

LANGUAGE AND GENDER: ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE USE OF GENDER-SENSITIVE LANGUAGE AMONG STUDENTS OF SPORTS

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse the attitudes of students of sports towards the use of gender-sensitive language in the Serbian language. As the correlation between language and gender has been a hot topic in Serbia in the last two years, this paper presents an overview of some of the studies related to language, gender and sports. The theoretical section of this paper covers some main terms such as gender-sensitive language and the connection among language, gender and sport. The aim of the study conducted for the purposes of this paper was to determine whether male and female students of sports have positive or negative attitudes toward the use of gender-sensitive language in contemporary society and in their everyday speech. The study was conducted by using an anonymous survey with open-ended and closed questions, and it included 281 participants. The study results show that students of sports are still not aware of the increasingly widespread use of gender-sensitive language, and that they are not interested in learning about the theoretical aspects of this issue.

Key words: gender-sensitive language, sports, students, Law on gender equality, equality.

ЈЕЗИК И РОД: СТАВОВИ СТУДЕНАТА И СТУДЕНТКИЊА СПОРТА ПРЕМА УПОТРЕБИ РОДНО ОСЕТЉИВОГ ЈЕЗИКА

Апстракт

Циљ овог рада је анализа ставова студената и студенткиња спорта о употреби родно осетљивог говора у српском језику. С обзиром на то да је питање повезаности језика и рода једно од најдискутабилнијих питања у Србији у претходне две године, овај рад представља преглед претходних истраживања из области језика, рода и спорта. Теоријски део овог рада покрива неке главне појмове као што су родно осет-

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љив језик и веза између језика, рода и спорта. Циљ истраживања спроведеног за потребе овог рада јесте да утврди да ли студенти и студенткиње спорта имају позитивне или негативне ставове према употреби родно осетљивог језика у савременом друштву и у свакодневном говору. Истраживање је спроведено путем анонимног упитника са питањима отвореног и затвореног типа, и обухватило је 281 учесника и учесница. Резултати истраживања показују да студенти и студенткиње спорта још нису свесни употребе родно осетљивог језика и да нису заинтересовани да се информишу о теоријским аспектима овог питања.

Кључне речи: родно осетљив језик, спорт, студентска популација, Закон о родној равноправности, равноправност.

INTRODUCTION

Gender-sensitive language is becoming an increasingly important issue in every field in Serbia, and sport is no exception. Although it can be said that we have gotten used to terms such as female professor, female athlete, and the like, the official public speech in Serbia still does not reflect the use of words such as *female deans and female rectors, female coaches, or female drivers (dekanica, rektorka, trenerica, vozačica)*¹. With that in mind, this paper analyses attitudes towards the use of gender-sensitive language in sports by examining the attitudes and speaking habits of students from the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Management at Singidunum University.

Since the adoption of the Law on Gender Equality in 2021, there have been many debates, misunderstandings, and arguments about the section of the Law which refers to the use of gender-sensitive language. The law defines gender-sensitive language as:

language that promotes the equality of women and men and a means of influencing the awareness of those who use that language in the direction of achieving equality, including changes in opinions, attitudes and behaviour within the framework of the language used in personal and professional life.

(Law on Gender Equality, 2021)

Furthermore, it foresees the obligation to use language that is in accordance with grammatical gender, in public administration and state institutions (Article 25), in education, i.e., in textbooks and teaching materials, as well as in certificates, diplomas, classifications, titles, occupations and licenses and other forms of educational work (Article 37, paragraph 3), and in the field of public information (Article 44). Penal policy regarding gender-sensitive language applies only to public authorities but

¹ These words are sometimes used in everyday speech, but they are still not registered in dictionaries and grammars;

is insufficiently specified; it is defined in Article 37, and a fine ranging between RSD 5,000 and 150,000 is prescribed for non-compliance (Article 68, paragraph 9). The obligation to use gender-sensitive language will be put into effect three years following the passing of the law - that is, on June 1, 2024 (Article 73)².

