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EXPERIENCE WITH(OUT) A NAME:
COINAGE, CONVENTIONALISATION, AND HYPOSTATISATION OF
ENGLISH NEOLOGISMS IN CONTEMPORARY FEMINISM

DES EXPERIENCES QU'ON (NE) NOMME (PAS) :
CREATION, CONVENTIONNALISATION ET HYPOSTASE DES NEOLOGISMES ANGLAIS DU
FEMINISME CONTEMPORAIN

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À celles dont nul n'entend les cris silencieux

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Abstract in English

One of the main observations of feminist linguistics since its emergence in the 1970s has been the androcentric nature of language. In order to counter this male bias, a number of linguistic changes have been proposed, including gender-fair language, which continues to receive considerable interest well beyond the feminist and academic spheres. However, feminist linguistic activism is not limited to the creation of gender-fair forms. Consciousness-raising groups were identified as a major form of feminist activism in the 1970s. These spaces enabled women to realise that what they thought were individual issues were in fact common to all of them. These were social issues, yet they were nameless. One example of such an issue is the inappropriate behaviour of men, particularly at work, such as sexual advances. To counter the absence of names, women were encouraged to name these experiences from their point of view, for example by coining the term *sexual harassment*.

The creation of neologisms to name experiences did not stop after the 1970s, and contemporary feminism is also accompanied by such neologisms. One of the most recent English neologisms is *himpathy*, which refers to the inappropriate sympathy often shown to powerful men accused of misogynistic behaviour. As with neologisms coined around the 1970s, little attention has been paid to more recent neologisms. The transformation of an experience without a name into an experience with a name is at the heart of the present thesis, which analyses 24 English neologisms that have emerged in contemporary feminism. More specifically, it seeks to (i) observe which experiences are named by these neologisms, (ii) measure the extent to which they are used and how, and (iii) explore their effect on the perception of the concepts denoted.

First, we find that these more recent neologisms redefine feminist linguistic activism of the 1970s. Not only do they name women's experiences in relation to men but they also place at the centre the experiences of people who are minoritised or marginalised because of their gender, sexuality, as well as because of their race or religion. Second, the degree of conventionalisation, i.e. to what extent and how they are used, of these neologisms is observed in the NOW (News on the Web) corpus. This aspect is particularly relevant to the study of feminist neologisms, since one of the motivations behind their coinage is to make the experiences they denote more visible in society. However, it has been shown that diffusion can also lead to the depoliticisation of their

meaning. The corpus analysis shows that these recent neologisms do not only vary greatly in their degree of diffusion, but also in the process of (de)politicisation they undergo via semantic changes and/or discursive strategies. Third, exploiting preliminary findings from the literature on neology, this thesis investigates the power of naming posited in feminist linguistics in relation to the notion of hypostasis. On the basis of a questionnaire, it is found that participants who knew the neologisms before the questionnaire perceived the denoted concepts as more useful, for example in terms of social relevance.

Much of the focus on feminist linguistic activism has revolved around gender-fair language, to the extent that it might give the impression that feminist linguistic activism *is* gender-fair language. The present thesis contributes to feminist linguistics by studying an overlooked part of feminist linguistic activism: feminist neologisms.

Keywords: neologism, feminism, gender, conventionalisation, hypostatisation, corpus linguistics, English.

Résumé en français

Une des principales observations de la linguistique féministe depuis dans son émergence dans les années 1970 est la nature androcentrée de la langue. Afin de contrer ce biais masculin, des changements linguistiques ont été proposés parmi lesquels le langage inclusif, qui continue de susciter un intérêt considérable bien au-delà des sphères féministes et académiques. Toutefois, l'activisme linguistique féministe ne se limite pas à la création de formes plus inclusives. Les groupes de conscientisation ont été identifiés comme une forme majeure de l'activisme féministe des années 1970. Ces espaces ont permis aux femmes de se rendre compte que ce qu'elles pensaient être des expériences individuelles étaient en fait partagées. Ces expériences communes n'étaient pourtant pas nommées. Un exemple de ces expériences est le comportement inapproprié des hommes, en particulier au travail, comme des avances sexuelles. Pour pallier l'absence de noms, les femmes ont alors été encouragées à nommer ces expériences de leurs points de vue, par exemple en inventant le terme *harcèlement sexuel*.

Le fait de créer des néologismes pour nommer des expériences ne s'est pas arrêté après les années 1970 et le féminisme contemporain est aussi accompagné de tels néologismes. Parmi les néologismes anglais les plus récents, nous pouvons citer *himpathy*, qui désigne la sympathie inappropriée dont bénéficient souvent les hommes puissants accusés de comportements misogynes. Comme pour les néologismes inventés autour des années 1970, peu d'attention a été accordée aux néologismes plus récents. La transformation d'une expérience innommée en une expérience nommée est au cœur de la présente thèse qui analyse 24 néologismes anglais apparus au cours du féminisme contemporain. Plus précisément, elle cherche à (i) observer quelles expériences sont nommées par ces néologismes, (ii) étudier dans quelle mesure ils sont utilisés et comment, et (iii) explorer leur effet sur la perception des concepts dénotés.

Premièrement, nous constatons que ces néologismes redéfinissent l'activisme linguistique féministe des années 1970. Ils ne se contentent pas de nommer les expériences des femmes par rapport à celles des hommes, mais placent au centre les expériences des personnes minorisées ou marginalisées en raison de leur genre, de leur sexualité, ainsi que de leur race ou de leur religion. Deuxièmement, le degré de conventionnalisation de ces néologismes, c'est-à-dire dans quelle mesure et comment ils sont utilisés, est observé dans le corpus NOW (News on the Web). Cet aspect est

particulièrement pertinent pour l'étude des néologismes féministes, puisque l'une des motivations derrière leur création est de rendre les expériences qu'ils dénotent plus visibles dans la société. Cependant, il a été démontré que la diffusion peut également conduire à la dépolitisation de leur signification. L'analyse de corpus montre que ces néologismes récents ne varient pas seulement dans leur degré de diffusion, mais aussi dans le processus de (dé)politisation qu'ils traversent par le biais de changements sémantiques et/ou de stratégies discursives. Troisièmement, en exploitant des résultats préliminaires de la littérature sur la néologie, la présente thèse étudie le pouvoir de la dénomination avancé dans la linguistique féministe lié à la notion d'hypostase. Sur la base d'un questionnaire, on constate que les participant·es qui connaissaient les néologismes avant le questionnaire perçoivent les concepts dénotés plus utiles, par exemple en termes de pertinence sociale.

L'activisme linguistique féministe s'est surtout concentré sur le langage inclusif, au point de donner l'impression que l'activisme linguistique féministe se limite à ce dernier. La présente thèse contribue à la linguistique féministe en étudiant un aspect négligé de l'activisme linguistique féministe : les néologismes féministes.

Mots-clefs : néologisme, féminisme, genre, conventionnalisation, hypostase, linguistique de corpus, anglais.

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List of Abbreviations

clmm	Cumulative linked mixed model
DEF-only	Definition only
FGS	Feminism, Gender and Sexuality
FLA	Feminist Linguistic Activism
m.	Masculine
MMN	Min-max normalisation
NEO+DEF	Neologism and definition
NOW	News on the Web
SNS	Social Network Sites
WIND	Wiktionary Inclusion Dates

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available on the ZENODO open repository via the link: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11621497>

Chapter 1. Introduction

Tu dis qu'il n'y a pas de mots pour décrire ce temps, tu dis qu'il n'existe pas. Mais souviens-toi. Fais un effort pour te souvenir. Ou, à défaut, invente.

You say there are no words to describe this time, you say it does not exist. But remember. Make an effort to remember. Or, failing that, invent.¹

–Monique Wittig, *Les Guérillères*, 1969

1.1 General introduction

Imagine a world without *sexual harassment*. The phrase is now so much part of our daily life that it would be difficult to describe such acts without resorting to its use. It would also seem rather surprising if today an institution, such as a university, described this as a “new idea”, but about 50 years ago, this was not so surprising, as shown in the following extract from the *Yale Daily News*:

During the discussion the women emphasized “sexual harassment” as an important aspect of sexism at Yale. “We insist,” said one of the women, “that sex harassment is an integral component of sex discrimination.” “Men perceive women in sexual categories and not in professional categories,” she continued. The complaint of sexual harassment was apparently a “new idea” to the [Department of Health, Education, and Welfare] team. “They said they would look into it,” noted the [Faculty and Professional Forum] spokeswoman. The situation was not surprising,

¹ Original quote in French translated in English by Le Vay (1985). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

she said, as “sex discrimination was not even an issue a year ago.” (Yale Daily News, 19/04/1971)

How did one refer to sexual harassment before the term *sexual harassment* existed? The two most likely options were either silence or the use of inaccurate terms, i.e. the harasser’s terms, such as *flirting*. It was not until the 1970s that the (then) neologism *sexual harassment* was coined to name this experience (Spender 1990).

It was also around that time that feminist studies emerged, among which feminist linguistics. One linguistic aspect that has been of particular interest to feminist linguists is the observation of the androcentric nature of language, and alternatives have been proposed to counter this male bias. The best-known alternative is gender-fair language as a way to counter masculine forms used to refer to everyone regardless of gender or when the gender of the referent is unknown, commonly known as *masculine generics* (Hellinger & Bußmann 2001). Gender-fair language consists of two main strategies: feminisation, such as the feminine form *spokeswoman* in the quote above, and neutralisation, such as *spokesperson*, instead of the masculine form *spokesman* (Sczesny *et al.* 2016). Although the lion’s share of research on Feminist Linguistic Activism (FLA) has fallen under the study of gender-fair linguistic forms, also called the *equality approach* (Pauwels 2003), they were not the only changes sparked by feminists.

The androcentric nature of language has not only been observed in terms of the over-representation of men in language, but also in the absence of words to refer to women’s experiences. As women shared their stories in consciousness-raising groups, they realised that what they thought were individual issues, were in fact common to all of them. These were social issues, yet they were nameless. An example of these experiences is the inappropriate behaviour of men, especially at work, such as sexual advances. To counter this absence of names, women were encouraged to name these experiences, in this case, *sexual harassment*. This type of FLA has been referred to as the *disruption approach*, which, in Pauwels’ definition, includes “the creation of new words [...] to highlight women’s subordination and men’s domination” (idem: 555). The transformation of an experience without a name into an experience with a name is at the heart of the present thesis.

Naming experiences from one own’s perspective did not stop after the 1970s; as feminism evolved, new terms emerged. Spender points out the fact that “more names [emerging] from this stronger state is predictable” (1990: 186). Examples of more recent

neologisms are *himpathy* which designates the inappropriate sympathy powerful men often enjoy in cases of misogynistic behaviour, *manspread* which is the practice of men spreading their legs, typically on public transport, and *transmisogyny* referring to misogyny towards trans women. The present thesis focuses on English neologisms like these coined to name experiences within contemporary feminism.

1.2 Objectives and research questions

The attention that gender-fair language has received since the 1970s is evident in the number of guidelines published to encourage its use, with over 3,014 guidelines published to date in over 40 languages (Elmiger 2024). However, even if guidelines may have been published, this does not mean that they will necessarily be followed. Numerous corpus studies have been carried out to measure the effectiveness of gender-fair language in terms of its implementation, comparing the use of gender-fair alternatives to masculine generics. Among these studies, we might mention Cooper's (1984) analysis of masculine generics, such as the pronoun *he*, and gender-fair alternatives, such as *he/she* (and its variants) and singular *they*, in a corpus consisting of American English texts from a variety of genres and fields published in the 1970s. This is but one example of studies analysing the use of gender-fair language, ranging from the study of general English corpora (such as this one) to, more recently, German mathematics textbooks (Moser & Hannover 2014) or French labour law (Bracchi 2019). In addition to a linguistic change, the motivations underlying the implementation of gender-fair language include a change in mental and social representations. In other words, gender-fair language does not only allow for a more equal representation of gender in language but also in our mind and in society. Measuring the effectiveness of gender-fair language also means assessing the impact of its use on such representations. Once more, gender-fair language has been the focus of numerous studies, more specifically within the field of psycholinguistics (for an overview, see Sczesny *et al.* 2016; Gygax *et al.* 2021).

While the equality approach has been in the limelight, the other form of FLA, the disruption approach, has been largely overshadowed. The main aim of this thesis is to gain a deeper insight into this hitherto under-researched area of FLA, which are neologisms coined to counter the absence of names. This involves three main objectives:

1. observing which neologisms were coined, more specifically which and whose experiences they denote;
2. measuring the degree of conventionalisation of these neologisms, i.e. to which extent they are used and how;
3. exploring the effect of the knowledge of a name on the perception of the denoted concept, which relates to the notion of hypostatisation, i.e. the idea that the existence of a word suggests the existence of a corresponding concept.

The first objective is to observe which neologisms were coined in contemporary feminism. While some FLA accounts mention the coinage of feminist neologisms (Pauwels 2003; Mills 2008), studying the more recent ones allows us to reintroduce feminist neologisms as part of FLA, and potentially enrich and redefine FLA, and in particular the disruption approach. To do so, I first collected neologisms that have been coined in contemporary feminism, which necessitates defining both neologisms and contemporary feminism. The neologisms examined in this study correspond to new forms, and are therefore formal neologisms (rather than semantic neologisms which are new meanings for established forms), which denote experiences for which there were no established names. I have collected neologisms using a crowdsourced dictionary-based approach; more specifically, the crowdsourced dictionary *Wiktionary* has been defined as the source to collect these neologisms. Since *Wiktionary* does not only include neologisms, I have defined a temporal criterion to collect neologisms from contemporary feminism. Although questions have been raised about the beginning of the current feminist activism, it is often situated around the year 2010 (Rivers 2017: 22; Pavard 2018: 7; Oren & Press 2019: 4-5). It is this year that has been chosen as the cut-off date for the period from which I collected the neologisms for the present study. The decision is mainly practical in nature, since this year also corresponds to the beginning of the corpus in which the usage of neologisms is observed.

In addition to the when, contemporary feminism can also be defined in terms of what social and political matters it addresses, and subsequently who it represents. This is an extremely broad question which cannot be satisfactorily answered in a few lines, since it would run the risk of homogenising feminism today, and thereby rendering its diversity invisible. Rather than proposing an answer that would not do justice to this diversity, I will describe the decisions taken in order to take this central aspect into account.

One of these decisions is a terminological one. Even though I tend to use the singular form to refer to contemporary feminism, I avoid the use of the wave metaphor. This metaphor consists of describing different periods of feminism as waves, such as the second wave to describe feminism in the 1960s and 70s, and has been contested for drowning out the diversity of feminist activism by simplifying feminist history (with somewhat clear boundaries) and “[determining] what is significant to preserve and study” (Laughlin *et al.* 2010: 79). The other decision is methodological, pertaining to the definition of the morphological criterion for selecting neologisms. This criterion requires one of the source words constituting neologisms to denote gender identities, sexuality or established terms related to feminism. To do so, several sources have been used to compile the list of source words which includes terms such as *agender*, *cis* as well as *man* and *woman*. At this point, it is important to stress that I do not claim exhaustiveness. Since neologisms are being coined on a daily basis, categories referring to gender and sexuality also emerge at a fast pace and “[n]o single individual can keep up with the situational generation of new words across all communities” (Enke 2012: 4). In total, 24 neologisms coined in contemporary feminism to counter the absence of names to refer to experiences have been collected and analysed. They refer to members or behaviour of the members of a dominant group, or to experiences of oppression of marginalised and/or minoritised groups.

While proposing alternatives is obviously a necessary stage of feminist-driven language change, these alternatives, whether they correspond to the equality or the disruption approach, must be used both within and outside the community from which they emerge. This corresponds in part to the definition of conventionalisation, which is made of two sub-processes: *diffusion* and *usualisation* (Schmid 2020). In broad terms, diffusion corresponds to the extent to which neologisms are used outside of the social and linguistic contexts from which they originate, and usualisation to how neologisms are used. It should be noted that the neology literature shows great variability concerning the terminology used to refer to the dynamic processes neologisms go through. For example, various terms can be found in the literature to refer to the development of neologisms, such as *idiomatisation*, *institutionalisation*, or *lexicalisation*. These terms, similarly to *neologism*, are notational terms, since “there is no single correct and reliable definition” (Lipka *et al.* 2004: 2). They can refer to the whole life-cycle of neologisms, as well as specific stages or aspects of it (see Foubert 2021 for a discussion on definitions

of social dynamic processes). In the present thesis, I will use the terms *conventionalisation*, *diffusion*, and *usualisation*.

Although diffusion and usualisation concern different aspects of the development of neologisms, they are not independent of each other, as Schmid explains: “once established in a community of whatever nature and size, types can be abstracted away from their original motives and diffuse to other communities without continuing to be associated with the original motives and situations of use” (2020: 126). This observation is also made in the only existing study of the conventionalisation of feminist neologisms that emerged around the 1970s. Ehrlich and King (1994) observe how neologisms such as *date rape* and *sexual harassment* are used in the press and summarise their findings as follows: “we demonstrate the extent to which these kinds of terms get redefined and often depoliticized as they become integrated into the larger, often sexist, speech community” (idem: 61). Despite similar observations and an interest in a common object of study – linguistic change – feminist linguistics and neology studies have not been informed by one another. This thesis is situated at the interface between two frameworks: feminist linguistics and neology studies.

The second objective of this thesis is to observe the degree of conventionalisation of recent feminist neologisms. To do so, the usage of the 24 neologisms has been observed in the NOW (News On the Web) corpus, which contains English texts published in web-based newspapers and magazines from over 20 countries since 2010 and is updated on a daily basis. It contained 12 billion words at the time of data collection (February 2021). One of the main reasons for choosing this corpus is the diversity of the sources it contains, since it includes mainstream media alongside media specialising in feminism, gender and sexuality issues, such as *Feminism in India* and *UK Gay News*. A mixed methods approach is employed to observe conventionalisation. While diffusion is measured more quantitatively with the use of seven variables and the creation of a diffusion index, usualisation is observed more qualitatively, partly because of the relatively low degree of diffusion of these neologisms.

The third objective is to observe the effect of the knowledge of a name on the perception of the denoted concept. The motivation underlying the coinage of these neologisms does not stop at denouncing particular behaviours and making them more visible. As Spender points out, naming is an “attempt to order and structure the chaos and flux of existence which would otherwise be an undifferentiated mass” (1990: 163), an idea which can also be found outside of the feminist linguistic literature. Commenting

on the effect of new words, Schmid argues that “nouns carve an apparently neatly bounded segment from the constant flux of events going on in the world around them. This is what the impression of having a concept of something is all about” (2008: 8). The concept-formation power of words is also known as *hypostatisation*, as it is addressed in contemporary philosophy of language and taken up by linguistics (Lipka 1977). While this idea is intuitively appealing, it has not really been tested empirically, apart from one study by Kerremans (2015) whose preliminary findings suggest that the knowledge of a word could have an impact on the perception of what is being denoted. She designed a questionnaire in which she asked participants to rate the usefulness of several concepts and to provide a short explanation. She found that participants who did not know a term for the presented concepts tended to rate such concepts as less useful. Moreover, she identified three utility types from participants’ utility score justifications: (i) holistic, (ii) societal, and (iii) personal. Holistic utility was found when concepts unite individual meaning components in a succinct and expressive way. Societal utility corresponds to the presence of the denoted concepts in society, and personal utility to concepts to which speakers can personally relate or by which they are personally affected.

Her results can serve as a basis for the present investigation of the hypostatizing power of feminist neologisms, not only because Kerremans’ findings suggest that the (lack of) knowledge of a word influences the perception of the denoted concept, but also because the utility types correspond both to the naming effects present in the feminist linguistics literature and to hypostatizing effects in the neology literature. By forming a concept, names help to make the denoted concepts intelligible to oneself as well as to others. More specifically, the present thesis investigates the power of feminist neologisms by means of a questionnaire, inspired by Kerremans’ questionnaire, to observe the relationship between the knowledge of neologisms and the perception of the utility of the denoted concepts. The hypothesis is that the knowledge of a word increases the perception of utility of the denoted concept, which will be statistically tested via a cumulative linked mixed model. Importantly, the questionnaire does not allow us to ascertain whether neologisms actually form concepts in the mind, a question that is beyond the scope of the present thesis. However, it does provide an initial exploration of hypostatisation through the notion of utility.

This thesis collects and analyses in more detail 24 neologisms coined in contemporary feminism to name experiences that have so far gone unnamed. In doing so, it attempts to answer the following three research questions:

- RQ1.** To what extent do recent feminist neologisms allow for a redefinition of feminist linguistic activism?
- RQ2.** What is the degree of conventionalisation (i.e. diffusion and usualisation) of feminist neologisms?
- RQ3.** Does the knowledge of feminist neologisms influence the perception of utility of the denoted concepts?

These questions will be answered via a crowdsourced dictionary-based neologism collection approach (RQ1), a corpus research (RQ2), and questionnaires (RQ3), which will be developed in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3).

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. The next chapter (Chapter 2) discusses the theoretical and empirical dimensions of the research. More specifically, it addresses four questions that arise from feminist linguistics, informed by the literature on neology: (i) What is wrong with language? (ii) What are the proposed solutions? (iii) Have any of these solutions been successful? And finally, (iv) why is it so important to change language?

Chapter 3 is concerned with the methodology used for this study. It starts by reviewing neologism collection methods found in the literature and moves on to the crowdsourced dictionary approach used in this thesis. It also describes the corpus used to investigate the conventionalisation of feminist neologisms, as well as the variables identified to measure diffusion and to observe usualisation. Concerning the exploration of hypostatisation, the design features of the questionnaires are presented, as well as the data management in terms of collection, annotation, and statistical modelling.

Chapters 4 to 6 are devoted to the results for each research question. Chapter 4 discusses the neologism collection results and the extent to which they allow for a redefinition of FLA. It starts by presenting neologisms which fall under Pauwels' definition of FLA by denouncing men's behaviour or reactions to it. The chapter then moves on to explain how most recent neologisms fall under a more capacious definition showing an intersectional understanding of FLA. These neologisms are categorised into

two main types: those addressing the problems of, and with, white feminism, and those linked to trans and queer feminism.

Chapter 5 is concerned with the corpus analysis results in an attempt to answer the second research question on the conventionalisation of feminist neologisms. The first part of the chapter discusses the process of diffusion. The seven variables used to measure diffusion are first compared and then combined in a diffusion index. The second part discusses the process of usualisation, more specifically focusing on the political nature of the meaning of feminist neologisms.

Chapter 6 addresses the third research question by presenting the questionnaire results. It starts by presenting demographic information about participants, followed by descriptive findings on the knowledge of neologisms and the perception of the denoted concepts, and finally the findings resulting from the statistical model testing the relationship between word knowledge and the perception of utility of the denoted concepts.

Chapter 7 provides a summary of the main findings and offers avenues for further research.

Chapter 2. State of the art

Linguistic innovations and feminist linguistic activism

Since the emergence of feminist linguistics in the 1970s, there has been a large body of literature focusing on the androcentric nature of language and on the feminist linguistic activism that came about as a result of this observation. This chapter addresses four questions that are relevant to feminist linguistics, informed by the literature on neology: (i) What is wrong with language? (ii) What are the proposed solutions? (iii) Have any of these solutions been successful? And finally, (iv) why is it so important to change language?²

The first two questions concerning the issues observed in language and the solutions suggested by feminist linguists will be addressed in the first section (2.1), which starts with an overview of the emergence of feminist linguistics. It then presents two manifestations of male bias observed in language, as well as the linguistic innovations which emerged to counter this bias: (i) masculine generics and gender-fair language and (ii) the absence of names to denote women's experiences and the creation of neologisms.

The following section (2.2) addresses the third question, about the success of these solutions and looks at what happened to these linguistic innovations once they were created. To do so, this section defines the notion of conventionalisation and gives an overview of studies on the usage of gender-fair and the neologisms coined to name women's experiences.

² These questions are inspired by the four stages of the language planning process: (i) fact-finding, (ii) planning, (iii) implementation, and (iv) evaluation/feedback (cf. Pauwels 2003).

In the third section (2.3), the question of the importance of feminist language change is addressed, looking at the power of words. It presents feminist views on linguistic relativity, reviews psycholinguistic studies on gender-fair language, and defines the hypostatizing effect of feminist neologisms.

The last section (2.4) provides a summary of this chapter. By answering these four questions, we see that while most of the attention has revolved around masculine generics and gender-fair language, the absence of names for women's experiences and the coinage of neologisms have been largely overlooked. Neologisms coined in the current feminist movement are the focus of this thesis.

2.1 The androcentric nature of language: issues and solutions

The aim of this section is to answer the following two questions raised by feminist linguistics: what is wrong with language and what are the proposed solutions? Before doing so, the following sub-section will focus on the emergence of feminist linguistics since the 1970s and the main concerns of feminist linguistics at that time.

2.1.1 The emergence of feminist linguistics

The uproar caused in June 2022 by the US Supreme Court decision to overturn the right to abortion, established 50 years earlier, shows the profound effect the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s has had on women. The realisation of feminism at the time that the personal is political not only left a mark on the political landscape, it also changed academic scholarship.

Feminist research and women's studies started to develop as women observed a gap between their shared personal experiences and academic knowledge. New subjects of study, once considered of little interest, emerged in order to understand the origins of women's oppressions (Messer-Davidow 2002; Brooks & Hesse-Biber 2006; Foubert & Boiteux 2022). It is within this new academic landscape that feminist linguistics developed. The questions that interested feminist linguistics (and feminist research in general) during the 1970s were intrinsically linked to the concerns of that era's feminist movement. However, this feminist movement was diverse, there were as many questions as there were forms of feminism. This was all the more true as various bodies of feminist thought appeared over time. Each of them inspired feminist linguists to answer different questions. Despite these differences, Bucholtz (2014) explains that feminism's common

interest is addressing social inequality, and this is also the case for feminist linguistics. In this regard, it is necessary to point out that while there are many studies on gender and language, not all of them are part of feminist linguistics, as they do not always share this motivation. Recently, feminist linguists, such as Mills and Mullany (2011), have “called for language and gender research to rediscover its political voice and its original motivation for coming into existence in the first place” (idem: 6). This can be done by “discuss[ing] feminism far more explicitly, ensuring that it is firmly in the foreground, so that it occupies a more overt and central role in language and gender studies” (ibid.).

