Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia 1

ISSN 2724-4652

Language, Gender and Hate Speech

A Multidisciplinary Approach

edited by
Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

Edizioni
Ca'Foscari

Language, Gender and Hate Speech

Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

Serie diretta da
Gian Luigi Paltrinieri

1

Edizioni
Ca'Foscari

Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

ISSN 2724-4652

URL https://www.edizionicafoscari.unive.it/en/edizioni/collane/comitato-unico-di-garanzia/

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach

Selected papers of the LIGHTS 2018 Conference

edited
by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

Venezia
Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing
2020

Language, Gender and Hate Speech. A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing
Fondazione Università Ca' Foscari Venezia | Dorsoduro 3246 | 30123 Venezia
http://edizionicafoscari.unive.it | ecf@unive.it

1a edizione dicembre 2020 | 1st edition December 2020
ISBN 978-88-6969-478-3 [ebook]
ISBN 978-88-6969-479-0 [print]

Certificazione scientifica delle Opere pubblicate da Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing: il volume pubblicato ha ottenuto il parere favorevole da parte di valutatori esperti della materia. La valutazione è stata condotta in aderenza ai criteri scientifici ed editoriali di Edizioni Ca' Foscari.
Scientific certification of the works published by Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing: the volume has received a favourable opinion by subject-matter experts. The evaluations were conducted in adherence to the scientific and editorial criteria established by Edizioni Ca' Foscari.

Language, Gender and Hate Speech. A Multidisciplinary Approach / Giuliana Giusti, Gabriele Iannàccaro (edited by) — 1. ed. — Venezia: Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing, 2020. — 226 pp.; 23 cm. — (Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia; 1) . — ISBN 978-88-6969-479-0

URL http://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/it/edizioni/libri/978-88-6969-479-0/
DOI http://doi.org/10.30687/978-88-6969-478-3

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

Abstract

In the 150th anniversary of the foundation of Ca' Foscari University of Venice, the Department of Linguistics and Cultural Comparative Studies, with the contribution of the University Equal Opportunities Committee, organised the LIGHTS conference (*Language gender HaTe Speec*h, 18-19 October 2018) with the sponsorship of the Italian Linguistics Society (SLI) and its Study Group on Language Policies (GSPL), of national associations, such as Toponomastica Femminile, Rete per la Parità, Donne in Rete, GiULiA, Osservatorio di Pavia, and of the Council of Europe (office of Venice).
National and international experts and experts in linguistic, sociological, juridical, and computational disciplines discussed the subject of inclusive communication and verbal violence with focus on the category of gender. Given the relative novelty of the subject in the Italian academic context, the conference aimed to establish a first contact among researchers to create a multidisciplinary network including those who study communication and those who work in communication to put forward future projects with a strong socio-cultural impact.
The goal of the selected proceedings is to offer a tool of disseminating knowledge of recent research and affirmative actions with an impact on the Italian society, education, and political institutions in an international perspective.
Intended readership includes scholars, university students, school teachers, journalists, policy makers, judges and lawyers and mass media publishers

Keywords Gender stereotypes. Gendered communication. Gendered hate speech. Gender-fair language.

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

Table of Contents

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

Can Gender-Fair Language Combat Gendered Hate Speech?
Some Reflections on Language, Gender and Hate Speech

Giuliana Giusti
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Gabriele Iannàccaro
Università di Milano Bicocca, Italia

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The Italian Context. – 3 Overview of the Volume. – 4 Conclusions and Acknowledgements.

1 Introduction

At first sight, gendered language and hate speech may appear unrelated issues. Hate speech is verbal offence with the aim to diminish and humiliate a single person belonging to a target group (where gender and sex are just two out of many characterizing features of possible target groups). How can it be counteracted by the use of feminine nouns and pronouns to refer to women in contexts in which the masculine is perceived (even by many women) as a means to express empowerment and equal status to men?

A second major difference between the two issues is that while gendered language has been proposed for European languages (in Europe and America) almost half a century ago, since the seminal work by Robin Lakoff *Language and Women's Place* (1973), hate speech has only recently reached the agenda of international organizations for human rights in the defence of disadvantaged minorities.

However, a direct correlation between the lack of gendered language in the cultural discourse and misogynistic speech can be found if we consider that

language creates identity at the individual and societal level and is the major means of transmission of cultural values and stereotypes (Gygax et al. 2008). In this perspective, the massive and constant disappearance of women in the media, especially women in power (as witnessed by the Global Media Monitoring Project, cf. Azzalini in this volume) impedes gender equity all over the World, where women are not a numeric minority but certainly are a disadvantaged group, as witnessed by the annual Global Gender Gap Report of the World Economic Forum. Since the typical targets of hate speech are minorities, keeping women as 'minor' in the cultural discourse, is certainly part of the cultural milieu that favours rather than combats hate speech against women.

The LIGHTS conference (*LInguaggio, parità di Genere e parole d'odio / Language, gender and HaTe Speech*) and this volume, which stems from it, wants to be a contribution to unveil the link between these two apparently unrelated issues.

The conference was held at Ca' Foscari University of Venice on 18-20 October 2018. It was part of the celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of Ca' Foscari. It was granted support by the Department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies and the University's Equal Opportunities Committee (CUG – Comitato Unico di Garanzia). It was sponsored by the Italian Linguistic Society (SLI) and its Study Group on Language Policies (GSPL), the Venice Accessibility Lab and by national associations for the advancement of women's rights, such as Toponomastica Femminile, Rete per la Parità, Donne in Quota, GiULiA, Osservatorio di Pavia, and by the Council of Europe (office of Venice).

The conference brought together experts in the areas of linguistics, education, sociology, legal and political studies to discuss inclusive communication practices, verbal and linguistic equity and fairness, and verbal violence in an intersectional approach, considering gender and gender-identity in a comparative cross-linguistic and cross-cultural approach. The aim was to establish a link between researchers and stakeholders in the areas of communication, media, language policies and education, to foster new scientific projects on language, gender and inclusion with a strong social impact, providing the forum and opportunity for national stakeholders to come into contact and discuss the most urgent needs with national and international researchers.

The location of the conference is not accidental. In the last decade, Ca' Foscari has taken up a proactive role in building awareness on the impact of language on gender identity in public institutions, education and the media. The issue is particularly timely in Italy, where the use of gendered language is much less common than in other countries of Europe and the Americas and where those who speak up for it are often object of discredit and even hate speech, as is presented in section 2.

The invited speakers were two leading figures in linguistics and two high officials in Italian and European institutions: Deborah Cameron (University of Oxford) and Heather Burnett (CNRS-Université Paris Diderot), Elisabetta Rosi (Italian Supreme Court of Cassation) and Daniele Cangemi, (Directorate General of Democracy of the Council of Europe).

The submissions coming from many countries, among which Croatia, France, Greece, the Netherlands, the UK, Pakistan, as well as many parts of Italy, went through a double blind selection process run by the 6 members of the scientific committee in collaboration with the 8 members of the selection committee; 16 talks and 8 posters were selected for presentation at the conference. The conference was held partially in English, due to the international attendance, and partially in Italian, in order to be accessible to national stakeholders, in particular teachers and journalists whose participation in the round table was acknowledged as lifelong education approved by the Association of Journalists in the Veneto Region. Not all talks or posters presented at the conference resulted in a contribution to the present volume. The editorial process involved a second round of evaluation, run by the two editors with the collaboration of 10 Italian academics. The result of these two years of work and collaboration is this volume, which we hope to be a starting point in the study of the relation between gendered language and gendered hate speech, offering an international perspective to the Italian public and an Italian perspective to the international public. Section 2 provides a brief presentation of the Italian situation. Section 3 briefly presents the content of the volume. Section 4 draws the conclusions and acknowledges the role played by a great number of colleagues and stakeholders with whom we wish to share the merit of this enterprise.

2 The Italian Context

Since the publication of *Il sessismo nella lingua italiana* and the guidelines for a non-sexist use of the Italian language (Sabatini 1986, [1987] 1993), the interest on the relationship between language use and gender equity in Italy's cultural and political discourse has witnessed dramatically polar reactions swinging at different times from fierce and fiery debate to total neglect. This is not the place to provide a history of the fortunes and misfortunes of this issue in the Italian media and cultural discourse (cf. among many, Robustelli 2012; Giusti 2016; Marazzini 2017a, 2017b, 2017c; Zarra 2017) but it is a fact that the discussion in the political and academic agenda has received more attention in other countries of Europe and America than it has ever had here in Italy. Limiting our perspective to Western countries whose official languages have nouns and nominal modifi-

ers inflecting for the gender of the referent, as is the case of Italian, we can safely say that linguistic research and political actions have been entertained on German in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland, on French in Canada, France, and Switzerland, on Spanish in Spain and most Spanish-speaking South American countries. Every time the issue of the use of the feminine gender on nouns denoting roles and the use of formulations that make the reference to women explicit avoiding the 'unmarked' masculine (in the plural or in the generic singular) has been raised, it has found opposers in the name of the preservation of 'purity' in the language and the 'irrelevance' of language to the actual achievement of equity. Despite the opposition equally raised by women and men in most of these countries, the feminist critical analysis and the academic linguistic and psychological research have led governments to take political actions to enforce gender-fair language in the media, textbooks, job announcements, institutional communication, including the language used in parliaments and in the writing of laws. In French-speaking countries, for example, a long-standing discussion on how to write in an inclusive way has brought to different types of *écriture inclusive* at different times, in different French-speaking countries, by different communities. The debated issue is no more on the need of equally expressing men and women but how to do it (cf. Fagard, Le Tallec, forthcoming; Burnett, Pozniak 2020; Pires in this volume).

After more than three decades since Sabatini's (1987) study and recommendations, which were officially commissioned and supported by the Italian Government, the discussion in the Italian media is still limited to whether and how individual women should be named with regularly inflected feminine nouns. Although the *Accademia della Crusca*, the most prestigious research institution for the Italian language, has been openly in favour of the use of feminine forms for professional nouns, promoting Robustelli's (2012) new guidelines, the actions are still limited to weak recommendations and policies are essentially missing or, if present, not enforced at all.

In 2018, the topic made a recent comeback on the political agenda and in the media thanks to Laura Boldrini (former president of the Chamber of Deputies) and Valeria Fedeli (former minister of Education). As soon as she was elected president in the early 2013, Boldrini required to be addressed as *signora presidente* and named *la presidente* in the feminine. Her recommendations to the Deputies to address women with regularly declined feminine nouns and her later request, in 2017, that the tags identifying the staff of the Chamber of Deputies be using feminine nouns were followed by protests of women in the staff as well as leading political figures including the former President of the Italian Republic Napolitano (cf. Villani, forthcoming). In 2018, Fedeli recommended that in selecting textbooks for the following school year, teachers be vigilant on avoiding those containing

sexist stereotypes and sexist language. This was again object of protests by editors, school masters, teachers and, of course, journalists.

The extreme verbally heated reactions across the media and over the web serve to underscore how important and timely it is in Italy to address the crucial role that language plays in creating gender equity in society. They also provide an exemplary case of what Deborah Cameron ([1995] 2012) defines "verbal hygiene"; namely, the natural propensity speakers have to establish norms of language use. As such, these normative speaker judgments are to be viewed as part of metalinguistic competence and are, therefore, also worth being investigated by linguists, social and cognitive scientists.

Paralleling this renewed interest in gender-fair language is the recent attention towards the manifold forms of hate speech at an international level, especially by the Council of Europe. Starting with Resolution 384/2015, the Council of Europe has undertaken a series of actions against hate speech in general and more recently with a focus on gender (cf. Cangemi in this volume). In Italy, this has been matched by increased interest on the topic at the national level. Boldrini nominated the *"Joe Cox" Committee on Intolerance, Xenophobia, Racism and Hate Phenomena*, at the Italian Chamber of Deputies, which issued a Final Report (Camera dei Deputati 2017) including an inventory of hate words compiled by the late Italian linguist Tullio De Mauro. Qualitative and quantitative research on the expression of hate speech in Italian conducted by Amnesty International Italia in 2019 shows that women are one of the most targeted groups along with religious minorities, migrants and refugees (cf. Amnesty International Italia 2020; Faloppa 2020).

None of these studies addresses the relation between the resistance to gender-fair use and the rate of tolerance of verbal violence in the cultural discourse, which is what the conference aimed at investigating.

3 Overview of the Volume

The design of this volume reproduces the willingness of the conference organizers to set it as a dialogic occasion: i.e. the willingness to relate the notions of gendered language and hate speech, the willingness to bring linguists and jurists into dialogue and to address an audience of researchers and stakeholders together. After the highlight chapter (Deborah Cameron), the issue is structured into two sections, *Corpus-Based and Experimental Studies* and *Juridical Perspectives, Monitoring and Good Practices*. Both sides help to explore the relationship between the two main focus themes of the book, gendered language and hate speech.

Three of the volume's main topics are already covered in the chapter by Cameron which starts from the definitions of the concepts of sexism and misogyny and turns out to consider that misogyny can be expressed through a range of interactional and representational practices, many of which would not amount to hate speech in the legal sense, but are nonetheless far from being innocuous and can be interpreted as witnesses of important political functions in patriarchal societies.

The balance, so to say, between gendered language and hate speech is, of course, uneven throughout the chapters: understandably, the juridical articles are concentrated on hate speech, since gendered language is not a crime and has therefore not yet given rise to a specific jurisprudential consideration.[1] Within this general framework, however, Ferrucci's chapter examines a corpus of negative comments in Facebook regarding women with decisional positions in Europe, in order to clarify their specific hate speech coding modes and distinguish them from impoliteness, lack of cooperation and legitimate critique (which are not legal offences and cannot be sanctioned in the name of the safeguard of freedom of expression). Devoted to the difference between inappropriate behaviour and offence is the chapter by Flick, who notes that the different legal treatment of the 'grey area' consisting in the fuzzy boundaries between the two notions is due to the different policies applied and reveal gaps both in the reporting systems and in the concept of damage itself. Not favouring the recognition of damages has a significant social meaning: it conveys a negative message, namely that abuse against women is acceptable and can be tolerated.

Consequently, a few chapters are devoted to the emerging mixed notion of *sexist hate speech*: Cangemi reports the position of the Council of Europe to enlighten the key elements that should guide all relevant stakeholders (governments, media, civil society etc.) in their contrasting action. A checklist of indicators and actions to eliminate sexist hate speech is also provided.

Rosi presents the uncertain status of sexist hate speech in the Italian legislation, in which the constitutional right of expressing one's thought (article 21 of the Italian Constitution) is not more guaranteed when the verbal act has a material act of crime or instigation to crime as its direct consequence, as is the case of cyberbullying. However, Rosi notes, there have been no incriminating cases of sexist cyberbullying up to date.

1 A promising preparatory work on this has been carried out by Stefania Cavagnoli (2013), which is the result of the linguistic research in collaboration with the National Forensic Council, further extended to many local equal opportunity committees of the bar association, in the form of lifelong education and lectures.

Azzalini analyses 'subtle gender stereotypes', not evident and usually not associated with violence against women in the Italian media, claiming that they play a role in tolerating gender-based violence (and, henceforth, sexist hate speech) by constantly reinforcing these stereotypes. The essay by Busso, Combei, Tordini focuses on the narrative of gender violence: grounded on a self-constructed corpus of journalistic speech and the analysis of a television series, the chapter compares the representations of physical and psychological violence against women.

The remaining chapters are more focused on gendered language, even if suggestions on its connection with hate speech emerge in the contribution from Binder, Ueberwasser, Stark. They analyse a corpus of Swiss WhatsApp (multilingual) messages, with a focus on 14 gender-specific swear words. It appears that gender-specific swear words only refer to non-participants of the discourse when they are used offensively, while lexical items directly addressed to the interlocutor are characterized by irony and semantic word-alterations. Moreover, gendered hate speech seems not to be a matter of mutual discrimination by the two sexes: Swiss WhatsApp users also refer to people of their own sex using gender-specific swear words.

Analysing French forms, Pires raises the problem of written lexical forms known as 'inclusive', which incorporate both genders, like *travailleur·se*, 'worker'; *celleux*, 'these ones' or even Italian *content**, 'happy'. The drawbacks to their use are linked, among other reasons, to their excessive length, their unusual graphic form and the difficulty of transposing many of the forms into spoken language. For all these reasons, Pires pledges, instead, for the use of real feminine forms.

Other contributions deal more specifically with socio-morphologic aspects of feminine noun and adjective forms. Castenetto and Ondelli report the results of a field research on the acceptability of gender-inclusive linguistic structures in Italian, showing a welcomed decreasing trend in the expected dislike for the feminine forms of nouns describing titles and professions. Pagliaro focuses on politeness formulas containing items with single or multiple repetitions of a word, extracted from corpora of spoken Italian: men tend to produce these formulas more than women, which could mean that men are more exposed to linguistic variation and innovation, while women would rather be more conservative as regards to routine formulas. Last but not least, Bevilacqua offers a vision of the feminization of titles, office and profession names of Algerian French, arguing that the French-speaking press can play an important role in combating gender stereotypes in the Maghreb.

4 Conclusions and Acknowledgements

To give an idea of the themes and discussions that took place in the conference, it is necessary to also mention those contributions that for different reasons are not included in the volume. Heather Burnett presented an invited talk with the title "Language Change, Social Change and Grammatical Gender. Perspectives from France and Canada", where she presented and further developed her joint work with Olivier Bonami (Burnett, Bonami 2019). She also presented with Célia Richy a research on stereotyped examples in papers on French syntax (Richy, Burnett 2020). Lubna Akhlaq Khan gave an insight on feminist critique applied to a non-Western Culture in the talk "Discursive Construction of Patriarchy. A Feminist Critique of Punjabi Proverbs", which developed into Akhlaq Khan, Safeer Awan, Hussain (2019) and in the poster "It's not just a Joke. A Feminist Critique of Jokes about Marriage and Matrimonial Identities", which developed into Akhlaq Khan, Iqra, Hussain (2018). Sofia Lampropoulou talked about "Sexist Language in a Corpus of Greek Public Documents and Attempts at Language Reform", reporting and developing Lampropoulou and Georgalidou (2017). Sara Tonelli presented research on "Analysing Misogyny in Online Conversations", which is part of Menini et al. (2019). Roswitha Kersten Pejanić presented some of the results of her dissertation in "Production, Perception and Deconstruction of False Generics in Croatian" (cf. Kersten Pejanić 2016, 2019, 2020).

Contributions in Italian included Irene Biemmi's talk "Il Polite vent'anni dopo. Un viaggio nei libri di testo della scuola primaria, tra stereotipi di genere e linguaggio sessista", presenting the results of her monograph Biemmi (2017). Stefania Cavagnoli's talk "Linguaggio, parità di genere e lingua ostile nei testi giuridici. Quali strumenti per contrastare una comunicazione offensiva?" gave an overview on Italian and European juridical texts (also cf. Cavagnoli 2013; Cavagnoli, Mori 2019). Francesca Dragotto, Domenica Fioredistella Iezzi and Sonia Melchiorre presented "Ponti d'odio. La vicenda di Asia Argento come caso di studio dell'odio (on line) di genere", which developed into Dragotto, Giomi, Melchiorre (2020). Marzia Caria presented "Hate Words e linguaggio giovanile. Primi risultati di una ricerca in corso", which has developed into Bertini Malgarini and Caria (forthcoming).

Posters in Italian included Giovanna Covi's "Invitare a un uso della lingua rispettoso delle identità di genere. Quali le sfide in un contesto multilingue?" now available as Covi (2020) and Manuela Manera's "Narrazioni Tossiche. Le parole per raccontare l''ideologia del gender'". Rosanna Oliva de Conciliis, Daniela Monaco, Susanna Schivo and Manuela de Oliveira Magalhães presented the actions entertained by Rete per la parità for the transmission of the maternal family name: "Uso corretto della lingua per la costruzione dell'identità

di genere. La violenza nella mancata attribuzione per legge del cognome materno".[2]

The round table "Lingua, genere e parole d'odio", chaired by Martina Zambon (representative of the Veneto Union of journalists), involved an expert in gender and media, Monia Azzalini (Osservatorio di Pavia; Ca' Foscari), and many journalists who are on the front line in this topic: Lina Appiano (president of Donne in Rete); Marina Cosi (president of GiULiA, an association of Italian women journalists); Antonella Scambia (member of the Equal Opportunity committee of the Veneto Union of Journalists) and Maria Teresa Celotti (member of the Equal Opportunity committee of the Lombardy Union of journalists). The round table was accredited as lifelong learning action for journalists attracting journalists from the whole Veneto region.

In this brief introduction, we have suggested that there is an important but still underestimated link between the negative attitude towards gender-fair language and the threshold of tolerance of sexist hate speech in the name of freedom of speech. We have claimed that uncovering this link can promote the use of gender-fair language, which is especially urgent in Italy, where there are still many opponents even among women in the professions and in the progressive parties. We hope that the conference and this volume will be of inspiration to decision makers, educators, communicators, editors and publishers, as well as scholars in different fields and that it will contribute to a more considered use of apparently innocuous but in fact powerful means of the expression or concealment of empowered women in the cultural discourse, such as little inflectional morphemes expressing gender.

We conclude, thanking the many colleagues who have had a crucial role in the process. First of all we thank the components of the Scientific Board, chaired by Giuliana Giusti (Ca' Foscari) and including Giulia Bencini (Ca' Foscari), Federica Formato, University of Brighton, Gabriele Iannàccaro, Università Milano Bicocca, president of the Study Group for Linguistic Policies (GSPL), Anna M. Thornton, Università dell'Aquila, president of the Italian Linguistic Society (SLI), and Beatrice Spallaccia, Università di Bologna. The Scientific Board was supported by a Board of Reviewers including Raffaella Baccolini, Università di Bologna, Paola Catenaccio, Università di Milano, Maria Assunta Ciardullo, Università della Calabria, Silvia Dal Negro, Libera Università di Bolzano, Francesca Maria Dovetto, Università Federico II di Napoli, Franca Orletti, Università Roma Tre, Luciano Romito, Università della Calabria, and Francesca Santulli, IULM Milano.

2 A follow-up on the actions of the associations and the Italian legislation can be found in `http://www.reteperlaparita.it/cognome-della-madre`.

The chapters in the volume were reviewed with a double-blind procedure by Anna Cardinaletti (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia); Silvia Dal Negro (Libera Università di Bolzano); Francesca Dragotto (Università di Roma Tor Vergata); Sara Gesuato (Università degli Studi di Padova); Silvia Kunitz (University of Stockholm); Gianluca Lebani (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia); Silvia Micheli (Università Milano Bicocca); Claudia Padovani (Università degli Studi di Padova); Simone Pisano (Università degli Studi Guglielmo Marconi) and Anna M. Thornton (Università degli Studi dell'Aquila), to whom we are specially indebted for support as the president of SLI in 2018, and the scientific counselling at all stages. A final thank to the Ca' Foscari CUG and its president, Gian Luigi Paltrinieri, for the support at all steps of this enterprise.

Bibliography

Akhlaq Khan, L.; Iqra, R.; Hussain, A. (2018). "Construction of Matrimonial Identities through Humor. A Feminist Critique of Pakistani English and Urdu Jokes". *Pakistan Journal of Languages and Translation Studies*, 6, 105-31.

Akhlaq Khan, L.; Safeer Awan, M.; Hussain, H. (2019). "Oral Cultures and Sexism. A Comparative Analysis of African and Punjabi Folklore". *Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies. Alam-e-Niswan*, 26(2), 105-26. https://www.pakistanwomenstudies.com/pjws/article/view/10/11.

Amnesty International Italia (2020). *Il barometro dell'odio. Sessismo da tastiera*. https://www.amnesty.it/barometro-dellodio-sessismo-da-tastiera.

Bertini Malgarini, P.; Caria, M. (forthcoming). "Ma stai zitto bufu! Parole dell'odio nel linguaggio giovanile". Rossi, F. (a cura di), *La mediazione di ideologie linguistiche attraverso la stampa. Il caso delle lingue romanze = Conference Proceedings* ILPE 4 (Messina, 23-25 October 2019). Berlin: Peter Lang.

Biemmi, I. (2017). *Educazione sessista. Stereotipi di genere nei libri delle elementari*. Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier.

Burnett, H.; Bonami, O. (2019). "Linguistic Prescription, Ideological Structure, and the Actuation of Linguistic Changes. Grammatical Gender in French Parliamentary Debates". *Language in Society*, 48(1), 65-93. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0047404518001161.

Burnett, H.; Pozniak, C. (2020). *Political Dimensions of Écriture Inclusive in Parisian Universities*. Unpublished paper. Paris: Université de Paris; Université Paris 8. http://www.heatherburnett.net/uploads/9/6/6/0/96608942/burnettpozniak2020_ei.pdf.

Camera dei Deputati (2017). *La piramide dell'odio in Italia. Commissione "Jo Cox" su fenomeni di odio, intolleranza, xenofobia, e razzismo. Relazione finale*. http://www.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/shadow_primapagina/file_pdfs/000/007/099/Jo_Cox_Piramide_odio.pdf.

Cameron, D. [1995] (2012). *Verbal Hygiene*. London: Routledge.

Cavagnoli, S. (2013). *Linguaggio giuridico e lingua di genere. Una simbiosi possibile*. Alessandria: Edizione dell'Orso.

Cavagnoli, S.; Mori L. (eds) (2019). *Gender in Legislative Languages. From EU to National Law in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish*. Berlin: Frank & Timme.

Covi, G. (2020). "Genere e linguaggio. Azioni dell'Ateneo trentino e delle istituzioni locali". Scarponi, S. (a cura di), *Diritto e Genere. Temi e Questioni*. Napoli: Editoriale Scientifica, 139-56.

Dragotto, F.; Giomi, E.; Melchiorre, S.M. (2020). "Putting Women back in Their Place. Reflections on Slut-Shaming, the Case Asia Argento and Twitter in Italy". *International Review of Sociology*, 30(1), 46-70. https://doi.org/10.1080/03906701.2020.1724366.

Fagard, B.; Le Tallec, G. (éds) (forthcoming). *Entre masculin et féminin... Approche contrastive. Français et langues romanes*. Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle.

Faloppa, F. (2020). *#Odio. Manuale di resistenza alla violenza delle parole*. Milano: DeA Planeta Libri.

Giusti, G. (a cura di) (2011). *Nominare per esistere. Nomi e cognomi*. Materiali CPO 11. Venezia: Cafoscarina Editrice.

Giusti, G. (2016). "La frontiera della lingua". Isastia, A.M.; Oliva, R. (a cura di), *Cinquant'anni non sono bastati. Le carriere delle donne a partire dalla sentenza n. 33/1969 della Corte Costituzionale*. Trieste: Scienza Express, 239-45.

Giusti, G.; Regazzoni, S. (a cura di) (2009). *Mi fai male*. Materiali CPO 9. Venezia: Cafoscarina Editrice.

Gomez Gane, Y. (a cura di) (2017). *Quasi una rivoluzione. I femminili di professioni e cariche in Italia e all'estero*. Firenze: Accademia della Crusca.

Gygax, P. et al. (2008). "Generically Intended, but Specifically Interpreted. When Beauticians, Musicians, and Mechanics are All Men. *Language and Cognitive Processes*, 23(3), 464-85. https://doi.org/10.1080/01690960701702035.

Kester-Pejanic, R. (2016). *Die Macht von Sprachnormen. Perzeption, Produktion und Dekonstruktion von personaler Appellation im Kroatischen* [PhD Dissertation]. Berlin: Humboldt University.

Kester-Pejanic, R. (2019). "The *Anti-Language* of Feminist and Queer Activism. Linguistic Norm-Breaking and the Formation of the Heretical Discourse in Croatia". *Women's Studies International Forum*, 77, 102234. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2019.05.003.

Kester-Pejanic, R. (2020). "The Social Deixis of Gender Boundaries. Person Appellation Practices in Croatian". *Journal of Language and Discrimination*, 4(1), 98-118. https://doi.org/10.1558/jld.40375.

Lakoff, R. (1973). "Language and Woman's Place". *Language in Society*, 2(1), 45-80. https://web.stanford.edu/class/linguist156/Lakoff_1973.pdf.

Lampropoulou, S.; Georgalidou, M. (2017). "Sexist Language in Greek Public Discourse. When Gender Exclusive Forms Become a Matter of Grammatical Correctness". *Women's Studies International Forum*, 60, 49-57.

Marazzini, C. (2017a). "Premessa". Gomez Gane 2017, 5-12.

Marazzini, C. (2017b). "Qualche precisazione sul tema del 'linguaggio di genere'". Gomez Gane 2017, 121-9.

Marazzini, C. (2017c). "Polemiche sul linguaggio di genere". Gomez Gane 2017, 131-4.

Menini, S. et al. (2019). "A System to Monitor Cyberbullying Based on Message Classification and Social Network Analysis". *Proceedings of the 3rd Workshop on Abusive Language Online* (Florence, August 1, 2019). Association

for Computational Linguistics, 105-10. https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/W19-3511.

Richy, C.; Burnett, H. (2020). "Jean Does the Dishes while Marie Fixes the Car. A Qualitative and Quantitative Study of Social Gender in French Syntax Articles". *Journal of French Language Studies*, 30(1), 47-72. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0959269519000280.

Robustelli, C. (2012). *Linee guida per l'uso del genere nel linguaggio amministrativo*. Firenze: Regione Toscana; Accademia della Crusca. https://www.comune.mira.ve.it/public/robustellilineeguidaperlusodelgenerenellinguaggioamministrativo.pdf.

Sabatini, A. (1986). *Raccomandazioni per un uso non sessista della lingua italiana*. Roma: Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri; Commissione nazionale per la realizzazione della parità tra uomo e donna.

Sabatini, A. [1987] (1993). *Il sessismo nella lingua italiana*. Roma: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato. https://bit.ly/3kSwnig.

Spallaccia, B. (2017). *Misogynistic Hate Speech on Social Networks. A Critical Discourse Analysis* [PhD Dissertation]. Bologna: Università di Bologna. http://amsdottorato.unibo.it/8265.

Villani, P. (forthcoming). "Il femminile come 'genere del disprezzo'. Il caso di *presidenta*. Parola d'odio e fake". *Italiano digitale*. https://id.accademiadellacrusca.org.

Zarra, G. (2017). "I titoli di professioni e cariche pubbliche esercitate da donne in Italia e all'estero". Gomez Gane 2017, 19-104.

Highlight Chapter

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

Language, Sexism and Misogyny
The Reception of Women's Political Speech

Deborah Cameron
University of Oxford, UK

Abstract This paper examines linguistic sexism and misogyny in the light of the philosopher Kate Manne's recent proposals regarding the general definitions of these concepts and their relationship. Using the reception of female politicians' speech as an illustration, it argues that misogyny can be expressed through a range of interactional and representational practices; many of these would not amount to 'hate speech' in the legal sense, but that does not mean they are innocuous. From a feminist perspective linguistic misogyny, together with sexism, can most usefully be understood as fulfilling an important political function in patriarchal societies: policing women's public speech and undermining their claims to authority.

Keywords Authority. Interaction. Media. Misogyny. Political speech.

1 Introduction

This paper was originally written for a conference on the theme of language, gender and hate speech, and I will begin by situating it in that context. In my own country, the UK, the concept of hate speech is discursively well-established, but legally it is more marginal: the only kind of speech that is clearly prohibited by law, under public order and race relations legislation, is speech that incites either violence, or racial/religious hatred. What we do have is a legal category of hate *crime*. If an offence is shown to be motivated by hatred

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia 1
ISSN 2724-4652
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-478-3 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-479-0

Open access
Published 2020-12-29

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-478-3/001

of the group the victim belongs to (e.g., of black and minority ethnic people, Muslims or Jews, LGBT people or people with disabilities), that can be treated as an aggravating factor by the courts, enabling them to impose a longer sentence or a heavier fine. The concept of hate speech is relevant here because speech is one kind of evidence that can be used to establish hate as the motive for a crime. However, this provision specifically excludes offences which are committed against women because of their sex. Though women may be victims of hate crime in exactly the same way as men (that is, if they were victimized because of their race, religion, sexuality, gender identity or disability), misogyny in itself is not a legally recognized form of hate.

A number of feminist organizations in Britain have campaigned for this to change. They argue that misogynist speech and misogynist violence should be treated by the legal system in the same way as the racist or homophobic equivalents. Some local police forces have responded by introducing a policy of recording misogynist acts reported to them as 'hate incidents' (Mullany, Trickett 2018). Many incidents of this kind involve, or consist entirely of, linguistic acts such as verbal abuse or harassment. In this paper I will not address the question of whether the law should be changed to define this kind of behaviour as a criminal offence (an issue on which there is disagreement even among feminists). I will, however, suggest that misogyny works differently from racism or homophobia, and that an adequate feminist analysis of misogynist speech needs to take account of that difference.

2 Understanding Misogyny and Sexism

The US-based philosopher Kate Manne has recently called for a new understanding of misogyny. In her book *Down Girl. The Logic of Misogyny* (Manne 2017), she argues that misogyny should not be understood as a generalized hatred of women as a class, but rather as a system for punishing 'bad' women, those who do not keep to their allotted place in the patriarchal order. She points out that whereas ethnic or religious hatred often does involve feelings of antipathy towards the group as a whole, and a desire to avoid contact with its members (expressed, for instance, in calls for their expulsion, segregation or, at the extreme, extermination), misogyny rarely if ever takes analogous forms. Very few men would not claim to love and/or respect at least some women (their mothers, say, or their female children); and few would regard the total absence of women from their lives as a desirable state of affairs.

Manne makes an important distinction between misogyny and sexism. In her model sexism is the 'justificatory' branch of the patriarchal order, which rationalizes and justifies male dominance through be-

liefs, theories, stereotypes and cultural narratives that present women as naturally inferior; misogyny, on the other hand, is patriarchy's 'law enforcement' branch, which rewards 'good' women who comply with societal norms while punishing those who misbehave. At the most general level, 'good' and 'bad' behaviour are defined with reference to the norm that men are entitled to take from women, while women are obligated to give to men. Women are punished if they do not give men what men feel entitled to expect from women (for instance, love, sex, fidelity, domestic services, emotional support, attention, respect) or if they demand too much from men, or if they take something for themselves which men regard as their own by right.

Importantly, Manne does not regard misogyny as a psychological disposition of individuals, but rather as an ideology that permeates society and its institutions. Of course its effects often play out in relationships between individual men and women, but misogyny also has institutional forms which may have consequences for women as a class – for instance, when a politician raises concerns about women 'taking men's jobs', when a church leader condemns the 'selfishness' of women who choose not to have children, or when a judge expresses sympathy for men who injure or kill their unfaithful wives. These misogynist beliefs and attitudes continue to be expressed and acted on by people in positions of power because they command a high degree of consensus in society more broadly: they are culturally pervasive, among women as well as men, and are certainly not confined to a tiny minority of men whose hostility to women is so extreme as to be pathological.

In the following discussion I will ask how this account of misogyny and sexism can illuminate the relationship of women to language, considered not only as a representational medium but also, in use, as a social practice. I will suggest that sexism and misogyny, defined in the way Kate Manne defines them, are separable but often co-present influences on the use of language, and that misogyny does not just make itself felt in what we might intuitively want to call hate speech – for instance, when women who express opinions online are deluged with rape and death threats, or when women in any context are referred to with slur-terms like 'cunt' and 'whore'. The combination or interaction of sexism and misogyny shapes our verbal interactions in much more varied, and more basic, ways.

3 The Everyday Sexism and Misogyny of Verbal Interaction

Since the mid-1970s, researchers in a number of disciplines, using an array of methods to analyse data from a wide range of speech genres and situations, have found copious and compelling evidence that there exists, in male dominated societies, a tendency for wom-

en's contributions to interaction to receive fewer tokens of attention, acknowledgment and respect than the contributions made by men. One manifestation of this is the widely-attested pattern whereby men tend to dominate interaction in mixed-sex dyads or groups. Investigations of the gendered distribution of speech, measured either by speaking time or by the percentage of turns taken by each participant, show a general trend for women to get less than their fair share of the floor while men get more than their fair share. One particularly striking recent case is Karpowitz and Mendelberg's (2014) study of small-group deliberative discussions, where they manipulated the gender-composition of the groups they observed in their lab to see whether the numerical balance between men and women made a difference. All their groups contained five people, meaning that in an ideal 'just world' each participant would get 20% of the speaking time. They found that men always took at least 20%, whereas women only reached that threshold in groups where they were not just a majority but a supermajority, outnumbering men 4:1. These researchers found more or less the same pattern when they moved out of the lab to analyse the real-world deliberations of US school boards.

While it is often assumed that this pattern is a consequence of men's greater assertiveness and confidence – they get more speaking time because they are more aggressive than women in competing to take and then hold the floor – it is not easy for even a very assertive and confident speaker to dominate a multi-party interaction without the consent and the support of other participants. Men's interactional dominance is enabled by the willingness of both sexes to pay more attention to men, allowing them to speak without interruption and making supportive moves (e.g., asking questions or giving minimal responses and agreement tokens) which encourage them to continue speaking. In this respect talk exemplifies the general principle set out by Kate Manne, that men are entitled to take from women while women are obligated to give to men. Though in some situations there is an interaction between gender and status (i.e., some men receive support and deference from both women and other men because of their position in a professional or institutional hierarchy) the 'men dominate/interrupt and women support/defer' pattern has also been observed in cases where there is no status differential, and even where women outrank men (e.g. Fishman 1978; Snyder 2014; West, Zimmerman 1983; Woods 1988). As Karpowitz and Mendelberg note, legitimate speakership is associated with authority (the capacity to influence without using coercive means) – we attend to others' contributions to the degree we believe they have something worthwhile to communicate; and authority is conceptualized as a male or masculine quality. Hence the anecdotally familiar phenomenon of men receiving credit when they repeat a point that has already been made, without receiving acknowledgment, by a woman.

It is not only women's speaking rights which are frequently disrespected. A "respect gap" (Cameron 2020, 20) is also apparent in the differential use of address forms to men and women, whether in casual street encounters between unacquainted persons (Brooks Gardner 1980), or in formal professional settings. In the latter case, one conventional marker of respect is the use of titles like 'Dr' or 'Professor' to address and refer to individuals. But some studies have found that this courtesy is frequently withheld from professional women. In a study of the introductions made at Grand Rounds, a kind of medical conference where hospital doctors present recent cases to colleagues and students, Files et al. (2017) found that women doctors introducing their colleagues virtually always used the title 'Dr', regardless of the sex of the person being introduced. Men, however, were much more likely to use the title when introducing other men: though this was a situation in which every speaker, by definition, was entitled to be referred to as 'Dr X', men gave that appellation to 72% of male introducees and only 49% of female ones.

In Britain in 2018 there was a brief but high-profile media controversy about the use of the title 'Dr' (Evans 2018). After a newspaper announced that in future it would only use the title in reference to medical doctors, and not people with PhDs in other fields, the feminist historian Fern Riddell tweeted that she disagreed with this policy: she felt that any journalist who consulted her as an expert in her field should use her academic title. Though the point she was making had nothing to do with gender – she was demanding recognition for all holders of doctoral degrees – she was immediately attacked for being an 'immodest woman'. What followed suggested that this was not just a reaction to Riddell as an individual. Many other women academics responded by recounting similar experiences of being told that it was unseemly or churlish for them to insist on the use of their titles. The attitude underlying these responses can be seen as another instance of Manne's principle that women are expected to meet others' demands, and not to make demands themselves. Fern Riddell's critics did not dispute that she had earned a PhD, but apparently they did dispute that she was entitled to public recognition for that achievement, and saw her demand for recognition as illegitimate self-aggrandisement.

4 The Case of Women's Political Speech

Over the last few years, with my colleague Sylvia Shaw, I have been examining the way sexism and misogyny shape perceptions of political speech (Cameron, Shaw 2016; 2020). Politics is an obvious setting in which to pose questions about language, gender and authority, since it is a domain where authority is centrally at issue, and is

projected or negotiated to a large extent through language. In democracies, politicians must use words to persuade their peers and the voting public that they are worthy of the power they seek; and in contemporary democracies they are also very dependent on the way they and their words are represented by the media, since the relationship of most citizens to the electoral process and the people involved in it is mediated rather than direct. We might go to the polls in person to record our vote, but few of us are active in political campaigns: very few of us nowadays go to political meetings or hustings or to lobby candidates in person. In Britain, certainly, the key events of any election campaign are the TV debates where political leaders perform less for the small audience in the studio than for the mass audience watching at home. In our work on British politics, Sylvia Shaw and I have investigated the difficulties women politicians face in negotiating the demands of this kind of performance, and we have argued that this is a more complex question than many discussions of it acknowledge.

In both political science and linguistics, the question has most often been approached by focusing on women's own linguistic behaviour, asking how it differs from men's and how that might put women at a disadvantage. Maybe women's habitual speech-style is too tentative or too conciliatory to project the authority people expect from a political leader, or maybe women are less skilled users of the competitive, adversarial style of discourse that is the prevailing norm in most political assemblies. But for us that has not been the most fruitful approach. In our empirical analysis of the TV debates which were the key events of the 2015 UK general election, we found there was little difference in the behaviour of male and female politicians of comparable status and experience. The difference had less to do with production and more to do with perception.

We argue, not only in this case but in general, that it is an error to suppose that gender distinctions and hierarchies are reproduced exclusively through the actual verbal behaviour of male and female speakers; attention must also be given to the role of hearers or audiences. Hearers' perceptions are influenced by culturally pervasive ideologies of language and gender; this gives rise to gendered judgments on speakers, which are typically reproduced and amplified in media representations of their speech. The information contained in media representations may in turn be a source of feedback for the speakers concerned, on the basis of which they might choose to adjust their behaviour. If a woman (like Hillary Clinton, say) has been represented in media commentary as 'cold and unfeeling', she might make a conscious effort to project warmth and emotional expressiveness in future performances. But although individual speakers can make this kind of post-hoc adjustment, they cannot prevent or control the tendency for their speech to be perceived and judged through a

gendered lens. And as we found in our case study of the 2015 election campaign, that is often a distorting lens: people's *perceptions* of the way women communicate are not borne out by empirical analysis of their actual *behaviour*. For instance, commentators on the TV election debates between party leaders often commended the three women who took part for their civility, the fact that they refrained from interrupting, challenging or insulting their opponents. In fact, our analysis showed that they did all the things they were praised for avoiding: one of the women, Nicola Sturgeon, interrupted and challenged others more frequently than all but one of the male party leaders.

The ideologies of language and gender that shape the reception of women's political speech are examples of sexism in Kate Manne's definition: they invoke beliefs, stereotypes, theories and cultural narratives about the supposed linguistic differences between men and women. And it is possible for a cultural narrative to be sexist in this sense without being negative. The judgment mentioned above, commending women for their civility towards their political rivals, is an example of a 'positive' sexist stereotype: it belongs to a set of ideas about women as political actors that Sylvia Shaw and I call the "different voice" ideology, a reference to the work of the psychologist Carol Gilligan (1982). The idea that women are more relational, more collaborative, more responsive to others' needs than men, has become part of a discourse which credits women with bringing a more humane, democratic and 'modern' approach into historically male-dominated political institutions. This is typically presented as a positive development: women, by virtue of being different from men, bring something new and valuable to the political arena.

Since the 1990s, one important thing women have repeatedly been said to bring into politics is a less adversarial, more co-operative and consensus-seeking style of speech. This style has been cited, usually approvingly, not only by political commentators in the media, but also by politicians themselves, in public statements and interviews with academic researchers. Below are some examples of these statements:

> Women are more co-operative in the way they work. They're not so into scoring points, and more interested in hearing different points of view. (Julia Drown MP, Lab., Swindon South, 1997)

> What [women] will do is make politics more relevant to people's lives: democracy is about consensus rather than imposing will. (Gisela Stuart MP, Lab., Edgbaston, 1997)

> Women prefer a "less combative and aggressive style", with "less standing up and shouting on the floor of the House". (Childs 2004, 5-6, summarizing interviews conducted with women MPs)

> Nicola Sturgeon for the SNP and Leanne Wood for Plaid Cymru changed the debate not just because of what they said, but *how* they said it. (Roberts 2015)

This representation of women's difference is, of course, a stereotype; even if it captures some actually-existing tendency, it offers an overgeneralized and exaggerated account of it. And the problem with stereotypes, even positive ones, is that if they are treated as normative yardsticks against which real individuals may be judged, many, perhaps even most, women will not measure up.

5 Sexism and Misogyny in the Representation of Female Politicians

Most women politicians do not conform to the 'different voice' stereotype, especially when they get into positions of significant power. Women who are or who aspire to be powerful almost invariably become targets for misogyny, the punishment meted out to women who deviate from the norms of proper feminine behaviour. This is something you see very clearly if you look at the way women politicians are represented – at the language used about them in general, and more specifically the language used to represent their speech.

One common representational strategy is to belittle women in authority while simultaneously presenting them as monstrous tyrants. Below are some examples taken from commentary on the TV election debates in the UK in 2015:[1] the first two are about the woman who chaired one of the debates, the newsreader Julie Etchingham, and the others are about Nicola Sturgeon, who took part in the debates in her capacity as the leader of the SNP (she was also, then as now, First Minister of Scotland.)

- Our Julie was also in a white jacket that gave her the air of an imperious ***dental nurse***.
- This ***headmistress*** was not taking any nonsense from the naughty boys and girls at the back of the class.
- But the Aussie [Green Party leader Natalie Bennett] backed the ***head girl*** Nicola [Sturgeon, SNP leader] when she took on the Prime Minister, saying: "I agree with Nicola".
- She was very much like a ***primary school teacher***, bobbing her head up and down, using her hands a lot.
- She ticked off Nigel Farage like a ***hospital matron*** who has found something nasty in the ward.

1 The source we used to compile our corpus of press commentary on the debates was Lexis UK, date range 31 March to 8 May 2015.

In these examples women in positions of authority are compared to nurses and schoolmistresses, the occupants of positions where women have historically been permitted to exercise a petty form of power over either children or incapacitated adults. For this they are either resented (on the basis that any kind of female power is illegitimate and unnatural) or ridiculed (on the basis that they are tinpot dictators who overestimate their own importance, and/or only seek power because their lack of feminine allure denies them the rewards 'normal' women prefer).

It is striking how frequently misogynist commentary focuses specifically on the speech and the vocal performance of women. During the American presidential election campaign of 2016, the supposed unpleasantness of Hillary Clinton's voice became such a prominent issue, it spawned its own genre of meta-commentary in which people argued about whether descriptions of her voice as 'shrill' and 'grating' were responding to anything real, or whether they simply demonstrated a bias against female voices (Khazan 2016). There is evidence that (in English) lower-pitched voices are typically judged more authoritative than higher-pitched ones, and that this correlation holds for both male and female voices (Klofstad, Anderson, Peters 2012). But describing a speaker as 'shrill' implies more than just high pitch, it also implies an unpleasantly piercing sound, and is associated with negatively stereotyped female behaviours like bossiness or nagging. Positive descriptions of women's voices tend to emphasize qualities associated with sexually desirable femininity, such as warmth, softness, breathiness or whisperiness. Qualities more associated with the projection of authority, like loudness, monotony and creaky voice or fry, are criticised in women speakers, though when displayed in the speech of men they tend not to be commented on at all. The criterion of being pleasing to the ear is not applied to men, just as men face less exacting judgments on their appearance and dress.

Another source of information about the way women's speech is perceived is the way their speech is reported – specifically, what verbs of speaking are used to introduce a politician's own words. Guidelines for English-speaking journalists usually recommend the generic verbs 'say' and 'tell' because they are evaluatively neutral and so less liable to draw complaints of bias. But in a study of Canadian election coverage, the researchers Elisabeth Gidengil and Joanna Everitt (2000) showed that while 'say' and 'tell' were the most frequently-used verbs used to report the speech of all the party leaders, they were used more frequently in reporting male leaders' speech. Women leaders' speech, conversely, was more frequently reported using affect-laden verbs, and these consistently implied a marked degree of aggression. While men simply 'said' things, women 'accused', 'blasted', 'hit back' and 'hammered away' at their political opponents. The researchers could not find anything in the speech itself to justify

this representation of the women as more aggressive than the men. They found that all the leaders in this campaign adopted the strategy they call 'talking tough', adopting a confrontational rather than low-key style. But since in women a confrontational style is in conflict with societal norms of gender-appropriate behaviour, it is liable to be perceived as *more* confrontational than the analogous style used by men. Representing it in markedly aggressive language ensures that media audiences who may not have heard the speech in question receive a negative impression of it. This may also be done in a mock-humorous mode, as in this example, taken from press coverage of the 2015 General Election (it recounts an exchange from the second TV debate, involving three female party leaders and one male):

> "Ed Miliband is scared to be bold," **scowled** Ms Sturgeon. "We don't want a pretend alternative to austerity". "Exactly right!" **squeaked** Ms Bennett.
>
> "Labour are letting the Tories off the hook!" **snapped** Ms Wood. The audience applauded.
>
> Desperately Mr Miliband tried to steer the debate back to his absent foe. "Let's not pretend there's no difference between me and David Cameron", he **said**, *rather pleadingly*. "There's not a big enough difference!" **barked** Ms Sturgeon.

The choice of verbs of speaking here helps to construct a scenario in which the women are ganging up on the hapless man, scowling, snapping and barking at him in a collective display of anger and aggression, while he is given the neutral verb 'say', embellished with an adverb, 'pleadingly', that emphasises his position as a supplicant.

6 Conclusion

The judgments made on women's political speech exemplify a phenomenon psychologists have called the 'likeability-competence dilemma', on the basis of studies showing that if a woman is judged to display high competence in an area of expertise perceived as male, she will also be judged less likeable than either men with the same competence or women who are less competent (Rudman, Fairchild 2004; Heilman, Okimoto 2007). This is undoubtedly a real dilemma for women politicians in an age when, as polls consistently show, we expect our leaders to project both competence and likeability; we want to be able to respect their authority, while at the same time feeling we can relate to them as people. It is difficult for a woman to meet both these criteria simultaneously (Potter 2019).

Kate Manne's distinction between sexism and misogyny is helpful for our understanding of this phenomenon. Women who behave in accordance with the norms of patriarchal femininity are liable to be judged less competent than men: this is a case of sexism, the ideology that justifies women's subordinate status as a consequence of the natural differences between the sexes – for instance, in this case, the idea that women have a less assertive style of speaking and are less effective in contexts like political debate where the norms are explicitly adversarial. Women who behave in counter-stereotypic ways, however, are liable to be judged *less* likeable than men, and this is a case of misogyny, the ideology that punishes women for laying claim to men's rights and privileges or failing to show regard for men's feelings. At the extreme, all a woman has to do to provoke this kind of punishment is merely express an opinion in a public forum. That in itself is regarded by some men as a sufficiently serious encroachment on their privileges to justify a flood of threats couched in the violent and sexually graphic register that Emma Jane (2017) calls 'Rapeglish'.

Although this register is not currently defined as a form of hate speech in English law, there are many people who think it should be, since the kind of hatred it expresses towards women appears comparable to the kind of hatred racists or homophobes express towards their target groups. But in this paper I have tried to suggest that such a narrow definition of misogyny is not necessarily helpful for the purposes of either feminist analysis or feminist politics. Misogyny works through a wide range of interactional and representational patterns, and arguably what they have in common is not the meanings they express or indeed the offence they give, but the function they fulfil – policing women's behaviour in accordance with patriarchal norms. In the case of women's speech, the most general norm being upheld through both sexism and misogyny is that women should not assume the right to speak and be heard on the same terms as men. I believe that is a fundamental aspect of women's oppression, which must be exposed and resisted in all its forms.

Bibliography

Brooks Gardner, C. (1980). "Passing By. Street Remarks, Address Rights and the Urban Female". *Sociological Inquiry*, 50(3), 328-56. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-682x.1980.tb00026.x.

Cameron, D. (2020). "The Gender Respect Gap". Caldas-Coulthard, C. (ed.), *Innovations and Challenges in Language and Gender*. Milton Park: Routledge, 19-33.

Cameron, D.; Shaw, S. (2016). *Gender, Power and Political Speech*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Cameron, D.; Shaw, S. (2020). "Constructing Women's 'Different Voice'. Gendered Mediation in the 2015 UK General Election". *Journal of Language and Politics*, 19(1), 144-59. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.19086.cam.

Childs, S. (2004). "A Feminised Style of Politics? Women MPs in the House of Commons". *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 6(1), 3-19. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856x.2004.00124.x.

Evans, P. (2018). "'It's Dr, not Ms', Insists Historian". *BBC News Website*, June 15. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-44496876.

Files, J.A. et al. (2017). "Speaker Introductions at Internal Medicine Grand Rounds. Forms of Address Reveal Gender Bias". *Journal of Women's Health*, 26(5), 413-19. https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2016.6044.

Fishman, P. (1978). "Interaction. The Work Women Do". *Social Problems*, 25(4), 397-406. https://doi.org/10.2307/800492.

Gidengil, E.; Everitt, J. (2000). *Talking Tough. Gender and Reported Speech in Campaign News Coverage. Working Papers Series*. Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, Harvard University. https://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/2000_12_gidengil_everitt.pdf?x78124.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a Different Voice. Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.

Heilman, M.E.; Okimoto, T.G. (2007). "Why Are Women Penalised for Success at Male Tasks? The Implied Communality Deficit". *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(1), 81-92. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.1.81.

Jane, E. (2017). *Misogyny Online. A Short (and Brutish) History.* London: SAGE Publications.

