

# How feminine is a linguist? On the meaning of non-feminine names of professions

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## 1. Introduction

Dutch, unlike English, has quite a number of suffixes that can be used to form female personal nouns.<sup>1</sup> With *-e* new names can be formed on the basis of non-feminine names, as is shown in (1):

(1)	pedagoge	pedagoog	‘(female) pedagogue’
	violiste	violist	‘(female) violin-player’
	studente	student	‘(female) student’
	fotografe	fotograaf	‘(female) photographer’

Another very productive suffix is *-ster*, which, like *-e*, can be attached to non-feminine names as in (2), but can also form new names by a process of substitution of *-er*, as in (3):

(2)	tuinierster	tuinier	‘(female) gardener’
	luisteraarster	luisteraar	‘(female) listener’
(3)	zwemster	zwemmer	‘(female) swimmer’
	deeltijdster	deeltijder	‘(female) parttimer’

Although there are cases in which the speaker may be in doubt about which suffix to attach (as for instance, *brigadiere* or *brigadierster* ‘female police-officer’), in general the distribution of *-e* and *-ster* is clear: *-e* is attached to non-native names with stress on the last syllable, *-ster* to non-feminine names with *-ier* or *-aar*, or names with *-er* which, in turn, are derived from verbs (like *zwemmen* ‘to swim’) or nouns (like *deeltijd* ‘parttime’).

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. de Caluwe & van Santen (2001) for a detailed study of the possibilities for the formation of female personal names in Dutch.

In addition to these two productive suffixes, there are many feminine names with suffixes that are no longer productive, such as the native suffixes *-es* and *-in*, as in (4):

- |     |         |        |                    |
|-----|---------|--------|--------------------|
| (4) | cheffin | chef   | ‘(female) chief’   |
|     | lerares | leraar | ‘(female) teacher’ |

There are also non-native suffixes, which appear in foreign words, as in (5):

- |     |               |             |                      |
|-----|---------------|-------------|----------------------|
| (5) | adviseuse     | adviseur    | ‘(female) advisor’   |
|     | redactrice    | redacteur   | ‘(female) editor’    |
|     | organisatrice | organisator | ‘(female) organizer’ |
|     | historica     | historicus  | ‘(female) historian’ |

Besides these derivations, there are compounds, for instance with *-vrouw*, *-dame*, *-zuster* or *-meisje*, such as:

- |     |                  |                  |                        |
|-----|------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| (6) | zakenvrouw       | zakenman         | ‘(female) businessman’ |
|     | bardame          | barman           | ‘(female) barman’      |
|     | ziekenzuster     | ziekenbroeder    | ‘(female) nurse’       |
|     | kostschoolmeisje | kostschooljongen | ‘(female) boarder’     |

All in all, this means that in talking about women or female professionals in particular, in Dutch we *can* use ‘their own’ term. Frequently, however, the non-feminine name is used. In this respect, the situation is different from German, where for women more often a feminine name, in *-in*, is used: *Direktorin* (‘female director’), *Schriftstellerin* (‘female writer’). How is this possible, and why do the Dutch do it? These are the questions I would like to address in this paper.

The clue to the answer lies, without doubt, in the meaning of the non-feminine names. In Holland, there is an ongoing debate about the use of names for professions. One option is to *differentiate*, and use gender-specific names consistently. The other option is to *neutralize* gender distinctions, i.e. use one gender-neutral name for a man, for a woman, and in all those cases in which gender, as irrelevant, is not expressed.<sup>2</sup> I

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<sup>2</sup> De Caluwe & van Santen (2001) discuss at length the linguistic and social

do not wish to discuss all advantages and disadvantages, but concentrate especially on the meaning and use of non-feminine names. What exactly is their meaning? There is no problem with the meaning of the feminine names – they are ‘female’ – but things are less clear with the non-feminine ones. Are they male, or indeed just non-female, i.e. gender-neutral? In other words: how feminine are the non-female names? Consider the sentence in (7):

- (7) Drie linguïsten hadden hun man meegenomen naar het congres.  
‘Three linguists had brought their husbands to the conference.’

