

## I. ARTICLES

DOI: 10.17951/et.2018.30.41

Anna Pajdzińska  
ORCID: 0000-0002-0321-2485  
(UMCS, Lublin, Poland)

## LINGUISTIC WORLDVIEW AND GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES\*

**Abstract.** The grammar of every language includes a set of meanings characteristic of that language. Expression of grammaticalised meanings is obligatory and largely automatic. Individual languages contain grammatical categories specific to them and differ from one another not only with regard to the number of those categories but also their type, the internal structure of the shared categories (different number of subcategories in each language), and their nature (relating to modelling or selection). These differences have been exemplified in the study, with the relationship between grammatical categories and linguistic worldview being illustrated with the category of gender. The following questions have been put into focus: 1. Is there any relationship between concepts and the grammatical gender of the words that express them? 2. In what way does the grammatical gender of words influence our view of those aspects of reality that correspond to the words in question? 3. How can one explain the similarities and differences with regard to the gender between corresponding words in various languages?

**KEY WORDS:** grammatical category and subcategory; grammaticalised meaning; grammatical gender; Baudouin de Courtenay; literary text

Average speakers do not treat language as a complex cognitive system, a system of human orientation in the world, an interpretive network for physical reality. They are more likely to think that the view of the world suggested by their native language is natural and the only possible one. In

---

\* The article appeared in Polish as “Kategorie gramatyczne a językowy obraz świata” in *Etnolingwistyka* 30. The present English translation has been financed by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, project titled “English edition of the journal *Etnolingwistyka. Problemy języka i kultury* in electronic form” (no. 3bH 15 0204 83).

particular, language users are not aware of the fact that the most general interpretive categories are provided and, at the same time, imposed by grammar – and yet it is precisely within the grammatical framework that speakers must express their experience. As Sapir says, “categories [including] number, gender, case, tense, mode, voice, ‘aspect’, and a host of others [...] are not so much discovered in experience as imposed upon it”, which leads to “our subconscious projection of implicit expectations [of the language] into the field of experience” (Sapir 1931: 578). The grammar of each language, its most stable aspect, one that determines its essence and is subject to external influence only to a small degree, encodes meanings specific to this language. Individual languages have their specific sets of grammatical categories and can differ not only with regard to the number of those categories but also their type. For example,<sup>1</sup> in Inuit languages there is a grammatical category that encodes the size of the object being spoken of; the Sioux language grammaticalises the information whether a given object is animate or inanimate (additionally, it is important, in the first case, whether the object is moving or not, while in the second case – whether it is long, round, high, or a collection of many items). The Kwakiutl, in turn, grammaticalise the information whether the object is visible or invisible. In contrast, grammatical categories common in Indoeuropean languages may not be present in others. For example, the category of number is not found in Kwak’wala,<sup>2</sup> Chinese, Thai and Japanese, while tense is non-existent in Semitic languages. There are also differences in the specific structures of grammatical categories in various languages. For instance, in Polish, English, Italian, Slovenian, and Woro, there is the grammatical category of number, but in the first three it is divided into the subcategories singular and plural, in Slovenian there are three numbers: singular, dual, and plural,<sup>3</sup> while in Woro there are also three numbers, but different: dual, triple, and neutral.

<sup>1</sup> In quoting linguistic examples, I make use of my knowledge of foreign languages, as well as the knowledge accumulated in the course of reading about world languages and by participating in seminars conducted by Prof. Jadwiga Sambor and Prof. Adam Weinsberg from the University of Warsaw’s Department of General Linguistics. I owe part of the information to my private contacts for which I am thankful. Given the multitude of sources, references appear only in the case of direct citations.

<sup>2</sup> However, Kwak’wala distinguishes between dispersed and focal plurality. For example, “the same word is used to refer to a single fish and to a number of fish of the same species. However, in order to say a given collection of fish belong to different species, another form is used” (Bańcerowski, Pogonowski, and Zgółka 1982: 91).

<sup>3</sup> This was also the case in Old Polish, with the traces of dual number remaining until today, as in the forms *ręku* [hand-LOC] (next to the more common contemporary *ręce*) and *rękoma* [hands-INSTR] (now more commonly: *rękami*).

