GENDER-RELATED LINGUISTIC STEREOTYPES IN ROMANIAN

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Abstract. This paper relies on Putnam (1975) and defines a stereotype as a set of properties which are thought to be possessed by the objects that lie in the extension of the term and which everyone speaking the language in question must know in order to use the term correctly. On this view stereotypical reasoning enables the speaker to have access to a useful, although limited, type knowledge. Our paper reports the findings of two surveys that we conducted in Constanta among Romanian teenagers and undergraduates and establishes some of the gender-related linguistic stereotypes that can be found in Romanian society. The main tenet of this paper is that gender-related linguistic stereotypes act as guides as to where to seek confirming or disconfirming empirical evidence for real gender linguistic differences.

1. Prototypes, stereotypes and theories of reference

Classification is fundamental to human reasoning. Whenever speakers think about something as a kind of thing (e.g. plant, animal, etc.), they engage in a process of categorization. In their use of language, speakers make use of linguistic categories. Labov (1973) argues that linguistics is "the study of category" and views man as a "categorizing animal". When presented with some new entity, speakers make use of its perceptual properties to categorize it or to refer to it as an instance of a class or concept that they already know something about. But for their ability to categorize, people could not function properly, either in the physical world or in their social or intellectual lives. Once an entity has been categorised, knowledge of the conceptual class allows inferences to be made about the perceptual or even non-perceptual properties of that entity (Smith and Medin 1981). Thus the role of a concept is two-fold: first, to categorise, secondly, to allow inferences.

The assignment of an entity to a category depends on the speaker's knowledge of the lexical meaning of the word denoting that entity. A word acquires its meaning by virtue of its location in some body of structured knowledge, lay or technical, in which it is related to other concepts (Chitoran and Cornilescu 1986). As Dewey (quoted in Chitoran and Cornilescu 1986: 326) points out, "to grasp the meaning of a thing, an event, or a situation, is to see it in its relation to other things, to note how it operates or functions what consequences follow from it, what causes

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it, what uses it can be put to." For instance, referring to an entity as 'chair' is based on the speaker's organized knowledge and beliefs about furniture which in its turn is part of a more general body of organized knowledge and beliefs about concrete physical objects in general.

This body of knowledge and beliefs of which the lexicon is an integral part is not necessarily acquired through professional training but it may be based on a lay understanding of the world which is shared by the members of a speech community. According to Putnam (1979), language success stems from systematic correspondences between words, on the one hand, and objects and states of affairs, on the other, and these correspondences are reflected in the verbal behaviour of all members of the speech community.

According to traditional theories of reference, any meaningful term has some meaning, intension or cluster of features associated with it and present to the mind whenever the term is understood. It is this meaning that determines the extension which is equivalent to signification (the referent). An object is in the extension of the term if and if it has the characteristics included in the meaning, concept or intension of the term (Chitoran 1973, Chitoran and Cornilescu 1986).

Proponents of causal theories of reference (Putnam 1975; Kripke, 1979 Donnellan 1972) raised objections to the way meaning is accounted for by traditional theories on the grounds that not all objects that make up the extension of the term have all or at least most of the characteristics stipulated in the intension. There are green lemons, tigers without stripes, three-legged dogs, etc.

Instead, Putnam (1975) argued that the meaning of natural kind terms consists of four components. The meaning of water, for instance, includes

1) **the extension,** i.e. the object to which the term refers, e.g., the object individuated by the chemical formula H2O;

2) a set of typical superficial properties of the term, referred to as the **stereotype**, e.g., it is tasteless, "transparent", "colourless", "odourless", "hydrating", and is found in lakes and rivers;

3) **the semantic indicators** that place the object into a general category, e.g., "natural kind" and "liquid";

4) **the syntactic indicators**, e.g., "concrete noun" and "mass noun".

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Thus, the features that constitute the intension of a natural kind term do not determine the extension of the term. These features included in the *operational definition* of the term make up the **stereotype** and are used to decide membership in the category for other individuals on the basis of family resemblance.

