ELOPE

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Gender Ideologies in English and Slovene: A Contrastive View

Summary

The article deals with the concept of linguistic sexism in the cross-cultural context. It compares the generally accepted guidelines for avoiding linguistic sexism in English and Slovene, exemplified by two guides on non-sexist use of English. It is argued that in English non-sexist language strives for gender neutrality, whereas in Slovene it strives for gender specificity. The reasons for the differences between the perceptions of sexism in English and Slovene are examined by taking into account the linguistic expression of gender and the cultural and historical context in which both languages have developed. The use of semantic gender in English, as opposed to the use of grammatical gender in Slovene, is treated as one of the factors influencing the approach to the non-sexist use of language in both languages. Strategies for non-sexist expression and their rebuttals are discussed in the context of predominant cultural ideologies about gender and presuppositions regarding the link between social change and linguistic reform.

Key words: sexism, language, gender, neseksistična raba jezika, English, Slovene

Ideologija spola v angleščini in slovenščini: kontrastivni pogled

Povzetek

Članek obravnava pojmovanje jezikovnega seksizma v medkulturnem kontekstu. Predstavljena je primerjava splošno sprejetih priporočil, kako se izogniti jezikovnemu seksizmu v angleščini in slovenščini na primeru dveh priročnikov o neseksistični rabi jezika. Postavljena je trditev, da v angleščini neseksistična jezikovna raba stremi k spolni dvoumnosti oz. nevtralnosti, v slovenščini pa k spolni specifičnosti. Razlogi za razliko v dojemanju seksizma v angleščini in slovenščini so postavljeni v kontekst jezikovnega izražanja spola in širšega kulturnega in zgodovinskega razvoja obeh jezikov. Raba semantičnega spola v angleščini v nasprotju z rabo slovničnega spola v slovenščini je obravnavana kot eden izmed dejavnikov, ki vpliva na pristop k neseksistični rabi jezika v obeh jezikih. Strategije za neseksistično izražanje in zavrnitev njihovih argumentov so postavljeni v kontekst predominantnih kulturnih ideologij o spolu in predpostavk o povezavi med družbenimi spremembami in jezikovno reformo.

Ključne besede: seksizem, jezik, spol, neseksistična jezikovna raba, angleščina, slovenščina

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1. Introduction

The concept of linguistic sexism has long played an important part in discussions on the general nature of sexism as a form of prejudice and discrimination based on sex or gender. The fight against general sexism returned to the forefront of social movements in the so-called second wave of feminism, thus forming a part of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s against discrimination of underprivileged groups. The concept of linguistic sexism, as one of the most prevalent forms of sexism, has thus always had strong historical ties to the political left, the feminism of the 1970s and the concept of political correctness. As Cameron (1992) has observed, an interest in the use of the English language as an essential part of sexist practice was revived in second wave feminism and linguistic issues were made central to the fight against gender-based discrimination.

There have always been strong links between the concept of linguistic sexism and political correctness. It is thus no coincidence that the first mention of the term "politically correct" is attributed to the African-American feminist Toni Cade Bambara (1970). Although, nowadays, the term political correctness is primarily used pejoratively, its dictionary definition still contains its original meaning, defining it as "the avoidance of forms of expression or action that are perceived to exclude, marginalize, or insult groups of people who are socially disadvantaged or discriminated against" (Oxford Dictionaries Online). Similarly, the concept of linguistic sexism has been subject to much criticism from the outset (cf. Blaubergs 1980) Guidelines for non-sexist language are often viewed as another form of political correctness and certain aspects of the fight against sexism in language thus face similar criticisms to those levelled at the general concept of political correctness. Some critics even accuse the proponents of non-sexist language of applying the argument of political correctness against any criticism of their ideas. For example, Ross complains that any criticism of the concept of sexist language "is usually strongly inhibited by quick charges of 'sexism' and by other intimidating tactics of political correctness" and calls the tendency to eliminate gender-specific references in the English language "an Orwellian goal" (Ross, Against the Theory of "Sexist Language", 1). Far from being resolved, the issue of sexist use of language and its non-sexist variants is thus still part of an ongoing debate.

The term sexism has gained international currency, at least in the western world, and has thus become an internationalism, accepted into the vocabulary of many languages, including the vocabulary of Slovene ('seksizem').

As opposed to the general term sexism, the concept of linguistic sexism and suggested non-sexist expressions seem to be more culturally diverse and shaped by a variety of factors.