Grammatical meanings are necessarily expressed, to a large extent, automatically. Average language users are usually not aware that the semantic content is distributed over the grammatical system and the lexicon of a given language,<sup>4</sup> associating meaning only with the latter. However, the grammaticalised content can become a living reality of their consciousness. Mayenowa (1974) refers to it as an “experience of grammatical categories”, recognising three kinds of situations: comparing the grammar of one’s own language with that of another language, highlighting grammatical categories in literature, and violating the grammatical system of a language in speech (Mayenowa 1974: 180–189). Wilkoń (1988: 9) adds that sometimes this “experience” is conditioned by the language system itself, as it allows for a choice between variants and multifunctional forms.

The relationship between grammatical categories and linguistic worldview will be examined here with reference to the category of gender. This is a non-homogeneous grammatical category, characterised by different levels and degrees of complication. In Polish and in other typologically similar languages, gender is marked in all inflected parts of speech. In the case of most word classes, verbs, adjectives, some pronouns and numerals, it has a syntactic function: gender inflection is used in order to establish correct grammatical relations in utterances. However, in the case of nouns gender is a syntactically independent category, ascribed to the word as such in all its forms and determining the form of dependent words. This leads to interesting questions: Is there a link between concepts and the grammatical gender of the words that designate those concepts? How does the grammatical gender of words shape our view of whatever these words denote in reality? How can one account for the similarities and differences, in terms of gender, between corresponding words in different languages?

These are complex question and especially the first one is often regarded as controversial and poorly formulated. Before presenting a few opinions, let us first note what is commonly undisputed. First of all, gender is not a universal category and is not found in e.g. Hungarian or Turkish, among

---

<sup>4</sup> Linguists treated these domains separately for a long time but it is only through a comprehensive description of the two that we become aware of various means of expressing concepts, as well as possibilities of using or combining them in alternative ways. For example, Nowosad-Bakalarczyk (2009) shows that there are “five basic exponents of gender: lexical, morphological (relating to word-formation and inflection), syntactic, contextual and consituational. In specific instances of language use we deal with different combinations of those exponents” (Nowosad-Bakalarczyk 2009: 158). A holistic view of the category of time, as it is expressed in Polish, is offered by Szadura (2017). It is also appropriate to recall here Halliday’s (1961) idea of lexicogrammar (and the lexicon as “most delicate grammar”), pursued ever since in Systemic Functional Linguistics.

other languages. Although it is possible to convey the meaning of “sex” or “gender” in those languages, one can do so by using other means (mainly lexical), only when it is desired, and with a degree of emphasis. In other languages, gender exists with a limited function. For example, in English, gender is essentially marked only on words designating female or male persons (through the use of different personal pronouns: *she* for females and *he* for males), and only exceptionally to other nouns, such as names of pets, mascots, water vessels, etc. Other languages – among them Polish, German, Russian, Czech, and Slovak – mark gender with all nouns, dividing them into three grammatical classes: masculine, feminine and neuter,<sup>5</sup> with detailed solutions varying in different languages, even when the designated entities are characterised by inherent genders. Consider the Polish noun *dziewczę* ‘girl’-NEUT, or the German *Mädchen* ‘girl’-NEUT, *Weib* ‘woman’-NEUT, or *Fräulein* ‘maiden’-NEUT. Nor is the division of nouns into three genders universal, as some languages only distinguish two. For example, in French, Italian and Spanish there is the masculine and the feminine gender, whereas in Swedish and Danish – the so-called common gender (masculine-feminine) and the neuter gender.

These striking differences have met with various reactions from scholars. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Cartesian grammarians of Port-Royal, striving to construct a universal grammar (Arnauld and Lancelot 1975 [1660]), viewed the gender distinction of inanimate nouns and many names of living creatures as completely redundant, arbitrary, unjustified in extra-linguistic reality. On the other hand, their near-contemporary, Italian Giambattista Vico, the author of the remarkable theory of the cyclic development of humanity and the evolution of speech (Vico 1948 [1725]), viewed language as an expression of a person at various stages of his or her inner development. He claimed convincingly that the anthropomorphic metaphor, of which the assignment of a name to grammatical genders is a special case, is a manifestation of the strong emotions of primitive humans, their powerful imagination and non-abstract thinking. While experiencing the world, primitive humans were not able to separate themselves from it: they expressed the reality they experienced with the use of images, the categories they understood best. The 18<sup>th</sup>-c. German philosopher Johann Georg Hamann shared Vico’s desire to reconstruct the worldview entertained by the people in the distant past. For

