***The power of linguistic norms: Testing effects of naming practices for people based on gender***

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Language has been shown to be a highly influential social institution regarding shared belief systems, social norms, societal structures, and, hence, human life altogether (cf. Bourdieu 1991; Halliday 1992, 2001; Butler 1990, 1993, 1997 and others). Within this social institution, the naming of people is most often based on a dichotomous gender system, with options of (social) indexing people exclusively as either *male* or *female*. Furthermore, the (usually masculine) denotation for the male identified person is institutionalised as *neutral* and *unmarked*, while the feminine counterpart of a given phrase is termed as *specific* and *marked*. These linguistic norms have been shown to be both products and preservers of unbalanced and biased perceptions of social norms (cf. Blaubergs 1980; Wassermann/Weseley 2009).

Studies on the perception of these *androcentric* or *false generics* have been able to provide the linguistic discussion on (anti)sexist language with evidence on the factual non-neutrality of masculine forms when used in a supposed generic way (cf. Bem/Bem 1973; Gygax/Gabriel/Sarrasin et al. 2008; Kusterle 2011 and many more). This has been studied extensively for linguistic contexts in the USA and Western Europe, whereas other cultural and linguistic surroundings, the Balkan region included, have not received equal attention.

In her lecture, Roswitha Kersten-Pejanic will contextualise a study on the perception of person appellation forms conducted in Croatia and will provide an overview on this challenged grammatical convention with regard to the importance of the institution of language and linguistic norms. The lecture will allow participants to discuss the role of language as a dominant social institution in shaping and normalising a social order based on gender as the actual “opiate of the masses” (Goffman 1977: 315) that shows a remarkable amount of inflexibility in many linguistic contexts.

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