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LANGUAGE FEMINIZATION
IN UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN

Over recent years, Ukrainian and Russian have been going through a number of sociolinguistic transformations. Feminist linguistic activism has become a marker of sociopolitical changes in the two language spaces. It has spread with a goal to identify and modify the rules that were developed and used to restrain the language and subject it to men-centered linguistic regulations.

This article will discuss and compare the transformations Ukrainian and Russian are experiencing as well as analyze the received data on the morphological level.

Key words: *language feminization, feminist linguistics, feminist linguistic activism, feminitives, gender linguistics.*

Introduction. Researchers have been studying the relations between language and society for centuries. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that came about in 1929 is an illustration of the idea that a person's language shapes the way they perceive the world. The patterns of language used in culture and society affect our thoughts and worldview. The linguistic relativity hypothesis, as it is also called, states that language one speaks either influences or determines the way one thinks about reality (Hussein, 2012, p. 642-646). If this reality is a world designed for men, it will be clearly reflected in the language.

Any given language is, from the anthropological point of view, an integral part of the culture, hence of the society that produces it. Even though the way people speak is not in itself cultural, it is closely related to social changes, which subsequently produce changes in language. Language expands, continuously adapting to social needs, and if the need of society is to live in gender harmony and equality, language will duly adjust.

Since changes in society and language are reciprocal, there is an urgent need to reconsider how nouns express the notions they represent. Nowadays, linguists observe a tendency for feminization among the Slavic languages. It is extremely important to talk about such tendencies as they are relevant in the research of *how we talk about them* and *how we choose to respond* to them (Pauwels, 2003, p. 550-571).

According to the French sociologist and public intellectual Pierre Bourdieu, language is not only a way of communication but also a mechanism and construct of power (Bourdieu, 1991). Therefore, feminitives are not about suffixes or word-forming models, but the status of speakers who use these words and what impact they make on their listeners and interlocutors. The whole social pyramid can be seen in every act of such language representations.

It is important to mention that feminitives are not used exceptionally by women; they allow for the possibility of women and men producing both similar and different gender discourses; and of women and men constructing their gendered identities in a range of ways (Bucholtz, 2003, p. 64). Feminitives are not just about women's rights, they are about gender equality and fighting against gender bias. This article will discuss sociolinguistic transformations Ukrainian and Russian are going through as well as analyze and compare the received data on the morphological level.

Theoretical Background. Feminitives are feminine nouns that have two groups of meanings. One group names women by various characteristics: position, profession, nationality, marital or family status. For example, «депутатка», «німкеня», «сестра» for Ukrainian and «депутатка», «немка», «сестра» for Russian. The second group are the names of female animals «кішка», «корова» for Ukrainian and «кошка», «корова» for Russian.

Among Ukrainian and Russian speakers, there have always been discussions about the necessity of using loan words and foul language as well as about emergence and existence of feminitives. It is vital to keep in mind though, that both languages have been using feminitives for quite a long time, e.g., in Russian, «актриса», «певица», «поэтесса» vs «актриса», «співачка», «поетеса» in Ukrainian. The existence of such words among others pushed the speakers to find ways to legitimize them. From the sociolinguistic point of view, feminitives emerged because there were people for whom these words were important, who wanted them to exist and to be pronounced.

Initially, women's lives were limited to private space, so feminitives were the first to emerge when there was a need to name family and home members. Ukrainian linguist Maria Brus has been studying women's names in the old Ukrainian monuments of the XVI-XVII centuries for decades. Her research shows that feminitives initially appeared in those historical moments when a woman became an owner of a certain property, which was reflected in written memoirs. Such feminitives can be retrieved from the dictionary of a Ukrainian lexicographer, linguist and Orthodox monk Pamvo Berynda of the XVI century. However, feminitives had been in use way before that. For example, there was a word «княгиня» (same for Ukrainian and Russian) in the XI century, which means «duchess, princess» (Brus, 2007, p. 144-155).

In the XVI-XVII centuries, in Ukrainian territories, the Lithuanian Statute legitimized the equality of property and inheritance rights for women and men. This meant that women began to participate more actively in state, public, and other affairs, and, consequently, were represented in public space. Consequently, new words were needed to name them, this was exactly when the Ukrainian word «дорадниця» appeared. It means «a female counselor» and is being actively used in the modern Ukrainian language.