Putnam claims that acquiring a word is not equivalent to learning its meaning. The speaker has acquired a word if he fulfils his society's *minimal criteria for knowledge* about the word's usage. This knowledge represents the **stereotype**, i.e. any speaker's minimal linguistic requirement. Thus, in order to use a natural kind term correctly (and to know what the term means) one must know the stereotype and associate it with the term. For most words there is a minimum number of entailments that all speakers of the language are supposed to know, even though these may not single out the extension very reliably. For example, English speakers are expected to know that lions are large catlike animals that have gold-coloured fur and a mane, even though these entailments are neither necessary nor sufficient to distinguish lions from non-lions accurately.

The stereotype has little, if anything, to do with the precise definition supplied by experts (e.g., a biologist in the case of lions). The example suggests that extension is not always determined at the level of the individual speaker, but at the level of the community. To take another example, any two English speakers would agree that the words elm-tree and beech-tree have different meanings and extensions, although they may not be able to tell an elm-tree from a beech-tree. The possibility of using such words in true sentences would not exist if it weren't for the experts in the community who can identify elm-trees and beech-trees.

This distinction between reference stemming from *folk classification* and reference established through *scientific categorization* parallels Berlin's distinction mentioned above between a general human capacity for basic-level categorization and a more *functional* one based on specialized training and depends, Putnam (1975) believes, on some sort of *division of linguistic labour*. In any community there are some terms whose references are fixed by the experts in the particular field of science to which the terms belong. For example, the reference of the term "tiger" is fixed by the community of zoologists, and the reference of the term "water" is fixed as "H2O" by chemists. These referents are considered *rigid designators* and are disseminated outward to the speech community. Thus, the correct correspondence between linguistic expressions and the world although determined by the speech

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community as a whole, may not be reflected in the knowledge of each member of that community.

Putnam's treatment of stereotypes has brought to light a number of interesting aspects regarding, on the hand, the relation **intension/extension** and, on the other, the relation **prototype/stereotype**:

a) Changes of the objects in the extension (i.e. the referent) bring about changes in the associated concepts. The extension determines the nature of the features included in the stereotype and the richness of the stereotype. As Table 1 shows, some stereotypes may be richer than others.

b) Superordinate categories such as **FURNITURE**, **BIRD**, **FRUIT**, etc. are structured to the extent to which they have typical members or *best exemplars* that best fit the speaker's 'idea' or *mental image* of the category. Thus, as we have already seen in the previous section, 'apple' or 'orange' have been reported as the most typical fruit, 'table' and 'chair' as the most typical furniture items, 'robin' and 'sparrow' as the most typical birds. These are *basic level* objects of the kind and help the speaker learn and identify more peripheral members.

c) A term like 'orange' or 'tiger' is conventionally associated with a **stereotype**, i.e. a cluster of attributes known to any competent user of the language. The stereotype enables one to identify paradigmatic exemplars (**prototypical members**) of the category in one's local environment.

d) These attributes do not occur independently. There is a correlational structure of real world objects that renders some combinations more expected than others, some rare, and some logically impossible.

Type of term	Type of features in the stereotype	Example of term	Stereotypical features
artefact	perceptual, functional motor movements	chair	seat, legs, one sits on it
social rank	social function, relative rank, typical traits or behaviour (income)	professor	educates, middle class, erudite, well-paid
fruit	perceptual	lemon	colour: yellow shape: oval

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			flavour: sour
animal	perceptual	tiger	large yellow black stripes dangerous

(based on Chitoran and Cornilescu 1986)

To sum up, this section has argued that assigning an entity to a category depends on the speaker's knowledge of the *lexical meaning* of the word denoting that entity. The definition of meaning is based on Putnam (1975). On this approach, the **stereotype** is part of the meaning and it is viewed as a set of superficial features included in the definition of the term and used to decide membership in the category for other individuals on the basis of family resemblance. Thus, knowledge of the stereotype enables one to identify paradigmatic exemplars (**prototypical members**) of the category.