---

<sup>5</sup> In addition, other semantic features of words may be taken into account, such as animateness/inanimateness in Polish or Russian, or personhood/non-personhood in Polish. These features are hierarchically arranged in different ways. For example, in Polish the animate vs. inanimate distinction only applies to the masculine gender, whereas that of person vs. non-person only to masculine gender of animate nouns.

instance, he assumed that the names of all mythological rivers are masculine because the hidden root of these names is *vir* or *amnis* rather than *flumen* (Berlin 1994). Another German philosopher, Johann Gottfried Herder, was one of the first to see the artistic side of the very grammatical structure of language. He wrote:

philosophical grammar would certainly reject the distinction between the genders of inanimate objects as superfluous, and meanwhile French and German poets would be reluctant to renounce those beauties that can be extracted from this unnecessary distinction. (quoted after Mayenowa 1974: 61)

Among researchers interested in the problem of grammatical gender, a special place belongs to the Polish linguist living at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jan Baudouin de Courtenay. He devoted nearly all his scientific life to the study of linguistic stereotypes, cognitive schemas, emotions and valuations, which – generally speaking – result from “*the impact of linguistic thinking on the psyche*, i.e. the worldview, moods etc. of people speaking a given language” (Baudouin de Courtenay 1984 [1915]: 215, emphasis original). Baudouin paid particular attention to the issue of linguistic metaphysical sources and mythological beliefs about reality, as well as the issue of gender distinctions, along with the conceptual hierarchies and assessments relating to them. He emphasised that the hallmark of any linguistic thinking is the “substantialisation of the reflections of the extralinguistic world” and the creation of linguistic myths, whereas “the colouring of [...] thought with sexual genderism” (which he considered one of the most significant effects of personification) is not a universal phenomenon. However,

All Aryo-European systems of linguistic thinking (except for Armenian, if it indeed is Aryo-European) are characterised by *sexualisation* (genderisation) of *linguistic representations*, with the predominance of the representation of maleness (masculinisation). In Polish linguistic thinking, besides masculinisation, there is also abundant virilisation (exposition of manliness). For the people with gender-based linguistic thinking, gender-typical features are attached to all substantive ideas (nouns), and it is difficult to get rid of them.

*The presence of gender-typical features* in the word is obligatory, and may even give rise to myths with far-reaching consequences. Suffice it to mention here various myths created by different peoples, referring to the “sun” and the “moon”. In some societies, the “sun” is male, a man, and the “moon” is female, a woman; in others, the opposite is the case. Hence, the different directions of the mythogenic thought. (Baudouin de Courtenay 1984 [1915]: 219; emphasis original)

The analysis of Polish led Baudouin to conclude that the gender system in that language is based on multiple oppositions: between the sexes, between the presence and absence of gender, between animateness and inanimateness, and finally, “on the *juxtaposition of the social meaning* of men with that of

all other creatures (including women and children, if they are conceptualised as children)” (Baudouin de Courtenay 1984 [1915]: 219). The scholar was positive that:

This represents a certain stage in the development of social concepts, that is an extremely patriarchal stage, when wives, children and slaves are the property of *patris familias* as their rulers and “heads of the family”, when the masculine element is the beginning of everything, when the Supreme Being, “God”, can only be masculine. (Baudouin de Courtenay 1984 [1915]: 223)

The grammatical category of gender was also in focus of another outstanding Polish linguist, Jerzy Kuryłowicz. He looked for the roots of gender in the specific mode of speaking (Kuryłowicz 1987 [1968], 1987 [1971]), i.e. in the juxtaposition of *I/we* and *you-SING/you-PL* with the third person. In contrast to the participants of a dialogue, the third party is neutral with regard to personhood, as it can indicate either people or other entities. This led to the formation of the personal/impersonal opposition. According to the Kuryłowicz, the second stage involved the distinction between animate and inanimate, connected with “the transfer of certain formal exponents, characteristic of personal nouns, to nouns designating other living beings (animals), and sometimes, but only secondarily, to inanimate nouns”<sup>6</sup> (Kuryłowicz 1987 [1968]: 130). However, the most significant contributor to the emergence of grammatical gender was the transfer of formal exponents of animate nouns to inanimate ones. The linguist recognised the tendency to personification by transferring the endings (or suffixes, or forms of adjectival attributes) from personal to inanimate nouns as a very widespread phenomenon. Gender was thus for him one of the manifestations of linguistic anthropocentrism. He did not, however, study the differences between the subcategories of gender and so was not as profound in his divagations as Baudouin.

