

Abstract

This thesis focusses on the issue of feminine gender agentive nouns formation and use in contemporary Polish, with respect to analogical phenomena in Czech.

The theoretical part of the thesis sketches the form and the manner of derivation of the feminine counterparts of agentive nouns, subsequently analysing their socio-political implications (the opposition between masculine and feminine gender, various views concerning the asymmetry in their usage). In contemporary Polish, two antagonistic trends can be delineated, one tabooing and blocking the derived forms, the other, on the contrary, upholding and promoting them.

In general, feminine forms are widely used for designations of jobs with lower social prestige; conversely, with respect to professions and honorifics viewed as prestigious, feminization is sparse, and, outside the feminist coterie, viewed as unnatural, inappropriate, even belittling. There are also quite a few nouns that undergo derivation only selectively. This state of affairs is evaluated as substantially different from that in Czech, a language in which feminization is common and normally unmarked.

The practical part contains a research carried out on a corpus of texts from the Polish daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* from 2006; 18 problematic feminine gender agentive nouns were selected and their instantiations extracted. The individual occurrences were annotated with respect to context and frequency. The acquired data were cross-checked with corresponding entries in two contemporary comprehensive dictionaries. It appears that the 18 expressions under scrutiny vary greatly both in terms of use and frequency of incidence, and that the codified norm is belied by actual observed usage.

Thus, it can be argued that in this part of the lexicon, the codification is contentious and at odds with common usage (*GW* could hardly be termed a feminist-oriented periodical), which seems to be veering towards a more widespread use of feminized forms.

Keywords: Czech language, Polish language, word formation, feminine derivation, gender linguistics, generic use of masculine gender, agentive nouns