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## The role of gender in the use of Hungarian address forms

**Abstrakt (Rola płci w użyciu węgierskich form adresatywnych).** Zwroty adresatywne są bezpośrednio związane z charakterem relacji społecznych. Płeć uczestników dyskursu, w tym kwestia tego, czy są oni tej samej czy różnej płci, ma wpływ na użycie form grzecznościowych. Celem tego artykułu jest nakreślenie głównych cech węgierskich praktyk adresatywnych związanych z płcią poprzez przedstawienie całościowego studium socjolingwistycznego bazującego na ankietach i wywiadach. Zgodnie z perspektywą konstruktywizmu społecznego związane z płcią wzorce użycia zwrotów adresatywnych są interpretowane jako aktywnie kształtujące interpretację poszczególnych relacji i ról płciowych, a nie tylko ich odzwierciedlenie. Stąd też wyniki badań sugerują, że powtarzające się wzorce stosowania bardziej poufałych / czułych form w odniesieniu do kobiet przyczyniają się do zachowania ról płci żeńskiej.

**Abstract.** Forms of address are directly related to the nature of social relationships. The gender of the discourse partners, including the question whether they are of the same or different genders, thus has an impact on the use of forms of address. The goal of this paper is to highlight the major gender-related characteristics of Hungarian address practices by reporting on a comprehensive sociolinguistic study based on questionnaires and interviews. In line with the perspective of social constructivism, the gender-related usage patterns of address forms are interpreted as actively shaping the construal of particular relationships and gender roles rather than merely reflecting them. Thus, the research findings suggest that iterative patterns in the use of more confidential/affectionate forms with women contribute to the maintenance of female gender roles.

### 1. Address forms and the construal of interpersonal relations

Address forms and other elements referring to the discourse partner are constituents of discourse which bear a direct relation to the nature and negotiability of social relations and networks. Their uses, variants and features characteristic of particular relation types and practice communities significantly contribute to the dynamics of

social reality. In the early phase of research on this topic, an objective stance prevailed which held that linguistic forms simply mirrored social relations, reflecting, as it were, social reality in language (Brown–Gilman 1960, Brown–Ford 1961). In this framework, the variability of address forms was seen merely as a linguistic consequence of the varied nature of social relations. With the rise of linguistic anthropology and studies in the ethnography of speaking, a new perspective emerged, which foregrounded the functioning of language as socio-cultural praxis geared toward meaning-making, and interpreted address practices as instruments of construing social reality. Under the assumptions of social constructivism, social relations are linguistically negotiable (cf. Eckert 2000, Eckert–Rickford 2001, Bartha–Hámori 2010), and the practice of using address forms may crucially shape the construal of various types of interpersonal relations (Afful 2007, Norrby–Wide 2015).

Building on this line of thought, recent studies have also demonstrated that socio-cultural categories previously interpreted as factors determining language use (such as gender and social class) are not *a priori*, neutral and value-free categories; rather, they are constructed in a performative way and re-negotiated in the process of interactions. Identity is shaped by linguistic, communicative acts. And the way in which an interpersonal relation can be construed (re-negotiated) is fundamentally determined by norms and social values implicit in iterative patterns constituting the tradition of the relevant discourse and relation type.

## 2. Address forms and gender

The use of address forms is directly related to the nature of social relations, with the gender of the speaker and the listener, including their sameness or difference, closely corresponding to the choice of particular address forms. The variable of gender also figured prominently in early research reflecting an objectivist stance. Seminal papers on the topic are replete with gender-related observations, highlighting several correlations (e.g. Brown–Ford 1961, Friedrich 1972).

However, a fundamentally new perspective has opened up more recently by the recognition that everyday language use is the most typical scene of communication for the construal of gender. The linguistic construal of social gender has two interrelated dimensions. On the one hand, language supplies the inventory for possible construals of gender. On the other, gender identity itself emerges from linguistic practices of a speech community (cf. Hall–Bucholtz 1999, 2003; Cameron 1997).

With regard to address forms, this means that gender construal can be studied on two levels. Firstly, research may focus on linguistic elements referring to the discourse partner and foregrounding various male and female social functions. Secondly, it may explore the routines affecting address practices (including gender-related asymmetries) at various scenes of communication.

As demonstrated by conversation analytic studies into gender construal, gender has key relevance not only when the speech partners make overt references to it, but rather also as a function of routine-like, recurring communicative acts such as addresses, greetings and mentions (Hopper–LeBaron 1998). Repetitive acts (cf. Butler 1990) creating the illusion of a stable identity and relevant for the construal of social gender include address forms, serving as linguistic markers of interpersonal relations.

