FACTA UNIVERSITATIS
Series: **Linguistics and Literature** Vol. 14, N° 2, 2016, pp. 189-208
DOI: 10.22190/FULL1602189G

A STUDY OF GENDER-CONDITIONED USE OF INFLECTIONAL AND PERIPHRASTIC FORMS IN ENGLISH ADJECTIVE COMPARISON*

UDC 811.111'367.623

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Abstract. *First introduced to the study of language by Robin Lakoff in her 1975 book Language and Woman's Place, gender has gained a status of a significant variable when it comes to language realization (Frank, 1978). As such, gender is an object of many sociolinguistic studies (Jespersen, 1922; Kramer, 1974; Edelsky, 1976; Thorne et al, 1983; Crawford, 1995) and is assumed not only to play a role in the pragmatics of language usage, but also to influence the frequency and nature of different lexical and structural realizations, resulting in what Kramer termed "a genderlect" (Kramer, 1974). The aim of this paper is to present the results of a case-study of periphrastic and inflectional instances of the grammatical category of comparison in English, attempting at answering the question whether gender causes a preference for periphrasis in language usage, which, in the broadest sense, presents a multi-unit alternative to a single-unit meaning, be the meaning lexical or grammatical, and the unit a word or a bound morpheme. We analyzed a sex-wise and quantity-wise symmetrical corpus, comprised of different registers and genres – fiction, scientific non-fiction, and on-line magazine articles, encompassing a million words approximately per sex, and looked for the frequency of periphrastic instances of the two categories. Our assumption is that gender on its own, with all other social and textual variables excluded (discourse, register, author's age and social groups, personal language background) is not a sufficient factor to unambiguously and conspicuously determine an author's/speaker's preference for the periphrastic form of the studied grammatical values.*

Key words: *grammatical meaning, inflectional forms, periphrasis, gendered language, adjective comparison.*

Submitted May 15th 2016, accepted for publication November 6th, 2016
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*The paper has been written as a part of the research project entitled *Languages and Cultures in Time and Space* funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (Grant no. 178002).

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research problem

There is extensive literature on the most important qualities of language use as based on the inherent characteristics of the feminine gender. Most frequently, these qualities refer to the sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of language, such as hedging, use of question tags, vocabulary choice (euphemism, etc), and the language of masculine gender speakers would be usually considered the starting point in the comparison, the "default variant" or the "gold standard" of the language. There are not many studies which would investigate any potential differences that might arise in "putting to effect" the grammatical system of the language by the two genders. Therefore, this study is meant to tackle the manner in which male and female speakers employ language structures, more specifically morphological structures, to achieve grammatical meanings in contemporary written English. Hopefully, the findings could lead to any salient conclusions regarding the problem of whether the gender of the speakers plays any inherent role in opting for one type of linguistic structure or the other.

As it appears, authors have taken conflicting attitudes regarding the question whether male and female speakers use the grammar of the language differently. As Hall (2003: 358) quotes:"Modern-day languages like English do not have distinctive grammars for the two sexes since theage-old division of labor has, in Jespersen's understanding, only 'lingering effects' (1922: 219) in the twentieth century." On the other hand, according to Leap (2003: 402), the modern times simply impose an expectation of a gender-different grammar of the language: "[…] language has always been a useful resource for expressing and contesting claims to gendered subjectivity. But the fragmented, seemingly decentralized condition of (late) modernity has made language an especially valuable resource in that regard- even if, at the same time, modernity imposes its own demands on gender-related grammar, discourse, and text-making".

Generally speaking, the main language problem in this research is the use of inflectional and periphrastic structures for expressing a grammatical meaning or inflectional value (Cf. Haspelmath/Sims, 2010: 81-82), namely within the grammatical category of comparison with English adjectives. In some of the most influential reference works on English grammar, reports have been offered from researchwhich show certain general tendencies regarding the inflectional/periphrastic divide. Quirk quotes from astudy of adjectives at the Survey of English Usage (Quirk, et al. 1985:463): "(iii) ***-er***is more frequent than ***more***, which is more frequent than ***less; -est*** is more frequent than ***most***, which is far more frequent than ***least***." As opposed to that, in their more recent grammar book, Teschner&Evans (2007:148) claim that "[…]growing numbers of English speakers have come to prefer *more* instead of *-er*to form **all** two-syllable equatives' comparatives[…]". More specifically, taking into account register variations, Biber, et al. (1999: 523-525) have found that "the greater use of phrasally marked adjectives in news and academic prose reflects the need to be more specific in the choice of descriptive and delimiting vocabulary, and therefore to use polysyllabic adjectives more frequently" as well as that "inflected superlative forms of polysyllabic adjectives are most common in fiction, where they often occur in the speech of rustic or uneducated characters and also often serve as noun phrase heads". Even though Teschner and Evans (2007:148) suggest further that "[…]the simplest possible rule for English learners to employ is this: when you are not sure, just use *more* to comparativize any two-syllable equative[…]", we have considered the investigation of the gender element in the topic a legitimate linguistic problem to pursue.

To ward off any terminological misconception, the authors have used the terms inflectional and periphrastic as these two have been used traditionally in morphological theory. An inflectional form is taken as a segment of an inflectional paradigm of a lexeme, a word stem marked by means of an affix for a specific grammatical category relevant for the lexical category in question (Bussmann, 1996: 566). Periphrastic forms, on the other hand, represent constructions that are meant to express grammatical distinctions, as opposed to the direct inflection of the lexical item. (Trask, 1996: 205).

1.2. Resarch objectives

In relation to the previous, the assigned task of this research endeavour would be to answer the query whether it is lady speakers/writers or gentlemen speakers/writers who use more periphrastic or inflectional forms in their language when they compare adjectives, which may provide us with a better insight into the ways female speakers use language and how these may be different, if at all, to the ways of the male speakers. Among the main objectives of the study, we could also enter supplying the results of empirical investigations related to the issue of female and male speakers' language use with an attempt to discover whether female speakers express tendencies toward more elaborate and structurally complex items for conveying particular grammatical meanings. Would they be using more frequently periphrastic forms than inflectional forms for the same grammatical meaningsuch as comparative and superlative degree of adjective comparison? The initial hypothesis that there would be no relevant difference in the ways female speakers used inflectional and periphrastic comparatives as opposed to male speakers was just as stimulating a factor as any potential findings which could point to the opposite.

