Gender and the Dichotomic Representations in the Linguistic Imaginary

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Résumé: Le langage est une expression de ce qui se passe dans la société. Comme membres de la communauté discursive, nous contribuons à façonner le langage conformément à la réalité qui nous entoure et à ce qui nous définit. Cependant, des formules différentes du discours dans lequel nous nous engageons apparaissent, le genre représentant un aspect essentiel. Ainsi, la recherche s'appuie sur cet élément, approchant son impact sur l'imaginaire linguistique. À partir du discours dans lequel les femmes et les hommes sont engagés, mon article soulignera les principales tendances sexistes qui peuvent être identifiées dans la langue anglaise. Comme une expression de la société patriarcale, la langue anglaise a développé des tendances sexistes, en attribuant des comportements linguistiques stéréotypés aux femmes et hommes. En outre, deux sequences qui font partie de deux *talk shows*, Ellen DeGeneres show et La Măruță show, seront analysées, en insistant sur la mise en lumière des différences entre le langage des femmes et le langage des hommes.

Mots-clés: *genre, discourse, sexisme, différence, discrimination*.

Introduction

Language is an expression of what happens in society. As conscious individuals, we are part of the linguistic community. Being an expression of the patriarchal society, as it has been argued by scholars in the field of sociolinguistics [Bollinger, 1980], English has developed in time some sexist patterns, assigning a distinct stereotyped linguistic behaviour to men and to women. But before approaching the sexist tendencies present in English, it is time we looked upon the notions of *sexism* and *sexist language* in order to understand their meaning and how their presence is reflected in English.

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Sexism has known various approaches, being related to the superior position of one particular gender (that is masculine) to the other one. For instance, Suzanne Pharr attempted to define sexism, pointing out that it is connected with "an enforced belief in male dominance and control" [Pharr, 1988: 8] that undermines the position of women in society. This opinion is also shared by Graddol and Swann, who argue that sexism resides in the "discrimination against women or men because of their sex." [Graddol & Swann, 1989: 96]

This social reality is reflected also at the linguistic level, leading to what sociolinguists call *sexist languages*. As it is reflected in the inquiries in the field, a sexist language is a a language that shows favouritism towards one sex, discriminating thus the other one. This opinion is also shared by Gamble and Gamble, who state that: "Sexist language empowers the members of one sex at the expense of members of the other sex, promoting the continuance of status differentials based on sex." [Gamble & Gamble, 2015: 65] The main tendency of languages is to favour men to the great detriment of women, who are placed on an inferior position. This second place occupied by women's speech is a result of the manner in which they are perceived in society, which assigns men and women with stereotyped patterns of behaviour, perceived by Frank and Treichler as: "linguistic usage shapes and reinforces selective cognitive tendencies, usually those in conformity with widely accepted cultural practices and beliefs." [Francine & Treichler, 1989: 9]

The bias towards men is definitely present in certain languages, among which English can also be spotted. Taking into account this premise, the main cases of sexism in English will be highlighted, giving suggestive examples that endorse this reality of an unsymmetrical representation of men and women within the language system.

English and its sexist features

At a lexical and syntactic level, researchers [Guimei, 2010: 332-335] have argued that the use of generic terms such as "man" or of generic pronouns such as "he" (and its forms in different cases: G – his, D-Ac – him) to refer to situations or aspects that regard both sexes (masculine and feminine) is an eloquent proof of English's sexist tendency.

Example: Is **man** thinking about the consequences of global warming? – in this example, it is visible how the word "man" refers to humankind. Therefore, women are no longer visible within the language, men representing the norm.

Example: Every person must be aware of the present dangers for the environment and **he** should fight to avoid them. – this is a suggestive example of how the pronoun "he" is used in a context that concern both sexes. In terms of gender, the "person" can be either a man or a woman, but, by using the masculine third person pronoun as an anaphor, the possibility of a woman

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subject is excluded. The use of plural forms "they/their/them" has been perceived as a solution for grammarians. Taking into consideration this point of view, the previous example would become:

Example: Every person must be aware of the present dangers for the environment and **they** should fight to avoid them.

