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LINGUISTIC DISCRIMINATION AS A SOCIAL, LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS PHENOMENON[1]

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Abstract: This article explores the difference between equality and the absence of discrimination within the area of language use. It draws on examples of social practices of linguistic inequality in Slovakia, and analyses how these are regulated by Slovak law, international law and laws of countries of best practices. The article argues that these examples represent three different models of linguistic equality: formal equality, equality of opportunities and substantive linguistic equality. It will analyse how these approaches empower or disadvantage speakers of minority languages, and what normative guide they provide for linguistic equality.

Key words: linguistic rights, equality, anti-discrimination, Hungarians in Slovakia, international human rights law

1. INTRODUCTION

Is linguistic equality achieved by prohibiting discrimination on the basis of language? That depends on how the balance is achieved between equality norms and provisions on the use of languages. This article explores the gap between equality and non-discrimination by drawing on specific examples of language use in Slovakia. By analysing how various social practices of linguistic inequality are regulated by law, the article differentiates between three legal regimes of linguistic equality, which differ in what specific forms of inequality they permit to persist.

The different meanings of equality have already been explored in the legal literature (see Fredman 2011, for an overview). McCrudden differentiates between four meanings of equality, each emphasising a different component of the full dimension of equality: the individual justice model, the group justice model, equality as recognition of identity and equality as participation (McCrudden 2005). Fredman has further developed the concept of substantive equality by distinguishing its four dimensions (Fredman 2016). These approaches have not yet been applied to the area of language use. That area is typically considered from the perspective of specific

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norms on minority rights and language use, without a deeper theoretical reflection on their relationship to equality (Malloy – Caruso 2013; Henrard – Dunbar 2008; Alfredsson 2000).

Slovakia's language policy has received a lot of attention in the academic literature but not from the perspective of different conceptions of equality (Sloboda et al. 2018; Lanstyák 2000; Gbúrová 2009; Wardyn – Fiala 2010; Moorman-Kimáková 2014). This article will fill this gap by addressing three specific ways of setting the balance between equality norms and language policy: by Slovak law, by international human rights law and by laws of countries of best practices. Analysing linguistic practices under these standards highlights the level of protection users of minority languages would need to exercise their linguistic rights. The article argues that these examples represent three different models of linguistic equality: formal equality, equality of opportunities and substantive linguistic equality. Contrasting the specific examples of the wider phenomenon of linguistic inequality with the narrow legal understanding of discrimination leads to a deeper understanding of the impact of legal norms on social practice and can provide a more comprehensive framework for linguistic justice.

2.   LINGUISTIC EQUALITY UNDER SLOVAK LAW

In Slovakia, section §2(1) of the Anti-discrimination Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of, among other grounds, language (Zákon o rovnakom zaobchádzaní 2004). Section §2a(2) defines direct discrimination as less favourable treatment of the person compared to others in a comparable situation. Section §2a(3) defines indirect discrimination as a formally neutral act or rule which treats a person less favourably compared to others, unless the act or rule could be objectively justified as following a legitimate interest and is proportionate and necessary to achieve that interest. Persons speaking a different language than Slovak are thus formally protected from unfavourable treatment by direct action or formally neutral rules. The Act applies to a wide area of relationships, covering employment and the provision of services.

At the same time, other laws contain provisions making direct distinctions between the use of different languages. More specifically: the Slovak language has certain advantages over other languages. Article 6(1) of the Constitution defines the Slovak language as the sole state language (Ústava Slovenskej republiky 1992). This provision is mainly implemented by the State Language Act, which formally declares the Slovak language to have "primacy" over all other languages on the territory of Slovakia, and also gives specific advantages to the use of Slovak in certain situations [Zákon o štátnom jazyku 1995, §1(2) and §3(1)]. The use of minority languages is mainly regulated by the Act on the Use of Minority Languages, which has a narrower scope and provides more limited protection to minority languages compared to that of the State Language Act (Zákon o používaní jazykov národnostných menšín 1999; Fiala-Butora 2012).

The language laws contain rules which provide advantages to speakers of Slovak compared to speakers of minority languages. This formally violates the principles of equality laid down by Article 12 of the Constitution and the Anti-discrimination Act. These seemingly contradictory approaches are hard to reconcile in the abstract. The relationship of language laws and anti-discrimination laws is not one of specific and general norms, where the former would constitute an exception to the latter. The Anti-discrimination Act also prohibits indirect discrimination caused by regulation [Zákon o rovnakom zaobchádzaní 2004, §2a(3)], and laws are not immune to review under anti-discrimination provisions (see the European Court's practice, for example Sidabras and Džiautas v. Lithuania 2004). The Anti-discrimination Act makes a specific exception for laws implementing the principle of affirmative action (also called positive discrimination) in section §8a, from which follows that other laws have to comply with the Act. The exception in §8a does not apply to the State Language Act, as that is not following the aim of compensating a disadvantage of members of national minorities. Nor do the language laws in general comply with §2a(3) of the Anti-discrimination Act: some of their provisions might pursue a legitimate interest, and they might be proportional and necessary to that interest, but this must be assessed on a case by case basis.

To establish the relationship between these two sets of norms, the following part will analyse specific examples of linguistic inequality in Slovakia. This will clarify how state bodies understand the dividing line between the realm of anti-discrimination norms which require equality on the basis of language and language laws which adopt specific rules of inequality between languages.

Access to employment is one of the primary areas covered by equality law. The Anti-discrimination Act protect persons from unfair dismissal on one of the protected grounds. A few examples of persons allegedly made redundant in Slovakia because of the language they spoke at work were reported by the press. A woman employed at Deichmann Šamorín was allegedly dismissed by her employer because she spoke Hungarian to customers.[2] Similarly, a man was harassed by his colleagues at Volkswagen's plant in Bratislava for speaking Hungarian, as a consequence of which he had to resign from his employment.[3]

These persons both submitted civil lawsuits arguing a violation of the Anti-discrimination Act. The Act does prohibit these kinds of unfair treatment, therefore if they succeed with meeting the burden of proof, they can achieve victory before the courts. We can conclude that the law does protect persons from being dismissed solely due to the use of a specific language and the connected association with a minority.

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[2] *Deichmann-ügy: még per is lehet belőle*, Új Szó, 2 December 2015. Available at: https://ujszo.com/kozelet/deichmann-ugy-meg-per-is-lehet-belole [cit. 20-01-2023].

[3] *Pert indított a pozsonyi Volkswagen ellen egy csallóközi alkalmazott amiatt, amit szerinte a cégnél át kellett élnie*, Paraméter, 10 September 2021. Available at: https://parameter.sk/pert-inditott-pozsonyi-volkswagen-ellen-egy-csallokozi-alkalmazott-amiatt-amit-szerinte-cegnel [cit. 20-01-2023].

On the other hand, the Anti-discrimination Act does not support persons to actually use their language at the workplace. There are specific provisions in language laws detailing what language public employees must use – the default language is Slovak for all public employees under the State Language Act [Zákon o štátnom jazyku 1995, §3(1)] and the Law on the Use of Minority Languages makes specific exceptions permitting the use of minority languages in some circumstances (Fiala-Butora 2013). If employees were forbidden by their employers to use a minority language outside of that context, the employers would be acting in accordance with the law, and the Anti-discrimination Act would not protect the employees.

An example is provided by the Slovak Railways. In their internal employment regulations, they specifically require employees to use Slovak in communication with each other [Železnice Slovenskej republiky 2008, section 12(4)]. Two employees speaking Hungarian with each other would thus breach this obligation. The regulation is obviously disadvantageous for speakers of languages other than Slovak. At the same time, it complies with the language laws. This provision has not yet been challenged before courts, but according to the Railways, it does not violate the Anti-discrimination Act.

Similar examples are reported from the Slovak Post as well. Complaints about postal employees berating customers for trying to speak Hungarian were reported to the Ministry of Transportation which replied that the Slovak Post is not breaching the law (Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia 2019, para. 211). In Bratislava, the director of one post office ordered employees not to speak Hungarian among each other (Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia 2014, para. 147). Again, this situation does not fall under the scope of the Anti-discrimination Act.

Hospitals are another important area of language use. Hungarian-speaking newspapers frequently report incidents where patients are berated and even harassed for trying to speak Hungarian to staff or just speak Hungarian among each other (for example parents to their small children).[4] A serious incident was reported from the Nové Zámky hospital's emergency unit, where a patient with severe abdominal pain was refused to be treated by a doctor because the patient, a young Hungarian woman, did not speak Slovak properly. The patient reported the incident, but the Hospital concluded that the doctor did not violate the law.[5] Other hospitals allegedly forbade their staff to speak Hungarian to patients, on the ground that they are based in municipalities where the Law on the use of Minority languages do not apply (Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia 2019, para. 145).

These hospitals are correct about their legal obligations. Language laws indeed do not require hospitals and their staff to understand and use minority languages – in

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[4] *Na Slovensku aj v nemocniciach len po slovensky!*, Maďari.sk, 20 February 2019. Available at: http://madari.sk/magazin/aktuality/na-slovensku-aj-v-nemocniciach-len-po-slovensky [cit. 20-01-2023].

[5] *Felelősségre vonják a magyar beteget elutasító bolgár orvost?*, Hírek.sk, 5 November 2013. Available at: https://www.hirek.sk/belfold/felelossegre-vonjak-a-magyar-beteget-elutasito-bolgar-orvost [cit. 20-01-2023].

fact they explicitly exempt them from the obligation to speak minority languages [Zákon o štátnom jazyku 1995, §8(4)]. If a doctor chooses not to speak Hungarian, they can legally do so. Hospitals outside of bilingual municipalities can prohibit doctors and nurses to speak Hungarian.

It seems that the balance between the Anti-discrimination Act and language laws was struck by the Slovak legislator in a peculiar way: equality law protects employees from dismissal on the basis of language; but it does not give them the right to use their language for communication at the workplace. The latter is regulated by language laws, which are not governed by the principle of equality but hierarchy among languages. As a result, equality on the basis of language is very narrow and formal. It does not capture a large part of the life experience of minority language speakers, and even if it complies with Slovak equality law, it can violate international requirements on equality.

3. LINGUISTIC EQUALITY UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

International human rights law contains the same duality as Slovak law: it prohibits discrimination on the basis of language, and at the same time it recognises language policy as a legitimate aim of restricting minority rights (see for example Mentzen v. Latvia 2004). Because apart from specific minority rights treaties it does not contain elaborate rules on language policy, each body monitoring international treaties has to balance equality provisions against measures promoting the state language. This chapter will assess the approach of the European Court of Human Rights, the most important international human rights body with jurisdiction over Slovakia, to assess how it struck this balance compared to the domestic Slovak actors described above.

Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights prohibits discrimination on the basis of language, among others (European Convention on Human Rights 1950). This provision can only be applied in conjunction with another article of the Convention, protecting substantive human rights. These other articles provide only limited protection to linguistic rights. However, Article 10, which protects the right to freedom of expression, is clearly relevant to situations where private persons want to express themselves in a language of their choice. Slovak law does limit these expressions in certain cases. Would these limitations hold up to scrutiny under the European Convention?

Article 14 does not prohibit all kinds of differential treatment, only those limitations which do not pursue a legitimate aim or are not proportionate to that aim (D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic 2007). The European Court can review any kind of measures for their compliance with Article 14, even if they are contained in a state's constitution (see for example Kiss v. Hungary 2010; Anchugov and Gladkov v. Russia 2013). In other words, Slovak language laws are not in general exempt from review; they have to be justified under the Convention criteria. The promotion

of an official language was accepted by the European Court as a legitimate aim (Podkolzina v. Latvia 2002); the question remains: whether the measures chosen by the Slovak legislator to pursue this aim are necessary and proportionate.

The Court can be particularly strict in situations where the restriction of expressions takes an invasive form, for example where it is enforced by financial sanctions (Murat Vural v. Turkey 2014). Although the Slovak government is of the position that violations of the State Language Act by private actors can no longer be penalised after the Act's 2010 amendments (Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention 2014, para. 5), in fact the sanctions were just moved into other laws (Fiala-Butora 2021).

One area where sanctions apply to private entities is the language of advertisements (Zákon o reklame 2001). In 2010, the Slovak Commerce Inspectorate imposed a fine of 150 euros on the Slovak-language *MY Nitrianske noviny* for publishing an advertisement in Hungarian from a business based in Hungary.[6] The Inspectorate argued that the State Language Act requires advertisements to be bilingual. The *Gombaszög Youth Festival*, the biggest cultural event of Hungarian-speaking youth in Slovakia, was also investigated for their posters which contained a text in Hungarian without Slovak translation.[7] They were not fined but ordered to take their posters down. Similarly, the Hungarian-language weekly *Ma7* was investigated for its billboards.[8] The Ministry of Culture did not sanction them with a fine but ordered the advertising companies to take the Hungarian-only billboards down.[9]

These cases are very likely breaching the above standards of the European Convention. The authorities are imposing a very disproportionate measure, sanction and threat of sanction, targeting private bodies who enjoy freedom of speech to communicate with their customers and participants in a way of their choice. In the case of services offered in Hungarian, a newspaper published in Hungarian and a festival conducted in Hungarian, there are good reasons for such advertisements to be in Hungarian only. Advertising in Slovak might in fact be misleading – some potential patrons could understand that the goods offered can be enjoyed in Slovak as well. It is hard to see how the government could justify these steps, how they could present a legitimate aim and argue that sanctions are a proportionate way of achieving them, and there are no less restrictive alternatives to achieve the same goal.

Another area where sanctions can be imposed is private broadcasting. Regional and local TV stations are required to translate or subtitle all their broadcasting to

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[6] *Týždenník MY dostal pokutu za maďarčinu*, Sme, 14 October 2010. Available at: https://domov.sme.sk/c/5592908/tyzdennik-my-dostal-pokutu-za-madarcinu.html [cit. 20-01-2023].

[7] *Kipécézték a Gombaszögi Tábort*, Új Szó, 9 July 2014. Available at: https://ujszo.com/kozelet/kipeceztek-a-gombaszogi-tabort [cit. 20-01-2023].

[8] *Államellenes feliratok a minisztérium körül*, Ma7, 24 November 2019. Available at: https://ma7.sk/kozelet/aktualis/allamellenes-feliratok-a-miniszterium-korul [cit. 20-01-2023].

[9] *Hétköznapi sovinizmus*, Ma7, 8 December 2019. Available at: https://ma7.sk/aktualis/hetkozna-pi-sovinizmus [cit. 20-01-2023].

Slovak on their own cost, including areas where Hungarian speakers constitute a majority (Zákon o vysielaní a retransmisii 2000). *Komárno TV* was fined by the National Broadcasting Council for violating this obligation by broadcasting an advertisement of the Hungarian-language weekly *Delta* only in Hungarian (Rada pre vysielanie a retransmisiu 2010). Similarly, *Štúrovo TV* was fined for broadcasting an advertisement of a company from Hungary (Rada pre vysielanie a retransmisiu 2012a). It was fined again for broadcasting a news report on a local traffic accident in which two Hungarian eye-witnesses said two sentences in Hungarian without Slovak translations or subtitles (Rada pre vysielanie a retransmisiu 2012b). *Štúrovo TV* this time appealed against the decision, and after being rejected by the Slovak courts filed an application to Strasbourg. The European Court of Human Rights rejected its application for being submitted late: the Court considered that the Slovak courts cannot provide an effective remedy for this violation, and therefore the applicant should have turned directly to Strasbourg (Július Pereszlényi v. Slovakia 2021). It is nevertheless clear from the decision that the matter falls under the Court's jurisdiction, and it can review the sanctions as potential violations of freedom of speech.

It is hard to see how the government could justify sanctioning a private broadcaster for broadcasting in the language of its target audience. All the more so because no comparable obligation to translate or subtitle broadcasting to minority languages exists in Slovakia. Any argument the government could raise for requiring Slovak translations would apply to translations to minority languages as well as for broadcasters who operate in areas inhabited by a significant number of speakers of minority languages.

The State Language Act creates several other forms of inequalities between languages. Touristic signs, for example, can be displayed only in Slovak. This is a very unreasonable requirement in regions where Hungarian-speakers live, and a large part of tourists are citizens of Hungary. The town of Komárno allowed a private association to put up Hungarian-English translations to the local touristic signs, and as a result they were threatened with a fine of 33 000 euros by the Nitra District Office (Okresný úrad Nitra 2014). They had to take the signs down. It is very hard to see what aim this provision and this particular measure serves, apart from suppressing communication in minority languages.

The State Language Act also requires cultural and educational events to be announced in the State Language – regardless of whether there are any attendants who do not understand the language of the event. Although I am not aware of any person fined for violating this requirement yet, the *Klasov volunteer theatre group* was investigated by the Ministry of Culture for their leaflets, announcing their Hungarian-language performance which did not have a full translation of one Hungarian poem.[10] I was also an eyewitness to how for a time the *Ghymes band*, the

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[10] *Jazyk ochotníkov z divadla v Klasove dráždi Maďariča*, Sme, 21 April 2010. Available at: https://domov.sme.sk/c/5338593/jazyk-ochotnikov-z-divadla-v-klasove-drazdi-madarica.html [cit. 20-01-2023].

most famous Hungarian-language folk-music band from Slovakia, accompanied its weekly performances by Slovak announcements. They tried to make fun of the situation, but it could not conceal the absurdity of imposing a requirement on them to communicate in Slovak to their audience.

The above mentioned are all examples of situations which can easily fall short of the not particularly strict requirements of the European Court of Human Rights. There are other international human rights bodies, such as the United Nations Human Rights Committee and the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, who can examine individual complaints related to language discrimination, and whose standards can be stricter than that of the European Court. Regardless of how a balance between equality provisions and language policy is struck by these bodies, it is important to underline that these international standards do not require equality in the area of language policy. They tolerate quite a significant degree of inequality, and only intervene for particularly serious cases of disproportionate measures without a reasonable justification and only in areas which can be characterised as individual rights. The resulting standard can be characterised as equality of opportunity: minority language speakers do not have to be supported by the state to compensate for disadvantages, but they also cannot be unreasonably burdened to prevent them from using their language. This is a standard which is higher than the formal equality adopted by Slovak bodies as explained in the previous part but still far from substantive equality. Slovak laws nevertheless quite frequently violate even this standard, as explained above. What substantive equality requires, will be analysed in the next part.

4. SUBSTANTIVE LINGUISTIC EQUALITY IN COUNTRIES OF BEST PRACTICES

Some countries guarantee equality of languages above the level required by international treaties. Finland, for example, recognises two national languages, Finnish and Swedish (Finnish Language Act 2003). While the latter is mother tongue of less than 6 per cent of the population, it is formally equal to the majority Finnish language. Another example is Italy where in the autonomous region of South Tyrol (Alto Adige) both German and Italian, the language of the local and the national majority, are recognised as official languages (Larin – Röggla 2019, p. 1024).

In these examples, official recognition is accompanied with measures that guarantee that speakers of national minority languages can use their language in all areas of life. This does not mean full equality of opportunities – those can be limited by the demographic fact that minority languages have a smaller number of speakers and thus constitute a smaller market, therefore some cultural goods are produced in lower volumes in those languages. There are fewer newspapers published, university degree programs offered and cultural events taking place in Swedish than in Finnish,

and the state could do little to compensate these disadvantages. However, the state can ensure that there are sufficient numbers of speakers of minority languages employed as civil servants, doctors, police employees, etc., to provide public services in minority languages.

These two countries achieved a very high level of linguistic equality, which I will call substantive linguistic equality for the purposes of the following analysis. After briefly characterising its features, this part will assess its relevance for Slovak language policy by answering a few interrelated questions: what would substantive linguistic equality mean in Slovakia? What are the areas where this concept is most relevant for assessing the country's current language policy? Lastly, how does the country fare in this comparison?

Substantive linguistic equality does not apply to all languages but only a select few. In Finland, only Swedish enjoys the recognition as national language, and is elevated above other officially recognised minority languages, such as Sami, Russian and Roma (Government of Finland 1999, p. 10). Similarly, in Italy, German in South Tyrol enjoys a higher status than country's numerous other minority languages. Advantaging one minority language above others can be explained by history (both Swedish and German used to be the dominant languages while Finland was part of Sweden and South Tyrol was part of Austria) but also their large number of speakers, their regional concentration and other factors which facilitate the provision of services in these languages. For example, it is easier to recruit or train sufficient number of qualified professionals in these languages. The aim is not to discriminate against smaller minority languages but to provide a high level of rights which is only possible in some languages.

Substantive linguistic equality is also limited geographically. While the majority language is typically recognised as official in the whole territory of the country, German in Italy is only official in South Tyrol. While Swedish in Finland is formally a national language, the right to use it applies to areas where its speakers reach a certain proportion of the population. For that reason, its use is in practice restricted to the South and South-West of the country. Even in areas where it is recognised as an official language, but the number of speakers is low, its use is limited in practice (Bamberg 2021). In contrast, Finnish is official everywhere except the autonomous Åland Islands (Suksi 2013).

Equality does not apply to all areas of life. While states can take measures to increase the knowledge and encourage the use of minority languages, they cannot compel their use in purely private areas of life. The range of potential friends, romantic partners and other social contacts will always be more extensive in majority languages (Emens 2009).

Most importantly, substantive linguistic equality does not mean fully equal opportunities in practice. Rights can be guaranteed by laws, and languages can have formally equal status, but the ability to provide services at all levels, in all areas, will always be a struggle in languages which are spoken by only a fragment of the

population. Finland and South Tyrol also have their shortcomings, but nevertheless the authorities make substantial effort to ensure the implementation of linguistic rights in practice.

Since majority languages are almost universally understood, at least by educated individuals, persons belonging to the majority group will in general face fewer difficulties in accessing public services in their languages. They might have fewer opportunities to socialise in their language in areas dominated by minority language speakers, but that does not compare to the challenges minority language speakers face in areas dominated by majority language speakers.

Applying the above criteria to Slovakia would result in differentiating among minority languages. The Hungarian language is best placed to benefit from equal status with the majority Slovak language, due to the number of its speakers, their concentration and qualifications. The Rusyn language is another possible candidate due to the regional concentration of its speakers, but it has a low number of speakers overall. The Roma language has a high number of speakers who are nevertheless not concentrated, and are also underrepresented among higher qualified professionals. Rusyn and Roma would need intensive support to benefit from equality. For the other minority languages of Slovakia, substantive equality seems unattainable due to the low number of speakers.

Substantive equality would require recognizing languages as formally equal, and to support minority languages to overcome the natural disadvantage stemming from the lower number of their speakers. Because not all disadvantages can be fully compensated, minority languages could not be fully equal in practice. Nevertheless, law should impose additional restrictions on the use of minority languages.

Language laws in Slovakia fall below these requirements in several respects. The Slovak language is formally elevated above all other languages by the Constitution, which recognizes it as the sole state language, and by the State Language Act, which expressly declares that Slovak enjoys precedence over other languages. Languages are thus not even formally equal.

In terms of specific norms, language laws widen the inequality instead of closing the gap between Slovak and other languages, as shown in the previous parts above. There are two specific areas which deserve specific attention under the lens of substantive equality.

Public signs are relatively inexpensive to place. The translation costs are nominal, they do not have to be done locally, and bilingual signs do not have higher production costs than unilingual signs. For that reason, public signs are an area where bilingualism is relatively easy to achieve. Nevertheless, equality is not the standard followed by the Slovak language laws. Slovak-language signs are the norm; minority-language signs are often only permitted but not required. That means some bilingual municipalities display bilingual street signs on their own cost, others do not (Mrva – Szilvássy 2011; Laihonen 2012). Some signs are not even permitted to be displayed bilingually, as the above-mentioned touristic signs, or the names of rivers, parts of municipalities,

directional signs and others (Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia 2019, para. 164). Even signs which must be bilingual are often missing in practice (Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia 2014, para. 150–153) or use Slovak municipality names due to the Ministry of Culture's dubious interpretation of the law (Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia 2019, para. 166). There seems to be no justification for these practices deviating from equality. They do not add anything to the possibility to use the Slovak language, they merely restrict the use of minority languages.

Providing services in minority languages requires an active human resource policy, with personnel speaking minority languages made available to match the demand. This is the other area where Slovak laws fall below the requirement of equality. Slovak is generally understood everywhere in the country (Lanstyák 2000, p. 143). It is a mandatory subject in all primary and secondary schools. Therefore, there is no shortage of public servants speaking the language, not even in minority-populated areas. The reports on the State Language have so far not uncovered public servants who would be unable to speak Slovak (Ministerstvo kultúry 2000).

That is not the case with minority languages. They are taught in minority language schools, therefore only persons belonging to the specific minority communities speak them. University-level training is provided only in Slovak, with the partial exception of Hungarian, therefore lawyers, doctors, public servants, even if they speak minority languages, might not be familiar with the terminology necessary to perform their jobs in those languages. This situation would require specific tools to allow public bodies to increase the numbers of their employees speaking minority languages. However, these tools are missing from the language laws.

The State Language Act requires all bodies and their employees subject to the law to use the state language in their work [Zákon o štátnom jazyku 1995, §3(1)]. A comparable provision of the Law on the Use of Minority Languages states that public bodies and their employees shall use minority languages under the law but at the same time expressly exempts these bodies and their employees from knowing minority languages [Zákon o používaní jazykov národnostných menšín 1999, §7(1)]. This creates a situation where public bodies interested or even required to provide services in minority languages cannot translate these requirements into their human resource policies. They cannot require the knowledge of minority languages from their employees. They cannot make them a formal precondition of employment or provide wage subsidies for employers learning a minority language. They are lacking the tools to enhance the knowledge of languages among their employees.

The absence of these tools of course does not mean that there are no speakers of minority languages employed in public bodies. Rather, it means that the presence of these speakers in public positions is accidental, it is not a result of a coordinated effort. It reflects the demographic composition of the areas where the body is based, but it can also fall significantly below it. According to the surveys of the government's Report on the use of minority languages, there are public administration bodies in

areas populated by minorities which have no employees speaking minority languages (Úrad vlády 2018).

The legal situation also means that human resource management must be covert. Public bodies do not have knowledge about the language skills of their employees, the state does not require and collect statistics. Job advertisements do not require the knowledge of minority languages because this would be considered discriminatory towards Slovaks who are unlikely to speak minority languages. This is illustrated well by an incident in Rožňava where the local municipality was hiring a clerk to the department on Hungarian culture. They specified in the advertisement that the person must speak Hungarian.[11] It nevertheless caused an outcry and was considered discrimination by the press. The Ministry of Culture considers requiring the knowledge of minority languages as discriminatory (Ministerstvo kultúry 2012). Similarly, a survey of a series of advertisements for social assistant positions working in Roma communities shows that language requirements, although badly needed in many of these communities, were just not part of the requirements (Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia 2019, para. 113). It is possible that public bodies and even private employers do take minority language skills into account in their hiring decisions, but as a consequence of the legal landscape they cannot do it explicitly, and therefore there is no concentrated effort to increase the linguistic skills of public bodies. By treating the linguistic skills of employees formally neutrally, that is, by not regulating them, the state advantages the use of Slovak, which is spoken by a wide variety of stakeholders, providers and recipients of services alike.

Substantive linguistic equality would require justification for every departure from equality. Minority languages are in a disadvantaged position, and although law cannot compensate for all inequalities, it can do so for some. Compared to this standard, Slovak law treats languages formally unequally, by elevating Slovak above other languages. Instead of helping them, it further disadvantages minority languages for no obvious reason. Importantly, it deprives public bodies of the tools to implement linguistic rights in practice. Language laws are not helping to overcome the demographic disadvantages of minority languages, but they are further entrenching them.

5.   MODELS OF LINGUISTIC EQUALITY

The above analysis uncovered that linguistic equality can be understood in at least three different ways. These do not have precisely defined content but can be nevertheless used as heuristic models for analysis. They differ in how they balance the general requirement of equality with norms of language policy which differentiate between languages.

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[11] *V Rožňave hľadajú nového úradníka, má to však háčik: Neviete maďarsky, máte smolu!*, Čas, 8 February 2016. Available at: https://www.cas.sk/clanok/363394/v-roznave-hladaju-noveho-uradnika-ma-to-vsak-hacik-neviete-madarsky-mate-smolu/ [cit. 20-01-2023].

The highest level of equality is provided by legal systems characterised by substantive linguistic equality. This system recognises some, not all, languages as formally equal, and concentrates on equal outcomes in practice. The concept of equality permeates language policy norms; they are oriented at ensuring equal access to public services in minority languages. Equality norms take precedence over language policy norms; deviations from equality must be justified. Substantive equality does not amount to full equality; it is restricted to specific languages in specific areas, and falls short of full equality even there. Nevertheless, for those languages and in those areas, it is closest to full equality.

International law does not raise to the level of substantive equality. It permits inequality by accepting some forms of the promotion of the majority language. Nevertheless, it submits language norms to scrutiny under equality provisions. Different treatment must be justified; not all goals and all means are acceptable. Restrictions on minority languages can be questioned, especially those which have no reasonable goal, or which are based on invasive measures, such as financial sanctions. Nevertheless, states are not required to achieve equal outcomes for minority language users. Compensating demographic disadvantages is not an international requirement. Also, equality norms have a narrow scope: they only apply to individual rights. General measures on public signage or human resource policies of public bodies are outside of its scope because they are hard to characterise as an individual right. The second model can be best described as equality of opportunity or limited equality on the level of linguistic norms: in areas subject to equality norms, languages must be treated equally, but equal outcomes are not required.

Slovakia's approach is closest to the third model, named formal equality. It is characterised by a separation of equality law and language policy. In the area of language use, equality law is subordinated to language laws. Equality law applies only to a narrow set of situations. It does prohibit discrimination on the basis of language, but this prohibition applies only in areas not related to language use. For example, a person cannot be refused services in Slovak on the ground that he or she is a speaker of a minority language; but the service does not have to be provided to him or her in their language. What must be provided is specified by language laws, which are not based on the concept of equality but on the subordination of minority languages to the majority Slovak language.

The Anti-discrimination Act thus treats languages not as communication tools but simply as the person's characteristic, similarly to religion or racial origin. Its only purpose is to identify the protected person and to offer protection if they were discriminated against based on this identification. The instrumental value of languages is not recognised by the law; it does not prohibit inequalities stemming from the fact that person cannot use their language for the purposes of communication. Language laws can restrict the use of minority languages orally and in writing which put their users in a disadvantage, and these disadvantages are not overruled under the Anti-discrimination Act.

6. CONCLUSION

The Slovak legal order protects persons from arbitrary discrimination on the basis of language in some areas unrelated to language use. The Anti-discrimination Act does not protect the use of certain languages. It protects their users if they do not use their language, but it does not prohibit forcing them to use the Slovak language in certain circumstances. Speakers of all languages have a right to be treated equally – if they use Slovak.

The exemption of language laws from the requirements of equality norms is all the more unfortunate because the former are characterised by a highly asymmetrical position of languages. They establish a hierarchy among languages, with Slovak having an elevated position. All majority languages in the world enjoy advantages simply through their demographic presence. The Slovak legal order adds to minority languages' disadvantages instead of compensating for them. It restricts the use of minority languages significantly below their demographic potential. For example, there is no reasonable justification for why all public signs in minority-populated areas could not be bilingual. It does so with tools which are sometimes harbouring on the arbitrary, as their only goal seems to be supressing the use of minority languages without providing any additional benefit for Slovak speakers. It also deprives public bodies of the instruments necessary to implement language rights in practice, further disadvantaging minority languages.

Equality does not have a precise content and scope. There are various areas and forms of equality which policymakers have to choose from, by balancing contradictory requirements. They have a wide discretion in deciding what disadvantages to compensate for. The particular form chosen by the Slovak legislators can nevertheless be characterised by a highly unequal balance between languages. Slovakia thus prohibits discrimination on the basis of language, while at the same time it entrenches and promotes a system of significant linguistic inequality. Speakers of all languages are equal – if they speak Slovak.

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R e s u m é

JAZYKOVÁ DISKRIMINÁCIA AKO SOCIÁLNY, PRÁVNY A ĽUDSKOPRÁVNY FENOMÉN

Článok skúma vzťah diskriminácie na základe jazyka a jazykovej rovnosti analýzou špecifických príkladov jazykovej praxe zo Slovenska a ich hodnotením v troch odlišných právnych režimoch. Rozdiel medzi absenciou diskriminácie a rovnosťou závisí od nastavenia rovnováhy medzi antidiskriminačnými pravidlami a pravidlami používania jazykov. Tri hodnotené právne režimy zodpovedajú trom spôsobom nastavenia tejto rovnováhy. Najvyššiu úroveň jazykovej rovnosti predstavujú krajiny dobrej praxe, napríklad Fínsko a Taliansko, ktoré môžeme nazvať modelom substantívnej jazykovej rovnosti. Tento model sa zameriava na zabezpečenie možnosti používania vybraných menšinových jazykov v praxi vo vybraných oblastiach, na garantovanie dostupnosti verejných služieb v týchto jazykoch. Neznamená absolútnu rovnosť jazykov, ale je k nej najbližšie. Režim medzinárodných zmlúv o ľudských právach môžeme nazvať modelom rovnosti príležitostí. Dovoľuje zvýhodňovanie väčšinového jazyka na úkor menšinových, ale prísne reguluje spôsob, akým k tomu dochádza. Pravidlá o používaní jazykov musia zodpovedať požiadavkám antidiskriminačných noriem, ktoré zakazujú nepomerné zásahy do používania menšinových jazykov. Tento model nevyžaduje opatrenia na kompenzáciu faktického znevýhodnenia menšinových jazykov vyplývajúceho z menšieho počtu hovoriacich, preto nevedie k rovnakým výsledkom v praxi. Slovenská právna úprava predstavuje tretí prístup, model formálnej rovnosti, pre ktorý je príznačná nadradenosť pravidiel o používaní jazykov antidiskriminačným normám. Rovnosť sa tak obmedzuje na ochranu osôb hovoriacich menšinovým jazykom v situáciách, keď svoj jazyk nepoužívajú. Antidiskriminačný zákon chápe jazyk ako vlastnosť človeka, nie ako komunikačný prostriedok. Inštrumentálnu funkciu jazyka, teda možnosti používania jazykov, upravujú jazykové zákony, ktoré nepodliehajú pravidlám rovnosti. Práve naopak, sú založené na hierarchii medzi jazykmi. Slovenská právna úprava tak zakazuje diskrimináciu na základe jazyka a vyžaduje rovnosť pre všetkých vrátane osôb s iným materinským jazykom len vtedy, keď hovoria slovensky.

DISCRIMINATORY INSTRUMENTALISATION OF LANGUAGE[1]

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Abstract: The paper focuses on the description of language used as a tool of discrimination. We understand discrimination as a relationship between two subjects when ontological and axiological certainty is violated. In this sense discriminatory instrumentalisation of language is released at the level of harmful discrimination, unequal treatment and disadvantage. Language use plays a major role in creating a discourse which establishes certain ways of thinking and speaking. The research material is based on conversation about the advertisement for Absolut vodka. The conversation was held on Facebook.

Key words: discrimination, instrumentalisation of language, harmful discrimination, unequal treatment, disadvantaging

1. INTRODUCTION

Discriminatory instrumentalisation of language is a form of pragmatic language use that has a real impact on social culture. Discrimination poses a problem in a democratic society because it undermines the core principles of democracy, such as equality or fairness.

The aim of the paper is to describe the use of language as a tool and means of discrimination. By preferring a descriptive approach over an explanatory one, we only address a certain portion of the issue, which includes a brief theoretical account of both the instrumentalisation of language and discrimination. The interpretive part will focus on online cultural discrimination. This indeed is a very small probe into discriminatory discourse, which has certain specificities and limits on social media. However, it is by no means a negligible contribution in terms of its impact on society, as we are nowadays witnessing how verbal duels are being gradually transferred from the virtual realm to real life relationships.

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2. INSTRUMENTALISATION OF LANGUAGE

Although the idea of language as an instrument has been developed in linguistics for quite a long time, the notion of instrumentalism is associated with pragmatism and with the philosophy of John Dewey. Dewey was a representative of the now obsolete behaviourist approach to knowledge, however, some of his ideas are still quite inspirational today, for example, that knowledge is not the goal of human activity per se, but is instead a means (instrument) of successful human activity or action: "knowledge, on this view, is not a copy whose truth is to be judged by its fidelity to an original; it is an instrument or organ of successful action" (Dewey 1998, p. 346).[2] Successful activity in this sense is overcoming the obstacles presented by the surrounding world: "The obstacles which confront us are stimuli to variation, to novel response, and hence are occasions of progress. If a favor done us by the environment conceals a threat, so its disfavor is a potential means of hitherto unexperienced modes of success" (Dewey 1998, pp. 370–371).[3]

With the communicative and pragmatic turn in linguistics, language also began to be regarded not as the goal of cognition, but as a means of cognising the world, and its activity-related aspect began to be emphasized. What we understand by the instrumentalisation of language is the use of language as an instrument and means of creating a certain social reality. The instrumentalisation of language is based on the use of linguistic (lexical, grammatical, textual, etc.) means and communicative strategies that have become established in certain communicative situations and through which (language has an indirect influence here) certain social and cultural relations have been standardised.[4] The mediating role here is played by discourse, which is considered to be "(i) a linguistic text, spoken or written, (ii) a discursive practice (production of the text and its interpretation), (iii) a socio-cultural practice" (Fairclough 2010, p. 132).[5]

In short, knowledge helps us to overcome the obstacles we face as social beings in our interactions with other members of society. Language serves as

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[2] "poznanie podľa tohto názoru nie je kópia, ktorej pravda sa má posudzovať podľa jej vernosti originálu; je to inštrument alebo orgán úspešného konania"

[3] "Prekážky, ktoré sa nám stavajú do cesty, sú stimulmi k zmenenej novej reakcii, a teda aj príležitosťami k pokroku. Ak sa v priaznivých podmienkach skrýva hrozba, potom nepriaznivé podmienky sú potenciálnym prostriedkom doposiaľ nepoznaných podôb úspechu."

[4] A brief explanation on linguistic instrumentalism can be found in a paper by Alena Bohunická *Ako niečo robiť slovami... a zarobiť (poznámky k jazykovednému inštrumentalizmu)* [*How to Do Things with Words… and Make Money (Notes on Linguistic Instrumentalism)*] (2014): "By instrumentalism, we refer here provisionally to a way of thinking about language that is built on the notion of language as an instrument – a tool or means with which selected kinds of communicative, cognitive, or social activities are associated" (Bohunická 2014, p. 151).

[5] The paper is not intended to be an account of discourse and the ways in which it fulfils its mediating role in the creation of social reality. Due to the limited scope, one can only refer to the papers by N. Fairclough or T. A. van Dijk.

a means of cognition; the use thereof is part of both creating and overcoming various problems. For example, if there is an increased level of exclusion of people or social groups manifested in society, this appears to be a problem that we create with language, but can also overcome with language. None the less, exclusion arises from how we think about people or groups, how we evaluate them, which translates into how we talk about them and vice versa. In discourse, the way of speaking (indirect experience) becomes the basis of cognition instead of direct experience: "The fact that a certain language or linguistic form can function as a means of exclusion or marginalisation is only a consequence of the existence of a certain prevailing discourse shaped by axiologically marked ways of speaking, which stabilizes certain ways of thinking as natural" (Bohunická 2014, p. 149).[6] This implies that one does not have to have direct experience with certain social groups or individuals in order to think about them in a certain way. Stereotypes and prejudices, whether positive or negative, play a major role here.

Another way of using language is when language itself becomes a characteristic on the basis of which people or groups of people are excluded: "It can function as a marginalising means because language can also be an evaluative parameter that excludes from the 'good' community those who treat it differently from its members, who participate in maintaining the dominance of a certain linguistic ideology" (Dolník 2013, p. 233).[7]

It appears that language is instrumentalised in three senses. Through empirical research we can investigate language as an instrument, i.e. the ways in which it is used, which leads us to the forms of its implementation in discourse. In addition, language is a means of establishing a person's relations with the environment (i.e. relations with the cognised world, with other people, with society), but also with oneself. A distinct manifestation of the instrumentalisation of language is when language is an evaluative parameter, which again creates a certain type of social relations based on the relationship of the users to the given language. Due to the limited scope of the paper, the interpretation will be limited to a mere description of the phenomenon, which will allow for the observation of the use of language as an instrument of discrimination. A broadened view would then include a description of the formation of relations at different levels, but also an explanation of the deeper connections, using insights from different scientific disciplines.

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[6] "To, že istý jazyk či jazyková forma môže fungovať ako prostriedok exklúzie či marginalizácie, je len dôsledok existencie istého prevládajúceho diskurzu tvoreného axiologicky príznakovými spôsobmi hovorenia, ktoré stabilizuje isté spôsoby zmýšľania ako prirodzené."

[7] "Ako marginalizačný prostriedok môže fungovať preto, lebo aj jazyk môže byť hodnotiacim parametrom, na základe ktorého sa z 'dobrého' spoločenstva vylučujú tí, ktorí zaobchádzajú s ním inak ako jeho členovia, ktorí sa podieľajú na udržiavaní dominancie istej jazykovej ideológie."

3.   DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination is a phenomenon that is obvious at first sight. One knows how to use the term in communication and intuitively reveals the negative connotations associated with discriminatory practices. However, the definitions of discrimination vary in expert sources. For example, the primary lexicographic interpretation thereof refers to the cognitive side of discrimination, describing it as "a distinction that harms someone, not recognising their equality with others, denying and restricting the rights of certain categories of the population or of certain states, international organisations, etc." (Balážová – Bosák 2005)[8] or as "harmful distinction, usually in the granting of rights or benefits (e.g. to a different race, gender, social class)" (Buzássyová – Jarošová 2006).[9] In this case, it is important to consider not only what it means to distinguish, but also when such distinction is harmful.

The sociological approach understands discrimination as "the fact and manner of restricting or impairing the rights and entitlements of certain social groups" (Linhart – Petrusek – Maříková – Vodáková 1996, p. 213).[10] Discrimination is part of social relations and social rules; it has its characteristic manifestations as well as a noticeable impact on the person or people concerned. Authors of the *Large sociological dictionary* (cf. Linhart – Petrusek – Maříková – Vodáková 1996, pp. 908–910) also emphasise the emotional aspect of discrimination, as extreme negative feelings are associated with it, e.g. in the case of racism, which they characterise as a hostile attitude towards members of another race or ethnicity. In this case, the subjective negative feelings of the persons discriminated against are not taken into consideration.

The legislative perspective is based on the principle of equal treatment, i.e. it emphasises the behavioural aspect of the concept: "Compliance with the principle of equal treatment shall consist in the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of sex, religion or belief, race, membership of a national or ethnic group, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital or family status, colour, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, or on the grounds of notification of a crime or other antisocial activity" (so-called Anti-discrimination

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[8] "rozlišovanie poškodzujúce niekoho, neuznávanie jeho rovnosti s inými, popieranie a obmedzovanie práv určitých kategórií obyvateľstva al. určitým štátom, medzinárodným organizáciám a pod." (*Slovník cudzích slov* [*Dictionary of Adopted Foreign Words*])

[9] "poškodzujúce rozlišovanie, obyč. pri priznávaní práv al. výhod (napr. pre odlišnú rasu, pohlavie, spoločenskú triedu)" (*Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka* [*Dictionary of the Contemporary Slovak Language*]) Available at: https://slovnik.juls.savba.sk/?w=diskriminácia&s=exact&c=p84c&c-s=&d=kssj4&d=psp&d=sssj&d=orter&d=scs&d=sss&d=peciar&d=hssjV&d=bernolak&d=noun-db&d=orient&d=locutio&d=obce&d=priezviska&d=un&d=pskcs&d=psken# [cit. 02-05-2022].

[10] "fakt a spôsob obmedzovania alebo poškodzovania určitých spoločenských skupín v ich právach a nárokoch"

Act).[11] Slovak legislation is also based on European Anti-Discrimination Law, which refers to the situational specifics of discrimination (social context, social conditions) and the purpose is to enable access to social benefits and available opportunities.

Contemporary social psychology abroad characterises discrimination as behaving differently toward people based on their membership in a social group (cf. Kite – Whitley 2016, p. 343).[12] The psychological definition expands the concept by not only building on negative connotations, as it can also be based on positive characteristics, e.g. women are characterised as the gentler sex, which indeed has an impact on their perception in society. However, this contributes to the reinforcement of inadequate stereotypes and prejudices.

It appears that discrimination has four aspects, namely cognitive, affective, behavioural and pragmatic. On the basis of the above definitions, it is evident that the concept of discrimination needs to be defined in terms of harmful distinction, unequal treatment and disadvantage, which constitute the pragmatic dimension of the phenomenon. The individual components of discriminatory behaviour are all present simultaneously, and are therefore defined only formally, for the purposes of interpretation.

When describing and explaining language as part of discriminatory practices used by individuals or groups, it should be mentioned that discrimination is an objectively existing, undeniable phenomenon in society. At the same time, it is a subjective phenomenon. It relates to the experience of that which makes us feel insecure. The feeling of security is a basic social and psychological need. However, the sense of security does not only relate to the need for safety or health protection, or the satisfying of basic human needs, but, as it turns out, feeling secure also relates to the need to belong somewhere, to have value both as a member of society and as an individual, i.e. to have human dignity. Therefore, (in the light of the above-mentioned literature), we have defined discrimination for the purposes of our paper as the relationship between two subjects (collective or individual) in which the ontological security (related to basic human needs, the very existence of a person in society) and the axiological security (related to basic human rights, the social value of a person and their personal dignity) are undermined.

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[11] "Dodržiavanie zásady rovnakého zaobchádzania spočíva v zákaze diskriminácie z dôvodu pohlavia, náboženského vyznania alebo viery, rasy, príslušnosti k národnosti alebo etnickej skupine, zdravotného postihnutia, veku, sexuálnej orientácie, manželského stavu a rodinného stavu, farby pleti, jazyka, politického alebo iného zmýšľania, národného alebo sociálneho pôvodu, majetku, rodu alebo iného postavenia alebo z dôvodu oznámenia kriminality alebo inej protispoločenskej činnosti." Available at: https://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/2004-365 [cit. 02-05-2022].

[12] "Discrimination consists of behaving differently toward people based on their membership in a social group" (Kite – Whitley 2016, p. 343).

4. DISCRIMINATORY INSTRUMENTALISATION OF LANGUAGE

In simplified terms, we can regard the discriminatory instrumentalisation of language as both the use of language as an instrument and a means of discrimination, as well as a discriminatory ground (when language acts as an evaluative parameter). If discrimination is the erosion of certainties, it occurs in discourse. The language activity targets both individuals and entire social groups. Language is used directly but also indirectly, consciously or unconsciously (automatically) to impact the object of discrimination. To impact the object of discrimination means to behave linguistically in such a way, that situations are created which call into question the need for the object's existence or value, both individual and social. Entire discourses arise about whether the object in question (an individual or a group) has the right to be part of society (being), whether their presence is beneficial to society (value), and what this may cause, what influence it may have on the society in question. Although we do not have direct access to the subjective experience of discrimination through language, we can very easily observe strategies that are successful in eliminating the influence of certain individuals or groups within the reference group. Indirectly, this creates inequality between the groups with rights and the groups without rights within the community, which poses a problem for a democratic society. Discrimination and discriminatory use of language poses a problem to such an extent that some countries intervene in the form of various laws, rules or guidelines, e.g. in 2008 the Austrian Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Labour issued in the form of materials for schools *Guidelines for non-discriminatory language use*.[13] The guidelines are aimed at achieving an understanding of discrimination in relation to the five categories (age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity) and also at achieving more sensitive linguistic behaviour. To this end, a number of negative examples are provided, as well as recommended terms and formulations that at the same time are politically correct. The said guidelines describe linguistic discrimination at the level of words and concepts, at the level of sentences and texts, at the level of argumentation, perspectivisation and in relation to the attribution of characteristics, not only in terms of what we do, but also in terms of what we say as well as what we do not say. Linguistic discrimination can be explicit but also implicit.

However, in order not to remain on the theoretical plane, or on the plane of a bare interpretation of concepts, we will demonstrate them using an example of cultural discrimination, pointing out the ways in which language is instrumentalised. M. E. Kite and B. E. Whitley Jr. (2016) distinguish between discrimination at different levels of society – discrimination between individuals, institutional discrimination, discrimination at the level of organisations, and discrimination at the level of culture. Cultural discrimination is the process of achieving one's own position at the top of the social hierarchy, whereby it is the group itself that

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[13] Leitfaden für einen nicht-diskriminierenden Sprachgebrauch (translated from the original)

determines the cultural value system. As a result, it is discrimination and inequality incorporated into literature, art, music, language, customs, beliefs, and ideologies (cf. Kite – Whitley 2016, pp. 21–22).

The example of cultural discrimination here is an alcoholic beverage advertisement that has provoked a storm of reaction. The advertisement thematises a scene from the nightlife of young people. At a disco party, a girl dressed in a traditional costume is walking through the crowd, singing an adapted version of a folk song in the lyrics: *Slovak mothers, pretty daughters you have*.[14] The same title of the song also served as the campaign's main slogan. There would have been nothing special about the scene if it had not been for the girl, who does not seem to fit into the generally accepted idea of a typical Slovak girl, because of the colour of her skin. On 14 September 2018, the producer of the alcoholic beverage posted the advertisement on the social network. The ensuing discussion revealed the deeply rooted attitudes and ideologies related to Slovak culture or, to be more precise, to Slovak traditional culture. The discussion stirred by the advertisement contains more than 2000 comments.[15]

Figure 1. Post from Facebook[16]

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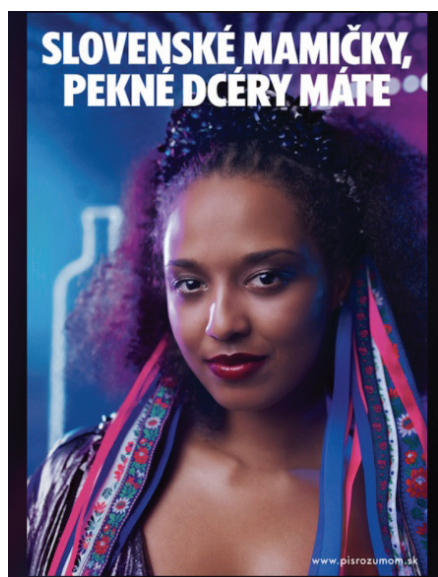
[14] In the original version of the folk song: *Slovak mothers, pretty sons you have*.

[15] In the discussion there were also posts that supported the advertisement, posts that cited negative posts in a challenging way, and also the posts of advertiser (Absolut). However, because of the limited range of the paper we focused on the negative and potentially discriminatory posts.

[16] Available at: https://www.facebook.com/AbsolutVodkaSlovakia/photos/a.180315242045131/1842873872455918 [cit. 02-05-2022].

