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# Grammatical Issues of Feminatives Through the Ukrainian Prism

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## Abstract

This article aims to study the grammatical, semantic, and social aspects of the use of feminatives in the Ukrainian language based on term theory providing combined use of descriptive and prescriptive approaches. It was shown that adding in text extra feminine proper nouns as simply opposed to masculinitives may result in several inconsistencies leading to violation of grammatical and phonological rules and to the degradation of the language's expressive ability. Not doing much to make a woman more visible, this opposition, in particular, leaves no room for correctly identifying non-binary persons and personified objects.

As a possible solution, we propose to recognize a general gender combining simple genders by the logical "OR", the existence of which follows from the analysis of the language practice. The corresponding nouns should be used instead of masculine names in the generalizing function.

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## 1. Introduction

The recent changes in human society have resulted in the wider use of feminine personal nouns. Given this, various aspects of the use of feminatives have been investigated in the context of gender-fair language (Karwatowska and Szpyra-Kozłowska 2005; Scheller-Boltz 2014; Zimman 2017; Formato 2019; Hall, Levon, and Milani 2019; Szpyra-Kozłowska 2019b; [Kielkiewicz-Janowiak 2019](#); Kolek and Valdrova 2020; Lohr 2020; Kirey-Sitnikova 2021), political correctness (Abbou 2011; Piper 2016; Coady 2018; Szpyra-Kozłowska 2019a; Kirey-Sitnikova 2021), language policy

(Motschenbacher 2014; Knisely 2020), social perception (Horvath et al. 2016; Kolek and Valdrova 2020; Kirey-Sitnikova 2021), nonbinary language strategies (Motschenbacher 2014; Zimman 2017; Knisely 2020; Kotthoff 2020; Lohr 2020; Wehle 2020; Kirey-Sitnikova 2021; Kolek 2022), word formation models (Dembska 2012; Grochowska and Wierzbicka 2015; Małocha-Krupa 2021; Piper 2016; Szpyra-Kozłowska 2019b), pragmatics (Karwatowska and Szpyra-Kozłowska 2005; Małocha-Krupa 2018), etc.

Following the global trend, the Ukrainian media have been recently flooded with newly forged feminatives. Even though language enrichment is, in principle, a positive phenomenon, several problems in their operation have been revealed, resulting in a kind of rather slack acceptance of these by Ukrainian society, especially by the majority of professional linguists. For example, *Лариса Кислюк* reminds us that “the use of masculine nouns as “title names” in the official business style is fixed in the language tradition and rules of etiquette”<sup>1</sup> (2018, 456–457). *Алла Архангельська* observes that even the “feminative-friendly” Czech language displays significant restrictions on their use (2019, 376). In particular, she cites the Czech grammar textbook that complete elimination from the communication of masculine forms in the generalizing function of the type *studenti, žáci, učitelé*, when they refer to a group of people regardless of their gender (as advocated by feminist linguistics), will result in undesirable consequences for the language system, as the hierarchical structure of word-formation tools and the lexical system as a whole will be weakened (Šticha 2011, 575). The researcher resumes that feminatives as means of linguistic identification of a woman do not emphasize her social status, so in a positive context, linguists prefer traditional “masculine” forms (2019, 376). *Олександр Тараненко* points out that linguistic androcentrism cannot be regarded as an attitude of the society to a woman, predicting that “the numerous and diverse traces of linguistic “patriarchy” in the language structures of European civilization nations, in particular in the Slavic and Romance ones are sure to remain, though in a somewhat weakened form,” and concludes that “different ways of overcoming linguistic “inequality” of females observed in modern languages and those found within gender linguistics, along with the evident upsides, impose some restrictions in realization” (2020, 46).