What is more, sexism in English is emphasized through the manner in which derivation [Guimei, 2010: 332-335] functions. In most cases, feminine gender noun are formed by adding a suffix to the masculine gender noun. This affiliation of women to men, the dependence of a masculine form in order to be created has been interpreted by linguists as an obvious pattern of sexism, as Baron Dennis argues: "The masculine gender is the primary unmarked gender (…) the use of an additional suffix to signal femaleness is seen as conveying the message that women are deviant, abnormal and not important." [Baron, 1986: 41] There are many examples of such cases in English, the following list of situations revealing only a small part of the entire amount of such pairs: *actor – actress, poet – poetess, waiter – waitress, prince – princess, steward – stewardess, author – authoress, hero – heroine, bachelor – bachelorette, usher – usherette* etc. Derivation does not underline only this dependence on men, but it often leads to placing women on an inferior position or to assigning the feminine term a negative meaning. This would be the case of pairs like: *governor – governess, host – hostess* etc. Analyzing the first example, the pejorative label assigned to women is obvious. While the masculine term "governor" refers to "a person in charge of a particular political unit" [*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2005: 553], its feminine equivalent is defined as "a woman who lives with a family and teaches their children at home." [*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2005: 553]

It is not only in the case of derived forms that the feminine equivalents of masculine terms have negative connotations and this tendency has been explained by Romaine Suzanne in terms of status dissimilarities in society: "Because the word 'woman' does not share equal status with 'man' terms referring to women have undergone a kind of semantic downgrading or pejoration." [Romaine, 1999: 93] In this respect, word-pairs like *master – mistress* are eloquent. The pejorative connotation assigned to the feminine term is explicit: while 'master' denotes "a person who has control over or responsibility for someone or something, or who is the most important or influential person in a situation or organization" [*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2005: 780], a "mistress", its feminine correspondent is definitely a pattern of derogation, being defined as "a woman who is having a sexual relationship with a married man." [*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2005: 810] Another suggestive example is *bachelor-spinster*, the discrimination that lies behind being approached by Romaine Suzanne, who argues that: " 'spinster' and 'bachelor' both refer to unmarried adults, but the female terms has negative overtones to it (…) a spinster is also unmarried but

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she is more than that: she is beyond the expecting marrying age and therefore seen as rejected and undesirable." [Romaine, 1999: 92]

Furthermore, Turner and West identified "the wealth of negative terms for women" [West & Turner, 2010: 140] in English in comparison with the lower number of pejorative labels for men. Most of them (*bitch, whore, chick,* etc.) have emerged due to their constant use by men who place themselves on a superior position, set in contrast with women. Hence, the sexual objectification of women which results from the use of the feminine labels is explicit. There are cases when even the pejorative labels assigned to men introduce feminine terms in their structure, affecting once again the image of women, as Romaine Suzanne claims: "Some of the more common derogatory terms applied to men, such as bastard and son of a bitch, actually degrade women in their role of mothers." [Romaine, 1994: 107]

In addition, the existence of "male-oriented terms which denote titles or positions" [Guimei, 2010: 332-335] is another sign of sexism in English. Linguists have argued that the existence of words like *businessman, chairman, salesman, postman, policeman, fireman, craftsman, spokesman,*etc. are eloquent proofs in this respect. The use of neutral form instead of these ones is considered by linguists a solution for eliminating the bias towards men. Consequently, the use of terms like *business person, chairperson, salesperson, post worker, police officer, firefighter, craftworker, speaker or spokesperson* etc. is taken into account by Gamble and Gamble as a means of avoiding the discrimination of women: "To challenge such sexist practices, in lieu of using man-linked words, we are starting the transition to the use of gender-neutral terms." [Gamble & Gamble, 2015: 67]

