

Forum for Linguistic Studies

https://journals.bilpubgroup.com/index.php/fls

ARTICLE

How Gender Sensitive Is Public Discourse?

Alla Marchyshyna^{1*}, Anatolii Skrypnyk², Valerii Nesterenko³, Oksana Halaibida¹, Olha Shapoval¹, Alla Khoptiar¹

¹Faculty of Foreign Philology, Kamianets-Podilskyi Ivan Ohiienko National University, Kamianets-Podilskyi 32302, Ukraine

²Faculty of Social and Psychological Activity, Rehabilitation, and Professional Education, Kamianets-Podilskyi State Institute, Kamianets-Podilskyi 32302, Ukraine

³Educational and Scientific Institute of Correspondence and Distance Education, Podillia State University, Kamianets-Podilskyi 32302, Ukraine

ABSTRACT

The paper seeks to answer the question whether gender sensitivity finds its way in speeches, oral utterances, lengthy texts, clichés, slogans etc. that constitute a contemporary public discourse. The research traces the deep-rooted stereotypes concerning feminine/masculine social roles and functions while their lingual presentations are traditionally perceived as fixed and emotionally trite. The study shows that these are the challenges that have been undermined recently as far as the speaking community tends no longer to be represented in terms of gender binary. The study follows the most widely spread instances of gender sensitivity violation and the ways of overcoming it. The public discourse serves the background where all the current transformations are taking place. The mechanism of meaning making and its impact on the present-day social consciousness comprise both the linguistic contents and language use. In order to uncover the implied connotations gender nominations are endowed with, a number of familiar statements, addresses, set phrases and the like have been analysed. The paper follows stylistic peculiarities of public discourse as far as it offers multimodal options of social interaction. Hence, gender sensitivity across diverse communicative events, media, commercials, advertisements

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Alla Marchyshyna, Faculty of Foreign Philology, Kamianets-Podilskyi Ivan Ohiienko National University, Kamianets-Podilskyi 32302, Ukraine; Email: allama@ukr.net

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 24 January 2025 | Revised: 21 February 2025 | Accepted: 25 February 2025 | Published Online: 1 March 2025 DOI: https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i3.8549

CITATION

Marchyshyna, A., Skrypnyk, A., Nesterenko, V., et al., 2025. How Gender Sensitive Is Public Discourse? Forum for Linguistic Studies. 7(3): 267–276. DOI: https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i3.8549

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2025 by the author(s). Published by Bilingual Publishing Group. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

etc. requires proper consideration in the linguistic aspect. Insights into cultural background, historical and national contexts disclose the deep-rooted stereotypes, beliefs, conventions which clash within the bounds of a definite discourse and require adjustment to the contemporary interpretation. The present research tries to shed light on possible ways of overcoming the problems and making public discourse gender-friendly.

Keywords: Gender; Gender Identity; Gender Nomination; Gender Sensitivity; Public Discourse

1. Introduction

The attitude towards gender and the relevant issues in the present-day society, after a long and diverse story of introduction and assimilation of the problem, can hardly be called gender-neutral, gender-stereotyped or gender-prescriptive. It would rather be termed gender-sensitive. The ground for such qualification, or recognition, is inveterate and properly motivated. Gender sensitivity appeared as a constituent of political correctness and is often viewed as response to sexism. The latter resulted in several aspects like anti-sexist movements, women-rights actions, and most notably gender equality campaign.

At the early stage of its evolution, gender sensitivity (or gender inclusiveness) probed for women's advances in public life of society, combating of prejudices and religious stigmas, promoted education as a gender-free social institution. This was completed within feminist methodologies arising from feminist politics while gender related biases and traditional practices often favoured male dominance which consequently resulted in gendered language^[1]. Sociolinguistic factors have changed recently what fostered attention towards restructuring of language resources and justification of gender balance.

As it is widely proclaimed by its proponents and researches (see, for example,^[2, 3]), gender sensitivity (sometimes called "a gender sensitive lens"^[4]) aims at overcoming the barriers in the social, political, economic, cultural spheres women face where men take advantage and hinder women's decision-making power^[5]. It may be considered an identifying component which goes hand in hand with feminist movement^[6] or a peculiar way of indulging respect to an individual irrespective of sex. Thus, gender sensitivity reflects the way gender equality is realized. Concerning the latter, Heidari^[7] considers it to be such state of a community where men and women have equal rights, rewards, opportunities, power, status, i.e., both genders enjoy equal social opportunities and access to them. Here, let us call it "gender justice" which means equal rights for 2 genders corresponding to two sexes.

