

Russian Gender Linguistics Forced to Respond Can Women Be Made Visible in Communication? (with examples from Polish, Czech, and Slovenian)

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This paper³¹ deals critically with current methodological approaches in Russian gender linguistics. It will be shown that we need to introduce and apply other approaches to further gender linguistic research in order to make gender analyses more proper and effective and, consequently, to achieve new and fruitful research results. In this context, my paper can be considered as a form of appeal to Russian gender linguists to question critically the predominant androcentrism in language. In the future, discourses need to be shaped in a different manner and possibilities must be provided to guarantee a diversity of gender and identity in society as well as in language. Using the example of the entity “woman” or, accordingly, of the visibility of women in language, I will point out that one cannot reduce (her) visibility in its narrow sense ‘to be visible for the eyes’, because visibility can also relate to cognitive structures, perception, and gender construction.

In the following, I will not provide any suggestions for concrete linguistic solutions. Rather it is my aim to examine different linguistic subdisciplines in order to demonstrate that they influence the visibility of women in language and, moreover, to illustrate their impact in the existence, the perception and the construction of women in communication.

Key words: Russian gender linguistics, discourse, structuralism, post-structuralism, motion suffixes, women and language.

Introduction

Today, gender linguistics is an established subdiscipline within linguistics. The *Interdisciplinary Bibliography on Language, Gender and Sexuality*, edited by Heiko Motschenbacher in 2012 [20], shows impressively how this research field has developed across different languages during the past few decades. Yet, the history of gender linguistics and its (current) state of research differ tremendously from each other when compared across different languages. In English, American, or German studies, for example, the subdiscipline *gender linguistics* – in the beginning: *feminist linguistics* – started to evolve in the (late) 1970s. In Slavonic studies, in contrast, “concrete”, “real”, and “research-relevant” gender linguistics – a discipline “in its own right” – cannot be found until considerably later. In Russian studies, for instance, gender linguistics in its current state – that means a) following a feminist-emancipatory approach, which is critical of language, b) questioning ideology in language and society, and c) focussing on patriarchal and androcentric, and, therefore, sexist structures – did not

become relevant or noteworthy before the early 1990s. Before the 1990s, questions of language and gender were discussed, primarily, within the field of language norm as well as in works on normative grammar and normative word formation [22]. However, one has to acknowledge that this focus of research has not been abandoned completely until now, which means that normative gender discussions still play an important role in Russian linguistics, a fact I will deal with in the current paper.

For the past two decades, we have witnessed a growing influence of American research as well as of adopted post-structuralist approaches, as documented by Kirilina [16, 17]. This has resulted in a rapidly expanding interest in Russian gender (linguistic) research and, hence, in an increasing number of publications. One problem with which scholars had to deal in the early days was the problem of terminology. New terms – especially the phenomenon or the entity of *gender* – needed to be introduced which before that period were unknown to both, the Russian society and the Russian linguists [16, 17]. Consequently, the birth of Russian gender linguistics can be described as relatively late and a little bit slow when compared with its Western counterparts.

Nowadays, gender linguistics has to be regarded as an established subdiscipline in Russian linguistics, too. However, this statement should not mislead us. Research on gender and language in Russian linguistics does not work in the same way as it does in other areas (cf. English, American, or German linguistics). Furthermore, we should not assume that, in this relatively short time, Russian gender linguistics could catch up with the quality standards and research diversity which we encounter, for example, in the disciplines mentioned above. Certainly, one reason Russian gender linguistic research has not evolved to a comparable level up to now is, of course, the short period of its existence. Yet, there are other reasons which hinder the further development of Russian gender linguistics and lead to different and sometimes quite questionable research results, especially when we consider the applied research methods and approaches.

This paper has two objectives: First of all, I would like to address and describe some of the reasons which enable us to retrace and to understand why Russian gender linguistics is still rooted in more traditional research methods. These observations will then guide us to some of the research results and conclusions, at which gender linguistics have arrived in the past few years. Moreover, these observations will show what Russian gender linguistics – with its current methodological focus – can achieve in the near future and where applied approaches

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and wide-spread assumptions may set boundaries for gender research. From this, we can conclude whether it would not make more sense for gender research to integrate and apply new methodological approaches which in turn would produce richer results. I must apologise here for being a bit repetitive as to some aspects and remarks. This is purely owed to the division of the chapters the contents of which overlap significantly.