4.1 Discrimination as harmful distinction

Discrimination is often characterised as harmful distinction. Although this is not a fully comprehensive definition, it captures important components of the phenomenon, the cognitive and axiological aspects, i.e. it arises from the cognitive and evaluative capacity of human beings, who need to orient themselves in a multifaceted world.

This orientation operates on the basis of the interpretive competence of a person who cognises the world and, in so doing, gets to know themselves. Here the anthropocreative power of interpretation and language, which, as J. Dolník says, is a bridge between the object and the subject, is revealed: "The resulting tension between the object and the emerging subject was that the subject's induced need and interest to understand nature clashed with its [the object's] otherness, resulting from the subject's self-awareness, i.e. its [the subject's] perception of the object as something other than itself. The evolutionary demand to understand this otherness necessitated the discovery of language to bridge the gap between object and subject" (Dolník 2019, p. 77).[17] Understanding the "language of nature" required interpreting it in some way, giving rise to human language. In that sense, language is a reflection of how one understands the world, and how one interprets it, thus uncovering its meanings and exploring what it brings to oneself, asking the questions: What is it? What message am I receiving? What is the meaning of this? What is the purpose of this?

Users actually did the same in the case of the above-mentioned advertisement, where the linguistic reactions are an expression of the said fundamental questions:

(1) ***Takto vyzerá slovenská mamička, alebo jej dcéra???*** *len zato, že má vo vlasoch folklórne stuhy???* ***Čistá provokácia***, *nič proti Absolut vodke, ale toto..... Ako keby ste v Afrike dali reklamu s blondýnou a napísali africké mamičky krásne dcéry máte... Pozdravujem autora tejto reklamy*
   [**Is this what a Slovak mother looks like, or her daughter???** just because she has folk ribbons in her hair??? **Pure provocation**, nothing against Absolut vodka, but this....Like if you ran an ad in Africa featuring a blonde and wrote: African mothers, beautiful daughters you have... Greetings to the author of this ad]

(2) *Aspon by tam mohla byt* ***slovenka*** *ked uz to tam pisete......*
   [At least there could be a **Slovak woman**, if you already wrote it there......]

(3) *toto je vzorka* ***väčšiny*** *Slovenských mám ?*
   [is this a sample of the **majority** of Slovak moms?]

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[17] "Vzchádzajúce napätie medzi objektom a rodiacim sa subjektom spočívalo v tom, že navodzovaná potreba a záujem subjektu rozumieť prírode narážala na jej inakosť, vyplývajúcu z jeho sebauvedomovania, teda z vnímania objektu ako niečoho iného, ako je on sám. Evolučná požiadavka 'rozumieť tomuto inakému' si vynútila objavenie jazyka na premostenie priepasti medzi objektom a subjektom."

(4)   *Slovenka **jak repa***....
       [**Typical** Slovak][18]

Users interpret the advertisement as an image of Slovak daughters (and mothers). The key concept is the qualifier *Slovak* (or a *Slovak woman*), which is associated with both quantitative qualifiers (*majority*) and qualitative qualifiers (*jak repa – as beetroot* – an idiom, in this case used as irony). Cognising the world means not only acquiring information about it, but also sorting and remembering it in case of repeated future experience with a given phenomenon. However, it is important to remember that getting to know the world is not objective; one does not use rational thought, logic and objective cognitive processes (analysis, synthesis, classification, etc.). If we speak, for example, of human identification competence, we understand it as a process based on the discovery of so-called salient features, which are regularly repeated and on the basis of which we can classify a group of phenomena into relatively homogeneous units. According to scientists, recognising the salient characteristics of a phenomenon is limited to 5 – 9 elements in which they find certain regularity; they serve to establish order in the diverse world, i.e. to create a certain natural order. In the context of discrimination, these features have not only an identifying but also a distinctive function and serve to differentiate entities or groups of entities. Thus, based on the users' statements, it can be perceived that the identification and differentiation of objects is also related to one's own identity, because it is this way that they answer the question of what is Slovak:

(5)   *Ja nie som žiadny rasista a milujem rôznorodosť kultúr ktorá na svete je a preto sa budem zo všetkých síl túto zachovať , lebo aj tá naša je jednou z nich . A tvoja hlúpa úloha je len v tom, že provokuješ a polarizuješ spoločnosť a sonduješ či sme už dostatočne hlúpy.. a potom je nad slnko jasnejšie, že **to nieje žiadna slovenka a typická už vôbec nie***!*
       [I'm no racist and I love the diversity of cultures that exist in the world, and that's why I'm going to do my best to preserve this one, because ours is one of them as well. And your stupid role is just to provoke and polarize society and to check if we are already stupid enough... and then it's as clear as daylight that she's **no Slovak woman and certainly not a typical one!**]

(6)   *jedna vec je ucta k cloveku a druha **prijat za normálne to co normálne nie** je a nikdy nebude !!!!!*
       [one thing is to respect a person and another **to accept as normal that which is not normal** and never will be !!!!!]

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[18] Translator's note: Irony. Literally: *As Slovak **as beetroot**... potatoes and beetroot used to be the two root crops typically eaten by Slovaks.

(7) *Na obcianskom to mozno napisane ma, ale **etnicky a geneticky nou nie je***
     [It may be written on her ID card, but **ethnically and genetically she is not
     (Slovak)**]

(8) *oblečiete cernosku do kroju a napíšete že je slovenka. šak to je tak **úchylka
     vec** ten **kroj má takú tradíciu** že v tej dobe nikto nevedel že nejaký černoch
     existuje. naštudujte si **rozdelenie ras**.*
     [dressing a black woman in a traditional costume and writing that she is
     Slovak. That's such a **sick thing**. The **tradition of the costume is so long** that
     at that time nobody knew black people existed. study the **division of the
     races**.]

Within their interpretive competence, users identify the object and at the same
time differentiate it, distinguish it from other objects, while it turns out that the
parameters for evaluating what is Slovak include *typicality*, *normality*, and
traditionality. The criteria for evaluation are *ethnicity*, or *race*, *genetics*.

(9) *nikdy mi nechutila ta vasa voda do ostrekovacov ale toto je moc. **slovenske
     zeny su biele, africke zeny su cierne**, neplette to dokopy*
     [I've never liked your windshield washer fluid, but this is too much. **Slovak
     women are white, African women are black**, don't mix it up]

(10) ***Slovak je len jeden a to je Biela rasa*** *to je proste fakt to nezmeníte. občianstvo
     môže dostať každý s tým to nemá čo spoločne obsolutne*
     [There is **only one Slovak (nation) and that's the White race** that's just
     a fact you can't change. Anyone can acquire citizenship, it has absolutely
     nothing to do with that]

Users try to characterize what defines a traditional, typical, normal Slovak
woman. In the above case, the most distinctive characteristic is race, the
manifestations of which (*white*, *black*) are in a disjunctive oppositional relationship.
At the same time, race is perceived as a biological fact, although it is a social
construct. For example, they characterize it geographically, although *Slovak* and
African are not homogeneous terms from a lexical point of view, since one denotes
a country, and the other denotes an entire continent. From a linguistic point of view,
it is interesting how race, nationality and even religion correlate, and how in many
places users use them as synonymous categories, that is, from a lexical point of view
they are in a relation of semantic congruence, or in a relation of void opposition

(11) *v popise je slovenske mamicky a nie cernosske mamicky*
     [the description mentions Slovak mothers and not black mothers]

(12) *Neviem si to predstaviť medzi židmi a moslimami že by rabín nabehol do Palestíny a vykašli sa na predsudky ja som tiež Palestinčan!*
[I can't imagine it between Jews and Muslims, like if a rabbi ran to Palestine and dropped all prejudice – and was like: I'm a Palestinian too!]

The vagueness of the concept of race is not at all surprising. The authors of the comprehensive collective monograph *Stereotypes, Prejudices, Discrimination* (Kite – Whitley 2016) point out that the categories of race, gender, and age most often influence our perceptions of people, explaining the unjustifiability of the concept of race from a historical perspective, which has proven to be very weak. A century ago, when Irish and Italian immigration was at its peak in the United States of America, even the Irish were not considered white. The categories of White and Non-white are social conventions. At one time, the word race was used to refer to practically any group of people, without making reference to biological characteristics. Over time, the term has been narrowed in correspondence with physical characteristics, especially in correspondence with the colour of skin, but not hair, eyes, etc. The authors argue that although race is a biological fiction, it is at the same time a social fact in the sense that it affects the hierarchisation of society. The perception of race, according to the above paper, is culturally influenced and is the result of stereotyping.

Here, the question of when a (non)distinction is harmful comes to the fore. Harmful distinction can be understood as a distinction that disturbs the normal state of being and functioning of a person. The normal state of being and functioning is what it should be in order for a person to exist smoothly in society, i.e. it ensures the security of survival and at the same time the person feels that they are part of society (assimilative security), and can satisfy their biogenic and sociogenic needs.[19] Discrimination as harmful (non)distinction manifests itself in different ways, i.e. the protagonist in the advertisement is associated with groups that are positioned outside or on the periphery of our society.

(13) *Nájdi si niečo o haploskupinách...okrem toho..***choď do Afriky...keď sme všetci rovnakí, potom v tom nebudeš vidieť rozdiel***...bude ti tam určite lepšie...*
[Look up something about haplogroups...and also...**go to Africa...if we are all the same, then you won't see the difference...**you'll be better off there...]

(14) *choď do Afriky, najlepšie JAR a povedz im tam, že sú aj bieli **vraždia, znásilňujú a mučia tam beztrestne búrov***...len choď*
[you go to Africa, preferably RSA, and tell them there are also white people. **they murder, rape and torture Boers without punishment...**just go]

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[19] M. Nakonečný (2009, p. 179) writes about biogenic and sociogenic needs.

(15) *tie **útoky nožmi, autami, zapálené kostoly, autá, bordel v západnej Európe, znásilnenia bielych žien atď** hovoria o akej tolerancii? My musíme byť tolerantní podľa vás a keď nie sme tak sme rasisti ale tí, voči ktorým máme byť tolerantní **nič z nášho spôsobu života netolerujú** tak to je v poriadku podľa vás?*

[those **attacks with knives and cars, churches and cars set on fire, the mess in Western Europe, rapes of white women**, etc., speak of what kind of tolerance? We have to be tolerant according to you and if we are not then we are racist but those we are supposed to tolerate **do not tolerate anything that is part of our way of life** - so that is ok according to you?]

(16) *vam vsetkym by som dal zivit tych **darmozracov** co sedia doma na podpore.*
[I'd have you all feed those **freeloaders** sitting at home on welfare.]

The protagonist is defined e.g. on the basis of stereotypes related to Africa or the African population, namely RAS or Kenya (although her father is from Congo), with which users associate threats to the health and life of especially the "white" people, indicating that Africans are not able to behave in a cultured manner.

It is further associated with immigrant groups who are described as *maladjusted, intolerant* and attributed with characteristics similar to those of Africans or South Africans. In addition, it is associated with the Roma, a minority living in Slovakia, whose maladjustment is reflected, according to them, in the use of social benefits subsidized (literally: *fed to them*) by the majority population.

In the extreme case, the protagonist is dehumanised and referred to not only as a different race, but a totally different species. An example of this is a metaphor that appears in several variants in many comments. The function thereof is to support a biological understanding of the concept of race, and it can thus be included among conceptual metaphors. The meaning of a particular metaphor can be interpreted as indicating that if someone is born in Slovakia, they are not necessarily Slovak:

(17) *takže keď sa moja mačka narodila v akvárku tak je automaticky ryba ?*
[so if my cat was born in an aquarium, it is automatically a fish?]

(18) *Čiže každý kto sa narodí na Slovensku je Slovák? Hmm ked sa narodí myš v stajni je myš či Kôň?*
[that is to say everyone born in Slovakia is Slovak? Hmm, when a mouse is born in a stable is it a mouse or a horse?]

(19) *Osol narodeny v konskej mastali ostane stale oslom*
[A donkey born in a horse stall will always remain a donkey]

(20) *ak sa potkan narodi v konskej stajni, to z neho este nerobi kona, alebo ano?*
[if a rat is born in a horse stable, that doesn't make it a horse, does it?]

(21) *a šteňa po slovenskom čuvačovi a africkom psovi bude stale čuvač .....*
[and the puppy of a Slovak Cuvac and an African dog will still be a Cuvac....]

Users of the social network express the fact that the protagonist in the advertisement does not fit into the autostereotypical[20] idea of a traditional Slovak maiden in various ways, e.g. by describing her as exotic:

(22) *Tiež ma to ako slovenku neurazilo, no predsa som sklamaná keď dá ktosi prednosť **exotickej kráse** pred tou ktorej máme doma dosť a vhodnejšej na reklamu DOMA! Sto ľudí sto chutí... v tomto prípade dosť prekvapených a dosť aj sklamaných*
[I'm not offended as a Slovak woman either, but I'm still disappointed when someone prefers **exotic beauty** to the beauty of which we have plenty at home and which is more suitable for advertising AT HOME!! A hundred people have a hundred tastes[21] … in this case, it's a surprise and a disappointment for quite a few]

(23) *naše.domáce ženy sú považované za najkrajšie a v slovenskej reklame máme **exotiku**???? Kde.sme*
[our domestic women are considered the most beautiful and we have **an exotic beauty** in a Slovak ad???? Is that where we stand now?]

The background of the advertisement is the combination of the traditional with the visually different, and the reaction of users rejecting (but also accepting) the strategy shows that it is the reaction to differentness that is surprising in the given context and to which they have to adapt. This brings us to the domain of xenology, where we have to talk about differentness and foreignness as a result of accommodation and assimilation processes in society, whereby what is foreign is understood as inassimilable (cf. Dolník et al. 2015). A particular emphasis of foreignness is the hyperbolisation thereof, which goes beyond cultural difference. The foreign is explained not only as different, but also as not normal, not familiar, as that which is not normally encountered. At the same time, it poses a threat, thereby provoking aggressive defensive reactions that contradict the idea of tolerance. In this case, the foreignness of the protagonist is extremised and her acceptability in the context of what is traditional Slovak is less probable than that of an alien being.

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[20] Stereotypical attitude towards one's own (reference) group (the opposite is heterostereotype – stereotypical attitude towards other groups).

[21] Translator's note: Although the idiom is usually translated as "One man's death, another man's bread", the translation here is literal to convey that different people have different reactions.

(24) *to ste tam mohli radsej dat **mimozemstana z alzy***...
[you should have just used the **alien from the alza ad**...]

Discrimination undermines the other person's confidence by finding in them various qualities, or qualities that they experience and evaluate as negative, inadequate, while at the same time reinforcing the perception of one's own qualities as correct, identical with those of the collective, thus achieving the reinforcement of the self-image of the members of the society, but also of one's own position in the community (solidarizing function). In this way, one avoids social exclusion (being pushed to the periphery of the community or marginalised).

4.2 Discrimination as unequal treatment

The interactional aspect of discrimination takes place against the background of the induction and reproduction of social relations in which a person acts as a behaving and acting being. It is a person's social nature that determines them to form social relations at different levels, and in each social relation they occupy different social and communicative roles. Discrimination occurs at all levels of relationships, i.e. between individuals, at the level of organisations, at the level of institutions and at the level of culture. However, our understanding of discrimination stems from a harmful distinction based on the opposition of own versus foreign (different), which creates a kind of social radius, with the so-called "group privilege" at the core of society. It is an unearned privileged state conferred (metaphorically) on the basis of race, gender, social class or sexual orientation.[22] Belonging to a dominant group is related to opportunities and social advantages.

It is the dominant group that determines the value system of the society in order to stay on top of it. The users' statements express what "should be" in the advertisement, what a Slovak woman "should look like", or what "shouldn't be there". For example, ideas about the beauty of domestic women were often articulated; in some cases, users posted so-called image memes corresponding to their idea of a white Slovak girl in a traditional costume:

(25) *Raz ked su to slovenske mamicky a chcete tam niekoho obsadit aby to prezen-toval, **mal by to byt clovek, ktory ma oboch rodicov a podobne slovakov**. Ne-mam nic proti rasam, sam ako som uz pisal mam kamaratov aj romov, ale proste ked slovak, tak poriadny a nie polovicny. Ako vyssie napisal m. k., ked sa narodis na pandore, neznamena, ze si avatar (papierovo ok, ale stale budes len pozemsky clovek, nebudes ani modry ani chvost mat nebudes ani nic)*
[it clearly says Slovak mothers and if you want to cast someone to represent that, it should be a person whose **both parents, and so on, are Slovak**. I have

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[22] "Group privilege is an unearned favoured state conferred simply because of one's race, gender, social class, or sexual orientation" (McIntosch 1988 – cited by Kite – Whitley 2016, p. 9).

nothing against other races, as I have already written I also have friends who are Roma, but simply said, if it says Slovak, then a proper one and not a half one. As m. k. wrote above, when you are born on Pandora, it doesn't mean you are an Avatar (on paper, ok, but you will still be just a person from Earth, you won't be blue, you won't have a tail or anything)]

(26) *mne vobec nezalezi na tom aku ma clovek farbu, ale aky ten clovek je. Len raz* ***ked ma niekto reprezentovat slovaka, tak tam nenasukam do kroja cernosku pre boha****.... nech ma papiere akehokolvek obcianstva*
[I don't care at all what colour a person is, but what that person is like. but **if someone is to represent a Slovak, don't put our traditional costume on a black woman for God's sake**.... whatever her citizenship papers are.]

(27) *O akej podpore tolerancie tu dristate? Ja na Slovensku* ***ziadne rasisticke nazory nevnimam*** *tak tu nepodsuvajte svoje zvratene nazory a to co tu neexistuje.*
[What kind of crap are you talking here about supporting tolerance? **I don't perceive any racist views** in Slovakia so don't slide in your twisted views on what doesn't exist here.]

(28) *Jedine, co mi vadi na celom tom obrazku je ta slecna. Nie tak ani ona sama ako to, ze v popise je slovenske mamicky a nie cernosske mamicky, tak* ***by tam mala byt klasicka poctiva slovenska deva a nie tato****. Sam mam priatelov romov a podobne, nehanbim sa za to lebo su to slusny pracujuci ludia, co sa staraju o svoje rodiny. Ale uz ked pisem slovenske, tak slovenske.!!*
[The only thing that bothers me about the whole image is the girl. Not so much her specifically as a person, as the fact that the description reads Slovak mothers and not black mothers, so **there should be a classic Slovak maiden and not this one**. I myself have friends who are Roma and the like, I am not ashamed of them because they are decent working people who take care of their families. But when it says Slovak, then Slovak it should be!!!]

(29) *Toto je moja zem a* ***budú tu žiť iba bieli Slováci****. Aj ja mám právo povedať ako si predstavujem svoju krajinu*
[This is my land and **only white Slovaks will live here**. I also have the right to say how I imagine my country]

Evaluation in the sense of "should be" is understood as part of the contradiction between the ideal (what should be) and the real (what is). Meanwhile, self-reflection of the privileged group's own discriminatory actions is either non-existent, i.e. the members thereof do not perceive themselves as discriminating (*I do not perceive any*

racist views), or the users are aware of their position in society as well as of the fact that possible discrimination against other members of the community would undermine their ideal self-image, which is why statements rejecting it often appear in the discussion (*I have nothing against races, but. ..*; *I have Roma friends myself, but...*; *I don't care at all what colour a person is, but...*). This way, they try to retroactively rationalise their attitudes. Alternatively, they invoke their rights (*I also have the right to say how I imagine my country*) in order to create the illusion of equality in society. The idea of equality is a fundamental principle of any democratic society. In Slovakia, this idea has been translated into Article 12 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. However, the idea of equality is still only an ideal, not a reality (cf. Debrecéniová 2008, p. 7), because unequal treatment is a social fact.

(30) **je rozdiel byt obcanom** *Slovenskej republiky,* **a je rozdiel byt prislusnikom Slovenskeho naroda**... *ktory je sucastou Slovanskeho naroda, a ludia tohoto naroda maju urcite vonkajsie znaky nesuce sa v ich genoch ..medzi inymi farba pleti .. ....holka je prislusnickou nejakeho etnika ... tak nech je na to hrda ..urcite ma toto etnikum vlastne kroje a zvyky, ...* **neodsudzujem** *na zaklade farby pleti ani* **nediskriminujem** *ci uz negativne alebo pozitivne ..***ale** *toto ako koncept reklamy mi dvihlo zlc*

[there is a difference between being a citizen of the Slovak Republic and being a member of the Slovak nation... which is part of the Slavic nation, and the people of this nation have certain external features present in their genes..among other things-skin colour .. .... the girl is a member of an ethnic group ... so let her be proud of it...surely this ethnic group has its own costumes and customs, ... **I do not judge** on the basis of skin colour or **discriminate,** either negatively or positively ...**but** this as an advertising concept has just raised my hackles]

(31) *Na obcianskom to mozno napisane ma, ale* **etnicky a geneticky nou nie je**
[It may be written on her citizenship card, but **ethnically and genetically she is not** (Slovak)]

The privileged group can clearly define, rationalize why other members of society do not belong to the core of society. The above example shows that practical users are able to accept a person as a citizen of the Slovak Republic, who, however, always remains on the periphery of society in terms of ethnicity, culture, etc., which means their exclusion and the associated marginalisation.

Acceptance of otherness, or acceptance of the image of a non-ethnic Slovak in a traditional costume, only comes into consideration if she is the subject of amusement, be it indulgent humour or caricature. Again, with the emphasis that it is not discrimination.

(32) *V kazdom pripade je taketo dievca v slovenskom kroji prinajmensom raritou .*
Ja som taketo nieco este v zivote nevidela, nie je to teda bezna vec tak ako sa
to snazi reklama vykreslit. Ba ano videla som Ibiho, slovenskeho bacu - ale to
nemalo tento odporny a spinavy rasisticky podton, bolo to naopak velmi mile,
vtipne a spontanne-presne take aky je aj IBI ,ktoreho my Slovaci milujeme bez
ohladu na to akej je farby pleti. A v tom to presne je! Uvedomte si vazena
Absolut company ze tu nejde o rasizmus zo strany nas pisatelov a Slovakov,
ide tu o viac, o vzorec kultury, zvyky a obycaje ,na ktore mame ako prislusnici
tohto naroda urcity nazor a ide o veci , na ktore sme bezne zvyknuti *a hlavne*
o VASU NEUCTU K TOMUTO DEDICSTVU!. My si tiez nedavame na hlavy
celenky z peria a nezacneme skakat okolo ohna na namesti SNP s tym, ze sme
povedzme indiani alebo zulu....absolut zneuzila VSETKYCH, AJ tu dievcinu
z reklamy AJ slovensku kulturu. UCTA VAM NIC NEHOVORI VSAK? Je to
naozaj velka hanba !
[In any case, such a girl in the Slovak traditional costume is at least a rarity.
I have never seen such a thing in my life, so it is not a common thing as the
advertisement tries to portray it. Yes, I've seen Ibi (Translator's note: Ibrahim
Maiga is a Slovak singer and actor of Malian descent) as a Slovak shepherd –
but it didn't have this disgusting and dirty racist undertone, on the contrary, it
was very nice, funny and spontaneous – just like IBI, who we Slovaks love no
matter what colour he is. And that's exactly what it is! Remember, dear
Absolut company, that this is not about racism on the part of those who
commented and Slovaks, **it is more than that, it is about the cultural
pattern, customs, which we regard as members of this nation, and it is
about the things we are used to** and especially about YOUR DISRESPECT
FOR THAT HERITAGE!!! We don't put feather headbands on our heads and
start jumping around the fire in the square of the Slovak National Uprising
claiming that we are let's say Indians or Zulu ....Absolut has abused
EVERYONE, EVEN the girl in the ad AND Slovak culture. RESPECT
DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU, DOES IT? It's really a big shame!]

Promoting diversity, inclusion, equality in society is seen as, at the very least,
disrespectful of one's heritage or racist towards one's own "white" race.

(33) *rasistická reklama, rasisti obyčajní nič viac*
[a racist advertisement, plain racists, nothing more]

(34) *Toto je* **vysmech a plutie na Slovensky narod**, *nase korene a tradicie a hlavne*
na nasich potomkov, toto ma co zo Slovenskymi mamickami??
[This is a **mockery and spitting on the Slovak nation**, our roots and
traditions and especially on our ancestors, what does this have to do with
Slovak mothers??]

(35) *Este **sa budeme za chvilu schovavat** vo vlastnej krajine, lebo sme bieli.*
[We'll be **hiding in our own country in a while**, because we're white.]

(36) *váš postoj je skutočne rasistický lebo miešaním rás tá **naša rasa zanikne***
[it is your attitude that is really racist because by mixing races **our race will disappear**]

(37) *Teda ak ma byt bratislava tak uzasne rozmanita ako taky britsky birningham kde posledne **banda tychto uzasnych farebnych ludi dokopala obycjneho parkovacieho inspektora** na zemi tak to sa fakt super tesime..*
[Well, if Bratislava is supposed to be as amazingly diverse as the British Birmingham, where a **bunch of these great colourful people kicked the shit out of a parking inspector on the ground** recently, then we are really super excited...]

(38) *A aká tolerancia mne to už pripadá ako **"znasilnovanie" Európy** všetko by bolo v pohode keby stále nemal niekto potrebu hlasnejšie hulakat sprostosti.*
[What tolerance, it just seems to me like the **"raping" of Europe**, everything would be fine if some people didn't feel the need to shout nonsense louder and louder.]

(39) *demokracia sa stáva v tejto dobe a priestore „Európa" väčšou hrozbou ako bola anarchia a možno sa demokracii časom **podarí prekonať aj holokaust***
[democracy is becoming a greater threat than anarchy was in this time and space of 'Europe', and perhaps over time democracy **will even beat the Holocaust**]

Users activate a self-preservation instinct in order to preserve a reference group with which they feel solidarity and identify themselves as members. Discriminatory behaviour is not grounded in a real threat, but only in the sense of threat evoked by our perception of other people, i.e. any reason to discriminate is a feature of the discriminating behaviour rather than a characteristic of the person being discriminated against. The fear of the foreign, which we perceive as a threat to our existence, was also demonstrated in the above-mentioned users' statements, none of which were directly related to the actual protagonist in the advertisement; the narrative is considerably depersonalised so as not to speak specifically about her person. The result, however, is the marginalisation of the protagonist to a passive position as a member of society on the periphery.

However, it needs to be said that the discriminating subject may not even be aware of the unequal treatment for a number of reasons, e.g. (a) they are a member of the privileged society (a privileged group is a majority group whose characteristics

are considered to be without markers), (b) they behave and act on the basis of lived social norms, i.e. on the basis of lived standardisations, conventions, traditions, attitudes (stereotypes and prejudices), (c) discriminatory behaviour and actions do not interfere with their motivational world, do not pose a problem in achieving their own goals, or (d) are often a means used to achieve their own goals.

3.3 Discrimination as disadvantaging

Harmful distinction and unequal treatment do not characterise discrimination in its entirety, e.g. because the ban on discrimination takes into consideration situations in which it indeed is desirable to positively distinguish (not to homogenise) and to treat differently, in the interests of creating a fair playing field in which every single member of society has the same "starting line" in their access to opportunities. The term discrimination is therefore extended so as to include the notion of disadvantage.

Disadvantage can be considered on several levels. First of all, it is the markedness of a negative evaluation to certain characteristics of the person being discriminated against. This aspect is related to harmful distinction and is more cognitive in its nature. Social advantages are characterized by social psychology as an unearned more advantageous status that is attributed on the basis of race, gender, social class, or sexual orientation, where the attribute "unearned" implies that these advantages are not based on ability, effort, or past achievements, but on being part of a privileged group (see Kite –Whitley 2016, p. 9). Advantages can be understood as passive values, they are characteristics that are attributed to people on the basis of (non)membership in a privileged group. Members of the privileged group are the bearers of unmarked characteristics, while non-privileged individuals or groups are the bearers of marked characteristics.

However, disadvantaging is mainly pragmatic, i.e. it is related to a person's goals and motivations. A person's motivational world is made up of needs, interests and values, whereby disadvantaging may not affect the whole spectrum of needs, but only some of the needs that a person has and the fulfilment of which is the aim of their behaviour and actions.

If we exclude that on the part of the discriminator there is a real threat to the existence of the individual or the entire privileged group, society, culture, we can see that in the analysed discussion there is a conflict between values (culture as a value, traditional values), or ideals (how traditional culture should look like) on the one hand and rights (the right to identity, the right to equal access to opportunities, resources, privileges), or the needs of a person on the other hand, i.e. on the part of the person being discriminated against (e.g. the need to belong, the need for self-fulfilment).

From the point of view of the subject being discriminated against, disadvantaging appears as the impossibility of taking advantage of one's own abilities in achieving goals, enjoying human rights or satisfying needs. One of these

is the right to identity. It turns out that identity is not only a phenomenon that is subjective, but also a phenomenon that must be collectively accepted. Identity has been variously characterized, for example as "generally, a unity of inner psychic life and action, which is also referred to as authentic being" (Linhart – Petrusek – Maříková – Vodáková 1996, p. 414).[23] In humanistic psychology, identity is understood as the ability to "be what one really is", that is oneself, and is associated with the pursuit of self-fulfilment (cf. ibid.). However, one cannot completely disregard the social influence on a person. In his psychosocial theory of personality development, E. Erikson emphasizes the "congruence between the inner sense of self and the externally given definition of identity ascribed to people by their social environment" (Blatný et al. 2010, p. 17).[24] Acceptance of the subject's identity takes place against the background of collective values that determine the boundaries of culture:

(40) *ty si očividne presvedčený o všetkom možnom,* **len aby sa v človeku stratila akákoľvek identita**. *Ja nie som žiadny rasista a milujem rôznorodosť kultúr ktorá na svete je a preto sa budem zo všetkých síl túto zachovať, lebo aj tá naša je jednou z nich.*
[You are obviously convinced of all sorts of things, **only to get rid of any identity in a person**. I am no racist and I love the diversity of cultures that exist in the world and I will do my best to preserve this one because ours is also one of them.]

Cultures are perceived by users as complex entities with fixed boundaries, which may also be related to the perception of geopolitical boundaries as those that are manifest, salient. Even if these boundaries sometimes appear relative, they are also underpinned by natural boundaries separating larger territorial units, such as continents (*After all, she has an African father!*). The preservation of culture is understood as the establishment of fixed boundaries between different cultures. Here, boundaries are established on the basis of race, which is one of the characteristics that no single person can actually contribute to, but which is nevertheless the main reason for the privileging or exclusion of members of society.

Discrimination resulting from the collective rejection of a person's identity in this sense poses a problem for the self-fulfilment of the members of society, because it puts them in a passive position, i.e. they cannot actively participate, for example, in the creation and reproduction of social (and traditional) culture. This passive position of the members of society also appears in language, as the users direct their disapproval not on the protagonist as a representative of culture, but instead towards

[23] "obecně jednota vnitřního psych. života a jednání, která bývá též nazývána autentickým bytím"
[24] "kongruenci mezi vnitřním pocitem Já a externě danou definicí identity přisouzenou lidem jejich sociálním prostředím"

the creators of the advertisement, who make explicit the theme of the diversity of society. The protagonist herself is thus perceived only as an object of exploitation for the benefit of ideology, and her real subjective identity is not perceived at all:

(41) *Vaše babky by z toho asi radosť nemali, **akú SLOVENKU si prezentujte***
[Your grandmothers probably wouldn't be happy about it, what **SLOVAK WOMAN** you are presenting here]

(42) ***absolut zneuzila VSETKYCH, AJ tu dievcinu z reklamy** AJ slovensku kulturu. UCTA VAM NIC NEHOVORI VSAK? Je to naozaj velka hanba!*
[Absolut abused EVERYONE, EVEN the girl in the advertisement AND Slovak culture. RESPECT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU, DOES IT? It's really a big shame!]

A passive status means dependence on social acceptance, which translates into solidarity of the privileged group. J. Dolník understands solidarity as a sense of belonging interpreted by the phrase "we belong together" (Dolník 2021). It is a two-way relationship between the individual, who needs to belong somewhere (subjective need for self-preservation), and society, which provides security for the self-preservation of the collective through solidarity. The solidarity of the collective must accordingly respond to the differentiation of the members of society, which translates into tolerance, i.e. the ability of the group to accept a certain degree of otherness in the individual, i.e. that certain characteristics do not provoke a negative reaction from the collective. However, the degree of tolerance is a result of the collective ability to accommodate. The accommodation on the part of the collective is in fact the adaptation of the system to new conditions, new phenomena. At the same time, the individual must give up certain specific features in order to become a part of the group that does not pose a perception problem. Even an apparently marked characteristic can be understood neutrally, not a priori negatively. In this case, J. Dolník speaks of the neutralisation of markers in a certain context (not in general, as it would constitute assimilation). It is a two-sided, namely an accommodative and assimilative process. However, skin colour is impossible to change, so a problem-free perceptual state requires a greater degree of accommodation on the part of the privileged group. It requires going beyond the boundaries of the comfort zone, but it is a manifestation of cooperation, one of the universalities of human society.

The discussion reveals that the users do not approve of the self-fulfilment of the advertisement protagonist within the traditional Slovak culture, and at the same time they also restrict the satisfaction of her need for appreciation, recognition, approval from a certain part of the society, but also belonging. While the self-actualization need belongs to the so-called growth needs (meta-needs), the need for recognition is one of the basic sociogenic needs (cf. Nakonečný 2009, p. 179):

(43) *Presne, si slovák len na papieri, v skutočnosti si iný, koho zaujíma nejaký papier a zákon, keď v skutočnosti máš proste iný talent, iný štýl, a cit. Myslím, to tak, že napríklad romovia sú skvelí muzikanti a speváci a majú to väčšinou vrodené, že sa im to ľahšie vymastruje atď.*
[Exactly, you are Slovak only on paper, in reality you are different, who cares about some paper and law act, when in reality you just have a different talent, a different style, and feeling. I mean, it's just that, for example, the Roma are great musicians and singers and it's mostly innate in them, it's easier for them to master such skills and so on.]

(44) *Radšej zmaz tu reklamu lebo **to nikdy nebude jej krajina** tak ako absolut nie je naša vodka*
[Better delete that ad because **it will never be her country** just like Absolut is not our vodka]

(45) ***ona nie je Slovenka**! Veď má otca afričana!*
[**she is not Slovak**! After all, she has an African father!]

(46) In the extreme case, the violation of the autostereotype of a white Slovak is elevated to the level of violation of legal standards, which means that cultural norms are considered laws:

(47) *Nie, nie, nie. Neviem kto, čo? Ja osobne si myslím. Že dievčinka netuší čoho sa dopustila aj keď **neznalosť neospravedlňuje**.*
[No, no, no. I don't know who, what? Personally, I think the poor girl has no idea what she's done, although **ignorance is no excuse**.]

A thoughtful reader might argue that no intent to discriminate can be demonstrated in this way; these are the personal attitudes of social network users and language users that are expressed explicitly and may not even correlate with the actions of individuals in the real-life context of coming into contact with members of marginalised population groups. It is precisely here that it is important to recall the discourse in which we operate and that the virtual world provides a space for the expression of aggression, which, although it may not manifest itself in the real world, is part of the formation of a society-wide discourse, is the site of numerous confrontations, and is thus part of the formation of a collective consensus in many areas. It is this social consensus that is the basis of truth and knowledge in pragmatism.

5. SUMMARY

Discriminatory instrumentalisation of language is the use of language as an instrument and means of discrimination or a discriminatory ground. We have

characterized discrimination as a relationship between two subjects (collective or individual) in which ontological certainty (concerning basic human needs, the very existence of man in society) and axiological certainty (concerning basic human rights, the social value of man and his personal dignity) is undermined, which takes place (and is revealed by us) on three planes. On the level of harmful distinction (which constitutes the cognitive side of the concept), unequal treatment (the behavioural side) and on the level of disadvantage (the pragmatic side).

We have described the discriminative instrumentalisation of language mainly in its instrumental form. Language as an instrument of harmful distinction (cognitive level of the concept) is related to the interpretative competence of language users who identify an object and at the same time differentiate it, distinguish it from other objects, while it turns out that the parameters for evaluating what is Slovak are *typicality*, *normality*, *traditionality*. The evaluation criteria are *ethnicity*, *or race*, *genetics*.

Language as an instrument of unequal treatment (the behavioural or interactional aspect) operates against the background of the induction and reproduction of social relations. The dominant, so-called privileged group, which is characterised by unmarked characteristics and determines the value system of society in order to remain at the top, plays an important role here, which is linked to the undermining of the idea of equality, the basis of a democratic society. Users idealise their own reference group and may not be aware of discriminatory behaviour and actions.

Language as a tool of disadvantaging (pragmatic side) refers to the motivational world of a person. In the debate in question, it is mainly the conflict between values and ideals (on the part of the discriminator) and basic human needs (on the part of the discriminated against), while the protagonist is demonstrably denied an active participation in the creation or reproduction of traditional culture.

A probe into the discriminatory instrumentalisation of language focuses on the description of language as an instrument of discrimination. However, a thorough understanding of this phenomenon also requires a description of language as a means or parameter on the basis of which certain individuals or groups are discriminated against. It is also desirable to complement the interpretation with an explanatory approach that would explain the principles of discriminatory behaviour and action as manifestations of language use as behaviour and action, manifestation of the motivational world of the person, as well as the ways of limiting discriminatory action through language. In addition, it is also desirable to extend the language material to different kinds of communications or discourses, which would offer a more concise view of the issue under study. Despite this, the probe offers results that are not negligible, although they could be blamed on the virtual communication among social network users. However, given that we are now witnessing the transfer of moods and attitudes from virtual space to real life, it is important to research and monitor this sphere indeed.

6.   CONCLUSION

Discrimination poses a problem in a democratic society. As a complex and long-term phenomenon, it is the cause of the suppression of the principles of equality and freedom and the repression of human rights. On an intersubjective level, it is the reason for causing insecurity in individuals or population groups, because it limits their opportunities to satisfy the needs that are the basis of a problem-free human existence (ontological insecurity) and, at the same time, it also attacks their value as human beings, their dignity (axiological insecurity).

However, a democratic society is characterised by social differentiation. The differentiation of society takes place in the political, economic, social or cultural spheres (including language), etc., which practically means the occurrence of variable ways of fulfilling political, economic, social or cultural and linguistic goals, as well as the variance in the demographic composition of the population. Variance in general (and also in language) is understood as a manifestation of the dynamics of the system, where phenomena with the same function or the same goal that they should fulfil coexist side by side. Finally, variance is also an aesthetic requirement in different types of texts.

In some contexts, however, variance is considered to be an undesirable phenomenon, especially when it concerns the fundamental values of society. Variance is then labelled as a problem. The fundamentality lies in the fact that society takes certain values as given, as immutable. These fundamental values may include health, family, traditions, language, etc. In these cases, a group of members of the collective points to the possibility of a threat to the existence of the values as well as to the entire society and its culture, which can be described as an effort to preserve them, to protect them from the influence of the external environment. As a result, a kind of an immune reaction occurs within that part of society, which is characterised by intolerance to variability. It is then the protection from external influences that is seen as a way of preserving, for example, culture. To preserve culture (and ultimately any phenomenon) practically means to reproduce it (it is also related to reinterpretation). However, the reproduction of culture is impossible if its creative potential is limited. In that case one can speak of sterilizing culture rather than preserving it.

But society and culture must evolve; their dynamics are a constitutive characteristic that cannot be taken away from them. The question, however, is how to achieve a state where the system is able to tolerate the influence of the environment and not react to non-native phenomena. The question relates to the productivity of human thinking, which is translated into human activity and reflected in originality that does not have to be based on innovation as a priority, but can be a creative combination of the traditional with the unconventional, or, different. Otherness, foreignness is a potential asset for the preservation of (also traditional) culture.

Perhaps this is also what J. Dewey had in mind when he talked about the obstacles that can be stimuli to novel response and the seemingly adverse conditions that can be the means to hitherto unexperienced modes of success.

Enabling a level playing field for self-fulfilment leads to creative overcoming of obstacles, the basis of which is cooperation, the collaboration of all members of society in achieving goals, because no matter what our characteristics are, our motivation to maintain and fulfil a problem-free existence with all its privileges is something we all share.

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R e s u m é

DISKRIMINAČNÁ INŠTRUMENTALIZÁCIA JAZYKA

Príspevok sa zameriava na opis používania jazyka ako nástroja a prostriedku diskriminácie. Diskrimináciu chápeme ako vzťah dvoch subjektov, v ktorom je narušená ontologická a axiologická istota. V tomto zmysle diskriminačná inštrumentalizácia jazyka realizuje v úrovni škodlivej diskriminácie, nerovnakého zaobchádzania a znevýhodňovania. Používanie jazyka hrá hlavnú úlohu pri vytváraní diskurzu, ktorý vytvára určité spôsoby myslenia a rozprávania. Ako výskumný materiál slúži diskusia o reklame na Absolut vodku, ktorá sa rozvinula na sociálnej sieti Facebook.

HOW (UN)FREEDOM IS BEING DEVELOPED:
THE LINGUISTIC WORLD OF ONE POLITICAL PARTY IN SLOVAKIA CONCERNING LIBERALISM[1]

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Abstract: In the globalised world connected via communication technologies and social media, this paper endeavours to understand how politicians succeed in influencing people's linguistic worlds through their public communication. The patterns in politicians' precise verbal usage convey intended connotations and redefine how people naturally experience the expressions concerning their conceptual knowledge associated with words. The paper thus suggests adjusting the schema of lexical meaning based on the biology of cognition, which acknowledges the uniqueness and diversity of how people understand received expressions and convey various contents in communication.

Key words: subjectivism, egolinguistics, linguistic world, political discourse, propaganda, far-right populism, liberalism

1. INTRODUCTION

In a perfect world, one would have invariably experienced the freedom of speech in everyday communication as the principles of liberal democracy define it. Everyone would have treated cautiously the information and thoughts they consider vital to address to avoid any potential social (or legal) penalty. After all, people bear responsibility for their actions. Consequently, expressed thoughts can be no exception, especially those aimed against human rights of others. Although the scientific knowledge proving any ideal (perfect) state of anything is unattainable due to its subjective nature – what one considers flawless, others may see differently – just realizing what the ideal state looks like provides an essential perspective in everyone's daily life.

Impulses from media discourse based on statements such as *I have the right to express my opinion freely* gradually initiate social reality, in which one can say anything as if there were no demands for expertise or adequate skills in a concerned

field. Particularly, meanings in findings delivered by scientists or experts often face questioning and mockery from politicians with no expertise who pursue their goals (cf. the issue of COVID-19 disease discussed in public). Some politicians are keen on using even eristic argumentation to gain any political point. Misinterpretation and disinformation are thus standard measures for many of them in their populistic rhetoric. They employ "simple and direct language" (Kreis 2017), sometimes using "humorous overstatements" (Montgomery 2017) to deliver a crystal clear message for everyone throughout the society despite the costs of possible loss in the factual accuracy it claims. To direct recipients' attention toward the course of their choice, they "provide simplified answers to quite complex issues" (Mudde – Kaltwasser 2017, p. 118). By ignoring the facts and raising emotions, these populist politicians shape not just the thinking of their supporters but also the public discussion about the challenging issues in general, so they abuse the social mood about them. Since such politicians benefit mainly from a polarised society to disseminate their ideology further (ibid., p. 6), they preferably instrumentalise any social issue to increase their political capital. Their precise word usage mobilises the masses by inducing specific mental representations to raise awareness of a particular issue and thus begin with influencing the recipient's worldview.

This paper, hence, endeavours to display how populism may form individuals' fundamental cognitive orientation. Specifically, it examines how communicative behaviour recognized by recipients modifies the structure of their linguistic worlds and insinuates the expected understanding of conceptual knowledge associated with words in agreement with the populists' intention. Following the subjectivistic approach, the paper analyses the public communication of the selected political party in its promotional newspaper and the Facebook posts of its most influential politicians. We subsequently confront the captured framing of liberalism gained from the reactions of their supporters in threads from analysed posts. Another finding of this paper is, therefore, to illustrate how populists misuse the freedom of speech, which goes beyond tolerable limits and sets a dangerous precedence in public communication as such by speaking indecent opinions. As the collateral outcome of such practices, besides incivility in the (online) political discourse, populists manage to modify the conceptual knowledge associated with the expressions of their supporters.

2. THE LEXICAL MEANING AS AN ORIENTATION POINT FOR HU-MANS

Globalisation has affected every aspect of society's function, not excluding the field of communication and mass media. The increased amount of information delivered from the entire world demands sufficient processing, which naturally relates to mass media in democratic countries. The purpose of newsrooms is,

therefore, not just to come up with various information from colourful life but also to run fact-checking (i.e. ensuring the trustworthiness of stated claims and reliability of their sources). By systematically cultivating a piece of raw information, an author gradually specifies the message about the immediate context (what, when and where something has happened) and eventually enhances broader circumstances (why it has happened). Thus, recipients get a complete picture of what happened within a relevant framework to interpret the event globally. People afterwards evaluate the gained inference depending on their linguistic worlds. To better understand the notion of the linguistic world and its crucial role in human life, let us review some key points from the biology of cognition briefly.

As living beings, **we exist in <u>endless</u> interactions with the environment surrounding us from birth till death**. Any interaction presupposes a presence of the organization separating one unity (i.e. entity or object) from another and, at the same time, representing relations by which a certain unity exists – its structure. "For me to judge that this object is a chair, I have to recognize a certain relationship between the parts I call legs, back, and seat, in such a way that sitting down is made possible" (Maturana – Varela 1987, p. 42). H. R. Maturana and F. J. Varela (ibid., p. 43) characterized the organization of living beings as *autopoietic*, meaning their organization is self-producing.[2] By endless interaction, we indicate a sustained contact between a living being and its environment; the cease of this contact means the beginning of a living being's disintegration (ibid., p. 74). The notion of living beings' autopoietic organization has several implications that have influenced our thinking about language; we will elaborate on it shortly in our text. **(1) Autopoiesis makes living beings autonomous**; that is, "they subordinate all changes to the maintenance of their own organization, independently of how profoundly they may otherwise be transformed in the process" (Maturana – Varela 1991, p. 80). **(2) To be autonomous means to have individuality**; that is, "by keeping their organization as an invariant through its continuous production they actively maintain an identity which is independent of their interactions with an observer" (ibid.). **(3) As individuals, we not only specify our boundaries in the process of self-production, but we also determine what changes may occur in our structure as a result of our contact with the environment** (Maturana – Varela 1987, pp. 95–96). That is how the ontogeny of a particular human being appears, as "a history of structural change in a unity without loss of organization in that unity" (ibid., p. 74).

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[2] "An autopoietic machine is a machine organized (defined as a unity) as a network of processes of production (transformation and destruction) of components that produces the components which: (i) through their interactions and transformations continuously regenerate and realize the network of processes (relations) that produced them; and (ii) constitute it (the machine) as a concrete unity in the space in which they (the components) exist by specifying the topological domain of its realization as such a network" (Maturana – Varela 1991, pp. 78–79).

However, we must bear in mind that the result of interactions concerning autopoietic unities (i.e. human beings in our case) only triggers possible structural changes in them – whether they were triggered by interactions with the environment, or as an outcome of its internal dynamics. "In this way we refer to the fact that the changes that result from the interaction between the living being and its environment are brought about by the disturbing agent but *determined by the structure of the disturbed system*" (ibid., p. 96). The structure of interacting unity determines what effects will attend consequently, and how they will be perceived. In the case of recurrent interactions, the collateral outcome is a history of mutual congruent structural changes. There is always this kind of *structural coupling* with the environment until the autopoietic unity or its perturbed environment does not disintegrate (ibid., p. 75). As long as a unity does not interfere with its environment in a destructive way, the compatibility between them coming from such interaction is the source of mutual perturbation initiating changes of states on both sides. If we take a close look into the process of structural coupling, we will recognize that this process of self-change with no loss of its integrity is also known as *adaptation*. From this perspective thus, we see **the autopoietic unity as a dynamic system coping with its environment**. Hence, the inevitable consequence of structural coupling is, in the bigger picture regarding the phylogeny of species, a structural drift, also known as *evolution*. In summary, every ontogeny of autopoietic unity comes with a unique history of structural changes stemming from structural coupling with its environment; therefore, it results in a structural drift that combines processes such as *conservation* (of its organization) and *adaptation* (to its environment).

There is an exceptional structural coupling related to human beings. The plasticity of their nervous system functioning with *operational closure* (i.e. the nervous system works as a closed network, with changes caused by its active components leading to further changes in their relations) creates sufficient conditions for so-called *third-order structural couplings* (ibid., pp. 180–181). This kind of structural coupling appears between organisms with a nervous system getting involved in reciprocal structural coupling (when each one serves recursively as a medium for structural changes of the other). But what is most important, it enables them to produce co-ontogenies with mutual involvement and, thus, to constitute social systems. To maintain any social system as a social unity, one must be able to communicate with other members in coordinated behaviour; hence, in the history of human third-order structural couplings, which constitutes a culture of a particular society, a language has been evolving.[3] Keeping in mind the notion of autopoiesis, we can focus our attention back towards the concept of the linguistic world.

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[3] This brief review from the biology of cognition by H. R. Maturana and F. Varela serves also as an invitation to consider a bigger – species-specific – perspective of human interaction in linguistic research. A much more detailed overview can be found, inter alia, in Deacon 1998, or Tomasello 2019.

2.1 The linguistic world – How we (mis)comprehend a political reality

Every human being experiences the objective (i.e. extralinguistic) reality of the world by (in)direct interaction with its environment (by indirect interaction, we mean knowledge or experience obtained from communication with others, for instance, as a natural course of action in education). Our interaction with the environment is constantly (re)creating our *background*; it is our understanding of how the world works. In J. R. Searle's words (1998, p. 107) "It is this set of capacities, abilities, tendencies, habits, dispositions, taken-for-granted presuppositions, and "know-how" generally that I have been calling the "Background" (…), all of our particular beliefs, hopes, fears, and so on, only function in the way they do – that is, they only determine their conditions of satisfaction – against a Background of know-how that enables me to cope with the world". Each experience is stored in our mind not only in the form of a simple memory but also as a mental representation, which establishes an equivalent world in the human mind of an individual – the linguistic world[4] – which simultaneously shapes its ego as well. The ego represents the structure of a human being (the way it understands and views the world), and the structural coupling with its environment appears as the personal experience, which may trigger structural changes concerning mental representations of its linguistic world.

By language we therefore understand not just a system of verbalization but also an extralinguistic system of physiological forms that we experience through a certain intentional state[5] (when we are in sensory, emotional, volitional, rational or irrational touch with the world in which we exist). The system of physiological forms shapes the linguistic world of everyone (and vice versa, the ego shapes their linguistic world in agreement with their peculiar worldview). It embodies individual mental representations of intentional states obtained from prior experience and brings them back as meanings we externalise in communication. In other words, the unique linguistic world of ego concerns the matter on which L. Wittgenstein (2001, p. 89) stated: "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence".