The following comparative analysis of the concept of linguistic sexism and non-sexist language in English and Slovene draws attention to the above-mentioned assumption that the view of what constitutes linguistic sexism and the appropriate way to fight it is not culturally neutral and universally applicable; instead, it should be interpreted as a result of factors such as the specific cultural context in which it arose, including the relevant linguistic research paradigms, as well as the typological characteristics of the languages in question.

The second-wave feminist work on linguistic gender focused mainly on the English language (e.g.,

Lakoff 1975, Spender 1980), although other languages are also sometimes mentioned in passing. Cameron (1992), for example, acknowledges this by saying that "though I shall stick to talking about the English language here, the challenge could and still can be found among speakers of many languages, including French, German, Dutch, Italian and Japanese". Besides English, French is another language which has received much attention with regard to gender expression and sexism, inspired by the proponents and scholars of the French feminist movement (e.g., Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Iragaray). As Livia (2001, 5) notes, it is in English and French that the most daring experimental works have been produced. Nevertheless, most of the debate about sexism in language uses the English language as the implicit norm for the discussion. Thus, discussions focusing on linguistic sexism are often based on implicit assumptions about what linguistic sexism means and how it should be fought. In order to make these assumptions explicit, linguistic sexism should be conceptualized as part of an intellectual framework that relies on a particular view of the relationship between language and society and is also partly influenced by linguistic diversity, such as the morphosyntactic structure of particular languages. In this article we illustrate these dependencies by comparing the concept of linguistic sexism in English and Slovene, looking in particular at what constitutes non-sexist language in both languages.

2. Linguistic relativism and the concept of linguistic sexism

The concept of linguistic sexism, just like other types of linguistically expressed discrimination, implies at least some degree of linguistic relativism. Linguistic relativism is based on the postulate that certain properties of a language have consequences for patterns of thought about reality (cf. Lucy 1997). According to this theory, language embodies an interpretation of reality and can at the same time influence thought about that reality. The use of language considered demeaning to women is thus considered an interpretation of reality which itself is demeaning to women; moreover, it is also considered an influence on reality by reinforcing the values of the society in which we live. Cameron (1992) notes that feminists revived pre-war anthropology and its claims that language affects the world-view (such as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis). Kunst Gnamuš (1995) says that the question of the influence of grammar on reality cannot be answered since we do not know what the conscious and unconscious effects of linguistic rules are on the representation of reality and forming of concepts. More recent research (e.g., Boroditsky, Schmidt and Phillips 2003) shows that grammatical gender has some influence on the non-linguistic representations of reality. Some form of linguistic relativity is usually taken for granted in more sociologically-oriented Slovene writing on the subject of language and gender, which presupposes that language both reflects and constructs reality and has the power to reinforce values (e.g., Leskošek 2000). The main assumption on which the use of non-sexist language is based is that the use of language not only reflects the changing nature of society, but that it can also facilitate that change.

This view underlies the rationale for the use of non-sexist language, but similar to the concept of linguistic relativism, the concept of non-sexist language has not been universally accepted. The challenge to this view often comes in the form of citing examples of languages that have no grammatical gender, but there is gender inequality in the society itself. Ross, for example, mentions the example of Farsi, a language with no grammatical gender distinctions and no distinctions in the titles for married and unmarried women (Ross, Against the Theory of "Sexist Language", 4), pointing out that this gender neutrality does not reflect gender equality in society. Such counterarguments show that the correlation between language use and reality is a complex matter and cannot be reduced to simple determinism. However, they do not convincingly prove that changes of what is perceived as degrading use of grammatical forms in language are just

a matter of semantic trivia with no concrete effect on society. What such arguments do not consider is the question of perception and self-identity. Cameron and Culick (2003, 25) note that "politically correct" renaming challenges others' prejudices while at the same time having more 'inward-directed' objectives. New forms of expression can satisfy the desire of group members themselves for names, linguistic forms and self-descriptions that they can readily identify with. In the case of non-sexist language it is thus of secondary importance if linguistic relativity can be fully empirically proven or if the new non-sexist forms of expression can by themselves eliminate social disadvantage. What matters even more is that non-sexist alternatives offer symbolic representations of women that women themselves can perceive as fair and can identify with. Thus, it can be argued that the notion of linguistic sexism can be sustained even without invoking the concept of linguistic relativism, rendering counterarguments based on the dismissal of linguistic relativism insignificant.

