

# WOMEN ABOUT WOMEN: GENDERLECT MANIFESTATIONS THROUGH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SELF-STEREOTYPES IN CONTEMPORARY FICTION

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**Abstract.** The article re-actualises genderlect as one of the key points of male-female differentiation and a relevant object in the humanities, not merely from the perspective of gender studies but linguistic and literary ones. Self-stereotypes in the speech of one or another gender may be considered the result of the complex interaction of collective identity and the subconscious. The excerpts from the selected novels by Salman Rushdie, Jennifer Crusie, Lisa Kleypas, Aleksandar Hemon, Zadie Smith and Candace Bushnell have provided a wide range of patterns of expressing self-stereotypes in the dimension of ‘women about women’. To emphasise the multicultural nature of genderlect self-stereotypes, the writers of different ethnic affiliations are represented. The article also classifies the criteria of self-stereotype polarisation in characters’ speech to explicate the strategies of women’s verbal behaviour. These criteria include marital status, maternal experience, professional activity, ageism and harassment. The impact of gender on verbal behaviour, observed in real life and adapted to fiction through literary representation, is manifested in communication stereotypes. This serves to illuminate the most representative speech self-stereotypes, which make certain images or ideas easier to interpret. The application of an interdisciplinary approach with a set of appropriate methods to theorising and practising genderlect reveals its role as a significant tool for reconstructing a linguistic worldview and contextualises both positive and negative self-stereotypes for the expressive evaluation of speech in fictional discourse.

**Key words:** author, English-language fiction, female, gender, novel, speech pattern

## INTRODUCTION

Examining the role of gender in culture and its expression in the humanities contributes to explicating new aspects of the development of society. The fact that linguistic gender studies are rapidly transforming is primarily due to the changing social status of women. Furthermore, modern linguistic research focuses on the study of humans in language and the influence of language on the consciousness of a speaker according to an anthropocentric approach (Fitch, 2010; Lee, 2016). Gender representation in language obviously manifests through the verbalisation of culturally determined stereotypes. In this regard, the study and description of gender stereotypes, associated with the processes of internalisation and socialisation as well as the means of expression of these stereotypes in language, are relevant in the humanities. Being at the intersection of their various branches (sociolinguistics, literary studies, social psychology, gender philosophy, etc.), gender stereotypes are expressed in language as indicators of male-female differentiation (Harrison, 2006: 36).

The impact of the above-mentioned processes on all fields of life, including the cultural one, contributes to the inclusion of such stereotypes into literary activities due to the close relationship between reality and the ways of its aesthetic perception. A literary text accumulating different relationships goes beyond literature and becomes an inexhaustible source of scientific research. The study of characters' gender representation through speech as a form of sociocultural existence is of great research interest. In this dimension, genderlect, on the one hand, is a product of socialisation processes, including gender, and on the other hand, a primary tool for reconstructing a linguistic worldview.

The re-actualisation of gender studies in the realm of speech and artistic conceptions of reality in the historical, cultural and literary context (Glover and Kaplan, 2009), the realisation of the impact of gender on the formation of men's and women's social roles, growing interest in the mechanisms of gender-specific vocabulary development in communication processes, and the focus on the gender subculture conception have led to the introduction of the *concept of genderlect* as a set of male and female speech features into research (Hidalgo-Tenorio, 2016). Tannen (2019: 385) coined the term *genderlect*, suggesting that 'masculine and feminine styles of discourse are best viewed as two distinct cultural dialects'. She used it to describe the way that the conversations of men and women are not right and wrong or superior and inferior—they are just different. The term *genderlect* is used to show masculine and feminine styles of discourse as two distinct cultural dialects, rather than as superior or inferior ways of speaking.

Modern linguistic research in the field of gender relations encourages scholars to study the ways and means of masculinity and femininity actualisation in communication processes. Of great significance are the studies that cover the issues of the lexical units' choice for communication in terms of generic masculine or feminine forms or androcentrism, where supposedly gender-neutral words are automatically and unconsciously associated with men and/or masculinity

(Hellinger, 2002; Hegarty and Buechel, 2006; Stahlberg et al., 2007; Bailey and LaFrance, 2017). Researchers also study genderlect through the prisms of deficit, dominance, difference and dynamic approaches (Tannen, 2001; Coates, 2016; Jespersen, 2020), link genderlect with the idea of social status and gender roles as well as their impact on language (Coates and Pichler, 2011), emphasise a multilingual aspect (Dabrowska, 2007), note the impact of a profession on the 'de-gendering' of a linguistic style (Cameron, 2000), and point to unique gender languages (Cameron, 2005; Butler, 2006).

