GENDER ORDERING AS AN INDICATOR OF LINGUISTIC SEXISM IN STANDARD AVERAGE EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

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Abstract:

The examination of gender in relation to language is an interdisciplinary endeavour that has been the subject of interest of linguists, sociologists, anthropologists, communication experts, psychologists, and scholars in other disciplines, especially after the 1960s, having as its starting point the feminist movements by the end of that decade. Since then, there has been an ongoing debate on whether language endorses sexism, or sexism contributes to the formation of a language. Both discourse and language reflect social realities governed by hierarchy and dominance and consequently reproduce or perpetuate the network of dominant gender biases and stereotypes. This paper will focus on the way language functions in favour of dominant groups and on the means that it uses to convey those asymmetric social structures in terms of grammar, syntax, and semantics within the Standard Average European linguistic area. The secondary objective of the paper is to demonstrate the existence of the aforementioned elements in all of the languages in question, despite not being amongst their grouping criteria.

Keywords: linguistic sexism, gender bias, sociolinguistics, eurolinguistics, language reform

1. Introduction

The term linguistic sexism refers to the existence of certain elements in a language that help expressing any sort of bias, inclination or prejudice for or against one sex on the other. Mostly, the bias is in favor of men. According to Graddol and Swann (1989), this discrimination is made on irrelevant grounds, while Atkinson (1993) defines linguistic sexism as not only the range of verbal practices of labelling and referring to women, but also as the language strategies in mixed-sex interaction that denigrate or suppress women as interactants. Moreover, the fact that sexism, in general, refers to attitudes or behaviours that depreciate one sex, according to Ivy and Backlund (1994), entails that linguistic sexism is the verbal communication that conveys those attitudes and behaviours. Consequently, declaring a word, sentence, or structure as sexist means

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that it "*creates, promotes, constitutes and exploits any irrelevant or impertinent marking of the distinction between the sexes*" (Vetterling-Braggin, 1981, as cited in Al Ramahi, 2013, p.187), or that it "*unnecessarily differentiates between women and men or excludes, trivializes, or diminish either gender*" (Parks & Roberton, 1998, p.233).

This work examines the phenomenon of sexism as a combination of linguistic features that reflect an imbalance in the way sexes are treated. Specifically, this examination appertains to the broader field of sociolinguistics, which is briefly defined in Section 2.1, while the field of application of the study, Standard Average European languages, is also examined in the same chapter, leading to a categorisation of the languages in question, based on their gender division system. Section 2.2 revolves around the portrayal of society in language, as formulated in the 'linguistic relativity' hypothesis. Section 3 comprises the main body of the research, analysing several indicators of sexism in morphological, phrasal, semantic, and syntactic level, and culminates in a quantitative analysis of occurrences of 'male firstness' in gendered groups across all languages in question. The last Section concludes with the ongoing language reform as well as previous changes the language has undergone in order to avoid any sort of bias with regard to sex.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The subject of the present work concerns the broader field of linguistics, borrowing much from contemporary sciences of gender studies. As a specific subject, the study of linguistic sexism has been a point of interest not only for linguists -especially in the area of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis-, but also for sociologists, and it often has political or even legal implications. Hence, in order to understand the content of the study, it was deemed appropriate to refer to the broader field surrounding it.

Over the years, many scholars have attempted to define exactly what sociolinguistics deals with, but one could argue that these definitions are fluid, as is the notion of society over time. Hudson (1980, p.105) attempts to define sociolinguistics as "*the study of language in relation to society*". Therefore, the main field of interest is how language interacts with, or to what percentage it is affected by social factors as age, ethnicity, social class or gender for instance. Coulmas (2013) goes further by attributing the way we use specific functions of language in different social contexts to convey social meaning or aspects to our identity, while Trudgill (1974, p.21) correlates sociolinguistics with "*language as a social and cultural phenomenon*". Despite being approximate and not exact, they all focus on understanding "*who speaks what language to whom and when*" (Fishman, 1965, p.67).

Gender research, as a sub-discipline of sociolinguistics that governs the present paper, concerns the documentation of empirical differences between women's and men's speech, the description of women's speech in particular as well as the identification of the role of language in creating and maintaining social inequality between women and men (Kendall & Tannen, 2001).

Tagliamonte (2006, p.5) makes a clear distinction between 'sociolinguistics' and 'sociology of language', that needs to be mentioned in the context of this paper, explaining that

"sociolinguistics tends to put emphasis on language in social context, whereas the sociology of language emphasizes the social interpretation of language".

