

Gender-Fair Language in Job Advertisements: A Cross-Linguistic and Cross-Cultural Analysis

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Abstract

The present study investigates whether and how the use of gender-fair language is related to linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic differences between countries with grammatical gender languages. To answer this question, we analyzed job titles in online job advertisements from four European countries differing in achieved gender equality and egalitarian versus hierarchical cultural values (Switzerland, Austria, Poland, and Czech Republic). Results show that gender-fair job titles were more frequent in more egalitarian countries with higher levels of socioeconomic gender equality (Switzerland, Austria) than in countries with a higher acceptance of hierarchies and inequalities (Poland, Czech Republic). In the latter countries, gender-specific (masculine or feminine) job titles predominated. Moreover, gender-fair job titles were more prevalent in a female-dominated branch (health care) and a gender-balanced economic branch (food services) than in a male-dominated branch (constructional steel and metal work). Thus, our findings suggest that the language use in job advertisements indeed corresponds with linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic aspects and may contribute to the transmission of gender (in)equalities and gender stereotypes.

Keywords

gender equality, cross-cultural comparison, gender-fair language, job advertisements, job titles

Gender stereotypes are based on the traditional division of labor (Bosak, Sczesny, & Eagly, 2012; Eagly, 1987): Women tend to work in occupations that require caring and cooperation and thus are perceived as more communal (e.g., warm, helpful), whereas men tend to work in jobs requiring decision making or strength and are perceived as more agentic (e.g., ambitious, independent). Furthermore, typically male occupations are often associated with greater power and higher social status than typically female occupations (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Although gender hierarchies and gender stereotyping have decreased over the last decades, men continue to have more power than women do and gender stereotypes persist, even if they take subtle forms and manifestations (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Language can be considered one of the subtle means

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of maintaining traditional gender arrangements, as language is an important vehicle for the transmission and maintenance of stereotypes (Maass & Arcuri, 1996). How situations are perceived and interpreted is influenced not only by what we say, but also by how we say it, so that language contributes to the construction of reality (Semin, 2000).

Earlier research has identified numerous gender asymmetries in language, which both reflect and support the traditional gender hierarchy (Hellinger & Bußmann, 2001a, 2002, 2003). But exactly how is actual language use related to linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic aspects of gender hierarchies and gender stereotypes? The present research aims to determine how gender-fair language—a symmetric treatment of women and men in language—corresponds to egalitarian cultural values (i.e., the rejection of unequal power distribution in organizations and countries; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010) and to achieved gender equality (e.g., Gender Gap Index [GGI]; Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2012) in a country. We examined these questions by analyzing job advertisements from four European countries: Czech Republic and Poland, two Eastern European countries with Slavic languages and nonegalitarian values, and Austria and Switzerland, two egalitarian Western European countries where German is spoken. In addition, we investigated to what extent the occurrence of gender-fair language was associated with the gender-typicality of economic branches as indicated by proportions of male and female employees (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2012; Eurostat, 2012).

Gender Asymmetries in Language Use and Language Structure

In many languages, there are asymmetries in the linguistic forms referring to women and men. The contributions in Hellinger and Bußmann (2001a, 2002, 2003) analyze gender in 30 languages from diverse language families (e.g., Arabic, Chinese, English, Finnish, Hindi, Turkish, Swahili). They show that masculine-male forms usually designate not only men but also groups of women and men, or referents whose gender is unknown or unspecified (see also Stahlberg, Braun, Irmen, & Sczesny, 2007). This usage is known as *masculine generics*. In contrast, feminine-female forms are almost never used in a generic sense but refer to women only (Hellinger & Bußmann, 2001b). In English, for example, the personal pronoun *he* is often used when gender is irrelevant (e.g., *the user . . . he*). In German, masculine role nouns serve as labels for mixed groups consisting of women and men (e.g., *einige Lehrer*_{masc.pl}, “several teachers,” for a group of male and female teachers). Past research has shown that masculine generics evoke a male bias in cognitive representations (Stahlberg et al., 2007) so that readers or listeners, in line with the grammatical form, mostly think of male exemplars. This effect has been observed in several languages, such as English (e.g., Crawford & English, 1984; Gabriel, Gygax, Sarasin, Garnham, & Oakhill, 2008; Gastil, 1990; Hamilton, 1988; Ng, 1990), French (e.g., Chatard, Guimont, & Martinot, 2005; Gabriel et al., 2008), German (e.g., Braun, Sczesny, & Stahlberg, 2005; Gabriel et al., 2008; Heise, 2000; Irmen, 2007), and Polish (e.g., Bojarska, 2011).

Although this type of asymmetry exists in many languages, it is more visible in some languages than in others. In general, languages can be divided into three categories: grammatical gender languages, natural gender languages, and genderless languages (for an overview, see Stahlberg et al., 2007). In *grammatical gender languages* such as Czech, German, Italian, or Polish, every personal noun has a grammatical gender, which usually corresponds to the gender of a human referent. In *natural gender languages* such as English or Danish, most personal nouns are gender-neutral and referential gender is mainly expressed in personal pronouns (he or she). In *genderless languages* such as Finnish or Turkish, referential gender is marked neither on personal nouns nor on pronouns. Here, gender is expressed lexically (e.g., through attributes such as “male/female [teacher]” or lexical gender words such as “woman” or “father”). Therefore, gender—both referential gender and the asymmetry inherent in masculine generics—is much more visible in grammatical gender languages than in natural gender languages or genderless languages (Hellinger & Bußmann, 2001b).