My second objective is to investigate the possibilities of making women visible in and throughout language. For some linguists, this question might seem banal and trite, because depending on your point of view discussing women's visibility in language might be an old hat. For Russian, however, this question has not yet been answered clearly and completely. Furthermore, the necessity to deal with this question is only rarely emphasised. Without doubt, the visibility of women in language does not play an important role in Russian (neither from an inside, self-referential perspective of women, nor from an outside perspective, i.e. when one refers to a woman). My study will show that, mostly, ideological ideas lead to the general assumption that it is neither possible nor necessary to make women visible in and throughout language. Furthermore, it will be illustrated that women can be made linguistically and cognitively visible. Yet, in order to do so, Russian gender linguistic research has to adopt new perspectives. In particular, it is necessary to perform gender analyses that are based on other, more innovative methodological approaches.

I. Russian gender linguistics – some critical remarks

Structuralism versus post-structuralism

While gender linguistic research in English, American, or German Studies focuses heavily on a post-structuralist approach to analysis of language and gender [e.g. 5, 9, 11], which includes an explicit connection to reality and, obviously, discourse [e.g. 12, 19], most Russian research projects are still embedded in structuralist thinking, following, consequently, a structuralist approach. One can observe that structuralist approaches are not only developed in the course of research. In a lot of cases, research questions on topics in gender linguistics are already posed from an explicitly structuralist perspective a priori. Although it cannot be denied that Russian gender linguistic studies often stress the importance of integrating post-structuralist and even deconstructivist approaches into gender linguistic research and that researchers lament the non-adequate research possibilities in a structuralist context, it is, in fact, a highly visible *factum* that post-structuralist approaches to Russian gender linguistics play an obviously marginal role to this date. References to Judith Butler [e.g. 2, 3, 4], Michel Foucault [e.g. 10] or other post-structuralists occur frequently only on the surface of research, while actual post-structuralist methods do not enter the research on language and gender completely. Furthermore, other terms, like *postmodern*, *postgender* or *post-feminist*, are

used in gender analyses superficially, but they are not applied in a way which corresponds to the state of the art.

A post-structuralist approach is based on the assumption that reality constructs language and that language constructs reality, so that language and reality are found in an interdependent relation with each other, explicitly emphasised by Weedon [29]. That means the extralinguistic *gender* which exists in reality is iteratively performed and established in and throughout language. Gender, this way, is neither prediscursive, nor stable, nor ever finalised. However, this is in direct opposition to the assumptions on which Russian gender research is based and relies. The majority of gender publications describe gender as a natural given and therefore a prediscursive entity. This entity is almost constantly and often consciously characterised by stability and invariance, and, consequently, by hermetic confinement. So, it appears only logical that gender linguistic research in Russian is based on stereotypical questions or, accordingly, on questions that implicate the assumption of stereotypical behaviour, because gender specificity is preassigned and *a priori* expected. In this context, inequity and inequality concerning gender are not discussed or critically questioned. Rather gender division and gender stereotypes along the gender binarity are fortified and upheld.

These preassigned assumptions or even paradigms are reflected in language: not only in the system, but also, or primarily, in language use. First of all, one needs to mention that some grammatical phenomena, like masculine generics, are not criticised or critically questioned. On the contrary: mostly, the use of masculine generics is characterised as legitimate and correct – in other words: as normal and / or normative. This assumption stands in the structuralist tradition and, therefore, in striking contrast to a post-structuralist approach. As a consequence, the general use of derivational feminine suffixes (*motion suffixes*, e.g. *-ка, -ница, -ша*) in language cannot be legitimised. However, there is absolutely no doubt about the fact that it is actually possible to use feminine word forms in Russian. Thus, it strikes us as a little bit odd when female speakers refer to themselves by using a masculine form (e.g. ^{fem}Я работаю ^{masc}журналистом ^[fem]‘I work as a ^[masc]journalist’). Or when in a female context masculine nouns are used to refer to a woman (e.g. ^{fem}Она – ^{masc}наш ^{masc}заведующий ^{fem}‘She is ^[masc]our ^[masc]director’). Russian speakers often do not make any use of the motion suffixes, although the Russian language provides the according suffixes. Nevertheless, the possibility and even the necessity to use motion suffixes is often, according to the language rules, strictly denied. In this context, traditional and rash evaluations, such as good / bad, adequate / inadequate, have an enormous influence on that kind of structuralist thinking, following deeply rooted ideological ideas.