Elimination of gender inequalities and promotion of gender equality may form a concept of gender sensitivity which joins the mainstream of social interaction and where women no longer are bound to be "domestic engineers" while men enjoy leadership and authority^[5]. The new agenda of social policy requires and thus proclaims a social balance between genders without any bias either towards "hegemonic masculinity"^[8] or "feminist scholars, activists and femocrats"^[9].

The present paper targets to identify how modern public discourse mirrors gender identity and the related phenomena within the framework of linguistic representation. Here, we mean "public" standing for a written or spoken semantically and structurally arranged social and linguistic unit which has been presented to a vast number of people with implication to influence their opinion. The focus would be to see the way of nomination and interpretation of genders which have already ventured their coming-outs and are now exposed for societal acceptance/rejection.

Though the concept of a public discourse, its conceptual scope, and principles of functioning have long been a focus of research interest, there are still numerous attributes to be considered. Here belong gender sensitive aspects and means of its lingual management.

2. Research Method

The choice of public discourse as an object of the present study arises from a number of factors which generally provide a common ground for such a multi-faceted phenomenon. First, a definite discourse is usually composed of people's utterances functioning within a certain sphere of social life. Here, public discourse seems rather appropriate as far as it possesses various means of spreading information. Thus, it provides possibilities to explore the domains where gender finds its lingual explication. Second, the concept of gender, though widely popular and violently discussed, still seeks its recognition and perception. The available gender nominations may either be used carelessly and sound offensive or some offence and even discrimination are caused by the lack of a proper gender-neutral word. The field of public discourse enables to trace both the reasons of gender sensitivity and response to it in terms of lexical units.

The review of rich literature on gender differences and gender expression in language and speech suggests a hypothesis that gender sensitive construction of public discourse predominantly results from the authors' choices of lingual units. The grammatical category of gender does not produce the gendered language often equaled to sexist. The nature of the English language implies heterogeneity of thought and expression while the speaker is free to choose between the gender-neutral or euphemistic alternatives.

The study seeks to explain how lingual units are employed to avoid sexist language in texts and utterances belonging to the generalized concept of public discourse and to make it gender sensitive: or, vice versa, how certain elements serve to differentiate between sexes and genders. The term "public discourse" signifying "speeches, publications and other statements made in pursuit of the public good"^[10] is used as opposed to "private" circulating among "citizens seeking to develop their own private friendships and interests"^[10]. Communication between social groups in democratic states, between authorities and citizens requires "inclusive public speech" which serves "a key mechanism for resisting domination"^[11] and assists in identifying social problems and maintaining justified regulations for societyfriendly policies.

As far as the research focuses on the way how gender sensitive aspects are implemented in the contemporary public discourse and what social perception of gender identity nominated by language units is like, the linguistic structure and expression within definite cultural contexts is followed in its qualitative characteristics. The analysis discloses how gender relevant moaning is conveyed in various social settings.

Hence, theoretical approach towards key concepts and their interpretation proves to be relative. The present-day recognition of gender as a tool for producing and articulating knowledge challenges traditional gender-blind methodologies where gender used to be treated as an object but not a subject of scientific interest. In such a way, gender sensitivity helps "to understand the world and knowledge produced about the world"^[4]. Such knowledge mirrors the experience which has to be spoken or written^[12]; thus, the discursive units encompass gender sensitive discourse.

The textual material for analysis has been selected according to its relevance for the problem explicating and its accessibility and prevalence in the public sphere of communication. Popular media are quoted most often due to their quick response to the hotly debated issues in social intercourse.

In this paper, gender identity is interpreted as different from gender expression. While the former is understood as a personal psychological sense of gender, the latter stands for the way a person expresses this identity. This dichotomy explicates the inner and outer expression of gender and can be parallelled to the generally accepted dichotomies any language is based on, mostly to *competence/performance* combination as Chomsky^[13] meant it, transforming and developing Ferdinand de Saussure's^[14] *langue/parole*, though they are roughly equivalent in this respect.

3. Results and Discussion

The constant and subtle ways of gender representation in discourse constitute a dynamic process where synchronic requirements undermine the stereotypes and challenge novelties. The traditional approach towards distribution of social roles is gender biased, or rather male-dominated. Anyway, notwithstanding the social function, men and women used to be treated with the terms of exclusion or inclusion in definite activities. Ahmad and Shah^[15] consider inclusion-exclusion to be a means of discrimination which covers stereotypical representation in professions, semantic roles, titular (address) indication, order of appearance, activities, generic construction (androcentrism), pictorial representation (visualization) in public spheres. Let's consider some familiar utterances where manipulation of gender nominations makes one gender (or genders) appear inferior to others (predominantly androcentric).

