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THE USE OF GENDER-MARKED
AND GENDER-NEUTRAL FORMS:
THE IMPORTANCE OF LINGUISTIC CORPORA
IN INCREASING THE LINGUISTIC AWARENESS
OF L2 LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to argue that large online language corpora, such as the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Global Web-based English (GloWbE) can be used as the means of sensitizing advanced L2 learners of English to the phenomenon of political correctness and gender-inclusive language. Some corpus-based activities which can help learners to achieve this goal will be presented.

The layout of the paper is as follows. It is pointed out in Section 1 that language teaching involves teaching culture and developing intercultural communicative competence. Consequently, students of English as a foreign language should become familiarized with the phenomenon of political correctness, as illustrated by the tendency to avoid gender-marked forms in English occupational terms. Examples of English politically incorrect and politically correct job titles are provided. Ways of forming feminine occupational terms in English are also mentioned. Some observations are made on the presence or absence of comments accompanying gender-specific occupational terms in selected online dictionaries of English.

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I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers and Gabriele Knappe for their insightful comments on an earlier version of this article.

In Section 2 it is argued that large corpora of the English language, such as COCA and the BNC, can be employed by the teacher to make advanced learners of English aware of the importance of gender-inclusive language. Excerpts from COCA and the BNC containing gender-marked occupational terms can also be discussed in class, in order to identify the reasons for the occurrence of gender-specific forms.

Section 3 focuses on the existence of some differences in the usage of gender-marked job names in varieties of English spoken in the Inner Circle countries (such as the United States of America or the United Kingdom) and in the Outer Circle countries (e.g., India or Pakistan). Those differences are exemplified by data from GloWbE and they testify to the linguistic and cultural diversity of English spoken as an official language around the world.

1. TEACHING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE: TEACHING GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN ENGLISH

As has been observed in the literature on second language acquisition or foreign language learning (see, among others, Byrnes, 2010; Piasecka, 2011; Sercu et al., 2005), culture should play an integral role in English language teaching. Successful communication in a foreign (or second) language requires intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997; Hoff, 2020; López-Rocha, 2016), which can be defined as “the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language” (Byram, 1997, p. 71).

According to Hall (1976), culture can be compared to an iceberg, only part of which is visible above the waterline. External (i.e., surface) culture subsumes elements (such as behaviours, traditions, customs, food) which are conscious, explicitly learnt and easily observable with touch, smell or sound. Internal (i.e., deep) culture involves elements which are difficult to observe, unconscious, implicitly learnt and difficult to change, e.g., beliefs, values, perceptions and attitudes.

The awareness of the importance of political correctness (which may be viewed as an element of internal culture) seems to be indispensable for learners of English as a foreign/second language in order for them to communicate efficiently and to understand cultural tendencies.

Awareness is an ability to reflect on language functions (Komorowska, 2014, p. 7). According to Swain (1985), language awareness correlates with higher levels of language proficiency. This paper focuses on the ways of raising linguistic awareness of advanced learners of English, as exemplified by BA and MA students of English philology in Poland.

Political correctness is defined in the Collins English Dictionary as “the attitude or policy of being extremely careful not to offend or upset any group of people in society who have a disadvantage, or who have been treated differently because of their sex, gender, race, or disability”.¹

It is manifested in the avoidance of gender-marked forms which may be perceived as excluding or insulting members of the other sex.

The feminist linguistic reform began in 1970s in the United States of America. It involved, among others, changing traditional terms of address for women (such as *Mrs* or *Miss* which depend on women’s marital status) and avoiding the generic use of masculine forms, e.g., rejecting the use of *he* and *his* with reference to a man or a woman in sentences such as *Someone has left his umbrella in the classroom* or *Nobody knows what will happen to him in the future* (Pauwels, 2003).

The anti-sexist reform affected also names of professions and positions. Supporters of feminine language campaign (Hellinger, 2001; Romaine, 2001) argue that the unjustified use of English job titles containing the morpheme *-man* or *-master*, such as *chairman*, *postman*, *mailman*, or *headmaster*, implies that male employees are the norm, hence females are excluded. Moreover, when speakers employ feminine job titles, such as *headmistress*, *stewardess*, *woman driver*, and *lady teacher*, they may suggest that females generally show poor work performance, and therefore distinct occupational terms need to be used to refer to them.

