

## PHILOLOGICAL SCIENCES

### THE ROLE OF USING FEMINITIVES IN OVERCOMING GENDER ASYMMETRY

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For the last decades the issue of striking the balance between female and male has become more comprehensive and widespread around the globe, covering the wide range of life spheres, from personal intimate to socio-political and economic aspects. Besides, the necessity to cope with a gender asymmetry has been recognised by increasing number of countries. Not only are the Northern European countries, which initially rose the problem of gender inequality, searching for the ways of overcoming gender asymmetry, but Slavonic societies are struggling to change their attitude and social behaviour towards male/female dichotomy. Thus, in Ukraine, alongside with the development of feminist movement and obtaining more and more social privileges by women, the policy of gender equality is being implemented as well. For instance, the Ukrainian language has been boosted with a big number of new words that denote jobs done by women – the first dictionary of Ukrainian feminities was published by a journalist Galyna Plachynda [2]. Among Ukrainian researchers the problem of overcoming gender asymmetry has been highlighted by I. Salata, Ya. Lyshka, N. Sobetska etc. who investigate linguistic foundation and peculiarities of creation gender-labelled lexis on the basis of the Ukrainian language. A number of European and American studies, such as works of D. Stahlberg, S. Sczesny, J. Bjornson, J. Saul and E. Diaz-Leon, W. Sosnowski etc., have been developing the strategies for coping with the linguistic usage of gender-labelled words. However, more elaborated approaches for overcoming gender asymmetry both at linguistic and social-economic levels are still needed, that is determined first of all by the features of a national mentality and traditional cultures.

To begin with, the phenomenon of feminities is at the intersection of linguistic and societal areas, since it deals with gender-labelled lexis

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applied for denoting women's assignment to a particular social, professional or ethnic group. However, according to S. Sczesny, M. Formanowicz and F. Moser [5], most languages represents all human beings through masculine forms which entitles men to more social power and meaning than women. Feminine grammatical and lexical forms refer exclusively to women.

In a wider sense, boosting a vocabulary with the words expressing various female activities implies positive shift in gender roles. Thus, the other side, or the problem feminitives struggle with is gender stereotypes which prescribe for both sexes strictly limited number of social roles, emotional reactions and specific behaviour. Depending on the grammar type of the language, creation of feminitives acquires various forms. In this way, the English and Scandinavian languages (Sweden), which belong to natural gender ones, don't have the category of male/female/neutral genders in contrast to grammatical gender languages, such as Ukrainian or French, which define nouns and adjectives according to their genders fixed in vocabulary. This means that grammatical gender languages, one the one hand, contain more varied ways for forming female-labelled lexis than natural ones. If to compare, belonging to female gender in English is mainly expressed through the personal pronouns, or in some cases using suffixes, such as *-ess*, *-ette*, while the Ukrainian language can differentiate female via particular noun and adjective endings, numerous noun suffixes, as well as verbal affixes. On the other side, grammatical gender languages turn out more conservative and less flexible in terms of gender as a social concept, because definite gender of a word established by long-term language practice, in turn, determines fixed connotations relating to this word. Whereas natural gender languages allow for more gender neutrality due to the lack of the lexis attachment to a certain grammar gender.

Languages where gender as the grammar category is absent, for instance Finnish, Turkish or Chinese, are called genderless. The only way to show female or male is through the lexical meaning. However, the extent of asymmetry in a language does not correspond to the variety of means (or their lack) of a gender revealing. As D. Stahlberg, F. Braun, L. Irmen and S. Sczesny state in their research, «expressing or concealing sex is not in itself sexist or non-sexist. The decisive question is whether references to sex are symmetrical, that is, whether women and men are treated linguistically in the same or an equal manner. In reality, however, asymmetries of various types are rife in all language types» [8]. Moreover, gender as a societal construct implies set of particular stereotypes and

representation of sexes inherent in a certain social community. These stereotypes are reinforced linguistically becoming an integral part of regular speech. In turn, via language gender asymmetries have taken root in a person's mindset. In this way, the categories of «male» and «female», being originally neutral, have significantly transformed and distorted, connoting restricted and emotionally charged meanings. In addition, as it has been noted by N. Sobetska [6], feminitives could trigger negative attitude and degrading connotations, especially denoting professional sphere. The researcher gives examples from the Ukrainian language, emphasizing that the feminitives are mostly used for low-paid and unqualified jobs, such as a cleaner, a maid, a waitress etc. What is more, sometimes the feminitives imply derisive, a bit ironical meaning, revealing weakness, extensive emotions and inability to take responsibility or make serious decisions. In case of highly-qualified and well-paid work, which indicates prestige or high social status, it is commonly expressed through the nouns of the male gender. Consequently, is there not only need for developing and using a «gender-fair language» [5] on a regular basis, but searching for more effective ways of overcoming gender asymmetry rooted in a collective mentality of a particular society.

In general, the researchers have distinguished three main strategies in sorting out the issue of a gender-fair language: feminization, neutralization, or both of them. Depending on the grammatical type of language one of these could be preferable. Thus, for the Ukrainian language grammatically is more natural to use special noun, adjective or verb affixes for creation feminitives. There are only a few words that originally mean a female kind of profession, in other cases words denoting woman's activity have originated from the masculine gender, even though masculine-originated lexis are treated differently with partly negative connotations, as it was mentioned above. That is why, for developing a gender-fair language within Ukrainian it is not suffice to apply only feminitives; searching for some gender-neutral words is also necessary. If to compare, English as a natural gender language allows for more possibilities to invent gender-neutral lexis due to the lack of a grammar gender and a variety of non-labelled words.

Nevertheless, the problem of gender discrimination, reinforced by linguistic structures has to be tackled at the level of national language policy. There should be relevant rules and regulations governing gender behaviour as well as widening language norms. Globally, a significant breakthrough was achieved in 1999 by the United Nations that created

guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English. This document contains various strategies for avoiding gender asymmetry and establishment gender-neutral language. Although it was designated first of all for the English language, some of the guidelines could be applied for other types of languages. Specifically, Ukrainian, apart from including grammatically created feminines, may follow the principle of «avoiding gender-biased expressions or expressions that reinforce gender stereotypes» [1], as well as omitting the gendered word when possible.

To conclude, the issue of gender asymmetry has still been open both as a societal and linguistic problem in most societies around the globe. However, for the last decades various gender strategies have been applying for overcoming the imbalance between masculine and feminine. As long as linguistic elements reflect the framework of a certain mentality, changing language norms implies transformations in a mindset. Creation of feminines has turned out a powerful tool of making a difference in overcoming gender asymmetry. Additionally, depending on a type of language, whether it is a natural or a grammatical gender language, or genderless one, the strategies of linguistic feminization, neutralization and their combination have appeared the effective policies. As for specifically Ukrainian, the prospects of overcoming gender asymmetry will raise on condition that relevant guidelines are elaborated by the government. This includes the development of gender-neutral vocabulary, the policy of avoidance gender-biased expressions and wide usage of feminine lexis within a state.

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## TO THE ISSUE OF TRANSLATION SOME ENGLISH MILITARY TERMS IN NATIONALITY CONTEXT

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Due to the historically developed ambiguous interpretation of military terms in different countries there are some difficulties in translating them. This is especially relevant for the terminology on English, which is important for successful international cooperation of Ukraine with the NATO countries. This causes a misunderstanding of the partner, and in the military sphere it can lead to serious consequences. Therefore, it is important to consider the lexical features of the translation of some military terms related to weapons and tactics, namely: «missile troops and artillery», «ground forces», to offer options for translation and interpretation of certain military terms in different contexts.

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