Among the various bodies of feminist thought, *difference feminism* had a particular importance on the development of feminist linguistics (and on language and gender as a research field in general). Difference feminism gets its name from the central role it gives to gender differences in addressing women’s positions. However, the way in which these differences and positions are understood greatly differ. The first feminist linguistic studies were influenced by two types of difference feminism: liberal feminism and radical cultural feminism (Bucholtz 2014: 25-31). On the one hand, liberal feminism advocates for achieving gender equality by diminishing gender differences. It does not aim at changing social structures but at giving women opportunities to access the same social structures as men, such as work. On the other hand, cultural feminism views these differences as qualities to be enhanced. More specifically, radical cultural feminism considers the differences characterising women to be superior to those of men. Therefore, a society led (or even dominated) by women would be more desirable than one dominated by men. These opposite perspectives are clearly present in the feminist linguistic literature.

The prominent figure in liberal feminist linguistics is Lakoff who, with the publication of *Language and Woman’s Place* (1975), established language and gender as a subfield of linguistics. In her work investigating “women’s talk” to understand the perceived role of women in society, she argues that the way women speak indicates powerlessness. This can be manifested in the topics women talk about which are considered trivial, such as domestic affairs, as well as the way they talk about these topics. For example, by using more hedges, such as *sort of* or *you know*, women tend to sound more unassertive. Perhaps surprisingly, these very same linguistic features have also been interpreted positively in other studies. This is the case of Holmes’ (1993) study of women’s talk in New Zealand. Because she takes a radical cultural approach, she argues that the characteristics that Lakoff uses to identify “women as hesitant,

unconfident, spineless creatures, unwilling to assert their own opinions in case they offended others, or worse, because they had none” (idem: 96) are in fact special interactional abilities. Another study in that direction is Coates’ (2013) analysis of the way women talk in women’s friendship groups. She argues that hedges can be more than just a sign of unassertiveness and finds that women use them to open discussions and a collaborative floor.

In addition to observing features of how women talk, studies within difference feminism have also investigated how women and men and their experiences are talked about. Clear cases of gender differences are examples of asymmetry in reference to women and men. In her book, Lakoff (1975) points out the now well-known *master-mistress* pair, with the feminine *mistress* having a sexual meaning which the masculine form does not have. This is but one example of what Schultz (1975) refers to as *semantic derogation*, i.e. semantic change undergone by female references with sexual connotations. Another example of lexical asymmetry concerning women’s relationship to men is found in female and male titles. While female titles indicate marital status, as with *Mrs.* and *Miss*, this is not the case with the male title *Mr.* Although Lakoff’s work has had a particularly wide resonance³, it is merely one study among many on overt forms of sexism in language (see for example Cherry (1987) for Japanese, Sautermeister (1985) for French, and Kochskamper (1991) for German). These studies have been the focus of feminist-driven change, since most of the attention of feminist linguists at the time was focused on the eradication of sexist forms, such as masculine generics (see Section 2.1.2 below).

Studies within radical cultural feminist linguistics have also observed gender differences in the lexicon. The radical cultural feminists’ idea that women’s qualities were above men’s meant that the language system was not “capable of expressing a woman’s point of view” (Pauwels 2003: 555). A women-centered language had to be created to counter a male-dominated society with a male-dominated language, or what the poet Adrienne Rich calls “the oppressor’s language” (1989). Feminists and linguists in the 1970s and 1980s started experimenting with language, either with the invention of languages (in science fiction books for example, see Elgin (1984)) or with the

³ It should also be pointed out that Lakoff’s work presented in *Language and Woman’s Place* (1975) has been widely criticised for generalising her observations on white middle-class women, as well taking men’s linguistic practices as the norm (cf. discussion in Bucholtz and Hall 1995; Bucholtz 2004). However, Lakoff was describing women’s language in terms of the language ideology which would limit women’s participation in male-dominated contexts.

publication of dictionaries to counter “dick-tionaries” (see for example Kramarae and Treichler (1985), Daly and Caputi (1987), and Russell (2012, 2018) for an overview of such feminist dictionaries). However, the idea that more women-centred meanings were necessary was not limited to creative and lexicographical exercises. The coinage of words to denote women’s experiences will be discussed in Section 2.1.3.

2.1.2 Masculine generics and gender-fair language

If there is one feature of language that has been widely commented on by feminist linguists for its overtly androcentric character, it is the masculine-as-neutral form, more commonly known as masculine generics; the use of masculine forms to refer to both men and women or when the gender of the referent is unknown. Common realisations of masculine generics are the masculine pronouns *he* or *his*, the use of *man* for occupational terms, as in *chairman* or *fireman*, and for terms referring to human beings, such as *mankind* or *man-made*. This widespread practice, found across languages (Hellinger & Bußmann 2001, 2002, 2003, 2015), has long been considered a mere incidental use of language, and one should not read too much into it (and recent debates in some European countries show that this is still the case; see for example Eisenberg (2017) in Germany; Abbou *et al.* (2018) in France).

Feminist linguists disagree with this idea, and argue that this is not a neutral but sexist form. A key study in this area is Bodine’s (1975) investigation of the masculine generic pronoun in prescriptive grammar. Her findings reveal that there is nothing incidental about the masculine form’s neutrality. It is not the natural course of language, but a decision made and remade by grammarians since the 16th century. In 1646, the grammarian Joshua Poole wrote “The Relative shall agree with the Antecedent of the more worthy gender [...]. The Masculine gender is more worthy than the Feminine”. In 1746, John Kirkby wrote in the *Eighty-Eight Grammatical Rules* that man embraces woman because the male gender is more comprehensive. Additionally, an Act of Parliament was passed in 1850 stating that “words importing the masculine gender shall be deemed and taken to include females” (cited in Evans and Evans 1957: 221). Not much of an accident after all, it seems. These rules were accompanied by numerous attacks against the singular use of the pronoun *they*, as grammarians argued that it fails to agree in number. Consider the following passages from Murray (1795) and White (1880):

RULE V. Pronouns must always agree with their antecedents, and the nouns for which they stand, in gender, number, and person [...]. ‘Can any one, on their entrance into the world, be fully secure that they shall not be deceived?’ ‘on *his* entrance,’ and ‘that *he* shall.’ (Murray 1795: 95–96)

Their is very commonly misused with reference to a singular noun. Even John Ruskin has written such a sentence as this: ‘But if a customer wishes you to injure their foot or to disfigure it, you are to refuse *their* pleasure.’ How Mr Ruskin could have written such a sentence [...], or how, it having been written, it could be passed by an intelligent proof-reader, I cannot surmise. It is, perhaps, an exemplification of the straits to which we are driven by the lack of a pronoun of common gender meaning both he and she, his and her. But, admitting this lack, the fact remains that *his* is the representative pronouns, as *mankind* includes both men and women. Mr Ruskin might better have said, ‘If a customer wishes you to injure his foot you are to refuse his pleasure.’ To use ‘his or her’ in cases of this seems to me very finical and pedantic. (White 1880: 416)

While these rules mainly focus on the pronouns *he* and *his*, similar social reasons for the predominance of men were used to advocate for the male-female order in binomial pairs such as *men and women*, or for the generic use of *man* in *mankind* as mentioned by White (ibid.) in the quotation above.

Revelations about the intentional nature of masculine generics have been accompanied by studies showing that men’s over-representation in language leads to the perception of men’s over-representation in society. In an overview of 20 studies on the interpretation of masculine generics carried out since 1971, Henley (1989) shows that their findings all go in the same direction, i.e. that masculine generics are not interpreted as generic, but as male specific. Among these studies, Bem and Bem (1973) observe that this male-specific interpretation has social impacts, since the use of masculine occupational terms in a job description has shown to decrease women’s willingness to apply.

In response to these studies, feminists have suggested and advocated for alternative forms to masculine generics. This form of linguistic activism is also known as the *equality approach* (Pauwels 2003), since it favours an equal representation of women and men in language. These linguistic strategies used to avoid masculine generics are more commonly known as non-sexist, gender-fair, gender-neutral or as inclusive

language.⁴ To implement this linguistic change, a variety of guidelines have been published. In total, more than 3,000 guidelines in over 40 languages have been indexed (Elmiger 2024). The first listed guidelines were published in 1975 in English. The most recent ones in this ongoing project were published in 2024 in German, Italian and Spanish, among other languages. While the issue of gender-fair language remains extremely topical, its focus is no longer just limited to fair representation between women and men. With the evolution of feminism – and more specifically the emergence of queer feminism – gender-fair language has also evolved to represent non-binary and queer people in general (see for example Kotthoff (2020) for German; Scotto Di Carlo (2020) for Italian; and Mackenzie & Swamy (2022) for French), thus going beyond what has also been referred to as “the great *he/she* battle” (Nilsen 1984).

Among the numerous guidelines published since the 1970s, many of them have been written by institutions, such as schools or political organisations, revealing that alternatives to masculine generics have been encouraged way beyond feminist spheres. Some examples are guidelines published by the National Council of Teachers of English in 1975, by the University of Quebec in Montreal in 1987, by UNESCO in 1999 (which was the first international institution to publish such guidelines), and by the European Parliament in 2008.

There are two main strategies that have been suggested by feminist linguists to avoid masculine generics and that can be found in these guidelines: neutralisation and feminisation. Both strategies serve the same general aim which is to replace male generics and get away from the perceived androcentric nature of language; however, the way in which they achieve such aim differs. The choice between them can depend on the way gender is expressed in the language and the specific purposes behind the use of these alternative forms (Chevalier *et al.* 2017).

Neutralisation is about de-gendering language. It consists of using neutral forms, which are not masculine nor feminine. Consider the following examples of masculine generics given in the UNESCO (1999) guidelines.

⁴ Since the 1970s, many terms have been used in the literature to refer to alternatives to masculine generics, such as non-sexist, gender-neutral, or inclusive language. At the time of writing, discussions are taking place among researchers regarding the potential selection of a single umbrella term to refer to these forms (gender-inclusive-language 2022). Throughout this thesis, I will use the term *gender-fair language* to encompass several strategies to avoid masculine generics, among which neutralisation and feminisation.

- (1)
 - a. Anyone disagreeing with this statement should give *his* reasons.
 - b. The *chairmen* are ready to start the meeting.
 - c. History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of *Mankind*

In the guidelines, the suggested neutral forms are:

- (2)
 - a. Anyone disagreeing with this statement should give *their* reasons.
 - b. The *chairs* are ready to start the meeting.
 - c. History of the Scientific and Cultural Development of *Humanity*

Other typical examples of such neutral forms are occupational terms, such as *firefighter* instead of *fireman* or *police officer* instead of *policeman*. Neutralisation is encouraged when gender should not be relevant in the discussed topic. It is preferred by what has typically been referred to as natural gender languages such as English and Swedish. These are languages for which most personal nouns are gender-neutral but with personal pronouns differentiating gender (Sczesny *et al.* 2016; see Gygax *et al.* 2019 for a discussion on language typology related to gender expression).

The second main strategy is feminisation which aims at making women visible in language. While there are cases of feminisation in English, such as using *he or she* instead of the masculine pronoun *he*, or *men and women* instead of *men*, it is more common for grammatical gender languages. These languages, such as French or German, express gender in all the nouns, even when they do not refer to human beings. Personal nouns do tend to match the gender of the referent. Pronouns differ depending on gender, as well as other grammatically dependent words. When it comes to this strategy, a lot of attention has been devoted to job titles. In 1999, a guide was published to feminise almost all occupational terms in French, thus suggesting a feminine form for *farmer*, *optician*, *teacher*, but also for *croissant maker* (Cerquiglini *et al.* 1999).

Commenting on the equality approach, Spender argues that: “[f]eminists are simply doing what males have done in the past: they are trying to produce their *own* linguistic forms which do not diminish them” (1990: 151; emphasis in original). As mentioned above, the considerable number of existing guidelines shows that gender-fair language has also attracted a lot of interest outside of the feminist spheres. In fact, it is probably fair to say that when non-linguists think about issues of language and gender, they think of masculine generics and gender-fair language. However, this was not the only form of linguistic activism sparked by feminist linguists, as we will see in the following section.

2.1.3 The absence of words, the coinage of neologisms and experience

The androcentric features of language were not only observed in terms of the over-representation of men, but also in the absence of names to denote women's experiences. Feminist linguists argued that men had the stranglehold on language, and for this reason, experiences of women remained unnamed (Spender 1990).

The activity of consciousness-raising groups played an important role in this realisation. Consciousness-raising groups are:

a small group process composed of peers for a particular minority group. The purpose of the group process is to examine the sociopolitical structures that create and sustain discrimination and disadvantage. By becoming more aware of the ways in which those structures determine personal experience, to facilitate changing the members' self-identity and well-being as well as mobilize them to change the sociopolitical structures. (Larson 2014)

They have been defined as a major form of activism of the 1970s feminist movement (Cassell 1977). Before these groups, women had very few places to talk with each other outside of domestic spaces and without the presence of men. Freeman (1975) argues that this is not incidental, the fact that women did not have such space was deliberate. The novelty of such practice can be revealed by men's reactions. They wanted to know what women talked about, tried to prevent them from talking about their relationship or even from going to these groups (Cassell 1977). Why was it so important to isolate women?

When women begin to talk to each other as they have done in [consciousness-raising groups], the *image* of supremacy of individual males is at risk. The stripping away of one male façade of superiority is not sufficient to threaten patriarchal order, but when multitudes of males are 'exposed' patriarchal order is at least temporarily at risk (Spender 1990: 111; emphasis in original).

As women shared their stories, they realised that what they thought were individual issues, were in fact common to all of them. These were social issues, yet they were nameless.

One example of such nameless experience told by women in consciousness-raising groups is the inappropriate behaviour of men in the workplace, such as making sexual advances or obscene remarks. After women shared these experiences, Farley explains

that “there was an unmistakable pattern to our employment. [...]. Each one of us had already quit or been fired from a job at least once because we had been made too uncomfortable by the behavior of men” (1978: xi). It was after discussing these experiences in consciousness-raising groups that the problem could be named *sexual harassment*. Other neologisms were coined in the 1970s. They could be formal neologisms, meaning that a new form was coined, as with *date rape*, which is a “rape committed by a person the victim is dating” (OED, n.d.a). Some neologisms were also semantic, i.e. new meanings for an established form, as with *patriarchy*, defined as “the predominance of men in positions of power and influence in society, with cultural values and norms favouring men” (OED, n.d.b).

Of course, it should be noted that it was not the first time that women realised that names were missing. Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* published in 1963 is considered to mark the beginning of the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s. This book starts with the observation of the widespread unhappiness of women who had been led to believe that they would be happy and fulfilled in the role of housewife. Friedan refers to this problem as “the problem that has no name”. Nor was it the first time that women coined women-centred neologisms. In the 1960s, the new meaning of *sexism* emerged to denote “prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex” (OED, n.d.c), thus becoming “a problem that has a name” (Ahmed 2015).

The motivation underlying the creation of these new words was more than just filling a lexical gap. Feminist linguists argue that men have a stranglehold on language, and because of this, women could either use men’s words, as “they have insisted that even those who do not share [their] experience should be obliged to uses those names” (Spender 1990: 189), or remain silent. Feminist linguists advocate for a third option that Daly calls the “castration of language” (1974: 131) which consists in limiting men’s power on language by bringing women out of their muted state. As women created new words to talk about their experiences, they were able to impose “a new order upon the world, the formulation of new categories and relationships between them” (Spender 1990: 131).

As with alternatives to masculine generics, different terms have been used to refer to these new words. Throughout this thesis, the terms *disruption approach* and *feminist neologisms* will be used. Ehrlich and King (1994) refer to them as *feminist linguistic innovations* which “function to reinterpret and give a name to the experiences of women”

(idem: 61). Similarly, Mills (2008) refers to them as *feminist neologisms* which, she argues, “have been very useful for women to recognise that certain experiences are general rather than specific to themselves” (idem: 86). While gender-fair language corresponds to the equality approach in Pauwels’ (2003) classification, these neologisms pertain to what she refers to as *linguistic disruption*. The main motivation behind the disruption approach is to “expose the sexist nature of the current language system” (idem: 555) and includes “the creation of new words [...] to highlight women’s subordination and men’s domination” (ibid.).⁵ While these definitions slightly differ, they all have in common the idea of naming women’s experiences.

This linguistic phenomenon did not stop after the 1970s, but carried on as feminism evolved. The creation of such words was only the beginning: “[t]hat such names can enter the vocabulary is itself a testimony to the distance women have travelled from their completely muted state; that more names will emerge from this stronger state is predictable” (Spender 1990: 186). The current feminist movement is also accompanied by the emergence of English neologisms. Among these neologisms are words denoting misogynistic behaviours or reactions to such behaviours. For instance, *manspread* refers to men spreading their legs in public, typically in public transport, thus taking the space of others. Another example is *himpathy*, coined by the philosopher Manne in 2017, which denotes the kind of inappropriate and disproportionate sympathy powerful men often enjoy in cases of misogynistic behaviour. These two neologisms correspond to Pauwels’ (2003) definition of linguistic feminist activism, and more specifically, linguistic disruption, as they denote women’s subordination and men’s domination. However, most recent neologisms refer to experiences which go beyond female-male relationships. This is the case of *cissplain*, which is the act of explaining trans issues to a trans person as a cis person, or *misogynoir*, which is misogyny towards black women.

That feminist linguistic activism now differs from what it was in the 1970s is not surprising. As mentioned above, feminist linguistics is linked to the concerns of the feminist movement. In the 1970s, the feminist movement was focused on the concerns of privileged women, i.e. white, middle-class, college educated women. As Cameron explains:

⁵ Linguistic disruption also encompasses other forms of linguistic creativity, which will not be the focus of this thesis, such as breaking morphological rules (e.g. *herstory*) or using alternative spellings (e.g. *wimmin*).

[T]here is a danger that in constructing the competing account, women will replicate men's exclusion of women in a different form: some women – the most privileged – will universalise their own experience as 'women's experience', and this will be false for other groups of women. During the 1980s such excluded groups of women – Black and other minority ethnic women in the West, Third World and non-Western women, working class women, older women, lesbians, women with disabilities – drew increasing attention to the dangers of generalising about women, and to the reality of diversity, difference and conflict within the category 'women'. (1992:12)

This does not mean that experiences named around the 1970s, like sexual harassment and date rape, were only the issues of these women, but that experiences of women lacking privilege were not named. For example, the specificity of the experiences of black women could not be expressed by white women, and this is exemplified by the fact that *misogynoir* had to be coined because *misogyny* could not encompass all experiences.

As mentioned above, there are two approaches to feminist linguistic activism: (i) the equality approach (gender-fair language) and (ii) linguistic disruption (the creation of neologisms). The lion's share of research has fallen under the equality approach, studying the problem of masculine generics and proposing gender-fair language as a solution, which in turn has led to the publication of numerous institutional guidelines. Fewer studies have tackled linguistic disruption, which investigates the absence of names or the use of inappropriate terms. Coates *et al.* (1994) and Coates and Wade (2004) have shown that acts of sexual violence are often misnamed in trial judgements, using terms which would be more appropriate for consensual acts, such as *intercourse*, or euphemisms, such as *brief touching* or *fondling*. Work done by activists reveal how the press uses terms related to the domains of love or passion to report on acts of violence against women (Gourion 2023). Despite these findings, the issue of the linguistic representation of women's experiences has been largely overlooked institutionally. To the best of my knowledge, only one set of guidelines has been published to encourage the use of more appropriate terms to refer to women's experiences. The charity Zero Tolerance has published a language guide for a more appropriate representation of violence against women and girls in the media using, for example, *sexual harassment* instead of *sex scandal* or *affair* (Zero Tolerance 2023).

Linguistic studies on neologisms coined by feminists to counter the absence of (appropriate) terms to refer to common experiences remain sparse. Reviews of linguistic activism since the 1970s do mention these neologisms, but focus largely on gender-fair language (Pauwels 2003; Mills 2008). Similarly to neologisms from the 1970s, little attention has been paid to more recent ones. It is these recent feminist neologisms which are the focus of this thesis. Studying these lexical innovations allows us to reconsider feminist linguistic activism. Despite the emphasis on gender-fair language, feminist linguistic activism cannot be reduced to the equality approach. Although some accounts mention the coinage of feminist neologisms, the definition of linguistic disruption does not capture recent linguistic changes. The investigation of these neologisms allows us to answer the first research questions of the present thesis, on the extent to which recent feminist neologisms allow for a redefinition of feminist linguistic activism (RQ1, Section 1.2)

In this section, I have presented the problems observed in language and the solutions suggested in response to these problems. While they are necessary steps for feminist linguistic activism, they are not sufficient. As Pauwels explains:

Evaluating the outcome of linguistic reform is a crucial aspect of any form of language planning. Language planners together with the interest groups, agencies or institutions which encouraged, demanded or sanctioned the reforms are usually keen to assess the impact of planning on the linguistic behaviour of the individuals, groups or communities targeted by the reforms. (2001: 139)

For feminist linguistic activism to be considered successful, they have to be used by feminists as well as by non-feminists. This is related to the notion of conventionalisation of linguistic innovations, which will be introduced in the following section.

2.2 The conventionalisation of feminist linguistic innovations

The aim of this section is to answer the third question asked in the introduction: have the solutions suggested by feminist linguists to counter the perceived androcentric nature of language been successful? This can be answered by looking at the degree of conventionalisation of these solutions. First, the notion of conventionalisation, which is constituted of two processes: diffusion and usualisation, is presented. Then, studies on the conventionalisation of gender-fair language and feminist neologisms are reviewed.

2.2.1 Defining conventionalisation: diffusion and usualisation

Gender-fair language was suggested because feminists questioned the masculine-as-neutral linguistic norm. However, to reduce male bias in language, it is not enough to suggest gender-fair language. Gender-fair language must enter into competition with masculine generics, thus creating a choice between terms to denote a generic meaning. This can be referred to as an *onomasiological competition*⁶ which corresponds to “different forms contending for the encoding of an idea” (Schmid 2020: 263). If gender-fair language succeeds within this onomasiological competition, it will eventually become the convention, which is “a mutually known regularity of behaviour which the members of a community conform to because they mutually expect each other to conform to it” (idem: 88). For a linguistic innovation to become a convention, it has to go through the process of *conventionalisation*, which is made of two sub-processes: *diffusion* and *usualisation*.

Diffusion corresponds to “the spread of conventions across the members of a speech community or parts of it, across genres and text types, and across activity types and types of situations” (idem: 94). It therefore affects situational and community-related dimensions of conventionalisation. There are three types of diffusion: (i) spatial, (ii) social, and (iii) stylistic diffusion. Spatial diffusion is concerned with the spread of an innovation from within one community situated in a certain location to another community in another location. Social diffusion corresponds to the spread of an innovation from within one speech community or social group to another. For example, feminist linguistic innovations could spread from a feminist community to a non-feminist community. Stylistic diffusion is related to changes in the use of specific cotexts and contexts of use, for example spreading from a specific discourse domain or text type to others.

Diffusion relies on a speech-chain mechanism (Agha 2003). In a first speech event with interlocutor *a* and interlocutor *b*, interlocutor *a* uses a certain utterance type. Interlocutor *b* will then use this utterance type in another speech event with interlocutor

⁶ The notion of onomasiology is different from that of semasiology. Onomasiology investigates the different linguistic forms a meaning can have, while semasiology investigates the different meanings one form can have (cf. Geeraerts 2010: 23-24). Applied to the representation of gender, looking at the different forms for the generic meaning, such as gender-fair and masculine forms, corresponds to an onomasiological perspective. On the other hand, looking at the different meanings of the masculine form, such as the masculine and generic meanings, corresponds to a semasiological perspective.

c. Interlocutor *c* will do the same thing with interlocutor *d* in a different speech event, etc. This idealised model mainly relies on face-to-face interactions; however, it can also take place in mass communication, which is more relevant to the diffusion of lexical innovations. In this case, one author can use one utterance type which will be read or heard by potentially millions of people.

While this is a broad explanation of the diffusion process, there have also been attempts at defining more specific patterns of diffusion. Informed by the diffusion of non-linguistic innovations (Rogers 1962), the S-curve model, corresponding to a “slow-quick-quick-slow” pattern (Aitchison 2001: 91), has been applied to the study of language change (Blythe & Croft 2012; Nevalainen 2015). Commenting on the diffusion of sound change, Aitchison explains that:

In the majority of cases, an innovation starts slowly, affecting relatively few words. When a certain number has been affected, the innovation gathers momentum. There comes a sudden ‘take-off’ point when a great number of words are affected in a relatively short time-span. Then, when the bulk of the change has been completed, the momentum appears to slacken, or even peter out, leaving a handful of words which lag behind the others. (2001: 91)

In recent years, the S-curve model has also been employed in the study of lexical innovations (Nini *et al.* 2017; Würschinger 2021). In addition to the S-curve model, there have been various models focusing on specific aspects of diffusion, such as geographical diffusion (see Schmid (2020: 183-194) for an overview of these models). However, these models tend to conflict. For example, while some argue that linguistic innovations spread from urban to rural areas, others claim the opposite (Bailey *et al.* 1993).

These contradictions can be explained by the fact that there are various types of innovations: morphosyntactic, phonological, lexical, etc., and also by the overlap between the three above-mentioned types of diffusion. Most of these models tend to focus on one type of diffusion, without taking into account the other two. However, the models of diffusion must combine all three types since “changes affecting one of these dimensions are likely to affect others” (Schmid 2020: 198). The aim of this thesis is not to suggest yet another model of diffusion. Rather, it aims at observing the degree of conventionalisation, in an attempt to measure the “success” of feminist linguistic activism, and more specifically feminist neologisms. To do so, specific aspects of each type of diffusion will be taken into account, as presented in Chapter 3.

While diffusion affects the situational and community-related dimensions of conventionalisation, usualisation affects the form- and meaning-related aspects. In broad terms and applied to linguistic innovations, the study of diffusion corresponds to analysing in which contexts and to which extent linguistic innovations are used, while the study of usualisation corresponds to how they are used. Usualisation involves different sub-processes which are all concerned with establishing, sustaining and adapting regularities of behaviour (idem: 92-93). One of the sub-processes affecting regularities in terms of forms and meanings, i.e. onomasiological and semasiological regularities, is *symbolisation*, which establishes, sustains and adapts the connections between forms and meanings of utterance types. To illustrate this notion, we can take the example of the representation of gender in language, more specifically in third person singular pronouns. Symbolisation establishes, sustains and adapts the connections between the generic meaning and the different pronouns used to encode it, such as the masculine pronoun *he* or singular *they*. These pronouns are also connected to other meanings, more specifically the masculine meaning for the pronoun *he* and a non-binary meaning for the pronoun *they*. These connections are also established, sustained and adapted by the process of symbolisation.

