

I'VE NEVER READ HER: Language & Gender - Jan 2014

EXTRACT ONE

"One Man in Two is a Woman": Linguistic Approaches to Gender in Literary Texts

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Introduction

The question of gender in literary texts has been approached by linguists in two different ways. The first involves a comparison of the fiction created by male and female authors and is typified by the search for "the female sentence" or a specifically female style of writing. The second involves a study of the uses to which the linguistic gender system of different languages has been put in literary works. In the former, gender is seen as a cultural property of the author, in the latter, a morphological property of the text. A third perspective on language and gender in literary texts is provided by translators and translation theorists. Translation theorists typically view a text as expressive of a particular time and place as well as being expressed in a particular language. The differences between source and target language may be accompanied by differences in culture and period, thus translators often work with both morphological gender and cultural gender. In this chapter, I will discuss men's and women's style in literature as well as literary uses of linguistic gender. I will also survey material on translation theory and what it offers to students of gender.

Male and Female Literary Styles

The most prominent modern thinker to discuss the differences between male and female literary styles is Virginia Woolf, writing at the beginning of the twentieth century. In a review of Dorothy Richardson's novel *Revolving Lights* (1923), she describes the female sentence as "of a more elastic fibre than the

old, capable of stretching to the extreme, of suspending the frailest particles, of enveloping the vaguest shapes" (Woolf 1990b: 72). Assuming the traditional literary sentence to be masculine, she argues that it simply does not fit women, who need something less pompous and more elastic which they can bend in different ways to suit their purpose. However, descriptions such as "more elastic," "too loose, too heavy, too pompous" are annoyingly vague and impossible to quantify.

Woolf comes closest to giving a more specific evaluation of the female sentence in a review of Dorothy Richardson's *The Tunnel* (1919). Here she quotes a passage of interior monologue as triumphantly escaping "the him and her" and embedding the reader in the consciousness of the character: "It is like dropping everything and walking backward to something you know is there. However far you go out, you come back. I am back now" (Woolf 1990b: 71). The exact relationship between the pronouns "you" and "I" in this passage is unclear. They seem to refer to the same person, the self, but also to include the reader. Because we do not know who "I" is, we have no referent for the temporal or spatial indicators "now" or "come back" either. This slipperiness of the referent seems to be what Woolf means by "elasticity."

It is significant that Woolf chose the writings of Dorothy Richardson to illustrate the female sentence, and specifically, a passage of interior monologue. Interior monologue has the property of breaking down the boundaries between character and narrator, so that the angle of focalization (who sees the action) coincides with the narration of that action (who tells about the action). More traditional methods of storytelling present a narrator, who recounts, but is separate from the character whose point of view is

related. It was one of the projects of modernism (and both Richardson and Woolf are considered modernist) to render the depths of modern experience in an appropriate form, which meant breaking away from what they considered a smug, self-satisfied Edwardian frame of social realism and an omniscient narrator. Although we cannot speak of a "modernist sentence" as such, nevertheless, the other authors usually included in the modernist canon such as T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound, as well as Woolf and Richardson, have all experimented with sentence fragments, elimination of predicates, meandering syntax with many clauses in apposition. These are the very elements which tend also to typify interior monologue.

We would do best, therefore, to take Woolf's description of the female sentence as a literary rather than a linguistic commentary. As the stuffy Edwardian era gave way to greater freedom for women, especially in the inter-war period, so women novelists felt freer to express themselves in new ways. The literary movement of modernism coincided with (and was also itself a product of) the new social developments consequent upon the horror and paradoxical liberty of the post-First World War period. Woolf's unremitting self-consciousness is shared by her contemporaries. Indeed her precursor, Henry James, writes of his own awareness of a fragmented consciousness in a discussion of his novel *Portrait of a Lady* (quoted in Millett 1951: v): "'Place the centre of the subject in the woman's own consciousness,' I said to myself, 'and you get as interesting and as beautiful a difficulty as you could wish!'" The challenge of this "beautiful difficulty" may be taken up by men or women authors.

Although Woolf's discussion of feminine style is impressionistic and essentialist, modern theorists have looked at more subtle differences in men's and women's writing. Sara Mills examines features such as descriptions of characters and self-descriptions in personal ads. In an analysis of a romance novel by best-selling author Barbara Taylor Bradford, Mills demonstrates that the actions performed by the female character are of a different quality from those performed by the male (1995: 147-9). Parts of the woman's body move without her volition and she is represented as the passive recipient of the male's actions. The male acts while the female feels.

That male and female characters in fiction receive very different treatment is not particularly controversial, but the claim that women's writing differs in some essential way from that of men is more tendentious. Quoting Woolf's categorization of the female sentence as loose and accretive. Mills proceeds to look at some concrete examples to see what proof there may be of these differences. She concludes that the concept of a female-authored sentence stems from overgeneralization on the part of the literary critic rather than from any inherent quality in the writing, but she demonstrates that a female (or male) affiliation may be a motivating factor in certain texts (1995: 47-8). Comparing descriptions of a landscape taken from two well-known novels, Anita Brookner's *Hotel du Lac* and Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano*, she shows that the first is conventionally feminine while the second is conventionally masculine (1995: 58-60). The features which mark the first as feminine include: abundant use of epistemic modality ("it was supposed," "it could be seen"); grammatically complex, meandering sentences with many clauses in apposition; and an impressionistic, subjective vocabulary such as "stiffish," "skimming," and "area of grey." In contrast, the second landscape is masculine in style, featuring the absence of an obvious authorial voice; an impersonal, objective tone; the description of amenities rather than people: "Overlooking one of these valleys, which is dominated by two volcanoes, lies, six thousand feet above sea-level, the town of Quauhnhuac" (1995: 60).

Female affiliation, or a distinctly feminist style, is a third possibility, in which the tone may be ironic or detached; female characters are presented as assertive and self-confident, and the reader is addressed directly and drawn into the text to share the narrator's point of view. Mills quotes a passage from Ellen Galford's *Moll Cutpurse* to illustrate her point: "She had a voice like a bellowing ox and a laugh like a love-sick lion" (1995: 60-1). This heroine is clearly very different from the passive female, mere object of the male's attention. The oxymoronic (apparently contradictory) quality of the comparison between Moll and a "love-sick lion" demonstrates the playful, almost parodic nature of the description. A lion is usually

a symbol of masculine strength, but this lion is in love and therefore emotional. Moll thus combines a traditionally masculine quality (strength) with a traditionally feminine quality (deep feeling).

For contemporary critics, it is possible to identify certain features such as complex sentences with many subordinate clauses and a vocabulary that is vague and impressionistic as typifying the "female sentence," but there is no essential link between the fact of being a woman and this type of writing. It is a style which may be deliberately chosen by either sex. Indeed, if one considers Marcel Proust's sometimes page-length sentences, and his deliberations about the exact quality of colors and smells, one is obliged to classify his style as distinctly feminine:

Jamais je ne m'etais avise qu'elle pouvait avoir une figure rouge, une cravate mauve comme Mme Sazerat, et l'ovale de ses joues me fit tellement souvenir de personnes que j'avais vues a la maison que le soupçon m'effleura, pour se dissiper aussitot, que cette dame, en son principe generateur, en toutes ses molecules n'etait peut-etre pas substantiellement la duchesse de Guermantes, mais que son corps, ignorant du nom qu'on lui appliquait, appartenait a un certain type feminin qui comprenait aussi des femmes de medecins et de commerçants.

(I had never imagined that she could have a red face, a mauve scarf like Madame Sazerat, and her oval cheeks reminded me so much of people I had seen at home that I had the fleeting suspicion, a suspicion which evaporated immediately afterwards, that this lady, in her generative principle, in each one of her molecules was perhaps not in substance the Duchess of Guermantes but that her body, ignorant of the name she had been given, belonged to a certain feminine type which also included the wives of doctors and tradespeople.) (Proust 1954: 209-10)

Proust's sentence in the above extract is indisputably long, complex and meandering, convoluted and concerned with female apparel and appearance - all traits which have been classified "feminine."

It is equally possible for a woman author to deliberately flout this convention and write in a recognizably feminist style, or indeed a traditionally masculine one. The writer James Tiptree Junior was declared by the science fiction author Robert Silverberg to be a man in the introduction to one of her short story collections:

For me there is something ineluctably masculine about Tiptree's writing. I don't think that a woman could have written the short stories of Hemingway, just as I don't think a man could have written the novels of Jane Austen, and in this way I think that Tiptree is male. (Silverberg 1975: xii)

Tiptree was invited to participate in a symposium organized by the science fiction magazine *Khatru*, the ensuing discussion being published in issues 3 and 4, but "his" style was felt to be so rebarbative that "he" was asked to withdraw (Lefanu 1988: 105-6). At this point "he" revealed that "he" was none other than Alice Sheldon, a renowned, and definitely female, author. The ensuing discussion of each participant's perceptions and misconceptions turned out to be the most fruitful part of the forum.