Gender-Fair and Gender-Biased Language Use

Gender-biased language has been found to have detrimental effects for women, for example, in decision making during the hiring process: Early work by Bem and Bem (1973) showed that explicit gender references in job advertisements discouraged female U.S. university students from applying for typically male positions. Recent studies obtained similar results with more subtle gender references: An agentic compared with communal wording of job advertisements led to a lower level of anticipated belongingness and to a lower level of job appeal in female Canadian psychology students (Gaucher, Friesen, & Kay, 2011). Job advertisements in the masculine (*he* instead of *he and she*) decreased female U.S. students' identification with the job and their motivation to pursue the respective career (Stout & Dasgupta, 2011). Belgian and German children associated occupations less with female jobholders when the jobs were described in the masculine rather than a gender-fair form (e.g., Dutch *automonteerders*_{masc.}, "car mechanics"; German *Sportler*_{masc.}, "athletes" versus Dutch *automonteerster en automonteerders*_{fem. + masc.}, "car mechanics"; German *Sportlerinnen und Sportler*_{fem. + masc.}, "athletes"). Moreover, girls perceived women as less successful and were less interested in a typically male occupation when it was described in the masculine compared with a gender-fair form (Vervecken, Hannover, & Wolter, 2013). In another study, women were perceived as less suitable for a high-status leadership position than men when the job was advertised with a masculine job title, whereas no such difference arose when a gender-fair job title was used (Horvath & Sczesny, 2016).

In line with these findings, use of gender-fair language has been promoted, especially for official and administrative texts, to represent women and men equally and to establish equal chances. Various guidelines exist which explain and suggest gender-fair expressions. Gender-fair language includes the avoidance of gender-specific (either masculine or feminine) forms in statements that refer to both genders as well as the avoidance of words and phrases with stereotypical connotations (Schweizerische Bundeskanzlei, 1996/2009; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1999). But whether and to what extent language regulations have been introduced differs widely between countries and speech communities. The first guidelines for gender-fair German, for example, were issued in the 1980s (e.g., Guentherodt, Hellinger, Pusch, & Trömel-Plötz, 1980); since then, many more guidelines and recommendations, especially for public institutions, have followed (Hellinger & Bierbach, 1993; Kargl, Wetschanow, Wodak, & Perle, 1997; Schweizerische Bundeskanzlei, 1996/2009). Czech guidelines, however, were only published in 2001 (Valdrová, 2001; Valdrová, Knotková-Čapková, & Paclíková, 2010, Valdrová, 2013), and to our knowledge, there are no guidelines at all for Polish. In general, guidelines offer only recommendations and are not legally binding. In Austria, however, the equal treatment act stipulates that job advertisements be phrased in a gender-fair way (Bundesministerium für Frauen und Öffentlichen Dienst, 2009; GIBG, 2004) and companies can be fined if they do not comply.

Thus, languages can be used in ways that promote or impede gender equality (Sczesny, Formanowicz, & Moser, 2016). But the very structure of languages also seems to be related to societal gender equality: In a study by Prewitt-Freilino, Caswell, and Laakso, countries with grammatical gender languages reached lower levels of general gender equality than countries with natural gender languages and genderless languages (Prewitt-Freilino, Caswell, & Laakso, 2012, who analyzed 134 countries with different language systems, controlled for geographic, religious, political, and developmental differences). In their study, gender equality was assessed with the help of the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Index* (GGI; Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2009). The study by Prewitt-Freilino and colleagues provides information on the correlation between language structure and achieved gender equality in different countries, but it tackles this issue on the level of the language system. However, as outlined above,

countries with grammatical gender language vary considerably regarding their achieved gender equality. Therefore, it remains an open question, to what extent the level of gender equality in a country is related, for example, to the way its language is being used, that is, to whether language use is more gender-fair or less so, and which factors might affect language use, such as language policies and/or specific features of language structure. Observing actual language use in a country can provide information about efforts to promote gender equality within the framework of a given language structure. The present study therefore investigates relations between achieved gender equality and actual language use in countries where the same type of language is spoken, namely, grammatical gender languages. We opted for languages with grammatical gender as gender is particularly visible in these languages (Hellinger & Bußmann, 2001b) and achieved gender equality tends to be comparatively low in the respective countries (Prewitt-Freilino et al., 2012).

Socioeconomic and Cultural Variations of Gender Equality in the Countries Under Study

To investigate correspondences of gender equality and language use, we selected European countries with different *levels of achieved gender equality*. As in past research (see Prewitt-Freilino et al., 2012), we used the GGI as an indicator of gender equality (Hausmann et al., 2012). The GGI is based on statistical data on gender equality in different domains of life, including educational attainment, political empowerment, and economic participation. Although the level of gender equality in European countries on average is fairly high, there are pronounced differences between individual countries, such as Iceland (first rank) and Italy (Rank 80). We selected two German-speaking countries with comparatively higher levels of gender equality, Switzerland (Rank 10 on the GGI; Hausmann et al., 2012) and Austria (Rank 20), as well as two Slavic-speaking countries, Poland (Rank 53) and the Czech Republic (Rank 73) with comparatively lower levels. As the gender regimes in these Western and Eastern European countries have different histories and trajectories (Pascall & Lewis, 2004), we also had a closer look on egalitarian values in these countries.

First, we examined the *power distance* dimension of cultural differences as defined in the Value System Module (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 2010). The power distance index measures egalitarian values using the acceptance of unequal power distribution in organizations and countries. Based on this criterion, rankings are available for 76 countries, among them the four countries included in the present study. The rankings of the four countries matched the levels of achieved gender equality specified in the GGI: While in Switzerland and Austria, public acceptance of power differences and inequality was low (Ranks 72 and 76, respectively, Hofstede et al., 2010), power differences and inequalities were found to be more readily accepted in the two Slavic-speaking countries (Czech Republic ranks 45/46 and Poland ranks 27-29).

Second, we found correspondences between *gender egalitarian values* as measured in the Global Leadership & Organizational Behavior Effectiveness study (GLOBE; comparison of the Eastern European cluster with the Germanic European cluster; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004) with the GGI rankings of the countries under investigation. In contrast to these *gender egalitarian values*, *gender egalitarian practices*, that is, the perception of actual gender differences, showed a different pattern: Managers from the Eastern European cluster perceived the practices in their countries to be more gender egalitarian than Germanic European managers. One reason may be that in Eastern European countries, inequalities are more taken for granted (reflected in higher values on the power distance dimension), with the result that inequalities are perceived as smaller than in the Germanic European countries, although they are not (as shown by the GGI).