The linguistic field that this paper will focus on and from which we will draw examples is the Standard Average European (abbreviated SAE) linguistic area, hence *"a geographical region containing a group of three or more languages that share some structural features as a result of contact rather than a result of accident or inheritance from a common ancestor"* (Thomason, 2001, p.99), as proposed by Whorf (1941). According to this theory, SAE languages comprise several linguistic branches that all present the same grammatical or syntactical features, including the Romance, Germanic and Slavo-Baltic branches (Haspelmath, 2001). Despite those secondary branches being universally accepted by linguists worldwide, it was only toward the end of the 20th century that the SAE linguistic area was picked up on by scholars, as they gained insight in the grammatical properties of the languages of the rest of the world and realized the peculiarity of the European linguistic core in the global context, which justifies Dahl's definition of SAE as an *"exotic language"*. (Dahl, 1990)

Haspelmath compiles an extensive list of 35 morphosyntactic characteristics which he addresses as 'Europeanisms' or 'euroversals', that include the 'have'-perfect, definite and indefinite articles, relative clauses with relative pronouns, particles in comparative constructions etc. (Haspelmath, 2001). However, none of the characteristics that will be analyzed in the third section of the paper as indicators of linguistic sexism are classified as unifying elements under this category.

Yet, even amongst those languages, some factors could affect or help interpret the results of this study. Therefore, considering Stahlberg, Braun, Irmen, and Szczesny's (2007) proposal of distinction between three language types -genderless[ii], natural gender and grammatical gender languages- we could organize SAE as presented in Table 1. In natural gender languages (e.g. English, Scandinavian language) there is 'no grammatical marking of sex, such that most nouns and their dependent linguistic forms as articles, adjectives and pronouns can be used to refer to both males and females, and personal pronouns are the major resource of expressing gender.' (Menegatti, Crocetti & Rubini, 2017, p.2). In grammatical gender languages (e.g. Greek, French, German etc.), nouns are assigned feminine, masculine, common or neutral, and the dependent parts of speech carry grammatical agreement to the gender of the corresponding noun.

Due to time restrictions, lack of resources or insight to specific languages, the languages that will be analyzed for the sake of this paper are English, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Dutch, Russian, Lithuanian and Greek, so as to represent all secondary branches[iii] and gender division systems.

2.2. Language & Cognition

Numerous researchers have contended on the reflection of sexist culture in language use, based on the portrayal of women in it. Still, as Cameron (1990, p.14) argues, instead of depicting language as an impression of society or as a deciding variable in social change, it could rather be

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[ii] There is no such case of a language that has neither grammatical gender for nouns nor for personal pronouns (e.g. Turkish, Finnish) within SAE languages.

[iii] Albanian and Hungarian do not belong to a secondary branch but were not chosen due to small corpus.

seen 'as a carrier of ideas and assumptions which become, through their constant re-enactment in discourse, so familiar and conventional that we miss their significance'. On the same wavelength, Whorf lays out the principle of his hypothesis on the relation of thought and language, also known as 'linguistic relativity theory' or 'Sapir-Whorf hypothesis', in the following quotation:

> "It was found that the background linguistic system (in other words, the grammar) is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas, but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for the synthesis of his mental stock in trade. Formulation of ideas is not an independent process, strictly rational in the old sense, but is part of a particular grammar, and differs, from slightly to greatly, between different grammars. We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages." (Whorf, 1956, p.212)

In order to further understand Whorf's association of the background linguistic system of each language as a shaper of ideas, it would be legitimate to first define the notion of relativity in general. According to Hudson (1996, p.87), the question of relativity revolves around "*the extent that cultures (including languages) differ from one another*" and on whether they are all "*cut to the same mold, reflecting a common underlying humanity*" or they "*differ arbitrarily and unrestrictedly from one another, reflecting the fact that different people live in very different intellectual and physical worlds*".

Lastly, an interesting remark is made by Ehrlich and King (1992, p.152), whose definition of language entails the element of dominance, stating it "*is not a neutral and transparent means of representing social reality, but rather a codification of the perspective of the dominant classes*", and thus, in contemporary societies, the encoding of an androcentric worldview. Mauss (1923, as cited in Bright, 1966, p.122), also, defines language as the "*means of expression of collective thought and not the adequate expression of that thought itself*".

Despite the wide dissemination of the hypothesis, it has often been challenged; many theorists propose a more modest form of the same concept, while some debunk the Whorfian question or label it as pseudoscience (e.g. Pullum, 1991). A more modest approach is proposed by Bloom and Keil (2001, p.364), according to which, "*the language we learn enables us to perform abstract inferences and helps us carve the external world into distinct categories*". Slobin (1987, as cited in Riemer, 2016, p.158) also proposes an influential version of linguistic determinism, suggesting that language affects cognition during the process of encoding our thoughts into words, while Wolff and Holmes examine the way in which thought is affected by language after its use, claiming that "*the long-term use of a language may direct habitual attention to specific properties of the world, even in nonlinguistic contexts*" (2011, p.259). Even Whorf's later writings tend to argue that "*language can act as a meddler or spotlight*" (Wolff & Holmes, 2011, p.261). Arguably the most ardent critic of the linguistic relativity hypothesis is Pinker (2007, p.150), whose study rejects Whorf's claims, stating that "*word senses are mentally represented as expressions in a richer and more abstract language of thought*".