> In English, many adjectives have an inflected comparative formed by adding the suffix -*er*to the base form (e.g. *warm _warm-er*), but other adjectives lack such a form, and comparison is conveyed by a multi-word (or phrasal) expression containing the adverb *more* (e.g. *beautiful _ more beautiful*). In some intuitive sense, the phrasal expression serves the same function as the inflected form with other adjectives, and linguists have often felt the need to assimilate such "periphrastic expressions" to the single-word forms, so that it becomes possible to say that *more beautiful* is the "comparative form" of *beautiful*, just as *warmer* is the comparative form of *warm* (cf. Matthews 1981: 54f.). (Haspelmath, 2000: 655)

As Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 1582) have put it: "There is no simple set of rules to indicate which adjectives take which type: in many cases it is a matter of more or less likely rather than possible or impossible." As there is no consistency in terms of comparison patterns even within the established sets of adjectives according to their structural, phonological and supra-segmental characteristics, the conclusion is that the matter is considerably lexically conditioned and that the prevalence of one pattern over the other in the language of the speakers is highly likely more dependent upon some other factors.

1.3. Research methodology

The present study aims at establishing any potential preference of male or female native speakers of English for either inflectional or periphrastic adjective forms with the

goal of answering the main research question whether biological gender penetrates one's language system and consequently, whether women's language differs from men's at the level of grammar, and this segment of grammar in particular. The study focuses on those adjectives that possess the capacity of being compared dually, i.e. both inflectionally and periphrastically as given in the relevant literature (Jespersen, 1965; Quirk et al. 1985; Bauer, 1994; Greenbaum, 1996; Biber et al. 1999, Huddleston/Pullum, 2002; Teschner/ Evans, 2007, as well as other online sources specified).

For the initial step in conducting the empirical portion of the study, a list of forty-five such adjectives was gathered. The advantage of this method is twofold: it constitutes a body of research items that is significant, yet manageable in size, as well as prevents the interference of sole cases of idiosyncratic use of periphrasis, increasing the significance of the instances found in the corpus (for a more detailed discussion of different aspects of the use of periphrasis, see section 2.3.). Secondly, the researchers proceeded to generate a corpus of written English used specifically for the purposes of this particular study. The corpus was subdivided into a total of six sub-corpora with respect to two variables: the author's gender (male or female) and the text register: fiction, non-fiction (scholarly), and journalistic. Both the male and the female corpora were identical in word-count – one million words each, and were comprised of texts retrieved from online magazines and quality dailies, academic texts, novels and short stories, including both the British and the American varieties of English.

Corpus analysis was conducted computationally by means of WordSmith Text Analysis Tool (Scott, 2012). One of the tools of the software that was used in conducting this study is providing concordances of an input item, i.e. giving a numbered list of all the occurrences of the form as well as its immediate context. We made use of the software's feature to generate instances of entire inflectional paradigms of a search item found in a text when given the input LEMMA* which provided us with a better insight into the general adjective use in the two major sub-corpora, at the same time making the analysis more efficient in the case of those adjectives that proved to have fewer occurrences. When the number of the search results did not allow for the manual counting of the adjectives, we resorted to adding context words MORE and MOST to the input lemma, as well as the separate inflected search words. Each of the six sub-corpora was analyzed separately, leading us to the total number of searched forms in the corpus, as well as the number per gender/register.

In order to compute the statistical significance of the obtained results, we used a right-tailedtwo-sample z-test for equal proportions where the parameter of the computation was the proportion of instances of analytically compared adjectives in the population of the total number of compared adjectives calculated by the following formula:

$$\pi = \frac{\text{number of PERIPHRASTIC FORMS}}{\text{number of INFLECTIONAL FORMS} + \text{number of PERIPHRASTIC FORMS}},$$

where π_F stands for the same parameter pertaining to the sub-corpus containing texts by female authors, and π_M for the same value in the sub-corpus of male authors. The objective was to answer the question if male or female authors used periphrastic forms approximately equally ($\pi_F = \pi_M$), or in different proportions that are statistically significant ($\pi_F < \pi_M$ or $\pi_M < \pi_F$).

Values required for our testing are sample size n and sample proportion p:

$$n = \text{number of inflectional forms} + \text{number of periphrastic forms},$$

$$p = \frac{\text{number of periphrastic forms}}{n},$$

where these values pertaining to either male or female sub-corpora were noted as n_M and p_M and n_F and p_F, respectively.

The statistical hypothesis testing was conducted as follows:

1) We defined our null hypothesis $\boldsymbol{H_0}(\pi_F = \pi_M)$ and our alternative hypotheses $\boldsymbol{H_1}(\pi_F > \pi_M)$ or $\boldsymbol{H_1}(\pi_M > \pi_F)$ and defined a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05 = 5\%$ (out of the usually chosen values 0.01, 0.02, 0.05 i 0.10),
2) We calculated the pooled proportion *p* and our test statistic *Z:*

$$p = \frac{p_F n_F + p_M n_M}{n_F + n_M}, \quad Z = \frac{p_F - p_M}{\sqrt{p(1-p)\left(\frac{1}{n_F} + \frac{1}{n_M}\right)}},$$

3) We defined a critical region $\boldsymbol{C} = [z_\alpha, \infty)$ for rejecting the null hypothesis where z_α, is defined using the standard normal distribution table as

$$\Phi(z_\alpha) = \frac{1-2\alpha}{2} = \frac{1 - 2 \cdot 0.05}{2} = 0.45 \;\Rightarrow\; z_\alpha = 1.645 \;\Rightarrow C = [1.645, \infty),$$

4) Finally, we would come to a conclusion that if the value $\boldsymbol{Z}$ falls into the critical region ($\boldsymbol{Z} \in \boldsymbol{C}$) the null hypothesis $\boldsymbol{H_0}$ is rejected and the alternative hypothesis $\boldsymbol{H_1}$ is accepted with a threshold of significance α*;* if $\boldsymbol{Z}$ falls out of the critical region ($\boldsymbol{Z} \notin \boldsymbol{C}$), the null hypothesis $\boldsymbol{H_0}$ cannot be rejected, i.e. it is accepted with the threshold of significance α.

The testing was conducted for each of the three registers, as well as for the overall corpus. They are further discussed in section 3.

2. Theoretical Framework and Previous Research

2.1. Gendered language

The concept of gender-based differences in language use has been a frequently studied phenomenon in sociolinguistics. While it can be dated back to Jespersen (1922) and Flannery (1946), the contemporary research into different use of language by men and women is credited to American sociolinguist Robin Lakoff and her 1975 book titled *Language and Woman's Place*where she studied "woman's language" as marked by a prominent use of devices such as tag questions, diminutives, amplifiers, hedges, and others.The purpose of these devices, as claimed by Lakoff, is to point to woman's subordinate position to man, constraining women to speak tentatively and softly, marking their "powerlessness" and "weakness" (Eckert&McConnell-Ginet 2003). Along with *women's language*, new terms were coined for gendered language, such as "[…]'the female register' (Crosby and Nyquist,1977); 'genderlect' (as in dialect) (Kramer, 1974b); and, more recently,'gender-linked language' (Mulac et al., 1986)[…]" (Crawford, 1995:22).