Maria Brus stresses that in general, feminitives formed an extensive and semantically rich lexical subsystem in the Ukrainian language of the XVI-XVII centuries, which reflected the history of Ukrainian women, their household,

cultural, educational, military, and charitable activities. In the dictionaries of the early XX century as well as in the official business documents belonging to that epoch, there was an active attempt to introduce female nouns where it could have been possible. That is why, in Maria Brus's point of view, feminitives are all about returning to the Ukrainian language traditions, which due to certain circumstances were rejected (Brus, 2007, p. 151). For example, in Lviv, «пані професорко» was used until 1939. This rejection may have happened due to the fact that a part of Ukraine was under the influence of the Russian Empire and another part was under the influence of Austria-Hungary and Poland. Where there was Polish influence, speakers would accept this word combination more promptly, and where Ukraine was under Russian influence, these words were less perceived, because there were fewer of them in public.

This is a normal process of language development, this is how it is arranged: we no longer say some words because we do not use certain objects, there are no certain titles, while others, on the contrary, we learn to use because the surrounding world requires it from us.

The «Gramota.ru[1]» portal, in collaboration with the Institute of the Russian Language of the Russian Academy of Sciences, published facts about the percentage of masculine, feminine, and neuter nouns in Russia. Linguists have calculated that there are only about 40.5% of masculine nouns, 43% – feminine, and only about 16.5% – neuter nouns. There are more feminine nouns in Russian than masculine words, although this happens in a more men-oriented language, in which adjectives and demonyms are mentioned in dictionaries mostly only in their masculine forms.

When foreigners learn Ukrainian or Russian grammar, they learn that there are three noun genders in both languages: masculine, feminine, and neuter; always in this order, starting with masculine. When foreigners learn Ukrainian or Russian adjectives, masculine adjectives will be dealt with first as only they will certainly be found in dictionaries. The endings for feminine, neuter, and plural adjectives must be learnt separately and used instead of masculine endings that are introduced first. As one of the ways to eradicate such a linguistic gender bias, Google has launched a new system for its online machine translators and dictionaries. Learners of French and Spanish as well as other European gender languages will find their searched adjectives in all forms – masculine, feminine, and neuter (if any), whereas learners of Ukrainian when searching for the word 'good' on Google Translate, or any other adjective, will only get this word translated into Ukrainian with a masculine form. Therefore, it is always a learner's duty to memorize the endings of feminine, neuter, and plural forms.

Russian demonyms are another bright example of a men-centrist language approach. One can find masculine demonyms for each and every inhabitant, resident, or native in particular regions or cities, whereby it is not the case with feminine equivalents (Mazikina, 2021). For some toponyms in Russian there is no corresponding well-established demonym; most often feminine one. In this case, the female inhabitants of a particular locality are called descriptively, for example, «жительница города» which is translated to «a female citizen of the city».

This does not depend on the size of the city. For instance, such a big city like Vladivostok is still trying to get used to its demonyms. Traditional dictionaries of the names of residents of Russian cities give only the «владивостокец» variant, accompanying it with a note that this word is not used in the nominative singular

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[1] http://new.gramota.ru/

form. However, the need to name a male or female resident of Vladivostok in one word in the initial form among native speakers of the Russian language arises regularly, therefore modern dictionaries already recognize as the norm the variants of «владивостокчанин» and «владивостокчанка», which until recently were considered non-normative.

The study of language and gender is very much dependent on societal norms, everyday practices, and vastly on the ideologies about women and men, their roles and places in society (Ehrlich, 1994). When Ukrainian women started participating in the political life of the country, it affected immediately the Ukrainian language as the society realized there was an urgent need in creating feminitives for their job titles and positions (Sydorenko, 2018). In Ukrainian, the noun «міністр» («minister») has proven to be insufficient as it does not represent the whole multifaceted spectrum of grammatical functionality. Since an interlocutor can only unmistakably retrieve information about this noun's grammatical categories of number and case, whereby the category of gender can only be checked by examining an adjective or a verb adjacent to it, the Ukrainian language has created its feminine form «міністерка» which directly represents a noun that does not depend on any additionally attached parts of speech.