Another argument invoked by linguists placed among those which support the idea of sexist language is *the stereotypical association of sexes with certain fields of interest/occupations* [Guimei, 2010: 332-335], in spite of the fact that the terms which are used can denote both sexes. While higher-status occupations such as *lawyer, judge, engineer, doctor, surgeon, professor* tend to be assigned to male figures, lower status positions are attached to women: *teacher, nurse, secretary, babysitter* etc. Hence, stereotypical beliefs associate men with occupations and positions which point out the idea of power, of dominance, being assumed that each sex is suitable just for certain types of occupation. Linguists have underlined that a woman who accedes to the previously mentioned positions attributed to men will be referred to as *woman lawyer, woman judge, woman engineer, woman doctor, woman surgeon, woman professor,* being gender marked. Nevertheless, even this tendency to add a gender marker so as to illustrate that a woman is in a position of power illustrates their discrimination in the linguistic system: women are not supposed to have access to high-status positions due to their inferior condition. This dissimilarity in terms of professions has its roots in the manner in which men and women are perceived in society. They are assigned certain stereotypical attitudes, roles or responsibilities which determine their attachment to one or another

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particular type of profession. Being associated with the idea of power, men are linked with high-status positions. On the other hand, women are associated with the ideas of empathy, cooperation, support and patience and this is the main reason why they tend to by attached to professions that require such features. Once again, language goes hand in hand with the social reality, becoming a mirror of social injustice and emphasizing the prejudice against women.

Another noticeable sexist pattern of English is related to the manner in which women and men are called (their titles) or *addressed* [Romaine, 1994: 108-111]: *Mr. vs Mrs/Miss*. Men are the ones who continue the name tradition of a family, while their wives are supposed to change their last name after marriage. This is also a case of discrimination, because the woman is defined by having recourse to the man, to his last name: *Mrs Taylor*, *Mrs Smith* etc. By adopting the last name of the husband, the subordinate position of women has been emphasized. Women reach an identity through marriage, through the mediation of a male figure. When a person is addressed *Mr Thompson*, for instance, it means that he is a man, an adult who has attained the status of *Mr*, but when a woman is addressed *Mrs Thompson*, her status of wife is brought to the surface.

As we managed to see in these situations identified by linguists, sexism is undoubtedly present in English at a lexical, syntactic and semantic level. Language becomes thus a proof of the social derogation of women and it certainly does not represent women and men in an equal manner. The attempts to adapt the existent male-oriented forms in order to avoid discrimination do not prove to be always successful, their results being perceived only at a formal level. The discrimination of women is not annihilated because it is part of what happens in nowadays society. Language's sexist tendencies are just an expression of the stereotyped society in which individuals live, where distinct types of approaching men and women within the language and distinct types of approaching their own language emerge. In the subsequent section of this paper, an inventory of the main stereotypical linguistic patterns assigned to each sex will be outlined.

Stereotypes of men and women in interaction

The approach of differences between the patterns of linguistic behaviour of men and women have dominated the inquiries of scholars in the field, leading to the emergence of stereotypes, which are defined as: "fixed idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong." [*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2005: 1268] As it was highlighted in the subchapter which presented the accounts on gender differences, linguists formulated opinions with regard to the dissimilarities between the speech of the sexes. The stereotypical conversational styles identified by linguists are definitely influenced by more complex issues than the innate distinction between the sexes and here should be included: the position on the social ladder of the participants in an interaction (men or women), their profession, their age etc.

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Deborah Tannen was one of the voices who pointed out the differences between the speech of sexes, underlining them in six pairs [Tannen, 1990] that were previously discussed. Her series of differences which determined the advent of two different *genderlects* [Tannen, 1990: 42] is completed by the aspects highlighted by Robin Lackoff [Lackoff, 1975]. Their opinions along with those formulated by other scholars reveal the dichotomy between the *powerful language* based on competition, specific to men and the *powerless language* based on solidarity, specific to women, enhancing thus the stereotypes present in society: *women as passive and weak* vs. *men as dominant, in control*.

