. Similarly, an adjective following a masculine noun retains its citation form, but an adjective following a feminine noun undergoes an Initial Mutation Rule. The adjective *bach* ‘little’ is therefore unchanged in the phrase *bachgen bach* ‘a little boy’, but has an altered initial consonant in the phrase *merch fach* ‘a little girl’.

This distinction between masculine and feminine gender is, however, relevant here only in the singular. In the plural there are no grammatical distinctions dependent on gender, though the semantic distinctions still hold. The definite article is followed by the citation form of both masculine and feminine nouns, as *y bechgyn* (m) ‘the boys’ and *y merched* (f) ‘the girls’. The adjective, too, appears in citation form following both masculine and feminine nouns, as in *bechgyn bach* ‘little boys’ and *merched bach* ‘little girls’.

### 3.2 The pronoun system

There are distinct third person singular masculine and feminine pronoun forms in Welsh, used to refer to an individual man or woman, i.e. *e, fe* (m) ‘he’, ‘him’ and *hi* (f) ‘she, her’. The distinction is obligatory, and shows up in all positions in the sentence. Examples (1) and (2) illustrate pronouns in subject function, with the subject following the verb, while (3) and (4) show pronouns in object function.

1. *Mae e ‘n mynd.*
   *is he PROG go.INF*
   ‘He is going.’

2. *Mae hi ‘n mynd.*
   *is she PROG go.INF*
   ‘She is going.’

3. *Clywais i fe.*
   *heard I him*
   ‘I heard him.’
Welsh

Where the pronoun follows a preposition, there is a distinct inflection on the preposition, agreeing with the masculine and feminine pronoun. In (5) and (6), for instance, the preposition *am* ‘for’ is inflected to agree with the following pronoun. Here the pronoun is retained in the sentence, but it could equally well be dropped, leaving the inflection as the only overt marker.

(5) *Soniais i amdano fe.*
spoke I about.3SG.MASC him
‘I spoke about him.’

(6) *Soniais i amdani hi.*
spoke I about.3SG.FEM her
‘I spoke about her.’

No such inflections appear where a preposition is followed by a noun; in such forms the preposition is unaffected by the gender of the following noun, as in *am y bachgen* ‘about the boy’, and *am y ferch* ‘about the girl’.

Masculine and feminine possessive pronouns are identical in form, but nevertheless trigger different Initial Mutation Rules in the following “possessed” noun. The noun *cath* (f) ‘cat’, for instance, appears as *gath* when it follows the masculine possessive pronoun, *ei gath* ‘his cat’, but as *chath* when it follows the feminine possessive pronoun, *ei chath* ‘her cat’.

The distinction between masculine and feminine pronoun forms, however, is limited to the third person singular. In the plural there is only one set of forms, which do not distinguish referential gender. ‘They’ may be a group of men, a group of women, or a mixed group.

(7) *Maen nhw yn mynd.*
are they PROG GO.INF
‘They are going.’

(8) *Clywais i nhw.*
heard I them
‘I heard them.’

(9) *Soniais i amdanyn nhw.*
spoke I about.3PL them
‘I spoke about them.’
The plural possessive pronoun does not trigger an Initial Mutation Rule, and the following noun retains its citation form following this possessive, *eu cath* ‘their cat’. Similarly, first and second person pronouns do not specify referential gender, either in the singular or the plural. Gender is simply not a relevant feature except in the third person singular, where it is obligatorily specified in the pronoun system.

Since pronouns are chosen according to the gender of the individual referred to, the masculine form for a man and the feminine form for a woman, there are many straightforward cases. In (10), a male is referred to by a noun of masculine gender and subsequently by a masculine pronoun:

(10) \( \text{Soniodd } y \text{ bachgen am } ei \text{ gath}. \)  
spoke the boy about his cat  
‘The boy spoke about his cat.’

Similarly in (11), a female is referred to by a noun of feminine gender and subsequently by a feminine pronoun:

(11) \( \text{Soniodd } y \text{ ferch am } ei \text{ chath}. \)  
spoke the girl about her cat  
‘The girl spoke about her cat.’

