

THE SEXIST LANGUAGE IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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Articolul „Limbajul sexist în discursul politic” reprezintă o cercetare a discursurilor politice în vederea depistării limbajului politic incorect și, mai cu seamă, a utilizării derogatorii a termenilor generici în limba engleză, și o încercare de a găsi termeni și expresii alternative, atât în articolele analizate, cât și în alte surse, pentru a substitui utilizările incorecte.

Some of the most important linguistic changes affecting English since the 1960s have arisen from the way society has come to look differently at the practices and consequences of sexism. There is now a widespread awareness, which was lacking a generation ago, of the way in which language covertly displays social attitudes towards men and women. The criticisms have been mainly directed at the biases built into English vocabulary and grammar which reflect a traditionally male-orientated view of the world, and which have been interpreted as reinforcing the low status of women in society. All of the main European languages have been affected, but English more than most, because of the early impact of feminist movement in the USA [1, p.368, 1995]. In our article we shall dwell upon the use of the noun *man* and the pronoun *he* as false generics and the problem of the order of reference when considering the parallel treatment of men and women namely in political discourse since it is considered to be an example of correctness.

Traditionally, many writers have used the term *man* and certain compounds derived from it to designate any or all members of the human race regardless of sex. This practice has the strength of history on its side. As Casey Miller and Kate Swift mention: "In Old English the word *man* meant "person" or "a human being" and when used of an individual was equally applicable to either sex." It was parallel to the Latin *homo* "a member of the human species," not *vir*, "an adult male of the species." The words *wer* and *wif* (or *woepman* and *wifman*) were used to refer to "a male human being" and "a female human being" respectively. But in Middle English *man* displaced *wer* as the term for "a male human being," while *wifman* (the word that evolved into present-day *woman*) was retained for "a female human being" [2, p.9, 1980]. *Wif* narrowed in meaning to become *wife* as we use that word today. *Man* eventually ceased to be used of individual women and replaced *wer* and *woepman* as a specific term distinguishing an adult male from an adult female. Despite this change, *man* continued to carry its original sense of "a human being" as well, and so the result is an asymmetrical arrangement that many criticize as sexist: *man* can stand for all people, but *woman* cannot. Some authors affirm that by the end of the eighteenth century the modern, narrow sense of *man* was firmly established as the predominant one.

Thomas Jefferson declared that "*all men are created equal*" and "*governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed*" in "The Declaration of Independence". (3, 1776) In a time when women, having no vote, could neither give nor withhold consent, Th. Jefferson had to be using the word *men* in its principle sense of "males," and it probably never occurred to him that anyone would think otherwise. Four months after the bloody Union victory at Gettysburg, President Abr. Lincoln made a speech at the site of the battle and quoted the same slogan "*all men are created equal*". (4, 1863) This speech was delivered approximately one hundred years after "The Declaration of Independence" but as the social status of women hadn't changed the word "*man*" was probably referred to "males" only.

The famous slogan from "The Declaration of Independence" is very famous with politicians. We can read in the Bill Clinton's State of the Union Address the following sentence: "*Over 200 years ago, our founders changed the entire course of human history by joining together to create a new country based on a single powerful idea: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal..."*" (5, 1995) In this case the use of the word *man* should not be viewed as discriminatory, as long as it is only the quotation of the original source.

Although nowadays the social status of women is different from what it was before the women's rights movement, and respectively this is reflected in a more accurate language use, we can come across the use of *man* as a false generic even today in the political discourses of famous leaders. For example the word *man* in the sentence: "*By our efforts, we have lit a fire as well - a fire in the minds of men. It warms those who feel*

its power; it burns those who fight its progress..." (6, 2005) – extracted from the Second Inaugural Address of George W. Bush, refers to both men and women, as the context shows. The usage of the word *man* in this context is even more ambiguous if one takes into consideration that throughout the speech the generic use of *man* is being avoided. Therefore the reader or listener might be confused as one might think that this message of lighting "*a fire in the minds of men*" is addressed only to males.

Current dictionaries still define *man* in both its narrow and broad senses. In the Oxford Wordpower Dictionary for learners of English, for example, the definition is "1. An adult male person; 2. A person of either sex male or female; 3. The human race, human beings ..." [7, 2001]. The debatable issue is whether the first and exclusive meaning has, in effect, become the only valid one. Referring to this point the authors of "The Handbook of Non-sexist Writing" mention that:

"Recent studies of college students and school children indicate that the broad definitions of man and men, although still taught, have to a significant degree become inoperative at a subliminal level. Phrases like economic man and political man, it turns out, tend to call up images of male people only, not female people or females and males together" [2, p.10, 1980].