Novels may be identified as the work of a woman purely because of their content. The British feminist publishing company Virago was about to publish a novel by a young Indian woman, when they learned that the book had in fact been written by a middle-aged English vicar. Upon hearing this, Virago stopped publication. As a company that was set up specifically to publish books by women, they were angry at being hoodwinked into accepting a manuscript written by a man. Critics of Virago's actions argued that it was the submissive, downtrodden status of the heroine which had at first convinced the editors that the novel was written by an Indian woman. This, they said, was a form of racism as the editors assumed that a victim status was typical of Asian women. Dinty Moore, a male author, was assumed to be female when he published a short story in an anthology of reminiscences of a Catholic girls' school. This also caused hot debate, though the anthology was not withdrawn (Rubin 1975).

In a study on the micro-level of text-making (looking at the immediate linguistic environment rather than the whole novel), Susan Ehrlich (1990) has analyzed the use of reported speech and thought in canonical texts, particularly the novels of Virginia Woolf. She compares Woolf's style with that of Henry James and Ernest Hemingway with regard to the types of cohesive devices each uses (1990: 101-3). James depends heavily on what is known as grammatical cohesion, or anaphora. This means he introduces a character, and as soon as the reader has had the chance to form a mental image of this character, he replaces the character's name with a pronoun (this is, of course, a very traditional strategy). Hemingway relies instead on lexical cohesion, or a simple repetition of the character's name. Woolf, in contrast, uses a much greater variety of cohesive devices including grammatical and lexical cohesion as well as semantic connectors, temporal linking, and progressive aspect. A semantic connector tells the reader explicitly to connect two pieces of information in a particular way: *at the same time; in this way; in addition*. Temporal linking gives two clauses the same time reference and is a feature that often involves hypothetical clauses which have no time reference of their own: *Edith would be sure to know; I would have arrived before the others*. Progressive aspect also links two propositions where one clause provides an anchor for the other.

The advantage of research like Ehrlich's is that it provides a concrete set of criteria by which to distinguish different literary styles. We cannot assume that all women will write like Woolf and all men like James or Hemingway, but if we know that a researcher has based his or her claims entirely on a study of canonical texts by male authors, we can predict that certain types of data will be missing.

Studies of gender in literary texts have not been confined to stylistic analysis but also include investigations into the representation of men and women and what these literary models can tell us about conversational expectations in the real world. In an insightful analysis of the preferred conversational strategies of a husband and wife at loggerheads with each other, Robin Lakoff and Deborah

Tannen (1994) propose a new methodology for interpreting communication between the sexes. They analyze the contrasting conversational strategies of Johan and Marianne in Ingmar Bergman's film. *Scenes from a Marriage*.

In this study, they introduce the concepts of pragmatic identity, pragmatic synonymy, and pragmatic homonymy, which, as they demonstrate, replicate the semantic relations of synonymy (having the same meaning but a different form), homonymy (having the same form but a different meaning), and identity (having the same form and the same meaning) (1994: 148-9). The analysis shows that the two partners often use similar strategies to very different ends and, an even more significant finding, that they also achieve the same end (avoiding conflict) by very different strategies: excessive verbiage on Marianne's part and pompous pontification on Johan's. Marianne prattles: "Here already! You weren't coming until tomorrow. What a lovely surprise. Are you hungry? And me with my hair in curlers" (1994: 152); Johann drones: "I'd been out all day at the institute with the zombie from the ministry. You wonder sometimes who those idiots are who sit on the state moneybags" (1994: 154-5). Marianne's contribution is characterized by short sentences, abrupt changes of topic, and a homely, domestic tone. Johan's style is more cohesive and elaborate; it concerns the world of work and is distanced from the current situation. Although their styles are very different, they share the same goal: each is trying to avoid a confrontation about their deteriorating marriage.

Justifying their choice of the constructed, non-spontaneous dialogue of a film script, Lakoff and Tannen explain that "artificial dialog may represent an internalized model. . . for the production of conversation - a competence model that speakers have access to" (1994: 137). They later define this type of competence as "the knowledge a speaker has at his/her disposal to determine what s/he is reasonably expected to contribute, in terms of the implicitly internalized assumptions made in her/his speech community" (1994: 139). Although this type of analysis has not been widely imitated, it demonstrates the

utility of looking at constructed dialogue precisely because such pre-planned scripts allow us to see what pragmatic roles have been internalized and what expectations speakers have of patterns of speech appropriate for each sex.

In the French tradition, the *écriture féminine* school, made famous by such writers as Helene Cixous, Chantal Chawaf, and Annie Leclerc in the 1970s, defines women's writing as corporeal, tied to the workings of the body, and at the same time multivalent and polysemic, defying syntactic norms. Chawaf challenges the reader with the rhetorical question "*l'aboutissement de Vecriture n'est-il pas de prononcer le corps?*" (1976: 18) ("is not the aim of writing to articulate the body?"), while Cixous exhorts, "*Ecris! L'écriture est pour toi, tu es pour toi, ton corps est toi, prends-le. [. . .] Les femmes sont corps. Plus corps donc plus écriture*" (Cixous and Clement 1975: 40, 48) ("Write! Writing is for you, you are for you, your body is yours, take it. [. . .] Women are bodies. More body so more writing"). The assertion that women are bodies is a little puzzling. Are women, according to Cixous, more corporeal than men? How can writing be corporeal except in a pen and ink sense?

Écriture féminine came out of the women's liberation movement as a response to the complaint that men's writing was increasingly abstract and distanced from material concerns. Where the prevailing ideology, which dominates most text forms from highbrow novels to the language of advertising, tended to see the female body as dirty, messy, shameful, and generally problematic, *écriture*

feminine set out to celebrate this body in all its wet, bloody, sticky functions and by-products from menarche to pregnancy and childbirth to menopause. Where the subliminal message of mainstream, misogynist discourse was that women were mired in their own physicality and therefore constitutionally unable to produce great works of fiction, *écriture féminine* saw men as cut off from their own bodies, decentered and more interested in the play of signifiers than in their real-world referents.

When we encounter sentences like the following from Cixous's *La Jeune née* (*The Newly Born Woman*), "*Alors elle, immobile et apparemment passive, livrée aux regards, qu'elle appelle, qu'elle prend*" ("Then she, immobile and apparently passive, prey to glances, that she calls, that she takes") (Cixous and Clement 1975: 237), which has no main verb and two subordinate clauses, we may feel lost, confused, or simply impatient. In order to appreciate the innovatory quality of this style, which provides no object for usually transitive verbs (who does she call? what does she take?), we need to feel the weight of the well-formed French sentence and the desire of the feminist writer to wriggle out from under it at all costs. For the French, their language is "la langue de Molière" (the language of Molière), while English is "la langue de Shakespeare" (the language of Shakespeare). The apex of literary achievement was apparently achieved many centuries ago, and perfected by male writers. *Écriture féminine* is a reaction to this assumption of perfection and its attribution to men.

EXTRACT TWO

The Gendering of Language: A Comparison of Gender Equality in Countries with Gendered, Natural Gender, and Genderless Languages

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Published online: 18 October 2011

Springer Science+Business Media, LLC 2011

Abstract Feminists have long argued that sexist language can have real world consequences for gender relations and the relative status of men and women, and recent research suggests that grammatical gender can shape how people interpret the world around them along gender lines (Boroditsky 2009). Although others have theorized about the connection between grammatical gender in language and societal gender equality (Stahlberg et al. 2007), the current work tests this link empirically by examining

differences in gender equality between countries with gendered, natural gender, and genderless language systems. Of the 111 countries investigated, our findings suggest that countries where gendered languages are spoken evidence less gender equality compared to countries with other grammatical gender systems. Furthermore, countries where natural gender languages are spoken demonstrate greater gender equality, which may be due to the ease of creating gender symmetric revisions to instances of sexist language.

Keywords Grammatical gender·Gender equality· Gendering Language

Introduction

It is quite likely, that as long as language has existed, the distinction between male and female has also been present within it. Today, there are no languages, which do not distinguish between the genders at all, leading linguists and psychologists to believe that gender may be “so fundamental to social organization and social structure that linguistic means to refer to this category are indispensable for speech communities” (Stahlberg et al. 2007, p. 163). However, references to grammatical conventions of gender in language have prompted contemporary concerns over the power of language to shape social stereotypes about gender, and perhaps ultimately shape status distinctions between men and women. The feminist language critique, in particular, deems language to be overwhelmingly androcentric, putting girls and women at a disadvantage in personal and professional relationships (Stahlberg et al. 2007), and some countries, such as Norway, have actively reformed their languages to reflect a more genderless outlook (Gabriel and Gygax 2008).