The prior experience plays an essential role in our thinking about the linguistic world because it gives us insight into the troubling matter: **Why does people's understanding of lexical meanings show distinctions?** Since a person in their equivalent linguistic world cannot grasp the extralinguistic reality in all its

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[4] J. Bartmiński's (2009) concept of the linguistic worldview focuses on the supra-individual language of a community, in contrast to the suggested linguistic world respecting the biology of cognition here. The linguistic world's attention leads to ontogeny's investigation of a given person and their language. It, thus, considers the autopoietic organization of human beings while not losing sight of their autonomy.

[5] We proceed the notion of intentional state in line with the J. R. Searle's concept of biological naturalism according to which "[i]ntentionality is that feature of the mind by which mental states are directed at, or are about, or of, or refer to, or aim at, states of affairs in the world" (Searle 1998, p. 64).

complexity,[6] only partial aspects of the recognized segments from its environment acquire dominant positions in the emerging mental representations.[7] Based on these dominant features, **a person sets internalized segments of reality as their mental representations into varied mutual relationships to understand (or navigate themselves in) their linguistic world**. The various configurations of mental representations thus reflect the unique structure of individual linguistic world shaped by unique experiences of a given ego. Following the language economy, different expressions (but also the very same expressions, as we will show later) refer to different mentally processed segments of reality, which the sender shares with the receiver trying to induce them accordingly. Since each text represents its author's linguistic world, each communication therefore reflects the interacting linguistic worlds of its actors (in both roles: as a sender or a receiver). Thus, to become intelligible, the interactants reciprocally present their views in communication.

For all said above, we recognize a text in conformity with F. Miko's theory on its receptive existence.[8] According to his understanding, a text exists only as an interlocutor in communication. It means there is no text without an author or a reader, who could otherwise contribute jointly to its purpose as a message to be conveyed and received. By the speech, he meant the human natural communicative behaviour in its interactive manner, i.e. how people express their intentional states through expressions in communication. Despite the Prague School of Linguistics' premise about language as an ideal model, F. Miko acknowledges text as a natural outcome in the evolution of human interaction. Language is therefore equal to speech.

The speech was indeed mainly a sound-gestural expression and had had an impulsive nature (i.e. *operability* in F. Miko's terminology)[9] in its beginning. While the other dimension of speech – expression – did gradually begin to emerge more

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[6] As we stated above, the human nervous system functions as a closed network with structural determination; therefore, the environment cannot specify changes in its structure – it may only trigger them (the individuality coming from autopoietic autonomy plays the crucial role in it, cf. the difference between causality and correlation). Biologically speaking, sensory or motor stimulation constantly disturbs the human nervous system, which must deal with them, leading to a structural change. Since the adaptability of the nervous system "lies in its continuous transformation in line with transformation of the environment as a result of how each interactions affects it" (Maturana – Varela 1991, p. 170); people, thus, grasp segments from extralinguistic reality within their personal experience.

[7] Referring to Richerson and Boyd 2008, M. Tomasello (2019, p. 7) noted the "[m]odern evolutionary theory emphasizes that organisms inherit their environments as much as they inherit their genes: a fish inherits not only fins but also water. Human children inherit a sociocultural context replete with cultural artifacts, symbols, and institutions, and their unique maturational capacities would be inert without a sociocultural context within which to develop".

[8] He developed his theory of the expression system based on the Prague School of Linguistics' functional structuralism. His theory of expressive structure in speech origins in his book *Estetika výrazu* [The aesthetics of expression], 1969. Its importance can be seen as similar to the speech act theory developed by J. L. Austin (1962) in disparate political conditions.

[9] It could deem as an illocutionary act in J. L. Austin's theory of speech acts.

efficiently as a descendant of its first dimension (Miko 1989, p. 33). The latter emerges the most noticeable in articulation; therefore, F. Miko called it *iconicity*. The language iconicity has unleashed the possibilities of how people share their linguistic worlds. They have started to express even the subtlest meaning nuances intuitively to capture the complexity of their understanding of the world; consequently, they broadly became aware of the diverse language used in society. Although people speaking the same language use identical expressions, they may understand them differently and convey by them various meanings reflecting their personal experiences and goals (cf. single-word utterances in child language, Bloom 2002).

3. "I HATE; THEREFORE, I AM!" THE NORMALIZATION OF THE POPULIST VOCABULARY

The effort to influence someone's linguistic world is not a new idea in politics, and its procedure has been (ab)used countlessly since ancient times (Posetti – Matthews 2018 provides a brief overview). Its infrastructure, on the other hand, has become much more efficient in disseminating disinformation and conspiracy theories through society in the digital age, in which populistic politicians are more than happy to engage.

There are many ways in ideational approach on populism defining it as a discourse, language, mode of identification, political frame, etc. (Kaltwasser et al. 2017) but "all consider populism to be, first and foremost, about ideas in general, and ideas about 'the people' and 'the elite' in particular" (ibid.). According to C. Mudde and C. R. Kaltwasser (2017, pp. 9–19) populism has three core concepts: **(a) the people**, it is usually a combination of three meanings: people "as sovereign", "as the common people", or "as the nation"; **(b) the elite**, it usually concerns the establishment, the cultural elite and the media elite, always portrayed as one homogeneous corrupt group neglecting the general will of the people; **(c) the general will**, populists argue the politicians should follow the general will of the people, as they are pure and homogeneous, and any internal divisions should be rejected as artificial. Concerning this exclusionary behaviour and "the angry language" (Wahl-Jorgensen 2018) of populist politicians, incivility has emerged not only in political discourse but in (online) media discourse (Rösner et al. 2016; Kenski et al. 2020) too.

A symptomatic example of this incivility has occurred recently in Slovakia concerning how people might particularly comprehend speech stimuli from the media discourse. Some people began to employ the catchphrase *liberálny fašizmus* [liberal fascism] as an outcome of how they see social reality affairs. It has appeared in plethora of variations in Slovak public space, especially on social media, with the encouragement of certain politicians. Although the term can be considered an

oxymoron due to its antagonistic components (cf. liberalism and fascism), it would be too short-sighted to consider such an explanation satisfying. After all, people do their best in using language (as a human interactive disposition) to share meanings within their linguistic worlds with others. As "behavioural-action-oriented creatures", which coordinate their behaviour and actions (cf. Dolník 2019, p. 24), people's actions are not controlled only by logic but also by emotions (cf. the idiom *to get carried away by emotions*). Nor can a language, hence, be limited by rules of logic. The alternative conclusion engages the very nature of communication – to be expressed and understood. Language iconicity allows people to grasp lexical meanings and put them into even seemingly unlogic relations to deliver a specific message by completing a distinctive sense of applied expressions. In short, language iconicity empowers people to mentally transform the environment around them into the form of their preferences.

3.1 Speech stimuli analysis of political party's newspaper *Naše Slovensko*

The understanding benefits from knowing the context; hence, we present the public communication belonging to the political party Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko (ĽSNS) [People's Party Our Slovakia], the Slovak far-right party, in **Table 1**. We executed the content analysis of the party's public communication in their propagative newspaper distributed into people's mailboxes from 2013 to 2021. Despite the complicated conditions,[10] we managed to gather 34 issues of *Naše Slovensko* [Our Slovakia], the propagative newspaper, (2013: n = 14; 2014: n = 6; 2016: n = 2; 2017: n = 2; 2018: n = 1; 2019: n = 4; 2020: n = 2; 2021: n = 3) plus a few of their similar newspapers located in Slovak regions: *Bystrický kraj* [Banska Bystrica region] (n = 1), *Náš Bratislavský kraj* [Our Bratislava region] (n = 3), *Náš Žilinský kraj* [Our Zilina region] (n = 1), *Náš Košický kraj* [Our Kosice region] (n = 1), *Náš Nitriansky kraj* [Our Nitra region] (n = 2). We analysed the collected texts using the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) in Critical Discourse Analysis (Wodak 2008, 2001) to investigate the party's narrative on liberalism presented to the broad public. Aiming at their delivered topoi, we observed their self-presentation and practice of creating antagonistic roles between the deictic centre "us" and the others "them". In other words, we investigate the central dimension of their discourse strategy: nomination, predication, argumentation and perspectivization.

The content of **Table 1** serves here as a platform to convey the speech stimuli concerning *liberalism*, with which recipients of *Naše Slovensko* newspaper came

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[10] The party's leader was charged with the crime of supporting and promoting groups aimed at suppressing fundamental rights and freedoms in 2020. Party's website stopped working shortly after the accusation, and all issues of the *Naše Slovensko* [Our Slovakia] newspaper became unreachable. Although their new website offers a newspaper archive, the oldest attainable volume was issued in December 2019.

into contact. In terms of positive self-presentation, the nomination related to in-group employs two levels, noun phrases like (a) "decent people", "decent families", or "Christian values" accompanying their worldview; (b) "Slovak nation", or "our ancestors" associated with fatherland. Both conform the P. Taggart's notion of *heartland* as "an evocation of that life and those qualities worth defending, thereby stirring populists into political actions" (Taggart 2000, p. 95) (cf. category 1 in **Table 1**). Such nomination naturally creates presuppositions about the out-group (e.g. we are decent, so the others are not; when governing the state, only the opinion of true descendants matters, others do not). Furthermore, the attribute "decent" in their discourse implicitly refers to white people (in opposition to Roma people or later to immigrants). Consequently, the presentation of the out-group – *liberals* – involves two levels too, noun phrases such as (a) "sexual perverts", "homosexuals", and "transsexuals" linked to sexuality (their perspectivization narrows down the matter of gender identity into sexuality only, calling them e.g. "transformers"); (b) "liberalism", "liberal NGOs and gender ideology", or "liberal fanatics" referring to how they perceive the ideology of liberalism as such (cf. category 2 in **Table 1**).

The black-and-white tendency outlined above mirrors the distinctions between *us* and *them* in predication. They present the members of the in-group as "the defenders of traditional family and Christian values against the LGBT and gender ideology of liberals", or "the representatives of genuine Slovaks" in *Naše Slovensko* newspaper (cf. category 3 in **Table 1**). "All far-right populists parties instrumentalize some kind of ethnic, religious, linguistic or political minority as a *scapegoat* for most if not all current woes in society and subsequently construe the respective group as dangerous and a threat 'to us' to 'our' nation; this phenomenon manifests as a **'politics of fear'**" (Wodak 2021, p. 6). R. Wodak claims that far-right populist parties "instrumentalize such fear (also related to resentment and other negative emotions) to create **hope** – they promise to provide (simple) solutions to counter such fear (e.g. by "removing" the scapegoats)" (ibid.).

Regarding the politics of emotions (when range of moral emotions, such as anxiety, fear, resentment, anger, rage, shame and nostalgia, are evoked and exploited; cf. Wodak 2021, p. 46), the authors of these texts employed *arrogance of ignorance* (Wodak 2021, p. 6), the practise that appeals to common sense, intuition, resentment and anti-intellectualism, which marks a shift to a politics of emotions instead of drawing on fact-based evidence and expertise. Opposite to political correctness, such rhetoric bears marks of *shameless normalization* (Wodak 2021) – when formerly tabooed topics, wordings and impolite or shameless behaviour (i.e. "bad manners") take part regularly in shifting boundaries of the unsayable. Concerning liberalism, the texts contained such wordings as "disrupting the traditional values", "defending the paedophiles and sexual deviants", "imposing their sick lifestyles to children and youth", etc. (cf. category 4 in **Table 1**).

Table 1. The framework of the induced linguistic world in *Naše Slovensko* newspaper concerning *liberalism*

Category	Externalization
1. Noun phrases construed as elements of the deictic centre – *we*	(a) *slušní ľudia* [decent people], *slušné rodiny* [decent families], *tradičná rodina* [traditional family], *kresťanské hodnoty* [Christian values], *normálni ľudia* [normal people], *rodičia slušných detí* [parents of decent children] (b) *slovenský národ* [Slovak nation], *národ* [nation], *Slovensko* [Slovakia], *naši predkovia* [our ancestors], *národní velikáni* [national figures], *občan SR* [Slovak citizen], *skutočná opozícia* [the real opposition]
2. Noun phrases construed as elements outside the deictic centre – *they*	(a) *sexuálni uchyláci* [sexual perverts], *homosexuáli* [homosexuals], *sexuálne úchylky* [sexual deviations], *sexuálni devianti vrátane pedofilov* [sexual deviants including paedophiles], *sexuálne zvrátenosti* [sexual perversions], *sexuálni pomätenci* [sexual madmen], *transexuáli* [transexuals], *zvrhlíci* [perverts], *LGBT komunita uchylákov* [LGBT community of perverts], *buzeranti* [faggots] (b) *liberalizmus* [liberalism], *liberáli* [liberals], *liberálne mimovládky a gender ideológia* [liberal NGOs and gender ideology], *dekadencia* [decadence], *liberálni fanatici* [liberal fanatics], *liberálne skupiny* [liberal groups], *egoistický svetonázor* [egoist worldview], *pseudohumanisti* [pseudohumanists], *konzum* [consumption], *extrémni liberáli* [extreme liberals], *liberálna agenda* [liberal agenda], *liberálne media* [liberal mass media], *liberálne šialenstvo* [liberal madness], *najextrémnejší liberáli* [the most extreme liberals]
3. Verb phrases construed as markers of *us*	*Odmietame registrované partnerstvá, adopciu detí homosexuálmi aj propagáciu sexuálnych úchyliek* [We reject registered partnerships, the adoption of children by homosexuals, and the promotion of sexual deviations]. *Vedieme boj za slušný život* [We fight for a decent life]. *Výchovu postavíme na tradičných národných a kresťanských princípoch* [We set the education on traditional national and Christian principles]. *Postavíme Slovensko nad diktát Bruselu* [We will put Slovakia over the commands of Brussels]. *Nechceme mať degenerovanú spoločnosť* [We don't want to have a degenerate society]. *Chránime slušných ľudí* [We protect decent people]. *Bojujeme za Slovensko* [We fight for Slovakia]. *Vystupujeme proti zvrhlej agende liberálov* [We are against perverted agenda of liberals]. *Vyznávame cyrilo-metodskú tradíciu* [We profess the Cyril-Method tradition]. *Bojujeme o charakter Európy* [We fight for the character of Europe]. *Nedovoľme liberálom, aby svojou zhubnou gender agendou otrávili Slovensko* [Let's not allow the liberals to poison Slovakia with their wicked gender agenda]. *Hovoríme pravdu* [We tell the truth]. *Chránime život od počatia* [We protect life from its conception]. *Odmietli sme nebezpečnú LGBT a gender ideológiu* [We rejected the dangerous LGBT and gender ideology]. *Chránime tradičné hodnoty* [We protect traditional values].

4. Verb phrases construed as markers of *them*	*Prenasledujú a kriminalizujú jedincov s odlišným názorom* [They persecute and criminalize individuals with different opinion]. *Vnucujú ľuďom cudziu kultúru* [They impose a foreign culture on people]. *Obraňujú záujmy sexuálnych deviantov a iných rozvracačov tradičných hodnôt* [They defend the interests of sexual deviants and other destroyers of traditional values]. *Otvorene demonštrujú za svoje zvrátené úchylky* [They openly demonstrate their sick perversions]. *Aj prváčikov v šlabikároch učia o rozvrátenej rodine, v ktorej deti majú „dvoch oteckov alebo dve mamičky"* [They teach even the first-graders about a broken family in which children have "two fathers or two mothers"]. *Snažia sa nanútiť homosexuálne partnerstvá a osprostieť naše deti a mládež* [They try to force homosexual partnerships and make children stupid]. *Podporuje homosexuálov a transexuálov a mládeži ich ukazuje ako vzory* [supports homosexuals and transexuals and show them as role models for the youth]. *Presadzuje vzájomné manželstvá týchto zvrhlíkov a dáva im vychovávať deti* [enforces marriages of perverts and enable them to raise the children]. *Chce, aby sme odsudzovali tradičné hodnoty* [wants us to condemn traditional values]. *Snaží sa prepašovať do spoločnosti zvrátenú gender ideológiu* [tries to smuggle a perverted ideology into society]. *Snaží sa zničiť tradičnú rodinu* [try to destroy the traditional family]. *Lákajú k sebe ľudí najmä tým, že sa vydávajú za „moderných" a „pokrokových"* [They lure people mainly by pretending to be "modern" and "progressive"]. *Kádrujú hanlivými nálepkami* [They frame by derogatory remarks as in totalitarian regime]. *Rozprávajú o rešpekte a tolerancii, ale sami za pomoci prostitútok z médií prenasledujú a lynčujú každého, kto s nimi nesúhlasí* [They talk about respect and tolerance but persecute and lynch anyone who disagrees with them with the help of prostitutes from mass media]. *Presadzujú protikresťanskú politiku a žiadajú prijímanie tisícov cudzincov na Slovensko* [They promote anti-Christian policy and demand the admission of thousands of foreigners to Slovakia]. *Degeneruje, ohlupuje a robí spoločnosť bezduchou masou, ktorá sa ľahko ovláda* [degenerates the youth and make them stupid, making society an easily controllable mass without their own opinion]. *Podporujú legalizáciu drog* [They support the legalization of drugs].

Naturally, people usually do not engage in such analytical examinations during an ordinary reading of their texts. The analysis thus provides the determining speech stimuli on liberalism, and, at the same time, it reconstructs the party's ideological perspective. Moreover, all these stimuli presented above may influence receivers' backgrounds and affect how recipients further experience the lexical meaning of *liberalism* despite the established interpretation captured in dictionaries. But what makes it possible?

3.2 How propaganda makes its view meaningful and promotes it further

In picturing lexical meaning as a critical node in human orientation, F. Miko's perspective of interactive text's existence is fundamental. This is because messages in politicians' public communication do not deliver just a range of information on a specific topic. Populist politicians naturally strive to define the receivers' linguistic worlds to interpret political reality through their lenses. Thus, they endeavour to corrupt their linguistic worlds (i.e. their worldview and perception of what ordinary is) and raise emotional responses towards a challenging social issue (usually in terms of a majority against a minority, cf. the core concepts of populism). To exploit the certainty of what people trust, one must get involved with their *assimilation base* (Dolník 2018a) by which the structure of a concrete person – their ego – decides what is compatible or not with their linguistic world. Besides a linguistic world, people at the same time form their assimilation base. It enables them to maintain their homeostasis and the integrity of their egos. In the process of developing an ego, the *accommodation-assimilation activity* emerges as the autopoietic process of conservation and adaptation mentioned above.

H. P. Grice (2002) clarifies the nature of human interaction culture by the cooperative principle. Following this kind of pragmatic aspects in communication, and autopoiesis mentioned above, J. Dolník (2013, pp. 361–365) defines the accommodation-assimilation activity to grasp human intelligibility. Regarding structural coupling, people, during an interaction with their environment to keep up with the world's dynamics, modify either themselves (meaning, the shape of their linguistic worlds) by the accommodation part of this activity or the way they understand the environment's setting by the assimilation part of that activity. The aftermath from the interactions with an extralinguistic ground must, naturally, take part in how someone's ego experiences the meanings of expressions on a linguistic basis and vice versa. That is how objectivity emerges in communication; nobody could otherwise understand a word. Thus, if one wants other people to believe their interpretation of political reality, adequate stimuli must be provided. Postulating convincing impulses with enough persistence, one can modify someone's judgement, even with entirely fabricated information. In conformity with J. Dolník's concept of accommodation-assimilation activity, the sender thus adjusts their message anticipating the structure of the receiver's linguistic world (i.e. their knowledge, interests, needs, etc.) to secure the best condition for conveying their perspective. In other words, while pursuing their own goals, the sender assimilates the receiver's linguistic world (assimilation part) by stylizing the content of a message (accommodation part).

Finally, the accommodation-assimilation activity plays a fundamental role in how a person experiences the meaning of a recognized expression. According to J. Dolník's theory (2018b), the human expression reception works in two modes. **(1) Non-rational mode** relates to the state when an individual understands the meaning of a recognized expression impulsively (i.e. effortlessly). **(2) Rational mode** links to

the state when an individual's understanding of the recognized expression requires extra effort, hence, interprets the expression. The former mode links to *behavioural lexical meaning*, and the latter relates to *actional lexical meaning*. Therefore, the stimuli person's ego accepts become part of its linguistic world, which defines how the ego experiences meaning in non-rational mode when it impulsively understands perceived expressions as behavioural lexical meanings.

In our approach to the meaning, as subjectively experienced by individuals based on their background, we keep in mind F. Miko's claim – each word, each mean and each procedure is the bearer of a certain expressive quality, even several of them, that is, a set of expressive qualities that subsume all elements of language and text. There are then no "non-symptomatic" or "neutral" means (Miko 1989, p. 70). In our understanding, the set of expressive qualities reflects the linguistic world of a particular person and the way of their externalization obtained from mutual communication with others. The structure of the linguistic world and its externalization is subject to natural cultivation during human life; it concerns gaining new experiences and knowledge. Since human behaviour and actions are changeable, thus, how people experience a lexical meaning within their linguistic worlds must be subject to dynamics too.

Although people are constantly exposed to various speech stimuli in communication, the outcome – which of those stimuli the ego recognizes and accepts eventually – depends on their assimilation base. We, therefore, compare the party's speech stimuli regarding liberalism with the authentic reactions of Facebook users in the following section to show how propaganda may alter the conceptual knowledge of its followers.

3.2.1 Public communication of selected politicians on Facebook

The purpose of message depends on its operability by which an author appeals to recipients. People who create messages like those analysed above only rarely unveil their intended goals explicitly, especially in politics. Instead of declaring their opinions on minorities openly and risking social or legal sanctions, they put necessary speech stimuli into their public communication as a statement of their values and thus remain seemingly pro-democratic politicians (cf. their usage of attribute "decent" as the marker of "white people"). This *far-right populist perpetuum mobile* (Wodak 2021, p. 25), enables them to continually violate publicly accepted social norms without getting into serious trouble. Such modus operandi has appeared in many analyses of populistic public communication (e.g. inter alia, Judis 2016; Wodak 2017; Wodak et al. 2021), pushing the limits of the sayable, making a platform to claim anything, no matter the trustworthiness of it, and getting public attention to utilise. Using stereotypes to raise emotions is a standard propagandistic procedure because of its *suggestive deontic effect* (Dolník 2013, p. 323) – a stereotypical image preserves the compelling impact on an individual as an

imperative: "When it is generally accepted, I simply have to behave in this nature". Propagandistic authors, consequently, anticipate the fear evoked by their texts to stimulate recipients' ego-defence reactions they may abuse.

We reviewed the public communication of M. Uhrík and M. Mazurek (two former members of ĽSNS, and currently the leading members of Hnutie Republika [The movement Republic] since March 9th, 2021), on Facebook from 2018 to 2022. As in the previous analysis, we focused on their framing of *liberalism*, but additionally, we followed the authentic reactions of the recipients from the comments related to the politicians' posts. Due to the enormous number of comments, we set a limit of the first 250 comments, after which we ignored the rest. The content analysis consists of 99 posts[11] on Facebook regarding *liberalism* (2018: n = 16; 2019: n = 33; 2020: n = 34; 2021: n = 16), in which we analysed the speech stimuli in confrontation to responses in comments using DHA combined with "socio-cognitive" approach in CDA of T. A. van Dijk (2001). We attempted to find out how party supporters' linguistic worlds mirror the presented framing of liberalism. While the party to which both politicians belong has changed, their narrative about liberalism remained the same.

We offer one of the analysed posts in following section, which M. Mazurek published on January 18th, 2020 on Facebook:

(1) *ĎAKUJEME VŠETKÝM KOŠIČANOM ZA NÁDHERNÚ ÚČASŤ!*
    Aj keď si budú liberáli písať, ako nás neuveriteľne v Košiciach prečíslili a na fotkách tretinu našich sympatizantov zaraďovať do davu „protestujúcich", tak si to netreba všímať.
    [THANK YOU TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF KOŠICE FOR THE WONDERFUL PARTICIPATION!
    Even if the liberals will write about how they incredibly outnumbered us in Košice and included a third of our sympathizers in the crowd of "protesters" in the photos, there is no need to pay attention to it.]

(2) *Títo Trubanovi narkomani kopú z posledného a musia si na naše mítingy voziť autobusy osadníkov* 🙂 *Okrem toho, že prídu a správajú sa ako zmyslov zbavení, sú neuveriteľne vulgárni a plní nenávisti a agresie, tak ešte dôjdu s nechutne hanobiacimi transparentmi, kde neurážajú len nás, ale dokonca aj Pannu Máriu.*
    [These Truban drug addicts are losing their steam. They brought busloads of settlers to our meetings.🙂 In addition to coming and behaving as if they have lost their senses, they are incredibly vulgar and full of hatred and aggression, they also come with disgustingly defamatory banners, where they not only insult us but even the Virgin Mary.]

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[11] M. Uhrík erased many of his earlier posts on Facebook; so we collected only 7 posts concerning liberalism in the period we covered.

(3) *Na takéto akcie perverzných a protikresťanských fanatikov chodí ešte aj predseda protikresťanskej strany KDH Lojzo Hlina, naozaj veľavravné...*
[Even the leader of the anti-Christian party KDH Lojzo Hlina goes to such events of perverse and anti-Christian fanatics, really eloquent...]

(4) *Podarilo sa nám usporiadať takýto neuveriteľný míting v druhom najväčšom meste Slovenska, kde nás prišlo podporiť minimálne 800 ľudí a naviac sme dokázali tak vystrašiť liberálov, že museli zmobilizovať všetkých vajdov na okolí.*
[We managed to organize such an incredible rally in the second largest city of Slovakia, where at least 800 people came to support us, and what's more, we scared the liberals so much that they had to mobilize all the gypsy leaders in the area.]

(5) *Nielen, že svojim správaním jasne presvedčili všetkých prítomných, aby nás volili a nepripravili nás ani o jediného voliča, no naviac nás neuveriteľne teší fakt, že si musia takto trápne dokazovať, ako nám vedia „obsadiť" míting.*
[Not only that their behaviour clearly convinced everyone present to vote for us and did not deprive us of a single voter but we are also incredibly pleased by the fact that they have to prove to themselves in such an embarrassing way how to "hijack" the meeting for us.]

(6) *Toto sa však robí iba stranám, ktoré sú suverénne najsilnejšie. A keďže narkomani na svoje mítingy nedostanú ani 20 ľudí, musia chodiť na tie naše. Na mítingy strany, ktorá ide vyhrať voľby! A to aj s pomocou týchto trápnych komparzistov, vďaka ktorým máme špičkové mediálne pokrytie našich akcií* 🙂
P.S. my ich naozaj neplatíme... Túto reklamu a to neskutočne primitívne správanie nám hlupáčikovia nijak nefakturujú 🙂
[However, this is only done to the parties that are sovereignly the strongest. Since drug addicts can't even get 20 people to their meetings, they have to go to ours. To the meetings of the party that is going to win the elections! And even with the help of these embarrassing extras, thanks to whom we have top media coverage of our events 🙂
P.S. we really don't pay them... The fools don't invoice us for this advertisement and this incredibly primitive behaviour.]

We summarize its macro-propositions as:
M1 We are an influential political party with actual reach.
M2 The immoral liberals are terrified of our ability to mobilize people.
M3 We are genuine Christians.

At the level of local meanings, the author creates M1 mainly implicitly by claims such as "we managed to organize such an incredible rally (…) where at least 800 people came to support us" and "we scared the liberals so much that they had to mobilize all the gypsy leaders in the area" (both in paragraph 4) or "this is only done to the parties that are sovereignly the strongest" (paragraph 6). He builds their positive self-presentation by emphasizing the party's achievement in mobilizing people and, at the same time, positions themselves in the role of a victim whose rally was under attack. Liberals were the aggressors together with "settlers" (i.e. Roma people), whereas they intended to hijack the rally. The author uses this perspectivization in his favour to point out that such attempts are conducted only against the most influential parties. Therefore, the party he belongs to is powerful. Moreover, in paragraph 2, he questions the impact of liberals on people implying they are desperate, and hence they brought Roma people to the rally to do a dirty job.

In opposition to M1, the author constructs M2 (i.e. the negative presentation of their opponents) directly, calling them "Truban's drug addicts"[12] (paragraph 1) and "perverse and anti-Christian fanatics" (paragraph 3) who behave "incredibly vulgar" and are "full of hatred and aggression" (both in paragraph 2). By perversion, he refers to homosexuality that is, according to them, against the values of Christianity. The second phrase of paragraph 2 is delivered in a way that one cannot tell if it refers to liberals or the Roma people mentioned at the end of the previous phrase as "settlers". But either way, the aftermath is the same – to denigrate liberals because the author's framing suggests that liberals brought Roma people to the rally since these "settlers" do nothing but exploit the social system (to see this perspectivization on Roma people, one must know other texts beyond this sample, cf. the meaning of "decent people" above). To minimize any impact of liberals' effort at the rally on potential voters, the author mocks their attempt and calls them "embarrassing extras", thanking them for "top media coverage" of their events (both in paragraph 6). Liberals thus get the description of naïve and incompetent fools (cf. "drug addicts can't even get 20 people to their meetings, they have to go to ours" in paragraph 6). The last nota-bene comment is one of those "humorous overstatements" that M. Montgomery (2017) articulates concerning populism.

Lastly, the author builds M3 as he delineates the "perverse and anti-Christian" behaviours of liberals (paragraph 3). Additionally, A. Hlina's[13] Christian values are challenged there, to whom he addresses familiarly as Lojzo and calls his party anti-Christian since he joined the side of liberal protesters at the rally. Besides, the author places his party in the role of true Christians by accusing his opponents of insulting the Virgin Mary at the end of paragraph 2.

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[12] M. Truban was a leader of the opponent party at the time.
[13] A. Hlina was a party leader of KDH (Christian democratic movement) at the time.

The analysed text hits its recipients differently depending on a specific amount of common ground that the recipients share with him to see his message. The interdependency between meanings from the local coherence of perceived text and how meaningful they appear to recipients at the global level causes the distinction in people's perception, which we strive to seize here. We, therefore, review the responses in Facebook threads related to the examined post above. Concerning space limitation, the illustration of content analysis consists of 7 comments in the following section.

(7) *A.H.G.: Banda fetakov a uchylakov je už tak zúfala že ide aj cez mŕtvoly a sľubuje hory doly len aby mala voličov.* 😕 *Ale my sa nedáme a stranu ĽSNS* 🇸🇰 💪 *v februári volíme.*

[A bunch of junkies and perverts are already so desperate that they let nothing and no one stand in their way and promise the moon just to have voters. 😕 But we will not give up and we will vote for the ĽSNS party 🇸🇰 💪 in February.]

(8) *A.H.G.: MD to je váš názor a neviem o čo vám ide ale trepete dve na tri a určite nebudem voliť takú stranu ako je ps-spolu, kde je samý uchyl, fetak a akože kresťan.* 🤭🤦‍♀️🤷‍♂️

[MD, it's your opinion and I don't know what's your point but you're talking nonsense. I will definitely not vote for a party like PS-Spolu where there are only perverts, junkies, and wannabe Christians]

(9) *M.S.D.: Nevsimat si fetakov a buzerantov na co to je dobre, robim s 4 ciganmi a sami my povedali ze idu volit Kotlebu, ze nebudu volit fetakov a tych co im chcu brat deti a davat vychovavat buzerantov!!!!!!!!ved ludia ani nevedia co su slnieckari a je mi luto tych co idu s davom oviec a tvrdia ze ste fasicti alebo ze idete so smerom........*

[Don't pay attention to junkies and faggots, what is it good for, I work with 4 gypsies and they said that they had been going to vote for Kotleba, they won't vote for faggots and those who want to take their children and let them raise by bums!!!!!!!! people don't even know what the *slnieckari*[14] are and I feel sorry for those who go with the crowd of sheep and claim that you are fascists or that you go with the SMER[15]........]

(10) *J.V.: Milan, treba organizovať obdobne mítingy, keď ich bude mať liberálna mafia..Treba nechať vyrobiť transparenty s preškrtnutými penismi s nápisom STOP PS/SPOLU - STOP KOKOTIZMU . Treba ukázať tým liberálnym mafiánom, že ich zastavíme.*

[14] The pejorative term *slniečkari* refers to people open to different cultures, religions, or nationalities.
[15] The SMER–SD is a Slovak party.

[Milan, similar rallies should be organized when the liberal mafia will have them... Banners with crossed out penises with the words STOP PS/SPOLU - STOP MORONISM should be made. We have to show those liberal mafia that we will stop them.]

(11) *O.M.: Voliť LGBT liberálov je čire šialenstvo.Ved zo svojim programom nemôžu bez podporí USA a iných zlocinných podvodníkov uspieť, liberáli znamená zločinné zoskupenie fanatikov uchylov a doslova bláznov, toto zoskupenie je jednoducho nevolitelne, a treba to zakázať.*
[Voting for LGBT liberals is pure madness. They cannot succeed with their program without the support of the USA and other criminal fraudsters, liberals are a criminal group of fanatics, deviants, and literally fools, this group is simply unelectable, and it must be banned]

(12) *M.M.: JĎ ty podporuješ LGBTI? Už keď dvaja chlapi budú vychovávať nejaké dieťa čo s neho vyrastie? Kotleba ide proti tomu lebo je to proti viere a kresťanstvu. Jaký on je nacek a fašista a neviem čo ešte. Že v minulosti niečo urobil zle tak ho teraz treba odsúdiť na trest smrti či akú máš predstavu? A ty komu prejavuješ podporu LGBTI?? Zmeň si titulnú fotku za dvoch mužov alebo si daj svoju foto ako transka aby vedeli že ich podporuješ. Hnus*
[J.Ď., do you support LGBTI? If two guys are going to raise a child, what will grow out of them? Kotleba goes against this because it is against faith and Christianity. What a fascist he is supposed to be? He did something wrong in the past, so now he should be sentenced to death, or what do you think? And… who do you show LGBTI support to?? Change your cover photo to two men or put your photo as a trans woman so they know you support them. Disgusting.]

(13) *T.T.: N.N. radšej mužov v ženských šatách? Radšej politikov prednášajúcich na školách o pozitivach užívania drog.? Radšej LGBTI? Americké základne? Rodič jedna, rodič dva? Nie.!! Radšej LSNS*
[N.N., do you prefer men in women's clothes? Do you prefer politicians lecturing in schools about the positives of drug use.? Do you prefer LGBTI? American bases? Parent one, parent two? No.!! Better it'll be LSNS]

Although there is no explicit mention of the LGBTQ+ minority in M. Mazurek's Facebook post, his supporters engaged this minority in their reactions to address liberals. That is the distinction between local meanings of used expressions in the text (i.e. the microstructure of text perceived by an outsider who cannot recognize the author's linguistic world yet) and its global perception of an insider within the macrostructure of their linguistic world. The politician does not have to express

everything explicitly because he assumes his supporters will understand his speech stimuli based on the common ground. As a result, the linguistic world of M. Mazurek's supporters appears to be corrupted by his party framing. Concerning sexuality, they call them "perverts" (paragraphs 7, 8), "faggots" (paragraph 9), or imply that being a liberal means "men in women's clothes" (paragraph 13) who "want to take their children and let them raise by bums" (paragraph 9). Moreover, they commonly decrease the LGBTQ+ community to gay men and transexuals (e.g. lesbians are rarely, if ever, mentioned). Other phrases such as "liberals are a criminal group of fanatics, deviants, and literally fools" (paragraph 11) and "liberal mafia" (paragraph 10) suggest that liberals force others to live according to them under some threat. This framing of "radical liberals" follows back speech stimuli like, for example, "extreme liberals" found in *Naše Slovensko* newspaper (cf. category 2 in Table 1), which supports our assumption about propaganda that alters the conceptual knowledge of its followers. If we consider that people tend to evaluate information with a bias in favour of their own existing beliefs – when they interpret ambiguous or mixed information by them, they resist information leading to cognitive dissonance (Nyhan and Reifler 2019, p. 225) – the invoked linguistic world mirroring in supporters' comments cannot be unexpected. Since similar speech stimuli were present in all analysed posts, they echo in followers' comments speaking of liberalism as an ideology of perverts, LGBTQ+ people, drug addicts and so on.

4. DISCUSSION

Since autopoiesis makes people autonomous, by giving them their individuality, the way they communicate with each other bears the very same feature. Although every person forms their linguistic world through their interactions with the environment (including other people around them), its actual structure depends on the person's ego. That concerns the unique representation of liberalism involved in expressed linguistic worlds of analysed politicians' supporters, which contradicts the established meanings such as "ideology, a political doctrine emphasizing individual freedom" or "openness to more radical changes, new opinions and respect for differences in various areas; great tolerance towards someone, something different from tradition, especially Christian, antonym conservatism" both defined in *Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka* [Dictionary of the Contemporary Slovak Language], (2011). The individuality of everyone, represented by their egos, causes distinctions in how people understand the same expression, as the person's ego controls their assimilation base. The ego decides which speech stimuli it recognizes and allows them to influence the structure of its linguistic world through accommodation-assimilation activity. Though there is an established way for how an ego experiences particular meaning, adequate stimuli may modify this behavioural lexical meaning in the ego's linguistic world. Especially when, from the receiver's perspective, the

sender's expressive usage contradicts the behavioural lexical meaning of the receiver tied with recognized expressions. The receiver's ego, therefore, needs to employ a rational mode of expressional reception and interpret the uncertain phrases to understand them. We found such adequate speech stimuli in the analysed public communication concerning liberalism. The persistent narrative about "the sick ideology of LGBTQ+ perverts, which disrupts the traditional values, religion and the national sovereignty together with EU and NATO" is redefining the meaning of liberalism in the linguistic worlds of this narrative's supporters. The suggestive deontic effect of received framing contributes to the cause, particularly in such echo chambers as these politicians create. In the end, autopoiesis enables the human ego to decide which triggering stimuli from its environment will impact its linguistic world. Therefore, if liberalism is set in someone's worldview as "the sick ideology of LGBTQ+ perverts", they will experience this meaning of liberalism accordingly in their linguistic world despite any conflicting argument.

This plasticity of the linguistic world regarding how people may experience the same expressions in the same context differently leads us to revise our approach to lexical meaning as such. The subjectivistic perspective in suggested theoretic framework of linguistic world nudges us to consider people's individuality in our investigation. We must therefore recognize even other layers of lexical meaning, which make any communication understandable but, at a same time, they rationalize people's understanding of the world. That brings people the certainty and explains their behaviour and actions following their linguistic worlds. Becoming intelligible in communication requires much more than acknowledging the denotative layer of lexical meaning. As we mentioned above, **language as a human interactive disposition does not work just on rules of logic because the language iconicity empowers people to put their entire world into words to convey their view**. Since the catchphrase *liberálny fašizmus* [liberal fascism] got us thinking about lexical meaning differently, **Figure 1** portrays our schema of lexical meaning that takes into notice the individuality of people and respects the uniqueness of their linguistic worlds.

**Figure 1.** The outline of lexical meaning in linguistic world
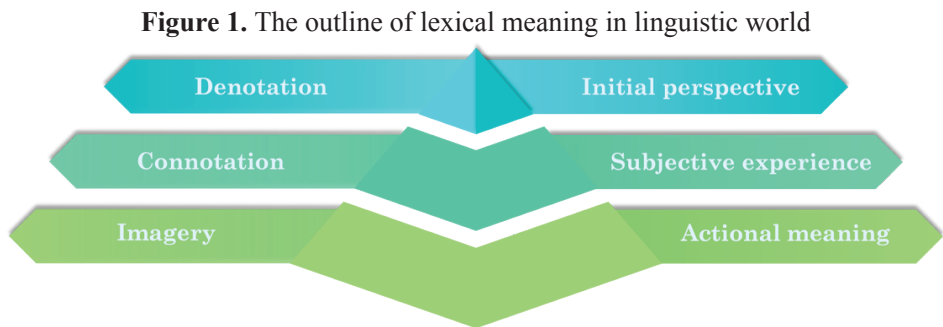
Though we consider the denotative layer of lexical meaning as its baseline in communication, it is not the only crucial attribute in human understanding. The denotation presents only the tip of the iceberg, which a human being explicitly perceives by their senses, but the rest is observable upon scrutinized look at the message a sender conveys. Hence, from the subjectivistic point of view, denotation provides merely an initial perspective. It navigates an ego through its linguistic world so people can understand the recognised expressions. On the other hand, the connotative layer relates to the ego's vivid experience, which makes it more demanding for an observer to recognise it at first glance but provides valuable insight since it echoes an ego's individuality. All knowledge, experience, hopes, beliefs, etc., that ego has acquired defines a person and affects how they experience lexical meanings in communication. In our understanding, language iconicity allows people to blur the boundaries between lexical meanings and utilize them as actional lexical meanings in order to achieve various goals. To sum up, all layers of lexical meaning are equally essential in investigation to come to an accurate conclusion. In factual text analysis, one cannot rely solely on the denotative layer of meanings manifested in the text since valuable evidence may lie underneath, more reasonably enlightening its author's motivation. By observing the authors' language iconicity, which reflects their subjective experience, one can better understand the reason for their choices in expressions.

Figure 2 shows the semantic network regarding the lexical meaning of liberalism as captured in the analysed texts in *Naše Slovensko* newspaper and public communication of M. Mazurek and M. Uhrík. The meaning of liberalism has two main directions in their usage, towards homosexuality, or the West. There is a compound between homosexuality and gender ideology always tied to sexuality within their understanding of liberalism. That, together with drug legalization and openness to other cultures, makes, according to their framing, liberalism against traditional values and Christianity. In the second direction, the liberalism is an import from the West, which promotes it via the European Union, and NGOs. Those play the crucial role in defending the gender ideology and homosexuality. The West also means NATO, the fundamental opposition of Slovak interests in relation to Russians. The European Union invites immigrants into Europe, among others Christianity-threatening Muslims.

The persistent propaganda on what liberalism means and how it threatens "decent people" in Slovakia seemingly influenced the linguistic worlds of propaganda followers, who expressed themselves in analysed comment sections. All the suggested speech stimuli there concerning liberalism (cf. Figure 2) appear to have found the echo in the structure of the lexical meaning the supporters experience and deliver through the expression *liberalism*. Our findings thus indicate the possibility of altering a pattern of how people understand lexical meanings by modifying their structure, which people do not necessarily speak about explicitly but

externalize it in communication. After all, generating an actional lexical meaning for an audience works on the same principles as a linguistic world evolves upon (because the accepted actional lexical meaning by ego eventually becomes its constituent as a behavioural lexical meaning). The intention of authors, which reflects the used speech stimuli in the texts, is essential for adequate language iconicity conveying a message appropriately. Its successful execution assures that the intended effect makes the phrase "liberal fascism" meaningful and well expressed in the linguistic worlds of the followers. Yet, the reaction depends solely on the ego of everyone involved and how each ego controls its assimilation base.

Figure 2. The semantic network of the expression *liberalism*
in the propaganda linguistic world
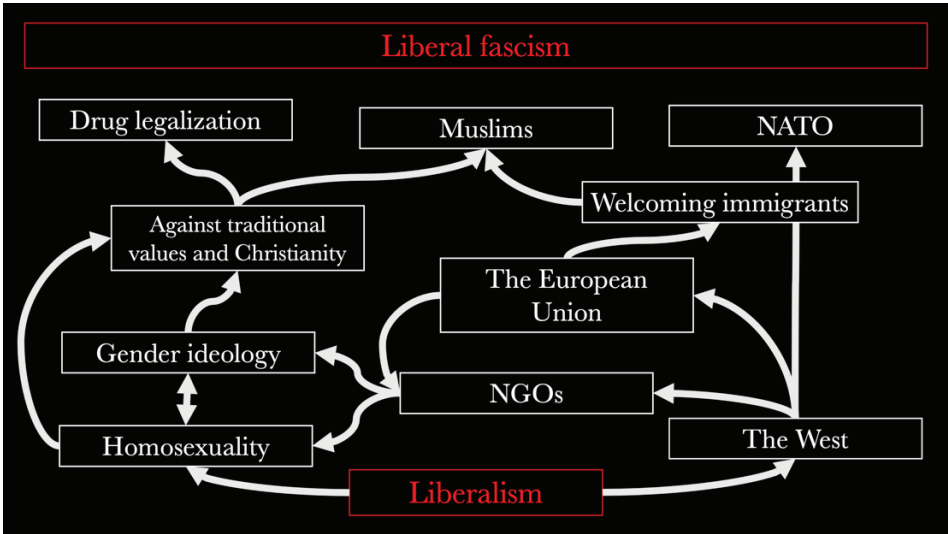
5. CONCLUSION

The egolinguistic perspective followed in our paper forced us to modify our thinking about the lexical meaning, which better reflects human diversity in how people understand received expressions and express themselves through them in communication. The schema of lexical meaning based on the biology of cognition must not neglect the principles involved in creating and maintaining the linguistic world in which an ego works. Taking into account human uniqueness and diversity as people experience lexical meanings, thus means to not lean merely on the interpretations of lexical meanings captured in dictionaries while judging the message of texts. People can discriminate, threaten or bully others even by seemingly neutral (i.e. not utterly hateful) expressions. It is not a secret that the disinformation

related to extremism and far-right populism is rising in the whole V4 region and flagrantly attacks the very fundamental liberal democratic principles. Therefore, while assessing a text for hate crime, one must put the idiolect of the author before the vocabulary descriptions found in dictionaries since one can primarily find the denotative layers of expressions there. To counter hate speech, discrimination, xenophobia or other crimes perpetrated by use of language, one should better understand what is happening within our linguistic worlds to secure the freedom of speech in terms of liberal democracy.

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R e s u m é

AKO SA BUDUJE (NE)SLOBODA: JAZYKOVÝ SVET JEDNEJ POLITICKEJ STRANY NA SLOVENSKU V SÚVISLOSTI S LIBERALIZMOM

V globalizovanom svete pretkanom komunikačnými technológiami a sociálnymi sieťami sa táto štúdia usiluje pochopiť, ako politici svojou verejnou komunikáciou postupne vplývajú na jazykové svety svojich recipientov. Analýza komunikácie sledovanej strany odhalila istý vzorec v externalizovaní významu *liberalizmus*, ktorým jej členovia navodzujú recipientom potrebné konotácie, pričom sa nimi usilujú nanovo definovať spôsob, akým recipienti prirodzene prežívajú význam slova *liberalizmus*. S ohľadom na pojmové znalosti späté so slovami tak politici svojou verejnou komunikáciou vplývajú na sémantickú štruktúru slova *liberalizmus* v jazykových svetoch recipientov, ktorá sa im vyjavuje v podobe tzv. behaviorálneho významu. Štúdia preto navrhuje korigovať perspektívu v nazeraní na lexikálny význam, aby zohľadňovala jedinečnosť a rôznorodosť ľudí v ich spôsobe, akým rozumejú jednotlivým výrazom a ďalej nimi v komunikácii sprostredkúvajú rozličné obsahy. Pri konštruovaní takej perspektívy autor vychádza z biológie poznania H. R. Maturanu a F. J. Varelu a egolingvistiky J. Dolníka.

GENDER ASYMMETRY OF VISEGRÁD GROUP LANGUAGES AS REFLECTED BY WORD EMBEDDINGS[1]

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Abstract: Today, word embeddings have become a standard method in natural language processing, largely due to the availability of large language corpora. The models effectively reflect the semantic relationships between words without any additional linguistic input. Recently, more emphasis has been placed on interpreting the seemingly discriminatory results of some queries, with the goal of de-biasing language models.

However, if we consider the vector space to be a reasonably valid model of a linguistic semantic space, does not the asymmetry and subsequent discrimination in word embeddings reflect the (average) discriminatory tendencies inherent in the language? This article explores word embedding models for the Visegrád group languages and we apply basic vector arithmetic to demonstrate the basic language asymmetry present in the models.

It is well known that in English models, vector transfers result in eerily accurate predictions when swapping genders (the famous *king – man + woman = queen*), but these transfers also result in rather uncomplimentary roles for certain occupations (*doctor – man + woman = nurse*, or *computer programmer – man + woman = homemaker*). The article explores similar transfers in models of V4 languages – Slovak, Czech, Polish, and Hungarian. With Hungarian gender neutrality, Polish strong generic masculine, and close parallels between Slovak and Czech, we hope to uncover interesting similarities and differences in gender asymmetry in these languages, based on real language data.

Key words: word embeddings, discrimination, NLP, grammatical gender, gender stereotypes, generic masculine, gender symmetry, gender asymmetry

1. INTRODUCTION

Word embeddings (as introduced by Mikolov et al. 2013) have become a crucial and indispensable component of advanced natural language processing (NLP) research and language analysis. It is widely recognized that the relationships between vectors capture the semantic values of language, although the exact reason for this is not fully understood (Şenel et al. 2018). This semantic relationship also extends to

proper names. Informally, we will refer to the "semantic closeness" and "synonyms" (also regarding proper names) as the closeness of their vectors in our models. Similarly, we will use the term "closeness in semantic space" to mean small angle between vectors in our word embedding models and the "semantic surroundings of a word" to mean the n-dimensional hypersphere (of a certain radius) surrounding the vector in our model. Another improvement on the basic word embedding method is the addition of substring vectors to the vector of the word, in the form of the fastText algorithm (Bojanowski et al. 2017). This improves the analysis of inflected languages without the need for "traditional" lemmatization and related NLP processes.

Our article aims to explore the possibilities of vector models in examining deep semantic relationships when expressing gender equivalence in the V4 languages. This is motivated by the pan-European trend towards bias-free language, gender-sensitive expressions and gender-balanced language. This requirement is mandatory for the creation of official EU documents and is part of the *Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025*[1] and most recently also part of the agenda of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in the form of the *Plan of Gender Equality in the Slovak Academy of Sciences*.[2] The specific guidelines for gender-neutral expression in the Slovak language are contained in the handbook *Inclusive Communication in the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union*.[3] It follows from the handbook that two parallel and legitimate paths lead to inclusive language in Slovak.[2] Namely gender neutralisation (the use of gender-neutral terms to refer to persons and groups, e.g. *osoba* [person], *skupina, kolektív* [group, team] and feminisation (the use of feminatives to express the feminine gender in the names of professions, social roles, functional, etc.) e.g. *hosteska* [hostess], *športovkyňa* [sportswoman]. Gender-balanced language in Slovak is based on the explicit parallel naming of male and female objects, while gender pairs are formed, e.g. *herec* ↔ *herečka* [actor ↔ actress]. The goal of this explicit binarization is to induce gender symmetry. However, the question arises whether the existence of a female name in a gender pair is a sufficient expression of symmetry? Is formal symmetry a reflection of the full semantic equivalence of the members of the gender pair, or do the language users somehow differentiate the members of the pair and use them a little differently in practical communication? Furthermore, if differences and asymmetries arise here, what are they, and what do they tell?