Finally, we consulted the World Values Survey (WVS; World Values Survey Association, 2016) and the European Value Survey (last wave 2008; EVS, 2016) which also address aspects of gender equality. The WVS measured the following attitudes: the right to work for women and men when jobs are scarce, the importance of university education for boys and girls, and the suitability of women and men as business executives or political leaders. For the countries under investigation, data only exist for certain periods of time, and there are no data at all for Austria. In general, however, available data for the Czech Republic, Poland, and Switzerland indicate that support for male privileges has decreased over time. As for differences between countries, if any, male privileges received less support in Switzerland compared with Poland and the Czech Republic, which is in line with the GGI ranking. In the EVS, respondents were asked whether men have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce. Interestingly, the expressed support of male privileges in times when jobs are scarce was quite similar in the four countries, less than 30% of respondents agreed (data from 2008; EVS, 2016).

Taken together, the differences in achieved gender equality—as indicated by the GGI, which guided our selection of countries—were generally matched by the presence of egalitarian values in these countries: The two German-speaking countries show higher levels of socioeconomic gender equality (as measured by the GGI) than the two Slavic-speaking countries; they were also found to possess more (gender) egalitarian values. In other words, in both Eastern European countries, “capitalist transition has eroded the Communist gender equality legacy” (Pollert, 2003, p. 332). However, equality values seem to increase and to converge in all four countries (World Values Survey Association, 2016). Nevertheless, it has to be emphasized that gender equality (e.g., equality in income) is far from accomplished across Europe (Pascall & Lewis, 2004), a fact that indicates how deeply entrenched male power is and remains in European societies (Pollert, 2003). This makes the research on every aspect of factors related to gender equality—including linguistic factors—an important ongoing challenge.

Linguistic Gender-Fairness in the Languages Under Study

Different strategies can be pursued to reduce gender asymmetries in language: neutralization, feminization (Bußmann & Hellinger, 2003), and a context-dependent combination of the two (Schweizerische Bundeskanzlei, 1996/2009). Neutralization means that gender-marked terms are replaced with gender-indefinite nouns, such as epicenes (i.e., forms with invariant grammatical gender which refer to female as well as male persons, for example, *osoba*_{fem.}, “person” in Polish or Czech; *jedinec*_{masc.}, “individual” in Czech; or *Fachkraft*_{fem.}, “expert” in German) or the plural form of nominalized participles or adjectives (e.g., *Studierende* “students [studying ones]” in German or *vedoucí* “leaders” in Czech), where there is no grammatical gender distinction. Feminization, on the contrary, consists of an explicit reference to women. Thus, feminine and masculine forms are used in combination whenever both genders could be concerned, for example, German *Elektrikerinnen und Elektriker* “[female and male] electricians”; Polish *nauczycielki i nauczyciele* “[female and male] teachers”; Czech *žadatelky a žadatelé* “[female and male] applicant”; or abbreviated forms (e.g., German *Elektriker/in*; Polish *nauczyciel/ka*; Czech *žadatel/ka*). For many grammatical gender languages, including German, Polish, and Czech, feminization has been suggested (Hellinger & Bußmann, 2003), and nowadays more often a combination of feminization and neutralization (Schweizerische Bundeskanzlei, 1996/2009).

In addition to neutralization and feminization, a novel linguistic form occurs especially in job advertisements, namely, the combination of a masculine job title with m/f for male/female, for example, German *Geschäftsführer*_{masc.} m/w, “CEO m/f.” This pattern is used in several languages such as Dutch (Pauwels, 1998), Spanish (European Parliament, 2008), and German (Bundesministerium für Frauen und Öffentlichen Dienst, 2009; Greve, Iding, & Schmusch, 2002; Lujansky-Lammer, 2006).

Languages differ in the *ease with which gender-fair language can be implemented*. There are, for example, remarkable differences between German (Germanic language) and Polish or Czech (Slavic languages): It is fairly easy to derive feminine role nouns from masculine ones in German by adding the feminine suffix *-in* (e.g., *Boxerin* “[female] boxer” derived from *Boxer*_{masc.} “boxer”) or by substituting the element *-mann* or *-herr* “man” with its counterpart *-frau* “woman” (e.g., *Ratsfrau* “female member of the city council” as counterpart of *Ratsherr* “male member of the city council”). That feminine and masculine personal nouns can be created relatively symmetrically may reflect the egalitarian culture in German-speaking countries (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 2010). The efforts of promoting gender-fair language over the past decades (Schweizerische Bundeskanzlei, 1996/2009; UNESCO, 1999) are an additional sign of the importance of egalitarian cultural values in Switzerland and Austria. In Slavic languages, it is more difficult to refer to women and men symmetrically (Koniuszaniec & Blaszkowa, 2003). In Polish, for example, feminine forms of certain role nouns refer to a lower status (e.g., *profesor*_{masc.} designates a university professor, whereas *profesorka*, fem. is a high school teacher), coincide with diminutives (e.g., *muzyczka*, fem. “female musician” and “little music”), or even denote objects (e.g., Polish *drukarka*, fem. derived from *drukarz*, masc. “printer” can refer to a “female printer” and a “printing machine”). The difficulty in creating feminine equivalents of masculine role nouns is one reason why many Polish role nouns are available in the masculine only. Unlike Polish, both masculine and feminine forms are available for most Czech job titles, but some feminine forms are used infrequently (Čmejrková, 2003). These are indications that hierarchical cultural values are deep-rooted in Poland and the Czech Republic. Here, status differences are more accepted and can be expressed more openly (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 2010).

To sum up, language use as a subtle mechanism can contribute to the maintenance of gender hierarchies (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Sczesny et al., 2016) and can thus support hierarchical structures in general (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 2010). Guidelines for gender-fair language, on the contrary, aim at counteracting inequalities and can be seen as expressing lesser acceptance of (gender) inequalities. Apart from linguistic features and language policies, cultural values of egalitarianism and gender equality as well may influence the use of gender-fair language, as outlined above.

