

*International Research Exchanges Board
Short Term Travel Grant*

Research Report

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1. Topic of Research and Countries visited

Project: Femininities and Masculinities: Gender and Discourse in Contemporary Ukraine
Ukraine, summer 2002

2. Relevance and contribution to field

My work on questions of language and gender in contemporary Ukraine provides a wealth of new data to the field of Slavic gender linguistics, which has received only modest attention thus far. With respect to Ukrainian linguistics, only a few brief publications occurred (Dmytrieva 2001, 2002, Pishchikova 2002). This shortage of attention to the field of Ukrainian gender linguistics makes my project of great importance to the discipline as it deals with issues pertaining to the communication among and between the two genders in Ukrainian. The analysis of shifts in language patterns and uses will contribute to an understanding of the rapidly changing conditions of contemporary society in Ukraine, addressing conflicts between traditional/patriarchal and contemporary values in light of changing gender roles, as well as the incorporation/rejection of Western models and their manifestation in the Ukrainian language. The project, therefore, is significant for the field of cultural studies of the Slavic world and in general. In addition, the proposed project will contribute to multifaceted studies on language used by men and women in the dynamic field of gender linguistics in general.

3. A concise summary of approach and research methodology:

During my stay in Ukraine, I conducted fieldwork, which is an essential part of my project. More specifically, my aims were: (1) to collect printed resources, in particular the mass media, and (2) to gather speech samples in various conversational settings.

With respect to my first aim, I collected current issues of magazines, targeted toward either female, male or mixed audiences, which will constitute one part of my corpus for the analysis. I also consulted some back issues of specific magazines at the Stefanyk Public Library in L'viv.

With respect to my second aim, I conducted sixty interviews: twenty of female-female interaction, twenty of male-male interaction and twenty of mixed-audience, each some 10-15 minutes in length. These samples constitute both structured and spontaneous

conversations. Most of the interviews I conducted in L'viv as it is the city, which has a predominantly Ukrainian-speaking population. I am very pleased with this portion of my fieldwork: I was able to gather a multitude of samples of spoken language, which will definitely yield interesting results during my analysis.

Plans for 2002-2003:

Prior to analyzing my oral data, I plan to transcribe and computerize the corpus. The focus of the analysis will be on lexical, syntactic, pragmatic and discourse organization of the text, as well as on the interpretation of the diverse linguistic indicators of conversational structures (turn-taking, indirectness, interruptions and overlaps) (Searle 1992, Tannen 1993, 1994, Dorval 1990).

My work on media sources will begin with the scanning of printed texts, followed by the study of the more/less frequent linguistic patterns of lexis, syntax, pragmatics and discourse. The analytical results will be tested against the socio-semantic theory of Bernstein (1970, 1986, 1990), which focuses on coding available to members of speech communities as they create and perpetuate their individual or collective identities. Within this analysis, I will explore the question of how linguistic codings instantiate elaborated ('individualistic', dynamic) or restricted ('communal', static) femininity and masculinity.

4. A summary of research findings and preliminary conclusions:

At this stage of my work, a summary of research and conclusions are preliminary; however, they may be expressed as follows:

My investigation of both divergence and approximation of the linguistic choices in various communication groups (written and spoken communication) will demonstrate how the choice of code intertwines with extralinguistic factors. I will test how the speaker's knowledge of the addressee and his/her perception of closeness with her or him in particular influences linguistic choices. I will also test the hypothesis that men and women are not carriers of different linguistic code, but rather that there may be differences in the way men and women draw upon resources found in the general code-pull, and that the extent to which they have access to the use of certain codes diverges.

5. Suggestions for future research agendas in the field for the scholarly community:

In the field of Slavic linguistics, and Ukrainian linguistics in particular, it is important to determine how my findings will relate to other linguistic settings, as with professional and institutional discourse for instance, or other genres of the written language beyond media sources (literary works, personal letters, formal documentation etc). Will the speaker's knowledge of the addressee and his/her perception of closeness with her or him presuppose a certain code in other environments of language use? In addition, there is a need for quantitative analyses, which would justify findings of the qualitative approaches. All in all, there is a multitude of research questions that could be addressed in the field of Slavic gender linguistics.

References:

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