To sum it all up: the structuralist approach with its highly visible dominance in Russian linguistics can be described as an obstacle to further gender linguistic insights. On the one hand, this means that analyses and debates on language and gender will remain inadequate.

On the other hand, Russian gender linguistics, as a logical consequence, is still rooted in old patterns and traditional ideas. As a consequence, new scientific findings often remain limited and uncritical. Last but not least, it is difficult to catch up with the research in other disciplines under these conditions. But above all, it needs to be questioned whether a structuralist approach does not ignore the essential point of gender linguistics and, as a consequence, challenges the actual necessity of this discipline.

Construction versus deconstruction

Deconstructivist critical approaches within gender linguistics, provided and established by Judith Butler for example [cf. 2, 3, 4], give us the opportunity to rethink gender and, consequently, to provide gender with new dimensions.

Deconstructivist approaches have not entered Russian gender linguistics up to now in a satisfying way. However, even the constructivist approach in gender linguistics is not free from doubts. Following a constructivist approach, one assumes that gender and, consequently, gendered language use are in reality socially and culturally constructed. A constructivist approach, as we can see, is based on post-structuralist approaches. In Russian gender linguistic research, however, the assumption that gender is constructed takes the back seat. A relation to reality, an important entity for a constructivist approach, is often missing. Gender and gender identities are regularly discussed in a hermetic way, excluding reality and discourse. Rather it seems to be a wide-spread opinion that gender, particularly, man and woman, and, consequently, gendered behaviour – this includes language use – are naturally given entities. Hence, women and men speak differently, because they embody their respective gender by nature. Women speak like women, because they are women. To this effect, people do not construct their identities; they are their identities (see above). The main question, consequently, concerns the way *how* women and men speak, without questioning the reasons for this *how*. This leads, for example, to an often highly generalised description of the way women and men speak. As a result of this assumption, one could cite, for instance, the wide-spread myth that women do not use vulgarisms to the same extent as men; this is a myth which is seldom critically questioned and has, as far as I know, never been investigated in a meaningful fashion (see here the study of Wurm [30]).

Russian gender research often postulates that gender binarity is given by nature. This raises a lot of critical questions which, actually, have to be integrated into further research projects. One interesting question here might be: where does the entity *man* end and where does the entity *woman* begin? And can we assume and, finally, speak of a unique female identity that can be seen as a full counterpart of the male identity? How do “intermediate” genders, that means people with a trans-identity of any kind whatsoever or intersex persons, fit in this scheme? These questions show that older and most of the recent

research approaches can lead only to limited research findings.

Considering the research on word formation and its roots in the language system, we can observe a less distinct constructivist approach, too. In this context, it is postulated that it is often not possible or even necessary to make women visible in language, by using available motion suffixes or, in general, feminine word forms. This obstructs the construction of a female gender identity or even eliminates any possibilities of constructing a female identity. What's more: these assumptions do not correspond to the idea of objectivity and reality. As we can clearly see, in Russian gender linguistics, structuralist ideas are rehashed and integrated in research in a, let's say, 'renewed' fashion. By 'renewed' fashion I mean that old structuralist ideas and assumptions which were formerly discussed in the framework of language norm, are decorated today with some gender elements which, in the end, nevertheless offer us no new or, more precisely, no explicitly new research results. Let me remind you once again of the rejected use of motion suffixes which are up to now characterised *a priori* as negative or pejorative, often based on the judgement that those forms sound strange and “un-Russian”. Consequently, we can observe that the discussion about these suffixes from a gender linguistic perspective and their current categorisation do not differ from strictly structuralist discussions outside a gender context as we have known it for decades.