In languages with notional (or covert) gender, such as English, the avoidance of sexist language may be achieved by using gender-neutral forms. For instance, *chairman* can be replaced by *chairperson* or *chair*, *stewardess* by *flight attendant*, and *postman/mailman* by *mail carrier*, *letter carrier* or *courier*. The gender-neutral (hence gender-inclusive) compound *head teacher* should be preferred to *headmaster* or *headmistress*, and the gender-specific lexeme *woman* or *lady* should be omitted (if there is no need to explicitly designate the sex of the referent). In languages with grammatical gender, such as German or Slavonic languages, (masculine) gender bias may be avoided by using female occupational terms next to male occupational terms, e.g., *Studenten und Studentinnen* ‘(male) students and female students’, *Lehrer/Lehrerin* ‘teacher’, *Fahrer(in)* ‘driver’ in German (Sczesny et al., 2016).

Gender-inclusive language is recommended by the United Nations and the European Parliament. Although Poland is a member of the European Union, the social awareness of political correctness among Poles is rather low, as is observed

¹ According to Roper (2023), the term “political correctness” refers to language “that seems intended to give the least amount of offense, especially when describing groups identified by external markers such as race, gender, culture, or sexual orientation”.

by Koniuszanec and Błaszowska (2003); also by Karwatowska and Szpyra-Kozłowska (2005). Many native speakers of Polish regard masculine occupational nouns as “gender neutral”. They protest against the formation and use of novel feminine names of jobs and positions in Polish, such as *ministra* ‘female minister’, *dziekana* ‘female dean’ or *kierowczyni* ‘female driver’ (see Bloch-Trojnar, 2015; and Kielkiewicz-Janowiak, 2019 for more discussion). It should be added that similar resistance to the introduction of new feminine job titles has been observed in, among others, the Italian language (Sabatini, 1985; Marcato & Thüne, 2002) and Spanish (Nissen, 2022). Therefore, it seems important to raise the awareness of political correctness among learners of English in Poland, as well as in other European countries.

Some information about politically correct and politically incorrect English occupational terms can be found in comprehensive dictionaries of the English language. As far as occupational nouns with the feminine suffix *-ess* are concerned, the online Merriam-Webster dictionary marks *authoress* ‘a woman or girl who is an author’ as “somewhat old-fashioned” whereas the dictionary entries for *poetess* ‘a girl or woman who is a poet’ and *editress* ‘female editor’ contain no comments on their usage. In contrast, the Collins English Dictionary marks the word *editress* ‘female editor’ as old-fashioned and adds the following remark in the entry for *poetess*: “Most female poets prefer to be called poets.”

While the usage of suffixed female forms (such as *authoress*) is undesirable, native speakers or advanced learners of English have other means of forming feminine occupational terms at their disposal, such as the coining of compounds with the combining form *-woman* (as in *spokeswoman*), the use of the gender-specific words as compound modifiers (e.g., *woman*, *lady*, *girl*) and the use of the attributive adjective *female*. The online Collins English Dictionary (in the entry for *lady*) and the online Merriam-Webster dictionary (in the notes on female forms) warn against the usage of *lady* as a modifier or a head element in names of jobs, such as *lady artist*, *lady doctor*, *cleaning lady* and *saleslady*. Such statements echo the views expressed by Robin Lakoff fifty years ago:

For at least some speakers, the more demeaning the job, the more the person holding it (if female, of course) is likely to be described as a lady. Thus, *cleaning lady* is at least as common as *cleaning woman*, *saleslady* as *saleswoman*. But one says, normally, *woman doctor*. To say *lady doctor* is to be very condescending: it constitutes an insult. (Lakoff, 1973, p. 59)

Therefore, the occurrence of *lady* in occupational terms may be perceived as offensive or condescending, especially by speakers of American English (Garner, 2016, p. 548).