Karpowitz, C.; Mendelberg, T. (2014). *The Silent Sex*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press.

Khazan, O. (2016). "The Science behind Hating Hillary's Voice". *The Atlantic*, August 1. https://www.theatlantic.com/video/index/493814/the-science-behind-hating-hillarys-voice.

Klofstad, C.; Anderson, R.; Peters, S. (2012). "Sounds like a Winner. Voice Pitch Influences Perceptions of Leadership Capacity in both Men and Women". *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, 279, 2698-704. https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2012.0311.

Manne, K. (2017). *Down Girl. The Logic of Misogyny*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mullany, L.; Trickett, L. (2018). *Misogyny Hate Crime Evaluation Report*. University of Nottingham; Nottingham Trent University. http://www.nottinghamwomenscentre.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Misogyny-Hate-Crime-Evaluation-Report-June-2018.pdf.

Potter, C.B. (2019). "Men Invented 'Likability'. Guess Who Benefits". *New York Times*, May 4. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/04/opinion/sunday/likeable-elizabeth-warren-2020.html.

Roberts, Y. (2015). "Yet Again Men Hold Power. Why Can't Labour Change?". *Observer*, September 13. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/13/women-politics-power-labour-leadership-jeremy-corbyn.

Rudman, L.; Fairchild, K. (2004). "Reactions to Counterstereotypic Behaviour. The Role of Backlash in Stereotype Maintenance". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87(2), 157-76. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.87.2.157.

Snyder, K. (2014). "How to Get Ahead as a Woman in Tech. Learn to Interrupt Men". *Slate*, July 23. https://slate.com/human-interest/2014/07/study-men-interrupt-women-more-in-tech-workplaces-but-high-ranking-women-learn-to-interrupt.html.

West, C.; Zimmerman, D. (1983). "Small Insults. A Study of Interruptions in Cross-Sex Conversations between Unacquainted Persons". Thorne, B.; Kramarae, C.; Henley, N. (eds), *Language, Gender and Society*. Cambridge (MA): Newbury House, 102-17.

Woods, N. (1988). "Talking Shop. Sex and Status as Determinants of Floor Apportionment in a Work Setting". Coates, J.; Cameron, D. (eds), *Women in their Speech Communities. New Perspectives on Language and Sex*. London: Longman, 141-57.

Part I Corpus-Based and Experimental Studies

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

Narrating Gender Violence
A Corpus-Based Study on the Representation of Gender-Based Violence in Italian Media

Lucia Busso
Aston University, Birmingham, UK

Claudia Roberta Combei
Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna, Italia

Ottavia Tordini
Università di Pisa, Italia

Abstract Using a corpus-based and cross-modal approach, this study explores mediatic linguistic representations of gendered violence. Specifically, we analyse a journalistic corpus (WItNECS, Women in Italian Newspaper Crime Sections) and a multimedia dataset of the Italian TV program *Amore Criminale* (AC). The corpus is explored via collocational analysis of key terms and topic modelling. AC is investigated with a multimodal analysis of speech and gestures. Finally, we compare similarities and differences of newspaper and television language. Findings from this innovative methodology bring new evidence on the mediatic representation of 'women as victims'.

Keywords Language and gender. Corpus linguistics. Topic modelling. Multimodal analysis. Media language.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia 1
ISSN 2724-4652
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-478-3 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-479-0

Open access
Published 2020-12-29

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-478-3/002

1 Introduction

The social, cultural and political issue of gendered violence has been at the centre of a heated debate in recent years, thanks to global social campaigns (such as *#METOO*, or *ni una menos*) that have drawn more attention to the problem. Nevertheless, quantitative and statistical data on the phenomenon are still scarce. Suffice it to say that according to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), no European-level statistical analysis has been possible, due to complete absence of useful data (EIGE 2018). In Italy, few (and very recent) statistical data have been analysed (by ISTAT and by the Department for Equal Opportunities). Findings show that family contexts are the highest-risk situations for women: in 2014, 77% of female murder victims were in fact killed at the hands of a partner, a former partner or a family member.[1] Data from the 2018 survey by SDGS (Sustainable Development Goals) on spy crimes reports that in 2014-16 almost 80% of family maltreatment, 74% of persecutory acts and 89% of sexual violence concern a woman.[2] A new attention to the problem is also demonstrated by recent advances in the regulatory field: Law 23/4/2009, art. 612 bis c.p. introduces for the first time the crime of "persecutory acts" (stalking) in the Italian legal system.[3]

Notwithstanding the seriousness of such crimes and the recent global attention to the issue, Italian media and social debate still fails to truly grasp the extent of the problem. The same term "femicide", defined for the first time in Russell and Radford (1992) as the murder of a woman by a man because of her gender, is only first introduced in Italian in 2008 (Spinelli 2008), and is recorded by dictionaries the following year. Furthermore, Italy can be considered (following Formato 2019) a "fruitful epistemological site" (Sunderland 2004, 73), i.e. a place which is particularly interesting for the study of gender and language due to its idiosyncratic characteristics (for an in-depth discussion, see Formato 2019, 3 ff.). These crucial features of Italian sociocultural *milieu* include the cult of femi-

This work is the result of a close cooperation, from the beginning of the design phase onwards, between the three authors. For academic purposes, L. Busso is held responsible for sections 1 and 3, C.R. Combei for sections 2 and 4, O. Tordini for sections 5 and 6. We thank the anonymous reviewer for the useful suggestions.

1 EURES 2016, cited in Abis, Orrù 2016.

2 Report SDGS 2018 – Informazioni statistiche per l'agenda 2030 in Italia. https://www.istat.it/it/files//2018/07/SDGs.pdf.

3 Law proposal 1455 reinforces the procedural safeguards of victims of sexual and domestic violence has recently been approved (April 2019). To date, there is also a penalty of up to six years and a €15,000 fine for revenge porn.

nine beauty and the ideal of the Mother as the "figure" (Auerbach, [1973]'s terms) of woman, all of which had "a profound sexual asymmetry in Italian society" (Gundle 2007, 266).

We propose an exploratory investigation of the portrayal of gendered crimes in Italian media. Specifically, we present a contrastive analysis of newspaper and television language. The data analysed are a corpus of crime news sections articles and a set of episodes from *Amore Criminale* (Criminal Love), a television show which narrates "the stories of women who through love met death […] through reconstructions, documentary material and direct testimonies".[4] In other words, we propose an investigation of journalistic and TV language aimed at disentangling attitudes, stereotypes and conceptualizations underlying the contemporary sociocultural attitudes toward women and hate crimes perpetrated against them (Tabbert 2012).

The article is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the theoretical background, the hypotheses and the data collection of the corpora used for subsequent analyses. Sections 3, 4 and 5 deal with the various types of analyses. Specifically, we first present a corpus-based lexical exploration (§ 3), followed by a description of the computational analysis performed using Structural Topic Modelling (§ 4). Both paragraphs refer to analyses conducted on written language. Section 5 introduces the multimodal and multimedia contrastive analysis performed on television spoken language. We conclude with Section 6, in which we discuss the significance of our findings.

2 The Study

In the last decade, a large body of literature employed corpora in gender linguistics (e.g. Mills, Mullany 2011; Johnson, Ensslin 2013; Baker 2014; Wodak 2015), but to date, very few such studies have addressed the Italian language (cf. Marcato, Thüne 2002; Busso, Combei, Tordini 2019; Formato 2019). Nevertheless, the potential of corpus-based analyses is unquestionable, since they allow large-scale explorations, useful for revealing linguistic and cultural schemes and traits from all sorts of data.

This exploratory study brings a contribution to the field of corpus-based content analysis by describing the language used by Italian media to talk about violence against women. We adopt a multimodal and multimedia approach on texts (i.e. newspaper articles) and audio-video material (i.e. interviews and docu-fiction) in order to unveil patterns of content, style and gestures in the description of gendered

4 From the description of the show, our translation.

violence in newspapers and television shows. Unlike Abis and Orrù (2016) and Formato (2019), our study combines corpus-based lexical explorations, Structural Topic Model techniques (Roberts et al. 2014) and metaphor and gesture analysis. We believe that this combined exploratory approach might be beneficial in addressing the complex issue of how language is used to depict gendered violence.

Our expectations regard both content and style. On the one hand, we expect that newspapers will abound in articles dedicated to femicide perpetrated by the victims' partners; this would act as a proxy for illustrating that this phenomenon has escalated in recent years in Italy. On the other hand, we believe that the audio-video material will be rich in metaphorical content. This will also allow us to briefly compare the two media.

We perform our analyses on a specialized corpus of journalistic language (WItNECS, Women in Italian Newspaper Crime Sections) **[Tab. 1]** and a multimedia and multimodal database for the Italian television series *Amore Criminale* (AC) **[Tab. 2]**. WItNECS was collected manually, choosing as a starting date 13 September 2016, that symbolically matches the suicide of Tiziana Cantone – an Italian victim of revenge porn. The data collection process continued for over 9 months and it consisted in downloading and storing all news regarding violence against women in Italy and the metadata of the articles in individual.txt files. In order to ensure balancedness and representativity to our data, we collected articles from four national newspapers: *Corriere della Sera* (CS), *La Stampa* (LS), *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (IFQ), and *La Repubblica* (R). For the latter, we also included regional editions from Milan (RRM), Florence (RRF), Naples (RRN), and Palermo (RRP), in order to render the data geographically comparable. WItNECS was automatically compiled on Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al. 2014).

Table 1 WItNECS statistics

WItNECS	
TOKENS: 271,506	LANGUAGE: Italian
WORDS: 234,178	ENCODING: UTF-8
SENTENCES: 10,556	
	TIMEFRAME: 2016-09-13 to 2017-06-30
DOCUMENTS: 614	

Table 2 AC statistics

AC	
TYPE: Multimodal and multimedia	LANGUAGE: Italian
FORMAT: videos, orthographic transcriptions, gesture and language annotations	ENCODING: UTF-8
CONTENT: docu-fiction, interviews, court records	8 episodes (2015-16; 2016-17)

Our multimedia database (AC) is built around 8 episodes of the TV show *Amore Criminale*.[5] We chose this show not only because it presented real instances of femicide, but also because it was rich in terms of communicative styles and linguistic registers. The AC database consists in 8 episodes aired during the 2015-16 and 2016-17 seasons, as well the orthographic transcription and the multilevel annotation of gestures (see § 5, for a detailed description of the transcription and annotation process). Each episode deals with a different crime and it contains interviews with real people, reconstructions of specific events (i.e. docu-fiction), as well as the presentation of court and legal records.

3 Corpus-Based Lexical Analyses

As mentioned in § 2, we expect crime news articles to convey significant information which reflect communicative strategies, latent ideologies, and general public opinion on the topic of gendered violence. We explore such a hypothesis with a first exploration of the corpus with the online software *SketchEngine* (Kilgarriff et al. 2014), which allows accurate quantitative surveys using fine-grained statistical measures (e.g. association scores, keyness). The corpus was subject only to a mild pre-processing at this stage: numbers, excess white spaces, URLs, hashtags and other non-linguistic symbols were stripped. In fact, the analyses presented are conducted with the *Wordsketch tool*, which allow to select the grammatical relations of interest, therefore excluding stop-words and non-interesting elements at a later stage in the analysis.

5 *Amore Criminale* is an Italian television programme broadcast on Rai Tre. Each episode recounts a love story ended with a murder. The narrations combine various communicative styles: interviews (with the victims' families, friends, and colleagues, with policemen, magistrates and lawyers), docu-fiction (filmed reconstructions) and original documentary material. The presenter introduces and summarizes the story.

For reasons of space, we do not dwell on the detailed lexical analysis (for further details see Busso, Combei, Tordini 2019), but we present two instances of analyses that exemplify well two main trends observed in journalistic language: the overwhelming presence of gendered violence in the domestic environment, and the implicit tendency of mainstream media outlets to exonerate the perpetrator of the crime. Specifically, we analyse the grammatical and collocational behaviour of three relevant terms: "donna", 'woman'; "marito", 'husband'; "moglie", 'wife' and "amore", 'love'.

Figure 1 depicts the Wordsketch of "donna". Wordsketches summarize a word collocational behaviour, using the logDice score, and allows to highlight different grammatical relations between collocates. The dynamic text size relates to frequency. In Figure 1, the relations depicted are modifiers (pink), noun modifiers (green), and nouns occurring with adversative or copulative conjunctions (blue). Some interesting considerations already surface. As we can see from Figure 1, women have collocates which point both to the violence and the abuse: "uccisa", 'killed'; "vittima", 'victim'). Furthermore, women are depicted by their age ("giovane", 'young'; "ragazza", 'girl') or nationality ("straniera", 'foreign'). Interestingly, women are grammatically related to men ("uomo"), children ("bambino"). They are victims and mothers ("madre"). Interestingly, we find no modifier relating to either job descriptions, or personal characteristics not related to external appearance (such as age and nationality).

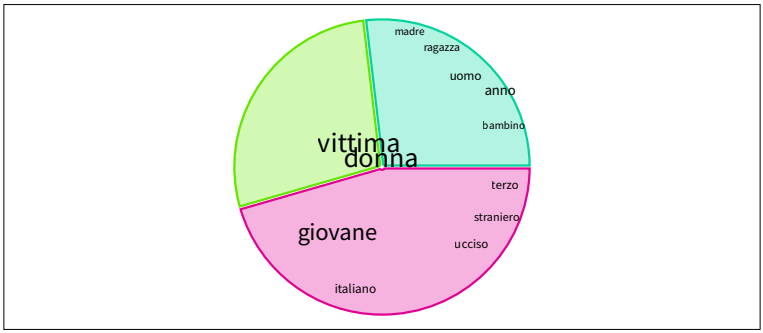

Figure 1 Wordsketch of the term "donna"

We also present the Wordsketch difference of 'husband' and 'wife', as they represent the most frequent terms to denote perpetrator and victim after the generic terms 'woman' ("donna", freq.: 2037, freq. pmw: 5976.27; "moglie", freq.: 358, freq. pmw: 1050,3) and 'man' ("uomo", freq.: 1017, freq. pmw: 2983.7; "marito", freq.: 341, freq. pmw: 1000). This datum corroborates our hypothesis: not only women are depicted as mothers, or in relation to a man, but also a prevalence of fam-

ily-related environments seems to emerge. Figure 2 represents the Wordsketch difference between the two terms, set on the grammatical relations of "verbs with 'moglie/marito' as objects".

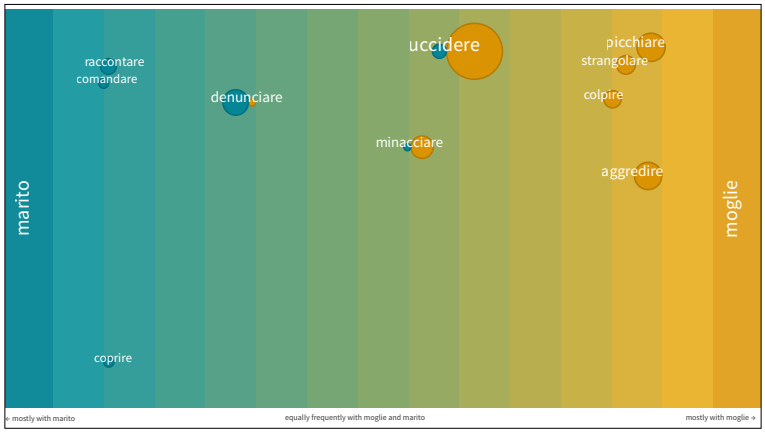

Figure 2 Wordsketch difference of verbs with "moglie/marito" as objects

As we can see, wives tend to appear more as direct objects. The verbs displayed are all actional, confirming the agentive role of the husband as a perpetrator of different kinds of violence ("uccidere", 'to kill'; "aggredire", 'to assault').

Notwithstanding the clear agentivity of the actions perpetrated by men and husbands, we can make some noteworthy observations by analysing the adjectival collocates of the term "amore", which in Italian is often used as a metonymy for relationship. Since most episodes of violence occur between partners, in fact, we considered it an interesting linguistic cue to explore how newspaper address the issue of violent relationships, a widely spread sociological phenomenon which often result in abuse, stalking or murder. The lexical collocates reveal that violent relationships are frequently not considered as a criminal, abusive situation, but rather 'justified' in various ways. The love is metaphorically defined as "malato" (sick). The metaphor, poetic as it may be, is however extremely dangerous: by equating a violent relationship to an illness, the perpetrator of the violence appears not to be held responsible for his actions, as violence is merely a symptom of an uncontrollable disease.

We also find that relationships are "sfortunato" (unlucky) or "eterno" (eternal). Both these terms are again extremely problematic, as they tend to put the focus on external elements (luck) or to reinforce the belief that despite everything love (especially marriage) should be eternal.

Love is also defined as "sbagliato" (wrong) or "criminale" (criminal). Although these terms are more appropriate to describe abuse

and violence, yet again we find a shift of focus from the perpetrator to the general relation of love, which disguise the responsibility of the agent.

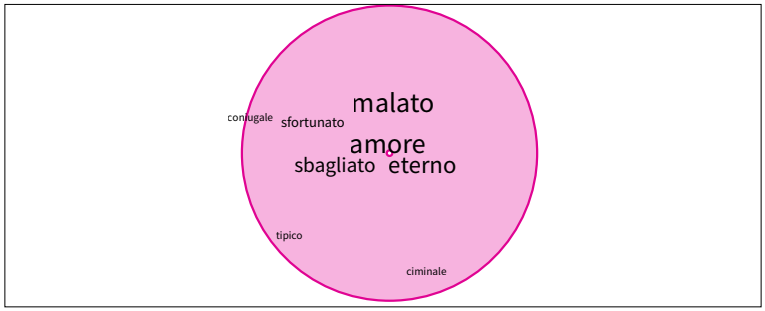

Figure 3 Wordsketch of the term "amore"

In sum, the main findings of the exploration of the lexicon of WItNECS can be summarized as follows: gender violence mostly occurs in the domestic environment; for this reason – perhaps – women are defined as "in relation to" a man. Moreover, female victims are qualified with adjectives relating to their age or nationality, rather than with personal traits or professional titles. Although wives are also found to appear principally as direct objects, husbands (and men)'s agentivity is found to be disguised with various (implicit) strategies (for a more detailed discussion; see the parallel study Busso, Combei, Tordini 2019).

This first corpus-driven exploration of our data allows for a preliminary understanding of collocational behaviour and general corpus structure. For a more in-depth analysis, we employ computational techniques for a better understanding of hidden patterns inside our corpus.

4 Inside *WItNECS*

In the last decade, an exponential interest in text mining has been reported worldwide (Sinoara, Antunes, Rezende 2017). This might be due to the enormous availability of texts on the web – often unstructured – and to the ongoing communication shift from traditional media to online content. For these reasons, various machine-assisted approaches for the analysis of large corpora have been proposed so far (see Watanabe, Zhou 2020 for a review). In an attempt to bring a contribution to content analysis, our study employs the Structural Topic Model technique (Roberts et al. 2014) to inductively identi-

fy semantic themes and issues on which Italian journalists focus in their crime articles regarding violence against women. This allows us to verify one of our expectations, namely that most articles will report femicide perpetrated by the victims' partners. Unlike Busso, Combei, Tordini (2019), this paper also explores the variation in issue attention across the newspapers considered. This enables us to capture communicative intentions and topic patterns for each newspaper. In § 4.1 the Structural Topic Model technique is presented; in § 4.2 we describe how pre-processing was applied to our data; finally, in § 4.3 we present our model and comment the topics.

4.1 The Definition and Characteristics of the Structural Topic Model

The Structural Topic Model (STM) is a generative model of word counts with document-level covariate information (Roberts et al. 2014; Roberts, Stewart, Airoldi 2016). Covariates are measurable variables that have a statistical relationship with the dependent (response) variable; hence, a covariate may predict or explain a dependent variable.

STM is part of the unsupervised learning methods that use modelling assumptions, text properties, and covariates to estimate topics within a corpus of often unstructured material and to organize it according to word co-occurrences. In the STM, and in similar frameworks such as Latent Dirichlet Allocation (Blei, Ng, Jordan 2003), a topic is a mixture over words where each word has a probability of belonging to a topic, while a document is a mixture over topics. One of the major novelties of the STM is the fact that the prior distribution of topics may be varied as a function of covariates (Roberts et al. 2014; Roberts, Stewart, Airoldi 2016). Covariates may enhance the interpretability of topics. Moreover, incorporating covariates in topic models improves inferences and enables the exploration of relationships among variables in regression-like schemes. This feature allows researchers to explain topical prevalence,[6] topical content or both, as a function of the relevant variables.

In the last couple of years, the STM has been greatly employed in social and political science research (Curry, Fix 2019; Mourtgos, Adams 2019; Pinto 2019; Combei, Giannetti 2020), but to the best of our knowledge, in linguistics it is still unused (Brookes, McEnery 2019; Combei 2019; Busso, Combei, Tordini 2019).

6 We use the topical prevalence feature in this work.

4.2 Data Processing for Structural Topic Model

STM is based on the 'bag of words' approach; this means that at the document level (i.e. the single newspaper article, in our case), every word is treated as a unique feature, and then its co-occurrences are computed. At the corpus level (i.e. all newspaper articles, in our case), words are systematized into a term document matrix, with each document representing a matrix column, and each word representing a matrix row.

After having built the term document matrix and in order for STM to be applied to the newspaper articles, several pre-processing operations were necessary. This helped reducing the 'noise' in our data. After the text tokenization (i.e. identifying and separating each word), we defined an ad hoc 'stop words' list for Italian, consisting of 1300 lexically empty or uninformative words (i.e. prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs, determiners etc.). Then, we cleaned and normalized the text with the pre-processing functions available on the *quanteda* (Benoit et al. 2018), *tm* (Feinerer, Hornik, Meyer 2008), and *qdapRegex* (Rinker 2017) R packages (R Core Team 2018). Hence, numbers, punctuation and one-character sequences were deleted. Additionally, we converted all letters to lowercase. Finally, following similar research (Banks et al. 2018; Mourtgos, Adams 2019), we opted for a frequency threshold of 1; this means that a word that appeared only once in one document was dropped.

The corpus generated with the "textProcessor" and "prepDocuments" functions in STM consisted of 77,087 single word forms and 17,840 lemmas. By applying the "searchK" function, we were able to perform several tests, such as held-out likelihood, residual analysis and semantic coherence, in order to establish the correct number of topics. According to these three tests, the 20-topics model had high levels of held-out likelihood and of semantic coherence, as well as low residuals. STM also gave us the possibility to set the type of initialization, therefore we used the spectral initialization, since its stability and consistence had already been proven (Roberts, Stewart, Tingley 2016; Combei 2019). We chose the highest probability as a word profile. Previous studies have shown that the stemming function available for STM does not perform well on Italian (Combei, Giannetti 2020); as a result, we used word forms instead of stemmed words in the model.

To use the name of the newspaper as a covariate for the topical prevalence, the information was coded in the file names during the data collection and further extracted and processed with R (e.g. from "CS_2016_12_14.txt" we obtained the newspaper name "*Corriere della Sera*" and the date "2016-12-14").

4.3 The Exploration of Topics

The topics that emerged from the STM model on WItNECS are shown in Figure 4. Each topic was assigned a label after the examination of their most semantically coherent words and after the analysis of the most exemplar documents, namely newspaper articles that had the highest proportion of words associated with the specific topic.

The results of our empirical observation display interesting societal, linguistic, and journalistic insights. Firstly, based on the topic proportions and the word probabilities of the STM model, it is clear that the most prevalent topic in our corpus regarded domestic violence and uxoricides (topics: 1, 4, 6, 10, 14, 16, 18), with an overall expected proportion of 38%. Words such as "marito", "coppia", "relazione", "famiglia", "fidanzato", "moglie" have high values of probabilities.[7] This finding fully confirms our first expectation, indirectly suggesting that this phenomenon has seen a rapid growth in recent years in Italy.

News describing cases of sexual harassment were second in terms of their presence in newspapers, as suggested by the high proportion of topics (i.e. 21%) related to this issue (topics: 5, 7, 9, 13, 20). On a different note, topics 8 and 17 (expected topic proportion: 13%) suggest that various articles also delineated crime scenes, giving deictic information on the crime setting and its participants, through words from the semantic field of crime (e.g. "corpo", "cadavere", "fuoco", "coltello" etc.).[8] Next, topics 3 and 19 (expected topic proportion: 12%) concerned news on arrests, accusations and sentences for crimes of violence against women; most terms in these topics belong to the semantic field of law (e.g. "gip", "custodia cautelare", "corte", "pena", "condanna" etc.).[9] Additionally, topics 2 and 12 regarded initiatives of helping victims and preventing femicides (estimated topic proportion: 7%). Topics 11 and 15 (estimated topic proportion: 9%) revealed the attention newspapers dedicated to new media and revenge porn (e.g. "video hard", "social", "facebook", "diffusione", "rete" etc.).[10]

As one of the aims of the STM model was to reveal communicative intentions and topic patterns for each newspaper, we also computed the estimated effects for the covariate 'newspaper'. The gamma matrix and the "findThoughts" function of the STM package allowed us, on the one hand, to examine how topics were distributed in each

7 Translation into English: 'husband', 'couple', 'relation', 'family', 'fiancé', 'wife'.

8 Translation into English: 'body', 'corpse', 'fire', 'knife'.

9 Translation into English: 'magistrate in charge of preliminary investigations', 'pretrial detention', 'court', 'punishment', 'sentence',

10 Translation into English: 'pornographic video', 'social media', 'Facebook', 'sharing', 'network'.

Figure 4 Topics in WItNECS

newspaper, and on the other hand, to assess the goodness of our model. Regarding the topic distribution, several tendencies, although not particularly strong, were revealed. We will mention only results that reached statistical significance (p-values < 0.05 in the regression-like scheme). Firstly, initiatives of helping victims and preventing femicides were reported often by IFQ and RRN (e.g. an IFQ article on 5 March 2017). Crimes involving new media and revenge porn were more frequent in CS and RRN (e.g. a CS article on 14 January 2017). Next, topics related to domestic violence had high expected proportions in LS, RRM, and RRP (e.g. a LS article on 11 April 2017). Topics regarding arrests and sentences for crimes against women were more frequently reported in LS (e.g. a LS article on 11 March 2017). Also, sexual harassment crimes were reported more often in IFQ (e.g. an IFQ article on 13 March 2017). Finally, the national and regional editions of *Repubblica* dedicated more space than other newspapers to the description of crime scenes (e.g. a R article on 1st May 2017).

5 Discourse and Gestures Analysis of *Amore Criminale*

Along with lexical and computational investigations, we also carried out a multimodal analysis on the audiovisual material extracted from the AC database (see § 2), with the purpose to offer a more thorough representation of 'women as victims' in Italian crime news. The novelty of this approach consists in the fact that this popular TV show has never been object of a linguistic research, albeit it can offer crucial insights into the narration and perception of everyday gender violence. To explore the AC content, we employed the software ELAN, a tool for multimodal transcription and processing developed by the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics[11] (for further details, cf. Sloetjes 2014). This method was chosen to provide a coherent methodological basis for the annotation and examination of audio and video resources and the interpretation of the multimedia content. In fact, ELAN allows the researcher to create and manipulate multiple annotations on different 'tiers', namely multiple levels of analysis in which both linguistic and metalinguistic information can be segmented and labelled. As methodological framework for the transcription and the analysis of multimodal data, we adopted the method developed by Magno Caldognetto et al. (2004). According to this system, which is called "partitura", communicative acts can be processed either separately or in their mutual interaction (see Busso, Combei, Tordini 2019).

For the purposes of this work, we followed the norms for orthographic transcription and coding originally provided by McNeill

11 Available at `https://tla.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan`.

(1992), and subsequently adapted in more recent studies, for instance Poggi (2007) and Kong et al. (2015) (see Wagner, Malisz, Kopp 2014 for an overview). This classification method was employed to label either the gestures of the participants (presenter, actors, victims/relatives in interviews), and the content of their oral productions (for example, M-speech act). Specifically, we employed the following tags:

- *I-gesture* for iconic gestures that shape the form of an object and/or try to reproduce a dynamic movement (i.e., the act of miming a real scene);
- *M-gesture* for metaphoric gestures, which convey and abstract idea to conceptualize a concrete experience;[12]
- *D-gesture* for deictic gestures, used by the speaker to indicate a specific element in the physical communicative context (i.e., pointing finger);
- *E-gesture* for emblematic gestures, i.e. with 'standard'/shared properties (for instance, gestures which are not language-specific, such as the thumb-index gesture for "OK").

In total, we analysed about 16 hours of the TV show, and tagged 116 observations. The content and percentages resulting from these classifications are shown in Figure 5.

Results show that 48.7% of communicative acts[13] in the AC database have a metaphorical content. If we look at the correspondences with the audiovisual material, we note that metaphors are specifically employed to describe the behaviour of the subjects – both men and women – involved in the events. These metaphors are drawn from various semantic domains, for example: nature/animals/plants ("era un parassita", 'he was a parasite'; "scatta la caccia all'assassino", 'the killer hunt starts'; "Francesca era un leone […] una combattente", 'Francesca was a lion […] a fighter'; "il fuoco della gelosia", 'the jealousy fire'), perception ("lento sprofondare nel mondo oscuro del ragazzo che amava", 'slowly sinking into the dark world of the man she loved'; "refrattario ad ogni luce di umanità", 'impervious to any light of humanity'), war ("eravamo tutti nel suo mirino", 'we were all in his gunsight'; "assediata da un uomo", 'besieged by a man'), or technology and games ("piano piano […] ho cominciato a vederla come un avversario", 'Little by little, I was starting to see her as a rival'; "era come se avessi combattuto in un videogame", 'it was as if I fought in a videogame'; "per me lei era solo una pedina", 'she was just a pawn to me').

12 As argued by Chui: "without concomitant linguistic representations, metaphorical thoughts cannot be interpreted without perceiving the manual configurations" (2011, 448).

13 For both iconic and metaphoric acts, we summed the total of *speech acts* and *gestures* (for instance, 42.6% *M-speech* + 6.1% *M-gestures*).

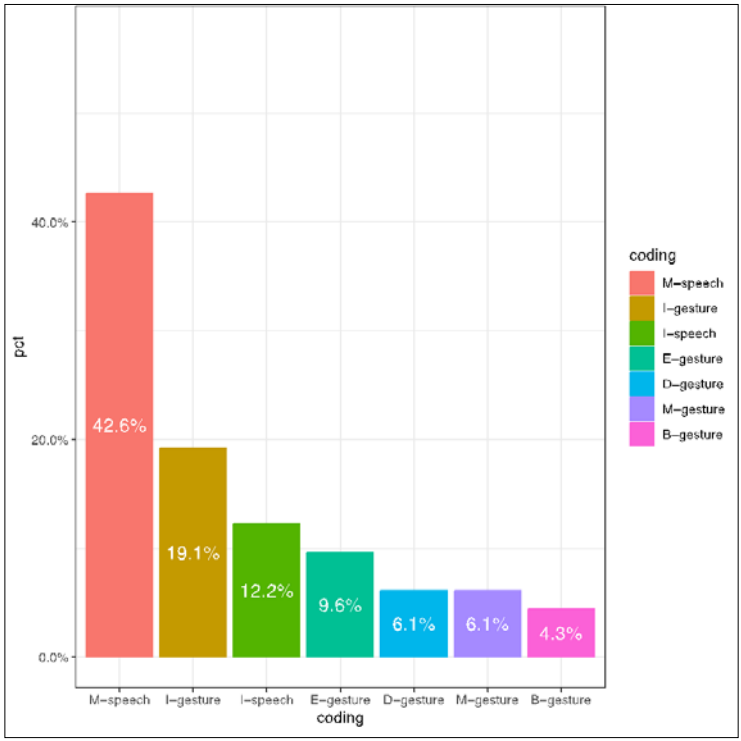

Figure 5 Percentages resulting from the gesture-speech tagging

As can be inferred from some of the examples presented here, some episodes of AC (season 2016-17) include interviews to men who had previously perpetrated violence on women (i.e. "uomini maltrattanti", 'abusing men'), and who are currently being treated in specialized centres. Specifically, they are asked to report (anonymously) their experience as serial aggressors and to describe the escalation of brutality against their partners. Interestingly, we note that they adopt recurrent schemes that might suggest a displacement of violence outside their own moral dimension. That is, these men would undergo *raptus* (such as "rabbia cieca", 'blind rage') that temporarily take over they consciousness, making them unable to control their behaviour and to act responsibly. Moreover, most of them report to have faced past traumas as victims of violence, which left a permanent trail on their personality. From the interviews, we deduce that they are deeply aware of what they have inflicted on their victims. In fact, they have decided to undergo psychological treatments in specialized rehabilitation centres. Nonetheless, the overall impression is that men are still – unconsciously – looking for some external justification of their viciousness.

Overall, gestures revealed to be the most significant strategy to convey the *authentic* content of the AC show, namely the characterization at socio-psychological level of both victims and "uomini maltrattanti". It is also worth noting the meaningful presence of *I-gestures* (19.1%), combined with *I-speech acts* (12.2%). Iconic pragmatic strategies are employed either by victims (if present) and by the presenter/interviewer to describe or mime acts of violence, (for instance: "avevo un occhio così", 'I had an eye like that'; "mi acchiappa per i capelli e mi tira fuori", 'he grabs me by my hair and pulls me out'). In some cases (6.1%), *I-gestures* are supported by *D-gestures* ("ero tutta piena di lividi […] qua […] dappertutto", 'I was all full of bruises […] here […] everywhere').

In light of these observations, we can infer that the representations of gendered violence in AC and WItNECS exhibit visible differences, yet also share some commonalities. First, it is evident that the nature of the TV show allows to provide a socio-psychological portrait of the actors, which on the contrary is absent in newspapers. Also, the spectacularization of the events is widespread in AC, as many details of the narration are stressed through adjectives. Besides, when describing both aggressors and victims, metaphoric speech is the most pervasive among the various communicative strategies. At the same time, the analyses conducted on both media show that the majority of crimes are committed by someone within the victim's domestic circle. Furthermore, the aggressor is often represented as someone who may have had no control of his own actions. In particular, equating "violent love" as consequence of a disease (for instance, "raptus") (see § 3), seems to suggest that – since he was sick – the culprit is to some extent less guilty.

6 Concluding Remarks

To conclude, we presented an exploratory cross-modal study of newspaper and TV language concerning the sociological phenomenon of gendered violence, through quantitative and qualitative analyses of an ad hoc compiled newspaper corpus and multimodal database. The journalistic corpus was firstly explored to reveal the collocational behaviour of several relevant terms. This first step was essential to a preliminary understanding of the corpus and of some of its patterns. It was found that women tend to be described as 'in-relation-to' their family members, based on their age and nationality, and never with professional titles. Furthermore, the collocations of the term "amore" (love) seemed to suggest an implicit exoneration of the culprit in favour of an 'external' causality: violence is a sickness, an unlucky circumstance, a mistake. To refine our preliminary analysis, we used the computational STM technique for in-depth quantitative explora-

tions. The STM allowed us to display and organize the content of the over 600 crime news articles of WItNECS. Besides revealing cues on the stylistic simplicity and objectivity, the major finding of this analysis, which confirms our expectations, is that most crimes are committed by someone in the victim's domestic circle (e.g. husband, exboyfriend etc.). Most importantly, it is to note that such quantitative analysis – that fully confirms data provided by the EIGE, ISTAT and the Department for Equal Opportunities – has never been so far performed. Regarding the distribution of topics in the newspapers under consideration, very few patterns were traceable: news depicting crime scenes were more recurrent in the national and regional editions of *Repubblica*; crimes regarding the distribution of revenge porn through new media appeared more often in CS and in RRN; finally, the issue of domestic violence was more frequent in LS, RRM, and RRP.

The multimodal analysis on the AC database allowed us to directly compare the two different mediatic languages and communicative strategies. In particular, it shed light on a large variety of communicative patterns, which highly depend on the focus of the interview/presentation. First, it is to note that metaphors (in both discourse and gestures) are frequently used to sketch the socio-psychological portrait of the actors, i.e. "uomini maltrattanti" and victims. Undoubtedly, this type of strategy contributes to emphasizing the spectacularization of the events presented in the TV show, in contrast with the descriptive approach that traditionally characterizes newspapers. Second, iconic speech and gestures are also frequently adopted by both victims and interviewees to report, testify and/or mime episodes of violence – either physical or psychological.

In conclusion, our data confirm the results of the surveys conducted by ISTAT and by the Department for Equal Opportunities (§ 1): women are harassed or killed mostly by men they know well. Also, the contrastive analysis revealed a striking similarity between AC and WItNECS. In both corpora, the gravity of violence seems to be somehow attenuated by external circumstances, or by internal factors, i.e. a temporary illness affecting the aggressor (*raptus*). Moreover, we also find a crucial difference between the representation of gender violence in WItNECS and AC. While – for its idiosyncratic nature – the TV show also reports on psychological violence and domestic abuse, crime news is principally concerned with femicide.

Bibliography

Abis, S.; Orrù, P. (2016). "Il femminicidio nella stampa italiana. Un'indagine linguistica". *Gender/sexuality/Italy*, 3, 18-33.

Auerbach, E. (1973). *Figura.* || *1938. Auerbach. Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*. Gloucester (MA): Peter Smith.

Baker, P. (2014). *Using Corpora to Analyse Gender.* London: Bloomsbury.

Banks, G.C. et al. (2018). "A Review of Best Practice Recommendations for Text Analysis in R (and a User-Friendly App)". *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 33(4), 445-59. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-017-9528-3.

Benoit, K. et al. (2018). "quanteda. An R Package for the Quantitative Analysis of Textual Data". *Journal of Open Source Software*, 3(30), 774. https://doi.org/10.21105/joss.00774.

Blei, D.M.; Ng, A.Y.; Jordan, M.I. (2003). "Latent Dirichlet Allocation". *Journal of Machine Learning Research*, 3(3), 993-1022. https://www.jmlr.org/papers/volume3/blei03a/blei03a.pdf.

Brookes, G.; McEnery, T. (2019). "The Utility of Topic Modelling for Discourse Studies. A Critical Evaluation". *Discourse Studies*, 21(1), 3-21. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445618814032.

Busso, L.; Combei, C.R.; Tordini, O. (2019). "La rappresentazione lessicale della violenza di genere. 'Donne come vittime' nei media italiani". Aldinucci, B. et al. (a cura di), *Parola. Una nozione unica per una ricerca multidisciplinare*. Siena: Edizioni dell'Università per Stranieri di Siena, 261-79.

Busso, L.; Vignozzi, G. (2017). "Gender Stereotypes in Film Language. A Corpus-Assisted Analysis". Basili, R.; Nissim, M.; Satta, G. (eds), *Proceedings of CLiC-it 2017*. Rome: CEUR-WS, 71-6.

Chui, K. (2011). "Conceptual Metaphors in Gesture". *Cognitive Linguistics*, 22(3), 437-58. https://doi.org/10.1515/cogl.2011.017.

Combei, C.R. (2019). "Is '*manovra*' really '*del popolo*'? Linguistic Insights into Twitter Reactions to the Annual Italian Budget Law". Bernardi, R. et al. (eds), *Proceedings of the Sixth Italian Conference on Computational Linguistics. CLiC-it 2019* (Bari, 13-15 November 2019). Aachen: CEUR-WS, 1-8.

Combei, C.R.; Giannetti, D. (2020). "The Immigration Issue on Twitter Political Communication. Italy 2018-2019". *Comunicazione Politica*, 21(2), 231-64. https://doi.org/10.3270/97905.

Curry, T.A.; Fix, M.P. (2019). "May It Please the Twitterverse. The Use of Twitter by State High Court Judges". *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 16(4), 379-93. https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681.2019.1657048.

EIGE, European Institute for Gender Equality (2018). *Improving Police and Justice Data on Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the European Union*.

EURES (2016). *III Rapporto su caratteristiche, dinamiche e profili di rischio del femminicidio in Italia*. http://www.quotidianosanita.it/allegati/allegato4803121.pdf.

Feinerer, I.; Hornik, K.; Meyer, D. (2008). "Text Mining Infrastructure in R". *Journal of Statistical Software*, 25(5), 1-54. https://doi.org/10.18637/jss.v025.i05.

Formato, F. (2019). *Gender, Discourse and Ideology in Italian.* Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gundle, S. (2007). *Bellissima. Feminine Beauty and the Idea of Italy*. Lexington (KY): University Press of Kentucky.

Jamet, D. (2010). "What do Internet Metaphors Reveal about the Perception of the Internet?". *Metaphorik.de*, 18(2), 17-32.

Johnson, S.; Ensslin, A. (2013). "'But Her Language Skills Shifted the Family Dynamics Dramatically'. Language, Gender and the Construction of Publics in two British Newspapers". *Gender and Language*, 1(1), 229-54. https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.v1i2.229.

Kilgarriff, A. et al. (2014). "The Sketch Engine. Ten Years on". *Lexicography*, 1(1), 7-36. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40607-014-0009-9.

Kong, A.P. et al. (2015). "A Coding System with Independent Annotations of Gesture Forms and Functions during Verbal Communication. Development of a Database of Speech and GEsture (DoSaGE)". *Journal of Nonverbal Behaviour*, 39(1), 93-111. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10919-014-0200-6.

Magno Caldognetto, E. et al. (2004). "La 'partitura'. Un sistema di annotazione multilivello di interazioni multimodali basata su ANVIL". De Dominicis, A. et al. (a cura di), *Atti delle XIV Giornate di Studio del Gruppo di Fonetica Sperimentale (GFS)*. Roma: Esagrafica, 253-8.

Marcato, G.; Thüne, E.M. (2002). "Gender and Female Visibility in Italian". Hellinger, M.; Bussman, H. (eds), *Gender Across Languages. The Linguistic Representation of Women and Men*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 188-217.

McNeill, D. (1992). *Hand and Mind. What Gestures Reveal about Thought*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mills, S.; Mullany, L. (2011). *Language, Gender and Feminism. Theory, Methodology and Practice*. London: Routledge.

Mourtgos, S.M.; Adams, I.T. (2019). "The Rhetoric of De-Policing. Evaluating Open-Ended Survey Responses from Police Officers with Machine Learning-Based Structural Topic Modeling". *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 64(1), 61-73. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2019.101627.

Phillips, M. (1985). *Aspects of Text Structure. An Investigation of the Lexical Organisation of Text*. Amsterdam: North-Holland.

Pinto, L. (2019). "Structural Topic Model per le scienze sociali e politiche". *POLIS*, 33, 163-74. https://doi.org/10.1424/92923.

Poggi, I. (2007). *Mind, Hands, Face and Body. A Goal and Belief View of Multimodal Communication*. Berlin: Weidler.

R Core Team (2018). *R. A Language and Environment for Statistical Computing*. Wien: R Foundation for Statistical Computing. https://www.r-project.org.

Rinker, T.W. (2017). *qdapRegex. Regular Expression Removal, Extraction, and Replacement Tools*. 0.7.2. Buffalo, New York: University of Buffalo.

Roberts, M.E. et al. (2014). "Structural Topic Models for Open-Ended Survey Responses". *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(4), 1064-82. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12103.

Roberts, M.E.; Stewart, B.M.; Airoldi, E.M. (2016). "A Model of Text for Experimentation in the Social Sciences". *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 111(515), 988-1003. https://doi.org/10.1080/01621459.2016.1141684.

Roberts, M.E.; Stewart, B.M.; Tingley, D. (2016). "Navigating the Local Modes of Big Data: The Case of Topic Models". Alvarez, R.M. (ed.), *Computational Social Science. Discovery and Prediction* (*Analytical Methods for Social Research*). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 51-97. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316257340.004.

Russell, D.; Radford, J. (1992). *Femicide. The Politics of Woman Killing*. New York: Twayne.

Sinoara, R.A.; Antunes, J.; Rezende, S.O. (2017). "Text Mining and Semantics. A Systematic Mapping Study". *Journal of the Brazilian Computer Society*, 23(1), 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13173-017-0058-7.

Sloetjes, H. (2014). "ELAN. Multimedia Annotation Application". Durand, J. et al. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Corpus Phonology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 305-20. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199571932.013.019.

Spinelli, B. (2008). *Femminicidio. Dalla denuncia sociale al riconoscimento giuridico internazionale*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.

Sunderland, J. (2004). *Gendered Discourses*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tabbert, U. (2012). "Crime through a Corpus. The Linguistic Construction of Offenders in the British Press". Gregoriou, C. (ed.), *Constructing Crime*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 130-44.

Wagner, P.; Malisz, Z.; Kopp, S. (2014). "Gesture and Speech in Interaction. An Overview". *Speech Communication*, 57, 209-32. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.specom.2013.09.008.

Watanabe, K.; Zhou, Y. (2020). "Theory-Driven Analysis of Large Corpora. Semisupervised Topic Classification of the UN Speeches". *Social Science Computer Review*, 2020(1), 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439320907027.

Wodak, R. (2015). "Gender and Language. Cultural Concerns". Smelser, N.J.; Baltes, P.B. (eds), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 698-703.

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

Gendered Hate Speech in Swiss WhatsApp Messages

Larissa Binder
University of Zurich, Switzerland

Simone Ueberwasser
University of Zurich, Switzerland

Elisabeth Stark
University of Zurich, Switzerland

Abstract This paper provides a first manual analysis of the use of 14 gender-specific swear words in Swiss WhatsApp messages in (Swiss) German, French and Italian. We will show that gender-specific swear words only concern non-participants of the discourse when used offensively, in our data. When such items are directly addressed to the interlocutor, they are rather used ironically or even hypocoristically. Furthermore, we will show that gendered hate speech in this context is not a matter of mutual discrimination by the two sexes, but that Swiss WhatsApp users also refer to people of their own sex using gender-specific swear words.

Keywords Gendered Hate Speech. WhatsApp Communication. Gender Perception. Gender Representation. Gender Stereotypes. Gender-Specific Swear Words.

1 Introduction

The interest in gender equity and the prosecution of verbal, physical or mental harassment related to gender and/or sexual orientation has been increasing over the past several years. Especially the verbal aspect of gender-based discrimination, namely (gendered) hate speech, is regarded as particularly

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia 1
ISSN 2724-4652
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-478-3 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-479-0

Open access
Published 2020-12-29

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-478-3/003

challenging in terms of detection, reporting and prosecution, since it lacks an overall accepted definition (cf. Alkiviadou 2018). For example, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers does not mention hatred based on gender differences or sexual orientation explicitly as instances of hate speech (cf. Alkiviadou 2018, 23):

> [Hate speech is] understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify **racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism** or other forms of hatred based on **intolerance**, including: intolerance expressed by **aggressive nationalism** and **ethnocentrism, discrimination** and **hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin**. (Recommendation (97)20, Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers[1])

One of the main reasons why gendered hate speech seems to constitute a complex and to date underresearched category of verbal harassment is that it is difficult to discern whether hateful expressions are really used to harm somebody, or if, instead, they are intended to be understood ironically or sarcastically. This aspect is especially demanding for the interpretation of written data where we lack prosodic information and facial expressions, as will be shown below. This is by no means exclusively a potential impediment for the researcher, but it can also have a confusing impact on the actual receiver of the message.

We seek nevertheless to present in this chapter a first manual quantitative, cross-linguistic analysis of gendered hate speech in the multilingual Swiss WhatsApp corpus (Stark, Ueberwasser, Göhring 2014-20), providing data from a nowadays ubiquitous form of computer-mediated communication, WhatsApp (Ueberwasser, Stark 2017). To do so, we will analyse a determined set of lexical items such as 'bitch' or 'wanker', which can potentially be classified as instances of gendered hate speech, in their pragmatic use in the Swiss WhatsApp corpus. We will also have a look at the gender of the message's author. Thus, in our pilot study[2] we are addressing the following research questions:

- Which lexical items characterize gendered hate speech in Swiss WhatsApp messages?
- What are the functions of these lexical items?
- Are there any gender-specific differences?

1 https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=0900001680505d5b.

2 In this chapter we present the results of a pilot study carried out in Summer 2018 as a preparation for a large citizen science project started in spring 2019 in collaboration with the Citizen Science Centre of the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich.

In order to answer these questions, we will show an analysis of data from three languages ([Swiss] German, French and Italian).

The chapter will be structured as follows: first, we will briefly present the state of the art with regard to (gendered) hate speech. The methodology of our pilot study and how we tried to diminish the challenges of dealing with written data (as mentioned above) will be explained in section 3, followed by the main results (section 4), which will be discussed in section 5. In section 6, we will present our conclusions.

2 Gender and Hate Speech. State of the Art

The relationship between gender and language has always been considered complex, let alone the relationship between gender and a very specific form of language use, namely hate speech (cf. Coates 1992; Crawford 1995; Stapleton 2003). In our study, we address the factor of gender in a twofold way: we focus on the relationship between the sex of a speaker/writer and what is known as gendered hate speech, namely the frequency in use of gender-specific swear words in Swiss WhatsApp messages and their functions. To do so, it is essential to first define what can be understood as gendered hate speech, given the fact that the aspect of gender (as a reason for being attacked) is missing in many official international documents that deal with discrimination and the spread of hatred (cf. Alkiviadou 2018). In our study, we define gendered hate speech as follows:

> Gendered hate speech encompasses expressions which are used to **harm, insult**, **disrespect**, or **discriminate** an individual or a certain group of people on the basis of **gender** or **sexual orientation**. This includes derogatory expressions referring to the **sexual anatomy**, **gender-specific swear words**, and expressions to designate members of the **LGBTQ-community**.

Numerous studies have been carried out on a more general level, comparing the use of swear words for both male and female speakers (Risch 1987; de Klerk 1988, 1991, 1992; Stapleton 2003, among others) and some of those studies also addressed the use of gender-specific swear words and their evaluation by men and women (cf. de Klerk 1991, 1992, 1997). Most of them started from a very similar hypothesis, which is primarily based on the general belief that women tend to use less 'bad language' than men. Secondly, some of the first studies carried out in this area of interest (cf. Jespersen 1922; Trudgill 1974; Lakoff 1975) reinforced this stereotype by qualifying women as "avoiders" of swear words because they pay more attention to linguistic norms and values such as politeness and status

(Stapleton 2003; de Klerk 1992). Also, breaking so-called "linguistic taboos" (de Klerk 1991) is often associated with "masculinity and toughness" (Hughes 1992, 291). Chetty and Alathur, introduced the term of "sexist hate speech" (2018, 112-13) to refer to the concept of gendered hate speech, which, according to them, is generally targeted towards women or girls. Regarding the gender-related "imbalance" in the frequency in use of swear words, Stapleton (2003) also argued that men use terms referring to the female sex organs on a regular basis, whereas women tend to avoid the same terms (see also Fine, Johnson 1984).

However, the empirical data analysed in the above-mentioned studies provided – at least partially – counterevidence to the widespread stereotypes, which were shown to be basically overgeneralizations (Hughes 1992). Many researchers found that the frequency in use of swear words by women is not significantly lower than the frequency with which men use swear words. Indeed, the use of so-called 'bad language' seems to be regularly used by both sexes (Stapleton 2003; de Klerk 1988, 1991, 1992). Referring concretely to gendered hate speech, Risch (1987) showed that women do have and use a vast range of derogatory expressions to refer to men. Also, de Klerk (1992) was able to negate the hypothesis of "lexical bias" in a study on gendered slang, which claims that the idea that men tend to use more "bad words" referring to women is based on the fact that there are more gender-specific swear words or "slang words" referring to women in general. De Klerk (1992) showed, for example, that women never were short of "slang words" to refer to males. Moreover, de Klerk also claimed that, in connection with swearing and the use of slang, the role of solidarity seems to be essential for women:

> Females, it would appear, are not striving for standard prestigious speech (Trudgill 1972) but are striving to use what their peers are using. It would seem that males and females alike gain solidarity from using nonstandard words and that females (certainly young ones) are not necessarily as linguistically conservative as current literature would have us believe. (1992, 286)

Sutton's (1995) study on slang words for women reported another interesting conclusion: several (female) informants revealed that the interpretations of the expressions 'ho' and 'bitch' were context-bound. That means that when women refer to each other as 'ho' or 'bitch', it can even be an expression of endearment, whereas when men use these terms, it is always considered offensive by women. Sutton also claimed that "slang used by young women to address one another is part of their search for identity as individuals and as a group (women) in a male-dominated world" (1995, 289) and that women who use

slang words do not actually talk "like men", but they tend to imitate other women who stand out for not fulfilling the typical "female stereotypes". Thus, women's swearing seems to be restricted to a limited number of contexts. Stapleton (2003, 23) argued, based on Risch's (1987) and Hughes' (1992) statements, that women's swearing presupposes an ambience of intimacy or trust more than for men. This aspect is particularly interesting if we take into account data from the new media such as Facebook or text messages, as hate speech seems to become more and more prevalent in the internet, more specifically in social media (Guiora, Park 2017), which means that hate speech seems to shift from the more private realm towards a public space.

However, the data in which we are interested in our study belong to the context of private conversation. WhatsApp communication itself, as a relatively new form of computer-mediated communication, has not received a lot of attention in linguistic research so far (Ueberwasser, Stark 2017), never mind regarding a topic such as hate speech. WhatsApp is a smartphone application for written communication and has become the widely preferred successor of 'normal' text messages as it provides a platform for the free exchange of written messages, audio or visual material for which only an active connection to internet is needed (cf. Dürscheid, Frick 2014). If both interlocutors are online, it is even possible to have some sort of "real-time communication" (Dürscheid, Frick 2014, 167). Another feature which is frequently used in WhatsApp communication is the rich catalogue of emoticons and emojis, which often assume an expressive or emotive function, but they are also used on a propositional level as a substitute for a written word (Dürscheid, Frick 2014, 173-4).