However, one can refer to some examples from other Slavonic languages where gender research has led to some changes in language use, in particular to a new consciousness and gender awareness. So, for example, in Czech language, the use of explicit feminine forms was unusual until (about) the 1950s (cf. also the explanation by Doleschal [8]). Nowadays, it is common sense that when one refers to a woman, one has to use feminine forms which are – and this very fact needs to be emphasised – gender-neutral lexical units without any stylistic or connotative label (e.g. *psycholingvistka*, *automechanička*, *psycholožka*, *gynekoložka*, for further explanation see Valdová [27, 28]). In this context, it is interesting and, consequently, worth to note that, today, even foreign surnames appear in Czech in a gendered form (e.g. *Britney Spearsová* 'Britney Spears', *Meryl Streepová* 'Meryl Streep', *Michelle Obamová* 'Michelle Obama'). To which extent, we can speak here about a parallel connection between feminine surnames and feminine person nouns remains questionable and has to be clarified in further scientific debates (in detail cf. [28]). In Polish and Slovenian, we can observe a change in gender awareness, too. While the form *majorka* formerly meant 'the wife of the major' (gendered form to point out dependence), it is now also used in Slovenian to refer to a 'female major' (gendered form to construct identity) (cf. also *sodnica*, *kánclerka*, *producētka*). Furthermore, those feminine word forms are more and more included in Slovenian dictionaries, as recently examined by Štumberger [25]. This demonstrates the acceptance of the use of motion suffixes and, finally, the use of feminine

forms in general. Also in Polish we realise a constantly, although slowly rising use of motion suffixes. Word forms, like *pani ministra* '(female) minister', *pani premierowa* '(female) prime minister', *biolożka* '(female) biologist', *psycholożka* '(female) psychologist', *dyrektorka* '(female) director', *rektorka* '(female) university chancellor', are increasingly used not only in written, but also in spoken language. Although a lot of Polish speakers are up to now confused about the use of those lexical constructions (in comparison, see Keller [15]), we can detect a significant change in language which will be, I suggest, increasingly visible in the future.

In contrast, the majority of Russian linguists rejects the use of motion suffixes as well as such combinations, like *студентки и студенты* 'female students and male students', *читательницы и читатели* 'female readers and male readers', or *преподавательницы и преподаватели* 'female teachers and male teachers', which they explain as unnecessary, because the masculine form includes female persons directly (cf. in contrast the examples for Czech language, recently provided by Valdová in 2013: *manažerky a manažeři* or *vážené voličky, vážení voliči* [27]). Those assumptions and postulates are grounded more in ideology than in logic.

Constructivist approaches must be implemented more in Russian gender research. This presupposes an explicit renouncing of structuralism and an embracing of post-structuralism. The question then is not so much *if* and *how* women and men speak differently. The question is *why* they differ. To question the reasons for language behaviour is of great importance for gender linguistics. Moreover, to pose the question *why* we speak – and even do not speak – in a special manner is also relevant with regard to language use in general.

Furthermore, gender linguistics in general carries a potential of deconstructiveness within itself which has not been tapped fully in Russian gender linguistics up to now. Yet, the time has come for Russian linguistics to deal with deconstructivist approaches to guarantee new and important research findings in the future.

Gender stability versus gender instability

In Russian gender linguistics, it seems as if the entity *man* is a clearly defined concept. There also seems to be an obvious agreement as to what a *woman* is. The idea of woman and man is rooted in their *sexus*. This assumption has far-reaching consequences for the grammatical gender or, in a more general way, for any grammatical construction, and, not least, on gender as a social category. Russian gender linguistics, is blind to its own assumption that women, in general, derive their specificity, definition, and, particularly, their right to exist from being the significant counterpart of men – i.e. women only exist in a woman-man-constellation. From this perspective, what men lack, is the property of women. What men exhibit to full extent, women have to a lesser or deviant degree. Consequently, the man is seen as the all-encompassing ideal of being. In the Russian language, these assumptions obviously appear. Gender-unspecific constructions demand a masculine agreement (e.g. *чтобы быть интересным, ...* 'in order to be