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[2] Handbook *Gender neutral language in European Parliament* (2018, p. 6)[8] states: "Genderless languages (such as Estonian, Finnish and Hungarian) do not generally need a particular strategy to be gender-inclusive, save for the very specific cases that are discussed in the particular guidelines for those languages". In Hungarian, gender-sensitive language is partly reflected in the formation of gender pairs in the names of professions (e.g. *tanár* [male teacher] – *tanárnő* [female teacher]), but the dominant tendency is to use gender neutral terms. The aim of the tendencies towards gender sensitivity (***away*** [emphasis ours] from gender neutrality) in Hungarian is "that the language will not be sexist and at the same time will use its grammatical genderlessness" (Satinská 2018, p. 102).

Linguistic research based on word embeddings can perhaps be the first step towards the answers. Word embeddings are not the first, neither the only method of representing words by vectors in a multidimensional vector space, but they are computationally tractable with (by contemporary standards) just modest computing equipment and they conveniently reflect several important linguistic features (such as a combination of semantic and grammatical relations). We try to obtain an insight into how the users of a given language express their semantic space regarding gender pairs. We emphasize that this is just a probe into corpus data and the results should be understood as such, reflecting the corpora[3] and not necessarily the society nor the language. Equivalence of relationships between gender pairs can be observed at the level of one language and interlingual comparisons as well. Thanks to the relative objectivity of word embeddings, we can observe more or less symmetric phenomena in the verbal manifestation of the genus of people and animals in individual languages. We aimed to show what type of results the models bring in monitoring the degree of gender equivalency of words and represented by related vectors.

Although well established, word embedding models still require clarification of their functionality and material base for the linguistic audience. Therefore, in the structure of our paper, we will first very briefly describe the basics of word embeddings and the foundations of our web interface to the word embeddings used, as well as the corpora used to train the models. Later we will present the language material and a selection of examples, on which we follow the way of manifestation of gender equivalence. We define gender equivalence and its types. We also deal with interpreting and comparing individual examples between V4 languages. At the end of the article, we present a summary of our results.

1.1 ARANEA corpora family

ARANEA family of web corpora is a group of web corpora collected, annotated and compiled using the same methodology and procedures, thus creating a set of comparable corpora of similar composition. Currently, there are 24 languages available, of various sizes and quality. Most of the corpora are lemmatized and POS tagged, and several moderately inflected languages represented therein have full morphological annotation. However, there are corpora that are not lemmatized, even for languages with rich morphology, due to technical or other reasons (e.g. lack of sufficiently advanced NLP tools for the language). In general, corpora are available in three different sizes: *Maximum* (all the crawled text, after deduplication), *Maius* (1.2 billion[4] token subset of the *Maximum*, created only if *Maximum* is bigger than

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[3] We should note that the corpora had been collected before the widespread public availability and usage of Large Language Models; we expect the internet space to become soon "infested" by automatically generated texts virtually indistinguishable from human output and the reliability of web corpora to decrease, perhaps even significantly.

[4] We are using 1 billion = 10^9.

1.2 billion tokens) and *Minus* (120 million tokens, accessible without a registration, created only if *Maximum* is bigger than 120 million tokens). *Maius* and *Minus* are therefore comparable across the languages.

The sizes of Slovak, Czech, Polish and Hungarian (i.e. the *Visegrád group*, later in the article *V4*) corpora, as well as the English corpus used in this article are:

Table 1. Overview of corpora (and word embeddings trained thereon) used in this article

Language	Corpus	Size [Gtokens]	Crawl time
Czech	A. Bohemicum IV Maximum	7.1	2013–2018
English	A. Anglicum II Maximum	11.4	2013–2017
Hungarian	A. Hungaricum Maius	1.2	2014
Polish	A. Polonicum Maius	1.2	2013
Slovak	A. Slovacum V Maximum + prim-8.0-juls-all	5.5	2013–2019

Slovak word embeddings are different from the other languages, though – they are based on a bigger corpus, a union of the *Araneum Slovacum V Maximum* (Slovak web corpus of the Aranea family) and *prim-8.0-juls-all*, a representative corpus of contemporary Slovak, part of the Slovak National Corpus project. There is also a different Slovak word embedding model (called *sk-ll*) that differs in a significantly lower threshold for token frequency (10 occurrences), aimed for specific lexicography use, but we will not discuss this model here.

The corpora (and vector models) are therefore not really comparable, since we aim for the best (i.e. biggest) possible corpus for the language in question, but we can still get valuable information and make comparisons from the models. There are three models for most of the languages; the first model is trained on lemmas, the second one on the original raw word forms (case-normalized, to correctly capture e.g. sentence-initial words), the third one uses fastText algorithm. Unless stated otherwise, in this article we will use the model trained on lemmas. The composition of the corpora is as expected from web-crawled texts – generic webpages, business webpages, online discussion, news articles etc. The languages in question share many similar characteristics on their web usage, we feel the differences are not crucial for our purposes. We will highlight several features of the V4 corpora:

- Most of the text come from the respective top level domain (.cz, .hu, .pl, .sk);
- There is a non-negligible amount of Slovak texts in the .cz domain and vice versa; these texts are removed by language filtering;
- Compared to other languages, the Hungarian corpus contains bigger proportion of texts from minorities in neighbouring countries;

- The languages are mostly monocentric; written colloquial Czech is somewhat popular on the internet, but dwarfed by the literary standard; Cyrillic-script Eastern Slovak as used in Vojvodina does not come into the mainstream consideration at all;
- Czech, Polish and Hungarian possess a lot of classic literature present on the internet (regarding the expiration/exemption from copyright protection) while Slovak literature appears in noticeable (for corpora and language models) quantity only in the 20th century (but the inclusion of the *prim-8.0* corpus could somewhat compensate for the presumed lack of Slovak classical fiction on the internet).

The English corpus, on the other hand, is collected without any territorial limitations. Its composition is expected to be different, given the worldwide span of English, but in any case, English serves as a comparison and is not the focus of this article (and the results we obtained conform to those reported in the literature).

2. WORD EMBEDDINGS

2.1 Web Interface

Word embeddings are quite easy to use, with several mature OpenSource software frameworks, libraries and packages in major programming languages. However, this approach can still be cumbersome for casual users, such as language teachers or learners, or in linguistic research. To address this, we have developed a web interface to query the models, with the intention to be make word embeddings accessible to both experienced linguists (or lexicographers) and language enthusiasts. The interface is described in (Garabík 2020), and we just summarize the main points used in this article:

- A query will display a table of nearest words from the embedding model and a visualisation graph, displaying the surroundings of the result, in either 2D, 3D or 4D projection, using ISOMAP dimensionality reduction.
- We define the "closeness" of words as $\sqrt{1-\cos^2\varphi}$, where φ is the angle between the vectors corresponding to the two words). In the article, we will define the function $|word1, word2| = \sqrt{1-\cos^2\varphi(word1, word2)}$.
- We support simple vector arithmetic, consisting of addition and subtraction. The result of the expression is used as a vector around which we look for semantically close words and display the table of them in a similar manner to the previous usage cases.
- In this article, we adopt the following convention: in an arithmetic expression composed of words, we understand the words to stand for their respective vectors[5]; the equal sign = means the resulting vector is closest to

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[5] By writing a *word* directly in these expressions we of course mean the corresponding vector as a function of the *word*.

the word after the equal sign; the ≈ sign means the resulting vector is not the closest one, but is near enough to be relevant in the expression (e.g. the closest one is a typo or a mis-lemmatized word; or a different part of speech, etc.). We might include several words separated by commas (and spaces): this means that they are in the vicinity of the result, in the order of increasing semantic distance.

2.2 Vector transfer

The use of vector arithmetic over word embedding models is well known – subtracting "masculinity" from and adding "femininity" to a word vector ideally gives us a feminine variant of the word; the iconic example of *king – man + woman = queen* is already mentioned in (Mikolov et al. 2013). Close (in the sense of their angle being small) vectors signify there is some kind of semantic or syntactic similarity between the words, which even allows us to quantify the level of synonymy between the words – this is however not comparable across different vector models.

Of the languages we focus on, Hungarian completely lacks grammatical gender; Polish, Slovak and Czech follow a typical pattern of Slavic languages with three main genders (masculine, feminine, neutrum), with the masculine further divided into animate and inanimate. These three languages also make a heavy use of generic masculine for gender-neutral or gender-agnostic roles, a feature that is increasingly being targeted by various gender-equality activists (however, examples of other "non-sexist" languages, such as Hungarian, are discussed very seldom, if at all). Among these languages, Polish exhibits a strong generic masculine on the lexical level, especially in names of professions, where feminine alternatives often do not even exist, or they are uncommon and perceived as marked. In contrast, in both Czech and Slovak, feminine names of professions are productively derived and commonly used, while generic masculines are also common.

3. LANGUAGE EXAMPLES AND CATEGORIAL OPERATORS

3.1 Gender pairs

The subjects of our interest are gender pairs, that is, gender equivalents in Slovak, Czech, Polish and Hungarian. In common sense, we consider a gender pair to be a pair of words, one of which names a male representative and the other a female representative.[6] A gender pair can be singular if it expresses gender

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[6] Thanks to their nature, word embedding models conflate biological, semantic and grammatical genders (reflecting the use of genders in V4 languages). The results from gender transfer within the vector space(s) should be interpreted with this in mind.

opposition between individuals or animals e.g. *žiak – žiačka* [schoolboy – schoolgirl], *kohút – sliepka* [rooster – hen] or collective if it expresses gender opposition between groups of people or animals e.g. *žiaci – žiačky* [schoolboys – schoolgirls], *kohúty – sliepky* [roosters – hens]. Gender pairs in terms of expressive complexity in Slovak can be full-expressions if both members of the gender pair are expressed as heteronymous lexemes, e. g. *chlapec ↔ dievča*[7] [boy ↔ girl] or symbolic if the gender of the other member of the gender pair is signalled only by the gender suffix, e.g. *boh ↔ bohyňa* [god ↔ goddess]. Defining gender pair is primarily meaningful when referring to animate objects (living beings or beings considered living metaphorically, e.g. mythical beings, AIs, etc.) that have a biological genus, but of course we can consider masculine or feminine components of vector representations for any word.

The tendency to use gender pairs in the interest of inclusive language is promoted, for example, in Slavic languages, which use male → female transition[8] to express their gender affiliation or in languages using generic masculinity. Both ways – male→female transition and generic masculine are considered discriminatory by some groups of activists. The dominant tendency in Slovak and Czech is feminization – derivation of female wordforms (feminatives) from the names of persons in the masculine gender e.g. *riaditeľ → riaditeľka* [director → directress], *novinár → novinárka* [newsman – newswoman]. However, the phenomenon of gender equivalence also includes the formation of male counterparts to the names of persons in the female gender e.g. *letuška ↔ steward* [stewardess ↔ steward]. On the other hand, in the name of gender sensitivity, there are also some efforts in Slovakia and Czech Republic to abolish or loosen the strict use of female counterparts to male surnames (Komanická 2016; Valdrová 2001).

The situation in Polish when naming persons of the feminine gender is more complicated, because two ways of expressing gender are used in parallel in the names of professions, titles and social functions: lexemes with the grammatical (word-forming) exponent of the gender (suffixes) e.g. *-ka: dziennikarka* [newswoman] *-owa*: *szefowa* [female boss], *-yni/-ini*: *twórczyni* [female creator], *mistrzyni* [female master], but also through the generic masculine: (*pani*) *doktor* [doctor]*,* (*kobieta*) *szef* [boss], (*kobieta*) *twórca* [creator], (*kobieta*) *mistrz* [master] (Nowosad-Bakalarczyk 2020, p. 215). The dominant tendency of decades past – to use the gender-neutral generic masculine to refer to persons of the feminine gender – is expressed in the *Nowy słownik poprawnej polszczyzny* (1999, cited by Nowosad-

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[7] This is an interesting example of a disparity between grammatical gender and (biological or social) sex. *Dievča* [girl] is grammatically neutrum but biologically (or socially) feminine. Yet we perceive it as a feminine equivalent of the masculine *chlapec* [boy].

[8] The Slovak term *prechyľovanie* (and Czech *přechylování*) does not have a well-established English translation. In Lipková 2008 the term *transition* is introduced; Kolek and Valdrová 2020 use the term *feminization*. Other authors use other various terms or circumlocutions.

Bakalarczyk 2020, p. 215): "In the Polish language of the last decades, female names with the exponent -*ka* have been considered not very official, disrespectful, and inconsistent with the seriousness, rank and social position of the indicated people. There was a massive retreat even from the already adopted terms, such as *dyrektorka* [female director], *kierowniczka* [female manager], *profesorka* [female professor], in favour of the expressions of the (*pani*) *dyrektor* [director], (*pani*) *kierownik* [manager], (*pani*) *profesor* [professor]. In the female form, only the names of trades traditionally performed by women remain, e.g. *aktorka* [actress], *malarka* [female painter], *nauczycielka* [female teacher], *pisarka* [female writer], or regarded as unattractive, of low social rank, e.g. *ekspedientka* [saleswoman], *fryzjerka* [hairdresser], *sprzątaczka* [cleaning lady]. In today's Polish language there is no name of a prestigious position, degree or academic title that would have a female word-formation form".

3.2 Categorial operators

Relations between vectors in word embedding models reflect semantic or syntactic relations between words in the language. Unfortunately, it is difficult to arrive at a linguistically sound interpretation of the axes (or coordinates or the basis of the vector space). Therefore, there is not a straightforward operation that replaces one semantic category with a different one (e.g. swapping masculinity for femininity), and we have to resort to a transfer achieved by a difference of another two vectors with well-known semantic roles, preferably perfectly symmetrical and balanced. Usually, the equivalents of *man* and *woman* or personal pronouns *he* and *she* are used, implicitly assuming that other semantic categories of the words (apart from masculinity or femininity) are equivalent ("of the same strength"). We will consider these equivalents as categorial operators.

In our case, these operators express a gender category, namely the category of masculinity: Slovak and Czech *muž*, *on*, Polish *mężczyzna*, Hungarian *férfi* [man], the category of femininity: Slovak and Czech *žena,* Polish *kobieta,* Hungarian *nő* [woman], the superior category of humanity: Slovak *člověk,* Czech *člověk,* Polish *člověk,* Hungarian *férfi* [man] or the category of animality: Slovak *zviera,* Czech *zvíře,* Polish *zwierzę*, Hungarian *állat* [animal]. In arithmetic operations with categories of words, we define categorial inhibitors by "subtracting" a certain category from the examined expression. For example, if we "subtract" the masculinity category called *man* from the term *king*, the term *man* will be a categorial inhibitor of the operation. At the same time, if we add the category of femininity represented by the term *woman* in the same equation (*king – man + woman*), the term *woman* will be categorial activator of the operation (see section 4.1.1). We performed these operations to determine what are the equivalents of the word in question, if by the arithmetic operation we put one category into the background (e.g. masculinity) and another category to the forefront (e.g. femininity).

3.3 Trans-categorial result types
3.3.1 Partial symmetry

The result of the arithmetic operation in our word embedding model represents a trans-categorial result and creates the equivalent of the word, e.g. the well-known English example: *doctor – man + woman = midwife, nurse*. It is evident that the trans-categorial equivalents *midwife* and *nurse* to *doctor* express a typical professional configuration (*doctor ↔ nurse*), but they are not functional equivalents regarding gender equality. We consider this situation to be a case of a gender asymmetry, i.e. the results *midwife* or *nurse* express partial asymmetry to the term *doctor*. However, it is an asymmetry from a comparative point of view, applicable to the case when we consider the correspondence of form and content in configurations such as *king ↔ queen, doctor ↔ doctor* as a standard of gender symmetry, while we compare languages with a different gender system, a language with a grammatical gender and a language with a natural gender (Czech, Slovak, Polish versus English). The topics of our article are the languages of the V4 countries, i.e. three Slavic languages, mostly inflected and strongly gendered (Slovak, Czech, Polish) and one primarily agglutinative and grammatically genderless language (Hungarian).

3.3.2 Full symmetry

The same example yields a different result when we look into an equivalent in the Slovak language word embeddings model. In the expression *doctor – man + woman* (see section 4.3.), *muž* [man] is a categorial inhibitor and *žena* [woman] is a categorial activator. The result is the Slovak feminative *doktorka* [female doctor] as the full equivalent, and it represents the situation of full gender symmetry in the gender pair in Slovak *doktor ↔ doktorka* [male doctor ↔ female doctor]. Male ↔ female word transition is the language mechanism by which a complete symmetry is achieved in inflected languages. This transition – derivation via gender suffixes enables a consistent creation of gender-equivalent forms (feminatives) to appellate male forms e.g. *kuchár ↔ kuchár-ka* [cook – female cook], or to proprial male words e.g. in the surnames *Balog ↔ Balog-ová*.

3.3.3 Asymmetry – nonequivalency

An example of asymmetry is when the investigated expression in the vector model has no opposite-gender equivalent. For example, the term *doctor* in the English language does not have a feminative. Of course, word embeddings show partial context equivalents, already mentioned *nurse* and *midwife*. In the English language environment, the term *doctor* is gender non-equivalent because it represents a syncretic form; *doctor* is a syncretic invariant. Such an "invariant" is a linguistic sign that combines or merges several linguistic meanings. It is one of the most prominent manifestations of asymmetric dualism (Vobořil 2017, p. 429). In the case of the *doctor*, it is not the absence of a feminine equivalent but its inherent presence

in the syncretic invariant (i.e. the generic masculine). Another type of non-equivalence is a situation where the observed expression has no equivalent because there is no equivalent object to it in a real (non-linguistic) world. This happens e.g. in the case of *priest*, when there are no direct gender equivalents to the Polish term *proboszcz* or to the Hungarian term *plebános* (cf. 4.2.2.).

3.3.4 Equivalence continuum

We use word embeddings to show semantic distance between words; the semantic equivalents are displayed in a table, arranged according to their semantic proximity to the result (Table 2). Thus, if there is a semantic equivalent, it will be at the beginning of the table, with a small semantic distance (first column). For example, if we look for the gender equivalent to the word *king*, we see that after performing a vector transfer from the male to the female, the closest expression is the word *queen*, which forms a symmetric gender pair with it. In the result table, words that are semantically close to the resulting word/vector may constitute partial equivalents, e.g. in our example case these are *prince, princess, monarch*. The highest degree of equivalence in terms of gender transfer of the word *king* is represented by the word *queen*, and the interface displays related words according to their semantic distance where, in addition to the most typical gender equivalents, less typical equivalents may occur.

Vector models show the semantics distance between the words table, while the equivalent of the search term is located in the second row of the result table (Table 2). We look for the gender equivalent of the word *king*, and find it in the term *queen*, which is most closely associated with the term *king*, and forms the symmetric gender pair with it in English. Looking at the hierarchy of items in the result table, we see that in lower positions are placed other terms related to the searched word; these may in specific contexts appear as partial equivalents, e.g. *prince, princess, monarch*. Thus, the vector model statistically evaluates the contextual distribution of related expressions to the searched word and creates their hierarchy regarding the degree of equivalence. The term *queen* represents the highest degree of equivalence to the word *king*, but the contextual, gender-differentiated equivalents in certain situations may also be the terms *prince* and *princess*. Vector models display a continuum of related expressions where, in addition to the most typical gender equivalents, less typical equivalents can and do occur. The degree of their proximity to the key expression is quantified by the semantic distance in the vector models for individual languages.

4. TRANS-GENDER EQUIVALENTS

In following examples, we show the table of nearest (i.e. having minimal semantic distance to the result of the arithmetic expression) words (i.e. vectors) and

a dimensionality-reduced picture showing spatial arrangement of the nearest vectors. Since the original 200-dimensional space is reduced to two or three dimensions, a certain (and huge) distortion is inevitable and so the rotation and viewing angle were chosen to demonstrate key points of the resulting vector relations, if possible. We also keep the dimensions of the graphs down to three, since because of certain technical difficulties, displaying four-dimensional graphs in printed media is difficult.

4.1 Personal transgender equivalents, case "king"

4.1.1 English vector model: *king ↔ queen* (gender symmetry)

In Table + Figure 2, we display the result of the expression *king – man + woman = queen* in the English language model. Note the inconsistent capitalization, common for high-ranking titles in English, and the semantic closeness of the capitalized and uncapitalized variants. Semantic space surrounding the result visibly contains a delineated region of "feminine rulers", with the *queen* being closest to the feminine equivalent of *king*. The left part of the vector model in Fig. 2 represents a proprietary scene in which appear: specific personifications of various ancient rulers,[9] the name of the ancient country in Mesopotamia (*Mittani*), the common name *pharaoh* and the female pharaoh *Hatshepsut*.

Table + Figure 2. Result of the arithmetic expression *king − man + woman = queen* in the English language model.
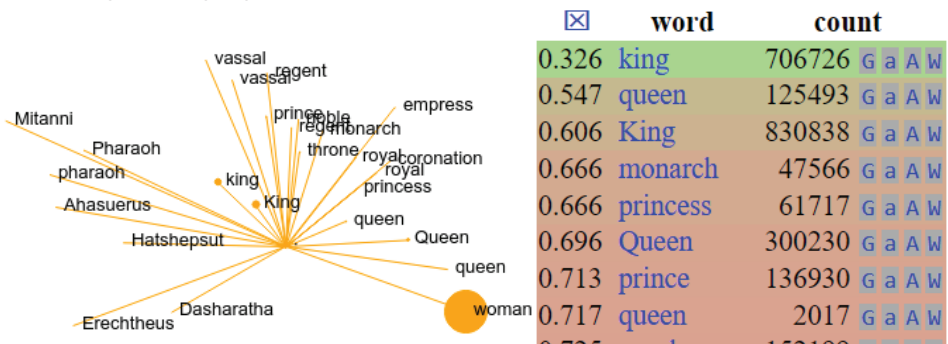
4.1.2 Slovak vector model: *kráľ ↔ kráľovná* (gender symmetry)

In Table + Fig. 3, we see the equivalent expression in the Slovak language *kráľ – muž + žena = kráľovná*. Compared to English, the semantic region of "feminine

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[9] *Ahasuerus* refers to the fictional ruler of Persia, King Xerxes; *Dasharatha* denotes the ruler of an empire in ancient northern India; *Erechtheus* refers to the King of Athens in Greek mythology; *Hatshepsut* refers to the female pharaoh.

rulers" is more clearly separated, but otherwise the results are expected and unsurprising. In addition to the *kráľovná* [queen] equivalent, the terms *cisárovná, panovníčka, vládkyňa* [empress, female monarch, female ruler] also appear in Slovak as contextual equivalents. The proprietary scene is represented by the names of historical figures such as *Mária Terézia* [Maria Theresa] and *kráľovná Viktória* [Queen Victoria]. In Slovak, the titles of female power holders are consistently feminized.

Table + Figure 3. Result of the arithmetic expression *kráľ – muž + žena = kráľovná* (Slovak for *king – man + woman = queen*).
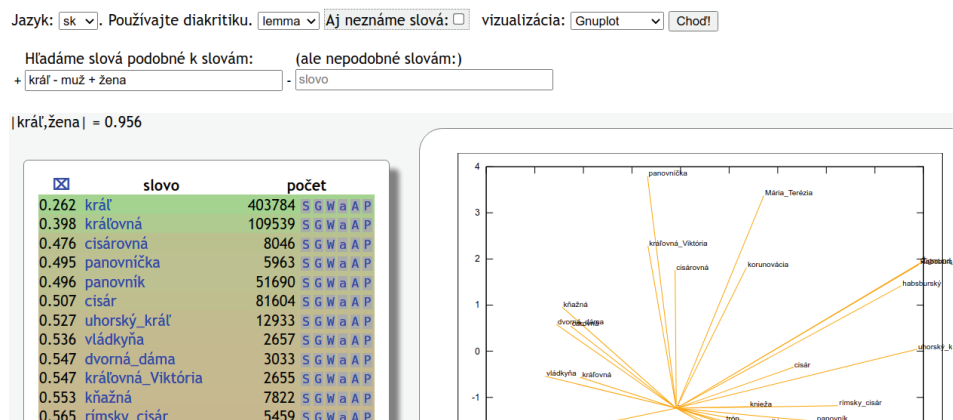
Compared to English, the semantic region of "feminine rulers" is more clearly separated. Unlike other examples, we bring a screenshot of the (almost) complete search interface here, to demonstrate the features present in the interface.

4.1.3 Czech vector model: *král ↔ královna* (gender symmetry)

Similarly for Czech *král – muž + žena = královna*. Contextual equivalents are also the terms *panovnice* [female monarch], princezna [princess], následnice [female successor]. The proprietary sphere consists of the names of female historical (real and fictional) personalities like *královna Alžběta Sophia, Brunhilda, Diana, Sibyla*.[10]

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[10] The name *Sibyla* can refer to the mythical soothsayer *Sibyl* or to the real historical figure *Sibyla Libštejnská from the House of Kolowrat.*

Table + Figure 4. Result of the arithmetic expression *král – muž + žena = kráľovná* (Czech for *king – man + woman = queen*)

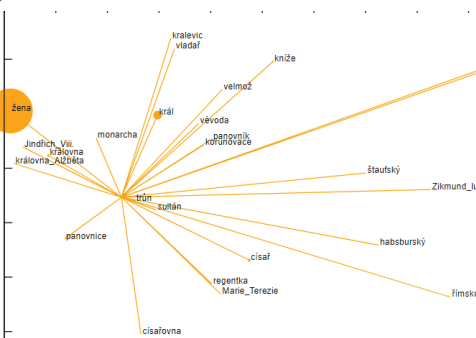| ⊠	slovo	počet			
0.143	král	533546	s	G	a
0.380	královna	137948	s	G	a
0.406	panovník	60418	s	G	a
0.469	panovnice	3401	s	G	a
0.472	císař	176151	s	G	a
0.517	korunovace	11616	s	G	a
0.519	kníže	99737	s	G	a
0.529	vévoda	28574	s	G	a
0.533	trůn	82467	s	G	a

4.1.4 Polish vector model: *król ↔ królowa* (partial gender asymmetry)

In Polish (Table + Fig. 5), the result is much less clear: *król – mężczyzna + kobieta ≈ władca, monarcha* (i.e. [ruler, monarch], both grammatically masculine), with much less amount of feminine ruler titles. Although one of the equivalents in the vector model is *królowa* [queen consort], it is relatively far from the result of the arithmetic expression (semantic distance of 0.521, cf. Table 5). In Polish, there is a frequent and neutral referencing of female persons through male forms. It often happens in the designation of prestigious professions, social roles and functions, such as: "95-letnia królowa Elżbieta, najstarszy i najdłużej panujący monarcha na świecie, w przyszłym miesiącu będzie obchodzić swoje siódme dziesięciolecie jako władca". [The next month, the 95 years old Queen Elisabeth, the oldest and longest reigning monarch in the world, will celebrate her 75th anniversary as a ruler].[5] Or: "Historia Polski zna dwa przypadki, w których o kobiecie możemy powiedzieć "król": Jadwiga Andegaweńska i Anna Jagiellonka" [The history of Poland knows two cases where we can call woman a "king": the two being Jadwiga Andegaweńska and Anna Jagiellonka].[11] The lower representation of feminatives and the higher competitiveness of male forms in referring to feminine persons in Polish is a feature of this language that is noticeably different from Slovak and Czech. One or the other reference method is used depending on the context or attitude. In Polish, there is a correlation between the expression of social prestige, high importance or historical factuality and the generic masculine (i.e. non-feminatives word form) referring to female persons (*król, władca, monarcha* [king, ruler, monarch], but also *doktor, prezydent, prezes* [doctor, president, chairman] etc.). In addition to this method, feminatives such as *władczyni, cesarzowa, królowa, królewna, caryca* [female ruler, emperor, queen consort, queen, tsarina] are also applied contextually. The proprietary sphere in the Polish vector model (Fig. 5) is expressed by the (rare) name *Elżbieta Łokietkówna* [Queen of Poland and Hungary].

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[11] The history of Poland knows two cases in which we can give the title "king" to a woman: Jadwiga Andegaweńska and Anna Jagiellonka.[6]

Table + Figure 5. Results of the arithmetic expression *król – mężczyzna + kobieta* (Polish for *king – man + woman*)

⊠	word	count				
0.222	król	88183	G	a	A	W
0.473	władca	31513	G	a	A	W
0.478	monarcha	4780	G	a	A	W
0.521	królowa	15932	G	a	A	W
0.529	cesarzowa	1235	G	a	A	W
0.534	cesarz	17168	G	a	A	W
0.537	cesarz_rzymski	846	G	a	A	W
0.560	Henryk_Walezy	221	G	a	A	W
0.571	II_Mocny	301	G	a	A	W
0.573	książę	52563	G	a	A	W
0.575	następca_tron	1534	G	a	A	W
0.576	Cesarz	3752	G	a	A	W
0.577	Elżbieta_Łokietkówna	54	G	a	A	W

4.1.5 Hungarian vector model: *király ↔ királynő, királyné* (gender asymmetry)

Hungarian makes lexical difference between *királyné* [queen consort] and *királynő* [queen monarch], the result of an equivalent expression is *király – férfi + nő = királyné*, i.e. *queen consort*. Let us note that the difference in semantic distance from the word *király* is quite comparable and the preference of *királyné* can be just a result of random corpus composition and model learning process: |*király, királyné*| = 0.426 (Table 6); |*király, királynő*| = 0.521, while |*királyné, királynő*| = 0.356 (i.e. understandably quite close).

Table + Figure 6. Result of the arithmetic expression *király – férfi + nő* (Hungarian for *king – man + woman*)

⊠	word	count				
0.212	király	166733	G	a	A	W
0.426	királyné	7971	G	a	A	W
0.461	császár	31296	G	a	A	W
0.483	uralkodó	23201	G	a	A	W
0.516	herceg	26923	G	a	A	W
0.521	királynő	18288	G	a	A	W
0.544	fejedelem	16917	G	a	A	W
0.545	Ulászló	926	G	a	A	W
0.546	Kázmér_lengyel	137	G	a	A	W
0.553	királyság	23931	G	a	A	W
0.571	német-római_császár	879	G	a	A	W
0.586	Jolánta	102	G	a	A	W
0.595	uralkodói	3225	G	a	A	W
0.597	napkirály	589	G	a	A	W

4.2 Personal transgender equivalents: case "priest"

We can look into some words that are clearly gender-asymmetric (with no change in sight, despite all the prominent public talking about gender neutrality). Let us take the equivalent of two arithmetic expressions in our languages (for brevity, we will omit the graphs and tables of semantically close words), the first one being *priest – man + woman* and the second being *parson – man + woman*.[12] We distinguish the following results according to the degree of equivalence to the phenomena of gender symmetry and asymmetry.

4.2.1 Gender symmetry

In Slovak, *kňaz – muž + žena = rehoľníčka, rehoľná sestra* [priest – man + woman = religious sister]; *farár – muž + žena = farárka* [parson – man + woman = female parson].

In Czech, the results are similar: *kněz – muž + žena ≈ řeholnice* [priest – man + woman ≈ religious sister]; *farář – muž + žena = farářka* [parson – man + woman = female parson].

4.2.2 Gender asymmetry

In Polish, the search for a female equivalent of the terms *ksiądz* [priest] and *proboszcz* [parson] results in gender asymmetry. In the case of the expression *ksiądz – mężczyzna + kobieta*, the semantically closest term is the phrase *błogosławionej pamięci* (or the acronym *bp, BP*) [of Blessed Memory], which used to occur in relation to the deceased of the Jewish faith, but nowadays is extended towards other religions, as the corpus occurrences show). Our interpretation of the result is that there is no female equivalent of the word *ksiądz* (Tab. 7a).

In the case of *proboszcz – mężczyzna + kobieta*, the resulting vector remained close to the word *proboszcz* (*proboszcz, ksiądz proboszcz, proboszcz, parafia*, Tab. 7b). *Parafia* [parish] just happened to be a feminine gender noun closest to the result of the expression, similar to the phrase *błogosławionej pamięci* (combination of two feminines in Polish) being close to the term *ksiądz*.

In both cases, the asymmetry is also well visible on the visualization (Fig. 7a, 7b). There are no results even remotely relevant present, meaning that the vector transfer did not move us to anything resembling the "feminine region". This implies that the given expressions do not have a female counterpart in the Polish language. Here, language transgender non-equivalency corresponds to non-language asymmetry. In the absence of denotation in the subject reality, the most frequent word or phrase contextually linked to the search term is often nonsense or irrelevant (*błogosławionej pamięci, parafia*).

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[12] There are no exact semantic equivalents for these religious terms between these languages and English; the glosses we give in the text are approximate.

Table 7a. Result of the search scheme *ksiądz – mężczyzna + kobieta*
Table 7b. Result of the search scheme *proboszcz – mężczyzna + kobieta*

0.189	ksiądz	129825	G a A	0.414 Proboszcz	4293	G a A W
0.474	błogosławionej_mięci	3450	G a A	0.471 proboszcz_parafia	5796	G a A W
0.480	Proboszcz	4293	G a A	0.490 ksiądz_proboszcz	1973	G a A W
0.503	Biskup	12002	G a A	0.510 parafia	73621	G a A W
0.503	Zbigniew_Hul	75	G a A	0.519 wikary	1912	G a A W
0.514	bp_Antoni	481	G a A	0.527 ksiądz	129825	G a A W
0.516	Sac	2879	G a A	0.532 Biskup	12002	G a A W
0.521	bp_Edward	375	G a A	0.540 parafianin	9428	G a A W
0.522	ks	3407	G a A	0.558 biskup	64293	G a A W
0.534	kard	11023	G a A	0.563 wikariusz	3778	G a A W

Figure 7a. Result of the arithmetic expression *ksiądz – mężczyzna + kobieta* (Polish for *priest – man + woman*)
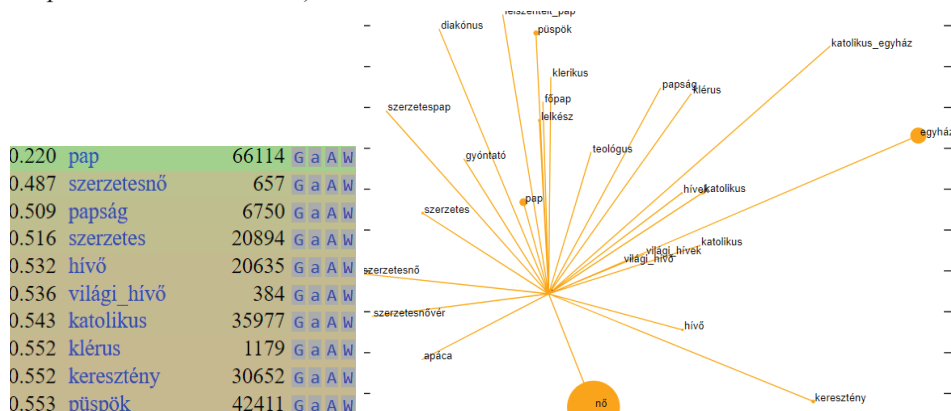**Figure 7b.** Result of the arithmetic expression *proboszcz – mężczyzna + kobieta* (Polish for *priest – man + woman*)
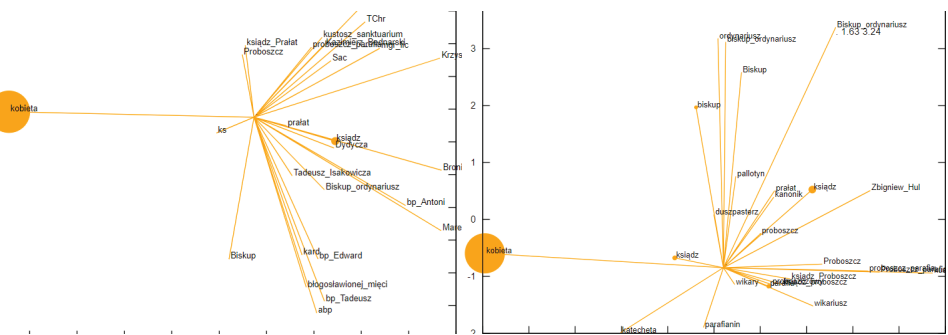
In Hungarian, *pap – férfi + nő = szerzetesnő* ([religious sister] feminine); *plébános – férfi + nő = ferences_atya* ([Franciscan father] shows no relevant results, there is no feminine specific region in the semantic space.

In the result table (Tab. 8) for the word *pap* [priest], the word *szerzetesnő* [nun] appears as an equivalent and refers to a conventionalized pair of *priest ↔ nun, religious sister*. But the nearest semantic equivalent *szerzetesnő* [nun] cannot be considered a gender equivalent of the term *pap*. However, symmetric family pairs denoting *monks* and *nuns* have the same denotation value, e.g. *szerzetes ↔ szerzetesnő*, [religious brother ↔ religious sister]. Thus, neither the term *pap* (nor *plebános*) itself has a gender equivalent in Hungarian and as such, it is an example of gender asymmetry.

Table + Figure 8. Result of the arithmetic expression *pap – férfi + nő* (Hungarian for *priest – man + woman*)

0.220	pap	66114	G a A W
0.487	szerzetesnő	657	G a A W
0.509	papság	6750	G a A W
0.516	szerzetes	20894	G a A W
0.532	hívő	20635	G a A W
0.536	világi_hívő	384	G a A W
0.543	katolikus	35977	G a A W
0.552	klérus	1179	G a A W
0.552	keresztény	30652	G a A W
0.553	püspök	42411	G a A W

We hypothesize that there is a (historical) religious difference among the countries (Catholics vs. Protestant) – there is no shift to female semantic region in countries without protestant tradition for the word *parson*, while the *priest* has a *religious sister* as an equivalent (with the exception of Polish). This can be considered a case of clear gender related asymmetry.

4.3 Personal transgender equivalents: the well-known "doctor" case

4.3.1 Gender asymmetry

It is a common knowledge that in English (Bolukbasi et al. 2016), vector transfer from masculine to feminine while starting from the word *doctor* gives less prestigious jobs, such as *nurse* or *midwife* as the feminine equivalents. This is also confirmed in our English language model: *doctor – man + woman = midwife, nurse, physician, pharmacist, lactation consultant, pediatrician, gynecologist.* Apart from *gynecologist* (and perhaps *physician*), all these words are indeed less prestigious – the transfer took us to the semantic region of less prestigious job titles. And the presence of *gynecologist* is easily explained by the gender transfer being relevant not to the gender of the doctor, but to the gender of the patients. Since the word *doctor* is theoretically gender neutral, we can reverse the transfer and arrive at the result of *doctor – woman + man = physician, surgeon, dentist, neurosurgeon, cardiologist, urologist.* We moved to a semantic region of more prestigious job titles, with the *urologist* perhaps filing the same role as *gynecologist* in the previous expression, i.e. catering for exclusively male patients.

In the V4 languages there are two different words for this job title – both used in the general sense of *practitioner of the medical profession*, but the second one is in addition used also as an academic title (situation quite similar to the use of *doctor* in English).

As for the Polish vector model, we have *doktor* [doctor], *lekarz* [physician].

In Polish, *doktor – mężczyzna + kobieta = profesor, prof*; and *lekarz – mężczyzna + kobieta = onkolog, pediatra, ginekolog, neonatology* etc. There is no transfer to a feminine region in any of the cases, while *ginekolog* represents the transfer to the gender of the patient.

In the Hungarian vector model, we can look at the words *doktor* [doctor], *orvos* [physician]: *doktor – férfi + nő = orvos, professzor, sebész…* [physician, professor, surgeon…]; *orvos – férfi + nő = nőgyógyász, szakorvos, családorvos, onkológus…* [gynecologist, specialist doctor, family doctor, oncologist…]. We see no transfer to a specifically female semantic region present in the latter two languages; neither is there any transfer to a region of less prestigious job titles in any of the V4 languages.

4.3.2 Gender symmetry

For the Slovak and Czech vector model, we have *doktor* [doctor], *lekár/lékař* [physician].

In both Slovak and Czech, it reads *doktor – muž + žena = doktorka* [female doctor]; in Slovak, *lekár – muž + žena = gynekológ*; in Czech, *lékař – muž + žena = pediatr, lékařka, gynekolog, diabetolog*. If fact, the result of the gender vector transfer moved us somewhere between *lekárka, gynekológ* and a region of female job titles (productively derived from the male ones); equivalently in Czech. Accidentally, *gynekológ* in Slovak or *pediatr* [paediatrician] in Czech were slightly closer than other words.

Getting back to the English model, we have to realize that a typical web content in English is quite different as compared to V4, not being limited to a group of geographically and culturally close and connected countries. In addition, there is a lot of diachronical text (e.g. fiction not covered by copyright protection, old digitized newspaper articles etc.), where the medical profession was male dominated. This is not the case of V4 languages, where old newspaper archives are rarely publicly available (and usually only in the form of scanned pictures, that did not make their way to the web corpus), with older fiction being rather rare.

4.4 Personal transgender equivalents: the case of "steward"

We can look at some examples where we expect some lexical gender asymmetry – in both Slovak and Czech, *letuška* is the term for *flight attendant*, but the word (of a feminine gender) refers only to female members of that profession, with the male version being a rather notable lexical lacuna, especially considering that modern trends in gender equality reached this profession already many years ago. Although still not quite equal in the numbers, male employees are quite common and not a remarkable occurrence any more.

In Slovak, we get *letuška – žena + muž = steward, stevard*; in Czech, *letuška – žena + muž = stevard* (and *steward* still present among the closest words, just not at the first nor second place).

Both Polish and Hungarian models are not equivalent at all – in Polish, the feminine *stewardesa* is regularly derived from the masculine *steward*, so there is no lexical lacuna to be probed; nevertheless, we see that *steward – mężczyzna + kobieta = assistant, stewardesa, kelner, stewardessa.* The result of the transfer is however quite far away from any of those words.

4.5 Impersonal transgender equivalents (animal ancestral pairs): the case of "dog"

In Slovak, it is notoriously difficult to arrive at the feminine form of the word *pes* [dog], which is a masculine gender, used either specifically for males or as a generic term applied indiscriminately for all the members of the *Canis familiaris* species. The widely used *fena* or *fenka* is fought against by prescriptivists (as a loanword from Czech); the prescribed "correct" *suka* is perceived as very offensive and vulgar. Since prescriptivism used to dominate the Slovak lexicographic scene for decades, the term *suka* is continued to be widely used by linguistically self-conscious authors anyway.

Investigating transgender equivalents in word embedding models, we can observe how language users perceive gender equivalence in a group of non-personal[13] life objects, e.g. animals. The most common species of animals have different names in Slovak for males and females of the same species, e.g. *kocúr ↔ mačka* [tomcat ↔ female cat, *kohút ↔ sliepka* [rooster ↔ hen]. However, the results of vector arithmetic operations show that gender equivalence is not so straightforward and that people's perception of the equivalence of expressions is determined not only by the factual relationship between denotations (biological gender) but also by formal relationship between expressions (grammatical gender) and other circumstances (cf. Wachtarczyková – Garabík 2022, p. 85). An example of this is the word *dog*. The equivalence in our Slovak word embedding model expressed by *pes – on + ona = mačka* ([dog] grammatical masculine) *– he + she =* ([cat] grammatical feminine) (Tab. 9a) represents a case of a generic feminine. We used the fact that 3rd person pronouns are lemmatized as their base form (nominative singular) but without the change of the gender.

Thus, in our word embedding model, the gender equivalent of a *dog* is a *cat*. The perception of the gender equivalent of a certain masculine expression in Slovak seems to be also influenced by the grammatical gender of the corresponding word (such an in the Slovak terms for the *ferret* or the *chihuahua*, which possess feminine grammatical gender). Other symptoms of femininity such as smallness, animal resilience can be derived from some recurring items in the result table of Slovak and Hungarian equivalents of *ferret* (Slovak *fretka*, Hungarian *görény*), *guinea pig*

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[13] We do not insinuate animals are not or should not be treated as persons; we are using "person" as a linguistic term here.

(Slovak *morča,* Hungarian *tengerimalac), small dog* (Slovak *psík*, *šteňa,* Hungarian *kutyus*, *kölyökkutya*).

Table 9a. Result of the arithmetic expression *pes – on + ona* (Slovak for *dog – he + she*)
Table 9b. Result of the arithmetic expression *kutya – férfi + nő* (Hungarian for *dog – man + woman*)

0.110	pes	740820	S G W a A P
0.369	mačka	211899	S G W a A P
0.468	psík	131885	S G W a A P
0.471	fretka	7596	S G W a A P
0.484	čivava	4497	S G W a A P
0.499	šteňa	33832	S G W a A P
0.514	zviera	584333	S G W a A P
0.530	králik	39779	S G W a A P
0.534	morča	8152	S G W a A P

0.207	kutya	149265	G a A W
0.359	macska	43713	G a A W
0.410	cica	16203	G a A W
0.459	kutyus	12412	G a A W
0.475	gazdi	12266	G a A W
0.508	tengerimalac	2073	G a A W
0.510	kölyökkutya	1451	G a A W
0.511	kiskutya	6816	G a A W
0.537	görény	3040	G a A W

Table 9c. Result of the arithmetic expression *pes – on + ona* (Czech for *dog – he + she*)
Table 9d. Result of the arithmetic expression *pies – on + ona* (Polish for *dog – he + she)*

0.356	pes	333197	S G a A W
0.448	kočka	92082	S G a A W
0.485	fretka	4092	S G a A W
0.495	čubina	490	S G a A W
0.513	psík	6815	S G a A W
0.521	jezevčík	5645	S G a A W
0.523	krysařík	653	S G a A W
0.524	fenka	28132	S G a A W
0.525	borderka	772	S G a A W
0.534	jezevčice	663	S G a A W

0.327	pies	47808	G a A W
0.483	sunia	2147	G a A W
0.491	suczka	2693	G a A W
0.543	suka	2339	G a A W
0.565	kotka	4992	G a A W
0.585	jamniczka	125	G a A W
0.589	piesek	5049	G a A W
0.598	szczeniak	1815	G a A W
0.609	psinka	130	G a A W

The same approach would work neither in Czech nor Polish models since their lemmatization is different – personal pronouns are lemmatized as the nominative singular masculine: *ona* is lemmatized as *on*. However, we can use the "word" model (not the "lemma" one) and get the results for Czech *pes – on + ona = kočka* ([cat] feminine) and for Polish *pies – on + ona = sunia* ([bitch] diminutive feminine). Slovak and Czech models share the cat as the feminine variant of dog. In the Czech model (Table 9c) the lower positions also include terms denoting generally *psík* ([dog] deminutive), specific representatives of small breeds e.g. *jezevčík, krysařík,* a slang term *čubina* [bitch], and way down in the list, we find the neutral expression *fena*.

An equivalent approach is not possible in Hungarian because the language lacks gendered pronouns.

Nevertheless, we might try a different arithmetic expression, *kutya – férfi + nő = macska, cica* [dog – man + woman = cat, kitty]. We are subtracting (human) male and adding (human) female, which is not the best approach, but we hope the other semantic categories (i.e. vector components) carried by the words *férfi* and *nő* cancel themselves out. And indeed, the (rather unexpected) result (Tab. 9b) strongly suggests that there are other factors at play, not just the grammatical gender (which the Hungarian lacks); or the biological one. We hypothesize that the result reflects a typical gender of the *owner* of the pet animal – men are usually more likely perceived as dog owners and women as cat owners (at least based on the texts in the corpus). Or, equally likely, dogs are often described as more masculine, strong, alpha-males; cats are described as effeminate, refined, emotional.

In the Polish vector model, gender (and species) symmetry manifests itself in the word *dog*. The first three equivalents in the Polish model (Tab. 9d) denote the *female dog* (*sunia, suczka* [bitch]). They only differ in the emotional value, as *sunia* and *suczka* (also the term *psinka*) are diminutives of the neutral expression *suka* [bitch].

4.6   An example with humanity inhibitor and animality activator

We can move beyond simple gender related lexical asymmetry and explore other types, e.g. geographical (see Garabík 2020). We will not discuss these asymmetries here, just give an interesting gender related example – the equivalents of *man (male human) – human + animal* and *woman – human + animal*, i.e. the transfer from humans to animals, while keeping the gender category intact.

In Hungarian, *férfi – ember + állat = hím* [animal male]; *nő – ember + állat = nőstény* [animal female]; this is what we expect from simple ontological arguments.

In Polish, *mężczyzna – człowiek + zwierzę = ciężarny, czworonóg* [pregnant, quadruped]; *kobieta – człowiek + zwierzę = ciężarny* [pregnant]; i.e. the transfer took us somewhere within the same semantic region, but there is no noticeable "gendered animal region" around, and the nearest words are there just by chance.

In Slovak, *muž – človek + zviera ≈ králik, šteňa* [rabbit, puppy]; *žena – človek + zviera = mačka* ([cat] female or generic feminine). There is an equivalent animal region in the semantic space, but the perception of an animal equivalent is somewhat unfavourable for both of the genders.

In Czech, *muž – člověk + zvíře ≈ kanec* [boar]; *žena – člověk + zvíře ≈ lvice* [lioness]. Given the use of *kanec* and *lvice* in Czech to denote (human) sexual prowess, the authors notice certain unpleasant cross-language discrimination greatly favouring the Czech language.

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Table 10a. Result of the arithmetic expression man – human + animal (Czech *muž – člověk + zvíře*)

Table 10b. Result of the arithmetic expression woman – human + animal (Czech *žena – člověk + zvíře*)

0.453	zvíře	851859	S G a A W
0.654	muž	2162680	S G a A W
0.695	tygřice	2420	S G a A W
0.708	lvice	8933	S G a A W
0.709	kanec	11853	S G a A W
0.726	býk	62104	S G a A W
0.739	skot	38683	S G a A W

0.459	zvíře	851859	S G a A W
0.621	žena	2746127	S G a A W
0.689	lvice	8933	S G a A W
0.702	gravidní	1839	S G a A W
0.708	tygřice	2420	S G a A W
0.713	kojící	26492	S G a A W
0.735	těhotný	123744	S G a A W

These examples just show how the categories of masculinity, femininity, humanity and animality are projected into individual expressions in different languages.

5. CONCLUSION

We examined gender vector transfer for selected words in word embedding models for the Visegrád group languages: Slovak, Czech, Polish and Hungarian. Unlike the well-known transfer to less prestigious professions present in English models (when transferring from masculine to feminine, e.g. in the medical field), these languages do not exhibit such a phenomenon. We attribute this absence to the composition of the English corpora which the word embedding models are typically trained on (often web corpora) and which do contain a significant amount of diachronic or otherwise biased text.

Slovak and Czech show results unsurprisingly similar to each other (productive use of feminine equivalents, without corresponding decrease in prestige); Polish exhibits functioning generic masculine and Hungarian is gender-neutral, though specific female professions are lexically distinguished. In the Slovak and Czech vector models, gender equivalence and feminization were common in most of the examples (*king*, *doctor*, *priest*), while the perception of animal gender equivalents is similar (*dog*).