"I now pronounce you man and wife". Is there anyone in the English-speaking world who has never heard this statement? The holdover from Old English is both explicit and enigmatic. The question arises whether the gender balance is even concerning the categories implied. Is "*man*" a sex, gender or status indicator? The same concerns "*wife*". The present research is an attempt to make it clear.

Etymologically, there are reasons for such a word combination. The lexical units "man" and "wife" had existed in the language long before the word "husband" was borrowed from Old Norse ("húsbóndi"). But the historic background is now overshadowed by the contemporary meanings of these words. The pronouncement about man and wife does not merely fix the fact of marriage. It suggests the concept of relationship in a marriage. The ancient phrase surely bears some flavour of antiquity and continuity of tradition with the implied deep-rooted stereotype of family roles. But from the linguistic and, precisely, semantic point of view each of its components stands for a definite concept which implies that a man remains a man preserving his social status quo while a woman acquires a matrimonial position resulting in duties and responsibilities. Can the abovementioned matrimonial verdict be taken for a gender discriminating assertion? The statement reveals "who is really getting married: the woman" as far as "she becomes the bride and the man remains a man"^[16]. Besides, the standard phrase both describes what the person is doing in public (i.e., pronouncing) and states the marriage thus distributing social roles^[17].

The passage from a religious ceremony suggests inquiry whether present-day newly-weds perceive the meaning proclaimed on the most important day of their life or accept it as nothing more but a component of the ritual, i.e., whether they sense the gender disparity insinuated by the priest. Anyway, it is expressed with lingual units which correspond to the concepts they stand for. The possible solution for this problem may introduction of gender-neutral phrases like "I pronounce you married"/"I pronounce you a family" or something of the kind.

The key questions arising from the problem of gender bias or neutrality are: what is gender neutral language like? What is it for? Probably, its most important function is to protect gender identity as a value of personal choice. It fits anti-discrimination laws in the linguistic sphere and thus respects any gender option a person adopts. Gender-free language produces an impression of everyone's inclusivity into any issue discussed or involvement into any action, implied or performed. Using a gender-neutral language can hardly make any communicant either privileged or discriminated. On the contrary, if overcomes "imbalance, inaccurate, and biased tendencies"^[18]. This is also an advertisement tip widely applied by employers in order to attract more applicants to job vacancies.

Texts of different genres which fill the public discourse today tend to avoid gender discriminating units. The reasons are numerous, and not always they arise from mere respect towards freedom of gender identity expression. These may be purely pragmatic (to seek a wider audience or to follow "gender"-related fashion, for instance). But the mainstream of gender sensitivity seems evident.

Linguistic means of gender sensitivity help to avoid sexand gender-based discrimination in its language paradigm and except any superiority of one sex/gender over the other(s). It ousts the actual use of the linguistic realization of sex and gender stereotypes. It allows alternative views upon gender binary and eliminates any offense caused by inappropriate address or nomination. Anyway, practicing gender politeness explicates the speaker's relevance, erudition, and culture^[19] as well as awareness of the norms of political correctness.

In order to achieve gender neutrality in speech, one has to overcome a complex cognitive barrier, to destroy gender stereotypes in social memory originating from strong masculine and feminine associations^[20]. They used to construct gender roles and norms resulting in gender-stereotypical beliefs having found their way to human minds and hearts. The use of gender neutral (or "bias-free", as it is also called) is recommended by top officials or the highest authoritative international organizations (see, for example, the change to Canada's national anthem where the phrase "In all thy sons command" became "in all of us command" in 2019 or the United Nations Secretariat Administrative instruction: "Guidelines for promoting equal treatment of men and women in the Secretariat/from the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management"^[21].

But what about "Ladies and Gentlemen"? The trivial address seems to be losing its popularity, too. Take, for example, the announcement in the "NBC News":

> "Japan Airlines will stop addressing passengers as "ladies and gentlemen" in favor of genderneutral phrases, in an effort to be more inclusive."

Starting Thursday, announcements on flights and in airports will use new forms of address including "Attention all passengers" and "Good morning, everyone"^[22].

The same concerns TfL (Transport for London) announcing "Ladies and Gentlemen" no longer appropriate terminology and instructing London Underground staff to drop the traditional phrase and use "hello everyone" instead^[23]. This is meant to make the language "fully inclusive" and reflect "the great diversity of London".

It is obvious that the airlines and underground management "felt" the situation and showed they were gender sensitive. In order to be gender-friendly, they eliminated the deep-rooted stereotype in favour of the new social tendency. The reason of such innovation is pragmatic but the realization turned out to be linguistic: two grammatically similar lexemes (plural forms of countable nouns) with semantic structures having an opposite seme of male/female indication are substituted by a structurally and semantically completely different phrases. The point is not that "ladies and gentlemen" are no longer treated as ladies and gentlemen. They are either functionally identified ("passengers") or are given a broader and even overwhelming nomination ("everyone") including the babies onboard and members of the staff.