However, a distinction should be made between the stereotype and the prototype. It should be pointed out that in terms of structure, a **stereotype** is a set of possible states of affairs, whereas **prototypicality**, as studied by Rosch (1975), is bound up with two axes of categorization. Along the vertical axis, categories are organized hierarchically so that one can identify *superordinate*, *basic level* and *subordinate categories*. While the horizontal axis represents contrasting categories of the same level which are included in the next highest category. Within each category some members are more representative of the category, i.e. they are best examples or **prototypes**, while others are more peripheral. However, despite their simpler structure, stereotypes are essential attributes that a speaker has to know in order to use a word correctly.

2. Stereotyping reasoning

Throughout this paper the term **stereotype** is based on Putnam (1975) and is assumed to apply not only to natural kinds, but also to social groups and such cultural constructs as *gender*. Following Putnam, a stereotype is defined as a set of properties which are thought to be possessed by the objects that lie in the extension of the term and which everyone speaking the language in question must know in order to use the term correctly.

However, it is not necessary that these properties apply to all or even most objects that are in the extension (there can be tigers without stripes or green lemons).

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Moreover, an entity exhibiting them does not necessarily belong in the extension. To quote one of Putnam's examples, the liquid on Twin Earth which has the same operational definition as water, i.e. it has the same stereotypical properties, it answers the same perceptual paradigm (it is tasteless, colourless, thirst-quenching, etc) is not water because it has the chemical formula XYZ and not H2O (Putnam 1975).

The following example illustrates the way we view **stereotypical reasoning**. The choice of the tiger stereotype follows Putnam. If the speaker says that during his trip in India, hiking in the jungle, he saw a tiger, the addressee will assume he saw a *large, frightening animal*, *yellow* with *black stripes*. The addressee will make these assumptions although not all tigers fit this description: some tigers are small others may be albino. Thus, the addressee has used the **stereotype** that says that tigers are 'big', 'dangerous' and 'yellow with black stripes'. The use of this stereotype may turn out to be a mistake: the end of the story may reveal that this was an albino tiger. However, this aspect is of secondary importance. What is of central importance is that it is the use of the stereotype that enables *efficient communication*. Since the speaker knows the addressee has this stereotype (a stereotype that the speaker shares with the addressee), he assumes the latter will draw the corresponding conclusions and he intends the latter to draw those conclusions.

Thus, stereotypical reasoning is very closely related to, but not identical with, the use of **prototypes**, i.e. the best exemplars of a category. Prototypes, though, allude to a *richer* structure than stereotypes and this is the reason the latter term has been preferred. On this view, people carry around neither a set of defining features that make up the stereotype, nor much information about individual group members. Instead, perceivers store *abstracted representations* of a group's typical features and judge individual group members on the basis of similarity comparisons between the individual and these mental representations (Cantor and Mischel 1978).

In common parlance s**tereotypes** are considered to be typically inaccurate and an impediment to intelligent thinking. This reputation should not hide the fact that the *use of stereotypes* is a fundamental tool in achieving intelligence, hence, the importance of studying stereotypes in their own right. Nevertheless, the negative connotation attached to the word stereotype should remind us we are studying a *limited* form of reasoning, certainly not capable of exhibiting all forms of

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intelligence. Thus, a **stereotype** represents an initial schematic instance of knowledge, whereas a prototype has a generally accepted perennial value.

There is nothing inherently wrong with stereotyping reasoning. Although some stereotypes can be entirely wrong-headed or socially dysfunctional, others can flatter, or be accurate descriptions of social reality, or they can be positively functional. As pointed out in the previous section, Putnam has shown that in order to use a natural kind term correctly, the speaker must know its stereotype and associate it with the term. The same can be argued about social groups. Knowledge of the stereotype associated with social groups is essential if one wants to function properly in society. Thus, the stereotype includes the perceiver's *knowledge, beliefs* and *expectations* about 'the characteristics, attributes and behaviours of members of certain groups' (Hilton and Hippel 1996:240) and it allows the perceiver to simplify the information flow about complex situations (Jenkins 1996). Stereotypes are learned through direct exposure to group members and social learning (gossip, media, patterns of socialization, etc.).