3. The core beliefs of sexism underlying the concept of linguistic sexism

In order to understand the roots of and differences in the concept of linguistic sexism, we should first look at the reference of its superordinate term, i.e., sexism. As mentioned above, the word sexism has become an internationalism describing discrimination based on gender, most often discrimination against women. The dictionary definitions of the terms are very similar in English and Slovene. The term 'seksizem' in the Slovene language is defined in the dictionary part of the Slovene Orthography (2001) as "discrimination against the members of a certain gender, usually women" (in Slovene: "zapostavljanje pripadnikov določenega spola, navadno žensk"), whereas the English dictionary definition is "prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex" (Oxford Dictionaries Online).

When the meaning of sexism as the specificity of female oppression is discussed, it becomes clear that the definition of what constitutes sexism is very similar across cultures. Feminist theories are unified in their interpretation of the term sexism by interpreting it as the traditional belief, and practices based on such a belief, in the difference between the sexes whereby women are in some way inferior to men.

A very useful definition of sexism invokes two component core beliefs of sexism and the ethics to fight against it, which help to explain the cultural context, i.e., the traditions and beliefs that led to the current understanding of the linguistic sexism in different cultures, and which have also influenced the culture-specific guidelines for the use of non-sexist language. According to the second-wave feminist Jo Freeman (1971), traditional feminist theory about sexism recognizes at least two different concepts on which the belief of the inferiority of women is based: men are more significant or important than women, e.g., it is more important for a man to be paid well, to secure a promotion, etc. It is the basis for the belief that if women enter a particular occupation they will degrade it, often described as the "feminization of a profession". Men are then forced to leave such "feminized" professions or be themselves degraded, and women can only raise the prestige of their profession by recruiting men.

According to Freeman (ibid.), the second core concept of sexism is that women have a complementary role, meaning that they are here for the pleasure and assistance of men and that they should fulfill their natural "feminine" functions. Their identity and social value is defined solely by their relationship to men they are related to. The mentality of this second concept, which

puts women on a pedestal as long as they fulfill their natural complementary role is still present in modern society and is often defended by both men and women, especially by politicians who fight for the restoration of "natural" order in society.

These two principles are accepted by mainstream feminism as something that should be fought against; the approaches to fighting sexism can be, according to Freeman (ibid.), broadly divided into two ethics that have received a varying degree of emphasis across cultures: the egalitarian ethic and the liberation ethic. The egalitarian ethic proclaims that the sexes are equal; therefore, the sex roles should be completely eliminated. In practice this ethic can be interpreted to mean that women simply need to assume the same roles as men, so society should change accordingly to grant women the opportunities to act like men. The liberation ethic, on the other hand, proclaims that it is primarily the content of the roles assumed by men and women that must change. According to the liberation logic, a society that discriminates against women also forces men to fit a certain mold, thus oppressing men as well. The social institutions which oppress women thus also oppress people in general, so the social institutions themselves have to be changed. The application of both of these logics has undergone criticism. Certain feminists argue that pursuing the egalitarian ethic alone assumes that women want to be like men, and that they just need more opportunity in society, to get their piece of the pie, so to speak (ibid.). Real equality between the sexes, so the argument goes, will also inevitably lead to basic structural change. Conversely, criticism levelled against the liberation ethic suggests that when you try to liberate society as a whole, you cannot simply expect that the liberation of women will follow automatically. As Freeman notes (ibid.) a combination of elements from both these ethics is necessary to overcome sexism. Some of the cultural differences in the treatment of linguistic sexism have been influenced by a varying emphasis on them. We will specify these dependencies in the sections below.

4. Linguistic sexism in the context of culture

Although individual elements of the concept of sexism may have had varying influences on the fight against it, the view itself on what constitutes sexism is now accepted by the majority of feminist theories with roots in western tradition. Both of the above-mentioned ethics have played a role in the development of the concept of linguistic sexism and thus form a part of its cultural context. The view on what constitutes non-sexist language seems to be shaped by several factors, including the cultural context of feminist traditions with their own understanding of what sexism is and how it should be fought.

