Conceptual reflections on gender and language in Swedish

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The importance of conceptual clarity

- Levels of importance

  - Lay-use vs. Research/science

- Measurement – operationalization

- Gender – a multi-facetted concept

  - Strong pre-conceptions

What is gender, anyway: a review of the options for operationalising gender

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ABSTRACT

In the social sciences, many quantitative research findings as well as presentations of demographics are related to participants' gender. Most often, gender is represented by a dichotomous variable with the possible responses of woman/man or female/male, although gender is not a binary variable. It is, however, rarely defined what is meant by gender. In this article, we deconstruct the concept 'gender' as consisting of several facets, and argue that the researcher needs to identify relevant aspects of gender

Gender in language and cognition

- Linguistic and grammatical gender

- Three grammatical language groups
(Prewitt-Freilino et al, 2012)

  – Bridge experiment (Boroditsky et al., 2003).

  – NLP: Connection between grammatical gender of inanimate noun and verbs/adjectives (Williams et al., 2021)

- Male as norm

  – Precedence of men/masculinity

    - Order effects (he/she)

    - Masculine generics

    - Masculine suffixes (fireman)

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Reducing the negative effects

- Gender-fair language (Sczesny et al., 2016)

  – Main aim: increase visibility of women/decrease linguistic androcentrism

  – Balancing/feminization or neutralization → not comprehensive

- De-gendering and multi-gendering (Morgenroth et al., 2020)

  – De-gendering - neutralization

  – Multi-gendering – draw attention to gender as non-binary

  – E.g. Singular they

    • De-gendering: Generic use

    • Multi-gendering: nonbinary/specific use

Politicization of gender

- Obstructs implementation – resistance

- Ideological resistance:

  – Binary sexism is ok (Vergoossen et al., 2021)

  – Social Dominance Orientation (SDO): Generic use

  – Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA): nonbinary use

(Renström & Klysing, manuscript)

Conflating sex and gender in Swedish - *kön*

- *Kön* is the biological term referring to genitals

- But is also used instead of gender

  - Gender role = *könsroll*; gender identity = *könsidentitet*

  - "Gender" (i.e. *genus*) is not often used, mainly due to highly politicized (gender studies)

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Neutral, fair or inclusive?

- Neutral (Google: 21 600)

  - implies the disconnect to gender

  - Most popular lay term Runs the risk of male bias (e.g. singular they; Lindqvist et al., 2019)

- Fair (Google: 174)

  - Implies fair representation of all genders

  - Traditionally focused on women

- Inclusive (Google = 1420)

  - Often used interchangeably/in combination with "neutral"

  - Clearly implies encompassing of all (genders)