Symbolisation can be linked to another sub-process of usualisation, which is *contextualisation*. Contextualisation establishes, sustains and adapts the use of utterance types in different contexts and contexts. When an utterance type is repeatedly used in a specific context, components of this context can become part of the meaning, which corresponds to contextual symbolisation. This process can be exemplified by the name of a local event, the *Braderie de Lille*, which is a flea market taking place every September in Lille. One of the potential etymologies for the name *braderie* is the verb *to roast* (*braden* in Dutch). From the 16th century onwards, merchants sold roast chickens alongside the valets, who sold the unused household goods of the local bourgeoisie. Although the valets have long since been replaced by regular inhabitants of Lille and the chickens by mussels (cooked but not roasted) this event and other flea markets in northern France are still called *braderie* (Vreyer 2014; TLFi n.d). Another example, related to language and gender, can be found in the abovementioned process of semantic derogation observed by Schultz (1975) who points out that neutral terms, such as *harlot* to refer to a vagabond, gained negative and/or sexual connotations as they became associated with women.

Through these different sub-processes, usualisation can contribute to semantic change. It can take different forms, such as pejoration, amelioration, metaphorisation or generalisation. Generalisation is more likely to happen to the meaning of frequent lexical items, as “they occur in a larger range of cotexts and contexts” (Schmid 2020: 170). Before undergoing semantic change, semantic variation can already be present in early stages of usualisation, as shown by the few studies analysing the conventionalisation of lexical innovations. The early stages of usualisation are characterised by strong semasiological competition. For example, Kerremans *et al.* (2012) find that, in the first two years since its first occurrence in 2008, the verb *to detweet* had five different meanings. Eight years later, two meanings were still competing, which can partly be explained by the low frequency of the word.

This aspect highlights the cooperation between usualisation and diffusion. Indeed, “utterance types change not only their contextual features and social meanings under the influence of diffusion, but also their propositional meanings and forms. Therefore, diffusion is often a trigger for or motor of reorganisation driven by usualisation” (Schmid 2020: 198). In order to get a comprehensive account of conventionalisation, both diffusion and usualisation have to be studied.

The cooperation between diffusion and usualisation raises methodological points for the study of the success of feminist linguistic activism. More specifically, this means that it is not only necessary to look at *who* uses feminist linguistic innovations, but also at *how* they are used. The most straightforward way to assess success is to study the diffusion of these innovations. To do so, one can focus on social diffusion by looking at whether the innovations are used by feminists and non-feminists alike. If that is the case, it would suggest that these innovations become the norm of social conformity. However, as mentioned above, when innovations become frequent and diffuse to other contexts, they can undergo semantic change, such as generalisation. In that case, the social component, which is a feminist component, might fade away: “once established in a community of whatever nature and size, types can be abstracted away from their original motives and diffuse to other communities without continuing to be associated with the original motives and situations of use” (*idem*: 126). Therefore, it is also necessary to look at the usualisation of feminist innovations. This can be done by looking at their meaning in context.

The next sections review previous studies of the conventionalisation of feminist linguistic activism, starting with gender-fair language.

2.2.2 The “success” of gender-fair language

Most studies assessing the effectiveness of feminist linguistic activism have focused on the equality approach. This could be explained by the institutional effort put into it, which mainly took the form of guidelines on gender-fair language. As mentioned above, the most straightforward way to assess the effectiveness is to look at the diffusion of innovations suggested by feminists, which is also the preferred methodology in such studies.

The focus on diffusion is clearly revealed by the research questions asked by Cooper (1984: 5), such as: “Has there been a change of usage beyond the feminist and academic circles in which the change was first promoted?” and “Has change proceeded from more metropolitan areas to less metropolitan areas?”. In this study, Cooper analyses different types of diffusion, such as stylistic and geographical diffusion. He compares the frequency of androcentric generics, more specifically *man*, *man* in compounds and the pronoun *he*, and of non-androcentric generics, such as *he/she* (and its variants), singular *they*, and *-person*. The analysed corpus is comprised of American English texts from a variety of genres and areas, with dates of publication ranging from 1971 to 1979. The results show that there is a considerable decline in the use of androcentric generics between 1971 and 1979, with some variation between text types. Women’s magazines, followed by science magazines, show the most considerable decline. On the other hand, the decline in texts from the Congressional Record is much slower. When it comes to geographical aspects, there are no differences between cities and small towns. The author concludes that: “Whether or not the feminist movement raised the consciousness of the ordinary American citizen with respect to sexism in language, it is clear that the movement raised the consciousness of the American writers whose texts were analysed here.” (idem: 19-20).

Later studies reveal that these conclusions do not only apply to the American writers in Cooper’s corpus, but that they can be generalised to other texts and contexts. Cooper analyses a wide range of text types and contexts, as we will see in the studies presented below, most of them focus on more specific contexts. For example, Newman (1998) analyses the use of generic pronouns in spontaneous spoken American English, more specifically in eight TV interview programs in the 1990s. His findings show that *they* is used 60% of the time, and *he* 25% of the time. Also looking at spoken English, Pauwels (2001) analyses public speeches in Australia, as it was the target of non-sexist language

reform. She compares the use of generic pronouns in non-scripted spoken language from 1960s to 1970s, i.e. the pre-reform period, and from 1999, i.e. the post-reform period. The results show “a substantive change in generic pronoun choice. The masculine generic pronoun *he* had almost a monopoly in public speech in the pre-reform period (approximately 95%) whereas singular *they* is the most frequently used generic pronoun in the post-reform period (75%)” (idem: 117).

If these last two studies focus on specific contexts of use, their similar results suggest that gender-fair language did diffuse in a variety of contexts. Many other studies, ranging from the study of Japanese EFL textbooks (e.g. Lee 2018) to EU legislation (e.g. Cavagnoli & Mori 2019; Caliendo & Foubert 2022), show similar findings. While these studies concern a variety of texts, contexts, and languages, they tend to apply the same methodology, comparing the frequency of masculine generics to their feminist counterparts. This can be done over time, across genres, text types, etc. Even if this can be an indicator of the diffusion of gender-fair language, it is not enough to confirm its success.

As pointed out by Schmid (2020), conventionalisation is not just about diffusion, but also comprises usualisation. In order to complement the above-mentioned studies on gender-fair strategies, the ways in which they are used need to be investigated, as Pauwels explains: “[n]on-sexist language reform can be considered truly successful if there is not only evidence of the adoption of non-sexist alternatives but also evidence that these alternatives are being used in a manner promoting linguistic equality of the sexes” (2003: 566). Some observations have been made on the usage of gender-fair language, such as those by Ehrlich and King (1994) who explain that the neutral forms of *spokesman* and *chairman*, which are *spokesperson* and *chairperson* or *chair*, are not always used with their intended meaning. More specifically, they find that, while the masculine forms are used specifically for men, the supposedly neutral terms are used for women. This is the case in the domain of education, for which the authors give the following examples from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*:

- (3) Margarette P. Eby, *Chairperson* of Humanities at U. of Michigan at Dear-born, to Dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts and Professor of Music at U. of Northern Iowa.
- (4) David W. Hamilton, Associate Professor of Anatomy at Harvard, to *Chairman* of Anatomy at U. of Minnesota.

Other examples of such uses of neutral forms applied only to women are found in newspapers and in the political domain. While these observations show a certain degree of semantic variation, they remain too sporadic to say anything about systematic semantic change.

Another study highlighting the importance of looking at the way in which gender-marked nouns are used has been carried out by Baker (2010). This large-scale diachronic study investigates the representation of gender in a four-million-word corpus comprising British English texts from 1931 to 2006. The author looks at the masculine terms *policeman*, *spokesman* and *chairman* and at their gender-fair alternatives. The results show that for nouns referring to the police, neutral forms, such as *cop* or *copper*, are more frequent than masculine forms, and that they are used to refer to both women and men. The term *spokesman* remains more frequent than its gender-fair counterparts. However, it is not used in its generic sense, as it is only used once to refer to women. There are very few occurrences of *spokesperson*, and some of them use the term ironically, as a way to parody ‘politically correct’ language. The term *chairman* is also the most frequent one, but it is only used twice to refer to women. Similar results have been found on this last term by Romaine (2001), who argues that “superficial changes such as a decline in the use of generic *man* and *he* observed in some studies have to be seen in the largest context. If male generic terms are simply replaced by gender-specific male terms, then reform is not really successful” (idem: 167).

Baker (2010) uses his findings to draw conclusions on the most effective strategies of feminist linguistic activism. When new terms are being used, the ones based on existing words or word combinations, such as *police officer*, are preferred to completely new forms, such as the ones based on the *-person* suffix. Overall, the most successful strategy seems to be the decreasing use of sexist terms.

So far, we have seen two ways of measuring the effectiveness of gender-fair language. The first one is to compare the frequency of masculine generics to their gender-fair counterparts in different contexts, thus focusing on the notion of diffusion. The second one is to look at the gender of the referent to check whether these forms are used with their intended meaning. This type of analysis investigates the usualisation of gender-fair language, since it looks at potential semantic variation and change. A third way to measure the effectiveness of gender-fair language, which would also focus on usualisation, could be explored. In addition to looking at who the referent is, it might also be possible to analyse what is being said about them. Imagine that *spokesman*, with

a masculine specific meaning, is as frequent as *spokeswoman*, in this case “does equal frequency mean equal representation [...]?” (idem: 139). The short answer is no. In the same study, Baker compares the frequency of nouns, such as *man* and *woman*. The results reveal signs of convergence between these terms in 2006, suggesting that women and men are now represented more equally than in the previous decades. However, looking at the co-text, and more specifically adjectives, shows that both men and women tend to be depicted in stereotypical ways. For example, looking at the adjectives only used to describe men shows that they are depicted as powerful and physically strong. Based on these observations, the author argues that “two equivalent words may have equal frequencies, but be used in different contexts. Frequency is therefore only one possible indicator of bias” (idem: 130). This could also be applied to the analysis of gender-fair forms, for example by comparing the co-text of *spokeswoman* and *spokesman*, and the use of *police officer* when used to refer to a woman or a man.

To the best of my knowledge, there are no studies applying this method to assess the effectiveness of gender-fair language. While many studies have been carried out on gender-fair language, only very few studies have looked at its usualisation. The next section will review studies on the conventionalisation of another form of feminist linguistic activism, namely feminist neologisms.

2.2.3 The (de)politicisation of feminist neologisms

As shown in Section 2.1, the equality approach has attracted much more institutional interest than the disruptive approach. This imbalanced attention can explain why many studies have been carried out on the conventionalisation of gender-fair language, while feminist neologisms remained overlooked. According to Pauwels, the disruption approach was not intended to be used by non-feminist linguistic communities:

[T]here have not yet been any systematic investigations into community adoption of changes linked to the strategies of linguistic disruption [...]. In fact the linguistic disruption strategy was not intended to be adopted by the community at large; rather, it was used by linguistic activists to raise the community’s awareness, sometimes in a more provocative manner. (2003: 562)

This might be explained by the fact that, as previously mentioned, the disruption approach includes several forms of linguistic creativity, among which breaking morphological rule, as in *herstory* or *womyn*. When it comes to feminist neologisms

denoting women's subordination and men's domination, which are also included in the disruption approach, Spender (1990) does not only stress the importance of naming experiences from the point of view of women, but also of having these names recognised as *legitimate*. Commenting on the term *sexual harassment*, for example, she explains that: “[t]he apparatus of language and reality which has readily permitted the dominant group to ‘blame the victim’ [...] is unable to continue functioning when the meaning generated by women are encoded – and legitimated” (idem: 185-186). While this does not necessarily mean that these neologisms have to be used by the community at large, it could still be argued that they are expected to demonstrate a certain degree of conventionality.

One study has investigated the conventionalisation of feminist neologisms emerging in the 1970s, which is Ehrlich and King's study (1994). The authors argue that if social structures have an impact on language, as claimed by feminist linguists, then the feminist-intended meanings will lose their political meaning as they become institutionalised in the sexist social structures constituting meaning. This leads to a potential paradox, which is that in order to make a phenomenon more visible, the term denoting it has to become conventional, but getting conventionalised also means getting depoliticised. To verify this idea, they observed the usage and possible redefinition of feminist neologisms, such as *sexual harassment* or *date rape*, in the print media.

They identify three strategies of redefinition. The first one is the omission or obscuring of crucial aspects of the experience. The authors give two examples according to which there is the idea that a certain kind of behaviour is sexual harassment: if it is reported, or if there are witnesses. This is only possible by omitting the crucial aspects that it often happens in contexts of power relations and/or in private. The second strategy is the expansion of the definition, arguing that the expanded definition is the feminists', as a way to ridicule and trivialise the denoted phenomenon. For example, one journalist comments on date rapes and argues that *rape* now “encompass[es] any type of sexual interaction” (Gutmann in Taylor 1991: 39). The third strategy is the obliteration of the denoted concept, as a way of making it believed that it is the creation of feminists' imagination. This can be done by using expressions such as *so called*, *the invention*, or *the claim that*.

Overall, Ehrlich and King summarise their findings as follows: “while feminist and nonsexist linguistic innovations [...] attempt to reshape the dominant social structures and attitudes, they are at the same time being shaped by these very structures” (1994:

73). There are some limitations to their study since an overview of the corpus is not presented, nor is the proportion of redefinitions alongside the original definition. Going back to Schmid's model of conventionalisation, this qualitative study focuses on usualisation and shows how neologisms get redefined as their usage goes beyond their original social context.

In the past decade, quantitative studies have also been carried out on more recent neologisms. For example, Foubert and Lemmens (2018) investigate the coinage and usage of *man-X* neologisms, such as:

- (5) *man science*: - mæn saɪəns – noun – a branch of knowledge often inherent in men and absent in women that allows for the programming of VCRs, lighting of pilot lights, and ability to problem solve. (*Urban Dictionary*, 18/05/2018)
- (6) *man-sturizer* (*man* + *moisturizer*): A face product marketed to manly men and metrosexuals who want to moisturize their face while still maintaining a modicum of their masculinity. (*Urban Dictionary*, 18/05/2018)
- (7) *mansplain* (verb): to explain (something) to a woman especially in a condescending way. (*The Open Dictionary*, 18/05/2018)

While these neologisms have formal similarities, their motivations greatly differ. Among these new words are neologisms confirming gender stereotypes (e.g. *man science*), neologisms (re)appropriating domains typically associated with women (e.g. *man-sturizer*), but also feminist ones naming undesirable behaviours (e.g. *mansplain*). Focusing on the latter, we find that while these neologisms are the least creative ones (as there are less types of these neologisms than those with other motivations), they are the most frequent ones in the iWeb corpus. While this remains but a restricted analysis of the usage of feminist neologisms, it is the first and only study looking at the diffusion of various recent feminist neologisms. As we will see below, the few other studies investigating recent feminist neologisms focus on one to three neologisms and on their usualisation.

Bridges (2017, 2019) analyses the usage of *mansplain* on various social network sites (SNS), such as Tumblr and Reddit, and observes a wide range of meanings and uses. In addition to the original meaning described in (7), the results reveal three other meanings (2019: 128). First, *mansplain* can be used with a meaning which is not unidirectional, in the sense that it is *not* an act of men towards women, but is bidirectional, in the sense that both men and women can mansplain to each other. Second, it can refer to a broader

linguistic behaviour and not only a case of condescending explanation. Third, the term is also used with a reversed meaning, with men being the victims of *mansplaining*, since it is a word used by women to silence men's voices. The results are in line with Ehrlich and King's (1994) identification of redefinition strategies, such as the expansion of the original meaning. Bridges (2017) also provides a more systematic analysis of this process in interaction with diffusion, by comparing the distribution of these meanings across SNS, as she argues, "a word can be reappropriated to different social groups with converse meaning, as it is applied in new contexts" (idem: 101). The results show that while the original meaning is the most frequent one on Twitter and Tumblr, it is the reversed meaning which is the most frequent on Reddit. The author argues that this is unsurprising given the difference in user demographics of these platforms, since Reddit is mainly used by young white men, and Tumblr is associated with feminists and members or allies of the queer community.

While Bridges (2019) looks at the usage of *mansplain* in about 200 posts per SNS, Lutzky and Lawson (2019) carry out a more large-scaled investigation of *mansplaining*, *manspreading* and *manterruption* on Twitter. They retrieved posts using hashtags with these terms over a period of six months, which resulted in the collection of over 20,000 tweets. Given the scale of this study, they use keywords to identify the contexts of usage. The results show that the expansion of meaning to counter unidirectionality is applied to *manspreading*, as some argue that it is something that women do too. The authors argue that "the Twittersphere does not only criticize the behavior denoted by the hashtags but also contests and challenges the sexist nature of these terms or their restriction to the male gender" (idem: 10).

The study of recent neologisms has not been limited to *man-X* neologisms. Husson (2017) analyses the usage of the French neologisms '*grossophobie*' (*fatphobia*) and '*cissexisme*' (*cissexism*) in new feminist discourses. According to the author, these neologisms belong to the category of agonistic words. This category is situated at the intersection of lexical, semantic, discursive and argumentative levels, and captures the way in which social antagonisms are manifested in discourse. More specifically, the author provides a critical analysis of the interpretation present in the literature (Angenot 2014) of agonistic words as demonising labels whose sole purpose is to serve outrageous rhetoric. This interpretation is in line with the reversed meaning of *mansplain*, which corresponds to the idea that men are the victims of *mansplaining*, found by Bridges (2019). To analyse the usage of *grossophobie* and *cissexisme*, Husson (2017) gathers a

total of 108 occurrences in a corpus including various text types from the web (blogs, forums, SNS, etc.). Her findings counter Angenot's (2014) interpretation of agonistic words. These neologisms are not used to put people on trial and condemn their behaviours. Instead, they aim at describing and categorising cases of systemic oppression to construct and reinforce their analyses. In the case of *fatphobia* and *cissexism*, several dimensions of oppression are taken into account. By doing so, these neologisms address the notion of inclusivity and a question that has been omnipresent in feminism since the 1970s: who is the political subject of feminism?

To summarise, if studies on gender-fair language have focused on diffusion, investigating whether these forms are used and by whom, the few and mostly recent studies on feminist neologisms have been mainly concerned with usualisation, more specifically answering the question of how neologisms are used. To do so, a variety of methods and approaches have been used, such as corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis. These studies have also been restricted to very few neologisms. In this thesis, I will look at both diffusion and usualisation to provide a more comprehensive analysis of recent feminist neologisms, and answer the second research question on the degree of conventionalisation (RQ2, Section 1.2).

2.3 The power of words

“In a world where language and naming are power, silence is oppression, is violence.”

(Rich 1995: 78)

Feminist linguists, and feminists in general, tend to confer a great power to language, and consequently, to those who are in charge of language, i.e. men. But what kind of power is this exactly? The aim of this section is to answer the fourth question asked at the beginning of this chapter: why is it so important to change language? After reviewing feminist linguists' perspectives on linguistic relativity, the section presents empirical studies testing the social and cognitive impact of gender-fair language. Finally, the power of feminist neologisms will be addressed in relation to the notion of hypostatisation.

2.3.1 Feminist linguistics and linguistic relativity

The field of feminist linguistics has greatly evolved since its emergence in the 1970s, but one question remains ubiquitous: what is the link between language, mind, and society more generally? While it is a central question in feminist linguistics, it is not specific to it, but has been addressed in linguistics with the notion of linguistic relativity, also known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis or the Whorfian hypothesis. Not only has this notion been given various names, but it also varies in the way it is formulated and understood. While the question of the link between language and mind has a long history (cf. Everett 2013), the first contemporary formulation of the hypothesis has been attributed to Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Whorf. Whorf argues that crosslinguistic variation influences non-linguistic behaviour of language users. This has led to a weak and to a strong version of the hypothesis. According to the weak version, what can be expressed in one's own language can have an influence on the way we think and behave. This stands in opposition to the strong version, or linguistic determinism, which is the idea that language restricts non-linguistic behaviour in such a way that is not possible to think outside of what can be encoded in language, but forces us to think in a certain way. There is often confusion between these two versions, and feminist linguists are commonly criticised for believing in linguistic determinism. However, from a feminist linguistic perspective, the strong version does not stand, since, if it did, it would not have been possible to criticise the androcentric nature of language and suggest alternatives (Cameron 1992: 147). Moreover, not all feminist linguists share the same view on linguistic relativity.

Some feminist linguists, starting with Lakoff, are particularly cautious about overstating the influence of language on society. In this chicken-and-egg debate, Lakoff argues that linguistic change follows social change, not the other way around. As a result, she is fairly critical of the utility of feminist linguistic activism. As mentioned above, the main focus of feminist linguistic activism has centred around masculine generics, such as the masculine pronoun *he*, for which the singular *they* has been suggested as a neutral alternative. She regards this solution as unrealistic:

[pronouns] are too common, too thoroughly mixed throughout the language, for the speaker to be aware each time he uses them. [...] My feeling is that this area of pronominal neutralization is both less in need of changing and less open to change than many [...] other disparities. (1975: 45)

But even concerning the forms suggested to overcome these other disparities, she argues that the influence of language is limited. For example, commenting on the suggestion to change the female titles to *Ms.*, Lakoff says that “trying to legislate a change in a lexical item is fruitless. The change to *Ms.* will not be generally adopted until a woman’s status in society changes to assure her an identity based on her own accomplishments” (idem: 41). Over the years, Lakoff nuanced her opinion on the matter. In the second edition of her book, she highlights the utility of feminist linguistic activism:

Even if we decide that language change is unlikely to effect social change, making an issue of language discrepancy can be persuasive. [...] So even if a change fails (as with radical pronoun reform), or doesn’t work as thoroughly or in the way in which it was intended (as with *Ms.*), talking about the need for change, and the way in which existing usage reflects inequality, can be powerful. It can also make feminist argument the butt of jokes (as with both of the cases cited) but even that, over time, can have positive effects – it gets noticed. (2004: 108, n.9)

Other feminist linguists have stronger views on the impact of language. Spender argues that by having the monopoly on the production of names, men also have the “monopoly on reality” (1990: 183). Based on this and other claims from the chapter *The Politics of Naming*, it would be tempting to say that feminist linguists like Spender hold fairly deterministic views, as claimed by Cameron who argues that “Spender’s [discussion of Sapir and Whorf] is a particularly extreme formulation of linguistic determinism. The constraints of language apparently cannot be overcome or even mitigated” (1992: 147).

However, even if the power conferred to language by Spender is indeed quite strong, it does not prevent thinking outside of what language can encode. As Spender explains: “it could even be argued that the [language] trap is so pervasive that we cannot envisage a world constructed on any other lines” (idem: 142); however, she continues to say that “although it is not always easy to get outside this language trap, to get outside the limitations of one’s own language, it is not impossible” (idem: 145). Because men have had the monopoly on language, they could name their experiences from their perspective (Daly 1973). In order to escape this language trap, women had to do the same thing:

Language is a human product, it is something which human beings have made, and which can be modified. We can – with perseverance – posit alternatives to those

who are readily available within our society. We can make the effort to formulate possibilities at the periphery of our cultural conditioning and to reconceptualize our reality: we can generate new meanings – and we can validate them. (Spender 1990: 3)

While it is clear that Spender agrees with the idea of linguistic relativity, she also points out that one should not only focus on language, quite the opposite: “it is no solution – and it is an insult – to suggest that women who are struggling for food and shelter – or to avoid violence – would be better off if they thought more about language and used it with greater perception and perspicacity” (idem: 6). Overall, she claims that the debate about whether one should change either language or society is futile, and that only doing one or the other will lead to failure.

More recently, the study of the representation of gender in language has been extended to discursive practices rather than just single words, and consequently to the question of the material effects of such practices. Several feminist critical discourse studies have analysed the representation of male violence against women in the media or in the legal domain. Specifically looking at the representation of rape perpetrators in the press, Benedict (1993) and Clark (1992) find that rape tends to be represented as stranger attacks, perpetuated by *fiends* or *monsters*. This is related to what is considered “real rape” by the law, in opposition to “simple rape”, as defined by Estrich (1987). While the former corresponds to a violent attack done by a (sometimes armed) stranger, the former is done by someone that the victim knows, such as a date, partner, or family member. Estrich finds that in the US criminal-justice system, real rapes are more likely to be prosecuted than simple rapes, even though the former constitutes the majority of rape cases (Russell 1984). As Tranchese explains: “it is the rarest types of rape that get the majority of attention in society” (2023: 28). Importantly, simple rapes are also less likely to be reported. As a result, feminist linguists within feminist critical discourse studies argue that the definitions and categories of rape represented in the media and legal domain are socially controlling and regulatory. This is not to say that this is the sole explanation for fewer reports of non-stranger rapes, nor that representing them more is the ultimate way to solve this issue (which would be quite caricatural). However, as Ehrlich argues:

if the ultimate goal of feminist approaches to language is social change and, in particular, change to material realities, then we need to avoid the dichotomizing of

‘words’ versus ‘things’ evident in some scholarship. Instead, we must be attentive to the way that the discursive and linguistic intersects with the material. (2004: 227)

While all feminist linguists analyse the representation of gender in language, they do not all agree on the degree of influence of these representations on thoughts, and society more generally. This can partly be explained by the fact that discussions about this question remained largely based on intuitions. However, this question has also been the subject of empirical studies, which will be the focus of the next sub-section.

2.3.2 Gender-fair language for gender-fair representations?

When it comes to feminist linguistic activism, we have seen that gender-fair language has received most of the attention, whether it be by the publication of guidelines promoting its usage or in the study of its conventionalisation. In the same way, gender-fair language has also been the focus of many studies on whether it can influence thoughts and society.

As mentioned above, English is defined as a natural gender language in the sense that while most personal nouns are gender-neutral, some do differentiate gender. For this reason, several studies have focused on assessing the potential impact of the expression of gender in pronouns on mental and social representations. Gastil (1990) compares the images evoked by three generic pronouns: *he*, *he/she*, and *they*. Participants were asked to read 12 sentences, which included 6 fillers and 6 target sentences. Target sentences had neutral subject such as *pedestrian* or *patient*, as in “After a patient eats, he needs to rest”. For each participant, only one of the three generic pronouns would be used for all sentences. After reading them aloud, participants had to verbally describe any image that came to mind. Gastil finds that, regardless of the gender of the participant, out of all the pronouns, the masculine pronoun evokes male images the most. Images evoked by *he/she* depend on the gender of participants. While it is more generic than *he* on average, it is only because of women’s answers. They describe more mixed (both male and female) and female images than men, whose answers do not show any significant differences with the ones for the pronoun *he*. The most generic pronoun is *they*, evoking mostly mixed images to women and an equal number of mixed and male images to men. These findings indicate that gender-fair pronouns do generate a fairer representation than masculine pronouns. This is consistent with the findings from other studies asking participants to draw images or tell stories (Moulton *et al.* 1978; Hyde 1984; Khosroshahi

1989). In addition to asking participants for descriptions of what comes to mind, more implicit methods have also been employed. For example, Noll *et al.* (2018) have measured reaction times in a lexical decision task after reading sentences with different generic pronouns. Their results are in line with the previous studies mentioned above.

