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English-based feminative neologisms in post-1989 Polish

Abstract

For more than three decades now an increase in the productivity of the feminative category has been observed in Polish-language communication practices and, consequently, an increase in the number of female personal names in Polish. The lexicographic team of the Formation of Feminine Names Research Unit, operating at the Institute of Polish Studies at the University of Wrocław since 2010, has been registering those changes and is currently working on a new edition of the “Dictionary of Polish Feminine Nouns”. Its corpus includes, among others, about 150 of the newest feminine lexemes created after 1989 and based on English roots. The article presents their lexico-semantic typology and juxtaposes it with earlier typologies of feminine names, thus showing which areas of activity of contemporary women are filled with innovative nominalizations. It also proves the compatibility with the Polish language system of the analysed hybrid feminine names, which, despite showing a varying degree of orthographic, phonetic and morphological adaptation, are generally accepted by young people, as attested to by a survey conducted among students of Polish Studies at the University of Wrocław. The discussion on internationalization of feminine forms – one of the ways of filling the semantic and lexical gaps in the naming of women – is set against the background of the political, cultural and communicative changes which have taken place in the Third Republic of Poland.

Keywords: feminatives / feminine personal nouns, neologism, linguistic borrowing, lexicography, gender and language.

1. Introduction

Major changes in the lexical system of a language are usually associated with dynamic changes in extra-linguistic reality. In Central and Eastern Europe, the last 35 years have been full of extremely important historical events, development of new ideas and communicative behaviours which have brought about unprecedented, previously unknown productivity of the lexical and word-forming processes of the Polish language (Mosiółek-Kłosińska 1999:37-62; Dubisz 2011:239-246).

In this article I deal only with a section of the lexical system of Polish i.e. innovative feminine personal nouns (feminatives) which are created on the basis of a borrowed English derivational base. I present a lexical-semantic analysis of such items as well as their evaluation in terms of their compatibility with the Polish language system and in the light of the opinions voiced by a group of young language users, i.e. Polish philology students at the University of Wrocław.

1.1. Political, economic and cultural transformation of Poland after 1989

Since the overthrow of communism in Poland and its liberation from the influence of Moscow (called at the time the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, USSR) in 1989, the constitutional name of the state has been the Republic of Poland – it is also referred to as the Third Polish Republic (in Polish: III RP). The change in the name indicated symbolically a break away from the post-Soviet communist system in favour of an independent, modern democratic state and was also a reference to the traditions of the state which once operated under the name of the Republic of Nobility (from the mid-15th century to 1795), and the reborn Second Republic (in the years 1918–1945). 1989 and the following years brought about many important events that led to changes in Polish women's and men's mentality and, consequently, in their behaviour and language habits. Such events included the following:

1. the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the iron curtain between the countries of the former socialist and capitalist blocs, which facilitated the free flow of information, knowledge and ideas previously blocked by censorship as well as opened the possibility of travel and resulted in a sharp increase in migration. Moreover, Polish began to coexist with other languages (Jadacka 2001:73-74; Kontra/Sloboda/Nekvapil/Kielkiewicz-Janowiak 2023:586);

2. Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, which boosted migration, intercultural and language contacts;
3. the spread of the Internet, new communication technologies and electronic media, which has resulted in a free and unrestricted access to the world as well as exchange of information. The Internet has become an uncontrolled catalyst for linguistic transformations.

The factors (1) – (3) have led to the creation of new communicative situations, new discourses, and numerous language changes, also influencing internationalisation of language (Jadacka 2001:143). Ożóg assessed the political and cultural transformation – including the change of the political system, the advent of a liberal, democratic, free-market economy and an expansive influx of previously suppressed fashionable cultural currents from the West (postmodernism, consumerism, mediaism, Americanization of life) – as follows, What has happened in Poland since 1989 fully deserves to be regarded as historical changes and epoch-making events (see Ożóg 2008:60).

1.2. Language transformation

The changes signalled in the preceding section have exerted a powerful influence on the Polish language. According to Ożóg (2008),

In the wake of political, economic, and socio-cultural transformations, our mother tongue has changed a great deal. We are currently witnessing the greatest changes in the Polish language in its entire history. There has never been a period in the history of the Polish language when during such a short time – in terms of the history of a language, 15–10 years is a small stretch – the language has changed so rapidly. Not even the Second World War ploughed so deeply into the native speech and linguistic consciousness of Poles as the period after 1989. Therefore, it can be said that the current state of the Polish language in relation to that of a dozen years ago resembles the state of language after a revolution (Ożóg 2008:60 – translated from Polish).

