

Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Palackého

Gender Bias and its Influence

(Bachelor's Thesis)

2024

Tereza Horáková

**Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Palackého
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky**

Gender Bias and its Influence
(Bakalářská práce)

Autor: Tereza Horáková

Studijní obor: Anglická filologie

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Michaela Čakányová, Ph.D.

Počet znaků: 67 105

Počet stran (podle znaků): 37

Počet stran (podle čísel): 47

Abstract and annotation

This bachelor's thesis explores the linguistic aspect of gender-biased language and its impact on perception and decision-making. It investigates the influence of gendered language on thoughts. The first part examines the concept of gender and its origin. Then more specifically gender in English, typology and the use of generic masculine, highlighting the semantic use of masculine words for feminine concepts. The second part addresses the problems associated with the stereotypical use of gender-biased language and its effects on the general public. It draws on research by Boroditsky (2003) which suggests that language shapes thoughts and creates associations based on gender. Additionally, the study incorporates research by Bem and Bem from 1973, exploring the influence of language in gender-biased job advertisements. The author creates a questionnaire—one part with the gender-neutral language and the another one with the gender-biased language—to assess the impact on respondents' thinking. By comparing the results, the study aims to extend and confirm the findings of the 1973 research, highlighting the potential of manipulating through gender-biased language and its effects across different age groups and social fields.

Key words

gender, generic masculine, bias, semantic concepts and their associations

Abstrakt a anotace

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá jazykovým aspektem genderově podmíněného jazyka a jeho vlivem na naše vnímání, rozhodování a myšlení. První část zkoumá pojem pohlaví/gender a jeho vznik. Dále pak konkrétněji gender v angličtině, typologii a užívání generického maskulina, přičemž je zdůrazněno sémantické užití mužských slov pro ženské pojmy. Druhá část se zabývá problémy spojenými se stereotypním užíváním genderově zabarveného jazyka a jeho dopady na širokou veřejnost. Práce vychází z výzkumu od Boroditsky (2003), který zkoumá, jak jazyk utváří myšlenky a vytváří asociace na základě pohlaví. Tato práce navíc zahrnuje výzkum Bema a Bemové z roku 1973, který zkoumal vliv jazyka v genderově zaujatých pracovních inzerátech. Autorka poskytuje dotazník – jednu část s genderově neutrálním jazykem a druhou s genderově podmíněným jazykem, aby posoudila vliv na myšlení respondentů. Porovnáním výsledků si tato práce klade za cíl rozšířit a potvrdit výsledky výzkumu z roku 1973 a poukázat na možnosti manipulace prostřednictvím genderově zaujatého jazyka a jeho účinky na různé věkové skupiny a sociální oblasti.

Klíčová slova

gender/pohlaví, generické maskulinum, podmíněnost, sémantické pojmy a jejich asociace

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla úplný seznam citované a použité literatury.

V Olomouci dne 2.5. 2024

Tereza Horáková

Děkuji vedoucí diplomové práce Mgr. Michael Čakányové, Ph.D. za pomoc a cenné rady při zpracování této bakalářské práce. Také bych ráda poděkovala rodině za projevenou podporu během studia.

V Olomouci dne 2.5. 2024

Tereza Horáková

Table of contents

| | | |
|----------|-----------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | INTRODUCTION..... | 9 |
| 2 | GENDER..... | 11 |
| 2.1 | GENDER IN ENGLISH | 13 |
| 2.1.1 | <i>Lexical gender.....</i> | <i>13</i> |
| 2.1.2 | <i>Social gender.....</i> | <i>14</i> |
| 2.2 | GENDER-BIAS..... | 15 |
| 2.2.1 | <i>Issues with gender bias</i> | <i>18</i> |
| 2.2.2 | <i>Generic he</i> | <i>19</i> |
| 2.3 | GENDER MARKING..... | 20 |
| 2.3.1 | <i>Composition</i> | <i>22</i> |
| 2.3.2 | <i>Morphology.....</i> | <i>23</i> |
| 3 | RESEARCH | 25 |
| 3.1 | QUESTIONNAIRE DEVELOPMENT | 26 |
| 3.2 | STRUCTURE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE..... | 27 |
| 3.3 | TRIAL QUESTIONNAIRE..... | 30 |
| 3.4 | EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH..... | 31 |
| 3.4.1 | <i>Choice of name.....</i> | <i>32</i> |
| 3.4.2 | <i>Choice of pronoun.....</i> | <i>33</i> |
| 3.4.3 | <i>Female vs. male leader</i> | <i>34</i> |
| 3.4.4 | <i>Choice of preferred option</i> | <i>35</i> |
| 3.5 | SUMMARY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE..... | 39 |
| 4 | CONCLUSION..... | 40 |
| 5 | BIBLIOGRAPHY | 42 |
| 6 | APPENDICES | 44 |
| 6.1 | QUESTIONNAIRE..... | 44 |
| | <i>First subsection:.....</i> | <i>44</i> |
| | <i>Second subsection:</i> | <i>46</i> |

List of figures

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Figure 1—number of names in the second part | 33 |
| Figure 2—number of names in the first part | 33 |
| Figure 3—values of the used words | 34 |
| Figure 4—preferences in the job environment (help/helper) | 35 |
| Figure 5—preferences in the job environment (executive/administrator) | 36 |
| Figure 6—preferences in the job environment (stewardess/flight-attendant) | 36 |
| Figure 7—preferences in the job environment (nurse/medical personnel) | 36 |
| Figure 8—preferences in the job environment (labour force/labourer) | 37 |
| Figure 9—preferences in the job environment (salesperson/manager) | 37 |
| Figure 10—showing questions from the research questionnaire | 38 |
| Figure 11—preferences in the job environment (secretary) | 38 |
| Figure 12—preferences in the job environment (police officer) | 38 |

1 Introduction

Gender-biased language is a very controversial topic nowadays from a sociological point of view. Due to the constant liberalization of society, the issue of gender-neutral language is constantly coming to the surface. In this bachelor's thesis I do not want to deal with or even define the so-called problems of society. I decided to explore this issue purely from a linguistic point of view, namely how language can affect our perception.

This phenomenon has been studied several times in the context of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis which examines the influence of language on thoughts. This bachelor's thesis aims to investigate the extent of the influence of gendered language on our thinking and even our decision making.

The first part of this thesis will deal with the general term of gender and its origin. Then it will be focused on gender in English and exactly in what ways it can be expressed. In this section, types of gender according to the taxonomy given in the book by Hellinger and Motschenbacher (2015) will be categorized.

The main point of the next section is previously mentioned gender-bias, and its parallel terms such as *generic he* or the problems with this bias in the research. For this reason, an overview of the issue of grammatical gender and its semantic usage will be provided exploring the book named *Gender Across Languages* (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001).

Based on this work the widespread usage of masculine or masculine-tinged words for semantically feminine concepts is going to be presented.

Finally, the thesis will deal with gender-marking and the typology of morphological gender. The aim is to give a description of gender-expressive suffixes and at the same time to try to reveal their interplay which foreshadows the derivation of masculine and feminine. Hellinger and Motschenbacher (2015,11) deal with these derivatives in their book where they propose that “processes of derivation and compounding have an important function in the formation of gendered personal nouns, particularly in the use [...] of new feminine/female terms.” Statements like these prove the need for understanding the gender typology.

In the second part of this thesis, the problems associated with the stereotypical use of gender-incorrect language and its impact on the general public will be addressed.

In this part, this thesis will draw on Boroditsky (2003) who deals with shaping thoughts with the help of language. It is suggested that the way we speak differs based on the language that we speak, and speakers or listeners create some associations and presumptions based on the gender (Boroditsky 2003). This idea was confirmed in the past and has been still of interest to many linguists.

Furthermore, the research is also based on Bem and Bem (1973). They observe the influence of language in gender-biased job advertisements. To be specific, there are advertisements that use words marked by gender. In the introduction of their work they state that “studies [...] indicate that both sex-biased wording in job advertisements and the [...] help-wanted ads in sex-segregated newspaper columns discourage men and women from applying for ‘opposite-sex’ jobs” (Bem and Bem 1973, 6). Based on this research from 1973, I prepared my own questionnaire.

This thesis will contain results gained from this questionnaire with gender-neutral and gender-biased language. This questionnaire is split into two parts—one is gender-biased and the second is gender-neutral.

Chapter 3 of this thesis is dedicated to decision making processes in the questionnaire construction and structure. The purpose is to answer the question if and how the effect of gender-biased language on people changed after 50 years. The responses are used to assess the extent of the influence of language on respondents’ thinking. This questionnaire, as well as the research by Bem and Bem (1973) will focus on the labour market area and will mainly examine associations in the work environment and job positions.

I attempted to get responses not only from men and women, but also from as many age groups as possible so that I could compare the extent of the impact of gendered language at different life stages.

The expected results should show that by asking gender-biased questions in a questionnaire the questions could be manipulative so much that the answers in this questionnaire will also be gender-biased, according to the gender expressed in the question. Thus, I expect to confirm and even extend the previously mentioned research by Bem and Bem (1973) where expressed gender in advertisements played an important role in job decisions.

