Review of: "Grammatical Aspects of Feminatives Through the Ukrainian Prism"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

A REVIEW OF THE SUBMISSION ENTITLED

Grammatical Aspects of Feminatives Through the Ukranian Prism

GENERAL COMMENT

The paper examines why the use of feminatives adversely affects the Ukranian language and suggests they be replaced by the general gender. While it offers insights into why exactly it may be wrong to continue using feminatives in Ukranian, the paper needs improvements in terms of the structure, theoretical foundation and methodology, but also, or even primarily, of the clarity and precision of the language.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Structure. The Introduction draws on the research by other people but there is no clear distinction between the literature review and the presentation of the corpus. The Introduction is immediately followed by the Results and discussion section. The author should consider distinguising more clearly between the results of previous research and his own research results. The corpus is not clearly described.

Theoretical foundation. The Introduction includes an overview of previous research, with examples. An objective description of other people's work is intertwined with the author's own remarks, most of which are not fully developed or substantiated. For example, "the Ukranian language, possessing highly developed grammatical tools and a long tradition of naming women, can serve as an expressive example in resolving issues connected with feminatives worldwide". In my view, all the languages have all the grammatical tools that they need and there can hardly be any sound foundation for ranking languages in terms of how higly developed their grammatical tools are. Also, saying that a language has "a long tradition of naming women" is in stark contradiction to saying that there is a "rather slack acceptance by these [feminitives] by Ukranian society and especially by the majority of professional linguists". I suggest the author supports the views with strong arguments and examples. The examples included are mostly of the negative position on feminitives. Are there not any positive ones?

Methodology. The author is invited to clarify and describe the methods better. At present, there are only mentions of several methods. It is possible that the authors mistakes a quantitative analysis for the statistical method as at one point the author explains that out of 257 entries (found where?), 13 are problematic, which accounts for more than 5%. This

leaves a reader confused, what is 5% the treshold for? What is the symptomatic sense of a statistical method? Please use well-established terminology and provide additional explanations and theoretical background where necessary.

Discriminatory language. The author seems to be quoting from a source (endnote #3) to say that "In order to provide positive discrimination for women who would have little chance if competing with men, the EC offers grants exclusively for female researchers" [N.B. the quotation marks are for the wording from the present paper, not the source the author is quoting]. Does "would have little chance" refer to their scolastic aptitude or the social setting? I suggest the author clearly distinguishes between other people's ideas and his own even when/if they are identical. This way, it is not clear who is saying that "This linguistic tradition may not be ignored". After all, is this a linguistic or a social tradition?

Lack of clarity & balance. Starting from the end of page 4 (out of 7), the author presents a solution to the 'problem' and starts by pointing to examples of genderless structures in Ukranian. What does this prove? I believe feminitives are needed but not because there are other linguistic expressions marked for the feminine gender. This is followed by three short paragraphs where the author explains the need for the "general gender". One would expect this to be the main point of the paper and therefore elaborated on and supported with much more than this. In short, the paper draws on other people's work to say why feminitives do not work in Ukranian and then presents a solution in three paragraphs. There must be a better balance between one and the other in the paper.

Suggestions relating to content. I understand very well that feminitives do not always take root easily (although under 5% of awkward sounding words is not a disaster or a reason for rejection) but please take the awkward examples given below in consideration if they work in Ukranian the same way they do in Montenegrin. I believe these strongly speak in favour of feminitives.

(a) Profesor je objasnila …   *The professor explained.*

[Masculine N profesor + AUX + Feminine Vb explain.]

(b) Poslanik je glasala…   *The MP voted.*

[Masculine N Member of Parliament + AUX + Feminine Vb vote]

The above do not sound right in Montenegrin for reasons of grammar, logic, reason or rhyme. Or worse even:

c)Poslanik je glasao za predlog. Ona je kasnije objasnila…   *The MP voted for the bill. She later explained…*

[Maculine N Member of Parlimanet + AUX + Masculine Vb vote

Feminine Pronoun + AUX + Feminine Verb.]

which confuses everyone as it is not clear who is saying or doing what.

Other remarks.

- As a native speaker of a Slavic language, I think I can follow most Ukranian examples well but this does not help non-

Slavic speakers. Please use glossing rules of your choice.

- A deeper analysis of the matter is required.

and, most importantly:

- Languages mirror the societal inequalities but I do not think we should wait for the societies to improve before our languages can improve.

Conclusion. Even if I do not agree with the author's views, I hope he can continue his work on the paper to make it a stronger case. On a more personal note, I apologize if my language is blunt at times. I sincerely hope some of my suggestions can be of help. It was definitely a pleasure to read about this controversial topic and I very much look forward to reading an improved version of the paper on Qeios.