The use of gender-fair or masculine pronouns do not only have an impact on mental representations but can have social consequences as well. An example of such consequences has been shown by Stout and Dasgupta (2011). In their study, participants had to imagine that they applied for work after graduation as they were reading or listening to job descriptions. The pronouns used in the job descriptions were either masculine, inclusive (*he or she*) or neutral (*one*). After being exposed to the job descriptions, participants had to answer questions about their sense of belonging, their motivation to pursue the job, and whether they could identify with it. The results show that when masculine pronouns were used in job descriptions, women had a lower sense of belonging and motivation, and did not identify with the job as much as in the inclusive or neutral pronouns condition. As for the other studies mentioned so far, Stout and Dasgupta find that gender-fair representations can influence representations.

While these studies investigate the English language, the influence of gender-fair forms on the perception of a profession has also been tested for other languages, such as French, German and Dutch. However, rather than focusing on pronouns, they have tested different forms of job titles, since gender is expressed in the vast majority of job titles in these languages. For example, *teacher* in French has two different forms depending on the gender of the referent, i.e. *enseignant* for a male teacher and *enseignante* for a female teacher. Looking at such job titles, Chatard *et al.* (2005) measure how gender-fair forms in French can influence the perception of vocational self-efficacy of secondary school children. Participants were shown 20 professions in total, 10 typically associated with men, and 10 with women, either in their masculine form only, e.g. *enseignant* or with the feminine form, e.g. *enseignante* or *enseignant(e)*. For each occupation, they were asked how confident they would be in succeeding in the studies allowing them to practise these professions. Overall, participants allocated a higher score to professions which are typically associated with their gender. However, showing both the masculine and the feminine forms significantly increases girls' perceptions of vocational self-efficacy for professions typically associated with men. In a similar study, Vervecken and Hannover (2015) have found that these results can be generalised to German and Dutch with primary school children. In addition to self-efficacy, they have also asked children

to assess job accessibility, for example, by asking how difficult they think a profession is. They have found that showing both the masculine and feminine form increases the perception of job accessibility.

In these studies, the gender-fair forms used as alternatives to masculine generics correspond to the feminisation strategy, since they are double forms (either complete or contracted) consisting of both the masculine and feminine forms. More recently, neutral forms have been encouraged, such as *le personnel enseignant (teaching staff)*, as a way of also getting away from a binary representation of gender (Gabriel *et al.* 2018). These forms have been the focus of more recent studies, including that of Tibblin *et al.* (2023) on French.

In this study, participants were asked to estimate the ratio of women to men when presented with 22 non-stereotypical role nouns, such as *spectateur (spectator)*. Each participant would see these nouns in one of the following forms:

- masculine form, e.g. *spectateurs*;
- complete double form with masculine first, e.g. *spectateurs et spectatrices*;
- complete double form with feminine first, e.g. *spectatrices et spectateurs*;
- contracted double form, e.g. *spectateur-rices*;
- neutral form, e.g. *public (audience)*.

The results show that masculine forms lower the estimated percentages of women, while double and gender-neutral forms increase them. Thus, the authors argue that all gender-fair forms can be used to increase the visibility of women, at least for non-stereotyped role nouns.

A similar experiment has been carried out for more recent gender-fair forms in German. Schunack and Binanzer (2022) compared the estimated proportion of women and men for both stereotyped and non-stereotyped occupations when exposing participants to masculine forms and gender-fair forms. Among these gender-fair forms were binary ones, more specifically word pairs such as *Lehrer und Lehrerinnen (male and female teachers)* and forms with capital *I*, as in *LehrerInnen*, but also non-binary forms using the asterisk *Lehrer*innen* (Kotthoff 2020). The results show that word pairs do not increase the proportion of women. However, the authors raise the issue of word order which they argue carries a decisive role. The capital *I* forms increase the estimated percentage of women for occupations which are already typically associated with

women, while forms with an asterisk do so for occupations typically associated with men.

Since the first review of studies, conducted by Henley (1989), investigating the impact of the expression of gender on representations, considerable empirical evidence has confirmed that gender-fair language can lead to fairer representations of gender (see Sczesny *et al.* 2016; Gygax *et al.* 2021 for more systematic reviews). The question of the potential influence of feminist linguistic innovations is not limited to gender-fair language, but has also been raised for neologisms coined to counter the absence of names for experiences. In contrast to gender-fair language, claims about the influence of neologisms remain entirely theoretical.

2.3.3 The hypostatizing effect of naming

There do not seem to be any studies empirically testing the effect of feminist neologisms. The power of naming in terms of its strength, which supports linguistic relativity instead of determinism, has been defined in Section 2.3.1 above. Yet, the exact nature of such power still needs to be identified. The lack of a proper definition can explain why there are no empirical studies, since it is difficult to measure something when one does not know exactly what needs to be measured. The power of naming, I will argue, is that it hypostatizes.

Before explaining the effect of the existence of a name, it is worth considering the effect of the absence of a name. For feminist linguists, the issue is not so much the existence of names coined by men, but the fact that women's experiences remain unnamed, because it gives the impression that these experiences do not exist. It is important to stress that this is just an impression, the absence of names does not mean the absence of concept or entity. Rather than their complete absence, Spender talks about *doubting* the reality of what is being denoted: "Without a name, the concept they were trying to present was of dubious reality" (1990: 184). Having a name, then, can help to erase this doubt of reality, but it can also do more than this.

According to Spender, naming is an "attempt to order and structure the chaos and flux of existence which would otherwise be an undifferentiated mass" (*idem*: 163), because without a name, experiences remain but "shadowy entities" (*idem*: 172). This idea is not specific to feminist linguistics. Investigating the effect of new words, Schmid explains that having a name helps language users to experience:

phenomena as manifestations of recurrent and familiar events or personal habits, mental representations of which seem to pop up readily in their minds. [...] the nouns carve an apparently neatly bounded segment from the constant flux of events going on in the world around them. This is what the impression of having a concept of something is all about. (2008: 8)

The concept-forming power of names is also known as *hypostatisation*, as it is addressed in contemporary philosophy of language and taken up by linguistics.

Linguists have defined hypostatisation as the impression that the existence of a word suggests the existence of a thing or entity denoted by the word (Lipka 1977: 161) or, as Leisi puts it, an *Erhebung zur Substanz* (1975: 26; “elevation to substance”). The hypostatisation power is stronger for nouns of events and abstract ideas than concrete nouns or adjectives, as nouns are a way to turn a network of related ideas into one holistic conceptual unit (Schmid 2008: 8). The idea of unity can also be found in the notion of *reification* in cognitive linguistics. Langacker defines reification as “the treatment [of constitutive entities] as a unitary entity for some higher-level cognitive purpose” (2009: 148) and makes the distinction between nouns and verbs. Taking the example of the noun *explosion* and the verb *to explode*, he argues that:

[W]hen the verb *explode* is nominalized to yield the derived noun *explosion*, there is no real change in conceptual content; there is, however, a conceptual reification wherein the event described by the verb is construed as a thing, i.e. as a region in an abstract sense of that term. (1991: 292-293)

In feminist linguistics, names allow the construction of categories, and according to feminist linguistics, naming from women’s perspectives is an “opportunity for closer approximations, for more accurate classification of the world” (Spender 1990: 190). With the term *femicide* (or *feminicide*) for example, it has been possible to create a typology of such crimes towards women and girls (WHO 2012; UN Women 2022). Not only does it allow a system of classification, it also puts these events into another light. Naming means making choices to profile certain aspects of what one wants to denote (Schmid 2008: 17-18), which means that they encode certain biases. For example, it is common to find in the press references to *crimes of passion* to talk about feminicides, and by highlighting love and passion, this term adopts the arguments used by the perpetrators, rather than the victims’ stories (Sanesi *et al.* 2021). Again, according to feminist linguists, the issue is not that men named experiences, but that they did so from

their perspectives, consequently making women's experiences invisible. Thus, by making women active participants in the naming process, "the task was to reconceptualize the way in which knowledge could be constructed" (Spender 1990: 64).

While Spender argues that one can doubt the reality of experiences when they are unnamed, she also explains that, in consciousness-raising groups, women did not question their reality. This might seem in contradiction with the idea of hypostatisation, but it can be explained by the fact that they all experienced similar things and that, by sharing them, it made them realise that their personal experiences were social issues. Having a name has a similar effect, it reveals the social relevance of the phenomenon. If there is a name for something, it can give the impression that it is societally relevant, it means that "*the world* puts [entities] like this in a class by themselves" (Bolinger 1980: 79; emphasis added). This is highlighted by one of the testimonies reported by Spender, as a woman explains: "I just would love to be able to say to him you're being 'X', you're behaving in a particular way that *our society* has labelled 'X'" (Spender 1990: 187; emphasis added). However, because there is nothing for this *X*, it becomes difficult for her to make herself intelligible. This is one of the manifestations of what Fricker refers to as *hermeneutical injustice*, which she defines as "the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding" (2007: 156). Having a name can help to make one's experiences intelligible to others, but also to oneself.

According to Fricker, the primary harm of hermeneutical injustice comes to the construction of selfhood. Without a name for their own experiences, women are prevented from making sense of them. To make her point, Fricker quotes a citation from feminist activist Susan Brownmiller talking about Carmita Wood, a woman who had to quit her job because of sexual harassment, but could not explain what happened when she applied to the unemployment insurance:

When the claims investigator asked why she had left her job after eight years, Wood was at a loss to describe the hateful episodes. She was ashamed and embarrassed. Under prodding — the blank on the form needed to be filled in — she answered that her reasons had been personal. Her claim for unemployment benefits was denied. (Brownmiller 1990: 281)

This happened before the term *sexual harassment* was coined. The absence of such words is a cognitive disablement which prevented Carmita Wood to understand her own

experience (in addition to making it understood; Fricker 2007: 151). As Tranchese explains in reference to other forms of sexual violence, “without a clear name, acts of violence can turn more easily into self-blame or victim blaming” (2023: 23). For women like Carmita Wood, naming has an identity-constructive power, it can lead to a better understanding of such experiences, and “amount to a *confirmation* of their world” (Spender 1990: 98; emphasis in original).

In the neology literature, one study presenting preliminary findings suggests that the knowledge of a word could have an impact on the perception of what is being denoted. In Kerremans (2015), her study aims at testing nameworthiness as a factor of conventionalisation of neologisms. To do so, she asked participants to rate the usefulness of several concepts and to provide a short explanation. The concepts were only given via a definition, not via a word. Definitions of novel, non-existent, and conventional concepts were presented. Participants also had to answer whether they were familiar with these concepts and give the possible corresponding lexemes. Overall, concepts for which there is a conventional lexeme were rated more useful than concepts with a novel lexeme. The participants who could not provide the correct forms for concepts denoted by a conventional lexeme tended to rate such concepts less useful. This suggests that the knowledge of a word has an influence on the perception of the utility of a denoted concept. Moreover, three main types of utility came back when participants justified their score: (i) holistic, (ii) societal, and (iii) personal. Holistic utility, or informativeness, was found when concepts unite individual meaning components in a succinct and expressive way. Societal utility corresponds to the salience of the extralinguistic referent in society, something that is a common or topical phenomenon. Personal utility corresponds to concepts to which speakers can personally relate or by which they are personally affected. These are clearly linked to the notion of hypostatisation, which, as we have seen, has holistic, social and personal effects. Thus, these types of utility can be a way to investigate the hypostatisation effect of neologisms.

In this thesis, I use the notion of utility to explore the hypostatisation effect of neologisms, with a questionnaire inspired by Kerremans'. The aim of this questionnaire is to answer the third research question on the influence of the knowledge of feminist neologisms on the perception of utility of the denoted concepts (RQ3, Section 1.2).

The power of words has been a recurrent theme in feminist linguistics since its emergence in the 1970s. However, the potential effect of feminist neologisms has not been verified empirically, in contrast to gender-fair language. The present research aims

at providing the first investigation of such effect. Before explaining the methodology adopted to answer this research question in Chapter 3, the following section will summarise the present chapter.

2.4 Conclusion of Chapter 2

At the beginning of this chapter, four questions were presented: (i) What is wrong with language? (ii) What are the proposed solutions? (iii) Have any of these solutions been successful? And finally, (iv) why is it so important to change language?

In answer to the first question, feminist linguists argue that seeing language as having an androcentric nature is problematic. It can take the form of masculine generics, as well the absence of words to denote women's experiences. But feminist linguists did not stop at identifying issues, they also offered solutions to counter them. As an alternative to masculine generics, feminist linguists suggested the use of gender-fair language. To this day, it continues to receive a considerable amount of attention. To counter the absence of words to denote women's experiences, feminist linguists encouraged women to become active participants in the naming process by coining neologisms. In contrast to gender-fair language, these neologisms have been an overlooked aspect of feminist linguistic activism and its definition (RQ1).

To know whether or not the solutions proposed by feminist linguists have been successful, the notion of conventionalisation and its sub-processes, diffusion and usualisation, have been introduced. While the former concerns the community-related aspect of conventionalisation, the latter deals with forms and meanings. Most studies on the success of feminist linguistic activism have focused on measuring the diffusion of gender-fair language. Concerning feminist neologisms, only a few studies have been carried out, and most of them have focused on the usualisation of a limited number of neologisms. By looking at the degree of conventionalisation of feminist neologisms (RQ2), I will provide a more comprehensive analysis of conventionalisation, by investigating both diffusion and usualisation.

This leads us to the fourth and final question about the importance of changing language, addressed in Section 2.3. Initially, intuitions were used to answer this question, but it has since become the topic of empirical studies. Numerous studies have tested and confirmed the influence of gender-fair language on cognitive and social representations, thus confirming the idea of linguistic relativity. Feminist neologisms have not been the

topic of such studies, and this can be explained by the fact their effect has not been precisely defined. Drawing from the literature on neology and philosophy of language, I argue that the potential effect of feminist neologisms is hypostatisation, and that it can be explored by observing the perception of the utility of the denoted concepts (RQ3).

As we have seen in this chapter, much of the focus on feminist linguistic activism has revolved around gender-fair language, to the extent that it might give the impression that feminist linguistic activism *is* gender-fair language. The general aim of this thesis is to contribute to feminist linguistics by studying an overlooked part of feminist linguistic activism – feminist neologisms.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Collecting neologisms, and operationalising conventionalisation and utility

3.1 Overview of the methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology employed to answer the three research questions addressed in this thesis: the definition of feminist linguistic activism (RQ1), the degree of conventionalisation (RQ2), and the relationship between the knowledge of a word and the perception of the concept utility (RQ3).

The first and necessary methodological step is to collect feminist neologisms, as presented in the following section (3.2). It begins by briefly reviewing the methods adopted in the literature. Several methods currently exist for collecting neologisms and the most common ones are corpus-based approaches. While they present a number of advantages, we will see how they can turn into disadvantages when it comes to collecting feminist neologisms. Instead, the method used in the present study is more innovative and corresponds to a crowdsourced dictionary-based approach. This method resulted in the identification of 24 feminist neologisms, which were used to address each of the research questions.

In order to answer the question on the conventionalisation of feminist neologisms (RQ2), the NOW (News on the Web) corpus has been used. One of the main motivations behind the selection of this corpus is its diversity, as will be presented in the third section (3.3). It will also provide a description of how the degree of conventionalisation of feminist neologisms has been observed, both in terms of diffusion and usualisation. The seven variables chosen to measure diffusion will be presented, as well as the method

used to combine them and design a diffusion index. Because of the relatively low degree of diffusion of feminist neologisms, a more qualitative approach has been taken to study usualisation. In total, nine variables have been selected to observe usualisation and have been categorised into three dimensions: metalinguistic, semantic, and discursive.

The fourth section (3.4) presents the method used for exploring the hypostatising power of neologisms, via the notion of utility (RQ3). More specifically, two questionnaires have been used: the transparency questionnaire and the utility questionnaire. The transparency questionnaire has been designed to control for the degree of (formal and semantic) transparency of the studied neologisms, since it might influence the results of the utility questionnaire. The utility questionnaire, which is the main questionnaire, focuses on the notion of utility as defined by Kerremans (2015). The design features and data management for collection and annotation will be presented for both questionnaires. Additionally, the cumulative linked mixed statistical model for the data management of the utility questionnaire will be presented.

3.2 Neologism collection

3.2.1 Corpus-based approaches to neologism collection

A well-established method adopted in the neology literature is to collect neologisms from corpora. This can be divided into two main approaches: the exclusionary list approach and the frequency-based statistical approach.

Since the end of the 20th century, tools have been developed to automatically extract neologisms from corpora, e.g. *Neoveille* (Cartier 2017; Cartier *et al.* 2018), *Logoscope* (Falk *et al.* 2014; Gérard *et al.* 2017), *NeoTrack* (Janssen 2008), *NeoCrawler* (Kerremans *et al.* 2012, 2018) to name just a few. While they vary in the languages and genres they observe, they all take the same approach to neologism collection, as they are based on a comparison between two word lists. The first word list contains all the words in a target corpus in which neologisms are expected to occur. The second word list represents the state of language at a given moment and works as an exclusionary list. It can be compiled from a reference dictionary or from a reference corpus made of texts predating those making up the target corpus. The comparison between these word lists can produce two outcomes: (i) words which are found in both lists (excluded from neologism candidates) and (ii) words found in the corpus but not in the exclusionary list;

these are considered neologism candidates because they are potential novel forms. This is illustrated in Figure 1 below, where *manspread* is a neologism candidate because it occurs in the target corpus but not in the exclusionary list.

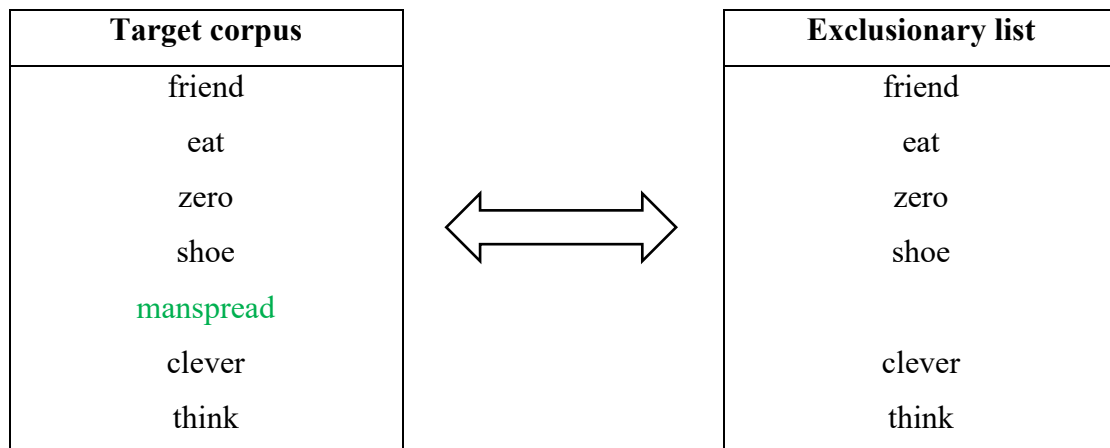


Figure 1. Overview of the exclusionary-list approach

The design of the exclusionary list is crucial to this type of neologism detection method; it has to be as exhaustive as possible in order to maximise its exclusionary potential. On top of using a reference dictionary, lists of abbreviations, symbols, proper nouns, loan words, and numbers can be added to the exclusionary list.

This method of neologism identification has two limitations. First, polylexical innovations such as compounds cannot be identified. For example, the neologism *cis privilege* cannot be identified as both the words *cis* and *privilege* would be part of the exclusionary list. Only monolexical innovations can be identified with this method. Second, despite the effort to build the most exhaustive exclusionary list possible, the output will contain invalid neologism candidates. In fact, it is most likely that invalid neologism candidates will represent the vast majority of the output. Maurel's (2004) study of unknown words in textual data parsing shows that 87% of unknown words in a newspaper issue are proper nouns and only 2% are neologisms. Depending on the size of the corpus, the number of neologism candidates can be considerable (Sablayrolles 2019), even though the manual selection of valid neologisms at this stage is less than desirable. This manual work consisting of distinguishing valid from invalid neologism candidates should be kept to a minimum.

Solutions have been proposed in the literature to remove common types of invalid neologisms, such as concatenations. Concatenations correspond to the succession of two words for which the space was involuntarily deleted during the data collection process,

as in *Ithink* for *I think*. In order to identify them, Issac (2011) suggests generating all cutting possibilities and find them in the exclusionary list. However, many neologisms in English are compound neologisms, such as *cissupremacy*. Concatenations are problematic because automatically distinguishing between intended and unintended concatenations is impossible. A partial solution would be to designate valid neologisms as the automatically selected concatenations that occur more than once. In fact, several studies have used a frequency-based statistical approach for neologism collection.

Frequency can be used to detect neologisms in a diachronic corpus. Garcia-Fernandez *et al.* (2011) base their method on cumulative frequency distribution. The distribution of occurrences over time is collected and neologisms are identified when their cumulative frequency reaches a threshold. The authors observe that the frequency distribution of neologisms is characterised by an exponential curve. This characteristic is used to detect neologisms in diachronic corpora by Cabré Castellví and Nazar (2012). This is a method used to detect both mono- and polylexical neologisms, the latter of which presents a challenge to automatic neologism detection. To overcome this challenge, they define the list of N-grams (lexical units as any sequence of up to five words). Despite its undeniable advantage, this method remains limited in another respect. The frequency-based method can only identify the most diffused neologisms, which represent only a small portion of lexical innovations. In the case of the present study, the frequency-based statistical approach is not appropriate, especially for RQ2, which is to define the degree of conventionalisation of feminist neologisms.

While the corpus-based method has a number of limitations, it is adopted by most neologism studies. The main advantage of this method is that it is able to collect a high number of neologisms. This aspect is particularly interesting for such studies because their aim is to understand neology in general, rather than analysing a specific type of neologisms. Because of the specificity of the present study, this advantage turns into a disadvantage. The aim of this thesis is not to analyse any type of neologisms, but feminist neologisms. Using this method would mean looking at the context of a considerable number of neologism candidates in order to determine whether they are feminist neologisms. Instead, it would be easier to have direct access to their definition during the collection process, which is why we have used a different method presented below.

3.2.2 Crowdsourced dictionary-based approach to neologism collection

Instead of corpus-based methods, the method adopted in the present thesis uses crowdsourced dictionaries as a resource for neologism detection. These dictionaries are often defined as amateur, collaborative, and populist dictionaries, in opposition to professional, institutional, and traditional dictionaries.

Before discussing why this resource is used to collect neologisms, it should be noted that there are different types of crowdsourced dictionaries. More specifically, there are two types of crowdsourced dictionaries: open-collaborative dictionaries, such as *Wiktionary* and *Urban Dictionary*, and collaborative-institutional dictionaries, such the *MacMillan Open Dictionary* (Abel & Meyer 2013). The distinction between the two types is based on the control that entry submissions are subjected to. While in both types of dictionaries, anyone can contribute to them, contributions to collaborative-institutional dictionaries will be controlled by the institution corresponding to the dictionary, which is not the case of open-collaborative dictionaries. They offer “the possibility for any person in any place to add and/or edit entries” (Fuertes-Olivera 2009: 106). Dictionaries like *Wiktionary* and *Urban Dictionary* have also been called “DIY dictionaries” (Gao 2012).

The legitimacy of crowdsourced resources, such as *Wikipedia*, has been at the heart of much discussion since their creation. As pointed out by Sajous *et al.* (2014), the question of relevance of using crowdsourced resources should take over the question of legitimacy, and these resources are particularly relevant to the study of neologisms. The main advantage of crowdsourced dictionaries is their use of technology that allows constant and fast updates (Penta 2011), which gives them the “potential of never being out of date, and can as such represent the ultimate dynamic repository of knowledge” (de Schryver 2003: 157), which is a necessary condition for collecting neologisms. Even though traditional dictionaries are also online, other characteristics justify the use of crowdsourced dictionaries when studying neologisms. In her metalexigraphic analysis of French collaborative dictionaries, Murano (2019) investigates elements favouring the production of neologisms identified by Sablayrolles (2000), such as equality between speakers and the non-respect of codes, and shows how they correspond to the functioning and users of crowdsourced resources. A comparative study of traditional and crowdsourced dictionaries shows that 62% of the *Wiktionary* 2017 new entries are

missing from the *Oxford Dictionary* (Sajous *et al.* 2018). While these results are not surprising, since “traditional lexicography in the interests of rigour does not incorporate new words until their use is well established” (Steffens 2017: 2), they are nonetheless evidence for the relevance of crowdsourced resources for neologism detection.

In addition to legitimacy, another concern expressed with regards to crowdsourced dictionaries is their neutrality. It does not take long before coming across racist or sexist definitions on the *Urban Dictionary*. However, while it might not seem as blatant, definitions found in traditional dictionaries also pose a problem in terms of neutrality. Farina (2005) addresses the misconception of dictionaries as guardians of the Truth and argues that:

Because the dictionary is a reference for all speakers of a language, because it is a tool for learning it, because it is consulted like an oracle that alone can discern what can and cannot be said, it is difficult for us to imagine that it could say anything other than the Truth. (idem: 1)⁷

The representation of gender and sexism in dictionaries has long been a subject of study in feminist linguistics (e.g. Yaguello 1978; Kramarae 1992). Among the recent studies addressing the lack of neutrality in traditional dictionaries, Nossem (2018) reveals the heteronormative dominant discourse present in dictionaries by analysing lexicographical decisions. For example, by relying on earlier works, lexicographers can maintain outdated realities. A recent illustration from February 2020 is the so-called *Larousse gate* in France which brought attention to the fact that the feminine form of baker *boulangère* was still defined as a baker’s wife. Farina (2005) shows that definitions can be discriminatory when they are not specific enough, as it is the case with job title definitions starting with ‘*homme*’ (*man*) or ‘*celui*’ (*the one*; m.). They can also be discriminatory when they are too specific, by specifying information which does not add anything to the definition. She finds, for example, that *menopause* is defined as a critical time for women. The notion of neutrality has also been studied in crowdsourced dictionaries, such as *Urban Dictionary* and in the French language version of *Wiktionary*, by Sajous and Hathout (2017) who show that while definitions in *Wiktionary*

⁷ French in the original : Parce que le dictionnaire est une référence pour tous les locuteurs d’une langue, qu’il est un outil pour son apprentissage, parce qu’on le consulte comme un oracle qui seul permettrait de discerner le dicible de l’indicible, il nous est difficile d’imaginer qu’il puisse dire autre chose que la Vérité.

are neutral, point of views are expressed in the illustrations. As for *Urban Dictionary*, definitions are not neutral but are more informative.