interesting ...'). Even in a female context seemingly gender-unspecific linguistic units demand masculine endings (e.g. *кто из девушек сказал, что ...* '[neut]who of the femgirls [masc]said that ...'). Women have to subordinate to male dominance and even to male minority (e.g. *7 студенток и 1 студент* → *8 студентов* '7 (female) students and 1 (male) student → 8 [masc]students', *две читательницы и один читатель* → *трех читателей* '2 (female) readers and 1 (male) reader → 3 [masc]readers).

The language system is divided into strictly male / masculine and strictly female / feminine, because the language system has its roots in the dominant discourse which is characterised by hegemonic and heteronormative ideas. Consequently, some structures are divided into strictly male / masculine and strictly female / feminine, too (e.g. *мужчина* 'man', *женщина* 'woman', *муж* 'husband', *жена* 'wife', *дядя* 'uncle', *тетя* 'aunt'). Very often, meanings are constructed explicitly according to the gender binarity and bequeath the same meanings (i.e. *жениться* '(for a man) to marry', *выйти замуж* '(for a woman) to marry', *свадьба* '(heterosexual) wedding', *семья* '(heterosexual) family'). In reality, however, it is difficult to divide genders or to constantly keep up the idea of gender binarity with heterosexual orientation. In reality, we encounter the ideal woman and the ideal man in their preassigned forms to a much lesser degree. That is demonstrated in detail in Motschenbacher [21]. Yet, we are not able to render the deviations and variations which we observe in the Russian language. In and throughout language, we can only construct a gender ideal which is stable and, moreover, heterosexual. This has not only consequences for man and woman, but to a high extent, particularly, for people who do not (want to) commit themselves to this gender binarism with its heteronormative patterns. The idea of gender as a fluent and, therefore, blurred entity is completely ignored in research, so that it is oriented towards the assumption that gender is stable, invariant, and non-negotiable. This results once more from the refusal to integrate deconstructivist and post-structuralist approaches into Russian gender linguistics.

Meaning, following a structuralist approach, is characterised by its arbitrariness and convention. This leads to the problem that meaning is regarded as something stable and fixed, so that there is no room left for variance. However, it is obvious that man and woman are no stable entities, neither in reality nor in language. Furthermore, we have to include "intermediate" genders, too. "Intermediate" gender as a biological given (intersex) or socially constructed phenomenon (trans-identity) must not be excluded from gender discourse. So, in this respect, how can we define *woman*, if *woman* is a fluent entity? How can we define *gender*, when we have reason to assume that there are much more than two genders? We cannot answer these questions in a structuralist context. This makes once more clear that if we want to deal with gender linguistic questions to perform adequate, objective and, particularly, fruitful analyses, we have to resort to post-structuralist and deconstructivist approaches. If the Russian language system only provides

a binary grammatical gender system, intersex persons and people with a trans-identity obviously have problems to choose the right grammatical form for themselves. Latest and current gender research has neglected all of these gender identities. Queer identities are in the focus of some works concerning sociological or cultural topics [i.g. 1, 13, 23, 24]. In linguistics, this phenomenon is still a desideratum.

II. Interim conclusion

All in all, we can conclude that potential research possibilities in Russian gender linguistics are currently not fully developed, so that necessary and preferable objectives cannot be reached in the near future. As I have shown, gender linguistic research is still rooted too much in structuralist approaches. This makes it necessary to increase the integration of post-structuralist research approaches into gender linguistics; yet, it is at the same time extremely difficult to integrate other, more useful (i.e. post-structuralist) approaches for gender research and plead for their acceptance. However, non-adequate research approaches lead to non-adequate research results. We can observe this in Russian gender linguistics. There are a lot of linguistic disciplines which have not been examined from a gender perspective until now. The relation between gender and different linguistic disciplines is demonstrated by Scheller-Boltz [22]. And if we apply different and new approaches in the future, we can get new and fruitful results. But we need a rethinking with regard to gender and, consequently, gender linguistics. Only in this way, we can do justice to the actual meaning and the aims (relevant research objectives) of gender linguistics.