Considering the ambiguous usages of the word *man* in the speeches of famous presidents of the USA, the question arises, how can we get along without *man* in the old sense, that archaic acceptance we no longer need but to which we have become habituated? Analysing one of George W. Bush's speech we notice that he resorts to the formula *man and woman*: "*America's vital interests and our deepest beliefs are now one. From the day of our Founding, we have proclaimed that every man and woman on this earth has rights, and dignity, and matchless value, because they bear the image of the Maker of Heaven and earth.*" (6, 2005) So, then we may consider that one means of being politically correct is to use the phrase *men and women* when addressing people of both sexes. Another appropriate replacement of the generic *man* is the word *person*. Unlike the "generic" *man*, *person* clearly conveys common gender – which is why it is a frequent choice today to replace traditional *man* terms. For instance we come across the term *person* in many contexts of the political discourses analysed, here is an example: "*The grandest of these ideals is an unfolding American promise that everyone belongs, that everyone deserves a chance, that no insignificant person was ever born.*" (8, 2006)

Generalization about people comprised in terms like "a man who/ whom", or "no man" are clearer when rephrased to include people of both sexes (unless, of course, only males are intended). For instance here is a sentence extracted from John F. Kennedy's "State of the Union Address": "*No man entering upon this office, regardless of his party, regardless of his previous service in Washington, could fail to be staggered upon learning--even in this brief 10 day period--the harsh enormity of the trials through which we must pass in the next four years.*" (9, 1961) As long as not only men can become presidents it would be more appropriate to substitute the term *no man* by neutral *no one* or *no human being*. Or the sentence: "*While the current deficit lasts, ways will be found to ease our dollar outlays abroad without placing the full burden on the families of men whom we have asked to serve our Flag overseas.*" (9, 1961) – could sound better if we used instead of the expression *the families of men whom*, the expression *the families of anyone whom*. In 1961 the women's rights movement was only at its start, and it is but natural to find such examples even in the speeches of the president. But we could find also examples of generalizations about people comprised in terms like "a man who/ whom", or "no man" in G.W. Bush's speeches. Let's consider the following sentence extracted from the president's discourse entitled "War on Terror": "*Evil men who want to use horrendous weapons against us are working in deadly earnest to gain them. And we are working urgently to keep weapons of mass murder out of the hands of the fanatics.*" (10, 2005) Here the meaning of *men* is that of *human beings*, and not to sound sexist it would have been better if the expression *evil men* had been substituted by *evil people (human beings)*. However in the example that follows, extracted from John F. Kennedy's State of the Union Address, the phrase *a man who* is clearly understood as referring to a male person thus being politically correct: "*This week we begin anew our joint and separate efforts to build the American future. But, sadly, we build without a man who linked a long past with the present and looked strongly to the future. "Mister Sam" Rayburn is gone. Neither this House nor the Nation is the same without him.*" (11, 1962)

Linguists argue that the use of the word *mankind*, having the word *man* as a constitutive element, imposes the image of maleness on the entire species [2, p.21, 1980]. Basing on this assumption we consider the usage of the word *mankind* in the following sentence inappropriate: "*We have confidence because freedom is the permanent hope of mankind, the hunger in dark places, the longing of the soul.*" (6, 2005) We consider that the sentence would sound more politically correct as: "*We have confidence because freedom is the perma-*

ment hope of human beings (humanity), the hunger in dark places, the longing of the soul.” On the other hand, we consider the following sentence taken from Bill Clinton’s State of the Union Address to be an example of a non-sexist reference to the human species and namely we want to foreground the appropriate use of the word *humankind*: “Throughout all history, humankind has had only one place to call home -- our planet Earth. Beginning this year, 1998, men and women from 16 countries will build a foothold in the heavens -- the international space station.” (12, 1998) Another *man*-prefixed compound the use of which rises questions is *man-made*. Let us consider the following example taken from G.W. Bush’s speech: “This Nation can lead the world in sparing innocent people from a plague of nature. And this Nation is leading the world in confronting and defeating the man-made evil of international terrorism.” (13, 2003) If we assumed that only males represent the threat of terrorism then this usage of the word *manmade* would be correct. But as long as we know that the threat of terrorism can come from both, the usage as listed above is considered to be wrong. The word *manmade*, in this case, can be either replaced by *human made* or omitted altogether from the sentence.