In fact, some contemporary linguists interpret gender distinctions in a way similar to de Courtenay’s analysis. Gender is believed to have cultural motivation and reflect the system of social values.<sup>7</sup> Various linguistic data

<sup>6</sup> According to Kuryłowicz, this hypothesis is confirmed by the contemporary expansion of the ending *-a* (typical of the Genitive and Accusative cases) to inanimate nouns (*tańczyć mazur-a* ‘dance a mazurka’, *pić szampan-a* ‘drink champagne’, etc.).

<sup>7</sup> For example, Kwiryna Handke claims that there is a clear linguistic asymmetry in Polish that is unfavourable to women: “This lack of symmetry boils down to the dominance of masculinity in a large area of language, which gives precedence and hierarchical superiority to masculine forms (which are primary, basic, superior) over feminine (secondary, derivative, subordinate)”. The researcher links this fact to “systemic, patriarchal dependencies, supported by law, custom, and religion” (Handke 1994: 21). Alicja Nagórko also believes that “we can say, without exaggeration, that [...] the Polish grammar favours men” (Nagórko 1996: 95), while Jolanta Szpyra-Kozłowska and Małgorzata

testify to the androcentrism of the Polish language, not limited only to the opposition between the masculine personal and the non-masculine personal gender (the latter being previously known as the feminine-object gender). Consider a few grammatical examples:<sup>8</sup> all feminine personal nouns refer only to women, and the corresponding masculine nouns refer to men or representatives of both sexes, i.e. they may be used as generic terms (*prawa i obowiązki pacjenta* patient's-MASC rights and duties, *karta praw nauczyciela* 'a charter of teacher's-MASC rights', *Polak potrafi* 'a Pole-MASC can do', etc.). In contrast, the mechanism of creating pejorative plural forms from personal masculine nouns involves a change of the grammatical gender from masculine personal to non-masculine personal (*studenci*-MASC – *studenty*-NON-MASC 'students', *dyrektorzy* – *dyrektory* 'directors', *inteligenci* – *inteligenty* 'educated persons', etc.),<sup>9</sup> and the so-called dual-gender nouns such as *niedojda* 'loser', *fajtlapa* 'butterfingers', *niedorajda* 'clodhopper', *łamaga* 'clumsy oaf' acquire a stronger negative character if in relation to men they are used in the feminine gender, expressed with syntactic means: *Piotrek to okropny*-MASC *niezdara* – *Piotrek to okropna*-FEM *niezdara*.

---

Karwatowska claims: “grammatical classification of women into the same category as animals or objects along with the distinction of separate masculine personal forms is a fairly extreme example of linguistic asymmetry and sexism” (Szypra-Kozłowska and Karwatowska 2003: 211).

Renata Grzegorzczkowska is more cautious in interpreting linguistic facts. While characterising the category of gender in Polish, she writes: “The contemporary gender-based classifications, with a recognition of distinct forms for masculine personal nouns, took their final shape in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At an earlier stage, masculine animate nouns were being distinguished (*ci ptacy śpiewali* ‘these birds sang’), and only the introduction of the accusative form in place of the former nominative plural (*wilki* ‘wolves’, *ptaki* ‘birds’) completed the process of establishing the masculine person-based category. The process was primarily motivated by phonetic factors and analogical thinking, as well as the tendency to render linguistic forms more distinct. Contrary to commonly held views, social factors did not play a major role” (Grzegorzczkowska 1993: 448). However, the linguist does not totally exclude the role of social relationships in the process, recognising that the category in question “can be treated as a testimony of the privileged position of men in former Poland, whereby women are grammatically equated with the world of non-persons: cf. *szafy*, *drzewa*, *psy*, *kobiety* **stały** ‘wardrobes, trees, dogs, women **stood**-NON-MASC’, but *mężczyźni* **stali** ‘men **stood**-MASC’” (Grzegorzczkowska 2001: 163, original emphasis; see also Grzegorzczkowska 1999: 43).