Overall, the main advantage of crowdsourced dictionaries is that they are never outdated, making them a relevant resource for neologism collection. In opposition to corpus-based collection, the meaning of neologisms can be easily and systematically retrieved. Moreover, some neologisms collected from the dictionaries might not occur in the corpus. This makes it possible to analyse non-conventional neologisms, which is not the case with neologisms collected from the studied corpus. Finally, the use of crowdsourced dictionaries is relevant to collect neologisms in general, but especially feminist neologisms. As we observed above, traditional dictionaries have offered a limited representation of gender. Crowdsourced dictionaries can offer an open and unlimited space for the expression of current gender representations. In the next section, I will provide a detailed account of the crowdsourced dictionary-based approach adopted to collect feminist neologisms.

3.2.3 Feminist neologism collection in *Wiktionary*

3.2.3.1. Selection and presentation of the crowdsourced dictionary: *Wiktionary*

The aim of this section is to present the various stages in the collection of feminist neologisms. The first stage in the crowdsourced dictionary-based approach is the selection of the dictionary. The second stage concerns establishing morphological, semantic, and temporal criteria that neologisms must meet. The third and final step is the collection of neologisms.

As mentioned above, there are two types of crowdsourced dictionaries: collaborative-institutional and open-collaborative dictionaries. Given the treatment of gender in traditional dictionaries, collaborative-institutional dictionaries have been excluded. There are two main open-collaborative dictionaries: *Wiktionary* and *Urban Dictionary*. The latter has been a resource for studying specific types of neologisms, namely misogynistic and anti-feminist ones (Ging *et al.* 2019). A recurring theme in the misogynistic definitions, which often describe sexual violence, is disgust for women, particularly their genitals. Feminists are also described as childish and irrational. Given the content of *Urban Dictionary*, it has been excluded to collect feminist neologisms and *Wiktionary* has been selected both for its content and its form.

Since the creation of the English *Wiktionary* in December 2002, the dictionary has grown to cover more than 150 languages and contains over 35 million entries. The large number of entries is due to the fact that everyone can contribute. In fact, there are currently more than four million contributors to the English *Wiktionary*. These contributors, also called Wiktionarians, include administrators, registered and unregistered users. Administrators constitute the smallest group of Wiktionarians and have the right to delete pages and to block articles and users. Registered and unregistered users can create and edit pages, the only difference being that the former have created an account and can sign their contributions, whereas the latter cannot.

While anyone is welcome to contribute by creating and editing pages, not just any word will be accepted into *Wiktionary*, since entries have to meet specific criteria for inclusion. The general principle is that: “a term should be included if it’s likely that someone would run across it and want to know what it means”.⁸ There are two inclusion criteria, and entries need to meet either one of them. The first criterion is that the word must be widely used. This criterion mostly applies to more established words, since *Wiktionary* aims to include all words from all languages, not just neologisms. The second criterion is more specific to neologisms. They have to be attested in a recorded media, with three instances over the course of at least one year. Words exempted from this temporal criterion are “hot words” which have been coined in the past two years. This criterion shows that neologisms with a low degree of conventionalisation can be included in *Wiktionary*.

In addition to these inclusion criteria, layout conventions must also be followed. More specifically, a number of elements are present on a page. The most basic ones are the language, part of speech, word, definition, reference and a verifiable place where the word can be found. There are also more optional elements, such as alternative spellings, additional definitions, quotations, derived and related terms, and categories to which the word belongs to. As we will see, the normalisation of entries and these different elements are particularly useful for collecting neologisms. Before going into the details of the collection process in *Wiktionary*, the criteria defined for the collection of specially feminist neologisms will now be presented.

⁸ https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wiktionary:Criteria_for_inclusion (Accessed February 16, 2024)

3.2.3.2. Selection criteria

Three types of criteria have been defined: (i) semantic, (ii) temporal, and (iii) morphological criteria. The semantic criterion requires neologisms to denote a new meaning. One of the research aims is to observe how neologisms coined in the current feminist movement can redefine feminist linguistic activism, which is the focus of RQ1. For this reason, neologisms which are new forms for established meanings have not been selected. This is the case of *homophobism* which is a synonym of *homophobia*.⁹

Because *Wiktionary* includes both established terms and neologisms, a temporal criterion has to be established not to collect potential conventional feminist terms from the 1970s or later. The present study being restricted to neologisms from the current feminist movement, a year of coinage had to be defined. As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, questions have been raised about the beginning of the current feminist movement. For practical reasons, neologisms coined from 2010 onwards were selected, because this is the start date of the NOW (News on the Web) corpus used for the study of the conventionalisation of neologisms. This gives the possibility to observe their conventionalisation from the moment they were coined over a period of 10 years. Because it is impossible to know when exactly a neologism has been coined, a number of sources have been used: the inclusion dates and quotes from *Wiktionary*, *Urban Dictionary*, and the Oxford English Dictionary.

In order to facilitate the collection of feminist neologisms, we have also used a morphological criterion. One of the main aims of feminist neologisms is to address matters related to gender and/or sexuality, and this can be indicated in the source words used to constitute such neologisms. As a result, the morphological criterion requires one of the source words to denote gender, sexuality or established terms related to feminism. As mentioned in the introduction, it is important to stress that I do not claim exhaustiveness, for the simple reason that it cannot be reached. Since neologisms are being coined on a daily basis, categories referring to gender and sexuality also emerge

⁹ Semantic neologisms, which are new meanings of established forms, have also been excluded, as they would have given rise to problems during the corpus analysis. An example of what was once a semantic neologism is the meaning of *bug* corresponding to an error in a computer programme, which was first found in the 1950s (OED, n.d.d). If one wanted to observe the occurrences of this specific meaning, they could use semantic neologism identification methods, such as word embeddings (e.g. Würschinger & McGillivray 2023). However, such methods are only adapted to highly frequent neologisms, which is not the case of neologisms studied here. Another solution would be to manually identify each occurrence corresponding to the new meaning, therefore requiring to observe the larger context of occurrence of an established form, a method which would require excessive manual processing.

at a fast pace and “[n]o single individual can keep up with the situational generation of new words across all communities” (Enke 2012: 4). For this reason, several sources have been used to compile the list of words referring to gender and sexuality that has served as the basis for the morphological criterion. These sources include a guide to gender and sexuality terminology (Killerman 2020), a study on trans and identity labels (Zimman & Hayworth 2019), as well as *Wiktionary* entries of established terms categorised under gender and sexuality.

These source words have to be truncated in order not to limit the collection to a certain type of neologisms, more specifically not to exclude blends, a word-formation process which consists of combining at least two words to create a new one by using parts of one or both of the source words. In the case of feminist neologisms, keeping the source word *feminism* in its full form to collect neologisms would exclude blends such as *femonationalism*. In order to systematically truncate the source words, we have used the method developed by Kjellander (2019) to collect blends. This method is based on the notion of a selection point, which is the cut-off point where a source word will be truncated (Gries 2006). To find this selection point, a frequency-based analysis is carried out. First, each source word is truncated at every possible cut-off point, as shown in the first column of the table below for the source word *lesbian*. Second, each truncated form (e.g. *l**, *le**, *les**, etc.) is searched for in a corpus, which returns a word list ordered by frequency. Third, in the word list, we look for the rank of the source word, in this case *lesbian*. The shortest truncated form for which the source word is ranked first is selected as the truncated form to collect blends. In the case of *lesbian*, the left truncated form is *lesb** and the right truncated form is **bian*. For the current study, we only use the left truncated form to filter neologisms for reasons that we will explain below.

Truncated forms	Frequency rank
l*	430
le*	90
les*	7
lesb*	1
lesbi*	1
lesbia*	1
lesbian*	1
*lesbian	1
*esbian	1
*sbian	1
*bian	1
*ian	37
*an	171
*n	991

Table 1. Truncation method with the source word lesbian

Feminist neologisms have to be collected in such a way that the method does not return too many false hits but that the manual processing is reduced to its minimum. Because of this, collection poses the challenge of finding the balance between accuracy and representativeness. One possibility is to find similarities between the studied neologisms. Even though there are few studies on recent feminist neologisms (e.g. Husson 2017; Foubert & Lemmens 2018; Lutzky & Lawson 2019), one similarity can be found in the pattern neologisms follow, which is to have the gendered source word at the onset of the neologism, e.g. *cissexism*, *mansplain*, and *manspread*. For this reason, only the left truncated forms are kept to filter feminist neologisms.

The question of representativeness also concerns the selection of source words in feminist neologisms. Studies on recent feminist neologisms have focused on neologisms with the source word *man* (e.g. Bridges 2017; Lutzky & Lawson 2019). In the present study, a larger variety of source words has been selected in order to be as representative as possible. The list of truncated forms, as well as the corresponding source words, is presented in the table below.

While the method presented above enables the systematic truncation of source words, several adjustments were made for some source words. For example, because pronouns are highly frequent words, their full form was kept. Indeed, if this method was used for the pronoun *she*, the truncated form selected would be *sh*. However, it is very likely that many neologism candidates collected containing this form will not be derived from the pronoun. Another important variation is words made up of three words, which were kept in their full form. As shown in the list of source words, a common pattern for terms referring to gender or sexuality is the following: [morpheme referring to type of gender identity or sexuality] followed by {gender} or {sexuality}, as in *cisgender* or *homosexuality*. When that is the case, the morpheme referring to the type of gender identity or sexuality was kept as such, unless a shorter truncated form was found with Kjellander's (2019) method, which is the case of *het* for *heterosexuality*. Finally, there are terms for which there are pre-existing abbreviations, such as *ace* for asexuality, these abbreviations were added in addition to the found truncated forms.

Truncated forms	Source words
agende	agender
allo	allosexual, allosexuality
andro	androgynous, androgyny, androphilic, androsexual
ace	asexual, asexuality
asex	asexual, asexuality
bi	bicurious, bigender, bisexual, bisexuality
boy	boy
bro	bro
butch	butch, butchness
chick	chick
cis	cis, cis female, cis male, cis man, cis person, cis woman, cisboy, cisdude, cisfemale, cisfeminine, cisfemininity, ciscgay, ciscgender, ciscgirl, ciscguy, cisheterosexual, cislesbian, cismasculine, cismasculinity, cisness, cisqueer, cissexual
demi	demiromantic, demisexual
drag	drag king, drag queen

dud	dude
enby	non-binary
fem	female, feminine, femininity, feminism, femme
gay	gay
gend	gender, gender expression, gender identity, gender variant
gir	girl
he	he
her	her
het	heterosexual, heterosexuality
him	him
his	his
homo	homosexual, homosexuality
intersex	intersex
lesb	lesbian
lgb	LGBT, LGBT+
male	male
man	man
masc	masculine, masculinity
men	men
miso	misogynistic, misogyny
non-bina	non-binary
pan	pansexual, pansexuality
poly	polyamory, polyamorous, polygender, polysexuality
queer	queer
questioni	questioning
sex	sexual, sexual attraction, sexual orientation, sexual preference, sexuality
strai	straight
trans	trans, trans man, trans woman, transgender, transfeminine, transmasculine, transsexual

two-spi	two-spirit
wom	woman, women

Table 2. Truncated forms and their corresponding source words

To summarise, three types of criteria have been defined for our selection of feminist neologisms on *Wiktionary*: (i) semantic, (ii) temporal, and (iii) morphological. These criteria have been applied in different orders depending on the specific method used for collecting neologisms.

3.2.3.3. Details and output of the collection process

Because of the large number of entries (over 1,000,000) in English *Wiktionary*, the manual collection of neologisms had to be reduced to a minimum. To do so, two sources have been used: (i) the topics under which entries can be categorised and (ii) the WIND (Wiktionary Inclusion Dates) database.

Wiktionary entries can be categorised under certain topics. Rather than selecting neologisms from the whole list of entries in *Wiktionary*, the topic list was used to select certain topics. Entries were selected from the following 13 topics: female, feminism, gender, intersex, LGBT, male, masculinism, romantic orientations, sexism, sexual orientations, sexuality, transgender, and women. First, neologisms were selected based on the morphological criteria (i.e. excluding source words), which resulted in the selection of 321 entries. For these 321 entries, the semantic criterion was applied. It was met by 23 entries. The last criterion to be applied was the temporal one. The inclusion dates and quotes from *Wiktionary*, *Urban Dictionary*, and the *Oxford English Dictionary* were checked for the 23 entries. Finally, 17 entries were selected as neologisms from contemporary feminisms. As mentioned above, alternative and derived forms can also be mentioned on *Wiktionary*. These were collected when available.

Because not all entries are categorised, we have also used the WIND, a database of all the dictionary entries up to 2019 along with their inclusion dates collected by Sajous *et al.* (2020). This database includes 633,296 entries in total. The first step was to filter the entries according to their inclusion date. The entries added to the dictionary before 2010 were excluded, which reduced the number of entries to 393,512. Then, the morphological criterion was applied. Only the entries including one of the truncated forms were selected, which left 13,436 entries. The first steps were automated and then the remaining steps were carried out manually. Still looking at the formal aspect, entries

with an established source word other than one listed above were excluded, which allowed to reduce the feminist neologism candidates to 2,993. In order to apply the semantic criterion, the meaning of each of these neologisms was retrieved from *Wiktionary*, which led to the selection of 54 neologisms. Finally, looking at the dates of quotes from *Wiktionary*, *Urban Dictionary*, and the Oxford English Dictionary, as well as the inclusion dates from these last two sources, led to the additional inclusion of seven neologisms. For these neologisms, alternative and derived forms were selected when available. The low number of neologisms added using the WIND reveals that most neologisms are categorised under topics. Moreover, using these topics is the most efficient way to collect specific types of neologisms. While the WIND can be a useful source for collecting neologisms in general, the gap between the entries available in the database and the final list of selected neologisms reveals that it is not the most efficient method for collecting specific types of neologisms, even with the automatic application of criteria, such as the morphological one.

The table below presents (i) the final list of feminist neologisms, (ii) along with the source words related to gender, sexuality or feminism, (iii) the source used to collect them, (iv) alternative forms and (v) derived forms.

An examination of the form, the meaning and the feminist context in which these neologisms have been coined will enable answering the first research question (RQ1): To what extent do recent feminist neologisms allow for a redefinition of feminist linguistic activism?

Neologism	Source word	Collection source	Alternative forms	Derived forms
acephobia	asexual	Topic		acephobic
allonormativity	allosexual	Topic		
brocialism	bro	Topic	brogressive	brocialist
broflake	bro	Topic		
cis privilege	cis	Topic	cisprivilege, cis-privilege	
ciscentrism	cis	Topic	cis-centrism	ciscentric, cis-centric
cisgenderism	cis	WIND		
cispatriarchy	cis	WIND		
cissplain	cis	Topic	cissplain, cis-plain	
cissupremacy	cis	Topic	cis-supremacy	cissupremacist, cis-supremacist
ciswash	cis	Topic		
femonationalism	feminism	Topic	feminationism	
heterocracy	heterosexual	WIND		heterocratic

Neologism	Source word	Collection source	Alternative forms	Derived forms
himpathy	him	Topic		himpathetic, himpathize
hislam	his	Topic		
homocapitalism	homosexual	WIND		homocapitalist
intersexphobia	intersex	WIND		
lgbtphobia	LGBT	WIND		
manspread	man	WIND		manspreader, manspreading, man spreading, man-spreading
misogynoir	misogyny	Topic		
trans-exclusionary	trans	Topic	transexclusionary, trans exclusionary	
transmisogynoir	trans	Topic		
transmisogyny	trans	Topic		trans-misogynist, trans-misogynist, transmisogynistic, trans-misogynistic
transprejudice	trans	Topic		

Table 3. Feminist neologisms collected in Wiktionary

3.3 Corpus analysis: observing conventionalisation

3.3.1 Corpus selection and presentation

The press has long been the main source of studies investigating the emergence and usage of neologisms (e.g. Renouf 1993; Cabré & De Yzaguirre 1995; Fischer 1998; Gérard *et al.* 2017). The present study, like the previous studies, observes conventionalisation in the news, but, unlike them, it is not limited to only few mainstream newspapers. Measuring the degree of conventionalisation does not only mean looking at whether neologisms are used, even though it is a necessary step, but also by whom and how. In the case of feminist neologisms more specifically, it is not only important to look at whether these neologisms are used, but also whether they are used by feminists as well as non-feminists, and how they use them. One key aspect of the corpus selection then is to ensure a diversity of sources.

Therefore, the conventionalisation analysis cannot be limited to only few newspapers as this would only provide us with a limited representation of usage, and of social contexts more generally. Not everything happening in the world is considered newsworthy. For an event to become newsworthy, it has to meet certain criteria, such as its magnitude or the involvement of prominent figures. Importantly, these criteria can differ depending on context as noted by Harcup and O'Neill:

[T]he above criteria can be contested since they are also governed by practical considerations, such as the availability of resources and time, and subjective, often unconscious, influences, such as a mix of the social, educational, ideological and cultural influences on journalists, as well as the environment in which they work, their position in the workplace hierarchy and the type of audience for whom journalists are producing news. [...] In other words, *who* is selecting news, *for whom*, in *what medium* and by *what means* (and available resources), may well be as important as whatever news values may or may not be inherent in any potential story. (2017: 1482-3; emphasis in original)

For this reason, the diversity of sources is essential to ensure plurality of media content and diversity of viewpoints.

For the present study, the NOW (News on the Web) corpus has been selected, which contains English texts published in web-based newspapers and magazines since 2010 and is updated on a daily basis. At the time of data collection (February 2021), it

contained 12 billion words. The NOW corpus is based on news aggregators, more specifically *Google News* before July 2019, then replaced by *Bing News*. Using news aggregators as a source for the collection makes this a very diverse corpus since “they provide convenient access to a range of news stories from several different sources and hence facilitate active multi-sourcing of news” (Foster 2012: 25). In addition, searches cover over 1,000 websites to find articles published in the previous 24 hours.

While included in the NOW corpus, the mainstream news providers are not the only sources and many others can be found when using news aggregators. The diversity of the corpus is revealed by the number of sources—over 8,000—in the corpus, among which figure local, specialised and mainstream media. This diversity allows stories from alternative voices to the mainstream media. Some of the sources directly focus on gender and sexuality matters, such as *Advocate.com*, *Big Gay Picture Show*, *Feminism in India*, *Gay News Network*, *Gay NZ*, *Gay Star News*, *Gay Times Magazine*, *LGBTQ Nation*, *LGBT Weekly*, *Queerty*, *San Diego Gay & Lesbian News*, *The Gay UK*, and *UK Gay News*.

Each neologism and their alternative forms have been searched in the NOW corpus. The occurrence lines (14 to left and right), 1,437 in total, along with contextual information (date, country, and source) were extracted from the corpus and imported into an Excel sheet for further coding.

3.3.2 Measuring diffusion with the diffusion index

The NOW corpus has been used to measure the degree of diffusion of feminist neologisms. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the neology literature shows great variability concerning the terms and definitions used to refer to the development of neologisms, which poses a methodological challenge. Because studies on the development of neologisms can differ in the terms or definitions used, it is not surprising that they also differ in the method used to measure such processes, as in the selected variables for example. In the present study of diffusion, seven variables have been defined:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| (1) token frequency | (5) proportion of non-FGS sources |
| (2) page frequency | (6) countries |
| (3) source frequency | (7) proportion of active days |
| (4) proportion of non-FGS pages | |

While previous studies differ in terms of how diffusion is measured, one variable can be found in all of them: frequency. In the first large-scale, longitudinal empirical study of the development of neologisms, Fischer argues that “frequency seems to be the safest measure for institutionalization” (1998: 172), and the same can be said for the measurement of diffusion in the present study. While frequency is the ubiquitous variable, the way it is used differs. In the literature, diffusion has often been measured based on token frequency. While it is a good first indication of the extent to which a neologism is used, it is not enough to measure diffusion. One neologism can be highly frequent, but if it is only used by one person, it is not diffused. It would be like measuring the popularity of a song by only looking at the number of streams, even though it might be only one person listening. Consequently, other frequency measures need to be added, such as information about the number of unique web pages (news articles) and sources (newspapers or magazines) in which they are used. Overall, three (relative) frequency-related measures have been defined for the present study of diffusion.

Other variables need to be added to fully account for diffusion. To continue with the music analogy, a disco song can be played by many different radio channels. However, if these channels are all specialised in disco music, the song might not be as popular as one thinks. In the case of feminist neologisms, these neologisms might have a high source frequency, but these sources might all specialise in feminism. To know whether these neologisms have spread in non-feminist contexts, we need to know the proportion of sources and texts which are not about Feminism (and related topics: Gender and Sexuality; FGS). To do so, each page and source in which neologisms occur has been manually annotated (i.e. FGS or non-FGS). Because diffusion can also be defined in terms of the spread from one geographical area to another and given the diversity of countries present in the corpus, the number of countries has also been defined as a variable to measure diffusion. Finally, diffusion can also be defined in terms of the period of time during which they occur. For this reason, the proportion of active days (relative to the date of the first occurrence) has also been defined as a variable.

Recent studies include several variables to measure diffusion and account for its multidimensionality. These studies either compare these variables (e.g. Würschinger 2021) or combine them (e.g. Kerremans 2015). However, the combination of these variables is not always done systematically. In the present study, an index has been created to measure the degree of diffusion of feminist neologisms. This diffusion index accounts for the multidimensional nature of the process by combining the

abovementioned variables. In order to combine these variables, the min-max normalisation (MMN) method has been applied.

MMN is a data transformation method based on normalisation, that is to adjust values measured on different scales to a common scale (e.g. normalised frequency). This normalisation method is necessary since the seven variables above are not on the same scale.

For each variable, MMN assigns 0 to the minimum value and 1 to the maximum value. Then, it adjusts the values in between while preserving the shape of the original distribution. The tables below illustrate this method with three neologisms and three variables.

Neologism	Token frequency	Proportion of non-FGS sources	Countries
acephobia	0.00009	1	1
ciswash	0.00030	0	2
manspread	0.05279	0.56145	17

Table 4. Data before the MMN transformation

Neologism	Token frequency	Proportion of non-FGS sources	Countries
acephobia	0	1	0
ciswash	0.00409	0	0.06250
manspread	1	0.56145	1

Table 5. Data after the MMN transformation

Focusing on the column ‘token frequency’, we can see that *acephobia* has the lowest frequency out of the three neologisms, and thus receives the value 0. The neologism *manspread*, on the other hand, has the highest frequency, which is why it receives the value 1. The adjusted value of *ciswash* is calculated based on these new minimum and maximum values. This data transformation method is applied to all neologisms and variables. Once this is done, it is possible to count the average, based on the value of all variables, and get a diffusion index for each word and to compare their degree of diffusion. The MMN can also be useful to give different weights to the different variables. If we consider that one variable is more important than the others, then it is possible to do so.

3.3.3 Observing usualisation

In order to provide a comprehensive account of conventionalisation, it is not enough to only look at whether these neologisms are used and by whom; the ways in which they are used must also be observed. In more technical terms, the diffusion analysis must be completed with a usualisation analysis. While a quantitative approach is adopted in the former, the latter uses a more qualitative approach for the reason set out below.

Several methods, adopting a distributional semantic approach, such as collocation analysis and, more recently, word embeddings, have been developed and used to automatically detect new words senses (Kutuzov *et al.* 2018). For example, Schmid *et al.* (2020) have analysed consistent and transient collocates of the term *Anglo-Saxon* to observe its usualisation in a corpus consisting of over 500,000 tweets in a period of 14 years. Because such methods are more accurate when applied to very large corpora over longer time spans, they are not appropriate for the current study. The most frequent neologism in the present study, *manspread*, occurs 549 times during 295 days. As a result, rather than automatically detecting semantic shifts, the occurrence lines have been manually inspected and annotated according to the variables presented in the rest of this sub-section.

The table below represents the variables and dimensions into which they are categorised, along with the coding system. In total there are nine variables categorised into three distinct dimensions of analysis, which are the (i) metalinguistic, (ii) semantic, and (iii) discursive dimensions.

Dimension	Variable	Coding system
Metalinguistic	Metalinguistic usage	yes/no
	Metalinguistic markers	yes/no
	Provided definition	yes/no
	Quotation	yes/no
Semantic	Meaning	[unique definition] [common definition] Unclear
	Redefinition	yes/no
Discursive	Expansion	yes/no
	Expansion domain	yes/no
	Obliteration	yes/no
	Distance	yes/no

Table 6. Overview of usualisation variables

The metalinguistic dimension includes four variables. The first variable is the type of usage: meta- or object-linguistic. The second variable corresponds to the presence or absence of metalinguistic markers, such as quotation marks. The third variable is whether the definition of the neologism is provided by the author. The fourth variable in the metalinguistic dimension is whether neologisms are used in quotations. The examples below are occurrences which have been annotated as “yes” for all four variables.

- (8) The EMT explains that “el **manspreading**” is “an English term that describes the posture of men who open their legs too wide and take up neighbouring seats.” (Irish Times, 08/06/2017)
- (9) You have this concept called “**himpathy**”, which you define in the book as “the disproportionate or inappropriate sympathy extended to a male perpetrator over his similarly or less privileged female targets or victims, in cases of sexual assault, harassment, and other misogynistic behavior.” (The New Yorker, 07/09/2020)

These four variables within the metalinguistic dimension reveal the fact that the study of conventionalisation cannot be limited to diffusion, i.e. whether neologisms are used and by whom. More specifically, while a neologism might appear conventional, it might not

be the case if all usages are metalinguistic ones, or if they are always used with quotation marks, within the same quotations or if the definition is always provided.