Aims of the Study and Hypotheses

The present research aims to determine whether the use of gender-fair language is related to language policies, levels of achieved gender equality, and egalitarian cultural values in different countries as assessed in previous studies (e.g., Hausmann et al., 2012; Hofstede et al., 2010; Prewitt-Freilino et al., 2012). This question is examined on the basis of job advertisements in the four European countries whose linguistic and cultural characteristics have been outlined above: Czech Republic, Poland, Austria, and Switzerland. We focused on job advertisements because gender-fair language is of particular importance for girls’ and boys’ interest in a career as well as in personnel recruitment (Bem & Bem, 1973; Horvath & Sczesny, 2016; Stout & Dasgupta, 2011; Vervecken et al., 2013). Furthermore, job advertisements are cross-linguistically highly comparable in form and content. As economic sectors tend to be gender-segregated, we analyzed advertisements from typically male, typically female, and gender-neutral branches. With this investigation, we aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay of gender-fair language and egalitarian values in general as well as gender equality in particular.

We expected gender-fair job titles to be more frequent than gender-specific ones in the two German-speaking countries, where an unequal distribution of power in general is less accepted and gender inequalities are smaller (egalitarian values, high level of socioeconomic gender equality). For the Slavic-speaking countries, we expected gender-specific job titles to be more prevalent than gender-fair forms, in line with the openly expressed gender hierarchy in those countries (nonegalitarian values, low level of socioeconomic gender equality; Hypothesis 1).

In addition, we expected different frequencies of gender-fair job titles in different economic branches according to the respective gender proportions. In Western societies, professions and economic branches still show considerable gender segregation (e.g., Bundesamt für Statistik, 2012; Eurostat, 2012): Across Europe, construction steel and metal work and transportation/logistics are male-dominated branches (more than 70% male employees), for instance, while social care and health care are female-dominated (less than 30% male employees) and food services and insurance are gender-balanced (Eurostat, 2012). Language use may reflect these differences: Lujansky-Lammer (2006) observed that gender-specific forms (i.e., either masculine or feminine forms) were most frequent in Austrian job advertisements for gender-typical branches. This effect was markedly stronger for male-dominated than for female-dominated fields, which is not surprising as men have long outnumbered women in the paid workforce and as there is the tradition of using masculine forms as generics (Irmen & Steiger, 2005). We therefore assumed the frequency of linguistic forms to vary with the gender-typicality of the branches: Gender-fair job titles were expected to be more frequent in gender-balanced than in gender-typical branches, whereas gender-specific job titles were expected to be more frequent in the gender-typical branches than in the gender-balanced one (Hypothesis 2).

The effect of gender-typicality of the branches should be weaker in the two German-speaking countries with their more egalitarian cultural values than in the two countries with Slavic languages (Hypothesis 3).

As described above, a range of different forms is considered gender-fair. One special case is the combination form, which sticks to the traditional use of masculine job title, but indicates that both men and women are included by adding m/f for male/female, for example, German *Geschäftsführer*_{masc.} m/w, "general manager m/f." Linguistically, this form is a minimum solution, and it is doubtful to what extent it can be considered gender-fair. To gain insights into the current use of the new combination form masculine + m/f in job advertisements, we explored its occurrence in comparison with other gender-fair forms. In line with Hypothesis 2, we expected the combination form to be more frequent in gender-typical branches (especially in the male-dominated branch) than in the gender-balanced branch (Hypothesis 4).

Method

We analyzed online job advertisements from Switzerland, Austria, Poland, and the Czech Republic regarding the linguistic form of the job title. We included the following three branches: construction steel and metal work (male-dominated, for example, locksmith, construction engineer), restaurants and food services (gender-balanced, for example, waiter, sous-chef), and health care (female-dominated, for example, doctor, care worker). Available census data for these sectors documented the gender distribution within each branch (European Union: Eurostat, 2012; Switzerland: Bundesamt für Statistik, 2012) and showed that the gender proportions were comparable in the countries under investigation. Furthermore, the selected branches were equally representative in the four countries, in that they comprised 2% to 7% of all employees in each country (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2012; Eurostat, 2012); all branches included low-status jobs as well as high-status jobs. Information on gender equality and gender distributions in the four countries is presented in Table 1.

For the sampling of job advertisements, we used the job search engine *Careerjet*, which is available in all four countries (i.e., careerjet.ch, careerjet.at, careerjet.pl, and careerjet.cz). This search engine provides a list of all job advertisements published online and thus covers a large variety of job offers (43,240 job ads in Switzerland, 32,389 in Austria, 70,547 in Poland, and 51,216 in the Czech Republic at the time of our study). The use of the same webpage allowed for maximum comparability between countries. In each branch, the total number of job advertisements available was more than 1,000 (ranging between 1,142 for constructional steel and metal work in Austria and 8,049 for restaurants and food services in Austria). In June 2012, we

Table 1. Country Information on Achieved Gender Equality and Percentage of Male Employees, in Total and According to Branches.

Country	Language	Power distance (rank)	GGI 2012 (rank)	% male employees			
				Total	Female-dominated branch	Gender-balanced branch	Male-dominated branch
Switzerland	German ^a	26 ^b (72)	.77 (10)	55	22	45	81
Austria	German	11 (76)	.74 (20)	53	23	41	84
Poland	Polish	68 (27-29)	.70 (53)	54	19	32	85
Czech Republic	Czech	57 (45-46)	.68 (73)	57	22	45	79

Note. Power distance is a dimension of national culture as described by Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010). Scores range from 0 to 100; 76 countries are ranked according to the acceptance of unequal power distribution. GGI is the Global Gender Gap Index annually published by the World Economic Forum (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2012). Equality scores range from 0 to 1; 135 countries are ranked according to the extent of gender equality achieved.

^aGerman is the most widely spoken language in Switzerland; the statistics include employees with other native languages (i.e., French, Italian, Rhaeto-Romanic).

^bGerman-speaking sample. The French-speaking sample showed a higher acceptance of power distance (70, Rank 22-25).

Table 2. Coding Categories and Examples for Each Language.