In spite of attempts at language reform already underway, numerous questions remain regarding the relationship between the social aspects of gender and language and the potential benefits of modifying languages to be more gender-neutral. Although Stahlberg and colleagues (2007) have theorized about the link between grammatical gender in language and the relative social standing of men and women in society and recent work highlights a link between the grammatical gender of language and sexist attitudes (Wasserman and Weseley 2009), we believe more work is needed to determine the precise relationship between language conventions and gender equality. Thus, in the current work we investigate this relationship directly in an attempt to determine whether the grammatical gender of a language can predict societal markers of gender equality.

Recent theorizing suggests that language not only reflects the conventions of culture and particular patterns of thought, but systems of language can actually shape our cognitive understanding of the world around us (Boroditsky 2009; Deutscher 2010). Specifically, the gendering of language (even that which appears mundane and purely grammatical, such as the use of *la* versus *le* in French) can actually impact our perceptions. For example, researchers have discovered that the grammatical gender of a term for an inanimate object can influence people’s perceptions of the masculine or feminine characteristics of that object, and this cannot be due merely to the properties of the object as the researchers used terms that were grammatically masculine in one language and feminine in another (see Boroditsky et al. 2003; Konishi 1993). The same findings are true even when pictures are used instead of text (Sera et al. 1994). Furthermore, when Jakobson (1966) had participants choose voices to personify the days of the week, Russian speakers consistently selected male or female voices to match the grammatical gender of that particular day.

If conventions of grammatical gender can affect people’s perceptions of gender in non-human objects, could it similarly affect the real world social relations of men and women? If so, then the extent to which a language distinguishes grammatically between the masculine and feminine could have serious consequences for the social, economic, and political standing of women relative to men. Recent work highlights how grammatical gender can increase sensitivity to the gender of a person, as relative to non-gender related questions, English speakers were faster and more accurate than Chinese speakers in

responding to gender relevant questions (Chen and Su 2011), suggesting that grammatical gender aids gender-relevant processing of social information.

Although all languages distinguish between genders, the degree to which they do so varies. Grammatically, almost all languages can be divided into three gender-related groups: grammatical gender languages, natural gender languages, and genderless languages (for overview of definitions and classification of grammatical gender across language families, see Stahlberg et al. 2007). Grammatical gender languages (or gendered languages) are characterized by their nouns, which are always assigned a feminine or masculine (or sometimes neuter) gender. When said nouns refer to people, they generally reflect the gender of the individual in question, and other dependant forms, such as adjectives and pronouns carry the same gender markers as the nouns to which they refer. Generally, gendered languages belong to the following linguistic families: Slavic (Russian), Germanic (German), Romance (Spanish), Indo-Aryan (Hindi), or Semitic (Hebrew), with some exceptions. English (a West Germanic language), and Northern Germanic (or Scandinavian) languages, belong to what are called natural gender languages. While these natural gender languages distinguish gender through pronouns (such as he or she), most nouns have no grammatical marking of gender, unlike the gendered languages. Finally, some languages, called genderless languages, are characterized by their complete lack of grammatical gender distinction in the noun system. In Finnish, for example, *hän* refers to both he and she, and so has no gender. Genderless languages generally belong to the Uralic (Finnish), Turkic (Turkish), Iranian (Persian), Sinitic (Chinese), and Bantu (Swahili) language families, along with some others.

Given recent research tying gender in language to gendered perceptions of the world (e.g., Boroditsky et al. 2003), one could infer that when language constantly calls attention to gender distinctions by discriminating between masculine and feminine nouns and pronouns—as is the case in gendered languages—that individuals may be more apt to draw distinctions between men and women. If, in fact, language plays a role in how people organize their beliefs about gender, then it stands to reason that differences in the gendered language systems across different cultures could play a role in societal differences in beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral practices about the role and status of men and women.

In an empirical test of this assumption, Wasserman and Weseley (2009) assigned suburban, New York high school students to read a passage in either English (a natural gender language) or a gendered language (either Spanish or French) and then complete a measure of sexism. Students who read the passage and completed the sexism measure in English expressed less sexist attitudes compared to students who read the passage and completed the sexism measure in a gendered language, lending support to the notion that the grammatical gender of language can impact sexist attitudes.

Although it is impossible to isolate whether the grammatical gender of a country's language system serves as a causal factor in indicators of gender equality, we can determine whether countries with gendered language systems are generally the same countries in which men and women remain unequal in their access to political and economic power. In the current work, we explore the possible links between gendered language systems and gender inequality by first reviewing the literature on the many ways gendering occurs in language (beyond conventions of grammatical gender) and how such gendering in language has been shown to impact status relevant social decision-making and behavior. We then address whether the grammatical gender of a language system can help to predict cross-cultural variations in gender equality over and above the predictive power of other cross-cultural factors by comparing countries with gendered, natural gender, and genderless language systems on archival indices of gender equality.

Gender in Language

As noted above, the use of gender specific nouns and pronouns is one way of classifying gender in language. A lack of grammatical gender, however, does not necessarily reflect gender neutrality (Braun

2001; Engelberg 2002), and so it would be mistaken to believe that the grammatically genderless languages automatically lead to a more gender-neutral society. Linguistic asymmetries and false generics in discourse cut across grammatical gender language systems, and likely contribute to how individuals organize and interpret gender relevant information in everyday communication (Stahlberg et al. 2007). Below, we give a brief overview of several ways in which language becomes gendered and how such linguistic patterns convey status differentially to men and women.

First, lexical gender refers to whether a word is gender-specific (for example father, sister, grandmother), or gender neutral (citizen, patient, individual), and gender asymmetry is created when gender is lexically marked when it does not need to be (Hellinger and Bußmann 2001). For example, in the case of the English words steward and stewardess, stewardess becomes a specific marked term, or separate from the term of steward, and also gains a secondary meaning entirely. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (1989), steward is taken to primarily refer to “an official who controls the domestic affairs of a household, supervising the service of his master's table, directing the domestics, and regulating household expenditure...”; however, a stewardess primarily refers to either “a female steward” or “a female attendant on a passenger aircraft who attends to the needs and comfort of the passengers.” The female counterpart of steward references the male term, which becomes the neutral form, and while the secondary profession of stewardess possesses some similarities to the roles of the steward, the masculine counterpart implies more authority, through the use of words such as “control,” and “supervise.” Furthermore, female counterparts for male words are often derived from the masculine term, and are more complex, demonstrating that the masculine is the generic form, as the feminine form is generally only used when females are specifically involved. For example, in Norwegian, *forfatter* (meaning writer) is the generic and masculine term, whereas *forfatterinne*, the feminine form, is derived from *forfatter*, is considerably longer in length, and would never be used as a generic term for a writer, unless a female writer were specifically being referenced (Bull and Swan 2002). Moreover, some languages use compounding in nouns to create gender specific structures of non-traditional professions (Hellinger and Bußmann 2001). A male-nurse or a female-surgeon points to the need to categorize, in language, which gender generally pursues which occupation, and to mark the exceptions with marked names. The marked nature of such exceptions results in specific patterns of the perceptions of social gender, or the use of stereotypes in deciding generic pronouns for specific occupations and roles.

Gender asymmetry may also be manifested through gender-related messages within a language, such as address terms and idiomatic expressions (see Hellinger and Bußmann 2001). Address terms refer to the use of formal structure as compared to informal structure within a language depending on who one is speaking to, or the use of honorary titles, such as Mr., Mrs., Miss, and Ms. in English. In the Javanese language, for example, a husband addresses his wife as *dik*, or “younger sister,” whereas he is called *mas*, or “older brother” regardless of his actual age.

In addition to asymmetry, the use of false generics can affect how gender intersects with language. A solely masculine or feminine term, used generically to represent both men and women, is called a false generic (Hellinger and Bußmann 2001). Most false generics are masculine and are used to refer to males as well as females, such as the word *lakimies* (literally, lawman, or lawyer) in Finnish. Another example is the general he in English, as in “When a student drops a pencil, he should also pick it up.” The only known languages in which the generic is female, are in some Iroquois languages (Seneca and Oneida), as well as some Australian aboriginal languages (Hellinger and Bußmann 2001).

