

UDC 81'272

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**Review of the book: Taranenko, O. O. *Androtsentryzm u systemi movnykh koordynat i suchasnyi hendernyi rukh.***

Kyiv: Vydavnychi dim Dmytra Buraho, 2021. 112 pp.  
ISBN 978-966-489-560-3 (in Ukrainian)

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Studies on gender linguistics and, in particular, on the way language codifies the semantic-pragmatic and social-psychological male — female opposition, have been less consistent in Ukrainian and, to a larger extent, in East Slavic studies compared to North American and western European linguistics. In this respect, Taranenko's work is a significant contribution to this field. The author is known to skillfully capture contemporary language trends and undergoing variations in Ukrainian in timely fashion. This aptness is essential both for the scholar himself and the scientific community which can benefit from new contributions and linguistic reflections of the author.

In the East Slavic cultural milieu, particularly in Ukraine, gender studies has been developing over the last two decades, and its impact on linguistics and language choice is definitely more recent. This minor delay, especially if compared to the Anglo-American and Germanic world, could be explained by the fact that Ukrainian linguistics has had other research priorities. Debates on alleged discrimination in language usage has become topical in relatively recent times, and this observation is important for two reasons. First, the change in language, linguistic consciousness and perception has to be associated with the political positioning of Ukraine towards Western values over the last decade and the progressive adaptation to the guidelines of the European Commission.

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C i t e s: Del Gaudio, S. (2022). [Review of the book: *Androtsentryzm u systemi movnykh koordynat i suchasnyi hendernyi rukh*, by O. O. Taranenko]. *Ukrains'ka Mova*, 2(82), 133–137

Gender-oriented language issues were stirred up partly by the socio-political discourse and lately fostered by mass media whose main concern seems to be the newly introduced idea of 'political correctness' and the avoidance of 'sexism' in language. Until about a decade ago, gender studies notably in this case in Ukraine and, widely, in the other Slavic countries, were essentially a minor branch of socio-anthropological and literary research. In this cultural context, Taranenko's contribution is of considerable value.

The monograph is not particularly voluminous. It is structured as follows: a short introduction, two non-proportional chapters (this rather refers to the disproportionate numerical distribution of the sections, not to the length of the contents), a bibliography, which is rather complete, and a list of abbreviations used. Two summaries, one in Ukrainian and one in English, conclude the monograph *Androtsentryzm u systemi movnykh koordynat i suchasnyi hendernyi rukh*.

The first longer chapter illustrates the way the principle of "androcentrism" is codified in language. It begins with a theoretic and practical exemplification of male designation as a usual starting point for indicating female referents. Three main language levels are chosen for analysis: nomination, word formation/derivation, and semantics together with grammar. The successive sections are thematically related to the aforementioned investigation fields and expand on the derivational and syntactic models used in language for female designation or analyze the opposite tendency, i.e., directed from feminization to masculinization. Two basic issues are addressed in the study: 1) the idea of representing people only by the masculine gender; 2) the evaluative classifications and function-frequency asymmetries of male-female selection in language.

Overall, the linguistic explanations and most of the related examples are clearly conveyed by the author. He manages to quite successfully illustrate a bulk of issues in gender linguistics and their reverberation in everyday language choice. A central issue in the discussion is the designation of masculine gender as the starting point to designate a person in general, irrespective of sex ('gender'). Strictly speaking, the headings of some sections tend, at times, to be rather extensive. Moreover, they are not always clearly separated from the body of the text, thus representing almost a thematic issue on their own.

Some of our observations are concerned with the following points. There is not enough evidence to define some key terminological concepts such as, for example, the term 'androcentrism' (*U androcentryzm*). Its linguistic implication, at first reading, may not always be comprehensible, even assuming the reader's knowledge of its ancient Greek etymology, that is, *άνήρ* 'man, male' + the suffix *-ism* indicating a tendency and movement. Therefore, a direct explication, either in the body text or a footnote, of this and other specific terms would facilitate their comprehension.