In terms of gender symmetry, Polish is different from Slovak and Czech. In the category of nomina agentis (names of professions), gender asymmetry is apparent by the widespread use of generic masculine (e.g. *doktor, filolog* [doctor, philologist]) as a gender neutral term for both males and females. The gender is indicated analytically, by prepending the terms with the words (honorifics) *Pan/Pani*, which – unlike the generic masculine – are inflected. Feminatives are only the names of traditionally "female" professions (*aktorka, nauczycielka* [actress, female teacher]) or not very attractive and socially non-prestigious professions (Lipková 2008, p. 45).

A correlation between generic masculinity and prestige that seems to appear in the Polish language was noted in (Novosad-Bakalarczyk 2006, p. 136; Lipková 2008, p. 42). Gender asymmetry in Polish, manifested by the use of the generic masculine to denote women's professions, is dominant in formal and official communication, where it indicates social status. In informal communication and referring to women from a personal perspective, gender pairs are regularly created and gender symmetry is applied.

The dominance of gender asymmetry in texts from the public sphere is reflected in word embeddings, as demonstrated by the words *doctor, lekarz* [doctor, physician]. Another manifestation is the absence of denotation in reality (and thus also the absence of a female equivalent) for the term *ksiądz* [priest] and *proboszcz* [parson]. Nevertheless, transfer to a less prestigious "semantic region" by transferring the gender from masculine to feminine was not exposed by our word embeddings model.

Slovak, Czech and Polish are distinguished from Hungarian by the presence of a grammatical category of gender attributed to each noun. In contrast, Hungarian distinguishes by gender only those nouns that refer to objects with a notable biological genus, i.e. persons and some animals. Hungarian derivation of feminine variants of masculine words bears only a superficial similarity to the Slavic languages and is more a reflection of the agglutinative characteristics of the language. The second component of these compound words is often the noun *nő* ([woman] e.g. *király ↔ királynő*), sometimes *asszony* [wife] (e.g. *szomszédasszony*) or *lány* [girl] (e.g. *diáklány*) (Misadová 2011, p. 68). There are also gender pairs expressed heteronymously (*bácsi ↔ néni*) especially in family relations and animals. An example of a gender symmetry in Hungarian is manifested by word *doctor*, with the gender pair *orvos ↔ orvosnő*. The partial symmetry *király ↔ királyné/királynő* appears for the pair *king ↔ queen*. On the contrary, gender asymmetry was demonstrated by the absence of denotation for the Hungarian equivalent of the word *priest*. The word embeddings model does not have an equivalent (only surrogate) gender equivalents for the terms *pap* and *plebános*. There were also similarities between Slovak/Czech and Hungarian in the perception of family pairs of animals for the equivalent of the word *dog* (*pes, kutya*), where the female equivalent of *dog* (*kutya*) is also a *cat* (*macska, cica*).

Finally, when comparing typologically different languages, the question arises whether the idea of an inclusive and gender-balanced language is universal or a challenge only for certain types of languages? The question is also whether feminization is the most important indicator of a gender-balanced language, if the generic masculine has an irreplaceable place in referring to holders of certain professions in some languages (Polish). In the Polish language, the names of professions with higher social prestige which refer to persons of the female gender require the use of the generic masculine with a feminine honorific (*pani profesor, pani architekt*).

On the other hand, in most cases in Slovak and Czech (*doctor, priest, queen, steward*) vector models show consistent feminization and no drop in prestige for feminatives (at least compared to widely reported drop in prestige in English language models). In these languages of the V4 group, there is the highest degree of gender symmetry in the nomina agentis category.

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R e s u m é

RODOVÁ ASYMETRIA JAZYKOV VYŠEHRADSKEJ SKUPINY
A JEJ ODRAZ VO VEKTOROVOM PRIESTORE

Do problematiky diskriminačnej inštrumentalizácie jazyka patria aj stratégie a spôsoby vyjadrovania rodu v jazyku a sledovanie prejavov rodovej ekvivalencie. V článku využívame metódu vektorovej reprezentácie slov, ktorá ako štandardná metóda spracovania prirodzeného jazyka poskytuje pohľad na jazykovú realitu prostredníctvom modelov odrážajúcich sémantické vzťahy medzi slovami. Vektorový priestor, ktorý tieto modely vytvárajú, odráža mieru a podobu rodovej symetrie, resp. ekvivalencie, pri skúmaní rodových párov v kategórii pomenovaní osôb alebo zvierat. Skúmame vektorové reprezentácie vybraných slov v jazykoch Vyšehradskej skupiny a aplikujeme základnú vektorovú aritmetiku na demonštráciu základnej jazykovej asymetrie prítomnej v modeloch. Nadväzujeme na známy príklad z anglických vektorových modelov, v ktorých vektorový transfer pri hľadaní rodového ekvivalentu smeruje k úplnej a symetrickej ekvivalencia (*kráľ* ↔ *kráľovná*: king – man + woman = queen), alebo k neúplnej, resp. nesymetrickej ekvivalencii s diskriminujúcim vyznením ako napr. v prípade *programátor*, ktorého náprotivkom je *žena v domácnosti* (programmer – man + women = homemaker). V článku skúmame podobné transfery v modeloch jazykov V4 – slovenčiny, češtiny, poľštiny a maďarčiny. Rozlišujeme typy ekvivalencie, pričom z hľadiska miery vyjadrenia feminity a zároveň adekvátnosti referencie uvažujeme o úplnej symetrii, čiastočnej asymetrii a úplnej asymetrii v rámci sledovaných rodových párov. Výsledky analýzy korešpondujú so známymi jazykovými faktami: feminizácia (rodová symetria) sa dominantne prejavuje vo všetkých flektívnych jazykoch, v poľštine je však evidentná zóna rodovej asymetrie v názvoch profesií, daná historicky a sociokultúrne. Čiastočná rodová asymetria je aj dôsledkom rodovej neutrality maďarčiny. Vektorové reprezentácie slov však odrážajú aj menej zjavné pôsobenie faktorov, ktoré sa podieľajú na spôsobe manifestácie rodu (feminity) v jazykoch. Ide napr. o rôzne medziparadigmatické analógie a korelácie dané vecnou blízkosťou denotátov alebo pôsobením gramatického rodu súvzťažných slov (v prípade absencie rodového ekvivalentu k výrazu *kňaz* v poľštine). Cieľom článku bolo načrtnúť možnosti ďalšej analýzy a interpretácie jazykového materiálu prostredníctvom vektorových modelov, ktoré práve pri typologicky odlišných jazykoch relevantne zachytávajú kontextuálnu sémantiku výrazov a uľahčujú orientáciu vo vzťahoch ich vzájomnej podobnosti, a tým aj vo vzťahoch rodovej ekvivalencie.

CONTEXTUAL SENSITIVITY OF THE LEXEMES *UČITEĽ* [TEACHER] AND *UČITEĽKA* [FEMALE TEACHER][1]

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Abstract: The study deals with the lexical meaning of lexemes *female teacher, teacher* (male teacher and a generic meaning of the lexeme), which might be in Slovak influenced by context and discourse as well as by attitudes and gender stereotypes of interlocutors. In pragmatic research, the author focuses on semantic indeterminacy as an implicit component of lexical meaning determined by the socialization of interlocutors. Analysis of the lexemes *female teacher*, *teacher* and their collocations with the adjectives *typical*, *crazy*, *burned out*, in different contexts, has shown that the gender of the person referred to has an influence on the meaning. The implicit or socialized meaning of the lexemes of the feminine gender is frequently associated with those phenomena that are percieved negatively in society, while the names of the masculine gender do not contain this component.

Key words: female teacher, teacher, grammatical gender, lexical meaning, contextual sensitivity, socialized meaning of a lexeme

> "Language is involved in determining both *what* we see and *how* we look at it, how we evaluate it."[2]
> (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000, p. 12)

Tove Skutnabb-Kangas stresses the coexistence of language, community and individuals, and above all, the role of language in the process of creating collective ideas about reality. The study of discourse provides much evidence that meaning is formed and changed in discourse (see, i.e. Sunderland 2004, pp. 8–9). Butler (2003) pointed this out significantly in the perception of gender as an identity constructed through a stylized repetition of communicative acts. In relation to gender and its construction, the change of perception of gender as a social and cultural category to its perception as a verb is also reflected. Christine Christie (2000) summarized the research on this topic. "Where gender is conceptualized as a verb, the use of specific

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[2] "Jazyk sa podieľa na určení jednak toho, *čo* vidíme, jednak toho, *ako* sa na to pozeráme, ako to hodnotíme." (Skutnabb-Kangas – transl. Z. Drábeková 2000, p. 12)

language forms is considered one way in which individuals construct themselves as more or less masculine or feminine. From this perspective, individuals perform gender, and gender identity is perceived as an effect of language, rather than an a priori factor that determines linguistic behavior" (Christie 2000, p. 34). The communication process is therefore fundamental in creating a certain cultural image as well as identity.

Discourse and text as its part are an example of forming the meanings of lexemes in a certain society and producing ideas about real entities. Pragmatic research emphasizes the social, cultural or political basis of language use, and communication is perceived as a discourse and context-based process. Interlocutors are influenced by certain discourse and according to various factors – both individual and collective – they perform certain utterances which do not contain everything the speaker intends to convey, or they contain parts the speaker conveys without intention. Anita Fetzer (2019, p. 262) writes: "Participants-anchored construals of context lie in the local discourse context. They share the premise that communicative action in general and communicative acts in particular can never be fully explicit." Christine Christie (2000, p. 29) supports the idea that speakers are not in control of meaning because they do not create it in a socio-cultural vacuum.

The underdeterminacy is what interests us about the meaning of lexemes that denote persons of both genders. Since underdeterminacy is also part of the discourse, we assume that it is somewhat conventionalized. The implicit component of lexical meaning is created on the basis of the socialization of interlocutors and preserves the cultural projection of a certain entity. The research approach and aim were first introduced in the publication *Personálna a sociálna deixa v slovenčine* [*Personal and Social Deixis in Slovak*] (Kesselová ed. 2019), in which attention was paid to the grammatical gender of nouns as a concept of referring to a person's social status (Urbancová 2019). When considering the construction of linguistic meaning (ibid., pp. 216–218), an example of meaning differentiation based on different grammatical genders using of the lexemes *female teacher* and *teacher* by Jana Valdrová was used (Valdrová 2018). She considers an utterance from the press[3] to conclude: "No one will associate an incompetent cow with a teaching man, but a capable teacher evokes the idea of a man" (ibid., p. 110).[4] This opinion, as well as observing the discourse aimed at teachers, has led to the investigation of that part of the meaning *učiteľka* [female teacher] and *učiteľ* [teacher] which is influenced by society and the

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[3] "Podporujeme stav, kdy – natvrdo řečeno – leckde učí žáky nějaká neschopná kráva v přepychové multimediální učebně, zatímco schopný kantor by dokázal víc s křídou a tabulí." (Komárek 2003, according to Valdrová 2018, p. 111). [We support a situation where – to be honest – an incompetent cow teaches in a luxury multimedia classroom, while a good teacher could do it better with chalk and a blackboard.]

[4] "*Neschopnou krávu* si nikdo nespojí s vyučujícím mužem, zato *schopný kantor* navozuje představu muže."

socialization of interlocutors. The question we ask ourselves is how the broader contextual factors, linguistic and nonlinguistic, are manifested in the lexemes functioning as social deictic centers. Attention is paid to cultural and social factors mirrored in the meanings of lexemes that denote people of different genders. Male and female names are appropriate for such research because they are closely linked not only to the cultural and social background, but also to the identity of the people.

Examples show the use of the same lexeme in a different context, which influences the part of the meaning depending on it:

(1a) *A: Teraz si ako **učiteľka.*** [Now you are like a teacher.]
(1b) *B: No dovoľ!* [Excuse me!] (Observed dialogue.)

(2) *Zase sa potvrdilo že **učiteľka** je diagnóza...* [It has been confirmed again that the teacher is diagnosed...] (www)

(3a) *M: Pri masáži rád rozprávam, ale vždy beriem ohľad na klientku.* [I like to talk during the massage, but I always take the client into account.]
(3b) *K: Dnes ste natrafili na **učiteľku**.* [Today you came across a teacher.] (Interview heard.)

(4) *M: Ty si typická **učiteľka**.* [You are a typical teacher.] (Reaction after the listener attempts to interrupt the speaker.)

(5) *Ty si určite **učiteľka**.* [You must be a teacher.] (Estimation of employment during the first meeting in an informal social situation.) (Observed dialogue.)

The basic meaning of the lexeme *female teacher* is a woman who teaches by profession (Pisárčiková 2004). If we apply this meaning exclusively to the interpretation of the above utterances, they would remain unclear. The new, contextualised part of the meaning is the conventionalized meaning created on the basis of the social experience. The lexemes under research are context-sensitive, so their meaning is significantly dependent on the context, and it is also influenced by the socialization of interlocutors. Examples suggest that a *female teacher* may be a negative expressive word and its use is meant to be offensive (1), it may refer to a person who has an occupational disease, diagnosis: female teacher (2), may refer to a communicative person (3) or a person that interrupts the speaker (4). The fifth utterance draws attention to the meaning limits and underdeterminacy of the utterance. It is not clear which characteristics of the teacher are significant in a particular situation.

The research of context-sensitive meaning follows a pragmatic approach and the lexemes under the research are seen as examples of social deixis. Deictic

expressions are generally characterized by a situational plurality. Unlike deixis, social deixis does not refer to the "world" of things but to social relations (Auer 2014, p. 157), "...the relationship between the language form and its meaning is characterized by significant changes that may require complex interpretive work" (Auer 2014, p. 157).[5] The plurality of meanings of social deixis is limited by the actual social situation.[6] When considering social deixis, the identity of the interlocutors is important, and it influences utterances perception and interpretation of utterances. The meaning of social deixis is anchored in a group of people, and it is closely related to the cultural and social life of the group. By using a lexeme with social-deictic potential, the speaker can also reveal their affiliation to a certain group of people.

The text focuses on lexemes that denote male and female persons and parts of the meaning resulting from gender differentiation. We identify a socialized component of meaning, that is, one that lives in a certain community without being included in the dictionary definition. We are looking for manifestations of discursive activities that create a cultural image of the lexeme *female teacher* and *teacher*. Slovak words *učiteľ* and *učiteľka* are translated as *teacher* and *female teacher*. We do not use the expression *male teacher* because in many cases the word *teacher* is used with a generic meaning, and it refers to both genders.

The source of data is the Slovak National Corpus (SNC, version prim-9.0-public-all) and websites.[7] We assumed that the attributes of the profession under investigation would be clearly evident in the collocation with an adjective *typický* [typical] and we sourced collocations *typická učiteľka* [typical female teacher] and *typický učiteľ* [typical teacher].

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[5] "...vzťah mezi jazykovou formou a jejím významem se vyznačuje výraznými posuny a zlomy, které mohou vyžadovat komplexní interpretační práci" (Auer 2014, p. 157).

[6] A good example is the manifestations of gender stereotypes in the meaning of lexemes, i.e. the text that appeared on the back of the car: *A woman has just overtaken you.* It has sense if women are perceived as bad riders.

Other examples are from the informal conversation but with an unknown person, for example in a shop. It is a dialogue between two strangers, but in order to understand, the deictic centre should be clearly identifiable.

A: Povedala som si, že si budem menej kupovať oblečenie. [I said I would buy less clothes.]

B: Aj ja som nad tým rozmýšľala, ale sme predsa ženy... [I thought about it too, but we are women…]

In a friendly conversation between people, the meaning of the lexeme can be linked to individual experience and is known only by interlocutors or a small group of people. In this way, for example, communication could work in order to conceal something, hide the meaning of the word and replace it with another, or to present language or communication creativity

In communication, we not only mark, but also emphasize belonging to a certain group.

[7] We do not list specific websites for www examples. We proceed in accordance with the examples from the Slovak National Corpus, for which the authorship of the text is also not specified.

Typická učiteľka [typical female teacher]:

(6) *Nie je to typická učiteľka, čo by žiakovi „klepla" po prstoch, ak ich nedrží správne. Lucia učí spôsobom, ktorým motivuje svojich žiakov, aby sami chceli byť lepšími.* [She is not a typical female teacher who would "tap" student's fingers if they do not hold them properly. Lucia teaches in a way that motivates her students to improve.] (www)

(7) *Nie som taká typická učiteľka. Som prísna, ale aj priateľská...* [I'm not such a typical female teacher. I am strict but also friendly...] (www)

(8) *Na prvý pohľad vyzerá Nonna strohá, nudná a nudná. Toto je typická učiteľka a hysterická žena.* [At first glance, Nonna looks stern, boring and boring. This is a typical female teacher and a hysterical woman.] (www)

(9) *Pri jeho trocha impertinentnej poznámke vytiahla jednu polovicu svetlohnedého obočia, hneď vyzerala ako typická učiteľka.* [At his slightly impertinent remark, she raised one-half of her light brown eyebrows, immediately looking like a typical female teacher.] (SNC)

(10) *Napokon, presne tak vyzerá – typická učiteľka.* [Finally, that's exactly how she looks like – a typical female teacher.] (SNC)

(11) *Vysoká, dobrá postava, sivé, vkusne upravené vlasy. Vznešená a rozvážna, a ako sa mu zdalo, uvedomuje si vlastnú dôležitosť. Trochu mu pripomínala slečnu Bulstrodovú: bola typická učiteľka.* [Tall, good figure, gray, elegant hairstyle. Sublime and sober, and he assumed that she was aware of her importance. It reminded him a little of Miss Bulstrode: she was a typical female teacher.] (SNC)

(12) *„My nie sme spokojní s tým, čo pán Ondek vyrokoval," hovorí učiteľka. V okuliaroch, nemodernom svetri, so silným hlasom. Typická učiteľka, komiksová učiteľka. Keď ide prehovoriť, vždy sa postaví.* ["We are not satisfied with what Mr. Ondek has negotiated," says the female teacher. In glasses, wearing a sweater out of fashion, with a strong voice. Typical female teacher, a comic book female teacher. When she wants to talk, she always stands up.] (SNC)

(13) *Keď som ju zbadala, mladistvý vzhľad, perfektne vyšportovaná postava, svižný krok a elegancia mi vyrazili dych. Pre istotu som sa opýtala, či je to osoba, ktorú hľadám. Najmenej 20 i viac rokov by som jej ubrala. Predstavy o typickej učiteľke, poznačenej polstoročnou pedagogickou činnosťou, som v tej sekunde*

zahnala. Všetko je úplne inak. Je to stále šarmantná, čulá a pokojná dáma. Prosto pani učiteľka, ktorá nekričí, aby bolo ticho aj vtedy, keď nikto ani nemukne. [When I noticed her, her youthful appearance, perfect athletic figure, brisk movements and elegance took my breath away. To be on the safe side, I asked if this was the person I was looking for. I would take her at least 20 or more years. I dismissed the idea of a typical female teacher, marked by half a century of pedagogical activity, at that second. Everything is completely different. She is still a charming, snappy and relaxed lady. Just a female teacher who doesn't shout to keep silence even when no one dares to say anything.] (SNC)

(14) *Dnes podpora učiteľov zo strany verejnosti nie je síce jednoznačná, ale je silnejšia, ako bola kedysi, tvrdí Branislav Pupala, ktorý sa na prieskume podieľal. „Ľudia sa stali citlivejšími na problémy štrajkujúcich učiteľov. Tiež ich oslovuje mladšia generácia, ktorá je pre verejnosť dôveryhodnejšia ako typická učiteľka z čias socializmu,“ povedal Pupala.* [Today, public support for teachers is not clear, but it is stronger than it used to be, Branislav Pupala says, who took part in the survey. "People have become more sensitive to the problems of striking teachers. They are also addressed by the younger generation, which is more credible to the public than a typical socialist female teacher," Pupala said.] (SNC)

(15) *A ona tam učí. Ako typická učiteľka nemá ani štipku zmyslu pre humor.* [And she teaches there. As a typical female teacher, she has no sense of humor.] (SNC)

(16) *Ulice Madridu boli úplne zaplavené mladými. Ako typická učiteľka si vzala za úlohu previesť svojich priateľov bezpečne cez cestu.* [The streets of Madrid were completely flooded with young people. As a typical female teacher, she set out to take her friends safely across the road.] (SNC)

(17) *V učiteľskej profesii je ale väčšina učiteľov počas profesijného života v jednej hlavnej spoločenskej role. Preto niektoré zručnosti sebariadeného učenia sú rozvinuté inak, pri viacrozmernosti myslenia dokonca menej, ako v iných profesiách. Ironicky to býva označované spojením „typická učiteľka“, čím sa obvykle myslí jednostranná orientácia na poučovanie a prikazovanie.* [In the teaching profession, most teachers have one major social role during their professional life. Therefore, some skills of self-directed learning are developed differently, with less multidimensional thinking even less than in other professions. This is often ironically referred to as the "typical female teacher", which usually means a one-sided orientation to teaching and ordering.] (Kosová 2007)

Typický učiteľ [typical teacher/male teacher]:

(18) *Keď chceme zistiť, či niekto môže, alebo nemôže byť dobrým pilotom, ministrom či učiteľom, zoberieme si nejakého predstaviteľa tejto profesie a detailne skúmame všetku jeho činnosť za určité časové obdobie. Čo robí pilot od rána do večera? Čo robí minister, čo učiteľ? Všetko sa pozoruje, nahráva, analyzuje a vznikne z toho akási mapa, ktorá povie: typický učiteľ väčšinu času rozpráva, komunikuje, toľko a toľko percent venuje tým a toľko zase iným činnostiam. Potom sa spätne analyzuje, aké má mať človek predpoklady, aby bol úspešným učiteľom: musí byť trpezlivý, musí sa vedieť vyjadrovať, mať dobrý vzťah k žiakom.* [When we want to find out whether or not someone can be a good pilot, minister or teacher, we take a representative of the profession and examine in detail all their activities over a period of time. What does the pilot do from morning till night? What does a minister do, what a teacher? Everything is observed, recorded, analyzed, and a map emerges that says: the typical teacher talks, communicates most of the time, devotes so much and so much percentage to these and so much to other activities. It then analyzes retrospectively what person's preconditions are for being a successful teacher: he must be patient, he must be able to express himself, he must have a good relationship with the students.] (SNC)

(19) *Cestujeme do Dvorca navštíviť Jozefa Kláska (podľa Kolomana je to typický učiteľ zo zapadnutej dedinky).* [We travel to Dvorec to visit Jozef Klásek (according to Koloman, he is a typical teacher from a small village).] (SNC)

(20) *Ak hodnotia vlastnú preferenciu správania (Ktorý prístup by ste zvolili vy?) tak používajú konštruktívnejšie riešenia situácií, pričom v atribuovanej preferencii prisudzujú typickému učiteľovi viac reštriktívne riešenia pedagogických situácií.* [When evaluating one's own behavioral preference (Which approach would you choose?), they use more constructive situation solutions, while they assign more restrictive solutions to the typical teacher in general.] (SNC)

(21) *Porovnajme moje postavenie s postavením typického učiteľa na Harvarde, ktorý učí, povedzme, mikroekonómiu. S materiálom sa dôkladne oboznámil už zamladi a keďže študoval na dobrej univerzite, mohol tiež pozorovať metódy, aké na prednáškach a seminároch používali jeho učitelia. Pred tridsiatkou ho mohli vymenovať za odborného asistenta a do päťdesiatky či šesťdesiatky mohol učiť tie isté veci už dvadsať, prípadne tridsať rokov. Jediné, čo musel urobiť, bolo meniť svoje prezentácie, zaraďovať užitočné nové myšlienky z literatúry a aktualizovať štatistiky.* [Let's compare my position with that of

a typical Harvard teacher who teaches, say, microeconomics. He became thoroughly acquainted with the material when he was young, and since he was studying at a good university, he could also observe the methods used by his teachers in lectures and seminars. Before he was thirty, he could be appointed an assistant professor, and by the age of fifty or sixty he could have taught the same things for twenty or thirty years. All he had to do was to change his presentations, incorporate useful new literature ideas, and update statistics.] (SNC)

(22) *Ocenením Palových kvalít je aj od roku 1999 jeho funkcia hosťujúceho profesora na univerzite v anglickom Sunderlande, kde jeho manželka pôsobí už niekoľko rokov. Nasledovať ju však nemieni, necíti sa typickým učiteľom.* [Pavol's position of a visiting professor at The University in Sunderland in Britain since 1999 is recognision of his quality. His wife has been working there for several years. However, he does not plan to follow her, he does not feel to be a typical teacher.] (SNC)

(23) *Nikdy som nemal žiadneho iného učiteľa, ale otec vlastne nebol žiadnym typickým učiteľom, skôr mi ukazoval veci, púšťal hudbu a najmä sme čo najviac spolu hrali.* [I have never had any other teacher, but my father wasn't really a typical teacher, he rather showed me things, played music, and especially we played as much as possible.] (SNC)

Some given examples also provide an explicit meaning of the collocation *a typical female teacher*, *a typical teacher*, so we can create a set of characteristics based on them. Typical female teacher: she is strict, she demotivates by "tapping" fingers instead of explaining, she is not friendly, she is austere, boring, she has a strict facial expression, she has a typical/characteristic appearance – on the one hand she is tidy, on the other hand she does not have elegant or stylish clothes, she is aware of her own importance, she has a strong voice, she is the opposite of a charming, sensitive, calm lady, she screams even when there is silence, she is attentive to others, she talks down to people and she orders. A typical teacher is either a prototype representative of the profession or a specific person; specific attributes are specified in the 18th example: *he must be patient, he must be able to express himself, he must have a good relationship with the students*.

The examples show that if the content is general and the teaching profession is described, its representative is identified in the masculine gender, which represents the use of generic masculine. The location by which *a typical teacher* refers to a particular person does not have a more precise definition, e.g. (19). When a *typical female teacher* is used, it refers to either a specific person or an often negatively perceived female representative of the profession. The generic masculine in our

examples has a basic meaning (neutral, dictionary). Thus, in the "social life" of collocations, a *typical teacher* usually does not have a negative connotation. In contrast, the collocation of *a typical female teacher* is mostly associated with negative characteristics. The difference may be partly due to the fact that the teaching profession is mainly done by women, so it is likely that there are more examples of different attributes in this gender group. However, the explanation is not satisfactory because the identified attributes are only negatively oriented and, like the real teacher sample, are not differentiated.

The difference in the use of the masculine and feminine gender as a difference between referring to a profession and referring to a specific person is also visible in the collocation *a burnout female teacher* and *a burnout teacher*. A burnout female teacher is used in connection with certain persons:

(24) *Tá vyhorená učiteľka, hovorila som si, ako môže robiť s malými detičkami? – a úzkosť vo mne rástla. (...) Lebo priatelia, nemôže za to vyhorená učiteľka. Nemôže za to riaditeľka, ktorá robí, čo sa dá, aby všetko fungovalo, ale nemá na výber.* [That burnout female teacher, I was wondering, how she can work with little children – and my anxiety grew. (...) Dear friends, the burnout female teacher is not to blame. Neither the female director, who does what she can to make everything work, but has no choice.] (SNC)

(25) *Kruh ľudí, ktorí sa práve chcú dozvedieť čosi o syndróme vyhorenia, tvoria učiteľky.* [The group of people who just want to know something about burnout are female teachers.] (www)

Burnout teacher is used in a general sense to refer to a group of people in a teaching profession. It is possible that in some cases the collocation could refer to a specific person or males, but this is unlikely due to the existence of generic masculine or is not clear in the text [e.g. (26)–(31)]:

(26) *A hádam by aj rád pravidelne predkladal výsledky svojej práce (t. j. prípravy na nový model vzdelávania) na kontrolu ktorémukoľvek inšpektorovi. Od vyhoreného učiteľa nič také čakať nemôžeme.* [And I guess they would also like to regularly present the results of their work (i.e. preparation for a new model of education) for inspection to any inspector. We can't expect anything like that from a burnout teacher.] (SNC)

(27) *Neviem, ako presne vyzerá vyhorenie, kedysi som o tom čítala pár psychologických článkov, väčšina sa týkala vyhorených učiteľov, ale v tom období som si bola akurát schopná predstaviť učiteľa s tlejúcimi vlasmi a oblekom od popola.* [I don't know exactly what burnout looks like, I used to

read a few psychological articles about it, most of them related to burnout teachers, but at that time I was just able to imagine a teacher with rotting hair and a suit covered by ash.] (SNC)

(28) *Ženy prikyvujú, to by bolo riešenie pre mnohých vyhorených učiteľov.* [Women agree, this would be the solution for many burnout teachers.] (SNC)

(29) *Výskumy hovoria o množstve vyhorených učiteľov, ktorých už nič nemotivuje.* [Research shows a number of burnout teachers who are no longer motivated.] (SNC)

(30) *Na otázku, či je vyhorený učiteľ pre žiakov nebezpečný, Zelina hovorí, že iba v tom, že študentov už nie je schopný aktivizovať, nerozvíja ich tak, ako by mohol a nedáva im to, čo by mal.* [Asked if a burnout teacher is dangerous to students, Zelina says that just because he is no longer able to activate students, does not encourage them as he could and does not give them what he should.] (SNC)

(31) *Vyhorený učiteľ navyše nemá silu (a stráca aj záujem) robiť nejaké kurikulárne zmeny, premýšľať nad redukciou obsahu osnov a podobne.* [The burnout teacher does not have the strength (and loses interest) to make some curricular changes, to think about reducing the content of the curriculum, and so on.] (SNC)

The collocation *a crazy female teacher*, *a crazy teacher* is not frequent on the Internet or in the SNC, but the examples we have seen also differ according to the gender of the referred person. For the female gender, the collocation has a negative meaning:

(32) *Považujú ma za hypochondra alebo bláznivú učiteľku.* [They consider me a hypochondriac or a crazy teacher.] (SNK)

When entering *a crazy teacher*, examples from fiction or film reviews appear in SNC:

(33) *A povedal si ako vždy: nešťastie, títo buditeľskí učitelia; a dnes k tomu ešte: hotové nešťastie ten bláznivý učiteľ...* [And he said to himself as always: misfortune, these awakening teachers; and today to that: misfortune this crazy teacher...]

In the Internet discussion, a usage appeared that indicates the positive characteristics of a crazy teacher:

(34) *Teda Dávid, prajem Ti a celému nášemu školstvu, aby sa Ti darilo. Prajem si, aby môjho vnuka učil taký „bláznivý" učiteľ ako Ty.* [That is, David, I wish you and our entire education system prosperity. I wish my grandson to be taught by a "crazy" teacher like you.] (www)

To complete the provided image, let us mention the name of the competition *Teacher of Slovakia*. The vision of the competition and the whole project is: "We are changing the way the world views teachers. We emphasize the importance of the teaching profession and try to raise its status" (Učiteľ Slovenska, website). The aim of the competition is to promote the teaching profession and emphasize its positive attributes. However, the profession is named by the generic masculine, and it stabilizes the neutral perception of masculine general.

A notable part of the discourse under investigation consists of jokes in which a certain underdeterminacy and contextual sensitivity of lexemes are expected. As an example, we present 5 jokes included in the blog under the title *5 jokes about teachers, which accurately describe the real state of our education.* (Blog Branislava Gröhlinga): [8]

(35) *- Ako sa stupňuje slovo chudobný?*
Chudobný, chudobnejší, totálna chudoba, žobrák, učiteľ.
[What is the comparative and superlative of the word poor? Poor, poorer, total poverty, beggar, teacher.]
- *Predstav si, môj riaditeľ už rok nekompromisne kritizuje nášho ministra školstva a ten mu na to nepovedal ešte ani slovo.*
- *To je taký sebakritický?*
- *Nie, on o tom ešte nevie.*
[Imagine that my director has been uncompromisingly criticizing our Minister of Education for a year, and he has not spoken to him yet.
Is he so self-critical?
No, he doesn't know about it yet.]
- *Prečo sa učiteľky nemôžu hrať na schovávačku?*
Lebo by ich nikto nehľadal.
[Why can't female teachers play hide and seek? Because no one would look for them.]
- *Na začiatku školského roka, príde otec so svojim synom prvý krát do školy a hovorí učiteľke: „Budete učiť môjho syna. Ak s ním nebudete spokojná, dám vás preložiť na inú školu."*
[At the beginning of the school year, a father comes to school with his son for the first time and talks to the female teacher: "You will teach my son. If you are not satisfied with him, I will let you go to another school."]

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[8] Branislav Gröhling was the minister of education, science, research and sport between 2020 and 2022. The quoted blog was published on 8th April 2015.

- *Traja mladí učitelia sa rozprávajú o tom, čo spravia s vianočnými odmenami.*
  Prvý hovorí: „Pracujem v škole v Nemecku a z vianočných odmien si kúpim auto a za zvyšok pôjdem s priateľkou na dovolenku.“
  Druhý hovorí: „Pracujem v školstve vo Švajčiarsku a za vianočné odmeny si dám spraviť bazén a za zvyšok pôjdeme na cestu okolo sveta.“
  Tretí hovorí: „Pracujem na Slovensku a za vianočné odmeny si kúpim sveter.“
  Ostatní sa prekvapivo pýtajú: „A čo so zvyškom?“
  Tretí odpovedá: „No zvyšok mi doplatia rodičia.“
  [Three young teachers talk about what they will do with the Christmas bonus.
  The first one says: "I work at a school in Germany, and I will buy a car, and I will go on vacation with my girlfriend."
  The second one says: "I work at a school in Switzerland, and I will have a swimming pool built, and I will go on a trip around the world."
  The third one says: "I work in Slovakia and I will buy a sweater."
  The others ask surprisingly: "What about the rest of the money?"
  The third one responds: "My parents will pay the rest."]
- *A teraz ešte jeden „kameňák“ ako bonus:*
- *Prečo sa na tých vtipoch nesmeješ?*
  Lebo som učiteľ...
- *Tieto pre niekoho vtipy, znamenajú pre učiteľov tvrdú realitu, v ktorej dennodenne žijú, pracujú, zápasia o prežitie. Dokedy ešte?! Kto sa bude smiať naposledy?*
  [And now a bonus:
  Why don't you laugh at those jokes?
  Because I'm a teacher...
  For some these are jokes, for teachers it is real life, which they live, work in it, struggle to survive on a daily basis. How long? Who will be the last to laugh?]

In the above text, we observe that lexemes *female teacher* and *teacher* appear in different contexts and their use suggests different parts of meaning. The use of a *female teacher* is in the sense of needlessness – *no one would look for her* – and the object of threatening by an influential father. Lexeme *teacher* occurs in the sense of poorly valued person, teacher-principal and profession.

The examples given in the text illustrate the different discursive functioning of words depending on gender as both social and grammatical categories. The use of masculine in a generic sense influences the meaning of the male noun. This meaning is presented in the discourse neutrally or positively with regard to the contribution

and importance of the profession. The female gender refers only to the part of the group of people with the same profession and in the examples the negative social evaluation as a part of the meaning prevails.

The following text documents how the current teacher discourse may have an impact on women's perception:

(36) *Žiaci chcú mužov*
Ak sa učiteľ zjaví na chodbe, má prirodzený rešpekt. Podľa žiakov, je lepšie, ak niektoré predmety učí muž. Veľmi často učia aj hudobnú, matematiku, či chémiu. Okrem toho ich treba hľadať aj v riaditeľni. [Pupils want men
If the teacher shows up in the hallway, he has natural respect. According to the students, it is better if some subjects are taught by a man. Very often they also teach music, mathematics or chemistry. In addition, they can be found in the directorate.] (www)

We encounter gender segregation in various professions, but especially in teaching the need for a different gender order is emphasized. A teacher as a man is portrayed as a person with natural respect, with a gift to teach certain subjects, having managerial skills that predispose him to the position of a director, and also as a person that is wanted by students.

Pragmatic research of the use of lexemes *female teacher* and *teacher* has shown differences in the meaning of collocations *typical female teacher, typical teacher, crazy female teacher, crazy teacher*, as well as independent lexemes *female teacher* and *teacher*. The implicit or socialized meaning associated with the female gender is characterized by those parts that are socially negatively perceived, while the male gender does not include them. The cultural projection of the teacher turns out to be different with different genders. This phenomenon is also stabilized by the use of generic masculine, which is considered asymptomatic in system linguistics, but in a pragmatic view we reveal that it mostly refers to value-neutral or positive attributes of the teaching profession, which is then transferred to the masculine gender in a non-generic sense. The teachers' discourse research reveals differences in the meaning of words that relate to people of different sex. It is also appropriate to state that in the analyzed lexemes we can consider their interpretive potential, which may not overlap with the intention of the speaker.

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Resumé

KONTEXTUÁLNA SENZITIVITA LEXÉM *UČITEĽ* A *UČITEĽKA*

Štúdia sa zaoberá časťou lexikálneho významu lexém odlišujúcich sa rodom – *učiteľka, učiteľ –*, ktorá je ovplyvnená kontextom a diskurzom. V pragmaticky ukotvenom výskume sa autorka orientuje na významovú neurčitosť ako implicitný komponent lexikálneho významu determinovaný socializáciou komunikujúcich osôb.

Analyzujúc lexémy *učiteľka*, *učiteľ* a ich kolokácie s adjektívami *typická*, *typický*, *bláznivá*, *bláznivý*, *vyhorená*, *vyhorený* v rôznych kontextoch autorka zistila, že na význam má vplyv aj rod označovanej osoby. Implicitný alebo socializovaný význam skúmaných lexém ženského rodu je frekventovane spojený s tými javmi, ktoré sú v spoločnosti prijímané negatívne, zatiaľ čo pomenovania mužského rodu tento významový komponent neobsahujú.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AMONG SLOVAK, CZECH, AND POLISH SPEAKERS[1]

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Abstract: In this paper, the various arguments that have been presented with respect to usage of generic masculine forms and pair/feminine forms are discussed and analysed. The source of the data is provided by a questionnaire carried out in October 2019, including a sample of answers and comments from Slovak, Czech and Polish respondents. In the study, two dominant views on generic masculine forms, arbitrary and semantic, are introduced and discussed against empirical findings from many experiments and studies. The material from the questionnaire is qualitatively analysed with respect to the axiological reactions of the respondents. The language attitudes are further classified into eight categories: representation, offensiveness, addressing, economy, textual qualities, language naturalness, tradition and ideological markedness. The attitudes of participants from both "camps" are quoted to illustrate the argumentation process yielding to the acceptance or rejection of forms substantiating gender-inclusive language.

Key words: gender-inclusive language, language attitudes, generic masculine forms, pair forms, alternative forms, feminine forms, questionnaire

1.   INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The usage of masculine generics has never been the focus of systematic linguistic research in the Slovak context. However, gender-inclusive language strategies proposed mainly by researchers in the field of gender linguistics represent a hotly

debated topic and they often face criticism and resistance, both from the language community as well as from some language experts. The investigation of genericity of masculine and gender-inclusive language can be conducted in two ways, depending on the objective of such research. Firstly, different types of tests and experiments provided in this area aim at answering the question concerning the mental representation of generic masculine forms or, in other words, the conditionality of cognitive inclusion of women by the usage of particular language forms (using different types of tests, e.g. completing sentences, cf. Klein 1988, Scheele – Gauler 1993; measuring reading time necessary for anaphoric identification of nouns with different grammatical gender, cf. Irmen – Roßberg 2004; estimating the proportion of women and men in certain roles, e.g. participants at a congress of nutritionists versus geophysicists; Braun et al. 1998; association tests, cf. Stahlberg – Sczesny 2001; measuring response time necessary for category identification, cf. Irmen – Köhncke 1996; writing stories about fictitious people following an introductory sentence in the masculine or in gender-fair wording, cf. Heise 2000, making up nicknames for persons whose profession was labelled by the male noun form, cf. Valdrová 2008, etc.). On the other hand, there are numerous studies investigating the language attitudes of speakers towards the usage of language forms conforming the idea of gender-sensitive language (e.g., Blaubergs 1980, Parks – Roberton 1998, Dąbrowska 2008, Ostertágová 2014, Vergoossen et al. 2020, Scheller-Boltz 2020). In our study, we will focus on investigation of language attitudes towards gender-sensitive language among Slovak (SK), Czech (CZ) and Polish (PL) speakers but we will take into consideration the conclusions achieved in the former types of studies.

As to the terminology, the terms "gender-fair language" (Kollmayer et al. 2018), "gender-inclusive language" (Stout – Dasgupta 2011), "gender-sensitive language" (Savić 2011), or "non-sexist language" (Douglas – Sutton 2014) will be used synonymously, meaning manifestation of gender equality through language.

The paper is structured as follows. The first section serves as an introduction to the presented issues. The second section sketches two possible understandings of generic masculine forms within arbitrary and semantic approaches. The third section provides information on the online questionnaire and specifies the methodology used to classify all individual statements into individual types of arguments. In the fourth section, attention is focused on arguments from the determined categories and the given issue is commented on against the findings based on different types of tests and experiments which can reveal the conceptualization of language phenomena by language users.

2. GENERIC MASCULINE FORMS

Basically, two fundamental approaches towards the usage of generic masculine forms can be differentiated. According to the first, which can be labelled as arbitrary, there are no associations between grammatical gender and sex, grammatical gender

represents purely formal characteristics, and the gender form of a language unit has an arbitrary status; i.e., generic masculine as a grammatical form has nothing to do with "masculinity", it represents a semantically neutral means of generic reference. The second approach, traditionally labelled as semantic, by contrast, emphasizes that generic masculine as a grammatical form cannot be semantically neutral, there exist inevitable links between grammatical gender and sex. Those two approaches reflect two different kinds of language logics: reflexive-logic and pragmatic-logic views of language phenomena (cf. Dolník 2010).

The reflexive-logic approach can be illustrated by a statement found in the paper by Košková – Satoła-Staśkowiak (2017, p. 6): "Na jazykové vedomie nositeľov jazyka sa pod vplyvom rôznych sociologických a psychologických výskumov začína vyvíjať tlak a nastoľujú sa požiadavky na zmenu tej podoby jazyka, ktorá sa nielenže tradične bežne používa, ale je aj ukotvená gramatickými pravidlami." [The language consciousness of language speakers is exposed to pressure based on different sociological and psychological experiments which call for changing such forms of language that are not only traditionally commonly used, but which are also anchored by grammatical rules.]. This quote illustrates two important aspects of the reflexive-logic approach. Language and grammar are viewed as phenomena independent of external cognitive capabilities and social circumstances so that external interventions into its form are regarded as inadequate. Grammatical rules determine the usage: grammar is hence to be understood as a pre-requisite for usage (*a priori* grammar). The grammatical rule concerning genericity of masculine forms is understood as a well-defined norm (which is proved by its common usage in the course of time). However, in the post-structuralist approach, grammar is not a category that is strictly separable from language usage but rather a highly conventional form of language usage (cf. Hornscheidt 2006, p. 37), it has emergent status (emergent grammar that is provisional and emerges in usage).

Within the pragmatic-logic approach, questions concerning the cognitive aspects of generic masculine usage (when compared with gender-neutral or gender-balanced strategies) are often raised. Investigating the cognitive and social aspects of grammatical structures (e.g. by sociological and psychological experiments) is justified by the fact that (i) language/grammar is grounded in cognition so that the cognitive structures shape language usage and the grammatical meaning is dependent on conceptualization, (ii) specific grammatical patterns and structures are held up through social practice, i.e. language use is a form of a social practice (Hornscheidt 2006, p. 75).

Namely, two major questions resonate in regard to the given issue:

1. How are generic masculine forms conceptualized by speakers (the aim of such studies is to reveal unconscious cognitive interpretations of generic masculine forms)?

2. How are generic masculine forms interpreted by speakers (do all speakers view generic masculine forms as a neutral strategy of referring to both genders equally)?

The study seeks to find answers to the second question, with the focus on language attitudes of Slovak, Czech, and Polish speakers. In the following part, the results of a questionnaire investigation carried out in October 2019 will be presented and discussed against the findings achieved by various psycholinguistic experiments and tests.

3.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The present study was designed as an experimental online study. Participants were invited to complete the online questionnaire via social media in October 2019.

The questionnaire was distributed in public and private groups on the social network Facebook (e.g., *Inštitút slovakistiky a mediálnych štúdií FF PU*, *Polszczyzna mnie bije*, *Simultánní blekotání*, *Copywriteři a další psavci*, *Lektoři češtiny pro cizince*, etc.).

In the first part of the online questionnaire, the participants were asked to answer several questions concerning demographics (gender, age, educational level and native language),[2] cf. distribution of individual characteristics in the table below.

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[2] A few remarks need to be added in this section: (1) The Slovak version was filled out by more people from the younger generation – 101 out of 171 (59%) respondents were aged between 20 and 30, while in the Polish version, respondents aged between 20 and 30 were represented by 69 persons out of 160 (43%), and in the Czech version even less – 64 respondents out of 188 (34%) were between 18 and 30 years old. This unequal age representation might be a result of the questionnaire distribution via different channels – the Facebook account of the *Institute of Slovak language and media studies FF PU* is followed mainly by students and graduates of the department; while members of the *Polszczyzna mnie bije* Facebook group, who responded to the Polish questionnaire to a large extent, come from various age groups; The same holds for Facebook groups where the Czech questionnaire was distributed.; (2) The Slovak and Czech versions of the questionnaire show a somewhat higher proportion of respondents with a higher education (including respondents studying at a university or respondents with a university degree). To a certain extent, therefore, it can be assumed that the respondents of the Slovak and Czech versions had a higher chance of encountering the issue of gender aspects of the language, behind the media sphere, i.e. in the academic sphere, in linguistic publications, etc., and the acceptance rate of gender-sensitive language could, thus, be higher.; (3) 8.2% of respondents in the Slovak/Czech version and 8% of respondents in the Czech version of the questionnaire stated their mother tongue as other than Slovak/Czech (e.g., Polish, Ukrainian, Serbian, Russian, Ruthenian, Hungarian, etc.). The level of knowledge of Slovak in the questionnaire was not examined, so the language competences of respondents with a mother tongue other than Slovak/Czech cannot be evaluated. It can be people who have learned or are learning Slovak/Czech, ultimately, even, members of national minorities. Their answers were included in the overall results but when evaluating specific answers, information about mother tongue was taken into account.; (4) All three versions of the questionnaire show a higher proportion of female respondents (79.5% for Slovak, 71.9% for Czech and 80.3% for Polish.). In this paper, we aim at the qualitative investigation of the attitudes. To conduct in-depth quantitative research, more representative and balanced sample would be needed. One possible explanation for uneven gender distribution is the fact that the questionnaire was filled in mostly by the students of humanities which are typical of mostly female enrolments. The comparable results in gender distribution can be evidenced in similarly conducted research, e.g. Remigio – Talosa (2021). Considering this gap in the body of sample, the interpretive qualitative research design was chosen instead of descriptive quantitative investigation and no statistically significant or generalizing conclusions about the respondents' attitudes are drawn to avoid self-selection bias.

Table 1. Data on respondents to the questionnaire in three language versions

Categories	Slovak	Polish	Czech
Age	20–69	20–69	18–62
Gender (F/M)	79.5%/19.3%	71.9%/27.5%	80.3%/19.1%
Native language	SK 91.8%	PL 99.4%	CZ 92%
Education (university/high school)	81.7%/14.2%	74.4%/25.6%	85.1%/12.2%

The second part of the questionnaire was focused on investigation of the preferences and attitudes towards different possibilities of gender expression. The main part of the questionnaire was designed with respect to the following questions:

(1) Do users of Slovak, Czech and Polish perceive one of the two alternatives (usage of the generic masculine or a concretization of the female gender) as marked/inconvenient?

(2) What associations do feminine versus masculine nouns applied to denote females (non-directness, dishonesty, prestige, expertise, etc.) evoke?

(3) Does affiliation to style/genre/communication sphere affect a preference of a gender form?

(4) Does a function (address) or do grammatical categories (sg., pl., third person) affect a preference of a gender form?

(5) What are the similarities or differences in attitudes in all three language communities?

Through the questionnaire, we monitored the language preferences of users of the three West Slavic languages in four communication areas:

(1) marketing communication (MC; addressing customers in text messages and in a public announcement – in sg. and pl. form),

(2) institutional communication and communication with the public (IC; referring to professions in official mail and in documents of political entities, specifically in the election manifesto),

(3) rhetorical style (RS; referring to socially high-ranking professions with a sign of positive evaluation in an official commemorative speech, either with or without subordinate sentences with a verbal form),

(4) political communication (PC; referring to professions in the electoral list of candidates, expression of personal conviction in the field of politics).

Each communication area consisted of two sets of sentences or shorts texts, offering two or three different possibilities of gender expression. Respondents were asked to choose the most suitable form in the given types of text:

(a) generic masculine form;

(b) pair forms, i.e. full male and female noun form respectively or feminine form;

(c) full male noun form and female suffix after a slash (sk, cz: *lektor/-ka*) or in brackets [pl: *lektor(ka)*].[3]

The sentences which the respondents were supposed to choose from come from existing texts that we collected privately (received e-mails, text messages), are available on the Internet in the form of announcements by public and non-public institutions and political parties or come from the database of the Slovak National Corpus. The selected sentences were modified and supplemented with gender-balanced variants. The original Slovak version of the questionnaire was subsequently translated into Czech and Polish by native speakers with regard to the conditions in the given language communities (names of politicians, parties, banks, etc., were translated so that they were understandable to the public in the given countries).[4]

Each choice of options was followed by an instruction for the respondents to provide us with an explanation of their opinion, where respondents could but did not necessarily have to clarify their choice. This part was supposed to be the main source of qualitative data on attitudes towards gender forms and motivation for preferences of language users.

Participants (n1 = 171 Slovak speaking; Mage = 31.8, n2 = 160 Polish speaking, Mage = 35.6, n3 = 188 Czech speaking, Mage = 32.4) provided 1882 arguments (519 by Slovak, 893 by Czech and 470 by Polish respondents) related to the usage of generic masculine, pair and alternative forms. The analyses focus on those arguments concerning generic masculine and pair/feminine forms.

Based on Chatfield's (2018) approach, different types of argument can be analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. In this study, we focus on qualitative analysis as it enables us to focus on the interpretive dimension and to reflect not only

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[3] See the instruction and one of the sentences sets (from the marketing communication area, Slovak version) below: "Ktorú z nasledujúcich foriem preferujete? Ak sa Vám zdajú rovnako dobré viaceré možnosti, vyberte viaceré." [Which of the following forms do you prefer? If more than one option seems just as good, choose more.]

    (a) *Vážení klienti, dovoľujeme si Vás informovať o plánovanej údržbe kartového systému Tatra banky, ktorá sa uskutoční zajtra v čase od 00:00 hod. do 00:30 hod.* [Dear clients (generic masculine form), we would like to inform you about the planned maintenance of the Tatra Banka card system, which will take place tomorrow from 00:00 until 00:30.]