2 Gender

This bachelor's thesis revolves around the concept of gender in linguistics. Therefore, it should be specified what gender is and how it could be recognized.

When we talk about gender, we usually think of the biological gender that is associated with sex i.e. male or female. In this bachelor thesis I will be concentrated on linguistics and gender and therefore it is important to first shed light on the concept of grammatical gender.

Grammatical gender is a linguistic feature like person, case, and number. Grammatical gender can be divided into feminine, masculine, and neutral (Audring 2016). In this classification, natural gender does not play a role, and words that have a certain biological gender may have a different grammatical gender. An example of this phenomenon is the German language where grammatical gender is expressed by the article and other specifiers, for example adjectives must correspond to this gender (Yule 2010).

| | | | |
|-----|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| (1) | ein | großer | Hund |
| | a/one | big _{MASC} | dog _{MASC} |
| | 'one large dog' | | |

Yule (2010) emphasizes that biological gender does not determine grammatical gender. An illustration of this phenomenon is the word *Das Mädchen* that can be translated as a "girl". It has already been known that German has articles, and the article *das* signals neuter. This means that biologically female gender will not be reflected in the grammatical gender where neuter will be used.

There is a visible distinction in the example (1) where German language uses suffix *-er* in the adjective to show morphological agreement with the masculine noun and its determinant *der Hund*. English on the other hand does not show any signs of morphological agreement in the adjective.

Gender also affects the object's referents. This means that the gender of the noun determines the gender of other parts of speech, for example pronouns and adjectives, and in some languages also articles (Yorkston, De Mello 2005, 225). As an example, we can provide example (1) where we can clearly see how the gendered word influences other parts of speech which need to agree with the head noun.

To understand gender and its use, it is highly significant to understand the roots of it. According to an older journal article by Wheeler (1899, 529), personification was an instinct of primitive men. Consequently, they began to perceive natural objects as persons, and characterization by gender was then the most obvious aspect. Wheeler (1899, 529) claims that grammatical gender is the conventionalized result of this simple personification. It suggests that gender-classified nouns originally had nothing to do with distinguishing gender.

- (2) a. teacher (he/she)
- b. der Lehrer / die Lehrerin

In this example above, it could be noticed that for identifying grammatical gender, suffixes can be helpful. Languages that possess the ability to express semantic gender usually express gender by using feminine or masculine suffixes. In example (2), it is obvious that b. distinguishes two kinds of suffixes, and these are: *-er* and *-erin* and both suffixes are conventionalized and productive.

English belongs to the branch of west Germanic Indo-European languages, which suggests that this language was influenced by different languages that helped English to evolve. The consequence is that English contains many borrowings from other languages.

English used to have a system of grammatical gender (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001, 107), but over time it has lost this ability to express formal gender. Hellinger and Bussman (2001, 107) talk about this loss in their book where they mention that Old English had three grammatical gender classes like Czech or German and that is feminine, masculine, and neuter. At the end of the 14th century, it vanished and so did inflectional endings. It is important to note that the fact that a language does not have a grammatical gender does not necessarily mean that the language is gender neutral or that it leads to a neutral perception in society (Prewitt-Freilino, Caswell, and Laakso 2012, 270). This statement is further developed in chapter 2.1.

For now we can conclude that “English is no longer a (grammatical) gender language” (Hellinger and Bussman 2001, 107). According to Yorkston and De Mello (2005, 225) no language has a completely formal system for determining gender. Even gendered languages that express grammatical gender have a semantic basis for determining the gender category.

2.1 Gender in English

“[I]n English [...] we have no grammatical gender [...] and the apparent instances of gender agreement cited by Whorf are simply examples of sex reference [...] as one aspect of nominal and pronominal meaning” (Hall 1951, 172). Once it is understood that English has the absence of grammatical gender, it is comprehensible that the gendering of words must be based on something else. It is important to become familiar with a way that helps to express gender in English. I will refer to these ways of distinguishing gender as lexical and social, following the distinction in Hellinger and Motschenbacher (2015).

2.1.1 *Lexical gender*

Lexical gender is not expressed by syntax or by the environment in a sentence. It is lexically specified when it carries semantic meaning. So it does not refer to a grammatical category of gender but to the sex of referent.

In their article about gender marking Yorkston and Mello (2005, 225) defined lexical gender as semantic gender. They claim that the semantic system is what provides a gender to a certain word based on its associated meaning with its signifier.

Lexical gender can be fully expressed—that is, be marked by femininity or masculinity. Of course, a word does not need to express any gender or sex of the referent, in which case we distinguish between gender-specific and gender-neutral words.

Once lexical gender is expressed and the word is gender-specific, it requires the correct choice of pronouns that refer to this word (Hellinger and Motschenbacher 2001). But the choice of these anaphoric pronouns can also be influenced by factors such as “‘reference’ (e.g., to a known individual), tradition (choice of ‘false generics’ [...] or speaker attitude (as evident, e.g., from a positive evaluation of ‘gender-fair’ language)” (Hellinger and Bussman 2001, 7).

Lexical gender can also be visible morphologically. In English, most nouns that denote humans are not marked morphologically for lexical gender because English does not possess grammatical gender. There are some words marked by suffixation but these ones are exceptions. In comparison to languages without grammatical gender, languages with grammatical gender have many more ways to mark a gender (Hellinger and Motschenbacher 2015).

In English nouns are divided by semantic categories [+male]; [+female], which usually correspond with the sex of the animate referent hidden behind the concept of the given noun.

- (3) a. [+male]: ox, stallion, father
- b. [+female]: cow, mare, mother

In example (3)a. the listed nouns have the semantic property [+male]. in contrast to example (2)b. There aren't any grammatical 'hints' (such as determiners or suffixes) expressing gender. As it was mentioned, semantic systems usually assign gender to word based on the definition of the given word. (Yorkston and De Mello 2005, 225). Based on this property the speaker uses anaphoric pronouns "he" or "she" (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001, 107). Some nouns are indistinct in gender such as:

- (4) teacher, parent, worker

These nouns are semantically neutral and that is why they do not express particular semantic gender.

In this bachelor's thesis I will work with the associations based on the semantic properties of nouns and that is why it is important to understand the difference between linguistic gender and sex. While gender is a linguistic property it might not correspond with the sex of the referent even though it usually does in English (Yorkston and De Mello 2005, 225).

2.1.2 Social gender

Social gender is closely linked to social stereotypes. This could also be the main reason for naming this category specifically 'social gender'. "Personal nouns are specified for social gender if the behaviour of associated words can neither be explained by grammatical nor by lexical gender" (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001, 10). The reason why it is not possible to describe social gender with terms like grammatical nor lexical gender is because it is simply the matter of the current society.

Social gender differentiates individuals in a sector of social roles. Unlike biological sex, together with social sex one accepts certain social patterns. Although

the word *grandma* has female biological gender, social gender also shares gendered culture and thus what exactly it means to be a *grandma* (Yule 2010).

In English, we can observe signs of social gender in social status, especially presented by jobs that can be considered more highly ranked in social status. Such jobs will have a masculine anaphoric pronoun attached to them. Conversely, jobs that may be perceived as inferior or easier for the most part will have a feminine anaphoric pronoun (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001, 10-11). Let me provide an example from Hellinger and Bussmann (2001, 11):

- (5) a. lawyer, surgeon, scientist pronominalized by *he*
- b. secretary, nurse, schoolteacher pronominalized by *she*

These examples support the idea that social perception largely enters into language and can influence its rules.

As already mentioned, social gender expresses certain ideas and expectations related to acceptable social roles. These roles therefore present ideas of who might be an appropriate participant in the given social group (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001).

However, when a label escapes social imagery, derivations of these socially marked words appear in the language, such as the specification *female* or *male*:

- (6) a. female surgeon
 - b. male nurse
- (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001, 11).

It is therefore possible to assume that independent of the possession of grammatical or ungrammatical language, most personal nouns are subject to masculine bias. Thus, maleness is the norm and an unmarked variant (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001). I will focus on this phenomenon further in the chapter 2.3.

2.2 Gender-bias

To understand this bachelor's thesis, it is necessary to understand what the gender-biased language actually is. When speaking about gender-biased language, we mean a language tinted with some kind of gender not necessarily expressed in words.

The bias means that we as receivers in the communication prioritize one gender over the other. This phenomenon usually and mainly favours the use of masculine gender. The most used example for this would be speaking about an unknown person. The speaker would usually use the pronoun *he* even though they do not know the gender of the person we speak about.

A lot of entertaining stories are built on the basis of misunderstanding in the use of non-specified nouns. One of the examples can be found in the famous series “How I Met Your Mother” where there is one full episode called “Jenkins”. One of the main characters there talks about one of their colleagues who is a woman, but this is not specifically stated. The wife of this main character in a follow up says “I can't wait to meet him.” This misunderstanding is then creating the entire plot of the episode.

(7) colleague assumed to be *he*

The gender of the *colleague* is not known but it is presumed, and therefore, the use of masculine pronoun is prioritized. Hellinger and Bussmann (2001,107) suggest that in a non-specific context, we as speakers can use the pronoun *they* when speaking about semantically neutral nouns (like in example (4)).

