

REVIEW ARTICLE

On 'linguistic male nipples': Review article of *Sprache – Genus/Sexus* by Heinz Sieburg (ed.) Pp. 386. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997.¹

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Representative overviews of a national scholarly tradition are always welcome. In the case of the present volume, a collection of sixteen papers by German authors of the last 110 years on language and gender, such a presentation is especially valuable owing to the rich tradition of German scholarship on the issue since the late 18th century. The book has been edited by Heinz Sieburg, and published by Peter Lang as the third volume in the series "Dokumentation germanistischer Forschung".

The volume begins with a Preface (pp. 7-8) and an Introduction (pp. 9-32). In the Introduction Sieburg reviews the collected papers against the background of contemporary scholarship within and outside Germany; this part also allows him to relate the selected papers with respect to the range of aspects considered in the book. This is followed by the papers themselves (pp. 33-345), which we may roughly divide into the following three parts. Part I is concerned with the origin of Indo-European gender and the assignment of gender to loan and native nouns. An association between gender and the origin of language as well as differences between men's and women's speech are investigated in Part II. And finally, Part III consists of more recent papers motivated by feminist linguistics. The final part of the book consists in a fairly extensive Bibliography (pp. 346-386), including a general part with sections on bibliographies, collections and research reports (pp. 347-350), and a second part dealing with a range of topics such as diachronic and typological aspects of gender, gender assignment, male and female communicative styles, non-verbal communication, feminist linguistics, language policy, language teaching and acquisition, and finally dialectological and sociolinguistic aspects (pp. 350-386).

The leitmotif of the volume consists in an analysis of the relation between natural gender and the range of manifestations of gender in language structure and usage.

¹ In what is a happy coincidence, this review appears together with Peter Trudgill's paper on the function of gender. There are some general points on which we differ – not the least on his contention as to the impending loss of gender in the world's languages which for me would mean eventually becoming unemployed. The expression in the title, also used by Peter Trudgill, and originally taken from Lass (1997: 13), well epitomizes the issues involved. While our articles in an interesting way parallel the controversies discussed below, I'm glad the polemical tone of discussion has given way to a more moderate one, and I hope we'll soon be able to meet – be it Poznań or Reykjavík. I would also like to thank Barbara Kryk-Kastovsky and Joseph Kuhn for their helpful comments on the paper.

Contrary to the doubts expressed by Trudgill (this issue), I believe that such a common treatment of seemingly diverse phenomena discussed in the book has several advantages. In the same way that recent studies of sex-based gender and animacy-based noun classes have revealed similarities, both in formal expression and underlying cognitive motivation, likewise, there appears a continuum in the choice of lexical, morphological and phonological elements and communicative strategies as an expression of the sex of the interlocutor(s) and the gender of the person or thing spoken about. What I consider to be a methodological bias in the preoccupation with grammatical gender results from its presence in the Whorfian Standard Average European languages. In addition, Sieburg has successfully demonstrated that the 19th and 20th century approaches to grammatical gender and discourse differences respectively are – in spite of apparent structural differences – motivated by analogical assumptions. It is then to its advantage that the present volume brings together a number of related perspectives.