    (b) *Vážení klienti, vážené klientky, dovoľujeme si Vás informovať o…* [Dear clients (male noun, female noun), we would like to inform you about…]

    (c) *Vážení/-é klienti/-ky, dovoľujeme si Vás informovať o…* [Dear clients (male noun/suffix for female noun), we would like to inform you about…]

[4] The questionnaire was translated into Czech by Mgr. Karolína Dohnalová, into Polish by Mgr. Aleksandra Wojnarowska. The translators participated as well in the distribution of the questionnaire and data collection, cf. Kyseľová – Wojnarowska – Dohnalová (2021).

statistical findings but also latent content present in the answers and comments of the respondents. To provide qualitative analysis, statements of participants were divided into several categories representing set of codes derived on the basis of data, not established before (e.g., Blaubergs 1980).

4. TYPOLOGY OF ATTITUDES

Language attitudes can be defined as a specific example of metalinguistic reaction reflecting the human tendency to evaluate phenomena in positive or negative way (cf. Sloboda 2017). Three parts of a language attitude can be identified: (i) cognitive component which includes information and knowledge about the evaluated object, (ii) affective component which reflects feelings towards the evaluated object and (iii) behavioural component which mirrors the readiness to act as a reaction to the attitude (Sloboda, ibid.).

In the following part, individual types of argument concerning the qualities and understanding of generic masculine forms and pair/feminine forms (feminine-masculine word pairs) will be presented and commented on.

In the characterization of attitudes, the term "argument" is used in the general sense, as it is understood in Toulmin's model of argumentation. In his work *The uses of arguments* (2003) he argues that good, realistic arguments typically consist of six parts and he uses following terms to describe the items: (i) *data*: the facts or evidence used to prove the argument, 'the facts we appeal to as a foundation for the claim' (p. 90), (ii) *claim*: the statement being argued (a thesis), "conclusion whose merits we are seeking to establish" (p. 90), (iii) *warrants*: the general, hypothetical (and often implicit) logical statements that serve as bridges between the claim and the data, "general, hypothetical statements, which can act as bridges, and authorise the sort of step to which our particular argument commits us" (p. 91), (iv) *qualifiers*: statements that limit the strength of the argument or statements that propose the conditions under which the argument is true, "some explicit reference to the degree of force which our data confer on our claim in virtue of our warrant" (p. 93), (v) *rebuttals*: counter-arguments or statements indicating circumstances when the general argument does not hold true, "circumstances in which the general authority of the warrant would have to be set aside" (p. 94), (vi) *backing*: statements that serve to support the warrants, "assurances, without which the warrants themselves would possess neither authority nor currency" (p. 96).

In the questionnaire, the respondents usually use only some of the items from the Toulmin's model, e. g.

Data: *... ženský rod může někomu evokovat, že je daná žena vnímána jako schopná kandidátka v zúženém okruhu žen-kolegyň,* [… usage of the feminine form can evoke that a given woman is viewed as a capable candidate only in a narrow circle of women – colleagues,] (PC)

Rebuttal: *generické maskulinum naopak podtrhuje její význačnost mezi všemi konkurenty bez ohledu na gender.* […generic masculine form emphasizes her excellence among all competitors irrespectively of gender.] (PC)

or

Claim: *Tady by mi přišlo naprosto nevyhovující a do očí bijící použít výraz politik,* [Here, I would find it completely inconvenient and striking to use the expression *politician* (male noun),] (PC)

Backing: *to je skoro jako prohlašovat, že je muž.* [… it is almost like claiming she is a man.] (PC)

In the strict sense, the criteria of representation, offensiveness, addressing, etc. should be defined as *topoi* or *loci* which are labelled as *warrants* in the Toulmin's model. They can be described as parts of argumentation belonging to the obligatory, either explicit or inferable premises. They are the content-related justifications or "conclusion rules" which connect the argument or arguments with the conclusion, the claim (cf. Wodak 2006, p. 74). Richardson (2004, p. 230) talks of topoi "as reservoirs of generalised key ideas from which specific statements or arguments can be generated." For example, the statement *Pierwszy jest krótki I dlatego lepszy.* implicitly relies on the premise that shorter texts are better (the topos of *economy*). In the process of argumentation, the topoi are usually not explicitly stated, but they stay in the background when the attitudes are presented or when the specific agenda is negotiated; the topos of *representation* can be paraphrased by means of following formula: language forms used in communication should be equally representative for both genders, the topos of *offensiveness* can be paraphrased in the following way: language forms used in communication should not be offensive for any gender, etc.

In the questionnaire, many statements provided by our respondents were accompanied by signs indicating a strong affective attitude (e.g., exclamation marks, emoticons):

PL1: *SĘDZINA to ŻONA sędziego!!!!!!* [Sędzina (she-judge) is a sędzia's (he-judge's) wife.]
CZ1: *Chiruržka? Jako vážně?!? :-D :-D :-D* [She-surgeon? Really?]

However, purely emotional, ironic, or humorously marked comment on preference of particular language form (representing affective component) are not taken into account in our analysis, e.g.:

SK1: *Páči sa mi to viac.* [I like it more.]
SK2: *Som slniečkar.*[5] [I am slniečkar.]

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[5] A person open to the world, liberal, human rights, multicultural and rather left-oriented.

At the same time, the ambivalence factor should be mentioned, i.e. the fact that language attitude often incorporates both positive and negative reactions at the same time, e.g.:

SK3: *Zaváňa to síce feminizmom a emancipáciou, ale subjektívne pocity bokom: aj v tomto prípade je jazykovo korektné rozlišovať profesie genderovo.* [All this seems to smack of feminism and emancipation, but personal feelings should be put aside: in this case it is linguistically correct to differentiate professions with respect to gender.]

This statement illustrates the clash between two types of language attitude: the first is related to the argument of ideology (negative) and the second is related to the argument of representativeness (positive) or, in other words, there is an incongruence between cognitive and affective components of language attitude.

4.1 Argument of representation

The argument of representation was used by Slovak, Czech and Polish respondents in both directions: to support the usage of generic masculine form as being equally representative for both genders, e.g.:

SK4: *Zbytočne vypisovať aj zákazníčka.* [It is useless to write she-customer.] (MC)
CZ2: *... je vidět, že je psán pro všechny.* [... (by using generic masculine form) it is obvious that the text is written for everybody.] (MC)
PL2: *Wszyscy jesteśmy klientami, niezależnie od płci.* [We all are clients independent of gender.] (MC)
CZ3: *Mužský rod jako zástupný naprosto dostačuje pro popis povolání.* [Masculine gender as a representative one is absolutely sufficient for labelling profession.] (PC)

or to validate generic masculine form as male-biased:

SK5: *Viem že aj ako žena mám šancu.* [(Choosing both forms) I know that I have a chance as a woman.] (IC)
CZ4: *První varianta opět ignoruje polovinu populace.* [The first variant (= generic masculine form) again ignores the half of the population.] (IC)
PL3: *Nie uwzględnienie płci w pierwszej ofercie.* [The gender is not taken into consideration in the first choice (= generic masculine form).] (MC)
PL4: *... to jakby kobieta nie istniała w społeczeństwie.* [… as if women did not exist in society.] (MC)
CZ5: *Tady by mi přišlo naprosto nevyhovující a do očí bijící použít výraz politik, to je skoro jako prohlašovat, že je muž.* [Here, I would find it completely

inconvenient and striking to use the expression *politician* (male noun), it is almost like claiming she is a man.] (PC)

The given contradictory statements manifest that different language users have different views on the representativeness of masculine forms. However, when investigating unconscious conceptualization of generic masculine forms, a different picture appears. Since at least the 1970s, gender linguistics and related theories discuss the generic use of masculine noun forms and the mental images they evoke in the minds of speakers. Many empirical studies have shown that masculine generics evoke a male bias in mental representations and make readers or listeners think more of male than female exemplars of a person category (Stahlberg et al. 2007). A detailed review of such studies is presented in the paper by L. Irmen and U. Linner (2010). Most studies have proved and concluded that generic masculine names are male-biased, not gender neutral. These experiments proved that generic masculine forms activate the least or the smallest cognitive inclusion of women (cf. Szcesny – Stahlberg 2005). Recent investigations have brought more precise explanations concerning conceptualization of generic masculine forms.[6]

To sum up, most of the studies have proved that speakers do not understand masculine forms as referring to both genders equally as these forms activate unequal gender representations that are male dominant. It seems that there is an evident incoherence between unconscious conceptualization processes and consciously articulated beliefs of the language users.

4.2 Argument of offensiveness

Offensiveness related to gender issues usually applies to usage of explicitly sexist language. Grammatical forms usually do not evoke insulting overtones. Nevertheless, both generic masculine and feminine forms are amenable to different types of metalinguistic evaluations. This type of argument is closely connected to the former one, i.e. if a respondent views generic masculine form as representative, its usage is not perceived as offensive for him or her and vice versa. Within the first group of arguments, it is emphasized that usage of generic masculine form is not insulting. Such claims were identified among all three language groups of answers within marketing communication, e.g.:

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[6] Recent studies have tried to refine the achieved findings. In the work by Braun et al. (1998) or by Braun, Szczesny and Stahlberg (2005) it has been proven that knowledge about typical gender distributions concerning social roles or certain contexts (environments) can weaken the effect of generic masculine forms, i.e. even generic masculine forms can evoke female, not male, associations. The study by Nissen (2013) shows that it is also the time factor that can come into play. It has been proven by comparing the results of two questionnaire investigations that were carried out in Spain in 1995 and 2005 in which native speakers of Spanish were asked to complete specific filler sentences. The results illustrated that a clear male bias of certain masculine forms in the first study seems to have vanished within a time span of ten years.

SK6: *... rodovo neutrálne, takže ma toto oslovenie nijako nedehonestuje.* [... gender neutral so that this kind of addressing does not offend me.] (MC)

CZ6: *Neuráží mě být v jednom oslovení s muži.* [I do not feel offended being addressed together with men.] (MC)

PL5: *...nie czuję się dyskryminowana, gdy widzę zwrot „Szanowni klienci".* [... I don't feel discriminated against by seeing the expression "dear customers" (male noun-pl.).] (MC)

On the other hand, for some participants, generic masculine forms are examples of "subtly sexist language" as they perpetuate gender stereotypes, e.g.:

SK7: *Neuráža to ani jedno pohlavie.* [It (= pair/feminine form) does not offend either men or women.] (MC)

PL6: *Pierwsza forma może być obraźliwa dla kobiet* [The first form (= generic masculine form) can be offensive to women)] (MC)

PL7: *...są osoby, które mogłyby się poczuć wykluczone, więc lepsza wydaje mi się forma bardziej inkluzywna.* [...some persons could feel excluded (= being addressed by masculine noun forms) so the more inclusive form seems to be better.] (MC)

Remarkably, for some participants, feminine noun form in general, regardless of the addressing function, is viewed as insulting. This holds for the Polish word *polityczka*:

PL8: *Forma polityczka jest obraźliwa i deprecjonująca.* [The form "she-politician" is offensive and depreciating.] (PC)

PL9: *Polityczka to mała polityka. Jest to więc słowo, które brzmi pogardliwie lub ironicznie i jako takie nie przysługuje się dobrze osobie, do której się odnosi.* [The word "she-politician" means a small politics. Hence, it is a word that sounds contemptuous or ironic and is not appropriate for the person which it refers to.] (PC)

Arguments of this type often appear in the statements of Polish participants who associate some feminine forms with such qualities as sounding unprofessional, derogatory, colloquial, ironic, comical. This also proved to be case for the Polish words *chirurżka, sędzina, naukowczyni*:

PL10: *Żeńskie formy brzmią śmiesznie. Są nieprofesjonalne.* [Feminine forms sound comical. They are unprofessional.] (PC)

PL11: (Naukowiec) *Tak brzmi to profesjonalniej.* [(Scientist – male noun) It sounds more professional this way.) (RS)

In some comments, individual generic masculine forms are evaluated differently, e.g.:

CZ7: *Maskulinum "vědec" mi ve spojení s ženou nevadí, "učitel" už více.* [I do not mind the masculine form "scientist" with respect to a woman, however, I do mind the masculine form "teacher".] (RS)

PL12: *Naukowczyni brzmi strasznie! Ale „nauczycielka" jest poprawne* [She-scientist sounds terrible! But "she-teacher" is correct.] (RS)

It is obvious that such interpretations are grounded in background information, i.e. in knowledge about typically male- and female-dominated areas, which promotes or discourages the usage of generic masculine form. Moreover, in the Polish context it seems that the higher-ranking the profession, the stronger the tendency to reject a female-gender specification (cf. Sosnowski – Satoła-Staśkowiak 2019), following the idea that professionality and competencies are relevant, not gender. In the words of one of the respondents, specifying a gender diminishes the significance of the profession:

PL13: *Niektóre określenia, mające formy rodzaju męskiego podkreślają znaczenie danej funkcji. Niestety, dość często forma żeńska może brzmić infantylnie albo wskazywać na mniejszy zakres zadań osoby, ktora pełni daną funkcję.* [Some expressions in the male form emphasise relevance of a given function. Unfortunately, the female form often sounds infantile or indicates a smaller range of tasks of the person performing the function.] (PC)

According to some linguists (Mokrý 1938; Kolek – Valdrová 2020, p. 41), the demand of invisibility of female gender within profession/title label points, in fact, to the social inequality of men and women and the inferiority complex of female gender. In order to support the endeavour to reach gender equality, the issue is also discussed in the answers to the questionnaire, e.g.:

CZ8: *…nepovažuji práci političky za méně hodnotnou než práci politika, tudíž by se za svou profesi neměla stydět.* […I do not find the job of she-politician less valuable than the job of he-politician, thus she should not be ashamed of her profession.] (PC)

PL14: *Skoro nie ma problemu ze słowem „nauczycielka" – dlaczego miałby być ze słowem „naukowczyni"?* [Since no-one has a problem with the word she-teacher, why should there be a problem with the word she-scientist?] (RS)

Finally, offensiveness of the feminine form is sometimes explained as an example of different reference, e.g.:

CZ9:   … *ženský rod může někomu evokovat, že je daná žena vnímána jako schopná kandidátka v zúženém okruhu žen-kolegyň, generické maskulinum naopak podtrhuje její význačnost mezi všemi konkurenty bez ohledu na gender.* [… usage of the feminine form can evoke that a given woman is viewed as a capable candidate only in a narrow circle of women – colleagues whereas generic masculine form emphasizes her excellence among all competitors irrespectively of gender.] (PC)

4.3 Argument of addressing

Taking into consideration the relationship of the speaker and the listener, language has an interpersonal or interactional function aiming at establishing social relations between people and helping to fulfil communication intentions. Interactionally-oriented approaches to the study of language have evidenced that linguistic structures function as resources for organizing social interaction and achieving communication goals. In this respect, usage of either generic masculine or pair/feminine forms can maintain or debilitate the interactive potential of texts.

Data from our questionnaire show that a large part of respondents evaluates generic masculine forms as adequate means for establishing the relationship between speaker and listener or the addressing itself is irrelevant compared to the following content of the message, e.g.:

PL15: *Nie potrzebuję podkreślania mojej płci (jako odbiorcy) w ten sposób.* [I do not need to emphasize my gender (in the role of addressee) in such a way.] (MC)
SK8:   *Verného zákazníka nezaujíma oslovenie, ale akú dostal výhodu za svoje "verné služby"...* [A loyal customer (male noun) is not interested in the form of address, but what advantage he got for his "loyalty"...] (MC)
CZ10: …*je mi úplně fuk, jak mě oslovují, zdržuje to ve čtení podstatného.* [I absolutely don't care how I am addressed, it prevents me from reading the important content.] (MC)

Contrary to these opinions, many respondents express their preference for pair/ feminine forms because they consider them as more addressing means in the given types of text:

SK9:   *Pôsobí to osobnejšie.* [It looks more personal.] (MC)
CZ11: *U druhé možnosti se mi líbí, že autor zahrnuje obě dvě pohlaví a dal si tu práci a oslovil každé zvlášť.* [Within the second option, I like that the author includes both genders and he made an effort and addressed each one individually.] (MC)
PL16: *To osoba kupująca jest adresatem ogłoszenia i staramy się zdobyć jej względy.* [The buying person is the addressee of the advertisement, and we should try to win her favour.] (MC)

As to the potential of generic masculine forms to target both genders equally (in job recruitment materials, job advertisements, etc.), it should be mentioned that there have been many experiments which discovered that generic masculine forms diminish the willingness of women to apply for various jobs and thus perpetuate gender inequality in male-dominated areas (e.g. Born – Taris 2010, Gaucher et al. 2011).

The data also show that strong preference of gender-balanced language relates to texts with a singular addressee whereas generic masculine forms were more preferred in texts with a plural addressee.[7] As the plural form targets the gender-mixed collective, it is not viewed as a personal form of address which thus keeps demands for gender sensitivity at bay, e.g.:

CZ12: *… forma klienti mi jako generické maskulinum nevadí, nejsem si jistá proč, možná proto, že u množného čísla to působí obecněji.* [... I do not mind the generic masculine form "clients", I am not sure why, maybe because of the fact that plural is more general.] (MC)

SK10: *Oslovovanie väčšej skupiny ľudí iba mužským ekvivalentom sa mi už zdá menej nevhodné, ako keď je oslovená jedna osoba.* [I consider addressing a bigger group of people only by the masculine equivalent less inappropriate when compared with addressing a singular person.] (MC)

The findings from empirical studies corroborate those intuitions: in the studies by Rothermund (1998), Łaziński (2006), Karwatowska – J. Szpyra-Kozłowska (2010, p. 238) it has been shown that male association is more frequent when the masculine form is used in the singular, however, plural forms are more neutral, and their generic sense is more easily activated.

4.4 Argument of economy

Arguments relating to the criterion of language/textual economy often occur in the comments. The opponents of gender-balanced language frequently evaluate pair/feminine forms or alternative forms (such as abbreviated forms with slashes, e.g. Slovak š*tudent/ka*, brackets, e.g. Czech *lékař(ka)*,[8] or the so-called capital-I form, e.g. German *SpezialistIn*) as less economic and thus not suitable for usage in texts. In our questionnaire, this was the case especially within marketing communication where quick availability of content is often expected, however, the requirement for economy often also appeared elsewhere, e.g.:

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[7] The marketing text with the addressee the in singular was the only text in the Polish version of the questionnaire where gender-balanced option gained over 50% preference by Polish respondents, cf. Kyseľová – Wojnarowska – Dohnalová (2021).

[8] In Czech, using brackets is sometimes rejected due to fact that it imposes hierarchization, cf. Valdrová (2008). This is not the case in Polish, where, on the contrary, brackets are preferred to slashes.

SK11: *Čím menej slov tým lepšie!* [The fewer words, the better!] (MC)

CZ13: *Je pro mě podstatnější stručnost a čitelnost textu než genderová rovnost.* [For me, the brevity and readability of the texts are more important than gender equality.] (MC)

PL17: *Pierwszy jest krótki i dlatego lepszy.* [The first text is shorter and therefore better] (MC)

SK12: *Nepriame označenie (nie oslovenie) nie je pre mňa dôvodom na používanie rodovo citlivej verzie. Nevnímam to hodnotovo ako v oslovení (nedostatok úcty v „nerodovej" verzii), skôr pragmaticky (účel textu a jeho ekonomika)* [Indirect labelling (not addressing) is not a reason for me to use a gender-sensitive version. I do not perceive it in sense of value as in the address (lack of respect in the "non-gender" (=masculine) version) but, rather, pragmatically (the purpose of the text and its economy)] (IC)

Those attitudes reflect the generally widespread belief that those language forms that meet the requirement of language economy are *ab ovo* better and more correct than longer forms (Lanstyák 2016, p. 19). However, Levinson's I-principle includes two subparts: the Speaker's Maxim of minimization (Do not say more than is required) and the Recipient's Corollary following Enrichment rule (Amplify the informational content of the speaker's utterance, by finding the most specific or precise interpretation), cf. Huang (2019). From this, it follows that it is possible to flout the Maxim of minimization on the part of the speaker to achieve the easiness of reception on the part of the listener (there are many examples in language usage which illustrate this phenomenon, e.g. polite directive speech act: *Nemohol by si prosím ťa otvoriť okno?* [Could you please open the window?] is, for sure, less economic than the imperative form: *Otvor okno!* [Open the window!]). In certain contexts, an uneconomic pair/feminine form can be preferred to ensure the understandability of the text, as illustrated in the following comment:

CZ14: *Tady je zmínění obou rodů naopak fajn, protože je zřejmé, že se hledají učitelé i učitelky, pokud by to tam napsáno nebylo, tak bych nad tím musela chvíli uvažovat.* [In this case, using pair/feminine form is fine as it is obvious that both male and female teachers are recruited and if the feminine form had not been used, I would have to think about it for some time.] (IC)

In several studies, it has been proven that generic masculine forms hinder the easiness of the reception process as has been shown in the study by Irmen – Köhncke (1996), investigating reaction time measures reflecting cognitive availability of male and female concepts from generic masculine forms, specific masculine and unspecific feminine forms, or in the study by Irmen – Roßberg (2004, experiment 1) which investigated the reading time necessary for correct interpretation of anaphoric reference to generic masculine forms.

4.5 Argument of textual qualities

The opponents of gender-sensitive language often argue that usage of pair/ feminine forms makes texts less comprehensible (readable). With respect to textual qualities, the opinions often refer to the value of "incomprehensibility", "stylistic inadequacy", "lower readability" of feminine/alternative forms, i.e. they are often viewed as a kind of communication distractor.

This type of arguments is also present in our dataset. Generic masculine forms were preferred by those participants who view pair/feminine forms as a kind of distractor in communication.[9] Lower readability is such a strong factor that it prevents respondents from choosing a gender-balanced option despite the fact that they otherwise prefer gender-sensitivity in language:

SK13: *stredna forma uz je zbytocne prekomplikovana*. [The middle form (= pair forms) is unnecessarily complicated.] (IC)

SK14: *Snaha o diverzifikáciu rodov vo vetách pôsobí nejasne a zahlcuje text nepodstatným štylizovaním*. [Efforts to diversify genders in sentences seem vague and overwhelm the text with insignificant stylization] (MC)

PL18: *Pierwsza forma jest prosta i zrozumiała. Pozostałe dwie formy komplikują odbiór treści*. [The first form (= generic masculine) is simple and understandable. The other two options make comprehension of the message more difficult.] (IC)

CZ15: *otrocké opakování muž a žena muž a žena muž a žena za sebou několikrát v jednom odstavci nedávám :) bohužel to není čtenářsky přívětivé, hyperkorektnost... ač bych tam ráda viděla ten ženský tvar, tak tohle je šílené*. [Unbearable repetition of the words *man* and *woman* and *woman* and *man* after each other in the same paragraph is too much for me, it is not reader-friendly, hypercorrect… although I would like to see the female form there, this is crazy.] (IC)

The arguments relating to textual qualities include such kind of labels as "non-compactness", "lack of clarity", "stylistic deformation", etc., however, it is not always clear what is really meant by the speakers when describing the qualities of

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[9] In the questionnaire, especially amongst Czech respondents, slashes proved to be a considerable distractor from comfortable comprehension and, along with the argument of economy, one of the main reasons for non-acceptance of gender-balanced expression. For example, within marketing communication, only 6% of Czech respondents voted for gender-balanced addressing using slashes by singular forms, and 4% preferred slashes by plural forms (compare it with 16% of Polish respondents and 37% of Slovak respondents by singular, and 8% of Polish respondents, 19% of Slovak respondents by plural), while the majority of Czech respondents justified their rejection of slashes by the argument of bad readability (cf. Kyseľová – Wojnarowska – Dohnalová 2021). However, the issue of usage of slashes in gender-fair expression is not in the focus of the present study.

texts with pair forms or alternative forms. There is a question whether the worse comprehensibility of a text with pair forms is merely the subjective feeling of a language user or an objective fact.[10] For example, in the study by Friedrich and Heise (2019), students read a randomly assigned text that either used masculine-only forms or consistently used both masculine and feminine forms and after that, they answered a comprehensibility questionnaire. The authors proved that participants who had read a text in gender-fair language did not give statistically significant lower ratings of comprehensibility than participants who had read a text that used masculine-only forms. The results indicate that the use of gender-fair language does not impair the comprehensibility of texts.[11]

The investigation indicates that the alleged "incomprehensibility" and "distractive nature" of pair/feminine forms probably have more to do with their less economical character. However, further research is necessary to prove whether pair/alternative forms truly are distracting and less comprehensible in communication.

4.6 Argument of language naturalness

Many participants argue in favour of either using or avoiding generic masculine forms and pair/feminine forms by calling them natural or, by contrast, unnatural. One part of the respondents rejects the usage of some feminine forms as they perceive them as unnatural, untypical and infrequent, e.g.:

SK15: *V tomto konkrétnom prípade by mi, osobne, úplne stačila prvá možnosť (možno preto, že slovo „klientka" nepočuť tak často ako „zákazníčka".* [In this first case, the first option (= masculine form) would be sufficient (maybe because the word "klientka" is not as frequent as the word "zákazníčka".)] (MC)

SK16: *... slovo „chirurgička" mne osobne príde dosť neprirodzené* [I perceive the word "she-surgeon" as rather unnatural.] (PC)

CZ16: *Slovo chiruržka jsem v životě neviděla a asi ani už vidět nechci :D* [I have never seen the word "she-surgeon" in my life and I do not want to again.] (PC)

PL19: *Nie podoba mi się jak brzmi forma naukowczyni, trochę jakby była wymyślona na siłę.* [I don't like the sound of the form she-scientist, a bit like it was made up artificially.] (RS)

PL20: *Nie słyszałam o naukowczyni.* [I have not heard of she-scientist.] (RS)

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[10] In theoretical studies, it is often emphasized that readability cannot be considered a property of texts alone but one of the text-reader interaction.

[11] The authors mention several empirical studies that show no statistically significant effects concerning the differences between generic masculine and pair/alternative forms regarding simplicity or concision but a statistically significant effect on aesthetic appeal. The use of pair forms and gender-neutral forms yielded to lower ratings of aesthetic appeal than the use of generic masculine forms.

The majority of Czech respondents questioned or even rejected the word *chiruržka* as unnatural, untypical and odd:

CZ17: *slovo chiruržka bohužel není příliš zažité a působí nepřirozeně* [The word she-surgeon is not very well established and appears unnatural.] (PC)

CZ18: *Chiruržka snad ani neexistuje...* [She-surgeon perhaps does not exist.] (PC)

The statements concerning "unnaturalness", "untypicality", or "non-existence" of certain feminine forms reflect an approach that is rooted in language intuitiveness.

On the other hand, pair/feminine forms are preferred with the argument of naturalness with respect to the gender of the persons they refer to or with respect to the language system, e.g.:

SK17: *... prirodzené oslovenie s ohľadom na pohlavie človeka* [… it is a natural way of address with respect to the gender of a person] (RS)

PL21: *jeśli da się zgodnie z regułami języka utworzyć rodzaj żeński – to należy go utworzyć i używać (...) Nie przyjmuję „argumentu”, że niektóre brzmią „dziwnie”, „trudno wymówić” (...) „Kwas dezoksyrybonukleinowy” też trudno wymówić, a jakoś nikt nie postuluje zmiany nazwy lub zaprzestania używania* [If a language system allows female forms to be created – they should be created and used (…) I do not accept the argument that some of them sound "strange", are "difficult to pronounce" (…). "Kwas dezoksyrybonukleinowy" [DNA] is also difficult to pronounce and yet nobody proposes to change the name or to stop using it.] (MC)

It seems that the concept of naturalness is viewed from two different perspectives by the speakers: within the first group of respondents, "naturalness" results from the frequency of the token (masculine forms are more frequent, therefore they are evaluated as more natural); within the latter group of respondents, the concept of "naturalness" has something to do with the criterion of representativeness ("natural" dichotomy of animates into "male" and "female") or is justified by the possibilities of the language system.

As the frequency of the token can change with the course of time, feminine forms can become more frequent and thus established in language usage which results in its "naturalness", e.g.:

CZ19: *... politička zní jako slovo přirozeně a je v jazyce již zavedené – byť uznávám, že míra zavedenosti je pravděpodobně čistě otázka vývoje jazyka v čase.* [… the word "she-politician", as a word, sounds natural and is established in language – however, I admit that the degree of being established is probably only a question of development of language in the course of time.] (PC)

4.7 Argument of tradition

The arguments related to tradition with respect to linguistic expressions is often articulated not only in the questionnaire but also in linguistic studies as has been shown in the article by Košková – Satoła-Staśkowiak (2017) in Section 2. The entrenchment[12] of generic masculine forms in the language system and the preference to keep the current system unchanged (defending the linguistic status quo) is understood as justification for their usage.

In the questionnaire, the preference of generic masculine forms is often explained with reference to language tradition and stability:

SK18: …*zákazníčka nie je veľmi zaužívané asi.* [She-customer is perhaps not very well established.] (MC)

PL22: *Naukowczyni to neologizm. Kłuje w oczy* [She-scientist is a neologism, it sticks out.] (RS)

PL23: (Lektorzy) *Zgodnie z polską tradycją językową…* [(Lecturers – male noun plural) In accordance with the Polish language tradition…] (IC)

Within pragmatic theories, this attitude is explained on the basis of axiological preference principle: what is stabilized, is preferred. The idea of language stability is often an incentive for preferring generic masculine forms.

On the other hand, pair/feminine forms are preferred as a symbol of modernity and progress:

SK20: *V súčasnej dobe už asi prirodzenejšia akceptácia rodu*. [Currently, it is more natural to take account of gender.] (IC)

SK21: … *dnes už by to mal byť štandard, používať rodovo citlivý jazyk.* […Usage of gender-sensitive language should be the standard today.] (MC)

CZ20: *Takováto vyjádření podle mého poukazují hlavně na to, že mluvčí nevládne jazykem 21. století.* [These expressions (= generic masculine) are proof of the fact that the speaker doesn't have a command of the language of the 21st century.] (PC)

As far as language tradition or long-term stability is concerned, attitudes of non-expert language users are, of course, based on their current language experience, while, naturally, they do not have a perfect insight into how the language has been used in previous decades or even centuries.[13] When it comes to modernity, what is

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[12] The term "entrenchment" is used in cognitive grammar to refer to the degree to which the formation and activation of a cognitive unit is routinized and automatized.

[13] According to a statement given by the Polish Linguistics Committee by PAN in 2019, the usage of feminine forms beside masculine ones at the beginning of the 20th century was a common phenomenon in Polish. This changed in the second half of the 20th century, where generic masculine (preceded by

now seen as modern and rejected based on the argument of fashion, was previously quite common and vice versa.[14]

The historical development concerning the usage of generic masculine forms and gender balanced language within the Slovak, Czech and Polish context proves that "tradition" and language stabilization is not a static concept. As Hornscheidt (2006, p. 37) puts it, language standards and norms are "the manifestations of a dominant language use, which, as authorizing source, nurtures the idea of their own pre-existence to language usage".

4.8 Argument of ideological markedness

Finally, the argument of ideology is often used in the comments of the participants. The recommendations for usage of gender-balanced language strategies are often marked with an ideological label of "feminism" or "genderism":

SK22: …*Vo zvyšných formách mi to prišlo silené, len aby sme vyhoveli moderným snahám o korektnosť.* [...I found the other options artificial so that we conform to the modern endeavour for correctness.] (MC)

CZ21: *působí jak z propagační brožury gender studies.* [it looks like from a propaganda brochure for gender studies.] (MC)

PL24: *Próba uwzględnienia wszystkich, zgodnie z polityczną poprawnością, doprowadza do tego, że nie chce mi się czytać całej wiadomości.* [The endeavour to take account of everybody corresponding to political correctness yields to the result that I do not want to read the whole message.] (MC)

On the other hand, there are comments which reveal the belief that language can be used as a means for elimination of social inequalities:

CZ22: *… s ohledem na druh profese považuji za vhodné použít oba rody, mimo jiné i v rámci přispění ke genderové vyváženosti profese, nebo alespoň tomu, jak to vnímá veřejnost.* [… with respect to this kind of profession, I consider it appropriate to use both genders, amongst other things, to contribute to the

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a word *pani*) started to prevail over feminine forms and began to be regularly used especially in order to label new professions and functions associated with high prestige. Then again, by the beginning of the 90s, feminine forms began to be promoted more, new ones appeared (*socjoložka*, *polityczka*) or old ones came back to life (*posłanka*) (cf. PAN 2019).

[14] According to findings by Kolek and Valdrová (2020), usage of feminine noun forms to label professions of women and academic titles was greatly supported by Czech linguists publishing in the journal *Naše řeč* in the first half of the 20th century. Labelling women by generic masculine forms and usage of collocations as *slečna doktor*, *paní doktor*, etc., was considered non-Czech, unnatural, incorrect, and called fashion and an unwanted sign of modernity. During socialism, contrary to the language development of profession labelling in Polish, usage of feminine nouns persisted and was supported in terms of equality of men and women in socialist society (Kolek – Valdrová 2020, p. 41).

gender balance of the profession or, at least, to the way it is perceived by the public.] (IC)

It is apparent that the term "ideology" automatically carries negative connotations in these cases. Even within the linguistic community, the usage of generic masculine forms is often articulated as an expression of "common sense". Such opinions are substantiations of language "intactism", i.e. the belief that language cannot or should not be interfered with from "outside".

Nevertheless, as was elaborated in Section 2, in post-structuralist linguistics, it has been emphasized that language is a socially determined phenomenon and the conceptualization of language and discourse is always construed from a position of a particular social or cultural group of users as it is anchored in social experience (grammar is viewed not only as phenomenon that entails meaning but also as a tool that triggers and produces meaning, cf. Posch 2015).

5.   CONCLUSIONS

The comparison of attitudes of Slovak, Czech and Polish respondents has proven the similarity of arguments in favour of and against gender-sensitive language, the only exception being a more frequent refusal of feminine forms among Polish speakers (due to the historical development in the usage of feminative forms in the second half of the 20th century). The investigation of attitudes towards gender-sensitive language reveals important dimensions of understanding the status and function of language and its structures in three West Slavic language communities:

(1) Status quo approach versus language progressivism: Language users often decline to use pair forms and enforce the usage of generic masculine with the argument of tradition (generic masculine forms are believed to represent traditional, established forms). The possible change of their linguistic behaviour (to use gender sensitive language forms instead of generic masculine) is thus rejected as something unnecessary. On the other hand, the proponents of gender-sensitive language view language as a possible way of eliminating social inequalities. Language forms are believed to bear the traces of the social structure that they both express and help to reproduce. Many respondents admitted the influence of the social debate on the usage of gender-sensitive language (it was reflected in the usage of many "expert" expressions, e.g. gender linguistics, transgender people, balanced, sensitive language, gender correctness, etc.).

(2) Economy versus representativeness and addressability: The opponents of gender-sensitive language often mention its uneconomic nature (pair forms are longer and thus less economic). On the other hand, those who prefer gender sensitive strategies often support their choice with the argument of representativeness and addressability of forms.

(3) Language "intactism" versus language as a socially determined and determining phenomenon: Whereas in the reflexive-logic approach, the interaction of the linguistic and extra-linguistic is deplored ("the language consciousness of language speakers is exposed to pressure based on different sociological and psychological experiments"), in the pragmatic-logic approach, the idea of a language system existing independently (as a kind of self-regulating system) is abandoned.

The conclusion from the investigation of gender sensitive language, especially in the context of the various research experiments and studies concerning cognitive representations of masculine forms, is that the language we use *matters*. Many sociological and psychological experiments prove the inadequacy of the Saussurean idea concerning the arbitrariness of generic masculine forms and their capability to cognitively represent and evoke both male and female individuals in an equal way: "In a sense, the neglect of research on linguistic sexism and discriminatory language evoked by so-called 'generic' masculine forms is well embedded into an increasingly post-factum society, in which evidence is denied and outvoted by mere opinions; it is the climate change debate of language: research keeps providing evidence, scientists and advocates spread such knowledge, yet it is widely ignored and silenced by loud voices of a backlash." (Schütze 2020, p. 115). In this sense, the study represents a first probe into the investigation of language speakers' attitudes towards gender balanced language to uncover persistently repeating patterns of argumentation of both its supporters and deniers.

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R e s u m é

POSTOJE K RODOVO INKLUZÍVNEMU JAZYKU U SLOVENSKÝCH, ČESKÝCH A POĽSKÝCH HOVORIACICH

Cieľom štúdie je analýza argumentačného inštrumentária vo vzťahu k používaniu generického maskulína a tzv. párových foriem (mužských podstatných mien spolu s prechýlenými ženskými podstatnými menami). Východiskom analýzy sú dáta získané z dotazníkového prieskumu, ktorý sa realizoval v októbri 2019 na vzorke slovenských, českých a poľských respondentov. Celkovo sme analyzovali 519 odpovedí a komentárov slovenských hovoriacich, 893 odpovedí a komentárov českých hovoriacich a 470 odpovedí a komentárov poľských hovoriacich. V príspevku sa venujeme dvom základným typom postojov k používaniu generického maskulína, kto-

ré sa v teoretických prácach označujú ako arbitrárny a sémantický motivovaný prístup. Argumentačné postoje hovoriacich sú konfrontované s mnohými domácimi aj zahraničnými empiricky, resp. psycholingvisticky založenými výskumami používania generického maskulína a párových foriem. Naším cieľom je kvalitatívne orientovaná analýza materiálu získaného zo spomínaného dotazníka, najmä pokiaľ ide o axiologické reakcie respondentov. Jazykové postoje, ktoré vedú k preferovaniu alebo odmietaniu rodovo vyváženého jazyka, rozdeľujeme do ôsmich podkategórií: argument reprezentatívnosti, ofenzívnosti, adresnosti, ekonómie, textových kvalít, jazykovej prirodzenosti, tradície a ideologickej príznakovosti.

NEW WORDS AND GENDER EQUALITY IN SERBIAN – DOES DISCRIMINATION EXIST?[1]

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Abstract: We examined the general attitude to new feminine titles, as it formed in the media in 2021, and the overall image of social feminine titles currently prevalent in the Serbian media, all by way of ascertaining the reasons for acceptance or non-acceptance of new social feminine titles that were articulated in the media. Having defined the necessary terms (*discrimination*, *gender equality*, *social feminine title* and so on) and after a brief review of the social context that made social feminine titles a hot topic in the Serbian media in 2021, we analysed the relevant media texts that present the various positions on social feminine titles. The method of qualitative content analysis was applied, as it was deemed the most fitting methodological procedure for extracting both the arguments put forward in favour of, and those against social feminine title use. The research corpus consisted of media texts and official announcements by Serbian linguistic institutions on the subject of social feminine titles, collected from January to September of 2021. The basic assumption was that the dominant attitude in the media texts would be against new feminine title use, but also that both supporters and opponents of new social feminine titles would feel discriminated against, whether the discrimination came via opposition to or, conversely, via obligatory and consistent use of these terms.

Key words: discrimination, gender-sensitive language, gender equality, social feminine titles, social masculine titles, media text, Serbian language

1. INTRODUCTION

Our present research focuses on establishing the reasons for (non)use of new feminine titles in the Serbian language, as they appeared in the media in 2021. In the first part of this paper, we define some key terms: *discrimination*, *gender equality*,

gender-sensitive language, *social feminine title* and *social masculine title.* We then examine the social context which kept the issue of social feminine titles in the public eye throughout 2021. The central part of the paper consists of a thematic analysis of media texts articulating the various attitudes toward social feminine titles.

2. KEY DEFINITIONS

Following reference dictionaries and legal regulation, we define *discrimination* as unfair partiality, prejudiced conduct, or bias in treatment of persons or groups; in other words, any action that excludes or limits someone's rights in advance on various grounds. Especially relevant to our investigation is the Prohibition of Discrimination Act from 2021, where severe discrimination is defined, among other things, as acting against the principles of gender equality, which is to say acting without "respect for equal rights and freedoms of women and men in political, economic, cultural and other aspects of public, professional, private and family life" (Article 20).

The Gender Equality Act, adopted into law this year in the Serbian Assembly as one of the means of achieving gender equality in Serbian society, mandates the use of gender-sensitive language which is defined as "the language that promotes equality between women and men and a means of influencing the consciousness of those who use that language in the direction of achieving equality, including changes in opinions, attitudes and behaviour within the language used in personal and professional life" (Article 6, number 17).

The terms *socijalni maskulinativ* [social masculine title] and *socijalni femininativ* [social feminine title] were first used in Serbian linguistics by Predrag Piper (2013, p. 54; 2016, pp. 37–38).

The first term, *social masculine title*, denotes masculine nouns that stand for status, function or profession. These are words that denote professions, occupations, functions, titles and designations of men. Some examples are: *učitelj*, *upravnik*, *dekan*, *profesor* [teacher, warden, dean, professor]. *Social masculine title* also refers to a masculine noun which has the role of denoting gender-neutral forms, such as *akademik*, *dirigent*, *sudija* [academic, conductor, judge]. We use these nouns when the information regarding the person's sex is irrelevant, such as in the following examples: *Ovaj udžbenik namenjen je studentima Pravnog fakulteta* [This textbook is intended for law students], *Sastanku prisustvuju predstavnici sindikata* [Union representatives are attending the meeting], *Pre operacije obavezan je pregled anesteziologa* [An anesthesiologist's examination must be performed before the surgery], *Ona uči za lekara* [She is studying to be a doctor].

Conversely, the term *socijalni femininativ* [social feminine title] denotes feminine nouns that stand for status, function or profession. These are words that denote professions, occupations, functions, titles and designations of women. Some examples are *vaspitačica*, *učiteljica*, *upravnica*, *dekanka/dekanica*, *profesorka/*

profesorica [female kindergarten teacher, schoolteacher, warden, dean, professor] and the like. We also have biological feminine nouns, such as *golubica*, *slonica*, *vučica* [female pigeon, female elephant, she-wolf], etc. Social feminine titles naturally grow in numbers as the role of women in society changes and the linguistic image of the world follows suit. The spread of social feminine titles in contemporary languages reflects the fact that, in a large part of the world today, women have become equal with men in a social, legal, and, to a certain extent, practical sense. The term *social feminine title* is to be distinguished from the term *femininum* which represents a form or noun of the female gender in the grammatical sense.

Before we reflect on the reactions to the law that was passed, which are closely tied to our theme here, it is worth noting that the problematization of this issue of nouns and noun derivatives of professional titles and designations of status for women started in the late 1980s, but we can safely say that the matter has culminated this year. Of the Serbian linguists who worked on this subject,[3] the following names stand out: Božo Ćorić (1979, 1982, 1990, 2008), Milka Ivić (1989), Jovanka Radić (2007, 2010, 2011, 2013a, 2013b), Svenka Savić (1984, 1995, 1998, 2009), Jelena Filipović (2011a, 2011b), Živojin Stanojčić (2013, 2014), Đorđe Otašević (2021a, 2021b, 2021c), Predrag Piper (2014, pp. 145–159, 2016), Jovana Jovanović (2020a, 2020b), Dragićević and Utvić (2019), and others.[4]

Briefly, the majority of linguists agree that the feminization of language is on the rise[5] and that the phenomenon needs to be addressed with great care. As far as the use of feminine titles in relation to masculine titles is concerned, the possibility of nouns of masculine gender indeed denoting the general gender and thus acting as nomination for the whole class is often pointed out, whereas nouns of female gender are marked in relation to these (they may only denote individuals or animals of female sex); for example, *Svečanom prijemu brucoša prisustvovali su svi studenti prve godine* [The freshman reception was attended by all new students] or *Na Tari*

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[3] The large number of recent works and studies on feminine forms and the use of gender-sensitive language among other Slavic nations and nationalities all speak to the relevance of this topic. Thus far, however, research based on a comparative analysis of the feminine form in Serbian versus other Slavic languages is sparse. Some examples are the comparison of the Serbian and Slovenian languages in the work of Nikola Bajić (2012), and the doctoral dissertation of Stefana Paunović Rodić, where the investigation of gender asymmetry in the free association test is presented, examining the difference in the conceptualization of four gender pairs of stimuli in the Serbian and Slovak languages (Paunović Rodić 2019, pp. 321–334). Equally infrequent are investigations of media discourse with the goal of ascertaining the frequency of feminine title use in Slavic languages. In this regard, Klaudia Stępień's Masters' thesis stands out, investigating the status and frequency of feminine title use in Polish (Stępień 2018). As well, in her Masters' thesis, Jelena Trikoš (2016) takes a look at gender sensitive language in the Serbian newspapers.

[4] The sociolinguistic approach and critical analysis of discourse in the research of gender-sensitive language in Slavic languages (Bogetić 2022; Petrović 2022) shows all the complexity of this topic within a broader, social context.

[5] On the process of feminization in Slavic languages, see Arhangelyska 2013.

ima medveda [There are bears on the mountain Tara]. However, denoting the general (neutral) gender may sometimes go to nouns of female gender, which primarily denote individuals of female sex, as in the example: *Ne podnosim mačke* [I can't stand cats]. But despite such examples, the situation is predominantly that of the masculine gender being the generic one, i.e. the masculine titles and feminine titles are in a relation of hyponym (superior and broader term) to hypernym (subordinate and narrower term), and the feminine titles are linguistically marked (Ćorić 1982, p. 14; Ivić 1989, p. 42; Radić 2011, p. 52, etc.).

Furthermore, in a language, one and the same sense may be articulated in different ways and by different means. This is also true for what is considered gender-sensitive language. Fusional (synthetic) languages, such as Serbian and other Slavic languages, allow greater possibilities here compared to analytical languages which achieve this through use of other functional words or by syntactical means. Precisely for this reason, achieving gender equality by way of derivatives need not be insisted upon (Piper 2016, p. 19; Slijepčević Bjelivuk 2019a, p. 121).

Languages are not so simplistic as to reduce all relations to a binary system, and we ought to be very careful with artificial creation and imposition of parallel forms, as this is indeed systemically and not just politically unsustainable.[6] One reason is linguistic economy, whereby the markedness of feminine titles is considered superfluous information or informationally redundant (Ćorić 2008, p. 207; Piper – Klajn 2014, p. 55; Piper 2016, p. 48).

Many words of foreign origin cannot have their gender counterparts, for example: *skeptik*, *agnostik*, *homofob*, *fan*, *student*, etc., which makes it impossible to insist on it (*Mlade devojke su najčešći fanovi Arijane Grande* [The fans of Ariana Grande are usually young girls]). Or take, for example, the nouns *sponzoruša* [female gold digger], *prostitutka* [prostitute], *babica* [midwife], *dadilja* [nanny], *domaćica* [housewife], *sekretarica* [secretary], etc., which do not have their gender counterparts (morphological ones can be formed but not semantic ones) (Ćorić 2008, pp. 198–208).

In the 1990s, feminist linguistics start to develop in Serbia, focusing, unlike structuralist linguistics, more on the communicational possibilities of language and

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[6] This means that the degree of grammaticalization of social feminine titles cannot depend (solely) on societal movements and political climate of a certain age and society (extra-linguistic criteria), but must depend primarily on linguistic criteria – the grammatical system of a language, style in which these words are used, and also tradition, prevalence and other criteria of a language culture: "The number of social feminine titles in a language gradually grows over time in accordance with the corresponding changes in society, and this process must be neither hindered nor artificially accelerated" (Piper – Klajn 2014, p. 222); "When assessing the normative acceptability of new social feminine titles, they should be taken into consideration individually, given that the degree and form of their connection to the language system, especially the system of functional styles, is not the same in each case. Social feminine titles of recent origin, such as noun neologisms proposed and advocated by representatives of certain political views, often cannot be considered part of good literary language until they see wider use and better integration in the modern Serbian language system" (Piper – Klajn 2014, p. 56).

the application of the Speech Act theory (Savić 2008; Savić, Čanak – Mitro – Štasni 2009).[7] The representatives of that school, the female ones in particular, start from the socio-cultural milieu that has now changed, the changes inevitably being reflected in the language (Filipović 2011a, p. 115; Filipović – Kuzmanović 2019, pp. 187–188). In the modern Serbian language, many social feminine titles have become common in speech, even in the media, yet the norm still does not reflect that. Language is a dynamic category, its norm allows for change, and Serbian is a fusional language, meaning that it has creative possibilities for building new words for women's occupations, and, over time, with more frequent use, these will no longer sound unusual (Bošković Marković 2021; Savić 1995, 1998, 2009, etc.).[8]

3.   SOCIAL CONTEXT

The strongest impetus for the creation of social feminine titles in the Serbian language came in the last decades, especially the first decade of the 21st century, owing to the change in the political and ideological system. After the adoption of the Gender Equality Act[9] in late May 2021,[10] largely negative reactions of institutions in the field of linguistics followed.

Matica Srpska, the oldest Serbian literary, cultural and scientific society, was the first to react, announcing that, in cooperation with the Board of the Literature and Language Department, it sent a letter entitled "Gender-Sensitive Language, Feminine Titles and Gender Equality"[11] to all the top government structures in the country.

Then, on June 1st, the Serbian Language Standardization Committee[12] issued a statement entitled "The Gender Equality Act is an act against the Serbian

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[7] Svenka Savić is the major representative of this school of thought. More on the development of Serbian gender linguistics in Filipović – Kuzmanović 2019.

[8] In his works (2021a, 2021b, 2021c, etc.), using examples from the media discourse and contemporary neological lexicography, Otašević points out the growing presence of feminine titles in the Serbian language. As he claims, both gender counterparts appear concurrently in almost all cases, and the prediction is that in the near future the number of gender pairs where both gender counterparts appear concurrently will be so large and so common that the connotation of subordinateness, characteristic of feminine titles in the past, will largely or perhaps even completely disappear.

[9] Legal information system. Available at: https://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnik-Portal/eli/rep/sgrs/skupstina/zakon/2021/52/3/reg [cit.10-01-2022].

[10] In July of the year in question, a National Strategy for gender equality for the period of 2021–2030 was adopted, with an action plan for its implementation in the period of 2021–2023. Internet source: Ministry for human and minority rights and social dialogue. Available at: https://www.minljmpdd.gov.rs/doc/konsultacije/090821/Polazne-osnove-za-Predlog-strategije-o-RR.pdf [cit. 12-1-2022].

[11] Matica Srpska. Available at: https://www.maticasrpska.org.rs/saopshtee-matitse-srpske-povo-dom-pitaa-o-rodno-ravnopravnosti/ [cit. 10-01-2022].