In the article “Gender bias in linguistics textbooks: Has anything changed since Macaulay & Brice 1997?” (Cépeda et al. 2021) the authors examine, as the title suggests, gender bias in linguistic textbooks. The article shows that male occupations occur much more frequently as the subject of sentences than female ones. The article mentions that male-examples are used twice as much as female-examples. On the basis of this article, we can conclude and confirm the claim of Hellinger and Bussmann (2001) that maleness is a norm and it can be assumed that most common nouns referring to people have male bias.

This gender-bias can also be called psychological gender. Psychological gender is an important topic when speaking about how language shapes thoughts. As its name suggests, psychological gender has a lot to do with our minds.

According to Hellinger and Bussmann (2001,107) the variation of the anaphoric pronoun may vary based on “the affective attitudes of the speaker”. That is why it could be said that based on our associations (or differently said–based on our bias) we may presume that neutral noun such as *a dog* could be viewed as *it*, *he* or *she*.

One of the most famous works concerning the fact that language affects our perception and thinking is the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which elaborates on the claim that the particular language a person speaks affects how *he* or *she* thinks about reality. The basic argument of this hypothesis is that the chosen language influences behaviour (Lucy 2001).

In her work on shaping thoughts with language, Boroditsky (2003) proposed that in languages with grammatical gender, attributions are made on the basis of stereotypical perception. She gave the example of the sun. When the sun is grammatically masculine, it was described by stereotypically masculine properties such as “powerful” or “threatening” whereas speakers of a language where the sun is grammatically feminine again described stereotypical properties such as “warming” or “nourishing” (Boroditsky, Schmidt, and Phillips 2003). The sun itself has no lexical gender and cannot be assigned [+female] or [+male] sexes. So, this article supports the idea that gender is a big part of our perception and language can influence our thinking.

Gender bias should be therefore perceived also in terms of co-occurrence. In English, gender is expressed semantically and, as a result, brings together additional semantic associations by the hearer. (Yorkston, De Mello 2005, 229) Therefore, certain nouns can be said to have male-coded or female-coded associations. That means that words that are associated with males will be retrieved with other stereotypically masculine words or, conversely, in the case of feminine words, with stereotypically feminine words.

The evaluation of gender-bias is usually done by focusing on certain words that are more commonly and stereotypically associated with a particular gender (Hu et al. 2022). These are the so-called female-coded and male-coded words. “[A]mbitious is usually considered masculine and considerate is considered feminine, although both words can be used to describe people of any gender” (Hu et al. 2022). In general, these gender-coded words are known to appear in various job advertisements.

In research by O’Brien et al. (2022), 74 job advertisements for positions in the medical sector were analyzed. During this examination, they found out that only one advertisement did not contain any gender-coded language. And most of the ads (roughly 60 percent) were male-coded. These examples clearly show that gender bias is not only related to pronouns in sentences or speech but can also affect the choice of jobs in life.

The area of violence can be another example of gender-coding in life situations. A lot of violent acts are associated and also gender-coded by male means. In evaluating

the research from Lunneblad and Johansson (2021), it was shown that male acts of violence are treated more straight-forwardly while descriptions of female acts of violence often involve a degree of euphemism or softening of language. An example of this difference in school environment is that the male acts are described as “aggression” but female acts as “subtle incidents” (Lunneblad and Johansson 2021, 7).

Psycholinguists suggest that the way we read and comprehend text is more affected by the objects mentioned rather than the grammatical structure used. Yorkston and De Mello’s research (2005, 229-230) supports this, showing that certain objects are retrieved more easily if they belong to a particular category. They found that alcohol brands are better remembered if they match the gender category associated with the product. For instance, since wine is often associated with femininity and whiskey with masculinity, a brand with a name that matches the gender category tends to be recalled more readily. In simpler terms, naming a wine brand with a feminine name makes it easier to remember, and the same goes for whiskey brands with masculine names.

This categorization is also supported by previous research showing that people more effortlessly evaluate statements that fall into the same category. One of the examples that Yorkston and De Mello (2005) show are the sentences “Robin is a bird” and “Swan is a bird.” It is said that evaluating the first sentence will be easier for a human because of the same active category, while the perception of the swan is feminine and therefore it will be harder for a human to encode this sentence. (Yorkston and De Mello 2005, 229-230)

2.2.1 Issues with gender bias

Gender bias can be understood in two different contexts. As a linguistic bias or as a social bias. Linguistic gender bias is the topic of this thesis and it is the exploration of connections, although the syntactic function of gender-markers may be secondary to the semantic one (Yorkston, De Mello 2005, 229). Still this bias is explored in a linguistic setting.

Nowadays, social bias is also projected into gender studies, which is mainly influenced by feminist perspective on language. Many articles apply to this type of bias. One example of them is that by Nancy M. Henley (1993) with the title “Psychology of Language and Gender”, which is a part of the “Feminist pedagogy”. Although these articles are about gender-biased language, a lot of them are also gender-biased themselves.

So, the conclusions about bias in these articles can be seen as an academic problem. An example of the very bias in these sources is the article by Syed, Ali and Khan (2022) where the authors express their complete dissatisfaction with the view of language. Let me provide a full quotation: “This shows that instead of using female-representing job title, language users use neutral job titles. They do not like to use the job titles that specifically refer to females. This is quite unfair” (Syed, Ali, and Khan 2022, 82).

In this quotation, it is clear that their stance is not neutral, but instead it displays considerable female-bias of its own. As far as this perspective is concerned, it is important to stress and understand that language (or jobs) is not only male-biased but also female-biased in certain circumstances.

2.2.2 Generic *he*

Generic *he* expresses the anaphoric pronoun that refers to general names and nouns. It is used when talking about an unknown or unspecified (gender-neutral) noun such as in the example provided in (7) where the noun *colleague* was mentioned. *Colleague* as a word may convey [+male] or [+female] semantic property, but because of the common use of generic masculine the obvious anaphoric pronoun would be *he*. In other words, generic masculine may be described as universal linguistic device where the typical example *male* is used for the entire category of *human* (Müller et al. 2015, 1161). The previously mentioned “Jenkins” episode of “How I Met Your Mother” could be remembered once more. The main character in this episode even realizes how the use of a generic masculine has led his wife to misunderstanding.

- (8) a. “When I first mentioned you [the colleague], she mistakenly thought you’re a guy.”
b. “Funny, I was picturing a guy.”

His wife further confirms this misunderstanding in the example (8)b.

However, generic *he* may be problematic when using the plural form of these general nouns. The presumed and prioritized gender (or gender of the pronoun) would be grammatically masculine. The pronoun plays simply grammatical function, but it may

affect the speaker or hearer and therefore we may view it as flawed on the side of the human factor. Let me provide an example:

- (9) *Transport will be provided for the delegates and their wives.* (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001, 110)

The general noun *delegate* is mentioned and based on the use of generic masculine. It may be assumed that it may only denote men and so the speaker used *wives* that possess the [+female] feature, even though the gender of the *delegates* is unknown.

Studies have shown that using generically masculine pronouns, even when meant neutrally, affects how readers or listeners subconsciously perceive them. They tend to decode them as referring to males most of the time unless explicitly stated otherwise, such as with the neutral pronoun *they* (Usherwood 1992). This example shows that the generic *he* might sometimes be grammatically correct, but it may affect the participants in communication and result in miscommunication.

2.3 Gender Marking

Gender marking is a linguistic term for expressing gender through several means. As it is described in Müller et al. (2015, 1159), it is “a way of explicitly signaling that a linguistic expression refers to a male or female being (person or animal).” Simply said, gender-marking is something that expresses gender in a word or sentence. Other types of word formation such as affixation (otherwise known as “motio”); conversion and transposition also fall under derivational gender marking (Müller et al. 2015, 1160-1164).

Languages that have the property of expressing grammatical gender are provided with more means to form gender inflection. According to Müller et al. (2015), gender marking is more common in such languages compared to those without grammatical gender. For example, German has developed productive suffixes, compound words, and other mechanisms for this purpose. On the other hand, while English does have some gender-signalling suffixes here and there, those suffixes are not productive at all.

Although gender marking is called “gender” marking, it often marks only the inflection towards feminization. To denote masculine gender, it is sufficient to use a bare noun unless social gender indicates female gender (Müller et al. 2015, 1159).

This idea is also emphasized by Müller et al. (2015, 1161) in their book where they determine that gender marking tends to be used for feminization rather than masculinization. It is possible to assume that the base form remains unmarked due to lacking grammatical gender. However, this mirrors the male referential gender in languages without grammatical gender. As a result, the general term is often perceived as implicitly male, prompting the need for explicit specification for other genders. This male bias has obtained support from psycholinguistic research. Studies have found that the original meaning that expresses a person has shifted away and tends to lean towards maleness (Müller et al., 2015, 1161-1162).

(10) doctor **female** doctor
lawyer **female** lawyer
steward stewardess

“The female counterpart references the male term” (Prewitt-Freilino, Caswell, and Laakso 2012, 270)

Linguists agree on the nature of word formation. “This point of view is also due to the fact that nouns denoting females are often morphologically dependent on semantically parallel nouns denoting males, e. g., German *Lehrer-in* f ← *Lehrer* m ‘teacher’” (Müller et al. 2015, 1160). The markedness of the feminine gender encounters criticism from the linguistic community, particularly highlighted by feminist language critique. This criticism emphasizes the asymmetry in gender marking which exists in both gendered languages and languages without grammatical gender (Müller et al. 2015, 1161).

