

# Gender, Language and New Literacy

Edited by Eva-Maria Thüne, Simona Leonardi  
and Carla Bazzanella



Spanish Theatre since 1975

151

## Continuum

The Tower Building  
11 York Road  
London SE1 7NX

80 Maiden Lane  
Suite 704  
New York NY 10038

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## 8 The lexicographical representation of gender in the Microsoft *Word Thesaurus*: Polish

Johanna Miecznikowski

### 1. Introduction

Compared to other computer-mediated dictionaries, which form highly complex hypertextual structures,<sup>1</sup> the Microsoft *Word Thesaurus* is a simple lexicographical tool. Providing a list of synonyms, its primary aim is to help the user find adequate lexical items to express an intended concept, and avoid repetition. Simple as it is, the tool might be of use for producers of Polish texts in a domain of central interest in a gender linguistics perspective, i.e. the domain of personal reference. Finding an adequate nominal expression to refer to persons can be a difficult task in Polish, especially when it comes to reference to females. Polish is a language with a rich system of morphologically marked grammatical gender and a large set of nouns possessing lexical gender. The extent to which these morphological and semantic resources are used to make female gender explicit, however, does not only depend on the referent's sex, but also on the type of noun, the syntactic context, textual constraints (see Dalewska-Greń 1994) and the communicative importance of gender as a category. Moreover, as in all gender languages, nouns with lexical gender lexicalize dominant gender stereotypes, but are also subject to reinterpretation processes, depending on individual speakers' representations of gender roles and on on-going social change. Does the selection of forms and meanings proposed by the *Thesaurus* help the text producer make his or her choice when looking for an adequate noun to refer to an intended female referent? How does this tool represent gender-related semantic differences and connotations of personal nouns?

These questions will be addressed in the main section of this chapter (§4), after a short overview of the Polish gender system (§2) and some remarks on the social context in which gender-related phenomena have been discussed in Polish linguistics (§3).

## 2 Gender in Polish

### 2.1 Grammatical gender

Polish nouns belong to three main gender classes: masculine, feminine and neuter. Within the masculine gender, three subclasses must be distinguished. The resulting gender system consists of five classes, defined on syntactic grounds<sup>2</sup> and corresponding partly to morphological inflection classes:<sup>3</sup> feminine (e.g. *ręka* 'hand'), neuter (e.g. *słońce* 'sun'), masculine personal (e.g. *chłopiec* 'boy'), masculine animate (e.g. *kot* 'cat') and masculine inanimate (e.g. *dom* 'house'). In the singular, the forms of masculine personal and masculine animate nouns coincide. In the plural – more precisely, in the nominative and accusative plural, since in the remaining cases gender distinctions are not expressed at all – feminine, neuter, masculine animate and masculine inanimate nouns fall into one category, which thus enters into opposition with the category of masculine personal nouns.

Thanks to agreement relations with nouns, grammatical gender is marked on a large range of word classes in Polish: demonstrative, possessive and relative pronouns, adjectives, quantifiers, numerals, and the verb. The latter agrees with the subject in the past tense. In the singular, it takes a masculine, feminine or neuter form; in the plural, it shows the characteristic asymmetry of the Polish gender system: plural forms in all three persons are either [+masculine personal] or [-masculine personal]. Agreement is normally determined by the grammatical gender of the noun; conjoined feminine and masculine nouns require masculine agreement.

### 2.2 Lexical gender

Lexical gender, as a semantic category, is relevant for animate nouns. When analysing the *Thesaurus*, we will be interested above all in personal nouns. In Polish, most personal nouns are lexically either masculine or feminine. Lexical and grammatical gender usually coincide, with a few exceptions (e.g. augmentatives like *chłopisko* (nt.) 'big man', *babsztyl* (m.) '(terrible) woman'). A small number of personal nouns have double gender, with partially differing inflectional paradigms (e.g. *kaleka* (m./f.) 'cripple', 'handicapped person'). Another set of personal nouns, as well as indefinite pronouns, are not semantically marked for gender (e.g. *osoba*, (f.) 'person', *ktoś* (m.) 'someone', collectives such as *państwo*, (m.) 'Mr and Ms'/'ladies and gentlemen').

On the level of word-formation, lexical gender is either expressed by the stem (e.g. kinship terms such as *ciocia* (f.) 'aunt', *wuj* (m.) 'uncle') or marked by derivational suffixes. In the latter case, feminine forms are usually derived from masculine ones. Common derivational suffixes are, among others, *-ka* (e.g. *aktor* (m.) – *aktorka* (f.) 'actor'), *-ini/-yni* (e.g. *dozorca* (m.) – *dozorczyni* (f.), 'caretaker', 'guard'), *-ica* (e.g. *uczeń* (m.) – *uczennica* (f.) 'pupil'), *-a* (e.g. *robotnik* (m.) – *robotnica* (f.) 'worker') or *-owa* (e.g. *brat* (m.) 'brother' –

*bratowa* (f.) 'brother's wife'). Some masculine nouns do not allow derivation (e.g. *mecenas* (m.) 'lawyer'); the extension of this class is not clearly defined, however (see Miemietz 1993).