The democratization of the political system and the freedom of broadcasting afforded by the Internet have resulted in the democratization of the language itself. Many accelerated transformations of Polish could be observed during that time such as numerous linguistic borrowings and the birth of new discourses, e.g., feminist (Witosz 2008; Steciąg 2014a), queer (Rejter 2013) and ecological (Steciąg 2012, 2014b), but also the discourse of exclusion (Witosz 2010). Some other trends have been noted including an increase in the variability of linguistic structures, relaxation of commu-

nicative verbal behaviours and *savoir-vivre* rules drifting towards American behavioural models (Marcjanik 2020:244-246). The new discursive reality unleashed an incredible linguistic productivity unlocking the vocabulary potency previously constrained by the ossification of newspeak. The tendency, ubiquitous in the 1980s, not to express gender information, i.e. to use grammatically masculine nouns in a co-gendered reference is slowly beginning to be reduced, e.g. *klient* ‘customer/client, masc.’ in Polish may refer to both a man and a woman, but today the noun *klientka* ‘female customer/client’ is gaining popularity fast.

The attitude of conscious participation in social transformations and expressing openly many hitherto concealed views on identity or behaviours find expression in the exploration of language creative potential. New ideas have caused an explosion of novel linguistic forms. Of course, these are not instantaneous changes, but rather a long process, happening in different ways and subject to evaluation by language users. It is, however, significant for the history of word formation. Just as in times of threatened national and state sovereignty purist attitudes towards language intensified, so after 1989, with a regained faith in the possibilities of social action, political pluralism and postmodern cultural breakthroughs, public approval of new phenomena and linguistic tendencies could be observed. Emerging forms of civic life, consciousness movements and postmodern trends meant that unnamed, often hitherto unseen aspects of human (individual or social) existence were acquiring names and that linguistic creative process is sometimes still taking place (Małocha-Krupa 2018a:193-270). Researchers of the Polish language have been recording a wealth of innovative linguistic facts: intensive, numerous processes of reproducing the lexical resource and its marked growth as well as the creation of new lexico-semantic nets (Mosiołek-Kłosińska 1999:37-62; Mazur 2000; Jadacka 2001:73-156; Waszakowa 2005; Dubisz 2011:239-246) and a massive influx of borrowings from English (Mańczak-Wohlfeld 1994; Cierpich 2019), sometimes referred to as ‘McDonaldization’ (Ibis Wróblewski 1996: 257-260).

2. The reintroduction of the feminative category

Feminatives in Polish have been a productive word-forming category for centuries (Klemensiewicz 1957; Woźniak 2014, 2020; Małocha-Krupa 2018a; Karamańska-Młynarczyk 2019) and it is not a modern innovation. However, researchers point to the resurgent productivity of the feminine

personal noun formation among the contemporary processes accompanying fundamental social, cultural, communicative and political transformations. After 1989 the pro-equality circles called for the introduction of a greater linguistic symmetry between masculine and feminine personal nouns. The effects of the development of this tendency have already received much attention; I will only mention published monographs concerned with this issue: Karwatowska/Szpyra-Kozłowska (2005); Łaziński (2006); Nowosad-Bakalarczyk (2009); Dembska (2012); Małocha-Krupa (2018); Krysiak (2020); Szpyra-Kozłowska (2021).

In connection with the changes in language – brought about, among others, by electronic communication – there began a long-term process of introducing gender symmetry into Polish. That growth of interest resulted in a lively, extremely productive search for feminine equivalents of masculine personal nouns in an effort to fill the existing lexico-semantic gaps in the constitutionally equal, but still largely devoid of adequate feminine naming of women’s professional, social, and public reality. Within that ideological and communicative context, the process of unblocking and enriching the word-formation category of feminatives began, initially in pro-equality circles. On the one hand, old names used in historical Polish texts started to be revived, e.g., the feminative *adwokatka* used to mean ‘a woman who is friendly to someone, who defends someone’ but ever since women were allowed to pursue higher education, it has functioned in a specialized, narrower sense of ‘a female lawyer dealing with cases in court, defending defendants, giving legal advice.’ Many feminatives have returned to Polish as neosemantisms. They have lost their meaning of ‘a woman who is a wife/daughter of X’ and acquired new meanings referring to professions and functions which women have acquired and perform without any restrictions.¹