This phenomenon which expresses that the formation of gender through lexical elements is rather feminization, and exceptionally masculinization, falls under the topic of generic masculine.

In the Jakobsonian structuralist tradition, the generic masculine is ambiguous and has no lexical gender expressed. In this case, it depends therefore on the context and the use of a specifier. On the other hand, as already mentioned, psycholinguists claim that for the community of language users the generic masculine rather specifies a masculine gender (Müller et al. 2015, 1161).

Let's have a look at the different variants that can be used to express gender marking. In languages which do or do not possess grammatical gender two processes have

an essential function in the formation of nouns that express gender, and those are the processes of derivation and compounding (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001,11).

2.3.1 Composition

Composition is one of the ways to express gender through word formation. As the name itself implies it is a process of combining words or lexemes. This compounding should help to ensure that one of these words that creates the final product of word formation expresses and helps to convey information about the gender of that word. In English, which is a right-headed language, the gender-specific morpheme typically serves as the head of the compound word. In other words, it is the gender-specific morpheme that determines the compound's classification as a noun denoting a person, while the modifier does not necessarily denote a person and can belong to any word class (Müller et al. 2015, 1162).

- (11) chair-man
man as the gender specific noun
chair as the denoting noun
(Müller et al. 2015, 1162)

In English, composition is an important tool for gender marking because it allows us to put semantically marked words with either [+male] or [+female] meaning into the head position of words. The use of such a compound has a typical environment which it occurs in. “Typically, female gender-specification occurs with reference to a particular individual (Congresswoman Maxine Waters) or in contexts of contrastive emphasis (male and female delegates)” (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001,12). This also supports the previous claim that there is a need to mark *femaleness*.

Compounding is also used for non-traditional professions. It expresses the need to include gender in a profession. It is a pattern for the perception of a generic pronoun for socially classified roles (Prewitt-Freilino, Caswell, and Laakso 2012, 270). So, although it often denotes femaleness it sometimes expresses maleness, if the role is perceived differently.

- (12) a. female doctor
b. male secretary

The process of composition can also be used in languages that possess the feature of grammatical gender. Again, I will return to examples from the language that has grammatical gender, and that is German.

(13) Geschäfts-mann

bussinesman

mann as the gender specific noun (man)

Geschäfts as the denoting noun (business)

(Hellinger and Bussmann 2001,12)

This example shows that composition can be used in languages that use grammatical gender as well as in languages that do not possess grammatical gender.

2.3.2 Morphology

Another no less important gender marking strategy is gender derivation which is a part of morphology. It allows us to derive different nouns to express gender. Importantly, gender derivation is mostly only used in languages that have grammatical gender and sometimes it is treated as a part of inflection (Müller et al. 2015, 1163). Derivation is most often realized in the form of a suffix that expresses the feminine gender and is added to the noun (Müller et al. 2015, 1163).

Since the 11th century, several suffixes have emerged in French (which influenced English), leading to the creation of a limited number of suffixes to denote the feminine gender: *-ine*, *-ix*, *-ette*. Only the suffix *-ess* has gained some productivity, and many forms are still used today: *actress*, *stewardess*. The suffix came into English with French words. Words like *goddess* come from Middle English. Modern English derivations include words like *poetess*, *actress*, and *stewardess* (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001,109).

The type of derivation that consisted in adding an inflectional morpheme after the noun, which was able to immediately mark the gender was called “motio” (Müller et al. 2015, 1163-1164). In German, this gender inflection is called *Movierung*, and it means adding productive morphemes like in example (2). This process in German is well-established and extremely productive when it comes to “feminization” (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001,12). Other examples might be:

| | | | | |
|------|----------|-----------|--------|-------------------|
| (14) | a. Baron | Baronesse | -esse | (Baron; Baroness) |
| | b. Heros | Heroine | -ine | (Hero; Heroine) |
| | c. Abt | Äbtissin | -issin | (Abbot; Abbess) |

In today's modern linguistics, this term refers to a derivation from one noun denoting one gender to the other gender.

This derivation is very rare in languages that do not have grammatical gender and is nowadays unproductive (Müller et al. 2015, 1163-1164). English, which has some suffixes that express gender but they are no longer productive, can be a prime example of the language with this rare derivation:

| | | | |
|------|------------|-------------|------|
| (15) | a. steward | stewardess | -ess |
| | b. hero | heroine | -ine |
| | c. teacher | *teacheress | |
| | d. boss | *bossine | |

The fact that there is little boundary in the recognition of derivational and grammatical gender supports, the idea that grammatical gender might be an indicator of sex or might be used that way. This idea is supported by the fact that suffixes that change gender are lexically specifying a different gender. (Müller et al. 2015, 1163-1164).

There are few derivational models in English that form female-specific expressions, they are not productive and most often form semantically asymmetrical pairs in which the female represents a less significant category (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001,12). This asymmetry is called semantic derogation. Semantic derogation is the process of deriving a feminine variant from the original noun that had only denoted a male. The 'problem' arose because these nouns underwent a change in their meaning. A typical example is the word *spinster*. This word was derived with suffix *-ster* from the noun *spinner* which was denoting an occupation where workers produce thread or yarn. Later, *spinster* was denoting a girl or a woman with this occupation (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). In the 17th century it was the correct title for an unmarried woman. Today, it is a label for a woman who has passed the appropriate age for marriage (Hellinger and Bussmann 2001, 109). Hellinger (2001) argues that other suffixes that have survived and formerly referred to women (e.g. *-nette*) are now used as diminutives and thus confer connotations of smallness in women.

3 Research

My approach to the study is based mainly on the research by Bem and Bem from the year 1973 where it was shown that more women opted for job advertisements that showed no sign of generic masculine. It was concluded that they were influenced by the language used in the advertisements.

Although this research (Bem and Bem 1973) could be considered outdated, it can still serve for a great comparison of whether, despite changes in society, language still evokes the same things or whether our thinking about language shifts with the society development.

I decided to duplicate this study and create a similar questionnaire. Firstly, the original idea was to create two questionnaires. One that would be gender tinged with words like *salesman* and one that would be gender neutral with a gender-neutral option (in this case *salesperson*). In the end, I incorporated both parts into one questionnaire, which ensured more respondents.

Since every language works a little differently, this questionnaire is intended for native speakers of English. In chapter 2 it was mentioned that speakers of languages that have grammatical gender could answer differently to English speakers, based on their native language. Again, the German word *das Mädchen* serves as a demonstration of this phenomenon.

(16) das Mädchen, es geht
the_{NEUTR.} girl, it goes
the girl (she) goes

This example (16) can indicate how the answers in the questionnaire could be affected by someone with a native language that includes grammatical gender and who is at a lower level of English. They might be influenced by their own language pattern very easily. This is the reason why this questionnaire is intended primarily for native speakers of English and only their responses will be taken into account.

The associations in language are also very important. In another research, Yorkston and De Mello (2005) examined the influence of brands (and their semantic gender) on name choice. They chose a semantic language for this experiment. They found out that following the choice of a product, people also choose a name. When they put

whiskey in the experiment, they found out that people were more likely to assign a masculine name than a feminine name, even though whiskey itself has no gender. This finding can be taken as evidence that language does indeed influence thoughts. Even if it is a type of drink that does not actually have gender. Therefore, it is interesting to observe how a profession or job position can be perceived on the basis of these associations.

The aim of this research is to provide general associations with words that have an expressed or unexpressed gender. Also, it is expected that a gender-biased questionnaire will have responses influenced by the gender provided in the questions. In the answers the age of the respondents and their sex will be taken into account.

The predicted result is that even nowadays language does influence the respondents' thinking enough to choose the answers predicted and the research by Bem and Bem (1973) where respondents chose answers based on the words in the advertisements will be confirmed for present speakers as well.

3.1 Questionnaire development

Firstly, it seemed that words from various areas should be included in the questionnaire to reflect all the situations. Because of the language research and the possibility of a direct comparison, finally it was decided to restrict words to job positions and job environment as it was used in the original research by Bem and Bem (1973). Hence there was a need to find words from this field. To start with, the words, that were searched for, were jobs that have an implied lexical gender (e.g., *a stewardess*) and then jobs that are socially established and have a clear social gender (e.g., *a nurse*) (Yule 2010). These 'fixed' associations were clarified in the theoretical part of this thesis.

For the accuracy and currency of the terms, I turned to the job recruitment website of The Guardian magazine, exactly The Guardian Jobs (Accessed November 12, 2023) where I searched for suitable job advertisements. I selected about 20 advertisements but in the end, in the interest of keeping the length of the questionnaire reasonable, I kept only one—"Business Development Manager (Intelligence)" (The Guardian Jobs, accessed 2023). The next words chosen for job positions are frequently used and therefore I chose them. I assessed that people would know or remember them in co-occurrence with certain pronouns. The following listing shows neutral and biased job positions which are used in the questionnaire.