Students of English as a foreign language may find it difficult to predict whether *woman* or *female* should be selected as modifiers in gender-marked names of jobs and positions. York (2014) observes that the use of *female* (as in *female writer* or *female doctor*) is recommended by the style guide of the *Guardian* whereas reporters from another British newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph*, tend to use the gender-specific word *woman* (as in *woman writer* and *woman doctor*). Robb (2014) interviews some well-known American or British women linguists on the choice between *woman* and *female* in feminine job titles. Robin Lakoff finds both *woman doctor* and *female doctor* to be old-fashioned since she regards the reference to gender to be unnecessary. Deborah Tannen and Lynne Murphy prefer the modifier *woman* and they point out that *female* in *female writer* sounds too biological. In their opinion, it seems to describe an animal, rather than a human being. And yet is it *female* which is recommended in *Garner's Modern English Usage*. Garner (2016, p. 382) states that “*woman* is sometimes used attributively where *female* would be more natural <a woman lawyer>”.

When deciding on what word combinations to employ, advanced learners of English have one powerful tool at their disposal, namely large and representative online corpora of the English language.

In the next section it will be shown how COCA and the BNC can be used by advanced students of English to increase their sensitivity to gender-exclusive and gender-neutral language.

2. SEARCHING FOR GENDER-MARKED FORMS IN COCA AND BNC

Online corpora of the English language can provide advanced students of English with more information about whether sex-specific occupational terms occur in English and if so, which of those forms and under what conditions should be employed.

Learners of English will find two online corpora particularly useful: the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), available at <https://www.english-corpora.org> (and previously known as part of the BYU corpora). The Corpus of Contemporary American English is the largest freely accessible and representative (balanced) corpus of English. It contains 1 billion words of text (including 24–25 million words for each year 1990–2019). COCA contains texts representing spoken English, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts. In March 2020 the corpus was expanded to cover three new genres: blogs, other web pages, and TV/movie subtitles.

The British National Corpus contains 100 million words and was originally created by the Oxford University Press. It is a balanced collection of written and spoken texts from 1980s until 1993 which represent various genres, such as fiction, newspapers, commerce, biography, conversation, interview etc.

Classroom activities which involve the discussion of corpus data allow advanced learners of English to find out by themselves what is the standard practice in using feminine job titles in the language they intend to master. These activities represent data-driven learning and they enhance learners' autonomy (Johns, 1991; Boulton & Vyatkina, 2021).²

The first corpus-based activity which can be given to BA or MA students of English philology in a morphology class, or in a linguistics seminar, is the study of the frequency of gender-marked forms referring to female drivers in the BNC and COCA. Students can be asked to compare the occurrence of the expressions *woman driver* (pl. *women drivers*), *female driver(s)* and *lady driver(s)*. The quantitative results are given in Table 1. The count for the plural forms of *woman driver* in the BNC includes one example of a non-standard plural, i.e., *woman drivers*.

Table 1

Number of Hits for Woman Driver, Female Driver and Lady Driver (in the Singular and Plural Forms)

	BNC			COCA		
	sg	pl	all	sg	pl	all
woman driver/women drivers	24	28	52	34	47	81
female driver/female drivers	3	0	3	68	34	102
lady driver/lady drivers	8	1	9	19	2	21

As the data above indicate, the compound *woman driver* is employed in the BNC more often than the noun phrase with the attributive adjective, i.e., *female driver*. A different preference is shown in COCA, in which there are more occurrences of the gendered-marked forms with the adjective *female*.

The compound *lady driver* appears less frequently than the two remaining gender-marked expressions mentioned in Table 1. Since the modifier *lady* in occupational terms may be regarded as offensive, as stated by Lakoff (1973), the next task that may be given to students is to find out if the sentences from the two corpora indicate a negative assessment of the referents of the compound *lady driver(s)*. The examples in (1) confirm Lakoff's observation.

² Malicka-Kleparska (2023) argues that students can expand their grammatical competence (e.g., the use of the passive voice in English) as a result of corpus-based activities.

- (1) a. What do you get when you cross a lady driver with a Viet Cong? A hundred thousand senseless deaths. (COCA)
 b. “Lady driver,” one of the men mutters under his breath. (COCA)
 c. It might be a lady driver with a couple of children in the car, again doing her incompetent best. (BNC)

If students look at the corpus data carefully, they may observe that the appositive compound *woman driver* (and its plural *women drivers*) can have pejorative connotations, as is (2).

- (2) a. Stupid women drivers! (COCA)
 b. I might have known, a woman driver talking on her bloody car phone. (COCA)

Nevertheless, inquisitive learners may point out that in the majority³ of other sentences in those two corpora, the gender-specific forms *woman driver* and *women drivers* are not used offensively or condescendingly.