Stereotyping reasoning serves multiple purposes that reflect a variety of cognitive and motivational processes. Stereotypes *make information processing easier* since they allow the perceiver to rely on previously stored knowledge instead of incoming information (Hilton and von Hippel 1996). Stereotyping emerges as a way of *simplifying* the demands on the perceiver (Macrae et al. 1994). They can also be triggered by such environmental factors as *different social roles* (Eagly 1995), *group conflicts* (Robinson et al. 1995) and *differences in power* (Fiske 1993). Other stereotypes can emerge as a way of justifying the status quo (Jost and Banaji 1994) or in response to a need for social identity (Hogg and Abrams 1988).

Stereotypes are defined as beliefs about a group. Research (Hilton and Hippel 1996:240-41) has identified two sources of these beliefs. The one source of stereotyping thinking includes mental representations of real differences between groups, which make them accurate representations of reality (Judd and Park 1993; Swim 1994). Under such circumstances stereotypes operate like schemas, allowing easier and more efficient processing of information about others. Like schemas, stereotypes may cause the perceiver to fail to notice or to gloss over individual differences (Hippel et al. 1993). Otherwise, there is little reason to believe that they cause people to deviate grossly from accurate perceptions. However, when they are based on relatively constant characteristics of the person (such as race, religion,

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gender), they may be formed independent of real group differences and therefore some may be erroneous.

In addition to making a complex social world more orderly and predictable, stereotypes are *condensed symbols of group identification* playing an important part in boundary maintenance as well as in the creation and maintenance of group ideologies. Issues of classification are always issues of identification (Jenkins 1996). As such, stereotypes are *selective* in that they are localized around group features that are the most *distinctive*, that provide the greatest differentiation between groups and show the least differentiation within-group variation (Ford and Stangor 1992); in other words they are localized around **prototypical** features (cf. Rosch and Mervin 1975).

One implication of the prototype model would be that it allows for stereotype change which is accomplished through the emergence of subtypes. This has implications for stereotype change. One view of subtyping holds that it maintains stereotypic beliefs. If, for instance, a perceiver who expects Germans to be efficient meets an inefficient German professor he may form a subtype of German professors that includes the expectation that German professors are inefficient (Weber and Crocker 1983). Thus, this process renders inefficiency among German professors less surprising, while preserving the belief that, in general, Germans are efficient.

However, Brewer's analysis (1988) challenges the view that subtyping primarily serves to maintain existing stereotypes. He argues that as our perceptions of groups become relatively differentiated, *subtypes* replace superordinate categorizations and become base level themselves. Since our experience with larger groups (e.g. gender groups or age groups) is sufficiently, rich superordinate categorizations such as 'women' or 'old people' become uninformative. Consequently, people are likely to rely on subtypes of such groups when making stereotype-relevant judgements. Thus, following Brewer's line of reasoning, one would expect gender-related stereotypical beliefs to be liked to the various social roles that members of the two gender groups fulfil at one time or another. Activation of certain female subtypes would be expected to inhibit activation of competing subtypes.

To conclude this section it is necessary to point out that stereotyping is a cognitive process resorted to in the *categorization* and *classification* of social

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groups. It has been argued that knowledge of the **stereotype** enables the speaker to identify paradigmatic exemplars (**prototypical members**) of the category. Stereotypical reasoning, thus, becomes closely related to, but not identical with, the use of **prototypes**. Prototypes allude to a *richer* structure than stereotypes and this is the reason the latter term has been preferred.

The next section examines relevant literature on gender-related stereotypes in English-speaking communities and establishes the features of male and female stereotypical behaviour.

3. Gender-related stereotypes in Romanian. A case study

To our knowledge no research on **linguistic gender-related stereotypical behaviour** in Romanian has been carried out so far. Thus this paper reports on the findings of a survey whose aim was to establish the existence of gender-related stereotypes in Romanian. We claim that these stereotypes will further prove instrumental in identifying gender-related linguistic variables.