The phrase "ladies and gentlemen" may be counted as a "gendered address term" and qualified as "inconvenient and discriminating"^[24] what undermines the values of human rights, equality, and culture. Such address may provoke the feeling of marginalization in those who have not found themselves among the updated short list of genders. This nomination "ladies and gentlemen", alongside with address no longer fits the gender inclusive mainstream in implementing gender friendly terminology into public spheres. To make everybody feel welcome, all outward public presentations (visual, oral etc.) are aimed at embracing the vast diversity of genders without accentuation any.

One more new grammar tendency has been established since gender neutrality got into the mainstream of cultural and social transformations. This is use the plural form "they" as corresponding to singular "someone": "She said: 'Dating when you're living in stealth is nerve-wracking, because it's hard to know when to tell someone – and you don't know how they'll react"^[25].

The whole campaign of introducing gender balance in language is actually aimed at reducing the male bias in defining a person. Here, the nature of a national language itself is of enormous significance and serves the ground for possible socio-cultural influences upon vocabulary and grammar. For instance, three types of gender-fair strategies have been tested while comparing English and Swedish^[26]: paired forms ("he/she"), traditional neutral words (e.g., singular "they", "the applicant"), gender-neutral third-person pronouns actively created to challenge the binary gender system. While the two former have already been in circulation for a period of time, the latter arises as a new phenomenon: in Swedish such pronoun (hen) is already known to the language users while in English the pronominal lexeme ze is just making its way into the modern vocabulary and active usage. The linguistic peculiarity of a newly-coined pronoun is its total dependance upon the context - there is no constant semantics attached to it apart from indicating a person, most often of non-binary gender identity. This feature makes ze close to it which stands for non-human referents.

Linguistic inequality in gender nominating is embodied into so-called masculine/male generics. These are person nominations expressed by role-nouns used as labels for mixed gender groups (e.g., "policemen" - male and female police officers; "congressmen" - male and female representatives; "spokesmen" - male and female speakers etc.). As can be seen from the examples, masculine nominations do not merely designate men but stand for both sexes. On the contrary, lexemes with female semantics indicate women only (e.g., "actress", "waitress", "launderette"). This is considered to be going hand in hand with the "traditional gender hierarchy, which grants men more power and higher social status than women"^[27]. It is verified not only by outward (though thorough and conspicuous) observation but influences the national worldview: "Countries with grammatical gender languages were found to reach lower levels of social gender equality than countries with natural gender languages or genderless languages"^[27]. From this position, gender asymmetry can by reduced by language means. Introduction of "ze" may soften gender sensitivity in the language. Gender sensitive communication avoids gender stereotypes and creates gender neutrality while the speakers express their opinions and treat other interlocutors on the ground of equity (sexual, gender, social, cultural, national etc.).

Recently, a lot of stylistically neutral lexemes have undergone gender-related semantic changes. The formerly stereotypical male generics have acquired negative connotations as opposed to gender-neutral, or inclusive nominations. Gender sensitive approach advocates the idea that indication of sex should be omitted in public discourse unless the cases where it is necessary for the meaning of the utterance/sentence.

There may be several reasons for such shifts in the lexical and semantic strata. One of them is reappropriation of traditional male and female domains in social, political, cultural, and other spheres. Nowadays, there are no longer "gender differences in leadership and decision-making"^[28] postulated in public discourse. The distribution of roles performed by individuals as gendered (or gender-negative) persons is no longer fixed. The differences between gender-oriented activities are erased and no preferences are highlighted. These transformations are noticeable in various types of public discourse.

The most popular and widely spread among these are mass media. Broadsheets and tabloids include gender relevant lingual units notwithstanding whether they are local news reports, editorials, or focused on the events from abroad. The up-dated linguistic approach towards gender relevant concepts is most obvious in media texts due to their social functions and pragmatic objectives. Lingual coding of the system of values transformation finds its way in the media as, on the one hand, the response to the social moods in their language manifestation, and on the other hand, as an attempt to introduce newly-coined lingual means and structures aiming at softening the social tension and prescribe their utilization and normativity. The media discourse, thus, is aimed at coordinating social expectations, and for this purpose it has to "ensure a regular and continuous stream of texts"^[29]. Researches suggest the need to study media texts as far as "In the years to come, media will become more pervasive"^[30]. So, to investigate media texts is to predict how the social consciousness is going to change.

