The Marie Curie Initial Training Network - Language, Cognition, and Gender (ITN LCG) investigated European languages from an interdisciplinary perspective to expand current knowledge of how language influences and forms the cognitive representations of women and men. The diversity of Europe offers a unique opportunity to study the impact of language and culture on the establishing and maintaining of gender inequality. This issue has previously not been addressed systematically on a large scale, although the reduction of gender inequality is generally considered an important issue within Europe. Partners from
10 universities in the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom as well as associated partners from public and private sectors investigated the interplay of Language, Cognition, and Gender from a cross-linguistic and cross-cultural perspective.

ITN LCG had four interrelated research objectives: a) deriving indices for European languages that measure the extent to which linguistic features evoke gender-related representations in speakers/listeners, b) investigating to what extent gender equality in formal linguistic standards and the use of gender-fair language correlate with higher levels of socio-economic gender equality, c) analysing the impact of language on gender stereotyping in social judgment and decision making, and d) developing and evaluating scientifically-based prototypes of guidelines and training tools for gender-fair communication in European languages. To promote the scientific treatment of these topics, ITN LCG provided a structured research and training programme for 15 early stage (ESR) and 3 experienced researchers (ER).

How does language shape the cognitive representations of gender (WP A)

WP A focused on investigating cognitive representation of gender, using advanced techniques such as eye tracking, electrophysiological measurement (ERPs) and neuroimaging (fMRI). Four projects investigated both cross-linguistic differences in these representations and the nature of these representations within a particular language (e.g. based on the lexicon, grammar, or pragmatic features). The results of these studies are set in relation to questionnaire data on sexism, sex typing and implicit measures of stereotyping from the Gender-Career version of the Implicit Association Test (IAT). In addition, WP A aimed at devising gender indices that will allow for a systematic classification of the languages under study. To define criteria for two Language Gender Indices, all projects participated in specifying linguistic features that may promote or hinder gender-related representations, both on a formal and a conceptual level. For the LGI-formal, a questionnaire was prepared and information about 14 languages/language variants was collected. For the LGI-social, web-based norming studies of experimental materials were conducted, as one way of operationalising this language gender index. The data collection has resulted in updated norms on the gender perception of role nouns, and a tool to facilitate cross-language and cross-cultural comparisons for seven languages. This is available to researchers investigating the impact of stereotypical representations of role-nouns ([https://www.unifr.ch/lcg/](https://www.unifr.ch/lcg/); see also Misersky et al. (in press)).

Work on the LGI-formal has indicated the subtle ways in which linguistic gender markings vary across languages, allowing us to study different effects on the cognitive processing of gender information. Work on the LGI-social indicates that stereotyping for gender is similar across the languages analysed in Misersky et al. (in press). Experimental work on English, (Swiss) German and (Swiss) French by Gygax, Gabriel, Garnham, Oakhill and co-workers suggests a model in which grammatical gender cues take priority over social (knowledge-based) stereotypical cues to gender where the two conflict (more commonly in French and German) – masculine plurals intended as generic as often interpreted as referring to males. However, when stereotype-based cues work on their own (more commonly in English) the model would predict that their effects on cognitive representations are strong.

How do features of European languages correspond with gender equality in European societies (WP B)
The projects of WP B investigated the relation between language use, language policies and socio-economic rankings of gender equality, as the relation between these factors is far from straightforward. As a starting point, the fellows of WP B collected and assessed guidelines for gender-fair language in different countries and languages represented in the network (Czech, English, French, German, Italian, Norwegian, and Spanish). The fellows performed a comparative analysis of the guidelines and prepared a written report of their results (Moser, Sato, Chiarini, Dmitrow-Devold, & Kuhn, 2011: https://ilias.unibe.ch/goto.php?target=wiki_256402_WORK_PACKAGE_B%3A_Report_on_Milestone_1).

Comparative analyses of gender-related representations conveyed through social communication were conducted on educational material for English and German, and for newspapers for Czech, German, and Italian. Aiming at the identification of social factors that might be related to the use of gender-fair language, we focused on job advertisements from four countries that differ in their gender-related socioeconomic indices (Austria, Czech Republic, Poland, Switzerland) and studied the relation between individuals' language competence and their use of gender-fair language. Finally, we investigated the impact of linguistic factors (especially the generic use of grammatically masculine forms) on gender-related representations.

How does language contribute to social behaviour towards the sexes (WP C)

The studies forming WP C overall documented that when a description of a person uses a grammatical masculine form in contexts that experimentally simulated relevant domains (e.g. hiring decision-making, leadership attribution) women are made invisible and men’s social visibility is enhanced. These results question the idea that masculine-generic linguistic forms are indeed neutral. Rather, the use of symmetrical linguistic forms is to be preferred since it may shield women against both invisibility and status loss. In sum we showed that gender-fair language had an utmost importance and indeed can contribute to overcoming gender inequality in work places. Also the brain activity reflects the different status and power conveyed by a gender unfair or so called gender-neutral language suggesting that gender stereotypes are part of the knowledge that the brain automatically activates whenever a linguistic description conveying them is met in laboratory and, more relevantly, in the outside world.

How can gender equality be promoted through strategies for gender-fair language use (WP D)

In WP D we developed and evaluated evidence-based guidelines, strategies, and training programs for gender-fair language and communication. We critically evaluated existing guidelines with respect to their effectiveness in increasing people’s awareness of gender stereotypes and in reducing gender-unfair language use. We conducted experiments on how to make people feel positive about gender fair language and consequently increase their use of gender fair language. The insights we gathered from these experiments were used to develop prototypes of guidelines for gender-fair language use and prototypes for online and onsite training elements to promote positive attitudes towards gender fair language, to counterbalance gender stereotypes, and to encourage the use of gender-fair language. In practice trails in
various applied settings we investigated how to foster gender-fair language use and how to avoid the activation of gender stereotypes.

Target groups outside academia are policy makers who can take advantage of evidence-based strategies for treating women and men equally. This concerns most relevant contexts of political and economic decision making, such as gender-fair communication and public relations strategies, gender-fair strategies of personnel selection and promotion, or gender-fair political strategies on communal, state and federal level.

Project website: www.itn-lcg.eu

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