We can judge from these citations that academic Ukrainian linguistics supports the neutralization tendency in naming women which uses masculine nouns generically, which possibly follows Sulyma’s idea (Сулима 1928, 12). However, this adherence to the obsolete paradigm of “masculine vs feminine” helps little in solving the fundamental problem to be equally represented regardless of gender and motivates the opponents to act more actively and even rashly. At the same time, the Ukrainian language (where grammatical gender is marked on pronouns, nouns, adjectives, and verbs in the past tense) possesses highly developed grammatical tools and a long tradition of naming women. For example, there are 935 such entries in the Ġrinčenko’s dictionary first published in 1907–1909 (see Ġринченко 1958–1959) and lots in the later sources (see Архангельська 2019; Sychak and Starko 2022). This is a good reason to expect that Ukrainian can serve as a proficient example in resolving issues connected with feminatives worldwide.

It is worth mentioning that the most of abovementioned studies significantly involve or focus on sociolinguistic matters, which are subject to likely ideological impacts and biases (see Małocha-Krupa 2021, 101). At the same time, there is an urgent and strong demand for full information about exactly what feminatives may be used and how (Małocha-Krupa 2021, 110). The greater the danger of unfairness and prejudgment, the more important an objective, unbiased approach based on linguistic and historical facts becomes. Unfortunately, this approach has not been predominantly applied heretofore. At

the same time, much attention should be paid to a comprehensive analysis of available grammatical resources and their semantical impact, their role in creating feminatives, and the relevance of resulting forms in the given context. The high importance of these aspects follows from Potebnja's linguistic scheme:

*"In the word, we discern the external form, that is the articulated sound, the content, objectified with the help of sound, and the internal form, or the closest etymological meaning of the word, the way the content is expressed"*  
(Potebnja 1999, p. 156)<sup>2</sup>.

So, the semantics of a word significantly depends on its historical forms. In particular, the internal form plays a substantial role in the semantics of feminatives, often outperforming the influence of their external features. The meaning of *zastupnycja* analyzed in (Городенська 2016, 43) is an example of such impact.

In this article, we will consider the use of feminatives from the standpoint of terminology theory, focusing on Ukrainian grammar and general grammatical considerations concerning relevant semantic and stylistic issues. This work is organized as follows. The next section outlines the research methodology. Section 3 contains the results of the terminological investigation of the dictionary of modern Ukrainian feminatives (Плачинда 2018). In Section 4, we expand our approach to more general problems associated with feminine personal nouns and provide a more general discussion. The key proposition to solve mentioned problems is presented and argued in Section 5. The obtained outcomes are summarized in Section 6.

## 2. Methodology

Codification of feminine proper nouns is perceived as a real challenge to lexicography and to other subfields of linguistics, where the limits of normativeness are the subject of dynamical expansion (Małocha-Krupa 2021, 105). This situation is typical in terminology science dealing with large terminological vocabularies containing numbers of lexical units which also require such development (see Vakulenko 2014; Вакуленко 2020; Bussey 2020). As far as feminatives may be considered as terms, their study needs the application of term theory as a ground for language planning. Therefore, this problem requires the combined use of statistical and analytical methods of terminology science that provide an effective synthesis of descriptive and prescriptive approaches (Vakulenko 2014, 20–28; Вакуленко 2020, 12–15). Following Адмони (1964, 81–82), the statistical method acts in the symptomatic sense (unlike mathematical statistics, symptomatic statistics is mostly about occurrences rather than quantities). As follows from terminological studies (Mihaljević 2017; Вакуленко 2020, 12–15), the prescriptive elements are necessary to secure holistic and well-grounded codification of emerging and rapidly growing vocabularies.

At the verification phase of terminology management (see Bussey 2020), the apt (appropriate) term tokens (Vakulenko and Melnyk 2014, 36; Вакуленко 2020, 11) should be explored. Considering feminatives as specific terms nominating female persons, we will make use of the criteria of **essentiality** (coverage of key aspects of the concept and absence of false associations), **derivativity** (ability to easily create derivatives of the word), **good sound** (concordance with

phonotactic rules), **organic nature** (compliance with spelling and language tendencies), **unambiguity**, and **brevity**. The terminology theory obliges that if the units are newly created, they should successfully meet necessary requirements.