<sup>8</sup> Lexical examples are not considered here. Also, due to their large number, bibliographic references are omitted (for an extensive bibliography cf. Nowosad-Bakalarczyk 2009).

<sup>9</sup> In the case of nouns whose roots end with a palatalised consonant, depreciation is signalled only syntactically, with the use of defining forms of adjectives, pronouns, or verbs.

However, even those authors who believe that such linguistic facts are culturally motivated, assume that arbitrary linguistic phenomena, non-transparent to speakers, result from historical processes of thought and conceptualisation that occurred in the minds of ancestors<sup>10</sup> and as such are cannot be verified scientifically. As Sapir put it: “In German and in French we are compelled to assign “stone” to a gender category—perhaps the Freudians can tell us why this object is masculine in the one language, feminine in the other” (1985 [1924]: 158).<sup>11</sup> Very few scholars try to formulate hypotheses based on the examination of languages in close connection with their cultures, trying to find correlations between linguistic and cultural phenomena. A comparison of data from different languages “sometimes reveals far-reaching convergences. For example, Mircea Eliade (1961, 1978) was struck by the fact that in many languages the names of the day are masculine, while the names of the night are feminine. This coincidence can be explained by the fact that the rhythm of day and night is the basic rhythm of life on our planet, independent of humans, influencing them, or in the past even determining their way of living. Each part of the day is associated with a different attitude of on the part of people to reality. But the reason why in different cultures days are masculine, while nights are feminine, is less obvious and must be considered a pure coincidence if one does not take into account the complementarity of both concepts and the priority of masculinity in those cultures. The less common the experience underlying certain concepts, the more likely it is that the corresponding words will have different gender in different languages, being associated with different conceptualisations.

Another issue is the lack of agreement between the grammatical gender of animate nouns and the natural gender of their designata. Anna Wierzbicka, among other scholars, takes the neuter gender instead of the expected female or male gender (cf. e.g. the Polish augmentatives *kobiecko* ‘woman’-NEUT, *dziewczynisko* ‘girl’-NEUT, *chłopisko* ‘man’-NEUT, *chłopczyisko* ‘boy’-NEUT) as an exponent of the emotional attitude of the speaker towards the referent. Wierzbicka claims that the semantic structure of these words

<sup>10</sup> Cf. e.g. “Genetically, the category [of gender] is a remnant of the primitive animistic worldview characteristic of Proto-Indo-Europeans, who saw all things as animated” (Grzegorzczukowa 1993: 447).

<sup>11</sup> Alicja Nagórko comments: “Precise linguistic distinctions have only become established for people and, to a lesser extent, animals (in fact, mainly farm animals, whose sex is important for the breeders, cf. *ogier* ‘stallion’, *klacz* ‘mare’, and *koń* ‘horse’ as the name of the species). To seek extra-linguistic motivation for the relationship between grammatical gender and the sex of other living beings would be at best a manifestation of virtually poetic animism, a desire to animate the non-biological world” (Nagórko 1996: 94).



includes the component ‘I don’t want to think of this person etc. as a woman/girl/man/boy’ (Wierzbicka 1996: 398). She also draws attention to the fact that the change of the gender (as in masculine forms of women’s names: *Marysik* from *Marysia* ‘Mary’) always has an expressive function and in those cases signals “affectionate jocularity” (p. 398).

While the problem of the semantic motivation of gender in the case of most nouns is controversial, there is a widespread agreement that for a member of a language community in which gender classification is applicable, grammatical gender constitutes a natural basis which determines the direction of metaphorisation and limits its scope. As an example, consider the last part of Wisława Szymborska’s poem *Drobne ogłoszenia* [‘Classified ads’] (1977: 26–27), in which the author of one of the ads is “Night, day’s widow”, who explains:

ZA OBIETNICE męża mego,  
który was zwodził kolorami  
ludnego świata, gwarem jego,  
piosenką z okien, psem zza ściany:  
że nigdy nie będziecie sami  
w mroku i w ciszy i bez tchu  
– odpowiadać nie mogę.

FOR THE PROMISES made by my husband,  
who was deceiving you with the colours  
of the populous world, its hubbub,  
with a song from the windows and a dog behind the wall:  
that you will never be alone  
in darkness and in silence and without a breath  
– I cannot take responsibility. (transl. R.A.)