(17) leader, politician, scientist, singer, actor, teacher, nurse, pilot, labourer, designer, clerk, salesman, soldier, doctor, helper, manager, sales administrator, stewardess, police officer, secretary, salesperson, sales executive, labour force, flight-attendant

I feel the importance of stressing that gender biased words are not only biased towards the male gender and in many cases towards the female gender.¹

The evaluation of how to spread the questionnaire brought about another change during the preparation. Despite the fact that I decided to use social networks, it would not be possible to secure enough English native speakers as respondents for two questionnaires (biased and neutral). This was the main reason for rethinking the methodology for data collection. So, to avoid lack of data, only one questionnaire was created but with two parts.

Then it had to be secured that the respondents could not return back to the first part. After answering the first set of questions using gender-biased examples, the respondents moved to the questions with neutral job positions. Even if they figured out what is the principle or aim of the questions, their initial answers could not be modified.

It was very important for the value of this inquiry not to reveal the nature and aim of my work and therefore the questionnaire was titled "Research on preferences in the work environment." This ensured that respondents were not influenced in advance. The questions were at least in the first part asked in such a way that the respondents were not able to reveal the aim of the work.

3.2 Structure of the questionnaire

As mentioned earlier, the questionnaire is divided into two main parts. The first part is also divided into two more parts where general information about the respondents is collected in the first introductory part.

Information such as age, native language and gender are really important for this research. It makes possible to evaluate whether the working age category may have different social associations and therefore different perceptions of gender-biased words.

Gender of respondents is also an important factor when comparing the research with that one by Bem and Bem (1973) where women preferred to choose neutral

¹ Therefore, I want to reaffirm that I am not engaging in any favouritism in the sociological field, and I distance myself from this "issue". My aim is to present the data and draw conclusions without partaking in feminist agenda.

language. Therefore, the attitude towards social and lexical gender by different sexes will also be examined.

The questionnaire also includes questions for native speakers of other languages. For example, what the level of proficiency in English is. The reason for this is that then it is possible to compare different languages and their influence even if the questionnaire reached some unintended respondents. Nevertheless, this is a secondary issue, and I will not consider it in this thesis.

The first type of questions in the questionnaire involves asking for specific names (proper nouns) associated with various common noun job positions which are not gender specific. Respondents can freely provide any name that comes to their mind. This type of questions is included in the second part of the questionnaire as well. However, in the second part, the common noun is more specified, and respondents are asked to provide a male or a female name. This specification can influence perceptions regarding typically male or female common nouns. To demonstrate the types of questions, the examples are given below. (19a) is from the first part of the questionnaire and (19b) from the second one.

- (18) a. Who is the first politician you can think of?
b. Who is the first female or male politician you can think of?

In their research, Yorkston and De Mello (2005) argue that when respondents are instructed to list members of a group represented by the masculine gender, even in a neutral context (such as professions like *lawyer*), their minds tend to process and retrieve masculine examples better. Conversely, they struggle more to retrieve feminine exemplars within that domain. Therefore, if a name and a general term belong to the same gender category, respondents find it easier to recall them (Yorkston and De Mello 2005, 230). Concerning this type of questions, it is assumed that in the first part of the questionnaire the respondents would use male names and use them rather than female names, but in the second part when asked specifically about a male or female, it is expected that there would be more female names mentioned than in the first part.

Specific questions with open answers about some job positions are another type of questions used in this questionnaire. The respondents are told to respond with a full sentence using a personal pronoun.

(19) How should a teacher act?

He/she should be...

This type of questions is used only in the first part of the questionnaire. It specifically shows the perception of gender of common nouns. Moreover, the aim of this type of questions is twofold. Firstly, it is the pronoun the respondents choose and secondly, it is the description they provide in the answer to this open question. This means that when someone would answer “*he...*” when talking about a teacher and then would respond that “*he* should be strong”, we may perceive this characteristic as stereotypically male. Therefore, if someone would use *he* for a nurse which is stereotypically *she*, then the characteristic will also be a part of the research.

The inspiration for this type of questions and the exploration of the characteristic of a pronoun was the study by Boroditsky, Schmidt, and Phillips (2003). To confirm the claim of nurse being stereotypically *she*, example sentences from Collins dictionary can be used. These are either bound with *she/her* pronouns or remain neutral, but none of these sentences is used in connection with male gender (Collins dictionary, accessed 2024).

(20) I rang for the nurse and asked for some water. (neutral, no gender expressed)

She had spent 29 years as a nurse. (pronominalized by *she*, gender expressed)

(Collins dictionary, accessed 2024).

The last type of questions in the first part is the choice between two options. Either it is a gender neutral or gender-biased job positions/characteristics.

The respondents need to pick only one of them, based on their personal preference. It shows whether they perceive and prefer the gender-neutral term or the one that corresponds with its biological gender.

(21) help needed / helper needed

searching for a stewardess/ searching for a flight-attendant

(22) a secretary should rather be

a.) kind, cheerful, helpful

b.) erudite, reasonable, capable

Specifically in this type of questions (21) the sex of the respondents is important for the study because respondents of different sex can have different perceptions of job positions. When picking words for two characteristics, I tried to use stereotypically female or male features depending on how this job position is publicly perceived. Again, the idea of using these stereotypical characteristics was inspired by Boroditsky, Schmidt, and Phillips (2003).

It is assumed that more female respondents would rather opt for a gender-neutral advertisement while male participants would also use gender-biased advertisements. Examining the effect of one's gender on the selection of the advert in this way is inspired by the method used by Bem and Bem (1973) in their research.

3.3 Trial questionnaire

Before starting data collection, it was important to test the function of the newly created questionnaire. It had to be proved that the trial version would be firstly understandable for the respondents and secondly working. The questions should have answers with the desired features needed for conducting the research, for example use of the pronoun as in the example (19).

The first version of the questionnaire was sent to Czech respondents, all of whom were native speakers of Czech.

One of the questions was specifically aimed at them:

- (23) How would you translate principal into CZ? (a job position)
How would you translate a female and a male principal into CZ? (a job position)

None of the respondents answered in the first part of the questionnaire with 'ředitelka' (*principal* with suffix denoting female *-ka*), all of them used 'ředitel', which falls under the term of generic masculine. In the second question where their attention was drawn to the possibility of variations all but one person responded with both options, that means 'ředitel' and 'ředitelka' (*principal* and *principal* with suffix denoting female *-ka*)

The vast majority of Czech respondents answered the first type of question (18) with a male name, which (just like the answers to question (23)) may be a projection of the frequent generic masculine in Czech and its change of meaning, according to

psycholinguists (Müller et al. 2015, 1161) as mentioned in chapter 2.3. In the second part, considerably more female names were mentioned.

These test responses verified the set of the questions in the questionnaire and also showed what should be adjusted in a real questionnaire that would collect data from native speakers.

In the second type of question (19), it had to be specially mentioned in each question that the respondents were to answer with a pronoun. Therefore, this part was complemented. After editing, all respondents answered as instructed. Their answers were fully congruent with the expected ones using a pronoun.

In the last question type (21), many respondents answered as expected. Nevertheless, there were various discrepancies. Men were more likely to choose gender-stereotyped words such as *labourer* instead of *labour force*. This is a reassuring finding because, despite the unexpected result, there is an insight into the dependence on the age category and sex of the respondents.

Although this questionnaire was only a test and was intended to outline the process of a real questionnaire, it can be said that the results were satisfactory.

The conclusion at that time was that if the real questionnaire was to run in a similar way, we could assume that the theory that we can influence the respondents' thinking by the language used might be confirmed.

3.4 Evaluation of the research

After almost two months, the data collection for the research was closed. As expected, the questionnaire was mistakenly distributed also to other native speakers, such as speakers of Spanish, Bulgarian and Slovak. In the end, 36 responses were received from native speakers of English.

As far as the respondents' data is concerned, most of them, namely 27, fell into the age category of 21-30. Following this, three were from the age category of 15 to 20 and the same number of people from the age category of 46 to 60. Sadly, only one person from the category from 35 to 41 responded to this questionnaire. Two people from the oldest age category of 61 years and higher answered. This data can be summarized as a success in terms of collecting data from all given age categories available in the questionnaire.

When it comes to the gender of respondents, many more women than men answered this questionnaire. Thus, 22 women and 14 men participated in the data collection.

These data, of course, tell us nothing on their own, and so the focus will now turn to the answers of this questionnaire.

3.4.1 Choice of name

The first type of question consisted of 5 pairs of questions according to the pattern as in example (18). The nouns that were used were a *singer*, *writer*, *politician*, *scientist* and *actor*.

As predicted in non-specific context more male names were mentioned. When it was specified, in the second part, where it is searched for female or male names, the number of female names increased. The only exception was the question concerning male or female singer, where, on the contrary, the number of female names in the specified question decreased. However, let's have a look at these questions in a greater detail.

The first question in the questionnaire asked for the name of a *singer* and the second part of the questionnaire asked specifically for a male/female *singer*. As mentioned, this was the only question where the number of female names dropped. However, it was not a dramatic difference (the same cannot be said for other questions of this type). There were 25 women mentioned in the first part and 24 women mentioned in the second part.

