

Selected issues in gender linguistics – MA seminar

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Have you ever thought about the meaning of such Polish proverbs concerning women as *baba z wozu, koniom lżej* or *tere fere kuku, strzela baba z łuku* and the lack of similar negative sayings about men? Consider now some other asymmetries, e.g. *męska rozmowa* ‘serious talk’ and *babskie gadanie* ‘female prattle’ as well as differences between the following pairs of nouns: *dżokej* ‘jockey’ – *dżokejka* ‘jockey cap’, *śmieciarz* ‘garbage man’ – *śmieciarka* ‘garbage truck, *Amerykanin* ‘male American’ – *amerykanka* ‘sofa,’ where the first item in each pair refers to men and the second one means some object. What are the feminine forms of such masculine nouns as *dziekan* ‘dean’ or *prezydent* ‘president’ and the masculine equivalents of *przedszkolanka* ‘pre-school teacher’ or *kosmetyczka* ‘beautician’? All languages comprise many words, phrases and grammatical structures which are **gender-related** and which express **different judgements concerning men and women**. Gender linguistics deals exactly with such asymmetries and the ways in which men and women are represented in language.

It is also concerned with differences in the speech of both sexes and addresses such questions as *do women talk more than men? Do men swear more than women? Are there words more likely to be used by one of the sexes? Do men and women communicate in the same way or differently?* In other words, are women from Venus and men from Mars?

Finally, an interesting question concerns the gender situation in languages other than Polish. How do languages differ in this respect? What **translation problems** arise in the case of different gender systems? Should the proper Polish version of *she is an excellent candidate* be *ona jest świetnym kandydatem* or rather *ona jest świetną kandydatką*?

This seminar will be concerned with various exciting issues of **gender linguistics**, basing mostly on English and Polish, but also making references to other languages. We will examine various aspects of the topic and (hopefully) have lively discussions on **gender and language**. I will also, naturally, expect you to write your MA thesis on selected issues of this problem area.