Another controversial issue is that of the inappropriate usage of compound words with the suffix *man*. But in this context it is worth while mentioning that *woman* and *human* are not, as it is often implied, compounds incorporating the modern word *man*. *Woman* is a combination of *wif*, meaning an adult female, and *man* in its lost sense of a *human being* irrespective of sex or age. *Human* is from the Latin *humanus* akin to *homo*, also meaning human being. Neither has any relation to a word originally meaning male person than do other words like *manager*, *manufacture*, *manuscript* and *manipulate*, which come from the Latin *manus* – hand [2, p. 20, 1980]. However the problem concerns the words like *chairman*, *congressman*, *countryman*, and *gentleman*. It is due to mention that almost all the usages of these words are non-sexist in the political discourses analyzed, with some exceptions. For example, it is but natural to find the word *gentlemen* as referring to the people who held functions of legislation, in the speech of Th. Jefferson, because in 1801 women did not have the right to participate in any way in the political life of the country

“To you, then, gentlemen, who are charged with the sovereign functions of legislation, and to those associated with you, I look with encouragement for that guidance and support which may enable us to steer with safety the vessel in which we are all embarked amidst the conflicting elements of a troubled world.” (14, 1801)

In the passage that follows the use of the word *congressmen* is ambiguous, one can’t make sense whether it refers only to the male-members of the Congress or the word *congressmen* refers to female-members as well. If so the passage would sound more politically correct if the word *congressmen* were replaced by the formula *members of Congress* or *representatives*. The original variant pronounced by G.W. Bush: “And so my attitude is to folks around the country is, if it’s a good idea for congressmen and senators, in other words, if they think it’s a good enough idea for themselves, it ought to be a good enough idea for workers all across the country.” (15, 2005) The example that follows also reflects a politically incorrect use of the word *countrymen*: “Little more than 100 weeks ago I assumed the office of President of the United States. In seeking the help of the Congress and our countrymen, I pledged no easy answers. I pledged--and asked--only toil and dedication.” (16, 1963) As in this context the word *countrymen* includes all the citizens of the USA, men and women, the quotation from John F. Kennedy’s State of the Union Address would sound more politically correct if we add at least the word *countrywomen* to refer to the people of the other gender. However we can also give some examples where the usage of the word *congressman* is appropriate for the situation, as it is clearly understood that it refers to a particular male member of the Congress:

“Reverend Schuller, Congressman Tejada, Governor Locke, along with Kristin Tanner and Chris Getsla, Sue Winski and Dr. Kristen Zarfos -- they’re all Americans from different roots, whose lives reflect the best of what we can become when we are one America. We may not share a common past, but we surely do share a common future.” (17, 1997)

We have also noticed that in order to avoid discrimination J.F. Kennedy, B. Clinton, G.W. Bush etc. adopt the form of address *members of Congress* when addressing the Congress: “Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the 88th Congress...” (16, 1963); (12, 1998); (18, 2001) The word *chairman* draws our attention because it is thought to be used as a generic term, but this is not true for the discourses that have been analysed. In the speeches analysed *chairman* is used only in reference to definite people whom the listeners or the readers know to be males: “I appreciate so very much Mike Critelli, who is the Chairman. Thank you, Mr. -- Mike, it’s great to see you again. And Charles Collins, senior -- the Vice Chairman. These are distinguished gentlemen who are helping to lead a very distinguished board of directors.” (19, 2004) According

to some linguists the only word that was proposed by the feminists, that has firmly entered the standard use is the term “*chairperson*” that has replaced “*chairman*”. When referring to a male the word *chairman* is used when to the female- the word *chairperson* is used. The term “*chairwoman*” is less preferred to be used [20]. However, it should be mentioned here that *chairwoman* is a historically sound parallel to *chairman*, and it pays a woman the courtesy of recognizing both her sex and her achievement. It does not, however, solve the problem of what to use as an indefinite, sex-inclusive title. In addition to the term *chairperson*, the term *chairer* has emerged, and some groups and institutions have chosen to use entirely different titles like *presider*, *coordinator*, *president*, and *convener* [2, p. 26, 1980].