3 Methodology

Our study is based on a corpus resulting from a collection of approximately 600 authentic WhatsApp chats which was carried out in summer 2014 in Switzerland. The chats comprise circa 750,000 anonymized messages in (Swiss) German, French, Italian and Rhaeto-Romance, totalling over 5 million tokens. There is a considerable difference in the amount of data in the different sub-corpora: there are over 3 million tokens in the German and Swiss German sub-corpora, whereas in the French and Italian sub-corpora there are only 1.3 million and 340,019 tokens respectively. The chats were browsed in ANNIS, a search and visualization architecture which allows us to create and use different kinds of search options (Ueberwasser, Stark 2017).

For the pilot study, the following 14 gender-specific lexical items, which all denote sexual anatomy, sexual orientation or professions related to the world of sex-workers and do barely exhibit graphic variants, were analysed using the ANNIS query tool:

Table 1 Lexical items taken into account in the pilot study

Language	Item	Translation
German	*Bitch*	'bitch'
	Gay	'gay'
	Futz/Fotze	'cunt'
	Nutte	'slut'/'whore'
	Schwuchtle	'swish'
	*Wixxer**	'wanker'
	Homo	'homosexual'
French	*gouine*	'dyke'
	salope	'slut'/'whore'
	poule	'slut'/'whore'
	pute/putain	'slut'/'whore'
	travelo	'drag queen'
Italian	*figa/fica*	'pussy'/'cunt'
	figlio di puttana	'son of a bitch'

* This item is written *Wichser* in Standard German, but we only find this variant in our data.

For the analysis, the following parameters were taken into account: a. the language of the message ((Swiss) German, French, Italian), b. the gender of the author of the message and c. the intended meaning of the message split up into three modalities of context: clearly disrespectful (offense), clearly not disrespectful (endearment/irony), and unclear. The last of these three categories is, of course, problematic, as a lot of messages containing a gender-specific swear word were attributed to this category. This is due to the fact mentioned above that the detection of hate speech is a tricky task because we lack important para- and non-verbal information such as prosody or facial expressions, which could give us a hint as to whether an expression is used ironically or seriously.

Despite this shortcoming, informal written data, and WhatsApp messages in particular, provide a series of important contextual elements to discriminate a clearly disrespectful from a clearly not disrespectful (ironic or even hypocoristic or endearing) meaning. To discern a clearly disrespectful meaning, for instance, elements such as modifiers like pejorative adjectives ((1) and (2)), demonstrative determiners ((3) and (4)) and intensifiers ((5) and (6)) can be helpful:

(1) ger. Die isch en hässlichi Nutte
'She is an ugly slut.'

(2) fr. C'est la pire pute
'She is the worst slut.'

(3) ger. ih hasse so lehrer ih ha gaar nüt gseit u die bitch faat afa liire..
'I hate those teachers, I said nothing, and that bitch begins to drone…'

(4) fr. Il y a de ces poules dans la classe Passerelle
'There are those sluts in the 'Passerelle'-class.'

(5) ger. De isch so en wixxer
'He is such a wanker.'

(6) ger. huere bitch !
'Fucking bitch!'

On the other hand, the use of emojis and emoticons can provide a clue to intended irony and sarcasm, as we can see in the example in Figure 1, where the laughing emoji relativizes the swearword *fotze* (cunt):[3]

Figure 1 Example browsed in ANNIS

The data were annotated manually. As a first step, false positives such as homonymous interjections (7), discourse markers (8) and quotations (9) were excluded:[4]

(1) fr. ***Putain*** je me réjouis de rejouer !
'Shit, I am looking forward to playing again!'

(2) fr. Tu geres ***putain***
'Just fucking manage

(3) ger. Karma Is a ***Bitch***

3 Translation: 'You fucking cunt, take me along!'.

4 It is certainly true that also interjections, discourse markers and quotations containing a swear word can have a distressing impact on the reader, but for this pilot study we only considered swear words referring to human referents.

Altogether, we found only 2,315 occurrences of the 14 lexical items in our relatively large corpus of ~ 5.5 million tokens. Among those occurrences, almost 80% were excluded because they were false positives (in the sense described above). After having discarded false positives, we worked on 502 examples in three languages. As a second step, we analysed the data according to the three above-mentioned modalities of context by taking into account the previous and the following message and elements such as those described above to clearly distinguish disrespectful meanings from ironic or hypocoristic meanings.

4 Results

Of the three categories of functions we determined for our analysis, we will focus on the clearly disrespectful use of gender-specific swear words in what follows.

Table 2 Type-token relation of the 14 lexical gender-specific swear words

Type	Translation	Token	Clearly disrespectful	Clearly not disrespectful	Unclear
ger. *Bitch*	'bitch'	106	71 (67%)	23 (22%)	12 (11%)
ger. *Gay*	'gay'	24	2 (8%)	9 (38%)	13 (54%)
ger. *Futz/Fotze*	'cunt'	30	17 (57%)	5 (17%)	8 (26%)
ger. *Nutte*	'slut'/'whore'	28	24 (86%)	4 (14%)	0 (0%)
ger. *Schwuchtle*	'swish'	12	3 (25%)	8 (67%)	1 (8%)
ger. *Wixxer*	'wanker'	22	16 (73%)	6 (27%)	0 (0%)
ger. *Homo*	'homosexual'	22	6 (27%)	14 (64%)	2 (9%)
fr. *gouine*	'dyke'	1	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)
fr. *salope*	'slut'/'whore'	24	19 (79%)	3 (13%)	2 (8%)
fr. *poule*	'slut'/'whore'	134	5 (4%)	85 (63%)	44 (33%)
fr. *pute/putain*	'slut'/'whore'	61	37 (61%)	16 (26%)	8 (13%)
fr. *travelo*	'drag queen'	1	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
it. *figa/fica*	'pussy'/'cunt'	13	1 (8%)	3 (23%)	9 (69%)
it. *figlio di puttana*	'son of a bitch'	2	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

This overview shows that, in general, words referring to the concept of 'prostitute' ((swiss) ger. *Bitch*, *Nutte*; fr. *salope*, *pute*) (61-86%) and the German word for 'wanker' (73%) were most often used in an offensive and clearly disrespectful context. However, the French polysemous word *poule*, which refers to the concept of 'prostitute' or 'mistress', but also to the concept of '(girl)friend' (especially when

it is accompanied by a possessive as in fr. *ma poule*),[5] was only used offensively in 5% of cases. The pragmatic function of this term was unclear in 69% of the occurrences. Surprisingly, only 56% of the occurrences of the word denoting the female sexual anatomy ((swiss-) ger. *Futz*/*Fotze*) appeared in a derogatory context. Figure 2 shows the frequency of the terms denoting women in an offensive context.

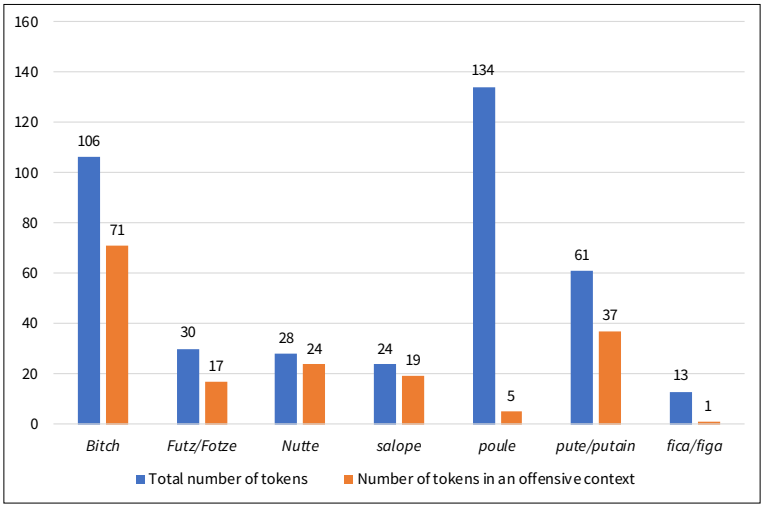

Figure 2 The use of swear words denoting women in a disrespectful and offensive context

Regarding the swear words for men **[Fig. 3]**, the terms denoting a male homosexual seem to be very common in everyday conversation and are not used as instances of hate speech (anymore) as they appeared in an offensive context in only 8-27% of the occurrences. On the contrary, we find many contexts where those terms were used with an ironic or even hypocoristic meaning. The term *Homo* (homosexual) always refers to the (male) interlocutor when it is used in an ironic context and to a third (male) person when used as hate speech. The term *gay* appears in the German and the French subcorpora. In each of them, there is only one occurrence of the term in an offensive context (1 out of 5 in the German corpus; 1 out of 19 in the French corpus). The French term referring to a female homosexual (*gouine*), in contrast, was not included in the discussion because it only appeared once in the corpus and its function was not clearly classifiable.

5 See dictionary entry for "poule[1]" in *Trésor de la langue française informatisé*, online: `http://atilf.atilf.fr/`.

The German term for 'wanker' (*Wichser*) is used with a negative, pejorative meaning in 73% of the occurrences. The Italian word *figlio di puttana* (son of a bitch) was not taken into account in the presentation of the results because it only occurred twice in our corpus (it was used in a derogatory context in both cases and referred in both cases to a male third person who was not part of the conversation).

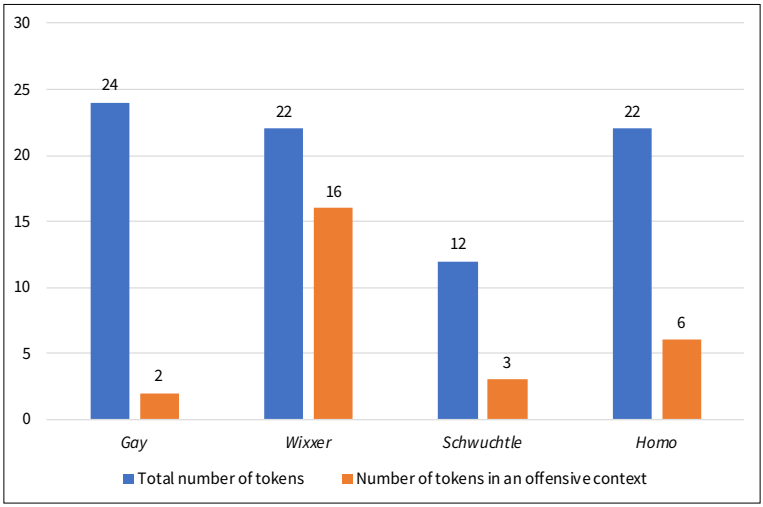

Figure 3 The use of swear words denoting men in a disrespectful and offensive context

The differences between men and women in their active use of swear words in a disrespectful manner, described as highly significant in the previous literature, could not be confirmed by our data. The following two figures give the distribution of males and females who used the respective swear words denoting women **[Fig. 4]** and men **[Fig. 5]** in an offensive context.

The first comment that can be made is that the frequency with which women use those words offensively is considerably higher than would be expected given the claims in previous studies. For instance, the use of the English word *Bitch* (bitch) in the German corpus constitutes the big exception in our data: it is the only term which is more often used by female writers (83%) than by male writers (17%). Another interesting and rather surprising finding is that ger. *Futz/Fotze* (cunt) is almost equally often used by men (53%) and women (47%), although it has been claimed that most women tend to avoid terms referring to the female sexual anatomy (cf. Stapleton 2003; Fine, Johnson 1984).

If we compare the difference in use between the two genders for the terms referring to men, we can see that, interestingly, the major-

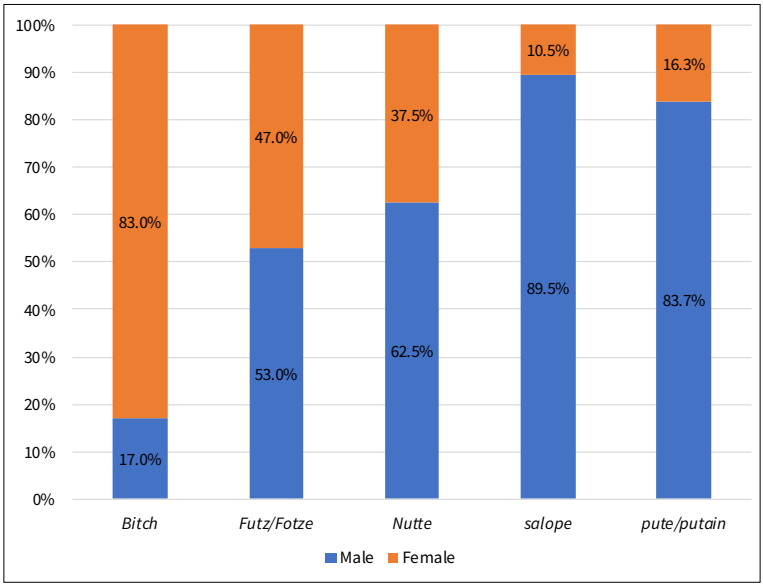

Figure 4 The use of swear words denoting women with regard to the gender of the author

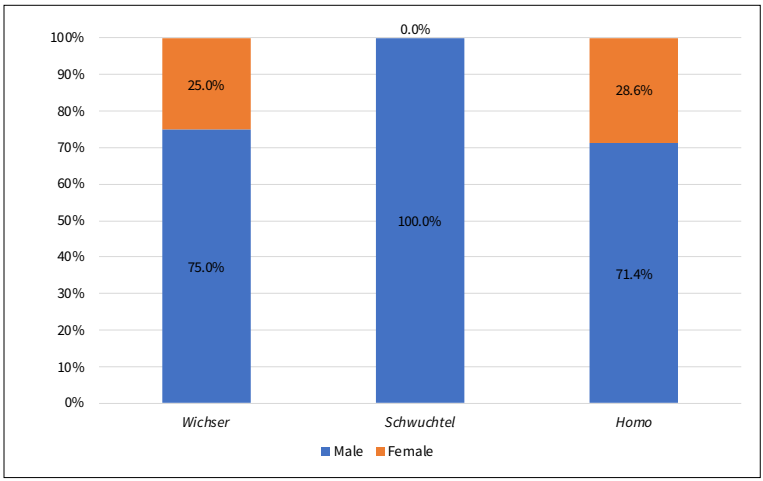

Figure 5 The use of swear words denoting men with regard to the gender of the author

ity of occurrences of all three items are by men. The Swiss German word *Schwuchtle*, 'swish' is even used exclusively by male writers in Swiss WhatsApp messages. In the present pilot study, the gender of the addressee has not been taken into account, as the intendedly harmful use of gender-specific swear words only concerns non-participants of the discourse in our data. Two recently completed BA theses on a related topic include this factor in their analysis (Strebel 2019; Ramisberger 2020) and it will also be considered thoroughly in the follow-up project.

5 Discussion

The spectrum of the results ranges from 'rather expected' to 'very surprising' compared with the findings from previous studies. As a first observation, we found that the investigated items were never targeted offensively towards the interlocutor. This means that gendered hate speech in the context of Swiss WhatsApp messages seems to be some sort of 'indirect' hate speech, since in our data none of the examples referred to the addressee in a clearly disrespectful or intendedly harmful way. For this reason, we did not consider the gender of the addressee as a factor for our pilot study.

As we have seen above, most occurrences of terms referring to the concept of 'prostitute' are used in a disrespectful and offensive context, whereas the terms fr. *poule* and it. *fica*/*figa* constitute a clear exception. Fr. *poule* is frequently used in a hypocoristic and endearing context. This is due to the fact that this word has undergone some semantic changes: etymologically, it refers to a female animal (hen). Today, it is polysemic: apart from the female animal, it can refer to a 'woman of easy virtue', a 'man's mistress', with a rather pejorative connotation (prostitute), and to the concept of '(girl) friend' (especially in expressions with a possessive as fr. *ma poule*).[6] As our data show, the latter constitutes the majority of occurrences of this term. The Italian term *fica*/*figa* represents a similar case. The original meaning referred to the female sex organ (Battisti, Alessio 1975), but it has also undergone some semantic changes and today it is often used to refer to an attractive woman of striking appearance (Battaglia, Barberi Squarotti 1961-2004). Accordingly, and in parallel to *poule*, it is very rarely used offensively in our data.

Furthermore, only 56% of the occurrences of the German word referring to the female sex organ (*Futz*/*Fotze*, 'cunt') are used disrespectfully and, more surprisingly, almost equally often by women

6 See dictionary entry for "poule[1]" in *Trésor de la langue française informatisé*, online: http://atilf.atilf.fr/.

(47%) as by men (53%). This goes against the claims put forward in Fine and Johnson (1984) and Stapleton (2003), according to which women tend to eschew swear words referring to the female sexual anatomy as they find them indecent. Moreover, only a small number of the terms referring to male homosexuals were used with an offensive meaning and when used thus, mainly by men (especially the word *Schwuchtel*, 'swish', which was used exclusively by male writers). It could be, though, that these two examples are instances of so-called 'reappropriation', a kind of self-labelling by pejorative terms often used to "weaken [its] stigmatizing force" (Galinsky et al. 2013, 2020).

Concerning the other swear words referring to males, our data showed that apparently, the only term regularly used with a pejorative meaning is the German word *Wichser*, 'wanker' (73% of the occurrences). It seems that, at least in our data, this term is as offensive for men as the terms denoting the concept 'prostitute' for women.

With regard to the use of swearwords by male and female writers in our data, we identified the word *Bitch* in the German corpus as an 'outlier', seeing that it is the only term used more often by women than by men. The reason for this exception is not clear, but it could have something to do with the linguistic origin of the term: *Bitch* is a foreign word, borrowed from English, which could mean that using swear words which do not belong to one's own mother tongue is not considered as rude as using equivalent terms from the native language. This hypothesis is confirmed by Sulpizio et al.'s study (2019) on the neural processing of so-called "taboo words" in native and foreign languages: according to the participants' responses, swear words are considered less offensive when they stem from a foreign language.

After this brief discussion of our most significant results, it should be pointed out that the present analysis is merely a lexicological pilot study and that it is by no means intended to be an exhaustive study on how Swiss WhatsApp users behave in terms of gendered hate speech. The examples we found are not sufficient in type or token numbers to draw clear conclusions, but they rather serve as a starting point for further research. There are also several aspects related to this topic that have not been discussed in this paper, but which have to be taken into account systematically in future work, first of all the gender of the messages' addressees.

Finally, the small number of gender-specific swear words used disrespectfully in our data is maybe due to the fact that in our WhatsApp messages, we deal with somewhat biased data since the informants volunteered to donate their chats to the research project *What's up, Switzerland?*

6 Conclusion

Summing up, for the time being, we have relatively few examples of gendered hate speech in a huge corpus of WhatsApp chats of over 5 million tokens. Only approximately 500 occurrences of the 14 lexical items we chose to analyse in three Swiss WhatsApp sub-corpora ((Swiss) German, French and Italian) referred to a person, and hate speech seems to solely concern non-participants of the discourse, as the items used disrespectfully only referred to a third person. We identified a differentiated use of these lexical items: some, especially the polysemous ones, tend to be used almost exclusively in an ironic or endearing way (cf. fr. *poule*, it. *figa*/*fica*), whereas others are mostly used in the context of (indirect) hate speech. The role of semantic change and polysemy seems to be the triggering factor here and needs to be analysed more systematically. Moreover, the data show that while men use the investigated items more often, women also use them on a regular basis. The use of the term *Bitch* in the German sub-corpus presents a rather surprising result: it is the only gender-specific swear word that is used more frequently by women than by men. Terms referring to male homosexuals do not seem to be instances of hate speech (anymore) and are often used in an ironic or even hypocoristic manner. On the whole, the insights of our analysis show that our data provide some interesting aspects for further research on gendered hate speech in the context of Swiss WhatsApp messages. An upcoming citizen science project in collaboration with the Citizen Science Centre of the University of Zurich and ETH Zurich will provide a systematic analysis of the whole WUS corpus.

Bibliography

Alkiviadou, N. (2018). "Hate Speech on Social Media Networks. Towards a Regulatory Framework?". *Information & Communication Technology Law*, 28(1), 19-35. https://doi.org/10.1080/13600834.2018.1494417.

ATILF, Analyse et Traitement Informatique de la Langue Française (2019). *Trésor de langue française informatisé*. http://www.atilf.fr.

Battaglia, S.; Barberi Squarotti, G. (1961-2004). *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*. Torino: UTET.

Battisti, C.; Alessio, G. (1975). *Dizionario Etimologico Italiano*. Firenze: G. Barbèra.

Chetty, N.; Alathur, S. (2018). "Hate Speech Review in the Context of Online Social Networks". *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 40, 108-18. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2018.05.003.

Coates, J. (1992). *Women, Men and Language*. 2nd ed. London; New York: Longman.

Crawford, M. (1995). *Talking Difference. On Gender and Language*. London: SAGE.

de Klerk, V. (1988). "An Investigation into the Use of Expletives by Males and Females in Grahamstown". *South African Journal of Linguistics*, 6(2), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/10118063.1988.9723759.

de Klerk, V. (1991). "Expletives. Men only?". *Communication Monographs*, 58(2), 156-69. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637759109376220.

de Klerk, V. (1992). "How Taboo are Taboo Words for Girls?". *Language in Society*, 21(2), 277-89. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0047404500015293.

de Klerk, V. (1997). "The Role of Expletives in the Construction of Masculinity". Meinhof, U.H.; Johnson, S.A. (eds), *Language and Masculinity*. Oxford: Blackwell, 144-58.

Dürscheid, C.; Frick, K. (2014). "Keyboard-to-Screen-Kommunikation gestern und heute. SMS und WhatsApp im Vergleich". Mathias, A.; Runkehl, J.; Siever, T. (Hrsgg), *Sprachen? Vielfalt! Sprache und Kommunikation in der Gesellschaft und den Medien. Eine Online-Festschrift zum Jubiläum von Peter Schlobinski*. Darmstadt: sprache&web, 149-82. http://www.mediensprache.net/networx/networx-64.pdf.

Fine, M.G.; Johnson, F.L. (1984). "Female and Male Motives for Using Obscenity". *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 3(1), 59-74. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927x8431004.

Galinsky, A.D. et al. (2013). "The Reappropriation of Stigmatizing Labels. The Reciprocal Relationship Between Power and Self-Labeling". *Psychological Science*, 24(10), 2020-9. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613482943.

Guiora, A.; Park, E. (2017). "Hate Speech on Social Media". *Philosophia*, 45(3), 957-71. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-017-9858-4.

Hughes, S.E. (1992). "Expletives of Lower Working-Class Women". *Language in Society*, 21(2), 291-303. https://doi.org/10.1017/s004740450001530x.

Jespersen, O. (1922). *Language. Its Nature, Development and Origin*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and Woman's Place*. New York: Harper & Row.

Ramisberger, A.L. (2020). *Le discours haineux relatif au genre dans les messages WhatsApp et Twitter suisses* [BA Thesis]. Zurich: University of Zurich.

Risch, B. (1987). "Women's Derogatory Terms for Men. That's Right, 'Dirty' Words". *Language in Society*, 16(3), 353-8. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0047404500012434.

Stapleton, K. (2003). "Gender and Swearing. A Community Practice". *Women and Language*, 26(2), 22-33.

Strebel, D. (2019). *"La pute t'as fait un screen…". Les injures dans des messages WhatApp par rapport au genre du destinateur et de l'offensé(e)* [BA Thesis]. Zurich: University of Zurich.

Sulpizio, S. et al. (2019). "Are You Really Cursing? Neural Processing of Taboo Words in Native and Foreign Language". *Brain and Language*, 194, 84-92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bandl.2019.05.003.

Sutton, L.A. (1995). "Bitches and Skankly Hobags. The Place of Women in Contemporary Slang". Hall, K.; Bucholtz, M. (eds), *Gender Articulated. Language and the Socially Constructed Self*. London: Routledge, 279-96.

Trudgill, P. (1972). "Sex, Covert Prestige, and Linguistic Change in the Urban British English of Norwich". *Language in Society*, 1(2), 179-95. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0047404500000488.

Trudgill, P. (1974). *The Social Differentiation of English in Norwich*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ueberwasser, S.; Stark, E. (2017). "What's Up, Switzerland? A Corpus-Based Research Project in a Multilingual Country". *Linguistik Online*, 84(5). https://bop.unibe.ch/linguistik-online/article/view/3849/5833.

Corpus

Stark, E.; Ueberwasser, S.; Göhring, A. (2014-20). *Corpus "What's up, Switzerland?"*. University of Zurich. https://www.whatsup-switzerland.ch/index.php/it/.

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

The Acceptability of Feminine Job Titles in Italian Newspaper Articles

A Survey Involving Italian Native Speakers

Giorgia Castenetto
Università degli Studi di Trieste, Italia

Stefano Ondelli
Università degli Studi di Trieste, Italia

Abstract This paper describes a procedure to assess the acceptability of gender-inclusive linguistic structures. Informants were asked to provide an overall linguistic assessment of extracts from newspaper articles while unaware of the final objective of the survey, i.e. eliciting their opinions on the masculine and feminine forms of professions and titles. Although opinions varied, the results show an increase in the acceptability of feminine forms, probably strengthened by their frequent use in the media. Furthermore, those forms provide a solution to the morphological and syntactic inconsistencies considered by the informants as a violation of Italian grammar rules.

Keywords Feminine Job Titles. Gender-Inclusive Language. Italian Language and Linguistics. Italian Morphology. Italian Sociolinguistics. Survey Methods.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia 1
ISSN 2724-4652
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-478-3 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-479-0

Open access
Published 2020-12-29

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-478-3/004

1 Scope and Structure

It is a common belief that less attention is paid to gender-inclusive language in Italy than in other countries.[1] Italian public figures often voice their skepticism towards language reforms aimed at gender equality. They claim that such linguistic innovations are hardly acceptable but fail to provide evidence beyond personal opinions and ideological stances. This paper illustrates a survey aimed to assess the actual acceptability of feminine job titles among a sample of Italian native speakers. Although the sample is not representative of the Italian population as a whole, the survey shows that feminine job titles are perfectly acceptable for the majority of informants who – rather – prove critical of the inconsistencies deriving from the simultaneous use of masculine and feminine morphological traits referring to a woman.

This paper proceeds as follows: section 2 describes the difficulties emerging in any language reform owing to the speakers' conservative attitude. With specific reference to Italy, we provide examples of the opposition to feminine job titles in public debates that are in contrast with data showing the increasing frequency of such lexical innovations in the press over the last twenty years. Section 3 illustrates the survey procedure, the traits under scrutiny and the sample of informants. In addition, we provide a detailed account of one of the phases of the survey, followed by an overview of the overall results. Finally, section 4 draws the conclusion of this study against the background provided by the close link between societal changes and linguistic innovations.

2 Promoting Gender-Inclusive Language is Difficult

Any paper on gender-inclusive Italian is invariably bound to start with a reference to the recommendations on the avoidance of gender bias drafted by Alma Sabatini as far back as 1987 (Sabatini 1987). Since her publication is well known in Italy, we shall not dwell upon its proposals and shall only briefly list its three main guidelines: avoid masculine forms meant as (supposedly) neutral reference (e.g. *uomo*, 'man' to refer to mankind; *figli*, 'sons' to refer to both sons and daughters); avoid definite articles before a woman's surname (cf. *Rossi* to refer to a man but *la Rossi* to refer to a woman); avoid masculine nouns describing jobs and titles when referring to women (*l'avvoca-*

1 For the mere purpose of authorship attribution, we specify that Stefano Ondelli drafted sections 1, 2.1, 2.2, 3 and 3.1, while Giorgia Castenetto wrote sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 4.

to Maria Rossi). Sabatini's recommendations have been implemented only partially and occasionally in the actual linguistic behaviour of the mass media and the public administration, despite a number of promotional initiatives by educators and academics. Examples include manuals for drafting administrative texts (Cortelazzo, Pellegrino 2003), recommendations by the Italian language services of European institutions (Robustelli 2011), recommendations addressing journalists and other media communicators (Manuelli 2014) and analyses of gender bias in school textbooks (Biemmi 2010).

Any resistance to using gender-neutral structures may be explained in part with the difficulties all speakers naturally encounter in welcoming linguistic innovations, as shown by the strong opposition to any orthographic reform such as the recent *Rechtschreibreform* in German, enforced in 1996 after lengthy debates. After all, this kind of resistance is not a peculiarity of Italian speakers, nor is it limited to gender-neutral language. Another example is provided by the adjective *unionale*, which was proposed as a substitute for *comunitario* to refer to concepts, policies and documents connected to the European Union. Cortelazzo (2010) was well aware that it was bound to meet with fierce opposition because it would be considered "unusual" and "ugly". This "ugliness" is the result of mere innovation: in fact, *unionale* fully complies with the morphological rules of Italian, as shown by adjectives derived from nouns such as *nazione>nazionale*, *regione>regionale* etc.

One might say that, regardless of individual political and ideological stances, from a linguistic viewpoint we are all conservatives, as clearly shown by the comparison between law and language repeatedly mentioned by Devoto (1958), Nencioni (1962) and Timpanaro (1963). Despite the numerous features in common, the reform of a language by a central authority is much more problematic than the reform of a legal system. In the case of Italian, this natural predisposition of the speakers' community to a linguistically conservative attitude may be stronger than in other languages for historical reasons. Since the unification of the country, Italian language policies – from Manzoni's monolingual approach to the Fascist strive for language purity – have often been characterized by prescriptivism, which in turn has led to the mistrust for any language reform (Lepschy 1989). This is a possible explanation for the weaker role played by the Accademia della Crusca, compared to its counterparts abroad, from the Académie Française to the Real Academia Española, as shown by the timidity of its recent initiative, called *Incipit*, aimed to curb the excessive use of foreign words in Italian.[2]

2 https://accademiadellacrusca.it/it/contenuti/gruppo-incipit/251.

2.1 Examples of Opposition to Feminine Job Titles

Admittedly, the importance attributed to gender neutrality in language is smaller in Italy than in other countries. The media and even the Academia have often opposed the introduction of gender-inclusive strategies with a wide range of arguments. Since the survey illustrated in section 3 of this paper focuses on feminine job titles, a few examples regarding this word class are illustrated below.

A source rich in anecdotes is the blog by the linguist Michele Cortelazzo titled *Parole. Opinioni, riflessioni, dati sulla lingua*.[3] In particular, Cortelazzo focuses on the lack of importance attached to gender-inclusive language by members of Italian political institutions. For example, he stresses the contradictory behaviour held by former minister Elsa Fornero when she declared to the press that she did not like seeing her surname preceded by the feminine article (*la Fornero*), but then described her position with the masculine form (*ministro*). According to Cortelazzo, it appears she believed that a position of great prestige was more suitably described by a masculine noun, while, had she been a nurse, a teacher or a shop assistant, she would have probably thought otherwise and used the feminine *infermiera* (nurse.F), *maestra* (teacher.F) or *commessa* (shop assistant.F).

Cortelazzo also mentions the numerous abusive comments addressed to Laura Boldrini, the former President of the Chamber of Deputies. Boldrini sent a letter to her colleagues to foster the use of gender-inclusive formulae and received sharp – even violent – criticism on the social media. Many comments were based on strictly personal preferences, inevitably lacking any scientific foundation. Surprisingly, criticism was also voiced by Giorgio Napolitano, President emeritus of the Italian Republic, who reportedly declared to the press that the masculine nouns *ministro* and *sindaco* are perfectly dignified, whereas their feminine counterparts *ministra* and *sindaca* (mayor.F) were, respectively, "horrible" and "abominable".[4]

Provided the limits to the (polite) expression of personal opinions are not exceeded, the anecdotes reported above by Cortelazzo are hardly surprising: the conservative attitude he describes is voiced by Italian speakers who are not experts in linguistics. However, criticism was levelled at gender-neutral language by members of the Academia as well, from Nencioni (1987), who considered Sabatini's recommendations as examples of authoritarian intimidation against the rules of Italian grammar, to Sgroi (2018), who claimed that, if speakers wish to, the Italian language is intrinsically equipped with all the necessary resources to make the referent's sex explicit; thus, there is no

3 https://cortmic.myblog.it.

4 https://cortmic.myblog.it/presidente/.

need to introduce novelties that are both scientifically ungrounded and ideologically biased.

Conclusively, one may say that the opponents to the innovations proposed by Sabatini in 1987 base their criticism on:

1. Mere personal opinions referring to the "ugliness" of the proposals put forward for feminine job titles.
2. Untenable arguments condemning the purported violation of grammar rules (why is *sinistra*, 'left' perfectly acceptable but *ministra* to be rejected? And what about *attrice*, 'actress' vs. *rettrice*, 'vice-Chancellor.F' or *protetta*, 'protected.F' vs. *architetta*, 'architect.F'?).
3. Undeniable difficulties in implementing gender-inclusive strategies in languages characterized by rich morphology (managing split forms in Italian is certainly more cumbersome than in English).
4. The all-out condemnation of changes imposed from above for ideological reasons.

Alma Sabatini was perfectly aware that encouraging linguistic change is a difficult task and noted that language users tend to neglect the great difference emerging between imposing a word from above and simply proposing it (Sabatini 1987, 99). Apparently, critics of gender-inclusive language tend to consider the proposals put forward as instances of linguistic imposition rather than recommendations that are political in nature, as rightly pointed out by Elena Pistolesi (cited in Cortelazzo 2015).

2.2 Do Italians Dislike Feminine Job Titles?

Based on the examples above, we can claim that the Italian-speaking community shows a certain dislike for feminine forms denoting professions and titles traditionally attributed to men: even women seem to prefer masculine nouns to refer to their positions. However, the data we rely on consist in explicit statements that do not reflect the actual linguistic choices of Italian speakers. For example, Italians are likely to express their regret for one of the most successful myths about their language, i.e. the decline of the subjunctive mood (Schneider 1999). Consequently, they might affirm that they make abundant use of this verbal mood, even though in reality they do not (or, at least, not always).

At present, little evidence is available to evaluate this resistance to the introduction of feminine job titles in Italian. Owing to this gap, tentative results may be drawn from the research conducted by Ondelli and Viale (2010) on newspaper articles translated from other languages and published in Italian newspapers. The influence of

source languages (mostly English) that are prone to welcoming politically correct structures may pave the way to a greater number of gender-neutral solutions in translations (e.g. split forms), which are likely to go unnoticed by the readers. For example, the fortune of the feminine noun *cancelliera* (chancellor.F) is very likely to be connected to the use of *Kanzlerin* in German, although, after closer scrutiny, this feminine job title may sound much 'stranger' than *ministra* or *sindaca*.

A simple search in the online archive of *la Repubblica*[5] provides evidence of the increasing acceptability of feminine job titles in Italy in recent years. Table 1 below reports the frequency of the words *assessora* (alderwoman), *avvocata* (lawyer.F) and *ministra* during the first twenty years of the 21st century (the search was conducted in September 2018):

Table 1 Total and annual frequencies of *assessora*, *avvocata* and *ministra* in *la Repubblica*, 2000-18. The 2015-18 period was calculated as four full years

Period	**01/01/2000-31/12/2009**		**01/01/2010-31/12/2014**		**01/01/2015-30/09/2018**	
Frequency	overall	yearly	overall	yearly	overall	yearly
Assessora	237	23.7	317	63.4	7,424	1,856
Avvocata	434	43.4	465	93	1,531	382.75
Ministra	1.110	111	1,581	316.2	5,101	1,275.25

Table 1 shows that the frequency of these three words has significantly increased in the last ten years, and *assessora* has literally soared in the last four years. Of course, this test has no scientific value because, on the one hand, it includes only a limited number of word types and, on the other, it accounts for the choice of only one of the main Italian newspapers circulating at national level. In addition, even though quality newspaper articles are currently viewed as the reference model of the new Standard Italian (Antonelli 2011), quality press readers may not be considered representative of the general population from a diastratic viewpoint. Nevertheless, the tendency to a greater acceptability of feminine job titles is very likely to emerge in other mass media too (e.g. television and the Internet).

3 The Survey

As is often the case, regardless of individual preferences based on ideology or more or less scientific arguments, the main challenge for linguists is posed by the collection of data that may be used to effec-

5 An Italian national newspaper available at `https://www.repubblica.it`.

tively assess the actual behaviour of a community of speakers. Data collection needs to be managed in order to portray the reality under examination as objectively as possible.

For example, in the case of the small experiment illustrated in section 2.2 above, besides the very limited number of job titles considered, a possible objection may entail the role played by ideological factors: e.g., since *la Repubblica* is known to adopt a progressive political stance, its journalists may accept feminine job titles more easily than their colleagues working for other newspapers. Similarly, a survey of different written text types may generate other imbalances in the analysis: e.g., in the case of administrative texts, a role may be played by mandatory guidelines imposed by state authorities requiring the use of gender-inclusive language, thus leading to an increase in the number of feminine job titles not reflective of their actual acceptability on the part of the common reader.

3.1 Methodological Issues

To conduct a survey aimed at assessing the acceptability of feminine job titles by native speakers of Italian, we adopted and adjusted the model implemented by Ondelli and Romanini (2018) to assess the acceptability of features of the new Standard Italian. The difficulties deriving from the elicitation of data from informants may be summarized in the three main points illustrated below.

a. Unsurprisingly, the need emerges to select a varied population sample representing the average speakers from the sociolinguistic viewpoint, with particular reference to diastractic variation. In the case at hand, diamesic factors do not seem to play a significant role, while diatopic variation, rather than referring to the traditional differences emerging in the northern, Tuscan and southern varieties of Italian, may account for the differences between linguistically innovative large metropolitan areas vs. more conservative rural areas. However, it is the diastratic variation, accounting for factors such as age, sex and education, which is more likely to impact the results of our survey.
b. One should avoid the overt exhibition of the linguistic traits under scrutiny, which in turn may explicitly draw the informants' attention on those traits. E.g., if the respondents are presented with a simple sentence or clause in isolation and are asked: "do you like this feminine job title? This is exactly what we are trying to analyse", they may feel they are called upon to judge the correctness of that word and draw upon the explicit norms they were taught at school or base their answers on their ideological and political values. In fact, we are trying

to measure their actual linguistic behaviour rather than what they think is linguistically correct or ideologically preferable.

c. In the light of (b) above, the text type including the feminine job titles we are analysing is paramount, since it is liable to influence acceptability. E.g., typical features of administrative texts such as the narrative imperfect or the use of the present participle as a verb rather than as a noun or adjective may go unnoticed, while they would stand out in other text types. Similarly, if readers expect to find gender inclusive language in administrative texts, they may consider the presence of feminine job titles less unusual and may not notice them.

3.2 Trait Selection, Submission Procedure, Distribution Procedure

The first step of the survey consisted in selecting a range of structures involving job titles to be submitted to the population sample called upon to assess their acceptability. The list of these structures is provided below.

- Feminine job titles whose acceptability on the part of the majority of Italian speakers is questionable as opposed to more traditional forms: *sindaca*, *ministra*, *la vigile*, *vigile donna*, *vigilessa* (traffic warden.F), *avvocata*, *avvocatessa*, *donna avvocato*, *avvocato donna* and *la legale* (lawyer.F).
- Masculine job titles attributed to female referents in the text.
- Both masculine and feminine job titles attributed to female referents in the text (e.g. using both *ministro* and *ministra* for the same person).
- Grammatical agreement: adjectives and past participles agreeing with masculine job titles attributed to a female referent (e.g. *il sindaco Chiara Appendino è soddisfatto*, 'the.M mayor.M C.A. is satisfied.M').
- Referential agreement: adjectives and past participles agreeing with a female referent preceded by masculine job titles (e.g. *il sindaco Chiara Appendino è soddisfatta*, 'the.M mayor.M C.A. is satisfied.F').
- Alternating grammatical and referential agreements in connection to the same female referent.

To avoid influencing the respondents and elicit spontaneous answers, the informants were asked to read short passages extracted from newspaper articles and write comments on the overall linguistic quality of the texts. In other words, they were asked to note any linguistic trait they considered unacceptable or even incorrect, but no explicit mention was made of feminine job titles.

We chose newspaper articles because the language of the press is considered the model for the new Standard Italian (Antonelli 2011). As already observed, although the quality press readers may not be considered representative of the average Italian speaker in the light of the low reading levels of the population, most Italians are familiar with this text type. Furthermore, given the broad range of subjects covered (politics, business, local news etc.), newspaper articles often make reference to job titles of great prestige attributed to women. Four passages were selected from articles published online by the news agency *Adnkronos* and the newspapers *Il Messaggero*, *la Repubblica* and *Il Sole 24 Ore*. To ensure that all the structures we wished to assess were present, we modified the extracts when necessary.

Finally, the texts were submitted through *Surveymonkey*,[6] an online free service for the creation and administration of questionnaires through the Internet. Students, friends and relatives were asked to disseminate the questionnaire among their contacts via email, the social media etc., in order to include a large (207 subjects) and varied pool of respondents. Unfortunately, upon collecting and classifying the results, the sample proved to be excessively homogeneous, since the vast majority included women, young people (between 20 and 25), people with a high level of education (having completed at least their secondary education) and living in northern Italy. Since the subjects included in those subgroups exceeded one half of the total number of respondents, the average values of their answers are more reliable than those calculated for less numerous groups, in which one single answer may lead to significant variations in the mean values.

6 https://www.surveymonkey.com.

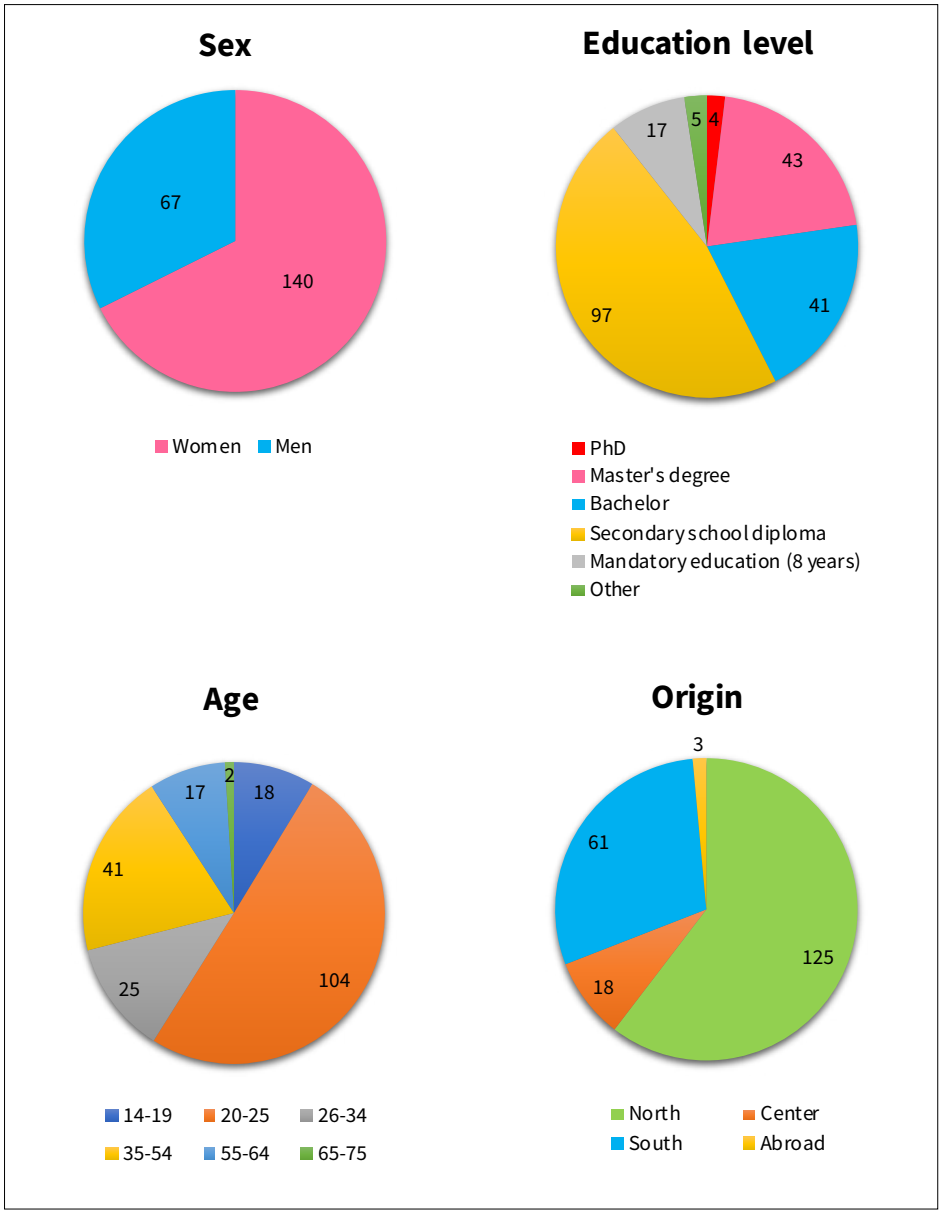

Chart 1 Informant distribution according to sex, level of education, age and origin

3.3 An Example

One of the texts included in the survey follows below, with the traits under investigation highlighted in bold:

> Una turista tedesca è stata arrestata dalla polizia municipale, perché sorpresa a rubare in un negozio in via Toledo. L'episodio è accaduto ieri pomeriggio, intorno alle 17.30, quando un cliente dell'esercizio commerciale che vende abbigliamento ed accessori per donna, ha notato alcuni movimenti sospetti della straniera e ha allertato alcuni poliziotti municipali che si trovavano in strada. Giunte sul posto le volanti della polizia municipale, la turista non dava cenni di voler collaborare, né di aprire la borsetta per farla ispezionare ai vigili. In un primo momento, i poliziotti municipali comandati da Rodolfo Raiola hanno tentato di convincere la donna a consegnare loro la borsa, parlandole in tedesco ma ciò nonostante la straniera ha cominciato ad agitarsi e a mostrare aggressività, colpendo due **vigilesse** con l'asta per i selfie che impugnava e strattonandole. La 52enne tedesca, scoperta poi essere **la ex sindaco** di un piccolo paese bavarese, è diventata sempre più violenta e ha sputato contro **le due vigili** che, nel frattempo, erano riuscite a sottrarle la borsa per ispezionarla e ritrovare al suo interno vari oggetti del negozio, tra cui orologi e braccialetti. La donna, dunque, è stata arrestata per furto ma anche per oltraggio e resistenza ai pubblici ufficiali, violenza e lesioni e rifiuto di fornire le sue generalità. **I due vigili donna picchiate** hanno avuto una prognosi di 7 e 8 giorni, mentre la turista è ora nella casa Circondariale di Pozzuoli. (*Il Messaggero*, 3 September 2016[7])

The purpose of offering this text type was to assess the acceptability of the range of possible feminine plural forms for the epicene job title *vigile*, i.e. *vigilesse*, *le vigili* and *i vigili donna* (traffic warden.F). Out of 193 readers who commented the text, these forms were considered unacceptable by 12, 50 and 69 subjects respectively, i.e. 6%, 26% and 36% of the respondents.

Vigilesse was criticised by a very small number of informants, while *le vigili* was considered unacceptable by 25% and 27% of the men and women in our population sample respectively. In terms of age, they account for 11% of the 14-19 age group, 26% of the 20-25 age group, 26% of the 26-34 age group, 31% of the 35-54 age group and 31% of the 55-64 age group. In terms of education, those who rejected *le vigili* account for 24% of the respondents who have

7 https://www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/cronaca/turista_tedesca_ruba_in_un_negozio_e_sputa_contro_le_vigilesse-1944617.html.

completed their lower secondary education (eight years in total), 24% of those who have completed their higher secondary education, 29% of those who have a bachelor's degree and 33% of the respondents with a master's degree. Lastly, in terms of origin, 28% reside in northern Italy, 27% in the south and slightly more than 10% in central Italy.

Since the informants were free to provide explanations for their judgments, some wrote that *le vigili* is unacceptable because *vigile* is a masculine noun and cannot be preceded by a feminine article. In fact, *vigile* is an epicene (or common) noun, i.e. it has one single form that can be used for both men and women (as is the case with *cantante*). Its gender may only be derived from determiners or adjectives, as in *il/la cantante* or *un'interprete molto colta*. In other words, according to the Italian grammar, *vigile* may be correctly introduced by either the masculine article *il* or the feminine article *la*.

Finally, the third variant (*i vigili donna*) was rejected by 39% of female informants and 30% of male informants. Those against *i vigili donna* made up 62% of the 14-19 age group, 40% of the 20-25 age group, 26% of the 26-34 age group, 22% of the 35-54 age group and 25% of the 55-64 age group. Those who voiced their criticism accounted for 30% of the informants who have completed their lower secondary education (eight years), 36% of those who have completed their higher secondary education, 29% of informants with a bachelor's degree, 33% of those with a master's degree. Finally, they account for 28% of residents in northern Italy, 27% of the informants living in the south and slightly more than 10% of those residing in central Italy.

With reference to the acceptability of the alternating use of different solutions for the feminization of *vigili*, the lack of consistency was mentioned by only 33 subjects out of 193 (17%). A possible explanation is that the vast majority of the informants considered these different feminine forms as perfectly interchangeable synonyms.

As regards the acceptability of the referential agreement, included in the text within the sentence "i due vigili donna picchiate", only 8% of the informants deemed it incorrect, i.e. 16 out of 193.

Another job title included in the passage was the masculine noun *sindaco* referring to a woman. Only 9 respondents out of 193 considered it incorrect, which is hardly surprising since the masculine forms seem to be preferred to refer to the offices and professions considered of great prestige.

Finally, 28 respondents out of 193, i.e. 15%, made no comment whatsoever.

3.4 Overall Results

Our survey cannot be considered a reliable picture of the linguistic norm (i.e. the actual average linguistic behaviour of speakers) in Italy. A larger and more balanced population sample would be necessary, while most of our respondents are young, female, highly educated and resident in northern Italy. However, with reference to the four more numerous groups, the results of our survey on the acceptability of *sindaca*, *ministra*, *la vigile*, *il vigile donna*, *vigilessa*, *avvocata*, *avvocatessa*, *donna avvocato*, *avvocato donna* and *la legale* may be illustrated as follows:

- *sindaca* is accepted by approximately 4/5 of respondents;
- *le vigili* is accepted by approximately 3/4 of respondents;
- *ministra* is accepted by approximately 5/6 of respondents;
- *avvocata* is accepted by approximately 2/3 of respondents;
- *avvocatessa* is accepted by approximately 90% of respondents;
- *vigilessa*, *donna avvocato*, *avvocato donna* and *le legali* are accepted by nearly all respondents;
- *vigili donna* is more frequently subject to criticism; however, it is accepted by approximately 60% of the informants.

We summarize the general conclusions of our survey below.

1. Men and women share the same opinion on feminine job titles, since neither group of informants proved more critical than the other.
2. Surprisingly, it was the 26-34 age group and the group of informants with higher education levels who proved more critical of feminine job titles, immediately followed by the informants who had only completed their lower secondary education (*licenza media*). However, no clear pattern emerges in terms of age and level of education. In other words, younger and more educated informants are not necessarily more open to innovations nor are the older and less educated cohorts less inclined to welcome new feminine job titles.
3. In general, feminine job titles today seem to be more easily accepted than in the past, although their masculine variants referring to women still provide a widely accepted alternative, since they were virtually never subject to criticism.
4. Today, the linguistic strategies implemented to obtain feminine job titles seem to be less criticized than the introduction of new feminine forms in addition to a pre-existing, more familiar feminine noun, as shown by the assessment of *le vigili* and *le legali* or *vigili donna* and *avvocati donna*. *Le vigili* and *i vigili donna* met with greater opposition than *le legali* or *gli avvocati donna*, although the morphological structures are the same. The pre-existing and widely used form *vigilessa* might

explain this difference, since *la legale* is an innovation. *Avvocatessa* was considered acceptable by our informants, although it is less familiar than *vigilessa* and leaves room for the introduction of *avvocato donna* or even *avvocata*.

5. Neither grammatical (e.g., *l'avvocato Raggi è appena arrivato*) nor referential (e.g., *l'avvocato Raggi è appena arrivata*) agreements were specifically opposed; rather, criticism was levelled at their simultaneous presence within the same sentence or text (approximately 1/3 of respondents), since it impinges upon text cohesion and clarity.

4 Conclusion

Although opinions varied, our survey shows a decreasing trend in the assumed dislike for the feminine forms of nouns describing titles and professions in the light of their purported violation of the rules of Italian morphology and syntax (Robustelli 2013). In contrast, the use of feminine forms for titles and professions provides a solution to the morphological and syntactic inconsistencies considered by the informants as the real problem in terms of a correct use of the language.

In the final analysis, those who describe Alma Sabatini's proposals as prescriptive and unjustified choices produced by ideological bias, devoid of any scientific grounding and contrary to the rules of Italian grammar, seem to disregard the dynamic relationship emerging between usage and rules, i.e. the driving force of linguistic change (Coseriu 1971). The increase in the acceptability of female job titles has probably been strengthened by their frequent use in the mass media. In other words, societal changes (in this case, women's access to positions of power and status) is reflected by linguistic innovations regardless of any grammatical reason for maintaining the masculine forms as the sole option. So, the use of masculine forms as neutral terminology referring to titles and positions in laws and regulations may well be justified but, as Cortelazzo (2017) rightly points out, it is the community of speakers who will eventually decide what is acceptable in their language.