3.1. Data collection and methodology

Initially a first survey was conducted among Romanian undergraduates studying at the University of Constanta as part of a pilot project meant to establish the existence of gender-related speech stereotypes in Romanian. The initial sample consisted of 26 male and 26 female Romanian students belonging in one age-group (20-25). All informants live and study in Constanta.

A list of sentences was devised to incorporate the *linguistic variables* which, according to Lakoff (1975), distinguish *men's* and *women's speech* styles since the aim of the survey was to check the extent to which these sentences reflect people's stereotypes with regard to gender-related speech styles in Romanian. The occurrences of each stereotype were counted and the figures were reduced to percentages since this makes comparison much easier.

Task

The informants were given the list of sentences given in (1) and were asked to put F beside the features they think were said by a woman, M beside those they think were

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said by a man and M/F beside those they think could have been said by either. Additionally they were asked to account for their choices.

(1)

1) Închide uşa.
2) Ce câine adorabil!
3) Dumnezeule, s-a stricat frigiderul!
4) Este foarte obosit.
5) Este aşa de obosit.
6) Te superi dacă te rog să-mi dai puţin creionul?
7) Unde dracu' mi-am pus cheile?
8) Şi-a cumpărat un pulover cafea-cu-lapte şi unul gri-petrol.
9) Şi-a cumpărat un pulover bej şi unul gri.
10) Au făcut ceea ce trebuia, nu-i aşa?
11) Ce idee nemaipomenită! (Underlining indicates emphatic stress.)
12) Nu te superi dacă te rog să-mi împrumuţi puţin dicţionarul, nu-i aşa?
13) La ce oră scapi?

3. 2. Findings

The informants' answers are given in **Table 1**. When asked to comment upon their choices, two clusters of stereotypes emerged. Romanian women are stereotyped as being *sensitive*, *polite* and *emphatic* in their use of language, as paying more *attention to details*. They are said to use more *standard forms* because they are more concerned with their public image and using grammatically correct forms is viewed as a constitutive part of this image. Other distinctive features of women's language include, according to the informants interviewed, women's preference for what Lakoff calls "*empty adjectives*" (e.g. *adorabil* 'adorable', *divin*, 'divine', etc.) *euphemisms*, *hypercorrect forms*, *small talk*, *tag-questions*, which, interestingly enough, are viewed as signalling women's non-assertiveness and their lack of confidence.

Unlike women, men are said to be *self-confident*, *direct*, *objective* and *task-oriented*. The way they use language has no impact on their public image, consequently they can freely choose to be either polite or vulgar. *Non-standard* linguistic forms, *swearing*, *taboo language* and *concise sentences* with less attention paid to details are considered to be features of male speech.

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	M	F	M/F
Închide uşa.	8%	6%	85%
Ce câine adorabil!	0%	100%	0%
Dumnezeule, s-a stricat frigiderul!	9%	71%	20%
Este foarte obosit.	9%	43%	45%
Este aşa de obosit.	4%	90%	6%
Te superi dacă te rog să-mi dai puţin creionul?	20%	50%	30%
Unde dracu' mi-am pus cheile?	65%	5%	30%
Şi-a cumpărat un pulover cafea-cu-lapte si unul gri-petrol.	6%	90%	4%
Şi-a cumpărat un pulover bej si unul gri.	36%	28%	32%
Au făcut ceea ce trebuia, nu-i aşa?	7%	53%	38%
Ce idee nemaipomenită!	6%	53%	38%
Nu te superi dacă te rog să-mi împrumuţi puţin dicţionarul, nu-i aşa?	10%	65%	25%
La ce oră scăpi?	45%	25%	30%

Table 1. Gender-related linguistic stereotypes in Romanian

When asked how they decided which sex to attribute, the students mentioned their own way of using language as well as the way people around them (i.e. their parents, friends, acquaintances or ordinary people on the bus or in the street) use language. These stereotypical views point to a **polarized** depiction of Romanian men and women corresponding closely to the distinction **agentic** vs. **communal** discussed above.