The poem capitalises on the conceptualisation of the night as a woman and the day as a man, expressed through grammatical gender and an idiosyncratic imposition of semantic conversion on the relationship between husband and wife (cf. *widow* in the ad’s heading) on the complementarity of the day and night. Both personas also gained additional, non-obvious features.

Another intriguing use of gender can be found in Zbigniew Herbert’s poem *Pan Cogito o cnocie* [‘Mr. Cogito on virtue’], from the volume *Raport z oblężonego miasta* [‘Report from the Besieged City’] (Herbert 1992: 36–38). A detailed analysis of the poem lies beyond the bounds of the present study; suffice it to say various interpretations of the poem, partly contradictory, partly complementary, are facilitated by the feminine grammatical gender of the noun *cnota* ‘virtue’-FEM. In popular thinking, virtue is associated with virginity and spinsterhood (cf. the expressions *stracić cnotę* ‘lose one’s virtue/chastity’, *cnotka* ‘a goody-goody’). On a superficial reading, the poem is a mockery of personified virtue:  *płacziwej starej panny / w okropnym kapeluszu Armii Zbawienia* (“that tearful spinster / in the horrible Salvation Army hat”), *nieznośnej w swoim uporze / śmiesznej jak strach na wróble* (“unbearable in her stubbornness / funny as a scarecrow”). For *prawdziwych*

*mężczyzn / generałów / atletów władzy / despotów* (“real men / generals / athletes of power / despots”), femininity is always inferior, even more so when it so unattractive physically. On a higher level of interpretation, the irony turns out to be more complex: its recognition, however, requires knowledge of the dual philosophical tradition of the concept of virtue, deriving from Greek-Roman and Christian philosophies. The Latin source of the word *virtue* is *virtus*, derived from *vir* ‘man, husband’; therefore, in Polish the concept is linguistically expressed not only by the noun *cnota*, but also *męskość* ‘masculinity’, *męstwo* ‘valour’, *odwaga* ‘courage’, *stałość* ‘constancy’, *nieugiętość* ‘indomitability’, *niezlomność* ‘steadfastness’. In other words, for the ancient Romans and those who follow that model, virtue did not and does not characterise “a weepy spinster” but “a real man”. Therefore, in fact, contempt and mockery in Herbert’s poem are not aimed at virtue as such but at those who despise it, preferring instead the use of primitive physical strength that ensures domination and power.

Gender is so important in metaphors or symbols whose figurative uses innovative in this respect are rare. The infrequent personifications or animations that are incompatible with the conventionalised grammatical gender are found to be surprising and require additional justification; indeed, they often impoverish the text semantically. For example, in the poem *Anińskie noce* [“The Anin Nights”] by Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński (1979: 377), the night unexpectedly takes the male form:

I wielkim, bezkresnym wachlarzem  
 wachluje nas chłopiec nieduży,  
 szmaragdy w uszach ma,  
 on jest Murzyn,  
 a my nazywamy go Nocą

And with a huge, endless fan  
 a small boy is fanning us,  
 emeralds in his ears,  
 he is a Negro,  
 and we call it Night (transl. R.A.)

It seems that the ability to indirectly express the blackness of the night is more important here than the grammatical gender of the noun *noc* ‘night’-FEM. This might have been intended to cause amazement and delight in the reader. Amazement is doubtless achieved but the enthusiastic readers of Gałczyński’s poetry will easily evoke works of the poet with more suggestive and expressive portrayals of the night as a woman – not so unique, perhaps, but better remembered.

Gender differences between languages present huge translational problems,<sup>12</sup> but at the same time are capitalised on in Adam Ważyk’s poem *Dane źródłowe* (“Source Data”) (1977: 39):

<sup>12</sup> For examples, cf., among others, Skwarczyńska (1954: 306), Mayenowa (1974: 185–186), or Nowosad-Bakalarczyk (2009: 167).