The present-day media text may be considered as belonging to public discourse due to its quick spread and influence on public opinion. The use of gender-discriminating or gender-inclusive lingual units in mass media is not just a mainstream or a matter of fashion. Media alter community morals, construct worldviews, popularize and judge, cast doubts and convince. They are bound to respond to hotly debated issues and depending on the way they do it their ranking fluctuates. These are usually the first to inform about the events, facts, discoveries, attitudes, forecasts etc. They serve a mediator between the society and social institutions transferring novelties from individuals and groups to institutions researching and classifying them: "the way research findings are reported in the popular press may affect readers' beliefs and attitudes and may reinforce stereotyping"^[31]. This idea was set forth by Black long ago where the media text was labelled as a "communicative channel" between the public and the authorities or public organizations^[32]. Hence, the language of media, vocabulary in particular, on the one hand, mirrors the current trend in the crowd and, on the other hand, seeks to find the proper and validated ground for it.

Underrepresentation of women is noticeable when taking into account the number of female-gendered lexemes. Such lexical disbalance distorts reality and establishes male dominance not only in society but in the language use. One of the reasons is scarce women's employment in the media. J. T. Wood states that "The lack of women in the media is paralleled by the scarcity of women in charge of media"^[33]. She figures out that this number equals to 5% which is extremely low. Thus, lingual means used for female descriptions are scarce, too.

Nomination procedures follow some patterns that go hand in hand with grammar rules and linguistic tradition. Here, morphological aspects are most conspicuous. They may be employed to provide both gender balance and gender neutrality.

Gender neutrality in the use of pronouns is not a new point of linguistic discussion. In particular, researchers prove the dominance of male pronoun *He* in media texts. Besides, *He* occurs in more positive semantic contexts than *She*, to say nothing about the multiple prevalence in usage^[34] (p. 40). This way, manipulating the frequency and positive/negative image making, the media manipulate the readers' consciousness and implicitly produce positive/negative images.

The traditionally attached element "-man" ("-men") is still quite frequent in public address and social appeal. Bearing the unifying and generalizing semantics, different kinds of *-man*-compounds imply humans fulfilling specific functions, possessing generally acknowledged social and national attributes thus appearing in headlines, editorials,

news reports, columns, even feature articles, and opinion media pieces. See the following title: "My dear countrymen—we are Freemen!" by Dr. Musa Ansari, MPA, JD^[35]. Here, the author considers the problem of freedom to express and follow political preferences metaphorically comparing tastes in politics to those in food. The text is rich in "-man"-nominations ("countrymen", "freemen", "bondmen", "bondwomen"). The potential readers are advised to eat "healthy meals" and avoid political food coming from "garbage cans" as far as it is "covered with verbal toxins" and is "contaminated with verbal pollution". But, at the same time, isn't it verbally toxic to differentiate between "-men", "-women" and the like in the contexts where it is not semantically meaningful?

The scrupulous survey of texts from media discourse proves that wide use of "-man"-compounds is characteristic of the English versions of the media issued in the countries where English is neither the native nor the official language or where binary gender distinctions dominate in social morale. The following examples may serve as illustrations, "My dear countrymen, what is wrong with you people?": The speech you won't hear on Independence Day"^[36]; "My dear countrymen, violence isn't our way, it never was"^[37]. Whereas in Western societies with gender sensitive approach in public discourse and prevalence of political correctness in social interaction the addresses like "My dear fellow citizens", "Dear fellow Americans" etc.

Some samples of gender identification demonstrate that modern newspapers are just on the way of changing their gender sensitive language policies. This process of restructuring is noticeable even within one and the same article:

> A spokesman for the broadcaster said the diversion "came at a time when we were working with lower staffing levels, due to the pandemic";

> MP Julian Knight, the committee chairman, said: "It is unbelievable that the BBC has spent more than $\pounds 1m$ of licence fee payers' money fighting claims brought by its own staff about equal pay and race discrimination^[38];

> A spokesman for "Vitabiotics Immunace", which commissioned the study, said...^[39].

Here, the nouns "spokesman" and "chairman" include

a morpheme "-man" which identifies not only a job post but sex as well. Further on in this article there is an alternative – "chair": "We will be calling on the newly appointed BBC chair Richard Sharp to investigate as a priority"^[38].

Direct feminine and masculine nominations are frequent and reasonable in articles reporting on sports events (e.g., "female athlete of the year", "girls' soccer team", "prominent female athletes", "male and female runners") or explicating health problems ("women experience symptoms of the menopause"), or suggesting labelling or offensive nominations and nicknames ("playboy son of Boohoo's billionaire boss").

