Generic masculine in Czech and German language: cognitive analysis

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Structure

- Tests in German
- Experiment in Czech:
  - J. Valdrová
  - P. Vyroubal
- Own experiment
  - Structure and methodology
  - Tested people
  - Results
  - Entry „occupation"
  - Prestige of a job
- Conclusions

Tests in German

- A lot of tests with different methodology (selection):
  - B. Scheele / E. Gauler (1993) – 1st researche in German

  - L. Irmen / A. Köhncke (1996) – „On the psychology of «generic» masculine"
    - „Results show a clear male bias of the «generic» masculine"

  - D. Stahlberg / S. Sczesny (2001) – „Effects of the generic use of the masculine pronoun and alternative forms of speech on the cognitive visibility of women" - inspiration for own research – 4 experiments –
    - „Consistently over studies, in the generic masculine condition we found a lower visibility of women than in the alternative language conditions „feminine-masculine pairs" and „capital I."

Tests in German

- L. Irmen / U. Linner (2005) – „Representing masculine generics: A theoretical integration of empirical findings"

- V. Steiger / L. Irmen (2007) – „On the acceptability and psychological impact of generic masculine and alternative person designations in legal texts"
  - „Results show a broad acceptance of gender-neutral forms which apparently best meet the demands of comprehensibility and gender equality of official and legal texts."

- F. Braun et al. (2007) – „"For reasons of intelligibility ...". How masculine generics and alternative forms affect the cognitive processing of a text"
  - „Female participants recalled a similar amount of details when answering questions on the generic masculine text and the gender-fair versions and they rated the intelligibility of all versions similarly. Male participants also recalled a similar amount of details in all three versions, but they preferred the masculine generic text over the gender-fair versions."

Experiment in Czech – Test by J. Valdrová

- Year: 2006
- 572 participants (10-18 years old)
- Method: test of the funny surnames (10 terms in singular)
  - 2 versions: A) only generic masculine; B) masculine and feminine forms
- A) Girls: 83,1 % image of a man; boys: 92,6 % image of a man
  - with a greater age more masculine (girls: 79,2 % – 80,9 % – 92,4 %; boys: 89,6 % – 91,3 % – 95,3 %)

- B) Girls: 44,6 % image of a man; boys: 57,4 %
- Conclusion:
  - GM evokes mainly the image of man
  - Selection of gender markers strongly associates with a woman in the mind; names of people in masculine and feminine gender (in full version or with a slash) -> disruption of a fixed image of man

Experiment by P. Vyroubal

- Vyroubal´s Bc-thesis – test of generic masculine in plural

Term	Boys	Girls	In total
	% of men´s names	% of men´s names	% of men´s names
Teachers	80,23	49,17	55,13
Programmers	86,05	76,52	78,35
Doctors	72,09	58,56	61,16
Shop assistants	54,65	36,19	39,73
Scientists	79,07	72,38	73,66
In total	**74,42**	**58,56**	**61,61**

Experiment by P. Vyroubal

- The number of masculine associations fell, however it still shows hesitation at men, specifically 3 from 5 concepts about 80 %.

Own experiment

- Structure:
  - Sex, age, occupation, education
  - 16 terms in the Czech version / 17 terms in the German version (+ term „Bundeskanzler") to which tested people had to write 1-3 names of the representatives, which occurred to them first (= associations)
    - Restrictions:
      - Women have to practise this occupation too
      - Names have to be familiar

Tested people

- Germany: 236 in total (165 women and 71 men)
- Czech Republic: 255 in total (202 women and 53 men)

- Largely University students (20-30 years old)

Term	% of women CZ M	% of women CZ W	% of women DL M	% of women DL W
Actor	4,42	10,71	12,08	30,97
Writer	5,50	11,92	8,84	32,87
Member of Parliament	2,13	4,65	25,20	37,01
Teacher	11,76	25,80	28,18	41,86
Host	6,74	10,85	15,44	17,70
Novel hero	6,67	7,84	16,67	24,82
Singer	9	11,14	20,93	33,74
Doctor	14,71	21,43	19,70	35,66
Hairdresser	31,71	34,39	31,88	50,81

