



## **GENDER RELATIONSHIP AND MEDIA LANGUAGE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF PRINT MEDIA IN POLAND AND MALAYSIA**

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This study looks into the question of media language and gender across two different cultures, Poland and Malaysia. The study pays particular attention to the language of print media which has the potential to create images of gender and leave long lasting impressions in the minds of the readers. Language is also said to be the most sophisticated symbol that mankind has to deal with. Where gender relationship is concerned, the content of the print media via media language and visuals have the potential to accentuate the prominence and dominance of masculinity versus femininity. Media language also plays an important role in creating social awareness that is associated with opinions, beliefs and ideas accepted and prevalent in specific societies. These opinions become patterns and models of the way people think - also of their thinking about the question of gender relationship. It is the nature of the media to create meanings and convey them to societies. This means that media messages are usually accompanied by certain intentions, assumptions and aims of media gatekeepers. Using a qualitative content analysis method to study the representation of gender via media languages across two cultures, this comparative study demonstrates that although messages of gender in these two countries are subjected to some media procedures, as well as cultural ones, there is some universalism and commonalities in terms of understanding when it comes to gender related issues. The obvious conclusion is that messages connected to gender are subjected to some interpretations subordinated to specific ideologies, political and cultural habitus that given opinions and linguistic patterns connected with gender are based on. As a result, they determine both the ways of perceiving gender in a given culture and the ways of treating it, which usually forms or strengthens particular image of femininity and masculinity in a given culture.

**Keywords:** Gender, Masculinity, Femininity, Media, Language.

### **Introduction**

The subject of the present study is the question of *language* and *gender* in Polish and Malaysian printed media. We pay particular attention to the language of media which creates certain images of femininity and masculinity, thanks to visual messages and texts (and, at the same time, their hidden meaning). It is connected both with language and "neutral" messages (so called "unisex") that are not oriented on particular receiver, and with messages addressed at *men* and *women*. We would like to point out that language is of significant importance in

creating social awareness that is associated with opinions, beliefs and ideas accepted and prevalent in specific societies. These opinions and ideas become patterns and models of the way people think – also of their thinking about the question of gender.

We would like to emphasize the important role of media in shaping social awareness. It is known that media tend to take advantage of enormous possibilities of language and its coded messages, and through news and features meanings are created and transmitted to societies. However, media are neither neutral observers nor commentators of events: they equip their media messages (verbal and visual) with specific comments and contexts, which build actual meanings. It means that messages of media are usually accompanied by certain intentions, assumptions and aims. The obvious conclusion is that messages connected with gender are subjected to some media procedures, as well as cultural ones, which means they are subordinated to specific ideologies, "politicians" and cultural habitus that given opinions and linguistic patterns connected with gender are based on. As a result, they determine both the ways of perceiving gender in a given culture and the ways of dealing with it, which usually forms or strengthens particular image of femininity and masculinity in a given culture.

### **Background of media language**

The focus of this study is on the language used in printed media through written text, image (also treated as text<sup>1</sup>) and the messages encoded in it (meanings). It is understood as both language and 'neutral' messages, which in their primary objective were not directed at a specific recipient, as well as those that are addressed specifically to a woman or a man. Therefore, by examining the language of these media, we are evaluating the contents of messages offered to the recipient (reader) through them, and we concentrate on its hidden dimension.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>in reference to Umberto Eco, for whom the concept of text goes far beyond its customary understanding, for whom life is also text, as well as any of its manifestations, (including images) which constitutes a specific type of text. This means that images can be read, like printed text. They use their own symbols, own language, which are used to provide specific information and communicate with others. Therefore, images are used in our daily lives and we can observe them in our environment, for example the drawing of a bed - which describes a place of accommodation, a hotel, the drawing of an airplane, which informs us and shows the way to the airport, or a drawing of a knife and fork crossing over - describing a restaurant, etc. These types of symbols are often used on roads (where clear, readable information must be provided, and in multicultural communities, where pictograms enable the best associations and constitute the most universal and clear information. A similar function can be performed by illustrations, photographs and other images that man creates for his own and others' use, compare: Eco U, (1999) and Sztompka P, (2002).

<sup>2</sup>Messages at the open (social) level, in reference to Eric Bern, refer to messages without hidden intentions, allusions, attempts to manipulate a person (e.g. a partner in communication), and describe the communication as sincere, spontaneous, authentic, as well as reliable, conducive to efficient and healthy interpersonal relations. In the case of messages at the hidden (psychological) level, we deal with messages (i.e. transactions) that are seemingly valid, but actually containing latent motives, hidden meanings, and sometimes even impure intentions. They are used to achieve a specific (usually predictable) outcome, effect. Therefore, they sometimes mean a manipulative way of communicating in order to obtain a desired (though sometimes unconscious) aim, result or effect. This method of communicating (or constructing messages), which is linked with 'authorizing' set games and psychological intrigue, which in nature are toxic, harmful, mercenary and functionalized - that is, oriented to achieve a certain purpose, desired result. With regard to interpersonal relations, we notice that, as a general rule, they disturb healthy, appropriate relations and sometimes trigger in a person want for revenge, redressing harm. This happens primarily when the person ignorant to the manipulation discovers that he/she was cheated,

This means that, in addition to the explicit dimension of the message (which in reference to Eric Berne is defined as the social level), which is usually treated as a basis of the message, we are also interested in its hidden dimension (defined as the psychological level). As it is the hidden level that largely determines the way in which a message is ultimately read by the recipient and what emotions and actions are triggered – and this greatly determines and decides about the final effects that the message evokes. In this paper we subject selected periodicals (printed media – newspapers and magazines in Poland and Malaysia) to an analysis. It is worth emphasizing here that the criteria for selecting periodicals for the analysis have been deliberately varied, in order to obtain a higher degree of reliability of the obtained list of periodicals, which simultaneously constituted the starting point of our joint research work.<sup>3</sup>

Newspapers have an important place in media communications (and, in particular, periodicals, that is printed media<sup>4</sup>). At the same time, what is increasingly talked about is the growing interest, and even the victory of Internet media over printed press (i.e. newspapers in digital form, whose popularity is growing proportionally to the development of modern technologies – i.e. the more often and commonly we reach for technical devices like: tablets, iPads and others, which are more and more effectively replacing printed messages). Online media and the digital messages offered through them, are increasingly displacing their paper equivalents, often leading to their elimination, and even collapse. An example is the weekly issued in Poland *Newsweek* – recognized on the Polish market as a reputable newspaper and belonging to the weeklies defined as opinion-forming. Despite the fact that *Newsweek* in 2010 (with a circulation of 177 thousand copies) was in the top three best sold magazines in Poland,

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wronged and that he/she became the subject of some manipulation. As a result, this can also lead to the continuation of a 'toxic game', which sometimes can be played endlessly. I would like to emphasize that in reference to Eric Berne's theory, we only accept a general mindset, which we refer to and use to describe and analyze the messages given by printed media. Here it is worth pointing out that Erica Berne's scheme is usually used in the context of direct cross-communication, Berne E, (1998).

<sup>3</sup>In the selection of periodicals, we were guided by both the rankings of periodicals, conducted in the years 2012-2013 (however, it is worth noting that the positions of periodicals were subjected to some changes and were not stable, while the results of rankings often differed from each other, which reduced their credibility), as well as our own searches. The latter was based on interviews carried out with kiosk owners (sellers of periodicals), who were asked: what kind of periodicals are the best-selling in their newsstands? Where the Malaysian printed periodicals are concerned, the selection was based on the circulation figures reported by the Nielsen, an audit circulation bureau).

<sup>4</sup>At the heart of printed media is writing, which since the dawn of time has constituted (and still does) an effective method of communication among people. Writing has, in fact, numerous advantages: it allows you to communicate with people with whom, for example, we cannot talk with directly, through writing we can prepare reports, we can capture information that we wish to pass on to someone or which we want to remember (e.g. information worthy of remembering or necessary to remember), etc. Unlike speech, which constitutes the basic trait of humans and which has been serving man for a couple of millions of years, writing came later, around 5-6 thousand years ago. Before the era of print came along, people used: picture writing (the oldest iconographic finds, which have been discovered, are paintings from the Paleolithic period) - such form of a message survived until the late Middle Ages. Among the many varieties of writing, there was also: blackletter, hieroglyphics, cuneiform script, and others. People created records on the walls of caves, on walls, on clay tiles, papyrus, parchment, and then on paper, now it has also appeared in the form of electronic records. When it comes to the most popular writing materials in human history, it is worth paying attention to: Egyptian papyrus, which was used in the antiquity in the Middle East, in some Asian countries, however, birch bark was used, in the Himalayas - aloe bark, and in India and China - the leaves of palm trees. One of the most luxurious writing materials was silk, used by the Chinese, compare: Kopaliński (1985) and Farndon J, (1994).

thereby coming first, its American edition appeared for the last time on the 31st of December 2012. Currently, the magazine is published in printed form as *Newsweek* Poland and in digital form. Under the primary premise, press covers by its reach any daily newspapers, periodicals and periodical publications, which appear no less than once a year, which results from the press law of 1984 in Poland. It is also assumed that they must be deprived of a homogeneous whole, they must bear a permanent title or name, as well as a current number and exact date (this particularly concerns daily newspapers and periodicals).

At the same time, we notice that in journalism, the term: *press* is very broadly defined as general newspapers, magazines which are released throughout a given country, which allows for a very broad understanding of the term press (far beyond the boundaries of printed media, also taking into account other broadcasts: radio, television, newsreels, etc.). That is why opponents of such an approach have the position to name printed media *magazines or newspapers*. At the same time, a *periodical* in the journalistic approach is a press periodical printed according to an established frequency for example: once a week, every two weeks, once a month, etc. While newspapers can be published daily. All other media forms are defined most commonly as means of mass media, mass communication or media. However, we notice that in the native colloquial language the terms: *press* and *periodical* (or newspaper) exists very close to each other and are often used (and occur) interchangeably as synonyms, and as such they have grown into the consciousness of the average readers in both countries<sup>5</sup>.

### The language of printed media and meanings encoded

The language we use every day and to describe ourselves, our everyday experiences, as well as the reality that surrounds us and other people, gives us connectivity with the world. Language is a fundamental part of culture and the art of communicating our thoughts (sometimes instead of the word language, the term 'code' is also used<sup>6</sup>). Thanks to language

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<sup>5</sup>Reading press is described as the reception of press aimed at satisfying specific cognitive, entertainment needs, as well as the functioning of presented press content in a specific society or community - this about the impact of the content contained in the press on the reader. The universality of readership is determined by many factors, including: shaped cultural traditions, social activeness, readership interests, the status of wealth of readers, as well as the prices of offered periodicals, or shaped behavioural patterns, and others. At the same time in promoting periodicals, as well as promoting their readership, a large role (an increasing role) is filled by marketing and advertising, which constitute greater or lower popularity of individual journals (which can be observed, among others, in the context of the impact of television advertising on the sales of some periodicals). At the same time, it is understood that readership is a phenomenon of culture, and its main factors differentiating social coverage are, among others: the level of education, sex, age, living environment, professional and personal interests, and others, compare: Pilch T, (2003).

<sup>6</sup>The term 'code' is considered to be superior in relation to language (we encounter it primarily in scientific papers). The term 'code' specifies all systems of symbols that are used in communication. For example, *natural codes* (being a 'biological property' of various *animal species and humans*) and *artificial codes* (which are only a product of humans and serve interhuman communication) are distinguished. At the same time, when we treat interhuman communication extensively, as communication in the vertical and horizontal sense (i.e. in time and in space), then it will also cover writing, that is the languages of computer programs. When discussing the term 'code' and its relationship with language, one cannot omit 'language codes' distinguished by Basil Bernstein, who extracted two language codes: Basil Bernstein identified two language codes: *limited code*, constituting the simplest form of communication, which is acquired by a human being in the process of primary socialization (i.e. mainly in the family), which is the simplest (and also limited form of communication). In this form of

we can communicate with each other and share with each other (mutually exchange) our insights, thoughts, feelings, and also better express our needs. Language (including language, written, printed) fulfils important functions in society. With it, one can register multiple insights, experiences and save information, which, in turn, can be passed onto the next generations. Another important function of language is mutual communication (interpersonal or inter-human communication),<sup>7</sup> where language emerges as the primary medium of mutual contacts and mutual interaction. Written language fulfils a special role, which also gives us the opportunity for indirect communication (letters, emails, and all other forms of virtual contacts), through which we can contact people all over the world, in its remotest parts – with friends, as well as strangers: journalists, writers, celebrities, people met in virtual space, etc. Language is also a very important part of building a community, creating internal solidarity of a specific community, which, for example, uses (speaks) a common language (e.g. natural, professional, or regional, etc.). Another important function of language is also to allow a person to realize pro-societal aspirations and needs (companionable, herd, social). Language also plays a significant role in shaping social awareness, which is associated with views, beliefs, ideas, which are accepted and popularized in a specific community (population), and which as a result become patterns and patterns of thinking, which are not only instilled in its members, but also enforced by social pressure (Sztompka 2002). It is worth mentioning that an important role in shaping social awareness is played by media, which take advantage of the great possibilities of language and its encoded meanings, in order to create specific messages and communicate them to the public (or specific social groups). According to a general semanticist, S.I. Hayakwa (1974) language is the most sophisticated symbol in human interaction. Language is also an important cognitive tool<sup>8</sup> of the world around us, and

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communication, short sentences, statement equivalents dominate. In addition, the following are used very often by persons communicating in this code: conjunctions and adverbs, and many spoken sentences constitute a form of expressing opinions and undeniable judgements (mainly the opinions of others), thereby the sender of information often uses commanding sentences. The authors of such statements generally derive inspiration from the outside world and from third parties, and not from their own resources (e.g. own thoughts, opinions), that is why their communication is generally predictable and easy to decipher. That is also why such a language code only incidentally stimulates the human psyche and intellect. The opposite of a *limited code* is the *developed code*, which like the previous, was acquired in the process of primary socialization (mostly in the family). However, unlike the previous one, the *developed code* is characterized by a high degree of individualization, which is dominated by the tendency to express one's own opinions, judgements, thoughts and come to one's own conclusions, thereby not being a predictable code, which may also be confusing for people who use the limited code. According to Bernstein, only a small percentage of people (society) receives access to intellectual resources (a significant part is devoid of such access), and therefore, is doomed to the limited code. see: Pilch J, Aleksander Z, (2003), Łęcki K, Szóstak A, (1996).