Bibliography

Antonelli, G. (2011). "Lingua". Afribo A.; Zinato E. (a cura di), *Modernità italiana. Cultura, lingua e letteratura dagli anni Settanta a oggi*. Roma: Carocci, 15-52.

Biemmi, I. (2010). *Educazione sessista. Stereotipi di genere nei libri delle elementari*. Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier.

Cortelazzo, M.A. (2010). "Unione europea. Una questione di aggettivi". *Corriere del Ticino*, 20 dicembre, 29.

Cortelazzo, M.A. (2015). "In appoggio a Laura Boldrini". *Parole. Opinioni, riflessioni, dati sulla lingua*. https://cortmic.myblog.it/appoggio-laura-boldrini.

Cortelazzo, M.A. (2017). "Femminilizzazione dei nomi, cerimoniale, costituzione". *Parole. Opinioni, riflessioni, dati sulla lingua*. https://cortmic.myblog.it/femminilizzazione-dei-nomi.

Cortelazzo, M.A.; Pellegrino F. (a cura di) (2003). *Guida alla scrittura istituzionale*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.

Coseriu, E. (1971). "Sistema, norma e 'parole'". Coseriu E. (a cura di), *Teoria del linguaggio e linguistica generale*. Roma-Bari: Laterza, 19-103.

Devoto, G. (1958). "Un nuovo incontro fra lingua e diritto". *Lingua Nostra*, 19, 1-5.

Lepschy, G. (1989). *Nuovi saggi di linguistica italiana*. Bologna: il Mulino.

Manuelli, M.T. (a cura di) (2014). *Donne, grammatica e media. Suggerimenti per l'uso dell'italiano*. Ariccia: Ed. G.I.U.L.I.A. Giornaliste.

Nencioni, G. (1962). "Ancora di lingua e diritto". *Lingua Nostra*, 23, 97-102.

Nencioni, G. (1987). "Lessico tecnico e difesa della lingua". *Studi di lessicografia italiana*, IX, 5-20.

Ondelli, S.; Romanini, F. (2018). "Norma interiorizzata e uso. Un'indagine preliminare su parlanti italiani". *Italica Wratislaviensia*, 9(1), 185-207.

Ondelli, S.; Viale, M. (2010). "L'assetto dell'italiano delle traduzioni in un corpus giornalistico. Aspetti qualitativi e quantitativi". *Rivista internazionale di tecnica della traduzione*, 12, 1-62.

Robustelli, C. (2011). "L'uso del genere femminile nell'italiano contemporaneo. Teoria, prassi, proposte". "*Politicamente corretto? Maschile e femminile. Usi corretti della denominazione di cariche e professioni" = Atti della X Giornata della Rete per l'Eccellenza dell'italiano Istituzionale (REI)* (Roma, 29 novembre 2010). Roma: Commissione Europea; Rappresentanza in Italia. https://diazilla.com/doc/742593/politicamente-o-linguisticamente-corretto%3F.

Robustelli, C. (2013). "Infermiera sì, ingegnera no?". *Accademia della Crusca*. https://accademiadellacrusca.it/it/contenuti/infermiera-si-ingegnera-no/7368.

Sabatini, A. (1987). *Il sessismo nella lingua italiana*. Roma: Commissione nazionale per la realizzazione della parità tra uomo e donna; Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri.

Schneider, S. (1999). *Il congiuntivo tra modalità e subordinazione*. Roma: Carocci.

Sgroi, S.C. (2018). "Il genere grammaticale e la teoria sessista della lingua". Castrignanò, V.L.; De Blasi, F.; Maggiore, M. (a cura di), *"In principio fuit textus". Studi di linguistica e di filologia offerti a Rosario Coluccia in occasione della nomina a professore emerito*. Firenze: Cesati, 651-65.

Timpanaro, S. (1963). "A proposito del parallelismo di lingua e diritto". *Belfagor*, 18, 1-14.

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

Repetition and Reduction. Two Contrastive Characters of Politeness Formulas in a Gender Perspective

The Case of the Italian *cià cià* and Similar Expressions

Anna Chiara Pagliaro
Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, Italia

Abstract This study is about politeness formulas as a class of fixed expressions and, in particular, it analyses the coexistence of two opposing phenomena – namely repetition and phonetic reduced variants – which contrasts with the typical stability and immutability of formulaic aspects in spoken communication. These aspects are discussed using the method of correlational sociolinguistics with reference to language and gender. The data show that men tend to use politeness formulas affected by repetition and reduction more than women. This tends to support the thesis according to which men are more exposed to linguistic variation and innovation while women would tend to a conservativeness and a tradition of the forms.

Keywords Gender Studies. Spoken Communication. Repetition. Reduction. Politeness Formulas. Ciao. Conservativeness. Innovativeness.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia 1
ISSN 2724-4652
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-478-3 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-479-0

Open access
Published 2020-12-29

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-478-3/005

1 Introduction

Spoken communication is characterized by phenomena of mutability and instability due to the different speakers who use the language in different situations (Voghera 2017). Two of these phenomena are repetition and reduction. Both of them are very common aspects of language, and involve both content and functional words. In this study the two phenomena are analysed in the field of politeness formulas in spoken communication, and a gender perspective is adopted.

In particular, the repetition and the reduction phenomena – and their coexistence in specific contexts – represent the main issue in the field of formulaic language due to their constituent characters of fixity and stability in spoken communication too. In addition, this perspective can introduce a key factor for the study of language and gender according to the matter of variation and innovation of language forms in men and women.

The present paper has the following structure. After the introduction, the second paragraph deals with politeness formulas, their meaning and their theoretical foundations. The third paragraph deals with the phenomenon of repetition, while the fourth is about reduction, as related to formulaic language and gender variation. The fifth section concerns the methodology of our research and the presentation of the data on repetition and reduction. Then, in the sixth paragraph we present the results from the data, particularly the case of *ciao*, while in the seventh we show that, following the perspective of correlational sociolinguistics as regards the field of language and gender, men tend to use more repetition and reduction in politeness formulas than women. Finally, our conclusions are presented in paragraph eight.

2 Politeness Formulas

The expression of politeness formulas[1] includes various elements such as greetings, farewells, thanks, wishes, apologies, compliments etc. This group of elements is an independent class of functional and pragmatic expressions characterized by fixed, conventional and non-transparent items of linguistic politeness (Pagliaro 2018). Indeed, they are not part of a grammatical class and they do not occupy a fixed position in the lexicon-syntax continuum. These expressions can

1 Cf. "phrase of politeness" (Malinowski 1923); "politeness formulas" (Ferguson 1976); "formulaic expressions" (Tannen, Öztek 1977); "conversational routines" (Coulmas 1981; Aijmer 1996); "formule di buona creanza" (Slama-Cazacu 1985); "formule di cortesia" (Pierini 1983; Slama-Cazacu, Mininni 1989); "routine formulas" or "pragmatic idioms" (Coulmas 1994).

be made of verbs (e.g. it. *scusa*, 'sorry'; *prego*, 'you are welcome'), nouns (e.g. it. *auguri*, 'best wishes'), or adverbs (e.g. *a presto*, 'see you soon').[2] But they can also be made of a single word (e.g. it. *salve*, 'hi', en. *bye*), collocations (e.g. it. *grazie mille*, 'thank you so much', en. *good morning*), locutions (e.g. it. *in bocca al lupo*, 'good luck', en. *see you soon*) or sentences (e.g. *ti ringrazio*, 'thank you' – lit. 'I thank you' – en. *how are you?*). They can be effectively described by the construction grammar paradigm, according to which a construction – i.e. a combination of a form and a function – can represent diverse entities of varying complexity/simplicity and specificity/schematicity placed in the same continuum, without clear boundaries between the traditional levels of lexicon, syntax and morphology (Croft 2001; Goldberg 2006).

In addition, politeness formulas are characterized by fixity as regards phonetics, lexicon-syntax, pragmatics and intonation and are therefore included in the macro class of 'formulaic language' (Coulmas 1994; Wray 2006; Giovanardi, De Roberto 2013). According to Bardovi-Harlig:

> The use of the term *formula* in contemporary empirical pragmatics refers to recurrent strings or expressions used for specific pragmatic purposes. Formulas often succinctly capture the illocutionary force of a contribution by virtue of the fact that the speech community in which they are used has tacitly agreed on their form, meaning, and use. (2012, 207)

The social and pragmatic role of politeness formulas, according to the theory of linguistic politeness, is to limit conflict and encourage harmony in the community through the communicative interactions, also varying the linguistic choices in relation to the context, the style, the register, the channel and the means of communication (Lakoff 1973; Leech 1983, 2014; Brown, Levinson 1987; Watts 2003). Traditionally, it has been argued that women are more polite than men, because they make greater use of minimal responses to indicate support to the speaker (e.g. hedged statements and linguistic forms related to politeness), while men talk more, use a greater amount of offensive language and use imperative forms to face other men (Coates 1993; Holmes 1995; Mills 2003). This statement would be worth considering more carefully. However, this goes beyond the aims and limits of this paper.

2 Traditionally, politeness formulas are included in the grammatical class of interjections (for discussion see Pagliaro 2018, 61).

3 The Phenomenon of Repetition

Repetition is a complex, ubiquitous and multidimensional phenomenon that affects all aspects of human existence. Daily linguistic and non-linguistic practices consist of routines in which humans do things and speak words in the same way day after day (Fischer 1995), without being aware of it. Indeed, Bazzanella (1996) theorizes a scale of consciousness of repetition that runs from the unconscious repetitions of the discourse markers to the conscious repetitions of rhetorical strategies of poets and advertisers. She also distinguishes between self-repetition and other-repetition and recognizes in this phenomenon different macro-functions (cognitive, textual, argumentative, stylistic and ethnic) and micro-functions (conversational and interactional).

Aitchison (1995) provides two groups of variables useful for a classification of repetitions. The first group refers to means (written vs spoken), participants (self-repetition vs other-repetition), scale of fixity (degree of repetition, total or partial), time scale (immediate or delayed repetition) and size (phoneme, morpheme, word, phrase or sentence). The second group refers to function, intentionality and optionality of repetition. With regard to functions, repetition is used for intensification, cohesion, comprehensibility and conversational interaction. Intensification involves an increase in quantity and in quality, whereas repeated lexical items promote textual cohesion and avoid misunderstandings, and finally serve to maintain conversations. With regard to the distinction between intentional and unintentional repetition, Aitchison (1995) distinguishes between intentional repetition, which is more easily identifiable in writing and poetry, the so-called 'covert controlled', which occurs above all in informal conversations, and the unintentional repetition, which occurs to a different extent in both normophasic and pathological speakers. Finally, as regards optionality, the parameter provides four alternatives: obligatory repetition, which is necessary in cases where the phenomenon is a grammatical one, as in reduplication; optional repetition, related to the alteration of the words in the conversation; dispreferred repetition, when it is avoided to favour the pronominalization; and impossible repetition, when it is unacceptable.

Furthermore, repetition is particularly connected to the phenomenon of formulaic language. In particular, Tannen (2007) links the phenomenon of repetition in conversation to the issue of fixed, prefabricated language, as opposed to *ex novo* creation. In fact, the analysis of repetition indicates that much human language is not produced from scratch every time but relies on resources already available, such as the range of idiomatic and of formulaic expressions. This does not mean that speakers are unaware users of a collection of fixed expressions, but that the language they use actually arises from the in-

terplay between the fixity and the novelty. In this perspective, Tannen (2007, 58) recognizes four functions of repetition in conversation. The first one is production, as repetition allows the speakers to express themselves more efficiently and with less use of energy. The second one is comprehension, because through redundancy the listener can receive and understand information at the same time or about in which it is produced. The third one is connection, as repetition links the different parts of a speech. The fourth one is interaction, because repetition serves to manage the conversation by tying their participants to each other.

Finally, Wang (2005) analyses the connection between formulaic sequences and repetition, considering the three dimensions of morphology and syntax, semantic and pragmatics. He distinguishes three groups of repetitions: full copy (e.g. *on and on*), partial reduplication (e.g. *here and there*) and triplet and others (e.g. *tic-tac-toe*).

4 The Phenomenon of Reduction

In speech every token of a word differs from other tokens of the same word in many aspects: pronunciation variants are present at all levels of spontaneous and semi-spontaneous speech and speakers tend to articulate what is necessary for understanding what they are saying, while simultaneously reducing any articulatory gesture that is not explicitly necessary. Accuracy of pronunciation depends on the linguistic and non-linguistic context and on the in-/formality of the speech situation. Even so, speakers can more or less consciously change their level of articulation in every moment (Albano Leoni, Maturi 1995; Voghera 2017).

Reduced variants can be defined as words absent in their entirety, characterized by incomplete articulatory gestures or fewer segments as compared to the typical variants. All speakers use reduction and reduced variants are common both for function and content words in many languages. Moreover, it can be assumed that reduction processes are gradient rather than categorical. Indeed, sounds may be very short and weakly articulated, but still present. Furthermore, reduced sections of speech often contain clear cues to some phonological features that cannot be definitively localised.

Differences in speech situations may affect the quantitative (frequency of occurrence) and qualitative (type of reduction) effects of reduction. Previous studies have claimed that segments may be weakened or even completely silenced due to two completely different reasons. On the one hand, segments may be reduced during the articulation process. For instance, a segment may be inaudible because its articulation is hidden by the articulation of surrounding segments. On the other hand, segments may be weakened or silenced due to

higher level processes, which include both phonological reduction process and the selection of a reduced pronunciation variant of the word from the mental lexicon (Ernestus, Warner 2011; Ernestus, Hanique, Verboom 2015).

Previous studies assert that there are differences among social groups. In particular, as regards the variable of gender, many studies affirm that, in general, men reduce more than women, even if there is not a considerable variance. Byrd (1994) states that the speaker-specific characteristic of sex influences speech rate, stop releases, flapping, central vowels, laryngeal state, syllabic consonants and palatalization processes. Many of these phonetic characteristics, produced more frequently by men, are typical of reduction in speech. The study of Bell et al. (1999) analyses the phonetic (speech rate, following consonant/vowel, accent, disfluency) and non-phonetic factors (planning problems, predictability and collocation,[3] position in turn and utterance, age and sex) that affect the reduction of frequent function words. The authors claim that the greater disfluency and the higher speech rate found in men are partially, but not completely, responsible for a larger amount of reduced variants in their speech. Finally, Keune et al. (2005) and Strik et al. (2008), state that men reduce more often than women due to their higher speech rate among other social and linguistic factors.

In particular, as regards politeness formulas, Jespersen (1922, 266-7) already observed that pronouncing tendency to hypoarticulate, which is a common phenomenon in all languages and which in extreme cases leads to a complete unintelligibility of what was said, also affects formulas of politeness (e.g. *How d(e) do* for *How do you do*).

5 Methodology of Research and Data

5.1 Aim of the Research and Corpus

In light of prior studies, this paper means to fill the existing research gap among specific phenomena of spoken language, and to analyse an indipendent class of pragmatic expressions and the gender perspective. Indeed, the aim of this study is the necessity to analyse not only the two phenomena of repetition and reduction in the politeness formulas, but also to consider the gender perspective evaluating the tendency to repetition and reduction – and so to innovation – in linguistic elements that concern social relationships.

3 In reference to the wide class of formulaic language, including also collocations, Bell et al. (1999), as result of Jespersen's lecture (1922, 267-8), affirms that a word or a form in frequent use is liable to suffer exceptional treatment and that the predictability of a particular word in its context contributes to the weakened pronunciations.

The current study considers repetition and reduction in politeness formulas as the co-occurrence of two opposite phenomena against the stability and immutability of formulaic characters like fixity, conservativeness and conventionality in a gender perspective. Indeed, this study starts from the method of correlational sociolinguistics within the field of language and gender that takes binary sex as a legitimate starting point for analysis, that exists previously as a potential analytical category, and relies on quantification to identify general patterns (Hultengren 2008; Dittmar 2010). In particular, it addresses the following questions:

1. Is the repetition of politeness formulas more present in men's or women's speech?
2. Is the phenomenon of reduction in repeated politeness formulas more present in men's or women's speech?
3. Finally, is it possible to consider one of the two gender categories as more innovating than the other?

The corpus used for the current study is a corpus of 3325 politeness formulas of Italian speech (Pagliaro 2018) collected from VoLIP (De Mauro et al. 1993; Voghera et al. 2014) and C-ORAL-ROM (Cresti, Moneglia 2005) Italian spoken corpora. Especially, the VoLIP is an about 500,000 tokens corpus, organized in five sections: (a) face-to-face conversations; (b) telephonic conversations; (c) communicative exchanges with constrained turn-taking; (d) unidirectional exchanges; (e) television or radio broadcasts. The Italian C-ORAL-ROM, instead, consists of about 300,000 tokens and its corpus design includes a first division between the informal register (50%) and the formal register (50%). The informal register is divided between family-private domain and public domain, both domains are divided into sections of monologue, dialogue and conversation. The formal register, instead, is divided into mass media (interviews, weather forecasts, news, documentaries, scientific press, sports and talk shows) and natural contexts (conversations on economics, law, conferences, political debates, professional explanations, religious sermons, political speeches, lessons). The formal register also includes the telephone domain divided between private conversations and human/machine interactions.[4] The VoLIP and the C-ORAL-ROM corpora are homogeneous from the gender point of view.

Initially, items with single or multiple repetitions of a word are extracted from the corpus of politeness formulas. Then, politeness formulas with reduction are extrapolated.

4 The human/machine interactions are not considered in this paper.

5.2 Politeness Formulas with Repetition

The politeness formulas containing items with single or multiple repetitions of a word collected from the total corpus are 151 and they have been manually extracted. Table 1 shows the items in Italian, their translation into English and the number of tokens.

Table 1 Items and number of tokens

Items	Translation	Number of tokens
arrivederci arrivederci	'goodbye goodbye'	2
buonasera buonasera	'good evening good evening'	2
buongiorno buongiorno	'good morning good morning'	3
bye bye	'bye bye'	3
chiedo scusa chiedo scusa	'I'm sorry I'm sorry'	1
ciao ciao (or more repetitions)	'bye bye'	114
gli auguro gli auguro	'I wish him I wish him'	1
grazie grazie	'thanks thanks'	12
mi scusi mi scusi	'excuse me excuse me'	2
niente niente	'you're welcome you're welcome'	1
scusa scusa	'excuse me excuse me'	7
scusami scusami	'excuse me excuse me'	1
un bacione grande grande	'a big big kiss'	2
Total		151

The data are analysed through tree variables: the type of politeness formula, the speech situation and the gender of the speaker who uttered them.

The classification of the type of politeness formulas and of the speech situation in which the items occur partially follows the taxonomy used in Pagliaro (2018, 128-9).

As regards the type of politeness formulas, the current study distinguishes among formulas of apologies, farewells, greetings, greetings to others (i.e. not addressed to the direct interlocutor), ironic farewells, minimizations, thanks and wishes as indicated in Table 2.

Concerning the speech situation, the present classification unifies and reorganizes the two similar organizations of the VoLIP (De Mauro et al. 1993; Voghera et al. 2014) and the C-ORAL-ROM (Cresti, Moneglia 2005) Italian spoken corpora, and adopts three parameters: face-to-face presence of speaker and addressee, freedom of turns taking and frequency of turns' succession (cf. Voghera 2017, 67). So that, it distinguishes among:

a. face-to-face conversations;
b. telephone conversations;
c. bidirectional communicative exchanges with constrained turn-taking (i.e. interviews, debates, classroom interactions, oral exams);
d. unidirectional exchanges (i.e. lectures, sermons, speeches);
e. telephone conversations broadcasted on radio;
f. television or radio broadcasts.

The number of the tokens for each category is shown in Table 3.

Table 4 indicates the number of tokens as produced by men or women.

Table 2 Type of politeness formulas and number of tokens

Type	Number of tokens	%
apologies	11	7
farewells	118	78
greetings	5	3
greetings to others	1	1
ironic farewells	1	1
minimizations	1	1
thanks	12	8
wishes	1	1
unclassified*	1	1
Total	151	

* The indication means that it has not been possible to identify the type of politeness formula due to limited contextual information.

Table 3 Indication of speech situation and number of tokens

Speech situation	Number of tokens	%
A: face-to-face conversations	13	9
B: telephone conversations	81	54
C: bidirectional communicative exchanges with constrained turn-taking	1	1
D: unidirectional exchanges	3	2
E: telephone conversations broadcasted on radio	25	16
F: television or radio broadcasts	28	18
Total	151	

Table 4 Politeness formulas as produced by men and women

Politeness formulas produced by	Number of tokens	%
women	63	42
men	87	57
unclassified*	1	1
Total	151	

* The indication means that it has not been possible to determine who the speaker was due to background noise.

5.3 Politeness Formulas with Combination of Repetition and Reductions

As regards the politeness formulas, it is firstly observed that the phenomenon of repetition can occur in combination with the phenomenon of reduction. So, the items with reduction identified through a perceptive and a spectroscopic analysis by PRAAT (Boersma, Weenink 2018) are extracted from the 151 politeness formulas containing items with single or multiple repetitions of a word. Figure 1 and 2 show the spectroscopic analysis of two example items. In particular, Figure 1 shows the analysis of the Italian informal farewell *ciao ciao*, 'bye bye' in its complete form, while Figure 2 shows the representation of the same item in a reduced form, with the final syllable of the second item reduced (i.e. *ciao cià*, 'bye bye').

The formulas with reduction are 62, so that they represent the 41% of the 151 politeness formulas with repetition.

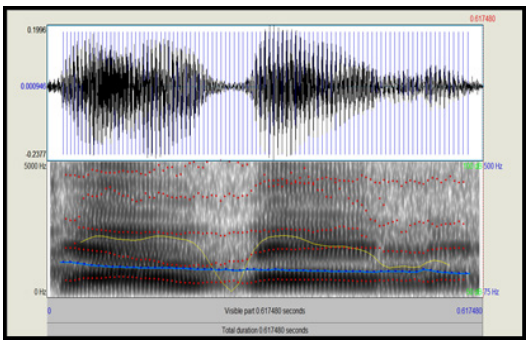

Figure 1 Farewell *ciao ciao*, 'bye bye' in its complete form ['ʧao'ʧao]

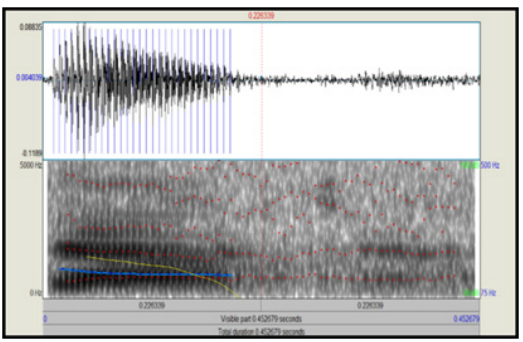

Figure 2 Farewell *ciao ciao*, 'bye bye' in its reduced form ['ʧao'ʧa]

The 62 items with reduction are analysed according to the type of reduction and, as for the phenomenon of repetition, according to the type of politeness formulas, the speech situation and the gender of the speaker who uttered them.

With regard to the type of reduction, the items are divided into five categories. The first category includes the items with the reduction of the final syllable. These represent the larger group and include expressions such as, for example, the farewell *ciao ciao* (/'ʧao'ʧao/), 'bye bye', that becomes *cià cià* ([ʧa'ʧa]). The second category includes the items with an internal syllable reduced, like in the farewell *arrivederci arrivederci* (/arrive'derʧiarrive'derʧi/), 'goodbye goodbye', that becomes *arrivederci arriderci* ([arrive'derʧiarri'derʧi]). The third category comprises the items with the reduction of the final vowel, as in the English farewell *bye bye* (en. /bɑɪ'bɑɪ/; it. /baj'baj/) that becomes it. *ba ba* ([ba'ba]), 'bye bye'. The fourth category includes the items with the reduction of the final vowel again and the final syllable reduced as in the apology *ma scusa ma scusa* (/ma'skuzama'skuza/), 'but sorry but sorry' that becomes *ma scuz ma scu* ([ma'skuzma'sku]). Finally, the fifth category comprises the items with an internal vowel reduced, such as the greeting *buongiorno buongiorno* (/bwon'ʤornobwon'ʤorno/), 'good morning good morning', that becomes *bongiorno bongiorno* ([bon'ʤornobon'ʤorno]). Table 5 provides a summary of the data with the number of tokens for the different categories.

Table 5 Type of reduction and number of tokens

Type of reduction	Number of tokens
final syllable reduced	58
internal syllable reduced	1
final vowel reduced	1
final vowel reduced + final syllable reduced	1
internal vowel reduced	1
Total	62

The distinction among the different types of politeness formulas, the speech situation and the gender of the speaker who uttered them follows the same criteria used for the previous classification of the repetition. In particular, Table 6 shows the items divided into the different types of politeness formulas; Table 7 displays the different speech situations in which the politeness formulas occur; Table 8 presents the data as produced by men or by women. Finally, Table 9 offers a summary of the data.

Table 6 Type of politeness formulas and number of tokens

Type	Number of tokens	%
Farewell	58	93
Apologies	2	3
Greeting	1	2
Thanks	1	2
Total	62	

Table 7 Indication of speech situation and number of tokens

Speech situation	Number of tokens	%
A: face-to-face conversations	6	10
B: telephone conversations	39	63
E: telephone conversations broadcasted on radio	10	16
F: television or radio broadcasts	7	11
Total	62	

Table 8 Politeness formulas as produced by men and women

Politeness formulas produced by	Number of tokens	%
women	27	44
men	35	56
Total	62	

Table 9 Summary of the data

Items	Type	Citation form	Reduced variants	Translation	No. of tokens
arrivederci arrivederci	farewell	/arrive'dertʃiarrive'dertʃi/	[arrive'dertʃiarri'dertʃi]	'goodbye goodbye'	1
buongiorno buongiorno	farewell	/bwon'ʤornobwon'ʤorno/	[bwon'ʤornobwon'ʤo]	'good morning good morning'	1
buon<giorno> buongiorno	greeting	/bwon'ʤornobwon'ʤorno/	[bon'ʤornobon'ʤorno]	'good morning good morning'	1
bye bye	farewell	en. /baɪ'baɪ/ it. /baj'baj/	it. [ba'ba]	'bye bye'	1
ciao ciao	farewell	/'ʧao'ʧao/	[ʧa'ʧa]	'bye bye'	10
ciao ciao	farewell	/'ʧao'ʧao/	[ʧa'ʧao]	'bye bye'	6
ciao ciao	farewell	/'ʧao'ʧao/	[ʧao'ʧa]	'bye bye'	22
ciao ciao ciao	farewell	/'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao/	[ʧaʧa'ʧa]	'bye bye'	1
ciao ciao ciao	farewell	/'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao/	['ʧaoʧa'ʧa]	'bye bye'	2
ciao ciao ciao	farewell	/'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao/	['ʧao'ʧao'ʧa]	'bye bye'	4
ciao ciao ciao ciao	farewell	/'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao/	[ʧa'ʧaʧa'ʧa]	'bye bye'	1
ciao ciao ciao ciao	farewell	/'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao/	['ʧaoʧaʧa'ʧa]	'bye bye'	4

Items	Type	Citation form	Reduced variants	Translation	No. of tokens
ciao ciao ciao ciao	farewell	/'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao/	['ʧao'ʧaoʧa'ʧa]	'bye bye'	2
ciao ciao ciao ciao ciao	farewell	/'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao/	['ʧaoʧa'ʧaʧa'ʧa]	'bye bye'	1
ciao ciao ciao ciao ciao ciao	farewell	/'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao/	['ʧaoʧa'ʧaʧa'ʧa'ʧao]	'bye bye'	1
ciao ciao ciao ciao ciao ciao	farewell	/'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao'ʧao/	['ʧao'ʧaoʧa'ʧaʧa'ʧa]	'bye bye'	1
grazie grazie	thanks	/'grattsje'grattsje/	[gra'grattsje]	'thanks thanks'	1
ma scusa ma scusa	apologies	/ma'skuzama'skuza/	[ma'skuzma'sku]	'but sorry but sorry'	1
no scusa no scusa	apologies	/no'skuzano'skuza/	[no'skuno'skuza]	'not sorry not sorry'	1
Total					62

6 Results. The Case of the Italian *cià cià* and Similar Expressions

In what follows we will present the results of the previous analysis, starting from the variables used to examine the two phenomena of repetition and reduction, i.e. the type of politeness formulas, the speech situation and the gender of the speaker who uttered them.

As regards the type of politeness formulas, the type mostly affected by the phenomenon of repetition is farewells. Indeed, farewells with repetitions represent the 78% of the items, followed by thanks (8%), apologies (7%), greetings (3%), and other types. Moreover, farewells are the type of politeness formulas mostly influenced by the phenomenon of reduction too, with a percentage of 93% of all the items. Also, the two phenomena usually both occur in the item *ciao*, used as a farewell in 114 tokens out of 151 items. *Ciao* is repeated once and more times and it is affected by reduction in 46 tokens out of 62. It is usually the final syllable that undergoes reduction. In this way, the combination of repetition and reduction creates new forms of the farewell *ciao*, like *ciao ciao* ['ʧao'ʧao]; *cià ciao* [ʧa'ʧao]; *ciao cià* ['ʧao'ʧa]; *cià cià* [ʧa'ʧa]; *cià cià cià* [ʧaʧa'ʧa]; *ciao ciao cià* ['ʧao'ʧao'ʧa] (cf. Table 9 for more examples). According to Bazzanella (2013, 42) for the cases of *ciao*, but also for other politeness formulas, this means that the speakers are reacting to the fixity of formulaic and routine language and are looking for novelty and intensification, creating new forms of politeness formulas that produce new values of linguistic politeness. In fact, the modified forms of the item *ciao* can be generally present only at the end of a communicative exchange (as is the case with farewells), while the no-repeated and no-reduced forms of *ciao* are used both for greetings and for farewells. In other words, these modifications seem to be responsible for the specialization of certain forms for new meanings.

With respect to the speech situation, the results indicate that the two phenomena of repetition and reduction in politeness formulas are more present in telephone conversations. Namely, as regards repetition, telephone conversations have the 54% of the tokens, followed by television or radio broadcasts (18%), telephone conversations broadcasted on radio (16%), face-to-face conversations (9%) and other speech situations. Similarly, the phenomenon of reduction is more present in telephone conversations (63%), followed by telephone conversations broadcasted on radio (16%), television or radio broadcasts (11%) and face-to-face conversations (10%).

Generally, farewells are the most used politeness formulas, because speakers need to point out when the conversation ends more than they need to point out for other moments of the communicative exchange to occur. Also, when closing a telephone call, speakers tend to use more politeness formulas due to lack of face-to-face interaction patterns, especially facial and body gestures. This means that speakers may tend to modify, through repetition and reduction, the politeness formulas they use most frequently.

As regards the parameter of gender, the results of the previous analysis indicate that both repetition and reduction are more present in the speech produced by men. Indeed, politeness formulas with single or multiple repetition of a word are the 57% of tokens produced by men, while only the 42% of those produced by women.[5] Similarly, the 62 politeness formulas with repetition and affected by reduction are produced in the 56% of cases by men and only in the 44% of cases by women. Moreover, with regard to the phenomenon of the reduced variants, the data are confirmed by previous studies who claim that, generally, men reduce more than women due to phonetic characteristics (Byrd 1994; Bell et al. 1999; Keune et al. 2005; Strik et al. 2008).

7 Discussion

As the literature states, both repetition and reduction are widespread phenomena in language, and they affect politeness formulas too, which are marginal elements of the lexicon. Their co-occurence also represents the manifestation of two opposite tendencies through the modifications of illocutionary force of a given speech act within a communicative exchange. Indeed, on the one hand, the reduplication functions as an intensification phenomenon; on the other hand, the presence of phonetic reduced variants operates as a mitigation phenomenon (Labov 1984; Bazzanella, Caffi, Sbisà 1991; Bazzanella 2004; Bazzanella, Gili Fivela 2009).

5 To these data we added the unclassified 1% the items.

Furthermore, the two phenomena are strictly related to the context. Repetition, in particular, is an iconic strategy in which the exact repetition always represents a more developed sign in terms of a semiotic and diagrammatic perspective. Regarding reduction, on the other hand, previous studies have claimed that segments may be weakened or even silenced due to articulation or phonological processes (Ernestus, Warner 2011; Ernestus, Hanique, Verboom 2015). For politeness formulas, it can be assumed that segments may be weakened or silenced due to both mechanisms. Namely, on the one hand, the reduction is due to the repetition and the segments are silent because they are hidden by the articulation of the surrounding segments and because of the production speed of two or more forms rather than one; on the other hand, it is possible to affirm that in specific contexts the speaker directly selects the reduced pronunciation variants.

Specifically, regarding the participants in the contexts and adopting the perspective of correlational sociolinguistics, it is then possible to consider the two sexes as variables for the analysis (Hultegren 2008; Dittmar 2010). And, if it is assumed that the presence of the two phenomena stands for a reaction against the fixity and immutability of formulaic language and for a disposition towards the renewal of traditional and conservative forms, it can consequently be stated that men are more innovative than women in their use of this aspects of language. In this sense, the issue seems to support the traditional thesis according to which men are more exposed to linguistic variation and innovation than women, who on their side would prefer conservativeness and the tradition of the forms (Berretta 1983; Eckert 1989; Coates 1993).

Nevertheless, Coates (1993, 185) affirms that linguistic variation echoes social variation and that it is therefore incorrect to affirm that either women or men are the linguistically innovative sex. Indeed, it would be better to claim that some linguistic change is initiated by female speakers and some by male speakers. Moreover, studies of gender and variation actually go beyond the description of who does what, and proceed into more worthwhile investigations on how systematic variation in language gives rise to social meaning (Meyerhoff 2014, 100). Also, from a sociophonetics perspective, as Podesva and Kajino (2014, 104) affirm, we need to remember that phonetic output is heavily influenced by physiology, as asserted by previous studies about reduction, but the roles of culture, social convention and gender ideology cannot be underestimated.

Also Ochs (1992) deals with the theme of the relation between language and gender, and the way this is mediated by social activities, and she suggests that three aspects of the language-gender relation must be taken into account. The first aspect is that the relation is *non-exclusive*, in the sense that various features of language may be

used by both sexes, but it is possible that some features are preferentially employed more by one than by the other sex. The second aspect is that the relation is *constitutive,* because linguistic features may guide social meanings, which in turn help to establish gender meanings. The third aspect is that the relation is *temporally transcendent,* because societies establish norms against which men and women can verbally *recontextualize the past* and *precontextualize the future*.

It would therefore seem that the reaction to the fixity of politeness formulas characterizes both sexes but men to a greater extent than women, and that this relation is mediated by men's tendency towards innovation and women's tendency towards conservativeness as social meanings.

8 Conclusions

The aim of this study was to analyse the phenomena of repetition and reduction in a gender perspective, adopting the viewpoint of correlational sociolinguistics. Repetition and reduction are two pervasive aspects of human communication that can be variously affected by the social and the linguistic context. In this paper we analysed the two phenomena in the field of politeness formulas – a marginal part of the lexicon – through the variables of the type of politeness formula, the speech situation and the gender of the speaker who uttered the expressions in discussion. The analysis of the latter variable revealed that men tend to use more politeness formulas affected by repetition and reduction. The results were interpreted as a tendency to react to the immutability of the formulaic aspects that influence men's speech more than women's.

Bibliography

Aijmer, K. (1996). *Conversational Routines in English. Convention and Creativity*. London; New York: Longman.

Aitchison, J. (1995). "'Say, Say It Again Sam'. The Treatment of Repetition in Linguistics". Fisher, A. (ed.), *SPELL Repetition*, vol. 7. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 15-34.

Albano Leoni, F.; Maturi, P. (1995). *Manuale di fonetica*. Roma: Carocci.

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2012). "Formulas, Routines, and Conventional Expressions in Pragmatics Research". *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 32, 206-27.

Bazzanella, C. (1996). *Repetition in Dialogue*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Bazzanella, C. (2004). "Atténuation et intensification dans l'Italien. Dimensions et configuration pragmatique". Araùjo Carreira, M.H. (éd.), *Plus ou moins !? L'atténuation et l'intensification dans les langues romanes*. Paris: Université Paris 8 Vincennes Saint-Denis, 173-200.

Bazzanella C. (2013). "Uso e comprensione del linguaggio formulare". Giovanardi, C.; De Roberto, E. (a cura di), *Il linguaggio formulare in Italiano tra sintassi, testualità e discorso*. Napoli: Loffredo, 35-60.

Bazzanella, C.; Caffi, C.; Sbisà, M. (1991). "Scalar Dimensions of Illocutionary Force". Zagar, Z. (ed.), *Speech Acts. Fiction or Reality?* Ljubljana: International Pragmatics Association Distribution Centre for Jugoslavia, 63-76.

Bazzanella, C.; Gili Fivela, B. (2009). *Fenomeni di intensità nell'italiano parlato*. Firenze: Cesati Editore.

Bell, A. et al. (1999). "Forms of English Function Words. Effects of Disfluencies, turn Position, Age and Sex, and Predictability". Ohala, J.J. et al. (eds), *ICPhS-14 = Proceedings of the 14th International Congress of Phonetic Sciences* (San Francisco, 1-7 August 1999), 395-8. https://www.internationalphoneticassociation.org/icphs-proceedings/ICPhS1999/papers/p14_0395.pdf.

Berretta, M. (1983). "Per una retorica popolare del linguaggio femminile, ovvero: la lingua delle donne come costruzione sociale". Orletti 1983, 215-40.

Boersma, P.; Weenink, D. (2018). *Praat. Doing Phonetics by Computer. Version 6.0.40*. http://www.praat.org.

Brown, P.; Levinson, S.C. (1987). *Politeness. Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Byrd, D. (1994). "Relations of Sex and Dialect to Reduction". *Speech Communication*, 15(1-2), 39-54. https://doi.org/10.1016/0167-6393(94)90039-6.

Coates, J. (1993). *Women, Men and Language*. London; New York: Longman.

Coulmas, F. (ed.) (1981). *Conversational Routine. Explorations in Standardized Communication Situations and Prepatterned Speech*. The Hague: Mouton Publishers.

Coulmas, F. (1994). "Formulaic Language". Asher, R.E.; Simpson, J.M.Y. (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, vol. 3. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1292-3.

Cresti, E.; Moneglia, M. (2005). *C-ORAL-ROM Integrated Reference Corpora for Spoken Romance Languages*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Croft, W. (2001). *Radical Construction Grammar.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

De Mauro, T. et al. (1993). *LIP. Lessico di frequenza dell'italiano parlato.* Milano: ETAS libri.

Dittmar, N. (2010). "Correlational Sociolinguistics". Jaspers, J.; Ostman, J.-O.; Verschueren, J. (eds), *Society and Language Use*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 140-51.

Eckert, P. (1989). "The Whole Woman. Sex and Gender Differences in Variation". *Language Variation and Change*, 1(3), 245-67. https://doi.org/10.1017/s095439450000017x.

Ehrlich, S.; Meyerhoff, M.; J. Holmes, J. (eds) (2014). *The Handbook of Language, Gender, and Sexuality*. 2nd ed. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.

Ernestus, M.; Warner, N. (2011). "An Introduction to Reduced Pronunciation Variants". *Journal of Phonetics*, 39(3), 253-60. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0095-4470(11)00055-6.

Ernestus, M.; Hanique, I.; Verboom, E. (2015). "The Effect of Speech Situation on the Occurrence of Reduced Word Pronunciation Variants". *Journal of Phonetics*, 48, 60-75. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wocn.2014.08.001.

Ferguson, C.A. (1976). "The Structure and Use of Politeness Formulas". *Language in Society*, 5(2), 137-51.

Fischer, A. (1995). "Repetition. An Introduction". *SPELL. Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature*, 7, 9-13.

Giovanardi, C.; De Roberto, E. (a cura di) (2013). *Il linguaggio formulare in italiano, tra sintassi, testualità e discorso*. Napoli: Loffredo Editore.

Goldberg, A. (2006). *Constructions at Work*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Holmes, J. (1995). *Women, Men, and Politeness*. London: Longman.

Hultegren, A.K. (2008). "Reconstructing the Sex Dichotomy in Language and Gender Research. Some Advantages of Using Correlational Sociolinguistics". Harrington, K. et al. (eds), *Gender and Language Research Methodologies*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 29-42.

Jespersen, O. (1922). *Language. Its Nature, Development, and Origin*. New York: Henry Holt & Company.

Keune, K. et al. (2005). "Social, Geographical, and Register Variation in Dutch. From Written 'Mogelijk' to Spoken 'Mok'". *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory*, 1(2), 183-223. https://doi.org/10.1515/cllt.2005.1.2.183.

Labov, W. (1984). "Intensity". Schriffin, D. (ed.), *Meaning, Form and Use in Context. Linguistic Applications*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 43-70.

Lakoff, R. (1973). "The Logic of Politeness; or, Minding Your P's and Q's". Corum, C.; Smith-Stark, C.T.; Weiser, A. (eds), *Papers from the Ninth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistics Society*. Chicago Linguistic Society, 292-305.

Leech, G.N. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.

Leech, G.N. (2014). *The Pragmatics of Politeness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Malinowski, B. (1923). "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages". Ogden, C.; Richards, I.A. (eds), *The Meaning of Meaning*. New York: Routtledge & Kegan Paul, 296-336.

Meyerhoff, M. (2014). "Variation and Gender". Ehrlich, Meyerhoff, Holmes 2014, 87-102.

Mills, S. (2003). *Gender and Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ochs, I. (1992). "Indexing Gender". Duranti, A.; Goodwin, C. (eds), *Rethinking Context. Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 335-58.

Orletti, F. (a cura di) (1983). *Comunicare nella vita quotidiana*. Bologna: il Mulino.

Pagliaro, A.C. (2018). *Formule di cortesia nell'italiano parlato* [PhD dissertation]. Napoli: University di Napoli "Federico II".

Pierini, P. (1983). "Struttura e uso di alcune formule di cortesia". Orletti 1983, 105-16.

Podesva, R.J.; Kajino, S. (2014). "Sociophonetics, Gender, and Sexuality". Ehrlich, Meyerhoff, Holmes 2014, 103-22.

Slama-Cazacu, T. (1985). "Le formule di buona creanza in lingua romena. Struttura e funzioni". *Studi italiani di linguistica teorica e applicata*, 14(1-3), 171-237.

Slama-Cazacu, T.; Mininni, G. (a cura di) (1989). *"GRAZIE". "PREGO". Le formule di cortesia in alcune regioni d'Italia*. Bari: Adriatica.

Strik, H. et al. (2008). "Pronunciation Reduction. How It Relates to Speech Style, Gender, and Age". *INTERSPEECH 2008 = Conference Proceedings. 9th Annual Conference of the International Speech Communication Association* (Brisbane, 22-26 September). Brisbane: ISCA, 1477-80.

Tannen, D. (2007). *Talking Voices, Repetition, Dialogue, and Imagery in Conversational Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tannen, D.; Öztek, P.C. (1977). "Health to Our Mouths. Formulaic Expressions in Turkish and Greek". Whistler, K. et al. (eds), *Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* (Berkeley, February 19-21, 1977). Berkeley (CA): Berkeley Linguistics Society, 516-34.

Voghera, M. (2017). *Dal parlato alla grammatica*. Roma: Carocci.

Voghera, M. et al. (2014). "VoLIP. A Searchable Italian Spoken Corpus". Veselovská, L.; Janebová, M. (eds), *Complex Visibles Out There = Proceedings of the Olomouc Linguistics Colloquium. Language Use and Linguistic Structure*. Olomouc: Palacký University, 628-40.

Wang, S.-P. (2005). "Corpus-Based Approaches and Discourse Analysis in Relation to Reduplication and Repetition". *Journal of Pragmatics*, 37(4), 505-40. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2004.08.002.

Watts, R.J. (2003). *Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wray, A. (2006). "Formulaic Language". Brown, K. (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*. Oxford: Elsevier, 590-7. https://doi.org/10.1016/B0-08-044854-2/04777-5.

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

Assessing the Mixed or Generic Feminine as an Inclusive Language Strategy

Mat Pires
Université Bourgogne Franche-Comté, France

Abstract Proposed grammatical gender-neutral language practices employing rephrasing, binomials, or abbreviated double forms are unlikely to achieve general acceptance or durably modify the linguistic system given their unusual graphical features, variable treatment of speech and writing, heavy processing requirements, increased volume, and overall complexity. In contrast, use of the feminine for mixed reference is well established for female-dominated professions such as nurse, draws on established linguistic resources, and preserves correspondance between written and spoken language. We provide examples of this strategy in several languages and discuss its advantages and shortcomings.

Keywords Inclusive language. Grammatical gender. Feminization. Gender resolution. Linguistic sexism.

1 Terminology and Issue

In numerous languages nouns are members of noun classes, which 'control' (i.e. determine) the forms of "agreement targets" (Corbett 1991, 189) such as pronouns, articles, or adjectives. Some languages (such as French, Italian, or Welsh) feature classes which are labelled 'feminine' and 'masculine', reflecting the fact that the vast majority of nouns with female and male referents are members of the corresponding noun class. Some (such as German, Lat-

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia 1
ISSN 2724-4652
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-478-3 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-479-0

Open access
Published 2020-12-29

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-478-3/006

in, or Konkani) have a further class, typically labelled 'neuter', which contains few animate nouns. However, in general in such tripartite noun-class systems, non-animate nouns may occur not only in the neuter class, but also in the masculine and feminine class. There are other combinations and specificities, which are outside the scope of this article. Here we will concern ourselves with 'gendered' languages of this kind, which feature masculine and feminine classes only, or have a further neuter class to which non-animate nouns are not exclusively assigned.

Such noun-class systems run into difficulties referencing animates without specifying their sex. This may be necessary in the case of mixed plurals, and when nouns are employed with generic value. A plurality of animates may be made up of males alone, females alone, or a mixture of the two. In many gendered languages this last case corresponds to a lexical and grammatical gap.

An animate noun employed with generic value may be singular (1) or plural (2).

1) Tout étudiant qui ne respecte pas ces consignes sera sanctionné.[1]
2) Les cordonniers sont les plus mal chaussés.

The binary nature of the class system imposes a choice: masculine *or* feminine. This choice is known as a 'resolution rule' (Corbett 1991, 261 ff). If, say, the resolution rule specifies the masculine, then the masculine becomes ambiguous, since it may reference one or more males, or a mixed group. If it is feminine, the ambiguity concerns females and mixed groups.

Many writers (e.g. Elmiger 2008; Cerquiglini 2018) have presumed that this issue is one limited to genericity, the 'generic masculine', but this is incorrect. Ultimately it concerns *all* nouns with mixed reference, be they plural (in which case they may be generic *or* specific), or singular (in which case they are necessarily generic). It is thus more accurate to refer to a 'mixed masculine': if plural the referent group is literally mixed, whether the plural holds a generic value, or refers to a specific group with masculine and feminine members; if singular and generic its semantic value is potentially mixed (it may reference a member of either sex).

1 I have used single underlining for mixed reference expressed with the masculine, dotted underlining with the feminine, and double underlining with a binomial or epicene form.

2 'Inclusiveness' and Masculine Resolution

In most gendered languages, the resolution rule specifies the masculine. This choice has been justified in various ways. Linguistically, it has been attributed to an 'unmarked' quality attributed to the masculine (in view of its numerous systemic roles[2]), though as a *justification* the argument is circular (Labrosse 1996, 30). Historically a supposed superiority of the male sex has frequently been invoked (for instance Favre de Vaugelas's (1647, 83) famous assertion of the 'nobility' of the masculine). The scope of masculine resolution has sometimes been widened, for example in purist traditions excluding certain feminine agentive nouns on nonlinguistic grounds (for French see Viennot 2014; Cerquiglini 2018).

Resistance to the masculine resolution rule has taken many forms, of a more or less radical nature. These are found in the manuals for non-sexist expression produced by individuals or state-sponsored committees. They include formulations which permit avoidance of masculine terms:

3) Potenciar y promover el rol de los agentes culturales. > el rol de las personas encargadas de la gestión cultural.
4) Se promueve la divulgación de los derechos laborales de los artistas. > para profesionales de las artes. (*Guía de lenguaje inclusivo de género* 2016, 5)

While such strategies are accessible in their use of established linguistic resources, they nonetheless have costs. The noun groups in examples (3) and (4) increase from 8 to 15 and from 5 to 11 syllables. In (3), *personas* is grammatically feminine and any targets will be feminine. However in (4) *profesionales* is a masculine generic, and even though as a noun it is epicene, any target will return a masculine form. Hence these strategies appear appropriate for proofreading stabilized texts, but less so for spontaneous speech or correspondence, where the avoidance they deploy is either effortfully long or highly context-dependent.

A second form is the binomial, which places the masculine and feminine forms in succession, rhetorically or semantically individuating the two groups, males and females. Charles de Gaulle is sometimes quoted as a precursor of such binomials (Elmiger 2008, 272); indeed Viennot (2014, 110) asserts bluntly that "il faut suivre le général et son 'Françaises, Français'" (one should follow General de Gaulle's 'Françaises, Français'). De Gaulle's phrase indicates a particular appeal to his female interlocutors, certainly justified cotextually by the se-

2 See Chervel 2019 for an extensive presentation of the centrality of the masculine in French.

mantic value of the following verb ("Françaises, Français, *aidez-moi*"), but it necessarily also invalidates the resolution rule, the masculine implicitly failing to cover both groups of referents. Binomials at least double the volume of a single gendered form (the feminine is generally longer, and the group may include a conjunction), and their use comes into conflict with the Gricean "Be brief" maxim. This is seen in De Gaulle's own practice. His first TV address after coming to power concluded with the famous phrase and its binomial, and also featured two cases of "celles et ceux", but there are also 11 examples of a simple masculine generic, including *Français* (5), while generic *Français* also crops up in another famous speech similarly concluded (6).

5) le sort même de la France et celui de chaque Français dépendent dans ce domaine du succès ou de la culbute. [...] Si les possédants subissent quelques nouveaux sacrifices, si les producteurs, les fonctionnaires, les salariés[3] concourent tous au sauvetage au détriment des augmentations qu'ils pouvaient escompter [...] je remercie celles et ceux qui ont déjà souscrit et je remercie d'avance celles et ceux qui souscriront avant que cette année finisse [...] Françaises, Français, aidez-moi ! (speech on coming to power, 27 June 1958).[4]

6) J'interdis à tout Français, et d'abord à tout soldat,[5] d'exécuter aucun de leurs ordres. [...] Françaises, Français ! Voyez où risque d'aller la France par rapport à ce qu'elle était en train de redevenir. Françaises, Français ! Aidez-moi ! (speech on the attempted coup in Algeria, 23 April 1961).[6]

Although not apparent in these examples, any target words controlled by these binomials will also be masculine – unless a new double form is used.

A third, more recent development is the 'abbreviated double form' which uses "separation signs" (Elmiger 2008, 130-1). Where the feminine is longer than the masculine we find graphical emphasis on the morphological boundary. Brackets – *enseignant(e)* – have been used in this way for a long time, but their marginalizing connotations have led other forms to emerge: *enseignant.e*, *enseignant-e*, *enseignant·e*, *enseignantE*, sometimes in the absence of a morphemic boundary, as in English *s/he*. German has internal capitals (*Binnengrossschrei-*

3 '[S]alariés' and also 'engagés' in this speech, are orally bivalent (Labrosse 1996, 97), and hence unmarked, despite the transcription.

4 https://fresques.ina.fr/de-gaulle/fiche-media/Gaulle00014/allocution-radio-televisee-du-27-juin-1958-prononcee-a-l-hotel-matignon.html.

5 The presence of women soldiers in the French army dates from 1938 (loi Paul-Boncour).

6 https://fresques.ina.fr/de-gaulle/fiche-media/Gaulle00071/discours-du-23-avril-1961.html.

bung) to mark off the beginning of the suffix: *LehrerIn*. One shortcoming is that these forms tend to suggest the primacy of the segment left of the boundary, in general the masculine, constructing the feminine as an extension of it (Labrosse 1996, 62-3; Cerquiglini 2018, 67, fn. 2).

A final procedure is the adoption or resemanticization of individual characters; it is particularly suited to situations where the feminine substitutes, rather than expands, the masculine. Thus the at-sign @ may iconically embrace O/A alternation in Spanish (7), X may stand for any letter, also in Spanish (8), and A/E alternation is served by a ligature in an unusual usage in French (9):

7) MIS ALUMN@S NON SON NÚMEROS (text of a placard in a demonstration, *Wikipedia*, "Gender Neutrality in Spanish")
8) TODXS A LA HUELGA (text of a placard in a demonstration, *Wikipedia*, "Gender Neutrality in Spanish")
9) C'EST TOI LÆ MÉCANO (slogan in a community cycle repair workshop)

These forms depend on the particular combination of substituted letters (French *la* vs *le*, Italian *gli* vs *le*, etc.).

Both these forms and the abbreviated double forms create a peculiar orthographic complexification, making them inappropriate for learners; indeed they are in practice limited to expert language users (Manesse 2019, 115). They also resist oralization and are essentially confined to written language – texts containing such elements cannot even be read aloud.

The objections that I have indicated to these various innovations lead one to wonder whether, even within the restriction to writing, such modifications can potentially cohere into a functional system at all. As we saw in Charles de Gaulle's speeches, the effort, even for an expert user, is daunting. Several writers have pointed out cases where inclusive forms are abandoned mid-text. Manesse notes that even a schoolbook intended for 8-year-olds and promoting the use of Inclusive Writing, contained examples of masculine generics (2019, 123).