Proving or disproving any of the aforementioned theories is yet to be determined, since there are diachronically many researchers arguing both for and against their validity. However, what is generally admitted and important for the present study is what lays in the basis of all those theories; that language, either perceived as an individual concept or as an interconnected part of culture, interacts and is reflected in the cognitive function, as well as that thoughts have to be communicable to count as thoughts.

3. Literature Review

As stated in the introduction, this section aims to analyze several indicators of sexism in morphological, phrasal, semantic, and syntactic level, and culminates in a quantitative analysis of occurrences of 'male firstness' in gendered groups across all languages in question.

3.1. Sexism at morphological level

The internal morphological structure and etymology of words with gendered forms designates a subordinate nature of females, as they are presented as the deviant and inferior group. That can be easily understood by the use of certain affixes used to designate a female form deriving from a male one. In all of the gendered languages analyzed, the male form is perceived as the base, with a feminine affix being added. Even in languages that do not have a general gender marking system, like English, there are still a few pairs that the female form is differentiated from the male with the addition of an affix for instance in prince/princess, hero/heroine, actor/actress etc. Such an addition, despite being used less and less as described in Section 6, according to Khan and Ahmad (2009) designates the importance of the female, only as an addition to the male.

The masculine form is, thus, the unmarked, and tacitly the main one.
What is interesting is the context of those words or the conditions of their usage, since they are mostly used as part of a standardized speech that demonstrates a slow rate of change or evolution. Specifically, across all languages, they are used in legal terminology, for titles of nobility and church dignitaries. Moreover, compounds are made based on the masculine form, for example:

(a) In French: royaume$_{masc}$ (*kingdom*) derives from roi$_{masc}$ (king) and not reine$_{fem}$ (*queen*) it would be a good idea to name the language you are taking examples from

(b) In English: kingdom derives from king and not queen.

Table 1 summarizes all the affixes used in SAE languages.

Table 1: Affixes used for the derivation of feminine forms of nouns

Language	Affixes
Dutch	-in, -ege/-egge, -es, -ster
English	-a, -ette, -ine, -ress, -rix, she-
French	-e, -trice, -elle, -ette, -ine
German	-e, -tät, -ität, -ung
Greek	-ινα, -ισσα, -εσσα
Italian	-essa, -trice, -tora, -ista, -cida
Lithuanian	-a, -ė , -is
Russian	-ка, -анка, -янка, --истка
Spanish	-a, -ista

As described previously, both in natural and grammatical gender languages, according to Silveira (1980), the hidden yet consensual norm that the prototypical human being is male is reproduced. That is, also, easily depicted in masculine forms used as generic forms. In languages that each word is assigned to a grammatical gender, it is *"common and accepted to use masculine nouns to refer to both men and women, or to persons whose gender is irrelevant or unknown"* (Menegatti et al., 2017, p.9). For instance, in Greek and Spanish, the masculine plural (c, d) is used when referring to a sex-unspecified group of individuals (e).

(c) οι δάσκαλοι$_{masc}$

(d) los profesores$_{masc}$

(e) teachers

Based on Menegatti et al.'s exploration in Italian, this is even more likely to occur when the subjects in question are women in predominantly male, high-status professions. In this case, masculine nouns are often used, even when alluding exclusively to women, such as:

(f) chirurgo$_{masc}$ (surgeon)

(g) primo ministro$_{masc}$ (prime minister)

Coady (2018, p.272) gives another example in French, where in a sentence (a), even if women outnumber men, *"the participle of the word die is being used in the masculine form (morts) and not in the feminine (mortes)"*:

(h) Cinq millards de femmes$_{fem}$ et un homme$_{masc}$ sont morts$_{masc}$ (five billion women and a man died)

The importance of classifying the words under specific genders is highlighted by Kovecses's exploration on the categorizing of the world (2006), who claims that it is a process that takes place unconsciously and that is a remarkably fast cognitive process.

In natural gender languages, this practice is reflected in giving a generic applicability to masculine pronouns; while feminine pronouns are used exclusively for females, masculine can either be male-specific or express a generic form. Ng (2007), states that masculine generics would be accepted with no particular consequences if they represented both genders with the same probability. However, his exploratory research demonstrates that *"masculine generic does not depict women and men as equal human beings and it makes females invisible in people imagery and memory, thus failing to perform its generic assigned function"* (as cited in Menegatti et al, 2017, p.9). That is to say that in people's cognition, the use of masculine generics is linked to males and the behaviors, images and qualities attributed to them.

Another instance is that of family names. In most cases of the languages examined, family names are not gender-marked, and their sexist nature is mostly attributed to the fact that they are inherited from father to children and from husband to wife. However, in some cases, like in Greek and Russian, both men and women use a family name that is gender-specific. Men's family names are mainly in nominative case (i), while for women, as Pavlidou (2006, p.39) points out, family names are indirectly labeled, since they are morphologically labeled for the male and not for the female. The important element in the case of Greek, is that these last names are in the genitive case (j), indicating a kind of possession.