For over a dozen years, the processes related to the functioning of feminatives have been investigated by the Formation of Female Names Research Unit operating at the Institute of Polish Studies of Wrocław University.² Among other things, the Unit team (Katarzyna Hołojda, Patrycja Krysiak, Agnieszka Małocha-Krupa, Marta Śleziak) has published “Słownik nazw żeńskich polszczyzny” (Dictionary of female names in the Polish lan-

¹ Nowadays such names are used without the non-emancipatory component of the meaning of belonging to a father or husband, e.g., *sędzina* originally ‘judge’s wife’ now also means ‘female judge.’

² See: www.ifp.uni.wroc.pl/zaklady-i-pracownie/pracownia-badan-nad-slowotworstwem-nazw-zenskich/.

guage, ed. Małocha-Krupa 2015) – the first such work in the history of Polish lexicography.³ Work is currently under way on the 2nd expanded edition of the dictionary. The first, 2015 edition contained more than 2,000 (2,103 to be exact) feminine personal nouns. To date, the corpus has been enriched with over 2,500 new lexemes and new meanings of feminatives which were used for personal reference, but mainly meaning a man’s wife or daughter, e.g. *strażaczka* originally meaning ‘firefighter’s wife,’ today it names ‘woman who is a member of a fire brigade, puts out fires, carries out rescue operations.’ The semantic evolution of such items is sometimes not obvious to the public and they are usually identified by language users as new words (neologisms) that ‘feminists have invented’. The reason for that is because it is much more difficult to notice semantic modifications of words than to extract novel forms from discourses.

2.1. Feminine neologisms of English origin

A neologism, generally understood as a ‘new word’, is a vague concept. It is usually considered to be an unstable item not codified in lexicographical sources. Jadacka notes that, “a new word remains a neologism for some time after it enters the general dictionary. [...] its lexicographic registration today cannot determine the loss of that status as the development of electronic research tools has significantly shortened the lexeme’s journey to the dictionary” (Jadacka 2010:41). As I agree with this statement, I decided to include in my research neologisms understood broadly as new words which have not been codified so far and which constitute the majority in the material under study as well as neologisms (less numerous) which have been registered recently in Polish dictionaries, especially in the online “Wielki Słownik Języka Polskiego” (Great Dictionary of the Polish Language).⁴ More specifically, the focus will be on feminine personal nouns (below also referred to as ‘feminatives’ or ‘feminine names’) which are synthetic neologisms created during the existence of the Third Republic of Poland (i.e. after 1989) and have an English (or international) root.

I define ‘word-forming neologisms’ after Jadacka as “a subclass of lexical neologisms, distinguished by a formal criterion. They denote words derived from some word-formation base (sometimes several word-formation bases) referring (in this case) to the Polish language” (Jadacka 2001:37). As the

³ For more on this topic see Małocha-Krupa (2021).

⁴ Żmigrodzki (ed.), <https://wsjp.pl/>, accessed on 15 Aug 2024.