Of course one can *say* (7), but in contrast to our response to sentence (8), we may be somewhat surprised:

- (8) Drie linguïsten hadden hun vrouw meegenomen naar het congres.  
‘Three linguists had brought their wives to the conference.’

In Dutch, the interpretation of (8) goes unnoticed, or automatically, while in (7) we are, at first, momentarily deceived, and then there is the reaction: “Oh yes, of course, we are dealing with female linguists here.” For this reason, certain feminist linguists call the gender-neutral quality of terms such as *linguïst* a myth (van Alphen 1983:310) or they say that gender-neutral personal names, or names for professions do not exist (Huisman 1985:70). Are they right or are they not? In other words, what do non-feminine names for professions signify? On present showing it is, unfortunately, already 1-0: the non-feminine names are more interesting than their feminine counterparts.

## 2. Two types of opposition

Let me first distinguish two types of opposition between feminine and non-feminine names. As (9) shows, *linguïste* is exclusively female: we can only use it with women, never with men:

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background and implications of the two options.

- (9) \*Hij is linguïste.  
‘He is a linguist[+fem].’

The gender-neutral function is also not an option. Sentence (10) can only be read as a demand for a female linguist:

- (10) Er is een vacature voor een linguïste.  
‘There is a vacancy for a linguist [+fem].’

On the other hand, *linguïst* is not exclusively male. We can use it when we are talking about a woman (11) or to refer to people, irrespective of gender (12) and we can also use it when we are talking about a man (13) or men (14):

- (11) Lisa Cheng is kort geleden benoemd als linguïst bij de Opleiding Algemene Taalwetenschap.  
‘Lisa Cheng has recently been appointed as a linguist at the Department of General Linguistics.’
- (12) Er zijn veertien linguïsten uitgenodigd om op dit congres een lezing te houden.  
‘Fourteen linguists have been invited to give a lecture at this conference.’
- (13) Is het toeval of niet dat er precies evenveel linguïsten als linguïstes zijn?  
‘Is it a coincidence or not that there are precisely as many linguists as there are linguists[+fem]?’
- (14) Aanleiding voor dit congres is de oratie van de Nederlandse linguïst Arie Verhagen.  
‘The occasion for this conference is the inauguration of the Dutch linguist Arie Verhagen.’

These possible usages are usually accounted for by means of the assumption that *linguïste* contains the component [female], which is absent from the corresponding name *linguïst*. It is therefore marked, not only morphologically (*linguïst* + *-e*), but also semantically, the non-feminine name being the unmarked member of this opposition. This type of opposition is called a privative one. Of vital importance is the fact that *linguïst* lacks the feature [male], as is shown by sentences such as in (11). It is

very well possible for us to refer to a woman by saying that she is a *linguïst*.

This is not the case with *verpleger* ('male nurse') and *verpleegster* ('nurse'). In Dutch, the sentence in (15) is ill-formed:

- (15) \*Zij is verpleger.  
'She is a male nurse.'

It should be:

- (16) Zij is verpleegster.  
'She is a nurse.'

Apparently *verpleger* has the feature [male]. *Verpleger* and *verpleegster* differ from each other in a single semantic feature. While *verpleger* is [male], *verpleegster* is [female]; they form a so-called equipollent opposition.

The two types of contrast may be summarized as in (17):

- (17)
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| equipollent<br>/          \<br><i>verpleger</i> <i>verpleegster</i><br>            <br>male      female | privative<br>/          \<br><i>linguïst</i> <i>linguïste</i><br>            <br>–          female |
|---|--|

We can approach the two kinds of opposition in yet another way. As pointed out above, the two words involved in an equipollent opposition differ from each other in one respect while being semantically identical in all others. But sometimes this very difference is not important. You may, for instance, want to know how many children someone has without referring specifically to boys or girls. So your question would be: "How many children do you have?" rather than "How many boys and/or girls do you have?" Which word do the Dutch use in case they prefer not to specify the gender of a person?