Term	% of women CZ M	% of women CZ W	% of women DL M	% of women DL W
Scientist	3,53	7,84	12,40	19,39
Dubbing artist	13,51	24,60	16,39	20,59
Film director	2,17	3,90	0,85	2,28
Sportsman	14,58	23,03	3,08	15,55
Movie hero	5,95	4,56	5,22	13,88
God	6,17	5,41	4,81	7,73
Colleague/ classmate	27,42	56,85	28,33	66,92
Average	**9,53**	**21,92**	**16,18**	**28,17**

- Term „Bundeskanzler"
  - 55,71% of men associated Angela Merkel
  - 82,32% of women associated Angela Merkel

- No women was associated by:
  - 18 Czech men (of 53 => 33,96 %);
  - 33 Czech women (of 202 => 16,34 %) ;
  - 9 German men (of 71 => 12,68 %);
  - 3 German women (of 165 => 1,82 %).

Entry „profession"

- German women:
  - 89 suffix -in **X** 68 masculine (+ 8 others) => largely feminine forms
- Czech women:
  - 44 feminine **X** 143 masculine (+ 15 others) => largely generic masculine

Occupation
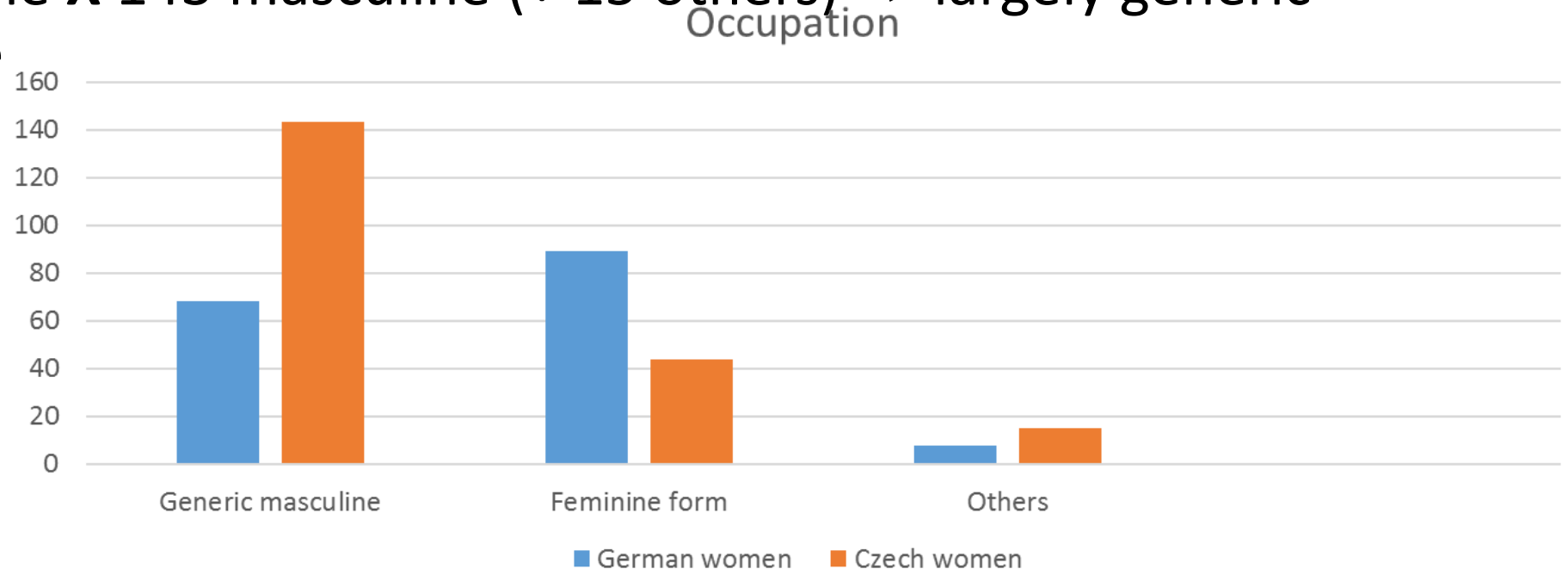
Prestige of jobs

- Hypotheses: The higher the prestigue of the profession, the more often the men are associated

- German: Not validated
- Czech: Partially validated

Conclusions

- Generic masculine in Czech and German evokes largely a picture of a man which makes women invisible in the language (a lot of Czech men associated no women´s name at all).

- Czech women call themselves largely in generic masculine forms, while German women call themselves in feminine forms.

- Relation between the prestige of a profession and the number of the stated men´s names was in Czech partially validated, however in German not.

Thank you for your attention.