It is important to mention, however, that this word first appeared in 2007, when Yulia Tymoshenko became the Prime Minister of Ukraine. The sociopolitical development of the country forced the Ukrainian language to react appropriately. However, in the very first place it faced a wave of criticism not from the expected speakers-bearers of a men-centered language tradition, unprepared to embrace newly appeared realities and practices, but from the linguists who perceived feminitives as a threat to the beauty and purity of the language. Quite similar attitudes towards feminitives can be found among Russian linguists as well. Among them, who are still fighting against already accepted, registered, normalized neuter gender of the word «кофе» and an alternative first stressed syllable in the word «договор», there are lots of disputes about the newly appeared feminitives. Such opposition towards the feminization of the language can be called language sexism.

While Ukrainians were promoting the idea of adopting new feminitives, the society noticed how strongly gender relations in language discourse were connected to power and status. Nonetheless, twelve years later, in 2019, rules of Ukrainian orthography were changed. Such feminitives like «міністерка» became a norm and are currently widely used, symbolizing the political and institutional evolution of the country. Were it not thanks to Yulia Tymoshenko, whose promotion triggered the creation of the feminitive «міністерка», the existence of this word would have remained questionable. In Russian, on the other hand, such a word is not used in any normative documents or media despite the fact that since 1991, there have been ten female ministers in the country, all of them wearing the masculine title «министр».

The language feminization movement in Russian in the form we see it now started in 1960s with the appearance of the word «стюардесса» alongside its officially registered and normalized synonym «бортпроводница». The word was created following the morphological pattern of such feminitives like «принцесса» and «поэтесса» with the suffix -есс-, which the official academic grammars back then did not consider as a productive suffix (Yaroshchenko, 2021). Almost two decades later, Russian linguists noticed this suffix's tendency for productivity; for example, such feminitives like «авторесса» and «критикесса» appeared. However, in the 1980s feminitives with -есс- received a derogatory meaning and became

elements of mostly disparaging and belittling connotation. The only word with a neutral meaning that survived until now is «стюардесса».

Russian morphological word formation is rich in suffixes that can be used to create neutral feminitives, avoiding their foreseeable derogatory meanings in future. Such suffixes like -ниц- («учительница», «писательница», «художница»), -к- («студентка», «журналистка»), -ис- («актриса»), -иц- («певица»), -есс- («поэтесса») productively form feminine roles and professions.

This comparison might be a sign of how deeply feminitives can be intertwined with the other aspects of identity, for instance, class and status. In Ukrainian, such concepts are no longer predominantly masculine, therefore women feel more empowered to participate in political life of the country and, most importantly, feel equally treated, and the other way around (Belovolcheko, 2018). Feminization of the language will definitely benefit future generations of native speakers because to them, such words as «міністерка» will be a norm. As individuals grow up performing the practices around which the community is formed, these practices will eventually become part of their everyday life or 'habitus' (Bucholtz, 2003, p. 43-69). In such a way, individuals will form their biased or unbiased opinion regarding many concepts of identities, including gender, in the very first place. The ongoing re-evaluation of the language attitudes towards feminitives means that this field is constantly developing and debates around this topic are flourishing. Thus, it is remarkable how the feminization of the language in Ukraine launched a shift towards inclusion of women as equal participants in all spheres of life. Russian goes through these changes as well, however comparatively slower than Ukrainian.

Methods. For research purposes, the descriptive method of a synchronous analysis of Ukrainian and Russian has been chosen. The descriptive method will help us better analyze the forms, processes, and structures of the illustrated examples on the morphological level. In addition, sociolinguistic analysis based on the method of correlation of linguistic and social phenomena in two independent language geographies will be conducted.

Results and Discussion. In Ukrainian linguist Olena Synchak[2]'s point of view, there are five reasons to use feminitives. Firstly, they are important as any language encodes social relations. Secondly, she refers to another prominent Ukrainian linguist Oleksandr Ponomariv[3], who noted in 1999 that the use of the masculine gender to denote women contradicts morphological and syntactic norms of the Ukrainian language. Besides, it is obvious that avoiding femininities impoverishes language: it makes it more clerical because of narrowing it to a formal style (Synchak, 2015).