The most common stereotype, valued in the specialized researches concerns women's solidarity and tendency to empathise with their interlocutors. This aspect has its basis in women's inclination towards expressing more feelings and emotions, towards listening to the other participant(s) in the conversation and supporting them, an inclination which is set in contrast with that of men, who are more likely to focus on conveying pieces of information, interrupting and confronting often their interlocutor. Thus, men and women follow different conversational norms, they develop different conversational styles in time, their different involvement in an interaction and the different expectations that they have being eloquent in this respect. All these aspects nourish the linguistic stereotypes regarding their speech styles. Besides the previously mentioned aspects, women are perceived as the ones who apologize more, who talk more, who gossip more or who are more polite when interacting with the others.

Regarding the first stereotype of this series, apologies, it is related to the previously mentioned ones, according to whom women are perceived as promoters of solidarity and cooperation. By aiming the pursuit of these aspects when taking part in a communicative situation, women are likely to use phrases that apparently point out an apologizing pattern such as "I'm sorry." This phrase induces the idea of apologizing, but rather than attempting to apologize, women use it as a manner of showing support to the cause expressed by the interlocutor. For instance, if a female interloculor tells another: "I have broken my leg during the ski competition and I could not walk for over six months", an answer like "I'm sorry!" points out a way of empathizing with the injured subject. Hence, apologizing is perceived in a different manner by the sexes and it is associated more with women because they do not hold on to maintaining an intangible superior position in society such as their male correspondents.

Furthermore, the stereotype of talkativeness associated with women generated debates among scholars, most of them being concerned with its validity. The inquiries in the field pointed out that a generalized perception of the woman as talkative is mistaken. Women do talk more than men, but this happens in the private environment, where there are two main actors, as Deborah Tannen argues: "the silent man and the talkative woman." [Tannen, 1990: 78] According to this perspective, women may be silent in the public environment, where they have recourse to silence in order to show support,

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empathy and to listen thus to their interlocutor. On the one hand, talking for women is a way of ensuring the maintenance of the connection with other individuals. They are more likely to express emotions and intimate aspects by dint of their tendency towards cooperation. It is this tendency to maintain a conversation that makes them talk, ask things and approach whatever aspects according to their interlocutor's background, field of interest.

In the sexist discourse, another stereotypical pattern of women's conversational style is gossip. Women are portrayed as the ones who gossip more, this feature being correlated with their tendency to talk more. As it was previously emphasized, women tend to express emotions and feelings, touching intimate issues in their discourse. This insistence on emotions and on conveying details regarding the situations through which they pass or the experiences that they live contributes to the designation of their speech as *gossip.* Undoubtedly, men subjects are the ones who perceive women's talk as lacking seriousness, being set in contrast with their speech. Linguists also approached this label of "gossipers' assigned to women, Cameron claiming that gossip is " a way of talking between women, intimate in style, personal and domestic in topic and setting, a female cultural event which springs from and perpetuates the restrictions of the female role." [Cameron, 1990: 243] Hence, from cooking, clothes, children issues, scandal comments to experiences and feelings, women's gossip encompasses almost all the aspects of their existence, being extremely complex and passing over the negative label which is usually assigned to it to prove once again that it is an expression of the intimacy and the cooperation which exist between women. However, according to men, gossip is definitely not oriented towards an exchange of information, but focuses on confession and on pointing out emotions, being seen with negative eyes by them. Their orientation towards conveying information regarding topics from their field of interest such as politics for instance influences their perception of women's talk as insignificant. These differences concerning the content of their gossip enforces the dissimilarities between the speech styles of men and women. While women seek to empathize and to cooperate with their interlocutors, men find it proper to enhance their position as dominant and independent figures, perceiving gossiping about personal issues as a sign of weakness and assigning it, implicitly, to women.