<sup>7</sup>At this point it is worth drawing attention to the differences between interpersonal communication – which refers to communication between people, and interhuman communication - understood in a much broader way, which emphasizes its vertical and horizontal dimension. Interhuman communication allows people to communicate in time and in space (due to historical works, literature, where the human being can communicate in time - which draws attention to the vertical dimension of communication, and he/she can communicate, for example, in cyberspace, which provides a person with instant contact with others, even if they live in the remotest corners of the world – which emphasizes its horizontal dimension), compare: Strumska-Cylwik L, (2005).

<sup>8</sup>The relationship between language and cognition (language and thinking) has enjoyed the interest of researchers for centuries (in particular among philosophers, psycholinguists). Some of them identified language with thinking, while others assumed that these processes are distinct, while representatives of the latter group forming an overwhelming majority – rejected the notion in which thinking processes were identified with language -

ourselves, which additionally calls attention to the functions<sup>9</sup> it fulfils in our daily lives. At the same time, it is worth noting that each case of linguistic communication is accompanied by specific factors, based on a kind of logic of communicating information that determine the effectiveness of communication – which can be observed, among others, in the pattern constructed by the renowned linguist, Roman Jacobson<sup>10</sup>.

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pointing to their direct link - this view has also been scientifically rejected. While here it was primarily about direct links between them, which was expressed by an experiment, during which the possibilities of performing movements of speech organ were blocked by using curare, which as it turned out did not at the same time block thinking processes. Such understanding of the distinction (language and thought) is also proven by numerous behaviours observed among young children, which indicate that children have a variety of skills of thinking and solving problems, even before they master the art of using language. Researchers who recognize this view, usually emphasize the simultaneous dominance of one process over the other. This is expressed even by the *hypothesis of cognitive determinism*, which is based on the notion that in language we shall not find anything that did not exist before in cognition. Which means that language is a reflection of the way of thinking of a given community that speaks in a given language. The opposite position of the presented position is the view that language determines the way of thinking of a given community (which describes the hypothesis of Sapir and Worf), to which we refer and describe further in the text presented above, and which indicates that the language we use (speak in) determines our picture of the world. In the context of structural anthropology - language was seen as a social phenomenon, as it lives and thrives as a collective creation. Ludwig Wittgenstein insisted, however, that "the limits of my language point to the limits of my world". While stressing that what reflects the world and maintains it in language is a logic form; therefore, language becomes the logical picture of the world, and thought is the medium of logical value. Wittgenstein also noted that language is both a form of life, and thought. This is shown by *language games* based on the natural use of language and which to a greater or lesser extent correspond to what we specify as games in ordinary language. Language games are also a way of inter-human communication, based on the use of language. In the hermeneutical perspective, however, language has been strongly linked to comprehension, therefore, the hermeneutical rule of understanding an utterance has committed the human being to the continuous search for understanding (see Kuziak M, Rzepczyński S, Tomasiak T, Sikorski D, Sucharski T, 2004; Whorf B. L, 2002; Szweczek W, Kurcz I. 1998).

<sup>9</sup>Roman Jacobson identified six basic functions of language, in which he included: the expressive function, also referred to as emotive, in which an important role is played by evoking impressions — for example, by using exclamation points. Here, the sender of the message particularly underlines his attitude towards the content of the message; *impressive function (also referred to as the conative function)*, where the sender of the message focuses on the receiver's reactions and directs his attention and interest primarily at them. Expressions which have an influence on the receiver of the message and his beliefs and will are also used here; *poetic function (creative)*, in which the message itself provides superior value, therefore, the sender's attention is above all directed at it. This feature is widely used in literature and advertising, which are based on a kind of word game, *cognitive function* (otherwise defined: representational, referential or symbolic), which focuses on the content of the message and what it refers to, see: Jacobson R, (1989), Łęcki K., Szóstak A, (1996) and Pilch T, Aleksander Z (1996).

<sup>10</sup>Jacobson presented in graphic form the scheme of communication, which consists of certain factors (six elements), based on a kind of logic of communicating information, where the *sender* communicates to the *receiver* a specific *message*, which is always passed on in a specific *context*. Therefore, for a message to be effective and properly understood – (properly decoded) it must be considered and referred to a specific context, which builds its appropriate meaning. We would like to emphasize here the special importance of *context* (which has an essential meaning), in light of the issue discussed (the hidden meanings, messages, programmes hidden in language, which we observed in printed media). Jacobson also stresses that the *channel* is also important, through which the message passes, and the ability to break through it. Another necessary element in the presented communication scheme is the *code*, common to the sender and the receiver (which is also very important in the context of the issue discussed), and which determines the appropriate understanding of the

The analysis of language singles out both spoken language and written language, while the latter constitutes the main subject of our research interests (in the context of the considerations undertaken on printed media). Written language is characterized by durability and communication indirectness. Thanks to it, the sender of a message can more carefully and with greater attention, choose language means that determine the effectiveness of the message (statement). In written messages one can better control and manage language resources, message contents, one can also eliminate redundant informational elements from it and select vocabulary more carefully (which in written texts is usually more varied, and at the same time, more condensed). However, the use of written language and efficient use of it is linked with specific acquired skills, predispositions, which cause that not everyone can equally effectively use it (even if one has sufficiently mastered the art of spoken language). Through such language (including also the language of images), one can also *manipulate*, *'brainwash'*<sup>11</sup>, *have an influence on* and pressure others. At the same time, the basis of effective manipulation (thus influencing, controlling and managing the beliefs and decisions of other people), in addition to widely understood linguistic and communication proficiency, is also knowledge of human beliefs, behaviours, automatic responses in specific situations, as well as needs perceived by people. With this knowledge, one can in fact effectively influence, and even modify, human behaviour. Manipulation is a form of influencing (which is a type of intentional and intended impact) others in such a way that they behave and act in accordance with the expectations and preferences of the manipulator (even in a situation when it is inconsistent with or contrary to their good). Manipulation can take on various forms: one can knowingly mislead someone, one can systematically glorify his/her own activities and diminish and depreciate the actions of others, one can shape positive and negative images of someone or something, and apply many other manipulative procedures. Manipulation seen in this way is a form of destructive impact on a human's mental structure, and usually entails a number of injuries, affecting the people subject to it. At the same time, numerous techniques of social engineering are helpful in manipulation, referring to, among others: the selection of facts, ridiculing someone or something, creating stereotypes, repeating slogans and many others. Other commonly used practices that bring media tangible and expected effects

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message (its decoding). Another vital element is *contact*, understood as the physical and mental relationship, which allows to establish and continue mutual communication - in the context of the issue discussed, it is about the relationship between printed press and their audience (recipients), see: Jacobson R, (1989), Łęcki K., Szóstak A, (1996).

<sup>11</sup>The concept of *'brainwashing'*, which gives way more and more to the term *'control of the mind'*, belongs to the commonly used ways through which people, their views, and even feelings and desires are manipulated, in order to weaken their autonomy and to limit their free choices. For example, such a procedure is used in the military, orders, sects; media also often refer to it (although not in such a wide scope). Control of behaviour - *'control of the mind'*, generally consists in exact planning, and additionally controlling daily human activity (with regard to properly managing his time, controlling and managing his access to sources of information – here we mean the lack of free access to it). To this end, some information (messages) are falsified, and to some, access is completely blocked (a person is beset with information, news only from so-called reliable sources, coming from accepted top bodies: supervisors, principals, who in this way strengthen their position and better implement the objectives. At the same time, their realization is very often conducted 'under the cover' of seeming concern, interested and understanding, as well as 'bombarding with love'. At the same time, to enhance the effects, rigid rules and regulations are used, as well as penalties and rewards, which are intended to strengthen the desired effects. Simultaneously, knowing and applying the specified repertoire of penalties and rewards, one can more effectively modify the behaviour of people and better manage them. Such *'control of the mind'* is often associated with procedures like: manipulating memories, repeating certain slogans - *'mantras'*, rejecting all forms of critical thinking, etc., see: Znyk P, (2008).

(benefits) are strategies consisting in referencing to the so-called opinion of most people (particularly authorities – where people's natural tendency to submission to authorities is taken advantage of). Despite the fact that in democratic societies it is prohibited and unlawful to cross 'specified' boundaries of manipulation (which results, among others, in restrictions set before advertising), in practice, the use of these restrictions is proving to be very unreliable, therefore, manipulators can very often violate the law, violate it or intentionally move about on its boundaries. In such cases they usually use words and language in an ambiguous way (Znyk 2008). Here it is worth pointing out that the language we use is not objective and unambiguous, since we can freely change its meanings. This means that the language we use is subjective, which also means that language can be manipulated, used freely and, through it, have an impact on others. By using it, we can also strongly influence the perception of ourselves and other people. Therefore, language is very often taken advantage of and used as a tool for manipulation, exerting pressure, of which all kinds of media seem to be a representative example in the modern world. It's not hard to see that language not only describes the reality that surrounds us, but also creates it, which calls attention to the causal (performative)<sup>12</sup> function of language. Through language, we can also lighten or darken the contents of a given message, reduce its significance, or on the contrary – we can give it a unique position and importance. With language we can hurt others, inflict pain on someone, or sadden someone, one can harm someone using language. Several phrases indicate this<sup>13</sup>, which function in the Polish language (commonly used and very willingly used by Poles in everyday, colloquial language). Poles using them describe, among other things, the style of speaking, the ability to speak, or characteristics (properties) or intentions of the person using a specific language. These include phrases such as: *biting, malicious* or *sharp tongue*, or *tongue as sharp as sting*, (that is language which, as a rule, hurts others, causes harm, makes one sad, or inflicts pain) – one can *fight (cut) each other with tongues*, in the sense of argue, quarrel, engage in polemics with someone, or have *a long tongue* (which describes a person who is unable to keep secrets, thus someone unworthy of trust, a 'chatterbox'). Likewise we have similar judgmental languages that become malicious and considered unbecoming for the Malaysian values. Such callous labelling common during political elections and one can read in the newspapers and online newspapers about the *laser mouth* politicians (mostly aimed at women politicians who have *bad tongues*), the *sleepy head* prime minister (the label used for the fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia), the *Botox* chief minister (referring to the former chief minister of Selangor state government), *katak lompat/jumping frog* (aimed for those who like to jump or move from one political party to another) and the like. The following sayings have a similar meaning: *the tongue itches, burns someone*, which may suggest that a person cannot remain silent. In the context of the quoted sayings, everyone also knows that it isn't nice to get onto *human tongues* or *bad tongues* – because this means that we can become the subject of (and even the victim of) someone's rumours, someone else's slander, or gossip. Similarly, when someone *wags his tongue* on someone else (that is one gossips about someone, talks about him behind his back or 'lets off steam' about someone). That language is a dangerous tool, has been known for centuries. The aphorism taken from Solon, and cited from Greek testifies to this, which says: *'how much more savagely does the tongue wound than does the*

<sup>12</sup>Causative (performative) function of language draws attention to the fact that language creates our reality, not only describes it; therefore, it can be used not only to communicate specific content, but also to cause (evoke) something more than what is being talked about directly, compare: Pilch T, Aleksander Z, (2003).

<sup>13</sup>Phrasemes (so-called idioms) are set expressions, phrases, which are appropriate for a given language (in the discussed case, they concern the Polish language). It is worth noting that phrasemes should not be translated literally - word for word - into other languages, because this may deform the given meaning and proper sense, compare: Skorupka S, (1968).