Routine-like, repetitive patterns inherent in addressing practices are crucial for the construal of gender roles, and through their ritualized character they underlie explicit normative references to the roles in question.

### **3. Goals and methods**

The goal of the paper is to highlight key gender-related features of Hungarian addressing practices, based on the results of sociolinguistic research including data gained by questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussions. In line with the social constructivist perspective, it will also be assessed how the observed routines and practices contribute to the elaboration of gender roles and their maintenance in society. The ensuing description of how Hungarian address forms are used, with special regard to gender-related features, is informed by my previous empirical investigations (Domonkosi 2002, 2010, Domonkosi–Kuna 2015, 2016), and also by other studies in which the variable of gender contributed to the interpretation of addressing practices (Reményi 1994, 2000, Molnár 2015).

In my analysis, I will consider as address forms all linguistic elements referring to the discourse partner, including the choice between T and V forms, in keeping with standard practice in the specialized literature (Braun 1998).

Of the various research results, I place special emphasis on those which show a characteristic gender-related distribution of address forms, foregrounding differences in the ways that particular gender roles may be construed. The quantitative data derived from sociolinguistic surveys that the paper presents do not serve to highlight the dynamism of construal. Rather, by showing up relevant differences between genders regarded as fixed and given, they reveal the constraining norms that emerge from repetitive practices.

### **4. Gender-related features of present-day Hungarian addressing practices**

In Hungarian addressing practices, several linguistic devices can be found whose usage frequencies are highly sensitive to the variable of gender. The distribution of T and V forms, and the proportions of use of various V forms show up several asymmetries

bearing on the construal of gender roles. Moreover, in the case of nominal address forms, differences do not only concern usage frequencies; rather, they are intrinsic to the linguistic inventory itself.

#### 4.1. Gender-related differences in the use of T and V

The use of T and V address forms may be modelled in a complex socio-cultural network model (Domonkosi–Kuna 2015: 40). With regard to social meaning, T forms most generally mark a more intimate, more solidarity-based relationship than V variants.

Data on the distribution of variants suggest that in all types of relationship and in all discourse domains, dyads of the same gender are more likely to use T forms, with dyads consisting of women standing out in particular. Sameness of gender thus allows for the linguistic construal of higher proximity, and address forms directed at women are characterized by higher intimacy and personal involvement.

These trends are also evident in closely knit family networks, socialization patterns, and early and subconsciously emerging routinized action sequences regulating gender roles, i.e. in iterative practices manifested in utterances.

In the language use of some of my middle-aged informants, different grammatical persons are used in utterances addressed to the two parents. 5,6% of female informants and 4,2% of men report addressing their mothers by T forms and their fathers by the use of V. This asymmetry in linguistic interactions may correlate with how family hierarchies have evolved, with the superordinate position of the father preserved longer in linguistic practice.

As the use of T forms within the nuclear family becomes ubiquitous, these differences gradually disappear. However, the observed differentiation in expressing social meanings can still be detected in other family-internal or intimate relationships. For example, the distribution of T and V shows up similar patterns in forms addressed at mother-in-laws/father-in-laws, and in the addressing of friends of parents or parents of friends. In non-official, generally intimate relationships in which a generation gap prompts the activation of linguistic routines reflecting hierarchy, gender roles are clearly accentuated. In the addressing of parents' friends, T forms have a significantly higher share in same-gender dyads, with the highest proportion observed in dyads of women.

In the relationship type just mentioned, there is a characteristic gender-related asymmetry. Specifically, women of the younger generation are much more likely to use T toward an elderly man than their male counterparts are toward an elderly woman. This difference is probably due to the fact that elderly men are more likely to initiate the mutual use of T forms than elderly women. In light of other data, this phenomenon cannot be simply put down to a natural inclination in men to use more informal linguistic devices. Rather, it seems plausible to suggest that men simply make use of their opportunity to reduce distance; an opportunity that follows from their superordinate position.

Let us now move on to spheres of socialization beyond the family. When it comes to language use at school, the main gender-related difference in the use of T and V forms lies in the fact that it is male secondary schools teachers who first break with the practice of asymmetric, hierarchy-reinforcing communication (i.e., the practice of teachers using T to address their students, and students using V, more specifically either *maga* or *tetszik*, in the opposite direction). The vast majority of teachers opting for symmetric person marking (and thus preparing students for adult status) are men (80,24%). The higher proportion of *maga* in the communication of male teachers also follows from the fact that as the interviews' data suggest, teachers of technical subjects at vocational schools almost invariably adopt V when addressing their students.