As far as the names *verpleger* and *verpleegster* are concerned, there is always the option of resorting to a separate word – *verpleegkundige* – in case we prefer not to distinguish by gender. We could similarly use a separate word to replace the pair *linguïst-linguïste*, namely *taalkundige*, but this is not really necessary: because *linguïst* lacks a

gender-based component, it can be used in cases where the male-female opposition is removed:

- (18) *verpleegkundige*                      *linguïst<sup>1</sup>/taalkundige*  
           /  /  /  
       *verpleger* *verpleegster*        *linguïst<sup>2</sup>*        *linguïste*

In other words, *linguïst* is the more specific term and the more general term all in one. Or, in the terminology of Lyons (1969:454): *linguïst<sup>2</sup>* and *linguïste* are co-hyponyms of *linguïst<sup>1</sup> = taalkundige*. This double function of *linguïst* is characteristic for members of unmarked categories. Before moving to the specific issue of the meaning of non-feminine names, it is therefore useful to have a look at the meaning of unmarked categories in general.

### 3. The meaning of unmarked categories

Jakobson defines the meaning of marked and unmarked categories as follows:

- (19) “The general meaning of a marked category states the presence of a certain (whether positive or negative) property A: the general meaning of the corresponding unmarked category states nothing about the presence of A and is used chiefly but not exclusively to indicate the absence of A”. (1957:5)

The first example of a marked category that I turn to concerns the diminutives as opposed to their base noun, as in *kamertje* (‘small room’) versus *kamer* (‘room’). In addition to the various connotations that they also have, diminutives denote ‘smallness’, i.e. they contain the sense-component [small], which is lacking in the positive. We can use *kamer* when we do not wish to point out that the room concerned is in fact a small room, but when used in opposition to *kamertje*, it could just as well refer to a room of a more than average size:

- (20) Ik zoek een kamer.  
 ‘I’m looking for a room.’  
 Dat is geen kamertje, dat is een echte kamer.  
 ‘That’s not a little room. It’s really a room.’

There are also privative oppositions and marked categories which involve adjectives, as in pairs like *oud* (‘old’) and *jong* (‘young’). At first glance, these two adjectives appear to stand in equal opposition to one another, *jong* meaning ‘having lived for only a short time’ and *oud* ‘having lived for a considerably long time’, but we soon come to realize that *oud* is also used as a neutral term, as the examples in (21) show:

- (21) Haar baby was pas drie dagen oud.  
 ‘Her baby was only three days old.’  
 Hoe oud ben je? Ik ben vier.  
 ‘How old are you? I’m four.’  
 Zij is één dag ouder dan hij.  
 ‘She is a day older than he is.’

*Jong* is therefore the semantically marked member of the opposition *jong-oud*. The property that is present in *jong* but absent in *oud* is [not far advanced in life, youthful]:

- (22)
- 
- ```

graph TD
  A[oud 'being of a certain age'] --- B[oud 'having lived a considerably long time']
  A --- C[jong 'having lived for only a short time']
  
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The question to be answered is the following: what exactly is the meaning of the unmarked members of a category?

According to Lyons (1977:308), *dog* can be a hyponym of itself, since it is sometimes in contrast with ‘bitch’ and sometimes superordinate to it (‘Is that dog a dog or a bitch?’). He continues: (this phenomenon) “is a direct consequence of semantic marking and should not be treated as an instance of polysemy”. Unfortunately, this is a mere statement, without argumentation; it is exactly the issue I would like to question. Do unmarked members of a category have one vague, indeterminate sense, or are they polysemous? The purely structural distinction equi-

pollent-privative opposition does not make reference to this issue, but I think it is actually crucial to understanding the meanings of unmarked categories.

In the case of *kamer* I don't think of polysemy at all – in spite of differences in size of the rooms in question, it has just one single sense –, but in the case of *oud* I do, based on sentences like the following:

(23) De oude en de jonge heer Jansen.

'The older and the younger Mister Jansen.'

Hun leraar was pas 23 jaar oud, maar de leerlingen vinden dat al oud.

'Their teacher was only 23 years old, but the pupils already think that's old.'

Hoe oud ben jij? Oh, 75, maar dat is tegenwoordig niet oud.

'How old are you? Oh, I'm 75, but nowadays that's not old.'

In my view, these different uses of *oud* do not correspond to a single sense, but to two different senses (see (22)).

Perhaps we can compare the meaning of *oud* with the meaning we find in words like those in (24), which show a broad sense in addition to their narrow sense:

| (24)                  | narrow sense                                        | broader sense                                                                                           |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>dag</i> ('day')    | time between sunrise and sunset                     | 24 hours                                                                                                |
| <i>regen</i> ('rain') | condensed moisture                                  | what comes down as rain: <i>een regen van kogels, confetti</i> ('a rain of bullets, confetti')          |
| <i>zee</i> ('sea')    | the salt water covering most of the earth's surface | an abundance, a great mass: <i>een zee van bloemen, mensen, vuur</i> ('a sea of flowers, people, fire') |
| French <i>fille</i>   | daughter                                            | girl                                                                                                    |

*Regen*, *zee* and *dag* have, in addition to a more specific meaning, a second, metaphoric or metonymic meaning which is broader. My hesi-

tations about the comparison with adjectives like *oud*, lies in the fact that this ‘broader’ meaning of, especially *regen* and *zee* is, unlike that of *oud*, at the same time the contextually restricted one, and so the ‘marked’ meaning. Accordingly, *rain* in a *rain of confetti* is not superordinate to *rain* ‘condensed moisture’.

A better example is the French noun *fille*, which can be used to refer to a daughter or a girl. As Goddard (2000:133) says, “any paraphrase which would be broad enough to include both kinds of use would have to say that *fille* meant something like ‘female human being’ and this would be too broad. Because we cannot find a single substitutable paraphrase, we have to posit two distinct meanings for *fille*”. This female personal noun example brings us to the meaning of non-feminine names.

## 4. The meaning of non-feminine names

### 4.1 Interpretation and meaning: vagueness and polysemy

How can we interpret Jakobson’s statement about the meaning of marked categories in general when it is applied to non-feminine names?

Whoever is not a woman must be a man, so the explicit presence of the sense-component [non-feminine] would imply the presence of the component [male]. But this is not the case. The unmarked category simply does not contain a gender-based component. When making use of this non-feminine meaning, we are usually dealing with a person who is non-feminine – that is, a man – though not exclusively. This meaning could also be used when one aims at a gender-neutral denomination.

We have seen examples in sentences such as (11) to (14). With *linguïst* in (11) we think of a woman, and in (14) we visualize a man, but this does not mean that the word *linguïst* contains the components [female] and [male], respectively, because we are guided by the use of the proper names *Lisa Cheng* and *Arie Verhagen* and the knowledge we have that is associated with these two names. We could easily account for these interpretations in terms of the non-gender-based meaning that is inherent in the unmarked word. In (12), *linguïst* is interpreted as ‘male linguist’ because of the context in which it stands in opposition to the feminine *linguïste*. So in this case we are indeed dealing with a specification of gender: it is not gender-neutral. The question to be asked is whether this interpretation can be accounted for in terms of the sense-component [non-feminine], the gender-neutral, ‘vague’ meaning, or