Female job names may be employed (with no negative overtones) when an overt or implied contrast is made between male and female referents. Relevant excerpts from COCA (e.g., 3a, 3b) can be given as confirmation of the principle of symmetry which states that—in gender-fair language—feminine forms should be avoided where no parallel male forms would be used (Hellinger, 2001, p. 10). Sentence (3b) shows the infrequent occurrence of the compound *men drivers*, which is juxtaposed with *women drivers*. A more common way of signalling the masculine gender⁴ of a driver is by using the adjective *male*, as in (3c). Sentences (3c) and (3d) exemplify a covert contrast between feminine and masculine forms. The criticism in (3c) does not apply to female drivers while the warning message in (3d) is not directed to male drivers.

- (3) a. Some men can be less aggressive than the average for women drivers. (COCA)
 b. I like to think that women drivers are more composed than men drivers, since there have been several times where men drivers have scared me to death. (COCA)
 c. Unsafe drivers, in particular, accepted that every male driver would at some time do something risky. (BNC)
 d. Detectives are warning lone women drivers to be on their guard after a 21-year-old woman was abducted in Manchester. (BNC)

³ In the BNC 7 out of 52 instances of *woman driver/women drivers* may carry some weak negative implications since their sentential context suggests that a woman is incompetent as a driver. In COCA 17 out of 81 occurrences of *woman driver/women drivers* occur in sentences containing sexist clichés or describing situations when a woman driver lost control of her car.

⁴ There are 3 hits for *men drivers* in COCA and no hits in the BNC. The expression *male driver* (sg) is instantiated by 4 occurrences and *male drivers* (pl) by 9 occurrences in the BNC. There appear 47 examples of *male driver* and 40 examples of *male drivers* in COCA.

Another reason why native speakers may decide to use gender-marked forms is when the specification of gender is regarded as part of the description of an individual (besides from other features, such as age, nationality, figure, or clothes).

- (4) a. The green minivan had been behind them since Ellsworth, a young woman driver with two kids in the back. (COCA)
 b. The woman driver of the hired van who's British ... (BNC)
 c. ... the Tahitian bare-chested male driver, bedecked with one large shell at his throat, casual shorts. (COCA)

Another set of gender-marked and gender-neutral forms to be examined by advanced learners of English includes the forms *waiter*, *waitress* and *waitperson*. Students can be asked to count the number of the occurrences of the sex-specific occupational noun *waitress* (or its plural form *waitresses*) in the BNC and COCA and compare it to the frequency of the gender-neutral lexemes *waiter* and *waitperson*.

Table 2

Number of Hits in the BNC and COCA for the Lexemes Waitress, Waiter and Waitperson (Singular and Plural Forms)

	BNC			COCA		
	sg	pl	all	sg	pl	all
waitress/waitresses	270	72	342	6921	1358	8279
waiter/waiters	672	233	905	6602	2356	8958
waitperson/waitpersons/waitpeople	0	0	0	18	6	24

In the BNC there are nearly three times as many occurrences of the gender-neutral lexeme *waiter* as the occurrences of the gender-marked lexeme *waitress*.⁵ The lexeme *waiter* is slightly more common than *waitress* in COCA when we take all their inflectional forms into account. The difference between the hits for both lexemes in COCA is more noticeable in the plural form, which may suggest that *waiters* is the form employed here often in the generic usage. Consequently, students can be asked to determine if *waiter* and *waiters* function as gender-specific male forms or as gender-neutral lexemes in COCA. The sentences in (5a, 5b) confirm the latter (i.e., gender-neutral and generic) usage of *waiter(s)*. The sen-

⁵ There are no occurrences of *woman waiter* and *lady waiter* in the BNC and COCA. As for the attributive adjective *female*, it precedes *waiter* in 3 phrases in COCA but no examples of the expression *female waiter* can be found in the BNC.

tence in (5c), though, shows that *waiter* can be interpreted as a masculine form and contrasted with *waitress*.⁶

- (5) a. Maria was taken to a restaurant, where she was obliged to work as a waiter for a month. (COCA)
 b. A minority of those rich and/or socially assured would order waiters around like serfs and peasants. (COCA)
 c. Your average polite American will look the waiter or waitress in the eye. (COCA)

The lexeme which undoubtedly functions as gender-neutral is the politically correct form *waitperson*. Some examples from COCA are provided in (6). Students can notice that both *waitpeople* (2 hits) and *waitpersons* (4 hits) occur as the plural forms.