Language and Gender Equality

Increasingly scholars and researchers recognize the power that asymmetries in lexical gender, male false generics, and the systematic way language becomes gendered can have on social gender stereotypes and inequities in status between men and women (Schneider 2004). For example, feminist scholars have long decried that masculine generics are androcentric, and make women seem invisible in historical and

contemporary discourse (see Cameron 1998). With empirical research highlighting the real world impact that gendered language can have on people's social judgments, decisions, and behavior, many have begun to rally behind the idea that change in language is needed to curb social inequalities in society (Martyna 1980).

Although opponents of language reform argue that male false generics remain mere grammatical convention, too widespread to expect change, and irrelevant to gender inequality, empirical evidence supports what feminists have long known (see review by Martyna 1980). For example, studies have shown that the male generic is in fact not simply a grammatical convention but that speakers actually visualize males when the word "he" or "his" is used in its generic form (Gastil 1990; Hyde 1984; Moulton et al. 1978). Moreover, a "chairman" primes male pronouns and is rated as more masculine than a "chairperson" (Banaji and Hardin 1996; McConnell and Fazio 1996). If men and women interpret male generics in a gendered way, then it stands to reason that these gendered impressions could have a lasting impact on real world gender stereotyping and role behavior. For example, consider the implications for career choice. Masculine forms of nouns, such as are found in lexical gender and gender related structures, are problematic, specifically when it comes to occupational titles and positions because women may have trouble identifying with the masculine forms, and so may choose to not pursue a career which implicitly excludes women. For example, Bem and Bem (1973) found that only 5% of female participants applied for a traditionally male job which used male generics in its description, whereas 25% of women applied when it was described in a gender neutral way. Moreover, Briere and Lanktree (1983) found that people rated women's attraction to a future career in psychology as lesser when they had read an excerpt about ethical standards for psychologists worded using male generics, as opposed to versions that were worded in a gender neutral way. Thus, over and above the influence of stereotypes about traditional gender roles associated with a particular occupation, the gendering of language may influence women's desire to seek certain employment opportunities.

Generics may also pose legal issues for women, when legal documents (especially from the past) do not clarify whether they pertain to all people, or explicitly to men. Such linguistic conventions can even have legal consequences, as Hamilton et al. (1992) have demonstrated the dangers of gendered pronouns in a legal context. In their study, students enrolled in introductory psychology courses at the University of Kentucky played the part of the jury in a mock murder case, and were asked to determine whether a woman had acted in self-defense. As a part of the 'case,' 72 participants (24 in each group) were given a definition of 'self-defense' with either the use of he, he or she, or she, in the description. Only five of the participants reading the description with he were willing to acknowledge self-defense, whereas sixteen did with he or she, and eleven with she. This suggests that male generic wording in legal proceedings can dramatically affect people's perceptions of an individual's guilt or innocence.

Given the above research demonstrating how small changes in the use of gendered language can have a dramatic impact on people's judgments, decisions, and behaviors, it is perhaps unsurprising that there have been efforts on the part of "government agencies, feminist groups, professional associations, religious organizations, educational institutions, publishing firms, and media institutions" to reduce the use of male generics (Martyna 1980, p. 491). In many languages, people have begun to shy away from the use of masculine generics.

Grammatical Gender in Language and Gender Equality

Although ample empirical research demonstrates that reducing the use of masculine generic pronouns promotes the inclusion of women, there are no empirical studies that we are aware of which attempt to investigate the overall

relationship between all three grammatical gender groups and gender equality. Wasserman and Weseley (2009) demonstrate that gendered languages promote an increase in expressed sexist attitudes.

Moreover, Stahlberg and colleagues (2007) have noted that languages that create significant gender distinctions (i.e., grammatical gender languages) are often thought to lead to greater sexism, while languages that do not distinguish grammatical gender (i.e., genderless languages) may on the surface appear less sexist. However, as they note:

All language types... could in principle be used in a symmetrical and gender-fair way: In grammatical gender languages the feminine could be used consistently in referring to female persons and the masculine in reference to males. In natural gender languages symmetry could be achieved, above all, by the consistent use of sex-marking pronouns. And in genderless languages sex can be disregarded symmetrically (Stahlberg et al. 2007; p. 167).

However, as we have seen from the above examples, this is rarely the case, and all grammatical groups display gender asymmetry, as it is expressed in language through lexical structures, generic terms, social use of language, and gender related word structures.

Despite the fact that gender neutral conventions can be developed for languages within all three grammatical groups, this does not imply it is equally easy to address gendered grammar conventions across these groups. In fact, Stahlberg and colleagues (2007) note that grammatical gender languages (like German) involve much more effort to create a gender neutral configuration—compared to natural gender languages like English—because such reconfigurations require changing a large number of personal nouns in addition to pronouns.

Furthermore, although it might appear that genderless languages already exhibit a gender fair grammatical style, there is evidence that gender neutral nouns and pronouns can be interpreted with an implicit male bias (Stahlberg et al. 2007). Take, for example, research showing that different solutions to the use of masculine generics are not equally effective in natural gender languages like English. Several studies have shown that replacing masculine generics with gender-symmetrical terms, like he/she, led to greater visualization of female actors compared to gender neutral terms, like the singular they (Hyde 1984; Switzer 1990). Hyde (1984) found that when children were asked to write a story in response to the prompt “When a kid goes to school, [he/they/he or she] often feels excited on the first day,” (p. 699) only 12% and 18% wrote about female characters when he and they were used, respectively, whereas 42% wrote about a female character when he or she was used. Thus, even the use of gender neutral terminology (such as member of congress) may implicitly convey a gendered interpretation more often than gender- symmetrical terminology (such as congressman/woman), which would make it more difficult to convey a gender neutral interpretation in genderless languages that lack gendered pronouns.

EXTRACT THREE

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Gender-specific Asymmetries in Chinese Language

Introduction

Chinese language is an ideographical language. It is not a “gender language”. The so-called gender language means a language that has grammatical gender to distinguish words between masculine, feminine and/or neutral class. Lexical specification of a noun is specified as female-specific or male-specific. This sort of features is characterized by many Indo-European or Semitic languages such as Arabic, Danish, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Polish, Russian, Spanish and others (Hellinger & Bubmann, 2002: 5).

A question then echoes from the mind, namely, Chinese does not belong to Indo-European or Semitic languages, so how does this non-gender language express gender-related messages linguistically? Would a language without grammatical gender be less sexist when women and men are addressed and portrayed? Before we set up to the actual analysis, a brief review about the study of language and gender will be helpful to gather background information relevant to this investigation.

Gender-linked References

Addressing each other is a daily practice. That is why this topic is one of the hot issues addressed in the sociolinguistic area. While it may be possible in many situations to avoid referring to someone's race or nationality, it is difficult to avoid categorizing people by gender when addressing each other. For instance, when we refer to someone's occupation, we would say "She is a doctor" or "He is a driver;" identifying a person's sex becomes priority whenever a third person pronoun is involved. Thus, gender is closely relevant to language use when human beings refer to each other. In English, the use of the male term he refers to both males in particular and when being gender-neutral although feminists believe that the third-person singular pronoun should not stand for the whole human set (Schneider & Hacker, 1973).

The prescription of generic masculine or male generic has long been the center of debates about linguistic sexism in English. Fortunately, such a problem does not incur in oral Chinese discourse because the third person in oral Chinese does not distinguish females from males. The Chinese referents "他" (ta), meaning "he" and "她" (ta), meaning "she" are pronounced exactly the same so there is no need in oral Chinese to distinguish a male from a female when referring to a third person singular. However, this "gender neutral" in the oral discourse does not occur in written discourse because Chinese has to distinguish a female from a male in the third person singular in writing. So the generic masculine "他" (ta) in Chinese like the word "he" in English generally stands for all human beings in communication.

The absence of a masculine generic "he" in oral Chinese does not suggest that gender-related discrimination is lessened in Chinese. Lack of grammatical gender in spoken discourse does not secure Chinese to be free of gender-related discrimination. Asymmetry in address forms is one of the salient ways that reflects social hierarchy. As we all know, the accepted asymmetric naming convention in Chinese is for women to continue to adopt their husbands' names after marriage. Changes in address may be indicative of the social changes undertaken concerning the relationships between women and men. The asymmetric naming convention of adopting the husband's family name has been changed since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. However, in rural areas and also in the Special Administration Region of Hong Kong, the traditional naming convention is popular. Such a naming convention makes women less visible and disappearing from an autonomous existence. The fact that a woman's marital status is of priority and the norm for children to take the father's family name as their last name indicates that the modern society is still a society of patriarchic heritage.