### 3.3 Generic masculines

There is no problem either if the noun is one of those which may refer freely to either a male or a female, and its grammatical gender happens to be compatible with the referential gender. In almost all such cases the grammatical gender of the noun will be masculine, and referring to a male is therefore unproblematic, as we have again a masculine noun and then a masculine pronoun:

(12) \( \text{Soniodd } y \text{ plentyn am } ei \text{ gath}. \)  
spoke the child about his cat  
‘The child spoke about his cat.’

The possessive pronoun *ei* here is masculine and the appropriate Initial Mutation Rule changes the initial consonant of the following word to give *gath*, rather than *cath*, as noted earlier in Section 3.2, and as seen in (10). A noun such as *plentyn* (m) ‘child’, however, may equally well refer to a female child, and in this case there is a switch, in that a noun of masculine gender is followed by a feminine pronoun:
Here the Initial Mutation Rule requires a different change in the following noun, and we find *chath*, rather than *gath*, as in (11) above. Such forms may appear odd, but the need to refer to an individual person by the referentially appropriate pronoun appears strong enough to override the presence, in the same phrase or sentence, of a noun of the opposite grammatical gender. The crucial consideration is the gender of the individual referred to rather than the arbitrary categorisation of the noun within the language.

Pronouns are, it appears then, sensitive to referential gender. Other rules of the grammar are not, and make no distinction between a masculine noun referring to a male individual, and a generic masculine which may refer to either a male or a female. A noun such as *plentyn* (m) ‘child’, which may refer to either a boy or a girl, behaves with reference to these other rules in the same way as a straightforwardly masculine noun such as *bachgen* (m) ‘boy’. Both retain their citation form following the definite article, as in *y plentyn* ‘the child’ and *y bachgen* ‘the boy’. In both cases an adjective following the noun appears in citation form, as *bach* ‘little’ in *plentyn bach* ‘little child’ and *bachgen bach* ‘little boy’.

4. Bringing the language and gender debate to centre stage

For more than twenty years in the UK, the Sex Discrimination Act has made it unlawful to treat anyone less favourably than anyone else on the grounds of his or her gender. This applies to employment, education and training, and the provision of goods, facilities and services to the public. The deep structural inequalities that remain indicate that the process has not been altogether successful, partly because the Act itself was not specific enough in many areas of gender inequalities. One area where the Act was specific, however, was in the field of job advertisements, where it stated:

It is unlawful to publish or cause to be published an advertisement which indicates, or might reasonably be understood as indicating, an intention by a person to do any act which is or might be unlawful […] use of a job description with a sexual connotation […] shall be taken to indicate an intention to discriminate, unless the advertisement contains an indication to the contrary.

(H.M.S.O. 1975: Section 38, Parts 1 & 3)
The Equal Opportunities Commission was set up to oversee the working of the Act, and job advertisements is one sphere where it has been comparatively successful in changing discriminatory practices.

In English, the kind of job titles which could indicate an intention to discriminate would be *barman* or *salesgirl*, and unless the advertisement contained a disclaimer to the contrary, the organisation could be liable to prosecution in the courts of law. For a number of years, the Equal Opportunities Commission has given guidelines to employers as to good practice in advertising jobs in English, but until recently, no such guidelines were available in Welsh. The demands of the 1993 Welsh Language Act, which makes it necessary for public bodies in Wales to publish language plans outlining their Welsh-medium service provision to those customers who required such a service, meant that there would be an increasing use of Welsh in job advertisements, as organisations which had previously not used Welsh in work were obliged to fill certain posts with Welsh/English bilingual personnel. The Equal Opportunities Commission in Wales therefore commissioned research that would enable it to formulate guidelines for employers advertising (perhaps for the first time) in Welsh, to ensure that they fulfilled their legal obligations, and to ensure that Welsh-speaking women and men were not deterred from applying for certain types of employment because of the inappropriate use of job titles. The publication of *The Sex Discrimination Act and the Use of Welsh in the Workplace* (Awbery 1997) marked the beginning of the Commission’s process of public consultation within Wales with employers, linguists, academics, and other interested parties, with a view to gaining a consensus on the correct and proper way to advertise jobs in Welsh in the future. Further research on *Gender and the Welsh Language* (Jones & Morris 1997) was commissioned by the Equal Opportunities Commission in Wales to consider the more wide-ranging impact of the Act on the lives of Welsh-speaking and non-Welsh speaking women and men in Wales.