It is mostly this penal policy that has triggered negative feelings of the public towards the Law, as many public institutions have risen against it. Namely, the *Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts* and its *Board for the standardisation of the Serbian language* and *Matica srpska* claim that, apart from this faulty penal policy, there are many other faults within the Law. For example, they believe that the 'interventions' in the use of standards disturb and damage the structure of the Serbian language, that the Law was used to violently ideologise the language, and to abolish or call into question the important semantic component of masculine nouns denoting professions, occupations, and titles which have a generic or general meaning that refers to both sexes. The Board also states that the interventions introduced by the Law are understood as language engineering by which many words inconsistent with the structure of the Serbian language are introduced, along with words that do not enrich but rather collapse its structure, and that this is 'violence against the Serbian language' and 'the law against the Serbian language'. The Board also believes that most feminine nouns that refer to professions, occupations, and titles, proposed by the supporters of the law, are not expedient and not in general use³.

Despite these negative attitudes, there are also arguments in favour of the Law, as gender-sensitive language is already in everyday use of the Serbian language, and it simply needs to be standardised and accepted. There are numerous counterarguments to the previously mentioned negative remarks against the Law. For instance, one could argue that every use of language (not only the one referring to gender-sensitive language) that is prescribed is language engineering, but it depends on whether we would use a top-down approach or a bottom-up approach⁴. Moreover, sociolinguists who are in favour of gender-sensitive language claim that every language use is an example of both language ideology and gender

² The Law on Gender Equality, <https://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon-o-rodnoj-ravnopravnosti.html>;

³ All these arguments were presented during three social dialogues that were organized by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue in Belgrade, Novi Pazar and Novi Sad, whose participant was also the author of this paper;

⁴ A top-down approach implies imposing a law which would trigger changes, as is the case with the Law on Gender Equality in the Republic of Serbia, whereas a bottom-up approach refers to changes found within a language which would later be implemented in a law;

ideology, and that the only difference lies in the type of the ideology that we nurture – it can be either traditional (against the use of gender-sensitive language) or egalitarian (in favour of the use of gender-sensitive language). When it comes to the statement regarding the damaging of the structure of the Serbian language, there are many examples which confirm the fact that gender-sensitive language has been used in the Serbian language long before the Law was adopted. For instance, words such as: *upravne članice*, *predsednica*, *potpredsednica*, *blagajnica*, *delovotkinja* were registered in 1875; *nadzornica* was registered in 1898; *predikatorica* or *propovednica* were registered in 1913, whereas the words *banditkinja*, *geografkinja*, *protestantkinja*, *patriotkinja*, *farmaceutkinja*, *trgovkinja* were registered in the Serbo-Croatian dictionary in the period between 1967 and 1976. Nevertheless, one of the main arguments in favour of the use of gender-sensitive language is the belief that language should mirror society and its changes. In other words, if there are more opportunities for gender equality within society, the same opportunities should be visible in the language of that society⁵.

Since the expert community is quite divided when it comes to the question of whether gender-sensitive language should or should not be used, there are also many differences in the opinions of the general public when it comes to this question. As sports and their representatives are an important segment of every society, the main topic of this paper is to analyse the attitudes and opinions of students of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Management at Singidunum University, in order to determine whether they are in favour of or against the use of gender-sensitive language in Serbia. In other words, the research questions are whether students of sports are in favour of gender-sensitive language, whether these students, as future athletes, represent a special case of support for or resistance to gender-sensitive language, and whether the use and/or omission of gender-sensitive language is related to sports, or to society in general. The paper is divided into several sections. The theoretical section explores the definition of gender-sensitive language and the correlation among gender, language and sports, whereas the research section presents the research methodology and research results. Finally, these sections are followed by sections presenting the discussion of the study's results and the conclusions drawn from them.

⁵ These arguments are part of the author's speech given at the social dialogue organised by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue;