Na dwóch trapezach cztery kombinacje: dwóch akrobatów dwoje akrobatów z przodu mężczyzna      z przodu kobieta dwie akrobatki	On two trapezes four combinations: two male acrobats two acrobats a man in front      a woman in front two female acrobats
Miłość i śmierć po grecku – dwóch mężczyzn po łacinie i po francusku – mężczyzna i kobieta po niemiecku – kobieta i mężczyzna  po polsku – dwie kobiety wszystkie kombinacje wyczerpane	Love and death in Greek – two men in Latin and French – a man and a woman in German – a woman and a man  in Polish – two women all possible combinations
Uczone krety rozprawiają o miłości i śmierci udając że myślą po grecku Eros Thanatos	Learned moles they talk about love and death pretending to think in Greek Eros Thanatos

(transl. R.A.)

The poet points to the importance of grammatical gender in constructing a poetic image and (or even, above all) stimulates reflection on whether and to what extent one language impedes the transfer of conceptual categories coded in another.

Yet another problem related to the grammatical category of gender appears in Jacek Dukaj's novel *Perfekcyjna niedoskonłość* ["Perfect Imperfection"] (2003), which takes place 800–900 years from now. Thanks to technological progress, people have acquired new capabilities. Even *stahs* ('standard homo sapiens') can be resurrected, since it is possible to scan the human brain and place it in an "empty" body, bred especially for the purpose. After the death of their bodies, post-human beings (*phoebes*) do not imprint themselves into new ones, but rather abandon the material body and transfer their consciousness onto another medium. They can create temporary bodies, manifestations, biological "hollow bricks". There may be many different manifestations of the same person at any one time. Abandoning of the body raises doubts as to the sex of a human, which of course translates into linguistic problems: grammatical gender distinctions, sufficient to reflect the diversity of beings in the world as we know it, turn out to be inadequate. One of the post-human beings explains to the protagonist why it should not be referred to with the neuter gender:

Ja nie jestem bezpłciowu, nie jestem aseksualnu – rzekł sucho phoebe, spoglądając .na Zamoyskiego bez mrugnienia. – Po prostu moja seksualność całkowicie transcenduje kategorie męskości i kobiecości. Jeśli możesz dowolnie zmieniać kolor włosów, pozbyć się włosów w ogóle lub zastąpić je czymś zupełnie innym, i przyszedłeś na świat ze wszystkimi

tymi potencjami – to jaki sens ma pytanie, czy jesteś blondynem, czy brunetem. Tak samo nie pytasz o płeć postseksualisty. (Dukaj 2003: 221)

“I am not genderless, I am not asexual,” said the phoebe dryly looking at Zamoyski without even blinking. “It’s just that my sexuality completely transcends the categories of masculinity and femininity. If you can freely change your hair colour, get rid of hair altogether, or replace it with something completely different, and you entered this world with all these potentials, then what is the point of asking someone if they are blond or dark-haired? In the same way, sex is a non-issue for a postsexual.”

The excerpt contains three non-existent Polish forms: *bezpłciowu* ‘genderless’, *askesualnu* ‘asexual’, and *rzekłtu* ‘said’. In the novel, the adjectives, pronouns (*onu*, genderless 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular), and verbs ending with *-u* relate to post-human beings: they were devised to mark the fact that “new people” are neither men nor women, that their physical manifestations can be male, female, or both, depending on one’s whim.<sup>13</sup> The use of innovative forms makes it easier to notice that grammatical categories – in this case the category of gender – encode meaning distinctions that are relevant to a given community. After all, grammar is

concentrated semantics: it embodies a system of meanings which are treated in a given language as particularly important, indeed essential, in the interpretation and conceptualization of reality and of human life in that reality. (Wierzbicka 1996: 402)

Differences between languages do not reside in what can or cannot be expressed but in what has to or does not have to be expressed. This is why research into linguistic worldview must focus, to a greater extent, on grammaticalised concepts and categories, which direct the attention of speakers to certain aspects of reality and, being obligatory, exert influence on people’s beliefs and form of artistic expression.

*Translated by Rafał Augustyn*

## References

- Arnauld, Antoine and Claude Lancelot. 1975 [1660]. *General and Rational Grammar*. Transl. Jacques Rieux and Bernard E. Rollin. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Bañcerowski, Jerzy, Jerzy Pogonowski, and Tadeusz Zgółka. 1982. *Wstęp do językoznawstwa*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM.