In addition, the higher degree of politeness specific to women is another stereotype promoted in society. It is assumed that women tend to be more polite when interacting with their male fellows. Janet Holmes approaches linguistic politeness, claiming that it is related to a type of "behaviour which actively expresses positive concern for others, as well as non-imposing distancing behaviour. In other words, politeness may take the form of an expression of good-will or camaraderie as well as the more familiar non-intrusive behaviour which is labelled polite in everyday usage." [Holmes, 2013: 5] Another suggestive definition links politeness with a norm, according to whom speech

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acts are interpreted: "politeness should be seen as a set of strategies or verbal habits which someone sets as a norm for themselves or which others judge as the norm for them, as well as being a socially constructed norm within particular communities of practice." [Litosseliti & Sunderland, 2002: 77] It is assumed that women tend to be considered more polite than men. What led linguists to draw this conclusion? Most of them associated women's perception as "more polite" by dint of their cooperative style, which was previously approached and which is set in contrast with that of men who are more competitive, direct and independent, as Holmes states: "Most women enjoy talk and regard talking as an important means of keeping in touch, especially with friends and intimates. They use language to establish, nurture and develop social relationships. Men tend to see language more as a tool for obtaining and conveying information." [Holmes, 1995: 2] Taking into account this opinion which has found many detractors, for instance Jane Sunderland and Lia Litosseliti, women are more polite by dint of this dichotomy between information and emotions, which has been considered as an eloquent exaplanation for the stereotypical linguistic politeness assigned to the sexes.

All these gender stereotypes are shaped in the individuals' minds starting from a tender age. They are assigned to men and women by means of the environment's influence and are enhanced by society during their development, the main result being the discrimination of women who are perceived as weak and sensitive. Thus, stereotypical roles and features emerge, a distinct behaviour being expected from each sex, as it was pointed out.

Talk shows – distinctive discourse patterns for men and women

This last part of the inquiry aims to highlight the dissimilarities in the speech styles of men and women, here including also nonverbal and paralinguistic aspects, starting from two case studies, from two different TV talk shows: an American one, *The Ellen DeGeneres show*, and a Romanian one, *La Măruță*.

I chose to approach talk shows because they "revolve around the *performance of talk*" [Tolson, 2001: 3], which represents the point of departure of the paper: *the performance of talk* and the different patterns of linguistic behaviour assigned to men and women, coming to the surface during this performance. TV talk shows represent according to Tolson live "broadcast talk" [Tolson, 2001: 3], eloquent for the interaction between individuals of the same sex or of different sexes. This opinion is also pinned down by other scholars in the field, who underline talk shows' similarity to an *in praesentia* interaction between individuals, that is in Ilie's opinion "face-to-face conversation." [Ilie, 2001: 209-254] Nevertheless, in this case, the interaction happens in a studio, in front of millions of people, or even more, from all over the world, if the channel is an international one. Being an ubiquitous part of our existence, the talk show has become the subject of analysis of various scholars, most of them pointing out its

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double purpose, that of revealing what happens in society, of keeping people in touch with the tendencies and with the main aspects of their age while at the same time aiming their entertainment. Researchers have often perceived talk shows as *semi-institutional* [Tolson, 2001], their placement in a context – the studio, the preservation of the patterns of a communication act from our everyday life and their goal of alluring and entertaining the public supporting their departure from the institutional type of shows. Having its roots in the *salon* which knew a great development starting with the 17th century or in the *coffee-house*, the talk show phenomenon is representative for the 20th century, when the interactive radio talk was soon transposed on the screen, having an audience of its own.

Talk shows are complex, having recourse to different strategies of discourse organization, (debate, confession, interview etc.), but besides this shape that they take, besides this format, there are other representative elements that should be taken into consideration such as the time when they are broadcasted, the topic of the conversation, but also the main actors: the host and the guests, the latter ones being engaged in different types of conversation, as Ilie states: ”spontaneous and purposeful talk, non-controlled and host-controlled talk, interlocutor-oriented and message oriented etc.” [Ilie, 2001: 209-254] It is particularly this *conversation* on which they are based, this interaction between the individuals the process which brings to the surface different conversational styles at the level of how individuals talk about a certain content, expressing their opinions and their vision towards what is happening, towards personal isssues etc. Moreover, Ilie pointed out the main characteristics that a talk show involves, highlighting: the wide audience (in front of the TV and in the studio), the host who activates as a guide or as a facilitator and a specific topic for each show, according to the guests, to what happens in society. In addition, taking turns is not pre-established in talk shows, the latter ones boasting about customized openings and finishing with the gratefulness part, where the show host thanks his guests for being present in the studio and implicitly for taking part in the discussions.