### 2.3 Different types of generic masculines and their relation to lexical gender

In the domain of personal reference, the masculine (personal) category is to be considered the unmarked term of the grammatical masculine – feminine opposition in Polish. As we have seen above, the unmarked status of the masculine appears in word formation ('"formal" (un)markedness', see Linke 2002: 124) or in the agreement patterns of conjoined nouns. Another important indicator of this masculine–feminine asymmetry in Polish is the possibility of using masculine nouns generically ('"distributed" (un)markedness', see *ibid.*). This possibility implies that a noun's semantic feature [+masculine] may weaken to such an extent that it may be applied, as a hypernym, to female referents. As in other languages, however, this does not prevent a male bias in the interpretation of generic masculines (see Jaworski 1986: 25–48, Linke 2002: 122–3), due to the systematic ambiguity of such expressions between a sex-indifferent and a male-only reading.

The contexts in which masculine nouns may be used are not equal for all types of nouns (see Dalewska-Greń 1994) and may be ordered according to a definiteness hierarchy. Most nouns with primary lexical gender, and a restricted set of nouns with derived feminine correspondents, cannot refer to females at all (e.g. *syn* (m.) 'son'). Another class of masculine nouns may be used in the plural with reference to mixed groups (e.g. *polacy*<sub>m.nom.pl.</sub> 'the Polish') or non-referentially in the singular (e.g. *Każdy polak ma prawo do opieki lekarza* 'every<sub>m.</sub> Pole<sub>m.</sub> has the right to medical care').

Finally, a subclass of masculine nouns can be used also to refer to female individuals and groups consisting only of females. These are nouns that have either no feminine counterpart (e.g. *mecenas* (m.) 'lawyer') or else have a derived feminine counterpart – mostly in *-ka* – that language users may want to avoid under certain circumstances because of negative connotations or meaning restrictions. With regard to these nouns, the possibility to partly neutralize the feature [+masculine (personal)] has been extended to predicative uses:

- (1a) *ona jest dobrym profesorem*  
she's a good<sub>m.sg.instr.</sub> professor<sub>m.sg.instr.</sub>
- (1b) \**ona jest dobrym polakiem*  
\*she's a good<sub>m.sg.instr.</sub> Pole<sub>m.sg.instr.</sub>

Furthermore, these nouns can even be used referentially for female referents, under the condition that they remain uninflected<sup>4</sup> – the deletion of specifically masculine endings mirrors the semantic reinterpretation of the noun. This referential use requires feminine agreement:

- (2) *nasza profesor przyszła*  
our<sub>f.nom.sg.</sub> professor<sub>ø</sub> came<sub>s.sg.f.</sub>

This agreement compensates to a certain degree for the lack of gender marking on the noun (see e.g. Levin-Steinmann 2003: 156–7). Apart from agreeing elements, the referent's sex is often expressed explicitly by means of *pani* 'Ms', *kobieta* 'woman' or a proper name, elements with which the noun enters into a relationship of 'tight apposition' ('enge Apposition', see Wiese 1968: 99):

- (3) *rozmawiałam z panią profesor / z profesor Sawicką*  
I talked to (Ms.) professor / to professor Sawicka.

The *indeclinabilitas* of the noun and its agreement patterns in this type of referential use indicates that the 'feminine' form is lexicalized to a certain degree. However, the frequent explicit expression of feminine gender by other elements as well as masculine agreement in predicative uses point to the fact that lexicalization is not complete, and that reference to females in the case of these nouns is still strongly related to the other types of generic masculines mentioned earlier.<sup>5</sup>

### 3 Gender linguistics and the women's movement in Poland

In their state-of-the-art of feminist linguistics in Poland, Koniuszaniec & Błaszowska (2003: 276) observe that '[t]he issue of language and gender has so far failed to attract attention among Polish linguists', showing that the statement made by A. Jaworski as early as 1986, according to which 'in Polish, this subject [the study of sexism in language] has so far received almost no attention' (p. 2), is still valid.<sup>6</sup> The complex grammatical gender system in Polish and its relation to sex have been studied for a long time, but not necessarily in a critical perspective. Systematic studies of gender stereotyping in contemporary language use are lacking, and analyses comparing the communicative behaviour of women and men are rare.<sup>7</sup> What is particularly significant in the context of the present article, finally, is that scholars of Polish have rarely adopted a gender-related reflexive perspective on linguistic scientific practice itself, observable in its written form in academic publications, lexicography, or grammar and textbook writing (but see Jaworski 1986, Chapters 4 and 5).

This situation is partly due to the fact that the feminist movement – which in other countries has contributed to promote studies on gender-related phenomena – has been comparatively weak in Poland in the past four decades (in this period, equality of women and men was officially declared to have been realized). Since 1989, various feminist organizations have developed, and have sought to establish a dialogue with the American and European women's rights movement. Nevertheless, feminist ideas continue to play only a minor role in the way most Polish women construe their identity.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, the Polish women's movement has, of course, not confined its attention to purely linguistic matters. Apart from its engagement in a theoretical discussion of women's identity and their role in society, it has participated actively in the debate about abortion legislation in the 1990s and has tackled political and practical issues such as domestic violence, the election of women to the Polish and to the European parliaments, or legal assistance for women. In contrast, sexist language use and its prevention have not been given any special attention (Handke 1994c). Similar priorities have been established by the Polish government with respect to the initiatives in favour of gender mainstreaming that it undertook when preparing Poland's accession to the European Union.<sup>9</sup> In its recent report on the situation of women in Poland, the Polish government states that gender-targeted measures primarily concern legislation and the labour market.<sup>10</sup>