*sword's steel'* (Latin: *multo quam Ferrum lingua ferit atrocior*), or descriptions of the tongue that we encounter in the Bible (in a number of Psalms), like: *false, treacherous or deceitful tongue* – indicating the dangerous aspects of using language as a tool of communication. In Malaysia, the tongue metaphor is also rampant. A common one would be *lidah bercabang* (in local dialect) which means *Split tongue* (refers to someone who never keeps his/her promises). However, by using language we can also make others laugh, cheer them up, put them in a good mood, or lift their spirits, especially when someone has a *witty, playful tongue*, when we find a *common tongue* with someone or we speak with someone in a *common language* – which suggests a kinship of souls, finding common ground of understanding. Sometimes *we lose our tongue* and cannot say a word, which may suggest our confusion, shyness, surprise, strong jitters or stress. In Malaysia, we call it *Lidah Kelu* or *Stiff Tongue*, which have more or less the same meaning i.e shy or lost for words. Sometimes, on the other hand, it is the opposite and someone's *tongue is untied*, which generally means that someone is talkative or becomes talkative and then says a lot, tells anecdotes and jokes. There are times when we are forced *to seek our tongue*, which is tantamount to obtaining advice, news, with asking about something, gaining information on a specific topic. In Polish common speech, we also encounter the strongly rooted saying deriving from the Latin: *aliis lingua, aliis dentes* ("some people have got tongues, some people have got teeth"), ordering one *'to keep one's tongue behind his teeth'*; a person who has gained this ability is recognized as trustworthy, being able to keep a secret, such a person generally does not speak unnecessarily and can *keep his tongue in check* or *bite his tongue*, when the situation so requires. The contrary happens when someone *chatters, prattles* unconsciously or *when someone's tongue itches*, consequently *blabs nonsense*, says far too much, and as a result exposes oneself to a lack of trust and credibility in the opinions of others. We have also been taught that it is not right to pull someone by the tongue, that is to obsessively interrogate another person – which generally gives the impression of a person who is overly curious and nosey. It happens that someone wishes that another person's *tongue dried* or that his *tongue is taken away* (which is a type of curse), and is connected with the wish and expectation for someone to become mute. Taking the above into consideration, we see that *it is not always easy to find a common tongue with other people*. This is due to the fact that, as noted by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf – people speak in different languages (this applies even to people of the same nationality – which refers to the use of the natural language)<sup>14</sup>, therefore, the languages of different people vary from one another, similarly like they themselves differ from each other. Therefore, even when they have the best and sincerest intentions, their language messages are

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<sup>14</sup>*Natural languages* are understood as the languages of specific human communities, which arose through their spontaneous (natural) development, they are also called ethnic or national languages. They relate to a system of characters, which serve non-specialist communication of people (societies), and which use a given natural language, for example: Polish, English, French, etc. We typically call language a complex system of symbols that are interrelated, and which constitute the property of a particular community, which means that their significance for members of a given community is the same. The term language is also used in a broader sense, characterizing it as any means of communicating thoughts and feelings, referring to both specialist and fragmentary methods of communicating with people, for example, using poetry, the language of philosophy, or literary language. There are also languages relating to specific professional environments (groups): for example, journalistic language, legal, scientific, political, clerical, or military. In addition, there are also artificial languages (which are supposed to act as universal communication systems), a representative example of which is Esperanto - created artificially in order to facilitate mutual communication between each other, and being representatives of different language communities. Another example of intentionally created language, used for specific purposes (for specific groups), for example, computer language, aviation language, or Braille language (writing). compare: Pilch T, Aleksander Z, (2003); Didier J, ( 1995), and Sztompka P, (2002).

not always clear and equally understandable for all people. It also happens that language messages are clear, understandable and readable for some (e.g. within certain social groups), and for others they are impossible to encode, remaining incomprehensible, unclear. This happens, because people perceive the world differently and produce different images of the world, which, like their languages, do not always correspond with each other and do not always fit together. As a consequence, the result is that people are not always able to communicate with each other effectively, and they are not always able to understand each other. It is worth pointing out that in the process of creating internal images, an act of metamorphosis occurs, causing external images (seen) to be changed into internal images (remembered), which extend personal resources of images. In the opinion of Sapir and Whorf, the language used by people (according to the theory of linguistic determinism that they preach) – is shaped and determined by the human vision of the world and what they perceive as real (i.e. the images generated by them) – because a thought is determined on the basis of the language that people use.<sup>15</sup> However, the multiplicity and quality of images in the world that surrounds people, have an impact on their language, simultaneously demanding from them to describe the images, define them (refer to them), determining one's approach to them. Therefore, the images that surround man do not remain indifferent, neutral and without meaning, but have a huge impact on him, like language used by him every day – both spoken and printed. Especially that in recent decades we have seen an increase in visual communication, and sometimes even their dominance over verbal communication, which has contributed to the establishment and consolidation of a new concept, which is 'iconosphere', which refers to a set of multiple images that surround us, and which has accompanied man since the dawn of time. This means that language constitutes here a fundamental value, becomes a carrier of native traditions and values. At the same time, we assume that language (which is very broadly understood in this paper), also includes images. We also refer to the importance of images displayed in the media in our previous work (in the context of so-called "good" images and "bad" images); see: Strumska-Cylwik, (2012), Belting H, (2012); Faridah and Mohd Rajib (2011); Faridah and Rahmah, (1996); Skorupka S, (1974); Skorupka S., Auderska H., Łempicka Z, (1968).

### **Methodology and Sampling**

The study of text in the newspapers and periodicals such as magazines especially pertaining to the representation of gender and portrayal of images is best executed through a thematic qualitative content analysis. By using qualitative method, the interpretive and subjectivity of the text could be addressed. In terms of sampling, a purposive sampling is used which allow selected samples being chosen according to the need of the research. Samples of newspapers and magazines were chosen over a three year period, of 2012, 2013 and 2014.

In the context of this paper, where we study the language of printed media in Poland and Malaysia in terms of 'hidden' (coded) messages in it, we recall selected topics, issues and articles taken from the 'most popular' periodicals, (that is, those that are mostly read by Poles and Malaysians – and specifically those that are bought most frequently). It is worth noting

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<sup>15</sup>It is worth noting that this hypothesis (theory) has been incorporated into a number of contemporary approaches to communication that have been defined as social constructivism, according to which - language constructs people's perception of reality and the types of relationships they mutually create. I discuss this theory more broadly in one of my articles, compare: Strumska – Cylwik, (2012), Adler Ronald B. Rosenfeld Ronald B., Proctor II Russell F,( 2006), Kopaliński W, (1985); Belting H, (2012); Morreale S.P., Spitzberg B.H., Barge J.K.(2007).

that the sale of periodicals does not necessarily correspond to and is synonymous with their reading.<sup>16</sup>

In the methodology, we do not differentiate between *strictly* women's or men's periodicals, because the presented periodicals do not do this either, that is they do not diversify their audiences on the basis of sex, which means that they can be for both women and men. Among them were magazines, weeklies, fortnightlies, monthlies, as well as daily newspapers. It is worth emphasizing here that among the many periodicals published in Poland and Malaysia, thematic orientation is strongly present, addressing specific issues (specific interests of the audience), and at the same time affiliated with their expectations, which sometimes stand out above the division of the sexes, other times they accent (more or less subtly) the existing differences, by infixing specific interests developed during socialization to gender roles.

In Poland, there are periodicals related to sports, politics, law and business, fashion, the automotive industry, cooking etc. Amidst the number of titles, among others, are: *Polityka*, *Murator*, *Cztery Kąty*, *Mieszkanie*, *Historia*, *Charaktery*, *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna*, *Auto Świat*, *Motor*, *Sport*, *Edukacja i Dialog*, and others. At the same time, some titles explicitly pay attention to their potential reader, who due to their specific interests, usually coupled with gender, will select a specific title. This manifests in the fact that men are generally more likely to choose titles such as: *Murator*, *Auto Świat*, or *Motor*, *Sport*, and women: *Cztery Kąty*, *Mieszkanie*, or *Charaktery*.

The Malaysian magazines having such orientations and holding good readerships are *Wanita* (for housewives) *Female* (popular among working women), *Cleo* (Malaysian edition), a family magazine, *Seri Dewi & Keluarga*, *InTrend* (a magazine published by the leading private satellite television station, Astro), *Jelita* (a women's magazine for the professional career women), *Malaysia Tatler*, women magazine, *Wanita & Wawasan* (emphasising women and vision).

In this research, we focus on the periodicals, which in various rankings in recent months were at the highest positions, as well as the ones that we most often encounter in our homes. It can be noticed that periodicals of diverse content dominate, which representatives of both sexes reach for with equal curiosity and interest. It should be assumed that the interest in them is dictated by a wider curiosity about the world, going beyond the limits specified by gender, or age (which sometimes determine, and even restrict the living or intellectual activity of the human being to clearly defined and assigned social roles).

At the same time, it is worth mentioning that some divisions of periodicals (for example, due to gender) turn out to be unreliable. Especially that a number of subjects is proving to be equally attractive to women and men. This is shown, among others, by the huge popularity and interest in the daily newspaper in Poland: *Fakt*, which turned out to be the undisputed leader amidst the press sold in Poland and which enjoys great popularity among Polish readers, one that is eagerly bought by women and men. At the same time, it is worth emphasizing that one of the undeniable phenomena of the newspaper *Fakt* is its very

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<sup>16</sup>This is confirmed by, among others, people (also readers), who provided me with a number of periodicals (including students who brought various newspapers, periodicals from their homes to class. They often emphasized, that sometimes these periodicals are only looked over (not read). They also stressed that the headings and titles are important, which more or less effectively encourage to read the whole e.g. article. They also raised the subject of subscriptions to periodicals; they noted subscriptions made by places of work, by institutions. Through such subscriptions, the position of a number of periodicals is clearly elevated (in the context of their popularity), though it does not necessarily always coincide with actually reading them

thoughtfully chosen and used title. The perverse use of the word '*fakt*'<sup>17</sup> [in English: 'fact'] as the title for the daily newspaper *Fakt* proved to be an effective marketing strategy, which suggests to the readers that they shall receive here reliable information based on the objective communication of obtained facts. On assumption of the term: *fakt*, we see the hidden suggestion that such a message will be true and based solely on actual (reliable) data. For the truth,<sup>18</sup> on assumption should be planted exclusively on facts. However, despite such expectations, in place of facts, *artefacts* appear very often – presented in the form of ready, respectively prepared by certain people (specialists) information, comments, ready conclusions (made already before us by someone else). Such worded messages are generally

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<sup>17</sup>The term 'fact' is related to any data of an experience. It constitutes a simple detail, which stands in opposition to the law expressing the general rule. Many types of facts are distinguished (raw, historical, scientific, etc.), but the most basic is the so-called 'raw' fact - referring to popular observations (experiences) like: I see an accident on the street, I hear the rumble of colliding cars, I smell burning, etc. Such a fact is based on direct observation, in which the vital role is played by our senses: sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste. Therefore, the message is real, based on facts, means only talking about (reporting it) what exactly what our senses feel, which means that we are actually providing facts. In the context of the "Ontology of the Treaty" in Wittgenstein, the world is a total of facts, not of things, at the same time, a fact is not the same as an event. It differs from it in that it is based on existence, while an event is planted in time. At the same time, the total of facts determines what is and what is not a fact. Sometimes we distinguish facts as '*general facts*' and '*particular facts*'. General facts, in their assumption concern 'everyone' as a certain whole and are reflected in expressions like: all, everyone (this does not mean, however, that an inductive generalization took place here). At the same time, it is precisely on the basis of 'particular facts' that such generalizations are made, compare: Didier J, (1995) and McKay M, Davis M, Fanning P, (2002).

<sup>18</sup>In Descartes, truth was equated with certainty, which means that true recognition can only be certain recognition - understood as clear recognition. However, in terms of the rationalistic depiction of Hegel, the truth is a whole, which in his opinion gives meaning to any existence. At the same time, the truth is the effect of the developmental process, where knowledge comes about, through which one can recognize the sense of everything that was born as different as a result of change. Hegel, on the basis of the law of logic, also recognized the dialectic law. Based on this, he assumed that any true statement corresponds to a true negation, whereas each thesis has an antithesis, and a synthesis emerges from them. Another position was taken by Frederick Nietzsche, for whom the world remained unrecognizable and constituted a dynamic, variable construct, which cannot be closed in any fixed frames. Therefore, in his opinion, the truth is not to be understood in the traditional way, which is a consolidation and simplification of dynamic reality. Therefore, Nietzsche advocated the relative treatment of all recognition and values (and thus the truth), which was expressed by relativism (having very many opponents and often subjected to criticism – also in the modern world). Another view was proposed by Emmanuel Lévinas, who in his philosophy of encountering and experiencing *the Other* recognized a new value. The experience of *the Other* (Second person) became, in fact, the primary experience, assuming objective self-experience. In Hans Georg Gadamer, the act of recognition is made by the verification of pre-judgements, through their confirmation or rejection, as illustrated by Gadamer's hermeneutic circle. The truth appears in it as a historical phenomenon, while a conversation constitutes the dimension of disclosing the truth. While Jean-François Lyotard viewed that truth can never be captured, because certain knowledge is not available. He saw modernity as an era of the fall of 'great narrative', while the postmodern human being as a participant in a number of discourses and linguistic games, in which he is entangled. Different approaches and interpretations of *truth* cause that very often it is relative, used as a tool for manipulation. Consequently, in a situation where it appears to be unfavourable, two-edged, very often the manipulator moves the focus from the objective plane (reason), or the 'intersubjectively verifiable' plane, to an objective plane (reason), through which the 'truth' changes its face or becomes relative, compare: Didier J, (1995), Karwat M, (2006).

accompanied by carefully selected visual messages (photographs, images) <sup>19</sup>, which as it should be presumed, are to strengthen and enhance the attractiveness of the given message. As a result, they form only an imaginatively created 'pseudo reality' stuffed with 'pseudofacts', which in a clever way imitate the truth and create only its fiction and illusion.