whether we should recognize that *linguïst* is polysemous, having two alternative meanings, namely ‘person’ and ‘male person’.

Let us compare this with the English noun *man*, which has two meanings: ‘male human being’ and ‘human being’; it is indeed polysemous, but what about the array of Dutch non-feminine names? Do *linguïst*, *dirigent* (‘conductor’), *loodgieter* (‘plumber’) and *hoogleraar* (‘professor’) have two meanings, namely ‘male person’ and ‘person’, or do they only contain the component ‘person’, a broad, somewhat vague meaning, which, when used in a particular context, is understood as ‘male person’?

Tuggy (1993) discusses various tests to be able to distinguish between vagueness and what he calls ambiguity. In (25) I have applied these tests to the nouns *kamer* and *regen* in order to differentiate between vagueness and polysemy:

- *The logical test: Can X and not-X be true?*

Dat is een regen van confetti maar geen regen

‘That is a rain of confetti but not rain.’

\*Dat is een kamer met uitzicht, maar geen kamer.

\*‘That is a room with a view, but not a room.’

- *The ‘linguistic’ test: grammatical constructions which are taken as requiring semantic identity: X does/did Z and so does/did Y. In case of ‘crossed’ readings without semantic oddness, the meaning of Z is vague, if zeugma results, Z is ambiguous.*

Jan heeft een zaal van een kamer, en Piet z’n hokje is ook een kamer.

‘Jan has got a room the size of a hall, and Piet’s little box is also a room.’

[Jan liep in de regen en Piet liep in een regen van confetti].

\*Jan werd nat door de regen en Piet ook.

Jan was walking in the rain and Piet was walking in a rain of confetti.

\* ‘Jan got wet with the rain, and Piet as well.’

Both tests indicate that *kamer* is vague while *regen* is polysemous.

What about, for instance, *linguïst*? The logical test indicates vagueness, because (26) is ill-formed:

- (26) \*Zij is linguïst bij de opleiding Chinees, maar geen linguïst.  
 ‘She is a linguist at the Chinese department, but not a linguist.’

The same is indicated by the linguistic test: there is nothing wrong with sentence (27) if we mean to say that the linguist already working there is a man, while leaving aside the gender of the newcomer:

- (27) De Opleiding Duits heeft één linguïst, maar ze krijgen een nieuwe.  
 ‘The German department has one linguist, but they’re getting another one.’

My conclusion from these tests is that in accounting for the ways in which non-feminine names can be used, we can describe their meaning as being vague. The fact that we can use *linguïst* to refer to a man, a woman, and a person irrespective of his or her gender, does not imply that it is polysemous, i.e. that, in addition to the meaning ‘not-specifically feminine linguist’, it also means ‘male linguist’. There are, however, two factors which can cause us to interpret the word as containing the property [male]. First of all, there is the popular conception of lots of professionals, and a second factor is the actual way we make use of non-feminine names. It is these issues that we will address in sections 4.2 and 4.3.

## 4.2 Conception

If the unmarked names are gender-neutral, meaning ‘not-specifically female X’, where does the idea come from that they are not really neutral but, in fact, male? And why does it take us slightly longer to interpret sentence (7) as opposed to sentence (8)?

First of all, with many unmarked names we tend to think of men. Plumbers, boxers, captains, and so on, are men; that is to say, they are men in our conception or visualization of these words. They are associated with typically male professions, in which we find no or hardly any women. We could in this case speak of a *stereotype*:

- (28) “a socially determined collection of information associated with the extension of a word which a user must possess if he is assumed

to know the meaning of that word” (Geeraerts 1982:249, my translation).

Stereotype is a social concept, a kind of semantic norm. For many speakers the feature [male] is inherent in their knowledge of *plumber*. We could consider this to be knowledge of stereotypes, which forms part of the knowledge that the individual members of a speech community share, and as such it is social. Is this social knowledge contained in the meaning of the word?