The second noun in the questionnaire was *a writer*. Here the jump was quite dramatic. There were 10 female names in the first part and 19 in the second, which means that instead of the original roughly 28 percent, the number rose to almost 53 percent.

There was an equally dramatic difference in the third question and that was *a politician*. In this question, the number changed from 11 percent to just under 53 percent again. These differences already form a sketch of a sort of generic conception of certain job positions.

And last but not least is *a scientist*. Again the increase was not so remarkable and the number of female names in the second part increased by 4.

As far as the noun *actor* is concerned, here the original 12 female names and 24 male names exactly swapped their values and in the second part there were 24 female names and 12 male names.

To give an overview, here are two charts summarizing the total turnover of names in the first part and the second part of the questionnaire.

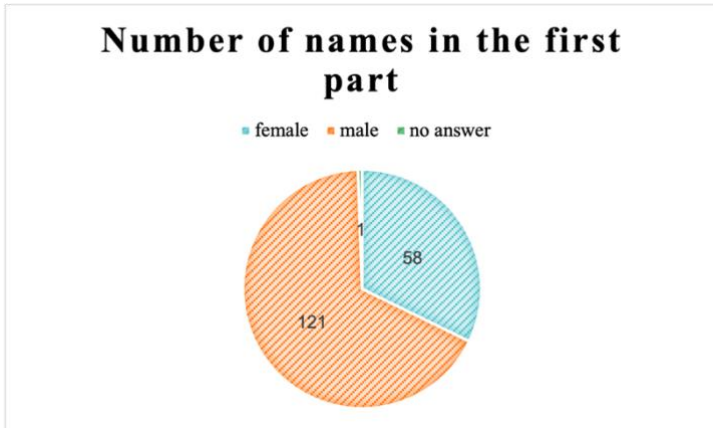


Figure 2—number of names in the first part



Figure 1—number of names in the second part

These charts are a clear indicator that generic associations do indeed influence the thinking of respondents.

3.4.2 Choice of pronoun

Another type of question is concerning the already mentioned pronoun choice in the answer as in the example (19). There were twelve questions in this section. The questions included job roles such as *a teacher, nurse, pilot, flight-attendant, labourer, politician, designer, lifeguard, clerk, salesman, soldier and doctor*. In every question of this type, in the largest proportion of responses there was a neutral pronoun used, whether it was the pronoun *they* or both *he/she* were mentioned.

These neutral pronouns were used across all age categories, so any suggestion that age might influence standardized usage with respect to *generic he* is negated.

The first to be discussed are the jobs whose pronoun matching was not so different in selection of *he* and *she*. The first such occupation was *a pilot*, where most responses were neutral, specifically almost 56 percent. Nearly 20 percent responded with the male pronoun and 14 percent with the female one. Unfortunately, for each question there were some respondents who answered with the full noun and therefore we cannot include them in the statistics. In this question, 11 percent of such responses were found.

Jobs such as *a designer, lifeguard and clerk* came out with an equal proportion of responses with female and male pronouns. Therefore, a closer look was taken at the characteristics given by the respondents. For the responses where a female pronoun was assigned to the job position of *a clerk*, most responses were that the clerk should be helpful or attentive and for responses where there was a male pronoun, it was stated that *he* should be good at math.

As for the noun *designer*, there were responses that stated that *a designer* is a *he*, and does all sorts of things, the answers varied. While in responses where the *designer* was referred to as a *she*, most respondents answered that *she* only makes clothes and outfits.

The biggest differences were in occupations such as *a nurse* and *a soldier*. There was only one answer with a male pronoun for *a nurse* and only one answer with a female pronoun for *a soldier*. In this case we can therefore speak of a kind of stereotypical bias.

The word *salesman* contains the morpheme *-man*, so almost all respondents assigned the masculine gender. It is not surprising, but the proportion of responses corresponds to the above-mentioned *soldier* where no gender is expressed. This can be taken as evidence that associations in the English language determine gender.

These data are visualized in a graph where all the professions asked are on the X-axis and the numbers of respondents are on the Y-axis.

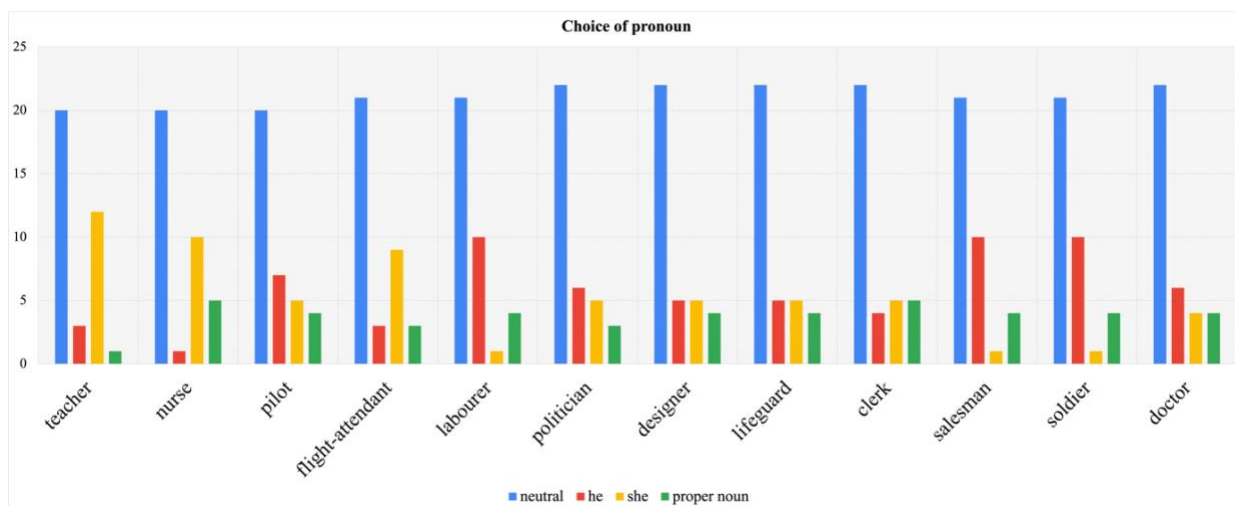


Figure 3—values of the used words

Figure 3 shows that most people prefer the neutral option, which according to Bem and Bem (1973) should be the best solution for job positions.

3.4.3 *Female vs. male leader*

The next type of questions asked about the characteristic of a *leader* and the second part asked the same question but specifically about a *female leader*.

Due to the qualitative nature of this question, it is not possible to clearly assess the success of the intention, but there is an interesting finding. In contrast the descriptions of the general noun *leader*, many respondents added for the specific one (female leader) that a *female leader* should be courageous or strong. Most of the respondents who

answered this way were women. We can only assume that for a leader in general there is no need to mention something like this, whereas for female leader it is a quality that should be expressed. So, *leader* is still considered to be associated with male characteristics.

3.4.4 Choice of preferred option

This type of questions is the same as the one in example (21). Respondents were asked eight questions with a choice of A or B. In most cases, one option was more gender-specific. For many job positions, it was assumed that the morpheme *-er* may be perceived as rather generically masculine. In the first six questions, respondents were given a choice of two jobs, one of which could be considered more generically female or male.

In the first set of questions, respondents chose between the *helper needed* or neutral *help needed* option.



Figure 4—preferences in the job environment (help/helper)

Only 14 percent of respondents chose the generic form and as expected, a large majority chose the neutral option.

Similarly, the respondents chose neutral responses when choosing between *a sales executive* and *sales administrator*. It seems as if respondents prefer to choose jobs, namely without the previously mentioned morpheme *-er*.



Figure 5—preferences in the job environment (executive/administrator)

Roughly 36 percent of all respondents chose the option that could be seen as rather masculine.

In next two questions I chose stereotypically generic female occupations such as *a nurse* and *stewardess*. The answers still confirm the assumption that neutral professions are more popular among voters.