We should keep in mind that in contrast to terms, feminatives often appear in stylistically coloured contexts. Then the criteria for feminatives cover not only morphology, syntax, and semantics, but also stylistics and other linguistic areas.

### 3. Core results

To be specific, we will consider the feminine set given in (Плачинда 2018). This choice is motivated by the fact that this dictionary contains up-to-date, sometimes newly forged feminine proper nouns that are typical for modern discourse in Ukrainian media.

According to the statistical method, there are 13 problematic units out of 257 entries, which is more than 5%. The analytical method reveals the following.

The words *bokserka* ('female boxer'), *mašynistka* ('female machinist') *moločnycja* ('milkmaid'), *oficerka* ('female officer'), *pasičnycja* ('female beekeeper'), *zastupnycja* ('female deputy'), due to their internal form, denote also a T-shirt or sport shoes, female typer, thrush, an officers' mess, a beekeeper's wife, and ausiliatrice, respectively (Грінченко 1958–1959; Городенська 2016, 43), thus violating the requirement of essentiality. This inability to correctly express the desired sense is rather typical of feminatives. For example, an *elektryčka* is a suburban train, rather than a female electrician; *apanamka* is a hat, rather than a female citizen of Panama; an *uğorka* is a sort of plums, rather than a female citizen of Hungary; *juvelirka* means 'jewelry', rather than ('female jeweler'), and so on. These semantic issues are the consequences of the fundamental law of linguistic sign asymmetry (Karcevskij 1929).

The internal form of the word *barmenka* ('female barista') relates it to the 'man' which also signifies the lack of essentiality.

The words *istorykynja* ('female historian'), *mystkynja* ('female artist'), *členkynja* ('female member') having a phoneme /k/ before the /y/ in a rare suffix "ynj", do not comply with the rule of positional alternation of Ukrainian phonemes. If a phoneme /k/ is followed by a suffix starting with an /y/, it turns into a /č/: *bijka* – *bijčynja*, *mamka* – *maščyna*, *turok* – *turčyn*, *vovk* – *vovčycja*, etc. Іван Вагилевич (1965) lists also the variant *lemčynja* as one of the derivatives of *lemko*. So, the exceptions to this rule exist only for rare words that did not have time to acquire their normal form. Since the word end formant "-ynja" is relatively infrequent in Ukrainian, the decisive role here is not the etymology of the suffix and not even the palatalization of velars /k ǵ x/ but the phonetic and phonological similarity of the corresponding contemporary morphemes. Therefore, the words ending with "-kynja" are not natural (organic) to the Ukrainian language.

The variant *koležanka* ('female colleague') is derived from the word *koleža* which is of common gender (both masculine and feminine) that indicates a violation of the criterion of organic nature (naturalness). Remarkably, the motivating Polish form *koleżanka* has been also estimated as not plausible (Karwatowska and Szpyra-Kozłowska 2005, 43).

The *pidpryjemnycja* ('female entrepreneur') is derived from a non-existing form *pidpryjemnyk*, thus violating the

requirement of naturalness.

The feminine *ambasadorka* ('female ambassador') which is associated with the word *posoljstvo* (< *posol*) having a differing stem, does not meet the criterion of derivativity. Generally speaking, all feminines display this inability to form their derivatives.

All these facts indicate the degradation of the expressing capacity of language.

## 4. Broader discussion

Now we proceed to some more general observations.

Given that the feminines are formed by adding an extra suffix and an ending, they are usually longer than the "masculine" forms, thus losing in brevity. In addition, they are supposed to be used along with "masculinitives", contrary to the language's tendency to eliminate redundancy of expression means (Серебрянников 1970, 250). That is, satisfactory compensation from other criteria should be expected. However, this cannot be the case because of denotation deficiency resulting from linguistic sign asymmetry.

This asymmetry has another important consequence for feminines: the exact one-to-one correspondence between social and grammatical genders is not achievable.