The extensive amount of work done on the subject varies immensely in terms of the studied linguistic phenomena examined as variables as well as differing approaches to the subject. In addition, results of such research have often been met with controversy and have been found biased or inconsistent. Still, the concept of gendered language remains highly intriguing and perplexing due to the complex nature of this subject matter. One of the factors accounting for the complexity of the issue is the fact that studying gendered language requires reliable and extensive understanding of both gender and language. Reaching the definitions of these two phenomena that reflected adequate knowledge has proved difficult to achieve throughout the history of gendered language studies, and the early work proved to involve over-simplified notions of both gender and language. Additionally, over time, researchers have taken different approaches to the correlation of the two phenomena, focusing on different aspects of their interaction. Coates (2007: 65) lists four differing approaches: 1) the deficit approach, characteristic of Lakoff's work where women's language is treated as intrinsically inferior and deficient while men's language is seen as the norm, 2) the dominance approach, where women are perceived as the subordinate group and men's language is another way of establishing male dominance, 3) the difference approach, where men and women are treated as different *sub-cultures*and women's talk is allowed "to be examined outside a framework of powerlessness and oppression" (Coates:2007: 65), and 4) the social constructionist approach, characterized by the notion of gender as something which is not given and static, but constantly constructed and re-constructed. While these do represent a sequence of historical paradigm shifts, "[…]the emergence of a new approach did not mean that earlierapproaches were superseded. In fact, at any one time these different approaches could be described as existing in a state of tension with each other. It is probably true to say, though, that most researchers now adopt a social constructionist approach." (Coates, 2007: 65).

Additionally, Coates (2007: 66) points out that it was only in the 1990s that "the understanding that gender is a social or cultural construction became widespreadin sociolinguistics[…]". Contrary to this finding, "early theorists of language attributed women's deficiency tobiological or other essential causes" (Crawford, 1995: 38). That is, the early work on gendered language involved the understanding of gendered language as stemming from the binary opposition of two sexes and their biological features, i.e. it excluded the more contemporary differentiation between sex and gender. In the words of Coates (2007):

> The early years of language and genderresearch revolved around English-speaking cultures and around white, middleclassspeakers. More recently, researchers have been encouraged to study thespeech patterns of women and men in a variety of cultures. There is now emphasison the fact that gender is constructed locally and that it interacts with race, class,sexuality and age. This has enabled researchers to 'diversify the canon' and tomove away from white, middle-class and anglocentric norms. (Coates, 2007: 67)

In other words, a general paradigm shift happened in language studies from *the essentialist approach* to the aforementioned *social constructionist approach*, together with the realization that gender is a much more complex and broader phenomenon than the male-female dichotomy which lead to "[…]abroader consideration of language as social practice" (Litosseliti, 2006:13). That is, a realization has been reached in recent research that gender as a single variable is insufficient, and is, in fact, realized in co-occurrence with many other factors.

The shift from the inherent and static notion of gender, to the one where gender is *performed* and *accomplished*was accompanied by a shift toward approaching language as a fluctuating system of linguistic features and socially-placed *performative* acts. As Litosseliti puts it:

> The view of language not as a fixed or closed system, but as dynamic, complex and subject to change, assumes that every time we use language, we make meaningful selections from the linguistic resources available to us (Antaki, 1994). This is hardly a straightforward process, not least because these selections are embedded in a local/immediate, as well as broader/institutional and socio-cultural context (Antaki, 1988, 1994; Fairclough, 1992).
> (Litosseliti, 2006:10)

Thus, gender can be both *reflected* in language, and *accomplished* by it, together with other aspects of reality. To support this concept, Crawford (1995: 18) writes that "the reality constructed throughlanguage forms the basis of social organization(Heritage, 1984; Potterand andWetherell, 1987)".

The vast amount of research into the correlation between gender and language has often incorporated and been supported by different gender ideologies, or it has been motivated by particular ideological stances of the researchers themselves. As a result, particular shortcomings in the study of gender differences have been observed by various authors (Richardson, 1997; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Crawford, 1995). Firstly, there is the issue of publication bias where the results reporting cases of gender differences are more likely to be published than the ones reporting cases of similarities, resulting in the lack of literature on the latter. In his discussion of this phenomenon, Richardson (1997: 9) cites Jacklin (1981) and Grady (1981). This is also noted to be related to the ideologically driven motivation to address male dominance via research. In Richardson's words:

> The origins of contemporary research on differences between women andmen lie in traditional concerns either to support or to refute assumptionsand expectations about the appropriate social roles for men and women (seeMosedale, 1978; Shields, 1975). When conventional explanations basedupon religious doctrine ceased to command general assent in the early 19th century, scientists and other thinkers began to look for differences that couldaccount for men's supposedly greater intellect, because this, in turn, wasassumed to explain the subordinate social position of women and their consequentconfinement to the roles of wife and mother.
> (Richardson, 1997: 4)

An additional problem, as noted by Crawford (1995) and Eckert&McConnell-Ginet (2003), is related to data analysis and result evaluation. Firstly, there is uniform and insufficiently-reliable treatment of form and function; that is, an overly elaborate correlation is assumed between a linguistic feature and its meaning or performative function. An example of this is Otto Jespersen's *The Woman* (1922)that describes women's language as illogical and much richer than men's in words but poorer in purpose and sense, as well as Lakoff's study of tag questions, hedges, diminutives, etc that she believed stood for a linguistic representation of women's linguistic deficiency and men's dominance. Crawford relates this phenomenon to sex-stereotypes, or as she writes "there is a readily available template for understandingsex differences when they are obtained" (Crawford, 1995:30). At the same time, "stereotype-inconsistent" results are readily dismissed as either unrepresentative or "anomalous" (Crawford, 1995: 30).

Finally, accounting for differences and what they represent has also proved a difficult task and the results accumulated over the years of research have proved inconsistent. This contributes to the overall inconclusive nature of the pursuit for gender-linked language. Research into gendered language in English has so far implied a quest for significant frequencies of different linguistic features in language use of women or men. When a linguistic feature prevails in women's language use, it is considered a formant of women's language (Crawford, 1995:22). Eckert and McConnell-Ginet(2003:62) further write in their discussion of phonological features as parts of genderlects that, "it is in the possibility for variation in the phonetic realization of asingle phoneme that gender can be embedded".

Seeing as a significant portion of linguistic features taken for variables in the study of gendered language have been of a lexical and pragmatic nature, making a study easily-related to ideological motivation, we have opted for conveying a study of grammatical value with the aim of establishing whether the extra-linguistic gender penetrates the mental grammars of speakers. In other words, this paper is focused on the grammatical category of adjective comparison which can be formally expressed in a dual manner in the English language, inflectionally and periphrastically. This freedom of choice that male and female speakers have, i.e. this formal variation, can give us better insight into whether there is "women's language" and gendered language in general, and, if so, what features it incorporates, that is, whether women's language can be differentiated on the grounds of a particular form attached to the same grammatical meaning as well.