Likewise, in Malaysia similar newspapers that uphold facts and believe strongly in providing complete, current and factual news accounts include several mainstream newspapers such as *New Straits Times*, *The Star*, and the national language newspapers, such as *Berita Harian* and *Utusan Malaysia*. The leading online newspapers, such as *Malaysiakini* and the *Malaysian Insider* also join in the league to provide news that “are not covered by the mainstream newspapers”. A more recent promising periodical that came into the market is in the form of news magazine genre namely *Focus Malaysia* and *Unreserved*.

By analysing the message content of the newspaper such as *Fakt*, it is easy to notice that the following dominate: *news about current events in the country and the world, information relating controversial topics and issues, as well as information planted on gossip and sensation, which usually involve a variety of accidents, tragedies, disasters, natural disasters, murders*, etc. They are usually provided in a short, concise, 'loud' form. In such messages, we also observe the features of a 'masculine' language', which manifests itself primarily in concise language forms, in substantial reports based on 'facts', as well as the characteristics of a 'feminine' language, which has been based on emotions, and that creates very 'emotional' messages. Such a message does not require from the reader any intellectual effort, or 'deeper immersion', and does not incline the recipient to deeper reflection.

A somewhat similar trend is also observed in Malaysia in some popular tabloid newspapers such as *Harian Metro* and *Kosmo* that capitalise on sensationalism and bizarre happenings, whilst the online newspapers such as *Malaysiakini* and *Malaysian Insider*, have regular highlights on controversies and sensational political issues.

As a rule, there is not much that results from it. Such a message is based on carefully prepared and 'assembled' set of selected and properly crafted information ('facts'), often gullible, often based on slogans. <sup>20</sup> However, such messages, despite their low credibility, appear to be highly desirable, and above all, are sold very well, and both women and men go after it (which is confirmed by rankings and sales results of specific titles of periodicals). We notice here that people sometimes prefer to adopt an artificially created and orchestrated world view in the media, rather than its actual version. This may mean that the media addresses specific reading needs and correspond to the pattern of perception of the average reader, for whom such a message is carefully prepared and 'tailored to his needs' – according

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<sup>19</sup>The strength of the image (photography) in modern reality results, among others, from the fact that it is able to better synchronize human perspective with the world, it reflects people's changing view of the world around them (and sometimes becomes a view on their own view). This was accomplished through photography being released from being perceived as a sign - index, reflection, where a photo was a kind of trace of things, a fingerprint that faithfully reflects things and events. Today, as a general rule, there are no such requirements from photographs. Therefore, the 'freed', modern images do not represent the world as it is, do not present the real world. The reality presented through them is rather a type and result of the construction that people themselves create, and which can be freely managed. Therefore, images are being increasingly perceived as a certain threat; Jean Baudrillard called images - 'the murderers of the real'. The crisis of their representation consists in doubting the reference, which people refuse to today's images, because they no longer trust them (especially in the age of the digital image, virtual or Photoshop treatment commonly applied, see: Baudrillard J, (2006).

<sup>20</sup>Slogans are construed as generalities, clichés, platitudes, or common trite phrases, sometimes also as concise, short slogans advertising or promoting something, someone, compare: Skorupka S, (1974) and Skorupka S., Auderska H, Lempicka Z, (1968).

to his expectations and wishes. In this case, they address the expectations of those readers who are eager for sensation, seeking 'a shiver of emotions', thrill, topics for discussion. In this way media fits into the expectations of the general public, both female and male.

This is probably why a number of periodicals (not only daily newspapers) are increasingly aiding themselves with sensation, controversy, rumour, which are presented in various forms and guises, both in printed media and electronic media, as well as online media; thereby texts and reporter messages are stuffed with them.

## Findings

### Reflection of gender in Polish media

The study of gender representations and image portrayal of gender which is the focus of this paper, reminded us of Jean Baudrillard (2006) who noted, "*the use of mass media, pathetic hypocrisy of everyday information intensifies through the signs of disaster (sacrifice, murder, rape, revolutions) the undisturbed peace of everyday life*". However, the submitted contents are the responsibility of not only those who provide them, but also those who receive them and use them. It is worth noting (which John Fiske highlights) that meanings are not placed in the text itself, but they are formed in interactions emerging between the text and the audience. At the same time, the audience is not a passive, but an active audience, and has complete freedom in the choice of media, which best respond to their needs and expectations (although it is worth considering here how these needs are needs that people are actually aware of). It is worth noting that the emerging meanings also have a *socio-political* dimension, because they are connected with the manifestation of a particular ideology, and this means that they cannot be seen and understood in isolation from their social context.

Note that we also encounter various forms of '*ideological leaks*' in periodicals that are not necessarily related directly with politics. Such ideological manifestations usually work in favour of a specific class that has power, which by holding it, also controls production and distribution, relating both to goods, as well as to meanings and ideas (which seems to be particularly important in the context of the undertaken subject). Therefore, such an ideology strengthens a given class domination; (see: Fiske, 2008). We can observe a particularly strong presence of such ideological messages in periodicals, magazines – referred to as opinion-forming – in particular in popular daily newspapers in Poland, and in political press, such as: *Polityka*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Wprost*, *Newsweek*, and *Uważam Rze Historia*. These periodicals not only shape, but also establish certain opinions, beliefs of male and female readers. It is worth noting that in these periodicals the *mechanism of rationalization* is often used,<sup>21</sup> which turns out to be helpful in shaping and strengthening certain opinions.

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<sup>21</sup>Rationalization in psychology constitutes a form of justifying specific behaviour. This is one of the defence mechanisms (it is stressed that this mechanism is particularly happily used by people who are more educated). It constitutes a form of a seemingly rational justification of their decisions and attitudes (e.g. unsolicited behaviours, reactions, feelings, needs, motives), so that they can be accepted and tolerated. While real motives are hidden (often also from one's own consciousness). Rationalization is a manifestation of 'false reasoning', which involves choosing the wrong rationale in order to justify an unacceptable (generally unpleasant) state of affairs. Two typical varieties of rationalization have been distinguished, which are described as: "sour grapes" (when we consider the purpose we achieved as irrelevant) or "sweet lemons" (namely telling oneself that a specific unpleasant event or situation occurring with our participation is in fact pleasant). Here it is also worth recalling the word 'rationalization', which derives from the Latin: *ration* - reason and relates to rationalism, which is a system based on reason, and also opposes the systems based on feelings or revelation. It also stands in

We encounter this mechanism in one of the issues of *Polityka*, in an article entitled '*Co wiedzą za miedzą*' [What they know behind the bounds] written by Jagienka Wilczak, where we not only see very strong opinion-forming trends focusing on building a ground of understanding in Polish-Lithuanian relations, but also an attempt at rationalizing them. This article clearly encourages to the mutual opening of both nations (to cooperation, mutual projects), it refers to the historical traditions and common historical experience. The reader's attention is turned to the common aspects and interests on the international stage, which according to the article '*should connect the two neighbouring countries*'. Here, a very clear tendency can be seen to seek reasonable justifications concerning the building of a mutual community.

Another spectacular example of using the mechanism of rationalization is the article by Macin Dzierżanowski in the weekly *Wprost* entitled '*O kim mówił Wojciech Fibak*' [Who Wojciech Fibak was talking about], which was dedicated to the profile of the world-famous tennis player Wojciech Fibak, and specifically speaking, a sex scandal including him. A strong group of people (actors, editors, 'friends') stood in defence of the tennis player, who in addition to defending him, justified (rationalized) the tennis player's behaviour.

Noteworthy is also the title from the cover of the periodical: '*Kto się boi listy Fibaka?*' [Who's afraid of Fibak's list], which suggests the 'painful' involvement of his defenders in the described scandal. In this, it suggests that perhaps we are dealing here with 'emotional blackmail',<sup>22</sup> which is supposed to trigger fear – fear in witnesses of the event (the defenders) and thus trigger certain behaviours in them. At the same time it is worth emphasizing that reference to emotions: fear, anxiety, and even intimidation, is a common procedure used in the media. For it turns out that stories spun from fear, anxiety, threat – (intimidation, invoking a sense of terror) are a great sell. The characters of 'fear', 'anxiety', not just take a variety of forms and figures, but also speak a specific language (of a huge emotional charge). Their intention is to produce an atmosphere of confusion, unrest, anxiety in connection with a specific event or someone's actions, which may soon ensue. Such a phenomenon sometimes takes the form of '*fear confounding*', (Karwat, 2006). It causes confusion, fear, even panic, and consequently leads to a shift of attention of recipients to side circumstances (e.g. the side circumstances of someone else's actions), instead of on his intentions, significance, or content. Another commonly used practice includes threatening with a partner, which is expressed, among others, by one of the articles from *Newsweek* by Michał Krzymowski, the title of which clearly feeds tension: '*Tusk straszy Gowinem i Schetyną*' [Tusk threatens with Gowin and Schetyna].

One can scare others in various ways: *through disasters, wars, terrorism, disease and many others*. Generally, one can cause fear in everyone (both women and men), despite the

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opposition to empiricism. It is worth mentioning Weber's *theory of rationalization*, which concerns changes in the patterns of social actions and according to which people increasingly base their actions on the rational (instrumental) calculation of costs and on the consequences of those actions. It relates to the development of science, technology, bureaucracy. Rationalization understood in this way is based on technical knowledge and is ancillary to the criterion of productivity, which concerns both the organization of social life, as well as economic life, see: Kofta M, Szustrowa T, Grzegówska- Klarkowska H, (2001); Giddens A,(2004); Didier J, (1995), compare: *Racjonalizacja w psychologii*, (2013).

<sup>22</sup>*Emotional blackmail*' is treated as one of the social techniques designed to exert an influence on someone, manipulate him/her. It is usually used towards people who excessively expose their personality traits, vices, weaknesses, and who reveal significant information about themselves - such that can be used against them. 'Emotional blackmail' most commonly affects people who excessively need the approval of others, who suffer from deep anxiety (for example, about a negative opinion or anger of others), who have an impaired self-esteem, who is used to take on excessive responsibility for others, etc., (Znyk, 2008).

fact that, as a rule, everyone is afraid in their own way. That is why a lot of the media builds their popularity on inducing and sustaining fear. Sometimes they do it, without a specific aim, simply to unleash in fear in the audience – that is, just to be afraid (where fear becomes the intrinsic value – in itself); other times fear is directed at a specific aim (for example, it becomes a warning against some more or less real threat).

Anxiety and fear have become inevitable partners of many daily messages. A representative example is the popular science magazine *Świat Wiedzy*, where already on the cover titles and slogans appear which bring about an atmosphere of fear, threat and suggest 'anxietal' atmospheres, which is reflected in the titles cited: 'Czy lodowiec może eksplodować?' [Can a glacier explode?], 'Jakie narkotyki kupujemy nie wiedząc o tym?' [What drugs do we buy without knowing about it?], 'Wywiad z psychopata' [An interview with a psychopath], or 'Niebezpieczne tajemnice historii' [Dangerous mysteries of history] – these are just a few examples of 'tempting' with fear and inviting to an 'anxietal reading game'. At the same time, it turns out that you might want to accept such an invitation to learn, for example, how to see through a psychopath, and thus protect oneself against him? Or what agents (products) that we use every day hide in them a fatal danger? (especially when we use them carelessly). Sometimes 'inspiring fear' arises from a powerlessness to some problems, especially when previous actions and efforts failed. Then 'planting fear in others', 'infecting others with fear' may prove to be a reasonable measure, especially when the media participate in 'spreading' it (and thus their authority and incredible clout). Then fear can not only be soothed, but also relieved, and a solution can even be found (and sometimes even justice can be achieved, and harm can be amended). An example of this is the series of articles in *Newsweek* from the series *Błędy lekarskie i bezkarność* [Doctors' errors and impunity], which write about negligence and medical errors, as well as their consequences.

The language of these articles usually builds a strong tension among readers: usually a simple 'reporter' style is used here; the language is sparing, 'reporting' – avoiding unnecessary means of linguistic expression, but also 'strong' and imbued with a strong emotional charge. This tension is generally already built by the title itself, which is an announcement of something important, as well as emotionally moving, for example: *Śmierć Jasia. Stop bezkarności lekarzy* [Little Johnny's death. Stop the impunity of doctors]; *Nieludzki poród* [Inhumane childbirth]; *Nietykalni* [The untouchables]; *Lekarz nie przeprosza* [The doctor does not apologise], and others. The cited titles and their corresponding articles describe the impunity of the medical environment in Poland, and at the same time express the powerlessness of those who are affected by this problem.

The language of such articles is generally equal to the seriousness of the topics; it is sparing, powerful and expressive. Language helps here not only express and expose the truth, but also to present it in all its glory, and bring out the various nuances that accompany it. Sometimes we hear a dramatic cry, a cry of desperation (both of women and men), such as: *In the delivery room you need to kick, scream, bite, call for help*, which talks about the difficult experience of young parents: a young woman and a young man. We encounter another example of a desperate cry and call of desperate readers and event participants in a series of articles in *Newsweek* – *Pedofilia i bezkarność* [Paedophilia and impunity]. Here there are also 'strong'-sounding titles like: *Matka prosi – powstrzymajcie mojego syna, żeby nie gwałcił kolejnego dziecka* [A mother begs – stop my son from raping another child]; *Zielone światło dla pedofila* [Green light for paedophile]; *Mój syn pedofil* [My son, the paedophile]; and *Fikcja* [Fiction]. In the latter, we see an unusual and surprising message that illustrates the dramatic relationship of a woman (Mother) and a man (Son – the paedophile). Here, the media are the 'last lifeline' which can save their 'hopeless' situation. The accompanying visual messages (attached photographs) are just as 'strong' in their expression, such as: a photograph of the face of a crying girl with sad eyes, which we see on



the cover – or a photograph attached to the article: '*Wielka fikcja*' [*Huge fiction*] – depicting the face of a frightened, defenceless girl, or the photograph of a desperate, crying mother in the article '*My son, the paedophile*'. Both in the presented texts and the accompanying visual messages – we see the sorrow, despair, helplessness, powerlessness of women and men entangled in everyday life, which is guarded by flawed law, ridiculous regulations and the indolence of public officers. Their completion and quintessence becomes the cited below answer of the Deputy Minister of Justice, who in response to the question: 'Is there a way of controlling paedophiles after they leave prison?' said: 'Scant' – which even more 'fills the goblet' of bitterness and despair. The use of the word 'scant' in legal language sounds ridiculous, incompetent and inappropriate – especially in the context of the severe acts committed.