linguists in the Formation of Female Names Research Unit understand it, feminatives are synthetic structures of the type *kanclerka* ‘woman chancellor’ or *premierka* ‘female prime minister’ and thus not analytic structures of the type *pani kanclerz* ‘madam chancellor’, *pani premier* ‘madam prime minister’ – these are analytical variants of the feminative category. Neither do I analyse generic uses of nouns in feminine-personal reference which function in Polish as quite often they constitute a parallel naming technique for women, the most prestigious professions, holding important functions, and academic titles (Łaziński 2006). Therefore, I analyse products of a word-formation category, not a semantic one – as opposed to the eminent Lublin-based researcher Jolanta Szpyra-Kozłowska, who treats feminatives “as a category not so much word-forming as semantic, the products of which contain an element of femininity” (Szpyra-Kozłowska 2021:94). Furthermore, my analysis does not cover non-derivative names (*córka* ‘daughter’, *doula* ‘doula’) and centres on morphologically complex formations, i.e. Polish derivatives either from masculine forms (*headhunterka* ‘female headhunter’ from *headhunter* ‘id. masc.’, *performerka* ‘female performer’ from *performer* ‘id. masc.’, *youtuberka* ‘female YouTuber’ from *youtuber* ‘id. masc.’) or revealing the possibilities of multi-motivation and parallel derivation, e.g., *homofobka* ‘female homophobe’ can be formed from *homofob* ‘male homophobe’ or *homofobia* ‘homophobia’, *researcherka* from *researcher* or *research*.⁵ Moreover, the assumptions and criteria for identifying feminine-personal nouns described above remain in agreement with the Polish linguistic tradition of regarding them as regular products of a word-formation process (Klemensiewicz 1957:101-119; Kreja 1964:129-140; Grzegorzczkova/ Laskowski/Wróbel 1999:422-423 as well as with the common definition of feminatives (Krysiak/Małocha 2020:229-238). Traditionally they are viewed as synthetic structures derived by word formation and thus formed by the feminative suffixes such as *-ka* (and its variants), *-yni/-ini*, *-ica/-yca*, segments with possessive meaning (*-owa*, *-ówna*, *-anka*, *-yna/-ina*) or expressive meaning (*-ica/-yca*) and with the use of the paradigmatic segment *-a*. The lexical material analysed in the remainder of this article has another feature in common: it concerns feminatives as defined above,⁶ built on English (sometimes international) roots.

⁵ On the possible multimotivation of feminatives see: Waszakowa (1993:27, 66, 108-109); Skarżyński (1999:60, 64); Małocha-Krupa (2018b:161-163); Szpyra-Kozłowska (2021:99-104, 126-136); Wrzyszczyk (2022:118-119).

⁶ This study omits the names of female creatures, heroines of fantastic, virtual worlds, of whom there are large numbers, for example in computer games, includ-

3. Lexico-semantic typology of English-based feminatives

As mentioned earlier, post-1989 neologisms built on English roots were extracted from the corpus of the Formation of Female Names Research Unit According to its June 2024 version, there are 150 of such forms. Currently, the whole corpus comprises more than 5,500 items, collected from recent and historical texts (from the 17th century to 2024).

It is noteworthy that English-based neologisms do not name professions, functions or traditional statuses – those already have their names fixed and codified in the historical and contemporary resources of Polish. English loans denoting persons is not a new phenomenon and many such items have been used for decades, e.g. E *speaker* > P *spiker(ka)*, E *presenter* > P *prezenter(ka)*, E *boxer* > P *bokser(ka)*. The question then is: What new semantic/lexical spaces do these innovative feminatives fill and name?

In order to describe them, I will employ a lexico-semantic typology of English-based feminatives as I believe that it is a better descriptive tool of the forms under consideration. This is because such a typology does not assume that a lexical item belongs exclusively to a given class, thus allowing it to be placed in several categories. It should be borne in mind, however, that there are no sharp boundaries between the proposed classes as sometimes one word can carry more than one meaning. e.g., it is often difficult to distinguish meanings referring to a profession or a hobby, someone's activity resulting from a passion or someone's skills, but not being a source of livelihood. The result of the analysis of the selected 150 feminine neologisms built on English roots is given below.

1. Nouns related to women's activities in the Internet, in virtual reality: *blogerka* 'female blogger', *botka* 'female robot, artificial intelligence doing things for women', *forumowiczka* 'female forum member', *freediverka* 'freediving woman', *gejmerka* 'female computer gamer', *hakerka* 'female hacker', *hejterka* 'female hater', *influencerka* 'female influencer', *instagramerka* 'female Instagram user', *podcasterka* 'female podcast creator', *researcherka* 'female researcher', *streamerka* 'female streamer', *tiktokerka* 'female TikTok content creator', *webmasterka* 'female webmaster', *wikipedystka* 'female Wikipedia contributor', *youtuberka* 'female YouTuber'.

ing the widely popular *League of Legends*, e.g., *Yordlka* (from the English *Yordle*), *Vastajanka* (from the English *Vastaya*).