Like the titles of public offices, most job titles ending in *man* date from a time when only males performed the jobs described. Not so today. That is why the term *businessman* as being used as a general term for all the businesspeople both male and female, is inappropriate nowadays. We could find such inappropriate usage only in John F. Kennedy’s “State of the Union Address” where he mentions that: “*Above all, if we are to pay for our commitments abroad, we must expand our exports. Our businessmen must be export conscious and export competitive.*” (11, 1962) It is clear from the context that all the businesspeople of the country are being referred to, but with the wrongly chosen term. This affirmation would sound more politically correct if we used a more neutral term. The United States Department of Labor began only in the early 1970s to revise its occupational classification system. And probably in 1962 when J.F. Kennedy’s speech was delivered, the term *businessmen* was not yet considered to be wrongly used as referring to both sexes. However analyzing the speeches of G.W. Bush we did not come across such a misuse. In the president’s discourses, the term *businessmen* is replaced by *business people* or *business owners*:

- “*You know, one of the interesting things that Lindsay said, there are a lot of businesspeople who contribute 12.4 percent into the Social Security -- a lot of sole proprietors. They pay the whole deal.*” (21, 2005)
- “*The Energy Policy Act of 2005 is going to help every American who drives to work, every family that pays a power bill, and every small business owner hoping to expand.*” (22, 2005)

The word *policemen* is no longer used as a generalizing term to refer to both sexes. In all the speeches analyzed the generalizing term used was *police officer*. For instance, that is what G.W. Bush says in one of his speeches: “*But by stopping the abuses of a few, we will add to the public confidence our police officers earn and deserve.*” (18, 2001)

There is also a tendency to replace the word “*man*” by “*woman*” in the contexts, connected to the feminine gender: “*It seems like to me it would cause people to pay pretty close attention to what the government's decision-making process is like. I mean, here's a young woman who opens up on a bimonthly basis her statement, reminding her that she owns that. That's part of an ownership society.*” (21, 2005) At the same time some of the words with the “*feminine*” ending are replaced by neutral ones. So, instead of the word “*stewardess*” and “*housewife*” the words like “*flight attendant*” and “*home-maker*” are used:

“*A few days before Christmas, an airline flight attendant spotted a passenger lighting a match. The crew and passengers quickly subdued the man, who had been trained by al Qaeda and was armed with explosives. The people on that airplane were alert, and as a result likely saved nearly 200 lives. And tonight we welcome and thank flight attendants Hermis Moutardier and Christina Jones.*” (23, 2002)

To describe George Washington as “*the father of his country*” or to speak of the authors of the United States Constitution as “*the Founding Fathers*” is to use sexually appropriate metaphors [2, p.33, 1980]. Therefore, the usage of these clichés is accurate in the following paragraphs:

- “*Across the generations we have proclaimed the imperative of self-government, because no one is fit to be a master, and no one deserves to be a slave. Advancing these ideals is the mission that created our Nation. It is the honorable achievement of our fathers.*” (6, 2005)
- “*You know, if there had been that much scrutiny when we were writing our Constitution as has been given to their -- scrutiny when they're writing their constitution, a lot of people would have said it's never going to get written. It was not an easy deal for our forefathers, our founders to get consensus on our Constitution. But nevertheless, they worked hard and came up with a great Constitution.*” (24, 2005)

Controversial is also the use of the pronoun *he* as a false generic. Tracing the origin of the generic use of *he* it should be mentioned that the first grammars of modern English which were written in the 16th - 19th centuries, were mainly intended to help boys from well-to-do families prepare for the study of Latin, a language most scholars considered superior to English. The male authors of these earliest English grammars

wrote for male readers in an age when few women were literate. The masculine-gender pronouns they used in grammatical examples and generalizations did not reflect a belief that masculine pronouns could refer to both sexes. They reflected the reality of male cultural dominance and the male-centred world view that resulted. Males were perceived as the standard representatives of the human species, females as something else. Although the early grammarians examined many aspects of their native tongue and framed innumerable rules governing its use, their writings contain no statement to the effect that masculine pronouns are sex-exclusive when used in general references. Not until the eighteenth century was it widely taught. Present-day linguists, tracing the history of the so-called generic *he*, have found that it was invented and prescribed by the grammarians themselves in an attempt to change long-established English usage. The object of the grammarians' intervention was the widespread acceptance of *they* as a singular pronoun. Grammarians argued that they lacked the important syntactical feature of agreement in number with a singular antecedent. But in prescribing *he* as the alternative, they dismissed as unimportant a lack of agreement in gender with a feminine antecedent. In 1850 an Act of Parliament gave official sanction to the recently invented concept of the “generic” *he*. In the language used in acts of Parliament, the new law said, “words importing the masculine gender shall be deemed and taken to include female.” Although similar language in contacts and other legal documents subsequently helped reinforce this grammatical edict in all English-speaking countries, it was often conveniently ignored [2, p.37, 1980]. Many writers of English have traditionally used the pronouns *he*, *him*, and *his* as generic or gender-neutral singular pronouns in formal writing. However, whether *he* really refers to both genders or can be considered gender-neutral is questionable, since many people feel that it can only designate a male who is supposed to be taken as the representative member of the group referred to.