With regard to communication at the workplace, the findings of Andrea Ágnes Reményi convincingly demonstrate the prevalence of gender asymmetries in the use of T and V (1994: 85–109). In the first phase of her research, she explored addressing practices within a closely knit network. The community under study involved 32 women and 20 men on two floors of a pharmaceutical company in Budapest employing 160 people in total. The data were gained by sociolinguistic interviews supplemented by participant observation in the interest of enhancing authenticity. Her results suggest that gender has a strong effect on the choice of address forms, with same-gender dyads using T forms significantly more frequently, and the proportion of T being the highest in dyads of women. Women's linguistic choices are primarily motivated by gender and age, whereas men are more strongly influenced by considerations of qualification, rank and spatial distance at the workplace. This research was later followed up by further investigations by Reményi (2000: 41–59), with data gathered by similar methods in two work communities whose hierarchical structures were assumed to be different: at a university department (at a faculty of humanities) and at a hospital ward. She found that power-related social variables such as status and rank had the strongest impact on communication at the hospital, whereas the university department and the pharmaceutical company placed more emphasis on gender and age.

Overall, gender-related differences in the distribution of T and V suggest that in iterative patterns of expressing gender roles, there is a clear bias for linguistically construing relationships between women as more intimate, and for framing the act of addressing a woman as more personal, characterized by lesser distance.

#### 4.2. Gender-related differences in the use of V variants

The V forms of address, typically regarded as more polite, more detached and formal, are highly differentiated in Hungarian. The pronouns *ön* and *maga*, third person verb forms used without a pronominal subject, and patterns with the auxiliary *tetszik* are all available as linguistic devices for construing the speaker's relationship with her addressee. Among third person grammatical forms, the pronouns and the *tetszik* construction all have specific stylistic values and spheres of use, hence none of them can be regarded as neutral and generally applicable.

Compared to the use of *ön*, the pronoun *maga* presupposes a more intimate and informal relationship. Traditionally, it is adopted by the superordinate party in a hierarchical relationship, therefore it is considered by many to have a patronizing undertone. In addition, due to *maga*'s occurrence in dialects, a sense of provinciality may also be part of the social meaning of this pronoun (Domonkosi 2017: 283–284). By contrast, *ön* is a more official, more formal pronoun foregrounding politeness and characteristic of status-marked scenes of communication. Finally, the *tetszik* construction is typical of asymmetric but at the same time relatively intimate relationships; as an impersonal construction, it conveys a sense of politeness despite the lack of a pronoun in scenes of communication which are not especially formal or official.

As for gender-related differences within the V domain, women are more frequently addressed by forms considered as more intimate or as appropriate when used from a superordinate position. Thus, patterns involving the pronoun *maga* have a higher share, and the *tetszik* construction is also more common. In fact, for some of the informants, the use of *tetszik* strongly depends on the addressee's gender; they deem it appropriate primarily or exclusively in utterances directed at women.

Gender restrictions associated with the use of *maga* and *ön* are spectacularly illustrated by anecdotal data supplied by a young male university student. As an aspect of linguistic etiquette, he was advised by his secondary school teacher of Hungarian that *maga* is appropriate for addressing women, while *ön* is more suitable for addressing men. This view was then backed up by the observation that the form *magácska* (derived by a diminutive suffix from *maga*) is exclusively used to address women. Although it cannot be empirically verified whether or not this advice on linguistic etiquette has general currency, the fact itself is still significant that the pronoun considered as patronizing or offensive in certain situations is associated with the addressing of women, whereas the form viewed as more official, respectful and detached is linked to utterances directed at men. Such anecdotal data also confirm what we see in results produced by empirical methods, i.e. that forms viewed as intimate are more common and regarded as more acceptable when the addressee is a woman.

Closely related to this are the results of a study of address forms used at an agricultural company. Here, the mutual use of V is made asymmetric by the gender-related difference that while the male leader of the company consistently addresses his female employees by the use of *maga*, these latter either strive to avoid the use of a pronoun when turning to him or opt for the use of *ön* (Molnár 2015: 260). However, in these cases, the use of *ön* may also be motivated by a large gap between hierarchical positions, since in the same company, the CEO is also addressed as *ön* by male employees, and secretaries who are not on T terms with their immediate superiors invariably adopt *maga* in this type of relationship (Molnár 2015: 262).