2.2. Inflectional vs periphrastic stuctures

In many languages, particularly those considered typologicallysynthetic languages, grammatical meaning is expressed by means of various endings added to the stem form of the item to form a complete word form with a specific functional job in a sentence. It is a synergetic union of form and meaning manifested by an unbroken and unbreakable unit. In some other languages, grammatical categories and elements therein would be expressed exclusively through *periphrasis* - a relation expressed by a multi-word language structure, a phrase with a unified purpose, or as Corbett (2013: 169) puts it "an interplay of syntactic and morphological factors", as in the French language, where future tense with verbs is regularly formed by means of a phrase which consists of the auxiliary *aller*and the lexical verb. In linguistics, this is referred to as **categorial periphrasis**, which should be distinguished from some other sorts of periphrasis.

At times, within one and the same language, certain grammatical meanings may be conveyed through both inflectional and periphrastic forms, depending on the particular class of items, which may be a case of **paradigmatic periphrasis**. This occurs with the case system of English nouns where inanimate nouns are found in periphrastic forms (the genitive case *the door of the house*) or Romanian proper nouns where masculine gender proper nouns in oblique caseare marked by a periphrastic form involving a personal pronoun and the name. (Haspelmath/Sims, 2010: 184). Very often, **lexical periphrasis** would be exemplified in the literature by the English category of adjective and adverb comparison, where only specific adjectives call for periphrasis in grading. As Crystal (2008: 358) put it "[…]the comparison of adjectives involves both inflection (e.g. *happier, happiest*) and periphrasis (e.g. *more happy, most happy* – the periphrastic forms), though most adjectives use only one or other of these possibilities (cf. **more big,*

**interestinger*)." This means that periphrasis with English adjective comparison is lexically conditioned, and not by any other grammatical factor for that matter.

Both synthetic and periphrastic modes can be viewed as adequate for the realization of a certain inflectional value in language. More recently, Ackerman, Stump and Webelhuth (2011) proposed, particularly in the lexicalist approach to periphrasis in morphology and syntax, that a morphological perspective on periphrasis in the inflectional domain could be developed, or even extended to the derivational domain. The same trail could be established in the works of a number of researchers such as Börjars et al. (1997), Spencer (2001); Sadler & Spencer (2001) and Stump (2001, 2002).

2.3. Inflectional and periphrastic comparison of English adjectives

Thus, the focus of this research is made of the lexemes that could be realized with a particular morpho-syntactic meaning both synthetically and analytically.When English adjectives represent a gradable quality, i.e. quality that can vary along a scale (Leech et al, 1982: 48), they can be marked for **comparative** or **superlative** degree depending on whether any nominal entity has more or less of the quality in question than any other one or more entities. There are two distinct ways of establishing adjective comparison: inflectionally (synthetically) by the addition of the morphemes {-er} and {-est}, respectively, and periphrastically (analytically) by pre-posing the adverbs *more* and *most* to the adjective head. When it comes to expressing the diminishing presence of the quality, there are no inflections of lower and lowest degree equivalent to *-er*and *-est*, but rather *less* and *least* are used as modifiers to achieve this effect (Downing/Locke, 2006: 486).

According to some of the most authoritative descriptions of the English grammarsystem, it is the length of the adjective that determines the comparison type involved, whether inflectional or periphrastic (Quirk, et al., 1985: 461). Basically, the morphological structure of the adjective can provide a hint regarding the manner of comparison, as there are no hard and fast rules with English adjective comparison.

Monosyllabic adjectives, particularly the ones ending in <-d>, <-t> or <-r>, are said to be compared inflectionally (with the exception of *cross, fake, loath, prime, real, right, worth* and *wrong*), along with disyllabic ones that have the stress on the second syllable and those ending in <-le>, <-some>, <-ow>, <-ure>, <-y>, with the exception of the adjectives used only predicatively, such as *alive, alone, aware*, etc. Only exceptionally can trisyllabic adjectives be compared by adding the comparison marker, as in *almightiest* and disyllabic adjectives prefixed with {*un-*} (Biber, et al, 1999: 522). Periphrastic comparison is characteristic of disyllabic adjectives not specified above, trisyllabic and other poly-syllabic adjectives, adjectives ending in {*-al*},{*-ful*},{*-ic*},{*-ish*},{*-ive*},{*-less*},{*-ous*}andparticipial adjectives. However, the apparently clear-cut situation considerably complicates at this point, as different sources quote different rules and provide contradictory examples. Part of this complexity stems from the fact that "[…] morphology and syntax (the question of comparison by means of the endings *-er*and *-est*or by means of *more* and most)are closely interwoven" (Jespersen, 1965: 343). Namely, for Quirk et al., 1985 disyllabic adjectives ending in <-er>: *bitter, clever, eager, proper, slender, tender* qualify for inflectional comparison, while Jespersen (Jespersen, 1965: 351) and Teschner/Evans (2007: 149) treat them as adjectives with double comparison.Other influential sources for English relativize certain instructions provided in grammar books. Biber, et al (1999: 522-523) appear to ascribe the matter of

inflectional vs. periphrastic to the issue of frequency, especially with disyllabic adjectives derived by the suffix {-ly}, as *more likely* is more frequent than *likelier*, while *earlier* surpasses the frequency of *more early*.

When it comes to the preference in the use of a periphrastic comparative to the inflectional one in general English use, it appears that the periphrastic one tends to overcome its counterpart, as Leech, et al (2009: 267) have established "a marginal shift in favour of analyticity" in English adjective comparison. That this is a more recent development in the English language has also been confirmed by the grammarians Teschner and Evans who claim that "[…]growing numbers of English speakers have come to prefer *more* instead of *-er*to form **all** two-syllable equatives' comparatives[…]"(Teschner&Evans, 2007:148).