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2. Nouns associated with women's professional activity naming female performers of new occupations, sometimes narrow professional specialisations. They can be associated with:
- artistic work: *designerka* 'female designer', *graficiarka* 'female graffiti artist', *performerka* 'female performer', *starletka* 'female aspiring star';
 - music industry: *didżejka* 'female DJ', *frontmenka* 'female frontperson', *rockmenka* 'female rock band member', *songwriterka* 'female song writer', *showrunnerka* 'female showrunner';
 - fashion industry: *bodypainterka* 'female body painter', *brafitterka* (formerly *gorseciarka*) 'female brafitter', *fashionistka* 'female fashionist', *herstylistka* 'female hair stylist', *piercerka* 'female piercer', *tipserka* 'female manicurist';
 - text creation: *copywriterka* 'female copywriter', *ghoswriterka* 'female ghost writer', *slamerka* 'female slam poetry performer';
 - mental or physical health activities: *arteterapeutka/artoterapeutka* 'female art therapist', *coachka* 'female coach', *counsellerka* 'female counsellor', *dermokonsultantka* 'female skin cosmetic consultant', *facylitatorka* 'female facilitator', *groomerka* 'female animal groomer', *senselierka* 'a female fragrance specialist', *streetworkerka* 'female streetworker';
 - anti-crime activities: *koronerka* 'female coroner', *profilerka* 'female profiler'.
3. Names of social functions, status and positions: *artdirectorka* 'female art director', *bizneswoman/businesswoman/bizneswomanka/bizneswomenka* 'businesswoman', *championka/czampionka* 'female champion', *freelancerka* 'female freelancer', *kongresmanka/kongreswomen* 'congresswoman', *menadżerka/menedżerka* 'female manager', *supermenka* 'superwoman', *superwizorka* 'female supervisor';
4. Agentive nouns (*nomina agentis feminativa*), paraphrased as 'a female who performs an activity'. Those are derived from the activities that women perform as part of their jobs, e.g. *anotatorka* 'female annotator', *bookerka* 'female in customer service', *castingowiczka* 'female casting specialist', *headhunterka* 'female headhunter', *dan-serka* 'female dancer', *lobbystka* 'female lobbyist', *testerka* 'female tester', *trendsetterka* 'female trendsetter'. Among the agentive nouns there is also a group of items with meanings not directly related to women's professional activities, such as *bargainistka* 'female bargain hunter', *bookcrosserka* 'female bookcrosser', *squatterka* 'female squatter', *stalkerka* 'female stalker';

5. Nouns related to sporting activities: *badmintonistka* ‘female badminton player’, *cheerleaderka/cheerliderka/czirliderka* ‘female cheerleader’, *fajterka* ‘female fighter’, *fitneska* ‘female fitness fan’, *sparringpartnerka* ‘female sparring partner’, *sprinterka* ‘female sprinter’, *surferka* ‘female surfer’, *windsurferka* ‘female windsurfer’;
6. Attributive nouns (*nomina attributive feminativa*) describing a woman who is the bearer of a trait by virtue of some attribute (appearance, lifestyle, views, personality, inclination, opinions); it can be paraphrased as ‘a female who is characterized by something’, e.g., *autsajderka/outsiderka* ‘female outsider’, *boomerka* ‘female boomer’, *celebrytka* ‘female celebrity’, *couchsurferka* ‘female couchsurfer’, *genderystka* ‘female gender researcher’, *hipsterka* ‘female hipster’, *homofobka* ‘female homophobe’, *japiszonka/japówka* ‘female yuppie’, *singielka* ‘a female single’.

A comparison of the lexico-semantic typology of the new feminine names proposed here with earlier classifications and typologies of Polish feminatives (e.g. Krysiak 2013:87-91, 2020:123-127; Małocha-Krupa 2018a:62-86; Wrzyszczyk 2022:119-120) shows several other semantic categories such as:

- kinship terms (*kuzynka* ‘female cousin’, *burmistrzowa* ‘mayor’s wife’, *burmistrzanka* ‘mayor’s daughter’) providing information about, among other things, a woman’s marital or social status which shows the practice of using nominative husband- and father-related forms (created with the suffixes *-owa*, *-ówna*, *-ina/-yna*, *-anka*). This type of information belongs to the history of Polish and, from the perspective of contemporary participants of communication, is becoming completely irrelevant and even violates the etiquette of equality and therefore can be viewed as obsolete (it sometimes appears in texts only as a stylistic device);
- delocative nouns (*Afrykanka* ‘African woman’, *Angielka* ‘English woman’, *Polka* ‘Polish woman’);
- emotive, augmentative or diminutive nouns, i.e. all expressive nouns (*nomina augmentative feminativa* or *nomina deminutiva feminativa*) which may mean that the studied neologisms have not yet become an integral part of the Polish vocabulary system as they lack modifying derivatives.