The overview provided in the Introduction is readable and comprehensive, allowing the editor an opportunity to bring to light individual issues addressed in the volume. With respect to pre-19th century studies of gender, Sieburg briefly considers the classical and medieval conception of grammatical gender, including the active and passive properties attributed to the genders. The reference he gives is to Harris (1788), quoted from a secondary source. Unfortunately we miss a full reference to the former in the Bibliography, to what is a later edition of Harris' *Hermes: Or, a philosophical inquiry concerning language and universal grammar* (1751). A more appropriate choice under the circumstances – in a volume devoted to German scholarship – would be, e.g., the 18th century vernacular grammar by Gottsched (1748), or the *Grammatica speculativa* by Thomas of Erfurt (c. 1300 [1972]), antedating it by 450 years, in which the three genders are distinguished through the opposition between active and passive properties of males and females. On the question of pre-19th century studies, it is misleading to insist on the precedence of Grimm in German scholarship.² While Sieburg touches upon research leading to Grimm's *Deutsche Grammatik* – by referring us in a footnote (p. 10, fn. 3) to the surveys by Jelinek (1914) and van Royen (1929) – and mentions Humboldt (pp. 12, 14), we miss a more complete treatment. This would include the studies by Herder (1772), Adelung (1783) (possibly the first comparative study of gender, which deals with over 30 languages) and particularly Humboldt, important because of his account of gender in terms of grammaticalisation and Kantian categorisation. Admittedly, a presentation of these studies would exceed the size limitations, and with the exception of Adelung's paper all these studies are easily accessible; yet a more exhaustive account would certainly be useful in the Introduction. On a final note, one feels that the German reader should have been given more insight into non-German scholarship, e.g., of American and French structuralism (French scholars, including Meillet, are conspicuously absent throughout the volume).

² "... in die germanistische Forschung, an deren Anfang auch im gegebenen Zusammenhang J. Grimm zu stellen ist" (p. 10).

Now for the presented papers. Although with one exception a sense of continuity is preserved throughout the volume, my general impression is that they should be more clearly identified into subject matter sections. As far as the choice of papers is concerned, with such collections it's always difficult to draw the line; as Sieburg himself concedes, the choice is by necessity subjective.

The first part consists of papers in a controversy over the origin and development of gender in Indo-European.³ According to a range of scholars, among them Grimm and Roethe, natural gender is a reflection of the distinction male:female among humans and higher animals, with grammatical gender being an extension of natural gender to inanimate nouns through imagination and personification, or "... eine, aber im frühesten zustande der sprache schon vorgegangene anwendung oder übertragung des natürlichen auf alle und jede nomina." (Grimm 1890: 314). Features of m. and f. genders and designated objects reflect a range of semantic oppositions (e.g., active:passive, primary:secondary). Gender is thus semantically based, with formal features (inflection and derivation) being secondary. This view is challenged by Brugmann in his 1889 paper ("Das Nominalgeschlecht in den Indogermanischen Sprachen" pp. 33-43). Brugmann claims that there is no causal relation between natural and grammatical gender, and that the origin of gender should be sought in an idiosyncratic formal analogy. He attempts to demonstrate that the f. suffixes *-ā*, *-ī* resulted from a reinterpretation of the root with a subsequent extension by analogy to animate nouns. A semantic motivation is then only secondary: personification can only appear on the basis of an existing grammatical gender.

Brugmann's hypothesis is attacked by Roethe in his introduction to the reprint of the second edition of Grimm's *Deutsche Grammatik* (pp. 44-61). Roethe objects to the neogrammarian spirit behind Brugmann's paper, and argues that gender should be treated in terms of personification common to speakers of different languages, rather than an obscure and isolated development in a single family. Brugmann responds in a somewhat irritated tone in the third presented paper (pp. 62-68), but apart from general cutting remarks his arguments remain the same. The following paper (pp. 69-71) presents Roethe's reply, in which in a matching sarcastic tone he focuses on the psychological rather than morphological or phonological aspects of gender. Brugmann's empirical approach is finally defended by Michels in the fifth presented paper (pp. 72-85), which provides a fitting close to the discussion. Michels argues against constant personification among primitive men, and observes mockingly that attributing the tendency to personify only to earlier periods would imply that it appears at its strongest among apes.