The third segment of adjectives when it comes to comparison would be composed of the lexemes that within their paradigm have inflectional forms for comparative and superlative, *cleverer* and *the cleverest*,but are also quite normally compared by periphrastic forms in free alternation, *more clever/ the most clever*. These would not include only the instances when the periphrastic comparison is used to achieve a certain stylistic effect, e.g. "*But Pavarotti is a little fuller in the face. And probably a little **more**full by now*",but to point out the comparison for the purpose of emphasis (Biber, 1999: 522). In language use like this, even incomparable adjectives can be compared, as in *more dead than alive*. The number of these adjectives seems to be very limited and dwindling, as shown by three research studies presented in Leech, et al. (2009). The table 11.7 gives the number of adjectives exhibiting both inflectional and periphrastic comparison in the same corpus in the British English 1931 research (16), in 1961 (16) and in 1991 (10). It should be noted that these are the examples found in the corpora, which does not necessarily mean that all of the existing lexemes were encompassed.Moreover, Leech, et al. (2009: 267) conclude that those cases that allowed both modes of comparison tend to end the "vacillation" between the two by being standardized on the phrasal alternant. Even though Laurie Bauer accepts the statements by Barber (1964) and Potter (1969) that the suffixed comparative adjectives were being gradually replaced by periphrastic forms as a sign of a growing trend from synthesis to analysis, he dismisses them as largely impressionistic rather than generalizations based on concrete data. However, not being particularly definite and specific on the general prevalence of the periphrastic comparison, in his corpus-based diachronic study, Bauer (1994: 60) commented on the change English went through within the twentieth century in terms of adjective comparison, stating that "[…] the change has been a regularization of a confused situation, so that it is becoming more predictable which form of comparison must be used".

Partly as a way out of this rather complex and entangled issue in English grammar, and partly as it represents the situation in the "real life" language more precisely, various authors tend to take a more liberal stand and offer general instructions and descriptions of the following kind:

> Most adjectives that are inflected for comparison can also take the periphrastic forms with *more* and *most*. With *more*, they seem to do so more easily when they are predicative and are followed by a than-clause[…] (Quirk, at al., 1985: 462)

> With disyllables the analytic forms are always possible, while the inflectional ones are sometimes possible and sometimes not. (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 1583)

Based on the previous discussion and the projected research objectives, we have devised a list of the commonest adjectives that could be compared inflectionally or

periphrastically (excluding the instances of the so-called metalinguistic comparison)[1] with more or less equal frequency. It involves all the adjectives that have been attested as dual comparison adjectives irrespective of the time period or the number of tokens in various corpora of data. The list has been composed for the purposes of this research only and is based on the examples quoted in Jespersen, 1965; Quirk et al. 1985; Bauer, 1994; Greenbaum, 1996; Biber et al. 1999, Huddleston/Pullum, 2002; Teschner/ Evans, 2007, as well as other online sources specified.

The sample double-comparison adjective list includes the following lexemes: ample (Bauer), bitter*(American Heritage Dictionary*), brave, clever, common, complete (Bauer), costly (Biber), cruel (Quirk), deadly (Biber), empty (Bauer), friendly (Quirk) (Teschner) (Bauer), gentle, handsome (Quirk) (Teschner), humble, hollow, intense (*American Heritage Dictionary*), joyful (Jespersen), kindly (Bauer), likely (Quirk), lively (Quirk), lonely (Quirk), lowly (Biber), narrow, obscure (Bauer), pleasant, polite, proper (Jespersen), quiet, remote (Bauer), robust (Bauer), shallow (Teschner), severe (Bauer), simple, sober (Bauer), solid (Quirk), still (*American Heritage Dictionary*), stupid, subtle, sure, ugly (Biber), unhappy, untidy, wealthy (Bauer), wicked (Quirk), wilful (Jespersen).

3. Corpora Analysis and Discussion

As it has been stated earlier, the corpus used for the analysis was collected exclusively for this research purpose. The texts have been randomly selected from various sources typical of the intended registers. Texts by many different authors were taken into consideration in each of the registers, i.e. fiction, journalistic and non-fiction scholarly language. The two major sub-corpora formed were based on the gender of the language users, or the text writers and involved female and male gender writers of novels, newspaper and magazine articles and scientific studies in a number of study domains such as psychology, sociology, linguistics, art, etc. Each of the two major sub-corpora, female and male, consisted of over a million words divided into three segments corresponding to the three registers analysed, each containing well over 330,000 words.

The analysis of the corpus texts was carried out by means of a piece of particular lexical analysis software for finding patterns in texts, named WordSmith Tools version 6.0.0.252 which is published by Lexical Analysis SoftwareLtd.and Oxford University Press. Within the software, the concordance of the items from the research core was assessed and counted, in an attempt to establish the frequency of the two types of adjective comparison. Both the comparative and superlative forms of forty-five (45) adjectives that allow for double comparison were searched for by the engine within WordSmithTools which provided the linguistic context for every form that occurred in the corpus.

3.1. The general corpus results

As the results of corpus analysis show, three hundred twenty (320) instances of individual occurrence of adjectives marked for comparison were registered in 2 million words, with two hundred forty-four (244) in the form of periphrastic comparative or

[1] This kind of comparison is employed for classification, rather than qualification purposes. See Huddleston /Pullum (2002: 1582)

superlative, and seventy-six (76) in either of the two possible inflectional forms. It is obvious that the adjectives with both alternatives were more than three times more frequent in the phrasal form of comparison (76.25% of the entire number of instances) than in the suffixal one (23.75% of the cases of comparison). This may serve as a strong and blatant statement that the English language shows powerful tendencies towards analytic grammatical structures and that when the category of comparison is concerned, it may be classed with other languages with increasing morphological analyticity. Moreover, not only do these findings corroborate the claim in Leech, et al (2009: 267), but they also determine the shift from inflection to periphrasis as significantly more than marginal.

The adjectives with an expressed inclination toward the comparison with *more* and *most* were *common*,with twenty-seven (27) examples in the entire corpus, *likely*,with one hundred forty-seven (147) forms in the comparative or superlative and *severe*, with fifteen (15) cases. Among those with more prominent inflectional affinity were *remote* which had eleven (11) tokens, *simple* twenty-five (25) and *wealthy* showing only five (5) items. Simultaneously, these are the adjectives that manifest a clear trend of opting for one or the other of the comparison modalities, as there was only one instance of *the most simple* detected in both of the sub-corpora, four cases of *commonest*, while of all the appearances of *likely* not even one was *likelier* or *the likeliest*. This may present a significant indication that the adjective may be expected to fall out from the group of double comparison adjectives.

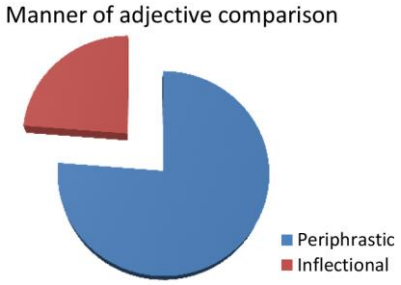

Fig. 1 Representation of the relation between periphrastically- and inflectionally- compared adjectives in the corpus.

It may be worth noticing that when it comes to comparison, these adjectives have a tendency to appear three times more often in the form of a comparative degree nominal modifier, rather than in a superlative degree one. Somewhat less than a third of all the registered examples (93) were marked for the superlative degree or preceded by the adverbial *the most*. The only lexemes represented by the superlative forms were *likely* and *common* in the fiction and non-fiction registers of the female sub-corpus, and *gentle* and *stupid* in the journalistic register of the male sub-corpus. Illustrations from the corpus are given in (1) and (2).