Considering the problem of *he*-usage as a neutral pronoun referring to both men and women, Casey Miller and Kate Swift claim that “generic” *he* is fatally flawed “as a linguistic device imposed on the language rather than a natural development arising from a broad consensus” This affirmation is demonstrated by the results of several recent systematic investigations of how people of both sexes use and understand personal pronouns. The studies confirm that in spoken usage – from the speech of young children to the conversation of university professors – *he* is really intended or understood to include *she*. On the contrary to the all levels of education people whose native tongue is English seem to know that *he*, *him* and *his* are gender specific and “cannot do the double duty asked of them [2, p. 37, 1980]. Like “generic” *man*, “generic” *he* fosters the misconception that the standard human being is male.

Analyzing the political discourses of famous leaders we didn't come across the generic use of “*he*”. This can be explained either by the specificity of the political speeches which concern and are addressed to all the people and therefore, the usual pronouns to be used are the plural ones, or by the gender awareness of the speech deliverers. Considering the targeted discourses we have noticed that there are several ways of avoiding the generic use of *he*, and thus solving the pronoun problem. One means of replacing the generic *he*, would be the use of *they* as a singular. For example, G. W. Bush mentions: “*Every one in this chamber knows that Social Security is not prepared to fully fund their retirement. And we only have a couple of years to get prepared.*” (18, 2001), or: “*Secondly, I believe the system -- I know the system can be designed so that someone who works all their life does not retire into poverty.*” (21, 2005) Thus, he resorts to using *they/their* in order to avoid the generic use of *he*. Another way of solving the pronoun problem that we have found in the discourses analyzed is the use of *he/she*. At first glance, we might find this weird, but if the context clearly requires generic pronouns, alternating between *he* and *she* can offer a balanced way out. Some examples of the kind can be brought forth. Bill Clinton states:

- “*They can help us to end social promotion. For no child should move from grade school to junior high, or junior high to high school until he or she is ready.*” (17, 1997)
- “*A hundred years from tonight, another American President will stand in this place and report on the State of the Union. He -- or she -- he or she will look back on a 21st century shaped in so many ways by the decisions we make here and now.*” (25, 1999)

G. W. Bush mentions: “*In America we must make doubly sure no person is held to account for a crime he or she did not commit -- so we are dramatically expanding the use of DNA evidence to prevent wrongful conviction.*” (26, 2005) Thus the alternation between *he/she* is widely used.

One more method of solving the pronoun problem is to eliminate it entirely from the sentence. When it is important to focus on a non-specific individual who might be of either sex, the solution is often to drop pro-

nouns entirely. For example instead of saying: “*It says to parents, that if the schools continue to fail, if they won't adjust, if a child is trapped in mediocrity, his parents have different choices to make.*” - G. W. Bush states: “*It says to parents, that if the schools continue to fail, if they won't adjust, if a child is trapped in mediocrity, parents have different choices to make.*” (19, 2004) Pronouns may also be eliminated by the device of repeating the noun: “*Our goal is for every child to be reading at grade level by the third grade, because we believe every child can do that.*” (19, 2004) Instead of using the referential pronoun *he*, the word *child* is repeated and thus the pronoun problem is solved. Another alternative to avoid the third person pronoun problem in giving practical advice is to address the reader or listener directly. We can find examples of this kind in the discourses of political leaders. For example: “*I want to help families rear and support their children, so we doubled the child credit to \$1,000 per child. It's not fair to tax the same earnings twice -- once when you earn them, and again when you die -- so we must repeal the death tax.*” (18, 2001) In such a way the listener is addressed directly by means of the pronoun *you*, which constitutes another clever method of avoiding the generic use of the pronoun *he*. Sometimes the determiner *one* is employed to replace the thirdperson pronoun: “*And for those of you who have got a loved one in the United States military, I want to say two things to you: one, we'll make sure your loved one has whatever is necessary to protect America; and, secondly, thank you for their sacrifice.*” (27, 2005) Thus, the determiner *one* might be a way out when trying to avoid the generic *he*.