[12] The Serbian Language Standardization Committee has made announcements and publicly voiced decisions before. Previously two decisions were made, one in the years 2006/2007, entitled "How to name the occupations and titles of women" and the other in 2011, entitled "Language of gender equality" (links

language".[13] A day later this Committee followed up with a Decision regarding the adoption of the Gender equality Act, entitled "Violence against the Serbian language".[14]

On June 10th, the Executive Board of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts held its twenty-first session, and on this occasion put its support behind all the positions the Standardization Committee had published in its Decision on the adoption of the Gender Equality Act.[15]

In response to the adoption of the Gender Equality Act, Matica Srpska and the Serbian Language Standardization Committee organized a large meeting[16] of prominent experts in the field of Serbian language and social-humanistic disciplines, which was held on July 3rd at Matica Srpska. At the meeting, various problems with the structure and use of gender-sensitive language were discussed, as well as other, in the view of the meeting's participants, unfavourable aspects prescribed by the Act. The roundtable took place in three sessions and is available in the video archive on the Matica Srpska website. An announcement of the meeting was published on the website of the Serbian Language Standardization Committee, together with a presentation by prof. Dr. Sreto Tanasić,[17] Committee chairman, followed by the conclusions of the meeting.[18]

4. RESEARCH GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

Seeing that social feminine titles, as a means of introducing gender-sensitive language, have become a hot topic in the Serbian media, in this research we focused on the reasons for acceptance or non-acceptance of social feminine titles that were articulated in the media. A cursory review of the material makes it clear that the Serbian public is divided into two blocks when it comes to the attitude toward social feminine titles. There are the supporters of social feminine titles on the one hand, and the opponents on the other. We considered it important to take a research approach to this division and to extricate the reasons for and against social feminine titles, especially

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are given at the end of the paper, see Internet sources), while the announcement regarding gender equality was made in 2017. Available at: https://www.ossj.rs/odluke-i-saopstenja/o-rodnoj-ravnopravnosti/ [cit. 12-01-2022].

[13] The Serbian Language Standardization Committee. Available at: https://www.ossj.rs/odluke-i--saopstenja/zakon-o-rodnoj-ravnopravnosti-je-zakon-protiv-srpskog-jezika/ [cit. 10-01-2022].

[14] The Serbian Language Standardization Committee. Available at: http://www.ossj.rs/odluke-i--saopstenja/odluka-povodom-usvajanja-zakona-o-rodnoj-ravnopravnosti/ [cit. 10-01-2022].

[15] The Serbian Language Institute of SASA. Available at: http://www.isj.sanu.ac.rs/2021/07/08/сану-подржава-одбор-за-стандардизаци/?fbclid=IwAR2kWdFwVwe_FsrkeUjUpkjpB8gl-2sWnMm0_Jg4Y5PIBJmUP0R-TvYH0zIM [cit. 10-01-2022].

[16] Matica Srpska. Available at: https://www.maticasrpska.org.rs/polozaj-sj/ [cit. 10-01-2022].

[17] The Serbian Language Standardization Committee. Available at: http://www.ossj.rs/aktuelnosti/odrzan-skup-polozaj-srpskoga-jezika-u-savremenom-drustvu-izazovi-problemi-resenja/ [cit. 10-01-2022].

[18] The Serbian Language Standardization Committee: for Meeting Conclusions, see Internet sources.

because, to our knowledge, no such research has been conducted in Serbia as yet. We begin with the assumption that the attitude present in the media texts is predominantly negative, i.e. against new feminine title use, mainly because of the reactions of the Serbian linguistic institutions to some aspects of the Gender Equality Act that was adopted into law, the ones dealing with gender-sensitive language in particular. It was also expected that both groups, supporters and opponents of new social feminine titles, will feel discriminated against, whether this discrimination arose through opposition to or through obligatory and consistent use of these terms.

The main goal of our paper is to establish the attitude to new feminine titles that formed in the media in 2021, and, more generally, to articulate the current image of social feminine titles as presented in the Serbian media, all by way of considering the reasons for their acceptance or non-acceptance, as these were presented in the media. The main research questions we asked were: 1. Why do opponents of social feminine titles feel that they should not be used, and why do proponents of social feminine titles think that they should be used? 2. As per the arguments presented in the media, is the process of realizing a greater degree of gender equality disrupted by the (non)use of these words? We believe that the findings and conclusions of this research may also be relevant to other European countries with a similar socio-political background.

The first step in the research was to form a corpus consisting of texts from the media (newspapers and TV shows) and official announcements of Serbian linguistic institutions on the topic of social feminine titles. The corpus consists of texts collected by Google News from January to September 2021.[19] A total of 105 texts were excerpted, 53 of which communicate the positions of the opponents of (new) feminine titles (and of the Gender Equality Act, which regulates gender-sensitive language use), and 32 of which communicate the positions of feminine title and gender-sensitive language supporters; in the remaining 20 texts the two positions' attitudes are confronted. The texts include the opinions not only of linguists but also of experts from other scientific disciplines, including those dealing with gender-sensitive language and those from various cultural domains: journalists, columnists, translators, lawyers, politicians and representatives of the government, NGOs and Serbian Orthodox Church.

The corpus is exhaustive and representative – we tried to collect as many media publications as possible on the topic in a given period. All information media based in Serbia were taken into account, regardless of whether they are public services, privately owned media, or those in which the Republic of Serbia – or even some other, foreign

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[19] The reason we chose this timeframe for the corpus lies in the fact that in the media discourse this topic imposed itself as one of the main ones precisely in that period, which is also the time from the Gender Equality Act entering the adoption procedure to the final reactions after it went into force. Of course, all the views expressed in the texts that make up the corpus for this research are based on previous scientific and professional literature or else on the decisions of professional bodies, so in some places it was necessary to refer to such sources for continuity's sake, despite thereby deviating from the specified corpus timeframe.

country – has a share of the ownership (or management structure).[20] It should be noted, however, that the topic of social feminine titles is covered mostly in non-tabloid media (among which *Politika* and *Danas* stand out in Serbia, see Report 2015, p. 161), so it should come as no surprise that examples from such media are predominant in our corpus also. Reporting on this topic has been sensationalist and tabloid at times, especially in the headlines and subtitles, which also reflects the general profile of the newspaper itself (*Novosti* are one example). In this paper, we examine only the views of those who were invited to speak on the topic, and we did not address the way in which the media themselves use gender-sensitive language, regardless of the fact that some clearly do strive for reporting that is gender-balanced and in accordance with the recommendations for the use of gender-sensitive language (*Danas* is one example).[21] Also, media profile, whether with respect to the style of reporting (tabloid/serious media) or cooperation with the Government of the Republic of Serbia (the relevant qualifications here are "pro-regime" or "pro-government", versus "independent" or "free" media) played no role in the selection of texts for the corpus, and is thus not pertinent for our research. Even under the assumption that the choice of guests and interviewees, i.e. all those whose statements are to be found in the collected texts, is determined by a given media's profile, the expertise required for such media classification calls for specialists outside the field of linguistics and a greater degree of interdisciplinarity, and is irrelevant for our purpose here.

Qualitative content analysis (thematic analysis), as suggested by Kuckartz (2014), was chosen as the method of interpreting data from this corpus. It is a research method for analyzing textual data content through a process of identifying and classifying themes in the texts studied. We approached the textual data in order to single out the main themes that speak in favour of social feminine title use on the one hand, and those against it on the other. The selected themes will be illustrated with examples from the corpus.[22]

5.   ANALYSIS

Four themes were identified: on the one hand, we have (1) the linguistic arguments against social feminine titles and (2) the linguistic arguments for social feminine titles,

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[20] On the problems of non-transparency of media financing in Serbia, i.e. ownership and control of media in Serbia, see the Report on ownership structure and control of media in Serbia, produced by the Anti-Corruption Council of the Government of the Republic of Serbia in 2015. Available at: http://www. antikorupcija-savet.gov.rs/izvestaji/cid1028-2751/izvestaj-o-vlasnickoj-strukturi-i-kontroli-medija-u-sr-biji [cit. 12-02-2023].

[21] The use of gender-sensitive language in the Serbian media was the subject of some earlier research (Trikoš 2016), and, while the topic in Serbian studies is far from exhausted (it has been researched neither systematically nor in its entirety, but rather only fragmentarily), it is outside the scope of this paper.

[22] Due to the limited space we give only the English translation of the utterances and titles of the cited articles. Examples presented in Serbian are marked with single quotation marks.

and, on the other, there are (3) the ideological arguments of the opponents of social feminine titles and (4) the ideological arguments of their proponents.[23]

5.1. Linguistic arguments against new social feminine titles

We classified the linguistic arguments against social feminine titles into subcategories (formative, morphological, pragmatic, semantic and normative arguments) according to the language level they are referring to.

1. Formative arguments refer to atypical formative patterns, as in the case of the suffix *-škinja* (*virusološkinja*, *epidemiološkinja*, *psihološkinja*),[24] which is considered unsuitable for the formative system of Serbian (Ćorić 1982, pp. 138–141; Ćorić 2008, p. 206; Slijepčević Bjelivuk 2019a, p. 124, 2019b, p. 127).[25]

(1) *Let's take these pairs as an example: 'filolog/filološkinja', 'sociolog/ sociološkinja', 'pedagog/pedagoškinja', 'andragog/andragoškinja'[26]… these were not formed by analogy as the formative types are not at all the same, the base is not the same. The suffix '-kinja' in the above examples is not added onto the masculine form, which is how you make a feminine title, but onto the adjectival base: 'psihološki', 'sociološki'…The formative structure of Serbian is thus violated, this is not in accordance with the derivatological norms of the language.* (Politika: "An attack against an already wounded Serbian language")

2. Morphological arguments point out the collapse of the morphological word structure. In Serbian, nouns have a fixed gender; each noun is either masculine or feminine or neuter, unlike adjectives, for example, which change by gender. When it comes to nouns, therefore, gender is a classification category (Ćorić 2008, pp. 197–199). If noun pairs were consistently constructed (from the social masculine title we make a counterpart in the form of a social feminine title), gender would become an explicit category (any such noun, as it changes cases, would also change by gender).

(2) *Noun gender in Serbian […] is not a category based on gender forms, but is rather a classification category – i.e. some nouns are simply masculine, others feminine and still others of the middle gender; nouns do not change by gender! […] The literalism imposed by the Act could profoundly change the Serbian language: by consistently building pairs of nouns in accordance with gender equality, the noun grammatical gender would turn from an implicit to an explicit category, formalized in the same way as case and number categories in*

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[23] While our focus is on new social feminine titles, some of the arguments encompass both new and previously established feminine titles in the Serbian language.

[24] These are the feminine forms of the nouns virologist, epidemiologist, psychologist.

[25] Though there are linguists who dispute neither the possibility of, nor the (potential) standardization of such forms (cf. Stanojčić 2013, 2014).

[26] Serbian motal pairs for philologist, sociologist, pedagogue, andragogue.

the group of nouns. This would lead to a chain reaction of multiple language changes. (Committee: "Conclusions of the meeting")

The grammatical masculine gender is neutral with regard to sex in Serbian, it refers to persons of both sexes; nouns which denote occupations, titles and designations denote persons of both sexes – *sociolog* [sociologist] is a term for both women and men. The generic masculine gender, as Serbian linguists point out, implies awareness of the equal social value of men and women and is in accordance with the history of the language and its structure (Ćorić 1979, p. 31; Ćorić 2008, pp. 202–203). The grammars of the Serbian language in official use report that nouns that mean type, title or occupation signify beings of both sexes (Stanojčić – Popović 2016, p. 162; Piper – Klajn 2014, pp. 55–56). Social feminine titles should only be used in a referential and not in a generic sense and only in appropriate linguistic contexts – when individualization of utterance is called for.[27]

The Serbian Language Standardization Committee has informed the public about this issue on several occasions, as the following examples show:

(3) *The grammatical noun form is unmarked and neutral with regard to indicating gender difference.* (Committee: "How to name occupations and titles of women")

(4) *Gender neutrality of the generic masculine gender in the Serbian language is not an assumption but a linguistic fact: the grammatical and natural noun genders in Serbian are not identical. The grammars of Serbian in official use say that nouns meaning type, title or occupation denote beings of both sexes (man/people, dog, pigeon, writer, judge…).* (Committee: "Language of Gender Equality")

(5) *The male grammatical gender is a neutral category, which means that, according to the laws of the language, it semantically includes both male and female categories (e.g. Ona je odličan lekar* [She is an excellent doctor]*, Raspisan je konkurs za jednog nastavnika* [A job opening for one teacher has been announced]*; Majka i otac su šetali* [Mother and father walked]*, etc.).* (Committee: "Violence against the Serbian language")

(6) *Neutrality of the generic masculine gender in the Serbian language is a linguistic fact: the grammars of Serbian in official use state that nouns meaning type, title or occupation denote beings of both sexes, whether of feminine or masculine grammatical gender, so the claim that the use of generic male gender represents*

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[27] As noted earlier, the spread of social feminine titles is pronounced in oral use but has also been observed in media language (Piper 2016, p. 51), which is understandable primarily because of the communicative and referential function of language in these styles. Milka Ivić also wrote about referentiality as a reason for the use of feminine titles (1989, p. 42).

discrimination is indeed inconsistent with the proven and convincingly reasoned position of Serbian linguistic science. (Committee: "Conclusions of the meeting")

(7) *When it comes to feminine titles, the female gender is marked in Serbian, we always know that it is a woman, while the male gender is unmarked and has a dual function. Depending on the communicative circumstances, it can mean men in particular, but when it comes to an occupation or title, it refers to the whole class, regardless of whether we are speaking of men or women.* (Politika: "The Gender Equality Act Endangers Constitutional Freedoms")

3. Pragmatic and syntactic-stylistic arguments address the issue of using parallel forms in the text *Potrebno je da zakažete pregled kod svog izabranog/e lekara/ke,* [You need to make an appointment with your family doctor],[28] which affects the intelligibility and clarity of the text and complicates communication (Ćorić 2008, p. 207). This argument also addresses the redundancy at the grammatical level (because the grammatical male gender is neutral, adding a female gender title is superfluous), as well as the redundancy at the textual level, and encompasses both new and already established feminine titles in Serbian. Use of parallel forms in a text, which is implied by the Gender Equality Act according to linguists, would have far-reaching economic consequences as well, seeing that the texts in the public sphere already in existence would have to be redacted and printed anew.[29]

(8) *Using parallel forms or stating the form in the masculine gender with a mark for the feminine gender suffix unnecessarily burdens the sentence, with a very probable possibility of bringing it to absurdity (Svi prisutni/prisutne na ovoj proslavi bili/bile su nedvosmisleno razočarani/razočarane etc.* [All present at this celebration were unequivocally disappointed, etc.][30]*), and should therefore not be used.* (Committee: "Language of Gender Equality")

(9) *The dogmatic insistence on repetition is not new, but it is gradually intensifying. This author has repeatedly warned about the negative effects of this phenomenon*

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[28] Feminine suffixes are added onto the generic masculine form.

[29] Proponents of social feminine titles also note that "some technical solutions to inclusive writing (*Indijanci/Indijanke* i *Eskimi/Eskimke*, i.e. the two forms of a name for American Indians and Eskimos) may be controversial and suggest that "other countries" positive and negative experiences with inclusive writing should be further considered. For example, the French Academy recently rejected inclusive writing as counterproductive to the goals of equalizing the position of women in society, combating domestic violence, reducing the pay gap, basing its position on the claim that inclusive writers misunderstand the correlation between grammatical gender and sex of the noun they refer to. Among other things, there are arguments that French will become more difficult to learn and that English will replace it especially in Africa, and also that such a writing system makes language learning even more difficult for people with cognitive impairment (dyslexia…)." (Danas: "Feminine nouns have their origins in Proto-Slavic language")

[30] For "present", "were", and "disappointed", both male and female forms are written out.

since 2005, when in his book Language and Culture (XX Century Library) he quoted and commented on a letter in the newspaper Danas *dated March 25, 2004, signed by 'Aktivistkinje i Aktivisti'*[31] *of the Center for Nonviolent Action Belgrade. Instead of Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo, Serbian men/Serbian women and Albanian men/Albanian women are mentioned, emphasizing that we all need to be 'svesne i svesni'*[32] *of some things… And now even in the invitations to certain professional gatherings, 'učesnici i učesnice'*[33] *are greeted, 'koji/koje'*[34] *are asked to send contributions, and the like. It is even worse when "economizing" begins with monstrous shortening of words, such as 'članovi/ce, studenti/kinje, doktori/ ke'*[35]*, which can also often be seen (and not just in official forms), and which make a literate person's hair stand on end. […] But difficulties arise when 'borci i borkinje, studenti i studentkinje, članovi i članice'*[36] *stand side by side, and they are always so paired, not to mention the above "abbreviations". In other words, the main problems are actually not morphological but syntactic-stylistic in nature.* (Danas: "*Borkinje*[37] are not the problem but rather *borci i borkinje*[38]")

4. Semantic arguments refer to social feminine titles that cause semantic inaccuracy, for example: *Ona je najstroži professor na našem fakultetu* [She is the strictest professor (generic masculine form) at our faculty] *: Ona je najstroža profesorka na našem fakultetu* [She is the strictest professor (feminine form) at our faculty] or *Tamara Petrović je student generacije* [Tamara Petrović is the best student (generic masculine form) in her class] *: Tamara Petrović je studentkinja generacije* [Tamara Petrović is the best student (feminine form) in her class.] The question is whether in the second version of either example the woman in question is the strictest of all female professors or the best of all female students on the one hand, or else the strictest of all professors, both male and female, or the best of all students, both male and female, on the other (Ćorić 2008, p. 205).

(10) *When you say 'Marija je najbolja matematičarka u Srbiji'* [Marija is the best mathematician (female form) in Serbia]*, this means that she is the best of all female mathematicians. But if you were to say that she is the best "matematičar"* [mathematician – generic masculine form]*, it would mean that she is the best out of all men and women active in this discipline in Serbia.* (Politika: "The Gender Equality Act endangers constitutional freedoms")

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[31] Feminine and masculine forms of activists.

[32] Feminine and masculine forms of aware.

[33] Masculine and feminine forms of participants.

[34] Masculine and feminine forms of who.

[35] Members, students, doctors – the feminine suffixes are attached to the generic masculine form.

[36] Fighters, students, members – both masculine and feminine forms are written out.

[37] Feminine form of fighters.

[38] Masculine and feminine forms of fighters.

Certain social feminine titles can be semantically confusing in Serbian because they are formally identical to some other words, and can thus sound funny or have a negative connotation: the word *trenerka*[39] in Serbian means "track suit" as well as the new feminine title "female trainer"; *generalka* is "female general", but also "dress rehearsal", "general repair", or "general cleaning"; a new feminine title for a female correspondent has appeared – *dopisnica*, a word that in Serbian also means an open letter; it is the same with the word *govornica*: it means both "a female speaker" and "a phone booth" (Ćorić 2008, pp. 206–207).

(11) *Must we necessarily use the word 'ministarka'* [feminine form of minister] *for the woman who works as a minister, seeing that the word 'ministarka' means primarily a minister's wife. This is the meaning that comes to everyone's mind when we hear the word*. (Novosti: "Important for all women in Serbia")

(12) *Certain feminine forms for occupations such as 'trenerica'* [female coach and item of clothing] *are confusing because they have multiple meanings.* (Radio Slobodna Evropa: "Why is the right opposed to gender sensitive language?")

(13) *If I announce "'Dopisnica' is here", and you ask yourself if I mean a person or an open letter.* (Politika: "Engendering of language")

5. Normative arguments refer to feminine title use. Aside from the so-called natural feminine titles commonly used in Serbian: *učiteljica*, *vaspitačica*, *domaćica* [female teacher, kindergarten teacher, housewife], there are those that have not entered use: *trenerica*, *borkinja*, *vatrogasica* [female coach, fighter, firefighter] (Committee: "The Gender Equality Act is an act against the Serbian Language"; Committee: "Conclusions of the meeting"; Politika: "An attack against an already wounded Serbian language"; Politika: "The Gender Equality Act endangers constitutional freedoms"). Some artificially constructed feminine titles have also made an appearance. These are fabricated words such as: *ubickinja* [female murderer] (Politika*:* "A coup against Vuk"), *brusačica stakala* [female glass sander] (Politika: "An attack against an already wounded Serbian language") and the like.

(14) *The feminine forms in Serbian came into being naturally, without imposition, reflecting changes in reality. No one has the right, nor should anyone have the right to dispute the development of this part of language. Words such as queen, empress, female teacher or professor have been around for a while, while others are only starting to develop in this direction. This process ought not to be rushed or forced "from above".* (Politika: "The Gender Equality Act endangers constitutional freedoms")

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[39] Regarding the word *trenerka* in the Serbian language, see the paper by Jovana Jovanović 2020b.

(15) *Serbian already looks after gender equality, as it has long had female forms that are natural. [...] The fabrication of new concepts has become intrusive, so that some [...] insane solutions have emerged, such as 'borkinja'* [feminine form of fighter] *and others. "Some examples are grotesque. For example, if we were consistent, then we should say 'halfica' for a female halfback in football. She passed the ball to the 'bekica'* [feminine form of fullback] *who then went to the right wing. In basketball, for example, they would have a 'centrica'* [female form for center (Eng. centres)]. *'Blokica' passed to the centress under the basket – utter insanity*." (Sputnik: "Violence against one's own language in the name of equality – has Serbia committed itself to this baggage").

(16) *There are feminine nouns that have entered our thoughts, which are natural, such as 'učiteljica' or 'domaćica'* [feminine form of teacher or housewife]*, and then there are examples where it is impossible to pull this off. [...] What gains acceptance in a language, what remains, is what's natural, and everything that they want to introduce by force, like a derived noun that feels unnatural in a language, will not stick. A mixed system of titles must remain.* (Sputnik: "Violence against one's own language in the name of equality – has Serbia committed itself to this baggage")

(17) *Let's leave aside the made-up words in this manual, such as drvomodelarka' , 'isporučica', 'paedodontistkinja', 'reparatorka nameštaja'* [female forms of woodworker, deliveryman, children's dentist, furniture repairer]... *Or, say, 'brusačica stakla'* [feminine form for glass sander]. *As a dear female colleague of mine put it: "I could have sworn that they were talking about a sanding machine."* (Politika: "An attack against an already wounded Serbian language")

(18) *If the degree of a girl who studied psychology says that she is a 'psihološkinja'* [feminine form of psychologist] *or the degree of a girl who studied pedagogy says that she is a 'pedagoškinja'* [feminine form of pedagogue], *the language will not have it because the construction is clumsy, artificial and will not take root in the language.* (Novosti: "Important for all women in Serbia")

5.2. Linguistic arguments of supporters of new feminine titles

The linguistic arguments of those who support the new words include grammatical, formative and normative arguments.

1. The main grammatical argument of the proponents of new feminine titles points to the fact that with the use of social feminine titles mistakes in congruence would be avoided: *Premijer je rekla* : *Premijerka je rekla* (In the first instance, the generic masculine form of "Prime Minister" and the feminine form of "said" are incongruent, in the second instance both are feminine and therefore congruent). This argument applies to both new and previously established feminine titles in the Serbian language.

(19) *The arguments of "normativists" [are] inconsistent as they refuse to use feminine forms for functions and occupations performed by women, passing over in silence the problem this creates with sentence forming in the Serbian language. For example, if you were to say 'državni sekretar je rekla'* [The Secretary of State has said],[40] *this is incorrect, as the genders of subject and predicate are not in agreement [...].* (Radio Slobodna Evropa: "Why is the right opposed to gender sensitive language?")

(20) *When speaking of the linguists' reactions (and linguists' also – why not?),*[41] *first we have to ask the following question – how is it that they do not mind breaking one of the basic rules of the Serbian language – agreement of words in a sentence by gender, number, and case? Would they consider the following correct Serbian: The President said... The Minister reminded... The Prime Minister visited... The Governor announced*[42]*... Of course not!* (Danas: "Occupations in the feminine gender – unnecessary noise")

2. The proponents of social feminine titles also argue that the **formative possibilities** of the Serbian language allow for creation of new social feminine titles (Bošković Marković 2021; Savić 1995, 1998, 2009).

(21) *[...] suffixes for creating female names (feminine suffixes) [are] inherent in our language [...]. Feminine suffixes (e.g. the suffix '-ica') come from Proto-Slavic, which means that they have been around since ancient times and are an integral part of our language.* (Danas: "How nouns for women's occupations and titles have developed since ancient times")

(22) *Our language has always had recognizable forms of the female gender for numerous occupations: cook, maid, cleaner, dancer, teacher, actress, helper, laundress, seamstress, dentist, journalist, nurse, midwife [...] if this is allowed for old occupations, why not new ones?* (Danas: "Occupations in the female gender – unnecessary noise").

3. Normative arguments refer to the use of social feminine titles. Proponents of the new feminine titles point out that some of the disputed nouns are already included in the norm, as they are found in dictionaries, while they believe some others are common in use (*psihološkinja, ministarka*[43], *premijerka* – female forms of

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[40] The noun (masculine) and verb (feminine) genders are incongruent.

[41] "Linguists" in the parenthesis is in the female form: *Ако говоримо о реакцијама језикословаца (и језикословки – зашто да не?)...*

[42] Here the nouns are all in their generic masculine form, and the verbs in their feminine form: *Председник је рекла... Министар је подсетила... Премијер је гостовала... Гувернер је изјавила...*

[43] Meaning a woman who serves as a minister.

psychologist, minister, prime minister). They believe that with the use of social feminine titles, these words will no longer sound "unnatural", "clumsy" or "funny to the Serbian ear", and they put forward the idea that language is a dynamic category that, as such, allows for a change in the norm.

(23) [a comment on a columnist's remark, stating that *psihološkinja* (female psychologist) is a hideous term, as it brings *riffraff* to mind – *ološkinja* is the feminine singular form of *riffraff*].
If the problem is with the words themselves, he'd find adjectives such as 'filološki', 'ekološki', 'antropološki', 'muzikološki' [philological, ecological, anthropological, musicological] *equally hideous – because they would "smack of riffraff". [...] A common objection raised against words such as* [the female forms of] *engineer, architect, manager, lecturer, Germanist – is that they sound clumsy. Then what about 'drnč', 'džandrljiv', 'škrbav', 'Popokatepetl', Čibutkovica', 'otolaringologija', 'paralelopiped', 'dodekaedar', 'čvoruga', 'poslastičarnica', 'šćućuriti se', 'čokanjčić', 'žandarmerija', 'žižljivost ili ždrkljaj'?* [all hard to pronounce, strange or exotic-sounding Serbian words] *Or – 'rukometašica', 'odbojkašica', 'teniserka', 'džudistkinja', košarkašica'?* [female forms of handball player, volleyball player, tennis player, judoka, basketball player]. *Had we grown up with these words, they would all sound equally natural; the question of their naturalness would never be raised. The words such as* [female forms of] *teacher, professor, make-up artist, cashier, kindergarten teacher, were also new at some point in time, and they may well have sounded strange to people upon hearing them for the first time. Over time, though, everyone got used to them. Even some old words can sound strange to us.* (Al-Jazeera: "Why can a woman be a housewife, but not a [female form] diplomat?")

(24) *Some examples of nouns that the Committee cites in its letter as unacceptable exist in the Dictionary of the Serbian Language from 2011: 'dopisnica' is a noun that has two meanings 1. postcard 2. female correspondent (p. 292). Other examples cited by the Committee existed in the Dictionary of Serbo-Croatian Literary Language, and everyone can check that the first volume of that book from 1967 includes a noun 'govornica' meaning 'female speaker' (p. 517, confirmation found in Belgrade in 1937!). Also, in Volume 6 of that 1976 book, there are nouns: 'filozofkinja' meaning female philosopher' (p. 671), as well as 'trenerka' and 'trenerica' meaning 'female coach' (p. 275). The Committee also cites that the noun 'virološkinja' [female virologist] is unacceptable, the very word that prof. Dr. Marina Nikolić and Dr. Svetlana Slijepčević Bjelivuk included in the new Dictionary of Terms from the Covid pandemic period, which was created as a special project of the Standard Language Department of the Serbian Language Institute of SASA. How is it*

possible that the Committee does not use the dictionaries published by Matica Srpska or by one of the institutions that established the Serbian Language Standardization Committee? (Danas: "The Committee's recommendations are not founded on science")

5.3. Ideological arguments of the opponents of new feminine titles

It should be noted that the ideological arguments of the opponents of new social feminine titles are closely related to the Gender Equality Act, which prescribes the obligation to use gender-sensitive language, which is mostly interpreted by the professional public as obligatoriness in the use of social feminine titles.

1. The first subtheme in this category is the following: <u>New social feminine titles are not in accordance with the Serbian tradition but arise under the pressure from the West</u>:[44]

(25) [The ongoing reform] *is not the result of spontaneous, natural language development but of ill-conceived and therefore reckless adoption of the ideological matrix of modern Western, mostly de-Christianized or post-Christian culture and civilization.* (Novosti: "The living language of the living people will outlive decrees!").

(26) *The Act in question was undoubtedly fashioned under the influence of Brussels.* (Committee: "The Gender Equality Act is an act against the Serbian language").

(27) *It is interesting that the impetus for the Act came from the European Union [...] Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that, if the EU was indeed the cause of this Act, the current EU attitude towards gender-sensitive language will be the cause for its withdrawal.* (Committee: "Violence against the Serbian language")[45]

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[44] Some examples point out that the United Nations and the European Union do not have guidelines that would impose the use of inclusive language: "The directions provided by the United Nations for gender inclusive use of the English language give certain recommendations, they say that such language may be applied, not that it must be. It is stated that gender should be made visible when it is relevant for communication, with the advice to 'not overdo it because it can distract readers, especially in narrative texts', and that 'it can lead to inconsistencies and ambiguities, for example, in legal texts'. The document titled "Gender-Neutral Language" in the European Parliament states, for example, that the goal is to encourage administrative services to pay attention to gender sensitivity in a language. Which is fine. It is a matter of recommendations and encouragement, not something that is to be imposed." (Politika: "The Gender Equality Act endangers constitutional freedoms"); "Brussels does not interfere in local legislation, much less language issues in such a way. No EU country has a legal obligation to use the language of gender equality. There are recommendations by the left-wing European governments but no obligations. Only domestic buyers of European principles could convince those who do not understand the spirit of EU principles that such an obligation exists. Moreover, "inclusive spelling" is banned in schools in France by decree of the Minister of Education, May 7, 2021." (Politika: "A coup against Vuk")

[45] The fact that the European Union has not passed any law on gender-sensitive language has been

2. The next subtheme <u>The use of new social feminine titles threatens the national and cultural identity of the people</u> is illustrated by the following examples:

(28) *This violence against our language is committed by those who know nothing about its structure and laws of functioning or else they do know, but are working on the destruction of the Serbian language as one of the pillars of Serbian national and cultural identity. [...] The effort to protect equality is just a front for the destruction of language and national and cultural identity, and not just Serbian, but also the language of minority peoples and their culture.* (Politika: "We have public support, but the state will not listen to us")

(29) *Artificial changes to the grammatical structure of Serbian or any other language in the Republic of Serbia destroy the main bearer of cultural identity that makes Serbs Serbs, but also humans human – and that's language.* (Committee: "Conclusions of the meeting").

3. Within the subtheme <u>Social feminine titles are a means of discrimination</u> several subcategories can be identified:[46]

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stated on several occasions: "You do not have such laws anywhere in Europe" (Sputnik: "This does not exist in Europe: Strange ideological violence against the Serbian language is at work"); "The legal imposition of "gender-sensitive language" is not part of European regulations and values", [as testified by] "the GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE ordinances in the European Parliament, which state that the use of gender-sensitive language is recommended to the extent that it does not disturb the structure of a given language, with special attention paid to respecting the attitude of each individual regarding how they wish to be identified. Also, in the European Commission's 2019 report on legislation related to gender equality in Europe and the transposition of European rules into national law, which provides a detailed overview of the situation in 28 European Union countries, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and four candidate countries – language is not mentioned at all as a field of achieving gender equality that should be regulated by law" (Committee: "Conclusions of the meeting"). Proponents of feminine titles point out that the "legislation of the countries in our region prescribes consistent use of both masculine and feminine genders in the designation of occupations, and in Montenegro, for example, there are even penal provisions." An example from Slovenia shows that the Gender Equality Act influenced changes in language use because in the 1980s only four percent of job advertisements were in the female gender, climbing to 3540 percent by 2010" (Politika: "What do we say for women in gender-sensitive language – borci or borkinje" (masculine and feminine forms of fighters). See Markežić 2019, pp. 1618, for the official documents of the European Union on gender equality, and pages 2528 on the use of gender-sensitive language in English, French and German.

[46] Another two subcategories that appear are <u>Discrimination against males in the use of feminine titles</u> and <u>Discrimination of that part of the population that declares itself neither male nor female</u> but only with single confirmation within the same text: 1) "if we speak of 'gender-sensitive language', then the question of potential discrimination against males arises: are they discriminated against if they are referred to as *stranke, mušterije, pristalice* [parties, customers, supporters] because these are all feminine nouns?"; 2) "The phrase *Građani i građanke* (the two gender forms of citizens) is discrimination. This does not include the neuter gender; it does not include those who do not feel they belong in either category. The so-

a. Social feminine titles reveal the individual's sex, while social masculine title use does not:

(30) *Intrusion into one's intimacy – by insisting on the disclosure of an individual's sexuality (even when one does not want to declare it oneself) – violates one's personal dignity and ridicules society as a whole because it is fundamentally contrary to traditional morality, on which the existing society is built.* (Committee: "Conclusions of the meeting")

(31) *Gender equality is (in fact) ensured through the use of gender-neutral forms, while insisting on gender labeling in a context in which this information is irrelevant may result in discrimination.* (Committee: "Language of Gender Equality")

b. Forcing the use of social feminine titles discriminates against persons of both sexes who do not wish to use them:

(32) *Under the guise of anti-discrimination, the law discriminates against a part of the population of the Republic of Serbia, by all indications the majority (the part that does not wish to identify as, for example, 'nosačica', 'govornica', 'rukovoditeljka', 'farmerka', 'padobranka', 'geodetkinja', etc.* [feminine forms of carrier, speaker, manager, farmer, parachutist, surveyor]. (Committee: "Conclusions of the meeting")

(33) *The attitude of a large number of people living in the Republic of Serbia is not taken into account, namely all those who do not find it discriminatory to use grammatical masculine nouns to denote females. It is important to note that among them there are many female persons. […] This is why the question arises: How is this democratic? If democracy is reflected in the law through efforts toward the acceptance of gender-sensitive language, why insist on its consistent use even among those Serbian speakers who do not share this opinion?* (Matica Srpska: "Statement of Matica Srpska on the issue of gender equality")

(34) *The key problem with the law is that, in the name of exercising the rights of the part of the population that feels discriminated against unless feminine titles are used, it promotes inequality of those who do not feel this way, both linguists and speakers of Serbian, and not only Serbian. Those who are against the forced use of feminine titles are branded as conservatives, and women are labeled as not being actually aware that they are slaves to patriarchal patterns. In other*

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called general noun ought to be used – *građani* (generic masculine form). Everything else is, in fact, discrimination and mere politics." (Politika: "Linguistics between Legal and Gender Equality").

words, I am now in need of someone to raise the level of my awareness. Discrimination is carried out in the name of anti-discrimination. (Politika: "The Gender Equality Act endangers Constitutional Freedoms")

(35) *We have a diminishment or exclusion of already-existing rights that an entire nation possesses in terms of language use. It is being imposed that all females, including those who do not want this, must have (the feminine forms of) "doctor", "professor", "engineer" written on their degrees... Excuse me, how is this freedom? What happened to democratic choice? All that remains is legal coercion. And behind it all is an ideology, which is healthy neither for human thought, nor for human relations.* (Politika: "An attack against an already wounded Serbian language")

c. Discrimination against Serbian speakers, in case the Act does not apply to minority languages in Serbia:

(36) *Does this law apply to all official languages in our country or only to Serbian? If it refers to all the languages that have official status, then the following question arises: where does someone get the right to intervene in the language structure of Hungarian, Romanian, Albanian or any other language that has official status in the Republic of Serbia, and whose home territory is outside its borders? And if the Act refers only to the Serbian language, then it is quite clear that we are talking about discrimination.* (Politika: "An attack against an already wounded Serbian language")

(37) *It is not specified which language "gender-sensitivity", prescribed by law, refers to. In the case of all official languages in the country, the question arises of the right to change a language whose motherland is outside the borders of the Republic of Serbia, and whose official language policy either is not consistent application of "gender-sensitive language" or this is not even possible due to language structure (as in the case of Hungarian). [...] If the Act, however, refers only to the Serbian language, then it is a matter of discrimination. What applies to minority languages must also apply to the majority language, which in the case of the Republic of Serbia is – Serbian.* (Committee: "Conclusions of the meeting")

(38) *I OWE it to my readers to parenthesize here and explain what I mean when I speak of the discrimination of an entire ethnic group in our homeland. I am speaking of our fellow Hungarian citizens. There is no notion of masculine, feminine or middle grammatical gender in their grammar and speaking practice. Consequently, Hungarians, be they ever the most loyal citizens of Serbia, must necessarily violate this grand law and everyone, every day, can be*

prosecuted as a criminal. They simply cannot, in addition to the nouns 'lovac', *'sudija', 'sociolog'* [generic masculine forms of hunter, judge, sociologist] *and* *others ending in '-log', make "gender-correct" nouns 'lovkinja', 'sutkinja' or* *'sudijka', 'sociološkinja' and other '-ološkinje', recently invented. Here,* *someone might object that the law applies only to citizens who speak Serbian.* *Such an objection, however, would only be a poor and wily excuse. The reason* *being that, in every normal and orderly country, every law applies to all its* *citizens.* (Novosti: "The living language of the living people will outlive decrees!")

    d. <u>The use or non-use of feminine titles cannot affect the equality or discrimination of women</u>:

(39) *The grammatical category of the female gender is not the only means of* *ensuring the **visibility of women** in Serbian or any other language, nor can it* *affect discrimination or equality of women. [...] Even with the consistent use of* *the grammatical category of the female gender, discriminatory attitudes* *towards women can be expressed (e.g. **female politicians** ('političarke') are* *incapable of performing responsible duties). On the other hand, texts that do* *not use the grammatical category of the feminine gender may contain views* *that affirm gender equality.* (Committee: "Language of Gender Equality")

    4. <u>Language does not affect society</u> – this subtheme articulates the idea that we cannot improve social reality with changes to the language. In this case, this is to say that gender equality is not to be realized in this way:

(40) *This Act starts out with the idea that language use affects the speakers'* *consciousness. There have been various hypotheses in the history of linguistics,* *but the hypothesis that the structure of language determines our opinion,* *understanding of reality and attitudes, in its "strict form", is, to say the least,* *disputable. Language use is a different matter where by modeling statements by* *way of normatively accepted means, you can influence what kind of message* *your interlocutor will receive.* (Politika: "The Gender Equality Act endangers constitutional freedoms")

    5. <u>Language reflects societal changes. Reality affects language</u>:

(41) *The Serbian language should be left to respond to changes in society with its* *own creative mechanisms, which may well mean the emergence of a large* *number of social feminine titles.* (Politika: "We have public support, but the state will not listen to us")

(42) *Language is the human image of the world. Reality, as we see it, affects what we express through language as crucial and important. Language changes the way our perceptual reality changes. That is how feminine titles in the Serbian language came about, naturally, without imposition, reflecting changes in reality.* (Politika: "The Gender Equality Act endangers constitutional freedoms").

5.4. Ideological arguments of the proponents of social feminine titles
The ideological arguments of the proponents of social feminine titles include the following subthemes:
1. <u>Non-existence of social feminine titles is a reflection of a patriarchal system</u>:

(43) *The absence of the female gender in a language is a consequence of a patriarchal cultural model. For centuries, women traditionally belonged to the family circle and the private sphere, whereas the public sphere had been exclusive to men.* (Radio Slobodna Evropa: "The place of 'girls' in the gender sensitive language of Serbia")

(44) *By using gender-sensitive language and addressing women in all occupations and positions in the female gender, we are deconstructing the patriarchal model deeply ingrained in our society.* (Danas: "Women's occupations – unnecessary noise")

(45) *There are many words in our language, especially names of occupations, which are now traditionally expressed in the feminine gender. Such words are 'čistačica', 'kuvarica', 'kasirka', 'vaspitačica'* [cleaner, cook, cashier, kindergarten teacher]*, and they are mostly names for occupations that are less paid and less appreciated. Why, then, do the words 'direktorka', 'predsednica', 'sutkinja', 'inžinjerka'* [feminine forms of director, president, judge, engineer] *"hurt the ears" and "do damage" to our language? Is this really about the nature of language or rather about patriarchal patterns that do not allow women to be recognized and present in positions of power and influence?* (Politika: "If the word 'maid' is fine, what's wrong with the word 'engineer' (female form of engineer)")

2. <u>New social feminine titles are a projection of new social circumstances</u>:

(46) *Times are changing, women have entered all spheres of social and public life, they have the opportunity to study and pursue all professions, and have become 'advokatkinje', 'pilotknije', 'astronautkinje', but also 'predsednice', 'ministarke', 'rektorke' and 'poslanice'* [lawyers, pilots, astronauts, presidents, ministers, rectors and MPs. – all feminine forms]. (Danas: "Women's occupations – unnecessary noise")

(47) [Through daily use of gender-sensitive language] *we encourage positive change in the sphere of gender equality at the societal level in order to create space for girls and women to be empowered and given equal opportunities to advance in all spheres of professional and private life. And the only society that can move forward is a society in which both women and men have equal opportunities and conditions to live, work, and develop.* (Politika: "If the word 'maid' is fine, what's wrong with the word 'engineer' ")

(48) *Language is a living thing that changes in accordance with social needs. I think that language changes through education, culture, public discourse, and media.* (Radio Slobodna Evropa: "The place of 'girls' in the gender-sensitive language of Serbia")

 3. <u>Non-use of social feminine titles is discrimination against women</u>. This subtheme suggests that use of social feminine titles promotes equality of men and women and improves the standing of women in society (by improving the visibility of female professions and of women who hold highly respectable positions in society):

(49) *Linguistic discrimination in our society is mostly seen precisely in the professional sphere, where it is still the "standard" to use male gender names for occupations that involve leading, such as director, boss, president, manager. This underlines the unequal position of men and women, and it needs to be changed if we are to become a society of equal opportunities for all. The use of gender-discriminatory language leaves an impression that certain occupations are "reserved" only for women or only for men and this really is unacceptable.* (Politika: "If the word 'maid' is fine, what's wrong with the word 'engineer' ")

(50) *Language is very much soaked in ideology, and with certain language practices, the dominant ideology is reproduced and imposed on society, preserving the existing stereotypes, perception and power relations. And this does not apply only to discrimination against women, which is obvious and easily verifiable. If there is nothing disparaging in the use of the masculine gender for women's occupations and status if it is ideologically neutral, what would happen if the situation was reversed?* (Al-Jazeera: "Why can a woman be a housewife, but not a [female form] diplomat?")

 4. <u>Language affects society</u> – proponents of social feminine titles are of the opinion that language is a means of achieving gender equality and a reflection of societal reality. This position is supported by the Gender Equality Act (Ar. 6, number 17), in which gender-sensitive language is explicitly defined as "a tool by means of which the awareness of those who use it is affected":

(51) *Language shapes awareness, language creates thoughts and attitudes, language makes people, events and phenomena visible; The use of gender-sensitive language is not a question of language structure but of the power of those who want to create the awareness of public opinion.* (Danas: "Women's occupations – unnecessary noise")

(52) *The use of gender-sensitive language is one of the ways to incorporate and respect the principles of equality and equal rights in our daily lives; [...] In reality, the use of such language raises awareness of the importance of equality between women and men; By using it, we encourage positive change in the field of gender equality at the level of the entire society in order to create space for girls and women to be empowered and given equal opportunities to advance in all spheres of professional and private life; The language we use is a faithful reflection of the social patterns and society in which we live.* (Politika: "If the word 'maid' is fine, what's wrong with the word 'engineer' ")

6. CONCLUSION

With this paper, we wanted to present a linguistic phenomenon that is now current in the Serbian public space, and to extricate the reasons pro and contra social feminine titles. Media content analysis showed that there are linguistic reasons against the use of these words – the linguists implore that 1) new words not be invented and forcibly created where there is no need for them, 2) that social feminine titles that are not in accordance with the norm not be used, the normative norm in particular or those that have negative connotations and/or have double meanings (*pušačica*, *trenerka* – feminine forms of smoker, coach), 3) that social feminine titles which are in accordance with the norm and established in use be used only referentially, when the context demands that sex be made known. The more frequent use of social masculine titles in relation to social feminine titles in Slavic languages is caused by a larger semantic range of the generic form in those languages (see Klčová 2009, pp. 9–10). On the other hand, there are also valid linguistic reasons of the proponents of social feminine titles, which primarily concern the norm, formation and use of these words: 1) many of the new social feminine titles are common in speech, 2) over time, with use, social feminine titles will no longer sound "unnatural" or "clumsy", 3) language is a dynamic category that allows changes in the norm and introduction of new formative patterns.

What is interesting is that both the opponents and the proponents of social feminine titles speak of discrimination. Proponents of social feminine titles see discrimination in the use of gender-neutral terms and advocate the idea that social feminine titles are a way of realizing gender equality – that the use of these words improves the position of women in society by increasing their visibility at various

functions. On the other hand, opponents of social feminine titles see discrimination in the very use of these words, as forcing their use is discrimination against all those who do not wish to use them; also, they maintain that gender equality is ensured when gender-neutral forms are used – occupation titles of the grammatical masculine gender.

It is expected that the positions on social feminine titles presented in the media will have an effect on the attitudes Serbian speakers form toward new feminine titles and toward feminine titles in general and that our research will act as the first step in investigating the attitudes of Serbian speakers regarding feminine title use. It would be notable to compare results of such research to similar research conducted in other Slavic languages.[47]

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[47] According to Jarosz 2021, for example, 40% of Polish respondents believe use of parallel forms (both feminine and masculine terms) is important for suppressing gender discrimination, while 28% of respondents maintain the chances of proposed means actually lowering gender discrimination are slim (Jarosz 2021, p. 1001).

[48] Serbian titles are given in transliteration into Latin.

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Resumé

NEOLOGIZMY A RODOVÁ ROVNOSŤ V SRBČINE – DOCHÁDZA K DISKRIMINÁCII?

Skúmali sme všeobecné postoje k novým ženským pomenovaniam, ako sa vyskytovali v médiách v roku 2021, a celkový obraz spoločenských ženských pomenovaní v súčasnosti rozšírených v srbských médiách, vždy s konštatovaním dôvodov pre akceptovanie alebo neakceptovanie nových spoločenských ženských pomenovaní, ako boli artikulované v médiách. Po definovaní potrebných pojmov (diskriminácia, rodová rovnosť, spoločenské ženské pomenovania a pod.) a po krátkom prehľade spoločenského kontextu, ktorý spravil zo spoločenských ženských pomenovaní v srbských médiách v roku 2021 horúcu tému, sme analyzovali relevantné mediálne texty, ktoré predstavujú rozličné pozície v súvislosti so spoločenskými ženskými pomenovaniami. Použili sme metódu kvalitatívnej obsahovej analýzy, pretože sme ju považovali za najvhodnejšiu metodologickú procedúru na extrakciu argumentov za a proti používanou spoločenských ženských pomenovaní. Výskumný korpus pozostával z mediálnych textov a oficiálnych stanovísk srbských jazykovedných inštitúcií na tému spoločenských ženských pomenovaní, zozbieraných za obdobie od januára do septembra 2021. Základným predpokladom bolo, že dominantným postojom v médiách bude ten proti používaniu ženských pomenovaní, ale tiež, že obe skupiny (podporujúci aj oponujúci používanie nových ženských pomenovaní) sa budú cítiť diskriminovaní, či už diskriminácia prichádza skrz vymedzovanie sa alebo naopak skrz povinné a konzistentné používanie týchto výrazov.

LANGUAGE DISCRIMINATION IN POLISH PUBLIC DISCOURSE (EXAMPLE OF POLISH FOOTBALL FANS DISCOURSE)

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Abstract: In the urban space of Łódź, this paper studies some anti–Semitic aspects of discriminatory discourse of football fans. Its main goal is to present how anti-Semitic discriminatory meanings are formulated and spread in the urban space and how particular social groups (football fans) organize the urban discourse. In the multimodal material from the urban discourse, we scrutinize verbal and visual forms of discrimination captured on the walls of buildings, parks, or shopping centres in various stickers, posters, and flags. This paper implies that the language of particular social groups goes beyond closed internet communication or stadium discourse to a more open social sphere. A consequence of the social polarization found in the analysed data may be the radicalization and vulgarization of language in general.
Key words: antisemitism, discrimination, football fans discourse, Polish language, the city of Łódź

1.   INTRODUCTION

This paper studies some antisemitic aspects of discriminatory discourse of football fans in the urban space of the city of Łódź.[1] The main goal is to present how anti-Semitic discriminatory meanings are formulated and spread in the urban space and how particular social groups (football fans) organize the urban discourse. I take a close look at verbal and visual forms of discrimination; in a narrow perspective it comes down to functioning of language expressions that one can observe in the city area and in broader perspective to different kinds of signs and symbols in the form of images and pictures, other than linguistic codes. The multimodal material is taken from the urban discourse, which appears on the walls of buildings, on streets in the form of inscriptions, as well as in parks and shopping centres in various stickers, posters and flags.

In the first three sections, I briefly introduce the historical context of the city, shortly describe the understanding of discrimination and antisemitism in common language and in academic discourse; further, I give insight of the applied methodology and an in-depth analysis of collected material. I end the article with a brief summary.

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[1] I would like to thank the reviewers for insights, comments and helpful suggestions on the paper. Of course, for any possible shortcomings the responsibility lies with me.

Although the paper is a case study research and gives a picture of one particular city in Poland, some general conclusions on the character of discriminatory and antisemitic discourse might be drawn.

Studies on discrimination in football have proliferated over the last years. Not only racist excesses were studied (see, for instance, Cable – Kilvington – Mottershead 2022; Carrington 2012; Garland – Rowe 2001), but also those relating to the phenomenon of antisemitism from both historic and synchronic perspective (Burska 2019; Burski – Woźniak 2021; Poulton 2016; Rosół 2022; Reisigl – Wodak 2001). This fact is not surprising, because various types of information related to the activities of fans such as fights, obscene chants, and banners occur in the media (in the diverse public discourses) on a regular basis. It confirms the importance of the topic under consideration in this paper.

2. BRIEF HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Łódź is the third largest city in Poland granted town rights in 1423 by Polish king Wladislaw Jagiello. However, a rapid development of the city started in the 19th century as a result of dynamically developing textile industry. Today, there are two major football clubs in the city, both founded in the first half of the 20th century: Łódzki Klub Sportowy (with acronym ŁKS) founded in 1908 and Robotnicze Towarzystwo Sportowe Widzew (with acronym RTS Widzew), which dates back to 1910 or 1922.[2] The history of both teams differs. ŁKS was one of the founders of the Polish football league before the WWII, celebrated triumphs in the 50s of the 20th century, won the national championship in 1958 (the second championship ŁKS won in 1998) with a large group of fans in the city from the beginning. At that time RTS Widzew, not widely recognized, played in lower divisions as a local team. The club started to grow in the 70s and 80s, when it played in the Europa Cup, reached a semi-final in 1983 and won national championship in 1981, 1982, 1996 and 1997. Along with the successes, the group of the club's supporters grew in number: from a small number of local people to a large number across Poland. Today both clubs have a large number of supporters and play in the major league (Polish extraklasa) or in the first division (Polish first league).