Though the tradition to use "athlete" instead of "sportsman" is already established and acknowledged, there is still a wide application of the lexeme "sportsmanship": The league and its officials realize that sportsmanship is a major ingredient – perhaps the most key component – in high school sports^[40].

The same concerns the lexeme "freshman" which is occasionally being replaced by "beginner"/"newcomer": "'I was very limited to what I could do,' said Koziel, now a freshman at Kearny High School"^[41]; "Junior Justin Diller is the team's 220-pounder. He's a newcomer to wrestling"^[42].

There is still a strong tradition to nominate some professions with gender markers. The famous prizes known as Oscars awarded by the (AMPAS) still distribute between the "Academy Award for Best Actress" and the "Academy Award for Best Actor" making different requirements towards male and female playing. Though, the obvious tendency to change the situation may be observed, as in the following headline from "The Guardian":

pulled a surprise, beating out favourite Lily Gladstone to be named best actress for her role in Yorgos Lanthimos's offbeat period comedy "Poor Things". It's the actor's second best actress Oscar after previously winning for "La La Land"^[43].

Here, the award nomination of a feminine character is traditionally called "best actress" whereas her profession is nominated by a masculine, or rather common-gendered lexeme "actor".

One more instance of gender discrimination or lack of gender sensitivity is to use the word combination "both genders" instead of "all genders" or other non-discriminating expressions. For example, the official web-site of Manchester Metropolitan University recommends to avoid "sentences that imply two genders" in order to support non-binary staff and students (Supporting Non-Binary Staff and Students) and states that the singular "they" is the most common genderneutral pronoun. "Sanofi", an innovative global healthcare company, announces a vacancy of a "Regional Treasury Services Center Senior Analyst" for Europe & EMEA and indicates that applicants of "all genders" are welcome^[44].

4. Conclusions

The brief survey of current public discourse with particular concern of gender sensitive language suggests both the problem and ways of its solution. The lingual representation of gender identity implies the traditional gender binary. As far as public discourse serves the medium where the communicating parties negotiate their views and where their current attitudes and beliefs are explicated, it tends to adapt its contents and expression to the mainstream of gender agenda.

The research proves that many of present-day genderbiassed nominations go back to deep-rooted stereotypes which still exist in public communication. These units retain their discriminating connotations and therefore are gradually ousted from dignified use. This process also concerns the so-called masculine/male generics which used to stand for all genders relating to occupation, social status and so on. Gender-sensitive tendency cultivated in contemporary public discourse substitutes gender-marked lexemes with genderneutral ones. Semantic neutrality is rendered by means of plural number, slash-nominations, collective nouns, indefinite pronouns, etc. There are some revolutionary suggestions to the English grammar like the introduction of "ze" as neuter gender for humans. It has not got adequate recognition, however, it demonstrates a specifically linguistic tool to overcome sexism in language. The study proves that gender sensitive attitudes are expressed via language inventory. Such transformations are vitally significant in public discourse since it provides the widest and most open exchange of ideas or opinions and plays a crucial role in construction of social policies.

Language and style are not constant by their nature. Being social and cultural phenomena, these key notions are synchronically relevant, i.e., dependent on the history evolvement. Language responds to social and cultural demands by introducing new lingual units, exchanging of gender marked, or sexist units for those being gender neutral, or non-sexist. The discourse where these transformations initially take place is the public one. Here, the social constrains get loose and adapt to the contemporary values, in particular, concerning gender.

The present study sheds light on gender sensitivity as a social challenge and a linguistic issue. So, the areas for future research are various and numerous. Anyway, the problem in question should further be explored with an interdisciplinary approach comprising scopes and tools of different spheres of knowledge.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization and initial draft, A.M.; methodology and data, O.H.; formal analysis, V.N.; exemplification and illustration, A.K. and O.S.; writing, review and editing, A.S., A.M. and O.H.; super-vision, A.S., A.M. and O.H.; literature review and proof-reading, V.N. and A.K. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