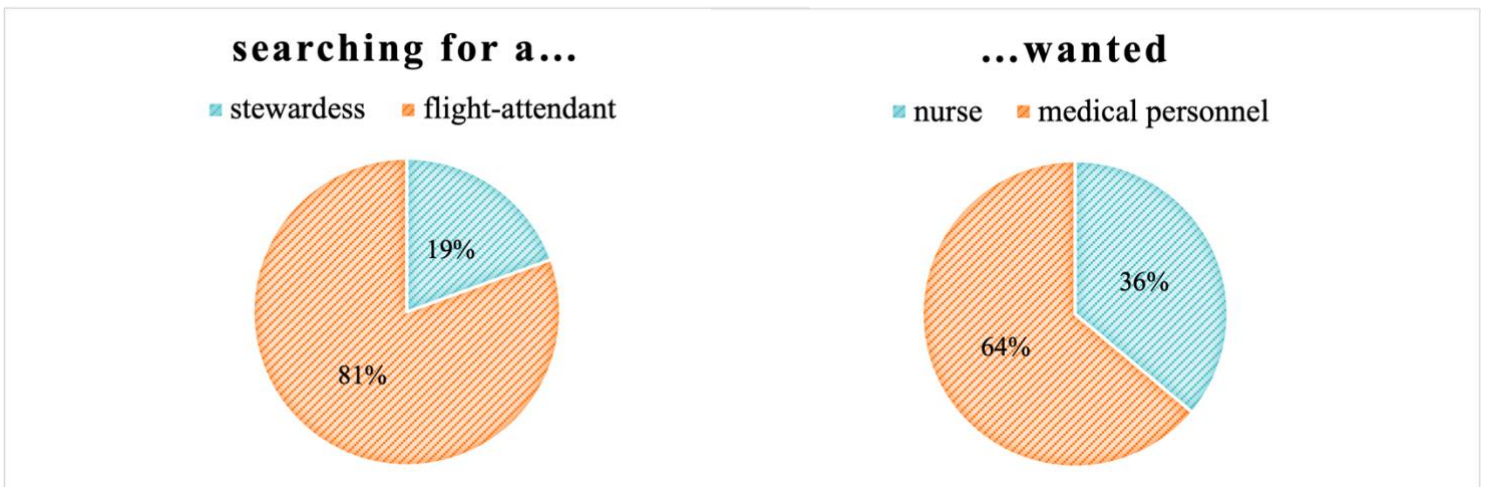


Figure 6—preferences in the job environment (stewardess/flight-attendant) Figure 7—preferences in the job environment (nurse/medical personnel)

It is clear from the charts that respondents still prefer the neutral option. Professions that show gender or are perceived as gender-biased are not as much selected. Among other things, these two charts are clear evidence that it is not possible to claim that jobs have only a male bias.

However, in two next questions respondents had to choose either *a salesperson* or *a manager*, and *labour force* or *a labourer*. In this case, the conventionally used *manager* and *labourer* position clearly won the vote over the more neutral *salesperson/labour force* positions.

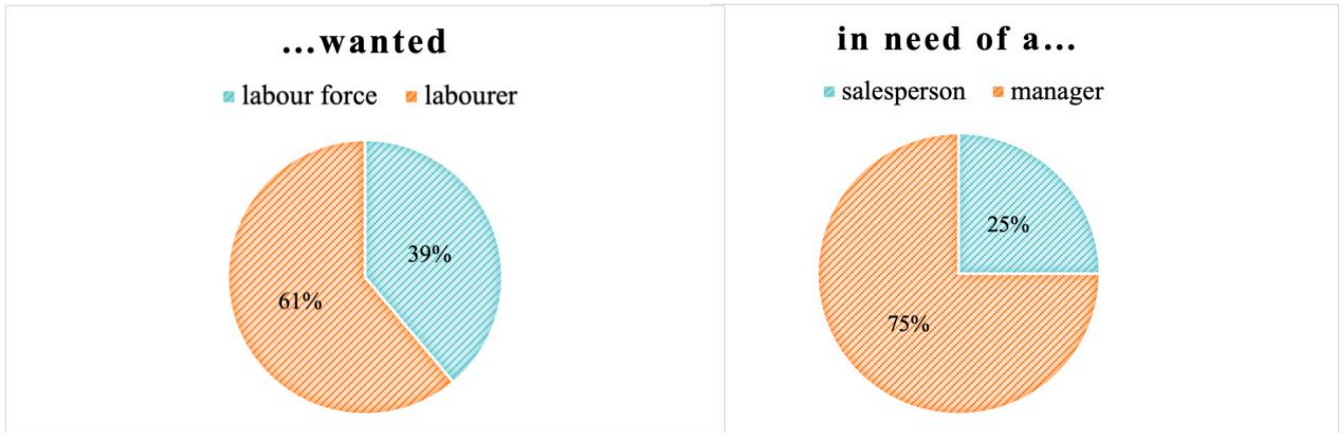


Figure 8—preferences in the job environment (labour force/labourer)

Figure 9—preferences in the job environment (salesperson/manager)

Three quarters of all respondents chose *in need of a manager* and roughly 60 percent chose *labourer wanted* as their preferred advertisement. These two questions are the only ones in this set of questions that do not support the idea of research from Bem and Bem (1973), which claims that people prefer neutrally presented jobs.

A suggestion could be made for a future research which could be supplemented and conducted with a sort of an interview. Then the reasons why respondents answered in this way could be also explored.

The next two questions asked about the characteristics of two jobs. One stereotypically female and the other stereotypically male. The job titles chosen for these questions were *a secretary* and *police officer*.

A secretary should be... *

kind, cheerful, helpful

erudite, reasonable, capable

A police officer is usually perceived as... *

respectful, courageous, hefty, strong

empathic, helpful, patient, protective

Figure 10—showing questions from the research questionnaire

As it is shown in the picture, respondents had a choice of two options that at first glance say nothing, but as mentioned in chapter 2.2 these words in the options can be perceived as stereotypically masculine (male coded) or stereotypically feminine (female coded). Thus, it was assumed that respondents would select a female-coded response for a stereotypically female job and a male-coded response for a stereotypically male job.

secretary characteristics

■ male coded ■ female coded

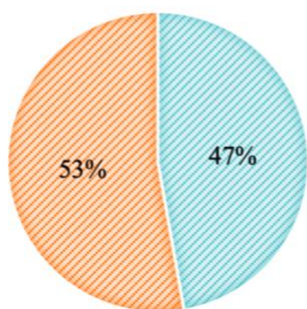


Figure 11—preferences in the job environment (secretary)

police officer characteristics

■ male coded ■ female coded

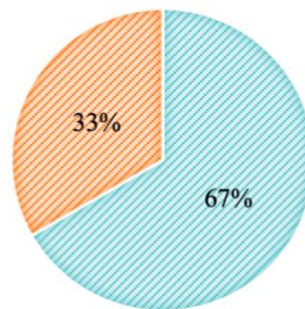


Figure 12—preferences in the job environment (police officer)

As it is evident, this assumption has indeed come true. Although it cannot speak of a large percentage difference in these answers for the secretary job position. However, for *a police officer*, two-thirds of respondents chose the male-coded option.

3.5 Summary of the questionnaire

Research by Bem and Bem (1973) claims that women are most inclined to gender neutral advertisements, men also prefer gender neutral advertisements, but not to the same extent as women. To compare this the overall evaluation of 3.4.4 part serves best.

When comparing the women's responses, they mostly chose the unbiased options for all questions from the biased and unbiased options. A big exception was the comparison of job titles *a manager/a salesperson*, where 18 from 22 women responding chose *a manager*. As I mentioned, this might be caused by the customized use of the noun *manager*.

When it comes to the age of the respondents, there is no difference in answering the questions among the categories. The only notable exception is the question about the qualities of a male/female leader. The respondents from age categories 46-60 and 60 and higher did not specify that a female leader should be strong, as highlighted in the 3.4.3 section. We can speculate that this is due to a generational difference and certain social changes towards feminism, that people of younger ages have a need to stress that women are or should be strong.

Two parts of the questionnaire were designed to enable people to show that they generally think in terms of stereotypical masculine. As mentioned by Yorkston and De Mello (2005) in chapter 2.2.2 respondents are more likely to retrieve masculine names because they are members of the active category, which is masculine. The moment the gender of the occupation is given i.e. female/male, they can more easily retrieve the use of feminine names. The prevalence of male names in the first part clearly confirmed the above-mentioned statements.

Finally, it can be said that research by Bem and Bem (1973) was truly timeless and even thirty years after its publication, the results are almost correlated. This questionnaire confirmed that people tend to prefer neutral job positions to biased ones and language actually influences our thinking.

4 Conclusion

At the beginning, this thesis summarized what grammatical gender and its linguistic function are. Moreover, it was stated how grammatical gender is different to gender in English. Also, the roots of grammatical gender were outlined and how they vanished from today's English language.

This brings us to chapter 2.1 which shows the specific type of gender in English. English does not have grammatical gender and therefore this chapter dealt with the division of gender in English according to the taxonomy given by Hellinger and Motschenbacher (2015).

In the following subsections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2, the expressions of gender in English, such as lexical and social gender, are described in more detail. This division brought attention to the so-called gender-bias that can occur in English due to the ambiguity of lexical gender. Examples from non-linguistic fields such as TV series were also given.

Chapter 2.2 is based on linguistic articles that demonstrate gender-biased language such as the article by Cépeda et al. (2021). It was assumed that most common nouns referring to people have male bias. Furthermore, it dealt with some problems of observing gender-bias. The reason is that a lot of articles that should have reported biased-language information neutrally were pretty much biased towards to the feminist point of view.

That means that these articles reflected gender studies where gender equality was discussed. So, they were biased from a feminist perspective. This fact complicated the research quite a bit because care had to be taken to make sure that the sources of this thesis were not biased in any way.

In addition the use of generic *he* (chapter no. 2.2.2) and the generic masculine were further observed. In this section, the concept was explained, and examples of this use continued to be given.

The last point of the theoretical part was about gender marking (chapter no. 2.32.3) using two main means, which are composition (chapter no.2.3.12.3.1) and morphology (chapter no. 2.3.22.3.2) with its important gender marking strategy of gender derivation. This chapter was also to explain the need for gendering certain words. This confirmed the unmarkedness of the default forms.