5. **Guidelines for non-discriminatory language use**

The Equal Opportunities Commission’s duty to ensure that job advertisements in Welsh, as in English, should not appear to discriminate against men or women in an unlawful manner means that it has a responsibility to monitor job advertisements and ensure that they are worded in a nondiscriminatory way. Over the years, considerable agreement has been reached as to what counts as
non-discriminatory usage in English, but in Welsh the situation was until recently much less clear (Awbery 1997). Furthermore, at the time the guidelines were commissioned, while some employers took care to use non-discriminatory language in both Welsh and English in their advertisements (as in Figure 1), others did not.

Job advertisements usually include very prominently a single noun, specifying the staff needed to fill the vacant post. It is important that this noun make it clear that both men and women are eligible to apply and that there is no intention to discriminate. Many job titles used in Welsh fall into the set of nouns which, though grammatically of masculine gender, may refer freely to men and women, and it is recommended that these be used whenever possible: *trefnydd* (m) ‘organiser’, *cyfrifiad* (m) ‘accountant’.

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Figure 1.
In other cases the relevant nouns are gender-specific, and it is necessary to use two forms side by side to ensure that both men and women are clearly included: athro (m) ‘male teacher’, athrawes (f) ‘female teacher’, newyddiadurwr (m) ‘male journalist’, newyddiadurwraig (f) ‘female journalist’. Masculine forms such as newyddiadurwr are occasionally used to refer to both men and women, but in the case of job advertisements it was felt that there was an overriding need to ensure that it was clear that the post was open to both men and women. The suffixes used in such pairs are lexically specific, but only certain lexical pairs are morphologically marked in this way.

In some cases a job has until recently been carried out only by men or only by women, and the term is normally interpreted as referring to the group traditionally associated with that job. If the noun concerned is not explicitly marked morphologically as referring to one gender, it may be used, but with a clear statement that the job is in fact open to both females and males. The creation of new forms to fill gaps, and to ensure that there are clearly male and female forms available is something that should only be done with great care, as these new forms can often strike people as odd, and cause unnecessary hostility to the principle of non-discriminatory wording.

Where there are lexical gaps, with no existing noun available to refer to a man or woman in a nontraditional job, it is recommended that alternative phrasing be used, which reads naturally in the language and does not strike the reader as odd. Instead of searching for an acceptable male equivalent to ysgrifenyddes (f) ‘female secretary’, for instance, one can use a phrasal equivalent not marked for gender: swydd ysgrifenyddol (f) ‘secretarial post’. This alternative phrasing also enables one to avoid the duplication which arises where there is a need to use two forms side by side, one referring to a man and the other referring to a woman, as with the paired forms athro (m) ‘male teacher’ and athrawes (f) ‘female teacher’: swydd ddysgu (f) ‘teaching post’.

Another approach is to use the plural form, with a slightly reworded advertisement, since this can refer to men and women equally:

(14)  Gwahoddir ceisiadau gan athrawon profiadol.

‘Applications are invited from experienced teachers.’

The wording of the rest of the advertisement is also important. Here the qualities, qualifications and experience required of the applicant are spelled out, and here again it is important that the wording makes it clear that both men and women are eligible to apply, with general terms, which can refer freely to
both men and women, being used to refer to applicants: *ymgeisydd* (m) ‘candidate’, *deilydd y swydd* (m) ‘postholder’.