The issues of the production of lexical units for describing men by men or women by women remain outside of researchers' special attention. The topicality of this research is stipulated by the insufficient investigation of speech self-stereotypes (Lenton et al., 2009). Self-stereotyping (or autostereotyping) refers to

a process by which people who belong to a stigmatised social group tend to describe themselves more with both positive and negative stereotypical ingroup personality traits compared to traits that are irrelevant to the ingroup stereotype. (Latrofa et al., 2009: 84)

The basis for this article is the recognition of the fact that all kinds of social stereotypes are the results of a complex interaction of collective identity and the subconscious, i.e., 'ideology' (in the broadest sense) and Jungian 'the collective subconscious'.

Verbal and behavioural representation of self-stereotypes is largely related to the formation of motives and personal constructs. In the context of this study, a genderlect self-stereotype can be defined as a so-called group standard based on the public opinion of one gender group about the same group and expressed by verbal means; it correlates with personal needs, beliefs, ideals, self-esteem and ideas about the regulation of one's own verbal behaviour.

The study of gender is important for the investigation of language. It reflects, records and transmits social differences, including gender ones (Xia, 2013). The basic point in the research on gender-specific speech is the dependence of communication behaviour, and in particular its gender aspects, on communication stereotypes.

It is significant that writers use stereotypes to create a well-thought-out, consistent image of the world, thereby helping the readers navigate the 'real' world of fictional events. Being simplified, standardised images, or representations of a social phenomenon or an object, they are usually emotionally tinged, as 'Emotional areas of textual semantics stand out from emotionally neutral areas and affect a literary text' (Bezrukov and Bohovyk, 2021: 10). Stereotypes are characterised by a noticeable stability of perception and help form the conception of reality.

Since 'there is nothing outside the text' (Derrida, 1997: 163), a literary text can be represented as a generalised worldview reflected in language and coloured by the author's consciousness, the formation of which is influenced by many forces, both social and individual (psychological). Contemporary fiction books reflect changes in the vocabulary of any language and ways of its representation, as well

as focus on the social issues of modern society, which enables us to trace the ways of self-stereotyping in speech patterns and verbal behaviour. In this article, Salman Rushdie's *Quichotte* (2019), Jennifer Crusie's *Bet Me* (2004), Lisa Kleypas's *Blue-Eyed Devil* (2008), Aleksandar Hemon's *The Lazarus Project* (2008), Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), Candace Bushnell's *One Fifth Avenue* (2008), *Lipstick Jungle* (2005) and *Sex and the City* (2001) have been analysed. The selected novels contain a full range of genderlect self-stereotypes in the dimension of 'women about women'.

The research aim is to determine and specify the ways and means of representing genderlect self-stereotypes as exemplified in contemporary fictional discourse and classify them to explicate the strategies of women's verbal behaviour. The research objectives of the paper can be formulated as follows: (1) theorise and problematise the application of the concept of self-stereotypes from a gender perspective in the realm of modern linguistics and literary criticism; (2) determine approaches to comprehending genderlect in the dimension of 'women about women' in contemporary fictional discourse; (3) systematise and classify the criteria of the selection of positive and negative self-stereotypical genderlect manifested in the speech of female characters in the selected novels; and (4) demonstrate that genderlect can be a means of reconstructing a linguistic worldview.

## METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO STUDYING GENDERLECT MANIFESTATIONS IN FICTIONAL DISCOURSE

In different cultures, there are specific norms that enable women and men to behave in a particular way to maintain gender roles. The ideas about these roles can differ quite widely depending on cultures, formed ideas about them and people. They are called gender stereotypes (Oswald and Lindstedt, 2006; Howansky et al., 2019). Stereotypes include a subcategory called self-stereotypes, both positive and negative ones (National Research Council, 2006), which are the object of this study.