Code	English examples	German examples	Polish examples	Czech examples
Masculine	waiter	<i>Kellner</i>	<i>kelner</i>	<i>číšník</i>
Masculine + m/f	waiter m/f	<i>Kellner m/w</i>	<i>kelner m/k</i>	<i>číšník m/z</i>
Gender-fair	waiter/waitress	<i>Kellner/Kellnerin</i>	<i>kelner/kelnerka</i>	<i>číšník/číšnice</i>
Feminine	waitress	<i>Kellnerin</i>	<i>kelnerka</i>	<i>číšnice</i>

Note. Gender-fair are all forms that address women and men equally, either by not differentiating for gender or by combining a masculine and a feminine form.

randomly selected and downloaded 120 job advertisements from each of the three branches for each of the four countries, which yielded a total of 1,440 job advertisements. In the Swiss sample, only German-language job advertisements were analyzed.

We developed a coding form which provided linguistic categories for classifying the job titles based on grammatical form and gender-fairness. The two gender-specific categories were: masculine form and feminine form; the two gender-fair categories were combination form (masculine + m/f) and other gender-fair forms (gender-neutral and masculine-feminine word pairs; Table 2 provides examples of these categories in the different languages). Two independent raters coded the linguistic form of the job titles. Interrater reliability was found to be high for all four countries: Kappa = 0.874 ($p < .001$), 95% confidence interval [CI] = [0.823, 0.925] for Czech job titles; Kappa = 0.861 ($p < .001$), 95% CI = [0.798, 0.923] for Polish job titles; Kappa = 0.994 ($p < .001$), 95% CI = [0.988, 1.000] for Austrian job titles; and Kappa = 1.000 ($p < 0.001$), that is, complete agreement between the two raters, for Swiss job titles. Five job advertisements contained no clearly defined job title. Therefore, only 1,435 job ads were included in the analyses.

Results

All frequencies and percentages of the linguistic forms occurring in job advertisements from the four countries are presented in Table 3, Figure 1, and Figure 2, differentiated for branches. To

Table 3. Frequencies (and Percentages) of the Different Forms of Job Titles by Country and Branch.

Countries/Branch	Job Titles			
	Gender-specific		Gender-fair	
	Masculine	Feminine	Masculine + m/f	Other gender-fair
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Switzerland				
Female-dominated	3 (3)	13 (11)	14 (12)	90 (75)
Gender-balanced	34 (28)	5 (4)	17 (14)	64 (53)
Male-dominated	57 (48)	0 (0)	23 (19)	38 (32)
Total	94 (26)	18 (5)	54 (15)	192 (54)
Austria				
Female-dominated	4 (3)	2 (2)	14 (12)	99 (83)
Gender-balanced	17 (14)	1 (1)	25 (21)	77 (64)
Male-dominated	12 (10)	0 (0)	52 (43)	56 (47)
Total	33 (9)	3 (1)	91 (25)	232 (65)
Poland				
Female-dominated	96 (80)	18 (15)	0 (0)	6 (5)
Gender-balanced	84 (70)	23 (19)	0 (0)	13 (11)
Male-dominated	119 (99)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)
Total	299 (83)	41 (11)	0 (0)	20 (6)
Czech Republic				
Female-dominated	76 (64)	17 (14)	0 (0)	25 (21)
Gender-balanced	40 (33)	3 (3)	0 (0)	77 (64)
Male-dominated	108 (90)	0 (0)	0 (0)	12 (10)
Total	224 (63)	20 (6)	0 (0)	114 (32)
Overall				
Female-dominated	179 (38)	50 (11)	28 (6)	220 (46)
Gender-balanced	175 (36)	32 (7)	42 (9)	231 (48)
Male-dominated	296 (62)	0 (0)	75 (16)	107 (22)
Total	650 (45)	61 (6)	145 (10)	558 (39)

Note. *n* = number of job ads in the specific category.

answer our research questions, we calculated analyses comparing gender-specific (i.e., masculine or feminine) job titles with gender-fair forms (combination form masculine + m/f or other gender-fair forms).

The Use of Gender-Specific and Gender-Fair Forms Across Cultures and Economic Branches

We calculated a log-linear analysis with the factors culture (German-speaking, Slavic-speaking), branch (female-dominated, gender-balanced, male-dominated), and language form (gender-specific, gender-fair) to investigate differences in the use of gender-specific versus gender-fair forms between countries and branches. The log-linear analysis revealed a significant interaction (Country \times Branch \times Language Form), $\chi^2(6) = 82.944, p < .001$.

To test Hypothesis 1, we calculated a chi-square test comparing the German-speaking countries (Switzerland and Austria combined) with the Slavic-speaking countries (Poland and Czech

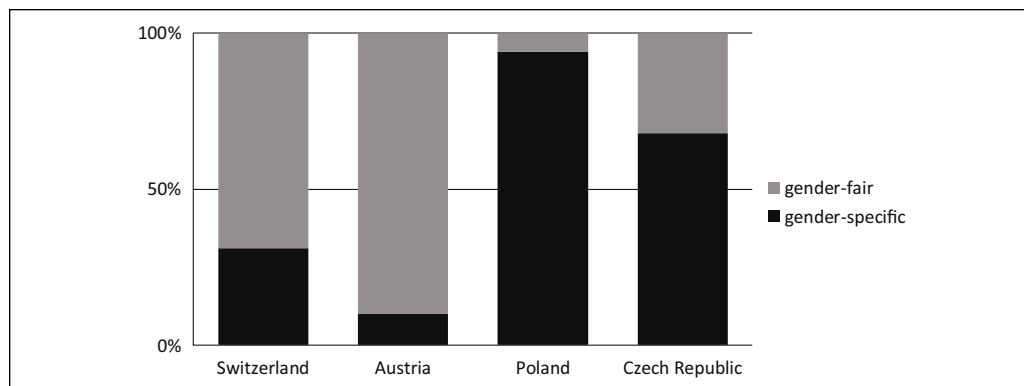


Figure 1. Forms of job titles by country: Forms of gender-fair and gender-specific job titles used in job ads, adding up to 100% for each country.