First of all, what about **non-binary** persons? And what about those who have been changing their gender more than once? Is it appropriate to reflect this gender shift in the professional service chapter of their CV? The use of feminines as opposed to masculinitives is aimed at positively discriminating against women, but this is done at the expense of non-binary and other persons who belong to even more deprived groups. Then it appears that we should either invent special variants for all kinds of non-binaries (which is grammatically impossible) or come up with some other and more fundamental solution.

Next, what about **personification** which is a common technique in fairy tales? Its application assumes that any living being and even any subject name should be prone to acquire necessary gender features (including non-binary, of course) which is impossible to realize within the paradigm "masculinitive vs feminine" (cf. Вакуленко 2018).

Even more, what about words for which it is difficult or **impossible** to create a feminine form due to morphological constrictions? We already mentioned a large class of such personal nouns ending with "k". There are lots of other similar examples: *molodec* ('well-doing person'), *mrecj* ('dead'), *mudrecj* ('sage'), *našadok* ('descendant'), *pidlitok* ('teenager'), *v'jazenj* ('prisoner'), etc. Similar difficulties occur in other languages, in particular in Dutch and French (Kielkiewicz-Janowiak 2019, 144).

Then, do feminines really help to make women more **visible**? The most effective gender indicator is a name, not a profession. At the same time, the Ukrainian female surnames with masculine endings "-yšyn" and "-iv" are still common: *Fedoryšyn*, *Kuxarčyšyn*, *Ivankiv*, *Jurkiv*, etc. Let us recall the inability of feminines to form their derivatives which also

restricts the alleged “visibility”. For example, a \**dyrektorka* is supposed to work in her *dyrektorsjkyj kabinet* (‘director’s office’, derived from *dyrektor*), and a \**doktorka* is supposed to have her *doktorsjka dysertacija* (‘doctoral thesis’, derived from *doktor*) that lose all feminine features.

Such inconsistencies happen in other languages, too. Though the female professors at the Ca’ Foscari Venice University appear as “professoressa” (in place of the gender-inclusive form “professore”), the endings “-i”, “-o” are kept in their surnames: *Cerasi*, *Cesiri*, *Masiero*, *Santulli*, *Tosi*, *Turano*<sup>3</sup>. Such internal form bears clear signs of the “masculine” etymology of these names which is much more apparent than that of “professore”. The same happens in the German language where the formant “mann” (‘man’) appears in the surnames of women and in the word “die Mannschaft” (‘team’) which is used even for teams of women. This “mannish” tradition is unlikely to be eradicated because the formant “man” became a base for many important concepts, including “woman” and “human”.

According to the 2018-2019 survey, in which 580 respondents from different regions of Ukraine took part, the greatest part of women (38.56%) does not use feminatives for naming women and prefer traditional masculine forms, such as *profesor* (‘professor’), *ministr* (‘minister’), *filosof* (‘philosopher’) (Архангельська 2019, 234–238, 260–265). The negative attitude of the majority of Ukrainian women towards newly forged feminatives as “female equivalents” to the “masculine” nouns which is reported in (Архангельська 2019, 237, 256, 266–274) and recognized also in (Плачинда 2018), grounds on the semantic load of feminatives that implies segregation, relating women to an inferior category. The Ukrainian native speakers are not alone in this relationship. For example, Karwatowska and Szpyra-Kozłowska report on the negative connotations of some Polish feminatives, such as *baba* (2005, 43). The Polish lexicographer Małocha-Krupa believes that it is not possible to codify feminatives in a fully scientific and unbiased way (2021, 111). Psychological studies indicate that the German feminatives are perceived as prone to convey a professionally “lesser status” (Horvath et al. 2016).

Except for historical non-prestigious “female” professions, feminatives are traditionally used in sports to denote female athletes that compete, in most cases, separately from men. To provide positive discrimination for women who would apparently have little chance if competing with men, the European Commission offers grants exclusively for female researchers<sup>4</sup>. This linguistic tradition may not be ignored.