Another asymmetry instance exists in addressing is that even when both women and men enjoy similar status, women suffer from covert discrimination. This claim is backed up by the research conducted by some students on how male and female professors were referred to by secretaries and other staff in a large northeastern university in the U.S. (Wolfson, 1989). The study found that secretaries used titles and last names for male faculty or even young male faculty but first names for female faculty in most cases. In contrast to the findings of the previous research, an opposite result came out based on the writer's investigation about the address forms used by the public servants in the workplace in the capital city of Beijing (Yan, 2002). The survey finds out that the public servants at the ministries of the central government prefer to use more formal address forms to address female counterparts. These female servants in turn prefer to be addressed with more formal terms, when the addressers and addressees are of similar age and rank. A strong correlation between gender and address forms emerges from the execution of the address forms by civil servants in this specific community.

The quantitative information in the analysis gives an impression that women in the administrative section enjoy as much status as their male counterparts. However, given the current situation of women's status in Chinese society, this conclusion is hardly true. Let us have a look at the reality of how men and women occupy the powerful positions. For example, in the Chinese Tenth National People's Congress in 2006, only 23 % of female members constituted the whole set of representatives. In the most recent 17th Plenary of the Chinese Central Party held in October 2007, the highest rank of the committee bureau has 31 seats but there is only one female representative in the whole group. The number of female civil servants constitutes a very small proportion and remains on the lower decision-making levels.

Based on the characteristics of the current society, this paper argues that when age and rank are similar, asymmetry in forms of address may be accounted for female uncertainty about their position or impact from the workplace. This serves as an account for the more formal address forms often being used by female public servants to reassure their positions in the male-dominated society. Overt politeness shown in the use of address forms in the specific context may not necessarily mean that women's positions have been greatly improved. On the contrary, we consider women still disadvantaged in the current society.

Female Radical in Word Formation

Word-formation is another particularly sensitive area in which gender may be communicated through references in language. Language will undergo processes of change in the creation and use of new feminine/female occupational terms. It is inevitable that new nouns will have to be coined to represent them. Formation of words in Chinese differs from that in English. A word is formed by combining graphs with radicals. Many Chinese characters are formulated by compounding graphs with radicals. The female character “女” nu (female) is an instance of word formation and is characterized by the association with discrimination. When it becomes a radical, the compound word is often associated with negative meanings.

A close study of the character 女 “female” has provided insights to understanding the meanings implied. As an ideographic language, the word bears rich imaginations. In light of the ideographic information (Ji: 2002:22), this character was a drawing wherein a woman was portrayed kneeling on the ground with the arms bounded on the back. From the creation of the character in the ancient time, we can see that females have been placed in the inferior position ever since the creation of the character 女 (female) in Chinese. Examination reveals some interesting findings embedded in the Chinese character 女 (female).

Based on the Modern Chinese Dictionary¹, a total of 178 characters, which have the female radical as the component in the formation of words have been identified. Semantically, these characters can be roughly divided into five sets.

1. Kinship relations: Words such as 妈 ma (mother), 姑 gu (aunt), 婶 shen (aunt), 嫂 sao (sister-in-law) are terms used to refer to various kinds of female relations.
2. Family names: In ancient time, tribes were dominated by women who were the head of the house. Therefore, many family names were derived from words that have the female radical as a component. Words such as 姜 jiang, 晏 yan, 姚 yao, 嫉 ji, etc. are ancient family names in the matriarchal society.
3. Positive connotations: Words such as 妩媚 (lovely, charming of a woman), 娇娆 (enchantingly beautiful), 婵娟 (lovely, beautiful of a woman), 婁, 嫵 (refined, elegance of a woman), 婀娜 (lithe and graceful of a woman's carriage), 妍 (beautiful), 姵 (beautiful), 婷, (graceful) 媛 (a beautiful woman), 妙 (young and beautiful) are examples associating with positive meanings.
4. Negative connotations: Words such as 妖 yao, generally means “evil” and “promiscuous” (usually of women). 嫌 (dislike, suspicion) 嫉妒 (be jealous); 嫪 (scorn, humiliate) are associated with bad meanings.

5. Other meanings: Take the word 始 shi (beginning), for example, is formed with the female radical with half of the character 胎 tai (carrying a baby), which means the starting or beginning. The combination of the two components has formed a new character.

Words in Group 3 and Group 4 will be examined in detail because they are associated with gender specific meanings. There is a total of 30 characters identified linking with distasteful associations and another set of 30 characters linking with positive connotations. The criteria of classifying them into negative or positive categories are based on two criteria. Firstly, we will take a look at the meaning of the word itself. Take the character 妖 (yao), for example, it generally means “evil/promiscuous”. Interestingly, this negative meaning is usually associated with women.

Secondly, we will refer to the meaning of the word in the bound phrases, where the female radical character serves as a component in the word formation. The character 妖(yao), in the bound phrases are generally linked with negative meanings. Please refer to Table 2.

Table 2: Female signific in the bounded phases

1. 妖魔鬼怪 (demons and ghosts)
2. 妖风 (evil wind)
3. 妖精 (evil spirit),
4. 妖孽 (a person associated with evil or misfortune)
5. 妖言 (fallacy)
6. 奸淫 (illicit sexual relation)
7. 奸猾 (treacherous)
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8. 奸笑 (sinister smile)
9. 奸贼 (traitor)
10. 奸计 (an evil plot)
11. 耍流氓 (behave like a hoodlum),
12. 耍手腕 (play tricks)
13. 耍赖 (act shamelessly)
14. 耍嘴皮子 (be a sick talker)
15. 妖娆
16. 妖道

17. 妖媚
 18. 妖氛
 19. 妖艳
 20. 嫌恶
 21. 嫌疑犯 (suspect)
 22. 嫉妒 (be jealous)
 23. 奴颜媚骨 (bowing and scraping sycophancy and
 24. 奴颜婢 (subservient servile)
 25. 妄下雌雄 (make irresponsible comments)
 26. 妄自尊大 (have too high an opinion of oneself
 27. 贪婪 (greedy)
- (charming and bewitching) (witch)
- (seductively charming) (evil influence) (seductive)
- (detest loathe)

A total of 27 entries are listed in the table. Every item has a character that is formed by the female radical as a component. It is noted that all of the meanings in the phases are associated with negative meanings, which are clearly illustrated in the translation presented in the brackets.

As mentioned, the 178 characters that are formed by the signific as a component in the dictionary have been identified. More than one-sixth of Chinese female compound words are associated with negative meanings as shown in group 4. In contrast, the graph 男 (nan), meaning “male’ is not linked with bad images at all. In addition, one-sixth of the characters containing female signific seem to have good images as shown in group 3. The numerical results seem fair regarding gender representation. However, a further examination reveals a different picture. Namely, words in group 3 are actually traits that are required for women to have and adjust to men’s expectations. Discrimination against females is thus reflected in a subtle way. The seemingly positive-associated traits are Chinese characters which contain female signific words as components in the word formation. These stereotypical feminine traits and specific feminine norms, expectations and requirements are demanded by the male-dominated society as the criterion for a respectable lady. There is no correspondent trait set for men to follow. Such asymmetry suggests that sexist attitudes prevail in language and society.

So gender discrimination in language comes from different dimensions and generally occurs in a covert way. Without conscious awareness, it will easily escape notice in the male-dominated and hierarchical society and will yield an impact on women’s development.

Gender-related Order in Expressions

The arrangement of male and female syntactic ordering, in many cases, is largely fixed in Chinese. Syntax of the language provides an interesting illustration of the archaic hierarchical attitudes embedded in the sequential word order. Let us have a look at the syntactic rule that gender-specific words be ordered in a

conventional way. It is found that the male-gendered constituent is in most cases preceding the female gendered constituent. The following examples illustrate the ordering.

Table 3 Male and female sequential order in frozen expressions

Chinese Character

男女 (nannu)

父母 (fumu)

兄弟姐妹(xiongdi jiemei)

儿女 (nuer)

夫妻 (fuqi)

乾坤 (qiankun) 2

太阳月亮 (taiyang yueliang) 3

Meaning men and women father and mother brothers and sisters son and daughter husband and wife
male and female sun and moon

Many phrases in Chinese are arranged in the defined ordering of male first and female second. To reverse the prescribed order by placing female ahead of male would result in rendering the phrases very odd or even wrong to native Chinese speakers. Take the sample noun phrase 男女 nannu, (men and women), for example, the phrase sounds incorrect to the speakers of Chinese language if we reverse the order of the characters in this phase. In addition, if you change the order of the noun phrase 儿女 ernu (sons and daughters) into 女儿 nuer (daughter), the meaning is definitely altered. The former refers to both male and female off-springs but the latter refers to female ones only. Again, if you change the order of the two characters 父母 fumu (father and mother) into 母父 mufu (mother and father), the term sounds ungrammatical since the Modern Chinese Dictionary does not have such a noun phrase as an entry. Interestingly, if the above set phrases in Table 4 are in English and put in a reversed order, they are actually acceptable and not necessarily wrong to the English native speakers.