Olena Synchak notes that in the XIX and the beginning of the XX century, there was a real boom in creating women's names that had ancient origins. It is at that time that the number of professions was increasing. Therefore, creating feminitives was progressing in the same plane with Ukrainization. The linguist cites the example of «Agatangel Krymsky's Russian-Ukrainian Academic Dictionary», which contains a number of female names to denote a woman as a participant in legal relations. However, the number of female titles in the «Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language in 11 Volumes» exceeds three thousand, but only a few of them existed at the time of Ukrainization. That is, if we discuss the beginning of the XX century, this creation of female names moved in parallel with

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[2] https://povaha.org.ua/pyat-prychyn-vzhyvaty-feminityvy/
[3] https://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/ukrainian/ponomariv/2011/05/-----2.html

Ukrainization since back then it was important to create Ukrainian terms. Ukrainization was implemented together with feminization. But in Soviet times, it was slowed down by Soviet language policy, the essence of which was a woman holding a prominent position and calling her profession by a masculine noun (Synchak, 2022).

These days, when we see a substantial difference in the societal attitude towards language feminization, we can clearly differentiate two opposite societies in Ukraine and in Russia. Feminitives in Ukrainian compared to their non-existing equivalents in Russian are markers of how the Ukrainian language has distanced itself from Russian.

The Ukrainian linguist Iryna Salata points out: «The form of the female gender had low-skilled occupations: maid, housewife, although high positions were marked by the male gender: minister, deputy.» (Salata, 2020). In Ukrainian, this tendency has changed. Such words as «міністерка», «депутатка» are widely used, whereas Russian has registered only «депутатка».

Since February 24, 2022, when Russia started the full-fledged war against Ukraine, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy has been addressing the nation daily. His every speech starts with «Дорогі українці, дорогі українки». Ukraine's President Zelenskyy chooses to use two separate plural forms of the adjective «Ukrainians» emphasizing everyone's inclusion and participation in the war against the Russian army. Regardless of the listener's sex, the President appeals in a direct and clear, non-ambiguous way to both – men and women. In fact, according to the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine[4], as of December 2021, 57,000 women served in the Armed Forces, i.e., almost 22% of all personnel. About 32,000 of them are military personnel (more than 12% of personnel). But after February 24, many women joined territorial defence units and the army. Therefore, we will learn about the exact number of women in the war later. The Ukrainian language reflects this phenomenon as well. When talking about female soldiers in Ukrainian, such terms are used: «жінка-військовослужбовець» («a female enlistee»), «бійчиня» («a female soldier»), «військова парамедикиня» («a female military paramedic»), «офіцерка» («a female officer»), «доброволиця» («a female volunteer»). The word «солдатка» means «a male soldier's wife or his widow» and is not used to denote enlisted female soldiers. In contrast to Ukrainian, such feminitives do not exist in Russian.

On May 22, 2019, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved an updated a version of the Ukrainian orthography, and on May 30, 2019, this document entered into force. The orthography allows the use of femininities but offers a fairly wide range of rules on how to create them[5]. Besides, the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine approved a new classifier of professions, which allows the use of female nouns if desired.

The head of the National Commission on State Language Standards Orysia Demska[6] stressed that «The initiative of the Ministry of Economy of Ukraine remains solely their idea. The Commission did not join the project, did not participate in its approval and is not responsible for those proposals, which means that at the official level in Ukraine, there is still no standardized writing for feminitives. The updated Ukrainian orthography gives a general direction on how to create, but it cannot predict all the nuances. The regulation of feminitives

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[4] https://ukrainer.net/ukrainian-women/
[5] https://mova.gov.ua/dokumenti/rozyasnennya/2021/zhovten-2021/rishennya-238
[6] https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2021/03/2/244092/

is not the task of the Ukrainian orthography, but of the National Commission on State Language Standards. Once the commission makes recommendations, Ukrainians will no longer hesitate between which is correct «фотографиня», «фотографеса» or «фотографка»».