GENDER-SENSITIVE LANGUAGE

The term 'gender-sensitive language' is defined as the use of forms corresponding to both genders (masculine and feminine) whenever possible, with the aim of eliminating any form of discrimination, and with the aim of establishing gender equality in language and society. It advocates avoiding the use of the generic masculine form, unless necessary, and insists on respecting both genders through language use (Bošković, 2015). In order to do this, it is necessary to use a certain type of suffixes in the Serbian language, which can be considered a discursive practice for marking the gender of nouns. Gender-sensitive language advocates for the elimination of sexist speech. It includes the morphological level of the system and, as research has shown so far, it is not always prone to change according to social trends, although, according to modern definitions of language, it should be. If we consider the fact that the language we use affects our perception of the world around us, then it is clear why gender-sensitive language is an important factor in shaping and changing gender ideologies. In other words, the use of gender-sensitive language is one of the steps in overcoming obstacles to gender equality in every society, as well as a means of achieving gender equality in society (Savić et al, 2009). This issue has become relevant in Serbia in the last few years, especially since the new Law on Gender Equality was introduced in 2021. First of all, there is the question of marking the female gender in the titles and names of professions in the Serbian language (recently, the forms *psihološkinja*, *fotografkinja*, *trenerica*, and similar forms that did not exist before, have appeared in daily use in the media), which often leads to conflicts of opinion, both among laymen and among academic staff and language experts of both sexes. Apart from the linguistic aspect, gender-sensitive language is also a question of social power. According to Georgijev (2014), patterns of linguistic behaviour are a reflection of cultural models and ideologies. The linguistic behaviour of the speaker confirms or denies, maintains, or changes a certain ideology. The meaning and use of language can be better understood if seen in correlation with the culture of a certain social community (Georgijev, 2014). Bearing in mind that the language we use reflects our attitudes, beliefs, and the way we treat others, it is clear that, by avoiding the use of feminine forms in those examples where those forms are grammatically and linguistically correct and socially acceptable, we show disrespect, neglect, and even an insult to women. Therefore, the use of gender-sensitive speech implies a greater visibility of women in language, and represents another step towards the betterment of their position in modern Serbian society.

LANGUAGE, GENDER AND SPORTS

According to a study by Fu, Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, and Lee (2016), a public initiative that urges the media to focus on sports performance suggested that female athletes got more 'sexist commentary' and 'inappropriate interview questions' compared to their male colleagues, which was clearly visible in a video from 2015, which showed male athletes' awkward reactions to receiving questions that are usually posed to female athletes. However, their research results showed that the questions posed to male athletes were generally more game-related than those posed to female athletes (Fu, Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, Lee, 2016). Furthermore, an analysis of online articles from 2009 discovered that more descriptors associated with the physical appearance and personal lives pertain to male basketball players, as compared to female ones.

By analysing the literature on the images used to portray female athletes in the media, Sherry, Osborne, and Nicholson (2016) conclude that a number of mechanisms contribute to media constructions of women's sport, including low volume of media attention, narrative focus, the salience of position or arrangement, linguistic choice and visual representations of women's sport (Sherry, Osborne, Nicholson, 2016).

As Parks and Robertson (1998) claim:

given that both language and sport can perpetuate male privilege, it is not surprising that the language of sport also favours men. Examples of sexist language in sports include gender marking (e.g., using 'Lady' or 'ettes' as part of the women's team name), referring to female athletes as 'girls', focusing media coverage on women's physical attractiveness or marital status rather than on their athletic prowess, and assuming that the 'real' event is the men's event and the women's event is 'other'. The language of sport 'trivialises and diminishes female athletes, renders them invisible, denies their adulthood, treats them as interlopers in a traditionally masculine domain'.

(Parks, Robertson, 1998, p. 481)

According to a study in Serbia, conducted in 2022, women in sports are stereotypically presented through media frames in the following ways: (1) female athletes are shown in irrelevant texts, which do not relate to their sports activities; (2) female athletes are presented as feminine, beautiful and/or sexual objects; (3) female athletes are presented as someone's mother, wife or girlfriend; and (4) female athletes are presented as infantile, emotional and irritable (Đukić Živadinović, Vujović, 2022).

Ponterotto's study (2014) of the representation of women's sports in the press reveals the presence of a discursive framework that tends to trivialise the bodies of female athletes. This framework is the result of two basic discourse strategies that she identifies: thematic strategies that

eroticise the female body, and metaphorical strategies that conceptualise the female athlete as a child: “In addition to responding to male subjectivities, they codify male ideals and assert a masculine sense of their identity as men, they also encode an ideology of femininity, which in turn it becomes hegemonic” (Ponterotto, 2014, p. 106).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this research is to answer the question of whether the student population studying sports is familiar with terminology that is closely related to gender equality, and with the fact that the terminology includes terms such as ‘gender-sensitive language’ and the ‘Law on Gender Equality’, as these are the two most relevant terms pertaining to this topic. More precisely, the research question is whether students of sports are in favour of gender-sensitive language, whether these students, as future athletes, represent a special case of support for or resistance to gender-sensitive language, and whether the use and/or omission of gender-sensitive language is related to sport as a specific field, or to society in general.