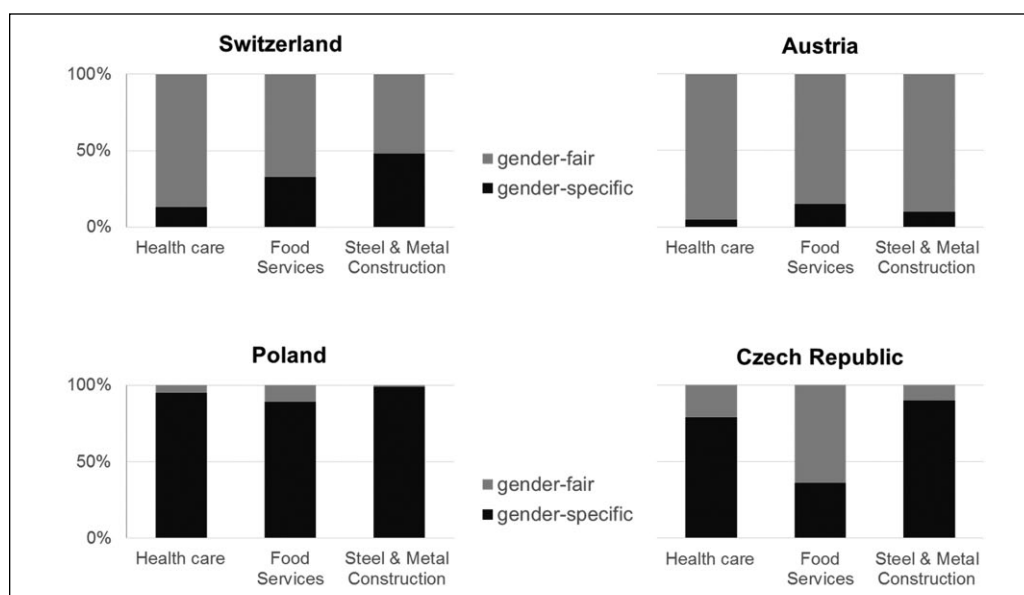


Figure 2. Forms of job titles by country and branch: Forms of gender-fair and gender-specific job titles used in the three branches in each country, adding up to 100%.

Republic combined). In line with the hypothesis, gender-fair job titles were more frequent than gender-specific job titles in the German-speaking countries (gender-fair: 79%, gender-specific: 21%), but less frequent than gender-specific job titles in the Slavic-speaking countries (gender-fair: 13%, gender-specific: 87%), $\chi^2(1) = 385.64$, $p < .001$. The odds ratio (OR, i.e., German-speaking countries [gender-fair forms / gender-specific forms] / Slavic-speaking countries [gender-fair forms / gender-specific forms]) showed that gender-fair job titles in relation to gender-specific job titles were 17 times more likely to occur in German-speaking countries compared with Slavic-speaking countries.

To test Hypothesis 2, we first calculated a chi-square test, comparing the use of gender-fair and gender-specific job titles between branches over all countries. This revealed a reliable association between linguistic form of the job title and branch, $\chi^2(2) = 30.63$, $p < .001$. In line with

Table 4. Odds Ratios.

	Female-dominated by gender-balanced branch	Gender-balanced by male-dominated branch	Female-dominated by male-dominated branch
Ratio of the odds (gender-fair forms/masculine forms) ^a			
Switzerland	3.1	1.9	6.1
Austria	3.3	0.6	2.1
Poland	0.4	14.5	6.3
Czech Republic	0.2	16.1	2.4
Ratio of the odds (gender-fair forms/combination forms) ^b			
Switzerland	1.7	2.3	3.9
Austria	2.3	2.9	6.6

Note. This table presents odds ratios comparing language use between branches by country.

^aOdds ratios comparing gender-fair and masculine forms between branches by country.

^bOdds ratios comparing gender-fair and combination forms between branches by country.

Hypothesis 2, gender-fair forms were more frequent than gender-specific forms in the gender-balanced branch (i.e., food services: 43% gender-specific forms, 57% gender-fair forms). Again in line with Hypothesis 2, gender-specific forms prevailed in the male-dominated branch (i.e., constructional steel and metal work: 62% gender-specific forms, 38% gender-fair forms).

Surprisingly, gender-fair forms were more frequently used than gender-specific forms in the female-dominated branch (i.e., health care: 48% gender-specific forms, 52% gender-fair forms). ORs showed that gender-fair job titles in relation to gender-specific job titles were more than 1.5 times more likely to be used in the gender-balanced branch (OR = 2.2) and also in the female-dominated branch (OR = 1.83) than in the male-dominated branch while the female-dominated branch and the gender-balanced branch did not significantly differ from each other (OR = 1.2).

To address Hypothesis 3, we analyzed the specific patterns within each country. Chi-square tests revealed significant interactions between branches and language use in all countries, for Poland, $\chi^2(2) = 11.54$, $p = .003$; for the Czech Republic, $\chi^2(2) = 90.32$, $p < .001$; Switzerland, $\chi^2(2) = 33.97$, $p < .001$; and Austria, $\chi^2(2) = 6.58$, $p = .037$. We analyzed frequencies and calculated ORs, as shown in Tables 3 and 4 as well as in Figure 2. For the two Slavic-speaking countries, frequencies showed that gender-specific job titles were highly frequent in all branches but much more so in Polish than in Czech. Gender-fair job titles, which were much more frequent in Czech than in Polish, occurred more often in the female-dominated branch and the gender-balanced branch than in the male-dominated branch in both countries. In the two German-speaking countries, gender-fair job titles were more frequent in the female-dominated branch and the gender-balanced branch than in the male-dominated one. However, a striking difference occurred with respect to gender-specific forms: while in Switzerland gender-specific forms were more frequent in the male-dominated branch than in the female-dominated branch and the gender-balanced branch, gender-specific job titles generally were quite rare in Austrian job advertisements.