Theorists usually speak of three waves of feminism (cf. Krolokke and Sorensen 2006), which commonly refer to the development of feminism in English-speaking countries. The first wave was about achieving basic legal rights, while the second wave focused on the control of the human body, including issues such as the right to abortion, birth control, and other social rights (hence the slogan "the personal is political"). The current third-wave feminism stresses the heterogeneity of female identity, by giving voices to bisexual, lesbian and transgender women and by discussing racial and postcolonial issues. In terms of the proposed ethics used for fighting against sexism, the first wave focused on the egalitarian ethic of women's rights, while second-wave feminism also incorporated the liberation ethic in its more radical groups. The liberation ethic was associated with the activist environment of student politics and had connections with civil rights movement. The third-wave movement combines the two ethics, with some groups focusing more on the women's ability to choose what kind of role they want to assume in life by opening up further opportunities for them in an "equal" competition with men, while others fight to change the social institutions

and the content of the gender roles by stressing heterogeneity based on human traits other than the biological sex. A certain kind of stigma has been attached to the word feminism in the mainstream English-speaking media in the last two decades, with some media outlets even declaring feminism to be dead (e.g., Mumsnet). On the other hand, the younger generation of feminists such as Kat Baynard (2010) talk about the illusion of equality and turn their attention to social phenomena, such as the sex industry and violence against women, that have effects on the whole of society.

In Slovenia, on the other hand, feminist ideology is closely connected to the post-war socialist ideology which officially proclaimed sexual equality. After the second world war, when Slovenia was a federal state of socialist Yugoslavia, feminism was incorporated into the official ideological discourse. Boskovik (1999) notes that the feminist movements of the pre-war periods were rejected as something essentially elitist; Western feminism was viewed with suspicion as a potential threat to the official ideology, which supported social feminism. The oppression of women was seen as a part of a larger pattern that was inherent in the capitalist system and its patriarchal society, and the fight against this oppression as an issue of class struggle. The intellectual framework used by the most prominent feminists of this period, such as Maca Jogan, was thus based mainly on the liberation ethic. Feminist efforts were focused on changing society as a whole, which was also supposed to bring an end to the discrimination of women in particular. Certain positives were achieved in this period (day care, maternity leave, equal pay) but the problem of gender inequality did not disappear. Moreover, society in general remained dominated by the patriarchal legacy of Catholicism.

A younger generation of Slovene feminists, who became more prominent after the fall of socialism, took up issues similar to those dealt with in second-wave and third-wave western feminism. Institutionally, an important role was also played by the Office for Women's Policy, which was later renamed the Office for Equal Opportunity. More recent authors and activists working on feminist issues mainly come from the sociological and psychoanalytical traditions, or the lesbian movement (e.g., Darja Zaviršek, Renata Šribar, Renata Salecl, Suzana Tratnik). These feminists are associated with academia or the creative arts. Their views are heterogeneous and can be placed in the context of third-wave feminism. The positions assumed by these feminists range from the focus on gender differences to the desire for a complete elimination of sex roles. However, there are few women in the mainstream population who would willingly describe themselves as feminists, and there is a social and intellectual divide between feminist scholars and the "everyday" woman. This is probably one of the reasons preventing more women from participating in political-decision making.

5. In search of non-sexist linguistic alternatives

The theory of sexism that has its roots in the period of second-wave feminism produced important linguistic research into language and gender. Cameron (1992) notes that feminism has always focused on representations of femininity, so it is logical that it has also turned its attention to language as a symbolic system of representation. The seminal work by Robin Lakoff *Language and Woman's Place* (1975) challenged the ways in which women were talked about and the way in which women's speech was limited. Since the 1970s, the production of academic articles on connections between language and gender has vastly increased and linguistic discrimination based on gender has become a common topic in sociolinguistic and feminist studies. Not all studies in this area have confronted the problem of discrimination, focusing instead on the differences between female and male use of language, based on the supposedly different nature of men and women (e.g., Tannen 1990). However, linguistic sexism has always been at the forefront of the study of gender

in language. As a result, guidelines on non-sexist language are a common part of ethical codes of conduct in English-speaking countries at various institutions, including universities and colleges.

In Slovenia, it is the post-socialist feminists, mostly from the social sciences and psychoanalysis (e.g., Bahovec, 1992), who have drawn attention to the problems of terminology and gender. In the 1990s the main political force driving the linguistic debate on sexism in language was the Office for Women's Policy, which encouraged much of the more recent scholarly work on this topic. Slovene linguists focused on various aspects of linguistic sexism, treating it either as a lexical problem, i.e., as part of the broader concept of offensive speech (e.g., Gorjanc 2005) or as a grammatical problem, the solution to which is impractical because of the grammatical nature of the Slovene language (e.g., Stabej 1997). Purely linguistic accounts of the expression of gender in Slovene usually stress the grammatical nature of using masculine forms as unmarked forms in the case of Slovene dual gender nouns (e.g., Kunst Gnamuš 1995), or provide a word-formational inventory of possible feminine – masculine pairs (Vidovič Muha 1997).