The research was conducted on a representative sample of male and female undergraduate students of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports Management at Singidunum University. For the purposes of this study, an anonymous questionnaire was distributed to 281 students, who filled in the questionnaire on a voluntary basis, individually and without time limits. The questionnaire included 101 male respondents, which make up 36% of the total sample, and 180 female respondents, which make up 64% of the sample. Statistical data processing was done in SPSS 21 for most of the questionnaire, wherein descriptive analysis was applied to open-ended questions, and ANOVA was used for a more detailed statistical analysis of the responses.

The questionnaire consists of four different parts. The first part contains questions related to students’ language ideology and gender ideology. For this part of the questionnaire, a Likert-type scale was used as a research instrument, as it is one of the most economical instruments and is easy to fill out, easy to assign, and easy to evaluate. The degrees of assessment are expressed numerically: 1 - completely disagree; 2 - mostly disagree; 3 - not sure; 4 - mostly agree; and 5 - completely agree. The second part of the questionnaire refers to the use of gender-sensitive language. More precisely, the names of titles and occupations that are commonly used in sports were given in the masculine form (e.g. *fudbaler, trener*), and the task was to write the same titles and occupations in the feminine form. The third part of the questionnaire is based on open-ended questions, as it investigates the theoretical knowledge of terms such as ‘gender ideology’, ‘politically correct speech’, ‘gender equality’, and the ‘Law on Gender Equality’. In the fourth part of the questionnaire, the re-

spondents were given 9 sentences and their task was to circle the ones that they would use in their everyday speech. The choice of sentences presented to the students was such that it clearly marked gender-sensitive examples and made a clear differentiation between neutral and biased forms of nouns in the Serbian language.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The data obtained from the questionnaire was processed using descriptive analysis and statistical analysis. It should be taken into consideration that not all participants answered all questions, which is why the number of respondents can vary, though these variations are small.

When it comes to the first part of the questionnaire, the research results show that only 20% of all male and female respondents are familiar with the terms *gender ideology* and *language ideology*, whereas 80% of them have not heard about these terms before and cannot define them properly. However, even though they did not define them, both male and female students clearly nurture certain language and gender ideologies, as there is a general belief among the respondents about the different roles that women and men have in communication, which were offered to them as statements in Likert-type scale. The statements that proved to be the actual beliefs of students include attitudes that women should not curse, that women should use more grammatically correct language which follows grammatical rules, that women should be more careful about what they say and how they say certain things, and that women should receive more compliments than men. When it comes to the differences in attitudes based on the gender of the respondents, a more detailed statistical analysis showed no significant statistical differences in the answers given by male or female students.

Nevertheless, the differences between genders are more clearly visible in the second section of the questionnaire, which is related to the use of gender-sensitive language. The results for the statement: *'I believe that it is necessary for the Serbian language to include words for all occupations in both masculine and feminine forms'* show that only 28% of respondents completely agree with the statement, while 33% of them are not sure. If we were to look at the data analysis according to gender, we would notice an interesting statistical difference ($p < 0.05$), wherein 62.2% of the male students completely disagree with this statement, while 70.1% of the female students completely agree with the statement. Based on this data, we can conclude that female students are more inclined to use feminine forms in comparison to male students (Table 1).

Table 1. *The results for statement 1: "I believe that it is necessary for the Serbian language to include words for all occupations in both masculine and feminine forms"*

Statement 1		Gender		Overall	
		Male	Female		
answers	I completely disagree	number	23	14	37
		%	62.2%	37.8%	100.0%
		compared to overall	22.5%	7.9%	13.2%
	I mostly disagree	number	13	9	22
		%	59.1%	40.9%	100.0%
		compared to overall	12.7%	5.1%	7.9%
	I am not sure	number	27	65	92
		%	29.3%	70.7%	100.0%
		compared to overall	26.5%	36.5%	32.9%
	I mostly agree	number	16	36	52
		%	30.8%	69.2%	100.0%
		compared to overall	15.7%	20.2%	18.6%
	I completely agree	number	23	54	77
		%	29.9%	70.1%	100.0%
		compared to overall	22.5%	30.3%	27.5%
	Overall	number	102	178	280
		%	36.4%	63.6%	100.0%
		compared to overall	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Regarding specific examples of the use of gender-sensitive language, data from the questionnaire indicates a slight increase in the use of nouns of the feminine gender for those sports in which we see an increasing representation of women, as well as for those titles that we largely see in the feminine gender in the media, or for those that are predominantly considered to be female sports. The aforementioned nouns are *sportistkinja*, *plesačica*, and *gimnastičarka*, while the percentage is still surprisingly low for the nouns *trenerica*, *fudbalerka*, *biciklistkinja*, and *hokejašica*, which might imply that we are still not ready to accept the fact that women can also participate in these sports. In Table 2, we can find specific examples of gender-sensitive language in sports. The first column shows the use of the given noun in masculine form only, the second column shows the percentage of the respondents who chose the masculine form, the third column gives examples of feminine forms given by respondents, and the fourth column shows the percentage of students who would use the feminine form.