Having outlined these general characteristics of talk shows it is time we looked upon the chosen talk shows chosen for the analysis. On the one hand, *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* has been broadcasted since 2003, reaching 14 seasons until now. On the other hand, *La Măruță* started to be broadcasted in October 2007, under a different name, that is *Happy Hour*. Since 2013, the name of the talk show has been changed into the current one, *La Măruță*. Given the fact that I approach two sequences from these talk shows, where members of both sexes are present, I will not focuse on the global structure (opening, body, ending etc.) of these talk shows. What interests us is the manner in which men and women speak, if the deficiency perspective regarding the dissimilarities in the speech style of men and women formulated by Robin Lackoff can still be applied, if women’s language is still a powerless/weak one set in contrast to that of men. Therefore, the strategies of interacting will be emphasized.

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The Ellen DeGeneres Show			*La Măruță Show*		
Guest/s	Profession	Length	Guest/s	Profession	Length
Julia Roberts and Richard Curtis	actress writer/producer	5'10" + 9'	Marius Manole and Medeea Marinescu	actors	8' 29"

Fig. 1.
Representation of the famous guests, of their professions and of the interview's length.

The interviews are drawn out from two transmissions, one from May 19 2017[1] in the case of *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* and one from June 2 2017[2] in the case of *La Măruță Show*. Figure 1 indicates that in each interview there were a man and a woman (Julia Roberts and Richard Curtis, Medeea Marinescu and Marius Manole), their professions being related to the fields of theatre or to cinematography.

To begin with, the background of Ellen DeGeneres, her experience as an actress and as a comedian assures a humoristic approach in each of her shows, to the delight of the audience, which is entirely captivated, both those in the studio and those in front of the screen. And this humour is also present in the interview with Julia Roberts and Richard Curtis. The first guest is Julia Roberts, whom, from the start, Ellen interrogates with regard to the novelties in her life "What's new in your life?". The setting influences the way in which the guest sits. Therefore, Ellen and Julia are sitting face to face, enriching eye-contact. The guest seems to be very cheerful and glad to find herself in front of the public. Her posture is significant in this respects. She keeps her leg over the other and appears to be very relaxed and confident.

Some sexist aspects emerge, for instance Ellen's remark concening Julia Roberts' devotion to the role of being a mother and her disappearance from the screen "But, for the most part you kind of have been laying low being a mom, right?" This humorous reply brings to the surface the idea of women who are supposed to fulfil the role of being mothers and looking after their children. Ellen does not hesitate to apologize "I'm absolutely wrong about that." and to emphasize what she meant about *laying low*. The disclosure of the status assigned to Julia Roberts for the fifth time, that of the most beautiful woman in the world, allows the audience to come across a Julia Roberts who also tells jokes: "it's like when you are serving volleyball, after five they rotate you out."/ "Like a bad penny!" or who starts a dialogue with the studio audience with regard to their preferences towards the other nominees to this position. However, the recourse to jokes is a strategy that Julia Roberts uses in order to avoid expressing her emotions, which happens in the end due to Ellen's insistence on determining her

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sG5h2i1GdpQ
[2] http://lamaruta.protv.ro/video/marius-manole-in-platoul-la-maruta.html

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to give some beauty tips, to speak about her kids, about her experience as a mother and about getting older. The use of phrases like “Hmm”, “you know”, “I mean”, “sort of”, the tendency to speak in italics “aaaand”, repetitions, the use of empty adjectives such as “nice”, “kind”, “great”, “incredible”, the excessive use of gestures (body language, hand gestures) and of facial expression is remarkable for the female guest’s speech style.