The second dimension is the semantic one and includes two variables: meaning and redefinition. The first variable is the meaning of the neologism used in each occurrence and the second corresponds to whether or not the definition is a redefinition. There are four ways of annotating the first variable. The first annotation notes when the author provides a unique definition, in that it has characteristics not found in other definitions. In this case, the definition was kept as such. This is the case of the usage of *brogressive* and *brocialist* below:

- (10) **Brogressives, Brocialists** and Manarchists – the keffiyeh and horned-rim glasses wearing bros who like to get involved with any and all social justice movements, if by “get involved” you mean “try their damndest to take over” (Rabble, 19/12/2014)

The second annotation corresponds to when the author provides a “common” definition, in that it is similar to other occurrences but phrased slightly differently. In this case, one common definition was assigned to these occurrences. This was done in order to homogenise the annotation system and enable the identification of conventional definitions. For example, the following occurrences of *manspreading* were annotated as “men spreading their legs in public transport”.

- (11) But now, a grassroots campaign against so-called “**man-spreading**” – the habit of male passengers parting their legs and placing them in a “V” - is about to get a boost. (Independent, 20/12/2014)
- (12) The term “**manspreading**” has been coined as a reference to men spreading their legs wide, into a V-shaped formation while slouching, ultimately taking up extra space on public transportation. (The Globe and Mail, 27/12/2014)

The third annotation corresponds to when the definition is not provided but can be inferred from the context that one of the common definitions is used. In this case, the corresponding common definition was assigned. For example, the following occurrence of *manspreading* was annotated in the same way as the previous two examples:

- (13) After completing an eleven-hour day, throwing back five craft beers, affectionately telling his mates they’re “the fucking man” and losing his Rolex, he’ll stagger on to the train back to Essex, **manspreading** across an entire row of seats [...] (GQ, 02/11/2016)

The fourth annotation “Unclear” corresponds to when the definition is not provided and cannot be inferred from the context. In this case, no definition was assigned. In the next example, *manspreading* is used in a list of behaviour to avoid in a subway. While it is clear that manspreading is meant as something that happens in public transport, it is unclear who does it.

- (14) 14. Stopping at the top of the stairs or escalator. 13. Stopping anywhere, for any reason, other than the platform. 12. Using your laptop on the train. 11. **Manspreading**. 10. Not moving in order to maximize the number of bodies that can fit on the bench. (The Awl, 24/06/2015)

Following the annotation of the first variable, the second variable annotated in the semantic dimension corresponds to whether or not the definition is a redefinition. In the following example, the occurrence would be annotated as “yes”, since *manspreading* is used to refer to people and not men specifically.

- (15) What’s unprecedented about the **man-spreading** uproar isn’t that there are people on this Earth who have the gall to take up more public space than they need [...] (Macleans, 15/01/2015)

The idea of redefinition raises the question of the “original” meaning. The original meaning could either be the *Wiktionary* definition, the first meaning used in the NOW corpus if the neologism occurred before its entry in *Wiktionary*, or, when the coiner is known, the definition given by the coiner.

The third and final dimension is the discursive one. It includes four variables, some of which are inspired by the discursive strategies identified by Ehrlich and King (1994). The first variable is inspired by the expansion strategy, which corresponds to the usages of neologisms expanding the original meaning. This would correspond to example (15) above. When this happens, it may also expand the domain to which the neologism originally applied, this leads to the second variable, the expansion of domain. The following example of *manspreading* to refer to long TV episodes illustrates this variable.

- (16) In what *Vulture* cleverly called the “**manspreading** of TV”, cable and pay-TV networks have spent the last few years trying to compete with streaming services over viewers’ hours by lengthening the episodes of their shows. (QZ, 18/08/2020)

The third variable, the obliteration strategy, is used to signal that the denoted concepts are imaginary feminist creations. This can be done using metalinguistic markers, such as *so called* or quotation marks.

- (17) Take, as a prime example, the current backlash against what annoyed transit riders have dubbed “**man-spreading**”: the supposed tendency among men to sit with their legs splayed on the bus or subway, taking up twice as much space as they need. (Macleans, 15/01/2015)

The fourth and final variable within the discursive dimension is whether the author expresses distance from the denoted concept. This variable, which is not in Ehrlich and King’s (idem) study, was added to account for the cases where neologisms are not redefined, even though the concepts they refer to are not fully supported, as in the following example.

- (18) Everything was about trigger warnings, owning your privilege and **cisgenderism** (if you don’t know that last one, trust me, you’re better off for it). (Toronto Sun, 01/07/2017)

This section has described the method used for the corpus analysis, which aims to answer the second research question about the degree of conventionalisation of neologisms. More specifically, the corpus selected for carrying out the analysis has been presented, along with the variables used to measure diffusion and observe usualisation. The next section presents the methodology used to answer the third and final research question, which concerns the notions of hypostatisation and utility.

3.4 Questionnaire analysis: operationalising utility

3.4.1 Transparency questionnaire

3.4.1.1. Questionnaire design

The aim of this questionnaire is to measure the semantic and formal transparency of neologisms. The results of this questionnaire are taken into account when designing the utility questionnaire and analysing its results. The overall questionnaire structure is divided into four sections: (i) welcome page, (ii) background information, (iii) task, and (iv) final page (see Appendix 1 for an overview of the transparency questionnaire).

The welcome page provides a brief but vague sketch of the topic. More specifically, participants were told that the questionnaire deals with knowledge about new words, leaving aside the feminist aspect of the study and it also stated that the questionnaire was completely anonymous. Participants were informed that they would be asked a few questions about their background before starting the actual questionnaire.

The background information section includes questions about language, age, education level, and gender. The first questions concerned the language of the participants to ensure that they met the linguistic criteria for participation in the questionnaire. The following two questions were asked: (i) is English (one) of your first language(s)? and (ii) do you mainly use English at home/at work/in your daily life? If participants answered the questions positively, they could continue with the questionnaire. If they answered no to at least one of the two questions, they were directed to a page explaining why they could not continue with the questionnaire. These two questions correspond to the recommendations made by Cheng *et al.* (2021) who contest the concept of the “native speaker”. They argue that it is both a vague and harmful concept. It is a vague concept in the sense that it is rarely defined, and when it is, its definition varies. For this reason, using this concept can lead to methodological issues and be harmful to psycholinguistic research. One of these issues is that there might be a difference between the researchers’ and participants’ idea of who a native speaker is. Using this concept can also be harmful to the participants, since it excludes many linguistic experiences. The authors explain that when nativeness is defined and/or operationalised, its conceptualisation is limited to an “ideal speaker-listener” with a specific acquisition experience, high proficiency, continued use and who is part of a specific sociocultural identity. This conceptualisation results in the exclusion of marginalised populations, which are already minoritised communities in research. In order to avoid excluding these participants, I decided to get away from the notion of the “native speaker” in the questionnaire. Instead, I defined specific aspects of language experience which are important for this specific research. These are the aspects that led to the formulation of the two questions presented above. In addition, participants were also asked about what their national variety of English is.

Participants were also asked about their age by selecting one of the four age brackets ranging from 18 to above 50, their education by selecting their highest level of education among one of three options: less than secondary school degree, secondary school degree or equivalent, or higher education degree, and their gender. Asking about gender is

another way in which surveys can exclude minoritised people. Before asking participants their gender, the first question researchers should ask themselves is: is gender relevant? (Conrod 2021). Given the focus of the studied neologisms, gender is relevant as it might influence the knowledge of these neologisms. The questionnaire was being designed at a time when numerous linguists were using online forums to discuss the best (and worst) gender-asking practices in linguistic studies specifically and in surveys generally (e.g. Amaranth 2020). These discussions served as a basis for formulating the questions on gender. Two questions were asked about gender. The first question asks whether participants are members of the gender-expansive (i.e. transgender/non-binary) community. This question was asked because many neologisms name the experiences of trans people particularly. The second question is: what is your gender? One general idea to keep in mind when asking gender-related questions is to not impose options. As a result, participants were not asked to only choose one option. Moreover, a write-in option was included in addition to the woman, man, and non-binary options.

Once participants answered these demographic questions, the task was briefly described as follows:

- You will be presented with 8 new words. For each word, you will be asked to:
- a. State whether you knew the word before.
 - b. State whether you knew its meaning before.
 - c. Identify the parts of the word. For example, for the word “Brexit”, the parts are “Britain” and “exit”. There can be two or three parts per word.
 - d. Give the meaning of the word or what you think the meaning of the word is.

Three sets of eight neologisms were designed to test 24 neologisms. There are two reasons for presenting each participant with only eight neologisms. First, the number of neologisms was chosen to guarantee that the questionnaire would not last more than 15 minutes and second, given that several neologisms share similar source words, presenting all 24 neologisms could have influence a participant’s identification of word elements and meaning. To minimise this risk, sets were designed based on neologism source words which were then randomly assigned to participants. The neologisms were also presented in a random order. The sets are presented in Table 7 below.

Set 1	Set 2	Set 3
acephobia	broflake	allonormativity
brocialism	cisgenderism	brogressivism
ciscentrism	cissupremacy	cisprivilege
cissplaining	femotionalism	cispatriarchy
ciswashing	himpathy	heterocracy
hislam	intersexphobia	LGBTphobia
manspreading	misogynoir	transprejudice
transmisogynoir	trans-exclusion	transmisogyny

Table 7. Transparency questionnaire sets

As the neologisms from Table 3 above were organised into sets for the questionnaire, three adjustments were made. First, in order to homogenise the stimuli in terms of their forms, all neologisms were presented as nouns, which does not necessarily correspond to their collected form. Second, the word *homocapitalism* was not presented in the questionnaire because it was designed and carried out after the corpus analysis in which the neologism does not appear. Third, *brogressivism*, an alternative form to *brocialism*, was added. Despite being close synonyms, the variation in their form could lead to different degrees of transparency and so they were presented separately.

The final section of the questionnaire wraps up with questions about the questionnaire's overall purpose. Participants could answer optional questions about the purpose of the questionnaire. Specifically, the questions asked if they knew what the questionnaire was about and what it would be used for. They could provide an email address if they wished to receive a debriefing about the results.

3.4.1.2. Data collection and annotation

The questionnaire was formatted on LimeSurvey, the online survey system supported by the University of Lille. Before distributing the questionnaire to a larger audience, it was tested on four participants who met the linguistic criteria and did not know the topic of the study. None of these four participants mentioned any problems with the questionnaire link or how it worked. Every participant filled out the questionnaire in under 15 minutes. After the successful test, the questionnaire was distributed more widely via personal channels as well as via my professional Twitter account.

In total, 97 participants completed the questionnaire: 32 for the first set, 31 for the second one, and 34 for the third one (for the details of the distribution of participants across sets according to demographic information, see Appendix 2). The answers were then exported in an Excel sheet for further annotation.

Based on the answers, each neologism received a transparency score. Each answer's transparency was giving two total points, one for formal transparency (i.e. question c: identification of the parts), and one for semantic transparency (i.e. question d: identification of the meaning). The point for formal transparency was based on how transparent each part of the word was. For example, if the neologism was composed of two parts, a correct answer for each part was given a half point. Semantic transparency, on the other hand, was either given zero points or one point. Each neologism's final transparency score corresponds to the average of all answers.

As mentioned above, the transparency questionnaire was designed to measure the transparency of the studied neologisms, in order to control for this variable in the utility questionnaire. In addition, transparency scores were also taken into account when designing the sets of the utility questionnaire, as discussed in the next sub-section.

3.4.2 Utility questionnaire

3.4.2.1. Questionnaire design

The aim of this questionnaire is to evaluate whether the knowledge of feminist neologisms influences the perception of the utility of the denoted concepts (RQ3). Based on Kerremans' (2015) findings, which inspired this questionnaire, our hypothesis is that the knowledge of a word increases the perception of utility of the denoted concept. While its purpose differs from the pre-questionnaire on transparency, the overall structure is the same: (i) welcome page, (ii) background information, (iii) task, and (iv) final page. Except for the task, the utility questionnaire's content was very similar to the transparency questionnaire; the only difference being that, on the welcome page, participants were told that the topic of the questionnaire was new ideas in changing societies (see Appendix 3 for an overview of the questionnaire).

For the task, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: (i) the 'definition' condition, henceforth called the *DEF-only condition*, or (ii) the 'neologism and definition' condition, henceforth called the *NEO+DEF condition*. Depending on the condition, participants were presented with a different description.

Condition 1: DEF-ONLY

In this part of the questionnaire, you will be presented with 12 definitions. For example, “the belief that children’s needs and preferences take precedence over those of their parents or other adults”. This will then be followed by four questions.

- a. Rate how useful this meaning is.
- b. Justify your answer.
- c. State whether you have ever encountered a word for this meaning.
- d. Give what the word might be or what the word is for this meaning.

Condition 2: NEO+DEF

In this part of the questionnaire, you will be presented with 12 words and their definitions. For example, “kindergarchy: the belief that children’s needs and preferences take precedence over those of their parents or other adults”. This will then be followed by three questions.

- a. Rate how useful this meaning is.
- b. Justify your answer.
- c. State whether you have ever encountered this word with this meaning.

The first question (a) aims at measuring the perception of utility of the denoted concept. To do so, participants were asked to rate the meaning presented to them on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being not useful at all, and 5 very useful). The second question (b) is related to the three utility types identified by Kerremans (*idem*): (i) holistic, (ii) societal, and (iii) personal. These answers are used as a potential variable influencing the perception of utility. The third question (c) differs depending on the condition. While the two conditions allow manipulating the variable concerning the knowledge of a word, it is possible that participants knew these neologisms prior to the questionnaire. In the NEO+DEF condition, the participants are asked whether they knew this word with this meaning. Going back to the notion of hypostatisation, Schmid (2008) argues that there is a hypostatisation effect from the first encounter with a word. Knowing whether the participants have encountered the word before can be used to test whether the degree of familiarity creates a difference in the perception of utility. In the DEF-only condition, participants are asked whether they have encountered a word for this meaning. This question is followed by a fourth question (d) – absent in the NEO+DEF condition – which asks what the word is or what it could be for this meaning. The answers are used

to make sure that the participants actually know the neologism in the cases when they answered positively to the previous question.

As indicated, each participant is presented with 12 definitions (and, in the second condition, with the neologisms). As with the transparency questionnaire, the feminist neologisms have been distributed across three sets, which means that there are eight feminist neologisms per set. In addition to the feminist neologisms, four fillers have been presented to the participants. The sets were defined in such a way that all neologisms with shared source words were not found in the same set. Furthermore, as mentioned in the previous subsection, the transparency score was also taken into account when defining the sets, which have been defined in such a way that the degree of transparency is equally distributed. The distribution of neologisms in each set is presented in the table below, with the transparency score shown between brackets. As explained above, a higher score indicates a higher degree of transparency.

Set 1	Set 2	Set 3
acephobia (1.28)	broflake (1.31)	allonormativity (1.09)
brocialism (1)	cisprivilege (1.84)	brogressivism (0.90)
ciscentrism (1.66)	ciswashing (1.55)	cisgenderism (1.13)
cissplaining (1.47)	femonationalism (0.74)	cispatriarchy (1.44)
cissupremacy (1.47)	hislam (1.30)	himpathy (0.60)
heterocracy (1.10)	intersexphobia (1.43)	lgbtphobia (1.96)
manspreading (1.83)	misogynoir (0.80)	transprejudice (1.97)
transmisogynoir (0.92)	trans-exclusion (1.81)	transmisogyny (1.49)

Table 8. Utility questionnaire sets

A one-way ANOVA was applied to the averages of each of the transparency scores for each set to ensure that the difference between the sets was not significant ($F(23) = 0.007$, $p = 0.99$).

For each set, the same four fillers were used, which have been selected based on the topic of the questionnaire presented to the participants (new ideas in changing societies). These fillers are:

- *ideocentrism*: the inability to view the world from a different ideological perspective.

- *morbique*: the morbid desire to travel to places to experience them before they are radically altered by climate change or other human-caused changes.
- *solastalgia*: psychological distress caused by climate change.
- *virtue signalling*: the action or practice of expressing one's views or acting in a way thought to be motivated primarily by a wish to exhibit good character, social conscience, political convictions, etc., or to garner recognition and approval.

More specifically, two of them, i.e. *morbique* and *solastalgia*, are related to climate change and the other two, *ideocentrism* and *virtue signalling*, are related to social and political issues in general. These fillers were found in the *Wiktionary* in the categories social justice and climate change or in blogposts on neologisms and climate change. *Ideocentrism* was also one of the neologisms collected by Kerremans (2015).

3.4.2.2. Data management: collection, annotation and statistical model

Once the questionnaire was formatted on LimeSurvey and tested successfully on a small number of participants, it was distributed more widely. This was done via personal channels (different than the ones for the transparency questionnaire), the English department of the University of Lille (more specifically its English lecturers) and via the survey exchange platform SurveySwap. This platform was used because the utility questionnaire required a larger number of participants than the transparency questionnaire. Specifically, a sufficient number of participants had to be reached for each of the two conditions and the three sets in order to test the relationship between word knowledge and the perceived utility of the denoted concepts.¹⁰

A total of 112 participants completed the questionnaire. The table below presents the distribution of responses among conditions and sets (for the details of the distribution of participants across conditions and sets according to demographic information, see Appendix 4). The answers were then exported into an Excel sheet for further annotation.

¹⁰ To obtain participants via the platform, a certain number of points must be accumulated by answering other users' questionnaires on the platform. The number of points necessary and collected is dependent on the estimated length of the questionnaire. This may have certain limitations. A quality control system is in place on the platform based on the disparity between the expected duration of the questionnaire and the actual completion time. However, it is possible that some participants do not answer the questionnaire conscientiously. Only one participant's responses were removed for this reason. These responses were distinguishable because they had written a series of meaningless characters. One potential limitation would be that only students, which represents a small fraction of the population, answer the questionnaire. However, by completing different questionnaires on the platform myself, I observed that companies also use it.

	DEF-ONLY condition	NEO+DEF condition	Total
Set 1	17	16	33
Set 2	18	21	39
Set 3	19	21	40
Total	54	58	112

Table 9. Distribution of participants across conditions and sets

Two variables were annotated: word knowledge and utility type. Word knowledge could either be coded as 0, 0.5, or 1 depending on the condition. In the DEF-only condition, the answers were either coded as 0 or 1. If a participant answered that they had never encountered a word for this meaning, the answer was coded as 0. If a participant answered that they had encountered a word for this meaning and provided the expected neologism, the answer was coded as 1. When more than one participant answered that they had encountered a word for this meaning and provided the same but different answer than the expected neologism, it was coded as 1. For example, several participants gave the term *misogyny*, when the definition provided was the one of *brocialism*. For all other cases, it was coded as 0. In the NEO+DEF condition, the answers could be coded as either 0.5 or 1. If a participant answered that they had never encountered the word with this meaning, the answer was coded as 0.5. If a participant answered that they had encountered the word with this meaning before, the answer was coded as 1.

The utility type variable concerns answers to question (b) which asked participants to provide a short explanation for their utility scores. As mentioned in Section 2.3, Kerremans (*idem*) who concluded a similar questionnaire identified three utility types—holistic, societal, and personal—based on the participants’ explanations given in her questionnaire. These utility types are the categories used to annotate the answers provided for the present questionnaire. Some answers were also coded as “unknown”, as shown in the table below presenting answers from our data.

Utility type	Examples
Holistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very abstract - Provides a clear definition of the word - Easy to understand
Societal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not sure it's a thing - does this happen? - That is a current thing in society that is affecting people's lives. - This is an important topic at hand
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Doesn't matter with my day to day life - I wouldn't use it - It's an issue that is well known to me
Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hard to say - Really!? - Unsure

Table 10. Examples of justification for rating the usefulness of a meaning

Once the data was annotated, it was imported into the programme R to test the hypothesis statistically. To do so, a statistical model was built in close collaboration with the StabLab from LMU Munich. In the present study, the dependent variable is the utility score, which is the answer to the first question: How useful is this meaning? This score uses a Likert scale, where each value is discrete (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and no value between each of these, e.g. 2 and 3). For such target variables, the cumulative regression model, also called ordinal logistic regression, is used. However, in regression analysis, it is assumed that the observations are independent from each other, which is not the case here, since participants answered multiple questions for multiple neologisms. For example, the observations of participant X for the neologism *brocialism* and for the neologism *manspreading* are not independent from each other, because it is the same person that is observed. Therefore, a mixed cumulative regression model has been used (which can be implemented in R using the `clmm()` function of the `ordinal` package (Christensen 2023)). Other variables such as word knowledge, transparency score, participant demographic information (language variety, age, gender, and education) have been added to the model as explanatory variables.

3.5 Conclusion of Chapter 3

The aim of this chapter was to outline the methodology employed to address the three research questions asked in this thesis. As presented in Chapter 2, these questions are: to what extent do recent feminist neologisms allow for a redefinition of feminist linguistic activism? (RQ1), what is the degree of conventionalisation of feminist neologisms? (RQ2), and does the knowledge of feminist neologisms influence the perception of the utility of the denoted concepts? (RQ3).

Whether the question is theoretical (RQ1) or empirical (RQ2 and 3), answering it requires collecting feminist neologisms, and as such, is the focus of section 3.1. Most previous studies have based their neologism collection on the corpus where the neologisms were being investigated. In this thesis, I use a crowdsourced dictionary-based approach. More specifically, *Wiktionary* has been used to collect 24 neologisms coined in the current feminist movement.

Based on this collection, a corpus analysis has been carried out to answer RQ2. The methodology employed for the corpus analysis is presented in Section 3.2. It starts with the presentation of the NOW corpus, selected for its media diversity. The following two sub-sections explain the mixed methods approach employed to measure diffusion and observe usualisation respectively. While diffusion is measured more quantitatively with the use of seven variables and the creation of a diffusion index, usualisation is observed more qualitatively. This is also due to the relatively low degree of conventionalisation of these neologisms.

Moving on the final research question, questionnaires were designed to observe the relationship between the knowledge of neologisms and the perception of the utility of the denoted concepts. First, the transparency questionnaire, which was designed in order to control for the variable of transparency when analysing the data from the utility questionnaire, was presented. Then the utility questionnaire design and data management including collection, annotation, and the selected statistical model (i.e. cumulative linked mixed model) were presented.

To summarise, different types of methods were employed to answer these three research questions: a collection of neologisms based on a crowdsourced dictionary, a corpus analysis by means of mixed methods, and questionnaires. In the next part of the thesis, the results obtained for each of these questions are presented.

Chapter 4. Neologism collection results

Feminist linguistic activism beyond female-male relationships

Feminist Linguistic Activism (FLA) is often reduced to gender-fair language, but it encompasses much more. In order to counter the androcentric nature of language, neologisms have been coined to highlight women's experiences as well as different forms of gendered oppression. This approach, also known as the disruption approach, has been defined by Pauwels as "the creation of new words [...] to highlight women's subordination and men's domination" (2003: 555), and similar definitions can be found in Ehrlich and King (1994) and Mills (2008). Contemporary feminisms have also introduced neologisms, such as *himpathy* and *misogynoir*. However, little attention has been paid to these neologisms in feminist linguistics, as had been the case with the neologisms from the 1970s. This chapter aims to shed light on these feminist neologisms in the feminist linguistic literature and to provide a critical description of FLA today, in order to answer the first research question: to what extent do recent neologisms allow for a redefinition of FLA?

This critical description of FLA is based on the analysis of 24 feminist neologisms collected in *Wiktionary* (as described in the methodology chapter, see Section 3.2). This chapter will start by presenting neologisms falling under Pauwels' definition of FLA that denounce men's behaviour or reactions to it (4.1). Such neologisms are the minority and most of them fall under a more capacious definition. More specifically, most neologisms illustrate a more intersectional FLA, as discussed in the second section (4.2). The more intersectional neologisms can be categorised into two main types: those addressing the problems of, and with, white feminisms, and those linked to trans and queer feminisms.

The last section (4.3) summarises the chapter. The analysis of the 24 collected neologisms shows that only a small portion of these neologisms align with the initial definition. By asking who the women in this definition are, these intersectional neologisms show the importance of naming for oneself, and the importance of not naming for others.

Even though the neologisms are presented according to different themes in this chapter, it is necessary to point out that, because of the many overlapping ideas, not all of these neologisms fit within the boundaries of neatly-defined types of feminisms, as epitomised by *transmisogynoir*. These neologisms do not necessarily present a simple or homogeneous image of feminisms, but highlight both how sources of inspiration and points of conflict between feminisms can create a larger, albeit heterogeneous, picture of FLA, and feminisms more generally.

4.1 Denouncing men's behaviour

A number of reports have recently been published showing the extent of current anti-feminist views. In 2023, the French High Council for Equality between Women and Men reveals that 6 out of 10 men think that feminists go too far nowadays (HCE 2023). Similar opinions are shared by 50% of men between 18 and 24 years old in the UK (Carter 2020: 42), and 46% of men under 50 who identify as democrats in the United States (Miller 2022). Commenting on how feminists become problems, the feminist writer and scholar Ahmed explains that “it is as if these problems are not there until you point them out; it is as if pointing them out is what makes them there. We become a problem when we describe a problem” (2017: 39). Among the problems feminists point out are acts that are commonly perceived as so trivial and harmless that they are no longer noticed, which is also known as *ordinary sexism*. But the issue is that:

when sexism is routinely presented as harmless, its harms become difficult to see and speak of, even as they accumulate around us. [...] Naming sexism matters because language and action go together: sexism is open to challenge only insofar as it is visible and representable. (Calder-Dawe 2015: 90)

It is in this context that *manspreading* was coined.

manspreading: the practice of men splaying their legs open wide when sitting on public transport, thus occupying more than one seat. (05/03/2015)¹¹

Experiences of manspreading can be read among the many stories of ordinary sexism shared by women within the *Everyday Sexism* project, which first took the form of a blog founded by Bates in 2012. With more than 50,000 thousand stories uploaded within two years, and with the blog being taken up in 25 countries, what started as an individual initiative turned into a collective project (Bates 2014). With the affordances of digital technologies, this feminist catalogue of instances of sexism revealed the scale of the problem, as individual stories were connected to experiences of others, similarly to consciousness-raising groups in the 1970s (Ahmed 2017: 30). Naming manspreading is in line with the feminist neologisms created in the 1970s: the term corresponds to Pauwels' definition of linguistic disruption. Commenting on experiences of everyday sexism, Bates says that before starting her project, she thought that "these events were normal. They hadn't seemed exceptional enough for me to object to them because they *weren't out of the ordinary*" (2014: 16, emphasis in original). Creating a collective account of such experiences shows that they are indeed not out of the ordinary, but that they should be. And naming them gives the possibility of objecting to them.