## 5. Proposition

The lucky solution to the above-mentioned problems appears to exist, and not only for Ukrainian. Let us pay attention to the fact that there appear nouns, pronouns, and verbs (in the past tense) that are not of definite (nominative, referential, or anaphoric) gender (cf. Вакуленко 2018): *dity* (‘children’), *batjky* (‘parents’), *ljudy* (‘people’), *druzi* (‘friends’), *istoty* (‘beings’); *molodecj* (‘well-doing person’), *mrecj* (‘dead’), *mudrecj* (‘sage’), *pidlitok* (‘teenager’), *predok* (‘ancestor’); *xto* (‘who’), *nixto* (‘nobody’), and so on. We should add here the names of animals, insects, and other living beings that have certain grammatical gender which does not correlate with their biological sex: *kyt* (‘whale’), *mavpa* (‘ape’), *zebra* (‘zebra’), *lynyvecj* (‘sloth’), *peresmišnyk* (‘mocking bird’), *akula* (‘shark’), *krab* (‘crab’), *tunecj* (‘tun’), *krevetka* (‘shrimp’), *moljusk* (‘clam’), *ravlyk* (‘snail’), *lyčynka* (‘larva’), *komar* (‘mosquito’), *muxa* (‘fly’).

The examples of phrases displaying this phenomenon may be the following:

*nixto ne buv ġotovyj do cjoġo*

*nobody not was ready to this*

('nobody was ready for this');

*cja ljudyna – spravžnij faxivecj*

*this person – real specialist*

'this person is a real specialist';

*kožen iz nas može skazaty svojij polovynci: "Ty – mij skarb"*

*each of us can say their half: "You – my treasure"*

'each of us can say to our partner: "You are my treasure"';

*odnoġo z batjkiv toġo, xto ce zrobyv, prošu pryjty do klasnoġo kerivnyka*

*one of parents of that who this did, ask come to classroom teacher*

'one of the parents of the person who has this done, is asked to come to the classroom teacher'.

Of what gender are the words *nixto*, *ljudyna*, *faxivecj*, *kožen*, *nas*, *polovynku*, *skarb*, and *xto*, given that the verbs *buv* and *zrobyv*, and the adjective *ġotovyj* are masculine? What if it were a girl? What gender have *odnoġo* and *batjkiv*, given that the pronoun's ending indicates the masculine gender but this is probably a mother?

Here further questions arise. If we agree to forge a feminine "faxivčynja" for a female specialist, do we need to invent a masculine form for "ljudyna" (which is feminine in Ukrainian) for a male specialist? What about non-binary specialists? What to do with the feminine Ukrainian word "polovynka" and masculine "skarb" to make them "neutral" for each gender?

The next example is even more eloquent. Let's compare two phrases, the first one written in the "traditional" style, and the second with a feminine.

1. *U nič pered ekzamenom student zdaten na te, čoġo ne navažuvavsja zrobyty protjaġom ciloġo semestru*

*In night before exam student able on that, what not dared do during whole semester*

'On the night before the exam, a student can do something that they did not dare to do during the whole semester'.

2. *U nič pered ekzamenom student i studentka zdatni na te, čoġo ne navažuvavlysja zrobyty protjaġom ciloġo semestru*

*In night before exam student and studentka able on that, what not dared do during whole semester*

'On the night before the exam, a student and a studentka can do something that they did not dare to do during the whole semester'.



Do these two sentences mean the same thing?

A woman can say about herself:

“Koly ja bula pidlitkom, ...”

*When I was teenager*

‘When I was a teenager, ...’.

This does not mean that she changed her sex later. The word *pidlitok* (‘teenager’) is masculine, and Ukrainian grammar does not allow a feminine personal noun for this concept.

Thus we may conclude that the language practice requires recognition of **ageneral gender** (Ukr. *zağal'nyj rid*), which is a combined gender like a common one and acts in place of the masculine, feminine, and neutral in the generalizing function (Vakulenko 2018). In contrast to the common gender, the general one combines simple genders using the logical “OR” instead of the “AND”. The rise of such combined genders resulting in erasing the boundaries between them is a consequence of the language’s tendency for grammatical gender to disappear.