Where the advertisement is framed in the singular, the male and female pronouns will need to be used side by side in order to ensure that it is clearly seen to refer to both men and women:

(15) *Bydd yr ymgeisydd llwyddiannus yn [...] will be the candidate successful prog Rhaid iddo ef/iddi hi feddu need for.3sg.masc him/or.3sg.fem her possess.inf ar gymwysterau da. on qualifications good ‘The successful candidate will be [...] It is necessary for him/or her to possess good qualifications.’*

This duplication can be avoided by the use of plural forms, where the pronoun system does not distinguish between male and female:

(16) *Dylai ymgeiswyr fod yn barod i [...] should candidates be.inf prt ready to Rhaid iddynt feddu ar gymwysterau da. need for.3pl possess.inf on qualifications good ‘Candidates should be ready to [...] It is necessary for them to possess good qualifications.’*

Alternatively the requirements can be expressed in the second person, where once again the pronoun system does not distinguish between male and female:

(17) *Byddwch yn gweithio [...] will be.2pl prog work.inf Rhaid i chi feddu ar gymwysterau da. Need for you.2pl possess.inf on qualifications good ‘You will be working [...] You will need to possess good qualifications.’*

It is also possible to express the needs of the post in ways which do not refer to the individual at all, and therefore do not carry any implications as to the gender of the person involved:

(18) *Mae profiad blaenorol yn hanfodol. is experience previous prt essential ‘Previous experience is essential.’*
(19) Bydd angen gweitho oriau hyblyg.

will be need work INF hours flexible

‘It will be necessary to work flexible hours.’

These guidelines put forward by the Equal Opportunities Commission are therefore formulated largely in terms of a “neutralisation” strategy. Job advertisements are formulated so as to omit reference to the gender of the candidate wherever possible. The alternative “visibility” strategy, which would involve creating forms to give male/female pairs was avoided, except where it is necessary to have masculine and feminine pronouns side by side as in (15), as it was felt that the Welsh-speaking community would regard the introduction of new, nonstandard lexical forms as linguistic imperialism on the part of English-speaking officials, with no understanding of or sympathy with the Welsh language. It was felt to be important that the guidelines should recommend forms which were indisputably correct Welsh, and that the issue of ensuring that job advertisements are framed in a non-discriminatory way should not become entangled in resentment of interference from English.

6. The ongoing debate

The Equal Opportunities Commission consulted widely over a period of six months, to establish whether the proposed guidelines were generally acceptable. Copies of the report were sent to interested parties, such as personnel officers, those responsible for job advertisements in the press, and translators, and a one-day seminar was held to explain the thinking behind the guidelines and to encourage discussion. There was also considerable coverage in the press and on radio and television.

There was some hostility in the press, in part displaying the usual dismissive reactions to anything perceived as “feminist”, but also, interestingly enough, condemning the guidelines as an English imposition, designed to undermine the natural structure of the Welsh language. In fact, the guidelines were formulated throughout with the intention that the forms recommended should be natural to the language, using the flexibility that is already present in normal usage rather than trying to impose something unfamiliar which might be perceived as alien and English. The importance of this factor in a minority language situation was recognised early on and very consciously taken into account in drawing up the recommendations.
The reactions of professionals in the field, such as personnel officers and translators, generally were favourable. They appeared glad to have clear guidelines, and felt that on the whole the Commission had struck the right note. There were some disagreements of detail as to the most appropriate job titles to use in certain cases, and discussions of the relationship between grammatical and referential gender in Welsh (Prys 1997). There were no major disagreements of principle, however, and the guidelines suggested by the Equal Opportunities Commission have now been adopted as official policy.

The final step in this process has been the issuing of a leaflet summarising the guidelines in a simple, easy to use format, for personnel officers, translators and others involved in drawing up job advertisements. This leaflet has been published with the support of the Welsh Language Board. There were initially some difficulties in arriving at an agreed form of words, reflecting in part some of the disagreements which emerged during the public consultation exercise, but also the rather different legal position of the Equal Opportunities Commission under the Sex Discrimination Act and the Welsh Language Board under the Welsh Language Act. It is encouraging to note that the two bodies have been able to collaborate in ensuring that guidelines of this kind are available to those seeking to extend the use of Welsh in all aspects of public life.

Notes

1. Accessible grammars of Welsh are King (1993) and Thorne (1993). Griffiths & Jones (1995) is a very good dictionary for English to Welsh; for Welsh to English the University of Wales Dictionary (Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru) is good but still incomplete; the most useful dictionary for everyday purposes is Thorne (1991), which translates in both directions.

2. We are grateful to the Benjamins reader for drawing our attention to some of the complications found with nouns of this type.

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