(1) […] *and Stroebe 1987), was* ***the most common*** *form of pathological grief.*(FN)
(2) […]*a new Heathrow runway for the title of "world's* ***stupidest*** *megaproject".* (MJ)

3.2. The sub-corpora results

One of the most obvious results that could be obtained from the analysis of the research corpus is the fact that in a million words, female speakers/writers would use almost 50% more adjectives (162 vs 82) in any of their comparison forms, inflectional of periphrastic than male speakers/writers. This percentage may vary when different types of register are taken into account, as it will be evident in the section 3.3.1 and on.

Furthermore, it was established that in the entire corpus of female speakers, the periphrastic comparison of the adjectives from the research list was more than three times preponderant with regard to the inflectional comparison instances **[comment: "used more than three times less frequently" is a bit unclear]**, which may be counted as an indicative result. It matches the results obtained in the overall corpus and expresses a slightly more pronounced result when compared to the male writers' sub-corpus. In total, the female writers appeared to use periphrastic comparison only around 3% more than their male counterparts, as can be viewed on the following table.

Table 1 Total number and percentage of adjective comparison instances in research sub-corpora.

Corpus	Inflectional		Periphrastic		Total	
Female	48	**22.86%**	162	**77.14%**	210	100%
Male	28	**25.45%**	82	**74.55%**	110	100%
Total	76	**23.75%**	244	**76.25%**	320	100%

As for the degree of the registered adjectives relevant for the corresponding sub-corpora, it was determined that female speakers/writers used 65 superlatives out of 210 adjectives in total, whereas the number in the male sub-corpus amounted to 28 superlatives out of 110. This tells us that 31% of the compared adjectives would be superlative degree in the language employed by the ladies, and 25% in the language of the gentlemen. The margin again seems to be insignificant and comes to around 5-6% in favour of the former group.

By conducting the two-sample z-test for equal proportions described in section 2., we come to the conclusion that the null hypothesis $\boldsymbol{H_0}$cannot be rejected ($\mathbf{Z} \notin \mathbf{C}$), that is, it is accepted with the level of significance of 0.03. That means that there is no statistically significant difference in the frequency of periphrastic forms as used my men or women.

$$n_F = 48 + 162 = 210;\ p_F = \frac{162}{210} = 0.7714\ (p_F = 77.14\%);\ p_M = 28 + 82 = 110;\ p_M = \frac{82}{110} = 0.7455$$

$(p_M = 74.55\%)$.

$\boldsymbol{H_0}(\pi_F = \pi_M);\ \boldsymbol{H_1}(\pi_M > \pi_F);\ \alpha = 0.05 = 5\%;\ C = [1.645, \infty)$.

$$p = \frac{p_F n_F + p_M n_M}{n_F + n_M} = \frac{0.7714 \cdot 210 + 0.7455 \cdot 110}{210 + 110} = 0.7625;$$

$$Z = \frac{p_F - p_M}{\sqrt{p(1-p)\left(\frac{1}{n_F} + \frac{1}{n_M}\right)}} = \frac{0.7714 - 0.7455}{\sqrt{0.7625 \cdot (1 - 0.7625) \cdot \left(\frac{1}{210} + \frac{1}{110}\right)}} = 0.5186 \notin C.$$

3.3 The registers

3.3.1. Fiction register results

Contrary to the expectations, the corpus segment that belonged to fiction writing proved to be the one with the fewest occurrences of adjectives marked for the category of comparison. In the sample of the language that included around 700,000 written words only 39 adjectives were registered in a comparison form, which is one in 18,000. Both of the sub-corpora consisted of integral texts of four to five novels by UK and US authors, which implies up to 10 different authors. The table in the following text presents the findings of the research in this segment of the corpus.

Table 2 Total number and percentage of instances of adjective comparison in the research corpus fiction segment.

Corpus	Inflectional		Periphrastic		Total	
Female	3	**14.29%**	18	**85.71%**	21	100%
Male	12	**66.67%**	6	**33.33%**	18	100%
Total	15	**38.46%**	24	**61.54%**	39	100%

The share of the inflectionally-compared adjectives is the largest in this segment of the research corpus. This may suggest that fiction writers, even though not very prone to employing comparatives or superlatives, pay attention to the way they form their adjectives and chose the synthetic modality in the stead of the analytic manner of comparison. The inherent motivation for this choice still remains unknown. As it can be deduced from the above table and tables 3 and 4, fiction makes the only domain where inflectional comparison dominated over the periphrastic comparison and not slightly so, but in the 2:1 ratio. Since this result was found in the male sub-corpus, it was the most decisive factor that influenced the small difference established in the preponderance of the female speakers/writers in periphrastic compassion usage. Regardless of the possibility that male fiction writers may appear to be more conventional or conservative in language use due to this, it remains a fact that only in this segment of the corpus was inflectional comparison the dominant manner of the two.

(3) […]*were drawn. The Southwark side was****quieter***[…] *he paid the boatman* […](FF)
(4) *It flows faster when it is younger and the course is* ***narrower***[…](MF)

Again, by conducting the statistical hypothesis testing, we come to the conclusion that in this register, the null hypothesis$\boldsymbol{H_0}$is rejected($\mathbf{Z}\in\mathbf{C}$) and the alternative hypothesis $\boldsymbol{H_1}$is accepted with the level of significance of 0.05. That means that women used periphrastic forms statistically significantly more than men did.

$$n_F = 3 + 18 = 21;\ p_F = \frac{18}{21} = 0.8571\ (p_F = 85.71\%);\ p_M = 12 + 6 = 18;\ p_M = \frac{6}{18} = 0.3333\ (p_M = 33.33\%).$$

$$\boldsymbol{H_0}(\pi_F = \pi_M);\ \boldsymbol{H_1}(\pi_F > \pi_M);\ \alpha = 0.05 = 5\%;\ C = [1.645, \infty).$$

$$p = \frac{p_F n_F + p_M n_M}{n_F + n_M} = \frac{0.8571 \cdot 21 + 0.3333 \cdot 18}{21 + 18} = 0.6154;$$

$$Z = \frac{p_F - p_M}{\sqrt{p(1-p)\left(\frac{1}{n_F} + \frac{1}{n_M}\right)}} = \frac{0.8571 - 0.3333}{\sqrt{0.6154 \cdot (1 - 0.6154) \cdot \left(\frac{1}{21} + \frac{1}{18}\right)}} = 3.3520 \in C.$$

3.3.2. Non-fiction (scholarly) register results

This research corpus segment consisted of more than 700,000 words contained in a number of monographs and books from the domains of scientific study and research by various male and female authors published within the past two decades. Whenthe non-fiction segment of the research corpus is considered, the findings show that it is second to journalistic English in the number of compared adjectives. On the other hand, this register showed a firm inclination toward periphrasis in adjective comparison, with only 15% of all the corpus items compared by means of inflectional endings. As opposed to the previous register-based research corpus segment, male writers exhibited a considerable disinclination to suffixal comparison. In scholarly writing, the female speakers proved to use 100% more adjectives in periphrastic comparison than their male counterparts.