Table 2. Examples of gender-sensitive language in sports

Masculine form (Serbian and English)	% (number)	Feminine form (Serbian) ⁶	% (number)
Vozač (driver)	58% (163)	vozačica	42% (118)
Maratonac (marathon runner)	60% (169)	maratonka	40% (112)
Rukometaš (handball player)	52% (146)	rukometašica	48% (135)
Trener (coach)	81% (228)	trenerica, trenerka	19% (53)
Teniser (tennis player)	59% (166)	teniserka	41% (115)
Plivač (swimmer)	66% (185)	plivačica	34% (96)
Košarkaš (basketball player)	52% (146)	košarkašica	48% (135)
Sportista (athlete)	22% (62)	sportistkinja	78% (219)
Karatista (karate man)	58% (163)	karatistkinja	42% (118)
Odbojkaš (volleyball player)	51% (143)	odbojkašica	49% (138)
Bodibilder (bodybuilder)	63% (177)	bodibilderka	37% (104)
Fudbaler (football player)	83% (233)	fudbalerka	17% (48)
Šahista (chess player)	28% (79)	šahistkinja	72% (202)
Plesač (dancer)	15% (42)	plesačica	85% (239)
Olimpijac (Olympian)	60% (169)	Olimpijka	40% (112)
Surfer (surfer)	41% (115)	surferka	59% (166)
Biciklista (cyclist)	81% (228)	biciklistkinja	19% (53)
Hokejaš (hockey player)	84% (236)	hokejašica	16% (45)
Snouborder (snowboarder)	55% (155)	snouborderka	45% (126)
Gimnastičar (gymnast)	30% (84)	gimnastičarka	70% (197)

If we take gender into account, then it can be noticed that male students tend to neglect gender-sensitive language, whereas female students use it somewhat more often. In Table 3, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) is presented for the purpose of confirming this conclusion.

Table 3. Analysis of variance for gender-sensitive language

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Vozač (driver)	Between Groups	.049	1	.049	.069	.793
	Within Groups	199.926	280	.714		
	Overall	199.975	281			
Maratonac (marathon runner)	Between Groups	.002	1	.002	.003	.958
	Within Groups	204.994	280	.732		
	Overall	204.996	281			
Rukometaš (handball player)	Between Groups	.301	1	.301	.402	.526
	Within Groups	209.518	280	.748		
	Overall	209.819	281			
Trener (coach)	Between Groups	.031	1	.031	.058	.809
	Within Groups	149.604	280	.534		
	Overall	149.635	281			

⁶ There is no need to insert the English translation, as the study refers to the Serbian language and there would be no significant changes in the masculine and feminine forms in English, as many English terms are already gender-neutral;

Teniser (tennis player)	Between Groups	.006	1	.006	.008	.930
	Within Groups	222.990	280	.796		
	Overall	222.996	281			
Plivač (swimmer)	Between Groups	.509	1	.509	.721	.397
	Within Groups	197.449	280	.705		
	Overall	197.957	281			
Košarkaš (basketball player)	Between Groups	.230	1	.230	.300	.584
	Within Groups	214.649	280	.767		
	Overall	214.879	281			
Sportista (athlete)	Between Groups	1.217	1	1.217	2.224	.137
	Within Groups	153.184	280	.547		
	Overall	154.401	281			
Karatista (karate man)	Between Groups	.757	1	.757	1.021	.313
	Within Groups	207.527	280	.741		
	Overall	208.284	281			
Odbojkaš (volleyball player)	Between Groups	.015	1	.015	.018	.893
	Within Groups	225.024	280	.804		
	Overall	225.039	281			
Bodibilder (bodybuilder)	Between Groups	.036	1	.036	.049	.825
	Within Groups	205.907	280	.735		
	Overall	205.943	281			
Fudbaler (football player)	Between Groups	2.100	1	2.100	3.971	.047
	Within Groups	148.056	280	.529		
	Overall	150.156	281			
šahista	Between Groups	3.638	1	3.638	5.969	.015
	Within Groups	170.635	280	.609		
	Overall	174.273	281			
plesać	Between Groups	2.986	1	2.986	7.628	.006
	Within Groups	109.596	280	.391		
	Overall	112.582	281			
Olimpijac	Between Groups	.087	1	.087	.115	.735
	Within Groups	211.403	280	.755		
	Overall	211.489	281			
surfer	Between Groups	2.984	1	2.984	4.150	.043
	Within Groups	201.346	280	.719		
	Overall	204.330	281			
biciklista	Between Groups	1.388	1	1.388	2.441	.119
	Within Groups	159.151	280	.568		
	Overall	160.539	281			
hokejaš	Between Groups	.848	1	.848	1.675	.197
	Within Groups	141.790	280	.506		
	Укупно	142.638	281			
snouborder	Between Groups	.179	1	.179	.241	.624
	Within Groups	207.722	280	.742		
	Overall	207.901	281			
gimnastičar	Between Groups	6.428	1	6.428	10.339	.001
	Within Groups	174.072	280	.622		
	Overall	180.500	281			