<sup>13</sup> The actual forms in Polish are: for ‘genderless’: *bezpłciowy*-MASC, *bezpłciowa*-FEM, *bezpłciowe*-NEUT; for ‘asexual’: *askesualny*-MASC, *askesualna*-FEM, *askesualne*-NEUT; for ‘said’: *rzekł*-MASC, *rzekła*-FEM, *rzekło*-NEUT; 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular pronouns: *on* ‘he’, *ona* ‘she’, *ono* ‘it’. [editor’s note]

- Baudouin de Courtenay, Jan. 1984 [1915]. Charakterystyka psychologiczna języka polskiego. In: Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, *O języku polskim*. Compiled and ed. by Jan Basara and Mieczysław Szymczak. 139–225. Warszawa: PWN.
- Berlin, Isaiah. 1994. *The Magus of the North: J. G. Hamann and the Origins of Modern Irrationalism*. Ed. Henry Hardy. New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux.
- Dukaj, Jacek. 2003. *Perfekcyjna niedoskonałość*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1961. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1978. *A History of Religious Ideas*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gałczyński, Konstanty Ildefons. 1979. *Dzieła*. Vol. 1. *Poezje*. Warszawa: Czytelnik.
- Grzegorzczkova, Renata. 1993. Kategorie gramatyczne. In: *Encyklopedia kultury polskiej XX wieku*, vol. 2, *Współczesny język polski*, ed. Jerzy Bartmiński. 445–458. Wrocław: Wiedza o Kulturze.
- Grzegorzczkova, Renata. 1999. Pojęcie językowego obrazu świata. In Jerzy Bartmiński (ed.) *Językowy obraz świata*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., revised. 39–46. Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS.
- Grzegorzczkova, Renata. 2001. *Wprowadzenie do semantyki językoznawczej*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., revised and extended. Warszawa: PWN.
- Halliday, M. A. K. 1961. Categories of a theory of grammar. *Word* 17(3): 242–292.
- Handke, Kwiryna. 1994. Język a determinanty płci. *Język a Kultura* 9 (Theme issue on *Sex and gender in language and culture*, eds. Janusz Anusiewicz and Kwiryna Handke): 15–29.
- Herbert, Zbigniew. 1992. *Raport z obłożonego Miasta i inne wiersze*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie.
- Kuryłowicz, Jerzy. 1987 [1968]. O rozwoju kategorii gramatycznych. 4. Rodzaj rzeczowników. In: *Studia językoznawcze. Wybór prac opublikowanych w języku polskim*. 130–133. Warszawa: PWN.
- Kuryłowicz, Jerzy. 1987 [1971]. Podstawowe kategorie morfologiczne. In: *Studia językoznawcze. Wybór prac opublikowanych w języku polskim*. 145–147. Warszawa: PWN.
- Mayenowa, Maria Renata. 1974. *Poetyka teoretyczna. Zagadnienia języka*. Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk: Ossolineum.
- Nagórko, Alicja. 1996. *Zarys gramatyki polskiej*. Warszawa: PWN.
- Nowosad-Bakalarczyk, Marta. 2009. *Płeć a rodzaj gramatyczny we współczesnej polszczyźnie*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS.
- Sapir, Edward. 1931. Conceptual categories in primitive languages. *Science* 74: 578.
- Sapir, Edward. 1985 [1924]. The grammarian and his language. In: Edward Sapir, *Selected Writings in Language, Culture, and Personality*, ed. David G. Mandelbaum. 150–159. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- Skwarczyńska, Stefania. 1954. *Wstęp do nauki o literaturze*. Vol. 2. Warszawa: PAX.
- Szadura, Joanna. 2017. *Czas jako kategoria językowo-kulturowa w polszczyźnie*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS.
- Szpyra-Kozłowska, Jolanta and Małgorzata Karwatowska. 2003. Klient nasz pan a wszyscy ludzie są braćmi – seksizm we współczesnej polszczyźnie. *Etnolingwistyka* 15: 195–218.
- Szyborska, Wisława. 1977. *Poezje*. Warszawa: PIW.
- Vico, Giambattista. 1948 [1725]. *The New Science*. Transl. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Ważyk, Adam. 1977. *Zdarzenia*. Warszawa: Czytelnik.

Wierzbicka, Anna. 1996. *Semantics. Primes and Universals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wilkoń, Aleksander. 1988. Funkcje kategorii czasu i aspektu w tekstach artystycznych. Teresa Skubalanka (ed.) *Stylistyczna akomodacja systemu gramatycznego*. 9–17. Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk–Łódź: Ossolineum.