Ellen is the one who dictates the rhythm of the talk show, addressing questions, interrupting in order to show express agreement, to empathize with the female interlocutor or to complete what she says. Thus, Ellen is the one who keeps claiming the turn. However, turn-holding and turn-yielding are also visible, the first strategy being more illustrative for Julia’s speech style, who attempts to keep her turn and to speak about what has been brought to discussion in detail. Ellen’s constant intrusion should not be understood as a means of aiming to monopolize the discussion, but as a means of showing support and understanding in five minutes of confession, mixed with jokes, claps of hands from the studio audience and bursts of laughter from them, but also from the main actors : Ellen and Julia Roberts.

Ellen’s next guest is Richard Curtis, a famous writer and producer, whom she introduces to the audience, pointing out the films that he produced, which are worldwide known. Richard sits next to Julia Roberts on the sofa, with his legs opened, facing Ellen and making thus eye-contact. Richard seems to be in a relaxed mood and pleased to be in front of the public. As in the case of Julia Roberts, Ellen adopts the same humorous manner of initiating the conversation, apologizing for the long distance that the guest had to walk: “Was that too long to walk? I’m sorry.” Richard goes in the same direction, appealing to his humorous side and complimenting Ellen for her “better eyes”: “Yeah, I think that best eyes.” Julia Roberts is introduced in the discussion agreeing with the other guest, who ironically states: “But imagine how pretty you would have been with her pupils.” A relaxed atmosphere is set, all the guests having a well-developed sense of humour, irrespective of their gender. Hence, the flow of the discussion is ensured by each of them.

What is more, by appealing to turn-claiming, Ellen interrupts the already overlong debate regarding eye colour and succeeds in changing the topic: “Let’s switch things up! Let’s talk about Red Nose Day, this is a, you started this aand explain why aand what is happening, it’s such a great idea.” Richard Curtis starts to present how the Red Nose Day emerged, insisting on the facts, on its origins and on its results. Thus, the main topic of the talk show is approached: Richard Curtis is the one who thought of Julia Roberts to run wild with Bear Grylls in order to provide African children with vaccines. Her presentation of her adventure into the wilderness points out the feelings she had, the emotions that arose when she met the African families striving to survive: “it’s just incredible”/ “I still can’t believe I did it frankly because I’m not brave and I’m very afraid of heights.” Richard Curtis feels the need to cheer up the moment

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with a misogynist joke, which brings to the surface a stereotypical attitude of men "But I mean, the thing is when we did *Notting Hill* Julia was single and desperate"/" I asked her *Why have you done this?* and she said *To impress my husband.*" Hence, the brave deed of Julia Roberts is reduced by Richard Curtis to an attempt of the woman (perceived as weak, as powerless) to impress the man, to show that the well-known stereotypes are no longer up-to-date. And to a certain extent, Julia Roberts really did this, she revealed that a woman can pass over fear, that she can be brave, walking on a rope and seeing crocodiles under it in the water. Leaving behind his misogynist joke, Richard Curtis emphasizes the results of the action: saving the lives of people, of children. Julia Roberts cannot leave the things unsolved and answers in kind, depicting ironically her companion's deeds while she was performing the bravest action of her life: "He was somewhere up the river with the suncream."

This second section of the talk show which introduces the second guest is also guided by Ellen, who, given the masculine presence, becomes the target of jokes, as well as Julia Roberts. However, this interview points out that jokes belong also to the *repertoire* of women, as we mananged to see in the first part and in the second too, Julia Roberts' arrows being remarkable in this respect. Interruptions occur, each of them being responsible. In Richard Curtis's case, interruptions serve to complete what the interlocutors say, to emphasize what happened. Once again confession intermingles with humour to the delight of the public. The conversation follows the question-answer pattern, the feedback coming especially from Ellen, whose interventions of the type "Yeah" cannot be considered attempts to interrupt, but ways of giving approval and of implicitly emboldening the guests to go on. Expressiveness and smiling serve the same purpose throughout the talk show.