By analysing the general theoretical knowledge of the respondents, we can conclude that the concept of gender-sensitive language is still completely unknown to 48% of all respondents, regardless of their gender. Regarding their awareness of the Law on Gender Equality, students of sports are mostly not interested in the topic, as 80% of them did not even answer this open-ended question, or they stated that they are not familiar with it. Overall, the results of the third part of the questionnaire show the same as in the case of most of the open-ended questions: respondents are not willing to answer these theoretical questions, regardless of whether they are familiar with them or not. Therefore, this theoretical section of the research should have been conducted in another form, perhaps as a focus group or an interview, so that the research results could be viable and understandable.

In the last part of the questionnaire, the respondents were given 9 sentences and their task was to circle the ones that they would use in their everyday speech. The choice of sentences presented to the students was such that it clearly marked gender-sensitive examples and made a clear differentiation between neutral and biased forms of nouns in the Serbian language. Nevertheless, the results show that gender-sensitive language is still not part of everyone's everyday speech. The first given set of sentences shows that the highest percentage of respondents would choose the neutral form:

1. Pošto je ona nova *osoba koja predsedava* (*gender-neutral form*), ne sme biti pristrasna (58%);
2. Pošto je ona novi *predsedavajući* (*masculine form*), ne sme biti pristrasna (26%); and
3. Pošto je ona nova *predsedavajuća* (*feminine form*), ne sme biti pristrasna (16%).

Furthermore, when it comes to occupations, there is a certain distinction between male and female forms. The sentences were the following:

1. Ona je uspešan *sportista* (75%);
2. Ona je uspešna *sportistkinja* (16%); and
3. Ona je uspešna *žena od karijere* (9%).

The next set of statements does not refer to sports only, but it does refer to gender-neutral language:

1. Organizujemo žurku dobrodošlice za sve *brucoše* (42%);
2. Organizujemo žurku dobrodošlice za sve *brucoškinje* (0%); and
3. Organizujemo žurku dobrodošlice za sve *studente i studentkinje* I godine (58%).

What can be concluded is that there is no statistical difference in the choice of answers between male and female students. Interestingly, even though 78% of all respondents chose the word 'sportistkinja' in the previous section of the questionnaire, only 16% of them would rather choose this feminine form of the word in this final section, which may lead us to the conclusion that students of sports still do not use gender-sensitive language on a daily basis, although they do know how to use it.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

With all these results in mind, we can conclude that the students of sports who participated in this research do not show any specific preferences either in favour of or against the use of gender-sensitive language. In other words, they do not show interest in this issue, and they are not completely familiar with the concept of gender-sensitive language and the Law on Gender Equality in theory. However, when it comes to the practical aspect of the use of gender-sensitive language, there are certain words related to sports that are used in their feminine forms more than in their masculine forms. These examples include words such as: *sportistkinja*, *šahistkinja*, *plesačica* and *gimnastičarka*. It should be taken into consideration that some of these sports are usually associated with women, so the use of gender-sensitive language is not an issue. Nevertheless, when it comes to those sports that are still generally associated with men, such as football, handball, or hockey, the percentage of female forms is extremely low. This leads us to the conclusion that there is still a strong correlation between language use and ideology. In other words, if we believe that there are certain sports that are exclusive to men, then we will only use the masculine form, and vice versa – if there is a sport that is commonly associated with women, there is no obstacle when it comes to the use of the feminine form. What can also be concluded is that there is certainly a connection between a greater number of women engaged in a certain sport, their activities, mentioned in the general public and appearance in media, and the use of gender-sensitive language. Unfortunately, this use has still not reached an extent that would ensure gender equality in the Serbian language in relation to sports. This also leads us to the conclusion that sport follows current trends in contemporary society and does not represent a specific branch of society that has different rules or attitudes when it comes to the use of gender-sensitive language.