3. DISCRIMINATION AND ANTISEMITISM

Discrimination as a notion has got a variety of definitions that differ regarding the scope and sources. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, in the common language understanding it is: "the practice of treating somebody or a particular group in society less fairly than others" with some common collocation,

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[2] There are some historical controversies about both dates, but they are not the subject of discussion here.

such as age/racial/gender/sex discrimination.[3] A broader definition delivers an American law dictionary: "unequal treatment of persons, for a reason which has nothing to do with legal rights or ability. Federal and state laws prohibit discrimination in employment, availability of housing, rates of pay, right to promotion, educational opportunity, civil rights, and use of facilities based on race, nationality, creed, colour, age, sex or sexual orientation (Law). In academic understanding of the notion, definitions of discrimination emphasized negative approach towards an individual or a group. For instance, Sociology dictionary defines it as "the unequal treatment of an individual or group on the basis of their statuses (e.g. age, beliefs, ethnicity, sex) by limiting access to social resources (e.g. education, housing, jobs, legal rights, loans, or political power)".[4]

Anti-Semitism is a more exclusive notion (narrowed down to a particular ethnic group) but is strongly connected with the discrimination. In 2016, International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance adopted a working definition of anti-Semitism that is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.[5] As M. H. Gelber emphasizes, anti-Semitism refers to showing prejudice against Jews, fearing, or disliking everything that is associated with the Jewish community (Gelber 1985).

The beginnings of football systematic anti-Semitism among fans in Poland dates back to the turn of the 80s and 90s. It has got a historical background. It appears mostly in those Polish cities where the Jewish community lived and there are at least two rival football clubs. In Poland in the city of Łódź (with two major clubs ŁKS and Widzew), Krakow (with teams Wisła and Cracovia), and Rzeszów (with Resovia nad Stal). However, football fans from other Polish cities use this antisemitic rhetoric when referring to the supporters of both teams. In the sport fan discourse, the antisemitism might be considered as "a discursive communication strategy used by some fan groups to build the foundations of a collective identity – a symbolic community that allows to distinguish one's own group from the opposite group" (Burski 2015, p. 227).

4. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

I adopt a multimodal discourse analysis based on different approaches and research theories (Halliday – Matthiesen 2004). The main perspective is a conceptual-

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[3] cf. https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/discrimination?q=discrimination

[4] https://sociologydictionary.org/discrimination/#definition_of_discrimination

[5] https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/combating-antisemitism/definition-antisemitism_en

discursive paradigm from Elena Kubriakowa and Krystyna Waszakowa that contradicts the modular description of phenomena on particular levels of grammar (see, for example, Kubriakowa 2006; Waszakowa 2021; also Langacker 2009). In this paradigm word-formation derivatives are components of utterances that occur together with other means in specific cases of language use (usage event in Langacker's terminology). The usage event is bipolar; consists of an expression plan and a content plan (Langacker 2009, p. 610). The plan of the expression includes: a) full phonetic specifications of the speech, b) any other signals such as gestures and body language as well as pictures, images, different symbols. The content plan consists of full contextual understanding of the statement, which concerns: what has actually been articulated, what the statement implies (see, for instance, Waszakowa 2021).

On the linguistic level, an instrument for discrimination might be derivative formations and derivational mechanisms that are different from those appearing in the standard language. Irena Kamińska-Szmaj in the context of language aggression and discrimination listed: (1) primary systemically evaluating (axiological) vocabulary; (2) connotationally evaluating (axiological) vocabulary, (3) words derived from a derivational basis with a negative value, morphological means, as well as negative phraseologisms and their modifications (phraseological derivation) (Kamińska-Szmaj 2007, pp. 62–66).

5.   DERIVATIONAL DISCRIMINATORY STRUCTURES

Frequent derivational structures with discriminatory antisemitic meanings are created by suffixation, where the derivational basis is a noun. For example, by the addition of Polish suffixes *-isko*, *-ol*, *-uch*, *-aszek*, *-ek*, *-owina*, *-as*, *-uś*; the following derivatives arise: *Żydzisko*, *Żydol*, *Żyduch*, *Żydaszek*, *Żydowina*, *Żydas*, *Żyduś*. These are mostly expressive suffixes with different function in Polish (for instance *-isko*, *-uch* might be considered as augmentative suffixes and *-aszek*, *-ek*, *-uś* as diminutive suffixes). However, all these forms have negative or ironic connotations. The basis of the negative connotation is, on the one hand, the diminutive and augmentative suffix itself, but primarily negative meaning is brought to the structure by the word-formation basis, the lexem *Żyd* [Jew]. In different Polish dictionaries this word has several definitions, some of which refer to a follower of Judaism; colloquially also to a stingy person or a smart, clever person who always looks at their own interests (cf. Słownik SJP.PL; Miejski.pl). Lexicographic meanings do not reflect negative connotation; however, Agnieszka Wierzbicka noticed that the neutral meaning applies only to a small group of Poles: in general, the word is perceived as negative (Wierzbicka 2015, p. 58). In the language usage, depending on communicative situation and context, it might carry strong negative connotational meanings.[6]

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[6] In colloquial expressions for instance as an offensive: *ty żydzie* [you Jew].

There are also structures based on the use of stereotypes functioning among the Jewish society (inner perspective) and non-Jewish society (external perspective). Creators of these structures draw attention to the physical features of the representatives of the Jewish nation: the custom of wearing a beard and sidelocks, hair colour (black or red), nose shape, eye colour, etc. References to these features are also present in derivatives and are used in other than language symbolic codes. There are numbers of small and larger word formation families with synonymic (or quasi-synonymic) discriminatory meanings. They have got mainly two meanings: structural and lexical.

From the type of hair: *pejs* [sidelock] – *pejsik*, *pejsowiec* with suffixes *-ik* and *-owiec* and structural meaning "person who has got a sidelock" and a lexical meaning "supporter of opposing, rival team"; *pejsiaty*, *pejsiasty* with suffixes *-aty* and *-asty* "attribute of sth/sbd with sidelock" and "attribute of supporter of rival team supporter"; *pejsownia* with suffix *-ownia* "place for people with sidelock" and "place associated with an opponent team or a group of opponent team supporters".

From the type of nose: *garbate nosy* [humped nose] – *garbatki*, *garbaciarze* [fans, supporters of rival club/team]. These forms are a result of univerbation of the phrase *garbate nosy*.

From the name of a disease: *parch* [scab] – *parchek*, *parchawiec* with suffixes *-ek* and *-awiec* "a person associated with a scab", *parchaty* "attribute of a person associated with a scab" and "attribute of a person who supports an opponent team".

From the cap: *jarmułka* [kippah, koppel] – *jarmułkowiec*, *jarmułek*, *jarmułkiewicz* with suffixes *-owiec*, *-ek* and *-ewicz* "a person who wears a kippah' and 'a person who supports an opponent team".

From international name of Jews: *Jude* – *judek*, *judkowicz* with suffixes *-ek* and *-owicz* "person" *judowy* "attribute of a person associated with Jew".

From Polish name of Jew: *Żyd* – *Żydzisko*, *Żydek*, *Żydus*, *Żyduś*, referring also to the name of club: *Żydzew*, *Żydzewek* that is a transformed original name from *Widzew Łódź*.

The derivational family constructed from the word *parch* is interesting due to semantic changes. The word originally meant a certain disease of plants, animals and people. For example, in Linde's dictionary from the beginning of the 19th century, these meanings are described in great detail (Linde 1811, p. 639). The association with Jew occurs in Karłowicz-Kryński dictionary where the authors noticed that

parch [scab] can be offensive for Jews (Karłowicz – Niedźwiedzki 1908, p. 57). The same can be found in Doroszewski's dictionary, but the meaning "contemptuously about a Jew" occurs with a qualifier *przestarzały* (archaic) (Doroszewski 1964).

On the city walls very frequent and popular are blends, such as *Żydzew*, *Żydkiewki*, *Brodowici*, *Jewdzew*.

Żydzew – Żyd + Widzew

Figure 1.

Source: facebook.com

The blend derived by merging of two onyms (proper names): the official name of the club *Widzew* and *Żyd* "member of the Jewish community".

Żydkiewki – Żyd + rzodkiewka
That blend derived by merging a proper noun *Żyd* [Jew] and a common noun *rzodkiewka* [radish] that refers to Widzew club colours which are red-white-red. The creators of this structure refer to the red colour of the vegetable and the red colour associated with the Widzew club.

Jewdzew – Jew + Widzew

Figure 2.

Source: facebook.com

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The structure – that might be considered as a hybrid word combining international and domestic elements – derives from the two proper names: international word *Jew* and the official name of the club Widzew. These blends are commonly used on walls in longer phrases with some typical clubs' symbols. For instance, very offensive: *żydzew dziwko derby blisko* [żydzew you whore, derby is coming]. The message is aimed at the fans of the opposing team. It underlines that a match between the two city teams is coming. The purpose here is to offend, intimidate the opponent, show one's own strength before the upcoming confrontation:
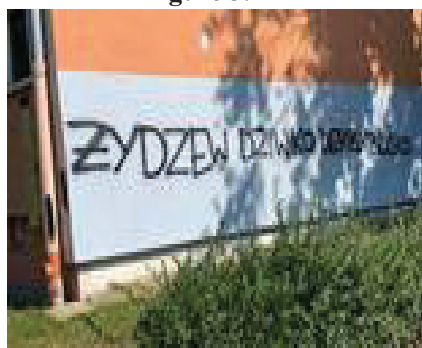
Figure 3.   **Figure 4.**

Source: facebook.com

Other stereotypical roots are references to the beard. The common well-known nickname of ŁKS fans is *Rodowici Łodzianie* [native citizens of Łódź]. The nickname emphasizes attachment to the city and local affiliation. Widzew fans using the stereotype of a bearded Jew coined a structure *Brodowici Łodzianie*. The first element is a blend of the noun *broda* [beard] and the nickname in the form of adjective *rodowici* [native citizens] that is connected with ŁKS fans to emphasize local affiliation. Therefore, the blend is a form of conceptual amalgamate of two mental spaces: one related to the functioning of a social stereotypical concept and other related to conceptual nomination among the particular groups of ŁKS fans. In this context, the creators of a given structure combine their prejudice, their view of the world with the view of the world of the other group.

The stereotype associated with the beard is used for various names: *brodacze z kaliskiego* "the men with the beard from the railway station Łódź Kaliska",[7] *brodowici z galery* "the men with the beard form the stand for ardent supporters". These forms of nomination juxtapose a stereotypical concept associated with Jews with a concept directly or metaphorically associated with a particular club.

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[7] Railway station Łódź Kaliska is located near the ŁKS stadium and commonly associated with ŁKS. As a local concept it functions with the negative connotation "a place where drunkards gather".

These types of offensive blends are widely disseminated in the Polish football fan discourse. Below, there is an example from the city of Rzeszów. In 2019, during the second league football match between Resovia Rzeszów and Widzew Łódź, hooligans of the visiting team who came to the match exhibited a flag with a slogan *Jebać Pejsovie* [Fuck Pejsovia]. It blends the offensive word *pejs* and the official name of the club Resovia. This blend fits into a typical structure mentioned above: a pejorative stereotypical element refers to Jewish attribute + formal or informal name of the club. An element which emphasizes the negative connotations is the crossed out Resovia club crest:

Figure 5.

Source: nigdywiecej.org[8]

6. PEJORATIVATION IN THE NAMES OF STADIUMS

The discriminatory phrases relate directly not only to fans but also to entities associated with both clubs. The mutual terms referring to the stadiums of both clubs are also depreciating. The Widzew stadium is named *Kurnik* [henhouse] which refers to its small capacity; *Blaszak* [tinplate] which refers to its sheet metal structures built with cheap material. The old stadium of ŁKS was named *el stadio da gruz* to present a time-worn stadium. *Wiata* [shed] referring to the shape of a bus stop or *Amfiteatr* [amphitheater] referring to only one stand which was open for some time before all stands were built (the whole stadium). In these structures, we can observe only a semantic derivation (neosemantization) and profiling some non-obvious features. From the point of view of discrimination, structures referring to objects (stadiums) do not have such a strong negative character as those related to people, but rather they are a form of a language game or a word play.

7. GRAPHODERIVATION AND GRYPSERYZATION OF DISCOURSE

Another formal mechanism used in the discriminatory discourse is the mechanism of graphoderivation. It is a way of derivation that creates occasionalisms

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by using and violating the graphic structure of the word with changing or adding some extra meanings to the whole structure. In general, grafoderivation is considered as a main tool for language play. It is popular and it can spread into different discourses, such as press, advertisement, etc. (see Popova 2008; Stramljič Breznik – Voršič 2009).

Recently, the acronym *ŚŻK* used by ŁKS fans, which is an abbreviated form of the phrase: *śmierć żydzewskiej kurwie* [the death of a whore from Żydzew], has gained great popularity. Therefore, there is an accumulation of pejorative marking – in addition to the contamination directed against the Jewish nation, the Żydzewski's vulgarism appears here.[9]

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<tr><td align="center">Figure 6.</td><td align="center">Figure 7.</td></tr>
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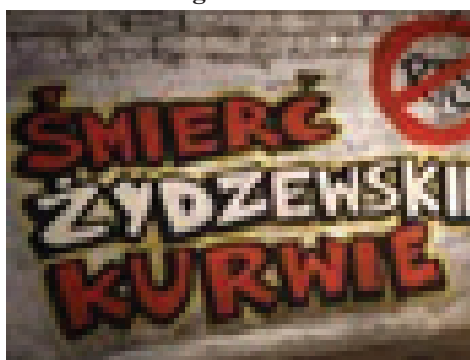
Source: facebook.com

The phrase is a base for acronym *śżk* and from this structure fans using a mechanism of analogy started using the word *śnieżka*[10] which functions in standard Polish as a normal lexem with the meaning "snowball". At first glance, such an inscription on the wall *Rzucamy w Widzew ŚnieŻKą* [we throw a snowball at Widzew] seems neutral or even funny, but by distinguishing the relevant letters graphically (the graphoderivational mechanism), it becomes understandable to those initiated.

Such acronyms as *śżk*, *jżk*, or numerical symbols *18* and *88*, often used in football fans' discourse, seem to be familiar with a form of thieves argot (in Polish *grypsera*). They encode hidden content for insiders only and fit well into the fan's environment; it is closely related to the prison environment. For instance, a simple wish, as appeared on a stadium banner *Wszystkiego „najlepszego" na 88 urodziny*

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[9] After one derby match in 2008 Arkadiusz Mysona, a ŁKS football player, ran around the pitch in a T-shirt with this inscription. The footballer said that one of the fans had asked him to wear it after the match and that he had not even noticed what was written on it.

[10] The base here might be an acronym or a whole phrase; in case we chose the latter interpretation, *śnieżka* has to be considered as an univerbation.

PZPN [All "the best" for the 88th birthday of Polish Football Association], may seem neutral at first glance. However, the symbol of 88 is a white supremacist numerical code for "Heil Hitler" where H is the eighth letter of the alphabet, thus, 88 = HH = Heil Hitler.[11]

The example of fans' discourse proves that negative ethnic stereotypes (despite their irrationality and anachronism, the memory of the Holocaust) remain in the collective consciousness for a long time and – processed – still serve to humiliate and insult people. For example, a frequent element is the Star of David combined with different symbols of both clubs. In the picture below we can observe the devastation of the banner with the name ŁKS by drawing the Star of David:

Figure 8.

Source: expressilustrowany.pl

Abusive acronyms such as *ŚŻK* (*śmierć żydzewskiej k..ie*) and vulgar phrases in the form of stadium chants: *Zrobimy z wami, co Hitler zrobił z Żydami; pozdrowienia śle cyklon B*, or associated indirectly with Jews by referring to the Third Reich.

There are strong antisemitic elements. However, Kazimierz Sikora, who studied the stadium language of hatred on the example of the city of Krakow, pointed out that "the process of inheriting negative connotations referring to the stereotype of a specific nation and social group established in language has brought a revision of the original denotation" (Sikora 2019, p. 83). The word *Żyd* should be understood as referring to a fan or a footballer of the hated rival. This position is confirmed by sociological analyses – fans do not mean Jews in the sense of followers of Judaism or members of the community. The fans know that there are really no Jews on the other side of the stands. They seem to be using antisemitic words because this best

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[11] https://www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbol/88

reflects their negative attitude towards their opponents (Burska 2019, p. 74). We can partly agree with that, however, the elements of discourse related to Jews are mostly typical for these Polish cities where Jewish communities lived and there are still vivid direct denotations to the Jewish community. To support this argument, one can make the premise that in other Polish cities there are different discrimination strategies in football fan discourse (not related to Jews).

8. PREVENTIVE ACTIONS

The opposite tendency on the walls of the city of Łódź is the public action that concentrates on funny inscriptions referring to the rivalry between the two clubs. The initiator of the action is a person hiding under a nickname Jan III Waza (king of Poland and Sweden in the 16th century). In one of his interviews, he said that he had wanted to break the balloon of hatred between the fans of both clubs.[12] Currently those inscriptions are created spontaneously by the city inhabitants and are widely spread among city area. They are humorous as well as offensive: *Widzew kopie bitcoiny łopatą* [Widzew digs bitcoins with a shovel];

Figure 9.
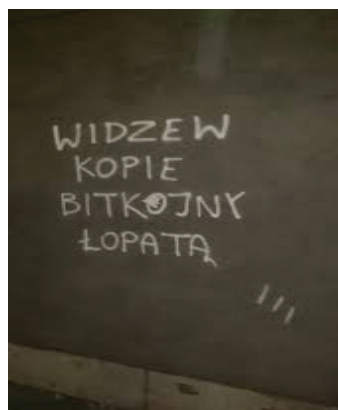
Source: wykop.pl

RTS zamiast do lekarza jeździ na Zdrowie [RTS goes to Zdrowie instead of seeing a doctor]; *ŁKS robi herbatę z wody po pierogach* [ŁKS makes tea from the water after boiling dumplings]; *ŁKS jeździ na wakacje do Zgierza* [ŁKS goes on vacation to Zgierz].

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[12] https://tvn24.pl/ciekawostki/stroi-zarty-z-lodzkiej-wojny-jestem-bezrobotny-mam-duzo-czasu-
-ra288556-3512177

Figure 10.

Source: wyborcza.pl

The examples use a variety of proper names for a language game. They refer to the bundles of features. For instance, *Zdrowie* is one of the park areas in the city of Łódź and, at the same time, it means "health" in common Polish. Zgierz is a small city near Łódź, but in some specific semiotic spheres – among townspeople of Łódź – connotes meanings as "provincialism", or "backwardness".

This action can be seen as grassroots efforts to combat discrimination through play and humour. However, although they have become entrenched in culture (they have even been used in advertising for one of the telephone networks in Poland[13]) they do not have much of an impact on reducing discriminatory discourse among football fans.

9.   CONCLUSION

The examples from the urban space of Łódź touch upon different aspects related to discriminatory and antisemitic discourse. Concepts are based on social dichotomy "us" vs "them" where one group "us" tries to humiliate others "them". It shows that the language of particular social groups goes beyond the sphere of closed internet communication or stadium discourse and penetrates wider, to more open social sphere. It embraces not only language (in the form of texts, specific narrations) but also other codes of communication. Moreover, it spreads not only in some subcultural domains but widely into the areas where so far a standard language (or so called high register of a language) was the dominant one. Radicalization and vulgarization of language in general are the consequences of social polarization. For instance, some phrases from sport fan's discourse are used by far-right politicians, such as: *będziesz wisiał* [you will hang], *batożyć gejów, żydów* [to whip the Gay, Jew]. It widens the research perspective on Polish antisemitic discriminatory discourses further.

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[13] https://lodz.naszemiasto.pl/orange-kopiuje-haslo-z-lodzkiej-wojny-na-slowa/ar/c2-3141645

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SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN LINGUISTIC DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN SLOVAK AND HUNGARIAN TEACHERS OF HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE[1]

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the presence of linguistic discrimination in pedagogical situations, especially in pedagogical evaluation. The paper is based on a survey which involved 502 Hungarian Language and Literature teachers and teacher trainees from Hungary (N = 216), Slovakia (N = 128), Romania (N = 108) and Ukraine (N = 50). Data were primarily collected through a technique similar to matched-guise tests; however, the method of the present research had some additional complexity. The article discusses similarities and differences in linguistic discrimination between Slovak and Hungarian teachers who teach Hungarian Language and Literature. The question it raises is whether there are any differences between the two samples. The results of the mentioned research show that the presence of linguistic discrimination is powerful in both samples, but there are differences in its strength and realization.

Key words: linguistic discrimination, linguicism, pedagogical evaluation, Hungarian Language and Literature, teachers

1.   INTRODUCTION

The connection between language and social class is an especially relevant issue in critical discourse studies and sociolinguistic research. In this field, Basil Bernstein's deficit or code theory is one of the most relevant and widely discussed theories. The mentioned theory claims that social class status and the family role hierarchies have potential to influence the forms of communicative language codes, with success at schools having a loopback effect on social class status. The differences in school performance arising from different linguistic codes in turn derive from social status (cf. Bernstein 1971, 1981). According to Richmond "the language which these children inherited from their families and their upbringing equipped them badly for dealing with the abstractions, the conceptualisations, the generalisations and the distinctions which were the stock in trade of the conventional

curriculum" (2017, p. 20). This statement refers to restricted code and elaborated code which influence sentence length, sentence structure, repetition and vocabulary in the performance. Based on previous research (Bernstein 1971, 1981; Holland 1981; Ivinson, 2018 and see critique of the theory in Rosen 1974) the restricted code (or language use) is characterized by shorter, simpler sentences and less varied vocabulary (more repetitions), while the elaborate code (or language use) is characterized by more complex sentences and more varied vocabulary (less repetition).

Bernstein's theory has been criticized for numerous reasons (see Labov 1972; Lawton 1975; Rosen 1974). According to the critics, the notions are too vague to have predictive power, including the concept of language code. Moreover, linguistic disadvantage can be interpreted as a delay in language acquisition, i.e. children coming from positional families may also master the elaborated code, but it may take them a longer time to do so. While these critical remarks may be justified, they clearly leave the possibility open that patterns of language use brought from the family have a significant impact on a child's rate of success at school. Indeed, several studies have systematically shown that the core of the theory holds true in education (Richmond 2017; Wells 1986). Furthermore, if the mentioned difference is associated with some kind of linguistic stereotype, and when these prejudices/stereotypes are manifested in behaviour, linguistic discrimination occurs (cf. Phillipson – Skutnabb-Kangas 1995; Skutnabb-Kangas – Phillipson 1989), which is usually based on language ideologies and heavily relies on the dominant language, usually its standard version (Skutnabb-Kangas – Phillipson 1989). The issues of language ideologies, stigmatisation and linguistic discrimination occupy special importance in the relationship between language codes and standard language. Standard language ideology is intersected with and includes assumptions about the elevation of standard language variety above others, and the reducing prestige of other (nonstandard) dialects (cf. Blundon 2016; Phillipson – Skutnabb-Kangas 1995, pp. 483–487). The mentioned concepts arise within a language when the use of nonstandard varieties (primarily vernacular dialects) causes linguistic discrimination. This type of language attitude is characteristic for the Hungarian language community and most European societies (Myhill 2004; Pieniążek – Štěpáník 2016).

I have addressed the phenomenon of language advantage and linguistic discrimination several times, from several points of view in my previous studies: the difficulties related to linguistic discrimination were introduced (Jánk 2019; 2021b), a measuring instrument developed to solve these difficulties was described (Jánk 2019, pp. 53–73; 2021a) and the results of research, which was carried out by the previous measuring instrument, were reported on with distinct focus points, highlighting various essential elements (e.g. Jánk 2019; 2020; 2021b).

The above-mentioned research has been based on a survey which involved 502 Hungarian Language and Literature teachers and teacher trainees from four

countries. The research has produced important lessons and conclusions both linguistically and pedagogically. However, there are some aspects of the topic that I have dealt with only tangentially.

The conclusion of the research was that students were rated differently depending on content, language variety and mode of language use. The present article looks at some underlying factors of the above-mentioned research. On the one hand, the study focuses on the main results of the Slovak and Hungarian samples and the main conclusions that can be drawn from them.

On the other hand, the study describes similarities and differences in linguistic discrimination between Slovak and Hungarian teachers who teach Hungarian Language and Literature. The key question it raises is whether there are any differences between the two samples and if so, then what they are. The main hypothesis was that Hungarian teachers beyond the borders of Hungary are less prejudiced than teachers within the borders of Hungary.

The paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, the theoretical framework and the key issues are discussed. In Section 3, the research context is introduced, regarding the special language situation of Hungarians. In Section 4, the study's methodology is briefly presented. Section 5 discusses the results. Finally, Section 6 offers a short summary and concluding remarks.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF LINGUISTIC DISADVANTAGE AND LINGUISTIC DISCRIMINATION

One fundamentally problematic issue in the educational process concerns the evaluation of students by teachers. The problems arise from the fact that this process can be influenced and negatively affected by many factors. The gravest issue is when the teacher's evaluation does not reflect on the actual knowledge that is supposed to be measured but rather on the teacher's partly or fully fictive ideas about this knowledge. An eminent example of this is when teachers assess and evaluate students' linguistic abilities instead of their knowledge. Although they generally do this unconsciously, they discriminate against students on the basis of language.

Just as in sociological and psychological contexts, linguistic "otherness" also typically incurs disadvantages as it is bound up with various prejudices and stereotypes (more broadly, language ideologies). However, such prejudices do not necessarily result in linguistic discrimination. While prejudices involve attitudes, opinions and emotional dispositions (i.e. affective factors) and stereotypes concern cognitive aspects thereof, discrimination consists in actual behaviour targeted at another individual or group (cf. Giddens 2006, p. 381; Lippmann 1965, p. 59). In other words, linguistic otherness first needs to be associated with some kind of linguistic prejudice and/or stereotype so that linguistic disadvantage can be said to exist, and when these prejudices/stereotypes are manifested in behaviour, linguistic

discrimination occurs (cf. Giddens 2006, pp. 490–497; Kozmács 2020; Ladegaard 1998, pp. 251–253). When a speaker speaks differently than dictated by the norms of a particular speech community (e.g. her vernacular dialect is different), this does not invariably produce linguistic disadvantage. However, when this language variety is negatively evaluated by another speaker or the community, when these latter have a negative attitude to such speakers, then linguistic otherness becomes linguistic disadvantage. This is especially so when the negative attitudes are rationalized at a cognitive level by stereotypes (e.g. dialectal speakers have not mastered their mother tongue properly, perhaps because their cognitive skills are inadequate).

Linguistic disadvantage is the phenomenon when there is a communicative problem, deficit or gap which limits or inhibits personality development and/or social success (e.g. in school). Basically, differences in linguistic repertoires or resources (see Blommaert 2016; Pennycook 2016 and cf. e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas – Phillipson 1989) do not constitute linguistic disadvantage by themselves. When they are related to some language ideologies, stereotypes and attitudes, later it leads to disadvantage and linguistic discrimination. Linguistic discrimination (in other words linguicism or language-based discrimination) is an extensive manifestation, activity: the phenomenon when there is a negative or positive discrimination between individuals or groups on the basis of their language varieties or language use (cf. Phillipson – Skutnabb-Kangas 1995, pp. 483–513; Skutnabb-Kangas – Phillipson 1989, p. 455).

Importantly, the main problem in this process is not with teaching the standard variety but rather with the personal bias that feeds into this process, going hand in hand with the teachers' ignorance of their students' linguistic background. One of the most notable differences among students concerns their linguistic backgrounds: their linguistic resources may be very different. Their language varieties are not the same (see the notions of vernacular, standard, slang, etc. – cf. Blundon 2016; Coupland 2007, pp. 34–40) and their language use may vary (in terms of vocabulary, sentence structure, use of stereotypical or abstract expressions, etc. – cf. Bernstein 1977; Richmond 2017). All of this has a profound influence on their chances of progress in the educational system (Phillipson – Skutnabb-Kangas 1995, pp. 483–487).

As can be seen from the above, language has a privileged role in education. First of all, language is the primary means of passing on knowledge at schools. Therefore, the successful completion of tasks (such as understanding the teacher's instruction or passing a test in reading comprehension) crucially requires and presupposes linguistic competence and resources, as determined by the teacher, including previously acquired language skills. However, as a function of their socialization, not all children possess the linguistic knowledge and skills necessary to perform specific tasks (cf. Vančo – Gergelyová 2020). In addition, when a student does not have a good command of a particular language variety, she may have comprehension problems; and even when she has mastered it as a non-vernacular variety, she may be stigmatized on a linguistic basis (Blundon 2016; Skutnabb-Kangas 1995).

3. RESEARCH CONTEXT

The term *határon túli magyarok* [Hungarians beyond the border] primarily refers to Hungarians living in present-day Austria, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia.[2] The largest proportion of Hungarians beyond the border lives in Romania, with the population of minority Hungarians numbering 1,240,000 people according to the official census. In Slovakia this number is much lower. According to the 2011 official census, the number of Hungarian citizens was approx. 411,000. This is the second highest number among Hungary's neighbouring states and makes Hungarians the largest minority ethnic group in Slovakia. However, the number is constantly decreasing, thus preserving the cultural and linguistic identity of ethnic Hungarians living in minority status is becoming more and more difficult (Sándorová – Vančo 2020; Satinská 2016).

In a bilingual and minority context, what is meant by "Hungarian language" is different from what we find in Hungary. The overwhelming majority of ethnic Hungarians beyond the borders do not speak the standard dialect but rather some vernacular dialect or language variety. Although this vernacular variety generally interiorizes elements of the local official language (e.g. Slovak), in the ethnic identity of minority Hungarians there is a strong sense of belonging to the Hungarian speech community. Therefore, language shift usually goes hand in hand with a shift in ethnicity (cf. Satinská 2016). As a result, for Hungarians beyond the border to survive/remain, the preservation of their language is extremely important and can only be achieved if Hungarian is not relegated to the spheres of private life (cf. Csernicskó – Szabómihály 2011). Education, and especially the teaching of Hungarian as a school subject, has an indispensable role in this context (for details, see Vančo 2020). Schools using Hungarian as a language of instruction, whose number keeps shrinking, are of strategic importance, and the role and responsibility of teachers of Hungarian working there cannot be overstated.

4. BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE METHODOLOGY

The primary goal of my research which ended in 2018 had been to verify the hypothesis that teacher trainees and teachers of Hungarian were demonstrably prone to linguistic discrimination to a significant extent (for details, see Jánk 2019). Beyond proving the existence of the phenomenon, I also sought to gain data about linguistic prejudices, since the latter (as we have seen above) plays a key role in the

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[2] In the wake of World War I, Hungary was forced to sign a peace treaty known as the Trianon Treaty. As a result, new state borders were created in accordance with the big powers' interests and political bargains, often irrespective of ethnic boundaries. Thus, territories with an overwhelming Hungarian majority were also assigned to the new states, and around 3 to 3.3 million Hungarians ended up living outside of Hungary's new borders.

interpretation of linguistic discrimination and in the study of linguistic disadvantage in pedagogical processes.

For the research I used a method similar to the verbal guise technique, which I had modified significantly as dictated by the research goals. The method has been discussed in detail in several papers (see e.g. Jánk 2021a, 2021), therefore here I give only a brief overview of the method and the measuring tool.

The first essential phase in the method is that teachers (after filling in a background questionnaire about their basic data) receive the instruction to read the outline of a short, simple and familiar excerpt from a teaching material (for example about the notion of verbs or nouns). As a next step, they need to evaluate the recording of a student's (imitated) spoken performance about the same topic. This step is then repeated several times in the course of the survey, with varied teaching material excerpts and recordings.

Thus, the reading of each teaching material excerpt is followed by the participant listening to a recorded spoken performance and then filling in an evaluative questionnaire. Crucially, the spoken performances have been recited by children speaking different language variants on the basis of texts written by myself. Accordingly, the study incorporates three variables, i.e. spoken performances vary along the following dimensions:

(1) the language variant in which they were told (standard or vernacular dialect),
(2) mode of language use (restricted or elaborated, with variation in sentence length, sentence structure, repetition vs. the use of synonyms),
(3) how much of the crucially important information they contained (all or only 60%).

As an independent variable, (1) pertains to level of compliance with the standard language variety. In the first case, the recording came from a child speaking the standard variety, in the second case from a child who was speaking a vernacular dialect (namely the Eastern Palóc vernacular dialect, cf. Rási 2020). They were 12–13 years old. I produced the texts myself and they were read out loud during the recordings.

Mode of language use (2) as an independent variable affects sentence length, sentence structure, repetition, use of abstract expressions and vocabulary in the recorded mock verbal exam or performance. I modelled two modes of language use: restricted and elaborated. The restricted mode of language use was characterized by shorter, simpler sentences and less varied vocabulary (more repetitions) and abstract expressions, whereas the elaborated mode involved more complex sentences and more varied vocabulary (fewer repetitions) and more abstract expressions.

Amount of crucial information (3) as an independent variable concerns how much of the base text's relevant information was reproduced. Again, I created two

versions. The first version was a content-wise complete performance, containing all necessary information (number of missing pieces of information is 0). The other group consisted of content-wise incomplete performances which were lacking important content (the number of missing pieces of information was 4).

Teachers and teacher trainees participating in the survey had to evaluate the performances in a variety of ways. First, they only assigned a grade to a given performance, then they also gave a verbal justification for the grade. Subsequently, they were asked to evaluate statements about the performance on a Likert scale. Statements in the questionnaire can be divided into two groups, the first concerning the performance itself (e.g. "The student was fully prepared" or "The student supplied all crucial information") and the second concerning the student (e.g. "This student has a good mind" or "The student is hard-working"). In the last case, the questionnaire was slightly modified, with the option "I can't decide" also appearing beyond the five-point scale. This was critically important because it prevented subjects from being forced to make evaluations that did not reflect their attitudes.

Linguistic discrimination can be primarily verified and measured on the basis of grades assigned to spoken performances, whereas linguistic prejudices can be detected in the ways that subjects evaluate statements in the questionnaire.

5. THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY IN HUNGARY AND SLOVAKIA

5.1. The sample

The above-mentioned research and its results are based on a survey which involved 502 Hungarian Language and Literature teachers and teacher trainees from four countries (all of them have Hungarian nationality). The numbers of participants were the following: 216 informants from Hungary, 128 informants from Slovakia, 108 informants from Romania and 50 informants from Ukraine. The main phase of data collection was carried out in 2017 and 2018. In the following, the Slovak and the Hungarian sample will be analysed.

The first part of the questionnaire included eight dependent (background) variables. In addition to the usual sociological variables (e.g. gender, age, place of residence) and other types of data (e.g. number of active years spent as a teacher or the type of school they worked at) were also asked. The data can only be regarded as largely homogeneous along with the variable of gender, with 90% of informants from Hungary and 85% of informants from Slovakia being women.

With regard to age groups, a relative majority from the sample of Hungary 61.1% of the informants were between 30 and 65 years of age, with informants under 30 having a share of 37% (and those above 65 accounting for only 1.85%). In the sample from Slovakia, a relative minority, 43% of informants were over 30 years of age; the majority, 57% were under 30.

In line with this, 56.6% (Hungary) and 43% (Slovakia) of the informants were experienced teachers, with at least five years of experience. Teachers at the beginning of their careers (with less than 5 years of experience) made up 16.2% (Hungary) and 17.2% (Slovakia) of the sample, whereas teacher trainees were represented by 29.2% (Hungary) and 39.8% (Slovakia).

Most informants from Hungary were teaching in the capital (17.1%), the rest working in small (17.1%), medium-size (16.7%) or large cities (14.8%) and 24.3% of participants were not teaching at the time of the research. By contrast, in the Slovak survey, less than 3% of informants were teaching in the capital (0.8%) or large cities (1.6%), the majority were teaching in medium-size (14.1%), small (14.8%) or tiny villages (37.5%), with 31.2% not teaching at the time of the survey.

Data analysis was performed by the SPSS statistical software, within that primarily Repeated Measures variance analysis and simple variance analysis. For determining significance levels, the Bonferroni test was adopted.

5.2. Comparative analysis of the samples from Slovakia and Hungary

In the remainder of this study, I present the results of two samples, Slovakia and Hungary. No attempt is made at an exhaustive treatment, as my primary focus is on numerical data obtained for Hungary and Slovakia. The reason for this is that a comprehensive analysis of all data (e.g. including the verbal justifications of grades) would be beyond the scope (and space limitations) of the present paper.

The data about grades in the two samples, Slovakia and Hungary are reported below. The consecutive bar graphs show the distribution of grades. The columns show the different grades' percentage. Evaluations were performed on a five-point Likert scale. In Hungary, five is the best, one is the worst mark, whereas in Slovakia, the opposite is true. I standardised these two methods for easier interpretation, so both are following the Hungarian conventions, thereby five (5) is the best, one (1) is the worst mark (failed exam).

The figures also include terms that need explication. "100%" refers to content-wise complete, "60%" to incomplete performances. "Dialect" means vernacular variety and "Standard" stands for the standard language variety. The results can be visualized through the following two figures.

Figure 1. Distribution of grades in the sample of Hungary (n = 216)
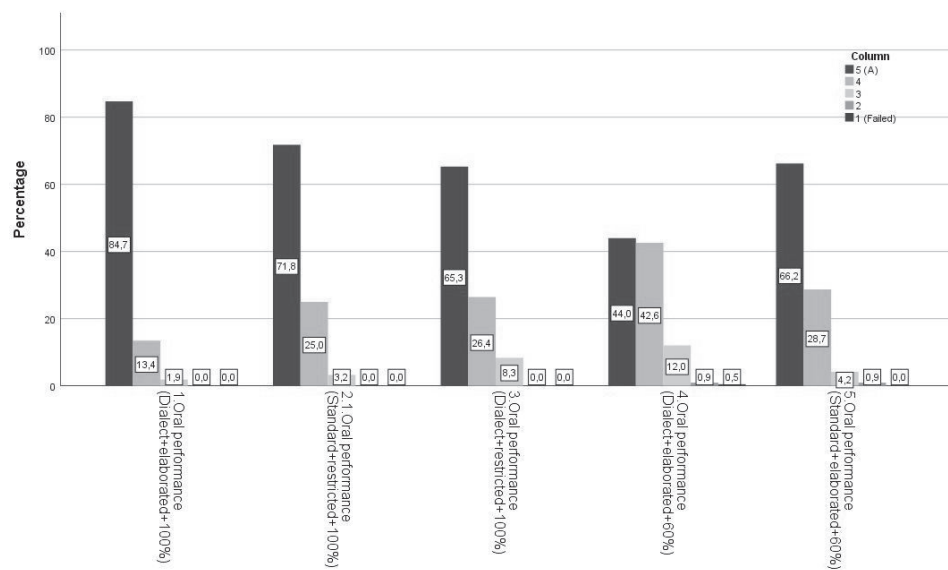
Figure 2. Distribution of grades in the sample of Slovakia (n = 128)
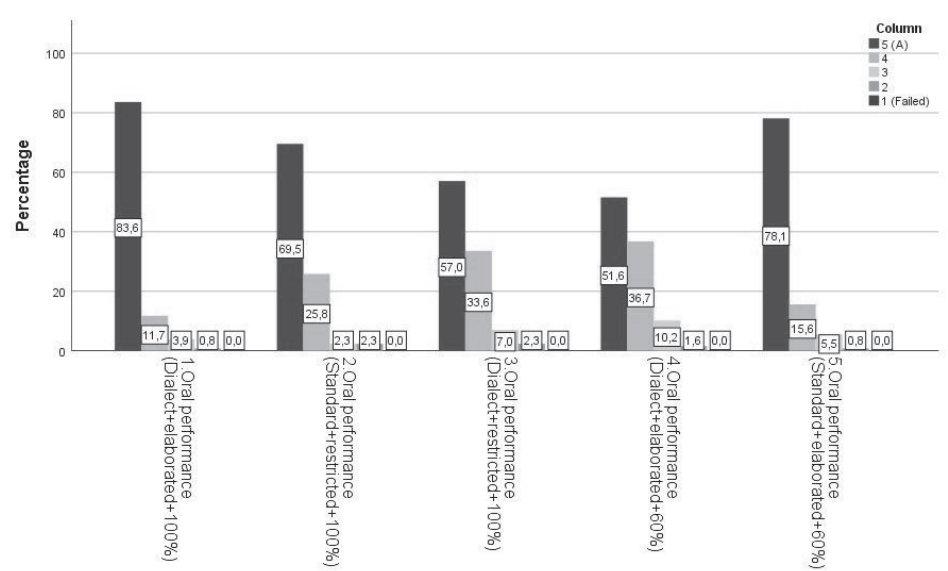
The first figure shows the distribution of grades in the sample of Hungary, while the second one in the sample of Slovakia. The grades and averages of grades clearly demonstrate that the vernacular dialect and the restricted code constitute a disadvantage for students when evaluated on the content of their verbal performance by teachers even when they are fully prepared and demonstrate this to their teachers. Moreover, we can see that the restricted code is more disadvantageous than a vernacular language variety.

In the case of the first two verbal performances, 15.3% and 28.2%, respectively, of teachers from Hungary, and 16.4%, 30.5% of teachers from Slovakia gave one grade lower to students than what would have been expected on the basis of content. In the case of the third performance, this figure was 34.7% (Hungary) and 43% (Slovakia). All of these differences are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$; Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.009$; $N^2 = 0.991$ and $p < 0.001$; Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.005$; $N^2 = 0.991$). This means that linguistic discrimination is remarkable in both samples, though more robust in the case of Slovakia.

At the same time, in the cases of incomplete-content performances (4th and 5th performances), 44% and 66.2% (Hungary), respectively, and 51.6% and 78.1% (Slovakia) of the respondents gave at least one grade higher despite the shortcomings. These results in the sample of Hungary indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in terms of mean of grades between the third (vernacular, restricted and 100%) and the fifth (standard, elaborated and 60%) performance ($p = 0.596$). This shows that linguistic discrimination is present in teachers' evaluation of students. Nevertheless, this phenomenon is more powerful in the sample of Slovakia. The evaluation of the last verbal performance was better than the third (dialect, restricted and 100%) and the second one (standard, restricted and 100%). This is indicative of extremely strong linguistic discrimination.

It is also important to discuss the teachers' written justifications of their grades. All answers had been evaluated by informants separately, hence the entire research material consisted of more than 1100 written justifications. Most of them belonged to the Hungarian sample: 550 written justifications were received from informants, which means that at least half of the teachers and teacher trainees justified their grades. In the sample from Slovakia, the number of participants was much lower (n = 128) than in the Hungarian sample, which was also reflected in the number of written justifications for grades. Around 240 teachers and teacher trainees supplied justifications which in terms of proportions is close to the results obtained in Hungary.

The following can be ascertained: a) written justifications correlate with the grades, b) two opposite attitudes (positive and negative) emerge in relation to vernacular dialect; c) justifications typically highlight the structure and manner of execution, thus language use in the performance in addition to attitudes to vernacular dialect.

In the case of both weaker (4 or lower) and the best (5) grades, justifications gave clear evidence of standardism as a language ideology in both samples. The informants produced comments like the following on performances in vernacular dialectal speech: "The wording was correct, but the student is not using standard language" or "The student also used grammatically incorrect words" (i.e. vernacular variants). Correspondingly, performances in the standard variety received praise such as "The style was nice, the student was using standard language" or "the student answered in a very sophisticated way, conforming to the standard".

It should be mentioned, though, that positive language attitudes related to vernacular dialect can also be documented in written justifications, albeit only sporadically. For instance, "The content is correct and I loved listening to her", "I really liked this »flavorous« diphthong-rich speech".

As far as the use of elaborated vs. restricted language is concerned, the situation is similar to the above. Written evaluations, justifications reinforce grades awarded to verbal performances and in many cases reflect on aspects of language use. When a child is using the restricted code, informants comment on this along the following lines: "The grade is good (4) [rather than 5] because of serious language mistakes", "Poor vocabulary, sloppy wordings", "she did not express herself well". For performances in the elaborated code that were content-wise incomplete, the following comments are typical: "Nice, fluent response, perhaps she understands the best what she is saying", "Well-prepared; she formulated the answer in a very sensible way", "Sophisticated language, so despite the missing parts: excellent (5)". The above mentioned can be observed in both the Slovak and the Hungarian samples.

It is also important to note that for all statements in the questionnaire, teachers and teacher trainees rated the performance given in the standard variety and elaborated code most positively in both samples. Regarding all characteristics – from how much the student liked the subject to his/her diligence – this was the best predictor of the highest evaluation, while the use of a regional dialect and restricted language use served as predictors of the lowest evaluations. And this was the case even though "undecided" was offered as an option among the answers, as it was selected by between one-third and half of the participants only. Here are just a few details with no claim on an exhaustive treatment:

- More than half of the informants (Hungary: 50.5%; Slovakia: 57.8%) do not even perceive missing elements of content when the student uses the standard language variety and elaborated code for reproducing the material. When standard language use is not accompanied by elaborated wording, this figure drops to 30–32%. And when the student was speaking a dialect and was using the restricted code, 41.7% and 43.8% of informants believed that the performance lacked content, even though this was actually not the case.
- Teachers and teacher trainees were the least sure about whether the student understood what s/he was talking about when the child was a dialectal speaker. In

the Slovak sample, 13.3% were convinced about this completely, and in the Hungarian one, 16.2%. The same figures for content-wise incomplete standard performances lie at 23.4% (restricted code) and 51.6% (elaborated code) in the sample from Slovakia and at 24.1% (restricted code) and 42.1% (elaborated code) in the Hungarian material.

- Around 50–60% of informants were confident enough to make inferences from a one-minute verbal performance about the extent to which the student liked grammar as a subject. This was most characteristic in the case of the 5th performance (standard, elaborated, 60%), about whom a significantly higher number of informants (p < 0.005) assumed that he liked the subject than about any other student. 34.7% of teachers from Hungary and 42.2% of those from Slovakia were completely convinced about this. The same assumption was least likely to be made about the 3rd student (dialectal, restricted, 100%); in particular, only 5.1% and 3.9% agreed completely with this statement.

- 70–80% of informants believed that they were capable of making inferences about the students' diligence. 48.1% of teachers from Hungary and 47.7% of those from Slovakia made the assumption that the student was hard-working in the case of a standard and elaborated but content-wise incomplete performance. By contrast, the student reproducing all content elements in dialect and in the restricted code was considered to be the least hard-working.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The goal of my study and presentation has been to demonstrate the existence of linguistic discrimination in pedagogical evaluation. The research involved a total of 502 teachers and teacher trainees, showing clearly that linguistic discrimination is strongly present in teachers' evaluation of students. Looking at grade averages and grade distributions, written justifications and evaluations of statements, we can conclude that the discriminatory effect of linguistic disadvantage is exactly the same as the benefit of students using the standard variety and the elaborated mode of language use.

Both the Hungarian and Slovak sample analysis shows robustious linguistic bias and discrimination. The primary hypothesis, that teachers from Slovak sample are more linguistically tolerant than teachers from Hungary, was not confirmed, to the extent that the data rather confirmed the opposite. The results showed that language bias, a less tolerant language attitude is much more pronounced than expected in the case of Hungarian language teachers in Slovakia. It is especially true in connection to the standard variety of language.

In the case of the first two complete verbal performances, 15.3% and 28.2%, respectively, of teachers from Hungary, and 16.4%, 30.5% of teachers from Slovakia gave one grade lower to students than what would have been expected on the basis

of content. In the case of the third performance, this figure was 34.7% (Hungary) and 43% (Slovakia). This means that linguistic discrimination is remarkable in both samples, though more significant in the case of Slovakia. Simultaneously, in the cases of incomplete-content performances, 44% and 66.2% (Hungary), respectively, and 51.6% and 78.1% (Slovakia) of the respondents gave at least one grade higher despite the insufficiencies. The evaluation of the last verbal performance was better than the third (dialect, restricted and 100%) and the second (standard, restricted and 100%) performances. This is an indicative of extremely strong linguistic discrimination. In parallel, a similar trend can be observed connected to the different evaluations of statements on Likert scale. Most of statements show that there is relevant linguistic discrimination, mainly among Hungarian language teachers in Slovakia.

Student performances were rated differentially depending on primarily language variety and mode of language use, with the performances using the standard and/or elaborated code being rated the most positively. Performances using a vernacular dialect or restricted language were always rated negatively, even when in terms of content the performance was free from shortcomings. And when both kinds of linguistic disadvantage were at play, linguistic discrimination was the most pronounced and destructive.

These results indicate that students were not rated on the acquired knowledge but based on discrepancies with respect to a language variety which was mostly unfamiliar to them. Language (including variety and usage) plays a key role in determining school success and failure, and hence also the assertion of children. Linguistic repertoires and resources are absolutely irreplaceable factors in school discourse. Content is not. Students are able to cover up their disadvantage in the eyes of around two-thirds of teachers and teacher trainees. At the other end of the spectrum, students affected by linguistic discrimination receive at least one grade lower from more than one-third of the respondents despite their content-wise complete performances.

No matter how hard a student works and prepares for classes within the range of their possibilities, several teachers will not be evaluating them on the basis of how well-prepared they are. Presumably, there is a potential in extending the research to the assessment of non-linguistic knowledge by teachers of non-linguistic subjects (e.g. in history, geography, etc.), where it would be shown how much the effect of language discrimination would be manifested in education as a whole.

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Resumé

PODOBNOSTI A ROZDIELY V JAZYKOVEJ DISKRIMINÁCII MEDZI UČITEĽMI MAĎARSKÉHO JAZYKA A LITERATÚRY NA SLOVENSKU A V MAĎARSKU

Zámerom tejto štúdie je ukázať prítomnosť jazykovej diskriminácie v pedagogických situáciách, najmä v pedagogickom hodnotení. Článok sa opiera o výskum, ktorého sa zúčastnilo 502 učiteľov a učiteliek (vrátane študujúcich s touto aprobáciou) predmetu Maďarský jazyk a literatúra z nasledovných krajín: Maďarsko (N = 216), Slovensko (N = 128), Rumunsko (N = 108) a Ukrajina (N = 50). Dáta boli zbierané primárne testami podobnými technike spojených masiek (matched-guise technique), no metóda výskumu bola obohatená o niektoré pridané prvky.

Štúdia sa zaoberá podobnosťami a rozdielmi v jazykovej diskriminácii medzi vyučujúcimi maďarského jazyka a literatúry zo Slovenska a z Maďarska. Základnou otázkou je, či sa tieto dve vzorky vôbec líšia. Výsledky spomínaného výskumu ukazujú, že prítomnosť jazykovej diskriminácie je markantná v oboch vzorkách, ale rozdiely sú v jej miere a realizácii.

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