Langacker (1987:154) defends this viewpoint in relation to the properties of (the word) *banana*, of which he mentions, among other things, the following aspects: a particular shape, color, taste, smell, and numerous other specifications like the knowledge that bananas are eaten, that they grow in bunches on trees, that they come from tropical areas and so on. He then proceeds by considering it “a pivotal problem of linguistic semantics: Which of these specifications belong to the meaning of the lexical item *banana* (...) Otherwise phrased, which of these specifications are linguistic (or semantic) in nature, and which are extralinguistic (pragmatic?) (...)”. My answer should hold no great suspense for the reader: All of these specifications are part of the meaning of *banana*. The distinction between semantics and pragmatics (or between linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge) is largely artificial, and the only viable conception of linguistic semantics is one that avoids such false dichotomies and is consequently *encyclopedic* in nature.”

According to Wierzbicka (1996), semantic knowledge *can* be separated from encyclopedic knowledge, but the difference with Langacker may largely be apparent. Wierzbicka, just like Langacker, considers various types of knowledge that structuralists would call encyclopedic to be part of the meaning of the word concerned. What is important is that she distinguishes between knowledge *of* and knowledge *about* a given concept, cultural knowledge deposited in language and other kinds of knowledge, whether scientific or non-scientific. In regard to the word *mouse*, there is, as she states, also knowledge “which is not part of the folk concept *reflected in language* – and a line can be drawn between that knowledge and the knowledge (and ideas) encapsulated *in* the word *mouse* itself” (Wierzbicka 1996:349).

A good Dutch example is the noun *beer* (‘bear’). Of course there is the ‘scientific’ knowledge that we have pertaining to bears – that they are dangerous, sometimes extremely aggressive animals – but the important

thing is that our knowledge is expressed through language, as is illustrated by the following Dutch expressions:

- (29) Zo sterk als een beer.  
 ‘As strong as a bear.’  
 Beresterk.  
 ‘Bear-like strong’  
 Een beer van een vent.  
 ‘A man like a bear, i.e. a huge man.’

This knowledge, then, is indeed semantic knowledge. But how about the knowledge that bears also function as pets, and that not only children, but even grown-ups, have teddy bears? For many people, bears are not dangerous, but mollifying, and they don’t eat salmon, but honey. This social knowledge also belongs to our knowledge of the word *beer*, and given a word like *knuffelbeer* (‘cuddly bear’), following Wierzbicka, we could maintain that it is part of the meaning of *beer*. In fact, decisive for her distinction between semantic and encyclopedic knowledge, is the actual use of a word, a position similar to that of Langacker.

With some hesitation, therefore, I do think we may conclude that our cultural knowledge – that plumbers normally are men – is encapsulated in the word *plumber*, because this knowledge is reflected in language, the word *plumber* being almost always used in connection with men. This actual usage is the focus of the next section.

### 4.3 Usage

An important reason why we should consider the word *linguist* to be unmarked is that it can also be used to refer to a woman as well as to a person whose gender is irrelevant; but is that really what we do? Jakobson claims, as we have seen in the quotation in (18), that unmarked categories are used mainly to indicate the absence of the feature associated with the marked category. Is it indeed true that unmarked names are most often used in connection with men?

We can use unmarked names indicating a person’s position or occupation without having someone particular in mind, as in (30):

- (30) We zoeken een nieuwe directeur.  
 ‘We are looking for a new director’.  
 Een goede ambassadeur laat het landsbelang altijd voorgaan.  
 ‘For a good ambassador the nation’s interest always comes first’.  
 De manager van tegenwoordig kan niet meer zonder mobiele telefoon.  
 ‘Today’s manager cannot do without a mobile phone’.  
 Een goede advocaat is bijna niet te krijgen.  
 ‘A good lawyer is hard to get’.

When used predicatively they are, true enough, gender-neutral, but their context of use may nevertheless assign gender, as in:

- (31) Mijn zwager is bedrijfsleider.  
 ‘My brother-in-law is a manager’.  
 Mevrouw Bakker, personeelschef bij de Leidse universiteit.  
 ‘Mrs. Bakker, personnel manager at Leiden university’.

When we use them referentially, to indicate actual individuals, it becomes clear from the context whether we are dealing with a man or a woman:

- (32) Onze commandant zei dat *hij* er niet over piekerde ontslag te nemen.<sup>3</sup>  
 ‘Our captain told us *he* would not even consider resigning’.  
 Mijn therapeut kondigde aan dat *ze* drie weken op vakantie ging.  
 ‘My therapist announced that *she* would be on holidays for three weeks’.

Sometimes gender is clear to the speaker but not to the listener:

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<sup>3</sup> This should not to be confused with the generic use of the personal pronoun *hij* and the possessive pronoun *zijn*, as in: ‘Van een pedagoog wordt verwacht dat *hij* tijdens *zijn* studie veertig uur per week werkt.’ (‘A pedagogue is supposed to work 40 hours a week during his study’.) In Dutch *hij/zijn* can be used as masculine and as gender-neutral.

- (33) Ik ken toevallig een specialist in plastische chirurgie  
 ‘I happen to know a specialist in plastic surgery’.  
 Onze fotograaf kwam een uur te laat  
 ‘Our photographer was an hour late’.

This shows that although gender may not be inherent in the names itself, it is often assigned to it in actual language use. Unmarked names can be assigned male or female gender, depending on the context.

I have retrieved a number of Dutch names from a corpus, which comprises 27 million words taken from newspaper articles appearing in the *NRC-Handelsblad* in 1994 and 1995. My aim was to determine their frequency as well as their function. *Linguïst* is not a good example: it appears only twice, gender-neutrally; we more often come across *taalkundige*. Instead of *linguist* I will discuss *pedagoog* (‘pedagogue’), which is particularly interesting because, unlike *loodgieter* (‘plumber’), it does not necessarily make us think of a man: in Dutch society, it is a profession for both men and women, and as such not an isolated case. In fact, I believe the use of *pedagoog* to be illustrative of many names of professions.

*Pedagoog* appears 32 times, of which only once in a context denoting a woman, that is, if you are familiar with the referents of *Lea Dasberg* (a woman) and *De Levita* (a man):

- (34) Lea Dasberg heeft gelijk. Het meningsverschil tussen de psychiater en de *pedagoog* is een verschil in therapeutische opvatting. De Levita wil het zieke deel behandelen, zodat ...  
 ‘Lea Dasberg is correct. The difference in opinion between the psychiatrist and the *pedagogue* is a difference in therapeutic view. De Levita wants to treat the diseased part in order to ...’

Reference to a man, on the other hand, is encountered 19 times, as in (35):

- (35) - De onderwijshervormer *Lighthart* leefde een eeuw geleden, een *pedagoog* in hart en nieren.  
 ‘The educational reformer, *Lighthart*, lived a century ago, a *pedagogue* to the backbone.’  
 - een ideale plek om *zijn* kwaliteiten als *acteur* en *pedagoog* in te zetten. Begin jaren tachtig hielp *hij* het Limburgse gezelschap ...  
 ‘an ideal spot to make use of his qualities as an *actor* and *pedagogue*. In the early 80s *he* assisted the Limburgian company ...’  
 - De *pedagoog*, zelf twee keer gescheiden, vier kinderen, vertelt over *zijn* eigen trauma.  
 ‘The *pedagogue*, divorced twice, with four children, gives an account of *his* own trauma’.)  
 - Veel later werd *hij* tenslotte *pedagoog* en psychotherapeut.  
 ‘Much longer after that *he* eventually became a *pedagogue* and therapist’.

The gender-neutral usage was found only six times, as in:

- (36) Al krijgt hij wel een ochtend per week een *pedagoog* van de naburige school op bezoek.  
 ‘Though he is visited one morning every week by a *pedagogue* connected to a neighboring school.’

In six cases usage was unclear. In (37) I summarize the actual use of the 32 instances of *pedagoog*:

|      |                 |    |
|------|-----------------|----|
| (37) | <i>pedagoog</i> | 32 |
|      | woman           | 1  |
|      | man             | 19 |
|      | gender neutral  | 6  |
|      | unclear         | 6  |

*Pedagoog*, then, is very frequently interpreted as referring to a man.

The female name *pedagoge*, which appeared 5 times, referred to a woman of course. The gender-neutral *opvoedkundige* appeared 3 times, once gender-neutrally and twice in relation to a woman. In (38) I give the answer to the onomasiological question which word do we use when we

want to speak of a woman, a man or a person who is a pedagogue by profession:

| (38)   | <i>pedagoog</i> | <i>pedagoge</i> | <i>opvoedkundige</i> |
|--------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| woman  | 1               | 5               | 2                    |
| man    | 19              | -               |                      |
| person | 6               | -               | 1                    |

As we see, the word *pedagoog* is seldom used when we want to speak of a female pedagogue; in that case we prefer the word *pedagoge*. This strengthens the ‘male’ interpretation of *pedagoog*.

From (37) en (38) we can infer, that people have predominantly a male person in mind when the unmarked term *pedagoog* is used, even though it does not concern a typically male profession.

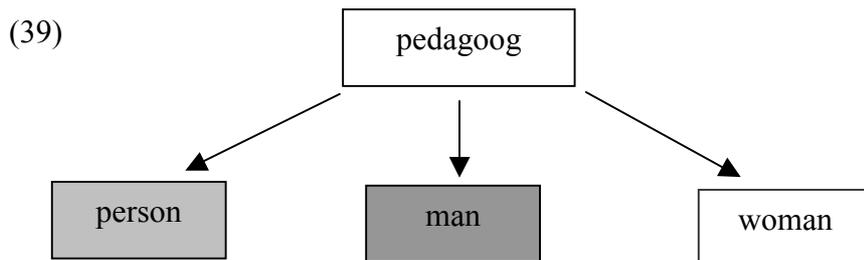
## 5. Conclusion

There are good reasons to assume that the meaning of non-feminine names can be described as ‘non-female person’. We have, however, seen that with many names we nevertheless picture a man and, furthermore, that other names are assigned male gender in actual language use. Jakobson’s claim holds in the case of *pedagogue*: usually it signifies a man, or at least the context makes us think of a man, but it is also used in a gender-neutral way, and occasionally, serves to denote a woman. Polysemy did not seem a satisfactory alternative to the meaning ‘non-feminine’, but how do we manage to account for both conception and usage?