So, the words *člen* (‘member’), *profesor* (‘professor’), *zastupnyk* (‘deputy’), *osoba* (‘person’), *ljudyna* (‘human’), *dytyna* (‘child’), etc., used in the generalized function, should be considered as having a general gender, though they display formal grammatical characteristics of masculine or feminine genders. The same goes for personification. If the name of the profession is denoted by a substantive participle, like *upovnovaženij* (‘authorized’), we should keep in mind the omitted noun that was present in the full form of this collocation. In this case, the lacking noun is *predstavnyk* (‘representative’) which governs grammatical gender of the profession name (masculine acting as general).

Then the problems to name non-binaries and personified objects obtain a necessary and achievable solution. Remarkably, the concept of a general gender conforms to the non-heteronormative language policy where gender neutralization is considered as the most useful strategy (Motschenbacher 2014; Zimman 2017; Szpyra-Kozłowska 2019b; Lohr 2021).

Then the feminatives may be used if the biological sex or social gender is emphasized, prevalently in the conversational register: *avtorka* (‘a woman who writes’), *doslidnycja* (‘a woman doing research’), *filoložynja* (‘a woman doing philology’), *likarka* (‘a woman doing medical treatment’), *spivrobitnycja* (‘a co-working woman’), *včyteljka* (‘a woman doing teaching’), etc.

For example:

*svoju peršuvčyteljku dity pam'jatatymutj use žyttja*

*their first učyteljka children will remember all life*

‘the children will remember their firstučyteljka all their life’;

*cjaavtorka ğlyboko rozkryvaje žinoče jestvo*



*this avtorka deeply reveals feminine essence*

‘this avtorka deeply reveals the feminine essence’;

*ja poznajomyvsja z cikavoju **filoloğyneju** i xoču z neju зустрічатysja*

*I acquainted with interesting filoloğynja and want with her meet*

‘I got acquainted with the interesting filoloğynja and I want to meet her;

*naša **spivrobotnycja** peremoğla na žinočomu šaxovomu turniri*

*our spivrobotnycja won on women chess tournament*

‘our spivrobotnycja won the women’s chess tournament.

But:

*vona – **Včytelj** z velykoji litery*

*she – Teacher with capital letter*

‘she is a Teacher with a capital letter’;

*sered našyx **spivrobotnykiv** lyše odna žinka*

*among our employees only one woman*

‘there is only one woman among our employees’, etc.

So, the Ukrainian language offers the possibility to specify or not specify gender depending on the register of speech. Particularly interesting are examples that contain the name of a profession or position combined with verbs in the past tense, which also display formal signs of gender.

For example, we say in a pharmacy:

“Likar vypysav meni ci liky”

*Doctor prescribed me these medications*

‘The doctor has prescribed me this medication’.

Here the word *likar* (‘doctor’) – although it appears in the “masculine” form – denotes a person of any gender, including non-binaries. In such a situation, it is not appropriate to specify a social or biological gender. The verb *vypysav*, following syntactic connection with *likar*, acquires the same grammatical gender – general one (which has in this case formal signs of a masculine gender).

In similar situations, if this doctor is a woman and especially if there is a history to tell about her, it is possible to use the verb with the formal signs of a feminine grammatical gender:

“Likar vypysala meni ci liky. Vona pojasnyla, šo meni dostatnjo 10 tabletok”

*Doctor prescribed me these medications. She explained, that me enough 10 pills*

‘The doctor has prescribed me this medication. She explained that 10 pills are enough for me’.

This is a situation of **ellipsis**, where the name of a female doctor is implied, which syntactically governs the “feminine” form of a verb. The whole phrase might be:

“Likar Aljošyna vypysala meni ci liky. Vona pojasnyla, šo meni dostatnjo 10 tabletok”

*Doctor Aljošynaprescribed me these medications. She explained, that me enough 10 pills*

‘The doctor Aljošyna has prescribed me this medication. She explained that 10 pills are enough for me’.

Such absence of formal agreement between the subject and predicate (and between the subject and its designation – that is not allowed in Ukrainian) is widely accepted also in standard Polish (Małocha-Krupa 2021, 104).