Another problem that arises when considering the parallel treatment of men and women or women and men is the order of reference. There is a convention to place the males first when addressing both sexes. This is true for both writing and speech. Some linguists explain this stereotypical way of ordering by the fact that it is easier to pronounce a single-syllable word than a two-syllable word. Consequently, we tend to place the word *man* first and the word *woman* after. Others claim that such a placement has to do with prosodic patterns: “since “men and women” and “male and female” scan as two trochees, they trip more lightly off the tongue than they would if reversed to scan as a trochee and an iamb. Neither theory accounts for “husbands and wives” nor such other familiar phrases as “coffee and cake”, “needle and thread” or “Adam and Eve” [2, p. 94, 1980]. As it follows, neither of these theories is relevant enough. The example given below will show how the ordering occurs in natural contexts in political discourse: “*Our nation relies on men and women who look after a neighbor and surround the lost with love.*” (18, 2005)

Social titles are also worth being discussed in connection with political correctness. There are three abbreviations that should be mentioned in this context: Mrs., Miss, and Ms. The Oxford Wordpower Dictionary for Learners of English gives the following definitions to these social titles: Mrs. – used as a title before the name of a married woman. Miss – used as a title before the family name of a young woman or a woman who is not married. Ms – used as a title before the family name of a woman who may or may not be married [7, 2001]. It should be mentioned that the form Ms. or Ms is now widely used in both professional and social contexts. Thus the term stands as a highly successful language reform—probably because people value its usefulness. As a courtesy title, Ms. serves exactly the same function as Mr. does for men, and like Mr. it may be used with a full name or with a last name alone as in: “*MS. CAMPBELL: -- I think we get a statement from it. It's taken out of my pay check before I ever see it, so I don't miss it, and it's right there and I can keep up with it.*” (21, 2005) Using Ms. obviates the need for the guesswork involved in figuring out whether to address someone as Mrs. or Miss: you can't go wrong with Ms. Whether the woman you are addressing is married or unmarried, has changed her name or not, Ms. is always correct. And the beauty of Ms. is that this information becomes irrelevant, as it should be—and as it has always been for men. Of course, some women may indicate that they prefer to use the title Miss or Mrs., and in these cases it only makes sense to follow their wishes. For example if it is obvious from the context that the woman is married one can use Mrs.: “*MRS. FERRELL: We started in Owensboro in 1929. We had two places there. My husband and his four brothers were all in together. And so when they built the one in Hopkinsville, David and I moved down here and took over. So we've been here for 69 years.*” (21, 2005)

Thus the sexist language, although much has been done to abolish, can still be encountered in political discourses of the nowadays statesmen and politicians. Although few, but there are still generic uses of the term *man* even in actual political discourses. Derogatory usages of compounds which have the prefix *man* have been detected.

Together with the sexist terms non-sexist equivalents have been observed. Thus in dealing with the generic *man* we have found lexical means of avoiding it and syntactical means by rewording the sentences in

such a way as to omit the wrong term altogether from the sentence. We have also suggested some alternatives to replace the derogatory terms that were not found appropriate equivalents to in the discourses analyzed.

The generic use of the third person singular (*he*) is carefully avoided in the political discourses analyzed. Several means of coping with generic use of "*he*" have been observed. Thus, we have come across grammatical means of getting rid of the pronoun problem substituting the generic use of the pronoun *he* by *they*, in such a way attributing the meaning of singularity to the pronoun *they*, which causes changes at the grammatical level of the language. Syntactical means of coping with the generic use of *he* has been found by rewording the sentence in order to drop the pronoun entirely from the sentence. Tautology is a semantic means that can be identified as a way of avoiding the pronoun problem. Lexical means of replacing the generic use of the masculine third person singular pronoun by neutral *one* and second person pronoun have been detected.

Analyzing the targeted political discourses we have noticed that there is a convention to place the males first when addressing both sexes. And that the form Ms is widely used to avoid the guessing work, when one does not know whether to use Mrs. or Miss.

We have noted that some of the changes that have been proposed by the proponents of the sexist language ban are deeply rooted in the use but others are not. Thus, although much progress has been made concerning the avoiding of sexism in political discourse since the Declaration of Independence, there are still many changes to be made to completely get rid of the sexist language. Analyzing the political discourse of politicians belonging to different historical periods from the perspective of sexist language, we have come to the conclusion that the sexist usage of terms in modern political discourse is much less common than in political discourse of other historical periods.

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