To test this functionality I analysed an issue of a magazine published by the French CGT union for its university employee members (*Le lien*, 196, Sept. 2018). By its very nature this is a publication (a) read by expert language users, and (b) on the left of the political spectrum, with an egalitarian and feminist outlook.

Le lien clearly has a policy of using gender-neutral language, and takes inspiration from the system set out in Haddad (2017): use of middle point as a morphological boundary, alphabetical ordering (*la.le* and not *le.la*, etc.). However the neutralization is far from systematic: only 66,2% of the applicable lexical items are given an inclusive form. Inclusivity is also highly skewed towards nominal forms: of forms remaining in the masculine, nouns account for only 26,4%, while a majority of non-nominals remain masculine: 51,9%.

This imbalance is manifest in numerous examples of non-agreement, with inclusive nouns and masculine targets:

10) la formation de sujets et de travailleur·ses émancipés, de citoyen·nes éclairés à même de poser un regard critique sur le monde.
11) elles·ils en sont réduits à occuper leurs lieux de travail.
12) Algérie : 600 000 mort·es combattants et civils.
13) Mais nombreux sont les précaires (ceux de la FERC compris) qui sont syndiqué·es.
14) Après les retraité·es, Macron fait les poches des travailleur·ses handicapés.

The forms of linguistic inclusivity mentioned above are all distinct, and do not form an overall system for neutralizing gender in texts. However, such protocols do exist. In French, though the term 'écriture inclusive' is not necessarily associated with a specific set of recommendations, and may reference any written degendering strategy, its most influential manifestation is undoubtedly the *Manuel d'écriture inclusive* edited by Haddad (2017). The particular abbreviated double form proposed in this handbook inserts the middle point at the boundaries between the masculine form, the feminine suffix, and the plural suffix. This produces two distinct morphological types: one which is a letter series identical to the feminine (example 15), and one which superadds feminine endings to the masculine form (16). A final type juxtaposes the two gender-specific terms in alphabetical order (17):

15) ingénieur·e·s; sénior·e·s
16) acteur·rice·s; ceux·elles
17) du·de la; il·elle; la·le (Haddad 2017, 7, 10)

This system does nothing to alleviate the problems of graphocentrism, inappropriateness for learners and general complexity. Indeed, the recourse to alphabetical order aggravates its complexity. Alphabetical order is specified where two gender-specific forms are simply juxtaposed, whether it be with the middle point (15), or as simple binomials, as in *celles et ceux* in (5) above. Correctly producing the forms thus requires the language user to analyse the spelling – a completely novel cognitive step in language production. As Manesse points out, it requires "une vigilance considérable pour contrôler, dans son discours oral ou écrit, le choix de mots selon l'ordre alphabétique de leur initiale, ou finale s'il s'agit de deux radicaux identiques !" (2019, 126).[7] Naturally, the recourse to the alphabet produces varying or-

7 'Considerable vigilance is required, both in speech and writing, to determine word choice on the basis of the alphabetical order of the word's initial, or of its ending in the case of two identical stems'.

ders: *les maçonnes et les maçons* (f; m); but *les décorateurs et les décoratrices* (m; f). We might add that a majority of binomials end up with different orders according to number: 'le maçon ou la maçonne', but 'les maçonnes et les maçons'.[8] And finally, different inclusivity procedures may also generate different orders since recourse to the middle point systematically places the masculine in initial position: *jaloux·se·s*, but *les jalouses et les jaloux*.

This initial position is in fact only one of two ways the masculine is given precedence, since the system does not require a middle point between the stem and the masculine suffix: (*acteur·ice* and not *act·eur·ice*) (Haddad 2017, 7). This ignoring of the stem-suffix boundary clearly constructs the masculine as the base form, from which the feminine departs, and as such sits uneasily with the overall project, as we have mentioned. Applying the alphabetical principle to middle-point forms is conceivable: it would produce *maçon·onne* or *jalouse·oux*, forms no stranger than proposed neologisms such as *agriculteur·ice* or *hospitalier·ère·s*. Excluding middle-point forms from the alphabetical principle ultimately seems to be a recognition of the limits of the *Écriture inclusive* project. By reproducing the initial position of the established mixed masculine form, one preserves a very limited readability, or recognizability at the least, with respect to the established orthographic system.

Overall, then, the complexity of Haddad's *Écriture inclusive* seems to limit it not only to writing but to a subset of types of written communication occurring between expert language users, and likely to be proofread in some way. Like the reformulation strategies it appears to be essentially a corrective phase of text preparation, rather than a comprehensive, workable system able to replace existing writing practice. Its use seems further to be limited to contexts valorizing the assertion of egalitarian representation of women and men.

3 Feminine Resolution

The attempts to replace the masculine resolution rule by associating two gender-specific lexical items either morphologically or syntactically is, then, beset by various shortcomings. I turn now to an option which does not rely on associating forms, but instead simply rewrites the resolution rule to specify the feminine gender. I will first look at examples of this phenomenon in English.

English is often cited as a language little concerned with gender neutrality, since it has no grammatical gender, and an epicene third

8 A majority, since this is true for any in which the graphical form of the feminine is that of the masculine with a final <e>, along with several other types.

person plural form *they*. One corner of English where sexism may still lurk, however, is the singular generic, since at first sight any agreement target must be either *he* or *she*. There are however two well established alternatives: *it* for infants, and *singular they* (Bodine 1975; Haegeman 1981). This use of *they* has however often been the brunt of criticism from purists, leading some writers to opt for *he*:

18) Before the reader is shunted through the relatively uncharted, often even hypothetical territory which lies before him, it is perhaps only fair he be equipped with some general notion of the terrain. (Millett [1970] 1977, xi)

A more recent, consciously anti-sexist development has seen the emergence of a singular feminine for mixed reference:

19) sometimes higher education works as intended: it expands a student's mind and allows her to leave a past life behind. [...] The reader is left to make her own mind up about the structural forces at play. (*London Review of Books*, 13-9-2018)
20) the minor risk of revealing to rivals what the journalist is working on, what she knows and what she doesn't. (*London Review of Books*, 06-12-2018)

Ultimately, given the existence of singular *they*, this English mixed feminine seems an unnecessary luxury. It is generally absent from grammars or style manuals, but is evoked by Chevalier, de Charnay and Gardelle:

> un *she* générique, à utiliser en alternance avec le traditionnel *he* (par exemple pour deux référents différents; ou pour une alternance d'un paragraphe à l'autre, ou d'une page web à l'autre d'un même site), qui vise à faire alors de l'humain prototypique une femme. Il est cependant peu utilisé, et restreint à certains écrits du monde universitaire ou sites pour jeunes parents (avec par exemple des antécédents du type *your child*), et il n'est le plus souvent pas recommandé par les guides d'usage aujourd'hui. (2017, 16)[9]

The usage is considered both recent (Chevalier, de Charnay and Gardelle describe it as "emergent"; 2017, 18), and not particularly successful. I wish here to question that perspective, and suggest that while a consciously anti-sexist adoption of *she* in English is effective-

9 'a generic *she*, used as an alternative to the traditional *he* (for instance for two different referents, or alternating from one paragraph to the next, or from one web page to the next in the same site) which aims to make the prototypical human a woman. It is however little used, and limited to certain academic texts, or sites for young parents (with antecedents such as *your child*) and is generally not recommended by contemporary usage manuals'.

ly modern, the feminine generic has a much longer pedigree, since the selection of gender may be determined pragmatically, rather than constituting a systematic and systemic feature. Consider this segment from Jane Austen:

21) "I shall be most happy to play [the harp] to you both," said Miss Crawford; "[…] for I dearly love music myself, and where the natural taste is equal the player must always be best off, for she is gratified in more ways than one […]". ([1814] 1998, 53)

Here the feminine gender of the pronoun controlled by the generic 'player' is ostensibly premised on the fact that (a) the speaker is a member of the genericized class *harpist*, (b) she is female, and probably further (c) cultural factors mean *any* harpist is likely to be female. A contemporary example of such gender attribution is the following:

22) At the end of his review of my biography of Kierkegaard, Terry Eagleton suggests that I was 'too nice' to criticise Kierkegaard's politics [...]. Setting aside the question of whether or not a biographer must criticise her subject, […]. (Clare Carlisle, letter to *London Review of Books*, 12-09-2019)

This example may be seen as a case of a conscious feminization strategy, as in (19) and (20) above. However, the feminine target also rests on Carlisle's own femaleness, and her membership of the class *biographers of Kierkegaard*; unlike the previous example, this class is not stereotypically female. To my knowledge, such examples of pragmatically determined female generics have not been properly investigated and do not figure in standard grammars.

This marginal usage in English has its counterpart in other gendered languages, though there too, it is absent from standard grammars. A feminine generic is used commonly to genericize certain activities in which females have historically had a prominent role:

23) Carrefour valorizza le cassiere con un progetto di solidarietà (title, *Mark up*, 14-11-2016)
24) Paghe basse, riposi pochi e supermercati violenti: le cassiere sono sole (title, *fanpage.it*, 05-08-2014)
25) So sollen Niedriglohngruppen für Verpacker eingeführt, Kassierinnen schlechter bezahlt werden (*HNA*, 'Streik im Einzelhandel', 05-07-2013)
26) Les caissières de la grande distribution en grève (title, *La croix*, 01-02-2008)
27) *Les* damnées *de la caisse* (title of a book about a supermarket strike, by Marlène Benquet 2011)

Other examples for which examples are readily found genericize female primary-school teachers and nurses, and such generics are even found beside collective photographs including males **[Figs 1-2]**.

Figures 1-2 Images from the websites of *Paris Match*, 27-08-2018 (left), and *Journal de Montréal*, 20-11-2017 (right)

The mixed feminine does not generally figure in grammars, despite the frequency of such occurrences. The only mention in a French reference work that I have found is in Wilmet's *Grammaire critique du français*, where, after devoting several pages to the feminization of names of professions, the author remarks wryly: "Après cela, libre aux hommes de refuser l'installation de l'épicène féminin *les infirmières*" (2010, 72).[10] While Wilmet has the merit of mentioning this usage, it is nonetheless surprising to find a genuine and established refusal of masculine resolution evoked only as badinage, in a context where men wreak revenge for feminized job agentives by *refusing* to use it. Bickes and Brunner are similarly flippant, separating their numbered arguments in its favour into "serious" and "playful-ironic" (1992, 7-10, cited in Elmiger 2008, 143).

Despite its scarcity in published reference works, the mixed-reference feminine is clearly recognized by speakers. Three of Elmiger's male German respondents evoke it spontaneously – thus diverging from the gender-neutral forms he has proposed for discussion. One explains that as he has already come across such a feminine, "I could also imagine people saying *Bürgerinnen* and *Bürger* being included in that […] I found it a bit unusual at the start until I realized yes why not you can turn it round", while another, a trainee nurse, evokes "one version […] we're always coming across at the school you only write the feminine form essentially… and it's spoken like that you

10 'Having said that, it falls to men to refuse to countenance the feminine epicene *infirmières*'.

always address both sexes" (Elmiger 2008, 281). He has no quarrel with this usage, and indeed states that it "simplifies things considerably" (281). Similarly, Perry records a 45-year-old female observing that for French "Les métiers étaient [...], jusqu'à récemment, plutôt dotés du genre qui correspondait au sexe de la majorité des gens qui les exerçaient (une infirmière, un ambassadeur)" (2011, 319).[11] She correctly identifies the practice of *number genericity*, the selection of gender on the basis of the perceived majority of members of the class.

Elmiger devotes two pages to "Le féminin générique" (2008, 142-4). He begins by describing it as a "very radical" way of getting round masculine genericity, despite making no such comment on abbreviated double forms (2008, 130 ff.) incorporating obscure typographical marks which open up a chasm between spoken and written language. The radical aspect appears to be semantic: the feminine needs to be somehow *redefined* as mixed, in a metalinguistic note. Elmiger (2008, 143) gives examples of such notes in the feminine-generic regulations of an undefined teacher training college (28), and of the Swiss town of Köniz (29):

28) 1. Le féminin est utilisé par souci de simplification et d'entraînement pour les étudiants.
29) Für alle Funktionsbezeichnungen steht stellvertretend für beide Geschlechter die weibliche Schreibweise.

He mentions a similar attempt in the town of Wändeswil which was finally abandoned in the face of opposition. However, this failure, dating from the early 1990s, seems not to have prefigured a trend: in May 2018 the University of Neuchâtel rewrote its statutes using the generic feminine, including in their Article 1 the comment:

30) Les termes utilisés pour désigner des personnes sont pris au sens générique; ils ont à la fois valeur d'un féminin et d'un masculin.

In such documents there is of course a particular legal need to specify the unusual semantic scope of these terms. In less semantically polarized occurrences of generic *infirmière*, or less legalistic texts – such as the occurrences in *Paris-Match* or *Journal de Montréal*, or the English examples from *London Review of Books* – no such usage note is deemed necessary. However, there do seem to be some comprehension issues: when Elmiger submits to his respondents a text referring to "une cinquantaine d'infirmières (dont quatre infirmiers)" (2008, 142), where the generic feminine contains a gender-specific masculine subset, most of them fail to understand the *infirmiers* as part of the *infirmières* (though at least one questions the usefulness of spec-

11 'Professions were (...) until recently mainly given the gender which corresponded to the majority of the people who worked in them (une infirmière, un ambassadeur)'.

ifying the sex at all, implying that he considers the subset to be part of the group). This clearly reflects the established specific value of the feminine. Interestingly, the established feminine generic *infirmières* involved in these exchanges is not presented as a precursor to more recent 'militant' uses of the feminine (cf. 2008, 142, 302).

4 Rationale for the Mixed Feminine

I hope to have shown that the feminine generic avoids some of the shortcomings of inclusive writing. Its one complexity appears to be the occasional need for such metalinguistic notes, but as the study quoted above shows, already in 2011 certain language users were familiar with it. I turn now to the logic behind its adoption.

The most straightforward justification for the feminine generic is *number*: the generic follows the numerically dominant group. My department faculty, and its students, are both female dominated. I may therefore justify writing or addressing either group in the feminine on these grounds – which are moreover exactly those behind the use of *caissière* or *infirmière*. I have used this argument in addressing a first-year undergraduate intake, and continued in subsequent correspondence, and have never received any objection.[12] There is a logic to number genericity – unlike the random choice of masculine, or indeed feminine gender. The system does not, however, have a defined outcome when the proportion of members is unknown. It also may reinforce sexual stereotyping.

It might be thought that the adoption of the feminine would be an initial step on the path to free gender alternation in the expression of mixed reference. However, such a system would remove the opposition between specific and generic altogether, making it probable that some replacement mark would emerge – a typographical feature in writing perhaps, something else in speech. This suggests that some form of number genericity, or a systematic feminine for mixed reference, as exists in certain languages,[13] are more workable options. The latter would certainly respond to the criticism motivating much of the effort towards inclusive expression: that of the visibility of women in language.

12 Clearly the dissymmetric status of teacher and student is a factor here, but I have never even received a request for clarification. On a single occasion I received an email from a student who considered himself not to be concerned by a reference in the generic feminine – and this was *despite* the inclusion of a usage note!

13 Corbett (1991, 220-1) gives examples of feminine for mixed reference from Maasai, Seneca, Goajiro and Dama.

5 Inclusive Forms as a Step towards a Mixed Feminine

My final point concerns ways in which the abbreviated double forms of inclusive writing may constitute a step towards feminine or number genericity, rather than being an end in themselves. Inclusive writing has certainly been more successful form of gender neutralization than the feminine generic in recent years, but in one way at least – attempts at their oralization – inclusive forms seem almost coterminous with the generic feminine. Elmiger (2008, 139) indicates three oralization strategies for German *Binnengrossschreibung* forms (e.g. *MusikerIn*). The first two emphasize the suffix boundary with a slight pause or by glottalizing its initial vowel. However, a third requires no phonological innovation, since, on the observation that these forms are *alphabetically feminine*, it simply proposes a pronunciation identical to that of the feminine. There are limits to this strategy: the feminine of *Angestellter* is *Angestellte*, and the proposed neutralized form *AngestellteR* (136) is thus alphabetically masculine.

In French a great majority of inclusive agentives are alphabetically feminine (e.g. *enseignant.e*) and could thus be orally feminine. The main exceptional suffixes are *-eur* (*-euse* or *-rice*) and *-aux* (*-ales*), along with a few rare pairs like *-if* (*-ive*) or *-oux* (*-ouse*), and a handful of closed-group items (*celui*/*celle*, *il*/*elle*, *le*/*la*…). It is 'unpronounceable' forms like these – *travailleur·euse·s*, *actif·ive·s* – which stand in the way of a feminine pronunciation. One solution would be to generalize the use of alphabetical feminines and to mark their mixed status with a single (semantic) mark rather than the multiple morphological marks recommended. The suffix boundary is the obvious spot – *travaill·euse*, *act-ives* – and such a system would not grant the masculine precedence as the present *Écriture inclusive* does. Rather than *travailleur·euse·s social·e·s* we would have the far more approachable *travaill·euses soci·ales*. In fact, nothing prevents the target words from being simply feminine – *travaill·euses sociales* – since gender is a property of the noun, and the noun is here marked (graphically) as generic; the target adjective is at no risk of being interpreted as specific.

6 Conclusion

I have argued that proposed gender-neutral language practices such as binomials, rephrasing, and abbreviated double forms are too complex and inherently limited to achieve general acceptance and durably modify the linguistic system. The feminine generic, on the other hand, has several advantages: it is a well established usage, it draws on existing linguistic resources, and it preserves correspondence between written and spoken language. Number genericity further constitutes a possible procedure for selecting the generic according to the situation. Finally, it is suggested that since many abbreviated double

forms are alphabetically feminine, the feminine might be generalized as the mixed form, with supplementary signs reduced to a single typographical mark to indicate mixed reference. This would remove 'unpronounceable' inclusive forms, and open the way to a systematic mixed and generic feminine, a feature which would undoubtedly increase the linguistic visibility of women.

Bibliography

Austen, J. [1814] (1998). *Mansfield Park*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Oxford World's Classics.

Bickes, H.; Brunner, M. (Hrsgg) (1992). *Muttersprache frauenlos? Männersprache Frauenlos? PolitikerInnen ratlos? Zwiegespräche zum geschlechtsneutralen Sprachgebrauch*. Wiesbaden: Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache.

Bodine, A. (1975). "Androcentrism in Prescriptive Grammar. Singular 'They', Sex-Indefinite 'He', and 'He' or 'She'". *Language in Society*, 4(2), 129-46. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0047404500004607.

Chervel, A. (2019). "La place du masculin dans la langue française. Pourquoi le masculin l'emporte sur le féminin". Manesse, Siouffi 2019, 79-94.

Chevalier, Y.; de Charnay, H.; Gardelle, L. (2017). "Bases linguistiques de l'émancipation: système anglais, système français". *Mots*, 113, 9-36. https://doi.org/10.4000/mots.22620.

Cerquiglini, B. (2018). *Le ministre est enceinte. Ou la grande querelle de la féminisation des noms*. Paris: Seuil.

Corbett, G.G. (1991). *Gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Elmiger, D. (2008). *La féminisation de la langue en français et en allemand. Querelle entre spécialistes et réception par le grand public*. Paris: Honoré Champion.

Favre de Vaugelas, C. (1647). *Remarques sur la langue françoise utiles à ceux qui veulent bien parler et bien escrire*. Paris: Veuve Jean Camusat et Pierre le Petit.

Guía de lenguaje inclusivo de género (2016). Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes, Gobierno de Chile. https://www.cultura.gob.cl/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/guia-lenguaje-inclusivo-genero.pdf.

Haddad, R. (éd.) (2017). *Manuel d'écriture inclusive. Faites progresser l'égalité femmes·hommes par votre manière d'écrire*. N.p.: Mot-clé. https://www.motscles.net/ecriture-inclusive.

Haegeman, L. (1981). "Singular *They*. A Recent Development?". *Moderna Språk*, 3, 235-8.

Labrosse, C. (1996). *Pour une grammaire non sexiste*. Montréal: Remue-ménage.

Manesse, D. (2019). "L'école au front ou l'école face à l'écriture inclusive". Manesse, Siouffi 2019, 115-28.

Manesse, D.; Siouffi, G. (éds) (2019). *Le féminin et le masculin dans la langue. L'écriture inclusive en questions*. Paris: ESF Sciences humaines.

Millett, K. [1970] (1977). *Sexual Politics*. London: Virago.

Perry, V. (2011). *Aspects du genre dans la didactique de l'anglais* [PhD Dissertation]. Toulouse: Université Toulouse III.

Viennot, É. (2014). *Non le masculin ne l'emporte pas sur le féminin !* Donnemarie-Dontilly: iXe.

Wilmet, M. (2010). *Grammaire critique du français*. 5e éd. Paris; Louvain: Hachette; Duculot.

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

What Women Want? A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of UK Media Constructions of (LGBTQ+) Female Voters

Lotte Verheijen
University of Liverpool, UK

Abstract Sexist media depictions of female politicians have been studied. However, studies regarding portrayals of female voters and their hetero/cisnormative narratives are lacking. Therefore, this study explores UK media constructions of female voters in the context of the 2016 EU Referendum and the 2017 General Election via corpus-assisted CDA. It mainly focuses on the exclusion of LGBTQ+ women as voters via hetero/cisnormative language use. Female voters tend to be depicted in relation to men, or children and a family in general, while mentions of queer women are rare. Moreover, LGBTQ+ rights chiefly feature in political discourse to further a nationalist agenda through homonationalist arguments.

Keywords CDA. Corpus Linguistics. Female Voters. LGBTQ+. Politics. Brexit. Homonationalism.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia 1
ISSN 2724-4652
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-478-3 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-479-0

Open access
Published 2020-12-29

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-478-3/007

1 Introduction

The UK has been in a state of 'permalection' as the previous 4 years have seen three general elections (i.e. 2015, 2017, 2019) in addition to the 2016 referendum regarding whether the UK will leave the EU, the so-called Brexit referendum. There are a fair few studies that examine the representation of female politicians during times of election, in both the UK and other countries (e.g. Cameron, Shaw 2016), but what about the representation of female voters? This question appears to be particularly pertinent since female voters have been put somewhat front and centre, in the UK but also in the US for example, with women's marches happening across the world, 'stunts' such as pink buses sporting 'woman to woman' slogans to attract female voters and the founding of a Women's Equality Party in the UK. Such studies are far and few between. Which made me curious as to who is in/excluded from the group of 'female voters' and more specifically 'LGBTQ+ female voters' and what their priorities are perceived to be.[1] Will the media discourse include non-cis/non-heterosexual women, or will they be excluded through the use of heteronormative and/or cisnormative language? In short, how are (LGBTQ+) female voters constructed linguistically by the UK media in the lead-up to both the 2016 EU Referendum and the 2017 General Election (henceforth 2017 GE)? And is there a difference between left-wing and right-wing newspaper representation?

2 Politics and the Media

The media is viewed as the real public space in which politics take place and through which people understand politics and its processes (Lewis 2013). Media institutions purport to be objective and neutral in the political debate. However, many scholars argue that the media and their implicit biases play a mediating and constructing role in the political process and in turn in society's views and power imbalances (Chouliaraki, Fairclough 1999; Wodak, Meyer 2009). Furthermore, many media institutions in fact explicitly state their political allegiances. The UK is particularly known for its partisan press which is the least trusted in Europe (Hardy 2017). British broadcasters are legally compelled to be impartial, yet British newspapers do not have to adhere to such tight regulations[2] (Starkey 2017) and

1 This preliminary study is part of a larger forthcoming project on the representation of female voters in the UK during the 2015-17 permalection period.

2 However, Britain's national newspapers play an important agenda-setting role for broadcasters and newspaper headlines often appear on televised news programmes (Barnett 2017).

subsequently they are "(in)famously partisan" (Deacon et al. 2017, 40). The British press is also almost unique among major democracies in terms of its reach, ubiquity and one-sidedness, regardless of circulations having been halved over the last 20 years, as Conservative partisanship is the "most salient voice" (Firmstone 2017, 50). Accordingly, based on stereotypical views of right-wing media, one might expect blatant prejudices and insensitivity from these newspapers and the British press in general (Van Dijk 1995). In addition to stating their support, the British press also actively supports and campaigns for political parties, which can potentially affect election outcomes, as the press still dominates national conversations surrounding politics in Britain (Barnett 2015).

3 Media Representations of (LGBTQ+) Women

Media images are often people's predominant source of knowledge about issues relating to underrepresented groups (e.g. women). Therefore, the manner in which women are portrayed is significant to the formation of public opinions, as negative and biased representations lead to stigmatization. The news media are a prime site for the analysis of gender representations as they are ineradicably linked to gender and power (Williams 2002), and women are often excluded from and/or severely underrepresented in the news (Jaworska, Hunt 2017; Gibbons 2000). Furthermore, "because the news is made by men, it is thought to reflect the interests and values of men" (Van Zoonen 1998, 34). Consequently, the news often reflects and reinforces patriarchal discourses by perpetuating gendered stereotypes that sexualise and objectify women by focusing on their physical appearance rather than their achievements (Ross 1995, 2000). Additionally, representations of women tend to be more negative than representations of men and/or even misogynist (Ajzenstadt, Steinberg 1997). A vast literature also demonstrates that women tend to be viewed as more sensitive and emotional, in contrast to the assertive and dominant nature of men (e.g. Len-Rios et al. 2005). Lastly, it is also a commonly used legitimation strategy within media discourse to 'other' and demonize oppressed groups such as women (Thompson, Yates 2017) and specifically women whose identities intersect with other oppressed groups (e.g. LGBTQ+ women, Muslim women, women of colour) (Baker 2006, 2014; Gabriel 2017).

The aforementioned 'sexual object', and 'mother' stereotypes also tie in with the rather pervasive discourse of heteronormativity. Women are primarily assumed to be heterosexual, whilst LGBTQ+ identities are stigmatised and 'othered', perpetuating the norm of compulsory heterosexuality (Coates 2013; Motschenbacher 2011). Furthermore, heteronormative discourses also favour spe-

cific types of heterosexual relationships and gender roles, exemplified by the:

> nuclear family, involving a stable, monogamous (preferably marital) and reproducible […] sexual relationship between two adults […] whose social and sexual roles are differentiated along conventional lines. (Cameron, Kulick 2003, 9-10)

Accordingly, women have also been found to be more strongly associated with marital status than men (Pearce 2008; Jaworska, Hunt 2017). Lastly, previous research has indicated that age is another intersecting identity which connects to the trivializing and infantilizing of women. Jaworska and Hunt (2017) found that *woman* and *girl* tend to be used synonymously, whereas this is not the case for *man* and *boy*. This echoes Bolinger's (2014) suggestion that women tend to be represented as never growing up, and always remaining subordinate to men.

4 Media Representations of Female Voters

Gender bias within politics and the use of gender stereotypes in media representations of politicians are well documented, (e.g. Semetko, Boomgaarden 2007; Valenzuela, Correa 2009). Yet, the literature on media representations of and appeals to female voters is rather lacking in both breadth and depth, even though it has been established that the underrepresentation of women in politics and negative, sexist portrayals of female politicians may put women off standing for office and/or voting (Katwala, Ballinger, Mattinson 2016). There is some research on appeals to female voters, yet the focus tends to lie on female politicians, or the electorate as a monolithic whole, a "people" (Zappettini, Krzyzanowski 2019). For instance, Scullion (2015) found that the electorate as a whole was portrayed with reverence, or infantilization, but no word on whether women were more or less revered or infantilized, as women tend to be (also see Farrell 2016 on Brexit coverage). Furthermore, there are several studies on the voting behaviour of women and how it tends to reflect a preference for female candidates (Dolan 2012; McElroy, Marsh 2010). Recent studies have also looked into the political engagement of women on Twitter (Mitchell 2015; Parry 2015), or (heterosexual) women as members of male-focused political fandoms in the UK (e.g. the Milifandom: Ed Miliband fans) (Cameron, Shaw 2016; Hills 2017; Norris 2017).

Among the previous studies on the actual media representation of female voters in the UK, Adcock (2010) appears to be the most salient and exhaustive. Adcock found that 'ordinary women', or voters, featured more heavily in news sources than expected, but they were

portrayed as "uninformed, irrational, confused or apathetic mothers, housewives, shoppers, workers, and patients" (2010, 148), and their views were judged as inappropriate in the masculine arena of politics. Women were also framed as 'adoring' fans of male politicians who are easily charmed and cannot be reasoned with. However, like the Adcock (2010) study most previous research is rather narrowly focused on one election or referendum (e.g. Harmer 2016; Ross 2016 on the EU Referendum; Harmer, Southern 2017 on 2017 GE), or comparing 'ordinary women' whose voices tend to be drowned out or constrained (Savigny, Warner 2015; Shaw 2006) to female politicians (Harmer, Southern 2017). These studies suggest that female voters tend to be more often portrayed as citizens than as experts and addressed as 'women' in a rather general sense (Ross 2016). Women are viewed as a homogeneous group, but further research is necessary on this topic. Moreover, large-scale, intersectional and diachronic studies that compare several election/referendum campaigns also appear to be lacking from the literature. For instance, heterosexuality has featured in a minor way in previous research, but neither heteronormativity nor LGBTQ+ voter representations have explicitly been identified. Regarding the studies on political appeals to women, foci have comprised gendered appeals by politicians identifying as mothers (Quirk 2015), or gendered 'stunts' such as Harriet Harman's Pink Bus (Savigny, Warner 2015) instead of serious appeals, which begs the question whether appeals to women are more personal and perhaps less jargon-heavy?

5 UK Politics. LGBTQ+ Issues

Even though the political rhetoric and possible impact of Brexit have been explored from many angles (Jackson, Thorsen, Wring 2016), there has been limited research on how Brexit and the other 'permalection' elections relate to and/or affect LGBTQ+ people in the UK (Danisi, Dustin, Ferreira 2019; Wintemute 2016), despite the fact that hate crimes against LGBTQ+ minorities have risen starkly since the EU Referendum (Stonewall 2017). Some studies have looked at LGBTQ+ issues in relation to major events of (inter)national and 'nationalist' importance and pride such as the 2012 London Olympics. Hubbard and Wilkinson (2015) found that Puar's (2007) original[3] no-

3 Over the past decade, Puar's (2007) original definition has been warped into a new, now more common, or 'reductive' (Puar 2013), definition. Here homonationalism relates to right-wing nationalist voices co-opting and/or harnessing LGBTQ+ rights as a means to position the 'progressive' West as conflicting with the religious values embraced by certain Muslims, consequently obscuring colonialist influences by projecting homophobia onto local Muslim communities (Hubbard, Wilkinson 2015; Drucker 2016).

tion of 'homonationalism' in which nations are seen as more 'progressive' because of their supposed 'acceptance' of gay people, reiterating self/other dichotomies that demonize 'foreign' others (Browne, Nash 2014). This acceptance and tolerance is then also seen as a source of national pride and used to position such 'progressive' nations against other nations that are viewed as ostensibly less tolerant. Not only during the 2012 Olympics did the UK boast its gay-friendliness, as the UK government generally promotes LGBTQ+ rights both at home and abroad, positioning itself as 'world-leading' in terms of gay rights (Hubbard, Wilkinson 2015). This despite the fact that, according to Danisi, Dustin and Ferreira (2019), the EU has been *the* catalyst for change in the UK, which begs the question if and how the notion of homonationalism ties in with the Brexit debate and the 2017 GE.

6 Rationale for This Study

As established by the previous paragraphs, underrepresented groups such as women in general, and female voters and LGBTQ+ female voters in particular are both underrepresented by the media as well as in studies of such media representations. This is the case even though it has been established that the underrepresentation of women in politics may put women off standing for office and/or voting. Previous studies have tended to be somewhat narrowly focused, lacking diachronic analyses across multiple political campaigns, and viewing 'women' as a homogenous or even monolithic group rather than a multitude of both intersecting and varying identities. For instance, heteronormativity and LGBTQ+ voter representations have not explicitly been identified in previous studies. Therefore, the present study aims to fill this research gap and contribute directly to reduce the underrepresentation discussed above. Furthermore, the British press is a prime site for such research as it is almost unique in large democracies in terms of its reach, ubiquity and one-sidedness. It dominates national conversations around politics in Britain and can therefore potentially affect election outcomes. Due to this wide reach and the notion that the news often reflects and reinforces heteronormative and cisnormative patriarchal discourses, the representation or non-representation of (LGBTQ+) female voters will have far-reaching effects and consequences, and are worth further exploration. Especially when one considers that hate crimes against LGBTQ+ minorities have risen starkly since the EU Referendum and arguments concerning homonationalist ideas might have affected Brexit in a myriad of ways.

7 The Present Study. Theoretical and Methodological Framework

7.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

In this (preliminary) study I employ methods of analysis associated with Critical Discourse Analysis, henceforth CDA. CDA is a set of approaches, theories and associated methodologies which can be viewed as an overarching framework of reference or a critical perspective (Van Dijk 2001), concerning the study of language use, or *discourse*, and its wider social context. CDA views language as a social practice (Fairclough, Wodak 1997). Language itself is not powerful, rather "it gains power by the use people make of it and by the people who have access to [it]" (Baker et al. 2008, 280). Moreover, CDA is problem-oriented and focuses on "social problems, and especially on the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination" (Van Dijk 2001, 96). This ties in with Johnstone's (2008) explanation of 'discourse', employed in this study, as conventional ways of talking or writing which produce and are produced by conventional ways of thinking, which in turn constitute (power-based) ideologies in society. CDA then aims to *critically* investigate "opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (Wodak, Meyer 2009, 10) which may not be apparent in everyday life (Van Dijk 1993).

7.2 Triangulation. Corpus-Assisted CDA

A widespread criticism regarding 'cherry-picking' of results within CDA can be offset by the use of quantitative corpus techniques to complement as well as serve as a basis for the more qualitative CDA analyses. Thus, triangulating your results by means of corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Partington 2009). Frequency analyses of articles and/or certain terms and their linguistic environments by means of a corpus software can help elucidate the reach and possible impact of the linguistic phenomena under investigation by accounting for all of their instances and consequently facilitating quantitative comparisons between corpora (Baker et al. 2008). Such frequency analyses may also provide an initial focus for analysis in the higher frequency terms and/or phenomena lending credibility to generalizations, which might also counteract the danger of 'cherry-picking' interesting phenomena that might support pre-conceived hypotheses, but may not be frequent or salient in the data (Mautner 2009; Widdowson 2008).

8 Methodology

8.1 Corpus-Building. Sources and Time Periods

In order to analyse the linguistic representation of (LGBTQ+) female voters by the UK news media, a set of (sub-)corpora were constructed. I used the online database NexisUK to search for and collect relevant articles from national UK newspapers. National newspapers were the most relevant option for this study, as such newspapers have the broadest readerships and generally the largest influence on public discourse. The newspapers that were collected for this study, based on Nexis's list of UK national newspapers and other media representation studies (e.g. Baker 2014), comprise the *Daily Mail*, *Daily Star*, *The Express*, *The Guardian* and its sister newspaper *The Observer*, *The I*, *The Independent*, *The Mirror*, *The People*, *The Sun*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times*. Table 1 below catalogues the newspapers' political orientation/party support during the 2017 GE and stance on Brexit (e.g. Leave or Remain). These categories are based on media research studies and newspaper articles stating the political affiliation or stance of the newspaper in question (e.g. Newton, Brynin 2001; Duff 2017; Mckee 2017; Smith 2017). The newspapers' political affiliations overlap entirely with their 2017 backing of a particular party (i.e. left-wing > Labour; right-wing > Conservatives), and almost entirely with their stance on Brexit (i.e. left-wing > Remain; right-wing > Leave). The one exception is *The Times*, which is Conservative and backed Vote Remain (Levy, Aslan, Bironzo 2016).

Table 1 Newspaper type and political orientation

Newspaper	Orientation	2017 Party support	EU stance
Daily Mail	Right-wing	Conservative	Leave
Daily Star	Largely non-political	n/a	Leave
The Express	Right-wing	Conservative	Leave
The Guardian	Centre-left	Labour	Remain
The I	Liberal centrist	n/a	n/a
The Independent	n/a	n/a	n/a
The Mirror	Centre-left, populist	Labour	Remain
The Observer	Centre-left	Labour	Remain
The People	Centre-left, populist	n/a	n/a
The Sun	Right-wing	Conservative	Leave
The Telegraph	Centre-right	Conservative	Leave
The Times	Centre-right	Conservative	Leave

In order to ensure the longitudinal nature of the corpus the articles from the above-mentioned newspapers were collected from two sep-

arate campaigning periods within the 'permalection' period. This longitudinal framework facilitates the drawing of cross-campaign comparisons with regard to the representation of (LGBTQ+) female voters. Both in terms of a comparison between two consecutive years and two different types of campaigns: a GE and a Referendum. Furthermore, such diachronic analyses have, to my knowledge, not been done before with regard to the representation of (LGBTQ+) female voters in the news media.

The starting point for each of these periods was set at the official start of each campaign and the endpoints coincide with the GE date in 2017 (18 April-08 June) and the EU Referendum date in 2016 (15 April-23 June). The specific dates used are based on previous studies on these electoral events (Deacon et al. 2015; Moore, Ramsay 2017).

In order to limit the size of the corpus and the breadth of the analyses, while still maintaining the longitudinal aspect of this study, these yearly sub-corpora do not span the immediate aftermath of the election and referendum. The periods of campaigning were deemed to be a feasible and comprehensive sample with a clear start and end. Moreover, his is an approach that has been employed by other election-based studies (see Jackson, Thorsen, Wring 2016).

8.2 Search Terms

The search terms were chosen on the basis of other gender-based/focused media research and pilot studies involving my own corpora. The majority of media studies on female representation merely look at neutral terms such as *women*, *female* (Cameron, Shaw 2016; Jaworska, Hunt 2017). In addition to these terms, I also wished to include terms carrying stronger connotations, such as *lady*, *girl*, as I aimed for a broad and representative perspective on female voter presentation. Therefore, I included a host of other nouns (and their plurals)[4] that are used to describe women or that are often used as synonyms for a woman such as *mother* or *daughter*:

Gendered terms:
female, *woman*, *lady*, *girl*, *lesbian*, ((*great*-)*grand*)*mother*, (*grand*)*mum*(*my*)/*mom*(*my*), *mamma*, ((*great*-)*grand*)*daughter*, *wife*, *grandma*, *matron*, *aunt*, *niece*, *girlfriend*, *sister*, *mumsnet*, *nan*, *gran*, *stepmother*, *stepmum*/*mom*, *gal*, *lass*

4 Nexis automatically includes plurals in a singular search (e.g. *lady* also yields *ladies*).

One can also direct Nexis to search for specific combinations of terms. The following list of terms related to elections and voting in combination with the search constituent 'w\p', ensures that the gendered terms appear 'within the same paragraph' as these election terms. This excludes articles with separate unrelated paragraphs (e.g. one paragraph on women and another paragraph on voting) yet includes the combination of the two sets of terms within a sentence as well as articles where the gendered term and the election term are separated by a few lines.

Voting-related terms:
vot!,[5] *election*, *Brexit*, *referendum*

After developing the search terms, sources and time periods discussed above, I collated the overarching corpus and its relevant sub-corpora. I also annotated each article with specific tags in order for the articles to be sorted into corresponding synchronic sub-corpora, partially based on the political orientation and referendum stance categories listed in Table 1 to facilitate synchronic as well as diachronic CL and CDA analyses.

9 Corpora Characteristics

The 2016 and 2017 corpora differ greatly in size and composition (see Table 2 below). The 2016 corpus has almost double the number of articles of the 2017 corpus (742 vs. 438). One partial explanation for this could be the longer campaign leading up to the Referendum, 70 days, compared to the 52 days of the 2017 GE campaign. However, despite the longer campaigning period the average amount of articles per day is significantly higher in 2016 (10.6 vs. 8.4). Possible explanations could be that the EU Referendum was viewed as a more important and salient vote with more long-term effects than a snap GE. The aftermath has certainly been more eventful and drawn-out, as Brexit has yet to happen at the time of writing.

There are also noteworthy differences evident in the sizes of the referendum stance and political orientation sub-corpora. The Leave and right-wing sub-corpora are substantially larger than their Remain and left-wing counterparts both in terms of number of articles and tokens, while the average number of articles per newspaper is also higher for right-wing/Leave newspapers in 2017 (see Table 1 below). However, the left-wing/Remain newspapers display a higher average number of ar-

5 The '!' sign yields all words starting with the letters preceding it (e.g. *vote*(*rs*), *voting*).

ticles in 2016 and this difference as well as the aforementioned difference in 2017 is much smaller than the difference in total number of articles. This indicates that the large difference in number of articles is primarily due to the fact that the British newspaper landscape is overwhelmingly right-wing **[Tab. 1]** and in fact left-wing/Remain-supporting newspapers tended to dedicate more articles to the plight of (LGBTQ+) female voters than their right-wing/Leave counterparts. Lastly, the difference between the sub-corpora is greater in 2017, which is mainly due to the fact that *The Times*, a prolific Conservative-supporting newspaper (23 articles included in both 2016 and 2017) which supported Remain in 2016 is included in the right-wing sub-corpus of 2017.

Table 2 Number of articles and tokens per referendum and political orientation

Year	Remain / Left-wing	Leave / Right-wing	Total
2016	247 (7;35)*	378 (12;32)	742
	339.691**	650.073	1.112.411
2017	95 (6;16)	224 (13;17)	438
	105.126	270.902	480.092

* Article freq. (number of newspapers; average per newspaper)
** Number of tokens

9.1 Newspaper Article Frequency

Figure 1 shows the number of articles related to female voters published per 5 days of the 2016 EU Referendum campaign, a period of 70 days between 15 April 2016 and 23 June 2016. Intervals of 5 days were chosen to provide a more detailed view of the period as a whole and allow for salient sub-periods of either increased or decreased coverage to emerge from the data.

Overall, 742 articles from this period were included in the corpus, which is an average of 10.6 articles per day, and 53 articles per 5 days. The highest article rate per 5 days of 172 was observed during the last week of the campaign between 19 and 23 June and the lowest rate per 5 days comprising 17 articles was observed between 5 and 9 May. The number of articles included appears to have undergone five distinct phases: a) steady flow between the first day of the campaign and 19 May; b) sudden, steady increase between 19 May and 3 June; c) renewed steady flow, or plateau, of coverage between 4 and 13 June; d) small decline in coverage between 14 and 18 June; e) stark increase up to 172 articles in the last week of campaigning between 19 and 23 June. These periods, the peaks and troughs in particular, are not random and could be explained by more general political coverage trends as well as events specific to this campaign. In general, one would expect a steady increase in coverage as an election, or in this case ref-

erendum draws near (Jackson, Thorsen, Wring 2016). This is why the dip in coverage towards the end stands out as unexpected. Possible explanations might lie in a general oversaturation of 'Brexit' coverage. However, it could also be possible that topics not specifically tied to voter gender might have been laid by the wayside. The stark increase in articles from 19 June onward could be interpreted as contrary to the suggestion of women becoming 'less' important to the overall coverage and debate closer to the Referendum date. However, one could also argue that this increase is merely in line with the expected increased coverage and therefore does not indicate a possible increase in the attention to issues related to female voters.

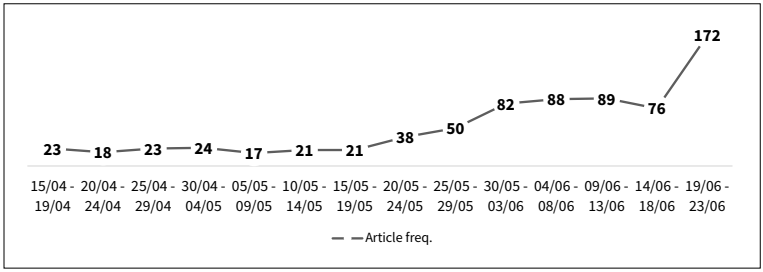

Figure 1 Number of articles published per 5 days of the 2016 EU Referendum campaign

Figure 2 shows the number of articles related to female voters published per 4 days of the 2017 GE campaign, a period of 52 days between 18 April 2017 and 08 June 2017. The period of 52 days of this campaign is shorter than the 70 day period of 2016 and thus intermediate intervals of 4 were chosen.

From this period, 438 articles were included in the corpus, which is an average of 8.4 articles per day, and 33.7 articles per 4 days of the referendum campaign. The highest article rate per 4 days of 70 was observed during the last 4 days of the campaign between 5 and 8 June and the lowest rate of 17 articles per 4 days was observed between 24 and 27 May. The number of articles included appears to be rather unstable and much more 'event-based' than 2016's Referendum coverage which displayed a steadier increase over the course of the campaign. In fact, five distinct peaks can be identified which all relate to salient occurrences in the campaign.

First, there is the peak spanning two bouts of 36 articles between 22 and 29 April. This peak is linked to the snap GE being called by then PM Theresa May and a woman dubbed 'Brenda from Bristol' expressing her dismay during a BBC interview on the morning of May's announcement (Wheeler 2017). The second peak of 34 articles occurs between 4 and 7 May and can be linked to increased coverage due to

local elections in the UK and what they might mean for Theresa May and female voters in the GE. Peak 3 of 33 articles occurs between 16 and 19 May and coincides with the release of the political parties' manifestos outlining their plans (Thorsen, Jackson, Lilleker 2017). The fourth peak of 48 articles per 4 days transpires between 28 and 31 May. This peak can be linked to not one, but two salient events occurring at once: the publication of new poll results predicting significant Labour gains and Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's "car-crash" interview on the Woman's Hour radio show (Thorsen, Jackson, Lilleker 2017) in which he is stumped on the costs of childcare, a cause closely associated with the plight of female voters. Lastly, the fifth and highest peak of 70 articles is situated during the last 4 days of the campaign between 5 and 8 May which ties into the more general trend of a steady increase in coverage as an election draws near. Overall, 2017's article frequency displays more peaks and troughs compared to the steady rise of 2016 and thus 2017's frequency is more event-based.

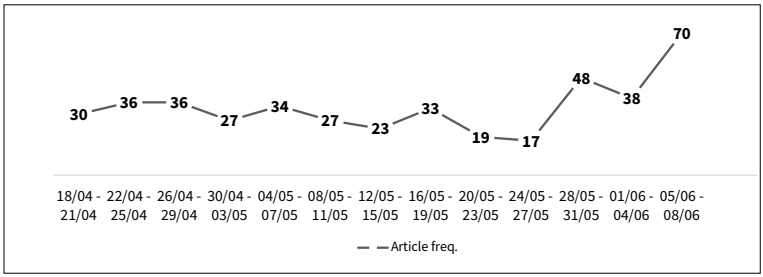

Figure 2 No. of articles published per 4 days of the 2017 General Election campaign

9.2 Search Term Frequency

The frequency of search terms, calculated by means of the corpus tool AntConc (Anthony 2018), reveals similar trends as well as differences within the 2016 and 2017 corpora (see Table 3 below). In both years the most frequent term is the general *woman*/*women*, while in 2017 the other general term *female* is relatively more frequent than in 2016 (rank 2 vs. 4). Furthermore, both corpora show a propensity for a heteronormative and cisnormative use of traditional, heterosexual, reproductive 'nuclear family' terms (Cameron, Kulick 2003). In fact, female voters are often talked about or interviewed in relation to the men in their family ("and his wife", "his mother", "mother of [MALE NAME]"), or a family in general ("mother-of-two"), while mentions of LGBTQ+ women are rather infrequent. The 2016 corpus appears to be slightly more hetero-and-cisnorma-

tive, as *wife* is ranked higher (rank 2 vs. 4) than in 2017 while *mother* is ranked similarly (rank 3).

Another difference between the two corpora relates to the inclusion of *lady*/*ies* in 2016. Upon closer inspection of the use of this term, the 2016 articles appear to be more geared toward older women, or 'ladies', as it is used to describe female politicians, (older) female voters of nobility and older/middle-aged female voters in general. On the contrary, the phrases 'young lady/ies' barely show up. In 2017 despite *lady*/*ies* being relatively less frequent, 'young lady/ies' is more frequent and the 2017 campaign appears to be geared more toward younger female voters. Perhaps because the effects of Brexit might be stronger for them.

Table 3 Top 5 search terms with regard to article frequency: 2016 vs. 2017

2016	**2017**
Wom*n	Wom*n
Wife	Female
Mother	Mother
Female	Daughter
Lady/ies	Wife

10 Qualitative Analyses. LGBTQ+ Themes and Homonationalism

The lack of LGBTQ+ terms among the top search terms and the heteronormative/cisnormative implications of the terms that were included indicate the lack of importance accredited to LGBTQ+ issues during the campaigns covered in this study. In order to explore if and how LGBTQ+ women were represented and appealed to in the two campaigns I scrutinized the concordance lines of the following LGBTQ+ terms: *lesbian*, *gay*, *bisexual*, *trans*(*gender*). These analyses exposed that queer issues appear to be more prevalent in 2017, as articles detailing Theresa May's voting record on LGBTQ+ issues appeared in *The Independent*. In addition, there were certain particular themes present within the representation of LGBTQ+ women. Firstly, in general the LGBTQ+ community is addressed as a whole, instead of addressing queer women specifically, which mirrors how female voters are seen as a homogeneous group (Adcock 2010). References to gay men were also more frequent than references to gay women. Example 1 below describing a trans woman's voting preference (i.e. the Green Party) and Example 2's mention of "the lesbian vote" landing on the Green Party, which also includes a reference to "older gays", are two of the few exceptions to this rule.

(1) "I want to vote Green. I feel the party is much more citizen-centred in its policies and sticks up for minority groups and working people. That resonates with me because I'm a **trans** person who was assigned male at birth but now identifies as **female**". (*The Observer*, 28 May 2017)

(2) There are a lot of rich, older **gays** in Brighton. They probably tend towards Tory [Conservatives]. The **lesbian** vote tends towards Green or Labour. (*The Times*, 30 May 2017)

Other themes prevalent regarding LGBTQ+ issues relate to such issues being described as non-issues, as "we have gay marriage" and alleged equality with regard to sexuality, as exemplified by Example 3 below.

(3) we have **gay** marriage and sexuality is rarely a barrier to any form of personal or public achievement. (*The Guardian*, 2 May 2017)

On the other hand, some articles describe LGBTQ+ issues, or "gay rights", as a "threatening" topic to a "lot of people" which appears to contradict the argument that full LGBTQ+ equality has been achieved and LGBTQ+ issues are no longer an urgent matter (see Example 4 below).

(4) The fact of the matter is that gay rights and feminism is very threatening to a lot of people. (*The Guardian*, 5 May 2017)

Lastly, notions of (common) homonationalism, which as I will discuss below were the most salient theme for 2016, also appear in 2017 in order to express Islamophobic and xenophobic viewpoints. In this case LGBTQ+ issues are only seen as important as a stance against a party's or a journalist's biased notion of Islam as a religion that views "women or gay people" as "second-class citizens" (see Example 5 below).

(5) To introduce a "social attitudes" test as part of a points-based immigration system which would stop people who believe women or gay people are "second-class citizens" from entering the country. (*telegraph.co.uk*, 25 May 2017)

In the 2016 corpus homonationalism in both Puar's (2007) original definition and the new and more common definition (Puar 2013) appear to be the most salient theme(s) regarding LGBTQ+ issues in the Brexit campaign. In the unfounded 'facts' of Example 6, from a Leave-supporting newspaper, one once again sees how gay rights are on-

ly viewed as important as a stance against an Islamophobic view of Muslims as homophobic and therefore un-British and against specifically Muslim immigration, which according to Vote Leave could be stopped when the UK leaves the European Union, as it would then supposedly be free to tighten its immigration policies.

(6) THE fact more than half of UK Muslims want gay sex outlawed and almost a quarter want Sharia law shows how little they are willing to integrate. (*The Sun*, 15 April 2016)

On the other hand, Remain-supporting newspapers display the same pride in gay rights (and women's rights), but also pride in "racial equality" (see Example 7) and view such rights as not just UK, but EU values. Consequently, leaving the EU would cast the UK back to times without "gay marriage", but with women being confined to "the kitchen and bedroom". This EU-wide homonationalism, so to speak, then views the EU as a progressive 'nation'. However, further research is needed to explore the homonationalist notions present in Remain and Leave rhetoric in more detail.

(7) Voting to leave would mean voting against racial equality and gay marriage and in favour of confining women to the kitchen and bedroom. (*The Observer*, 31 May 2016)

11 Conclusions

This preliminary study shows that although the 2017 corpus is smaller there appears to be an increase in the representation of female voters in general and LGBTQ+ female voters in particular from 2016 to 2017 (e.g. *women* has become a keyword).[6] However, heteronormative and cisnormative terminology prevails, albeit to a lesser extent in 2017. Because of this, LGBTQ+ female voters remain excluded through the perpetuation of hetero/cisnormative language use. Akin to a plethora of studies on the representation of women in the media showing 'the mother' to be a feminine archetype (e.g. Jaworska, Hunt 2017), as well as Adcock's (2010) findings regarding female voters being portrayed as 'mothers', and 'housewives', the high frequency of (heteronormative and cisnormative) nuclear family terms such as *wife* (as opposed to the non-marital *girlfriend*, for instance) and *mother* in this study show that female voters appear to be synonymous with mothers of men and wives of men. They are talked

6 Keywords are words that are more frequent in the studied corpus than in reference corpora and indicate the 'aboutness' of said corpus (Baker 2006).

about and interviewed with regard to the men in their lives and consequently it appears to be the case that their views might be judged as inappropriate in the masculine arena of politics. They are mere citizens, not experts (Harmer 2016), and addressed as 'women', the most frequent search term in both corpora, in a general sense (Ross 2016), and in turn as a homogeneous group. Furthermore, the presence of *lady*/*ies* as a frequent search term in 2016 and its links to older female voters bears further research, as older women tend to be rather underrepresented in the media. Instead the focus often lies on infantilized younger women (Bolinger 2014). Moreover, mentions of queer women remain infrequent in both 2016 and 2017 and almost solely confined to discourses surrounding the LGBTQ+ community as a monolithic whole, and/or notions of homonationalism linked to Islamophobia. Moreover, homonationalism, and its differing definitions, is particularly salient in the Brexit debate and further research is needed to explore the links between the Remain camp, which displayed a higher average article frequency per newspaper and therefore perhaps a heightened dedication to the plight of the (LGBTQ+) female voter, and the original definition of homonationalism, and the Leave camp and common definitions of homonationalism.