- (6) a. I am confronted with a late train, a rescheduled flight, or an incompetent waitperson.
 b. ... cooks, dishwashers, food handlers, and waitpersons in restaurants owned by multimillionaires.
 c. ... had a glass of wine, and enjoyed the music. The waitpeople did a good job of circulating.

A search in the BNC brings no instances of *waitperson* or its plural forms. What is the reason for this contrast between the BNC and COCA? This may be formulated as the next query that advanced students of English need to attend to.⁷ One possible answer is the difference in the size of the BNC and COCA, which influences results of searches for particular words or expressions. Another reason is the difference in the time periods for which the texts were collected in both corpora. The BNC is an older corpus, representing texts from 1980s up to 1993. The texts in COCA show a larger time frame—from 1993 until at least 2019. Although Merriam-Webster's dictionary mentions 1972 as the first known use of *waitperson*, it can be assumed that this lexeme gained popularity gradually (at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty first century). The lack of the gender-neutral word *waitperson* in the BNC may also be due to the fact that the linguistic feminist action (directed against linguistic sexism) began in the United States, with the United Kingdom and other English-speaking countries following their lead with some lag time.

⁶ Some cross-linguistic observations on gender-indefinite and gender-specific interpretation of masculine personal nouns can be found in Doleschal (2015).

⁷ Additionally, students can search for other politically correct gender-neutral lexemes with the morpheme *-person* in the BNC and COCA, such as *chairperson*, *craftsperson*, *draftsperson*, or *salesperson*.

3. *LADY* + NOUN COMPOUNDS IN NON-NATIVE VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

The next issue that can be discussed with students on the basis of the corpus data is the use of politically incorrect female profession names with the modifier *lady* in non-native varieties of English.

Kachru (1991), when describing the spread of English, drew the distinction between three concentric circles of the language, involving three different types of users. For the majority of users from the Inner Circle, English functions as a native language. The Inner Circle countries are the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. In the case of countries from the Outer Circle (such as, among others, India, Pakistan, Zambia, Nigeria or Jamaica, which were colonized by the British Empire) English is not a native tongue for the majority of population but it plays an important official and institutional role (for instance in education, the judiciary system and national commerce). In the Expanding Circle countries (e.g., China, Japan, or Egypt) English plays no official role but is taught as an important foreign language and is widely used for international communication.

It is possible to examine some differences between the Englishes spoken in the Inner Circle and the Outer Circle countries by using the corpus of Global Web-based English (GloWbE). The corpus was released in 2013 and it contains 1.9 billion words from 1.8 million web pages from twenty countries. The names of those countries are represented by the following abbreviations (used in Tables 3–6 below, which are based on screenshots of GloWbE): US—United States, CA—Canada, GB—Great Britain, IE—Ireland, AU—Australia, NZ—New Zealand, IN—India, LK—Sri Lanka, PK—Pakistan, BD—Bangladesh, SG—Singapore, MY—Malaysia, PH—Philippines, HK—Hong Kong, ZA—South Africa, NG—Nigeria, GH—Ghana, KE—Kenya, TZ—Tanzania, and JM—Jamaica.

Students can be instructed to carry out a search in GloWbE for selected combinations with the modifier *lady*. For instance, there are 47 hits for *lady teacher* (in the singular form), the majority of which are attested in the non-native varieties of English (i.e., the Outer Circle countries).

Table 3

Hits for Lady Teacher (sg) in GloWbE

	ALL	US	CA	GB	IE	AU	NZ	IN	LK	PK	BD	SG	MY	PH	HK	ZA	NG	GH	KE	TZ	JM	
LADY TEACHER	47	1		5	3			11	14	3	1		2	3	1						1	2

A search for the plural form *lady teachers* brings similar results, i.e., the prevalent occurrence of the politically incorrect expression in the “non-core” (i.e., the Outer Circle) countries.