Although the debate over semantic motivation vs. arbitrariness was not the only one discussed in the period, either within or outside German scholarship (we could also mention different approaches to the rise of Indo-European inflection, either in agglutination or reinterpretation), it captures the essential features of two distinct linguistic schools of the 19th century. This is aptly put by Sieburg in an impressionistic quotation from van Royen (1929: 137), who referred to it as a clash between "die

³ For earlier accounts, see also Jelinek (1906, 1914), Handel (1921), van Royen (1929) and Fodor (1959).

materialistische der Junggrammatiker und die spiritualistische der Romantiker". Several analogies can be traced between the arguments put forward in the 19th century and 20th century treatments that explore both formal and cognitive and anthropological dimensions of gender – some of these are reflected in the papers comprising the rest of the volume.

The sixth presented paper is the last one dealing directly with grammatical gender. The 1984 paper by Köpcke and Zubin ("Sechs Prinzipien für die Genuszuweisung im Deutschen: Ein Beitrag zur natürlichen Klassifikation" pp. 86-115) provides an insight into a series of works by the authors concerned with the assignment of gender to loan and native nouns. Köpcke and Zubin argue against arbitrariness of German gender and establish gender assignment rules which, they claim, are psychologically motivated. It is interesting to note the parallel between their characterisation of such semantic or psychological motivation (e.g., in the analysis of German compounds in *-mut* in terms of the opposition introversion vs. extroversion) and earlier formulations, e.g., by Grimm. The results of their studies can be compared with earlier studies of French gender (Mel'čuk 1958 [1974]; Tucker – Lambert – Rigault 1977), another language for which arbitrariness has been frequently suggested. Importantly, as Sieburg remarks (p. 17), gender is here treated in line with other systems of human categorisation, following the cognitive and functional studies of the 1970's. The account of gender from a functional perspective given by Trudgill (this issue) aims to demonstrate a relative low functional load that gender carries.

A more general comment should be made here – what I miss in this context is the lack of any mention in the volume of the substantial contribution of German linguists in the related models of grammaticalisation and "apprehension", which both attempt to account for the ways in which we capture and represent the real world in linguistic structure.⁴ Especially noteworthy are here the detailed accounts of recently developed gender systems in African languages – clearly less speculative than those of Indo-European gender. Their absence in the Introduction and the selected papers is a regrettable omission.

Part II is devoted to the issue of origin of language, followed by three papers exploring differences in male and female speech. It opens with the 1912 paper by Sperber ("Über den Einfluß sexueller Momente auf Entstehung und Entwicklung der Sprache" pp. 116-164). The author traces the origin of language to the male sexual drive, and derives all concepts in language from the "proto-concept" 'coïre', which he attempts to demonstrate by drawing on a wealth of supposed etymologies. Such a curious suggestion brings to mind other misguided accounts of sexuality in grammar and etymology. We could mention here the notion of masculine and feminine languages, based on, e.g., the richness of their consonantal systems (Müller 1868;

⁴ These include, e.g., the studies of Claudi (1985), Claudi – Heine (1986), Heine – Claudi (1986), and Seiler – Lehmann (1982), Seiler – Stachowiak (1982) and Seiler (1986). Admittedly, Claudi (1985) and two other studies by Walter (1982) and Seiler (1985) are listed in the Bibliography, but the choice is hardly representative.

Jespersen 1922); the above-mentioned distinctions active:passive and basic:derived applied to m. and f. genders, which has been interpreted as due to the superiority of the male sex and akin to the creation of Eve from Adam's rib (Lepsius 1880; Baudouin de Courtenay 1929); and finally the association of grammatical gender with reproductive organs in Herder's (1772) animistic theory.

The following eighth and ninth papers are concerned with the issue of differences in the phonology and morphology of male and female speakers, especially with respect to "primitive languages". They are followed by an account of dialectal differences, and in the final part of the book, with accounts of differences in communicative styles between men and women. By including such phenomena within the scope of the volume, Sieburg brings together different facets of the reflection of sex in language. There have been comparatively few examples of common treatment of such sex-based differences and grammatical gender.⁵ Consider the following features of male and female speech: the omission of sounds by one of the sexes in Chukchee and the different manner of articulation by one sex in Eskimo, or the presence of different affixes for the two sexes (as in grammatical gender). While they cross the boundary between phonology and morphology, they are all based on the sex of the speaker. Likewise, we have a parallel situation in 2nd and 3rd persons, where gender distinctions appear in the lexicon and morphology.