Bibliography

Adcock, C. (2010). "The Politician, the Wife, the Citizen, and Her Newspaper: Rethinking Women, Democracy, and Media(ted) Representation". *Feminist Media Studies*, 10(2), 135-59. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680771003672254.

Ajzenstadt, M.; Steinberg, O. (1997). "The Feminization of the Female Offender. Israeli Newspaper Reports of Crimes Committed by Women". *Women & Criminal Justice*, 8(4), 57-77. https://doi.org/10.1300/J012v08n04_03.

Anthony, L. (2018). *AntConc* (version 3.5.7). Tokyo: Waseda University. https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/.

Baker, P. (2006). *Public Discourses of Gay Men*. London; New York: Routledge.

Baker, P. (2014). "Bad Wigs and Screaming Mimis. Using Corpus-Assisted Techniques to Carry Out Critical Discourse Analysis of the Representation of Trans People in the British Press". Hart, C.; Cap, P. (eds), *Contemporary Critical Discourse Studies*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 211-35.

Baker, P. et al. (2008). "A Useful Methodological Synergy? Combining Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics to Examine Discourses of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press". *Discourse & Society*, 19(3), 273-306. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926508088962.

Barnett, S. (2015). "Four Reasons Why a Partisan Press Helped Win It for the Tories". Jackson, Thorsen 2015, 91.

Barnett, S. (2017). "Is Our National Press a Fading Dinosaur? Don't Bank on It". Thorsen, Jackson, Lilleker 2017, 55.

Bolinger, D. (2014). *Language. The Loaded Weapon. The Use and Abuse of Language Today*. London; New York: Routledge.

Browne, K.; Nash, C.J. (2014). "Resisting LGBT Rights Where "We Have Won". Canada and Great Britain". *Journal of Human Rights*, 13(3), 322-36. https://doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2014.923754.

Cameron, D.; Kulick, D. (2003). *Language and Sexuality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cameron, D.; Shaw, S. (2016). *Gender, Power and Political Speech. Women and Language in the 2015 UK General Election*. New York: Springer.

Chouliaraki, L.; Fairclough, N. (1999). *Discourse in Late Modernity. Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Coates, J. (2013). "The Discursive Production of Everyday Hetero-sexualities". *Discourse & Society*, 24(5), 536-52. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926513486070.

Danisi, C.; Dustin, M.; Ferreira, N. (2019). "Queering Brexit. What's in Brexit for Sexual and Gender Minorities?". Dustin, M.; Ferreira, N.; Millns, S. (eds), *Gender and Queer Perspectives on Brexit*. New York: Springer, 239-72.

Deacon, D.; Downey, J.; Stanyer, J.; Wring, D. (2015). "News Media Performance in the 2015 General Election Campaign". Jackson, Thorsen 2015, 12-13.

Deacon, D. et al. (2017). "A Tale of Two Leaders. News Media Coverage of the 2017 General Election". Thorsen, Jackson, Lilleker 2017, 40-1.

Dolan, K. (2012). "Electoral Context, Issues, and Voting for Women in the 1990s". *Women & Politics*, 23(1-2), 21-36. https://doi.org/10.1300/J014v23n01_03.

Drucker, P. (2016). "Homonationalism, Heteronationalism and LGBTI rights in the EU". *Public Seminar*, August 31. https://publicseminar.org/2016/08/homonationalism-heteronationalism-and-lgbti-rights-in-the-eu.

Duff, O. (2017). "I's 2017 Election Manifesto". *The I*. https://inews.co.uk/opinion/editor/2017-election-manifesto.

Fairclough, N.; Wodak, R. (1997). "Critical Discourse Analysis". Van Dijk, T. (ed.), *Discourse as Social Interaction*. London: SAGE Publications, 258-84.

Farrell, N. (2016). "Public Personalities in the EU Debate: Elites vs the Majority and Bullingdon Resurgent". Jackson, Thorsen, Wring 2016, 26.

Firmstone, J. (2017). "Newspapers' Editorial Opinions. Stuck between a Rock and a Hard Place". Thorsen, Jackson, Lilleker 2017, 50-1.

Gabriel, D. (2017). "The Othering and Objectification of Diane Abbott MP". Thorsen, Jackson, Lilleker 2017, 20-1.

Gibbons, S.J. (2000). "News Analysis. Women still don't Rate in The New York Times Coverage". *Media Report to Women*, 28(4), 5.

Hardy, J. (2017). "Media Policy. The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time". Thorsen, Jackson, Lilleker 2017, 12-13.

Harmer, E. (2016). "The Right Man for the Job. The Gendered Campaign". Jackson, Thorsen, Wring 2016, 15.

Harmer, E.; Southern, R. (2017). "Process, Personalities and Polls. Online News Coverage of the UK General Election 2017". Thorsen, Jackson, Lilleker 2017, 62.

Hills, M. (2017). "It's the Stans Wot (Nearly) Won It". Thorsen, Jackson, Lilleker 2017, 127.

Hubbard, P.; Wilkinson, E. (2015). "Welcoming the World? Hospitality, Homonationalism, and the London 2012 Olympics". *Antipode*, 47(3), 598-615. https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12082.

Jackson, D.; Thorsen, E. (eds) (2015). *UK Election Analysis 2015. Media, Voters and the Campaign*. Bournemouth (UK): The Centre for the Study of Journal-

ism, Culture and Community at Bournemouth University. https://www.psa.ac.uk/sites/default/files/page-files/UK%20Election%20Analysis%202015%20-%20Jackson%20and%20Thorsen%20v1.pdf.

Jackson, D.; Thorsen, E.; Wring, D. (2016). *EU Referendum Analysis 2016. Media, Voters and the Campaign*. Bournemouth (UK): The Centre for the Study of Journalism, Culture and Community at Bournemouth University. http://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/24337/1/EU%20Referendum%20Analysis%202016%20-%20Jackson%20Thorsen%20and%20Wring%20v1.pdf.

Jaworska, S.; Hunt, S. (2017). "Differentiations and Intersections. A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Study of Gender Representations in the British Press before, during and after the London Olympics 2012". *Gender & Language*, 11(3), 336-64. https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.28858.

Johnstone, B. (2008). *Discourse Analysis*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Katwala, S.; Ballinger, S.; Mattinson, D. (2016). "Don't Know (Where the Women Are). Why the EU Referendum Campaigns Haven't Engaged Female Voters". *LSE Brexit*. https://bit.ly/2I0qIrR.

Len-Rios, M.E. et al. (2005). "Representation of Women in News and Photos. Comparing Content to Perceptions". *Journal of Communication*, 55(1), 152-68. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2005.tb02664.x.

Levy, D.; Aslan, B.; Bironzo, D. (2016). "The Press and the Referendum Campaign". Jackson, Thorsen, Wring 2016, 33.

Lewis, J. (2013). *The Ideological Octopus. An Exploration of Television and Its Audience*. London; New York: Routledge.

Mautner, G. (2009). "Corpora and Critical Discourse Analysis". Baker, P. (ed.), *Contemporary Corpus Linguistics*. London; New York: Continuum, 32-46.

McElroy, G.; Marsh, M. (2010). "Candidate Gender and Voter Choice. Analysis from a Multimember Preferential Voting System". *Political Research Quarterly*, 63(4), 822-33. https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912909336270.

Mckee, R. (2017). "Which Parties Are the UK Press Backing in the General Election?". *The Guardian*, 3 June. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jun/03/which-parties-are-the-uk-press-backing-in-the-general-election.

Mitchell, M. (2015). "Why so Few Female Tweeters before GE 2015? The Gendering of Public Discourse on Twitter". Jackson, Thorsen 2015, 74.

Moore, M.; Ramsay, G. (2017). *UK Media Coverage of the 2016 EU Referendum Campaign*. London: King's College.

Motschenbacher, H. (2011). "Taking Queer Linguistics further. Sociolinguistics and Critical Heteronormativity Research". *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 212, 149-79. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.2011.050.

Newton, K.; Brynin, M. (2001). "The National Press and Party Voting in the UK". *Political Studies*, 49(2), 265-85. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00313.

Nexis (n.d.). *NEXIS*. https://www.nexis.com.

Norris, P. (2017). "Why the Younger Generation of Corbynistas?". Thorsen, Jackson, Lilleker 2017, 22.

Parry, K. (2015). "#RegisterToVote. Picturing Democratic Rights and Responsibilities on Twitter". Jackson, Thorsen 2015, 88.

Partington, A. (2009). "10 Evaluating Evaluation and Some Concluding Thoughts on CADS". Morley, J.; Bayley, P. (eds), *Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies on the Iraq Conflict: Wording the War*. New York: Routledge, 261-304.

Pearce, M. (2008). "Investigating the Collocational Behaviour of MAN and WOMAN in the BNC Using Sketch Engine". *Corpora*, 3(1), 1-29. https://doi.org/10.3366/E174950320800004X.

Puar, J. (2007). *Terrorist Assemblages. Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Puar, J. (2013). "Rethinking Homonationalism". *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 45(2), 336-39. https://doi.org/10.1017/S002074381300007X.

Quirk, S. (2015). "Comedy Clubs Offered a Better Quality of Debate than the Political Stage". Jackson, Thorsen 2015, 72.

Ross, K. (1995). "Gender and Party Politics. How the Press Reported the Labour Leadership Campaign, 1994". *Media, Culture & Society*, 17(3), 499-509. https://doi.org/10.1177/016344395017003009.

Ross, K. (2000). "Women Behaving Badly? Framing Gender in Political Communication". *Proceedings of Political Studies Association UK 50th Annual Conference*. London: Political Studies Association, 10-13.

Ross, K. (2016). "X Marks the Spot but the Ys Have It. Referendum Coverage as a Boys' Own Story". Jackson, Thorsen, Wring 2016, 51.

Savigny, H.; Warner, H. (2015). *The Politics of Being a Woman. Feminism, Media and 21st Century Popular Culture*. New York: Springer.

Scullion, R. (2015). "Liars, Bullies, Confused and Infantilised… and That's just the Electorate. The Roles Ascribed and the Portrayal of Members of the Electorate in Election TV Coverage". Jackson, Thorsen 2015, 33.

Semetko, H.A.; Boomgaarden, H.G. (2007). "Reporting Germany's 2005 Bundestag Election Campaign. Was Gender an Issue?". *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 12(4), 154-71. https://doi.org/10.1177/1081180X07307383.

Shaw, S. (2006). "Governed by the Rules?: The Female Voice in Parliamentary Debates". Baxter, J. (ed.), *Speaking Out*. New York: Springer, 81-102.

Smith, M. (2017). "How Left or Right-Wing Are the UK's Newspapers?". https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2017/03/07/how-left-or-right-wing-are-uks-newspapers.

Starkey, G. (2017). "Declining Newspaper Sales and the Role of Broadcast Journalism in the 2017 General Election". Thorsen, Jackson, Lilleker 2017, 49.

Stonewall. (2017). "Hate Crime against LGBT People in Britain Increases by 78 percent since 2013". https://www.stonewall.org.uk/news/hate-crime-against-lgbt-people-britain-increases-78-cent-2013.

Thompson, S.; Yates, C. (2017). "Maybot, Mummy or Iron Lady? Loving and Loathing Theresa May". Thorsen, Jackson, Lilleker 2017, 131.

Thorsen, E.; Jackson, D.; Lilleker, D. (2017). *UK Election Analysis 2017. Media, Voters and the Campaign*. Bournemouth (UK): The Centre for the Study of Journalism, Culture and Community at Bournemouth University. http://eprints.bournemouth.ac.uk/29374/10/UKElectionAnalysis2017_Thorsen-Jackson-and-Lilleker_v1.pdf.

Valenzuela, S.; Correa, T. (2009). "Press Coverage and Public Opinion on Women Candidates. The Case of Chile's Michelle Bachelet". *International Communication Gazette*, 71(3), 203-23. https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048508100913.

Van Dijk, T.A. (1993). *Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: SAGE.

Van Dijk, T.A. (1995). "Power and the News Media". *Political Communication and Action*, 6(1), 9-36. http://www.discourses.org/OldArticles/Power%20and%20the%20news%20media.pdf.

Van Dijk, T.A. (2001). "Multidisciplinary CDA. A Plea for Diversity". Wodak, R.; Meyer, M. (eds), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: SAGE, 95-120.

Van Zoonen, L. (1998). "One of the Girls? The Changing Gender of Journalism". Carter, C.; Branston, G; Allan, S. (eds), *News, Gender and Power*. London; New York: Routledge. 33-46.

Wheeler, M. (2017). "The Use and Abuse of the Vox Pop in the 2017 UK General Election Television News Coverage". Thorsen, Jackson, Lilleker 2017, 47.

Widdowson, H.G. (2008). *Text, Context, Pretext. Critical Issues in Discourse Analysis*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Williams, J.H. (2002). "The Purposes of Journalism". Sloan, D.; Parcell, L.M. (eds), *American Journalism. History, Principles, Practices*. Jefferson (NC): McFarland, 3-13.

Wintemute, R. (2016). "Goodbye EU Anti-Discrimination Law? Hello Repeal of the Equality Act 2010?". *King's Law Journal*, 27(3), 387-97. https://doi.org/10.1080/09615768.2016.1257778.

Wodak, R.; Meyer, M. (2009). "Critical Discourse Analysis: History, Agenda, Theory, and Methodology". Wodak R.; Meyer, M. (eds), *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: SAGE, 1-22.

Zappettini, F.; Krzyzanowski, M. (2019). "The Critical Juncture of Brexit in Media and Political Discourses. From National Populist Imaginary to Cross-National Social and Political Crisis". *Critical Discourse Studies*, 16(4), 381-88. https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2019.1592767.

Part II Juridical Perspectives, Monitoring and Good Practices

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

Combating Sexist Hate Speech
The Work of the Council of Europe

Daniele Cangemi
Council of Europe

Abstract This paper presents the Council of Europe current work on sexist hate speech and sexism. After an overview on sexist hate speech, its different forms, the factors contributing to it and the connection between sexist hate speech and freedom of expression, this contribution presents relevant Council of Europe standards and activities (including the new Committee of Ministers Recommendation on preventing and combating sexism), extracting from them the key elements that should guide governments, media, civil society and other relevant stakeholders in their action against sexism. A 'checklist' of indicators and actions to eliminate sexist hate speech is presented as a conclusion.

Keywords Council of Europe. Sexism. Hate speech. Human rights. Gender equality.

Summary 1 Introduction. The Council of Europe. – 2 Why Working on Sexist Hate Speech? – 3 The Relation between Sexist Hate Speech and Freedom of Expression in Council of Europe Conventions. – 4 Standards Developed by Monitoring Bodies and Awareness-Raising Initiatives. – 5 The Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers. – 6 Conclusion.

1 Introduction. The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organization. Created in 1949 by 10 States, it has now 47 member States, including the 28 members of the European Union. Belarus is the only European State which is not a member of the Organization. It is an intergovernmental organization, founded with the objective of protecting and promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

From the 1980s onwards, the Council of Europe has played a major role in the development of norms and concepts such as parity democracy, gender

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia 1
ISSN 2724-4652
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-478-3 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-479-0

Published 2020-12-29

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-478-3/008

budgeting and gender mainstreaming, that have been providing a new approach to gender equality, shaping its development in Europe.

Council of Europe action is based on a 'strategic triangle', in which the development of standards is linked with their monitoring and supplemented by technical co-operation to facilitate their implementation. All Council of Europe actions are developed and implemented in areas where the Council of Europe has a strong expertise and added value.

This is notably the case of gender equality and violence against women: the Council of Europe supports member States in implementing relevant texts and standards (conventions and recommendations) through a variety of measures (policy guidelines, capacity building, peer-to-peer exchange of good practice, awareness raising), including mainstreaming gender equality across all the policies and activities of the Organization. The objective is that member States change their policy, legislation and practice to bridge the gap between *de jure* and *de facto* equality. To this end, and building on its standards and *acquis*, the Council of Europe has adopted a six-year-strategy in the field of Gender Equality (2018-23),[1] which includes among its objectives the fight against gender stereotypes, sexism, sexist hate speech and other forms of violence against women. Relevant standards and activities covering the three sides of the 'strategic triangle' will be presented, with particular attention to the question of sexist hate speech.

2 Why Working on Sexist Hate Speech?

Sexist hate speech is rampant in Europe, and women are disproportionately targeted. Sexist hate speech can take many forms, both online and offline, in all forms of social interaction: at school, in the family, in social circles, in the public space, at work, via e-mails, websites, social media, etc.

Lack of awareness, unwillingness to address the issue, gaps in legislation and policies and problems with their enforcement, especially online, also contribute to a climate of impunity for abusers. But sexist hate speech has severe psychological, emotional and possibly physical impacts. It limits women's and girls' participation in different fields, undermines freedom of speech, and ultimately contributes to controlling and silencing women, obliging them to adapt their behaviour.

From this perspective, sexist hate speech has the same effects – and presents similar obstacles to its eradication – as other forms of violence against women, and can be seen part of a continuum

1 https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/gender-equality-strategy.

of violence. This also means that answers to sexist hate speech may be found in existing instruments to combat violence against women, such as the Council of Europe *Istanbul Convention*.

The internet has provided a new dimension for the expression and transmission of sexism, especially of sexist hate speech, to a large audience. The feeling of impunity and the thought of the Internet as disconnected from real life have contributed to the spread of sexist hate speech online, notably of a specific kind directed at women. This has led, on the one hand, to freedom of expression being sometimes abused as an excuse to cover unacceptable and offensive behaviour and allowing sexist hate speech to thrive; whilst, on the other hand, there persists a distinct – and generally legitimate – fear of restraining free speech, which is also shared by self-regulatory bodies and social media. But free speech and free expression are not 'free' if they are hijacked to intimidate, demean and – ultimately – to try to silence women.

In fact, there is no difference in impact between sexist hate speech online and offline, and the root causes of sexist hate speech precede the technological developments: they are fundamentally linked to the persistent unequal power relations between women and men. Sexist hate speech, online and offline, targets women because they are women, especially when they do not conform to traditional gender roles and put the status quo into question.

While in most Council of Europe member States sexism does not have a specific legal definition and is not subject to specific criminalization or comprehensive legal treatment, numerous countries have introduced criminal or other sanctions for different acts of sexism, including sexist hate speech. Some member States have legal, administrative, civil or criminal provisions prohibiting hate speech towards groups on the basis of certain grounds, including sex in a number of countries (ranging from fines to jail). These provisions can be found in criminal codes (France, Lithuania, Netherlands), anti-discrimination laws (Republic of Moldova), gender equality laws (Lithuania, United Kingdom), laws on violence against women (Spain), laws on sexism (Belgium) and anti-harassment (Ireland, Switzerland), as well as in laws on freedom of the press (France, Greece, Turkey).[2] The legal framework is constantly evolving.

This being said, there are not many national court cases dealing with sexist hate speech. This might be due to the lack of clarity in legislation, the lack of awareness and knowledge about rights, the

2 The country examples in brackets are given as illustration only. The information comes from the study by the Institut pour l'Egalité entre les femmes et les hommes: "Étude préparatoire de droit comparé sur les législations qui visent à sanctionner le sexisme", Brussels, 2010.

difficulty to find the identity of an anonymous hater, or the unwillingness to consider this issue as a serious one.[3] The European Court of Human Rights itself has not, so far, pronounced itself on cases of sexist hate speech.

3 The Relation between Sexist Hate Speech and Freedom of Expression in Council of Europe Conventions

The question of sexist hate speech is, as indicated earlier on, closely connected with the question of freedom of expression: both freedom of expression and equality between women and men being fundamental human rights.

Freedom of expression constitutes one of the essential foundations of a democratic society, and one of the basic conditions for its progress. As a fundamental human right protected by Article 10 of the *European Convention on Human Rights*, it enjoys a solid place in the human rights framework, and the increasing accessibility of the Internet has made it easy for users to share their thoughts publicly, instantly and autonomously. But freedom of expression is not an absolute right. Its exercise carries "duties and responsibilities" and might be subject to restrictions prescribed by law, concerning, for example, the protection of the reputation or rights of others. As the European Court of Human Rights pointed out,

> tolerance and respect for the equal dignity of all human beings constitute the foundations of a democratic, pluralistic society. That being so, as a matter of principle it may be considered necessary in certain democratic societies to sanction or even prevent all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify hatred based on intolerance …, provided that any 'formalities', 'conditions', 'restrictions' or 'penalties' imposed are proportionate to the legitimate aim pursued.[4]

Other articles of the Convention can be read in conjunction with Article 10 with respect to hate speech, notably Article 17, which prohibits the

3 There have been convictions of online haters in the United Kingdom. Stella Creasy, a British Member of Parliament was threatened online with rape from a man opposed to the campaign to put Jane Austen's face on a banknote. In September 2014, the author of the threatening tweet was convicted to 18 weeks imprisonment. Stella Creasy supported the campaign of journalist Caroline Criado-Perez who was also the target of threats. In January 2014, two of her Twitter 'trolls' were sentenced, respectively, to 12 weeks and 8 weeks of imprisonment for abusive messages.

4 *Erbakan v. Turkey* judgment of 6 July 2006, § 56.

abuse of rights,[5] and Article 14, which contains a non-discrimination provision applicable to the enjoyment of rights and freedoms set forth in the convention, including on grounds of sex. A self-standing general prohibition of discrimination is, finally, provided in Protocol no. 12 to the Convention,[6] which has at present been ratified by 20 States.[7]

When dealing with cases concerning incitement to hatred and freedom of expression, the European Court of Human Rights follows either the approach of exclusion from the protection of the Convention, provided for by Article 17, where the comments in question amount to hate speech and negate the fundamental values of the Convention, or the approach of limiting protection (in accordance with Article 10, paragraph 2) where the speech in question, although it amounts to hate speech, is not apt to destroy the fundamental values of the Convention. So far, however, the European Court's case-law about hate speech mainly focused on ethnic or racial hate speech,[8] and no judgement deals specifically with sexist hate speech.

The other key binding instrument to deal with sexist hate speech, notably as a form of violence against women, is the *Istanbul Convention*.[9]

The *Istanbul Convention* is the most comprehensive and progressive legally binding instrument addressing violence against women and calling for greater equality between women and men. Although it does not refer explicitly to sexist hate speech, various provisions of the *Istanbul Convention* indirectly deal, or can deal, with the matter. The convention contains for instance provisions related to eradicating gender stereotypical behaviour, traditions and practices which contribute to inequality between women and men (Article 12). This is relevant, as practices based on the idea of the inferiority of women are at the core of sexism, which can indeed take the form of sexist hate speech.

The need to ensure the dignity of women's rights and prevent violence against women in the information and communication technology sector and the media is also echoed in Article 17 of the *Istanbul Convention*, which encourages the participation of the private sector and the media in preventing violence against women. This article recognizes the importance of providing guidance and tools to avoid

5 "Nothing in this Convention may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein or at their limitation to a greater extent than is provided for in the Convention" (*European Convention on Human Rights*, Art. 17)

6 https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/0900001680080622.

7 Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, Georgia, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain and Ukraine.

8 https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_Hate_speech_ENG.pdf.

9 https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/home.

sexist and stereotypical language, as well as of having clear policy frameworks and complaint mechanisms to ensure the withdrawal of sexist and harmful content in the media.

Finally, the *Istanbul Convention* requests Parties to criminalize forms of violence that relate to sexist hate speech. For instance, pursuant to Article 40 of the convention, on sexual harassment,

> Parties shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment, is subject to criminal or other legal sanction.

As regards stalking, States Parties are requested, in Article 34, to

> take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the intentional conduct of repeatedly engaging in threatening conduct directed at another person, causing her or him to fear for her or his safety, is criminalized.

The implementation of these provisions by the States Parties is regularly followed by the *Istanbul Convention* monitoring mechanism, which consists of an independent body, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women (GREVIO), and of the Committee of States Parties to the Convention. The GREVIO produces country reports, and the Committee of the States Parties adopts, on the basis of the reports and conclusions of the GREVIO, specific recommendations addressed to the Parties concerned.

4 Standards Developed by Monitoring Bodies and Awareness-Raising Initiatives

ECRI, the Council of Europe Commission against Racism and Intolerance, is a unique human rights monitoring body, not based on a convention, which specializes in questions relating to the fight against racism, discrimination (on grounds of 'race', ethnic/national origin, colour, citizenship, religion, language, sexual orientation and gender identity), xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance in Europe. It is a pan-European Commission, composed of independent members from all Council of Europe member States.[10]

10 https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/home.

In the framework of its country monitoring work, ECRI examines the situation in each of the Council of Europe member States and produces country reports. In addition, it elaborates General Policy Recommendations (GPRs) addressed to the governments of all member States, providing detailed (non-binding) guidelines which policymakers are invited to use when drawing up national strategies and policies in a variety of fields.

It is in this context that, in 2015, ECRI published General Policy Recommendation no. 15 on combating hate speech.[11] This GPR refers for the first time to sex and gender in a definition of hate speech:

> Hate speech for the purpose of the Recommendation entails the use of one or more particular forms of expression – namely, the advocacy, promotion or incitement of the denigration, hatred or vilification of a person or group of persons, as well any harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatization or threat of such person or persons and any justification of all these forms of expression – that is based on a non-exhaustive list of personal characteristics or status that includes "race", colour, language, religion or belief, nationality or national or ethnic origin, as well as descent, age, disability, sex, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation. (ECRI General Policy Recommendation no. 15, para. 9)

With specific regard to sexist hate speech, the GPR stresses the gravity of hate speech targeting women both on account of their sex, gender and/or gender identity, and particularly when this is coupled with one or more of their other characteristics, such as 'race', religion or some other personal characteristic or status.[12]

The No Hate Speech Movement Campaign was coordinated by the Council of Europe Youth Department from 2013 to 2017. The objective of the campaign was to reduce the acceptance of hate speech (including sexist hate speech) both online and offline, through human rights education and awareness-raising, youth participation and media literacy. The website of the campaign[13] is still active and allows to look at initiatives carried out at national and international level.

One of the main products developed to support the Campaign is *Bookmarks*,[14] a manual on combating hate speech through human rights education, addressed to educators working both inside and outside the formal education system, for young people aged 13 to 18. The

11 https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/recommendation-no.15.

12 ECRI General Policy Recommendation no. 15, para. 31.

13 https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign.

14 https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/bookmarks-connexions.

main body of the manual consists of 24 activities, each of which has been designed to address one or more of the themes. With regard to sexist hate speech, for instance, the activity foreseen consisted in devising a 'mini-campaign' against sexism in online gaming. A second educational manual, *We CAN!*,[15] offers guidance to develop counter and alternative narratives to combat hate speech and promote human rights, especially in online environments. The manual proposes a set of online and offline communication and educational approaches and tools to undermine narratives which sustain and legitimize hate speech.

5 The Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers

In addition to the binding instruments and to the findings and recommendations of the monitoring bodies, the Council of Europe has developed, starting already in 1990, other non-binding standards, mostly under the form of recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to member States, which are directly or indirectly relevant in order to define the existing normative framework for sexist hate speech.

The importance of non-sexist language had been addressed by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers for the first time in 1990, when Recommendation no. R(90)4 on the Elimination of Sexism from Language[16] confirmed the "fundamental role of language in forming an individual, and the interaction which exists between language and social attitudes" and recommended governments to encourage the use as far as possible of non-sexist language (including in the media) and to bring "the terminology used in legal drafting, public administration and education into line with the principle of sex equality".

One of the best-known instruments is the 1997 Committee of Ministers Recommendation R(97)20 on Hate Speech,[17] this instrument contains the first international definition of hate speech accepted by the Council of Europe member States, although not legally binding, which still remains a reference. The 1997 Recommendation defines it as covering:

> all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, antisemitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin.

15 https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign/we-can-alternatives.

16 https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680505480.

17 https://rm.coe.int/1680505d5b.

As can be easily noted, sexist hate speech is not, however, explicitly mentioned.

In more recent years, attention focused more on the relevance of the gender dimension in the media context, including the audiovisual industry and, of course, the Internet. This dimension has been consistently addressed as a matter of priority in various Council of Europe transversal strategies.

First and foremost, of course, the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategies 2014-17[18] and 2018-23,[19] which both identify the fight against gender stereotypes and sexism, including combating sexism as a form of hate speech, as a priority objective. The strategy currently in force, in particular, requires the Council of Europe and its member States to address sexist hate speech as a form of sexism, to analyse and monitor its impact, in co-operation with other relevant sectors of the Council of Europe, and to prepare a draft recommendation to prevent and combat sexism (see below).

Secondly, the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child for 2016-21[20] includes two priority areas related to sexist hate speech: "A life free from violence for all children" (with a particular mention of violence against girls); and the "Protection of children in the digital environment". Thirdly, the Council of Europe Internet Governance Strategy for 2016-19[21] emphasizes the need to combat online harassment and bullying and includes an objective on "monitoring action taken to protect everyone, in particular women and children, from online abuse, such as cyber-stalking, sexism and threats of sexual violence".

The result of this increased attention to the phenomenon, in terms of production of new standards, has been manifold. It is worth mentioning notably the following instruments:

- Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)1 of the Committee of Ministers on Gender Equality and Media contains specific guidelines to ensure gender equality and to combat gender stereotyping in the media including in relation to legislation, accountability channels, indicators and media literacy.[22]
- Recommendation (2016)4 of the Committee of Ministers on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media[23] stresses the need for a gender-sensitive approach for all

18 https://rm.coe.int/1680590174.

19 https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/gender-equality-strategy.

20 https://rm.coe.int/168066cff8.

21 https://rm.coe.int/16806aafa9.

22 https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016805c7c7e.

23 https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016806415d9.

issues related to the protection of journalists. It refers, notably, to the fact that female journalists and other female media actors face specific gender-based dangers, including sexist, misogynist and degrading abuse; threats; intimidation; harassment and sexual aggression and violence, and calls for "urgent, resolute and systemic responses".

- Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)9 of the Committee of Ministers on gender equality in the audiovisual sector,[24] in which the governments of member States are invited, *inter alia*, to support awareness-raising initiatives and campaigns on combating gender stereotypes, including hate speech and sexism in the audiovisual sector.

Separate and specific attention should then be deserved to the new landmark Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism.[25]

One of the reasons which makes this recommendation a potential game-changer with respect to sexism in general, and to sexist hate speech in particular, is that it contains the first internationally agreed definition of sexism. For the purpose of the recommendation, sexism is defined as:

> Any act, gesture, visual representation, spoken or written words, practice or behaviour based upon the idea that a person or a group of persons is inferior because of their sex, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether online or offline, with the purpose or effect of:
> i. violating the inherent dignity or rights of a person or a group of persons; or
> ii. resulting in physical, sexual, psychological or socioeconomic harm or suffering to a person or a group of persons; or
> iii. creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; or
> iv. constituting a barrier to the autonomy and full realization of human rights by a person or a group of persons; or
> v. maintaining and reinforcing gender stereotypes.

24 https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807509e6.

25 The recommendation was still a draft at the time of the Seminar. It has been adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 May 2019. https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=090000168093b26a.

The recommendation also tackles sexist hate speech more directly in various sections, including for instance inviting for the first time the governments of member States to consider legislative reforms to define and criminalize sexist hate speech, to consider the imposition of non-criminal penalties, for example the withdrawal of financial and other forms of support from public bodies or other organizations that fail to denounce sexism and sexist behaviour, especially sexist hate speech, and to support research on systematic data on, *inter alia*, sexist hate speech. Particular attention is dedicated to sexist hate speech with respect to media and the internet, recommending for instance the implementation of legislative measures that define and criminalize incidents of sexist hate speech and are applicable to all media, including the internet and new media, better reporting procedures and appropriate sanctions, and the adoption and implementation of self-regulatory policies and mechanisms for the elimination of sexism, including sexist hate speech. The recommendation also tackles other sectors like justice – proposing notably to train law enforcement personnel, prosecutors and judges on sexism, cyber sexism, sexist hate speech and violence against women; sports and culture – fostering 'zero tolerance' towards sexism and sexist hate speech in sports and cultural events and encouraging leading cultural and sports figures to correct sexist assumptions or denounce sexist hate speech.

The recommendation also foresees a 'soft' follow-up procedure whereby member States will be periodically requested to report on the measures undertaken to implement it.

6 Conclusion

Sexist hate speech needs to be addressed by all stakeholders, including the public, relevant authorities, international organizations, law enforcement and other actors of the justice system, the private sector and civil society. In doing this, a balance must be found in providing a platform for free speech without tolerating sexist hate speech. A 'checklist' of indicators and actions to eliminate sexist hate speech, emerging from the Council of Europe normative and practical experience may include:

- Eliminate discriminatory laws, tackle gaps in legislation and monitor their implementation to ensure appropriate and effective action against sexist hate speech.
- Use regulatory powers with respect to the media to combat the use of sexist hate speech.
- Provide support, clear policy frameworks and legal remedies for victims, especially women and girls, in cases of sexist and harmful content.
- Promote civil society initiatives in this area.

- Encourage the media to strengthen self-regulatory mechanisms and codes of conduct to condemn and combat sexist hate speech and ensure more effective moderation of social media, including by setting clear standards for the industry and putting in place mechanisms to monitor progress.
- Ensure the integration of a gender equality perspective in all aspects of education and media policies.
- Promote gender equality and media literacy training and the production of training materials.
- Encourage all relevant actors (e.g. public institutions, political parties, civil society, sports and cultural organizations) to adopt and implement codes of conducts that address sexist hate speech.
- Research the phenomenon of sexist hate speech and the different forms it takes, including measuring its extent and the harm it causes.

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

Discrimination and Hate and Sexist Speech in the Italian Law

Elisabetta Rosi
Suprema Corte di Cassazione

Abstract Sexist language is an incitement to the stigmatization of women as women or of sexual orientation so that it contributes to maintaining the discriminatory situation of these categories. It can be included as a part of conduct in different crimes, but sexist language *per se* isn't criminalized in Italy (freedom to manifest one's thought is a right constitutionally guaranteed). Criminal law has a subsidiary function with respect to the ways in which the phenomena of hate and sexist speech must be combatted. Communication on the Web must be carefully regulated, with the involvement of managers in the processing of self-regulation, in particular the managers of the social networks.

Keywords Sexist Language. Hate Speech. Criminalization in Italy. Jurisdiction.

1 Introduction

The premise for the analysis of the criminal response to the phenomenology of hate and sexist language is primarily composed by international legal instruments,[1] adopted at multilateral and European level, to combat sexu-

1 Among international sources, the following should be mentioned: art. 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR); art. 20 International Covenant for Civil or Political Rights; art. 21 Nice Card; art. 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU); Convention of New York 12/21/65 for the elimination of racial discrimination, Conv. on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) of 1979; Rec. no. 20 of 30/10/1997 of the Council of Europe, on the "hate

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia 1
ISSN 2724-4652
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-478-3 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-479-0

Open access
Published 2020-12-29

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-478-3/009

al discrimination, globally, through the protection of human rights.

Significant criminal cases are art. 604 bis of the Italian Criminal Code which criminalizes propaganda and incitement to commit crime on the grounds of racial, ethnic and religious discrimination,[2] as well as the crime of association with the purpose of incitement to discrimination and violence on ethnic national racial or religious basis.[3]

The area of criminalization only includes ethnic, nationality and religious discrimination, not discrimination on the basis of sex or sexual orientation.

The requirements for the crime are: a) incitement to hatred by any means of communication; b) intentionality; c) concreteness of the risk of the occurrence of acts of violence or discrimination.

The components of hate speech are multiple and concern not only the medium, the content, as well as the context, but also the impact on the recipient. It is essential to verify the effects of this language used in the hate speech to limit the degree of offensive.[4]

The punishment of hate speech constitutes a limit to the freedom of manifestation of thought: the respect for human dignity must always prevail in balancing of the constitutional values (principle attributable to articles 2, 3, 19 and 21 of the Italian Constitution)

The existing criminal offenses – such as defamation, insult – repress opinions damaging to the real dignity of a person. Today, there are discussions of 'new' crimes of opinion (on the subject of denial of holocaust, homophobia, xenophobia) calling into question the protection of a collective human dignity, detached from the individual dimension.

speech"; Convention of Budapest on Cybercrime 2001 – protocol on racism and xenophobia 2003; Convention of Istanbul for the prevention and elimination of violence against women 2011; Rec. no. 15 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) (Commission in the Council of Europe) of 21/3/2016 relating to the fight against hate speech.

2 Introduced with the Law no. 654/1975, of ratification of the 1966 New York Convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination (first modified with the so-called "Mancino law" and then with Law no. 85/2006) and now, following the legislative decree no. 21 of 2018.

3 And the art. 604 ter of the Italian Criminal Code governs the aggravating circumstance of the purpose of discrimination or hatred of the same content.

4 MEANS: written and oral communication (offline), behaviours; written or audio-video communications (online).
CONTENT (opinion versus instigation).
RECIPIENT (single/public).
CONTEXT (satire/news/political criticism/interpersonal relationship).
EFFECTS / OFFENSIVENESS (human dignity/privacy/personal and/or digital identity/sexual freedom; in particular with regard to minors).

2 Sexist Language

Sexist language can be defined as follows in its requirements: a) incitement to the stigmatization of sexual orientation and of women as women; b) intentionality; c) offense to dignity or a concrete contribution to maintaining the discriminatory situation of women or the different sexual orientations.

The sexist language *per se* is not criminalized. To be so, it must take into account the so-called crimes of opinion. It is important to note that the freedom to manifest one's own thought is a right constitutionally guaranteed by art. 21 of the Italian Constitution and, according to scholars, freedom of expression includes any assertion and opinion, true or false.

3 Words Are Swords

Can the expression of one's thoughts of hatred against a person always be called 'hate speech?' What offense can be potentially prejudice that statement?

The harm on honour, dignity and reputation also depends on whether such language is expressed in the presence of the victim, in his/her absence, in public, publicly in the media, or on the web.

A verbal or written communication integrates the hate speech when it is able to instigate a behaviour of aggression or to denigrate the dignity of a person or a community or group of people.

The jurisprudence of the Supreme Court of Cassation considers:

1. That there are insurmountable limits set by art. 2 of the Italian Constitution and that there are expressive methods which, objectively, by intrinsic charge of contempt and mockery, are therefore only offensive and therefore to be considered unacceptable in any context (Cass. Section 5, no. 11632 of 2008).
2. That for the purposes of discrimination or ethnic, racial or religious hatred, it is not necessary for the offensive and discriminatory phrase to be perceived by third parties (Cass. Section 5, no. 22570 of 2013).
3. That it is sufficient that the expression highlights "a manifest prejudice of inferiority of a race" (Cass. Sect. 5, no. 13530 of 2017, case in which the offended person had been called a "black whore").

According to Constitutional judgments, the manifestation of thought is no longer such (that is, it cannot logically be traced back to this category) when it resolves into an action, where the relationship between word and material conduct is so direct and immediate that it no longer complies with the guarantee of art. 21 of the Constitution, as in instigation, apology and subversive propaganda.

4 Criminal Illegality of Hate Speech

By reviewing the Italian criminal system we must consider:

1. the administrative offense of injury: offense to the honour and dignity of the person (crime decriminalized with Legislative Decree no. 7 of 15/1/2016).
2. The crime of defamation (art. 595 of the Criminal Code) punishable on lawsuit: anyone who communicates with several people offends the reputation of another (paragraph 2: attribution of a specific fact; paragraph 3: in the press; paragraph 4: to political body, administrative or judicial or its representative). The individual who committed the offense is not punishable in a state of anger determined by an unjust fact of others (art. 599, paragraph 2 of the Criminal Code).
3. The offense of threat (art. 612 of the Criminal Code) offense to the honour and dignity of the person; it can be prosecuted on demand, but that it could be prosecuted *ex officio* if the threat is made in one of the ways referred to in art. 339 of the Italian Criminal Code ("[…] or with anonymous writing, or in a symbolic way, or by means of the intimidating force deriving from secret associations existing or supposed").
4. The offense (violence or) threat against a public official (art. 336 of the Criminal Code) "[…] to force him [or her] to perform an act contrary to official duties can be punished with the penalty from six months imprisonment to five years".
5. The offense (violence or) threat against a political body, administrative or judicial office or its individual components (art. 338 of the Criminal Code) "[…] to prevent even temporarily its activity or to disturb it, punished from one to seven years imprisonment".
6. The offense of harassment (art. 660 of the Criminal Code): "Whoever, in a public place or place open to the public, or by means of telephone, petulance or otherwise objectionable reason, bears harassment or interference, be liable to imprisonment up to six months or with a fine of up to 516 euros".
7. The crime of stalking (persecutory acts) (art. 612 bis of the Criminal Code, punished in a complaint, unless it has been committed to the detriment of a minor, or a person with a disability or is connected with another offense that can be prosecuted *ex officio*): anyone with conduct that is reiterated, threatening or harassing, so as to cause a serious state of fear or generate a well-founded fear of one's own safety or that of one's family member.
8. The crime of mistreatments in the family (art. 572 of the Criminal Code). Anyone who mistreats a person in the family or in any case cohabiting partner or a person subject to his [or her] authority or entrusted to him [or her] for reasons of educa-

tion, instruction, care, supervision or custody or for the exercise of a profession or an art; punished from two to six years of imprisonment.

9. Incitement crimes: crime incitement (art. 414 of the Criminal Code), to disobey laws (art. 415 of the Criminal Code), to paedophilia or child pornography practices (art. 414 bis of the Criminal Code, introduced with the ratification of the Lanzarote Convention, Law no. 172 of 2012), that is to instigate to commit sexual crimes to the detriment of minors.
10. Incitement conduct as a moral contribution to the crime. Instigation of the public official to commit torture (art.613 ter of the Criminal Code, introduced by Law no. 110 of 2017) of the Criminal Code.
11. Incitement to suicide (art. 580 of the Criminal Code).

5 Cyberspace and Hate / Sexist Speech

Technological development has changed the way in which we communicate. New technologies have surpassed professional information producers (mass media). The Web and social networks in particular have created the space of shared information, in real time, with rapid diffusion beyond national borders.

The features of ***online hate speech*** are clear:

1. Permanence.
2. Unpredictable re-enactment on platforms other than the one used.
3. Anonymity of the authors.
4. Transnationality.
5. Possible circumvention or difficulty of guaranteeing jurisdictional protection for victims.

In truth, sexist language could be included in the notion of sexual harassment as defined by the Istanbul Convention but not incorporated in the Italian criminal system.

See art. 4 of the Istanbul Convention:

> The Parties shall take the legislative or other measures necessary to ensure that any form of unwanted, verbal, non-verbal or physical behaviour, of a sexual nature, with the aim or effect of violating a person's dignity, in particular when such behaviour creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive climate, is subject to criminal or other legal sanctions.

Also in the special legislation for the protection of personal data (Legislative Decree no. 196 of 2003 for the protection of privacy, updat-

ed with the Legislative Decree no. 101 of 2018) on the measures to prevent and combat cyberbullying (Law no. 71 of 2017, which concerns subjects of a minor age) there are no incriminating cases of sexist language. Moreover, this law defined hate speech on the web as:

> any form of pressure, aggression, harassment, blackmail, insult, denigration, defamation, identity theft, alteration, illegal acquisition, manipulation, illegal treatment of personal data in harm of minors, carried out electronically, as well as the dissemination of online content also concerning one or more members of the minor's family whose intentional and predominant purpose is to isolate a minor or a group of minors by implementing serious abuse, malicious attack, or ridicule. (Law no. 71 of 2017, art. 1, c. 2)

6 Possibility of Exercising Criminal Jurisdiction in Computer Crimes

In truth, the Italian criminal system allows criminal jurisdiction to be exercised in computer crimes, once a crime has been introduced. In fact, jurisprudence has affirmed the principle that the crime is perfected, that is, committed, where the offense is perceived. This makes it possible to exercise jurisdiction also in relation to websites registered abroad or conduct established from abroad (see, for all, Cass. Section 5, 27/12/2000). It is also possible to implement the seizure of websites: forums, blogs, newsletters, newsgroups, mailing lists and social networks, although they are an expression of the right to express one's thoughts, they cannot enjoy the constitutional guarantees relating to the limitation on the seizure of the Press (Cass. Pen. no. 31022 of 2015).

Certainly, there are difficulties in identifying the user of the address connected to the IP who carried out the aggressive communication or shared an offensive content. It could be provided to criminalize the conduct of the web-manager for the persistence of disparaging posts, considering the obligation to remove posts or communications that have illicit content (pursuant to article 40 of the Italian Criminal Code).

From this brief summary it is clear that criminal law has a subsidiary function with respect to the ways in which the phenomena of hate and sexist speech must be against.

In conclusion, communication on the Web must be carefully regulated, with the involvement of managers in the processing of self-regulation, in particular the managers of the social networks.

Every scholar of social phenomena and criminology has the task of analysing and monitoring the phenomenon of hate speech and sexist language on the web, in order to promptly report the obsolescence of regulatory tools.

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

For a Bottom-Up Approach to the Linguistic and Legal Definition of Hate Speech
A Case Study of Offences Against Women

Francesca Ferrucci
Università degli Studi della Tuscia, Viterbo, Italia

Abstract In addressing the legal definition of Hate Speech (HS), some important linguistic issues arise: the necessity of semantic precision of normative texts conflicts with the difficulty of tracing distinctive features of the phenomenon; the balancing with freedom of expression poses the question on the boundaries between opinions and verbal violence. Comparative studies on national laws show significant gaps in definitions, highlighting their negative effects. This paper discusses the problem analysing a corpus of 2,720 Facebook negative comments against women with decisional positions in Europe. Recurring textual strategies are identified testing a bottom-up approach, argued as the appropriate method to meet the current research challenges.

Keywords Hate Speech. Woman. Recipient. EU Legislation. Freedom of speech. CMC. Text Analysis.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia 1
ISSN 2724-4652
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-478-3 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-479-0

Open access
Published 2020-12-29

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-478-3/010

1 Legal and Linguistic Definitions of Hate Speech

In addressing the legal definition of Hate Speech (henceforth HS), some important linguistic issues arise: there is the need of semantic precision, as requested by normative texts, but it is difficult to find the distinctive features of the phenomenon; its sanction has to be balanced with the principle of freedom of speech, but it is not clear what are the boundaries between opinions and verbal violence, not always corresponding to those between declarative utterances and speech acts (cf. Austin 1962; Searle 1969; Schlieben-Lange 1975). The present article has the purpose to provide a systematic review of the adopted solutions, mainly developed in a jurisdictional perspective, and to discuss them with an interdisciplinary focus that, by integrating inputs from linguistics, psychology and sociolinguistics, can produce an advancement with respect to the state of the art. An overview of the current definitions is first provided, highlighting the different used parameters and some of their limits; the challenges for their implementation are then identified, analysing documented HS events that hardly fit into the sanctioning perimeters. A case study, based on the HS against women with public decisional roles in Italy and in Europe, is finally presented, with the aim to experiment a bottom-up approach in the definition of the phenomenon, argued as the appropriate method to meet the various manifestations of discrimination and to achieve more comprehensive defining criteria.

Comparative studies on national laws show significant gaps in HS definitions and highlight their negative effects: if, on the one hand, the diversity of cultures in which norms are produced must be taken into account, on the other hand the lack of neatly defined criteria can reduce the effectiveness of the laws themselves, it can cause confusion in the judgment of single cases and produce an abuse of the term in the public debate, hindering deterrence.

> While many hate-based acts are spelled out and subsequently criminalized within national Criminal Codes, strict definitions of hate crime and hate speech have generally not been delineated. (PRISM Project 2015, 48)[1]

However, it appears very important to have a common and consistent definition at the international level, in order to counter the HS in all media, particularly those of Computer-Mediated Communication (henceforth CMC), where offences may become a viral phenomenon beyond single local communities (ELSA 2014, 291).[2]

1 See also Danish Institute for Human Rights 2017.

2 On the semiotics of the new media see Cosenza 2014; Manetti 2008.

If we consider the main circulating definitions of HS, the most frequent defining parameters are pragmatic: first of all, the sender's intention (hurting, offending) or motivation. For example, definitions in Croatia and Netherlands are respectively:

> hate crime is a crime committed because of race, colour, religion, national or ethnic origin, disability, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity of another person.
>
> Offences with a discriminatory background. (PRISM Project 2015, 48)

An overview of the trends in many European countries is available, in the same study by the PRISM European Project, referring to Bulgaria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy,[3] Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden, where the key concept is "bias":

> All of the 18 responding countries specified certain bias categories in their legislation, which help to identify segments of society that may be particularly targeted in acts of discrimination, hate crime and hate speech. Every respondent mentioned variations of the terms race, religion, ethnic origin, nationality, and sexual orientation […]. Other commonly mentioned categories include age, disability, and language. (PRISM Project 2015, 49)

UK's definition considers the different channels where HS may occur and highlights the perlocutionary effects on the recipient (incitement to hatred, intimidation):

> hate speech is any speech, gesture or conduct, writing, or display which is forbidden because it may incite violence or prejudicial action against or by a protected individual or group, or because it disparages or intimidates a protected individual or group. The law may identify a protected individual or a protected group by certain characteristics. (ELSA 2014, 269)

3 In Italy, the bias categories mentioned in laws are sex, race, language, religion, ethnicity, nationality, political opinion, personal and social conditions; in this framework, it is worth noting the exclusion of LGBT and disabled people from the Mancino Law against Hate crimes (Italian Constitution 1948, artt. 3, 8, 19; Law no. 645/1952; Law no. 654/1975; Legislative Decree 122/1993; Law no. 205 of 1993; Legislative Decree 286/1998; Legislative Decrees 70/2003, 215/2003 and 216/2003; Law no. 85/2006; Legislative Decree 198/2006; Law no. 101/2008; Legislative Decree 5/2010; Civil Code artt. 1418, Penal Code artt. 302, 402-5, 594-5, 724) (cf. PRISM Project 2015, 142-76).

What is meant by "protected individual or group" is better explained in the definition by OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe), that is used as a working basis by some European States. It describes hate crime as:

> a criminal act motivated by bias towards a certain group. For a criminal act to qualify as a hate crime, it must meet two criteria:
> – The act must be a crime under the criminal code of the legal jurisdiction in which it is committed;
> – The crime must have been committed with a bias motivation.
> "Bias motivation means that the perpetrator chose the target of the crime on the basis of protected characteristics. A "protected characteristic" is a fundamental or core characteristic that is shared by a group, such as race, religion, ethnicity, language or sexual orientation. (PRISM Project 2015, 48)[4]

Another important definition is the one by the Council of Europe:

> The term "hate speech" shall be understood as covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrant and people of immigrant origin. (cit. in PRISM Project 2015, 10)[5]

All these definitions refer to what, in the pragmatic theory of language, is considered a fundamental aspect of communication, including motivations, intentions, attitudes and feelings of sender and recipient; but they leave unsolved the problem of how to determine a priori the motivations of haters and emotional reactions of hate, in the perspective of sanction and criminalization.

Another parameter for crime definition is logic-semantic: the truth-value of an utterance. If the offences are false, then they must be punished.

> Whoever, with the exception of the cases indicated in the previous article, by communicating with more people, offends the reputation of others, is punished with imprisonment for up to one year or a fine of up to one thousand thirty-two euros. If the offense con-

4 The text is a model for many HS definitions in study groups and commissions: see for example the Report by Italy's Chamber of Representatives, where the key concept is the core characteristic of a person as the basis of the hatred (cf. Camera dei Deputati 2017).

5 Recommendation (97)20 of the Council of Europe, 30 October 1997.

> sists in attributing a specific fact, the penalty is imprisonment of up to two years, or a fine of up to two thousand sixty-five euros.[6]

This strategy for determining what is sanctionable is significantly different from the previous ones, as a violent offence may be 'technically' true, for example when denigrating persons who actually belong to a religious group presented as 'undesirable'. It seems to overlap only partially with the HS.

Finally, a strategy frequently implemented in HS definitions is to list the victims, as also shown by the Council of Europe's text mentioned above and in the norm holding in Austria:

> whoever incites or publicly urges to violence in a manner that is likely to endanger the public order, or in a way perceivable by the general public, against a church or a religious society, or against a group of people defined according to the criteria of race, colour, language, religion or belief, nationality, descent or national or ethnic origin, sex, disability, age or sexual orientation or against the member of such a group explicitly because of its affiliation, shall be punished with an imprisonment up to two years. (ELSA 2014, 10)

The reference to a "group of people" or a "member of such a group explicitly because of its affiliation" is another choice that, relying on the concept of "protected characteristics", presents the risk of overgeneralizing the HS cases.