We then replicated the survey replicated and extended it to cover other age groups. Thus the total number of informants is 238 distributed across 3 age groups as follows: 70 informants were *secondary-school pupils* (age-group: 12-14); 80 informants were *high-school pupils* (age-group: 15-19); 88 informants were *university students* (age-group: 20-25). In order to ensure comparability between the first and the second survey, the research design in terms of procedure and variables was the same. The findings of the second survey are given in **Table 2** together with those of the pilot study.

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	Age-group 12-14			Age-group 15-19			Age-group 20-25		
	M	F	M/F	M	F	M/F	M	F	M/F
Închide ușa!	37%	22%	41%	32%	15%	53%	14%	8%	78%
Ce câine adorabil!	18%	66%	16%	4%	91%	5%	6%	92%	2%
Dumnezeule, s-a stricat frigiderul!	35%	53%	12%	6%	90%	4%	8%	75%	17%
Este foarte obosit.	31%	48%	21%	31%	41%	28%	14%	48%	37%
Este așa de obosit.	18%	72%	10%	7%	88%	5%	3%	78%	19%
Te superi dacă te rog să-mi dai puțin creionul?	24%	46%	30%	18%	66%	16%	24%	42%	34%
Unde dracu' mi-am pus cheile?	76%	2%	22%	80%	7%	13%	58%	9%	33%
Și-a cumpărat un pulover cafea-cu-lapte și unul gri-petrol.	26%	58%	16%	8%	83%	9%	7%	86%	7%
Și-a cumpărat un pulover bej și unul gri.	40%	38%	22%	61%	24%	15%	46%	19%	34%
Au facut ceea ce trebuia, nu-i așa?	30%	44%	26%	25%	58%	17%	15%	41%	44%
Ce idee nemaipomenită!	22%	49%	29%	21%	64%	15%	6%	54%	40%
Nu te superi dacă te rog să-mi împrumuți puțin dicționarul, nu-i așa?	20%	48%	32%	9%	83%	8%	13%	60%	27%
La ce ora scăpi?	49%	20%	31%	66%	18%	16%	48%	20%	32%

Table 2. Gender-related linguistic stereotypes across 3 age-groups

3.3. Discussion

The existence of gender-related stereotypes is confirmed for other age groups as well. With high-school pupils the results reflect adult stereotypes remarkably closely. It seems that we have to assume that at least some children have quite well-developed linguistic stereotypes and they approach adult sophistication as early as secondary school.

It should be pointed out that expanding the number of informants to over 200 has *not* affected the overall results. The so called *empty adjective, precise colour terms* and *extreme case formulations* seem to be Romanian women's speciality. Although at first sight *direct illocutions* seem to be neutral with regard to gender-related preferences, men are said to have the tendency of using them more often than

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women. Approximately twice times as many men as women are believed to use direct illocutions and non-standard whereas taboo language and strong swear terms were attributed to men by roughly 70% of my informants meaning that when compared with women, ten times as many men use foul language.

These trends follow the pattern commonly found with adults pointing to children's early learning of linguistic and social conventions concerning men's and women's speech. When comparing secondary-school children with high-school teenagers and adults, we notice a **marked increase** in the attribution of *empty adjectives*, *precise colour terms* and *extreme case formulations* to women. This may signal *increasing awareness* of and *conformity* to established beliefs about prototypical gender-related linguistic behaviour. With regard to the learning of gender-related stereotypes, research has shown that children as young as five years of age may be quite aware of socially determined stereotypes concerning characteristics of men and women (Williams 1973).

To sum up, the findings of the surveys that we conducted among Romanian teenagers and undergraduates living in Constanta in order to establish the existence of gender-related linguistic stereotypes revealed two sets of features that can be seen as prototypical gender-related linguistic behaviour corresponding closely to the distinction **agentic** vs. **communal** discussed in the previous section with regard to English-speaking communities. **Stereotypical male speech** is characterised by my respondents as more *attention-seeking*, *demanding* and *authoritarian*. Whereas **stereotypical female speech** can be summarized as friendly, gentle, polite, enthusiastic and grammatically correct.