I think that the best way in which this can be done is in terms of the so-called *Usage-based model*, which Langacker proposes in several publications. Central to this model are the actual use of the linguistic system and a speaker’s knowledge of this use. He regards the different meanings associated with a particular form as being a complex category of which the members “are analyzed as nodes in a network, linked to one another by various sorts of categorizing relationships” (1988:134). One such relationship is the “categorizing relationship that holds between a schema and a structure that ‘elaborates’ or ‘instantiates’ the schema” (134). We are dealing with a type of specialization: B is part of A though it is more precise, more detailed. As such, ‘rapid motion’ is the super-

schema of *to run*, of which ‘rapid 2-legged locomotion (person)’ – in addition to other meanings – is the prototypical meaning.

If we consider the names for professions, we could adopt the following schema: profession, followed by an X, allowing for the interpretations X is a man, X is a person, irrespective of gender, and X is a woman. These three options differ in salience and likelihood of activation as a result of usage and conception. I quote Langacker (2000: 36): “The nodes in such a network vary in their entrenchment and ease of activation.” The meaning of the non-feminine names for professions certainly does not exclude the interpretation according to which we are dealing with a woman, but this specification is considerably backgrounded, while [male] and [gender-neutral] are much more common. With many names for professions, the specification ‘man’ is much more prominent, or salient.<sup>4</sup> I have tried to visualize this in (39):



As early as 1985, Bybee (1985:116) did not consider the question whether a particular form is or is not stored in the lexicon, to be a yes or no question, and proposed “to abandon this restricted, binary way of thinking about lexical storage, and treat the problem as the complex psychological problem that it is.” According to her, words differ from one another in lexical strength: “every time a speaker/hearer processes a word, it affects the lexicon by strengthening the representation of a lexical item”. It seems to me that this statement can be converted so as to be applicable to the status of the different possible uses or interpretations of lexical items, in this case names for professions: some are more entrenched than others.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Cruse (2000:30) who refers to “richness and/or salience of conceptual content”.

<sup>5</sup> In my opinion, this position comes close to that of Cruse (2000:50), whose

I can see two unquestionable advantages associated with an account of the meaning of non-female names that is, to a considerable extent, usage-based. To begin with, the question whether we are dealing with vagueness or polysemy is given no substantial importance. It is not a simple dichotomy. The various senses of a word do not have the same degree of salience; therefore, the question whether a certain meaning is conventional or not is likewise a matter of degree. The same holds for the question whether names for professions mean ‘man’ in addition to ‘person’.

The second advantage is that we can sufficiently account for potential changes in the use of words in general as well as in our names for professions. With *verpleger* we have seen that some non-feminine names are specifically male: we can only use *verpleegster* in relation to a woman. *Pedagoog*, on the other hand, *can* be used in reference to a woman, but as yet this is done sporadically in spite of the fact that quite a number of women are found in this profession. The reason for this is not that in that case we use *pedagoge* – although this might be a factor – but rather that at present we still tend to be talking about men in this profession rather than about women. There are hardly any female plumbers, which is why our conception of *plumber* is almost exclusively male. However, as conception and use of names of professions change, so does the extent to which the component [male] is salient.<sup>6</sup>

The meaning of non-feminine names of professions, like the meaning of all other words, is not fixed and invariable, but in permanent change. And it is not their meaning that dictates the possibilities to use them, but the other way around: actual use is decisive for the meaning of non-feminine names of professions.

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view, in his own words, “imports a disturbing degree of fluidity into semantic structure”.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Adriaens (1982) and Gerritsen (2001, 2002) for changes in the use of Dutch professional terms.

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