2 Limits of Current Definitions and Challenges for Their Implementation

While catching the main aspects of the phenomenon, the list of victims can improperly leave out many episodes targeting single persons, where their belonging to a social group is not recognizable as a triggering factor of the HS. Mounting evidence shows HS against VIPs, teachers, Healthcare Professionals, public officers and in general against those considered 'counterparts' in specific situations,[7]

6 Original text: "Chiunque, fuori dei casi indicati nell'articolo precedente, comunicando con più persone, offende l'altrui reputazione, è punito con la reclusione fino a un anno o con la multa fino a milletrentadue euro. Se l'offesa consiste nell'attribuzione di un fatto determinato, la pena è della reclusione fino a due anni, ovvero della multa fino duemilasessantacinque euro" (Italy's Penal Code art. 595, "Diffamazione").

7 Women are paradigmatic of this phenomenon, being often targeted by HS with no explicit reference to the categories of sex or gender: it is then difficult to sanction it as an act against a member of group explicitly because of its affiliation, or on a basis

with targets and contexts that are difficult to classify for regulatory purposes. Thus, one limit of current HS definitions is an insufficient 'descriptive adequacy': they do not represent all HS events, producing false negatives (that is, events that are not included in the range of a targeted phenomenon although they should be). Should the laws mention all types of victims, the lists could be very long, and it could be very difficult to specify all circumstances where HS happens. On the other hand, where definitions rely on the pragmatic strength of HS, its potential to hurt, offend, intimidate or incite, we face the opposite risk of false positives (that is, events that are included in the range of a targeted phenomenon although they should not). For example, it is possible to hurt someone with strong criticism, without resulting in violence.[8] This is obviously linked to the issue of freedom of speech as a fundamental right that must be ensured. In addition, it is not clear how the pragmatic strength can be objectively measured and based on distinctive features, thus meeting the need of a 'strict definition', as recommended by all relevant stakeholders in this field.

of protected characteristics or bias considered in laws. The corpus analysed in this paper includes many of these cases, focusing on women who play apical decisional roles; but there are also women in other roles who have to face HS in their day-to-day life, with less possibility to count on normative (and cultural) representation of these abuses. In Italy, for example, we can mention the recent experience by Mrs. Carola Rackete, the captain of the rescue ship Sea-Watch 3 of a NGO, who during the summer 2019 defied the Italian government ban and docked at Lampedusa for humanitarian reasons, after having saved many migrants: she has been strongly attacked by some internet users, but she does not match the types of victims used to define hate crimes. Evidences of HS against some workers' categories, such employees in public services, are well documented in scientific papers: cf. for healthcare professionals Kapoor 2017. Among them, women are the majority of the targets; see also De Mauro 2016; Ferrucci 2019.

8 In Figure 1, false negatives are represented by the light blue areas in the horizontal axis, where the events of "general circulating HS" and/or "face-to-face HS" are not covered by the defining parameters; false positives are instead represented by the light blue areas in the vertical axis, where the pragmatic, semantic or logic features can be related to non-violent speech acts. Conversely, the overlapping areas in dark blue represent the descriptive adequacy, that is reached only in some cases. HS events are commonly analysed in literature distinguishing between general circulating HS (in media, public spaces, including cases where victims do not participate to the interaction) and face-to-face communication (cf. Gumperz, Hymes 1972).

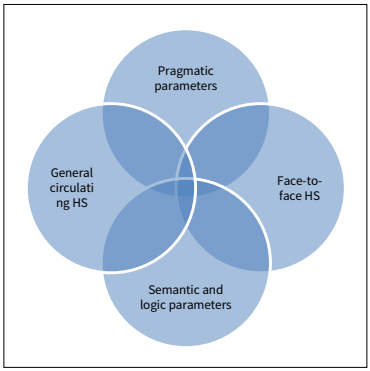

Figure 1 False negatives and positives in the definitions of HS

In the following section, a case study will be presented, regarding offences against women in CMC. We will consider many examples of violent utterances that do not fit into the current HS definitions and suggest more comprehensive criteria. The framework of the research is the assumption that HS produces severe harms on the victims: general consequences reported in literature are feelings of fear, silencing, provocation to anger and frustration, restriction of ability to identify with the group's characteristics and of identity-building processes. HS may lead to an overall disempowerment of the targeted persons; repetitive HS, if performed either in face-to-face communication or in general circulating mass media, may be traumatic: a 'before' and an 'after' of the event clearly separate the victim's interior experience.[9] So we have a twofold challenge.

First, we consider all types of HS events, even less frequent or less visible ones, starting from a collection of actual HS events that can represent the variety of the phenomenon. Only in this way we can reach a complete picture of what is to be defined in regulatory texts. Second, we have to consider the point of view of the recipient. That's exactly the right perspective that should be adopted, mentioning the Australian law as a positive example:

> [t]o the extent that hate speech laws are sufficiently broad and flexible to address the types of speech events and spectrum of harms attested to by the interviewees, and to assess harm from the perspective of the targeted communities, members of Indigenous and racial/

9 The literature distinguishes between constitutive and consequential harms (Maitra, McGowan 2012, 6); namely, between harms that are occasioned in the saying of a HS event, and harms that occur as a result of it. See also Gelber, McNamara 2016: the authors show that both types of HS events represented in Figure 1 can incur harm constitutively, consequentially or simultaneously in both ways.

> ethnic minority communities in Australia enjoy, potentially at least, a greater level of legal protection than equivalent communities in the many countries that have not been prepared to define the field of unlawful hate speech as broadly. (Gelber, McNamara 2016, 340)[10]

Research is needed to address the issue of descriptive adequacy, as it arises from the state of the art, also taking into account the ethical need to provide an answer, even in cultural terms, to all manifestations of this type of violence. For the academic community in communication sciences, study questions may be spelled out in the following ways: is it possible to clarify the distinctive features of HS, distinguishing it from impoliteness, lack of cooperation and legitimate criticism?[11] Under which conditions it becomes impossible to maintain a common field of semantic negotiation? Which textual strategies, appropriately generalized, can constitute the basis for a definition that should be at the same time more rigorous and broader, therefore more effective also for sanctions?

3 A Case Study of Offences against Women

A corpus of 2720 negative comments in Facebook has been examined, for a total of 106,816 tokens, browsing the profiles of 15 women who, at the moment of the events (2017-19), had public decisional roles in Italy and in Europe. The target women were chosen on the basis of the criteria of visibility (members of national Parliaments or Governments or international Boards, mayors of capitals), country and institutional representativity (4 European countries, UK, 1 European Institution and 1 worldwide institution), primary language of the Facebook Profile (Italian, English, French, Spanish, German) and political representativity (affiliation to different parties or movements). The comments were manually collected and then labelled by name of the target women, role at the moment of the HS event, year of occurrence and textual characters: no text-mining software was used, also with the intention to catch HS events where violence arises at a level wider than single lexical items or utterances, such as in the narrative structures.[12] In a final validation process, all the com-

10 While it is widely understood that engagement with victims' perspectives is central to understanding and addressing racism and other forms of intolerance, this attention is rarely manifested in HS laws: cf. eMORE Project 2018.

11 Cf. Grice 1975; Lakoff 1973; Eco 1979; Greimas, Courtés 1979. The theoretical framework also includes text linguistics: cf. Beaugrande, Dressler 1981; Coseriu 1997; Mortara Garavelli 1988; Perelman, Olbrechts-Tyteca 1958.

12 The manual collection of data is justified by the need to test/implement the HS markers currently identified, but it has the obvious effect to reduce the corpus extension; in

ments were checked, in order to standardize the labels regarding the HS textual characters and remove those that, even with strong criticism, did not include any of them. The most frequent identified characters are discussed in the following and shown in the examples.[13]

3.1 Roles and Actions in the Structures of Narratives

In 49.1% of the comments, the hater represents a narrative where the attacked woman is the victim of a (sexual) violence:

1. Anche se ho quasi 25 anni chiedo un regalo a Babbo Natale... Per Natale voglio stare chiuso in una stanza con te, soli, tu ed io... Solo noi e la mia accetta. Partirei con il taglio delle mani prima.
2. Du hast sie alle rein geholt und jetzt werden unsere Kinder von diesen Leuten vergewaltigt und ermordet.... das sollten sie mal mit deine Kinder machen... Ach nee du hast ja keine oder sollen sie es mal mit dir machen du würdest dich vielleicht noch freuen darüber.... das dich überhaupt einer nimmt. Was hast du aus unseren Land gemacht.

Less frequently (4.4%), but interestingly, the hater assigns to the attacked woman also the role of killer or criminal, suggesting, explicitly or implicitly, the need to punish her:

3. No le he visto yo la persona tan inútil y tan enferma mental como tú cierras trato con musulmanes que te tienen por una furcia haces tratos con independistas siendo uno de ellos recuerda que todo esto pagarás la propia nación te dará lo que te tiene que dar.

this sense, the case study is intended as a qualitative research, that can be integrated in the future with Automatic Text Analysis tools, also to further enlarge the corpus.

13 The comments are quoted in the original language, which is mostly related to the primary language of the Facebook Profile and to the geographic location of both the hater and the hated; only in the case of target women belonging to international boards, the audience is wider and multilingual. Here, the comment seems to be influenced by the sender's native language or, in a minority of events, his/her choice in favour of a vehicular international language such as English. In the subheadings, for explanatory reasons the textual characters are discussed separately but frequently they occur together in the same comment: for instance, the woman is represented as crazy (unworthy interlocutor) and at the same time as a dangerous criminal (role in the structure of narrative): see example no. 3. In this case the comment has been counted as occurrence of both textual characters. Thus the given percentages are to be considered as overlapping sets.

4. Madame, ne citez plus jamais Simone Veil, vous êtres loin de lui arriver à la cheville. Cette grande dame à fait beaucoup pour les femmes, vous, vous voulez tuer tout le monde !!

3.2 Woman as Unworthy Interlocutor

In 42.1% of the comments the victim is attacked with injurious qualifications and presented as unworthy interlocutor (as consequence of being crazy, mentally ill or similar):

5. Du irre Oma, du bist verwirrt und hast keine Ahnung vom normales Leben....
6. Hai il coraggio di parlare.. tu sei da ricovero. Vergogna italiana.
7. Parece retrasada hablando. ES UNA INUTIL JODER.Da vergüenza ver a la ministra de sanidad. Ni hablar sabe.vergonzoso.esto es el gobierno de inútiles. Eso si,feminista.Vergonzoso. tarda un año en hablar, se equivoca..y es ministra. INCREIBLE.

3.3 Delegitimizing Woman's Opinion and Power

In 30.6% of the comments the woman's opinion or public role is delegitimized:

8. Prima fa le "valige" meglio è per tutti.....Prenda atto della situazione e cambi mestiere…
9. when are you gonna pay the money back with your very poor italy..you are nothing without this EU,go home we dont want you and we dont need you..and peace in europe dream on,you have bring the extreme violence into the eu with your open borders..
10. ma ancora parla questa???????ma chi sei, chi te vole ??????

3.4 Violent Orders

In 26.8% of the comments the hater gives violent orders to the attacked woman:

11. sei una puttana andicappata vattene a casa fai la cosa giusta x una volta vaiiiiiiii viaaaaaa
12. Tu es très vieux, demande Euthanasia !...et votre partenaire, même que.
13. Niemand kann sie mehr ertragen, nicht mal ihre eigenen Leute. Also hauen sie endlich ab!

3.5 Downgrading Woman's Identity to Her Physical Appearance

In 8.2% of the comments the hater presents the woman's identity referring to limits of her body and/or her (bad) physical appearance:

14. patética como siempre. Ni sí ni no, ni blanco ni negro…esa solo sabe hacer pipí en mitad de la calle…
15. SEI PIU BRUTTA E VECCHIA DEI LANZICHENECCHI
16. Les mercenaires sont a la tête de l'état ou plutot la mafia bourgeoise, vous les "prout prout" de la société. Avoir autant de mépris d'arrogance et de dédain pour les autres, c'est pitoyable et indigne de votre fonction, rappelez vous que votre merde de président n'est pas élu a la majorité des français. Votre classe détruit allègrement la planete en pronant le capitalisme et vous donnez des lecons. Heureusement que l'on voit pas vos cheville ca doit etrre affrexu a voir tellement elle doivent etre gonflée. En bref je vous conchie ! (PS: changer de coiffure serieux on est au 21eme siecle)

3.6 Downgrading Woman's Identity to the Family Role

In 2.1% of the comments the hater presents the woman's identity referring to her traditional role at home and within the family:

17. Incroyable de se sentir encore indispensable quand on a échoué lamentablement, c'est bien français. On en veux plus de la vieille politique, on a vu les ravages de votre politique en Poitou Charentes et au ministère de l'écologie, on paye encore les portiques… Stop, il est temps pour vous de vous occuper de vos petits enfants.
18. Hai finito. Il tempo e' passato. Dedicati alla tua famiglia. Al principio sarà deprimente MA la vita ti ha portato a questo. Allontanati spontaneamente dal potere non avrai conseguenze. I tuoi occhi con borse annesse sprigionavano voglia di potere. Controlla i tuoi occhi

4 A Bottom-Up Approach for a Comprehensive Definition

The Facebook comments do not meet the parameters used in current HS definitions and at the same time can hardly be explained with the categories of impoliteness, lack of cooperation or criticism. They are violent, to the extent that they contain the sender's and recipient's simulacra[14] that are incompatible with the maintenance of a common

14 The 'traces' of the subjectivities of Sender and Recipient in written texts.

field of semantic negotiation. The attacked woman cannot even answer to the comment, as the answer itself would legitimate the nullification of her image that already took place in the interaction. In this sense, the comments are qualitatively different from manifestations of opinions, even when strongly conflictive. In the corpus we found, the textual features that show a common strategy are: destroy the ground of the communication, demolish its components and only leave the victim the possibilities of either taking note of the demolition, or to rejecting the comment as a whole, for example by erasing or 'censoring' it.

19. what democracy you idiot? Europe has no freedom of speech. anyone who speaks up against your agenda gets in real trouble. People like me can say things because we have this thing called 2nd Amendment in our country and we have real rights and freedoms unlike all the serfs you are lording it over.

The principle of Freedom of Speech, maximally protected in the US Constitution, explicitly conflicts with the opposite need to engage with the recipients' point of view. That is the present challenge of the legal systems in the European area.

In facing this complexity, we adopted a bottom-up approach, starting from a sample of real data and measuring 'upon the field' the descriptive adequacy of possible generalizations. Based on women's perspective, HS appears as a speech that:

- narratively represents an act of illegal violence or coercion against the woman;
- represents the woman in a humiliating way, also by qualifying her as unworthy of interlocution;
- delegitimizes the woman's right to express her ideas and/or to exercise decision-making power;
- gives violent orders to the woman;
- a speech that downgrades the woman's identity to her physical appearance or family traditional role.

This method, which uses the categories of linguistics and text analysis to describe specific coding modes, could be replicated on other corpora, with the advantage to separate HS definition from abstract categories of victims and hatred and to address multiple and intersectional discrimination, an emerging feature of hate crimes (cf. eMORE Project 2018).

Bibliography

Austin, J. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Beaugrande, R.A.; Dressler, W.U. (1981). *Einführung in die Textlinguistik*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Camera dei Deputati (2017). *La piramide dell'odio in Italia*. http://www.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/shadow_primapagina/file_pdfs/000/007/099/Jo_Cox_Piramide_odio.pdf.

Cosenza, G. (2014). *Introduzione alla semiotica dei nuovi media*. Roma-Bari: Laterza.

Coseriu, E. (1997). *Linguistica del testo*. A cura di D. Di Cesare. Roma: La Nuova Italia Scientifica.

Danish Institute for Human Rights (2017). *Hate Speech in the Public Online Debate*. https://www.humanrights.dk/publications/hate-speech-public-online-debate.

De Mauro, T. (2016). "Le parole per ferire". *Internazionale*, 27 settembre. https://www.internazionale.it/opinione/tullio-de-mauro/2016/09/27/razzismo-parole-ferire.

Eco, U. (1979). *Lector in fabula. La cooperazione interpretativa nei testi narrativi*. Milano: Bompiani.

eMORE Project (2018). https://www.rissc.it/homepage/our-projects/emore-project.

ELSA (European Law Students Association) (2014). *Final Report on Online Hate Speech. A Comprehensive Overview of the Concepts of Online Hate Speech in European Countries*. https://legalresearch.elsa.org/ohs.

Ferrucci, F. (2019). "Discorsi d'odio. Dentro e oltre gli stereotipi negativi". Petrilli, R. (a cura di), *Il linguaggio dell'odio*. Roma: Round Robin, 11-22.

Gelber, K.; McNamara, L.J. (2016). "Evidencing the Harms of Hate Speech". *Social Identities*, 22(3), 324-41. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2015.1128810.

Greimas, A.; Courtés, J. (1979). *Sémiotique. Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*. Paris: Hachette.

Grice, P. (1975). "Logic and Conversation". Cole, P.; Morgan, J.L. (eds), *Syntax and Semantics. Speech Acts*. New York; London: Academic Press, 41-58.

Gumperz, J.; Hymes, D. (eds) (1972). *Directions in Sociolinguistics. The Ethnography of Communication*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Kapoor, M.C. (2017). "Violence against the Medical Profession". *Journal of Anaesthesiology, Clinical Pharmacology*, 33(2), 145-7.

Lakoff, R, (1973). "The Logic of Politeness. On Minding Your P's and Q's". Corum, C.; Smith-Stark, T. Cedric (eds), *Papers from the 9th Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society, 292-305.

Maitra, I.; McGowan, M.K. (2012). "Introduction and Overview". Maitra, I.; McGowan, M.K. (eds), *Speech and Harm. Controversies over Free Speech*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1-23.

Manetti, G. (2008). *L'enunciazione. Dalla svolta comunicativa ai nuovi media*. Milano: Mondadori Education.

Mortara Garavelli, B. (1988). *Manuale di retorica*. Milano: Bompiani.

Perelman, C.; Olbrechts-Tyteca, L. (1958). *Traité de l'argumentation. La nouvelle rhétorique*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

PRISM Project (Preventing, Redressing and Inhibiting Hate Speech in New Media) (2015). *Hate Crime and Hate Speech in Europe. Comprehensive Analysis of International Law Principles. EU-Wide Study and National Assessments*. https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/hate-crime-and-hate-speech-in-europe-comprehensive-analysis-of-international-law-principles-eu-wide-study-and-national-assessments.

Schlieben-Lange, B. (1975). *Linguistische Pragmatik*. Stuttgart; Berlin; Köln; Mainz: Kohlhammer.

Searle, J. (1969). *Speech Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

The Legal Framework on Hate Speech and the Internet
Good Practices to Prevent and Counter the Spread of Illegal Hate Speech Online

Caterina Flick
Università Internazionale Telematica UniNettuno, Roma, Italia

Abstract *Hate speech* includes all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify hatred towards a person or group. The expansion of the Internet has marked an important change in the phenomenon, insofar as content is no longer mediated by editors. Hate speech based on ethnic, racial and religious hatred is recognized as a violation of the human rights set out by the European and international standards. This is not the case for sexist hate speech, although this difference is not justified by the data. The lack of a shared regulatory definition leads to shortcomings in, or even the complete absence of victim protection. Gender equality and freedom of expression are interconnected: enabling hate speech against women and girls to go unpunished limits women's freedom of information and deprives society of their voices. The balance must be struck by finding the tools for free speech. An overview of such tools is the goal of this contribution.

Keywords Hate Speech. Hate Crimes. Sexism. Free Speech. Internet Regulation. VAWG. Discrimination.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia 1
ISSN 2724-4652
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-478-3 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-479-0

Open access
Published 2020-12-29

10.30687/978-88-6969-478-3/011

1 Introduction

The term 'hate speech' includes all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify hatred towards a person or group. Traditionally, the phenomenon has been taken into consideration by international and national standards in reference to racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility towards minorities. Hatred towards women – gender hate – has been taken into consideration only in recent years, even though international conventions to protect human rights ban gender-based discrimination in the same way as discrimination based on race, nationality and religion.

Public expressions of hate are a concern, not only because they harm personal dignity and identity, but also because they are capable of creating a favourable environment for crimes inspired by hatred and fuelling social conflicts on a wider scale. These are the reasons why it becomes acceptable to limit freedom of expression, considered a fundamental right in democratic States.

The impact of hate speech is directly correlated to the size of the public who see and hear it: indications on the need to abstain from using or circulating hate speech are therefore mainly addressed to the media.

The expansion of the Internet has marked an important change in the phenomenon, insofar as content is no longer mediated by editors (disintermediation of information) and it spreads further. Social networks (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn) are the main arenas where the haters wage battle, but the same methods can be seen wherever it is possible to comment on a text (on web content and themed discussion sites e.g., Reddit), in search engines (e.g., Google), instant messaging services (e.g., Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger, Snapchat, WeChat or Skype), blogs, dating sites and apps, media and online newspaper comments sections, forums (e.g., 4chan), chat rooms, online video games, etc.

The specific characteristics of the Internet facilitate hate speech because they:

1. allow hate contents to remain visible for very long periods of time;
2. enable hate that is removed from the web to return easily in a different form or with a different title;
3. can provide anonymity, removing the inhibitions of many users owing to the conviction that they can avoid the consequences of their actions;
4. make it difficult to identify the people behind it, given the transnational nature of the web.

2 Gender Hate Speech. The Phenomenon

In the relationship between men and women, hate speech is fundamentally linked to the persisting inequality in male and female power relations. 'Sex' refers to male or female biological characteristics, while 'gender' is a social construct referring to the socially accepted idea of masculinity and femininity. Targeting people owing to their sex or because their behaviour contrasts with the dominant thought as to how a person should orient his or her sexuality is a crime inspired by gender hatred.

As far as women and the web are concerned, there are two interesting aspects.

First of all, one of the main digital divides is the gender divide: from the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in 2017 it emerged that 184 million fewer women than men possess a mobile phone; that 250 million fewer women than men use the Internet; and that in Europe only 17% of jobs in IT are occupied by women.

At the same time, international organization reports (UN Broadband Commission for Digital Development 2015; EIGE 2017) document that women are among the main victims of web-based violence, and that this violence has a significant impact on real life (in 77% of cases as indicated in the 2017 EIGE report). The Italian association Vox carries out on a yearly basis a mapping activity of the hate speech contents spread via social networks and online websites. The resulting maps focus on diverse hate and discrimination grounds, also including misogyny; according to the maps, lots of contents propagate hate against women (in 2019 the 27% of the mapped contents).[1]

Gender hate speech is linked to the representation of women, which continues to be hampered by entrenched stereotypes. Sexist hate speech takes on many forms, in particular criticism and victimization of the targets; brutal and sexualized threats of death, rape and violence; and offensive comments on appearance, sexuality, sexual orientation or gender roles on social networks, websites or in Internet chat rooms. However, it can also involve false compliments or alleged jokes, using humour to humiliate and ridicule the victim, nonconsensual use of images and sexist hate speech.

The haters' goals, or nonetheless the consequences of their action, also come to bear in the real world. For example, they can jeopardize a person's employment possibilities owing to a reputation compromised by information shared online. In some cases, it can even result in the victim's suicide.

1 The maps report the most common stereotypes and perceptions of the websites' and social network's users `http://www.voxdiritti.it/wp-content/uploads//2019/06/A3_Misoginia.jpg`.

In all cases, the goal is to humiliate and objectify women, destroy their reputation and make them vulnerable and fearful. It is a form of 'social shaming', which spreads the message that women are 'less human beings'. Gender hate speech instils deep fear and creates, reinforces and perpetuates gender hierarchy in public places. In any case, the anonymity often associated with its perpetrators should not be a deterrent for the lawmaker.

In the same way as gender discrimination, sexist hate speech has some main characteristics: the victim is a woman (men are less exposed); the aggression is addressed towards one woman in particular; the abuse involves the gender of the person who is targeted in sexually threatening and degrading ways.

The period 2018-20 saw a re-emergence of fear of foreigners and migrants, with the consequent increase in hate speech prompted by racial discrimination. This trend appears in the annual reports on the application of the Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online published by the EU Commission, based, however, on the number of notifications sent by national organizations.[2]

In spring-summer 2020, the international attention was more focused on hate speech connected to the Coronavirus emergency. The web platforms fell into line, updating their guidelines to protect people against dangerous content and new types of improper platform use linked to COVID-19.

All the same, there has been no decline in gender hate speech. It emerges every time that a piece of news comes out concerning a woman. One out of three personal attacks directed at women is sexist. Amnesty International Italia (2020) monitored the social profiles of 20 influential figures in Italy (ten men and ten women) in the period November-December 2019: it emerged that liberal-minded, high-flying women whose actions attract media interest are particularly subject to aggression. Indeed, on the social networks sexist attacks are seen against women who touch topics occupying a sensitive or dominant spot in the public debate: examples are the offence against ship captain Carola Rackete, aid worker Silvia Romano and journalist Giovanna Botteri.

In substance, attacks are made against women who present themselves as independent and making their own free choices, or against women who come out in favour of other categories of hate speech victims, such as migrants and Muslims. It is a true assembly line of hate, putting together ideas, behaviours, identities and choices to which people are freely entitled, in order to subject them to public mockery

2 From the *Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online*, 5th evaluation, June 2020, it appears that sexual orientation is the most commonly reported ground of hate speech (33.1%), followed by xenophobia, including anti-migrant hatred (15%); gender-based hate speech is less commonly reported (3.7%).

and violent discrimination. What is concerning is that these forms of expression, which entail a tendency to deny fundamental rights – and, in some cases, to lead to physical violence – find room to circulate and gain followers in the media system and political establishment.

In the report on 'keyboard sexism' published in June 2020, Amnesty International Italia highlights how one third of comments to influencers are sexist, substantially constituting attacks against gender rights, sexuality and the right of expression. 'Moral' insults which brand women as immoral or 'prostitutes', which classify them by their way of dressing or love life, are common. These comments stem from women's stance against gender discrimination and their support for the right to abortion, to equality between the sexes or to the free expression of their sexual choices. It is particularly interesting to analyse the various methods of verbal aggression towards women: sarcasm is seen alongside offensive terms used for other categories, de-humanizing insults and language attacking sexual identity; physical and personal attacks are used to delegitimize at the political or moral level; and gender hate speech is denied through 'but what about this?' and 'anyone can see' tactics.

Despite the increase in the phenomenon, interventions to remove hate speech are to a large extent left to the initiative of the providers, even following requests by the various stakeholders. Multinationals such as Google and Facebook rely on work teams whose task is to decide if particular content breaches the rules for use of the platform or not. YouTube explicitly prohibits hate speech, which is defined as offensive discriminatory language. Facebook abstractly bans hate speech, but allows messages with clearly satirical or humorous content, which in other circumstances could present a threat and many might nevertheless be considered in bad taste. Twitter for a long time did not explicitly ban hate speech, nor does it even mention it, except in a note which reads that political campaigns against a candidate are generally not considered hate speech.

In any case, it is at the providers' discretion to intervene (not all notifications result in removal) and few tools are available to those affected to demand the removal of hate content. Difficulties are encountered in evaluating contents as offensive, both because of the different sensibilities of the people making the evaluations and the lack of specification in the platforms' 'rules of engagement'.

3 Combating the Hate Speech Phenomenon

The fight against hate speech began in the 1960s. The protocols against hate crimes – the UN *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (ICERD), which was signed in New York in 1965 and came into force in 1969, and the UN *Inter-*

national Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) from 1966 – et out to punish incitement to hatred for reasons of race, "colour", ancestry or national or ethnic origin, and invited the States to take action accordingly. Hate crimes are described as having been committed when the victim is targeted because of his or her group identity: prejudice towards a group (bias motivation) is the element that distinguishes crimes inspired by hate from other crimes.

This stance was based on the principle of equality, cornerstone of democratic States, as stated in national constitutions and international conventions for the protection of human rights, which prohibit discrimination on any ground such as gender (sex), race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or any other status.[3]

In 1997, having noted the media's multiplier effect on the spread of the phenomenon, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe issued a recommendation dedicated to hate speech which invites member States to equip themselves with suitable tools to combat hate speech, albeit in observance of the freedom of the press and expression. The hate speech taken into consideration covers all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin.[4] The same definition is found in 2001, in the Additional Protocol to the Budapest *Convention on Cybercrime*[5] and in the recommendation on self-regulation and user protection against incitement to hatred in the new media.[6]

Like in all other crimes, hate speech victims are chosen on the grounds of *what they represent*, rather than *who they are*. They are classified according to their association with a group. Hate speech conveys the message to the victims and the group to which they belong that they are not welcome and are not safe.

The reaction of the legal system to hate speech must be carefully balanced with the fundamental right of freedom of expression and thought. In view of this fact, over the years democratic States have regulated hate speech in a more or less broad manner, on the basis of the definitions given in the international conventions, and banned this speech when it constitutes an immediate threat of violence or

3 Art. 2, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 1948; art. 14, *European Convention on Human Rights*.

4 Recommendation R (97) 20 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on "hate speech".

5 *Convention on Cybercrime*, adopted on 21 November 2001.

6 Recommendation Rec (2001) 8 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on self-regulation concerning cyber content (self-regulation and user protection against illegal or harmful content on new communications and information services).

an incitement to violence. However, there is no consent as to which forms of expression, while not directly inciting violence, nevertheless deserve to become the subject of special incrimination.

In 2011 it was recognized for the first time that the development of information and communication technologies and their use in mass communication had introduced significant changes to the media ecosystem.[7] The immense possibility of interaction between users, even without particular technical skills or professional requirements, gave the unprecedented opportunity to involve diversities in media governance, but at the same time facilitated the spread of harassment, intimidation and stalking. While the problem was acknowledged, its consequences were not examined. What is more, the recommendations were aimed prevalently at the private sector, with the invitation to outline forms of self-regulation to combat discrimination and stereotypes, promote gender equality and avoid the spread of hate speech or other content that could incite violence or discrimination for any reason.

In 2016 the European Commission, in accordance with the Facebook, Microsoft and Youtube web platforms (which are due to be joined by Instagram, Google+, Snapchat, Dailymotion and jeuxvideo) introduced the *Code of Conduct* on countering illegal hate speech online, a tool for removing hate speech from the web, with user notification and intervention by the platforms within a few hours. According to the five reports drafted on the monitoring and removal activities, the last in December 2019, on average 70% of harmful content has been removed. In any case, it is always left up to the big platforms to evaluate whether the content should be removed.[8]

4 Gender Hate Speech. No Definition, no Sanction

The definition of hate speech did not change until 2019 (see § 5) and still today it is a struggle to punish gender hate speech. This is despite the great spread of hate speech against women, and despite the prohibition of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex as well as race, religion, ethnicity etc. in the values and fundamental rights set out in all the international sources (from the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* onwards).

In 2011 it began to be acknowledged that the new media could be a vehicle for forms of abuse against women, such as aggression, bullying, intimidation and stalking.[9] In 2013 it was recognized that free-

7 Recommendation CM/Rec (2011) 7 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on a new notion of media.

8 *Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online*, 5th evaluation, June 2020.

9 Recommendation CM/Rec (2017) 7.

dom of expression, as a fundamental right, goes 'hand in hand' with gender equality. Nevertheless, on a practical level, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe only went so far as to invite the media, Internet service providers and online content and service providers to adopt best practices to prevent advertising, language and content from resulting in sex-based discrimination, the promotion of hatred and gender violence.[10]

This stance was taken at the same time as some important awareness-raising campaigns. The first, launched by UN Women, was on the so-called "autocomplete truth" of the web.[11] It was based on the results of real Google searches and aimed to reveal that sexism still exists and is a big problem in contemporary society. The second, by the No Hate Speech Movement, sets out to raise awareness among young people so that they can recognize and combat online hate speech. It also comprehends forms of discrimination and prejudice not included in the indications of Recommendation R (97) 20, such as misogyny and sexism. Sexism, in turn, can be defined as:

> the supposition, belief or assertion that one sex is superior to the other, often expressed in the context of traditional stereotyping of social roles on the basis of sex, with resultant discrimination practiced against members of the supposedly inferior sex. (UNESCO 2012, 54)

In the General Policy Recommendation on Combating Hate Speech, the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) refers explicitly to gender, which is indicated as "the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men" (ECRI 2016, 14), and gender identity, namely:

> each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerism. (14)

Indeed, the recommendation remembers the necessity to fight gender-based discrimination and gender-based sexism and recognizes that hate speech can be based on different criteria to those hitherto traditionally considered, amongst which, gender. In addition to

10 Recommendation CM/Rec (2013) 1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on gender equality and media. Recommendation CM/Rec (2014) 6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on a guide to human rights for Internet users.

11 https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2013/10/women-should-ads.

the Commission's recommendations, the previously mentioned 2017 EIGE report suggests that:

> [t]he EU should aim towards agreeing on definitions of forms of cyber violence against women and girls and incorporate these forms of violence into EU legislation, to ensure that victims of cyber VAWG in Member States have access to justice and specialised support services. (EIGE 2017, 5)

In all of these cases, none of the interventions or stances are binding. Added to the light touch of the Council of Europe is the position adopted by UNESCO (2015), which remembers how limiting freedom of expression has to be exceptional and legitimized by binding international standards. In the case of hate speech on grounds of race, nationality and religion, the references are indicated in the *New York Convention* and the ICCPR,[12] which clearly impose the criminalization of such expressions. Instead, in the case of gender hate speech, limits can, but do not have to be introduced, based on another ICCPR standard (solely) to protect reputation.[13]

It is probably owing to the lack of gender in the obligatory regulations that few States have included gender and/or sex as a protected category in their domestic legislation on hate-inspired crimes or policies to detect these crimes. All the same, many States have undertaken to include equality between men and women in their policies and prevent and combat all forms of sexual-based violence against women and girls.

Gender hate speech is struggling to be recognized and remains underestimated. Nevertheless, its impact on women, whether emotional, psychological and/or physical, can be devastating, especially for young women. The lack of provisions expressed against gender hate speech has been justified over time by the necessity to guarantee freedom of expression, and by referring to other tools as suitable to fight it; in the report accompanying the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on hate speech,[14] justification was given for the failure to refer to sex, gender and gender identity by stating the necessity to avoid detracting from the focus of the text by setting out every form of intolerance in detail. It highlighted how the discussion on freedom of expression tends to stoke tensions and how the conflict between freedom of expression and gender equality

12 ICCPR Art. 20.2: "Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law".

13 ICCPR Art. 19.3: 3. "The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article [right to freedom of expression] carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by the law and are necessary: (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others; […]".

14 Council of Europe CM Rec (97) 20 on hate speech.

was the greatest obstacle to fighting it. In substance, it highlighted how freedom of expression was more important than gender equality, and hence every attempt to combat gender hate speech was perceived as censure. There seem to be no concrete grounds for putting forward this reasoning with regard to gender hate speech, and not to other types of hate speech. And yet still today there is the widespread conviction that the efforts to combat crimes based on gender hate interfere with a particular social order; but it is hard even to imagine that a manifestation of hate can be part of a society's values and the harmful, long-term impact on victims cannot be ignored.[15]

The OECD office dedicated to monitoring gender-based hate crimes, as well as hate crimes on multiple grounds (multiple bias motivation), has highlighted that while on one hand many OECD participating States transmit both gender-based and multiple-bias data to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), these crimes are often underestimated and misunderstood. Very often the gender prejudice element of hate crimes is neglected, despite its reach and prevalence compared to other factors in multiple-bias crimes.[16]

The lack of a shared (regulatory) definition leads to shortcomings in, or even the complete absence of victim protection. The insufficient response of the justice system (both criminal and otherwise) can be attributed in part to the dichotomy between offline and online violence. As a result, the authorities (criminal investigation department) designated to protect citizens often tend to minimize the harm caused by cyberviolence, and reconstruct the victims' experiences as 'incidents', rather than as repeated (or repeatable) forms of behaviour.

In Italy, the most significant forms, or the ones which receive most social and media attention, can be classified as crimes promoting racial hatred,[17] threats, defamation, or crimes linked to slander or the protection of personal details. Nevertheless, gender hate speech still lacks any form of cover.

An emblematic case is that of a woman regional councillor, at the same time author and victim of sexist hate speech. On 13 June 2013, the councillor wrote on Twitter, referring to Cécile Kyenge, of Afri-

15 Liesbet Stevens, Deputy Director of the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men in Belgium and a participant in the ODIHR (OECD Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights) event on gender-based hate crime (`https://hatecrime.osce.org/infocus/2019-gender-intersectionality-and-hate-crime`).

16 In order to define and categorize such crimes, and to translate the key concept into practical policy measures, ODIHR held two expert roundtables in 2019. These events examined the application of legal provisions in the 21 OECD participating States that track gender-based hate crime, and the potential for integrating an intersectional perspective into national hate crime responses. This helped increase the visibility of victims and potential targets of hate crime, to make their voice heard when approaches to countering gender-based and multiple-bias hate crimes are developed.

17 The so-called Mancino Law, no. 205/1993.

can origin and at the time Italian government minister, "Will no one rape her, so she can understand what victims of this brutal crime feel? Shame on them". The matter was brought to the attention of the judiciary and the councillor was condemned for inciting hatred for racial reasons (*Il Fatto Quotidiano* 2013; *Corriere del Veneto* 2013). In July 2013, the same councillor was in turn seriously insulted by a municipal councillor belonging to another political party, who wrote on Facebook "What kind of a woman is she? [...] She should be dumped in a pen with a score of horny niggers and no one to help her, then we could watch what her reaction is" (*Padova Oggi* 2013). In this case there was no response at the legal level. The lack of definition also makes it impossible to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), as can easily be grasped from the fact that all the cases on hate speech taken to this court concern the expressly listed hypotheses alone.

5 The Regulations against Gender Hate Speech. The Italian Debate

In 2019, for the first time, the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation to prevent and combat sexism, in which it defines sexism as:

> [a]ny act, gesture, visual representation, spoken or written words, practice or behaviour based upon the idea that a person or a group of persons is inferior because of their sex, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether online or offline, with the purpose or effect of: i. violating the inherent dignity or rights of a person or a group of persons; or ii. resulting in physical, sexual, psychological or socio-economic harm or suffering to a person or a group of persons; or iii. creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; or iv. constituting a barrier to the autonomy and full realisation of human rights by a person or a group of persons; or v. maintaining and reinforcing gender stereotypes.[18]

It notes that while racist hate speech is recognized as contrary to the human rights set out by the European and international standards, this is not the case for sexist or misogynous hate speech. This is why the member States are invited to take responsibility for combating gender hate speech, and to ensure that the same rules and sanctions are applied as those laid down for racist hate speech, whether offline or online: not only through criminal sanctions but also, for example, economic measures against those organizations which do not report such cases or intervene to eliminate gender hate speech.

18 Recommendation CM/Rec (2019) 1 on preventing and combating sexism.

In the same period, the European Commission adopted the Audiovisual Media Directive.[19] This directive invites the member States to ensure that audiovisual media services, supplied by media service providers and video sharing platform providers and subject to their jurisdiction, do not contain any incitement to violence or hatred towards a group of people or a member of a group on any of the grounds in article 21 of the *Charter of Fundamental Rights* of the European Union, also including gender.

In Italy there is still a long way to go. Hatred against women in Italy is customary, it seems to be rooted in Italian culture and characterizes everyday language, which is still based on prejudices and stereotypes. At present, hate speech is criminalized on grounds of race, ethnicity, religion or nationality.[20] Some bills to fight homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity are currently under examination in parliament, providing a good opportunity to intervene and assert equality.[21] The debate is over the definitions (for example, the difference between 'incitement', 'promotion' and 'propaganda'), the type and entity of the sanctions to impose and the minimum threshold in order to evaluate conduct as punishable (is imprisonment justifiable for a post on Facebook which does not determine a real danger of the commission of acts of discrimination or violence?).

6 Conclusions

Hate speech is a form of expression that lies outside the scope of protection of article 10 of the *European Convention of Human Rights*. The European Court of Human Rights has judged that these forms of expression, or expressions that deny the fundamental values of the Convention, are excluded from protection.[22] That at present only those crimes based on ethnic, racial and religious hatred are protected is not justified by the data, which demonstrate an alarming spread of sexist acts.

Gender equality and freedom of expression should be seen as interconnected rather than conflicting rights; indeed, if gender equal-

19 Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive).

20 Italian laws no. 654/1975 and 205/1993, aggravating circumstances for the crimes in art. 604 bis and 604 ter of the Italian Criminal Code.

21 In particular bill no. 1721 to the Senate, currently under report, as well as Act of the Chamber (AC) no. 2171 of 14 October 2019 Perantoni et al.; AC no. 2255 of 4 November 2019 Bartolozzi et al.; AC no. 868 of 4 July 2018 Scalfarotto et al.; AC no. 569 of 2 May 2018 Zan et al.

22 Delfi As v. Estonia, no. 64569/09, § 78-81 (this case has been referred to the Grand Chamber of the Court); Axel Springer AG v. Germany no. 39954/08 § 89-95, and Von Hannover v. Germany (no. 2), nos. 40660/08 and 60641/08 §§ 108-13.

ity is achieved, freedom of expression can be expanded too. On the contrary, enabling hate speech directed against women and girls to go unpunished limits women's freedom of information and deprives society of their voices. Once this has been understood, the balance must be struck by finding the tools for free speech. However, this must not mean accepting hate speech.

It is in the realm of the new media in particular that interventions need to be made. In this complex universe, it is often only the technological element that is emphasized, while little consideration is given to the consequences of these tools' 'interactivity, which can quickly transform into a vehicle for widespread hatred.

The road to rooting out gender hate speech is long, but it is important that we follow it.

Bibliography

Abbondante, F. (2017). "Il ruolo dei social network nella lotta all'hate speech. Un'analisi comparata fra l'esperienza statunitense e quella europea". *Informatica e diritto*, 1-2, 41-68.

Athar, R. (2015). "From Impunity to Justice. Improving Corporate Policies to End Technology-Related Violence against Women". *Association for Progressive Communications* (APC). http://www.genderit.org/sites/default/upload/flow_corporate_policies_formatted_final.pdf.

Banks, J. (2011). "European Regulation of Cross-Border Hate Speech in Cyberspace. The Limits of Legislation". *European Journal of Crime, Criminal Law and Criminal Justice*, 19(1), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1163/157181711X553933.

Corriere del Veneto (2013). "La leghista: 'Nessuno stupra Kyenge?'. E il ministro: 'Ognuno si senta offeso'". *Corriere del Veneto*, 13 giugno. https://corrieredelveneto.corriere.it/padova/notizie/cronaca/2013/13-giugno-2013/mai-nessuno-che-si-stupri-kyenge-frase-choc-consigliere-leghista--2221627206840.shtml.

D'Amico, M. (2020). *Audizione davanti alla Commissione Giustizia della Camera dei Deputati sui progetti di legge volti a contrastare l'omofobia e le discriminazioni fondate sull'identità di genere*. https://www.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg18/attachments/upload_file_doc_acquisiti/pdfs/000/003/708/Osservazioni_prof.ssa_Marilisa_D_Amico.pdf.

Keats Citron, D. (2009). "Law's Expressive Value in Combatting Cyber Gender Harassment, 2009". *Michigan Law Review*, 108(3), 373-415. https://repository.law.umich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1300&context=mlr.

Il Fatto Quotidiano (2013). "'Mai nessuno che stupra la Kyenge?'. Il tribunale condanna Valandro". *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 17 luglio. https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2013/07/17/invito-a-stuprare-ministro-kyenge-condannata-a-anno-dolores-valandro/658886.

Mensi, M.; Falletta, P. (2015). *Il diritto del web. Casi e materiali*. Padova: CEDAM.

Nardi, V. (2019). "I discorsi d'odio nell'era digitale. Quale ruolo per l'internet service provider?". *Diritto Penale Contemporaneo*, 7 marzo 2019. https://archiviodpc.dirittopenaleuomo.org/upload/4923-nardi2019a.pdf.

Padova Oggi (2013). "Consigliere di SEL di Cavarzere a Valandro: 'Mollatela a venti negri'". *Padova Oggi*, 20 luglio. https://www.padovaoggi.it/politica/angelo-romano-garbin-di-cavarzere-dolores-valandro-mollatela-a-20-negri.html.

Rosenfeld, M. (2003). "Hate Speech in Constitutional Jurisprudence. A Comparative Analysis". *Cardozo Law Review*, 1523-67. https://larc.cardozo.yu.edu/faculty-articles/148.

Ziccardi, G. (2016). *L'odio online. Violenza verbale e ossessione in rete*. Milano: Cortina Raffaello.

Weber, A. (ed.) (2009). *Manual on Hate Speech*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Reports

AGCOM, Autorità per le garanzie nelle comunicazioni (2019). *Regolamento recante disposizioni in materia di rispetto della dignità umana e del principio di non discriminazione e di contrasto all'hate speech (delibera 157/19/CONS del 15 maggio 2019)*. https://www.agcom.it/documents/10179/13511391/Allegato+23-5-2019+1558628852738/5908b34f-8c29-463c-a7b5-7912869ab367?version=1.0.

Amnesty International Italia (2020). *Barometro dell'odio. Sessismo da tastiera*. https://d21zrvtkxtd6ae.cloudfront.net/public/uploads/2020/03/15212126/Amnesty-Barometro-odio-aprile-2020.pdf.

Commissione "Jo Cox" (2017). *Relazione finale sull'intolleranza, la xenofobia, il razzismo e i fenomeni di odio*. https://www.camera.it/leg17/1264.

Council of Europe (2013). *Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017*. https://rm.coe.int/1680590174.

Council of Europe (2018). *Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023*. https://rm.coe.int/prems-093618-gbr-gender-equality-strategy-2023-web-a5/16808b47e1.

Council of Europe (2016). *Gender Equality Unit. Background Note on Sexist Hate Speech*. https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168059ad42.

Council of Europe (2019). *Preventing and Combating Sexism. Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1*. https://rm.coe.int/prems-055519-gbr-2573-cmrec-2019-1-web-a5/168093e08c.

Council of Europe; ELSA, The European Law Students' Association (2014). *International Legal Research Group on Hate Speech Online. Final Report*. http://files.elsa.org/AA/Final_Report_OHS_Final.pdf.

ECRI, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (2016). *ECRI General Policy Recommendation no. 15 on Combating Hate Speech. Adopted on 8 December 2015*. https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-no-15-on-combating-hate-speech/16808b5b01.

EIGE, European Institute on Gender Equality (2017). *Cyber Violence against Women and Girls*. https://eige.europa.eu/publications/cyber-violence-against-women-and-girls.

European Commission (2016). *Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online*. https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-

and-xenophobia/eu-code-conduct-countering-illegal-hate-speech-online_en#theeucodeofconduct.

European Parliament; FEMM Committe (2018). *Cyber Violence and Hate Speech Online against Women. Women's Rights and Gender Equality.* http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/604979/IPOL_STU(2018)604979_EN.pdf.

International Women's Media Foundation (2014). *Violence and Harassment against Women in the News Media. A Global Study.* https://www.iwmf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Violence-and-Harassment-against-Women-in-the-News-Media.pdf.

OSCE-ODIHR; IAP (2014). *Prosecuting Hate Crimes. A Practical Guide*. https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/0/0/124532.pdf.

OSCE. *Hate Crime Reporting. Italy*. http://hatecrime.osce.org/italy.

OSCE-ODIHR (2019). *Democracy and Human Rights in the OSCE. Annual Report 2019*. https://www.osce.org/odihr/annual-report/2019.

Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri; Dipartimento della Gioventù e del Servizio Civile (2013). *Lotta all' odio e all' intolleranza nel web. No Hate Italia*. http://www.nohatespeech.it/menu-azioni/no-hate-italia.

PRISM, Preventing, Redressing and Inhibiting Hate Speech in New Media, co-funded by the European Union and coordinated by Associazione Arci, 2016. https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/hate-crime-and-hate-speech-in-europe-comprehensive-analysis-of-international-law-principles-eu-wide-study-and-national-assessments.

UNESCO (2012). *Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media: Framework of indicators to gauge gender sensitivity in media operations and content*. Paris: UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000217831.

UNESCO (2015). *Countering Hate Speech*. UNESCO Series on Internet Freedom. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000233231.

Unione Forense per la Tutela dei Diritti Umani (2012). *Observations submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination for the Thematic Discussion on "racist hate speech", 28 August 2012, Palais des Nations - Genève.* http://www.unionedirittiumani.it/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Information-paper-on-racist-hate-speech-Italian-network-on-racial-discrimination.pdf.

UN Broadband Commission for Digital Development (2015). *Cyber Violence Against Women and Girls. A World-Wide Wake-Up Call*. https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/cyber_violence_gender%20report.pdf?vs=4259.

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

Subtle Gender Stereotypes in the News Media and Their Role in Reinforcing a Culture Tolerating Violence Against Women

Monia Azzalini
Osservatorio di Pavia; Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract This paper examines how news media play a crucial role in tolerating gender-based violence by constantly reinforcing 'subtle' gender stereotypes. After presenting the institutional background in which media, gender stereotypes and gender-based violence have been studied over the last 30 years, subtle gender stereotypes are defined as those stereotypes that are less evident than the obvious ones and are not usually correlated to gender violence. Nevertheless, they can be detected in the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of women in the news, as measured by the GMMP (Global Media Monitoring Project), which is the longest and most extensive study on the representation of women in news media.

Keywords Gender. Media. Stereotypes. Women. Violence. Global Media Monitoring Project. Italy.

1 Introduction

This contribution focuses on subtle gender stereotypes in news media and their role in reinforcing a culture that tolerates violence against women.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia 1
ISSN 2724-4652
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-478-3 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-479-0

Open access
Published 2020-12-29

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-478-3/012

I start from a brief presentation of the international background from which the awareness of the relationship between media, gender stereotypes and gender-based violence has arisen in the early 1990s. Considering the main statements issued by international organisations such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe, I focus on the ambivalent power of mass media. Media can strengthen a patriarchal culture that legitimates or tolerates violence against women, or, on the contrary, they can contribute to preventing and contrasting it. International organisations, as well as feminist associations and researchers, have long ago highlighted the relationship between virtual and actual violence: images of violence against women, pornography, sexualisation or objectivation of women, disseminated in and through the media, are charged to be factors contributing to violence against women (United Nations 1993, 1995). In recent years, a new consciousness has emerged: gender stereotypes spread out and built-in mass media contribute to reinforce a 'symbolic' gender inequality that tolerates, or even legitimates, violence against women (Council of Europe 2011, 2016).

In this paper I consider the role of subtle gender stereotypes, namely those stereotypes that are less evident than the obvious ones and are not usually correlated to violence against women in the common opinion. After presenting the results of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), the longest and most extensive study on the representation of women in news media, I will suggest considering the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of women detected by the GMMP in the last decades as indicators of subtle gender stereotypes that strengthen the historically unequal power relations between men and women, on which gender violence is grounded.

Finally, considering the causes of female underrepresentation and misrepresentation in media from different perspectives, I argue that in most cases subtle gender stereotypes are not caused by deliberate mystification of the reality, but are the result of several factors, such as the low progress of gender equity, the woman's status in society, and, last but not least, the journalistic practices. Challenging these practices could be the first step for news media to prevent and contrast gender-based violence. Journalists have the power to represent a more realistic world, where women have made headway in gaining equal rights, and should increase their focus on women in the news. This great responsibility is renewed by the challenge to fight gender-based violence launched by the Council of Europe with the *Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* (Council of Europe 2011).

2 The Connection between Media, Gender Stereotypes, and Gender-Based Violence

Violence against women in society arises as a powerful issue on the international agenda during the 1990s. *The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* of the United Nations (1993a) is the first international instrument expressly devoted to the issue. Complementary to *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (United Nations 1979) and the *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action* (United Nations 1993b), it provides the most widely used definition of violence against women, as "a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women" and "one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men" (United Nations 1993a, 1). The 1995 UN *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (henceforth BDPfA) includes violence against women as one of the twelve critical areas of concern to be addressed by governments, the international community and civil society, including non-governmental organisations and the private sector, to support the advancement of women around the world. It also draws attention to the specific role of media:

> images in the media of violence against women, in particular those that depict rape or sexual slavery as well as the use of women and girls as sex objects, including pornography, are factors contributing to the continued prevalence of such violence, adversely influencing the community at large, in particular children and young people (United Nations 1995, 49)

In the first years after the BDPfA, the issue of the relationship between media and violence against women mainly focuses on two points: (i) the blatant negative representation of women in media content, in its various forms such as pornography, sexualisation, objectification, materialisation, and its contribution to violence against women in society; (ii) the role of news media in presenting violence against women as a human rights violation and stimulating a larger public debate (Gallagher 2000).

During the 2000s, the connection between media and violence against women becomes more intricate. Digital media, especially social media, have made it possible to share ideas, thoughts, and information on a global scale, creating new opportunities for the participation of women in communication and media, for the dissemination of information about women, for the contrast of violence against women (for an overview about governance networks on gender and media see e.g. Padovani, Pavan 2015, 2016). However, globalised media are also used to spread worldwide gender stereotypes and imag-

es or speeches demeaning to women (Ross 2012, 2013; Citron 2014; Spallaccia 2017).