The Use of the Combination Form Masculine + m/f

To test Hypothesis 4, we compared the frequency of combination forms with that of other gender-fair forms by country and branch. As combination forms were not used in the two Slavic-speaking countries, we conducted a log-linear analysis with the factors country (Switzerland, Austria), branch (female-dominated, gender-balanced, male-dominated), and language form (masculine + m/f, gender-fair). The analysis revealed significant main effects for country, $\chi^2(1) = 10.45$, $p =$

.001; branch, $\chi^2(2) = 6.34$, $p = .042$; and language form, $\chi^2(1) = 142.89$, $p < .001$, as well as a significant interaction (Branch \times Language Form), $\chi^2(2) = 47.94$, $p < .001$. We analyzed patterns of usage in the different branches for each country. Chi-square tests for Switzerland, $\chi^2(2) = 13.26$, $p = .001$, and for Austria, $\chi^2(2) = 35.88$, $p < .001$, revealed significant differences between the branches. To examine the specific patterns within each country, we analyzed frequencies and calculated ORs, as shown in Tables 3 and 4 as well as in Figure 2. In line with Hypothesis 4, it was more than twice as likely that the combination form rather than some other gender-fair form was used in the male-dominated branch (but not in the female-dominated branch) compared with the gender-balanced branch in both German-speaking countries.

Discussion

Our study is the first to compare the use of gender-fair language in job advertisements in countries with egalitarian cultural values and high levels of gender equality, Switzerland and Austria (both German-speaking), with its use in countries with hierarchical cultural values and lower levels of gender equality, Poland and Czech Republic (both with Slavic languages).

As predicted in Hypothesis 1, our results suggest that gender-fair language is more frequently used in countries with a high level of gender equality (i.e., Switzerland and Austria) than in countries with lower levels of gender equality (i.e., Poland and Czech Republic; GGI; Hausmann et al., 2012). These differences in the socioeconomic status of women and men correspond mostly to cultural differences in egalitarian values (*power distance*, Value System Module; Hofstede et al., 2010; *gender egalitarian values*, GLOBE; House et al., 2004; World Values Survey Association, 2016; EVS, 2016) and differences in the advancement of gender-fair language (Hellinger & Bußmann, 2003). As for the linguistic forms of job titles used in each country, we observed the following patterns: In Switzerland, gender-fair forms were most prevalent, but gender-specific forms as well were frequently used (about one third of the cases). The predominance of gender-fair forms in Switzerland can be explained with the fact that language guidelines have been promoting gender-fair language for about 20 years (e.g., Schweizerische Bundeskanzlei, 1996/2009), a fact, which in turn reflects the egalitarian values held in this country. In Austria, we found mostly gender-fair job titles, whereas gender-specific forms were very rare. The high frequency of gender-fair job titles in Austrian job advertisements can plausibly be linked to the equal treatment act, which demands the gender-fair phrasing of job advertisements (Bundesministerium für Frauen und Öffentlichen Dienst, 2009; GIBG, 2004). As Austrian companies can be fined for advertising jobs in gender-specific wording (i.e., with a masculine or a feminine form only), there is considerable pressure to use gender-fair language. Thus, the equal treatment act seems to be an influential means of implementing gender-fairness in language.

In Poland, we found mostly gender-specific (above all masculine) job titles and very few gender-fair forms. Cultural features such as power hierarchies (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 2010) and language features (Koniuszaniec & Blaszkowa, 2003) such as the difficulty of creating feminine counterparts of masculine job titles in Polish result in a language use that strongly reflects traditional gender roles. As we do not know of any guidelines for gender-fair language in Poland, the small number of gender-fair job titles in Polish job advertisements does not come as a surprise. In the Czech Republic, gender-specific forms predominated, but there was also a fair share of gender-fair forms (about one third). This may be due to the fact that feminine counterparts of masculine forms are at least available in Czech (Valdrová, 2001; Valdrová et al., 2010). But although gender-fair forms exist or can be created in Czech, they do not seem to be widely used. Again this may be explained with the higher acceptance of hierarchies and inequalities in this country (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 2010).

In line with Hypothesis 2 and with earlier research (Lujansky-Lammer, 2006), we found that jobs from gender-balanced branches were more often advertised in gender-fair than in

gender-specific forms, whereas in the male-dominated branch more gender-specific (mostly masculine) than gender-fair forms were used. Contrary to our hypothesis, gender-fair and gender-specific forms were almost equally frequent in the female-dominated branch. However, feminine forms, although generally infrequent, were most prevalent in the female-dominated branch. Thus, language use in the investigated branches indeed followed base rates of women and men working in the respective branches and their gender-typicality.

As predicted in Hypothesis 3, this pattern was more pronounced in the Slavic-speaking countries than in the German-speaking ones, due to differences in language policies and gender equality. In the Slavic-speaking countries, gender-fair forms were most frequently used in the gender-balanced branch and less in the gender-typical branches, where more gender-specific forms were used compared with the gender-balanced branch. This linguistic usage mirrors gender distributions in the different branches (Eurostat, 2012). In the German-speaking countries, gender-fair forms were frequent in the female-dominated branch as well as in the gender-balanced branch, but not in the male-dominated branch, where gender-specific forms predominated. This is notably different from the Slavic-speaking countries. Instead of gender-specific forms, gender-fair forms were most frequent in the female-dominated branch.

Finally, we analyzed the use of the combination form masculine + m/f. This form may be considered the weakest variant of gender-fair language, but it offers an easy and effortless way of indicating that a job title refers to both men and women. The combination form occurred only in the two German-speaking countries and was completely absent in job advertisements from the two Slavic-speaking countries. In line with Hypothesis 4, the combination form was particularly frequent in the male-dominated branch in both German-speaking countries, whereas other gender-fair forms were more frequent in the female-dominated branch and the gender-balanced branch. The differences between branches were larger in Austria than in Switzerland, as can be seen in Table 4. One reason may be that in Austria, the combination form is a simple possibility of complying with the equal treatment act in male-dominated fields (Bundesministerium für Frauen und Öffentlichen Dienst, 2009). In a way, these results mirror the pattern in the Slavic-speaking countries: Masculine forms still prevail in the male-dominated branch, even if combined with a hint that both, women and men, are addressed.