Considering the type of research material, the term *self-stereotype* is interpreted in linguistic and literary studies in the dimension of 'women about women', engaging mainstream fiction for illustrating the theoretical analysis with vivid examples. Contemporary fictional discourse is one of the most representative sources of research material in this respect. The basis for the practical realisation of the aim is the use of excerpts from the above-listed works of fiction with genderlect self-stereotypes manifested in them.

An interdisciplinary approach in gender, linguistic and literary studies accentuates current trends in the humanities and social sciences. Interdisciplinary discussion and the application of interdisciplinary perspectives in the humanities make it possible to significantly expand research potential for effective scientific communication beyond one branch (Nosowicz and Szerszunowicz, 2015; Robinson et al., 2016; Pedersen, 2016). Furthermore, an interdisciplinary approach

to the analysis of the selected texts stimulates significant opportunities for the research and reveals its prospects in the conceptual fields of sociolinguistics, literature, gender studies, linguistics, etc. This shows the validity of the attempt to apply the methods and concepts of gender studies, psychology, sociology, etc. to linguistic and literary studies.

At the same time, fiction enables the authors of the article to explore, identify and systematise different gender self-stereotypes. Literature, with its diversity of characters, reflects the existing views, concepts and ideas in society, emphasises the axiological features of thinking, and therefore is eminently suitable for engaging in research on genderlect (Parkhurst, 2018). Literary characters' language manifests the whole spectrum of those, in particular gender-specific, lexical units and expressions that appear to be a means of polarising cultural, psychological and social phenomena in mind and language.

The strategies of verbal behaviour for the expression of self-stereotypical utterances can be clearly traced in the selected works of fiction, using the following methods and approaches: linguistic and cultural analysis for reflecting behaviour patterns that ensure the collective nature of human life through the prism of using genderlect; semantic and syntactic analysis for establishing the relationship of the semantic component with the grammatical structure of the sentence; hermeneutic analysis for interpreting the content of the works of fiction; functional and semantic analysis for revealing the semantic potentials of genderlect self-stereotypes in female speech production; and imagological analysis for highlighting the characters of the novels in terms of their relationship with verbal behaviour within an interdisciplinary approach.

For the selection and interpretation of the excerpts from the novels, the following methodology has been addressed: The first stage of the empirical part of this research includes the method of selection based on contextual and interpretive analysis for compiling a corpus of excerpts. Such an analysis allows us to single out examples of gender-specific vocabulary. The second stage involves the descriptive method, applied with observation and generalisation, resulting in the selection, interpretation and classification of the research material. The third stage consists of linguistic and stylistic analysis, which enables the identification of stylistic devices that represent the characters' speech. This method helps not only highlight the features of the characters but also to explicate their expressiveness. All of those methods have made it possible to classify genderlect self-stereotypes in the dimension of 'women about women'.

The novels for analysis have been selected, first of all, with regard to the attention paid by their authors to the speech of female characters, which reveals the attitude of women towards other women. The writers do not idealise their female characters, instead creating situations in the novels that resemble those in real life. It is noteworthy that regardless of the gender of the authors, the depicted female characters use their own self-stereotypes in speech, which can be explained by the widespread use of such stereotypes in mass consciousness. It is fitting that the selected novels have been analysed to explicate genderlect self-

stereotypes since they include a diverse range of female characters and figures and are written in English by the authors of different ethnic affiliations. This emphasises the multicultural nature of studied concepts and self-stereotypes.

The interpretative range of the selected texts allows linguistic variability in the interpretation of the parameters of the texts, including those related to the gender of characters and gender-specific vocabulary. Translation as a personal (reader's) projection of the text allows specifying the cross-cultural asymmetry of gender categorisation due to characteristics of the events and phenomena in the text. The perceptions of gender stereotypes (self-stereotypes) that have developed in the receiving culture influence the translational conceptualisation of femininity (or masculinity) as a cultural category.

## POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SELF-STEREOTYPING IN WOMEN'S SPEECH

Both positive and negative self-stereotypes seem interesting to explore since they determine a certain expressive evaluation in communication processes. The criteria for classification of genderlect features in female characters' speech, highlighted in the article, demonstrate the complexity of speech production processes in terms of using speech self-stereotypes.