In the conversational register, we may use a feminine (if allowed grammatically) and a verb that syntactically agrees with it in a grammatical gender:

“Likarka vypysala meni ci liky”

*Likarkaprescribed me these medications*

‘The *likarka* prescribed me this medication’.

The Polish equivalent *lekarka* is also possible in similar situations, and it is also described as colloquial (Małocha-Krupa 2021, 105).

This special syntactic agreement between nouns and verbs in the past tense is possible for positions and professions that imply a person’s proper name which is usually gender-specific. This is not the case for other nouns, such as *dytyna* (‘child’), *pidlitok* (‘teenager’), *ljudyndyna* (‘human’), *osoba* (‘person’), etc. For example, a mother can say about her son:

“Moja dytyna zaxvorila”

*My child sicked*

‘My child is sick’,

- using a noun and a verb of formal feminine gender that acts here as the general gender. We may say about a young lady:

“Cej pidlitok zasmutyvsja”

*This teenager upset*

‘This teenager is upset’,

- where the verb *zasmutyvsja* agrees in the grammatical gender with the noun *pidlitok*. This is the general gender that acquires here the formal signs of a masculine gender.

The names of female athletes and some historical professions are used also in the official style *futbolistka* (‘female football player’), *plavčynja* (‘female swimmer’), *medsestra* (‘nurse’).

## 6. Conclusion

So, having applied the terminological approach, we investigated the grammatical and some social aspects of the use of feminatives in Ukrainian and other languages. It was demonstrated that the unrestricted use of feminatives as full “female equivalents” to traditional “masculine” proper nouns results in the deterioration of the communicative function of a language.

The limitations to the use of Ukrainian feminatives may be summarized as follows.

### 1. Morphological:

- the morphological inability of some Ukrainian nouns to build a feminine variant, such as *asmolodecj* (‘well-doing person’), *mrecj* (‘dead’), *mudrecj* (‘sage’), *našadok* (‘descendant’), *pidlitok* (‘teenager’), *predok* (‘ancestor’), *v’jazenj* (‘prisoner’), etc.;
- the morphological difficulties to form a gender-specific variant for a majority of common names that is necessary for personification;

### 2. Phonological:

- strong phonological tendency to change the phoneme /k/ into the /č/ in a position before the suffix with an initial “y”, making the feminatives ending with “-kynja” unnatural.

### 3. Semantic:

- wrong associations with distant concepts due to the strong semantic influence of the internal form of some feminatives: *elektryčka* (‘female electrician’ – ‘suburban train’), *juvelirka* (‘female jeweler’ – ‘jewelry’), *panamka* (‘female citizen of Panama’ – ‘open hat’), etc.;

### 4. Stylistic:

- the necessity to use words in the generalized sense where a social gender or biological sex are not important;

## 5. Social:

- principal inability of gender-oriented language to adequately name all possible variants of non-binary persons.

In addition, feminatives help little to make women more “visible” because the most important gender marker is a name, not a position or a profession.

As a possible solution, it is proposed to recognize a general gender which combines simple genders (masculine, feminine, and neutral) using the logical “OR” and may serve as the basis to successfully resolve all mentioned issues. We expect that this is a real ground to secure an inclusive gender-fair approach worldwide which does not hurt the grammar and communicative function of the language.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Вживання іменників чоловічого роду як «титільних імен» в офіційно-діловому стилі закріплене мовною традицією і правилами етикету.

<sup>2</sup> В слове мы различаем: внешнюю форму, т.е. членораздельный звук, содержание, объективируемое посредством звука, и внутреннюю форму, или ближайшее этимологическое значение слова, тот способ, каким выражается содержание.

<sup>3</sup> Università Ca' Foscari Venezia. Dipartimento di Studi Linguistici e Culturali Comparati. URL: <https://www.unive.it/pag/16871/>.

<sup>4</sup> The REWIRE Programme: REinforcing Women In Research. URL: <https://rewire.univie.ac.at/>.

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