The first reports of differences in the phonology and morphology of male and female speakers in primitive languages come from mid-17th century (Breton 1665). Sieburg rightly warns that many reports are unreliable and cannot be proved since the languages are now dead (p. 20). This applies to the now nearly extinct Island Carib (Arawakan). Several hypotheses have been put forward to account for such differences in this language, the most controversial being perhaps the "abduction theory". According to this theory, Arawakan men were slaughtered by the Caribs, leaving Arawakan-speaking women and Carib-speaking men. Thus, "... the practice of marrying women of other tribes, whether captured by force or obtained peaceably, may have often resulted in husbands and wives speaking different languages or different dialects of the same language" (Frazer 1900: 87). While Jespersen (1922) and Trudgill (1990) have questioned this theory, in which the sexual fantasies of linguists are given free rein (Glück 1979: 92, or p. 184 of the present volume), it appears that "... it is impossible to explain the available linguistic data unless one accepts the native tradition that indeed there has been such an invasion." (Taylor – Hoff 1980: 301).

In the eighth presented paper ("Die Frauensprache bei den primitiven Völkern" pp. 165-180), Kraus (1924) discusses differences between male and female speech through the perspective of Freudian psychoanalysis and attributes them to repressed sexuality and the incest taboo. This unorthodox cross-disciplinary treatment is an example of the range of socially, psychologically and anthropologically oriented studies produced in the first three decades of the 20th century. In the following paper ("Der Mythos von den Frauensprachen" pp. 181-212), Glück points out the ideologi-

⁵ Cf. Frazer (1900), de la Grasserie (1906), van Royen (1929) and Bodine (1975).

cal bias in the assumptions behind studies of male and female speech and argues that such differences also occur in "more civilised" languages. Consequently, he focuses on the German term *Frauensprachen* and proposes instead the terms *Sexlect* and *Genderlect*. Such differences in English were investigated in the sociolinguistics and urban dialectology of the 1960's and 1970. The last paper in this part ("Geschlechtstypischer Dialektgebrauch. Anmerkungen zu einer empirischen Untersuchung von Geschwistern in der rheinischen Ortschaft Fritzdorf" pp. 213-234), based on an earlier study by the editor of the volume (Sieburg 1992), is an example of such a treatment. Here Sieburg examines the speech of 115 brothers and sisters in a rural community near Bonn to reveal some of the principal patterns of male:female differentiation in the developed industrial West, e.g., the positive evaluation of the standard variety, and the resulting tendency towards the use of standard forms among female speakers.

The six remaining papers in Part III of the volume present discussions of gender differentiation in language through the perspective of feminist linguistics. There is a certain analogy between the 19th century controversy and the recent discussion presented in the following papers; this time, however, other aspects become prominent – not the origin of Indo-European gender but the extent to which language structure reflects social structure and particularly the extent to which language structure can discriminate against women. An example is provided in the volume with the 1978 paper by Trömel-Plötz ("Linguistik und Frauensprache" pp. 235-257), in which she discusses a range of discriminating asymmetries in linguistic structure and usage together with suggested changes. The structural asymmetries involve the generic masculine and negative semantic space in terms of professions for women, both in the lack of terms and negative connotations of those already in use. Two strategies can be discerned – either towards neutralisation, e.g., in E. *spokesperson* and G. *Amtsperson* 'official' or towards overt gender marking through pronoun agreement and derivation (e.g., G. *Professorin*). In addition, Trömel-Plötz considers asymmetries in the communicative styles of men and women. Marked differences in, e.g., turn-taking and interruptions can be analysed in terms of such oppositions as symmetry vs. asymmetry, or rapport-talk vs. report-talk.