### 4 The *Thesaurus* in Microsoft Word 2000

In the broader context sketched above, we would expect neither well-established dictionaries published in a traditional format, nor the Polish *Word Thesaurus*, to be significantly influenced by considerations of political correctness with respect to the lexicographical representation of gender. But this does not mean that there is no point in asking whether innovative lexicographical solutions are to be found in the *Thesaurus*, something that is far from implausible given its recency, its technical make-up and its intended uses. Is the category of grammatical and lexical gender dealt with in a transparent way? Does the *Thesaurus* accurately represent the differentiated referential properties of various types of personal nouns in Polish?

I will look for answers to these questions in three steps. First, I will describe structural features of the *Thesaurus* that influence the lexicographical representation of gender (§4.1). In the next section, I will discuss in detail one crucial pair of personal nouns: *kobieta* (f.) 'woman' and *mężczyzna* (m.) 'man' (§4.2). The last section is dedicated to the way professional titles are represented in the *Thesaurus* (§4.3).

#### 4.1 Personal nouns: four types of lexical entries

A lexical entry in the Polish *Thesaurus* of *Word 2000* contains a list of 'meanings', each specified as to part of speech (noun, verb, adjective or other), further meaning-specific 'synonyms' as well as eventual 'similar terms', mostly hypernyms, which are associated with the entry as a whole rather than with specific meanings.

Personal nouns are represented in the *Thesaurus* by four main types of entries:

- 1 Masculine and feminine forms are both listed and have distinct entries,

meanings and synonyms matching the headword's lexical gender. An example is the pair *matka* (f.) 'mother' – *ojciec* (m.) 'father':<sup>11</sup>

- (4a) *matka*: **rodzicielka** (f.) '(female) parent' (*mama* (f.) 'mom', *mamusia* (f.) 'mummy' (diminutive of *mama*)).
- (4b) *ojciec*: **rodzic** (m.) '(male) parent' (*rodziciel* (m.) '(male) parent', *patriarcha* (m.) 'patriarch', *protoplasta* (m.) 'ancestor'); **wynalazca** (m.) 'inventor'.
- 2 Masculine and feminine forms are both listed in the *Thesaurus* and share some or all of their meanings; the shared meanings and corresponding synonyms consist of both masculine and feminine forms. An example is *wnuczka* (f.) 'granddaughter' – *wnuk* (m.) 'grandson', which as their first meaning refer to each other and to the common synonym *prawnuk* (m.) 'great grandson', and have a second meaning, *syn* (m.) 'son', associated with a mixed set of masculine and feminine synonyms.
- 3 Masculine and feminine forms are both listed and share a common entry containing only masculine forms.<sup>12</sup> As we will see below (§4.3), typical examples are terms denoting professions such as *jubilerka* (f.) – *jubiler* (m.) 'jeweller':
- (5a) *jubilerka* f.: **złotnik** (m.) 'goldsmith' (*grawer* (m.) 'engraver', *rytownik* (m.) 'wood/copperplate engraver').
- (5b) *jubiler* m.: **złotnik** (m.) 'goldsmith' (*grawer* (m.) 'engraver', *rytownik* (m.) 'wood/copperplate engraver').
- 4 The *Thesaurus* lists a masculine or – less often – a feminine form, but no counterpart of the opposite gender, e.g. *mecenas* (m.) 'lawyer' or *szwaczka* (f.) 'seamstress'.

Entries of type 1 have been chosen by the authors of the *Thesaurus* for personal nouns whose lexical gender is expressed by the stem. As to pairs related by derivation, we find this type in the domain of interpersonal relations and for nouns referring to traits of character (e.g. *przyjaciel* (m.) – *przyjaciółka* (f.) 'friend', *kapryśnik* (m.) – *kapryśnica* (f.) 'capricious person', see §4.2), in the case of noble titles such as *król* (m.) 'king' – *królowa* (f.) 'queen', in the case of fairytale characters and the like (e.g. *czarownik* (m.) 'sorcerer' – *czarownica* (f.) 'witch') and for some professions (e.g. *sprzedawca* (m.) – *sprzedawczyni* (f.) 'shop assistant').

Entries of type 1 treat feminine and masculine terms of personal noun pairs as semantically distinct and as clearly marked for gender. They accurately reflect the fact that the masculine terms of the pairs in question cannot be used generically to refer to females and directly provide feminine synonyms for feminine headwords.

Feminine synonyms are also provided in the second type of entry, which in the Microsoft *Word Thesaurus* is adopted occasionally in the field of kinship terms. In contrast to type 1 entries, however, type 2 entries treat masculine and feminine terms as semantically equivalent and only weakly marked for lexical gender, providing also synonyms of a headword's opposite lexical

gender. The result is clearly odd, though admittedly the risk of confusion for the user is small, since the synonyms' lexical gender is usually marked morphologically.