Table 4

Hits for Lady Teachers (pl) in GloWbE

	ALL	US	CA	GB	IE	AU	NZ	IN	LK	PK	BD	SG	MY	PH	HK	ZA	NG	GH	KE	TZ	JM	
LADY TEACHERS	25		2	2	1		1	14	3				2									

Some examples from the varieties of English spoken in India (IN), Philippines (PH) and Sri Lanka (LK) are provided below in (7).

- (7) a. Asian Tribune: I was acting for a lady teacher who went on maternity leave and I was there for 9 months. (LK)
 b. Recently, a lady teacher from the Philippines wanted to visit her friends in Malaysia. (PH)
 c. ... presently we have eight priests and one lady teacher as full time faculty members in the seminary. (IN)
 d. In mountain regions lady teachers find the tough life difficult to adjust to ... (IN)

Advanced learners of English may find out that sentences such as those in (7) in GloWbE do not express a negative attitude towards the referents of *lady teacher(s)*. The female forms are used because speakers regard it as important to signal the gender of the teacher(s).

The next task given to advanced learners of English may be the examination of the occurrences of *lady doctor* in GloWbE.

As shown in Table 5, the compound *lady doctor* (in the singular form) appears 109 times in GloWbE. The majority of the attestations can be associated with South Asian English. There are also quite numerous examples which represent English spoken in Great Britain. This supports the view expressed by Romaine (2001, p. 159) concerning the slower implementation of non-sexist language reform in British English than in American English.

Table 5

Hits for Lady Doctor (sg) in GloWbE

	ALL	US	CA	GB	IE	AU	NZ	IN	LK	PK	BD	SG	MY	PH	HK	ZA	NG	GH	KE	TZ	JM
LADY DOCTOR	109	7		26	8	5		11	5	20	3	5	4	4	1			2	3	2	3

The higher frequency of this compound in non-native varieties is manifested more visibly in the case of its plural form (i.e., *lady doctors*) in Table 6. Nearly half of all the attestations (13 out of 27) come from Pakistani English.

Table 6

Hits for Lady Doctors (pl) in GloWbE

	ALL	US	CA	GB	IE	AU	NZ	IN	LK	PK	BD	SG	MY	PH	HK	ZA	NG	GH	KE	TZ	JM
LADY DOCTORS	27			4	1			5	2	13			1							1	

In (8) examples are given of sentences containing *lady doctor(s)* selected from various sections of GloWbE, mainly from Indian and Pakistani English.

- (8) a. A lady doctor is now a norm rather than an oddity and teachers are predominantly women. (IN)
 b. She became the First Lady Doctor to ever receive a Sword of Honour in the history of the Indian Armed Forces. (IN)
 c. ... with the former eventually becoming one of the first two lady doctors in the British Empire. (GB)
 d. Is it permissible for a lady doctor to treat general cases in which she has to touch Na-mahram men? (PK)
 e. ... ladies should not go to male doctors and men should not go to lady doctors for treatment. (PK)
 f. ... thank God, visiting lady doctors by men has not yet been declared un-Islamic and turned into a cognizable offence under some penal code. (PK)

The compound *lady doctor* appears in (8) in contexts in which we could find *woman doctor* and *female doctor* in COCA or the BNC, as students can check for themselves (see also Cetnarowska, 2017). There is either a covert or overt contrast between the female-marked forms (i.e., *lady doctor*) and the male individuals, for instance the contrast between male and female doctors in (8a–c) or female doctors and male patients in (8d–f). The last three examples in (8) emphasize the importance of cultural and religious factors in signalling the gender of a physician, especially in Islamic countries. They indicate multiculturalism in the English speaking countries. They also show that speakers in the Outer Circle countries may use expressions which are avoided and regarded as offensive or old-fashioned⁸ in the Inner Circle countries.

⁸ See “old-fashioned” as a label for *lady doctor* in the Collins English Dictionary.