### 1 MARRIAGE

One of the criteria for women's success, as a self-stereotype, includes marriage: 'There followed the multiple miracles of love, marriage, a brilliant career, and happiness' (Rushdie, 2019: 244). By using self-stereotypes, the authors point out that the most popular topic for discussion among women is marital status. Married women speak about single ones expressively with a strongly negative connotation: 'No wonder all those single women kept cats' (Crusie, 2004: 109). This sentence is stereotyped by using the plural 'women' and the negative predicate 'no wonder', which emphasises the widespread prevalence of the idea in culture. Expressiveness and emotional colouring of the sentence are achieved through the pronouns 'all' and 'those', which intensify the negative assessment, implicitly emphasising the idea of prejudice against single women. The exceptions are women who have not become wives due to a private tragedy, for whom the attitude in society is primarily positive: 'By all rights Aunt Gretchen should have been a tragic figure. She'd been engaged three times, and had lost all three fiancés [...] she would never consider marriage again—it was clear she wasn't meant to have a husband' (Kleypas, 2008: 27). In these sentences, the adjective of high probability, 'clear', is of great importance in creating epistemic modality. The right decision is also emphasised by the inverse use of the phrase 'by all rights', which adds an emphatic or dramatic component to the expression. The high degree of empathy is highlighted by the phrase 'a tragic figure' used to describe the character.

Another much discussed topic among women is the change of marital status: 'From what I knew, Vanessa was having a long-distance affair with a guy from Atlanta, and she went to visit him at least once a month' (ibid.: 128). Typically, such messages are expressed as rumours, as emphasised in the subordinate clause, without mentioning the source of information. When discussing relationships, a positive connotation is achieved by mentioning long-term ones, while attitudes towards females in short-term relationships are always mentioned in a negative context. Men are not condemned in such relationships, but rather their dominance over women is stressed: 'You know, men are allowed to leave women they're dating' (Crusie, 2004: 8). Gender self-stereotyping is traced by using the plurals 'men' and 'women' in opposition, without mentioning different views on existing ones. The stereotype about the existence of a men's world is found in the following example: 'BETWEEN THE GODS AND MORTAL MEN and women there hung a veil, and its name was *maya*' (Rushdie, 2019: 332). The author capitalises letters, emphasising two ruling classes (GODS and MEN), where the place of man is below God and women are 'invisible': 'Women are forced into invisibility by men' (ibid.: 289).

Among women, the wealth of men is much discussed. Such utterances mostly take the form of expressive statements: 'She wouldn't tell anyone his name or what he did, but *she had dropped heavy hints* to me that he was extremely rich and powerful, and she had him *wrapped around her finger, of course*' (Kleypas, 2008: 128). This expression is characterised by sarcasm, which is felt in 'she had dropped heavy hints'. In this context, a man is perceived as 'a noddy' that may be wrapped around the finger and a woman as someone with no moral principles. The speaker uses the adverb 'of course', which refers to things that are obvious or already known. There is a stereotype that a woman's sexual (external) attractiveness plays a crucial role for men when choosing a partner; for example, 'Maybe that was why Liza and Bonnie never had man trouble: great hair' (Crusie, 2004: 4). The adverb 'never', as an intensifier of categorisation, emphasises the axiomatic nature of this utterance.

Divorced women are often provoked by female colleagues to feel inferior because of a failed marriage or relationship: 'Because someone with your history of failed relationships could make a huge mess of things' (ibid.: 136). This statement is empathic, but it makes the woman take up a defensive position: 'I ... My history of failed relationships? I'd only had one. One failed marriage' (ibid.: 136). The incomplete utterance indicates the uncertainty of the speaker. It is stereotyped through the indefinite pronoun 'someone'.

## 2 MATERNAL IDENTITY AND EXPERIENCE

Married women, especially those who have children, are quite negative and tough in their speech in reference to single women without children: 'I'm the one to decide what's best for my own daughter, Gretchen. If you know so much about children, you should've one of your own' (Kleypas, 2008: 31). The author uses the definite article 'the' and the pronoun 'one' to emphasise such a stereotype.

The negative connotation is added by the subordinate clause, 'If you know so much about children', to include biting sarcasm. Expressiveness is also manifested in the main clause as advice: 'you should've had one of your own.' This underlines the prevailing opinion in society that a married, childless woman has no right to give advice on another woman's offspring's upbringing.