When it comes to the difference in attitudes between male and female students of sports, the difference is negligible in all sections of the study but one, which might be considered the most important one: the use of nouns denoting a profession in sports in feminine forms. According to the analysis of variance, male students would rather choose male forms when referring to various professions in sports, whereas female students would rather use the female forms of those words which denote the type of sports they play. This should come as no surprise, since women are those who are more likely to insist on gender equality in society in general, and sports prove to be no exception. However, as this is the only statistical difference in the whole research, we can conclude that both male and female students are familiar with gender-sensitive language, though female students are more prone to using it.

Regarding the fourth part of the research, it can be concluded that, even though there are students of sports who claim that they would like to

use gender-sensitive language and who chose female forms over male forms in the third research section, there is still ignorance and/or uncertainty of changing certain occupational names to the feminine form in everyday speech. This is clearly visible in the choice of the masculine form *sportista* rather than the feminine form *sportistkinja* when the words are to be used in a sentence, although 78% of the respondents chose the feminine form of the word in the previous section when it was not used in a specific sentence. This means that students do know what examples of gender-sensitive language are, but they are still not accustomed to using them on a daily basis.

Taking everything into consideration, we can conclude that students of sports do not have a defined and developed attitude toward gender-sensitive language, that they neither support it nor resist it, and that the use of gender-sensitive language is not related to sports as a specific field, but to society in general. Also, female students are more likely to use gender-sensitive language than their male colleagues.

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ЈЕЗИК И РОД: СТАВОВИ СТУДЕНАТА И СТУДЕНТКИЊА СПОРТА ПРЕМА УПОТРЕБИ РОДНО ОСЕТЉИВОГ ЈЕЗИКА

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Резиме

Циљ рада је да анализира ставове према употреби родно осетљивог језика у спорту испитивањем ставова и говорних навика студената и студенткиња Факултета за физичко васпитање и менаџмент у спорту Универзитета Сингидунум. Теоријски део рада дефинише основне термине који су у вези са родно осетљивим језиком и повезаност између језика, рода и спорта. Практичан део рада представља методологију истраживања, поставку основних питања, и резултате истраживања.

Родно осетљив језик је један од најједноставнијих начина да прикажемо нашу егалитарну родну идеологију, односно наше веровање да адекватном језичком употребом можемо допринети равноправности полова у друштву. У српском језику, родно осетљив језик се најчешће формира додавањем моционих суфикса -ка, -ица и -киња. Од усвајања Закона о родној равноправности 2021. године, питање родно осетљивог језика постало је горућа тема, јер Закон подразумева и увођење родно осетљивог језика у медије и образовање. Стога је ова тема од изузетног значаја за савремено друштво.

Резултати истраживања показују да студенти и студенткиње спорта немају јасно одређен став по питању родно осетљивог језика јер то није тема о којој знају много, мада показују њено разумевање у практичној примени. Наиме, када је реч о спортским занимањима, студенти радије бирају облик у мушком роду, док се студенткиње чешће опредељују за именице у облику женског рода. Примећује се избегавање употребе именице у женском роду за она занимања која се и даље сматрају традиционално мушким спортовима, као што су фудбал, хокеј или рукомет. Када је реч о типично „женским“ спортовима, попут гимнастике и плеса, види се велики проценат употребе именица у облику женског рода. Међутим, иако у већини знају да формирају облик женског рода, ни студенти ни студенткиње спорта га не користе у свакодневној комуникацији, што је приказано у резултатима последњег дела упитника, који се односио управо на употребу родно осетљивог језика у реченици. Дакле, можемо закључити да употреба родно осетљивог језика међу студентима и студенткињама спорта још није на завидном нивоу, али да постоји могућност достизања тог нивоа у будућности, као што показују и проценти формираних именица у облику женског рода за нека од спортских занимања.