Language expert Olena Burkovska named a number of reasons why there are people expressing their disregard for feminitives (Khryshchuk, 2021). In the majority of cases, their explanation might be one of the following: 1) feminitives are not regulated, therefore, there is no correct way to create a new feminitives form; 2) it is difficult to form feminitives to a number of masculine professions, e.g. «бос» in Ukrainian, «босс» in Russian; 3) new feminitives might not sound beautiful, hence may not be accepted by listeners and speakers; 4) sometimes feminitives with the productive suffixes can be perceived as offensive and derogatory; 5) some feminitives got extinct historically, so there is no need to revive them.

However, Olena Synchak mentions: «When we look at the word-formation tools of the Ukrainian and Czech languages, we see that we have the same resources for creating feminitives. The fact that they have been in Czech for a hundred years is not related to the structure of the language, but to the structure of society. This society was ready to accept them earlier, but there were other mechanisms in Ukrainian society, and it turned out to be unprepared at that time. »

A great contribution to the spread of femininities also belongs to literary editors, who follow all the innovations and features of spelling and correct in accordance with current regulations (Smolyar, 2017).

Conclusions and prospects for future research. Language feminization can be pursued by two linguistic strategies like neutralization and feminization. Since Ukrainian and Russian are both grammatical gender languages, they focus primarily on feminization of the language through morphological patterns.

Gender-fair language practices in both languages are very much dependent on the social transformations in these countries. The appearance of Ukrainian feminitives in dictionaries indicates that they are increasingly becoming normalized. The creation of new Ukrainian feminitives and their revival is the return to the proper Ukrainian laws of the language. After all, many Ukrainian feminitives were rejected in Soviet times (Brus, 2007). The Ukrainian language back then was brought closer to the Russian language, in which femininities were not registered so frequently.

However, since these days speakers feel the necessity to use deliberate feminine forms of initially available exceptionally masculine forms, the awareness of the gender equality issues will restrain people from using masculine denominations which are nothing less than a sexist language.

Talking about these language transformations – the feminization of languages – is vital, because in our conversations about language, we get to understand ourselves better (Pauwels, 2003).

It is obvious that mockery of feminitives is related to the status of women in society, that is, more related to stereotypes. This is not so much a mockery of words as a rejection of the incarnations of a woman who may be active in a particular field.

Today, women are visible in public. That is why they deserve this verbal recognition that language can give them. Besides, when we talk about gender equality, equal access of men and women to positions and professions, we should also think about feminitives.

And yet it is evident that the language feminization processes in the two languages are unfolding very differently. Over the past three decades, Ukrainian has created, adopted, and registered hundreds of new feminitives, whereas Russian has put these processes on hold, having chosen to stick to male-dominant forms to denote women in various professions. Ukrainian media, on the other hand, have been using new military-related feminitives that do not have their equivalents in Russian.

Currently, we see a significant difference in the societal attitude towards language feminization, therefore juxtaposed societies in Ukraine and Russia. Feminitives in Ukrainian, compared to their non-existing equivalents in Russian, are markers / indicators of how the Ukrainian language has been distancing itself from Russian; it also demonstrates the different ways in which Ukraine and Russia perceive women's role in society and their recognition through their respective languages.

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Резюме

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ФЕМІНІЗАЦІЙНІ ПРОЦЕСИ
В УКРАЇНСЬКІЙ ТА РОСІЙСЬКІЙ МОВАХ

Постановка проблеми. Наразі українська та російська мови зазнають ряд соціолінгвістичних трансформацій. Феміністичний лінгвістичний активізм став маркером суспільно-політичних змін у двох мовних просторах. Він поширився з метою виявити та змінити правила, які були розроблені та використані для обмеження мови та підпорядкування її лінгвістичним правилам, орієнтованим на чоловіків. Гіпотеза Сепіра-Уорфа є ілюстрацією ідеї про те, що мова людини формує її спосіб сприйняття світу. Лінгвістична гіпотеза відносності, як її ще називають, стверджує, що мова, якою людина розмовляє, впливає або визначає те, що людина думає про реальність і як вона її сприймає. Якщо ця реальність є світом, створеним для чоловіків, це буде чітко відображено в мові.

Мета статті – дослідити та порівняти соціолінгвістичні трансформації, які проходять українська та російська мови, а також проаналізувати отримані дані на морфологічному рівні.