As a further phenomenon confirming gender-related differences in the use of *ön*, it also deserves to be mentioned that in my data on language use in Hungarian public education, only male teachers are addressed by their students in this way.

Pronominal V address forms also have variants (*magácska*, *kiskegyed*), regarded by the majority of speakers as archaic and/or affected, which are exclusively used to

address women. The formal make-up of these pronominal elements is unusual; the diminutive suffix *-cska* and the attribute *kis* 'little' which has become a fixed part of a compound are both meant to express kindness. Although these forms are mostly adopted today in playful, ironic utterances only, they still demonstrate the fact that gender-related differences in addressing practices may be grammaticalized, giving rise to special-purpose, fixed variants in language.

Among V variants, a special role is assumed by the *tetszik* auxiliary construction, as its use is linked to situations which are not formal but in which the speaker still intends to convey a high degree of politeness. According to my data, *tetszik* is more commonly directed at women than at men in almost all scenes of communication. This pattern prevails in both the nuclear and the extended family, and it is key to the differentiation between addressing one's mother-in-law and father-in-law or one's female and male teachers at school. Last but not least, it is also evident in the service sector and in street communication with strangers.

In terms of their uses and their perceived social meanings, V variants are subject to a high degree of inter-speaker variability. The most general social values of particular elements have discernible gender-related associations. Gender differences encoded into pronouns and other interactional elements produce iterative practices, with the consequence that perceptions of social gender are shaped by the normative use of linguistic forms expressing intimacy and subordination in the case of women.

#### 4.3. Gender-related differences in the use of nominal address forms

Due to the role specifications they include, nominal address forms are well-suited to the construal of a variety of social relations. Compared to inflectional suffixes and pronouns, the relation marking inherent in the use of nominal address forms is easier to control and subject to a higher degree of meta-pragmatic awareness (cf. Caffi 1994, 2016). At the same time, owing to the more complex nature of semantic representations, these address forms allow for the expression of finer-grained gender distinctions. Asymmetries in this area concern not only usage patterns but also the Hungarian linguistic inventory itself. In formal scenes of communication, "historical development has produced the result that there are no analogous linguistic elements for addressing men and women in a polite manner" (Huszár 2009: 95).

Asymmetries in nominal address forms also characterize informal scenes of communication and relations of higher intimacy. Nominal address forms expressing affection are more commonly used by women and in utterances directed at women. By the force of repetitive practices, this tendency helps maintain a linguistic convention across scenes of communication that reinforces a sense of subordination, kindness and intimacy associated with female roles.

Patterns of endearing communication, maintaining gender asymmetries, are also manifested in address practices within the nuclear family. For example, some informants do not adopt parallel variants when addressing their parents. In the pairs of address



forms *anyuka/apu*, *anyukám/apám*, *anyukám/apu*, *anyuci/apu* 'mum/dad', the element referring to the mother typically expresses more intimacy via a diminutive suffix. In the data gained by interviews, a significantly higher number of address forms expressing affection refer to the mother (*aci*, *ajszí*, *ajuszi*, *ancus-mancus*, *anya-banya*, *anyácska*, *anyóca*, *anyca*, *anyucicám*, *anyúl*, *anyusz*, *anyuszi*>*nyuszi*, *asszi*, *apóca*, *apusz*, *fater*, *faterkám*, *kis anya*, *mamszi*, *mamu*, *mamuli*, *mamus*, *mamóca*, *nagyfőnök*), which suggests that this kind of endearing communication is much more accepted when the discourse partners are women.

With regard to socialization patterns, differences in linguistic practices of endearment can also be observed in communication directed at children. The most conspicuous gender-related difference comes from the fact that men hardly ever use the <given name> + <possessive suffix> address form. Men are also more likely than women to use the *fiam* 'my son', *lányom* 'my daughter' forms, whereas women more frequently adopt the compounds *kisfiam* 'my little son' and *kislányom* 'my little daughter'. Overall, the language use of fathers makes more sparing use of affective, endearing elements as forms of address. Address forms expressing endearment are much more commonly directed at girls than at boys, in line with the observations of Ferenc BÍRÓ, who explored name-based address forms directed at children, collecting data by questionnaire from informants of 10 to 14 years of age (1999: 448). Affective, endearing address forms display more variability in the language use of mothers; when the father employs such forms, he generally adopts a single variant only.