In turn, single women speak about married ones quite positively, especially about expectant mothers: 'You look gorgeous, I said.' (ibid.: 26). The speaker chooses the non-gradable adjective 'gorgeous' to describe the pregnant woman and underlines that she is very attractive. Positive connotation is achieved through the lexical units to indicate body build characteristics: 'She was a vision of sumptuous curves contained in white lace' (ibid.: 26). The phrase 'sumptuous curves' tends to tolerate a description of a change in body proportions showing pregnancy. The sentence is extended by the expression 'in white lace', which transforms the semantic meaning of this phrase into a metaphoric one.

The delivery of a child, however, is believed to be the main goal of a woman: 'Nobody's complaining, let's get that straight. Children are a blessing, the more the merrier' (Smith, 2000: 63). It is stereotyped by the negative, indefinite pronoun 'nobody'. But happiness cannot be absolute in a single-parent family because 'a family should always try to be together, and children need a father' (Rushdie, 2019: 303). The use of the adverb of frequency 'always' emphasises the idea of the truth of such a statement. But a large number of children in families who are actually unable to provide for their offspring is seen as outrageous: 'Who is going to feed these children? They are always hungry.' (Hemon, 2008: 74). The rhetorical question underscores the absurdity of parents' decisions to have more than one child in such families. Sarcasm is felt in using 'always hungry' as a form of generalisation.

The self-stereotype that women without children cannot be happy and self-sufficient makes others sympathise with them: 'You never married, never had children. Most women would have killed themselves. But not you...' (Bushnell, 2008: 75). It is a stereotypical statement that is manifested through the use of generalisation ('most women'), and expressiveness is conveyed by grammatical means: the elliptical construction 'But not you...' actualises the most significant component of the message. In this case, the author takes into account his own experience and the possible emotional response of the readers, since their 'emotional response to textual reality is always associated with personal experience' (Bezrukov and Bohovyk, 2021: 5).

One example of emphasising the warm relationship towards expectant mothers, which is expressed in the need to care for and protect them, is the following: 'Eat up! Stuff yourself silly! It's in there, wallowing around in your belly, waiting for the menu. Woman, don't torture it! You want to starve the bump?' (Smith, 2000: 63). The sentence fragmentation in the above excerpt emphasises the semantic meaning of the separated units, distinguishing them into independent rhythmic and intonational structures. The adjective 'silly' directs the emotion of dissatisfaction, but without negativising, that can be attributed to gender-preferential linguistic means, i.e., the choice of linguistic means and indicators depending on gender



(Edwards, 2013). The same units are perceived by men and women as having different degrees of positive or negative assessment. In this case, using 'silly' does not contain an offensive connotation but indicates the inexperience of a young woman.

### 3 PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY

There is extensive evidence of gender inequality in the insufficient representation of women in leadership positions (García-González et al., 2019). However, nowadays women are given more opportunities for their career development, which influences a female's self-image as someone who can take on not only the roles of a mother or wife but also be able to achieve noticeable progress in other life fields: 'Of course, there were still women like that, women who believed that the only way a woman could truly define herself was through a husband and children' (Bushnell, 2005: 137). This shows the negative emotional experience of the speaker and the real-life stereotype that only maternity and marriage impact the self-realisation of a woman. The negative connotation is added by the limitation clause 'women who believed' and the gender stereotype through the noun 'woman' with the indefinite article, which indicates all members of the class representatives. A further negative connotation is reached by the adverb 'still' to emphasise that the continuing past situation is not desired nowadays and by the emotional expression markers 'the only way' and 'truly'. This shows a traditional attitude of females towards a described standard behaviour pattern in the past and the rejection of such an approach by modern women.

It is beyond argument that modern women have broad opportunities to build a career, as shown in 'We're modern women. If we have to up and move to Paris for our careers, we do it. It's exciting. How many people get these kinds of opportunities?' (Bushnell, 2005: 188). The author uses in-group favouritism, a pattern of favouring members of one's in-group over out-group members (Aronson et al., 2019: 262), in the form of the pronoun 'we', which creates a kind of stereotyped statement. In the case of stereotype-consistent information, the speakers tend to use language that presents events as stable and dispositional, such as affirmations (Beukeboom et al., 2010: 979). The statement creates a bright, sublime and positive emotional effect by including stereotyped simple sentences: 'We're modern women', 'It's exciting', and the rhetorical question 'How many people get these kinds of opportunities?', where the contextual positive pattern is reached by the word combination 'these kinds of opportunities'.