The second half of the past decade has been marked by a series of sexual assault allegations against celebrity perpetrators. With more of these stories emerging, patterns in the reactions could be identified. One example of such pattern is that "the perpetrator is such a good [replace by perpetrator's occupation], and these accusations are going to ruin his career", ignoring the impact of the perpetrator's acts on the victim's life. This kind of reaction can be described as ***himpathy***.

himpathy: inappropriate sympathy given to men or boys, especially those who are guilty of sexual transgressions. (12/09/2018)

This term was introduced by the philosopher Manne and she argues that this is another problem that is so common it is regarded as business as usual. Despite this, it had no name.

¹¹ Unless mentioned otherwise, all the definitions presented are from *Wiktionary*. They were collected in January 2021. The definition is followed by the entry date in *Wiktionary* (see also Appendix 5 for an overview of all neologisms in alphabetical order).

Like with the coining of *sexual harassment* in the 1970s, which allowed the development of studies in sociology or psychology, among others, of female-male relationships in the workplace (Farley 1978: 14), *himpathy* offers a new analytical lens for the study of the mechanisms of misogyny. As Manne explains, himpathy can be understood as “the flip side of misogyny; its understudied mirror image; its natural (albeit highly unjust) complement. Misogyny takes down women, and himpathy protects the agents of that takedown operation, partly by painting them as ‘good guys’” (2020: 35). In *Feminist Media Studies* and *Feminist Critical Discourse Studies* respectively, there are studies on himpathy by Boyle (2019) and Tranchese (2023).

Among the examples Manne (2017) uses to illustrate *himpathy* is the case of Daniel Holtzclaw, a police officer in the United States accused of several cases of sexual assault. As for other cases of himpathy, people talked about how his future career was going to be ruined. What is notable here, however, is that he specifically targeted Black women who were highly marginalised (e.g. being sex workers or drug-users), and who would be less likely to be believed. In the end, “the white women on the jury judged that Holtzclaw was guilty—to their credit, given the evidence. Even so, they wept for him and his bright future in law enforcement, before his victims” (2017: 219). Additionally, Manne notes the silence of white feminists in the mainstream media. She uses this case to illustrate how misogyny and racism work together to the detriment of marginalised women, by drawing upon the notion of *misogynoir*, a term which will be presented in the section below.

The neologisms presented so far, *manspreading* and *himpathy*, both refer to men’s behaviour or reactions to men’s behaviour. It is also the case of two other neologisms collected from *Wiktionary*, which are *brocialist* and *broflake*.

- ***brocialist***: (i) a male socialist, especially one with masculinist views; (ii) a male socialist, leftist or progressive accused of downplaying women's issues, or displaying an alleged misogynistic or macho attitude. (11/11/2015)
- ***broflake***: an overly-sensitive man or boy who is easily upset or offended, especially one upset about loss of male privilege. (06/01/2018)

These correspond to Pauwels’ definition of feminist linguistic disruption insofar as they highlight men’s domination, and the source words of the neologisms alone, *man*, *him* and *bro*, are evidence of this. The majority of neologisms, however, expands this definition, informed by the evolution of feminism since the 1970s.

4.2 FLA and intersectionality: naming for oneself but not for others

In the revised and expanded version of *Language and Woman's Place*, Lakoff explains “that men once had the unquestioned right to make meaning for women, we can now clearly see as unjust”, and subsequently asks: “but how are feminists to deal with the temptation to make meaning for other women?” (2004: 23). This question has been repeatedly asked before and after its first publication in 1975. As early as 1866, Watkins Harper pointed out the differences and divergences in women's demands and means of expression: “You white women speak here of rights. I speak of wrongs”.¹² More than a century later, Bael published the pamphlet *Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female* (1969) in which she refers to the “very specific problems that have to be spoken to” faced by Black women. What Bael called “double jeopardy”, has also later been labelled “multiple jeopardy” or “matrix of domination”, and is now commonly referred to as “intersectionality” (Crenshaw 1991).

The central idea of intersectionality is that any liberation movement [...] that focuses solely on what all members of the group concerned have in common is a movement that will best serve those members of the group who are least oppressed. Thus, a feminism that focuses only on ‘pure’ cases of patriarchal oppression will end up serving the needs of rich white or upper-class women. (Srinivasan 2021: 17)

This is also at the heart of most of the neologisms coined in contemporary feminisms. Rather than trying to name experiences that are common to all and for all, these neologisms acknowledge differences.

4.2.1 The problems of white feminism

Among the terms referring to the very specific problems Bael talks about is *misogynoir*.

misogynoir: hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against black women.
(19/01/2015)

It was coined by Bailey who defines it more specifically as “the uniquely co-constitutive racialized and sexist violence that befalls Black women as a result of their simultaneous

¹² Excerpt from a speech delivered at the 11th National Women's Rights Convention (Watkins Harper 1866)

and interlocking oppression at the intersection of racial and gender marginalization” (2021: 1). It was first used in the Crunk Feminist Collective blog in 2010.

The neologism *misogynoir* was coined to highlight the type of misogyny Black women experience, a difference which has not always been recognised. Indeed, white (academic) feminists have been criticised for their failure to recognise this difference. Commenting on the origins of this term, Bailey (2014) explains the importance to find “precise language” and concludes by imploring people to “find the language that works for you but please don’t redefine the terms we create for ourselves”. The intersectional feminist philosopher Lorde stresses the importance of not only recognising, but also defining and naming these differences for oneself:

And certainly there are very real differences between us, of race, sex, age, sexuality, class, vision. But it is not the differences between us that tear us apart, destroying the commonalities we share. Rather, it is our refusal to examine the distortions which arise from their misnaming, and from the illegitimate usage of those differences which can be made when we do not claim them nor define them for ourselves. (2009: 17)

According to Molina (1990: 330), the difficulty of accepting and celebrating differences comes from the valorisation of “sameness” in society, but sameness in relation to whom?

Similarly to the ‘Third World Woman’ addressed by Mohanty (1988), the answer nowadays would be “certainly not to the ‘Muslim Woman’”. In her paper, Mohanty analyses the production and representation of the ‘Third World Woman’ as a singular homogeneous group, more particularly by (western) feminist discourse. She argues that “[i]t is in the process of discursive homogenization and systematization of the oppression of women in the third world that power is exercised in much of recent western feminist writing, and this power needs to be defined and named” (idem: 63). This power is closely related to what has been named *femonationalism*.

femonationalism: *the association of a nationalist ideology with feminism, especially when having xenophobic motivations.* (12/08/2019)

Coined by Farris and developed in her book *In the Name of Women’s Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism* (2017), *femonationalism* is a blend of *feminist* and *femocratic*

nationalism.¹³ Similar to *misogynoir*, it reveals conflicts between feminisms, since it refers to the involvement of certain feminists in the framing of Islam as a misogynistic religion, with, at its core, the representation of Muslim men as the “dangerous Other” and Muslim women as “victims to be rescued”. *Femonationalism*, however, does not only refer to this kind of feminist discourse, but also to what might appear to be an unexpected convergence with the anti-Islamic and immigrant discourse of nationalists, as well as neo-liberals. For Farris, introducing this neologism “aims to provide a theoretical concept to capture the political-economic agenda informing the invocation of women’s rights by a range of different actors” (2017: 5). The homogenisation of Muslim women as victims of male oppression is epitomised by the reduction of “diverse situations and attitudes of millions of Muslim women to a single item of clothing” (Abu-Lughod 2013: 40): the veil. In her book *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?*, Abu-Lughod calls into question the rhetoric of salvation, and asks: “What presumptions are being made about the superiority of that to which you are saving her? Projects of saving other women depend on and reinforce a sense of superiority, and are a form of arrogance that deserves to be challenged” (idem: 48). A first step in that direction is to name it, as *femonationalism* does.

Another term which has been coined with relation to feminism and Islam is *hislam*.

hislam: *Islam which reinforces masculinist attitudes or ideas or downplays women's issues.* (18/08/2018)

Based solely on the definition from *Wiktionary*, it seems to reinforce the association between Islam and misogyny, as discussed above. However, this term is used by Carland in her book *Fighting Hislam: Women, Faith and Sexism* (2017) about Islam and sexism, based on interviews with several Muslim women active in the fight against sexism within their religion. More precisely, this term is only used in the title of the book, since it is not used nor defined at any other point. As we will see in the following chapter on conventionalisation, all occurrences in the NOW corpus are also references to the book title.

Neologisms discussed in this section show that naming for oneself is a concern of contemporary feminisms. This can be achieved by naming the appropriation of other people’s voices, an idea which is present in the notion of *femonationalism*. By doing so,

¹³ It draws on the term *homonationalism* (Puar 2007) which refers to the United States using “gay rights” discourse as a way to justify the war on terror.

naming for oneself includes naming the women who have been doing the naming for others (especially those who defend different forms of hegemonic feminism: white, western, academic, etc.), as is the case with *misogynoir*. Importantly, naming for oneself also means defining who are the women in the definition of FLA, and subsequently, who is included within feminism more generally, an aspect which is also central to some of the neologisms presented below.

4.2.2 Feminisms, queer and trans studies

Feminism requires supporting women in a struggle to exist in this world. What do I mean by women here? I am referring to all those who travel under the sign women. No feminism worthy of its name would use the sexist idea “women born women” to create the edges of feminist community, to render trans women into “not women,” or “not born women,” or into men. (Ahmed 2017: 14-15)

The exclusion of trans women within feminism is one of the motivations behind the coinage of *transmisogyny* by Serano.

transmisogyny: *hatred of or contempt for trans women.* (21/09/2013)¹⁴

It highlights the specificities of the experiences of trans women, which cannot be encompassed by *transphobia* or *misogyny* (Serano 2012). While this neologism can be used to reveal the divisiveness among feminists, it also serves a more general purpose for Serano, which is to reclaim femininity.

As femmes, we can do one of two things with our power: We can celebrate it in secret within our own insular queer communities, patting ourselves on the back for being so much smarter and more subversive than our straight feminine sisters. Or we can share that power with them. We can teach them that there is more than one way to be feminine and that no style or expression of femininity is necessarily any better than anyone else’s. We can teach them that the only thing fucked up about femininity is the dismissive connotations that other people project on it. (2012: 183)

¹⁴ After the completion of the neologism collection process in January 2021, further information has been added on the origins of this neologism in July 2021, more specifically on the fact that it was coined in 2007 in Serano’s book *Whipping Girl*. This neologism has been kept nevertheless. The absence of records prior to 2010 in the other sources (*Urban Dictionary* and *Oxford English Dictionary*) used to control for the temporal variable (as well as its low frequency in the NOW corpus) show the neological character of this term.

This idea is in line with trans feminism, which goes beyond the discourse of the oppositional relationship between trans and feminist studies. In trans feminism, trans studies are not an add-on, or afterthought of feminist studies, but calls for the recognition of interconnections and new ideas which can emerge from them. It puts trans experiences at the heart of feminist concerns. This should also be reflected in our understanding of FLA. The output of the neologism collection process shows that neologisms denoting trans experiences and relationships between cis and trans people represent the majority of neologisms in contemporary feminisms.

- ***cis privilege***: *the social advantage enjoyed by those who are cisgender/cissexual.* (19/03/2018)¹⁵
- ***ciscentrism***: *the practice or quality of being ciscentric.* (19/01/2014)
- ***cisgenderism***: *cisgender attitudes and beliefs generally.* (06/02/2013)
- ***cispatriarchy***: *the assumed dominance of cisgender men.* (03/08/2019)
- ***cissplain***: *to explain transgender issues, people or behavior to a trans person (as a cis person) in a condescending manner, presuming the listener's inferior understanding.* (27/11/2019)
- ***cissupremacy***: *the ideology that regards cis people as superior to trans people, or diminishes the rights, concerns, etc. of trans people.* (18/01/2014)
- ***ciswash***: *to ignore, deny, or minimize the gender identity of a trans person or trans people, or the role that a trans person or trans people played in an event.* (07/11/2015)
- ***trans-exclusionary***: *excluding trans people (especially trans women).* (23/02/2017)¹⁶
- ***transmisogynoir***: *hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against black trans women.* (12/05/2018)
- ***transprejudice***: *prejudice against transgender people.* (30/07/2016)

Because these neologisms are at the forefront of FLA, one could more accurately speak about *trans* FLA. By centring experiences of trans people, these neologisms can be

¹⁵ This definition was first found under the alternative form *cisprivilege* added in 2013 to *Wiktionary*. In 2018, the entry *cis privilege* was added with this definition, and *cisprivilege* was defined as an alternative form. While the first example in *Wiktionary* is from 2010, it was first popularised by the “cis privilege checklist” (Cedar 2008).

¹⁶ This term is related to the acronym TERF, trans-exclusionary radical feminist, which was not collected as a first occurrence is recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary in 2008.

defined as forms of *transgender language reform* (Zimman 2017) and of trans linguistics more generally, as Zimman explains:

[t]rans linguistics centers trans people and others who occupy the margins of normative categories, those who exceed them, and those who travel between them. It pushes us to consider how other categories might be transcended or transversed. It prioritizes exceptional cases and discovering what is possible rather than privileging norms and generalizable claims. (2020: 13)

A central challenge for contemporary feminisms is to find the balance between recognising differences and finding points of convergence. Commenting on the category of women, Ahmed argues that “feminism begins with a premise that is a promise: we do not have to live by other people’s assignments” (2017 n8: 270). Not living by other people’s assignments and expectations is a central point of convergence, between feminist and trans studies, and queer studies more generally. In addition to the 11 neologisms mentioned in this section, six others correspond to queer activism.

- ***acephobia***: *fear, dislike, or hatred of asexual people and/or human asexuality.* (02/12/2014)
- ***allonormativity***: *the assumption that all human beings are allosexual, i.e. that they experience sexual attraction to other people.* (04/09/2020)
- ***heterocracy***: *a society influenced by heterosexual values.* (27/01/2016)¹⁷
- ***homocapitalism***: *capitalist appropriation and assimilation of sexual diversity, specially pertaining to the gay, cisgender, western, white, and upper middle class men.* (29/09/2018)
- ***intersexphobia***: *discrimination against people with intersex conditions.* (22/01/2015)
- ***LGBTphobia***: *a negative attitude towards LGBT people.* (02/10/2015)

Among these terms, two neologisms, *acephobia* and *allonormativity*, are related to asexuality studies, which is both a queer and feminist project. It is a queer project in the sense that it “[makes] sense of the social marginalization and pathologization of bodies based on the preference to not have sex, along with exploring new possibilities in

¹⁷ The definition is the second one in *Wiktionary*, the first one being “a polycentric government”.

intimacy, desire, and kinship structures” (Milks & Cerankowski 2014: 3). It is also a feminist project because it challenges expectations of sexual desire.

We need to interrogate the expectations and pressure that coerce people, especially women, to want more sexual desire, just as the feminists before us, such as the early twentieth-century sexuality and birth control activists, challenged the idea that women should overcome sexual desire in order to be truly womanly. (Chasin 2013: 416)

Like with *transmisogyny*, these neologisms question other people’s expectations to put the experience of marginalised communities at the heart of feminist concerns. Where feminist, trans and queer studies converge on the idea of not having to live according to the assignments and expectations of others, they also converge on the idea that one’s experiences should not be named according to the experiences of others.

When Lakoff raised the question of feminists making meaning for other women, she continued by asking “Is it ever right? If so, when?” (2004: 23). Neologisms from contemporary feminisms show that it is not. These neologisms also give the answer to another question inspired by (Muñoz 2012): What happens to FLA when feminist trans people of colour name the world?¹⁸ Then, neologisms like *transmisogynoir* can be coined.

4.3 Conclusion: so what is FLA today?

The literature on FLA has mostly focused on gender-fair language, to the extent that some might think that FLA *is* gender-fair language. This thesis focuses on another form of FLA which are neologisms coined to name experiences, as *sexual harassment* did in the 1970s. This type of FLA, which Pauwels calls the disruption approach, is defined by the coinage of neologisms that emphasise women’s subordination and men’s domination (2003: 555). Investigating neologisms from contemporary feminism, the aim of this chapter was two-fold: (i) to reintroduce feminist neologisms as a part of FLA, and (ii) to answer the question: to what extent do the neologisms from contemporary feminism redefine FLA?

The present research is limited by the fact that the collection of neologisms is restricted to selection criteria, particularly the morphological criterion, in order to reduce

¹⁸ The original question is: “What happens to feminist pedagogy when feminist trans-people of color name the world?”

manual processing. This study does not claim to be exhaustive and, given the neological nature of the linguistic phenomenon studied, it cannot claim to be. On the other hand, the study covers 24 neologisms which challenge feminist linguists to rethink the definition of FLA. The disruption approach is not monolithic; its definition cannot simply be reduced to female-male relationships, but should reflect the variety of perspectives offered by contemporary feminisms. This is also the reason why it is important to emphasise how neologisms may be present in specific forms of feminist activism without necessarily being limited to them, as *transmisogynoir* shows.

These neologisms from contemporary feminism make it not only possible to name women's experiences in relation to men, but also to give a central place to the experiences of people who are minoritised or marginalised because of their gender or sexuality, as well as their race or religion. FLA today does not pretend to name universal experiences, but favours an intersectional perspective. It does not name for others, even though it does name the experiences of feminists who have done so. Instead, it privileges naming for oneself by recognising differences.

Even without looking at their meaning, the form of these neologisms reveals the multiplicity of contemporary feminisms. It is for this reason that I do not use the waves metaphor, contested since its emergence for drowning the diversity of feminist activism (Pavard 2018). Not only does it give the impression of a "singular" feminism, it also makes gender the dominant category of analysis (Laughlin *et al.* 2010). This aspect is challenged by these neologisms, which question the political subjects of feminisms. These neologisms do not present a necessarily simple or homogeneous image of feminisms. Some are built on feminist neologisms from the past, others are not. They describe both points of divergence and convergence between different types of feminism, which can both span time and be simultaneous. They are inspired by the bits and pieces of feminisms from different time and space, from experiences of women living different kinds of oppressions. For these reasons, these neologisms are like tiles of a mosaic, a metaphor suggested by Delap (2020) to refer to the multitude of feminisms.

'[M]osaic feminism' [is] built up from inherited fragments but offering distinctive patterns and pictures. Like mosaics, the view from afar and the close reading of feminisms may give a very different picture. And like mosaics, feminist coalitions were built up from the bits and pieces available – other movements, committed individuals, actions and ideas. Some mosaics have been long-lived; others have

crumbled, and their tiles have been reused, or have disappeared from view. (2020: 20-21)

Many neologisms of the past, such as *misogyny*, *sexism* and *intersectionality*, have marked feminism, and new neologisms show that they continue to do so. Similar to the social theorist Collins' (2017) comments on the term *intersectionality*, feminist neologisms are neither an end point nor a point of origin, but a turning point. Contemporary feminist linguistic activism does not wipe the slate clean. Like a mosaic, it uses bits and pieces of the past to reconstruct and enrich what it means to name as a feminist today, and potentially tomorrow.

Chapter 5. Corpus analysis results

The conventionalisation of feminist neologisms

While the coinage of neologisms is a first and necessary step of Feminist Linguistic Activism, it is not sufficient. In continuing our analysis of FLA, and more specifically of recent feminist neologisms, we will now turn our attention to two questions: are these neologisms used? If so, how? This corresponds to the study of conventionalisation which is made up of two processes: diffusion and usualisation.

Diffusion corresponds to the first question above: are feminist neologisms used? While it would be tempting to rely on frequency alone to answer this question, such an answer would be limited, and other variables need to be observed to take into account the multidimensionality of diffusion. Usualisation, the second process constituting conventionalisation, corresponds to the second question on *how* the neologisms are used and will be discussed in the second part of this chapter. Diffusion and usualisation are not independent from each other:

Once established in a community of whatever nature and size, types can be abstracted away from their original motives and diffuse to other communities without continuing to be associated with the original motives and situations of use. (Schmid 2020: 126)

Neologisms can have a high degree of diffusion, but they might not be used with their intended meaning, as previous studies on (feminist) linguistic innovations have observed, such as Ehrlich and King (1994), for example.

This aspect is particularly important for feminist neologisms, since one of the motivations behind their coinage is to make the denoted behaviours and experiences visible. Despite the fact that they are being used outside of the linguistic community where they originated, their wider diffusion may however play a role in lessening their political

meaning. But before looking at whether this is the case for the neologisms of contemporary feminism, let us first consider whether these neologisms are used at all.

5.1 The multidimensionality of diffusion

The way in which the diffusion of neologisms, and linguistic innovations in general, is studied in the literature varies widely. One of the differences between studies of neologisms lies in the variables which can be used to measure the process of diffusion, such as counting the number of individuals using a neologism in a specific region and at a certain time (e.g. Eisenstein *et al.* 2012) or the themes of the texts in which a neologism occurs (e.g. Gérard *et al.* 2017). The present investigation of the diffusion of feminist neologisms is based on seven variables which are:

- (1) token frequency
- (2) page frequency
- (3) source frequency
- (4) proportion of non-FGS pages
- (5) proportion of non-FGS sources
- (6) countries
- (7) proportion of active days

More specifically, these seven variables are compared to demonstrate how different variables can yield disparate results in terms of the diffusion of neologisms. These variables are then combined to create a diffusion index that can be used to compare the multidimensional diffusion of neologisms in a systematic way.

5.1.1 Frequency-based measures: token, page, and source frequencies

While different variables have been used in studies measuring diffusion, the variable frequency is common to all. This might not seem surprising since it has been defined as the “safest measure” (Fischer 1998: 172), but even the safest measure can vary in the way it is used. In this section, three types of frequency measures are used and compared: token, page, and source frequencies. While token frequency takes into account all occurrences of a neologism, page and source frequencies do not. Page frequency corresponds to the number of unique web pages in which a neologism occurs and source frequency to the number of

unique sources (i.e. websites). This allows us to observe whether token frequency, which is the most commonly used, is a sufficiently reliable indicator of diffusion.

The relative token, page, and source frequencies following the initial occurrence of each neologism are presented in the table below. The neologisms are ordered based on decreasing token frequency.

Neologism	Token	Page	Source
manspread	0.05279	19.33540	9.66770
trans-exclusionary	0.02651	13.05242	7.79962
misogynoir	0.02050	8.41078	5.50335
himpathy	0.01070	1.56742	1.31993
transmisogyny	0.01051	5.00199	3.76387
broflake	0.00538	1.27504	1.20004
brocialism	0.00385	1.83632	1.35024
LGBTphobia	0.00275	1.41868	1.13494
cis privilege	0.00203	0.87341	0.87341
cispatriarchy	0.00172	1.08812	1.08812
allonormativity	0.00157	0.34332	0.34332
cisgenderism	0.00124	0.62081	0.57305
acephobia	0.00096	0.38348	0.38348
ciscentrism	0.00077	0.30231	0.30231
femotionalism	0.00068	0.16408	0.16408
cissupremacy	0.00063	0.12183	0.12183
hislam	0.00056	0.31227	0.31227
intersexphobia	0.00053	0.28968	0.23174
transprejudice	0.00034	0.18736	0.18736
ciswash	0.00030	0.11198	0.11198
cissplain	0.00024	0.13007	0.13007
transmisogynoir	0.00015	0.08456	0.08456
heterocracy	0.00009	0.04886	0.04886
homocapitalism	0.00000	0.00000	0.00000
Average	0.00603	2.37334	1.52901

Table 11. Token, page and source frequency of each neologism

On average, feminist neologisms occur 0.006 times per million words, on 2.4 pages per million pages, and in 1.5 sources per million sources. Regardless of the frequency measure, the three most frequent neologisms are *manspread*, *trans-exclusionary*¹⁹, and *misogynoir*, and the three least frequent neologisms are *homocapitalism*, *heterocracy*, and *transmisogynoir*. This is not so surprising, since *homocapitalism* is the only collected neologism that does not occur in the corpus²⁰, and both *heterocracy* and *transmisogynoir* are hapaxes. While for these six neologisms, token frequency is a good indication of the other frequency measures, it is not the case for the remaining neologisms.

In order to facilitate the comparison between the three frequency measures, the figure below represents the ranking of neologisms based on the three frequency measures: token frequency in the first column, page frequency in the second column, and source frequency in the third column. Focusing on *manspread* for example, the figure shows that it is ranked first in all three columns, which means that it has the highest token, page and source frequencies out of all neologisms. On the other hand, we can see that the neologism *homocapitalism* is ranked 24th for all three frequency measures. An example of a neologism of which the ranking differs depending on the frequency measure we look at is *broflake*, which is the 6th most frequent neologism when we take token frequency into account (first column), 8th when we take page frequency into account (second column), and 7th when looking at its source frequency (third column).

This graph gives a first indication of whether token frequency is enough for frequency-based measures of diffusion, or if page and source frequencies also need to be taken into account.

¹⁹ When collecting the occurrences of *trans-exclusionary*, occurrences of *TERF* (*trans-exclusionary radical feminists*) were also collected. However, these were not taken into account in the analysis of the conventionalisation of *trans-exclusionary*. As previously mentioned, a first occurrence of *TERF* is recorded in the Oxford English Dictionary in 2008.

²⁰ This is why *homocapitalism* will be removed from the discussion on the corpus analysis results and data visualisations (i.e. tables and figures).