The opening section of the first chapter (p. 4) begins with a quotation from the Bible indicating Abraham's progeny, which, in the author's intentions, should exemplify the «man centered», archaic patriarchal society or androcentric principle. As to this point, it is worth remembering that in Judaism, religious and ethnic belonging has been transmitted by maternal lineage for

centuries. In fact, it should be taken with extreme caution to use the Bible, a religious and, for many people, 'sacred' book, to characterize the principle of androcentrism that has existed in the Judeo-Christian societies.

This Book(s) is supposed to represent a revealed 'truth' for humankind in terms of a few billions of believers. Therefore, its contents and the language used to express them, even assuming some possible historical interpolations and the necessary adaptations to the different world languages during the translation process, are supposed to have been aprioristically determined.

The linguistic description of the relevant facts could be less immediate. A smoother introduction to the treated problematic would have been more effective. This would make a book more accessible to the readers with different backgrounds.

In addition to Ukrainian, the large gamut of languages, used for exemplification and comparison, e.g., Russian, English, French, German, Spanish, and Polish, enhances the significance of the study. Yet not all the evidence appears to be equally clear. Some Spanish naming means, for example, do not have a direct relation to the androcentric models of word-formation, cf. Sp *padre* 'father' — *madre* 'mother'; *toro* 'bull' — *vaca* 'cow' etc. Moreover, the etymology of certain denominations (e.g. *novio* 'bridegroom, fiance' — *novia* 'bride') is somewhat more complex (cf. p. 9, fn. 3).

After an outline of the social-cultural changes that have led to the increasing of professions carried out by women (p. 11), the difficulty for a semantic-grammatical agreement between masculine and feminine is discussed. Taranenko reasonably underlines the fact that these attempts may even generate a stylistically connoted (comic) effect, particularly in languages with rich morphology.

The comparison and historic excursus into different Slavic languages (with a focus on Ukrainian) and the observation that a direct correlation between *nomina feminina* with their equivalent *nomina masculina* is not always available and/or possible is appropriate (p. 14). Language conservatism plays an essential role in the slowing down of the development of feminitives. The opposite process, i.e., from feminitives to masculinization is also coherently illustrated (p. 21).

It is worth mentioning a typical misunderstanding and even a wrong interpretation of the words (nouns/pronouns) used in many contemporary languages to refer to somebody representing a group of individuals and/or 'mankind' (p. 25): G *man(n)* 'one' (which is used both as impersonal pronoun, e.g., *man sagt* 'one says, they say' and/or suffix to form compounds, e.g., G *Fachmann* 'specialist, skilled person, professional'; cf. It *uomo* 'man, mankind', Fr *homme* 'man').

More specific is the semantic changes that Proto Slavic \**čelověkъ* 'man' underwent in the various modern Slavic languages. However, all these designations can be related to the original sense of Lat *homo* and Gr *ἄνθρωπος* whose primary meaning referred to *humankind*, independently from natural sex or ideological gender. In this context, the Latin example of *vir* 'man' (meaning an adult male to whom were associated particular manly virtues, e.g., braveness, strength, and the like) is not appropriate. Generally neglected in gender studies, this fundamental semantic and cultural-historical differen-

tiation tends to engender a negative and man-centered association with this noun and/or its derivate forms.

Another statement with which one can hardly agree is that at the associative level, the concept of ‘person’, especially in Slavic and Romance languages, is almost automatically associated with a man rather than a woman (p. 33). This might have been perhaps the case until the first half of the 20th century, but not today. Since the last decade of the 20th century, the language consciousness of the average (West) European speaker has undergone considerable changes. Therefore, in this context, a “spasmodic research” of feminine equivalents seems to be superfluous.