Whorf (1956) distinguished this linguistic category of gender-related ordering as sexist categories. Farris (1988), in the same vein, was the first to examine Chinese with respect to the covert sexist categories. He noted that such gender asymmetry of dyads would encourage sexism in language by relegating women to a secondary position.

Since China has the longstanding feudalism in history, the remaining phenomenon of male-priority and female-subordinate culture is not surprising. Apart from the fact that gender-related discrimination embedded in the set noun referents, the male and female ordering convention can also be tracked in many Chinese idioms: 郎才女貌 (A talented man matched with a beautiful girl); 夫荣妻贵 (When husband is glorious, wife will be honored); 夫唱妇随 (Husband sings with wife as companion; 男盗女娼 (Man a robber, woman a prostitute); 龙飞凤舞 (Dragon flies and phoenix dances.)⁴, all of these expressions are overcastted by women subordinating to men. Sexist category is obvious in terms of the content and syntactic order.

Derogation of Feminine Words

Nouns in language are used to label things. Chinese has lots of paired referents and they were originally intended to contrast with each other in sex referents for the labeling purpose. Theoretically, words for labeling men and women ought to have equivalent meanings. Through the use of the paired words, evolution of meaning attached to the words for women is contrasted in other ways and gradually linked with different connotations. It is interesting to note that these dyads that are assumed to be equivalent in many cases do not actually undergo the same semantic change. Despite of their originally equal status, some of them have changed to be embedded with other images. This is a widespread cross-cultural phenomenon that words related to men, men's occupations and the like remain relatively stable in their meanings for centuries whereas those denoting women and the female-associated world or things have become worse in quality (Schulz, 1990). Such asymmetry is witnessed in the process of feminine words to have become derogatory. The changing in the feminine member of the paired words denotes a fact that women have been suffering prejudice and placed in an inferior position in society. Take the paired words 鳏夫guanfu (widower), 寡妇guafu (widow) as example. They are paired terms used to refer to a male and a female who have lost their partner. But linguistic discrimination may be inferred from the saying “寡妇门前是非多” (A widow is likely to incur affairs) reveals gender asymmetrical connotations. It is always widow, not widower, who is associated with sexual affairs and the saying may be accounted as discrimination against one sex because we do not have a counterpart to express the similar affair about widowers in Chinese. The example drawn from the daily life is evidence to reveal a problematic tendency which views women primarily as objects of sexual attention. Linguistic representation of women and men will effect and reinforce a certain attitude for people to develop themselves.

Schulz (1990) called this process of meaning change as “semantic derogation”. Spender (1980:22-23) gave a typical example of the English word tart which has undergone semantic changes in history. The word originally referred to a small pie or pastry. It was first applied to a young woman as a term of love. Later on it changed to mean young women who were sexually desirable; then it referred to women who were careless in their morals, and finally, it changed to mean women of the street.

A similar story of semantic derogation has undergone in the term 小姐 Xiaojie, (Miss) in Chinese.

Nowadays, one must be cautious when referring girls by the term 小姐 Xiaojie, (Miss), because semantic change has taken place within this term, which is largely associated with a young woman who provides immoral services in return for money. 三陪小姐 (Three-accompanying-Miss) is the typical story happened to the referent of the girl who is engaged in services which are likely to offer sexual services. In order to avoid incurring offensive referring, young women nowadays are addressed alternatively as 小妹 xiaomei (little sister) or 大姐 dajie (senior sister) in service settings. The term 小姐 Xiaojie, (Miss) is seldom used to refer to young women in certain settings in order to eradicate associations with immoral services.

The examples from both English and Chinese have presented a picture of how female referents suffer from derogatory evolution in the linguistic area. It is evident that semantic derogation has undertaken regardless of different cultural contexts.

Social Gender

Social gender has to do with stereotypical assumptions about what are appropriate social roles for women and men. It is a category that refers to the socially imposed dichotomy of masculine and feminine roles and character traits (Kramarae & Treichler, 1985: 173). An illustration of asymmetry in social gender in Chinese is the fact that many higher-status occupational terms such as lawyer, surgeon, scientist and professor will frequently be occupied by the male-specific in contexts where referential gender is either not known or irrelevant. On the other hand, low-status occupational titles such as nurse and secretary are often followed by female-specific. For example, in Chinese we presuppose occupations enjoying high status often referred to by males. Thus we refer to 女博士 nu 37 bo shi; (female Ph.D), 女记者 nu jizhe (female journalist) 女强人 nu qiangren (female strongperson), 女市长 nu shizhang (female major) 女法

官 nu faguan; (female judge), just to name a few. In contrast, if these titles are used to refer to males, no gender-related modifier 男 nan (male) is used to preface the professional titles. Take a recent example in Wenhui News (2007, Oct.24), which introduced a group of high ranking officials⁵. There are 25 members introduced in the news report. There is only one female member among the highest rank. It is noted that the introduction about her has focused on her gender and elegant manner rather than her other abilities. The title of the news is constructed as Female Central Political Bureau Member, XXX.

Regarding social gender, Moser (1997) did a comparative study of the gender specific words. His study noted that the Chinese word processor was gender-biased in relation to social gender. He cited an example from the software in the word processor. When the user entered a given character, a list of words and compounds associated with the character would automatically appear in the character window. He compared the two characters of 男 nan (male) and 女 nu (female) to illustrate the point. Namely, the character 男 nan (male) is selected, there automatically pops up a set of characters that could follow it to form compounds. So under the heading of the two characters, a set of nine compounded items appear such as 男人 nanren (man), 男子汉 nanzihan, (man/male) and so on. In contrast, following the character 女 nu (female), a much longer list appears. The number of bound phrases amounts to as many as 46 compounds, including 女神 nushen (goddess), 女工 nugong (female worker), 女干部 nu ganbu (female cadre), 女兵 nubing (female soldier) and so on.

Ten years have passed since Moser's study (1997). It is necessary to see whether any changes have taken place in the representation of men and men. A check is therefore conducted again to examine these words in the word processor in the computer. The result seems positive because the number of compound phrases has become more balanced. The compound phrases that link with both genders turn out to be a rate of 21 for man-compound entries against 24 for woman-compound ones.

EXTRACT FOUR

Anne Pauwels

Feminist Linguistic Activism - Non-sexist Language Reform

Feminist non-sexist language campaigns as an instance of language planning

It is important to acknowledge that the debates, actions, and initiatives around the (non-) sexist language issue are a form of language planning. The marginalization of feminist perspectives on gender and communication in the 1970s and early 1980s had a particularly strong effect on the recognition of feminist linguistic activism as a genuine case of language planning, in this instance a form of *corpus planning* (see Kloss 1969). In fact, "mainstream" literature on language planning either ignored or denied the existence of feminist language planning until Cooper's (1989) work on language planning and social change which includes the American non-sexist language campaign as one of its case-studies.

It will become clear from the description and discussion below that feminist campaigns to eliminate sexist bias from language have all the trademarks of language reform. In my previous work (e.g. Pauwels 1993, 1998) I have analyzed feminist language reform using a sociolinguistic approach to language planning (e.g. Fasold 1984). The sociolinguistic approach emphasizes the fact that reforms are directed at achieving social change, especially of the kind that enables greater equality, equity, and access. Within this framework the language planning process is divided into four main stages. The *fact-finding* stage is concerned with documenting the problematic issues and concerns. The *planning* stage focuses on the

viability of change as well as on developing proposals for change. In the *implementation* stage the methods and avenues for promoting and implementing the changes are assessed and the preferred proposals are implemented. In the *evaluation/feedback* stage language planners seek to assess to what extent the planning and implementation processes have been successful in terms of achieving the goal of the language planning exercise. This involves examining whether the changes are being adopted by the speech community and how they are being used.

2.2 Documenting sexist language practices

Exposing and documenting sexist practices in language use and communication has been, and continues to be, a grassroots-based activity by feminists with an interest in language and the linguistic representation of the sexes. There is no denying that feminist activists in the USA were the trailblazers in both exposing sexist bias and proposing changes. Amongst a (linguistic) academic readership the works of Lakoff (1975) and Spender (1980) and the collection of essays in Nilsen et al. (1977) became the main reference points for elaborate descriptions of linguistic sexism as it affected the English language. Other speech communities in which feminists took an early and active interest in exposing sexist linguistic practices included Norway (Blakar 1977), France (Yaguello 1978), Germany (e.g. Troemel-Ploetz 1978; Guentherodt 1979; Guentherodt et al. 1980; Hellinger and Schrapel 1983) as well as Spain (e.g. Garcia 1977). More recently the documentation of gender bias has spread to languages such as Chinese, Icelandic, Lithuanian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, and Thai (see Hellinger and Bussman 2001; Pauwels 1998).

