

Comparing Gender-Fair Language Strategies in Parliamentary Discourse: Feminization and Neutralization in Spain and Poland

Anna Jamka, Aleksandra Tomaszewska

(University of Warsaw; Institute of Computer Science, Polish Academy of Sciences)

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Gender-fair language is a linguistic approach aiming to reduce gender biases (Sczesny et al. 2016) by using the strategies of feminization and neutralization. Feminization involves creating feminine nouns while neutralization choosing either the same noun form for both genders (Szpyra-Kozłowska 2019) or words/phrases not indicating gender (e.g., pol. *personel* – es. *personal* – en. *personnel*; pl. *osoba studiująca* – es. *persona que estudia* – en. *a person who studies*). While using non-gendered nouns can be considered “neutral”, the use of the masculine seems to reduce the visibility of women in languages with the category of grammatical gender (Bengoechea 2003, Karwatowska, Szpyra-Kozłowska 2005).

Both Polish and Spanish are gendered languages. Nevertheless, there are significant differences in approaching gender-fair language in the two countries. In Spain, non-sexist language is deeply rooted in the legal system (e.g., in *Ley Orgánica 3/2007*) as well as institutional practices (guidelines for inclusive parliamentary communication, *Congreso de los Diputados*, 2023). Conversely, to the best of our knowledge, there are no such legal provisions or recommendations on gender-fair language in the parliamentary context in Poland.

Taking this into account, this study aims to compare the use of feminization and neutralization in Polish and Spanish parliamentary discourses. It utilizes the Polish and Spanish subcorpora of the ParlaMint 4.0 corpus composed of transcriptions of parliamentary debates from 2015 to 2022 (Erjavec et al. 2023). The analysis focuses on the use of feminization and neutralization in job titles and parliamentary roles.

The findings show that, in both countries, neutralization is used in reference to mixed-gender groups and to refer to a typical representative of a job/role, while feminization is mostly restricted to naming a concrete woman. The comparison of the names of parliamentary roles shows that feminization in this context is significantly more common in Spanish than in Polish. The results are interpreted with regard to particular socio-political contexts of each country (e.g., gender representation in parliaments and linguistic features of Spanish and Polish). This study lays the groundwork for further multilingual research on gender-fair language in parliamentary discourse.

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