A series of other interesting facts are discussed in the concluding part of the first chapter. However, some interpretations could lead to further argumentation, e.g., the statement that the word order designating the pair *father and mother* (U *bat'ko i maty*) and similar is fixed (p. 43), whereas in some languages this combination is interchangeable; cf. It *mamma e papa*. The denomination of a woman only in relation to her marital status as the only criterion for her designation (p. 39), e.g., Fr *madame* vs. *mademoiselle*, is only partially true and does not apply to all languages equally. The Spanish *señorita* just as the Italian *signorina* is used to designate a young girl sometimes regardless of spousal relationship<sup>1</sup>. The origin of expressions like *syn za bat'ka ne vidpovidaje* ‘a son does not respond for his father / is not responsible for his father’ might also have been socio-historically explained by the role of great responsibility a ‘father’ bore on his shoulders in more archaic societies (p. 26).

In chapter 3, entitled “Gender Reformation of the Language”, Taranenکو gives at first an overview of gender linguistics studies, outlining socio-cultural, political and psychological changes in contemporary society. The author limits himself to framing the problem without taking a critical and philosophic-linguistic stance towards the discussed issue (p. 54). A critical position towards some aspects of “feminine linguistics” (Taranenko’s term) feebly emerges in the concluding sections (pp. 60–61).

As to the linguistic aspects proper, one can agree with the statement that a “gender reform of those European languages which are endowed with a more complex morphology than Modern English” is not an easy task (p. 57). On the other hand, the question arises as to whether these often-advocated language reforms for “a gender-neutral approach” are going to be actually useful for the language system and whether they do not contradict the well-known principle of *linguistic economy* advanced by André Martinet.

Moreover, on the semantic-pragmatic level, the context of the speech act clarifies not just the role of the interlocutors but also their ‘gender’ thus avoiding a constant and often redundant male—female contraposition.

The last part of the chapter concentrates on the situation of gender linguistic studies in Slavic countries, particularly in Ukraine. Here, the theses,

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<sup>1</sup> In 18th- and 19th-century Italian, the masculine equivalent *signorino* was used alongside *signorina* (sometimes just referring to a person belonging to a middle-high social status).

mainly from Russian linguists, which argue against the feminization of language at all costs, are concisely presented. In this framework, Taranenko makes a comparison between those Slavic languages which are more resistant to such externally triggered innovations towards language neutral solutions and/or feminization and those which occupy the opposite position in the gradient scale. Russian represents rather a resilient language whereas Slovenian can be collocated at the other end with Polish having a middle position.

Undoubtedly, the ever growing cultural-anthropological and political influence of the Anglo-American world and, to a lesser extent, North Central Europe, in particular German, tend to be, in a more or less latent way, imposed on other cultural-linguistic systems, including in this particular case Ukrainian and, more widely, the other Slavic languages. All this, along with behavioral patterns conditioned by social media, affects the speakers' language consciousness, language behavior and choices. An additional consideration, although not directed to language "fairness", could be represented by the use of paraverbal communication such as emoticons. These, in fact, do not always resemble a particular national sign and gesture language, but rather they reproduce the Anglo-American pattern in this field.

In sum, this monographic study is unquestionably instructive and useful, particularly for those Ukrainian readers and scholars who are not sufficiently familiar with this issue. It offers an adequate overview and analysis of the most crucial and topical issues of contemporary trends in gender linguistics. These aspects are contextualized in a relatively broad perspective that considers an ample range of languages, with a focus on East Slavic. However, the author's critical assessment of the discussed issues is somewhat limited. One would expect from a linguist of this caliber the adoption of a more direct and clearly stated position on the current propounding of this new trend in language and in language policy, at least with regard to Ukraine. This criticism aside, the book represents one of the first milestones in this topical area related to both Ukrainian and other (East) Slavic languages.

Received 02.05.2022

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**Рецензія на книжку: Тараненко, О. О. *Андроцентризм у системі мовних координат і сучасний гендерний рух.***

Київ: Видавничий дім Дмитра Бураго, 2021. 112 с. ISBN 978-966-489-560-3