III. Making women visible in Russian language

There are different possibilities to make women visible in and throughout language. As shown in detail by Scheller-Boltz, every linguistic discipline contributes to an appropriate extent to the visibility of women in language [22]. **Morphology**, for example, offers a very important option for ensuring women's visibility in and throughout language, namely by using systematically available gender-specific and / or gender-related morphemes for constructing gender identity (e.g. *-ница, -ка, -уа*). In this context, one assumes that, from a morpho-cognitive perspective, the use of feminine morphemes leads to a concrete visibility and recognisability of women (see below).

One can scrutinise the field of **word formation** from a gender perspective. It is interesting to examine current patterns of word formation that are available in order to express – primarily – the female gender, but also the question of their current use and frequency. This leads immediately to the question of the acceptance of the patterns of word formation as well as of the products of word formation (*units of designation*).

As I have mentioned above, gender research is also necessary within **semantics**. Analyses in the field of

semantics can help to solve illogical and irrational problems. It is interesting to investigate – especially in a queer-linguistic context – to which extent meanings, traditionally embedded in a heteronormative context, or, as Butler says, in a “heterosexual matrix“ [2], may reveal themselves to be variable and fluid (e.g. *семья* ‘family’, *муж* ‘husband’, *жена* ‘wife’), or, respectively, to which extent a queer life style requires new meanings which could lead to semantic differentiation or semantic diversity [22]. Semantic analyses may illustrate how lexical units can make a contribution to the visibility of identities and how they obstruct the visibility of identities in communication.

Language norm usually relies exclusively on language systematic rules and conventions and is often discussed within these contexts. When analysing language norm, we have to investigate, for example, the sex of pronouns and question whether they have a cognitive sex? Dealing with this question points to possible gender-specific syntactic agreements as an interesting field of study (e.g. *кто пришла?* ‘_[neut]who _[fem]came’ or, in general, e.g. *наша/наш врач пришла/пришел* ‘_[fem]our/_[masc]our doctor _[fem]came/_[masc]came’). The process of feminising words by using appropriate suffixes or even more the (possible) ways of using feminine forms often collide with normative principles and rules. Further analyses are necessary to falsify or verify approaches and assumptions [22].

Within **cognitive linguistics**, we have to focus on the question of how gender is perceived, under which circumstances gender is ignored or excluded, and how people categorise different genders. So the question here is mainly whether identities can be made (cognitively) visible or perceptible in communication. Cognitive research on generic masculine forms can be cited here as an illustrative example. The respective studies are based on the hypothesis: If women are not visible in language and are not made visible through language, women as a whole are excluded from perception and, hence, will not receive the attention they deserve.

It is important to investigate different linguistic disciplines from a gender linguistic perspective to demonstrate their impact on gender and gender identity as well as on their visibility and perception.

As shown in detail in Scheller-Boltz [22], the German language offers currently a wide range of (written and spoken) options to make women but also other (that is queer) identities visible in and throughout language. Consequently, aside from a lot of variants based in the traditional gender binarity with its focus on male and female recipients, the German language offers today also a queer approach and may guarantee, although mostly in written language, an all-identity-inclusive language use (for a compressed survey, see Scheller-Boltz [22]). Gender-neutral language and gender diversity are subjects with a fine tradition in Great Britain, the U.S., and Canada, too. It is thus evident that I could make a long list of works dealing with these topics but this is not the purpose of this paper. For an illustrative example on this topic see Jule [14]).