In the sphere of education, the practice of using more intimate forms to address women is evident even in address forms directed at secondary school teachers. My questionnaire data reveal that the <given name> + *néni* 'Miss, aunt' variant is much more frequent (47%) than the corresponding variant for addressing male teachers, viz. <given name> + *bácsi* 'Mr, uncle' (29%).

In the case of certain linguistic elements, gender figures prominently in social meaning. Use of the address form *tesó* (an informal variant of *testvér* 'sibling, brother') is characteristic of the relationship between brothers; it is used both by boys and toward boys much more often. In street communication between strangers, the forms *öcsi*, *öcskös* (related to *öcs* 'younger brother', but meaning 'kid') is exclusively used by men, whereas *csillagom* 'my star' and *tündérke* 'little fairy' were described by informants as address forms only adopted by women.

The prevalence of intimacy is also manifested in the fact that in the addressing of women, it is much more frequent for several variants to co-exist within the same dyad. In the asymmetry reported by a female informant, hierarchy as well as gender may play a crucial role. As an employee working at a social security institution, the young woman is on mutual V terms with the male managing director. She addresses the director by his full given name, who, for his part, adopts one of the following forms depending on his mood: *Erika*, *Era*, *Era kisasszony* 'Miss Era', *Erika kisasszony* 'Miss Erika', *Era baba* 'Era baby', *szeleburdi* 'giddy', *leányzó* 'girl, damsel'.

A generally more intimate tone in the addressing of women is also shown by the fact that in official relationships and in the discourse domains of work, women are more



likely to be addressed by their given names than men, often in situations where men are almost ubiquitously referred to by forms foregrounding rank or position.

This trend is shown especially clearly by the results of Molnár's research (2015: 272). Her investigations and observations at an agricultural company revealed that women, whether employees or leaders, were much more frequently addressed by their given names or diminutive forms thereof. This was apparent even in situations in which the woman had a very high rank. A comparison of forms used by male employees (on V terms with their bosses) to address their female or male superiors (of the same rank in the company hierarchy) revealed that only 40% used the <position> + *asszony* 'lady' form, the rest addressing women by their given names. By contrast, those on V terms with their male superiors never used the given name to address them, resorting to the polite <surname> + *úr* 'sir' form instead.

A similar, controversial example was reported by one of my interview subjects from the realm of higher education. She told me about an asymmetric, offensive situation in which men were invariably addressed as *Mr Rector*, *Mr Vice-Rector*, or *Mr Dean*, whereas women were addressed by their given names. To her question inquiring about this double standard, she received the answer that the intention had merely been to express kindness.

The contrast between intention and effect is further highlighted by the results of an experiment conducted in the sphere of higher education in the United States (Takiff–Sanche–Stewart: 2001: 134–144). Male professors addressed by their ranks were perceived by students as having clearly higher status than those addressed by their given names. However, female professors addressed by linguistic forms foregrounding rank were deemed to be less accessible than those addressed by their given names. Remarkably, no such effect was observed in the case of men.

The lack of neutral, generally accepted forms for addressing women in official, formal situations underlies the fact that the addressing practice oscillates between devices considered as artificial and affected (e.g. *úrhölgy*, *úrasszony*) and those expressing intimacy. In view of this, the official addressing of women has been recognized as one of the most controversial segments of the Hungarian system of addressing conventions (Balázs 1999: 14).

The controversy comes partly from aspects of the use of women's names, and partly from the lack of a generally accepted female counterpart of the male social deictic element *úr* 'sir'. In situations where there is an appropriate marker of rank or position (e.g. *elnök* 'president', *képviselő* 'member of parliament', *polgármester* 'mayor'), the female form corresponding to *úr* is typically *asszony* 'madam' (which used to be restricted in use, referring to married women). 93,4% of my informants regard this as a polite, respectful form, and observations also suggest that this address form is becoming increasingly common, even regardless of the marital status of the woman.

As female counterparts for *úr*, the expressions *úrhölgy*, *úrnő* and *úrasszony* are also available in these situations. However, these forms are much rarer, only occurring in written and public communication. Apart from official correspondence, these variants have only been documented in speeches at the Hungarian parliament (*Tisztelt*

*Képviselő Úrhölgy!*, literally meaning 'respected lady MP'), at public ceremonies, or on the occasion of signing an international treaty (*Tisztelt Nagykövet Úrnő!*, literally meaning 'respected lady ambassador').