The definition of linguistic sexism itself is broadly similar in both English and Slovene, i.e., the use of male-centred expressions for women or for generic terms including both genders, but there are considerable differences in solutions proposed for non-sexist language. While the non-sexist English language tends to achieve gender neutrality, the non-sexist Slovene language strives for gender specificity.

It can be assumed that the differences in solutions are primarily motivated by the linguistic typological differences between the two languages. It can also be argued that differences in the specific cultural context of the development of feminism also had some influence on the differences in the conceptualization of non-sexist language which underlies the guidelines on non-sexist language.

5.1 Semantic and formal gender in English and Slovene

There is a distinct typological difference in the expression of gender between English and Slovene. While in English the expression of gender is overt, dependent on the meaning of the word, i.e., the biological sex of the referent (cf. Biber et al. 1999), the main division within gender is thus based on the semantic content of words. Gender is divided into the following categories: human and non-human, with human further divided into masculine, feminine and dual gender. Gender in English can thus be called semantic gender. The semantic gender is grammatically reflected through the use of singular personal pronouns (he, she, it) and corresponding possessive and reflexive forms; the human v. non-human distinction is also reflected through certain relative and interrogative pronouns (human who v. non-human which), and indefinite pronouns (someone v. something). Nouns with dual gender have *who – he* or *she* pronoun coreference. The specification of semantic gender as feminine and masculine gender can be indicated in various ways: with lexical pairs (wife, husband), grammatical endings (actor – actress), gender premodification (female, male teacher) and gender-specific compounding (congressman, congresswoman). Some nouns can shift their gender category, for example, nouns denoting vehicles, countries, etc. can shift from the non-human category (it), to the human category (she). Nouns denoting animals also frequently shift from the non-human (it) into the human gender category (he, she). It is very rare for a human noun to shift into the non-human use – this usually happens in the case of derogatory use (it instead of he or she) and is also possible with nouns such as baby, infant (it instead of he or she). Gender is thus seen as a less important grammatical category in English than in many other languages (e.g., Biber et al. 1999).

Slovene belongs to languages in which gender is a more visible feature of the morphosyntactic structure. As opposed to semantic gender in English, the Slovene language has grammatical gender, which means that every noun grammatically expresses one of the following types of gender: masculine, feminine or neuter. Gender is not based on the semantic content of words in the same way as in English, because Slovene inanimate and non-human nouns are all ascribed feminine, masculine or neuter gender. However, there is partial overlap with semantic gender, insofar as the grammatical gender of Slovene human nouns usually agrees with the semantic gender of the word. This rule has exceptions, however, in particular when it comes to words with dual semantic gender, i.e., words that can refer to both females and males. Grammatical gender is expressed through grammatical suffixes, typical of each gender category. These suffixes, however, are not an absolute predictor of the gender of Slovene nouns. For example, while the suffix *-a* in the nominative case of singular nouns usually indicates feminine gender, it can also indicate masculine gender (e.g., vodja 'leader'). Gender is embedded into the morphosyntactic structure of Slovene to such a degree that it also affects the agreement between subject and predicator (i.e., the predicator agrees in gender with the subject), between the headword and the modifiers (i.e., certain types of modifiers agree in gender with the headword), and between the antecedent and the anaphor in coreference (i.e., anaphor agrees in gender with the antecedent). As Kunst Gnamuš (1995) notes, gender in Slovene is a morphosyntactic category which fulfills two roles: first it is an inherent morphosyntactic category which helps to express syntagmatic relations and textual cohesion, second it is a category that has representational semantic function. It marks the biological sex, the distinction between female and male as a feature of reference. Kunst Gnamuš (ibid.) mentions the clash between the morphosyntactic function and the representational (referential) function of gender in Slovene: there is a hierarchy of genders, meaning that masculine gender is used as the unmarked gender in the cases of words with dual semantic gender (e.g., generic reference). Conversely, it is marked or even ungrammatical to use feminine forms for words with dual semantic gender. Economy of expression is thus achieved at the expense of the feminine forms. This means that the semantic difference between males and females is neutralized in favour of nouns with masculine grammatical gender. Kunst-Gnamuš (ibid.) avoids the potential ideological implications of such grammatical rules by noting that she cannot answer the question about the influence of such grammatical rules on identity and possible social discrimination because it is still unknown what kind of conscious or subconscious effect the interfacing role of grammatical rules has on the representation of reality and in the formation of concepts.

