

【国際大会 2011 in ハンガリー シンポジウム：ジェンダー意識の背景にあるもの  
要旨】

**Culturematters — Gendermatters**

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On 16 May 2007, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2008 to be the International Year of Languages. As language issues are central to UNESCO's mandate in education, science, social and human sciences, culture, communication and information, the Organization has been named the lead agency for this event. The inauguration message from Mr. Koiichi Matsuura, the then Director-General of UNESCO, on the celebration of the International *Year of Languages* event tells: "We must act now as a matter of urgency. How? By encouraging and developing language policies that enable each linguistic community to use its first language, or mother tongue, as widely and as often as possible, including in education, while also mastering a national or regional language and an international language. Also by encouraging speakers of a dominant language to master another national or regional language and one or two international languages. Only if multilingualism is fully accepted can all languages find their place in our globalized world."

The lead logo of the project was *Languagesmatter* – meaning that all languages are important, all languages should be respected, all languages should be accessible in education to their native speakers and that all languages have a role to play in the mental and cultural identity of its speakers.

The same is true for national cultures. *Culturesmatter*, not only because they are the main frame of identity to individuals and communities, but also because they provide the best manifestation of diversity in our globalized world. Hence their role as an identity quantifier is crucial in the multicultural context that we are living in. History has proved that efforts to „de-culturalize” nations or communities, that is to deprive them from their cultural characteristics, have failed on the long run. Preservation and maintenance of national cultures, their specifics and their characteristics is the duty and responsibility of policy-makers and of educational professionals. We have to maintain *culture-diversity* – similarly to bio-diversity – if we wish to keep our dignity and mental health.

Gender – and for that matter linguistic manifestation of gender – whether morphological, lexical, syntactical or pragmatical – is also part of the national culture, its mentality and the spirit of its language (Davies-Ikeno 2002; Liddle-Nakajima 2000). Therefore it is of great importance to find the healthy balance of *respect for gender-specificity of a given language*, of maintaining political correctness in expression and of properly allocating social roles in a given society (Hidasi 2003; Hidasi 2005).

The *Hungarian language* similarly to other languages belonging to the Finno-ugric language group – does not possess means of linguistic gender. Morphological gender-markers – characteristic in many Indo-European languages like French or Russian – are missing in its linguistic repertoire. Hence the third person pronoun is the same 'ő (singular)/ők (plural)' in both genders, and in conjugation or

inflections no distinction is made as for genders. Still, in terms of reference, greetings and in expressions referring to professions a rich variety of expressions was historically in use to make subtle distinctions for gender – often reflecting nuances of age and position. This rich vocabulary has made a certain come-back after the early 90-ies – following decades of deliberate universalizing tendencies during the years of socialism. The *renaissance of gender-motivated expressions and terms* is however not without controversies. On the one hand the younger generation cannot always handle these expressions in a pragmatically proper sense, on the other the modern-thinking part of the society with a strong gender-free orientation finds them unnecessary or even discriminatory.

“Sticks and bones will break your bones, but words can never hurt you” – tells an old rhythm, but is it really true? Words in fact can and do hurt if misused – intentionally or unintentionally. The latent meaning and connotation of certain words or terms of address might trigger discomfort or even conflict in communication. Escalating awareness to Political Correctness in the countries of Europe and Asia has affected several domains of language usage in a number of societies. A short historical over-view and stages of development in this process in an EU framework explain the societal and legal background that have triggered and influenced changes in this respect.

As for Asia in Japan from the 1970-s on legal steps have been taken to respect politically correct language usage in public discourse, but in reality this policy has not sufficiently penetrated yet into everyday discourse and into the media (Matsumoto 2002). In China local governments have recently taken initiatives – often in the form of campaigns as code of conduct for citizens – to exert control on educated public behavior, part of which are efforts to raise awareness on politically correct language usage.

Modernization of societies and growing awareness of human rights has led to movements in many countries of the world that aim to hinder the use of discriminatory words – which in principle is supposed to be the ruling language usage code in social discourse. In spite of this we can still witness in language usage many traces of prejudice and disrespect towards the weak and non-privileged. This is particularly true in language usage referring to females (Sakai 2003). Cases of imbalance and of misuse in certain languages of the world are an often discussed topic not only in Japan, but also in many countries of Europe – including Hungary. By sharing our mutual experiences in this field, we try to point out tendencies and reflect on mutually applicable usage patterns.

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