(i) Παπαδόπουλος

(j) Παπαδοπούλου

Therefore, the identity of the woman is linked to that of her father, and till quite recently, after her marriage, her dependence was transferred to her husband and this was reflected in the change of her surname (Kondyli & Archakis, 2004). On the other hand, Pavlidou (2006) argues that the use of general possessive may underestimate feminine existence, but at least it makes females visible, since their own last name is distinct from that of men.

3.2. Sexism at phrasal level

The notion of gender in sociocultural context and the implication it has on the metaphors constructed around it has been the subject of many cognitive scholars' reasearch during the last decades. Maestre and Lopez Maestre (2015, p.92) claim that metaphors contribute to the construction of "*a world view that shapes or reinforces those conceptions and views about femininity and masculinity that are considered appropriate, decent, normal and commonsense compared with those that are not*". Moreover, the male-centric ethicality and suppositions that lead to such concepts are intertwined with the patricentric societies that privilege men and always position women in a lower rank. That can take many forms, as the dehumanisation of women, their parallelisation with something edible or the representation of their interaction with men as a relationship of prey and hunter respectively. Such an exercise of power, values and entitlements, inequities and privileges are, according to Fairclough (1989), perpetuated through the habitualisation, and result to the acceptance of that gendered conditions of existence as natural.

Swim and Cohen (1997) detect a form of subtle sexism in conceptual metaphors, since -as cognitive processes- they also contribute to the transmission of ideologies of gender in a covert, indirect way. As mentioned previously, many metaphors entail the association of women with food, in which 'desire is hunger and the object of lust is food' (Lakoff, 1987), as in Spanish:

(k) miel (honey)

(l) pastel (pie)

(m) melocotón (peach)

Furthermore, Jayawardena (2015) compiles several French proverbs, in which women are compared or parallelized to animals:

(n) Des femmes et des chevaux il n'y en a point sans défaut (Women and horses, there isn't one without faults)

(o) Belle femme, mauvaise tête, bonne mule, mauvaise bête (Pretty woman, bad head, good mule, bad animal)

(p) A toute heure chien pisse et femme pleure (A dog pees and a woman cries all the time)

According to Whaley and Antonelli (1983, p.220) this reflection of semantic deprecation based on animal imagery expresses 'domestication, dominance, property status, sexual access and the thrill of the hunt' depending on the animal and the context, while Tipler and Ruscher (2019) claim that the focus of female animalizing metaphors implies the legitimacy of men's dominance over women.

Given the nature of proverbs as short quotes that express -most of the time in an allegorical way- claims that are the essence of popular wisdom and also consist "*a part of language and a kind of idiom which spread among the folks with popular image and rich significance*" (Nakhavaly & Sharifi, 2013, p.195), it comes as no surprise that they are, also, often examined when it comes to gender

inequality research. A proverb is a linguistic part that is perceived as one of the most prevalent forms of folk literature. As Shi and Zhang (2017) state, they not only reflect popular wisdom like social customs and psychological ideas, but also social phenomena, including sexism. They also adduce the case of the Old Testament as the root of sexism, considering Adam's belief of the woman as 'bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh' is perpetuated in the later social life, in which the male-dominated society remains the mainstream of social development.

Mieder and Dundes (1994) suggest that the essence and the conception of proverbs is based on 'the wisdom of many', which highlights the social importance of that particular linguistic feature, while Ray (1989) explains that proverbs express the words of men, the husband and the patriarchy. Hence, the sexist element that lies within those proverbs is mostly apparent in those revolving around the appearance of a female, as in the Russian proverb (q) that addresses the female inwardness in relation to her physical aspect:

(q) 'Волос длинный а ум короткий' (long hair, but short wits)

3.3. Sexism at semantic level

The discussion of the asymmetry of gender roles in society, as portrayed in a language's structure, has created the conditions of a more specific discussion on a particular feature of this domination: attributing practicality and sensibility to masculine, and irrationality to feminine. Hekman (1994), trying to identify the cause of the problem, claims that reason and rationality have been defined in exclusively masculine terms since Plato and more particularly since the Enlightenment, with an indicative example being the 'Man of Reason', which is gendered but not generic. Another way that language can demonstrate a bias regarding gender are words that connote something negative for women, "*even when corresponding terms for men designate the same state or condition*" (Romaine, 2000, p.107). Such negative overtones reflect the importance of social expectations about age, marriage, status, sexuality and so on and are usually applied on female terms rather than their male counterparts by certain patterns of collocations.

Collocations pass on societal meanings and conventional ideas that have progressively built up. Romaine (1999) stresses the importance of the context of words by commenting on the ambiguity of the English language, which is according to her the reason why its interpretation depends a lot on its context, a factor far more important than gender. In fact, most gender differences in language are attributed to context, since the same words can be defined differently based on the particular context.