The systematic differences in frequencies of linguistic forms, between countries on one hand and occupational branches on the other hand, suggest that language use reflects cultural values regarding stratification and gender equality as well as ideas about typical gender roles. The existence of guidelines and legal regulations may promote the use of gender-fair language, but legal regulations in particular may also foster the invention of easy solutions such as the combination form. Nevertheless, this strategy may be a first step toward gender-fair forms in languages where the derivation of feminine job titles is difficult (such as Polish).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings reported here are highly relevant for future research on gender and language. They show that not only language structure (i.e., the existence or absence of grammatical gender; Prewitt-Freilino et al., 2012) is associated with levels of achieved socioeconomic gender equality but language use as well. The high proportion of gender-fair forms in the two German-speaking countries suggests that the efforts to promote gender-fair language in the past decades (e.g., Schweizerische Bundeskanzlei, 1996/2009) have been successful. The high prevalence of gender-fair forms in Austrian job advertisements in particular shows that legal regulations are effective (Bundesministerium für Frauen und Öffentlichen Dienst, 2009; GIBG, 2004). Gender-fair language as found in the female-dominated branch and the gender-balanced branch in the two German-speaking countries may help to counteract the gender-typicality of professions. This can lead to a more balanced visibility of women and men (Stahlberg et al., 2007) and enhance equal

opportunities in hiring situations (e.g., Stout & Dasgupta, 2011). If gender-fair forms also gain ground in male-dominated branches in the future, these effects may be even more pronounced. But our results also show how difficult it is to challenge the existing gender hierarchy: It is exactly in the male-dominated branch that gender-specific forms are still common and equal visibility is not achieved. Previous research has revealed that gender-fair language is of particular importance in male-dominated fields (Vervecken et al., 2013); the current linguistic usage may thus contribute to perpetuating gender stereotypes (Bosak et al., 2012; Eagly, 1987) and gender hierarchies (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004).

That the vast majority of jobs are still advertised with gender-specific job titles in the two Slavic-speaking countries, on the contrary, indicates that there is still a long way to achieve linguistic gender-fairness in these countries. As mentioned before, this seems to be linked to a higher acceptance of inequalities (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 2010). Moreover, gender-fair language may not be immediately beneficiary in these speech communities: Speakers of Polish, for example, were found to devalue female applicants who introduced themselves with feminine rather than masculine job titles, and were less likely to indicate that they would hire them (Formanowicz, Bedynska, Cislak, Braun, & Szczesny, 2013). Hence, (female) speakers' wish to belong to the high-status group may outweigh their wish to achieve more (gender) equality. Gender-neutral forms and the combination form may therefore be interesting variants of gender-fair wording for Slavic languages. In all, it seems to depend on the cultural and linguistic background whether an increased visibility of women and a higher linguistic salience of gender have favorable or unfavorable consequences for women. However, language use is dynamic, and feminine forms may lose negative connotations with increasing use over time. Therefore, raising attention for gender-fairness in language and developing guidelines could be of great importance.

To sum up, language use reflects gender (inequality and also contributes to its maintenance or reduction (Semin, 2000). The wording of job advertisements in particular may serve as an institutional-level factor which promotes gender (in)equality (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Linguistic inequalities seem to be more pronounced in countries with hierarchical cultural values than in countries with egalitarian cultural values and also more pronounced in typically male compared with typically female and gender-neutral branches.

Limitations and Future Directions

Obviously, our method does not allow for causal inferences about the relation between language use, egalitarian cultural values, and gender equality or about the way linguistic, cultural, and legal influences interact. Also, our research did not directly measure levels of egalitarian cultural values and gender equality but relied on differences between the four countries that were documented in prior research. Therefore, our findings concerning the use of gender-fair and gender-biased language may not be directly related to these societal differences. To gain more insight into the interplay between language, social structure, and values, future research needs to investigate causal relationships between gender-fair language and gender equality or cultural values in different societies, for instance, with the help of longitudinal studies. Furthermore, the relation between gender-fair language use and egalitarian values should not only be investigated on a national level using archival data, but also on the level of individual language behavior, to complement our findings with behavioral data.

It should also be kept in mind that the present findings are limited to two Slavic-speaking and two German-speaking European countries (grammatical gender languages). Thus, research on other languages and countries is needed to broaden the scope of our findings. Especially countries with substantially different levels of human development (i.e., many African and Asian countries; Human Development Index, United Nations Development Programme, 2014) differ markedly from the current sample.

The branches selected for our study represent gender-typical and neutral areas of the job market. But again, our results should be validated by examining further branches. And it has to be kept in mind that while we considered gender distributions within the branches, we did not control for other features of the jobs advertised such as job status, private/public sector, or wages. We thus analyzed the association of language form and gender-typicality on a macro level and discovered general trends pertaining to entire economic sectors using general indicators published in previous research. Future studies could analyze the influence of specific job features and could also include further features of job advertisements (such as depictions and job descriptions) in the analysis.

Due to the lack of earlier findings on the combination form masculine + m/f, we could only offer exploratory analyses. More research is needed to fully understand when and why these forms are employed and how they are interpreted. This is of particular importance, as combination forms have been recommended for job advertisements in several countries (e.g., Dutch, Pauwels, 1998; Spanish, European Parliament, 2008; and German, Bundesministerium für Frauen und Öffentlichen Dienst, 2009; Greve et al., 2002; Lujansky-Lammer, 2006).

Conclusion

The present study has revealed differences in the use of gender-fair language in job advertisements between countries with egalitarian and hierarchical cultural values as well as between branches with different proportions of female employees. Cultural factors (such as egalitarian values, levels of achieved gender equality, a tradition of feminist language critique, or the lack of such a tradition; Bußmann & Hellinger, 2003) apparently interact with linguistic features (e.g., the difficulty of creating feminine counterparts to masculine personal nouns in Poland, Koniuszaniec & Blaszkowa, 2003), legal factors (such as the Austrian equal treatment act), or the proportion of female employees (more gender-fair forms in branches with numerous female employees). Our results suggest that political movements and legal regulations may indeed contribute to promoting gender-fair language in job advertisements, an effect which, in turn, may help to achieve gender equality in recruitment processes.

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