Many traditional Polish feminine names possess diminutive and/or augmentative forms, e.g., *kuzynka* ‘female cousin’ → *kuzyneczka* ‘id. dim.’, *siostra* ‘sister’ → *siora* ‘id. aug.’, *artystka* ‘woman artist’ → *artycha* ‘id.

aug.', *baba* 'hag' → *babsztyl/babsko* 'id. pejorative', *babinka* 'tiny old woman'. If it is possible to form diminutives (e.g. *danserka* > *dansereczka*) and augmentatives (e.g. *graficiarka* > *graficiara*) from loanwords, it attests to the fact that such items have adapted in terms of rules of Polish word formation. The analysed nouns can be claimed to have adapted partially as their very presence is a result of completed word-forming processes, hybridisation, derivation from masculine forms or other bases and the addition of the Polish suffix *-ka*.

The presented lexico-semantic analysis indicates that neologisms enrich several semantic fields that are important to contemporary Polish speakers and thus constitute a significant and necessary – in the light of the criterion of linguistic sufficiency – part of the lexical resource which names the new realities of women's new creative, equitable activities.

4. Evaluating feminatives from a systemic perspective

Grzegorzycykowa (1972:24) explains the modelling, systematic nature of productive word formation processes as follows: A productive word-formation type is one that serves as an example /model/ for creating new derivatives. The total of the productive types is a productive word-formation system whose function is to enlarge the vocabulary. Of course, it is only a part of the general word-formation system, which encompasses all semantic-formal relations occurring between the existing words.

Considering what is typical, systemic and regular in terms of the structure of the analysed neologisms, they all reproduce typical patterns of the feminine category faithfully, so, from the point of view of the language system, such items have been created according to the rules of productive word-formation processes. These new forms are derived from the masculine nouns and sometimes from a verb or a noun (those with parallel motivation), and they are all formed using the derivational suffix *-ka*. Descriptions of both old, historical Polish (Muczkowski 1825; Małecki 1863; Suchecki 1863; Wrzyszc 2022) and of the Polish in the second half of the 20th and early 21st centuries (Klemensiewicz 1957:101-119; Kreja 1964:129-140; Grzegorzycykowa 1972:52-53; Smółkowa 1976:88-89; Grzegorzycykowa/Laskowski/Wróbel 1999:422-423; Jadacka 2001:47, 76-81; Łaziński 2006:255; Piotrowicz/Witaszek-Samborska 2015:87-96) unanimously confirm that the most productive formant denoting femininity has been and still is the suffix *-ka*. The structure of the lexical innovations analysed in this article fully confirms this thesis. The suffix *-ka* occurs regularly in formations of

all semantic types. Its productivity is restricted neither by the semantic affiliation of a new noun nor by the morphological structure of its derivational base. In the analysed material, there occur no other systemically possible suffixes which may co-form other innovative feminatives, e.g., the suffix *-yni/-ini*. This formative, active in the past, became basically unproductive at the end of the last century. Nowadays, thanks to pro-equality circles, feminine names with *-yni/-ini* are slowly beginning to re-enter Polish and are perceived by some people as stylistically neutral. Their increasing frequency has been confirmed by researchers (Łazinski 2006:224-225; Małocha-Krupa 2018a:255-258; Szpyra-Kozłowska 2021:241-246). Examples of the growing productivity of *-yni/-ini* suffixation are also provided by the records of the Formation of Female Names Research Unit, in which we find, for instance, an innovative and controversial *naukowczyni* ‘female scholar’ and *patriarchini* ‘female patriarch’. We can also observe a revival of nouns registered in old historical sources, e.g., *gościni* ‘female guest’, *potomkini* ‘female descendant’. However, as mentioned earlier, none of the analysed neologisms with an English root has been derived with the suffix *-ini/-yni* although it is productive again among the new nominalizations in the feminine category (and not only from masculine nouns with *-ca*).