The president of the Foundation 'Stop Przעדawnieniu', who provides a clear response, uses a different language and other phrases: '*Life-long, unconditional isolation*' (it is worth mentioning that the woman herself in childhood was a victim of such rapes. A similar 'uncompromising' tone can be noticed in the statement of Prime Minister Donald Tusk from 2008: '*Zero tolerance for paedophiles*' and '*Chemical castration in closed wards*' – however, beyond the categorically sounding statements, they were 'empty', because no radical change occurred. This means that children are just as vulnerable, and their parents just as worried and helpless as before.

The media and their 'dramatic cries' (messages), failed to successfully complete their task. It is worth noting here that the media not only manipulate their audience, they arouse fear and terror in them, exert pressure on them, which generally evokes pejorative associations. Thanks to media we enrich our knowledge, we develop our interests, improve our skills, we have a better orientation in the world, we build more fruitful relationships with other people (also male-female), we take better care about each other and our surroundings, we develop our inner potential and improve – both women and men perfect themselves. It is also worth emphasizing their therapeutic dimension, through which we better cope with daily difficulties, solve a number of problems more efficiently (especially those that would be difficult to solve in isolation), we release ourselves from the feeling that we are alone in the world, even when we are feeling really lonely. Therefore, despite the fact that the media are not able to replace true contact with actual human beings, in a number of cases they become their substitute, allowing them to survive with dignity various crises and the troubling lack of contact with others. Often the media also allow us to reduce the concerns and doubts that arise in us. Due to them we free ourselves from the fears that accompany us, as well as a sense of otherness; because media provides us with knowledge about others, they allow us to see that others are like us, they have similar problems, life experiences, experience and feel the world around them in a similar way – in this way, the media build up in people a sense of mutual community, that bring them closer to each other.

In reference to these life experiences, we see this, among others, in several articles in 'Przekrój', such as: Karolina Kowalska's article 'Dużo hałasu o coś' [A lot of noise about something], in which the Author recalls the story of the famous Angelina Jolie and her family's experience with breast cancer. In this way, the Author not only familiarizes women – Poles with the dangerous disease (showing that it affects other women (even those famous) and can affect any woman without exception), but also prompts women to take an active approach to the problem, encourages them to examinations, diagnosis and prevention of the disease). At the same time she warns against rash steps and treating breast surgery as a cosmetic surgery only. Other articles in *Przekrój* (the authors of which are Maja Kowińska and Edyta Szewerniak-Milewska) write about children with Asperger's syndrome, they are an important element in building a community, and also play a meaningful role in raising public

social awareness in the scope of associating with this (little known to the average Pole) disease. Thus, they are not an empty message or solely emotional.

A number of media messages also gives us strength, the will to fight, refreshes our spirit. An example is the article by Patryk Chilewicz, entitled: '*Ludzie, którym się chce*' [*People who can be bothered to do something*] – in 'Przekrój'. Already in the title we see positive incentive to be active, take initiative. A similar message is found in the article itself, which encourages to take up new challenges, on the example of people who were bothered to do something (ambitious, entrepreneurial, creative), who in the building of a former grim children's hospital located in the heart of the capital, opened a vibrant centre of alternative culture, bringing together a variety of workshops and various artists (designers, photographers, painters, graphic artists, musicians, etc.). It is worth noting that extremely loud, as well as strengthening messages contained in the article, strongly stressing the importance of strong will, where: '*it is enough to want to*' – it is a kind of encouragement, inspiration, a call to others to act, to take on similar bold ventures and initiatives, not only in bringing to life old places (sometimes evoking bad associations). Such a message carries a positive '*ideology of action*', '*will*', which allows people to pursue their own dreams and passions. At the same time, this ideology is not an 'empty ideology', but rooted on specific examples – young women and men who 'were bothered', which all the more stresses its value. It is also worth emphasizing the importance of the media in building self-awareness, productive relationships with people, and the therapeutic functions they fulfil (which had been mentioned earlier). A representative example of this is, among other things, the greatly popular among Polish readers popular-science monthly *Charaktery*, which offers its recipients a number of interesting proposals, suggestions, or psychological 'advice', which allow to develop and improve oneself, one's knowledge and psychological skills. As a rule, they present issues and problems faced by people on a daily basis and which are particularly important in their lives, as evidenced by the subjects undertaken relating to: *love, betrayal, relationships with a partner, relationships with children, intimate problems, professional problems, felt emotions, etc.* The reader can also take advantage of the '*expert's tips*', who will provide him/her with support and help find a solution to a specific problem: *at home, at work, or school*. On the pages of the periodical there are various titles and corresponding problems of everyday life.

Sometimes the strength of the message contained in the title turns out to be so great that it cannot be passed with indifference, even when the problem discussed in the article does not concern us directly. One such example is Zbigniew Wajda's article entitled: '*Tak bardzo jedyńi*' [*So very single*], which in itself hides and reveals the drama of the loneliness of man, in this case an 'only child', for whom (in the context of the message provided) it is not easy to live and function in solitude. However, the title itself is a bit confusing and disorienting. After reading the article, we notice that its Author, probably deliberately used it to attract the reader's attention and expose the '*dark side*' of being an 'only child'. As a result, he conducted a fairly rigorous analysis of the phenomenon, pointing out both the positive and negative aspects (he also did not miss the positive and negative aspects of *having siblings* – which also indicates an objective approach to the issues in question).

In *Charaktery* one can also read about *how to 'love with humility', about 'emotional vampires', or parental relationships in the context of the articles 'Moja matka kocha siebie' [My mother loves herself] by Beata Banasiak-Parzych and 'Raport z matczynych nadużyć' [A report from maternal abuse] by Lubomira Szawdyn*. The latter pay attention to the toxic relationships of mothers with daughters, while they clearly emphasize the fault of mothers for such a state of affairs. At the same time it is worth emphasizing that the Authors support themselves by several arguments that forejudge the settlement concerning assigned blame. However, the approach proposed by the Author and such a strongly judgemental message may raise certain doubts. The question arises whether the strong exposed and emphasized

fault of mothers (which in my opinion was not sufficiently balanced by positive examples) is beneficial for their daughters in the process of building mutual relations with mothers, as well as for mothers, who must live with a sense of guilt? It is worth noting that the image of a 'bad' mother exhibited here has been presented in various versions, and illustrated by an appropriately selected negative judgement (language), which is rich in numerous 'labels' and which 'pigeonholes' mothers based solely on their worst qualities and faults. We have here: narcissistic mothers, *spiteful diva mothers*, *aching mothers*, *addicted mothers*, *mothers in emotional need*, *mother-friends*, *mothers insidiously malicious* and others – but all 'bad'. *'The bad woman – Mother'* seems to be omnipresent. One can get the impression that we are surrounded by only 'bad', 'negative', and 'toxic' mothers. Therefore, the question arises: can a daughter build a proper relationship with a mother based on the mother's fault and the grief felt towards her? This question in the context of the cited articles seems to be all the more justifiable that in reading them, one can get the impression that it is not possible to be a completely positive mother, 'proper', good enough, because in almost every motherly attitude and every motherly behaviour, one can find a 'hidden meaning' – 'which hide the bad traits of a mother' – which almost automatically turns on the type of thinking – *'I'm not a good enough mother'* – in mothers, or *'she's not (or wasn't) a good enough mother'* – in daughters.

We think that the Authors of these articles did not have this effect in mind. At the same time, we feel that such a presentation of the problem and such a 'one-dimensional' message is conducive more to releasing, strengthening or even empowering the felt guilt, sorrow, mutual resentment (which are generally not conducive to constructive actions and relations) – than their relief and building agreement. Such an exposition of the 'Bad Woman Mother' turns attention to the issue of perceiving a woman in wider aspect – in the context of the cultural habitus, in the context of the fulfilment of sex roles by a woman, which, as a result, are shape the perception and image specified for her.

### **Reflection of Gender in the Malaysian Media**

In Malaysia, women are given equal rights as their male counterparts. It has been accepted by the norms and culture of the Malaysian societies that, women, as people in their own rights, have perspectives about major issues affecting their lives. These perspectives have been strategically mobilized through national planning and policies implementations apart from changes in cultural perceptions, political and social structures to position women as resourceful and effective partners at the community, national, regional and international level. Nevertheless, although considered important to their societies, women have not been given due recognition. Too often, in media reports, we read about women being victims of so many incidents. Prostitution is blamed on women, rape is the women's fault and women become the scapegoat whenever there is a retrenchment exercise.

We often read about gory reports on murders and rapes, physical abuses and domestic violence, most of which affecting women as the victims. For societies, especially the women, the world is getting smaller and painfully frightening. Reports from the media are indicating that crimes and accidents are rampant. There has not been a single day that we do not see news on crimes, assaults, rapes, accidents be it on land, sea or air, in the print or broadcast media. In cases of assaults and rapes, almost 95 percent of victims were women.

The question of violence against women have been addressed since the 70's. At that time, women's groups had struggled very hard in structured workshops and conventions to put women's interests and issues on national and world agenda. The struggle continues till today. However, today the plight of women is seen more proactive by turning the focus to "Women against Violence" and no longer "Violence against Women", as the former Minister for the

Ministry of Women and Family Development of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil aptly puts it: "It is no longer tenable to go around talking about women as victims only. In Malaysia there is nothing the Malaysian women cannot do" (*BBC Online* 2003). It is another positive step to redefine women's determination and intent. But the problems prevail. Violence against women is still existing today and it happens in various forms, be it physical or mental.

As we sit and listen to the news every day, we can never miss news on gruesome incidents such as accidents, robberies, rapes, murders that had happened within our vicinities or in other states of Malaysia or in other parts of the world as we can see in one of the headlines: *Murder-robbery suspect snapped. Seven held over politician's death.* (*The Star*, 17 March 2014). This news is about the police having arrested seven drug addicts believed to be involved in the murder-robbery of Kota Tinggi Felda Semenchu Wanita UMNO Branch Chief Zalifah Jamaluddin (a female politician).

We also see in the same newspapers or on the same television news bulletin, programs and events by the government, business corporations or NGOs being executed to give a boost to the plight of women. But the concept of women's empowerment and dignity can never be realized if women, in general, are in a state of insecurity due to the happenings around them such as accidents, robberies, murders and rapes, not to mention the stressful conditions they are experiencing at the workplace or at home, some of which tantamount to violence against women and children. One such story highlighted the involvement of women in robbery, which says this headline: *Family flee with RM6000 from childcare center* (*The Star* 10 March 2014). The incident involved three women who were the robbers – a mother, a daughter and a woman friend ).

Although Malaysia is considered to be advanced in technological development and the people are enjoying the harmonious and peaceful living but because of the power structure in society and family institution that bestow power to the men, it is the women and the girls who are often deprived of needs, making them susceptible to societal challenges and social ills. And it is the women and the girls who are at a disadvantage in coping with the problematic environment. Although women make up more than half of the world's population, the rate of literacy among women is not that promising. Women make up almost two-thirds of the world's 876 million illiterates (<http://www.un.org>). Being illiterate will also make women feel vulnerable, insecure and lacking confidence, and hence lag behind in many development programs.

### **Media imagery and women in Malaysia**

It has been recognized that the media are a powerful agent for education and social change. It has the capacity to preserve, record and define human culture and history. It could be used as a powerful force to foster gender equality and against abuse and violence. However, of late, there is much complaints from the women's groups where media performance is concerned. Currently, it has been said that media tend to project images of women and men that are stereotypical and it supports male values. Much have been said about the continued negative portrayal and degrading images of women in the media.

Besides stereotypical images of women in the media, there is a vast gender gap. According to a report by *Unreserved* (Volume 1 August 2013) the gap involving women is still wide and actions need to be taken fast to close the gap. The report under the headline *Behind the gender issue* states that while women have progressed remarkably in many areas, the 30 per cent participation of the gender in decision making positions as desired in the private sector is still far from satisfactory. Out of 135 countries, Malaysia is placed in

the 100th position in the global *Gender Gap Index* 2012 report published by the World Economic Forum (*Unreserved* 2013: 6). The reason cited for lack of women's participation is due to the lack of political empowerment of women.