Type 3 entries, an economical lexicographical representation applied to personal nouns related by productive derivational procedures, treat feminine and masculine terms as otherwise semantically equivalent. This may seem advantageous in some cases, since in this kind of entry unwanted gender stereotypes are likely to appear. However, the fact that feminine synonyms have to be retrieved indirectly from the masculine forms provided is a serious shortcoming. The *Thesaurus* does not indicate whether a feminine equivalent of a given masculine synonym exists or not. In cases where one does exist, the form is not in fact provided, though it may not be fully predictable on the basis of general rules of word formation. For example, the *Thesaurus* proposes *szef* (m.) 'boss' as a synonym for *dyrektorka* (f.) '(female) director', but only a competent speaker of Polish will retrieve the existing feminine form *szefowa* (f.), which is derived in an atypical way. In cases where a given masculine synonym simply has no direct feminine equivalent in the Polish language, no information is given as to whether the masculine form can be used generically for feminine referents or not. So if *stomatolog* (m.) fairly obviously is an adequate synonym for *dentystka* (f.) '(female) dentist', the user is left to decide for herself/himself whether *golbroda* (m.) 'barber' (lit. 'shaves-beard') can be used as a synonym for *fryzjerka* (f.) '(female) hairdresser' (it can't).

Type 4 entries, finally, are an adequate lexicographical solution for the considerable number of personal nouns that have no generally accepted counterpart of the opposite gender. As we will see below when discussing profession titles (see §4.3), the cases in which the *Thesaurus* fails to include feminine forms that actually exist in the Polish language are relatively rare. In this respect, the *Thesaurus* is more complete than conventional Polish dictionaries such as Sobol (1993), in which the majority of existing feminine personal nouns are not mentioned at all, either as headwords or within a lexical entry.

#### 4.2 The crucial pair *kobieta* – *mężczyzna* and related problems

According to Sobol (1993), *kobieta* (f.) means: (1) *dorosły człowiek płci żeńskiej* 'adult human being of female gender'; and (2) *żona* 'wife'; *mężczyzna* (m.) means *dorosły człowiek płci męskiej* 'adult human being of male gender'. In contrast to this succinct description, the Microsoft *Word Thesaurus* provides 20 meanings for each term as well as 66 additional synonyms for *kobieta* and 62 additional synonyms for *mężczyzna*.<sup>13</sup>

In important respects the two entries are organized symmetrically. So both contain, in the same order:

- what one could term true synonyms, meaning roughly 'woman' or 'man' in different social classes and in different registers;



- terms meaning 'old woman'/'old man'.
- terms used to refer to a woman/man with a specific marital status;
- terms meaning 'mother'/'father' and 'godmother'/'godfather';
- terms used to refer to a young woman/man.

Aside from these sets of comparable synonyms, the entries of *kobieta* and *mężczyzna* each contain specific synonyms expressing different types of gender stereotypes.

*Kobieta* is linked, on the one hand, to 11 terms related to childcare and education of small children (*mamka, niania, niańka, piastunka, opiekunka, guwernantka, bona, przyzwoitka, wychowawczyni, przedszkolanka, świetliczanka*). On the other hand, *kobieta* has a bunch of emotively connotated synonyms. The positive ones, listed first, are related to the ideas of beauty, purity and innocence (*pleć piękna, białogłowa, gotąbeczka, anielica, hurysa, piękność, ślicznotka, miss, madonna*) or have a diminutive character (*kobiecina, babina*).<sup>14</sup> The negative ones are divided into two sets: *kumoszka* 'gossip', listed together with the term *przyjaciółka* '(girl)friend', and a set of 13 synonyms headed by the term *złośnica* 'cross-patch', 'irascible woman'.

The latter set, particularly visible because of its size, deserves some special attention. In contrast to the other synonyms specific to *kobieta* (rather than organized symmetrically within the pair *kobieta – mężczyzna*), only a minority of the synonyms in this set, denoting mythological female figures, lack a masculine counterpart in the Polish language (*hetera* 'Hetaera', 'shrew', *megiera* 'Megaera', *jedza* 'shrew', *wiedźma* 'witch', *ksantypa* 'Xanthippe'). The remaining eight synonyms, which the *Thesaurus* lists first, are derived from masculine forms, with which they form pairs: *złośnik* (m.) – *złośnica* (f.) 'cross-patch', 'irascible person', *kapryśnik* (m.) – *kapryśnica* (f.) 'capricious person', *grymasznik* (m.) – *grymasznica* (f.) 'moaner', 'fussy person', *sekutnik* (m.) – *sekutnica* (f.) 'unbearable/quarrelsome person', *któtnik* (m.) – *któtnica* (f.) 'wrangler', 'quarreller', *diabeł* (m.) – *diablica* (f.) 'devil', *piekielnik* (m.) – *piekielnica* (f.) lit. 'inhabitant of hell', *herod* (m.) 'Herod', 'cruel person' – *herod baba* (f.) 'female Herod', 'despotic woman'. That these terms appear as synonyms of *kobieta*, but not of *mężczyzna*, is in line with a further peculiarity, namely that they themselves have entries of type 1. Indeed, the entries of the feminine forms consist of the synonym set headed by *złośnica* exactly as it appears under the headword *kobieta*; they then indicate *kobieta* as a similar term.