Another observation is that morphological adaptation, consistent with the Polish language system, sometimes occurs in parallel with graphic adaptation (see Szpyra-Kozłowska 2016) Thus, for example, *didżejka* ‘female DJ’ (from the masculine *didżej* ← eng. *DJ Disk Jockey*), *gejmerka* ‘female computer gamer’ (from the masculine *gejmer* ← eng. *gamer*), *hejterka* ‘female hater’ (from the masculine *hejter* ← eng. *hater*) are beginning to function in Polish transliteration differing from the English orthographic forms. In some cases several variants of feminine forms are attested and exist side by side depending on the degree of the item’s polonization, e.g., *outsiderka/autsajderka* ‘female outsider’, *championka/czampionka* ‘female champion’, *kongresswomen/kongresmanka* ‘congresswoman’, *cheerleaderka/cheerliderka/czirliderka* ‘female cheerleader’, *businesswoman/bizneswoman/bizneswomen/bizneswomanka/bizneswomenka* ‘female businesswoman’. The expanded variance is a symptom of the language users’ need for a given nomination (Miodek 1983:15).

5. Language users’ evaluation of the new feminatives

In the earlier discussion we focused on the semantic categorization and the structure of selected feminine neologisms. The lexico-semantic issues

and the linguistic-cultural interferences involving the studied names constitute a very broad topic. Without exhausting the issue due to the limitations on the length of this article, we will proceed to present an evaluation of the neologisms in question carried out by a group of young Poles. The dispute over feminine names is neither new nor uniform in its general assessment and specific novel form and has been going on for almost 130 years. The problem is debated by linguists as well as by basically everyone who is interested in language and gender relations. Thus, it remains a nationwide, long-ideologised dispute; the topic of feminine names is sometimes a weapon and a tool eagerly used in the media battle of the political parties. On the one hand, despite numerous calls for the formation of feminine names which have been voiced in the public space for the last three decades,⁷ there is still some resistance to their use, especially in relation to names of professions, functions, positions and academic titles that are considered prestigious, e.g., the choice from among *ministerka/ministra/pani minister* ‘female minister’ and the generic *ta minister* ‘this, fem, minister, masc’. The varying extent of their social acceptance is related to the fact that some perceive new nouns as stigmatising, stylistically unnatural, deprecating, lowering the prestige of the office or function and sometimes as ugly and aesthetically unacceptable (Hołojda 2013:101-105; Nowosad-Bakalarczyk 2009; Krysiak 2020; Szpyra-Kozłowska 2021).

On the other hand, we are undoubtedly witnessing an enormous dynamism in the change of habits in communication about gender and a social demand for explicit knowledge on the subject. It is a normative problem that has aroused most lively interest in language use for years; meetings devoted to the issue of the formation and functioning of feminatives are attended by large numbers of listeners, who are often also emotionally involved in the issue. Disagreements, disputes and the ‘war on feminatives’ continue (Kiełkiewicz-Janowiak 2019:141-171).

At this point, however, and in connection with the research described here, the question arises whether such discussions and disputes also apply to feminine English-based neologisms – the subject of the present analysis. Can the accusations formulated in relation to the names of prestigious professions, titles, statuses such as *doktorka* ‘female doctor’, *dyrektorka* ‘female director’, *kierowniczka* ‘female manager’, *notariuszka* ‘female public notary’, *rektorka* ‘female university rector’, *prezydentka* ‘female

⁷ They are demanded by the pro-equality circles and the idea of introducing greater linguistic and gender symmetry is also supported by the Polish Language Council.

rector' levelled at nouns such as *webmasterka* 'female webmaster', *blogerka* 'female blogger' or *wikipedystka* 'female Wikipedia contributor'? What is the level of social acceptance of such hybrid neologisms? Are they evaluated as non-neutral, depreciating, downgrading, etc.?