Although it has been established that female politicians stand up for policies that aid, assist and benefit the public more so than male politicians, but in a male dominated society such as Malaysia female politicians have little opportunity to be elected as Members of Parliaments. Out of the 222 Members of Parliaments, less than 10% are women. In most political elections, women will contest against women and this will result in low percentage of women in the parliaments. Name calling is also rampant whenever a female candidate is chosen to stand for election. One particular example can be seen in this headline: *I am not anyone's puppet, says Wan Azizah* (*The Star* 17 March 2014). Dr Wan Azizah who replaces her husband, Anwar Ibrahim in the Kajang by-election was said to have a chance to win due to her image as the long suffering wife of an ambitious and controversial politician embroiled in more than his share of sex related controversies. Dr Wan Azizah was predicted to win the election due to *kesian* or sympathy votes and not because of her political prowess. The situation has not changed much when compared to the stereotypical generalizations the researchers found a decade ago.

According to Faridah and Rahmah (1995) when the print media chose to allocate space to the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, they used devilish terms such as "hardcore feminists", "burning bras", "nude women running around the streets of Huairou" and other generalizations and stereotypes which generally eclipsed many positive accomplishments at the Conference.

For women, the influence of media can be viewed from two extremes. On one side of the coin, media are seen as a powerful tool that can shape behavior and capitalize on the potentials of women which can be used by women to their advantage. While on the other hand, media reinforce existing stereotypes attitudes, expectations and values which could be a hindrance to women's advancement in organizations and societies. In recent times, we have seen that seminars on mass media whether at national, regional or international level seemed to place high emphasis on the training of women journalists, access by women to new communication technologies, cultural influences of media, women journalists as cultural communicators, the usage of women's news, and many other issues involving gender. But in spite of these orientations and exposures, the women have not been treated fairly by the media. Women are often portrayed as superficial and mindless especially in advertisements and their brains, strengths and talents are played down. Oftentimes, women are invisible and silenced in economics, politics, religion, science and technology but not so in media and advertising where women are made highly visible yet 'powerless' (See Garcellano, 1991; Faridah and Rahmah 1995).

Based on mass media theories, the primary effect and the main tendency of mass media are to support pre-existing beliefs, attitudes and behavior patterns. The media do not lead but they reflect society (Belkaoui 1976). Hence, negative portrayal of individuals or nations or groups of people, specifically women in the media, tend to conjure negative perceptions in the minds of the audience. Through the mass media, we can see that the exploitation of women have gone beyond the traditional setting into the more sophisticated modern world when women's so-called natural weaknesses and femininity are being exploited both by men and women for economic gains, especially in the media advertisements and television commercials.

Local studies (see Fuziah and Faridah, 2000; 2002 and 2004). also demonstrate that media imagery of the females is profound not only in advertisements but also in movies. Over the past decades, a great deal of movie messages via Hollywood, Bollywood and even Mollywood (the label used on Malaysian movie industry) has perpetuated the notion of

women as property or commodities “available” for sexual and other use. These messages are played over and over again in movies which show images of the females as the gentler sex, having common traits like passivity, weakness, needing protection, subservient, scatter-brain, dependent, comforting, nurturing, caring as well as beautiful (so convenient as a sex-object). The males on the other hand, are portrayed as forceful, strong, capable, aggressive, demanding, independent, successful, tycoon, a hero with the stoic macho-man and leadership qualities. According to a manual, *Confronting Violence* (1992) published by the Commonwealth Secretariat, it is these images that reinforce ideologies of masculinity and femininity, demonstrating that while the male is ‘naturally’ aggressive, the female is the ‘natural’ target for aggression which is so rampant in modern society.

Basically decisions about media content, whether taken at an institutional or a political level, are based on assumptions about the current state of social and cultural values. In most societies, such values incorporate certain definitions of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ which are replayed and reinforced by the media. The study on contemporary Malay movies by Fuziah and Faridah (2004) found that the male dominance-female submissiveness dichotomy is dominant. If the movies of the fifties portrayed women as objects of domesticity, contemporary movies portrayed them as objects of sexuality. These modern movies showed women in the public sphere as working professionals but once out of their homes, they are seen as objects to be admired, teased, used, desired and played upon by the opposite sex. Such a portrayal about women is not healthy and culturally detrimental. This has been supported in various writings with such headlines: *Women issues overlooked due to low political presence, analysts say* (*Malaysian Insider*, September 24, 2012); *The S word* (*Female* April 2014, p 308) which highlights on the S word which means Sexism – prejudice or discrimination based on sex, and includes behavior, conditions or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex. The feature also talks about some advertisements that play on women’s fears and insecurities to sell a product. The feature also quoted by Keira Knightly who says ” The pressure we put on women to be either thinner or fatter, or to have bigger breasts or smaller breasts, is disgusting. It’s amazing that in 2012 that level of misogyny over women is still there!” Sometimes sexism also goes the other way as exemplified in this quote from *Female* magazine (April 2014): ” Sometimes it makes sense that a woman may make more money and he stays at home . But it’s so difficult for men to do that because the moment a man is sitting at home and looking after the children, he is thought of as being a weakling – and that’s equally sexist. ” In this situation we need to question these expectations that women put on men too.

### **Role of language and the media**

So it is worth remembering that the media not only shape our opinions, our way of thinking about the world, about other people and about ourselves, but also have access to our feelings, and at the same time, they 'play on our feelings', and often even manage them. To do this they use a message (language) of a strong emotional charge, which usually reaches many recipients easily. Which is expressed by very emotionally bearing titles that use a specific, often emotional, language. However, language plays an active role, because it organizes the way in which people perceive: themselves, other people, the world around them, and events. For example, language causes people to notice certain things, or direct their attention to certain aspects of the situation. This means that the use of language for naming something or someone (for example, an event or person) in a specific way, also causes that the attention of people is turned to the specific aspects of the event, or to the specific characteristics of a given person (compare: Morreale S.P, Spitzberg B.H, Barge J.K).

Therefore, it turns out that the language of titles, headlines in newspapers, is very significant, which not only introduce us to the subject, but also to a specific atmosphere, mood, which accompanies them. That is why it is usually based on loud, precise and accurate wording, becoming a form of invitation to a kind of reading game. The sales results of periodicals indicate that the greater the emotional charge of media messages, the more popular they are as in the case of the newspaper *Fakt*. Similar rules also apply to other daily newspapers and periodicals. Their representative example is, for example, the weekly ANGORA, which particularly loves to refer to human emotions, reaching for the darkest and most sensationally-sounding, as well as 'loud' (in terms of content and emotions) topics, as evidenced by the cited titles and headlines in the newspaper: *Dożywocie za okrutną śmierć* [Life sentence for brutal death]; *'O profesorze, który molestował pacjentki'* [About a professor who molested his patients]; *'Oblęd i zdziwienie'* [Madness and surprise]; *'Podstępny, przewrotny i zazdrosny'* [Deceitful, perverse and jealous]; *'Ile kosztuje życie?'* [How much does life cost?]; or *'Morderstwo w hotelu Wrocław'* [A murder in Wrocław Hotel]. It is worth stressing that these are only a few selected positions from only one issue of the paper in Poland.

Loud in terms of content and emotion could also be traced in the Malaysian samples especially the periodicals and magazines. Several examples would be from *Jelita* magazine such as these: *Peliharalah rahsia rumah tangga* [Protect your marital secret]; *Isteri meminta lebih daripada kemampuan suami* [A wife demanding more than what the husband possess]; *Tidak wajar canang keburukan suami di laman sosial* [Bad habits – revealing the weakness of one's husband in the social media].

### The language of printed media in the context of cultural gender

It is worth noting that all the periodicals appearing on the market have certain recipients in mind, to whom they are addressed. At the same time, depending on whom they are addressed to, they also use specific language (appropriate for the recipient) that is often intended for a very specific group of readers – so for a particular *language community*.<sup>23</sup>

Language communities are generally determined in terms of: education, occupation, interests, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, and others. At the same time, it turns out that each language community can use language in different ways (that is, in a way particular for the given community). Therefore, it appears important to find such ways to transmit information, which will be heard (understood) by wider circles of recipients, or by different language communities, which is one of the most important challenges of today's media in their quest to expand their audience. At the same time, it is worth emphasizing that people tend to belong to many different language communities simultaneously, and it is not always easy to determine which is the dominant community for someone and which he/she mostly identifies with. Nevertheless, the sense of linguistic identity turns out to be very important in this regard, because identity and communication remain in an unbreakable relationship, and affect each other (Morreale et al. 2007). We can see it very clearly in the context of the relationship between language and cultural gender. *Cultural gender* refers to

<sup>23</sup>The concept of linguistic community refers to a group of people, which uses a set of constitutive and normative rules set by itself, which direct the meaning of words and the relevant reactions to them. Belonging to a specific linguistic community causes that the language which is used by it is understood. However, people who do not belong to it, could interpret particular statements in a different way, or even far from the intended meaning, because language is usually interpreted by a filter of a given community. Consequently, this may lead to mutual misunderstandings, Morreale S.P, Spitzberg B.H, Barge J.K, (2007).

the characteristics that are assigned to women and men in modern societies. At the same time, it is not always the same as *biological gender*<sup>24</sup>, which means that being a man or a woman does not finally depend on physical gender. This additionally indicates that language shapes the identity of a human being (also gender identity) through his/her socialization to a gender role.<sup>25</sup> Despite the fact that such socialization takes place and concerns mostly childhood,

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<sup>24</sup> Biological gender (sex) - refers to the anatomical and physiological differences between the body of a woman and man, while cultural gender (gender) refers to psychological, social and cultural differences between a woman and a man; therefore, it becomes a social difference of the masculine and feminine kind. This way it turns attention to the huge plasticity of a biological and cultural gender. It indicates that many of the differences between women and men do not result from biology, as it is strongly emphasized by scholars oriented at the biological approach, who focus on the genetic and biochemical factors, which in their opinion differentiates the behaviours of women and men. Causing, for example, that men are 'in their nature' dominant, imperious, they show leadership skills, willingly take control over others and strive for success, and more than women, are aggressive; while women are much gentler than men, more caring, submissive (and even feudal), dependent, emotionally demonstrative, aesthetically sensitive, etc. However, scientific studies have failed to confirm the physiological differences between women and men, which means that sufficient evidence has not been found proving the existence of the relationship between biological factors and complex behaviours of men and women, which are mainly shaped during various social interactions. However, the traditional definitions and characteristics of masculinity and femininity, and thus male and female gender roles, are still strongly rooted in human thinking. They are embedded in opposing skills and qualities, which are a kind of dichotomous inequality, which emphasize and reinforce thinking about the contrasts of gender. As a result, they lead to the strengthening of the dichotomous vision of inequality, highlighting the contrast of women relative to men (it is worth noting that the word dichotomy itself - from the Greek *dichotomia* and *dicha* draws attention to the duality, contrast and mutual exclusion). At the same time, the adoption of such a vision can lead to a number of negative consequences for both sexes. Especially when it is based on the belief that this is so, which is explained by the 'effect of the self-realizing prophecy' (self-realizing prognosis).. It is worth noting here that such belief and thinking that emphasizes the contrast of the sexes is additionally highlighted by cultural pressure, which in reference to the universality of certain views strengthens them even more. This is reflected in family and school socialization, in models of people promoted by the mass media, etc. Because of them, both women and men take on specific models as their own and obediently realize them by performing specific roles (including roles related to gender), see: Giddens A,(2004), Barker Ch, (2005), Sztompka P, (2002), Kopaliński W, (1985), compare: Connel R, (1987).

<sup>25</sup> Socialization to a gender role is based on an approach that distinguishes between biological gender and cultural gender. This approach assumes that a person (as an infant) comes into the world with biological gender, while cultural gender is shaped during one's lifetime (during socialization to roles connected with gender). This means that girls and boys, while growing up, receive (both open and hidden) different messages and different types of transmissions from their environment (parents, guardians), who show them ways in which men and women should behave in a specific culture. Sometimes such messages are very subtle, thus difficult to grasp. For example, they consist in parents talking more often with girls than with boys about feelings, or that girls are 'allowed' to express some of their feelings more - for example, the consent to cry (freedom of expressing sadness, fear). Unlike in girls, in boys such emotions are often blocked: for example, by statements like: '*men don't cry*', or '*a real man is not afraid of anything*'. We see similar (valued positively or negatively) reactions in the statements: '*boys don't play with dolls*' or '*girls should not climb trees*'. These types of comments not only become pointers of what one should and shouldn't do, but also a kind of social sanctions applied in order to strengthen (reward) specific, desired behaviours, and contain (punish) those that are unwanted, unwelcome. It is worth noting that generally other behaviours are expected, endorsed and reinforced on girls, and others on boys. The following is expected from girls significantly more frequently than from boys: prosocial behaviours, care, obedience, submission, subordination; while boys are more often prepared to be independent, strong, tough, self-assertive, successfully carrying out their tasks. It is worth emphasizing here that socialization for gender roles



because then we can observe its strongest effect, then we can also see its various influence in other periods of human life. Many of the measures aimed at adopting a gender role and a number of its tracks and effects we see in adults. The media provides us with a number of representative examples in this matter. It turns out that the media use a kind of language, varied, depending on gender affiliation – oriented at a female addressee or male addressee. In Poland women's periodicals addressed to *Her*, otherwise known as *women's press*<sup>26</sup> is essentially directed to a wide spectrum of women, based on their reading needs and widely understood social situation of women. Therefore, we find in it a vast spectrum of topics and issues taking into account varied expectations of a wide range of women (women of different ages, with different social status, economic status, family, women with different interests and needs – filling various social and professional roles. Ranging from housewives, mothers, wives, or mistresses, to intellectualists, business women, single women or celebrities. In the women's press, in addition to reports, feature articles, general information press materials, and journalistic articles, we also find articles and columns devoted to fashion with the trends of a given season, articles dealing with health, beauty, and above all, about the beautiful woman's body, as well as those focusing on family, relationships and partner relationships (mainly He-She relationships), also on bringing up children and parental relationships, and running the household. We see clearly a tagged type (which also includes certain beliefs<sup>27</sup> concerning

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does not definitely prejudge a person's final choices. Because people are not passive recipients of such 'programming', but actively create and modify their roles. At the same time it is stressed that social interactions play a significant role in shaping gender identity. There is also a group of researchers, who believe that both biological gender and cultural gender are socially constructed, therefore, they should not be treated as definitive, that is biological gender as biologically determined, nor cultural - as learned. Because in their opinion, the human body is subject to his/her will (according to which he/she can construct and deconstruct it in 'any' way - through exercise, diet, plastic surgeries, gender change, way of dressing), etc. It is worth noting that socialization to a gender role cannot in any event be subjected to one-sided (negative) evaluation, and in this way deprived of a number of positive aspects, thanks to which people not only better comply with specific roles, but also work more efficiently and draw greater satisfaction from their activities, compare: Morreale S.P, Spitzberg B.H, Barge (2007), Giddens A, (2004).