Regarding the Romanian talk show, *La Măruță*, the guests come simultaneously, given the fact that they are actors who form *a couple* on the stage. The host welcomes the guests and ensures that they sit comfortably. Once again, the setting influences the manner in which the host and the guests are positioned. In this case, the guests have to turn slightly to the right in order to face Cătălin Măruță. Moreover, they feel joyful, adopting a relaxed body position: Medeea keeps one leg over the other, while Marius keeps them opened.

As well as Ellen, Cătălin Măruță initiates and leads the discussion, questioning the guests. The conversation starts with the admiration expressed by Cătălin Măruță with regard to Marius's life story : "you have a story which can be very well transposed into a movie." From this point on, the host and his guests revolve around this topic, approaching in depth the condition of the actor and the passing of the time. The talk show tends to take the shape of a confession, following the question-answer scheme. Marius seems to hold his turn, not feeling ashamed to recount aspects of his life before being succesful, although he refuses to give details about his suicide attempt, appealing to humour and considering it "a silly thing"/"a joke". Medeea also holds her turn,

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both being frequently interrupted by the host, who reinforces or simply completes what was previously said. A remark regarding women's tendency of intuiting things, when Medeea admits that she had an intuition that they will continue to work together, points out Cătălin Măruță's stereotypical convinction that men are practical, while women more intuitive: "Women, this instinct."

Furthermore, the confession of Marius regarding his early conflict with Medeea generated by his "liberty" on the stage, which was not perceived as appropriate for the theatre and for society by Medeea, points out the dissimilarities between women's and men's behaviour, women being more interested in respecting the norm, in being polite and in maintaining a respectful image in society: "*You should know that you are not allowed to do these things, there are some rules that must be respected, you don't realise, but the theatre is* ... and she gave a prelection for 15-20 minutes." Moreover, Medeea's arguments regarding her incapacity to pass over a conflict with somebody challenges thus the streotypical perceptions according to whom women have the tendency to cooperate, to offer support, leaving behind what they really feel aiming the resolution of a problem.

Another situation which highlights men's stereotypical perceptions regarding women is related to Cătălin Măruță's remark when depicting on the screen sequences from a movie in which Medeea played as child. The host states: "Your tears stand in your eyes, you have your eyes clouded with tears", but Medeea Marinescu contests his affirmation, emphasizing that women are not supposed to get emotional as soon as they see a picture with them from their childhood: "No, it would be ridiculous to get touched when it comes to me." Regarding her speech along the talk show, Medeea is voluble, she answers to the point, she smiles during interaction and makes eye-contact with the interlocutor, the host in this case.and is polite. Her interventions are more numerous in the second part of the interview, where she and Marius complete each other's replies with regard to their performances as a real theatre couple. They pay attention to what was said before, gesticulate and share the floor. Medeea's interruptions are less numerous than those of Cătălin Măruță or of Marius Manole. Nevertheless, these interruptions, the overlappings cannot be considered clues of fighting for the floor, because, undoubtedly, they have a positive value, reinforcing what was previously said by the interlocutor and emphasizing support.

Conclusions

As we managed to see, gender definitely plays an important role on the linguistic imaginary, generating dichotomic representations. The sexist tendencies of English which were outlined and the most well-known cases of stereotypical behaviour for each sex point out how the sexist world and how the sexist language function. Resting upon the theoretical framework and upon the

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analysis of the talk shows' discourse we enforce the idea of a dichotomy between the speech styles of men and women and of the discrimination of the latter ones within language and through the linguistic behaviour to whom they have recourse. However, this discrimination will persist because it is deeply rooted in the society's way of thinking. Men and women are definitely different, but these differences should not be regarded as a sign of weakness, but they should be celebrated and misconceptions as "Women cannot claim turn in a conversation" or "Men do not apologise." should be abolished.

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