At this point we were brought to the research, which was very important for this bachelor thesis because, as mentioned in the introduction, it was to confirm our hypothesis: It is possible to manipulate people through human language associations

and also to confirm that wording in advertisements can exert influence over people concerning their choice (Bem and Bem 1973).

This section first described the overall purpose of this research. Let me repeat the aim of the questionnaire—the aim was to provide general associations with words that have an expressed or unexpressed gender and also to demonstrate that a gender biased questionnaire will have responses influenced by the implicated gender in the questions.

The development of the questionnaire and the problems encountered along the way were further described. The main change was to issue one questionnaire instead of two, to ensure a sufficient number of responses.

Finally, the process of questionnaire construction and subsequent testing of its functionality was described, and afterwards detailed analysis of native English speakers' responses was conducted.

In the end there is a final evaluation of the research which confirmed the given aim. It seems that society has indeed shifted with the times and words that may seem typically masculine or typically feminine have no definite associations. However, it can be confirmed that people prefer neutral positions to male or female-coded ones. In fact, the largest part of the questionnaire where pronouns were chosen is related to this confirmation. This part showed that instead of generic *he* people of different ages nowadays tend to neutral pronouns rather than to specified genders.

As it was stated in the introduction, the expected result should show that by asking gender-biased questions in a questionnaire the answers could have been manipulated so much that the answers in this questionnaire would also be gender-biased, according to the gender expressed in the question.

This assumption was successfully confirmed, and the clear evidence comes from the questions asking for a name associated with the occupation in general and then specifically for the male or female name. Even though there were some deviations from the expected result, it is safe to say that the aim was fulfilled. The hypothesis by Bem and Bem (1973) was confirmed, and the answers of the respondents can really be influenced by the language used which shapes thoughts and creates associations.

5 Bibliography

- Audring, Jenny. 2016. "Gender". In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, by Jenny Audring. Oxford University Press.
- Bays, Carter and Thomas, Craig, creators. *How I Met Your Mother*. 2005-2014. New York: CBS.
- Bem, Sandra L, and Daryl J. Bem. 1973. "Does Sex-biased Job Advertising 'Aid and Abet' Sex Discrimination? ¹". *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 3 (1): 6–18.
- Beukeboom, Camiel J., and Christian Burgers. 2017. "Linguistic Bias". In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*, by Camiel J. Beukeboom and Christian Burgers. Oxford University Press.
- Boroditsky, Lera, Lauren A. Schmidt, and Webb Phillips. 2003. "Sex, Syntax, and Semantics". In *Language in Mind*, edited by Dedre Gentner and Susan Goldin-Meadow, 61–80. The MIT Press.
- "Business Development Manager (Intelligence)." The Guardian Jobs. Accessed November 12, 2023. <https://jobs.theguardian.com/job/8679653/-business-development-manager-intelligence-/>
- Cépeda, Paola, Hadas Kotek, Katharina Pabst, and Kristen Syrett. 2021. "Gender Bias in Linguistics Textbooks: Has Anything Changed since Macaulay & Brice 1997?". *Language* 97 (4): 678–702.
- Collins Dictionaries. "Examples of 'NURSE' in a Sentence." Collins English Sentences. Accessed January 16, 2024. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/sentences/english/nurse>
- Hall, Robert A. 1951. "Sex Reference and Grammatical Gender in English". *American Speech* 26 (3): 170.
- Hellinger, Marlis, and Hadumod Bussmann, eds. 2001. *Gender across Languages: The Linguistic Representation of Women and Men*. Impact, Studies in Language and Society, v. 9-<11, 36 >. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: J. Benjamins.
- Hellinger, Marlis, and Heiko Motschenbacher. 2015. *Gender across Languages*. 4. Impact 36. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Henley, Nancy M. 1993. "Psychology of Language and Gender." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 21, no. 3/4: 227–239. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40022030>.
- Hu, Shenggang, Jabir Alshehabi Al-Ani, Karen D. Hughes, Nicole Denier, Alla Konnikov, Lei Ding, Jinhan Xie, et al. 2022. "Balancing Gender Bias in Job

Advertisements With Text-Level Bias Mitigation”. *Frontiers in Big Data* 5 (February): 805713.

Lucy, John A. 2001. “Sapir–Whorf Hypothesis”. In *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, 13486–90. Elsevier.

Lunneblad, Johannes, and Thomas Johansson. 2021. “Violence and Gender Thresholds: A Study of the Gender Coding of Violent Behaviour in Schools”. *Gender and Education* 33 (1): 1–16.

Malins, Greg, writer. *How I Met Your Mother*. Season 5, episode 13, “Jenkins.” Directed by Neill Patrick Harris. Aired January 18, 2010. New York: CBS, 2010.

Müller, Peter O., Ingeborg Ohnheiser, Susan Olsen, and Franz Rainer, eds. 2015. “Gender Marking.” In *Handbook of Word-Formation*, 1159–1169. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

O’Brien, Kelly, Veronica Petra, Divya Lal, Kim Kwai, Marian McDonald, Judy Wallace, Chloe Jeanmonod, and Rebecca Jeanmonod. 2022. “Gender Coding in Job Advertisements for Academic, Non-Academic, and Leadership Positions in Emergency Medicine”. *The American Journal of Emergency Medicine* 55 (May): 6–10.

Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. “spinster (n.),” September 2023. Accessed April 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/2721965059>.

Prewitt-Freilino, Jennifer L., Timothy A. Caswell, and Emmi K. Laakso. 2012. “The Gendering of Language: A Comparison of Gender Equality in Countries with Gendered, Natural Gender, and Genderless Languages”. *Sex Roles* 66 (3–4): 268–81.

“Recruitment Jobs.” *The Guardian Jobs*. Accessed October–December 2023. <https://jobs.theguardian.com/jobs/recruitment/>

Syed, Shujaat Ali & Amin, Tariq & Khan, Qaisar. (2022). “Investigating Gender Discrimination in Job Titles: A Corpus-Based Critical Analysis”. *Corporum*. 3. 73-91.

Usherwood, Tim. 1992. “Sex Biased Language.” *BMJ: British Medical Journal* 304, no. 6843: 1692–1692. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29716114>.

Wheeler, Benjamin I. 1899. “The Origin of Grammatical Gender.” *The Journal of Germanic Philology*, 2(4): 528–545.

Yorkston, Eric, Gustavo E. De Mello, and [Dawn Iacobucci served as editor and Laura Peracchio served as associate editor for this article.]. 2005. “Linguistic Gender Marking and Categorization”. *Journal of Consumer Research* 32 (2): 224–34.

Yule, George. 2010. *The Study of Language*. 4th ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

6 Appendices

6.1 Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of the bachelor thesis, and it explores attitudes towards work positions and associations in the work environment. It also reveals individuals' preference.

In each section, please follow the instructions on how to answer the question.

The questionnaire will take you approximately 5-10 minutes to fill out. Thank you very much and I wish you a pleasant time completing it.

This questionnaire is intended primarily for native speakers of English

1.) What is your age?

- a) 15-20
- b) 21-30
- c) 31-45
- d) 46-60
- e) 61 and higher

2.) What is your native language?

- a) Czech
- b) English
- c) Other...

3.) What is your gender?

- a.) male
- b.) female
- c.) other

First subsection:

4.) What qualities do you think are important for a leader to possess?

5.) Who is the first politician you can think of?

6.) Who is the first scientist you can think of?

7.) Who is the first writer you can think of?

8.) Who is the first actor you can think of?

The following passage contains questions for you to answer according to the following pattern based on your opinion.

Please answer in a full sentence using a pronoun

- 9.) How should a teacher act
- 10.) What does a nurse wear?
- 11.) What does a pilot fly?
- 12.) What does a flight-attendant do?
- 13.) What does a labourer wear?
- 14.) What qualities should a politician have?
- 15.) What does a designer do?
- 16.) Where does a lifeguard work?
- 17.) What qualities does a clerk usually have?
- 18.) What qualities does a salesman usually have?
- 19.) What qualities should a soldier have?
- 20.) What does a doctor do?

In the following passage, choose a formulation of a job advertisement option based on your personal preference.

- 21.) What would you rather pick?
 - a. helper needed
 - b. help needed
- 22.) What would you rather pick?
 - a. we search for sales executive
 - b. we search for sales administrator
- 23.) What would you rather pick?
 - a. searching for stewardess
 - b. searching for flight-attendant
- 24.) What would you rather pick?
 - a. nurse wanted
 - b. medical personnel wanted
- 25.) What would you rather pick?

a. labour force wanted

b. labourer wanted

26.) What would you rather pick?

a. in need of a salesperson

b. in need of a manager

27.) A secretary should be...

a.) kind, cheerful, helpful

b.) erudite, reasonable, capable

28.) A police officer is usually perceived as...

a.) empathic, helpful, patient, protective

b.) respectful, courageous, hefty, strong

Second subsection:

29.) What qualities do you think are important for a female leader to possess?

30.) Who is the first female or male politician you can think of? *Write only one name*

31.) Who is the first female or male singer you can think of? *Write only one name*

32.) Who is the first female or male scientist you can think of? *Write only one name*

33.) Who is the first female or male writer you can think of? *Write only one name*

34.) Who is the first actor or actress you can think of? *Write only one name*