Kalverkämper's reply to Trömel-Plötz ("Die Frauen und die Sprache" pp. 258-278) stimulates a controversy, which in the polemical and derogatory tone of discussion well measures up to the standards set by Brugmann and Roethe. More important however is Kalverkämper's argumentation: his insistence on a separation of natural and grammatical gender is consistent with the assumptions behind other structuralist studies.⁶ In the following paper (pp. 279-301), Pusch puts forward arguments similar to those given earlier by Roethe, accusing Kalverkämper of ignoring the social and psychological aspects of gender. In particular, she claims that due to the asymmetries discussed above the structure of German allows men a better means of self-identification. She is also critical of the use of the notion of "economy" in Kalverkämper's discussion of the generic masculine. Kalverkämper's reply ("Quo

vadis linguistica? Oder der feministische Mumpsimus in der Linguistik" pp. 302-307) comes with the accusations of deliberately provocative and ultimately irrelevant polemics.

As Sieburg remarks in the Introduction (pp. 26-27), the divide runs not so much between the two sides of the argument, but rather between the sexes. An exception is provided with the paper by Ulrich ("'Neutrale' Männer – 'markierte' Frauen. Feminismus und Sprachwissenschaft" pp. 308-321), in which she argues against the presence of a discriminating connection between gender and sex. Sieburg concludes that this may be the reason why her contribution has been largely ignored in German feminist scholarship (p. 27). The volume ends with a paper by Leiss ("Genus und Sexus. Kritische Anmerkungen zur Sexualisierung der Grammatik" pp. 322-345), which offers a more unbiased overview of recent developments. The excessive "sexualisation of language" that she points out is especially relevant with respect to the earlier paper by Pusch. In addition, Leiss considers the adverse effects of changes motivated by feminist linguistics.⁷ A general characteristic of recent studies is perhaps a more positive evaluation of typical male and female roles in discourse, as well as a change in their interpretation, from dichotomies towards complexity. In conclusion, it appears that, as Sieburg suggests (p. 32), a greater linguistic sensitivity and awareness of the social role of women can be counted as the main achievements of feminist linguistics.

As for the formal side of the volume, I have already commented on the division into subject matter sections. I have noticed only a few deviations from the original texts – considering the size of the volume the number is definitely small. There are a number of mistakes in the Bibliography, e.g., *Baltinger* (Anton Batliner) (p. 350), *Grenville* (Greville G. Corbett) (p. 351), *Madwig* (Joh. Nikolai Madvig) (p. 353), *Klaus-Michal* (Klaus-Michael Köpcke) (p. 356), *Graig* (Colette Craig) (p. 358). We may also mention the inconsistency in the use of initials vs. full first names, and of capitals in the English titles of books and articles (e.g., *german*, p. 353, 356). Other minor errors include, e.g., *Iceland* (... in German and Icelandic) (p. 354), *Sciantiarum* (Scientiarum) (p. 356) and *sprakvetenskap* (språkvetenskap) (p. 357).

In conclusion *Sprache – Genus/Sexus*, edited by Heinz Sieburg, is an extremely valuable book: not only does it make easily accessible a range of important papers, but it also treats a considerable number of areas of study together with a wide range of possible perspectives. Such contributions – and these include also the volumes edited by Margaret Mills (Mills 1999) and by Barbara Unterbeck and Matti Rissanen (Unterbeck – Rissanen 1999) – demonstrate how stimulating and fruitful research on gender and language can be.

⁷ "Es geht mir u.a. darum zu zeigen, daß die Hervorhebung von Frauen, d.h. die explizite Bezugnahme auf ihr Geschlecht als deren angeblich wesentliches Merkmal den Frauen mehr geschadet als genützt hat, und daß das auch für die sprachliche Hervorhebung von Frauen gilt" (Leiss 1994: 282, or p. 323 of the present volume).

⁶ Cf. especially Fodor (1959) and Ibrahim (1973).

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