It is also worth noting that after gaining career opportunities, women are no longer associated with fragile and defenceless figures, but their professional qualities are valued: 'I was very happy, I assured Rora, because she was great, Mary Field was. She was a surgeon who never cried over dead patients' (Hemon, 2008: 23). The author uses the parallel constructions 'I was happy' and 'she was great' to emphasise the professional characteristics of the woman (a surgeon) rather than her personal skills. The adverb 'very' adds emphasis to the adjective 'happy' and appears to be an intensifier, which can be used with negative or positive meanings

depending on the character's language intentions. The notion of a woman's stereotypical behaviour using the categorical statement 'who never cried over dead patients' is somewhat shifted, but, in this case, the writer creates a positive context. Using the adverb 'never' acts as an intensifier of categorisation and emphasises that there is a stereotype that such behaviour is not typical for women.

Women who occupy high positions often treat females superficially and aggressively: "I never realized how naive you are," my [female] boss said. "I hope someday you learn to look at the world with a little more sophistication" (Kleypas, 2008: 265). The sharply negative meaning of the utterance is stressed by the adverb of frequency, 'never', and the adjective 'naive', in relation to an adult, sounds like an accusation of infantilism and stupidity. Pfeiffer (1998: 5) draws attention to the fact that

any high-status person must deal with the hostility of the envious, the stereotyping of the power worshiper, the past experiences with other high-status individuals that people may be generalizing from, and the emotional elements generated by all of these conditions.

In the analysed excerpt, the female boss gives advice to her subordinate regardless of the latter's age or experience, but because of the common stereotype that a leader can act in this way.

The analysis of the selected novels suggests that women today are oppressed by the community regardless of their social or professional status and are often disapproved of by society: 'If you work hard and become successful, society will punish you one way or another. Society punishes women in general. No matter what you do, there's no guarantee you're going to win' (Bushnell, 2005: 298). It is stereotyped by using the personal pronoun 'you' in a general sense and the idiom 'in general' to indicate that the statement is true in most cases, and the modal verb 'will' reinforces the main idea. The author shows that the mentioned attitude of society towards successful women is typical. The negative emotions are shown through the expressive markers 'one way or another' and the intensifier 'hard' to emphasise a high effort to achieve success. The parallel constructions 'work hard' and 'become successful' enhance the positive meaning, however, the verb 'punish' is negative. In the complex sentence 'No matter what you do, there's no guarantee you're going to win', expressiveness is achieved through the cluster 'no matter' as well as the parallel constructions 'no matter' and 'no guarantee'. This helps the readers to guess the female dissatisfaction with the stereotype that a woman is incapable of succeeding on her own despite expended effort; instead, the woman's achievements are denied.

Of particular note are self-stereotypes that relate to a woman's perception of herself in society: 'I'm not one of those women who needs to be rescued all the time' (Kleypas, 2008: 193). The gender stereotype is verbalised by the plural noun 'women'. The female character expresses her negative perception of such a judgement through a three-component cluster, 'one of those', and the demonstrative pronoun 'those'. The contrast of the pronouns 'these' and 'those' creates an intuitive positive-

negative asymmetry. Expressiveness is achieved through the quantifier of regularity ‘all the time’, which stresses the addressee’s irritation at the very fact of such a stereotype in society.

#### 4 AGEISM

A prominent place among self-stereotypes is occupied by the age aspect. Low (2022: 6) writes that ‘one of the main sources of the marital surplus is the production of children, men seeking to capture this value of marriage may seek women young enough to conceive, even as they themselves age’. There is a well-known stereotype that the older women get, the smaller their chances of marrying: ‘Haven’t you gotten married, Lisa? Don’t you know the statistics for a woman over thirty?’ (Kleypas, 2008: 154). Expressiveness is achieved through using the general interrogative sentences as rhetorical ones, which stimulate the reader’s mind by using soliloquy to involve the character speaking their thoughts aloud and actualising the statement expressed by the pronoun ‘you’. It is used to create a more vivid discussion of an object or event that is already known to everyone. This example is stereotyped by using the noun ‘woman’, accompanied by the indefinite article in its meaning of generalisation, and the plural noun ‘statistics’, which is perceived as a marker of a social problem.