This work received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Abdalgane, M., 2021. Gendered Language: A Study of Sociolinguistic Theories and Approaches. The Asian ESP Journal. 17(3.1), 204–212.
- [2] Figueroa Vélez, J., Vélez Ochoa, S., 2021. Gender Sensitivity and Its Relation to Gender Equality. In: Leal Filho, W., Marisa Azul, A., Brandli, L., et al. (Eds.). Gender Equality. Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Springer: Cham, Switzerland. pp. 632–645. DOI: https://doi.org/10. 1007/978-3-319-95687-9 46
- [3] Heilman, M.E., Caleo, S., 2018. Combatting gender discrimination: A lack of fit framework. Group Processes & Intergroup Relations. 21(5), 725–744. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430218761587
- [4] Saeidzadeh, Z., 2023. Gender Research and Feminist Methodologies. In: Vujadinović, D., Fröhlich, M., Giegerich, T. (Eds.). Gender-Competent Legal Education. Springer Textbooks in Law. Springer: Cham, Switzerland. pp. 183–213. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-14360-1_6
- [5] O'Neil, T., Domingo, P., 2016. Women and power. Overcoming barriers to leadership and influence. ODI: London, UK.
- [6] Hadidi, Y., Gharibeh, G.S., Aleshzadeh, M.A., 2015. Look at the Effect of Feminist Movements on the Evolution of Gender-Sensitive and Neutral Forms in OED. International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature. 3(1), 7–17.
- [7] Heidari, S., Babor, T.F., Castro, De P., et al., 2016. Sex and Gender Equity in Research: rationale for the SAGER guidelines and recommended use. Research Integrity and Peer Review. 1, 2. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1186/s41073-016-0007-6
- [8] Connell, R.W., Messerschmidt, J.W., 2005. Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. Gender & Society. 19(6), 721–880.
- [9] Guenther, K., 2008. Localizing EU Gender Policy: The Diffusion of Gender Mainstreaming across Feminist Movements in Eastern Germany. CES Germany & Europe Working Papers, No. 08. Available from: http://aei.pitt.edu/9280/1/PSGE81.pdf
- [10] Sellers, M.N.S., 2003. Ideals of Public Discourse. In Republican Legal Theory. Palgrave Macmillan, London. pp. 62–70. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230513402_8
- [11] Hannon, M., 2023. Public discourse and its problems. Politics, Philosophy & Economics. 22(3), 336–356. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1470594X221100578
- [12] Smith, D.E., 2005. Institutional ethnography: a sociology for people. AltaMira Press: Lanham, Maryland.
- [13] Chomsky, N., 1986. Knowledge of language: Its nature, origin, and use. Praeger: New York, NY, USA.
- [14] Saussure, F., 1959. Course in general linguistics. Philo-

sophical Library: New York, NY, USA. [Translation of Cours de linguistique générale. Paris, Payot, 1916].

- [15] Ahmad, M., Shah, S.K., 2019. A Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender Representations in the Content of 5th Grade English Language Textbook. International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences. 8(1), 1–24.
- [16] Brennen, B.H., 2000, 2021. "I Now Pronounce You "Man and Wife". Available from: https://www.soen couragement.org/man&wife.htm (cited 18 February 2025).
- [17] Morgenroth, T., Ryan, M.K., 2018. Gender Trouble in Social Psychology: How Can Butler's Work Inform Experimental Social Psychologists' Conceptualization of Gender? Frontiers in Psychology. 9, 1320. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01320
- [18] Yusuf, I.A., 2023. Gender-Sensitive Reporting Principles: A Content Analysis of Violence Against Women and Girls in Indonesian Mainstream Newspaper Coverage. Journalism Practice. 17(1), 150–173. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2022.2037452
- [19] Kutateladze, M., 2015. Importance of Gender-Sensitive Language and Some Guidelines for Business-Writing. Journal in Humanities. 4(1), 21–24. DOI: https://doi.org/10.31578/hum.v4i1.300.
- [20] Crawford, J.T., Leynes, A.P., Mayhorn, C.B., et al., 2004. Champagne, beer, or coffee? A corpus of genderrelated and neutral words. Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers. 36(3), 444–458.
- [21] Guidelines for promoting equal treatment of men and women in the Secretariat, 1992. Available from: The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management. United Nations. Secretariat. Available from: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/153708?ln =ru&v=pdf (cited 18 February 2025).
- [22] Avery, D., 2020. Japan Airlines drops "ladies and gentlemen" for gender-neutral greetings. NDC News. Available from: https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nb c-out/japan-airlines-drops-ladies-gentlemen-gender-n eutral-greetings-n1241557 (cited 18 February 2025).
- [23] BBC News, 2017. Tube to change "ladies and gentlemen" announcements. Available from: https://www. bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-40591750 (cited 18 February 2025).
- [24] Tainio, L., 2011. Gendered address terms in reproach sequences in classroom interaction. Linguistics and Education. 22(4), 330–347.
- [25] Richardson, H., 2020. Transgender woman who kept her transition secret for 16 YEARS reveals she finally confessed she'd been born a man to her fiancé – but only after a month of dating and "being intimate". The Daily Mail. Available from: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-9005097/ Trans-woman-kept-identity-secret-16-YEARS-s hares-relief-telling-fianc-born-male.html (cited 18

February 2025).