CONCLUSION

Large language corpora can be used as a tool in raising the linguistic awareness of advanced L2 learners of English. Learners need to be more sensitive to the influence of political correctness on the usage of gender-marked and gender-neutral occupational terms in the contemporary English language. Some corpus-based activities by means of which this aim can be achieved were described in this article. It was suggested that students of English can compare the occurrence of sex-specific occupational terms with the modifiers *female* and *woman* (such as *woman driver* and *female driver*) in the BNC and COCA to assess which of those modifiers is used more frequently in the British and the American varieties of English. Another corpus-based activity may lead to the identification of contexts in which native speakers decide to use gender-marked forms in the BNC and COCA, although prescriptive sources (e.g., Garner, 2016) generally recommend the use of gender-neutral language. The study of corpus examples from non-native varieties of English is possible due to the existence of corpora such as GloWbE, which contains data from 20 varieties of English (including those from the Inner Circle countries as well as the Outer Circle countries). The data from GloWbE show that the need to specify the gender of the person associated with a particular profession may follow from cultural and religious requirements in non-native varieties of English, such as Indian English and Pakistani English. By examining various examples of occupational terms with the modifier *lady* in GloWbE, students of English can find out that in South Asian English expressions such as *lady doctor* or *lady teacher* do not carry pejorative connotations, in contrast to what is observed in the native varieties of English (as is pointed out by Lakoff and Garner). Moreover, while *lady teacher* or *lady doctor* are mentioned in the comprehensive dictionaries of English as old-fashioned, they are attested in GloWbE in subcorpora representing British English, as well as English spoken in the Outer Circle countries. This could confirm the observation made by Garner (2016, p. xii) that American English is now setting the tone and other varieties of English are following the changes occurring in American English, usually with a lag time of 10 to 50 years. Thus, political correctness has greater influence on the vocabulary concerning occupational terms in American English than in British English or non-native varieties of English.

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THE USE OF GENDER-MARKED AND GENDER-NEUTRAL FORMS:
THE IMPORTANCE OF LINGUISTIC CORPORA
IN INCREASING THE LINGUISTIC AWARENESS
OF L2 LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

S u m m a r y

This paper discusses some corpus-based activities which can be used to increase the sensitivity of advanced L2 learners of English to the constraints on the occurrence of gender-marked forms in English. Guidelines for gender-inclusive language recommend replacing gender-specific job titles, such as *fireman/firewoman*, with gender-neutral nouns, i.e. *firefighter*. By investigating examples gleaned from the Corpus of Contemporary American English and the British National Corpus, learners of English can identify the conditions under which gender-specific forms may be employed. They can also see which type of gender-marked forms occurs more commonly in each of those corpora (e.g., *woman driver* or *female driver*). A further online corpus known as Global Web-Based English can be used with advanced L2 learners of English as a source of data indicating different attitudes towards gender-marked forms in native and non-native varieties of English, as can be shown for occupational terms with the modifier *lady*.

Keywords: occupational terms; corpus; English; gender-marking; gender-neutral forms

UŻYCIE FORM NACECHOWANYCH I NEUTRALNYCH PŁCIOWO:
ZNACZENIE KORPUSÓW JĘZYKOWYCH
W PODNOSZENIU ŚWIADOMOŚCI JĘZYKOWEJ
UCZĄCYCH SIĘ ANGIELSKIEGO JAKO JĘZYKA OBCEGO

S t r e s z c z e n i e

W artykule przedstawiono sposoby wykorzystania (w trakcie zajęć z osobami uczącymi się języka angielskiego na poziomie zaawansowanym) korpusów językowych do porównania angielskich nazw zawodów zawierających znaczniki męskości lub żeńskości z wyrażeniami, które, zgodnie z zasadami poprawności politycznej, nie wskazują na płeć wykonawcy czynności. Omówiono kilka propozycji zadań polegających m.in. na określeniu częstości występowania wybranych nazw nacechowanych płciowo oraz ich neutralnych płciowo odpowiedników w British National Corpus i Corpus of Contemporary American English, a także na ocenie, które z synonimicznych femina-

tywów są preferowane przez użytkowników brytyjskiej lub amerykańskiej odmiany angielszczyzny. Studenci mogą samodzielnie zidentyfikować konteksty składniowe i sytuacyjne, w których rodzimy użytkownik język angielskiego uznał użycie form nacechowanych płciowo za zasadne. Kolejną kwestią do dyskusji podczas zajęć, na podstawie materiału pochodzącego z korpusu Global Web-Based English, mogą być różnice w użyciu języka o znamionach seksizmu w geograficznie oraz kulturowo oddalonych odmianach języka angielskiego.

Słowa kluczowe: nazwy zawodów; język angielski; korpus językowy; formy nacechowane płciowo; formy neutralne płciowo