Table 3 Total number and percentage of adjective comparison instances in the research corpus non-fiction segment.

Corpus	Inflectional		Periphrastic		Total	
Female	18	**18.75%**	78	**81.25%**	96	100%
Male	3	**7.14%**	39	**92.86%**	42	100%
Total	21	**15.22%**	117	**84.78%**	138	100%

The adjective that contributed with the greatest number of tokens in this portion of the corpus, as well as in the previous one was the adjective lexeme *likely*, with 33 instances of *the most likely* in the female and 21 instances of *more likely* within the male sub-corpus, which is in accordance with the claims in Biber, et al (1999: 522-523). The illustrations from the corpus are provided in (5) and (6).

(5) […] *melon boy, both. That was* ***the most likely*** *thing. Oryx saw her brother*[…] (FF)
(6) *Therefore, inequality is* ***more likely*** *to spawn clientelism where social capital*[…] (MN)

In this register, the null hypothesis$\boldsymbol{H_0}$ was rejected, seeing as $\mathbf{Z} \in \mathbf{C}$, and the alternative hypothesis $\boldsymbol{H_1}$ is accepted with the level of significance of 0.05. This means that in the non-fiction register, male authors used periphrastic forms statistically significantly more than female authors.

$$n_F = 18 + 78 = 96;\ \ p_F = \frac{78}{96} = 0.8125\ \ (p_F = 81.25\%);\ p_M = 3 + 39 = 42;\ \ p_M = \frac{39}{42} = 0.9286\ \ (p_M = 92.86\%).$$

$$\boldsymbol{H_0}(\pi_F = \pi_M);\ \boldsymbol{H_1}(\pi_M > \pi_F);\ \alpha = 0.05 = 5\%;\ C = [1.645, \infty).$$

$$p = \frac{p_F n_F + p_M n_M}{n_F + n_M} = \frac{0.8125 \cdot 96 + 0.9286 \cdot 42}{96 + 42} = 0.8478;$$

$$Z = \frac{p_M - p_F}{\sqrt{p(1-p)\left(\frac{1}{n_F} + \frac{1}{n_M}\right)}} = \frac{0.9286 - 0.8125}{\sqrt{0.8478 \cdot (1 - 0.8478) \cdot \left(\frac{1}{96} + \frac{1}{42}\right)}} = 1.7467 \in C.$$

3.3. Journalistic register results

The journalistic part of the corpus also consisted of over 330,000 words in the domain of female authors, and as many in the texts authored by male authors, sourced from the following newspapers and magazines for the two national varieties within the period April - October 2016. The sources for the segment encompassed the following:

- UK ENGLISH, Quality Dailies: *The Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Guardian, The Independent.* Magazines: *The Economist, The Observer (Guardian), How to Spend it, New Statesman.*
- US ENGLISH, Quality Dailies: *The New York Times, Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, Chicago Tribune*. Magazines: *Newsweek, Observer, Time, National Geographic, Vanity Fair, New Yorker, Reader's Digest, Variety*.

The results of this corpus segment analysis somehow reflect the average results for the entire corpus, potentially due to the qualities of the language in this register, which can be located somewhere between the creative language of fiction and the factual language of science. The findings for the two gender-determined sub-corpora are not very dissimilar, either, and indicate a stable and more or less gender-neutral language when it comes to adjective comparison in the journalistic register.

(7) […]*the sailing club: brief pause for* ***the hollowest*** *of laughs at that one),*[…](FJ)
(8) […]*a departure from* ***the quieter*** *observational style of his earlier work.* […] (MJ)

Table 4 Total number and percentage of adjective comparison instances in the research corpus journalistic register segment.

Corpus	Inflectional		Periphrastic		Total	
Female	27	**29.03%**	66	**70.97%**	93	100%
Male	13	**26.00%**	37	**74.00%**	50	100%
Total	40	**27.97%**	113	**72.03%**	143	100%

As with the previous non-fiction corpus, the number of the adjectives used in any of the forms marked for comparison in the female corpus was almost more than double the number of adjective forms used by male writers.

Again, by conducting the computation described in section 2, we came to the conclusion that in this register, women and men used periphrastic forms approximately equally, i.e. the difference in the values given in the table are statistically insignificant seeing as $\boldsymbol{Z \notin C}$, the null hypothesis $\boldsymbol{H_0}$ cannot be rejected with the same level of significance of 0.05.

$n_F = 27 + 66 = 93;\ p_F = \frac{66}{93} = 0.7097\ (p_F = 70.97\%);\ p_M = 13 + 37 = 50;\ p_M = \frac{37}{50} = 0.7400\ (p_M = 74.00\%).$

$\boldsymbol{H_0}(\pi_F = \pi_M);\ \boldsymbol{H_1}(\pi_M > \pi_F);\ \alpha = 0.05 = 5\%;\ C = [1.645, \infty).$

$$p = \frac{p_F n_F + p_M n_M}{n_F + n_M} = \frac{0.7097 \cdot 93 + 0.7400 \cdot 50}{93 + 50} = 0.7203;$$

$$Z = \frac{p_M - p_F}{\sqrt{p(1-p)\left(\frac{1}{n_F} + \frac{1}{n_M}\right)}} = \frac{0.7400 - 0.7097}{\sqrt{0.7203 \cdot (1 - 0.7203) \cdot \left(\frac{1}{93} + \frac{1}{50}\right)}} = 0.3852 \notin C.$$

4. Discussion and Conclusions

At the end of the report, it seems adequate to state that the results of the research point out several significant implications in relation to the topic of the research in question. Based on the figures presented in sections 3.2. and 3.3., three major observations can be made:

1) The sub-corpus consisting of texts by female authors contained almost twice as many compared adjectives than the one consisting of texts by male authors. This ratio remained approximately the same for two of the three registers, except for that of fiction where the figures were almost identical. Furthermore, the ratio corresponds to the overall adjective use in the two sub-corpora, regardless of the adjective degree.
2) Both the male and the female authors expressed the same tendency for the periphrastic adjective forms. In percents, this resulted in 77.14% for women and 74.55% for men. This shows a strong and conspicuous prevalence of analytic forms when it comes to the grammatical category of comparison with English adjectives, regardless of the two variables that this study was concerned with, i.e. gender and register.
3) Finally, certain discrepancies in figures were observed that should be addressed. Namely, a discrepancy across registers where the journalistic register closely reflects the overall results while the other two registers differ as follows: 1) the fiction register displayed a statistically significant prevalence of periphrastic forms in the female sub-corpus with the percentage of 85.71%, while men used them only in 33.33% of cases, 2) the non-fiction register displayed an instance of men's preference for analytic forms with the percent of 92.86% for men and 81.25% for women. Another discrepancy is observed with registers where women used periphrastic forms more than men in fiction, while the opposite was the case in non-fiction.