In order to answer these questions, in April 2024 I conducted a survey (which is a preliminary part of a planned larger project) among 150 university students of language-related fields of study, such as the Polish studies and creative writing, text culture and practice. The participants were asked to evaluate the usefulness/functionality of ten selected innovative feminatives. They were as follows: *blogerka* 'female blogger', *bookcrosserka* 'female bookcrosser', *castingowiczka* 'female casting specialist', *copywriterka* 'female copywriter', *facylitatorka* 'female facilitator', *ghostwriterka* 'female ghost writer', *gejmerka* 'female computer player', *influencerka* 'female influencer', *piercerka* 'female piercer', *stalkerka* 'female stalker' and *youtuberka* 'female YouTuber'. What they have in common, in addition to their word-formation structure based on a borrowed English stem and the presence of the feminine suffix *-ka*, is that none of them has so far appeared in dictionaries of general Polish, so they are uncodified and have the status of lexical innovations. They are not registered in the Great Dictionary of the Polish Language either,⁸ but are, however, found in the records of the "Dictionary of Feminatives" that is in preparation.

Most of the respondents (98%) rated the above formations as functional and useful in Polish language communication. As they are young people (between 19 and 21 years of age), with a good command of English and familiar with the rules of gender-fair language use,⁹ the students were familiar with the meaning of these items. An exception was the noun *facylitatorka* as 40% of the respondents appeared to have a problem with its sense and proper use. Interestingly, in answer to the question: Do you consider the listed feminatives stylistically non-neutral or depreciative of women?, almost all participants responded 'No'.¹⁰ In the space intended for comments, the students pointed out that in some cases there might be some "phonetic difficulties in their implementation", "problems with spelling and pronunciation", "problems with remembering the meaning by people who have not studied English".

⁸ See: wsjp.pl, accessed 20 June 2024.

⁹ The recommendation to introduce feminine names in communication is for them an obvious one related to their generational affiliation.

¹⁰ 2% of them were undecided.

Such remarks are characteristic of the discussion on the general sense of word borrowing (Miodek 1996), and not – as expected – objections to feminine formations.¹¹ Certainly, this modest survey does not show the whole problem and calls for an extension – first and foremost the inclusion of other groups of respondents with other types of education, aged 30 years and more. However, if we assume that students of the humanities and linguistics are part of the future Polish intelligentsia who will be influencing public discourse, whose opinion on language and normative-stylistic awareness may prove important and determining for language use in the future, this study may be considered a kind of *signum temporis*, a voice relevant not only in the discussion on the acceptance of borrowings, but also in the perception of feminine innovations built on English roots as style-neutral as opposed to the perception of often stigmatized formations such as *doktorka* ‘female doctor’, *kierowniczka* ‘female manager’, *notariuszka* ‘female notary public’. Interestingly, the analysed items do not form constructions of the type *pani doctor* ‘lady doctor’, *pani kierownik* ‘lady manager’, *pani notariusz* ‘lady notary public’. That is because there are no forms of address of the type **pani blogerko* ‘lady blogger’, **pani forumowiczko* ‘lady forum member’, **pani youtuberko* ‘lady YouTuber’ etc. in use. Those are not names referring to high positions of power, very prestigious professions, functions or academic titles. In their case gender information (Łaziński 2006:250) has moved from the word formation level to the syntactic level and they are now lively debated in terms of word-formation and stylistic dilemmas.

Conclusion

The category of feminatives, which is strongly embedded in the Polish language system, has long been a subject of public and academic disputes. Historically, such items have constituted a clearly distinguishable, firmly rooted class although their development was non-linear. That is because their functioning has been coupled strongly with the prevailing political, social and cultural ideas of emancipation, socialist realism, communism and feminism. At present, at the time of the Third Republic of Poland, dynamic changes are taking place in the lexical and word-formation systems of the language. In particular, we can observe a rapid expansion of feminatives, including the use of some recent English-language borrowings.

¹¹ In the ‘war on feminine endings’ it is often claimed that “feminists spoil the language” or that “they violate Polish”.

The latter are entering Polish in a way consistent with the system, through suffixal derivation. A common and distinguishing feature of the analysed innovations is their hybrid nature, i.e. a combination of the native suffix *-ka* with a borrowed stem, usually taken from English or indirectly from Greek or Latin. Such items in Polish reveal varying degrees of orthographic, phonetic, inflectional and derivational adaptation. They perform an important nominative function as they fill semantic and lexical gaps in the naming of women. They express new activities females perform in the virtual and real world and are accepted by young language users to whom they appear neutral and useful and are an effect of vocabulary internationalisation.

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