4. Conclusions

This paper highlighted the c*ognitive value* of **stereotypes** arguing that stereotypes are worthy of study in their own right and should not be dismissed as being nothing more than idle caricatures. We interpreted stereotyping as a routine everyday cognitive process resorted to in the *categorization* and *classification* of social groups. When presented with some new entity, speakers make use of its perceptual properties to categorise it or to refer to it as an instance of a class or concept that they already know something about.

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To our knowledge, no research on linguistic gender-related stereotypical behaviour in Romanian has been carried out so far. Thus in our investigation of gender-related conversational styles in Romanian, we set out to establish:

- the **existence** of gender-related stereotypes in Romanian and
- their **relevance** for identifying gender-related linguistic variables in Romanian

We devised a questionnaire including thirteen sentences that incorporate the stereotypical features which, according to Lakoff (1975), distinguish between men's and women's speech style. The questionnaire was administered to 238 informants distributed across 3 age groups as follows: 70 informants were *secondary-school pupils* (age-group: 12-14); 80 informants were *high-school pupils* (age-group: 15-19); 88 informants were *university students* (age-group: 20-25). Our informants were asked to put **F** beside the features they think were said by a woman, **M** beside those they think were said by a man and **M/F** beside those they think could have been said by either. Additionally they were asked to account for their choices.

The survey yielded the following results:

a) *Gender stereotypes in Romanian society* are surprisingly *similar* to those found in English-speaking cultures.

b) Our research shows that Romanian women are stereotyped as being *more sensitive*, *more polite* and *emphatic* in their use of language, as *paying more attention to details*. They are said to use *more standard forms* because they are more concerned with their public image and using grammatically correct forms is viewed as a constitutive part of this image. Other distinctive features of women's language include women's preference for what Lakoff calls *empty adjectives* (e.g. *adorabil* 'adorable', *divin*, 'divine', etc.) *euphemisms*, *hypercorrect forms*, *small talk*, and *tag-questions*; the last linguistic preference, interestingly enough, is viewed as signalling women's non-assertiveness and their lack of confidence, thus echoing Lakoff's views.

c) Romanian men, on the other hand, are said to be *self-confident*, *direct*, *objective* and *task-oriented*. The way they use language has no impact on their public image, consequently they can *freely* choose to be either *polite* or *vulgar*. *Non-*

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standard linguistic forms, swearing, taboo language and *concise sentences* with less attention paid to details are considered to be features of male speech in Romanian.

When asked how they decided which sex to attribute, our informants mentioned their own way of using language as well as the way people around them (i.e. their parents, friends, acquaintances or ordinary people on the bus or in the street) use language. These stereotypic views point to a polarized depiction of Romanian men and women corresponding closely to the distinction **agentic** vs. **communal** discussed above. This is in line with empirical research conducted in English-speaking communities.

Awareness of the stereotype associated with a given social group is essential if one wants to function properly in society because stereotyping is instrumental in setting expectations for one's own behaviour and that of others. Gender-related linguistic stereotypes, for instance, can provide insights into what is assumed by listeners and will tend to be expected until disconfirmed. These expectations may define listeners' predispositions and attitudes towards conversation with men and women and confirmation of them may be actively sought thus turning them into what has been called *self-fulfilling prophecies* for behaviour.

On the basis of Putnam's definition of stereotypes we interpreted these *stereotypical features* of gender-appropriate linguistic behaviour as the *primary source* of speakers' ideas about gender groups and we highlighted their potential to act as **guides** to where to seek confirming or disconfirming evidence for gender differences in language use. This interpretation of stereotyping reasoning allows us to formulate the following **hypotheses**:

- The similarities in terms of stereotypical gender-related behaviours are indicative of similar gender ideologies;
- Similar gender ideologies may lead to more or less *similar linguistic preferences* in terms of *conversational strategies*.
- Gender stereotyping in Romanian points in the same direction as it does in English: *women* will show a *preference* for **conversational maintenance strategies** and for those strategies oriented towards **expressing solidarity** with and **support**.

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