In one of my last papers, I have already posed the question of women's visibility in the Russian language [22]. It is evident that the situation in Russia is different from the countries, I have mentioned above. Russia has emphasised moral and traditional values – in particular in recent years. The church has influenced policies and society – in some instances to an almost frightening extent. The vision of the family with three children which Vladimir Putin in the year 2013 propagated reflects a traditional concept of gender with a binary structure and very traditional and conservative roles for men and women.³² Not only does this exclude persons who for biological or anatomical reasons do not fit into this model. It also demonstrates that gender diversity is currently a subject opposed by the Russian government. The so-called *propaganda laws*, which caused an international uproar particularly during the Olympics in Sochi [13] and the sharp – often debasing – criticism of this year's winner of the Eurovision Song Contest, Conchita Wurst, paint a very conservative picture of gender. This year's prohibition that transsexual persons are not allowed to pass a driver's licence is the latest example for the oppression by the state.³³

This concept of gender and gender identity is also reflected by language. The Russian ways of addressing another person and of referring, for example, to job titles remind us a lot of the language used in Western Europe in the 1970s. As a rule, the generic masculine form is the form which must be used and is accepted. This general rule applies to all text types. Exceptions like addressing both genders separately are seldom. In Russian *Если наши студенты...* 'if our _[masc]students' is grammatically, pragmatically and socio-culturally correct, even though one could question this as to political correctness and equality in general. It is normal for the Russian president to address his people during his New Year's speech using the generic masculine form. The generic masculine form is also used consistently for other forms of address like *дорогие читатели* 'dear _[masc]readers', *дорогие слушатели* 'dear _[masc]listeners', *дорогие зрители* 'dear _[masc]spectators'. Even women are directly addressed in the masculine form. The masculine form is also used for all entries in official documents. Job titles on name tags in shops, for example, use a masculine form even when the bearer of the tag is a woman.

The patriarchal structure with its androcentric focus is rarely questioned. It is a relic from the era of communism during which the inequality of man and woman was said to have been overcome [26]. Equality and non-discrimination were propagated for political reasons. They were reflected by the generic masculine form. From this point of view, women did not need to be made visible because they were equal. To be sure: neither had the Soviet Union accomplished gender equality nor could its approach to language policy be qualified as non-sexist. To

use the generic masculine form means to subject all genders to the male gender. From this perspective, masculinity is the ideal which is able to comprise and represent all genders – an idea which reminds us of the one-gender-model proposed by Laqueur [18].

Recently, I concluded that further studies are required in order to determine whether a change of language use is on the horizon to avoid the androcentric language and to guarantee women's visibility in language [22]. Here, I would like to address the problem another way. For the Czech language, Jana Valdová proposed a solution for making women visible in written texts [27]. Her version of doing gender in written communication is based on an example, published by Čmejrková [6, 7]. What is relevant here, is the fact that the Czech language or language structure faces the same difficulties as Russian does. However, Valdová shows clearly that it is possible even in Slavonic languages to use a language that includes at least man and woman. One can assume that in Russian those possibilities exist, too. One just has to use and apply them.

Conclusion

What is important at this moment is not to provide concrete examples or to show the variety of possibilities which would lead to women's visibility in language. I would rather like to encourage gender linguists to reconsider linguistically available options to make women visible in language and to reconsider to which extent, for instance, motion suffixes really have – until now – a connotation mark, characterising them as always negative, pejorative, or unusual (i.e. "un-Russian"). As we can see in Slovenian, Czech or Polish, changes are possible and necessary. We have to deal with ideological ideas. Otherwise, we are likely to fall into the trap of jumping to conclusions because we have failed to recognise and question traditional assumptions about sex and gender. Further studies, especially studies on (morpho-)cognition, are preferable here.

We have to reconsider the meaning of gender linguistics. For dealing with gender linguistics does not only mean to focus on women; it means to uncover structures, patterns, and thinking that discriminate gender identities. To deal with gender linguistics means to deal with discourses as well as with ways to include and critically question our reality. Particularly, we have to pay attention to the main discourse with its androcentric structure. It is not useful to follow structuralist approaches which focus neither on discourse nor on the construction of reality. Structuralist research applies – far from discourse and reality – a fixed, stiff, and thereby universal system as a standard which will never do justice to reality. Discourses have a great impact on language and by using language we feed the discourse and construct our reality. For making women and other gender identities visible and perceptible in society and in language we have to reconsider what may be the contribution of gender linguistics in this area.

³² Online at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/vladimir-putin/9739678/Vladimir-Putin-calls-on-Russian-families-to-have-three-children.html> (10.07.2014).

³³ Online at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30735673> (08.01.2015).

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