These observations inconspicuously lead us to the following conclusions:

1) Our study conducted on a corpus of randomly retrieved texts consisting of roughly over 2 million words has resulted in figures showing that women use adjectives much more frequently than men do. This can be considered as a piece of supportive evidence for previous studies that have claimed and proved higher level of expressiveness in women. However, attaching meaning to and accounting for such results must be done carefully and objectively, in accordance with the critique of gendered language studies briefly discussed in section 2.
2) Starting with a null hypothesis that there is no difference in the frequency of periphrastic or inflectional adjective forms in language used by men or women, we have reached what we consider two major findings: 1) the first one that

directly answers our research question that inconspicuously and with a high statistical relevance shows that indeed, female and male authors do not differ in their use of analytic forms, i.e. women do not use these forms more or less frequently, 2) and the second one that supports statements previously made byBauer (1994)concerning the shift in English from the synthetic to the analytic comparison of adjectives.Our study represents a strong piece of evidence for this diachronic development in the English language with the figures of 23.75% (inflection) and 76.25% (periphrasis). This finding is significant in that it can contribute to further studies of the directionality of grammaticalization as well as point to the significance of not simplifying the issue of gendered language by neglecting the contextual factors such as social variables, the linguistic context of the studied (variable) feature, and as we have shown, the diachronic factor of language development which affects speakers of both genders equally. Moreover, the data presented in this study may be taken as a counter argument to the claim presented in Szmrecsanyi (2012: 655) that "[…]written standard English, both British and American, has recently become significantly more synthetic", at least in the segment of adjective comparison.

3) Finally, the discrepancies observed in the third statement of this section require addressing. Seeing that there is no gender- or register-consistency in the results obtained for these two registers, it cannot be argued that the results are indicative of a "gendered language" in adjective comparison. In addition, it was only in one of the six sub-corpora that men used inflection more than periphrasis. Even though the two registers in question differ in style and features significantly, with fiction being much more speaker-governed and non-fiction rule- or register-governed, the numbers cannot be considered to be a stylistic feature of either register or be indicative of men's preference for inflection, seeing as men opted for periphrastic forms in every other sub-corpora. Therefore, results obtained solely in either of these two sub-corpora cannot bring us to any conclusions about register-features or genderlects as related to the studied linguistic variable. One way in which we can account for them, however, is in the light of the diachronic development formula proposed by Brinton and Traugott (2005):

$$A > \begin{Bmatrix} A \\ B \end{Bmatrix} > (B)$$

where A represents synthetic adjectives in our case and B represents the analytic ones. The overlap in the use of the two forms represented in braces represents the dual occurrence of the old and the novel form, i.e. the process of the (potential) realization of the novel form given in parentheses, as Brinton and Traugott (2005) explain. The significance of this overlap for our study is that it can have a different distribution in different contexts, accounting for the discrepancies in the use of synthetic and analytic forms of adjectives in the fiction and non-fiction sub-corpora.

Finally, we hope that our findings lead to a better understanding of the concept of gendered language and put more emphasis on the over-simplified research questions that sometimes neglect the multifold, contextual nature of the concept being analysed. We believe that our results can help paraphrase some of those research questions and place gendered language in a context where its differences can either be or not be realized.

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ISTRAŽIVANJE RODNO USLOVLJENE UPOTREBE FLEKTIVNIH I PERIFRASTIČKIH OBLIKA KOD POREĐENJA PRIDEVA U ENGLESKOM JEZIKU

Rad je imao za cilj da predstavi rezultate istraživanja vezanog za upotrebu perifrastičkih i flektivnih oblika u okviru gramatičke kategorije poređenja kod prideva u engleskom jeziku. Nastojalo se da se pre svega pruži odgovor na pitanje da li rod govornika ima ikakvu ulogu kada je u pitanju izbor između ova dva oblika, naročito kod engleskih prideva kod kojih je moguća alternativa pri poređenju. Pored predstavljanja osnovnih postavki u relevantnoj literaturi kada su u pitanju rodni elementi u upotrebi jezičkih sredstava, karakteristike govora kod izvornih govornika ženskog pola, kao i razlike između analitičkog i sintetičkog izražavanja gramatičkog značenja, u radu su razmatrane i osobenosti kategorije komparacije kod prideva u engleskom. Polazna pretpostavka u istraživanju je bila da pol govornika po sebi ne utiče u velikoj meri na preference u upotrebi perifrastičkog oblika u jeziku. Za potrebe empirijskog istraživanja formiran je uzorak od 45 najfrekventnijih prideva u engleskom jeziku sa dvostrukim poređenjem, koji su analizirani u posebno formiranom korpusu jezičkih uzoraka od preko dva miliona reči oba varijeteta engleskog jezika iz tri različita domena pisanog jezika - književnosti, naučnog i žurnalističkog registra. Korpus je podeljen na dva podjednaka potkorpusa u zavisnosti od pola autora, a primeri upotrebe jednog ili drugog načina poređenja registrovani su uz pomoć softvera WordSmith Tools version 6.0.0.252.

Rezultati istraživanja pokazali su da govornici ženskog pola generalno mnogo više upotrebljavaju prideve u bilo kom stepenu poređenja od govornika muškog pola. Osim toga, na osnovu podataka velike statističke relevantnosti došlo se do zaključka da je razlika od nešto manje od 3% nedovoljna da bi se moglo potvrditi da govornici ženskog pola značajno frekventije koriste analitički komparativ i superlativ od govornika muškog pola.

Sa druge strane, u radu je empirijski dokazano da postoji snažna tendencija kretanja ka analitičnosti u engleskom jeziku kada je u pitanju komparacija prideva, pri čemu se perifrastički oblik upotrebljava u 76,25% svih slučajeva, dok flektivni u 23,75% zabeleženih primera poređenja prideva u korpusu. Na taj način su potvrđene neke ranije tvrdnje autora (Bauer, 1994), dok su neke druge dovedene u pitanje (Szmrecsanyi, 2012) naročito kada se govori o gramatičkim karakteristikama prideve.

Ključne reči: *engleski jezik, poređenje prideva, flektivni oblik, perifrastički oblik, rod.*