In contrast, the masculine forms of the above words are either absent in the *Thesaurus* (*złośnik, któtnik, piekielnik, herod*) or have entirely different entries of type 1, not containing *mężczyzna* as a similar term (*kapryśnik, grymasznik, sekutnik, diabeł*). With regard to these pairs, it seems fair to criticize the *Thesaurus* lexicographers for having introduced a gender asymmetry that has no systemic justification.

The gender-specific synonyms of *mężczyzna* form three sets. First, we find terms indicating an unknown individual (*indywiduum* (nt.), *osobnik* (m.) '(unknown) individual', *ktos* (m.) 'someone', *iks* (m.) 'X', *iksński* (m.) 'X-inski', 'mister X'). The association of these expressions with *mężczyzna*

reflects a male bias in their interpretation (see Jaworski 1986). This becomes all the more clear if one considers the fact that in the entries of each of these expressions the lexicographers indicate *mężczyzna*, but not *kobieta*, as a similar term – despite the fact that they can perfectly well be used to refer to females.<sup>15</sup> It would have been preferable to treat these expressions like the similar terms *osoba* (f.) 'person' or *postać* (f.) 'person', 'figure', 'character', for which the *Thesaurus* indicates only gender-neutral similar terms. As to *kobieta* and *mężczyzna*, since both nouns can be used to refer to an unknown individual, it would have been adequate to indicate in both entries a set of gender-unspecific words – including *osoba* and *postać*.

A second small set of synonyms specific to *mężczyzna* is composed of *chłop* 'peasant', 'man' and *stary koń* lit. 'old horse'. These terms, especially *chłop*, are frequently used in colloquial speech. They are listed after the lexemes denoting young men, which indicates perhaps that the lexicographers consider them typical of young people's language. The entry of *kobieta* does not contain the feminine correspondent of *chłop*, viz. the very frequent *baba* (f.) 'woman' – which has no entry of its own, either.<sup>16</sup> Might it be that this – inadequate – lexicographical decision has been driven by politeness concerns with regard to women, since *baba* and *chłop* as synonyms of *kobieta* and *mężczyzna* belong to a low stylistic register and *baba* can have negative connotations?

Let's conclude this section by considering the third set of synonyms given for *mężczyzna*. This entry gives as many as 23 synonyms, grouped around four meanings: *narzeczony* 'fiancé' (*kandydat na męża, kawaler, konkurent, starający, amant, wielbiciel, adorator, zalotnik*), *zakochany* 'lover' (lit. 'who has fallen in love') (*zadurzony, zabujany*), *sympatia* (m.) 'beloved one'<sup>17</sup> (*bliski sercu, luby, miły, najdroższy, miłość, ukochany, umiłowany*), and *wybranek* 'bridegroom' (lit. 'the chosen one') (*oblubieniec, pan młody*). These synonyms cover a large set of roles related to (courtly) love, from the man actively courting a woman (*narzeczony* etc.) to the man at the mercy of love (*zakochany* etc.), the man who is the object of a woman's love (*sympatia* etc.) and finally the man chosen by a woman as a husband-to-be (*wybranek* etc.). While according to the individual entries of these terms some of these roles, in particular the last two types, are also attributed to women, significantly the corresponding feminine terms do not appear as synonyms of *kobieta*. There is no straightforward interpretation of this lexicographical decision. On the one hand, it seems as if the authors of the *Thesaurus* judged men more likely to be lovers and beloved ones than women, and this positive evaluation of men in partnership relations contrasts sharply with the negative evaluation of women in interpersonal relationships in general, as expressed in the previously discussed synonyms of *kobieta* clustering around the ideas of quarrelsomeness (*złośnica* etc.) and passion for gossip (*kumoszka*). In comparison with the thesauri of other languages, on the other hand, it is noteworthy that the domain of love and partnership is given such importance in the entry of *mężczyzna* at all – unlike certain other features commonly associated with masculinity such as strength, not to mention features belonging to the conceptual field of

'human being', which are lexicalized separately in Polish by the word *człowiek* and its derivatives.

#### 4.3 Some observations on the treatment of professional titles in the *Thesaurus*

Professional titles form an unstable area of the lexicon, subject to variation and rapid change, reflecting extralinguistic social, technological and political developments. This is also true with regard to Polish feminine and masculine forms of professional titles: as elsewhere, the growing female presence on the labour market in the past 150 years has made it necessary to develop new linguistic means to refer to women entering professional domains previously reserved for men. Corresponding to more general tendencies in the domain of personal nouns, speakers of Polish have the possibility either to form new feminine forms by derivation or to use existing masculine forms, while having recourse to morphosyntactical strategies (agreement, reduction of inflection) and the use of *pani* or proper names to make it clear that a female is intended (see §2). The morphological procedures used for the derivation of feminine forms do not show a great amount of variation: in the overwhelming majority of cases, only one suffixed feminine derivative is possible for any given professional title. However, there is considerable inconsistency as to the set of professional titles that form feminine variants and as to eventual semantic differences between feminine and masculine forms.

In a feminist perspective, it has been recommended that existing derived feminine forms be used consistently and innovative forms such as *psycholożka* (f.) (derived from *psycholog* (m.)) be promoted (Miemietz 1993, 1996; Koniuszaniec & Błaszowska 2003), in the hope that the negative connotations and restrictions of meaning affecting many derived feminine forms will disappear thanks to increased frequency of use. As mentioned earlier (see §3), these recommendations are quite recent. The question of whether the consistent promotion of feminine derivations is desirable in all respects in Polish, and whether in themselves they are likely to bring about semantic changes favourable to the image of women has not been debated in depth.