Slovene uses grammatically masculine nouns to refer to mixed gender groups, either generic or specific. This means that plural masculine nouns are ambiguous in whether they refer exclusively to males or to a group of males and females (pisatelji ('writers'), prebivalci ('inhabitants')). The masculine gender is used even if the reference implies only one male in an otherwise female group. Moreover, singular masculine nouns can also be used generically to refer both to male and female referents (delavec mora biti bolje plačan ('the worker has to be paid better')). Additionally, singular masculine nouns can be used for non-referential designations even if they are ascribed to a female referent (Ona je arhitekt. 'She is an architect.'). In contrast, plural feminine nouns and singular feminine nouns by definition exclude male referents (pisateljice, prebivalke, pisateljica). Examples of grammatically feminine nouns with dual semantic gender are rare and, interestingly, such feminine nouns often have derogatory or negative meanings (e.g., baraba 'bastard', reva 'weakling', žrtev 'victim')), although there are also examples with a neutral meaning (e.g., priča 'witness', oseba 'person').

5.2 Non-sexist language in English and Slovene: a comparison of guidelines

We have argued above that there is one general distinction in the conceptualization of non-sexist language in English and Slovene, i.e., English tends towards gender neutralization, whereas Slovene tends towards gender specification. For illustration, we have examined two manuals on non-sexist language, one for the English language and one for the Slovene language.

In English-speaking universities, it is common for new students to be presented with guidelines on how to communicate and behave appropriately in their study environment. Below we present the content of a guide produced by the Committee on Equality of Opportunity by University College Cork (1994), entitled Non-sexist Language, which exemplifies guidelines on the use of English free from sexism.

The definition of non-sexist language as gender-neutral language is explicitly stated by the committee in the introduction explaining the policy of equality (1994, 1): "The use of non-sexist, gender-neutral language is an essential part of this policy." The authors of the guidelines are quick to point out that their intention is not to limit or censor language, but to include all people on an equal basis (ibid., 2).

The propositions on how to achieve language use free of sexism can be divided into three general categories: the use of dual gender forms instead of gender-specific forms, the avoidance of gender-related stereotypes, the use of parallel terms of address. In the first category, the generic use of the word man is considered a false generic and should be replaced by appropriate dual gender forms (humans, person, people, to staff etc.) (ibid., 2). This includes even somewhat revisionist modernized versions of proverbs and sayings (e.g.' one man's meat is another man's poison' rewritten as 'what is food to one is poison to another'; 'to each his own' rewritten as 'to each one's own') (ibid., 3). The gender neutralization of job titles regardless of the actual sex reference of the noun also belongs to this category (maintenance men – maintenance staff, cleaning woman – cleaner, female poet – poet, male nurse – nurse, poetess – poet, actress – actor, usherette – usher) (ibid., 7). Nouns of dual gender denoting professions are thus preferred to gender specific nouns even when the reference is not generic and the sex of the referent is known (e.g., chairperson instead of chairman or chairwoman). It is interesting that terms which were originally used as masculine nouns can be used as duals (e.g., actor) as long as they do not contain the word man.

When it comes to the neutralization of pronouns, it is suggested that the generic use of male pronouns is misleading and exclusive (ibid., 2). Therefore, simply stating that male pronouns should be understood to include females does not suffice. The alternatives 'she and he', 'she/he' or 's/he are recommended in addition to some other ways of avoiding the use of the singular he, such as the use of the plural, the use of the passive voice, the use of an indefinite pronoun, (each student must complete his essay on Friday – students must complete their essays on Friday; he must return it by the due date – it must be returned by the due date; a student who wants his essay returned – anyone who wants an essay returned) (ibid.). Interestingly, the dual gender pronoun 'they' with the singular meaning of 'he' or 'she', which is frequently mentioned as an alternative to male pronouns, is not recommended in this particular guide, perhaps because it causes grammatical disagreement in number between the antecedent and the pronoun. Similarly, the possibilities given in this section do not include the use of generic 'she' instead of 'he' (e.g., child – she), the use which has become more prominent in the last decade.