<sup>26</sup>The term women's press has traditions going back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the first periodical titles were addressed to women, while synonymous words like women's magazine (specifying the broad understanding of press), or media message for women - was used for the first time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, compare: Pilch T, Zaworska – Nikoniuk D, (2003).

<sup>27</sup>Here we would like to draw attention to some **convictions** concerning women, which are strongly rooted in our Polish (though it is worth noting that not only Polish) cultural awareness, such as: '*a woman is weaker than a man*', - which arises from thinking about a woman as fragile, weak (which in reference to the Old Polish language is reflected in the word: *krechkość*, and in Latin: *fragilitas*). It is worth pointing that such a perception of women (recognized for example by the noble community) - additionally gave a woman specific privileges, for example, legal privileges. However, on the other hand, they reinforced thinking of her as weaker, 'worse' than a man. Which was reflected not only on the Polish ground and solely in reference to the Polish woman, but constituted an expression of a much broader tendency of thinking about the woman. We see it, among others, in literature (both Polish and world literature), for example, in Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' - in the phrase: "Frailty, thy name is woman", or in the words of Gustaw (in the 4<sup>th</sup> part of Mickiewicz's *Dziady*): "Woman! You meagre fluff! You changeable being", and others. For many centuries, a woman recognized as weaker was given a series of signals (messages) which were to emphasize that '*a woman without a man does not mean anything*', '*a woman without a man withers like a flower*'. On the other hand, they told women that they are '*born to suffer*', in this way the ethos of the '*martyr*', '*sufferer*' was strengthened, according to which '*a woman must suffer in her life*', and to add to this she should suffer with dignity, as demonstrated, among others, in the belief that '*a wise woman can turn a blind eye to this and that*', e.g. 'slight' excesses of her husband and that '*she can swallow more than*

women) – the 'ideal' woman, 'model' woman, and at the same time, a 'desired' woman: *woman – wife*; *woman – Mother*; *woman – lover*; *woman – 'guardian of the household'*, which generally should be resourceful, cautious, thrifty, as well as attractive, 'charming', sexy. This image is also part of the '*cultural order of gender*' (Connel 1987), which, together with the models of power relations between women and men, binding in all of society, also establishes a specific order concerning: the division of labour, power and personal relationships.<sup>28</sup> Specific rules apply in this 'order'. Often women are expected to be a 'wise' woman, which in Polish reality (though not only in Polish) for many centuries came down to a very specific game<sup>29</sup>, (which had a principle) like: "*everything is OK in my relationship*" – where there was

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*one tear*', etc. It is also worth noting the first meaning of the word *woman*, which appeared in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and meant: '*meretricious, debauched woman*', which was probably associated with the word 'kob' - that is 'sty'. The image of a woman, seen as *Femme Fatale*, is also significant, who brings men to ruin, brings misfortune on them, breaks the hearts of men, their career, and consequently, ruins their lives. At the same time, the strength of *Femme Fatale* is the foibles of men. We encounter the negative image of the woman already in the Bible (in the biblical story of Adam and the first 'evil woman', Eve, who pulled Adam to evil and sin, and at the same time, drew anger down on all of humanity). The motif of the 'evil woman' also appears in the stories of Xanthippe (wife of Socrates), considered a shrew, a terrible harridan, poisoning her husband's life; we can also see an element of 'evil' in the characters of Heter, who were courtesans, harlots in ancient Greece; nevertheless, they also had a reputation in the ranks of which many women were encountered to have played an essential meaning in social life, extremely intelligent and educated, for example, in the field of philosophy, literature, or music, compare: Kopaliński W, (1985).

<sup>28</sup>In the opinion of Connel, work, power and personal relationships (cathexis) are responsible for creating and maintaining the cultural relationships of the sexes. *Work* refers to its distribution due to sex, which describes the unfavourable situation of women, as the woman takes upon herself any house work together with bringing up and caring for children, while in professional work (on the professional market) she is doomed to professional segregation and unequal wages. *Power* refers to social relationships, and thus to authority, ideology, violence (in which we also recognize the unfavourable situation of women), while *personal relationships* describe the dynamics of mutual relations (intimate, emotional, personal), in which the woman is clearly dominated and subordinated to the man, which consequently causes that the adopted cultural order of the sex becomes a cultural regime of the sex.

<sup>29</sup> I refer here to the games distinguished by Eric Berne, relating to separate life stances distinguished by him (like: I'm OK! - You're OK!, or I'm OK! - You're not OK!, etc), which become the basis for conducting specific *games in life*. At the same time, only the first attitude: I'm OK! - You're OK! is based on healthy, rational bases, which allow people to communicate with one another and build fruitful mutual relationships without resorting to games and psychological intrigue. The other three attitudes are recognized as inefficient and counterproductive, inclining to mutual struggle. People tend to form their own set of favourite games (their own repertoire of favourite games), which they resort to and use to realize particular purposes. Usually, their own repertoire of games is shaped during childhood, and usually the closest environment (family, school environment) has influence on its final form. Sometimes, such games are conducted between women and men, thus exposing their inability to build healthy and effective mutual relationships (also known as communication relationships). Very often, such games are planted on 'toxic' beliefs and their twisted logic, like: *A man can love two women as long as one does not realize it* (Sidonie Gabrielle Colette) or *A woman rarely understands that loving her for an entire lifetime does not mean loving her non-stop* (Jacques Deval), which in the examples provided draw attention to the objective treatment of a woman and a man's tendency to manipulate her feelings, etc. It is worth noting that we encounter similar trends also among women who are equally able to effectively conduct diverse games and psychological intrigues, and manipulate men and their feelings. This is reflected in the following sayings: '*A woman knows: that if she wants to dominate, she must pretend that she is doing what her man wants*', which corresponds to: '*the man is the head, the woman is his neck*', compare: Berne E, (1998).

a principle like: "I see not – I hear not – I speak not" (which grows from specific scripts<sup>30</sup> usually created in childhood). As a result, this meant that a woman pretending that 'nothing was happening' (even when it was) was willing to "play" as the man wished (it should be remembered that it was usually the man who gave out the cards). It is also a game that sets a woman very high demands (requiring specific competences from her), sometimes provoking her to 'turning a blind eye' to the unfair game of her partner, another time to maintain a 'poker face', despite her strong emotions and concealed pain, yet another time expected to play the proverbial 'idiot' – who does not know what is going on and what the game is really about – which can be acquitted by an ironically sounding punch line, namely: the greater the 'idiot' you give yourself out to be, the more you are recognized for the wise player. It is worth emphasizing that the 'idiot-player', as a result, was not 'stupid' and naive, and usually was very familiar with the complex and non-transparent rules of the game, and knew well what it was about (but most of all, what the game was being played for). The game evoked, though seemingly inconsistent, is woven in paradoxes (in which it is difficult to determine who is actually the winner and who is the loser – one might get the impression that there are only 'losers') – as a result, it has its own logic, which causes that all players know very well what they should do. Specific requirements are set before the woman-player, of whom the following is expected: broadly understood tolerance, 'diplomacy', patience, flexibility, unlimited skills of forgiving the 'partner-player' his 'small weaknesses' and 'dishonesty'. In such a game, the 'woman-player' should also master the ability to 'turn off emotions and feelings' during the game, especially when they could harm her, or undermine or disrupt her established order. Feelings should not be in any case visible – 'any inconvenient' emotions and feelings should be 'invisible' for the environment and for the 'partner-player'. This way, the woman increases her chances for the game to continue. Such a game becomes an art of life, survival, and above all, to preserve her partner (which is, after all, necessary to continue the game). At the same time, inherent in such a game is the woman's suffering, which is written into it. However, suffering seems to be inherent, even naturally inscribed in being a woman (at least in the context of pain and suffering associated with giving birth to offspring). Suffering is part of the culturally established ethos of a 'martyr' and the ethos of 'the Polish

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<sup>30</sup> In reference to Eric Berne, *scripts* are a kind of 'instructions of use', created already in childhood (because they are usually based on the decisions that were made in childhood), and then reinforced by programming of the immediate surroundings - mainly parental programming. Depending on the type of decision, people choose a variety of scripts, as well as inscribing themselves in a specific scheme: winner (in Berne called 'prince' or 'princess'), 'not winner' or loser (termed 'the frog;'). The adopted and practiced scripts are typically created in order to survive for the rest of one's life. It is worth noting that a huge role in programming and strengthening specific programs assigned to specific scripts is played by language that people use, an which is to help greatly when 'printing' specific programs. Thus any linguistic messages are essential, through which we pass on not only just information (information in itself), but also the expectations imprinted in them, convictions, judgments, concerns, ideas, patterns, (or our faith or lack of faith in someone or something), which act like 'spells' and produce tangible results in real life. In reference to them, it is also worth citing related phenomena, associated with the so-called *effect of the self-fulfilling prophecy (self-realizing prophecy)*, or *Pygmalion effect* - identified for the first time by sociologist Robert Morton. They indicate that some expectations, predicting - for example, concerning human behaviour or events (even when they are involuntary and unconscious as to future events and behaviours) - have a great influence and great power. They significantly affect these behaviours or events in such a way as to cause their actual fulfilment. In simple terms, one can say that we receive (have) what we expect (or fear). This means that such 'prophecies' can also change our social reality (in different ways and in different directions). In their context, convictions that are rooted in our cultural awareness remain significant. This also applies to convictions relating to women preserved over the centuries, compare: Berne E, (1998), and Zimbardo P, (2001).

Mother' and 'the Malaysian Women' (Fuziah & Faridah 2002), which has been very strongly established in the cultural awareness of female and male universally. At the same time, as researchers of language stress, the Polish and Malaysian media shows a number of asymmetries in the treatment of women and men, to the detriment of women, whose image is much more distorted than the image of men, as well as unjust for women. It is also characterized by a high degree of *androcentrism*<sup>31</sup> and *linguistic sexism*<sup>32</sup>, concerning vocabulary, phraseology, word formation, as well as the inflectional-generic system. It is worth noting that these phenomena do not foster healthy, fruitful relations between the sexes, and in building a common ground of mutual understanding, but rather strengthen the sense of strangeness and deepen transgender differences. They are unfavourable (and sometimes downright hurtful and harmful) both for women (perceived as victims), as well as for men (seen as 'rapists' of women's rights). For language not only reflects the negative attitudes and social attitudes towards women, but also perpetuates and reinforces them. We see this clearly in one of the articles of the popular bi-weekly 'Gala', entitled '*Nic nie jest takim, jakim się wydaje*' [*Nothing is as it seems*], in which Beata Nowicka conducts an interview with the famous Polish actress: Dominka Ostalowska. In response to one of the questions: "(...) are the victims more often women or men?", the actress confirms the weaker position of women. In responding to the questions, she also refers to the laws of nature, trying to look for justifications in the early history of humanity – as if in this way, she was trying to find justification for the subordinate role of women and their inferior situation. The following statement deserves credit, in which the actress admits "(...) *I'm irritated by situations when I clearly feel that men are allowed more (...) when a man leaves, he "yields to weakness", he indulges in his nature, he probably has reasons for this". When a woman leaves, she's immoral and as if a little 'unreasonable'. The indulgence of masculine nature is... in accordance with nature, and female nature should not allow it (...)*". The last part of the cited statement draws attention, emphasizing that '*the indulgence of masculine nature is (...) in accordance with nature*'. Assuming such thinking does not leave any doubts, because it is

<sup>31</sup> Androcentrism - means the male element (man) is brought into the spotlight, which according to feminists is the result of the preservation of a patriarchal culture. Androcentrism of culture is based on the premise that women substantially differ from men (e.g. by intellectual level, emotionality, sexuality, etc.) , which is still not confirmed by scientific research