Now how does the Microsoft *Word Thesaurus* represent innovative feminine forms, and what image does it give of women's and men's roles in the professional world? In what follows, the first of these two questions will be discussed by examining a corpus of professional titles and agentives, retrieved by Miemietz (1993) in 1,254 job announcements published in the Polish newspaper *Życie Warszawy* in 1992. The second question will be addressed on the basis of selected *Thesaurus* entries of type 1, i.e. proposing separate descriptions of feminine and masculine forms.

The above-mentioned corpus consists of 177 professional titles,<sup>18</sup> of which 80 are not listed in the *Thesaurus*. Of the remaining 97 nouns, 69 have entries of type 3 according to the typology proposed under §4.1, 9 have entries of type 1 and 19 have entries of type 4 (of which 6 feminine and 13 masculine ones).

This overview shows that professional titles are most often presented in

type 3 entries. A simple morphological analysis reveals that type 3 entries have been chosen mainly on formal grounds. This set of entries consists in fact of a set of pairs with feminine forms ending in *-ka* as well as pairs of the type *-ca* (m.) *-czyni* (f.), resulting from suffixation procedures that are treated as fully regular and productive. This lexicographical strategy copes with variation in language use by automatically applying word formation rules. It makes the *Thesaurus* innovative in some respects (but even in the *Thesaurus* we don't find pairs of the type *psycholog* (m.) – *psycholożka* (f.)), while producing a certain amount of over-generalization. Thus the *Thesaurus* contains feminine forms that are neither attested in Miemietz' (1993) corpus nor listed in the dictionary she cites, Szymczak (1978–81). An example is *kierowczyni* (f.) '(female) driver'. Others are pairs of nouns ending in *-tor* (m.)/*-torka* (f.), nouns ending in *-yk* (m.)/*-yczka* (f.) – or nouns ending in *-rz*/*-rka*, which the *Thesaurus* lists without distinguishing between common forms such as *lekarka* (f.) '(female) doctor' and (still?) uncommon forms such as *tokarka* (f.) '(female) turner' or *stolarka* (f.) '(female) carpenter', 'joiner'. In some cases, the female forms in question have primarily a non-personal meaning, which the *Thesaurus* does not indicate (e.g. *tokarka* 'lathe', *stolarka* 'carpentry', 'woodwork').

On the other hand, the rule-based approach adopted by the lexicographers fails to account for a certain number of atypical derivations. It is comprehensible that the *Thesaurus* has only masculine entries (type 4) for *cieśla* (m.) 'carpenter', *poligraf* (m.) 'typographer', 'printer', *prezes* (m.) 'president' and a set of nouns ending in *-log* (even if this case is debatable) and *-owiec*. But, quite incorrectly, it also excludes a set of atypically derived, but quite common nouns: *mistrzyni* (f.) '(female) master' (< *mistrz* m.), *cudzoziemka* '(female) foreigner' (< *cudzoziemiec* (m.)), and *uczennica* (f.) '(female) pupil' (< *uczeń* (m.)). Other examples in *-ica* or *-nic-a* such as the nouns treated under §4.2 (*złośnica* etc.) show, by the way, that the *Thesaurus* does not in fact contain any type 3 entries for pairs in *-Ø*/*-ica* or *-nik*/*-nic-a*. Having been separated from their masculine correspondents, some forms in *-ica* have apparently been forgotten by the lexicographers.

To sum up, the vast majority of feminine professional titles are represented in the *Thesaurus* in the form of type 3 entries, as a result of a mechanical application of derivational rules. The advantage of this procedure, namely that it at last ensures the inclusion of feminine forms also in professional domains that are dominated by men (e.g. *instalatorka*), is outweighed not only by the general weaknesses of this intrinsically asymmetrical type of entry (see §4.1), but also by the omission of forms (e.g. *mistrzynie*) and meanings (e.g. *tokarka* 'lathe') that deviate from the rule applied.

Now what about those feminine titles that are treated in specific entries, independently of an eventual masculine counterpart?

A first group of terms consists of those terms in the Miemietz (1993) sample that appear only as feminine forms in the *Thesaurus* (entries of type 4): *bufetowa* (f.) 'woman serving at a buffet', *gosposia* (f.) 'housekeeper', *higienistka* (f.) '(female) hygienist', *hostessa* (f.) 'hostess', *krawcowa* (f.)



'dressmaker', *szwaczka* (f.) 'seamstress'. Some of them have no masculine correspondents in the Polish language (*gosposia, hostessa, szwaczka*). For others, there are corresponding masculine forms (*bufetowy* (m.), *higienista* (m.), *krawiec* (m.)); but also in Miemietz' corpus these lexical items appear only in their feminine form, and they denote professions typically associated with women. In these cases, the decision to explicitly list the feminine forms and to exclude the masculine ones is not motivated by the language system, but rather is related to frequency in language use and reproduces social stereotypes.