More specifically, words for females have negative connotations, despite that not being the case for males. An often-quoted example in English is the pair of spinster and bachelor, where, despite both words designating unmarried adults, only the female term has a negative connotation, being perceived as rejected, undesirable and beyond the expected age of marriage. Therefore, it becomes clear that social expectations and stereotypes are reflected in this imbalance. In French, characterizing a man as 'professional$_{masc}$' is a compliment, while saying that a woman is 'professionelle$_{fem}$' could mean that she is a prostitute. Thus, the problem is not detected in words themselves, but rather in their use within a sentence. Similarly, expectations on social roles are perpetuated on the way language is structured. For instance, saying that a man fathers and a woman mothers a kid implies two different things; in the first case the focus is

shifted on bringing a child into existence by the process of reproduction, while in the second the attention is drawn to the edification and the upbringing of a child. Moreover, across all languages, there are several collocations with mother appointing the deviance of the stereotypical notion of a house-wife mother. Terms like single mother, unwed mother, surrogate mother, birth mother linguistically signal some sort of divergence from the prototype of a mother, while on the same hand, there is no masculine counterpart for the same term.

However, according to Ehrlich and King (1992), semantic derogation of women does not only refer to terms characterizing them, but also to the names that a language attaches to activities and events and especially those relating to sex and sexuality. Similarly, Cameron (1992) interprets terms as "*penetration, lay, screw, fuck*" as a codification of an androcentric worldview, since "*penetration from a female perspective would be more appropriately encoded as enclosure, surrounding or engulfing*" (as cited in Ehrlich, 2001, p.36). Consequently, the role of language is not to label language in a transparent way, but rather shape or construct our notions of reality.

On a closer examination, compound nouns are also indicative of a system that criticizes female presence, while praising male traits. This semantic disproportion is apparent in many cases of compound nouns in Greek, where female participation in activities is defined as the 'exception' of a rule usually defined my male activities, as in:

(r) γυναικοκαβγάς (catfight, fight among women)
(s) γυναικοδουλειά (labor that befits a woman).

On the other hand, words deriving from or compound with man are not marked or stigmatized accordingly, but they are rather used to attribute characteristics of bravery, as in: (a) ανδραγάθημα (heroic achievement of a difficult goal that requires bravery).

Lastly, another important element that seems to affect the asymmetry reproduced by the semantic function of language seems to be the shortage of terms to describe particular activities or persons. For instance, in none of the renowned dictionaries of modern Greek exists a feminine counterpart for the word sexist (e.g. σεξίστρια$_{fem}$), or a masculine one for the word feminist (e.g. φεμινιστής$_{masc}$). Such a gap implies the absence of those signifiers and perpetuates the difficulty of the creation of the signified.

3.4. Sexism at syntactic level

The most prominent instance of gender bias regarding syntax is the 'male firstness', hence the ordering of gendered words and the ordering of masculine terms before feminine ones.

According to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003), the debate about male firstness goes back to the 16th century, when it was proclaimed that males should be mentioned before females, in the sake of a natural order and an evaluative discrimination. This ordering, that according to Pillay & Maistry (2017, p.491) "*reflects a widespread perception of male supremacy*", has been conventionalized and accepted until quite recently.

Even though most formatting and style guides (e.g. APA) explicitly denounce the generic masculine that was previously analyzed, as a form of gender-exclusive bias, they do not indicate male firstness in their publication manuals, because they lack "*empirical evidence of its existence in academic writing*" according to Willis and Jozkowski (2018, p.139), or because of the practical difficulty to prove any sort of bias in the choice of order between two words. However, the notion

of natural order has been denounced by several theorists (Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1991; Sugino, 1998) who claim that discourse reflects the cultural, political and ideological values of different social groups. Therefore, forms that are imposed by the groups in power tend to be valorized and accepted as the norm.

The following research aims to offer some translingual insight on the way SAE languages structure speech in connection to gendered pairs.

4. Data and Methods

The corpora selected for the research were accessed through the ELEXIS project, funded by the H2020 EU Research Programme, aiming to "*set and provide a European lexicographic infrastructure and foster research and cooperation in lexicography and natural language processing*". Given that the focus of the paper is on SAE languages, the corpora were selected to correspond to the branches included in this linguistic family. Hence, web corpora of Dutch (nlTenTen14), English (enTenTen15), French (frTenTen17), German (deTenTen13), Greek (elTenTen14), Italian (itTenTen16), Lithuanian (ltTenTen14) Russian (ruTenTen11) and Spanish (esTenTen18) were gathered. Respectively, all the corpora appertain to the same genre, ensuring the cohesion and optimizing the accuracy of the comparative results. While devising the research, we decided to make a clear distinction between the gendered pairs used as direct salutations or vocative addresses and the pairs that emerge as unfeigned, integral part of the text, since the former tends to be a standardized instance of speech or even part of a protocol, when according to Foucault (1966), "*woman is predominant because of her relationship with a man or because of her outward appearance*".