In 2011, some years after the Beijing Conference, the *Convention for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* focuses once again on media, introducing art. 17, which draws attention to the relation between media, gender stereotypes and violence against women and recalls the media sector to its public responsibility (Council of Europe 2011). To facilitate the participation of the media sector in fighting gender-based violence, the Council of Europe has recently published a document entitled *Encouraging the Participation of the Private Sector and the Media in the Prevention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. Article 17 of the Istanbul Convention* (Council of Europe 2016). Starting from the assumption that violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, this document highlights the connection between gender stereotypes in media contents – regarding specific and blatant forms of stereotyping, such as sexism, the trivialisation of violence or hypersexualisation of women – and gender-based violence:

> Media can reinforce the status quo by perpetuating gender stereotypes and attitudes that condone violence against women. […] Ideas about the inferiority of women, notions of male entitlement, or preconceived views of female or male sexuality significantly influence behaviour and justify men's use of violence against women as a form of control. Furthermore, the media play a central role in the production and dissemination of images of women and men, which significantly influence public perceptions of both sexes and gender roles. (Council of Europe 2016, 13)

The results of the GMMP show that news media, despite the progress of women in society, continue to portray asymmetrical and hierarchical gender identities and roles. This portrayal is not a blatant stereotyped representation, it needs to appropriate tools to be analysed and recognised, nevertheless it contributes to reinforcing the patriarchal culture that tolerates violence against women.

3 The Global Media Monitoring Project

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) is the largest and longest longitudinal study on gender in news media. It has been promoted by WACC (World Association for Christian Communication) since 1995 and has been carried out by hundreds of volunteers (universities, media institutes, NGOs, women associations) from all over the

world.[1] Since 2005, I have been involved in it as the Italian coordinator.[2]

The idea for an international day of media monitoring – which is the starting point of GMMP – arose out of the 1994 International Bangkok Conference on Women Empowering Communication organised by MediaWatch Canada, with the support of WACC and Status of Women Canada, in cooperation with Isis International Manila and IWTC (International Women's Tribune Center).[3]

After the Bangkok conference, MediaWatch contacted hundreds of organisations and individuals to run the ambitious project of a media monitoring day all over the world. Erin Research, a Canadian research firm, founded in 1981[4] with a long history in client satisfaction research and media analysis, was in charge of designing the research, preparing a news monitoring guide and research instruments, and analysing the data. The aim was and remains to map the representation and portrayal of women in the world's news media, develop a grassroots research instrument, build solidarity among gender and communication groups worldwide, create media awareness, and develop media monitoring skills on an international level.[5]

The focus of the research was and still is on news media because they are the major source of information, facts, ideas and opinions for people throughout the world. They are the famous "window on the world", from which we are expecting to be told "what we want to know, we need to know, we should know" (Tuchman 1978b, 1). However, how Gaye Tuchman stated in 1978:

> like any frame that delineates a world, the news frame may be considered problematic. The view through a window depends upon whether the window is large or small, has many panes or few, whether the glass is opaque or clear, whether the window faces a street or a backyard. (Tuchman 1978b, 1)

The GMMP research is exactly designed to analyse the 'size', the 'shape', the 'cleanliness' and the 'point of view' on the world of the national and regional news across various countries and regions worldwide.

WACC assigns to each participating country a minimum and a maximum number of newspapers, radio and television newscasts and, since 2015, online news sites and Twitter feeds, so that the media monitoring is based on the national media density. Each national coordi-

1 http://whomakesthenews.org.

2 With Claudia Padovani, University of Padua

3 http://whomakesthenews.org/articles/project-history.

4 http://www.erinresearch.com.

5 http://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp.

nator is responsible for building the sample, following the criteria of density and diversity – audience, ownership, and language – in their country. In each country, research teams analyse the most important television and radio newscasts of the day, 12 to 14 stories appearing on newspapers and websites, and 15-20 tweets posted no later than 6:30 p.m. on the media monitoring day. Monitoring involves a quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative approach captures statistical data on news topics, women and men in the news – such as journalists, people interviewed or people about whom the news is – the types of news stories in which they appear, their function in the news and some of their personal and social data, such as age, occupation or social position. The qualitative analysis examines the patterns of gender in the news, more in-depth, considering the role of story angle and perspective, language and visual representations in constructing and sustaining or challenging gender stereotypes.

The first edition of the GMMP took place on 18 January 1995. The results were published in a report entitled *Global Media Monitoring Project. Women's Participation in the News* (MediaWatch 1995) and were released during the UN Fourth World Conference on Women convened in Beijing in September that same year. The BDPfA adopted at the end of the Beijing Conference included mass media as one of the twelve critical areas for the empowerment and advancement of women all over the world. According to the BDPfA, media are not only responsible for the images of violence against women which adversely contribute to the continued prevalence of such violence, but they also play a wider and more powerful role in facilitating "a global communication that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behaviour" (United Nations 1995, 9). On the basis of this statement, the UN and its Member States established two strategic objectives: first, "increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision making in and through the media and new technologies of communication" (ob. j1); second, "promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media" (ob. j2). The objectives of the BDPfA "Area J", namely "Women and the media", became, and remain, the touchstones for the GMMP. The findings of GMMP have become a benchmark for evaluating the extent to which the aims of Area J have been achieved since 1995.

The subsequent GMMP, which took place on 1st February 2000, was coordinated by the World Association for Christian Communication and involved more organisations in the research and made the study more contextual. The monitoring day created great enthusiasm and solidarity among the hundreds of monitoring groups in 70 countries which provided over 50,000 data recorded from more than 16,000 news stories. The preliminary findings were released in time for the five-year review of the implementation of the BDPfA (Beijing

+ 5)[6] and the final report was published providing an extensive analysis of gender representation and portrayal in the world's news media. The research found that women's visibility was uniformly extremely low, as it was in the 1995 report. In no medium, region or news topic did the female-male ratio approach parity (Spears et al. 2000).

The third GMMP in 2005 saw the participation of 76 countries. Some progress in women's presence was evident: 21% of news subjects – people interviewed or whom the news is about – were female vs. 17% of 1995 and 18% of 2000. However, the main and substantive outcome was women's near invisibility in the news: for every woman appearing in the news there were five men. Men as newsmakers in every major news topic outnumbered women. Just less than 10% of all stories were focussed specifically on women. Women were rarely central in the most relevant stories covered by the news agenda. The authoritative and prestigious role of the expert was played by men in 83% of cases vs. 17% of female cases. And women were under-represented in all professional categories. Overall, news stories were twice as likely to reinforce gender stereotypes rather than challenging them. News stories on gender (in)equality were almost nonexistent. Thus, the third GMMP revealed that the world reported in the news is mostly male (WACC 2005).

The fourth GMMP (WACC 2010) witnessed an explosion in participation: 1281 newspapers, television and radio stations were monitored in 108 countries in Africa (26), Asia (13), the Caribbean (11), Europe (32), the Middle East (6), the Pacific region (5), Latin America (13) and North America (2). The collected data amounted to 16,734 news items, 20,769 news personnel announcers, presenters or reporters, and 35,543 total news subjects (people interviewed as experts, spokespersons, *vox populi* or eyewitnesses, and individuals whom the news is about). The research found some improvement in comparison to 1995 when only 17% of the people in the news were women, in 2010 these had risen to 24%. But an increase of 7 points of percentage meant that if conditions remained unchanged and the rate of progress was maintained it would take more than 40 years to reach parity (WACC 2010).

At the end of the GMMP 2010, WACC planned a roadmap to accelerate the progress in the portrayal and representation of women in the news, proposing a plan of action to be carried out in partnership with editors, media regulatory bodies, journalist associations, training institutions, governments, the communication and information

6 Five-year review of the implementation of the BDPfA held in the UN General Assembly on "Women 2000. Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century", in New York, 5-9 June 2000. It aimed to review progress in the implementation of the BDPfA; https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/beijing+5.htm.

society, and the civil society. The roadmap included several actions, such as building a list of women experts covering diverse promoted thematic areas, creating gender-and-media curricula in schools, journalism training institutes and centres, adopting and applying policies on gender parity in the media (WACC 2010).

Notwithstanding the efforts made by WACC and its international networks in 2010-15, the results of the GMMP 2015 were disappointing: even though women made up about 50% of the world population, only 24% of the people heard, read about or seen in newspaper, television and radio news of all the world (114 participating countries) were women, exactly as it was in 2010. Women's relative invisibility in traditional news media had also crossed over into digital news delivery platforms. Only 26% of the people in Internet news stories and media news tweets combined were women. Once again, GMMP showed that news media were (are) a narrow window on a male-centred world.

4 The Results of the GMMP Exercise in Italy

If we take the Italian context into consideration, in the old media (radio, TV and newspapers), which have been monitored since 1995, some progress had been made: the visibility of women as sources or subjects of news has increased from 7% to 21% (Azzalini, Padovani 2015a, 2015b, 2016). However, Italy still scores lower than the European and global average (respectively 25% and 24%) and still shows shortcomings as far as equal opportunity for women in news media. The main asymmetries reported in 1995 tend to persist in 2015 and demonstrate a gap between the advancement of women in society and the image of women (and men) reflected by news media.

For example, despite the increased participation of women in Italian political life and institutions (in 2015 there were 30% of women in Parliament), only 15% of politicians in the Italian news were female (vs. 85% of men; total 231) and only 15% of subjects and sources of political news were women (men 85%; total 123). Overall, women are under-represented in the most prestigious and prominent news topics e.g. politics/government (15%) and the economy (10%). When we look at occupation or social position (e.g. homemaker, parent, child, student, villager) of persons, 77% of individuals coded as homemakers are female, 67% of students or pupils are female and 43% of villagers or residents. This means that women are more represented in general 'social groups' than in more specific 'professional groups'. Among the professional categories, women are more represented as health, social and childcare workers (67%), celebrity, artist, actor, writer, singer, TV personality (51%), activist or worker in civil society organisation or NGOs, trade union (45%) and doctor, den-

tist, health specialist (44%). The high visibility of female celebrities is linked to the statement made by the famous actress Angelina Jolie and reported by the majority of media outlets on 25 March 2015 (date of the GMMP day sample) concerning her choice to have the ovaries removed to prevent herself from getting the same form of cancer that affected many women in her family. The high visibility of female worker in health and medical professional groups – both at low level, such as health, social and childcare workers and high level, such as doctors, dentists, health specialists – as well as workers of the so-called 'third sector' is maybe a positive, although weak, signal of a change in the Italian news media towards a more realistic representation of women. Contrarily, the high percentage of women whose profession or social position is not made explicit (41%) is a clear sign of a permanent marginalisation of women. The high percentage of women whose profession or social position is not made explicit has been a recurring result in the previous editions of the GMMP (Spears et al. 2000; WACC 2005, 2010), indicating that women have easier visibility when they are viewed 'anonymously', independent of their social role or professional skills. Women only represent 18% of the people recorded by the GMMP 2015 as sources of expertise or qualified competence invited to explain or comment an event or a specific issue and are under-represented in occupations with high social status such as academic experts (25%), businesspersons (24%), lawyers, judges, magistrates, legal advocates (21%). Women are more likely to make the news as victims in a ratio of 1:4 vs. the male ratio of 1:10.

Considering digital media analysed by the GMMP for the first time in 2015, the Internet is by far the most inclusive new medium for women in Italy, while Twitter is the most exclusive. On the pages of the online newspapers monitored on 25 March 2015, women reached 29% (out of a total of 347 people); whilst the visibility of women on Twitter was only 17%. In any case, the scenario provided by the digital media is not unlike the one provided by the old media: a world in which women are virtually absent and only play marginal roles. For example, the role of expert is infrequent on the Internet, unlike what happens in traditional media, but as in traditional media it remains a male prerogative; only in 16% of cases is it held by a woman. In one case out of four, women make the news for reasons presumably unrelated to either specific skills, or to political, institutional, social roles, having neither a professional role nor a social position made explicit. Women for which the profession is known or can be deduced from the news in 16% of cases are politicians that have a high degree of visibility in digital media, however less than their male colleagues (24%). As in the traditional media, women in Internet news are more likely to be presented as victims than men (24% vs. 13%) and are more often described on the basis of some family relations

such as mother, daughter or wife than men (15% vs. 11%). Moreover, women are central in 22% of Internet news. This confirms the well-known fact that the Internet media are more accessible to women, but this is not enough. Regarding stereotypes, little news both on the Internet and Twitter contains elements of challenge (respectively 6% of the total of 99 news and 4% of 144 tweets); whilst almost all Internet news (84%) reinforces gender stereotypes vs. 26% of Twitter.

As authors of the *GMMP Italy Report* wrote "Twitter gives us mostly reality pills" (Azzalini, Padovani 2016, 283). "Pills" of a "strange" world from which women are left out. Even if most of the news tweeted, as well as most of the news covered by newspapers, radio and television, does not contain blatant stereotypes, the world that they describe is a fake reality. The strength of the GMMP approach consists precisely in revealing not only the blatant but also the 'subtle' gender stereotypes. Women in the news do not outnumber 30% (depending on the context) of the persons seen, heard or read about, despite accounting for half of the world population. Furthermore, they have feeble identities, being socially and professionally 'anonymous' in most cases. In one case out of four, they are presented as victims. More than men they are brought back to family relationships (mother of-, daughter of-, wife of-). If they only play marginal roles in news media, despite their advancement in all aspects of social life, this means that news media continue to reflect the historically unequal power relations between men and women.

5 The Role of Journalist Practices

Early research on media and gender representation (Tuchman 1978a), based on George Gerbner's theory of cultivation (DeFleur, Ball-Rockeach 1995), stated that the so-called "symbolic annihilation"[7] of women was due to the social role of the mass media (Gerbner 1972). Starting from the hypothesis that media 'cultivate the resistance' of the value system of the socially dominant group (the male one), these studies focussed on the resistance of media to represent social changes, including, among others, those related to gender identities, roles and relationships. Media were charged to be structurally conservative and unilaterally powerful (Van Zoonen 1994; Ross, Sreberny-Mohammadi 1997). This thesis was subsequently – although not totally – overcome by more complex methodologies and approaches more attentive to the change in the media system.

7 The expression was coined by George Gerbner in 1972 and became a powerful and widely used metaphor to describe the ways in which media made women invisible (cf. Gallagher 2001)

Since the second half of the 1990s, several studies have investigated the factors related to the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of women in the news media, finding somewhat different evidence. Lynn M. Zoch and Judy van Slyke Turk (1998), for instance, demonstrate, through the analysis of three United States newspapers between 1986 and 1996, that female journalists are more inclusive than male journalists: they are more likely to quote female sources, but also middle management sources, of either gender, while their male colleagues only quote those sources considered top managers, male in most cases. This evidence founded the optimistic prediction that by increasing the number of female journalists, women's representation in the news media could improve. But even if the number of female journalists has risen, gender balance remains far from the reality. Thomas Hanitzsch and Hanush Folker (2012) deepen the matter, analysing the role concepts of female and male journalists in 18 countries. Their research reports a substantial gender similarity in the perception and exercise of the profession, independent from either the individual level or in newsrooms dominated by women, or in sociocultural contexts where women have achieved a high level of empowerment. This would explain why women continue to be underrepresented and misrepresented in the news media, despite the increase of female journalists.

Other recent studies report contrasting evidence. According to Shor et al. (2015), the persistence of gender differences in media coverage is more connected to the progress of equal opportunities in a country than to culture and journalistic practices. Using longitudinal data (13 American newspapers, between 1983 and 2008), the authors empirically isolate media-level factors and examine their effects on women's coverage rates in hundreds of newspapers, finding that societal-level inequalities are the dominant determinants of continued gender differences in news media coverage. Since media focus nearly exclusively on the highest strata of occupational and social hierarchies, in which women's representation has remained poor, women continue to be underrepresented.

However, Short et al.'s hypothesis does not explain why the representation of women in top positions, such as female politicians, is lower than their real representation in society, as demonstrated by the results of the GMMP. For instance, as mentioned above, the latest edition of the GMMP reported that 15% of politicians represented in the Italian news were women, compared to the actual 30% in the Italian parliament that year (2015). In 2005, in Rwanda – which had the highest proportion of female politicians in the world (49%) – only 13% of politicians in the news were women (WACC 2005). A hypothesis to explain this phenomenon is that there is a positive correlation between the media representation of women and the status they enjoy as a social group in a society:

> In most societies, women are still assumed to have lower status than men. Hence their views are regarded as less important. These cultural assumptions have an impact on journalistic practices in privileging the male. Sometimes it seems that women's very existence has been forgotten or overlooked in the selection of guests or interviewees. (*Portraying Politics* 2006, 13)

This is a statement that suggests a research hypothesis recently explored, for instance, by Humprecht and Esser (2017). By analysing the political news of 48 online newspapers, of 6 different types (popular, public, private, corporate, independent and web-based), of 6 western countries (France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Switzerland and the United States), for 6 weeks from October 2012 to February 2013, the authors investigated the correlation between journalistic practices, a country's gender culture and the level of advancement of women. The authors correlated a cultural indicator – the masculinity index in the Hofstede classification (2001) – with an indicator of gender equality – the Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum (2015) – with the results of a content analysis of the 48 selected online newspapers. The conclusion they reached is that journalistic routines seem highly influenced both by the level of masculinity of a country (the higher the level, the fewer women present in the media) and the progress of women in that country (the more advancement in gender equality in a country, the more women are included in online political news).

As we have seen, research on gender representation and news media reports somewhat different and contrasting evidence, possibly due to the complexity of the matter. In any case, no research perspective supposes that the media misrepresentation of women is caused by deliberate mystification of reality; it is the result of several factors, including, as mentioned above, journalistic practices. But journalistic practice can be changed. As Margaret Gallagher states, gender-fair journalism is nothing more than quality journalism and the GMMP shows that if the journalistic practices remain unquestioned, they often produce news that reinforces gender stereotypes (Gallagher 2006).

Therefore, the last edition of the GMMP has developed an Action Plan with 5 targets that involve journalistic practice in order to end news media sexism by 2020. First: create conditions for newsrooms that support gender equality (100% of national public media and 40% private media in each country), through media ethics codes, reporting guidelines, training, mentoring, peer support and "other strategies to transform gender-biased news media practice and newsroom cultures" (WACC 2015, 99). Second: increase in women's presence as subjects and voices in the news (overall global presence: 50%) with a systematic institutionalization of a gender-sensitive journalistic cul-

ture. Third: "increase in the proportion of content that challenges gender stereotypes" (WACC 2015, 99) (global average: 30%), in order to counteract and eliminate implicit stereotypes underlying gender-based discrimination. Fourth: increase the proportion of news that highlights issues of gender equality and inequality (30%). Fifth: increase the percentage of news reporting that is anchored in a critical human rights perspective (30%).

In addition to 5 targets, the GMMP 2015 Action Plan provides "specific priority actions" involving media regulatory agencies, media houses, civil society, media professional training institutions, funding agencies and researchers. All of these stakeholders are asked to take steps to end media sexism by 2020 in an integrated way. Particularly, they are called to support a change of journalistic practices in their country with several requirement, such as adoption and enforcement of gender policies and guidelines for gender-sensitive reporting (media regulatory agencies), development of gender aware ethics and practice codes (media houses), lobbying editors to apply gender policies (civil society), lending support to journalists and media engaged for gender equality (civil society), incorporating gender dimension in all modules of journalism training curricula (media professional training institutions), supporting media development work that emphasises gender equality in content production (funding agencies), working with unions to carry out surveys addressed to journalists about their experiences of workplace environments (researchers).

6 Conclusions

The GMMP provides effective tools of research to measure and explain the features of the world pictured by the news. Its results clearly show that 'who' or 'what' appears in the media and 'how' or 'why' this is done affect gender equity in the news but also affect society, through the news. According to the argument of the 2016 Council of Europe document, the GMMP could be considered as a tool to measure how mass media can reinforce rather than change a culture that tolerates or even legitimates violence against women.

News media are the major and most influential source of information, ideas and opinion for most people around the world. Over the last few years, the quick advancement of ICTs has increased and expanded global access to information. However, as the findings of the GMMP show, the news content has not changed as fast as the technologies. Journalists have the power to depict a more realistic world where women have made great headway. Nowadays, faced with the renewed challenge launched by the Council of Europe to fight gender-based violence, the journalist's role to provide gender-fair news is a great power and a great responsibility.

With its Action Plan the GMMP also provides specific priority actions to be taken by several stakeholders to support the strategic role of journalists in every country of the world.

Bibliography

Azzalini, M. (2015a). "Donne nel giornalismo italiano", in "Problemi dell'informazione", monogr. no., *Questioni di genere nel giornalismo italiano*, 15(3), 465-82.

Azzalini, M. (2015b). "News Media. Quale rappresentazione femminile? I risultati nazionali del Global Media Monitoring Project 2015", in "Problemi dell'informazione", monogr. no., *Questioni di genere nel giornalismo italiano*, 15(3), 669-73.

Azzalini, M. (2016). "Discriminazioni di genere nell'informazione. Una sfida ancora aperta". *Aggiornamenti sociali*, 67(8-9), 580-90.

Azzalini, M. (2006). "Chi fa notizia? Il rapporto Italia GMMP 2005", in "Inchiesta", monogr. no., *Donne e Comunicazione*, 36(153), 13-23.

Azzalini, M.; Padovani, C. (2015a). "Global Media Monitoring Project. Italian Context 2015". WACC, *Who Makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project 2015*. London; Toronto: WACC, 17-18. http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2015/national/Italy.pdf.

Azzalini, M.; Padovani, C. (2015b). *Who Makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project 2015. National Report, Italy*. Creative Commons. http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2015/national/Italy.pdf.

Azzalini, M.; Padovani, C. (2016). "L'informazione e le sfide dell'eguaglianza di genere. Global Media Monitoring Project 2015". *il Mulino*, 2, 276-84.

Cameron, D.; Shaw, S. (2016). "Gender, Power and Political Speech. Women and Language in the 2015 UK General Election". *Journal of Language and Politic*, 18(4), 642-5.

Campus, D. (2010). *L'immagine della donna leader*. Bologna: Bononia University Press.

Citron, D. (2014). *Hate Crimes in Cyberspace*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Council of Europe (2011). *Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*. https://rm.coe.int/168008482e.

Council of Europe (2016). *Encouraging the Participation of the Private Sector and the Media in the Prevention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. Article 17 of the Istanbul Convention*. https://rm.coe.int/16805970bd.

DeFleur, M.; Ball-Rockeach, S.J. (1995). *Teorie delle comunicazioni di massa*. Bologna: il Mulino.

Gallgher, M. (2000). *Gender Setting. New Agendas for Media Monitoring and Advocacy*. London; New York: Zed Books.

Gallagher, M. (2001). *Gender Setting. New Agendas for Media Monitoring and Advocacy*. London; New York: Zed Books; WACC (World Association for Christian Communication).

Gallagher, M. (2006). "Sintesi dei risultati GMMP 2005 a livello mondiale. Donne e informazione. Accesso potere e cambiamento", in "Inchiesta", monogr., no., *Donne e Comunicazione*, 36(153), 10-12.

Gallagher, M. (2015). "Foreword". WACC, *Who Makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project 2015*. London; Toronto: WACC, 1-2. http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2015/global/gmmp_global_report_en.pdf.

Gerbner, G. (1972). "Violence and Television Drama. Trends and Symbolic Functions". Comstock, G.A.; Rubinstein, E. (eds), *Television and Social Behaviour.* Vol. 1, *Content and Control*. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 28-187.

Hanitzsch, T.; Folker, H. (2012). "Does Gender Determine Journalists' Professional Views? A Reassessment Based on Cross-National Evidence". *European Journal Communication*, 27(3), 257-77. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0267323112454804.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks (CA): SAGE.

Humprecht, E.; Esser, F. 2017). "A Glass Ceiling in the Online Age? Explaining the Underrepresentation of Women in Online Political News". *European Journal of Communication*, 3(5) 439-56. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0267323117720343.

MediaWatch (1995). *Global Media Monitoring Project. Women's Participation in the News*. Toronto: Media Watch. http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/images/reports_1995/gmmp_1995.pdf.

Padovani, C.; Pavan, E. (2015). "Networks and Power in Gender-Oriented Communication Governance. Linking Theory to Empirical Explorations". Chitty, N.; Luo Q. (eds), *China and the World. Theatres of Soft Power*. Beijing: Zhongguo chuanmei daxue chubanshe, 42-68.

Padovani, C.; Pavan, E. (2016). "Global Governance and ICTs. Exploring Online Governance Networks around Gender and Media". *Global Networks*, 16(3), 350-71. https://doi.org/10.1111/glob.12119.

Portraying Politics (2006). *Portraying Politics. A Toolkit on Gender and Television*. https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/mars/source/resources/references/others/53%20-%20Portraying%20Politics%20-%202006%20COMP.pdf.

Ross, K. (2012). *The Handbook of Gender, Sex, and Media*. Malden, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Ross, K. (ed.) (2013). *Gendered Media. Women, Men, and Identity Politics*. Lanham, MD; Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield.

Ross, K.; Sreberny-Mohammadi, A. (1997). "Playing House. Gender, Politics and the News Media in Britain". *Media, Culture & Society*, 19, 101-9. https://doi.org/10.1177/016344397019001007.

Senato della Repubblica; Ufficio Valutazione Impatto. (2018). *Parità vo cercando. 1948-2018. Settanta anni di elezioni in Italia. A che punto siamo con il potere?* https://www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/documento/files/000/028/741/Focus_8_marzo.pdf.

Shor, E. et al. (2015). "A Paper Ceiling. Explaining the Persistent Underrepresentation of Women in Printed News". *American Sociological Review*, 80(5), 960-84. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0003122415596999.

Spallaccia, B. (2017). *Misogynistic Hate Speech on Social Networks. A Critical Discourse Analysis* [PhD Dissertation]. Bologna: Università di Bologna. http://amsdottorato.unibo.it/8265.

Spears, G.; Seydegart, K.; Gallagher, M. (2000). *Who Makes the News? The Global Media Monitoring Project 2000*. London: WACC. http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2000/gmmp_2000.pdf.

Tuchman, G. (1978a). "Introduction. The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media". Tuchman, G.; Kapla, D.; Benet, J. (eds), *Home and Heart. Images of Women in the Mass Media*. New York: Oxford University Press, 3-38.

Tuchman, G. (1978b). *Making News. A Study in the Construction of Reality*. New York: The Free Press.

United Nations (1979). *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*. https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm.

United Nations (1993a). *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*. https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/eliminationvaw.pdf.

United Nations (1993b). *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*. https://undocs.org/A/Conf.157/23.

United Nations (1995). *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf.

Van Zoonen, L. (1994). *Feminist Media Studies*. London: SAGE.

WACC (2005). *Who Makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project 2005*. London: WACC. http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2005/gmmp-report-en-2005.pdf.

WACC (2010). *Who Makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project 2010*. London; Toronto: WACC. http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2010/global/gmmp_global_report_en.pdf.

WACC (2015). *Who Makes the News? Global Media Monitoring Project 2015*. London; Toronto: WACC. http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2015/global/gmmp_global_report_en.pdf.

World Economic Forum (2015). *Global Gender Gap Report 2015*. http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015.

Zoch, L.M.; van Slyke Turk, J. (1998). "Women Making News. Gender as Variable in Source Selection and Use". *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75(4), 762-75. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F107769909807500410.

Language, Gender and Hate Speech
A Multidisciplinary Approach
edited by Giuliana Giusti and Gabriele Iannàccaro

The Feminisation of Titles, Office and Profession Nouns in Algerian French
The Case of the Press in the International Women's Day

Michele Bevilacqua
Università degli Studi di Napoli "Parthenope", Italia; Université d'Artois, France

Abstract After 132 years of colonization, French remains anchored to Algeria. With nearly 14 million French speakers (33% of its population) is an interesting field of study. An analysis of the press released in March 2018, around the date of the international celebration of Women's Day, will show that the use of professional nouns is quite diverse according to speakers, due to absence of established rules.

Keywords Algerian French. Feminisation. Algerian press. Nouns of occupations. Language emancipation.

Edizioni Ca'Foscari

Quaderni del Comitato Unico di Garanzia dell'Università Ca' Foscari Venezia 1
ISSN 2724-4652
ISBN [ebook] 978-88-6969-478-3 | ISBN [print] 978-88-6969-479-0

Open access
Published 2020-12-29

DOI 10.30687/978-88-6969-478-3/013

1 Introduction

After 132 years of colonization, French remains nowadays anchored to Algeria. With nearly 14 million French speakers, or 33% of population, Algeria is the second largest francophone country in the Euro-Mediterranean space after France.[1]

Algerian French in recent years has undergone an interesting evolution linked to changes in its society.

From this point of view, the sociolinguistic phenomenon that caught our attention is the feminisation of titles, office and profession nouns, a fashionable phenomenon in France and in Northern Francophones countries such as Québec, Belgium and Switzerland, in which structures used to refer to some names are quite different depending on the speakers, explaining the absence of fixed rules in the Francophone space, or even non-observance or exceeding, according to requirements, communication skills.[2]

This study, oriented by a sociolinguistic and lexicometrical approach, focuses specifically on the feminisation of titles, office and profession nouns in the above-mentioned Maghreb region at a time of the year when the Algerian press focuses especially on women, that is the "Journée internationale des femmes" or "International Women's Day".

The question of the feminisation of titles is very interesting because it deals with the present sociolinguistic situation of Algeria, use, lexical innovation, lexical instability characterized by variation, syntax, discourse analysis, with contact between languages and cultures, as well as the speaker's and its relationship with the language, with himself and with others.

The approach adopted combines two contradictory methods, one regulatory concerning the linguistic habits of a foreign language learned at school, and the other innovative, revealed by actual linguistic practice in its diversity, based on the concern for the visibility of women and especially on the simplification of French language.

The aim of this contribution is twofold: to understand the phenomenon and describe it in a French-speaking area, Algeria, where

1 Cf. http://observatoire.francophonie.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Francophones-Statistiques-par-pays.pdf.

2 As Elmiger affirms: "en comparant les décisions politiques en matière de féminisation, on est étonné de constater que chacun des pays francophones a choisi des solutions propres pour son espace, sans concertation formelle avec les autres régions francophones. Cela s'explique de différentes façons. D'une part, les décisions ont été prises à des moments différents et par des instances politiques indépendantes, parfois au gré des nécessités politiques propres à chacun pays. D'autre part, les propositions de chaque région ont intégré les particularités régionales […]. On peut néanmoins se demander pourquoi il n'y a pas une collaboration plus poussée à travers la francophonie, comme elle a été recherchée ailleurs, par exemple dans la réforme de l'orthographe" (2011, 77).

French turns out to be the privileged foreign language (Azouzi 2008, 49) – unlike the status of native language or official language in other French-speaking countries – and try to understand the problems and constraints arising from contact between languages and cultures. Our quantitative-qualitative analysis mould concerns the use of feminised structures in the francophone press in Algeria, a breeding ground promoting lexical innovation, choice for his role in lexical transfer in media and political-institutional discourses (cf. Cerquiglini 2018).

2 Women's Emancipation in Algeria. Sociocultural Features

Algerian women have always been present in the sociopolitical history of the country. In particular, they are remembered for the liberation of the country from the colonial yoke because they took part in the anticolonial fight of resistance (cf. Amrane 1991). The liberation of the country, the power of globalization, economic upheavals social evolution have made Algerian women want to change their own destiny and erase the past, when a strong sexism reigned (Taraud 2011), and they were crushed under the weight of the duties and stripped of their rights.

The desire to overcome the archaic mindset, to appear and become fully integrated in the socioeconomic, cultural and political life of the country and to break the image of oppressed women, excluded from society, manifests itself in a variety of ways, including school and education in general, which represents for them the only chance for freedom and openness to the outside world.[3]

Dealing with a series of various political and sociocultural constraints, Algerian women fight for their presence and recognition in various spheres of society, including those in which they had always been under the hegemony of men, working in various professions and assuming increasingly important positions (cf. Talahite 2008).

The appearance of lexemes and phrasal nouns in feminised forms in Algerian French such as "demandeuses d'emploi" (women searching for work) becomes fashionable at that time. Thus, the woman is no longer called "femme au foyer" (housewife), but rather "chômeuse" (unemployed); several rating groups appear in parallel to this concept, such as "femme au foyer partiellement occupée" (housewife partially occupied, 1997), "Autres inactifs" (Other inactive, 1987)

3 As Mohsen-Finan (2008, 11) says: "[…] si, pendant les luttes pour les indépendances, les femmes ont dû se fondre dans le combat national et appuyer les hommes qui portaient cette lutte, la volonté de beaucoup d'entre elles était de bénéficier des changements politiques en cours pour acquérir davantage de visibilité, de responsabilité et de respectabilité".

and "Travailleuses à domiciles" (women workers to services, 1989).[4] This round of changes, which gave rise to a new profile for Algerian women, is proof of a firm desire on the part of women in the struggle for gaining recognition in Algerian society. The factors that pushed to get the social emancipation are:

- the educational system: the universalization of compulsory education has promoted gender equality in the various educational levels and allowed some girls to advance in studies (cf. Boutaleb, Boualali 2003);
- the struggle waged by women's associations and by human rights organisations that defend the fate of women and struggle to promote equal opportunities in work and in politics;
- economic openness to international markets and to globalisation that allowed women to access other types of work related to new technologies.

Nowadays, Algerian women have managed to overcome various challenges and enter into a world formerly reserved exclusively to men. Improving their social status, and gaining visibility, several areas of work therefore feminised. This demonstrates a real revolution for women and even a prevalence of women in the labour market that explains the feminisation of certain professions in Algeria.

3 Gender, Feminisation, and French Language

With the increase of women in the labour market, the process of feminisation of French language acquired greater weight within the countries of the francophone space. In this regard the work of researchers Anne-Marie Houdebine (1998) and Éliane Viennot, of whom we mention the two fundamental works of 2016 and 2017.

Nowadays the main suggested (cf. Khaznadar 2015) morphosyntactic practices for the application of feminisation in the French language are, first, the feminisation of names of occupations, titles and offices (controlled by two circulars of the French government of the 1986 and 1998), such as: *Madame la directrice* instead of *Madame le directeur*; *Madame la préfète* instead of *Madame le préfet*; *Madame la professeure* instead of *Madame le professeur*. Furthermore, we have the use of doublets for the inclusion of both men and women: *toutes*

4 Cf. *Actes du Colloque International "Marché du travail et genre dans les pays du Maghreb. Quels marchés du travail ?"*, Document de travail no. 11, Rabat, 2006, https://www.genreenaction.net/Marche-du-travail-et-genre-dans-les-pays-du.html; http://www.genreenaction.net/Femmes-et-Travail-en-Algerie.html; http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/algerien/13438.pdf.

et tous; *elle et il*; *Français et Françaises*; the use of epicene terms, such as lexemes whose form is invariable to masculine and feminine, such as: *un/e élève*, *un/e Membre*, *un/e fonctionnaire*; the use of 'encasing' forms that avoid gender stereotypes, such as: *les droits humains* in the place of *droits de l'Homme/homme*; *personnalité politique* instead of *homme politique*; la *population française* for *les Français*; *les êtres humains* in place of *les Hommes/hommes*. Finally there is the use of various contractions or short forms through some gimmicks as the use of *point médian*, following the composition of generic order word: root word + masculine suffix + midpoint + feminine suffix + possible further period followed by 's' in the case of the plural (e.g. *l'enseignant·e*; *les musicien·ne·s*; *des conseiller·ère·s*; *la·le chercheur·e*; *ceux·elles*; *des intellectuel·le·s*; *un·e programmeur·euse*; *médicaux·ales*); often we tend to prefer the median point to the so-called single end point for reasons of easier typing, for example on computer keyboards (e.g. *la·le sénateur·rice*; *chargé·e·s* etc.); the use of slash, (e.g. *lycéen/ne*), the parentheses, (e.g. *citoyen/ne*), the capital 'E' (e.g. *motivéEs*) and the hyphen (e.g. *professionnel-le-s*).

In other Northern Francophone countries[5] such as Switzerland and Belgium the question of gender on nouns referring to professions is widely handled with greater attention using a non-sexist language, and particularly in Québec, the Francophone province of Canada in which the lexical feminisation as well as the full use of inclusive writing are encouraged since 1979 by the *Office québécois de la langue française* (cf. Vachon-L'Heureux 2007), and a series of linguistic resources,[6] useful for the comprehension of the dynamics of the French language, are made available on its Portal since the beginning of the 2000s.

4 Use of Feminisation of Nouns of Occupations, Titles, and Offices in the Francophone Algerian Press. Case Study

In this quantitative and qualitative study, a question arises about the use of feminised structures in the current language of Algerian francophone press, a fertile ground that favours lexical innovation (cf. Altmanova 2013). In order to use a rich and varied corpus, our choice has been focused on French-language online Algerian newspapers characterized by huge spread and therefore considered most read throughout the national territory, for a total of six newspapers:

5 The expression "francophonie du nord" was used in French sociolinguistics by Bulot and Blanchet (2013, 81) in order to indicate the Francophone European and North-American countries.

6 Cf. http://bdl.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/bdl/gabarit_bdl.asp?Th=1&Th_id=274.

El Moudjahid, *El Watan*, *Le soir d'Algérie*, *Le quotidien d'Oran*, *Liberté*, *Horizons*.[7] The choice of these newspapers was done according to a survey by the Algerian Ministère de la Communication on the circulation of newspapers.[8]

Through a quantitative analysis of the terms used in the articles processed by descriptive-analytical study and using an analytics lexicometrical software such as AntConc, a qualitative analysis has also been carried out on the linguistic results obtained.

The data collection period spans the entire month of March 2018, trying to compare some results with some data reported in the newspapers in question in March 2010, in order to provide a broader overview of the phenomenon in question. The choice of this period is due to the fact that March is worldwide considered the month of women, for the occurrence of 8 March with the "Journée internationale des Femmes" (International Women's Day). As a result, the issue concerning the female gender has a special coverage in journalism speeches, which responds to the object of this research for a highly diversified list of names of trades, titles and functions collected that relate to women at a time when the occurrence of this type of lexemes is highly visible compared to publications distributed during the other months of the year.

The perusal of online newspapers[9] allowed to collect 2074 nouns of occupations, functions, grades and titles, 1589 of which are visibly feminised forms, namely 87.75% of structures collected and 231 forms whose meaning is masculine, referring to a female figure expressing the perpetuation of masculine form and then the endurance to the feminisation, namely the 12.25% of the total number of nouns.

Before investigating the feminisation of titles of profession, for they are articles published during the month dedicated to women, it was appropriate to statistically calculate the relative frequency of the lexeme *femme* found in the analysed texts in March 2018,[10] and then to compare it to the frequency of the same lexeme in the month of March 2010:

7 Cf. http://www.denisdar.com/index.php%3frub=pieds_noirs&p=8.

8 Cf. https://www.liberte-algerie.com/actualite/les-algeriens-et-limpact-des-medias-32967/pprint/1.

9 Implemented through the transformation into Word format of the selected items, and then in txt format for lexicometrical analysis through the AntConc software.

10 Obtained by dividing the frequency of the lexeme with the total number of lexemes in the corpus analysed (cf. Muller 2000; Brezina 2018).

Table 1 Occurences of lexeme *femme* (woman) – March 2018

Number of articles – March 2018	150
Total number of words	45.000
Occurences of lexeme *femme*	223
Relative occurrence	49.5 %

Table 2 Occurences of lexeme *femme* (woman) – March 2010

Number of articles – March 2010	150
Total number of words	39.400
Occurences of lexeme *femme*	141
Relative occurrence	35.7 %

Based on what emerges from statistical-contrastive analysis, the lexeme *femme* in the month of March 2018 not only is present in almost all the articles studied, but often occurs multiple times for different linguistic reasons, presenting a percentage of 49.5%.

In March 2010, however, the term is used in a smaller percentage (35.7%), also due to the increased use of the generic masculine referred to professions carried out by women. As regards the corpus of 2018, instead, it has been observed that some journalists do not encounter any difficulty with the feminisation of titles by profession, encouraging this perspective, which translates into a systematic feminisation.

Among the different processes of feminisation of titles found in the Algerian francophone press, there are epicene forms. The term "epicene" in morphosyntax means "ambi-genders" (Riegel et al. 2014), i.e. both masculine and feminine, as defined in *Trésor de la langue française informatisé*:[11]

> ÉPICÈNE, adj.
> *GRAMM., rare.*
> **A.–** [En parlant d'un nom d'être animé] (Terme générique) qui sert à désigner une espèce, sans préciser le sexe. *Les mots Enfant, perdrix sont des noms épicènes* (*Ac.*1932).
> **B.–** [En parlant d'un subst., d'un adj., d'un pron.] Qui a la même forme au masculin et au féminin. (cf. Dupré *Lex.* 1972)

In the reference corpus there are some epicene nouns that end with the suffix *-e*, accompanied by a feminine article:

11 https://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/epic%C3%A8ne.

Table 3 Some epicene nouns that end with the suffix *-e*, accompanied by a feminine article

Article	Epicene noun	Article	Epicene noun
La	Ministre	La	Scripte
Une	syndicaliste	Une	Scénariste
		La	spécialiste
La	parlementaire	La	photographe
Sa	diplomate en chef	La	styliste
		L’	interprète
L’	activiste	Une/la	chorégraphe
Une/ la	membre de	La	peintre
La	commissaire (du police)	La	terroriste
Une	gendarme	Une	athlète de judo
La	secrétaire	Une	politologue
Cette	cadre	Une/la	sociologue
Une	titulaire		la chimiste
La/ une	juge		la biologiste
Une /la	sage-femme		une architecte
Cette	dermatologue		
“ la ”/ ma/une	gynécologue		
La	thérapeute		
La	néphrologue		
Une	psychologue		
La/une	journaliste		
la	réceptionniste		

Adding the lexeme *femme* (woman) before or after the epicene terms promotes the formation of compound words:

Table 4 The lexeme *femme* (woman) before or after the epicene terms

Before	Epicene noun	After
Femme	Ministre	
Femmes	Syndicalistes	
Une femme	Commissaire	
Les femmes	Les cadres	Femmes
Ces femmes	Fonctionnaires	
	Une gynéco	Femme
La (les) femmes	Journaliste (s)	Femmes
-femmes	-cinéastes	

Before	Epicene noun	After
- femmes	- peintres	
- femme (s)	- artiste (s)	
- la femme	Artiste (s)	- femmes
- femmes	- artistes peintres	
- dames	- artistes peintres	
- femme(s)	- arbitre (s)	
- femme(s)	pilote(s)(de chasse)	
	- copilotes	
- jeunes femmes	- bédéistes	- femmes

It has been noticed that journalists often use the term *femme* in the formation of the feminine epicene names, especially in the case of plural where the kind of gender is not obvious or when it comes to a name that does not require the article. In both cases a simple process of feminisation is used: it consists of a simple addition of the lexeme *femme*.

Another language strategy adopted in the journalistic discourse in question is to identify the gender through a female proper name. It is a name that specifies the sex, and it is placed before or after the name in issue.

> Ex. : l'artiste-peintre *Djahida Houdef* / l'artiste peintre *Samia* / l'architecte *Zaha Hadid* / *Nabila*, architecte / *Beihidja Rahal*, interprète de musique andalouse / *Aicha Saidi*, journaliste / *Sabiha Adadiche*, artiste peintre / *Souad Driss*, interprète pour sourds-muets.

The development of this policy was based on one of the three linguistic approaches summarized by Jonasson (1994, 114) (cited in Friburger 2006) on the semantic level, including the second that:

> soit le sens du nom propre est une description du référent : nous considérons qu'il a un sens fort et qu'il identifie de manière univoque un référent ou qu'il a un sens réduit à des traits sémantiques généraux: trait féminin/masculin, humain/non-humain, etc. (Friburger 2006, 638),

unlike the first approach that, on the contrary, states that "le nom propre est vide de sens" (638).

Another version used is the principle "Mme + last name and/or the female name", just because the name acts like the female determinant. Among the few examples there are:

Ex. : *Mme Saidani*, standardiste au niveau de Sonatrach / *Mme Idami*, chorégraphe / *Mme Rahmani*, membre de la commission exécutive nationale / *Mme Amine*, fonctionnaire

There is the case in which the gender of the person exercising the profession is determined in relation to the adjective that goes with it: the latter is before or after placed:

Ex. : artiste peintre *espagnole* / quatre artistes *françaises* / de *nombreuses* artistes / *différentes* artistes peintres / *la défunte* artiste peintre / je suis *la seule* interprète / les athlètes *algériennes*

In this specific situation, the qualifying adjective hides the other processes of feminisation and its use is sufficient to distinguish the gender of a person.

The examples in which names whose feminine forms a homophone are reported in a few cases, namely when the feminine in the corpus leads to a polysemy placed on a continuous axis between the different uses of the language, ranging from a simple polysemy through semantic vagueness (Aarts et al. 2004) to the rejection of the feminine form, and then to the retention of the masculine in terms of adaptation.

To get a better understanding of this case let us consider the example of the lexeme *médecin*, among the most common occupations in our corpus. In the articles analysed, the addition of the suffix *-e* to the word *médecine* describes the object of the profession exercised by the person rather than the title of female profession.

To avoid confusion about *médecine* (understood as 'medical science'), with *médecine* the 'medical profession', journalists use 'avoidance procedures', as the female name next to the name of the profession (*Sakina*, médecin, *Mme Demèche Dehbih*, médecin chef) or adding the lexeme femme (la première *femme* médecin). Otherwise it keeps the masculine form through periphrasis like "l'une est médecin de profession" (Elmiger 2011, 77).

Finally, with regard to loanwords, it has been reported the presence of many verbs from the English language and, obviously, from the Arabic (the official language in Algeria along with the Berber language) has been reported (Sebaa 2002).

Table 5 Presence of verbs from the English language and from the Arabic

English loanwords	Variations	Arabic loanwords	Variations
- En tant que Sales assistant		-Negafa	
- poste de marketing assistant		-Nekacha	
- la " business woman "	- la " *business woman* "	-Cheba	
	- " ladies Business "	-la Cheikha	-une chikha
- Cette manager	- femme(s) manager(s)		- " Chikha "
	- " la femme management "		-Les chikhate
	-manager marketing-communication	- *s'bayate*	
	- international press relations manager	- *meddahate*	
	- " algériennes, managers et entrepreneurs "	- une (moudjahida)	- Une ancienne moudjahida
		- les " *djoundiate* "	- les (anciennes) moudjahidate
- " working girls "	- femmes travailleuses	- femmes possèdent	
- une speakerine		des cartes de *fellah*	
- la designer	- designer (s)	- des *Delalates*	
- Miss			
- la top model	- les tops modèles		
	- la desperate maman modèle		
	- du top(s) model(s)-un-son		
- La star (s)	- une guest-star		
	- la starlette		
- une hit girl	- rock star		
- la Ghandj			
- une femme kamikaze			
- juniors filles			
- reporter d'images			

In these examples, a single case of preservation of the masculine gender has been identified as clearly formulated to refer to women: the term *top model* accompanied by male determinants *du*/*son*.

However, this case cannot be considered as a masculine absolute in the Algerian press because a feminine form has also been identified: *top model* (in this case the *top model* is considered as an epicene word be-

cause the reporter considers the article sufficient to consider it a feminine name) as well as some variations, such as *les top modèles* (addition of *-e* as feminine marker) and the *desperate maman model* (in this case, there is a threefold feminisation: feminine article + *maman* which has the same meaning as *femme* + suffix *-e* as a feminine marker).

5 Final Remarks

Equality and the feminisation of nouns denoting occupations, titles and functions can be seen as a complement and a lexical enrichment of Algerian French, which is imposed (by use) to overcome some language gaps of this diatopic variety of the French language that has emerged under the current political, economic and sociocultural circumstances (cf. Serres 2019).

This is a process of linguistic mutation that affects of course all world languages in a particular political and historic context.

In the case of French considering the differences in terms of language used in the processes of feminisation of profession titles in the various context of French-speaking countries, it is advisable that the French-speaking countries strengthen their efforts in finding a feminine equivalent in all existing profession titles, in order to overcome this language deficiencies which divide the *Francophonie* in facing some sociolinguistic changes.

With a brief contrastive period in March 2010, featuring selected articles it has been recorded that the feminisation of occupations, titles and names of functions is widely used in 2018 compared to the linguistic data available on newspaper articles written in March 2010, and this is because of a recently greater and widespread sensitivity in Algeria to the theme of gender representation in the French language,[12] under the influence of various political and institutional debates in French-speaking countries, such as the use of *écriture inclusive* (inclusive writing) (cf. Charaudeau 2018) in the media.

Even if this research remains legitimately open to the study of other feminisation processes adopted in the current Algerian press, the different uses and different positions of the Algerian francophone speakers towards feminisation in the French language have been highlighted, carrying out a synchronic analysis which aims to be representative of the reality of the situation.

12 Regarding the Moroccan press: "La presse, en français notamment, multiplie les portraits et les interviews de femmes remarquables. À la lire, on a presque le sentiment que le Maroc est un pays de femmes, femmes politiques, femmes de la société civile, femmes de secteurs sociaux, femmes artistes, écrivains, peintres, photographes, cinéastes" (Daoud 2008, 24) e "la presse en français encourage la modernisation en rendant compte de la féminisation de la société et en la poussant en avant" (22).

Bibliography

Aarts, B. et al. (2004). *Fuzzy Grammar. A Reader.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Altmanova, J. (2013). *Du nom déposé au nom commun. Néologie et lexicologie en discours*. Milano: EDUCatt.

Amrane, D. (1991). *Les femmes algériennes dans la guerre*. Paris: Plon.

Azouzi, A. (2008). "Le français au Maghreb. Statut ambivalent d'une langue". *Synergies Europe*, 3, 37-50. https://gerflint.fr/Base/Europe3/azouzi.pdf.

Boutaleb, K.; Boualali, A. (2003). "L'activité féminine en Algérie. Réalités et perspectives ". *Colloque 'Marché du Travail et Genre dans les Pays du Maghreb. Spécificités, points communs et synergies avec l'Europe'*. Paris: CNRS; Rabat: INSEA; Bruxelles DULBEA, 11-12.

Brezina, V. (2018). *Statistics in Corpus Linguistics. A Practical Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bulot, T.; Blanchet, P. (2013). *Une introduction à la sociolinguistique. Pour l'étude des dynamiques de la langue française dans le monde*. Paris: Archives Contemporaines Éditions.

Cerquiglini, B. (2018). *La ministre est enceinte ou la grande querelle de la féminisation des noms*. Paris: Seuil.

Charaudeau, P. (2018). "L'écriture inclusive au défi de la neutralisation en français". *Le Débat*, 199(2), 13-31. https://doi.org/10.3917/deba.199.0013.

Daoud, Z. (2008). "La situation de la femme marocaine au travers de la presse et des médias". Mohsen-Finan 2008, 21-45.

Duchêne, A.; Moïse, C. (éds) (2011). *Langage, genre et sexualité*. Montréal: Éditions Nota Bene.

Elmiger, D. (2011). "Féminisation de la langue française : une brève histoire des positions politiques et du positionnement linguistique". Duchêne, Moïse 2011, 71-89.

Friburger, N. (2006). "Linguistique et reconnaissance automatique des noms propres". *Meta. Translators' Journal*, 51(4), 637-50. https://doi.org/10.7202/014331ar.

Houdebine-Gravaud A.-M. (éd.) (1998). *La féminisation des noms de métiers. En français et dans d'autres langues*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Jonasson, K. (1994). *Le nom propre. Constructions et interprétations*. Paris : Duculot.

Khaznadar, E. (2015). *Le sexisme ordinaire du langage. Qu'est l'homme en général?* Paris: L'Harmattan.

Mohsen-Finan, K. (éd.) (2008). *L'image de la femme au Maghreb*. Arles: Actes Sud; MMSH, Maison méditerranéenne des sciences de l'homme.

Muller, C. (2000). *Initiation aux méthodes de la statistique linguistique*. Paris: Honoré Champion.

Riegel, M. et al. (2014). *Grammaire méthodique du français*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Sebaa, R. (2002). *L'Algérie et la langue française ou l'altérité en partage*. Paris: Publibook.

Serres, T. (2019). *L'Algérie face à la catastrophe suspendue. Gérer la crise et blâmer le peuple sous Bouteflika (1999-2014)*. Paris: Karthala.

Talahite, F. (2008). "Algérie. L'emploi féminin en transition". *HAL. Hyper Article en Ligne*, 1-32. https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/file/index/docid/203648/filename/2007MM-ws1-Talahite.pdf.

Taraud, C. (2011). "Les femmes, le genre et les sexualités dans le Maghreb colonial (1830-1962)". *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*, 33, 157-91. https://doi.org/10.4000/clio.10058.

Vachon-L'Heureux, P. (2007). "Au Québec, la rédaction épicène devient une proposition officielle". *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, 26(3), 70-80. https://doi.org/10.3917/nqf.263.0070.

Viennot E. et al. (éds) (2016). *L'Académie contre la langue française. Le dossier « féminisation »*. Donnemarie-Dontilly: Éditions iXe.

Viennot, E. (2017). *Non, le masculin ne l'emporte pas sur le féminin*. Donnemarie-Dontilly: Éditions iXe.

Gendered, language and hate speech: Are these concepts unrelated to each other, or is it possible to find a common research thread that allows us to understand them as two aspects of the same social phenomenon? This is the question to which the book aims to give an answer, through the support of experts and scholars in the areas of Linguistics, Education, Sociology, Legal and Political Studies. The volume collects some of the papers presented at the LIGHTS (Gender equality and hate words / Language gender and HaTe Speech) conference, held at Ca' Foscari University of Venice on October 2018, which represented a significant moment of discussion and confrontation on the power of language for the maintenance or, hopefully, the deconstruction of social and political stereotypes.

Università
Ca'Foscari
Venezia