With regard to those titles that have two separate entries, a feminine and a masculine one (type 1), the synonyms provided by the *Thesaurus* reflect gender asymmetries that are lexicalized in the Polish language, but also add unnecessary stereotypes, considerably compromising the usefulness of the *Thesaurus*. It may be acceptable, on the one hand, that the *Thesaurus* indicates items such as *siostra* 'sister', *położna* 'midwife' and *akuszerka* 'midwife' as synonyms for *pielęgniarka* (f.) 'nurse' but not for its masculine equivalent *pielęgniarz* (m.); these terms do indeed exist only in the feminine form in Polish and are necessarily applied to female referents. But pairs such as *kucharz* (m.) – *kucharka* (f.) 'cook' are more problematic. The *Thesaurus* indicates *kuchmistrz* (m.) 'master cook' and *szeł kuchni* (m.) 'chef' as synonyms for *kucharz*, whereas for *kucharka* it suggests *podkuchenna* '(female) cook's help', *pomoc kuchenna* (f.) 'kitchen help', *kuchcik* (m.) 'kitchen help', 'cook's apprentice' and *pomywacz* (m.) 'dish washer'. It is true that women are more often employed as cooks in a subordinate position and that, as a consequence, the feminine term may thus be seen as reflecting this situation. To avoid this connotation of low prestige, when referring to women, the language user has the option of using *kucharz* (m.) as a generic masculine. But in contrast to titles such as *doktor* or *inżynier*, the feminine form will often be preferred, and any negative connotations will simply be neutralized by the context (e.g. *Ona jest zawodową/doskonłą kucharką* 'She is a professional/excellent cook'). The synonyms for *kucharka* provided by the *Thesaurus* clearly do not account for this type of use. To retrieve adequate feminine synonyms, the user is constrained to look up the masculine entry and to form feminine variants of the synonyms provided there (*kuchmistrzynie* (f.) '(female) master cook' and *szełowa kuchni* (f.) '(female) chef' are attested lexical items in Polish). That the Microsoft *Word* user will make this laborious detour is all the more unlikely in the case of pairs such as *tancerz* (m.) – *tancerka* (f.) 'dancer', which exclude the masculine form with reference to women.<sup>19</sup> He or she will therefore stick with *danserka* (f.) '(female) dancer' and *girlsa* (f.) 'chorus girl' as possible alternatives of *tancerka*, without noticing the useful items *baletmistrz* (m.) 'ballet-master' (f. *baletmistrzynie*) and *choreograf* 'choreographer', indicated as synonyms of *tancerz* (m.).

## 5 Conclusion

The Polish version of the Microsoft *Word Thesaurus* may be a useful memory aid in many respects. But when it comes to reference to females by means of

personal nouns, it is hardly of any help to its user. A large proportion of lexically female personal nouns turn out to owe their inclusion only to the mechanical (and therefore error-prone) application of derivational rules, and have only lexically male synonyms, irrespective of the latter's referential properties.

The treatment of pairs of personal nouns in separate lexical entries helps avoid these shortcomings and leads to satisfactory results in some cases. However, the analyses proposed in this chapter have shown that this strategy is no guarantee for a careful choice of synonyms either. The lexicographers often exaggerate the semantic differences between corresponding items with female and male gender, relating them to completely separate sets of synonyms. These sets, accessible from any of their members, usually form specifically male or female semantic fields. The resulting images of gender roles might correspond to current linguistic routines in modern Polish society, as Miemietz' (1993) corpus of job advertisements suggests at least for the domain of professional titles. Just as at the level of word formation rules, however, reproduction of what is (stereo)typical does not necessarily support the user in the creative process of text production.

## Notes

- 1 A good collection of links to available on-line dictionaries for Polish can be found on the website of the Ruhr-Universität Bochum (<<http://www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/wwwoerterbuch/polnisch/polnisch.htm>>, consulted in January 2005). Among others, there exists an on-line version of the monolingual dictionary edited by Szymczak (1978–81) and revised in 1992 and 1995 (<<http://sjp.pwn.pl/>>, consulted in January 2005), which also offers the possibility of searching the corpus on which the dictionary is based.
- 2 A noun's grammatical gender is defined by the pattern of inflectional forms it selects in the sentence by virtue of agreement relations (Wiese 1968; Wróbel 2001).
- 3 If personal *pluralia tantum* (collectives such as *państwo* pl. 'Mr and Ms', 'ladies and gentlemen') and non personal *pluralia tantum* (e.g. *sanie* pl. 'sleigh') are counted as categories of their own, there are even seven gender classes (see Wróbel 2001).
- 4 This condition seems not to apply necessarily in the case of plural referential uses. With regard to this context – which can be considered less definite than a referential singular context, but still more definite than the predicative use – existing descriptions do not agree as to the acceptability of inflection (Miemietz 1993: 22).
- 5 This interpretation agrees with the description given by Bärbel Miemietz, who discusses in detail this type of nouns and their treatment in the literature (1993: 16–25). See also the interesting proposal made by van Leeuwen-Turnovcová (2003), according to which the resistance to derivation (of feminine forms) and inflection corresponds to a tendency of the Polish language to retard linguistic integration of the Other, appearing also with regard to words of foreign origin. This tendency is found in Russian as well, but not in Czech. In contrast, Handke (1994b) relates the uninflectedness of feminine forms to a more general tendency of Polish to reduce nominal inflection.
- 6 Useful bibliographical overviews can also be found in Miemietz (1993, 1996) and in Błaszowska (2002).