Feminist explorations into the representation of women and men revealed commonalities across speech communities as well as across languages. A striking feature across many languages and speech communities is the *asymmetrical treatment* of women and men, of male/masculine and female/feminine concepts and principles. The practice of considering the man/the male as the prototype for human representation reduces the woman/female to the status of the "subsumed," the "invisible," or the "marked" one: women are invisible in language when they are subsumed in generic expressions using masculine forms. Generic reference in many languages occurs via the use of forms which are identical with the representation of maleness (e.g. *he* as generic and masculine pronoun, generic nouns coinciding with nouns referring to males). When women are made visible in language, they are "marked": their linguistic construction is often as a derivative of man/male through various grammatical (morphological) processes.

This asymmetry also affects the lexical make-up of many languages. The structure of the lexicon often reflects the "male as norm" principle through the phenomenon of lexical gaps, that is, the absence of words to denote women in a variety of roles, professions, and occupations (e.g. Baron 1986; Hellinger 1990; Sabatini 1985; Yaguello 1978). The bias against women in the matter of lexical gaps is particularly poignant when we consider the reverse, namely, the absence of male-specific nouns to denote men adopting roles or entering professions seen to be female-dominant. The male lexical gaps tend to be filled rather quickly, even to the extent that the new male form becomes the dominant one from which a new female form is derived. An example of this practice is found in German where the word *Hebamme* (midwife) is making way for the new word *Entbindungspfleger* (literally "birthing assistant") as a result of men taking up the role of midwife. Meanwhile a female midwife has been coined *Entbindungspflegerin*, a form derived from *Entbindungspfleger*.

The semantic asymmetry that characterizes the portrayal of women and men in language is of particular concern to feminist activists, as it is an expression of women's and men's perceived values and status in society. The core of this semantic asymmetry is that woman is a sexual being dependent on man, whereas man is simply defined as a human being whose existence does not need reference to woman. Schulz (1975) highlights the practice of semantic derogation which constantly reinforces the "generic man" and "sexual woman" portrayal. Schulz (1975: 64) finds that "a perfectly innocent term designating

a girl or a woman may begin with neutral or positive connotations, but that gradually it acquires negative implications, at first only slightly disparaging, but after a period of time becoming abusive and ending as a sexual slur." This practice has also been observed and examined for French (e.g. Sautermeister 1985), German (e.g. Kochskamper 1991), and Japanese (e.g. Cherry 1987).

Linguistic *stereotyping* of the sexes was also seen as problematic, especially for women as it reinforced women's subordinate status. Stereotyped language was particularly damaging to women in the context of the mass media and educational materials. It is therefore not surprising that both these spheres of language use were subjected to thorough examinations of sexism (see e.g. Nilsen et al. 1977).

Community reaction to these feminist analyses was predominantly negative: the existence of linguistic sexism was vigorously denied. Reasons for its denial varied according to the status and linguistic expertise of the commentator. Whereas non-experts rejected the claim on (folk) etymological assumptions, or because of an unquestioned acceptance of the wisdom of existing language authorities, linguistic experts refuted the claims by arguing that feminist analyses of the language system are fundamentally flawed as they rest on erroneous understandings of language and gender, particularly of grammatical gender. For example, the reaction of the Department of Linguistics at Harvard University to suggestions from students at the Divinity School to ban *Man*, *man*, and generic *he* as they are sexist, and the reaction by the German linguist Hartwig Kalverkamper (1979) to a similar observation for the German language by fellow linguist Senta Troemel-Ploetz (1978), stated that feminist analysts held a mistaken view about the relationship between grammatical gender and sex. These denials were in turn scrutinized and refuted by feminist linguistic commentators who exposed historical practices of grammatical gender reassignment (e.g. Baron 1986; Cameron 1985) or who presented evidence from experimental work on people's perceptions of gender and sex in language (e.g. Mackay 1980; Pauwels 1998).

2.3 Changing language: How?

Most feminist language activists were and are proponents of language change as a measure for achieving a more balanced representation of women and men in language. Taking linguistic action to improve the plight of women was seen as an integral part of women's liberation. Furthermore, many language activists subscribe to an interactionist view of language and reality which has its origins in a weaker version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: language shapes and reflects social reality.

Despite this consensus on the need for linguistic action there is considerable diversity in the activists' and planners' views on how to change sexist practices in language. Their views on strategies for achieving change are shaped by many factors, including their own motivation for change, their understanding and view of language, and the nature and type of the language to be changed. Planners whose motivation to change is driven by a belief that language change lags behind social change will adopt different strategies from those activists whose main concern is to expose patriarchal bias in language. Whereas the former may consider linguistic amendments as a satisfactory strategy to achieve the linguistic reflection of social change, the latter activists would not be satisfied with mere amendments. Proposals for change are also shaped by one's understanding of the language system, of how meaning is created, and of how linguistic change occurs. For example, a linguist's suggestions for change may be heavily influenced by his or her training - training in recognizing the distinctive structural elements and properties of language such as phonemes, morphemes, and grammatical categories, and in recognizing how these elements contribute to creating meaning. Reformers without such training may focus their efforts for change mainly at the lexical level as this level is often considered the only one susceptible to change. The nature and type of language also influences proposals for change: languages that have grammatical gender pose different challenges from those that do not.

Among this multitude of opinions and views on the question of change, three main motivations for change can be discerned: (1) a desire to expose the sexist nature of the current language system; (2) a

desire to create a language which can express reality from a woman's perspective; or (3) a desire to amend the present language system to achieve a symmetrical and equitable representation of women and men.

Causing *linguistic disruption* is a strategy favored by those wishing to expose the sexist nature of the present language system. Its advocates claim that this strategy helps people to become aware of the many subtle and not so subtle ways in which the woman and the female are discriminated against in language. This disruption is achieved through various forms of linguistic creativity including breaking morphological rules, as in *herstory* (based on *history*), or grammatical conventions, such as the generic use of the pronoun *she*; using alternative spellings, as in *wimmin*, *LeserInnen* (female readers); or inverting gender stereotypes, as in "Mr X, whose thick auburn hair was immaculately coiffed, cut a stunning figure when he took his seat in Parliament for the first time since his election." The revaluation and the reclaiming of words for women whose meaning had become trivialized or derogatory over time (e.g. *woman*, *girl*, *spinster*) is another form of linguistic disruption, as is the creation of new words (e.g. *male chauvinism*, *pornoglossia*) to highlight women's subordination and men's domination.

More radical proposals have come from those activists who do not believe that the present language system is capable of expressing a woman's point of view. They call for the creation of a new woman-centered language. Examples range from the experimental language used by Gert Brantenberg (1977) in her (Norwegian) novel *The Daughters of Egalia*, the creation of the Laadan language by the science fiction writer and linguist Suzette Haden Elgin "for the specific purpose of expressing the perceptions of women" (Elgin 1988: 1), to the experiments in "writing the body" - *écriture féminine* - emerging from the postmodern feminist theories and approaches associated with Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray. To date these experiments in women-centered languages and discourses have remained largely the domain of creative writers.

More familiar to the general speech community are feminist attempts at achieving linguistic equality of the sexes by proposing amendments to existing forms, rules, and uses of language (sometimes labeled *form replacement strategy*). *Gender-neutralization* and *gender-specification* are the main mechanisms to achieve this. Whereas gender-neutralization aims to do away with, "neutralize," or minimize the linguistic expression of gender and/or gender-marking in relation to human referents, the gender-specification (also called *feminization*) strategy promotes the opposite: the *explicit* and *symmetrical* marking of gender in human referents. An illustration of gender-neutralization is the elimination in English of female occupational nouns with suffixes such as *-ess*, *-ette*, *-trix* (e.g. *actress*, *usherette*, *aviatrix*). An example of gender-specification in English is the use of *he* or *she* to replace the generic use of *he*. The application of both mechanisms has been confined mainly to word level as there was a belief that changes at word level could have a positive effect on eliminating sexism at discourse level.

Given the prominence of the linguistic equality approach and the form replacement strategy it is worthwhile examining which factors influence the feminist language planners in opting for gender-neutralization or gender-specification.