<sup>32</sup> There are many examples confirming the *phenomenon of 'linguistic sexism'* in the Polish language (at the same time, it is worth noting that since we recognize that language is created by society, it should also be recognized that society that uses it also deserves to be called sexist). One of the representative examples of Polish 'linguistic sexism' is the frequent use of gender terms referring exclusively to men, such as: "Polak potrafi" [A male Pole can do it] or "człowiek człowiekowi bratem" [a man to man is a brother]; another example is the pejoratization of feminine nouns, like: *dziwka* [whore] - deriving from the word "*dziewka*" - formerly referring to a girl (or village girl) - in today's variety it describes a prostitute. A spectacular example is also the word "*macocha*" [step-mother], which refers to a woman in her relationship with her step-children (and not with her natural children). The word "*macocha*" evokes very pejorative connotations, which describe a 'bad' woman, who treats her foster children badly and reluctantly, showing hostility, a severe approach, or ignorance, disregard. Similarly, the words: "*larifynda*" [hussy], "*kurtyzana*" [courtesan], which originally did not have negative meanings, and today are offensive to women, indicate semantic changes in this regard. Yet another manifestation of 'linguistic sexism' are lexical semantic asymmetries, which consist in the positive connotations of the masculine forms of some words, next to a negative or less favourable interpretation of the feminine forms, which we see, among others, on the example of the words "*położnik* - *położna*" [obstetrician - midwife]. Where the word obstetrician defines a specialist physician of obstetrics and refers to higher medical personnel, and the word midwife describes a nurse trained in obstetrics and refers to lower medical personnel, etc., see: Szpyra – Kozłowska J, Karwatowska M (2005), Skorupka S, Auderska H, Łempicka Z,(1968).

commonly accepted that '*one cannot fight nature*'. This statement highlights the painful entanglement of the modern Polish woman, who still seems to remain in the circle of 'toxic' and '*limiting*' beliefs<sup>33</sup>, which do not allow her to fully 'spread her wings' and free herself from the cultural influences limiting her, which are passed onto her in the form of authoritatively sounding linguistic messages. It's worth stressing here that a person usually accepts these messages as 'certain', 'reliable', checked. Ones that constitute a type of cultural heritage, given to man in advance, and which cannot be resisted, argued with or discussed. Likewise, we can trace some similar comments in the Malaysian samples. An example is this news feature in *Unreserved* (Volume 1 August 2013) under the headline *The Blame Game* which highlighted that what a woman wears should never be the reason for rape to occur. Rape is a violent crime that uses sex as a weapon. It is also used to assert one's control over another. The feature was written with a purpose in mind. In Malaysia, many still have this view that women should be blamed for the occurrence of rape. "Women who dress sexily provoke the act of rape" – this is the oft-cited myth in the country. A local consultant psychiatrist who was interviewed in the feature had commented that in societies where gender inequalities exist, rape would be more rampant because women are considered tools of pleasure. The consultant also pointed out that rape cases occur far less in countries that practice gender equality. Hence we can see that there are also balanced writings that highlight the support of the male gender towards the plight of the female gender.

### Discussion: Unconscious reality versus current consciousness

Despite the dominant trends of negative portrayal of women from the samples in the Polish and Malaysian media under study, we additionally notice that the image of a 'suffering' woman, 'dependent' on a man, seems to be passing in 'small steps' or at least is being removed from 'view', as an 'invalid' image, not fitting to the image of the modern world. Although still too often we notice it in the frequently appearing image of the 'suffering' woman, 'dependent' on a man. Which is quite often an 'invisible' image, left in the circle of 'inconvenient' images,

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<sup>33</sup>In our native culture function a number of such *beliefs*, which show '*unequal*', '*different*' treatment of women and men. They are clearly reflected at the level of native language and 'meanings encoded in it' addressed to both sexes. Their representative example are some preserved *sayings, proverbs*, for example: 'mężczyzna ma tyle lat, na ile się czuje, kobieta tyle, na ile wygląda' [a man is as old as he feels, a woman is as old as she looks], or 'gdzie diabeł nie może, babę wyśle' [where the devil can't go he'll send a woman], or 'kobieta zmienną jest i tylko głupiec jej wierzy' [a woman is changeable and only a fool believes her]. A woman is often treated leniently, as weaker, fragile as one of 'nature's 'mistakes'. Even in the Bible, it is not she, but Adam who was the first human being on Earth, as the father of all humanity - created in the image and likeness of God. Eve appeared later (created simply as a by-product: from the rib of Adam), and her creation was subordinated for a specific purpose - she was called to existence so that Adam would not be lonely. Her appearance was also associated with the emergence of evil that Eve drew onto humanity. Because it was Her, as the source of evil, who persuaded Adam to sin (to eat the forbidden fruit - apple), for which she was severely punished by God, who sentenced her to childbirth in pain, and thus the fate of a 'sufferer' - 'martyr'. As a consequence, however, not only she was punished. Eve's act also exposed Adam to the unpleasant consequences, because from then on Adam had to make a living in sweat and, together with Eve, was banished from Paradise (her act also weighed heavily on all of humanity, which found its expression in the 'original sin'). In the context of the Biblical message about Adam and Eve, we see a very distinct difference in the positions allocated to the woman and the man, where a woman appears in a secondary role, and at the same time is presented in a pejorative light and contexts, as the source of evil and misery - the one that brought evil to the world and misfortune to the man, compare: and Kopaliński W, (1985).

overlooked or even ignored, remaining in the circle of controversial topics, or even treated as 'invented'. It turns out that such an 'old' image cannot be simply erased from our thoughts, as it has been strongly fixed culturally and is sometimes still enforced by a number of 'uncompromising' linguistic messages, which as carriers of culture have strongly rooted this image in our language and mentality, and stubbornly uphold it (in this way defending the order that has been established for centuries). However, in recent years, opposing images are increasingly appearing and being propagated in the media – of *independent, rebellious women, insubmissive women*, freeing from the stereotypes inscribed in being 'the Polish Mother'<sup>34</sup> and 'the Malaysian Women' (Fuziah & Faridah 2002). Feminist movements have a major contribution to the development and strengthening of such images<sup>35</sup>, which have contributed to a change in women's awareness and the perception of their social situation. A tendency towards empowering the position of women can be increasingly clearly seen also in the media, which are more and more frequently presenting the image of a driven woman, striving for freedom, self-determination, independence (also independence from men). More and more there are messages like: '*A woman does not have to*', '*a woman can*', '*a woman is able*', '*a woman conquers the world*'. The media is more often presenting the figure (image) of educated women, who work professionally, travel the world, change jobs, enjoy fame and recognition – women pursuing all sorts of their own passions and dreams (often dreams going

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<sup>34</sup> One of expressions of this is Beata Rayzacher's article entitled: 'Teraz Matka Polka wie, że ma prawo do szczęścia' [Now the Polish Mother knows she has a right to happiness], which frees women from the sense of guilt and remorse for the fact that they want to work, develop their interests and passions, and that they do not agree to a life 'in the shadow of a man'. We see here clear messages supporting women in their quest for independence and freedom of choice: 'a moment to breathe and time only for yourself are as necessary to every mum as air'. Currently there are also messages that clearly exempt women from the obligation of spending 24h a day with children, allow women-mothers to leave their children in the care of family members or a nanny. To this end, statistical data is cited, like: 53% of women, when leaving the house, leave their child with a family member, 19% employ a nanny

<sup>35</sup> The feminist movement gave rise to a number of changes concerning the situation of women, her perception and treatment. It drew attention to the unequal chances of women in society, at the same time looking for the sources of this inequality. At the same time it is worth emphasizing that particular feminist theories, in a variety of ways, perceive this inequality and search for various sources of it, rooted in different phenomena and social processes, such as: sexism, patriarchy, racism, or capitalism. At the same time, there are three main feminist approaches: *liberal feminism*, focusing on the creation of equal opportunities for women and the protection of women, e.g. legal protection. It sees the source of inequality in social and cultural attitudes. Therefore, it notes and combats all manifestations of sexism and discrimination of women (for example: in the workplace, in institutions). At the same time, liberal feminism is demanding reforms of the existing system in order to improve the situation of women and make even the wages, which sometimes turn out to be lower than men's wages. Another important approach is radical feminism, which sees the sources of inequality in patriarchy and burdens men with responsibility for the exploitation of women in society (both in the context of work done - for free - at home, and professional, where access of women to significant and influential positions is blocked). Radical feminists, also pay attention to the issues of: physical violence against women (e.g. domestic violence), manifestations of systemic discrimination against women and the many manifestations of discrimination occurring in everyday interactions, etc. The latter approach discussed by me is 'black feminism', which places focus on black women and their particular situation, as well as the issue of inequality connected with cultural gender (dealt in the context of the phenomena of slavery, segregation, a movement in defence of human rights, which are part of their heritage), compare: Giddens A, (2004).

far beyond the home, husband and family)<sup>36</sup>. Malaysian magazines are carrying healthy taglines regarding women such as *The next gen entrepreneurs (Female April, 2014 p. 259)* highlighting awe-inspiring Malaysian women are highly wired and became successful entrepreneurs. *The Noble Cause and Golden Voices (Tatler April, 2014)* highlight five inspiring women on shaping industries and enhancing innovation. The media is also increasingly evoking images of fulfilled women, satisfied with life, accepting and believing in themselves, not subordinate to anyone, who are financially independent and cope well in life. Increasingly, we can admire in the media 'a woman of success' – a woman-politician, a woman-scientist, a woman-boss, a business woman, as well as woman who manages men. Very often in the presented images one can also see: task-oriented women, who are geared towards succeeding and gaining. At the same time, as women 'Conquerors' they exhibit a number of features, which for many centuries were reserved exclusively for men, and which they have taken from the man's world. Therefore, we can increasingly see in the media women leaders, deciders, firm women, unyielding to any pressure of the environment, confident, competent, active and athletic, and at the same time, as efficient and reliable as men. Such an image is more and more often presented to us by the media, both in visual and verbal messages. At the same time, images of such women are more effectively shattering past thinking about a woman, rooted on irrational convictions and stereotypes, assigning a woman only to roles considered feminine, as a result often limiting her. We are increasingly seeing that the modern, Polish woman is successfully freeing herself from the stereotypical perception of her thus far. We are increasingly seeing her in new social roles – taking up new, sometimes spectacular (and even unusual for women) challenges. The media is increasingly showing us women, who are earning more than men, participating in the financial maintenance of the household, and sometimes even providing for it alone, becoming the 'head' of the family. Numerous media messages show us a woman, who is 'appropriating' new 'unfeminine' spaces (for example, occupations associated with the male world). Therefore, we are increasingly seeing a woman-driver (e.g. in taxis, buses, trucks), a woman-president, a woman-mayor, etc. Very often such messages (reports, interviews, stories about such women) are also accompanied by visual images, which further consolidate their strength. We can often observe in them the images and figures of 'new women': attractive, well-kept, athletic, not necessarily only in uncomfortable 'women's' clothing. Such a picture of a 'New woman' is taking root in Polish media, as well as in Malaysian media. At the same time such a picture of a woman and such a presentation of her sometimes becomes a great, 'strengthening' inspiration for other women, and also becomes a greater challenge for the modern man, whose male position until now (and with it male dominance) seems to be increasingly threatened. Especially, that it additionally entails a change in the expectations of women relative to men (both in expectations set before partners in relationships, and e.g. politicians, etc.) – these expectations are getting higher, and the woman is becoming more and more demanding, and at the same time, more and more aware of her rights and own power. That is why we see more and more women who, inspired by the medial image of a free, liberated, self-determined woman, are trying to change their fate (especially those women, whose fate was thus far based on negative, toxic experiences, on her being used, or having faced violence). At the same time, more and more media messages focus on women like this, and illustrate their transformation. This allows us to see the new version of a woman – one who fights for her rights, a woman-'Warrior'. This frequently lets us observe the process of the woman freeing herself from toxic relations and patterns, sometimes also presents examples illustrating the

<sup>36</sup>It is worth noting that thinking oriented at subordinating women to such a scheme can be seen in many cultures and countries, not only in Poland; this is expressed in the German classification of the woman in the scheme: *Kirche - küche - kinder*, meaning: Church – kitchen – children.

painful process of such liberation. Especially when the transformation of a woman was based on scheme of transition from the role of a 'victim', 'caregiver' into the role of an 'attacker', 'persecutor', emerging from the logic of the violent scheme, which is explained by the theory of Stephen Karpman's 'drama triangle', (Longina Strumska – Cylwik, 2013).<sup>37</sup>

## Conclusion

In the context of the above, we notice that the media in Poland and Malaysia are not only neutral observers and reporters of events. As generally they do not transmit information completely impartially and objectively. They typically equip their media messages (both verbal and visual) in a particular comment and context, which builds their actual importance and which is generally accompanied by specific intentions, assumptions and objectives. Also messages concerning the sexes are subject to appropriate media treatments, as well as cultural, because, as a rule, they tend to be subordinated to given ideologies, 'politics' and a particular cultural habitus, on which given convictions and language patterns concerning the sexes have been based. As a result, they determine both the perception of a sex in a given culture, and a way of handling the sex, which tends to prejudge the preservation of a specific image of femininity and masculinity in a given culture. Our comparative study found that although the study of gender images and representations are undertaken from different cultures, there are some universal similarities. Male dominance is still prevalent and the female gender is still involved in the long continuous struggle to make their presence felt. Based on the empirical observations of headlines of newspapers and magazines, and the accompanying text, from the samples in both countries, there is an ample evidence for us to say that the words used in the media have the power to leave long lasting impressions on the images portrayed on both genders with symmetrical and asymmetrical meanings. Therefore, linguistic messages, which will be able to stand out above all gender divisions and differences, seem relevant and need to be used carefully. Thus relieving themselves from the necessity to bring out some rights over others.

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