7 The latter aspect has been treated by Kwiryna Handke, who arrives at the following conclusions:

1) The intellectual sphere dominates in the behaviour of men, who are usually more concerned with the essence of things than with their secondary properties or 'decorative frame', which in turn women prefer. So when buying a car, for instance, men are primarily interested in technical and functional values, and women – above all in external values, in particular in colour. . . . 2) The psychological sphere dominates in the behaviour of women, who are more subject to emotions than men.

(1994a: 26, my translation)

Further sociolinguistic studies on Polish are needed to assess the way the author's analysis reproduces widespread stereotypes on female and male behaviour.

- 8 According to the historical overview proposed by Titkow (1996), gender roles in Polish society have been influenced by, among others, the Roman Catholic Church, by the ethos of aristocracy (granting women high status and the competence to be administrator of a family's estate), by women's participation in the struggle for national independence, above all as mothers maintaining and passing on the national cultural and linguistic heritage (hence the stereotype of *matka polka*, the 'Polish mother'), and by the influx of women into the labour market since the second half of the nineteenth century.
- 9 Among other things, a Plenipotentiary for Gender Equality has been appointed, see <<http://www.rownystatus.gov.pl>>, consulted in January 2005.
- 10 *Rząd o sytuacji kobiet w Polsce*, see <<http://www.oska.org.pl/articles.php?id=153>>, consulted in January 2005.
- 11 In this and in the following examples the meanings are in bold, whereas the items given for each meaning stand in brackets, in italics.
- 12 Double gender nouns such as *sierota* (f./m.) 'orphan' can in general be ranged in this category; an exception is *sympatia* (f.) 'girlfriend', 'fiancée' – *sympatia* (m.) 'boyfriend', 'fiance', which has two different entries (type 1).
- 13 Let us note that the *Thesaurus* does not contain the adjectives *żeński* 'feminine', 'female', *kobięcy* 'womanly', 'feminine' and *męski* 'male', 'masculine'. We find only *kobięco* as an adverb, with a set of adverbial synonyms centred around the restricted – and stereotypical – meaning of female attractiveness (*pociągająco*, *ponętnie*, *apetycznie*, *mile*).
- 14 There is a similar asymmetry in the pair *matka* 'mother' – *ojciec* 'father' described *mężczyzna* earlier. Whereas the affectively connotated forms *mama* and *mamusia* appear as synonyms of *matka*, the words *ojczulek*, *tata* and *tatusz* (which have an entry in the *Thesaurus*) are not indicated as synonyms of *ojciec*.
- 15 Most misleading is the entry of *iksiński*, which is of type 3 (see §4.1): *mężczyzna* ends up being a similar term not only of *iksiński* (m.), but also of its feminine equivalent *iksińska*.
- 16 Of the various derivatives of *baba* (see Kryk-Kastovsky 2000), we find in the *Thesaurus* the diminutive-like *babina* and *herod-baba* 'female Herod'.
- 17 'Person of the opposite sex that one likes or with whom one is in love' (Sobol 1993, my translation).
- 18 Part of them appeared only as masculine forms, others only as feminine forms or in both variants.
- 19 See e.g. Dalewska-Greń (1994: 86).

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#### Links

<http://sjp.pwn.pl/>  
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## 9 The perspective on gender in the Portuguese *Word Thesaurus*

*Maria Aldina Marques*

### 1 Outline of gender-marking and gender-construction in Portuguese

#### 1.1 Categorization of noun gender in Portuguese – natural gender and grammatical gender: from semantics to grammar

Existing since time immemorial in different societies, languages are not only extremely influential, but, more precisely, crystallize the way the speaker perceives the world. The 'sexed' feature of life is arrived at on the basis of the categorization of grammatical gender, despite the formal nature of this category.

In Portuguese, gender as a procedure of grammatical categorization is characteristic of nouns, adjectives, participle forms, determiners and pronouns, in spite of its different morphological and syntactic functioning.

Traditional Grammar has circumscribed, and moreover is still circumscribing the analysis of grammatical gender in Portuguese. A logical perspective of grammar and a representation of grammatical gender based on semantic features support the following definition by a nineteenth-century Portuguese grammarian:

e como todos os animaes naturalmente se distinguem em duas Classes ou Generos segundo os dous sexos de macho e de femea: os Grammaticos puzerão os nomes dos primeiros na Classe ou Genero Masculino, e os dos segundos no Feminino. Estas são as classes naturaes em que entrão so os animaes. Todos os mais seres que não tem sexo algum, deverião ser arranjados na Classe, ou Genero Neutro, isto he, formarem todos uma terceira Classe . . .

Das Classes naturaes, a significação mesma determinava o seu género; das arbitrias, so a terminação dos nomes analogá á dos primeiros, he que podia determinar. Daqui a divisão do genero dos Nomes, ou pela sua significação, ou pela sua terminação.

(Jerónimo Soares Barbosa 1822: 123–4)<sup>1</sup>

There are thus two criteria for analysing grammatical gender in Portuguese. The first is a semantic one, based on male/female distinction, and the second is morphological, based on noun termination (-o/-a, masculine and feminine gender-marking suffixes, respectively).<sup>2</sup>