The category of gender-based stereotypes includes stereotyped assumptions (lecturers and their wives – lecturers and their partners, i.e., lecturers may be female, homosexual, single, cohabiting), patronizing expressions (the girls in the office – administrative assistants), and sex-role stereotyping (she is a tomboy – she is adventurous; he is a sissy – he is a sensitive boy). Here it is also recommended that a balance between male and female referents should be achieved, for example in textbooks (ibid., 8). Personification of inanimate objects is also rejected on the assumption that it reinforces stereotyped notions of femininity and masculinity (e.g., the sun as a 'he', the moon as a 'she') (ibid., 10). The guide also suggests varying the word order when listing pairs of female and male nouns and pronouns, so that the hierarchy of importance and status is challenged (ibid., 11).

The document concludes with the presentation of the Equality Committee, data about its establishment, and its main aim – committed to "equality of opportunity for men and women." (ibid., 14)

For the Slovene language, we present the guide entitled Nekaj izhodiščnih prizadevanj za odpravo seksistične rabe jezika 'Some basic efforts for the elimination of the sexist use of language' (Žagar and Milharčič Hladnik 1996). This is the first official document conceptualizing the use of sexist language in Slovene and offering guidelines on how to avoid it. It was drawn up at the instigation of the Office for Women's Policy, and was politically motivated by Slovenia becoming a member of the European Union and consequently, of various European institutions. The authors refer to the general recommendation by the Council of Europe that the national languages of member states should achieve equality in the grammatical expression of female and male forms and parallel designations for both genders. The member states were left to adapt the detailed guidelines to the individual languages in question. According to the document the elimination of sexist use is necessary for a change in cultural thought patterns (cf. Chapter 2), for the achievement of equality in social life and employment and for the elimination of gender-based prejudice and stereotypes. This can be achieved by treating both genders equally or at least neutrally (ibid., 3). The authors point to several ways in which this goal can be achieved. Generically used (dual gender) masculine terms or feminine terms excluding male referents should be avoided in designations for professions, and parallel feminine and masculine terms should be used instead (električar, električarka 'male electrician', 'female electrician', čistilka, čistilec 'female cleaner', 'male cleaner'). One of the reasons given for mentioning both forms is for women not to be the "invisible" half of the population: "If women are not present in language, they are much harder to notice and establish themselves in public life (ibid., 4)". At the same time the authors concede that the ideal of parallel feminine and masculine forms is easier to achieve for the Slovene language in comparison to languages such as English because of its different word-formation potential in the creation of feminine forms. The use of non-sexist forms can be achieved in various ways: the coordinated use of both forms (dijak/dijakinja 'male student/female student', the use of neutral dual gender forms (oseba, ki je nosilka pravice 'the person who is the owner of this right'), the use of the creative method (variation of masculine and feminine forms throughout the text) and the use of the legal definition (a footnote stating that masculine grammatical forms are used for both genders). The authors (ibid.) find the use of legal definition the least satisfying, and at the same time point to the potential awkwardness of legal texts that consistently use parallel forms, which is further complicated by the required agreement in gender between the subject and verb.

Another area of sexist use mentioned in the document (ibid., 6) is the asymmetric use of terms of address where parallel terms of address should be used instead of non-parallel terms. For example, it is suggested that the asymmetric Janez Marolt, manager, in Sonja ('Janez Marolt, the manager, and Sonja'), should be replaced with the symmetric Janez Marolt, manager, in Sonja Horvat, knjigovodkinja

('Janez Marolt, the manager, and Sonja Horvat, the accountant'). Interestingly, the authors do not problematize the distinction between ga. ('Mrs.') and gpd. ('Miss') based on marital status.

The third area of sexist use of language mentioned in the document points to the stereotypical descriptions of men and women alongside their characteristics and typical role in society (lepi spol/šibki spol 'the fair sex/the weak sex', direktor in njegova šarmantna tajnica 'director and his charming secretary').

The document concludes by recommending further research in this area, the modification of administrative forms, and the establishment of a special work group to elaborate detailed guidelines for all areas of public life.