In the corpus of examples, the following statements and self-stereotypes to indicate the support of women by female characters are found: ‘a particular type of single women—smart, attractive, successful, and never married. She’s in her late thirties or early forties, and, if empirical knowledge is good for anything, she probably never will get married’ (Bushnell, 2001: 27). The linguistic means of including a gender stereotype is the personal pronoun ‘she’ in the meaning of categorisation and the lexical cluster ‘a particular type’. To describe a single but professionally successful woman, the author chooses adjectives with a positive semantic component, ‘smart’, ‘attractive’, and ‘successful’, resulting in a positive assessment in relation to this category of women.

Women are sensitive communicators and build emotional relationships with one another. Expressing emotion establishes a connection through empathic understanding. One of the women’s characteristics as reactive communicators is that they tend to apologise more in order to show their empathy: “OK, Auntie Alsi, I apologize, I apologize... For fuck’s sake, what more do you want?” “Oh, every-bloody-thing,” [...] “The whole bloody universe made clear—in a little nutshell” (Smith, 2000: 67).

Obscenities, like in the excerpt above, are indispensable when the author wants to achieve or convey high expressiveness, for example, ‘For fuck’s sake’ or ‘bloody’. The main function of so-called *bad words*, as Burgen (2001: 27) asserts, is to reinforce the meaning of what is said, as offensive language is internally endowed with certain energy and has a huge expression that is hidden in short verbal forms. Among the above, profane language has a unique bipolarity, especially when it comes to obscene vocabulary; that is, the ability to convey either extremely negative or positive emotions. Generalisation is achieved by using ‘the whole universe’, which is perceived as an axiomatic statement.

## 5 HARASSMENT

One of the topics that has received comprehensive coverage in fiction is harassment. In this regard, examples like the following show the stereotype that every female victim poses to be treated aggressively because of her foible: ‘abusers choose women they can easily manipulate—they have a kind of radar for it. Like, if you filled the Astrodome with people and put one abusive man and one vulnerable woman in there, they’d find each other’ (Kleypas, 2008: 90). The female character notes that she has read but not heard about such an opinion that weighs her words, as people usually have the belief that the printed word is more valuable than the spoken one. The gender-neutral, indefinite pronoun ‘one’ does not refer to a male or female and indicates the stereotypical thinking of the addressee. The autonomous use of the marginal words ‘abusive’ and ‘vulnerable’ produces a negative effect on both men and women.

Attention should also be given to the fact that female psychologists support the female victim of the circumstances and act as advisors to resolve their problems: ‘It’s sad to think about what kind of abuse or neglect might have made him that way. But the end result is that Nick is who he is.’ (ibid.: 93). The female psychotherapist convinces the woman who is raped and beaten by her own husband that she is not to blame because ‘Nick is who he is’, and then adds that the treatment of patients like the character’s husband ‘only results in massive frustration and [is] a waste of time’ (ibid.: 93). The expert points out that this way of thinking was quite common in the past: ‘Victims of abuse were often burdened with the so-called responsibility of forgiving, even rehabilitating, their tormentors’ (ibid.: 94). However, this does not work in the modern world. The expected public image of women who have been victims of abuse is indicated by using the adverb of frequency ‘often’. The adjective ‘so-called’ shows that the mentioned idea is unsuitable or incorrect and alleges there is something the speaker is not sure is true, adding a negative connotation to the spoken.

There are vivid examples showing women’s courage and their desire to leave the comfort zone: ‘What most women thought “the rules” were simply precepts to keep women in their place. “Nice” was a comfortable, reassuring box where society told women if they stayed, they would be safe’ (Bushnell, 2005: 133). This sentence is stereotyped by using the generalisation ‘most women’. The negative connotation is reached by the general attitude of society towards women, the essence of which is embedded in the three words ‘church, kitchen, children’ or, as it is described by the German fixed expression illustrating basic ideas about the social role of women, in three K’s: ‘Kinder, Küche, Kirche’. Modern successful women disprove such an attitude towards themselves, and the character underlines her negative perception of such a phenomenon that hinders women’s self-realisation. At the level of grammar, expressiveness is achieved through the use of *wh-cleft sentences* (Lambrecht, 2001: 468). The quoted plural noun ‘rules’ and the adjective ‘nice’ emphasise the negative meaning of the sentence since quotation marks may be used to indicate irony, inaccuracy or scepticism (Carey, 2014: para 2). These marks

are also called *scare quotes*, which Barrett (2019: para 4) recommends using for paying special attention to understanding such words in a negative or opposite way. They stress the psychic nature of language and its diverse modes of expression (Hartmann and Veenstra, 2013; Amir, 2018).