For the identification and the numeration of the order of gender, several concordance searches were conducted in the aforementioned corpora via the Sketch Engine platform. A pilot assessment by Willis & Jozkowski (2018) revealed that the most common gendered pairs in contemporary articles are 'man and woman', 'male and female', and 'women and men' in that order. Taking into account Key's (1975) exploration on 'Status and Standard/Nonstandard language', the pairs of 'lady and gentleman' and 'girl and boy' were also, included as part of the research. The engine provided an accurate number of instances for each pair in every corpus, including both singular and plural forms and regardless of the grammatical case (in the languages that it was applicable). Then, a simple coding manual was used to express those instances in the percentage of masculine terms used first, as well as in a female-to-male ratio.

4. Results and Discussion

In total, 2.241.525 gendered pairs were collected across all nine corpora, 243.497 of which pertain to salutations and vocative addresses, as presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Gendered pairs examined, categorized by language

Languages examined	Size of corpus	Type of address	Gendered pairs per corpus	Masculine terms first	"Female first"-to-"Male first" ratio
Dutch	2.253.777.579	vocative address	14.491	2.116 (14,6%)	1:0,17
		other	60.538	52.438 (86,61%)	1:6,47
English	15.703.895.409	vocative address	23.120	521 (2,3%)	1:0,02
		other	606.574	556.458 (91,7%)	1:5,34
French	5.752.261.039	vocative address	10.465	422 (4,1%)	1:0,04
		other	60.714	47.013 (77,4%)	1:3,43
German	16.526.335.416	vocative address	179.372	7.969 (4,4%)	1:0,04
		other	558.427	324.571 (58,1%)	1:1,38
Greek	1.671.692.845	vocative address	21.287	893 (4,2%)	1:0,04
		other	5.363	4529 (85,6%)	1:5,43
Italian	4.989.729.171	vocative address	5.109	1396 (27,3%)	1:0,36
		other	118.526	95.367 (80,45%)	1:4,11
Lithuanian	778.151.979	vocative address	1.364	524 (38,4%)	1:0,62
		other	2.840	2.474 (87,1%)	1:6,75
Russian	14.553.856.113	vocative address	3.789	210 (5,54%)	1:0,05
		other	256.612	218.939 (85,3%)	1:5,81
Spanish	17.553.075.259	vocative address	8.910	1.023 (11,48%)	1:0,12
		other	304.024	233.629 (76,8%)	1:3,31

Firstly, analyzing the instances of vocative addresses, all of the languages examined present the same pattern; the majority of pairs appears to have female first. Lithuanian, which was selected as a representative of Baltic languages, is an interesting case since it has the highest male-first to female-first ratio, with the female-first terms still outnumbering the others. This pattern may be attributed to the articulatory assets of 'ladies and gentlemen' versus 'gentlemen and ladies', for example. However, that could not be the case in all of the languages examined. The reason seems to be more of a matter of gender politics, politeness and a standardized way to address both genders as some sort of protocol. This asymmetry is vividly demonstrated in Figure 1.