- [26] Lindqvist, A., Renström, E.A., Sendén, M.G., 2018. Reducing a Male Bias in Language? Establishing the Efficiency of Three Different Gender-Fair Language Strategies. Sex Roles. 81, 109–117.
- [27] Sczesny, S., Formanowicz, M., Moser, F., 2016, February 02. Can Gender-Fair Language Reduce Gender Stereotyping and Discrimination? Frontiers in Psychology. Available from: https://www.frontiersin.org/arti cles/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00025/full (cited 18 February 2025).
- Yuzar, E., Rahman, F., Sari, D.D., et al., 2023. Unmasking Gendered Language Patterns in Social Media Discourse. Saree: Research in Gender Studies. 5(2), 103–118. DOI: https://doi.org/10.47766/saree.v5i2. 1822
- [29] Ytreberg, E., 2000. Notes on Text Production as a Field of Inquiry in Media Studies. Nordicom Review. 21(2), 53–62. Available from: https://www.nordicom.gu.se/s ites/default/files/kapitel-pdf/45_Ytreberg.pdf (cited 18 February 2025).
- [30] Tafani, V., 2009. Teaching English through Mass Media. Acta Didactica Napocensia. 2, 81–95.
- [31] Hansen, K., Littwitz, C., Sczhesny, S., 2016, March 22. The Social Perception of Heroes and Murderers: Effects of Gender-Inclusive Language in Media Reports. Frontiers in Psychology. 7. Available from: https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychol ogy/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00369/full (cited 18 February 2025).
- [32] Black, E., 1992. Politics and the News: The Political Functions of the Mass Media. Toronto: Butterworths.
- [33] Wood, J.T., 1994. Gendered Media: The Influence of Media on Views of Gender. In: Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, and Culture. Wadsworth Publishing: Belmont, CA, USA. pp. 231–244.
- [34] Sendén, M.G., Sikström, S., Lindholm T., 2015. "She" and "He" in News Media Messages: Pronoun Use Reflects Gender Biases in Semantic Contexts. Sex Roles. 72, 40–49.
- [35] Ansari, M., 2019. My dear countrymen we are Freemen! The Farmville Herald. Available from: https://www.farmvilleherald.com/2019/05/my-d ear-countrymen-we-are-freemen/ (cited 18 February 2025).
- [36] "My dear countrymen, what is wrong with you

people?": The speech you won't hear on Independence Day. 2016. Scroll.in. Available from: https://scroll.in/article/813949/my-dear-countryme n-what-is-wrong-with-you-people-the-speech-you -wont-hear-on-independence-day (cited 18 February 2025).

- [37] "My dear countrymen, violence isn't our way, it never was", 2018. Greater Kashmir. Available from: https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid =1731578270266014&set=a.581186588638527&pai pv=0&eav=AfbBBig6yqu6104NOYuEXDVLAR1S A_ofUtiH5iCmEyeb1rurV_-7OV0emftcWb6cYPs (cited 18 February 2025).
- [38] Dalton, J., 2021. BBC spends more than £1.1m on legal fees in equal-pay and race-inequality cases. The Independent. Available from: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/ bbc-equal-pay-jobs-women-lawyers-b1790944.html (cited 18 February 2025).
- [39] Express, 2020. Available from: https: //www.express.co.uk/life-style/life/1377155/st udy-adults-quarter-immune-system-health (cited 18 February 2025).
- [40] Hague, J., 2020, May 26. NJIC honors local athletes for best sportsmanship. The Observer. Available from: https://www.theobserver.com/2020/05/26/njic-h onors-local-athletes-for-best-sportsmanship/
- [41] Hague, J., 2012. Kearny freshman Koziel wins three medals at NJSIAA Meet of Champs. The Observer. Available from: https://www.theobserver.com/2012/ 06/20/kearny-freshman-koziel-wins-three-medals-a t-njsiaa-meet-of-champs/
- [42] Hague, J., 2019. Weaver comes home again to lead Lyndhurst wrestling. The Observer. Available from: https://www.theobserver.com/2019/01/09/weav er-comes-home-again-to-lead-lyndhurst-wrestling/
- [43] Lee, B., 2024, March 11. Oppenheimer wins best picture Oscar as Emma Stone pulls surprise win. The Guardian. Available from: https://www.theguardian.co m/film/2024/mar/10/oscars-best-picture-oppenheimer (cited 18 February 2025).
- [44] Sanofi, 2024. Available from: https://www.talentify. io/job/regional-treasury-services-center-senior-analy st-europe-and-emea-all-genders-budapest-budapest-s anofi-r2735150#google_vignette (cited 18 February 2025).