My questionnaire study asked informants to describe their attitudes to these forms, and to comment on their spheres of use. Most informants expressed a negative attitude, with 65,9% rejecting *úrhölgy* and 90,1% rejecting *úrnő* as a neutral form of address. The higher degree of acceptance associated with *úrhölgy* suggests that it might have some chance of becoming more widespread. As regards the spheres of use of these forms, I received the following comments: *modoros, nem használnám* 'affected, I wouldn't use it'; *komikusnak érzénem, ha valaki így szólítana* 'it would feel funny if someone addressed me like this'; *előkelősködő képzetet kelt* 'it creates a fake sense of illustriousness'; *nagyon szokatlan, én még soha nem is hallottam* 'very unusual, I haven't even heard it before'; *csak nagyon formális helyzetben tudnám elképzelni* 'I can only imagine its use in a very formal situation'; *túlságosan, feleslegesen udvariaskodó* 'it is excessively, superfluously polite'; *szerintem ez nem elfogadott megszólítási mód* 'I don't think this is an accepted form of address'.

Both their restricted spheres of use and the spread of forms containing *asszony* make it unlikely that these address forms could ever take root in everyday official communication. Their conventional spheres of use were also highly restricted in historically earlier systems of Hungarian forms of address. In written communication, *úrnő*, *úrhölgy* and *úrasszony* were used as names of address in correspondence rather than as genuine address forms (Deme – Grétsy – Wacha 1999: 498), and in spoken discourse they were also used in a mentioning rather than addressing function. In the mid-war period, *úrnő* by itself was used by servants to address or mention the lady of the house; in a wider sphere, it was only employed in conjunction with the names of a few professions. Hence, the spread of these forms is also hindered by the lack of traditions.

Even more problematic is the official addressing of women in cases where there is no element which would foreground rank, degree or position. There is no generally accepted female counterpart of the <surname> + *úr* pattern which is increasingly common for addressing men. The spread of *úrhölgy* and *úrnő* in this capacity is blocked not only by the occurrence of the surname but also the fact that most speakers attribute an excessively polite meaning to them (partly owing to their unusual nature), hence they are not deemed appropriate as neutral forms of address. This gap in the Hungarian inventory of address forms partly explains the trend that even in status-marked scenes of communication, women may experience being officially addressed by their given names, considered as an intimate address form, or by the <surname> + *-né* 'Mrs.' pattern standing by itself, which is deemed impolite by 63,4% of informants. Based on subjective data gained by questionnaire study, two forms seem to be judged positively, so that their spread in the future is likely. The <surname> + *kisasszony* 'Miss, Mademoiselle' variant was found to be polite by 86,9% of informants, while the <surname> + *-né* 'Mrs.' + *asszony* 'lady' was deemed polite by 73,2%. These forms foreground the marital status of the addressee, thus cannot be regarded as having general currency. They show up a general feature of the system of Hungarian proper names referring to women, namely

the fact that names by themselves may indicate marital status (J. Soltész 1979: 66–69), thus contributing to the linguistic construal of gender role asymmetries.

As data from the questionnaire show, *hölgyem* and *asszonyom* (both meaning 'madam', literally 'my lady') occur less frequently in answers supplied by female informants, which might suggest that they accept these forms to a lesser extent than men do.

This practice of using nominal address forms influences in nuanced ways speakers' perceptions of roles in formal relations. The observed distribution of address forms suggests that the addressing of women is characterized by a higher degree of variability in informal situations, whereas men are addressed in a more varied manner in formal, official scenes of communication.

## 5. Summary

Under the assumptions of social constructivism, gender-related asymmetries in the use of address forms do not simply mirror social relations; rather, they actively contribute to the construal of particular relation types and gender roles. Hence, the reported results suggest that iterative patterns of using more intimate forms for addressing women contribute to perceptions of female gender roles. Addressing practices thus play a crucial role in the maintenance of gender role asymmetries.

A paradoxical aspect of the linguistic construal of female roles is that although the use of more intimate expressions is primarily intended to express closeness/directness, it still reinforces hierarchy and subordination because the forms in question are generally not used in a mutual fashion.

The dominance of more intimate expressions in the addressing of women is only partially explained by deficiencies in the linguistic inventory. Discrepancies in linguistic practice and the lack of appropriate linguistic devices mutually reinforce each other, thus reinforcing gender role asymmetries.

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