Moving on to the non-vocative gender pairs (Figure 2), it can be noted that there is again a common pattern among all languages, but this time it's the other way around. In all languages, male is always presented first, with the lowest percentage noted in German.
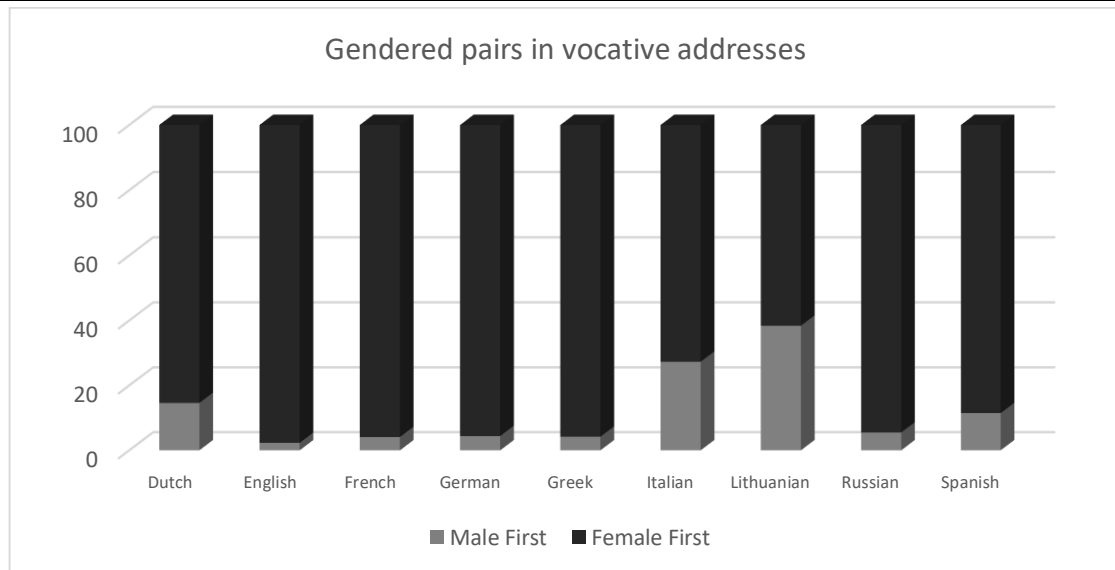
Figure 1: Analogy of the 'male-first' to 'female-first' gendered pairs used
as direct salutations and vocative addresses, categorized by language
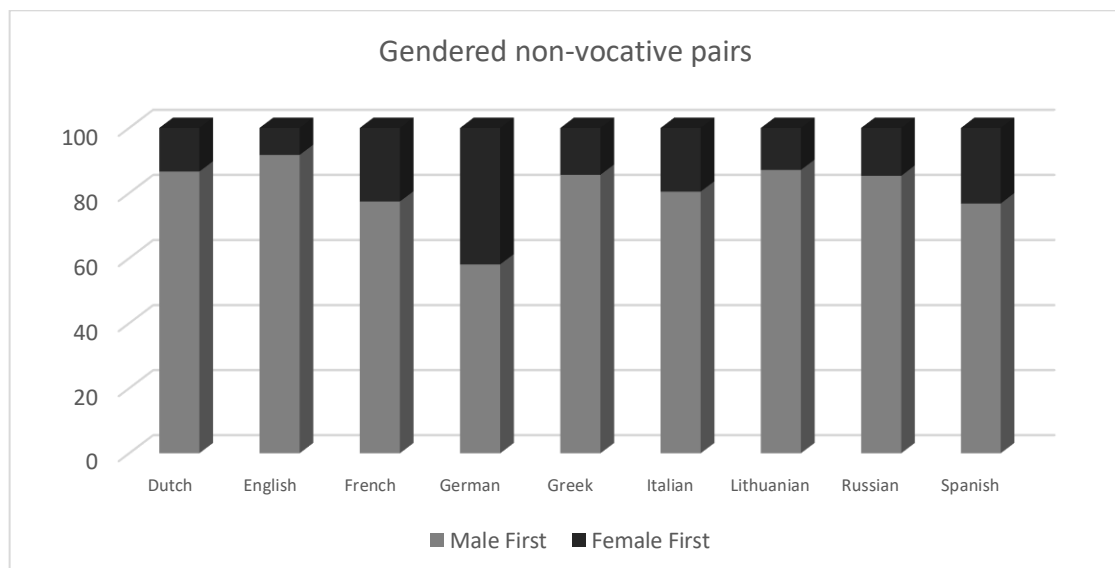
Figure 2: Analogy of the 'male-first' to 'female-first' gendered pairs
that do not constitute vocative addresses, categorized by language

Comparing those charts, it is, also, noticed that there is a greater fluctuation among Germanic languages (English, Dutch, German) than Romance languages, that tend to be more consistent. That could be a case of different social occurrences, or because of the fact that among Germanic languages, some have distinct grammatical genders, while others are either gender-neutral (English) or the distinction between masculine and feminine has largely disappeared (Dutch).

Another, secondary conclusion that could be drawn from these results is that despite male firstness not being one of the common features that classify those languages in the SAE family, it does appear to be another similarity among all of them.

5. Related Topics & Future Perspectives

Contending for the necessity of an unbiased and non-sexist language reform, many feminist theorists (Moulton, 1981, Spender, 1980 etc.) have presumed that language does not simply expound society, but rather envisions reality as presented through the lens of dominant classes (Gal 1991). So, extrapolating from that observation, we could say that in order for a non-sexist vocabulary to be implemented, it should be adopted by the wider, mainstream speech community. Labov (1972) makes a similar observation claiming that the spread of such linguistic innovations is determined by the status of the social sub-group leading the change. He also states that women initiate linguistic change, but Milroy (1987) says that the evidence is confusing and conflicting. Problems in formulating an adequate generalisation usually arise as a result of other factors, such as whether the change is in the direction of a prestige norm, or the nature of the motivating source of the change, which may be complex.

Crystal (2002), however, comments on the ongoing linguistic change in English language which he attributes to the current awareness of the way in which language identifies social attitudes towards men and women and to the criticisms that have been mainly directed at the biases that lead to unfair sexual discrimination. He also states that "*all of the main European languages have been affected, but English more than the most, because of the impact of early American feminism*" (Crystal, 1995, p.368, as cited in Davies, 1999, p.51).