Методи дослідження. Для дослідження було обрано дескриптивний метод синхронного аналізу української та російської мов. Дескриптивний метод

допоможе проаналізувати форми, процеси та структури ілюстрованих прикладів на морфологічному рівні. Буде проведено соціолінгвістичний аналіз на основі методу співвідношення мовних і соціальних явищ у двох незалежних мовних просторах.

Основні результати дослідження. Процеси лінгвістичної фемінізації в двох мовах розгортаються по-різному. За останні три десятиліття українська мова створила, прийняла та зареєструвала сотні нових фемінітивів, тоді як у російській мові соціум досі дотримується чоловічих форм для позначення жіночих професій. З іншого боку, українські ЗМІ використовують нові фемінітиви військової тематики, які не мають відповідників у російській мові. Ми виявили велику різницю в суспільному ставленні до мовної фемінізації. Фемінітиви в українській мові, порівняно з їхніми неіснуючими еквівалентами в російській, є маркерами дистанціювання української мови від російської. Наявність значної кількості нових фемінітивів в українській мові також демонструє різний спосіб, у який Україна та Росія сприймають роль жінок у суспільстві.

Висновки та перспективи дослідження. Дослідження соціолінгвістичних трансформацій, зокрема, фемінізації мов, вкрай важливе, оскільки в наших розмовах про мову ми краще розуміємо себе. Сучасні мовці відчувають необхідність створення та використання форм жіночого роду для слів, що початково були доступні виключно у чоловічих формах. Усвідомлення проблем гендерної рівності сприятиме розвитку суспільства та уникненню сексистських мовних ознак.

Ключові слова: мовна фемінізація, феміністична лінгвістика, феміністичний лінгвістичний активізм, фемінітиви, гендерна лінгвістика.

Abstracts

Shchedrina Mariia

LANGUAGE FEMINIZATION IN UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN

Background. In recent years, Ukrainian and Russian have been undergoing a number of sociolinguistic transformations. Feminist linguistic activism has become a marker of sociopolitical changes in the two language spaces. It has spread with a goal to identify and modify the rules that were developed and used to restrain the language and subject it to men-centered linguistic regulations. Scientists have been studying the relations between language and society for centuries. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is an illustration of the idea that a person's language shapes the way they perceive the world. The patterns of language used in culture and society affect our thoughts and worldview. The linguistic relativity hypothesis, as it is also called, states that the language one speaks either influences or determines the way one thinks about reality. If this reality is a world designed for men, it will be clearly reflected in the language.

The purpose of the article is to discuss and compare the sociolinguistic transformations Ukrainian and Russian are going through as well as analyze the received data on the morphological level.

Methods. For research purposes, the descriptive method of a synchronous analysis of Ukrainian and Russian has been chosen. The descriptive method will help us better analyze the forms, processes, and structures of the illustrated examples on

the morphological level. In addition, sociolinguistic analysis based on the method of correlation of linguistic and social phenomena in two independent language geographies will be conducted.

Results. It has become evident that the language feminization processes in the two languages are unfolding very differently. Over the past three decades, Ukrainian has created, adopted, and registered hundreds of new feminitives, whereas Russian has put these processes on hold, having chosen to stick to male-dominant forms to denote women in various professions. Ukrainian media, on the other hand, have been using new military-related feminitives that do not have their equivalents in Russian. Currently, we see a significant difference in the societal attitude towards language feminization, therefore juxtaposed societies in Ukraine and Russia. Feminitives in Ukrainian, compared to their non-existing equivalents in Russian, are markers/indicators of how the Ukrainian language has been distancing itself from Russian; it also demonstrates the different ways in which Ukraine and Russia perceive women's role in society and their recognition through their respective languages.

Discussion. Talking about these sociolinguistic transformations – the feminization of languages – is vital, because in our conversations about language, we get to understand ourselves better. Since these days speakers feel the necessity to use deliberate feminine forms of initially available exceptionally masculine forms, the awareness of the gender equality issues will restrain people from using masculine denominations which are nothing less than a sexist language.

Key words: language feminization, feminist linguistics, feminist linguistic activism, feminitives, gender linguistics.

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