5.3 Gender neutrality v. gender specificity

A comparison of English and Slovene guidelines shows that there are similarities between the conceptualizations of sexist language based on the common ground of the similar social values reflected in both languages. For both languages, these social values are historically closely connected with a male-dominated and a male-centred society that has treated males as the unmarked norm. Very similar recommendations are thus given for the avoidance of biased and stereotyped assumptions, patronizing and demeaning expressions and sex-role stereotyping and terms of address. Here the English guidelines go even further than the Slovene guidelines in recommending changes to old sayings and proverbs. The differences in recommendations arise mainly in the area of dual gender nouns and parallel feminine and masculine expression, and can be attributed to the differences in the semantic and morphological expression of gender in the two languages. As we have seen above, English expresses gender primarily at the semantic level, while Slovene expresses gender grammatically. This means that the Slovene nouns which can be considered as dual gender on the semantic level are grammatically still gender-specific. Consequently, the English ideal of gender-free language is very difficult to achieve. Nouns with semantic dual-gender in Slovene, i.e., nouns which can be used to refer both to females and males, are expressed mainly through masculine grammatical gender. In Slovene, dual gender finds expression on the semantic level, but not on the grammatical level (e.g., priča 'witness'– feminine gender, otrok 'child'– masculine). The use of plural forms or semantically neutral forms does not solve the problem of male-biased language in Slovene. The only way to avoid the use of the masculine form for both genders is to use parallel gender-specific terms. This is similar to the problem of the non-existent neutral singular third person pronoun in English, but in the case of Slovene this problem extends over nouns in general. The word-formation potential of Slovene enables a relatively regular formation of feminine terms parallel to masculine terms through suffixation. Feminine forms, while avoided in non-sexist English in favour of dual gender forms (e.g., actor instead of actress), are actively encouraged in Slovene, even though they are usually formed from masculine terms. The consistent use of the existing feminine forms and the creation of new feminine forms is considered to fulfill the function of rendering women visible, even if we take into account that the created feminine forms for different professions do not necessarily coincide with real-life statistics (e.g., varilec 'welder' – varilka 'female welder').

Reference to inanimate nouns as masculine or feminine, which is seen as an example of sexist use of language in English, is not treated as such in Slovene. Masculine or feminine gender is ascribed to inanimate nouns as an inherent part of the grammatical system of the Slovene language. Consequently, this is not seen as a problem for the non-sexist use of language, because it does not involve personification, and moreover, there is no alternative expression.

Gender neutralization, on the other hand, is more in tune with the linguistic typology of gender expression in English. One of the main problems of sexist English is considered to be the dual gender use of nouns containing the word man or the pronoun he. The primarily semantic nature of gender expression in English allows the existence of truly dual gender nouns, although sometimes these nouns are an extension of an originally masculine noun (e.g., actor in reference to women). In addition to this, the word-formation potential of creating feminine forms is in English much more idiosyncratic than in Slovene.

However, it seems that the decision about which approach to adopt regarding the sexist use of language also has parallels with a particular approach to women's liberation. If we take into account the above-mentioned egalitarian ethic and liberation ethic in the feminist movement, the ideal of gender neutralization seems to be based on the assumption that women are not served by the practice of mentioning gender in each case. If women are not represented equally strongly among all occupations at all levels, the feminine forms could be seen as marginalized forms. This position reflects the egalitarian ethic, which strives to change the gender roles, encouraging women to assimilate and emulate male roles to achieve success and equality. The ideal of consistent feminization of forms, on the other hand, seems to stem from the liberation ethic, based on which the change of society as a whole will automatically bring about equality of the sexes and make both genders equally prominent.

6. Conclusion

The comparison of assumptions about linguistic sexism in various languages shows that the conceptualization of non-sexist use of language is a linguistic-cultural concept that has to be evaluated in its specific linguistic and cultural context. The ideals of non-sexist use of language in English and in Slovene differ to a certain extent. In English, the non-sexist use of language encourages gender-neutral language and strives for the elimination of specific use of feminine or masculine gender. In Slovene, on the other hand, semantic gender-neutrality clashes with grammatical gender, so the ideal of non-sexist language consists in the consistent use of feminine forms in reference to females.

However, in English there is also an opposite trend toward the feminization of nouns (song – songstress, murder – murderess, adventurer – adventuress), at least in some types of texts. This indicates a step away from gender invisibility towards a more explicit linguistic expression of feminine identity. Further research will show if this trend is more than simply an expressive style of popular writing, or if it can have any significance for the concept of the non-sexist use of language in English.

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