The aforementioned changes affect both the vocabulary and the grammar. Regarding the vocabulary, there has been focus on replacing the 'male' words by neutral, a practice that in some cases has even become a legal requirement. Such instances are the replacement of gender-indicated words as chairman or salesman by sexually neutral words like chairperson and sales assistant respectively. Crystal (2002) mentions, however, that there is a debate as to how far such divisions should go and "*whether they should affect traditional idioms such as /man in the street/ and /stone-age man/, or apply to parts of words where the male meaning of man is no longer dominant, such as manhandle and woman*". Again, instances of when those neutral terms were first introduced show that their neutrality was lost and that they were used often only for women. An example by Dubois and Crouch (1987) demonstrates that a woman is a chairperson, but a man is still a chairman.

With regards to marital status, new neutral terms have been introduced in order to make the vocabulary less biased; for instance, 'Ms' instead of 'Mrs' or 'Miss'. Nevertheless, Fasold's (1988, p.190) research in the dawning of that change, signaled that stylistic guides and manuals disallowed 'Ms', 'except in direct quotations, in discussing the term itself, for special effect or only if its known to be the preference of the individual woman in question', proving that linguistic changes cannot be implemented but rather adopted overtime. According to Edwards (1979, p.23), this demonstrates the difference between cognitive and social problems, since "*it is one thing to recognize that language varieties are of equal communicative validity for their users, and it is quite another to assume that dissemination of this fact will rapidly remove social barriers*".

In natural gender languages' grammar, attention has been drawn on the lack of a pronoun that would correspond and would be used after sex-unspecified nouns (e.g. friend), indefinite pronouns (e.g. anyone) or used to describe persons that do not identify themselves within the

male-female binary. Several alternatives have been suggested to avoid this bias, such as /He or she/ or, in writing, forms such as (s)he, but they are often stylistically awkward and subsequently they have not been adopted. Wayne (2007, p.88) comments that these split terms also "*retain the signification of sex dichotomy by keeping both pronouns while designating the transgender or intersex subject with an unspeakable level that is impossible to enunciate*".

More recently, transgender activists have advocated a shift to a gender unmarked language, by introducing pronouns, that acknowledge and allow for a broader range of sex, gender and sexual expression (Wayne, 2007, p.85). Wilchins (2004, p.131) deliberately asks "*What does gender identification mean if it doesn't tell us about a person's body, gender expression, and sexual orientation?*". The answer seems to be found upon the many proposals for brand-new pronouns to be added to the word-stock of English (such as co, mon, heesh, hesh, hir, na, per and po), none of which have achieved any real currency. In the same wavelength, Spender (1980, p.162) declares that "*new symbols will need to be created*" for the goal of rendering all social groups linguistically visible, rather than "*for the purpose of eradicating sex distinctions from language*". Key (1975, p.138) makes an interesting observation on the 'unsuccessful' introduction of new pronouns, claiming that despite it being "*relatively easy to introduce new nouns into the language (e.g. margarine, polyester, astronaut), classes of words such as pronouns remain stable for hundreds of years without significant change*" and that "*it is easier to change usage than to change the list of items being used*". An instance in informal speech would be the widespread 'they' after indefinite pronouns, but the agreement of a plural and a singular word is still deemed awkward and is generally denounced.

All in all, general guidelines are being implemented, recommending that authors should avoid any sort of gender bias. According to Crystal (2002, p.257), "*it will take much longer before we can say whether the changes are having any real impact on the spoken language, with its greater spontaneity*", since it is unknown how long it would take for spoken language to adapt to social pressure till it becomes an automatic response and given that the future of a language is directly linked to the status of its speakers.

6. Conclusion

All in all, it has become clear that language and society are two communicating vessels that are hard to analyze separately. With regard to the way that language reflects gender, this paper focuses on linguistic sexism, examining several cases and indicators in nine languages that were selected as indicative of the Standard Average European linguistic branch. After setting the framework of the study, the cognitive function of language was analyzed, with a particular reference to the linguistic relativity theory, aiming to prove the significance of linguistic structures on the creation and perpetuation of social inequalities.

Those biases and asymmetries were approached on multiple levels, each time drawing examples from the languages in question. At a morphological level, sexist attitudes were mostly expressed in the form of derivation of feminine terms from masculine ones, as well as in the invisibility of females because of masculine generics. The next part of the study concerned the appearance of sexes in relation to their social role in a specific context, designating the social

expectations, stigmas and stereotypes projected upon them, especially with the use of metaphors, proverbs or the broader semantic field. The last level of analysis was syntax and included a research on the order male and female terms are presented in the use of language. The results presented a common pattern across all languages in favor of men, with a notable exception being the vocative addresses. A secondary conclusion drawn from this research was that all the 'mechanisms' examined were noted in all of the languages in question, despite not being among their grouping criteria under the SAE branch.

Lastly, an exploration of the ways and means used for the eradication of linguistic sexism demonstrated the ongoing language reform. The effectiveness of that reform remains disputable, but it is apparent that language change is a long-term process that not only evolves the application of grammatical rules, but also the reform of perceptions and mindsets.

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