The brightest illustration of women's support is female unification in ending gender-based violence. In such an 'association', the male model is especially disapproved of: "Look at him," [...] "he take everything, capisce? He take-a her mind, he take-a the blender, he take-a the old stereo—he take-a everything except the floorboards. It make-a you sick..." (Smith, 2000: 9). The husband leaves his wife and takes some jointly acquired property, but the women he meets in the yard discourage the male's behaviour and express support for their female friend. It is stereotyped due to using the personal pronoun 'he' in a generalising way. The female character concludes that the mentioned man cannot be relied on and, therefore, receives a negative assessment.

A special, humorous effect is achieved by using zeugma: 'He take-a her mind, he take-a the blender, he take-a the old stereo—he take-a everything except the floorboards' (ibid.: 9). The woman's support can be traced in the continuation of the dialogue, where the female character in the following quote believes that the man does not burden himself with responsibility for his actions, which irritates the female speakers: 'It's disgusting, you don't have to tell me, it's disgusting... and naturally, we're the ones left to sort out the mess; it's this idiot here who has to' (ibid.: 9). The positive attitude of the woman towards the abandoned wife is actualised through a negative attitude towards the man. The taboo word 'idiot' evokes an emotional and negative perception.

The selected novels also show examples of young girls experiencing sexual violence from their close relatives that is considered a shame and therefore hidden from others: 'There is grave danger to family member or members, but we hide them. We think of them as our shame, and we conceal' (Rushdie, 2019: 303). Generalisation through the pronoun 'we' indicates that such an idea undoubtedly exists in a particular society and, therefore, is not perceived as an exception. The direct speech is written in italics and forces the readers to pay attention to the contained information, as 'by distinguishing some units, parts of a sentence, and sometimes whole sentences, the author puts additional meanings into the context' (Bezrukov and Bohovyk, 2021: 4).

## CONCLUSION

Female speech, characterised by self-stereotypes, expresses a common tendency to use fixed speech patterns. The cultural context modifies verbal behaviour and emphasises the ways of perception and assimilation of the surrounding reality concepts through appropriate utterances. Stereotypes about the way women talk grow out of knowledge of non-linguistic, societally assigned sex role traits and of linguistic correlates of those traits. The analysis of the analysed group's utterances

on the subject of language means, used for the representation of gender stereotypes, shows that the females' speech is expressive and evaluative.

The research has been carried out within the framework of an interdisciplinary approach to genderlect manifestations. Language material indicates the representation of genderlect self-stereotypes through grammatical, lexical and semantic means. The expressive and evaluative components of the utterances of women about women conclude that positive assessment is mostly expressed through generalisation and negative assessment is verbalised through specific and attributive vocabulary. Fictional discourse through the prism of gender studies provides the most representative speech self-stereotypes. Genderlect is considered a product of socialisation, including gender, and a key tool for reconstructing a linguistic worldview.

The expression of genderlect self-stereotypes in the selected novels, which contain a wide range of female verbal behaviour patterns and sociocultural features and are written in English by the authors of different ethnic affiliations, transparently demonstrates the multicultural nature of the studied concepts and self-stereotypes and lets them extend beyond national borders. This shows the popularity of genderlect units, which can be found in the speech of literary characters with different views, ideas and cultural requirements.

Self-stereotyping is achieved through prioritising relations between speakers of the same sex. The developed classification of the criteria of genderlect self-stereotype polarisation in female characters' speech is of great interest and deserves further research. The presented classification can serve as the basis for the further development of a classification of genderlect self-stereotypes in the dimension of 'men about men'. A comparative analysis of classification criteria will reveal similarities and differences in the speech of both sexes in fictional discourse. The study also offers a model that can be implemented in the study of other works of fiction. It can be further developed on the basis of more extensive studies, including other languages, works from different epochs and cultures, etc.

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