Social and linguistic factors play a role in the selection of the strategies. Social factors revolve around questions of social effectiveness: the chosen strategy should achieve linguistic equality of the sexes by both *effecting* and *reflecting* social change relating to women and men in society. This is particularly relevant with regard to occupational nomenclature. Linguistic factors focus on the issue of *linguistic viability* as well as on matters of *language typology*. Proposed changes need to take account of the typological features and the structural properties of a language; for example, languages which mark gender through morphological processes may have different options from those that don't. Linguistic viability is also linked to linguistic prescriptivism: proposed alternatives which are seen to violate deeply ingrained prescriptive rules or norms could obstruct or slow down the process of adoption in the community.

Most non-sexist language proposals generated for a range of languages contain explicit or implicit evidence that these social and linguistic factors have played a role in the choice of the principal strategy (gender-neutralization or gender-specification). However, feminist activists and language planners proposing changes for the same language may differ in the priority they assign to arguments of social effectiveness and of linguistic viability, or how they interpret these concepts. This has led to debates about the preferred principal strategy. The Dutch and German feminist language debates are examples of the tensions about the choice of the main strategy for language change. Dutch and German are typologically closely related languages with a grammatical gender system. Languages with a grammatical gender system classify nouns into gender categories on the basis of morphological or phonological features (see Corbett 1991). Whilst many have claimed that a grammatical gender system which classifies nouns in the masculine, feminine, or neuter categories is a purely linguistic invention, and is not linked to the extralinguistic category of biological sex, Corbett (1991: 34) acknowledges that "there is no purely morphological system" and that such systems "always have a semantic core." This is particularly obvious in the gender assignment of human (agent) nouns, with most nouns referring to women being feminine, and those referring to male persons being masculine.

In the case of Dutch the grammatical gender system operates with a three-gender system: masculine, feminine, neuter. However, Dutch does not mark the distinction between masculine and feminine nouns in relation to a range of qualifiers and gender agreement markers, including definite articles, demonstrative pronouns, and attributive adjectives. For example, both masculine and feminine nouns attract the same definite article: *de*. This gender system is labeled *common gender*. In the case of human agent nouns grammatical gender largely coincides with biological sex. Dutch still has a large number of female human agent nouns (especially occupational nouns) which have been formed by means of a suffixation process involving suffixes such as *-a*, *-euse*, *-in*, *-e*, *-ster*. German also operates with a three-gender system: masculine, feminine, and neuter, but unlike Dutch is not of the common gender type. The grammatical gender assignment of human agent nouns similarly displays substantial overlap with biological sex. Although German also has a range of feminine suffixes including *-euse*, *-essje/l*, *-ette*, the most frequently used one is *-in*. Furthermore, this suffix is still very productive in the formation of feminine occupational and other human agent nouns, for example *Pilotin* (female pilot), *Polizistin* (female police officer).

In the Dutch debates proponents of the gender-neutralization strategy are in favor of phasing out the use of feminine forms of occupational nouns and of not using them in the creation of new female nouns. They promote the use of a single form to denote a male, female, or generic human referent. Their choice for this new gender-neutral form is almost invariably the existing masculine/generic form, e.g. *de advocaat* (the lawyer). They consider this strategy socially effective as it detracts attention from the categories of sex and gender which in their view ultimately benefits women. De Caluwe (1996: 40) claims that "it is even questionable whether women would be served by the practice of mentioning gender in each and every case. As long as women are not represented equally strongly among all occupations/professions at all levels. . . the feminine forms threaten to be seen as marginalized or even stigmatized forms" (my translation). The advocates of gender-neutralization also see this strategy as linguistically more viable for the following reasons: gender-neutralization is more in tune with current structural developments in the Dutch language, which is becoming more analytic and is moving away from the use of gender-marking suffixes (Brouwer 1991). Choosing gender-neutralization also reduces speaker insecurity with regard to the formation of new feminine forms: as Dutch has many feminine suffixes language users often face the sometimes difficult decision which suffix to use: "Is the female derivation of *arts/dokter* (physician/medical doctor) *artse* or *artsin/dokteres* or *dokterin*?" (Brouwer 1991: 76). Furthermore, gender-neutralization supporters claim that there is a definite trend away from the use of feminine occupational nouns among language users.

For the advocates of the gender-specification/feminization strategy (e.g. Van Alphen 1983; Niedzwiecki 1995), making women visible in all occupations and professions through systematic use of feminine

occupational forms is seen to achieve social effectiveness. In response to claims from the gender-neutralization camp that feminine suffixes have connotations of triviality, the feminization supporters respond that it is better to be named and to be visible in language, even if there are some connotations of triviality: Niedzwiecki (1995) believes that the latter will abate and eventually disappear when there is consistent and full use of feminine forms in all contexts. They are confident that this strategy is linguistically viable and do not believe that continued feminization is at odds with trends in the Dutch language. They rely on a study by Adriaens (1981) which recorded an increase in the number of feminized occupational nouns. However, judging by current trends in language use and by existing policy documents the gender-neutralization strategy is the one most likely to be adopted and implemented in Dutch-speaking communities (e.g. Pauwels 1997a).

In the German context the same social arguments are used by advocates of either strategy. The feminization supporters opine that their strategy is the more socially effective because it not only makes women visible and reveals that women are increasingly found in a variety of occupations and professions, but it also ensures that all occupations and professions are seen as accessible to men *and* women. Those opting for gender-neutralization in German claim that gender equality in language is best served by minimizing gender reference, especially in generic contexts. The linguistic proposals emerging from either side do include more radical suggestions than those found in the Dutch context. For example, the radical feminist linguist Luise Pusch (1990) proposes total or radical feminization by means of reversing the current practice of attributing generic status to the masculine form. In her proposal the feminine form becomes the appropriate (unmarked) form. Well aware of the radical nature of this proposal, Pusch defends it as an important transitional strategy to rectify the many centuries of androcentrism in language. She asserts, somewhat provocatively, that this strategy is socially effective as it gives men the chance to experience personally what it means to be subsumed under a feminine form and it gives women the opportunity to experience the feeling of being named explicitly in generic contexts. She also defends the linguistic viability of her proposal by claiming that it is simple and does not involve the creation of any new forms. A less radical version of the feminization strategy involves the explicit and consistent use of the feminine forms in gender-specific as well as generic contexts. In generic contexts preference goes to the use of gender-paired formulations (often labelled *gender splitting*) such as *der/die Lehrer/in* (the male/female teacher) or *der Lehrer und die Lehrerin* or the graphemically innovative *der/die LehrerIn*.

This proposal is seen as a linguistically viable option since the German language system is suited for continued formation of feminine occupational and human agent nouns through gender suffixation. Unlike Dutch, German has a dominant feminine suffix which continues to be productive: the *-in* suffix. There is minimal speaker uncertainty in creating new feminine forms as speakers are not faced with making a selection from a wide variety of options. Concerns about the semantic ambiguity of *-in* are downplayed, as the meaning "wife of a male incumbent of an occupation" rather than "female incumbent of" is disappearing fast.

Whilst some gender-neutralization supporters follow the same path as their Dutch counterparts and accord the current (masculine) generic form the status of gender-neutral form, others make much more radical proposals. In response to a request from the Institute of German Language regarding eliminating gender bias from occupational nomenclature, Pusch (1984) proposed to change gender assignment in human agent nouns (mainly occupational nouns). This would entail the elimination of all feminine forms derived by suffixation and a gender reassignment for the noun in generic contexts. The neuter gender is to be used for generic reference, leading to the following pattern: *das Professor* for generic reference, *die Professor* (instead of *die Professorin*) for female-specific reference, and *der Professor* for male-specific reference. Pusch argues that the use of the neuter gender in generic contexts is socially the most effective in conveying gender-neutrality. However, she is aware that a drastic overhaul of part of the German gender system may make this proposal less linguistically viable than others. Judging on policy

initiatives in Germany, Austria, and German-speaking Switzerland it is the feminization strategy which is promoted more heavily.

Similar debates and discussions about the most effective and desirable strategies have occurred in relation to the French and Spanish languages, where regional linguistic differences (e.g. Canada versus France) have also affected discussion (see Pauwels 1998). In the case of English there has been little if any debate about gender-neutralization being the principal strategy in promoting linguistic equality.

Discussions have been more about selecting alternative forms within the gender-neutralization strategy: for example, should the word *chairman* be replaced by an existing, semantically related noun, such as *president*, *chair*, or should a new form be created, for example, *chairperson*? Replacing generic *he* by pronouns such as singular *they*, by a new pronoun, or by generic *she*, *it*, or *one* is another example of this (e.g. Bodine 1975; Mackay 1980; Baron 1986; Henley 1987).