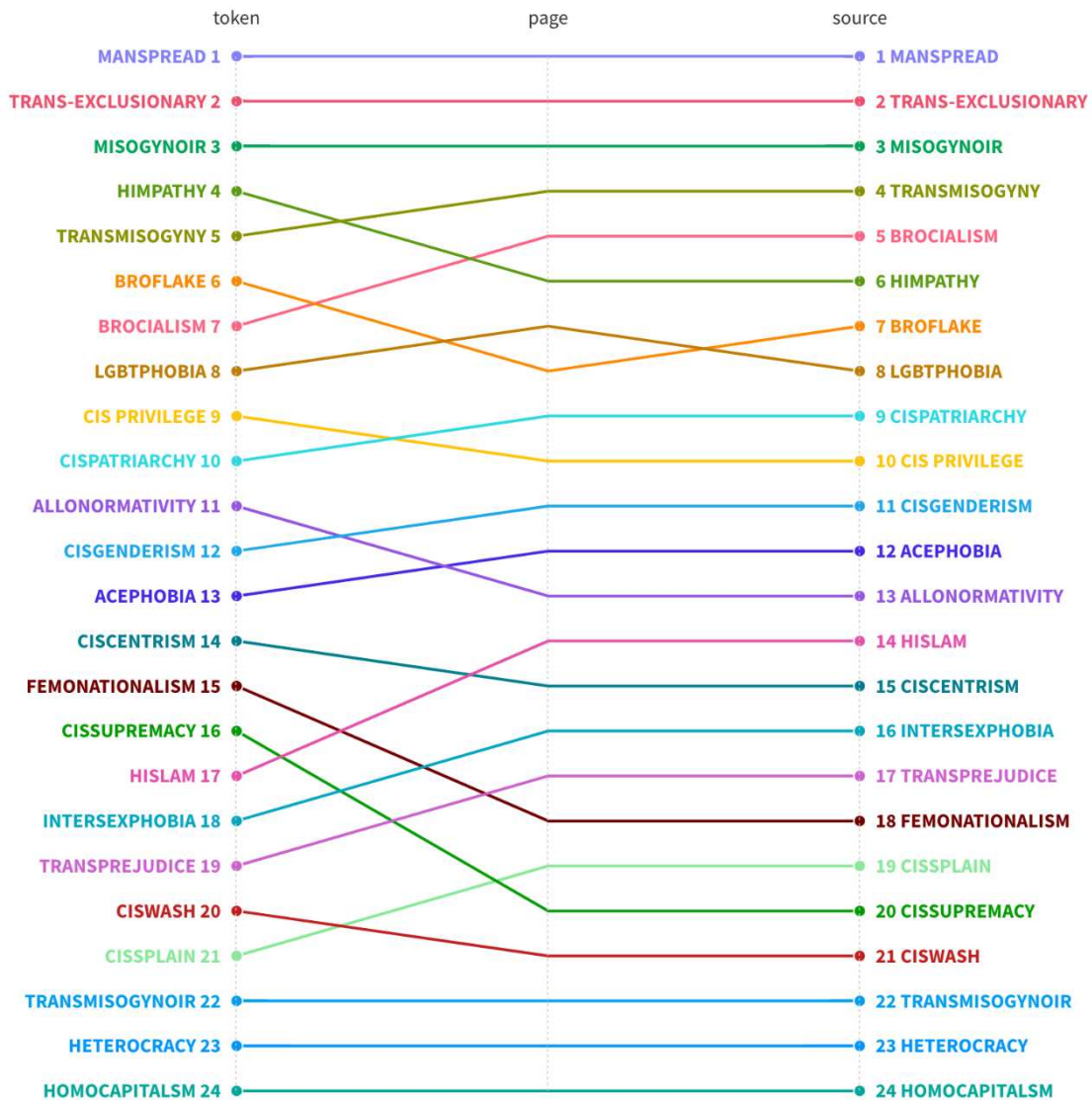


Figure 2. Ranking of each neologism based on frequency measures

Two main points can be drawn from this slope chart. First, page and source frequencies are almost always aligned, except for two neologisms. The neologism *broflake* is ranked 8th when taking into account its page frequency but 7th when looking at its source frequency, which is the opposite for the neologism *LGBTphobia* ranked 7th in the page column and 8th in the source column. Second, except for the top and bottom three neologisms, token frequency seems either to under- or overestimate the other frequency measures, and therefore the diffusion of neologisms. In order to explore this observation, further data analysis needs to be carried out, as presented below.

The three following graphs illustrate the relationship between each frequency measure.

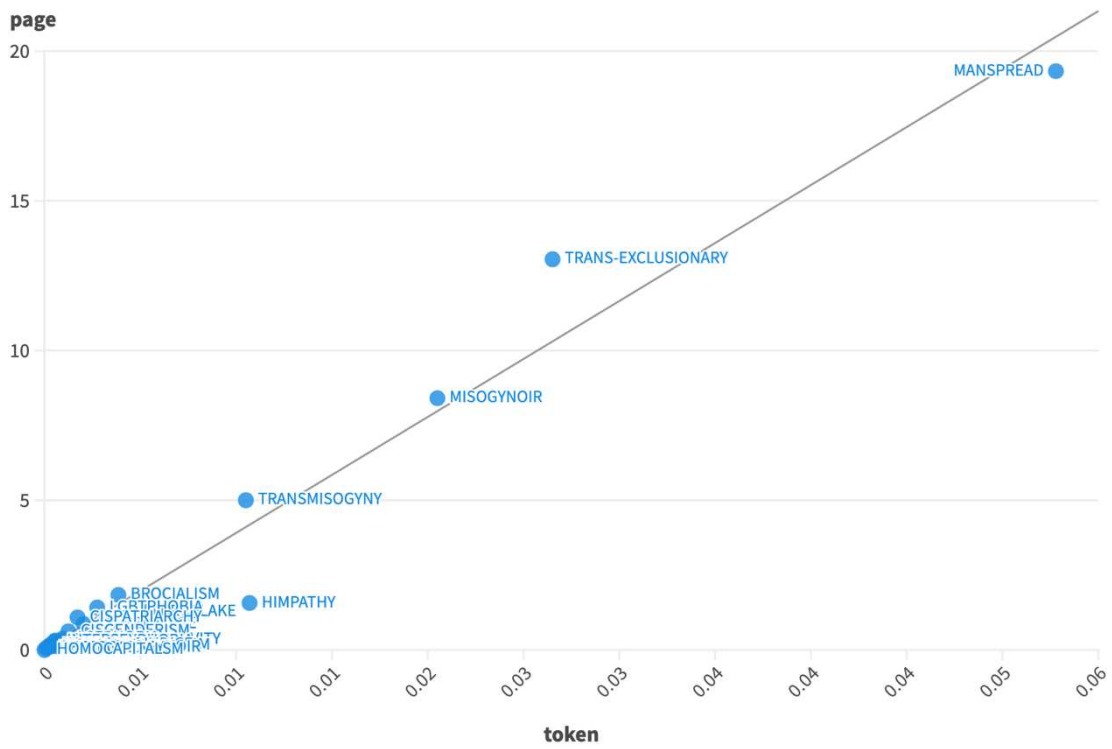


Figure 3. Relationship between token and page frequencies

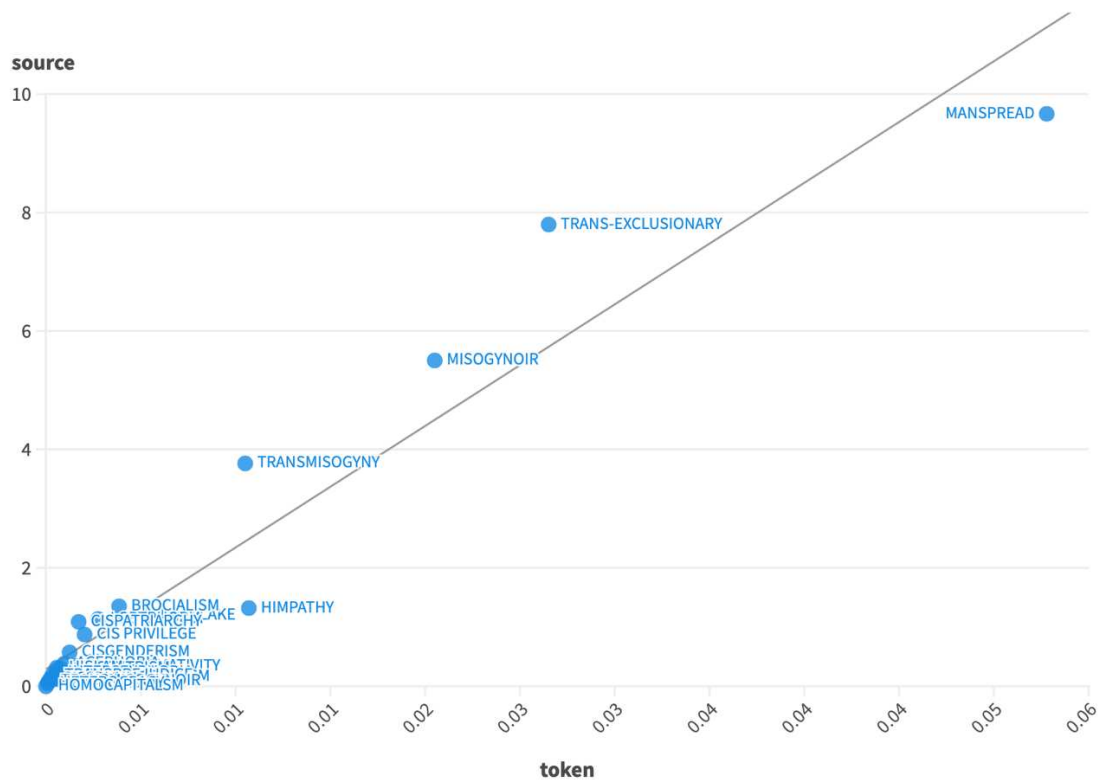


Figure 4. Relationship between token and source frequencies

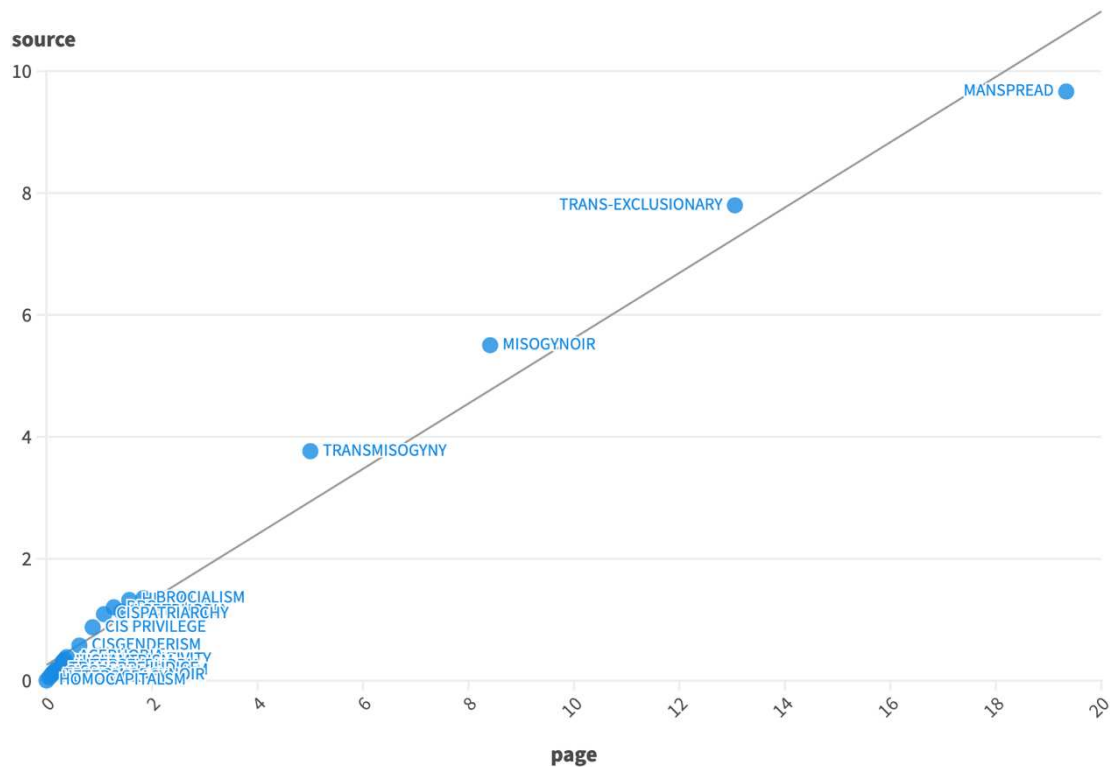


Figure 5. Relationship between page and source frequencies

These scatter plots show that the relationship between each variable tends to be linear, despite the fact that some neologisms may indeed appear more or less frequent depending on the measure observed. At first glance, for example, *himpathy* stands out from the other neologisms, since its token frequency is not aligned with its page (Figure 3) and source (Figure 4) frequencies. This neologism is one of the most frequent neologisms in terms of its token frequency. However, these figures show that only looking at this variable would overestimate its degree of diffusion since it does not appear in many different pages and sources. On the other hand, taking a closer look at the least frequent neologisms that form a cluster shows that only looking at token frequency would underestimate the diffusion of *broccialism*, which occurs on more pages than *himpathy* for example (see Figure 6 below with *broccialism* and *himpathy* represented with a cross symbol). This explains why, in the first graph, *himpathy* is ranked 4th and *broccialism* 7th in the token frequency column, but then 6th and 5th respectively in the page and source frequency columns.

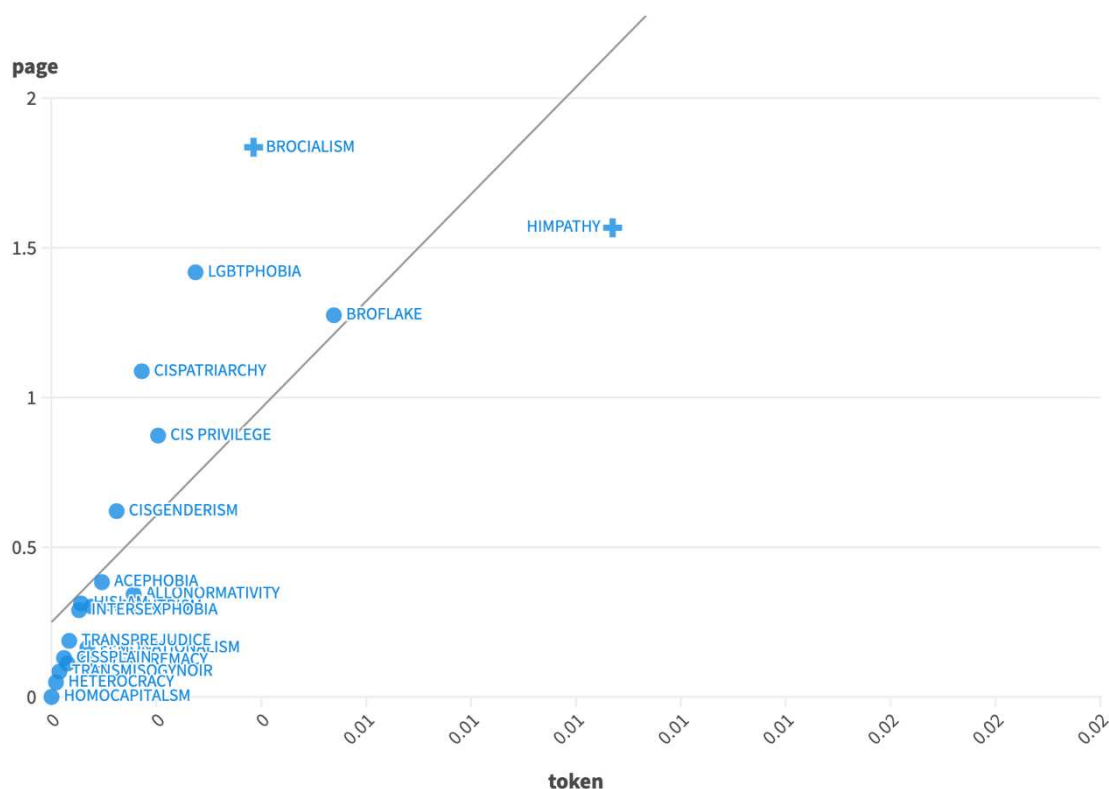


Figure 6. Relationship between token and page frequencies (neologisms with lower frequencies only)

For these reasons, although the graphs suggest a strong relationship between the different frequency measures, the decision was made to combine them rather than only keeping token frequency for the diffusion analysis.²¹ Based on these observations, one could also wonder why token frequency is used as the default measure of diffusion. While there is a clear practical advantage, which is that token frequency is easier to count, it could be argued that page and source frequencies are more accurate indicators of degree of diffusion.

5.1.2 (Non-)feminist contexts of usage

The study of diffusion should not be limited to the observation of how often neologisms are used, but should also include the contexts in which they are used. In order to observe

²¹ Simple linear regression analyses are typically used to statistically determine the relationship between two variables. In this case, it would be tempting to use linear regression to test if: (i) token frequency significantly predicts page frequency, (ii) token frequency significantly predicts source frequency, as well as if (iii) page frequency significantly predicts source frequency. However, this cannot be done because these measures are not independent from each other. Independence between variables is one of the assumptions that have to be met to carry out regression analysis.

the extent to which neologisms are used outside of feminist contexts, sources and pages in which neologisms occur have been annotated according to whether or not they focus on Feminism, Gender and/or Sexuality (FGS). More specifically, the proportions of occurrences in non-FGS pages and sources are analysed. Table 12 below shows the proportion of occurrences in non-FGS pages and sources for each neologism (in alphabetical order).

Neologism	Proportion of occurrences in non-FGS pages	Proportion of occurrences in non-FGS sources
acephobia	0	1
allonormativity	0	1
brocialism	0.441	1
broflake	0.824	1
cis privilege	0.167	1
ciscentrism	0.200	0.800
cisgenderism	0.154	0.833
cispatriarchy	1	1
cissplain	0	1
cissupremacy	0	1
ciswash	0	1
femonationalism	0	1
heterocracy	0	1
himpathy	0.053	0.938
hislam	0.800	1
intersexphobia	0	0.500
LGBTphobia	0.080	0.900
manspread	0.561	0.983
misogynoir	0.265	0.981
trans-exclusionary	0.045	0.959
transmisogynoir	0	1
transmisogyny	0.149	0.895
transprejudice	0	0.667
Average	0.205	0.932

Table 12. Proportion of occurrences in non-FGS pages and sources for each neologism

The maximum value 1 means that all occurrences are found in non-FGS pages and/or sources, indicating a high degree of diffusion. On the other hand, the minimum value 0 means that no occurrences have been found in non-FGS pages and/or sources, indicating a low degree of diffusion. For example, we can see that the first neologism in the table *acephobia* only occurs in non-FGS sources, which might suggest that it is highly diffused. However, focusing on the pages in which it occurs, we find that all of them are related to FGS, since the proportion of occurrences in *non-FGS* pages is 0.

On average, the proportion of occurrences found in sources which are not specialised in FGS is 0.93. While this might seem extremely high, and an indication of diffusion, it should be noted that despite the diversity of the NOW corpus, FGS sources nevertheless represent a minority in the collected corpus (16/390 sources). However, looking at the page level shows that most occurrences of feminist neologisms are in pages which are about FGS, since the average proportion of occurrences found in *non-FGS* pages is 0.21.

These proportions reveal that none of the neologisms, not even the hapaxes, occur only in FGS sources (second column). The neologism which has the lowest proportion of occurrences in non-FGS sources (0.5) is *intersexphobia*. It occurs in four sources, two of which are specialised in FGS, *Star Observer* and *Out in Perth*. On the other hand, 13 neologisms occur only in non-FGS sources (value 1). While this might be a sign of diffusion, looking at the page level (first column) reveals that eight of these neologisms only occur in articles which are *about* FGS (value 0).

For example, *cissplain* and *ciswash* occur in two different sources and pages each; while none of the sources are specialised in FGS, all of the articles are about FGS, as shown in the tables below.

Neologism	Source	Article
<i>cissplain</i>	The Irish Times	Online idiots of the far right and hard left turn on their own: Today's alt-righters and SJWs have far more in common than they care to know
	Firstpost	Nandini Krishnan's <i>Invisible Men</i> does many of us a personal and political disservice, writes interviewee featured in the book

Table 13. Sources and pages in which *cissplain* occurs

Neologism	Source	Article
<i>ciswash</i>	The Cornell Daily Sun	Suffragette and Stonewall: Hollywood's whitewashing of history
	Huffington Post	Scarlett Johansson pulls out of playing transgender character in 'Rub And Tug' following 'insensitive' comments

Table 14. Sources and pages in which *ciswash* occurs

The only neologism which only occurs in non-FGS sources and texts (value 1 in both columns), *cispatriarchy*, is a hapax. This reveals that looking at the proportions of occurrences in (non-)FGS sources and pages might give a biased image of diffusion since frequency numbers are not indicated. Based solely on proportions, the neologism *cispatriarchy* would be considered the most diffused, since it is the only one to occur only on pages and sources that are not on FGS. However, even taking frequency into account, that is by looking at the frequency of occurrences in non-FGS contexts, and not just at proportions, gives a different account of the diffusion of neologisms than just looking at frequency regardless of its distribution across contexts. This is illustrated in Figure 7 representing the ranking of neologisms according to page frequency in the first column, non-FGS page frequency in the second column, and proportion of non-FGS pages in the third column.

Focusing on the neologisms *himpathy* and *hislam*, the ranking of neologisms based on their page frequency shows *himpathy* as 6th and *hislam* 14th. However, when we look at their frequency only in non-FGS pages, *himpathy* ranks 12th and *hislam* 8th. What this shows is that if diffusion was only measured in terms of page frequency regardless of the topic they discuss, *himpathy* would be considered more diffused than *hislam*. However, once we look at what these pages discuss, and more specifically whether they discuss FGS or not, we realise that *hislam* is in fact more diffused than *himpathy*, since the former occurs more frequently in pages which are not about FGS than the latter. The neologism *trans-exclusionary* is another example highlighting the importance of combining variables when measuring and comparing diffusion of neologisms. Based on page frequency (first column), *trans-exclusionary* is the second most frequent neologism after *manspread*, therefore indicating that it is one of the diffused feminist neologisms. However, if we measure diffusion in terms of the proportion of occurrences in non-FGS pages, *trans-exclusionary* becomes one of the least diffused neologisms (13th in the third column).

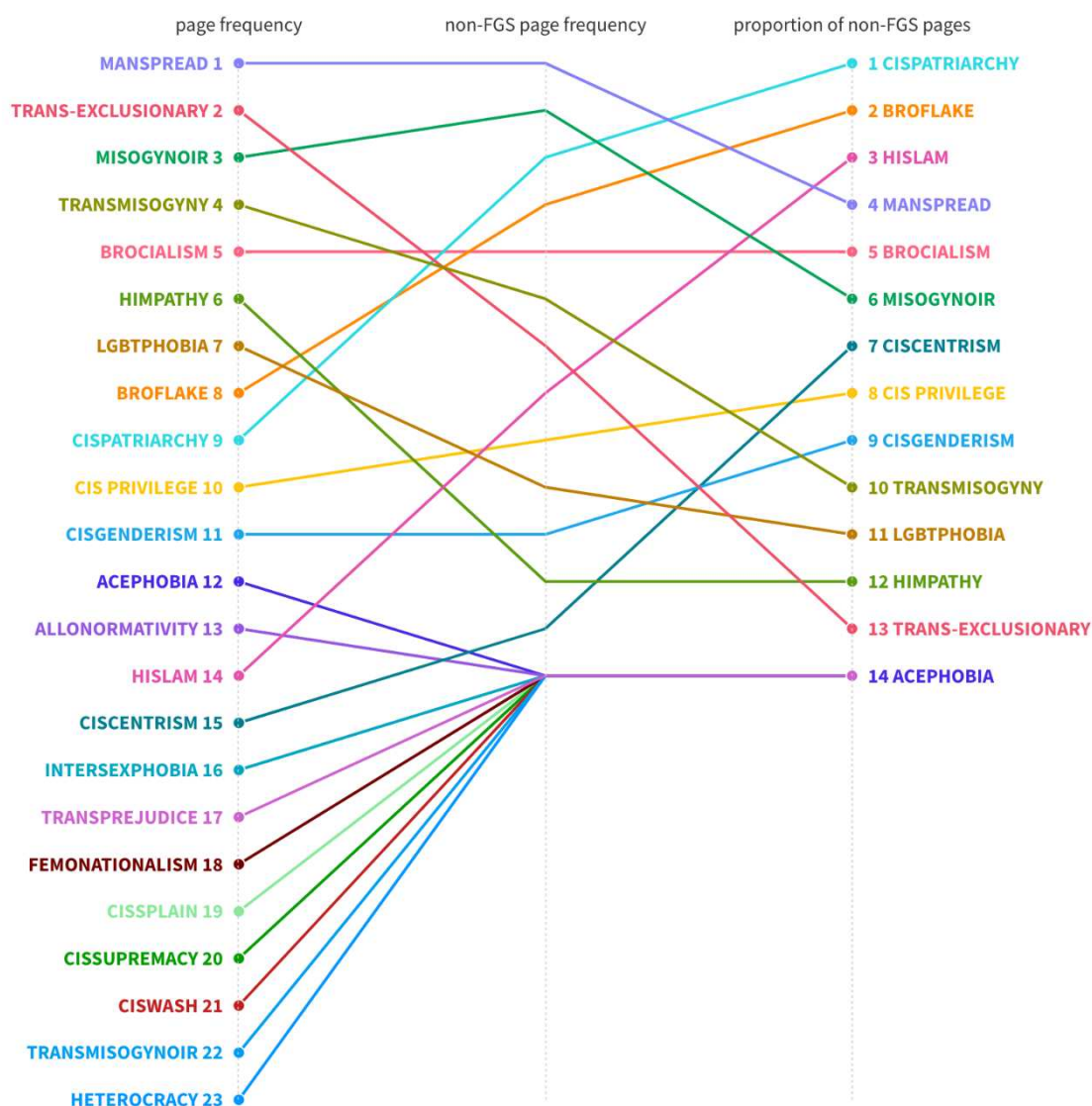


Figure 7. Ranking of neologisms according to page frequency, non-FGS page frequency and proportion of non-FGS pages

Once again, these findings reveal the importance of combining variables. While one neologism might be more frequent than another, it is not necessarily more diffused if we take the contexts of usage into account. Another way of showing that a higher frequency is not necessarily a sign of greater diffusion is to explore spatial diffusion.

5.1.3 Feminist neologisms across the world

On the basis of the contextual information provided by the NOW corpus, and more specifically the geographical information, it was found that, overall, feminist neologisms are present in 21 different countries. However, looking at each feminist neologism

individually, we can see that they differ in their degree of spatial diffusion, as shown in the table below which presents the number of countries in which each neologism occurs. For example, while *manspread* occurs in 17 different countries, more than half of the neologisms merely occur in one to three countries.

Neologism	Number of countries
manspread	17
misogynoir	13
trans-exclusionary	13
transmisogyny	11
LGBTphobia	9
broflake	8
brocialism	7
himpathy	7
cis privilege	6
cisgenderism	6
acephobia	3
ciscentrism	3
femonationalism	3
hislam	3
cissplain	2
ciswash	2
intersexphobia	2
transprejudice	2
allonormativity	1
cispatriarchy	1
cissupremacy	1
heterocracy	1
transmisogynoir	1

Table 15. Number of countries in which neologisms occur

The graph below shows the ranking of neologisms based on their source frequency (first column)²² and the number of countries in which they appear (second column), in order to compare the two variables. Source frequency, rather than token or page frequency, is taken as the point of comparison because this frequency measure is more closely related to number of countries. Since each source is based in a single country, the one-to-one relation would be closer than comparing token frequency to number of countries. However, even when using this frequency measure, the analysis of the degree of diffusion of a neologism changes as soon as the number of countries is taken into account.

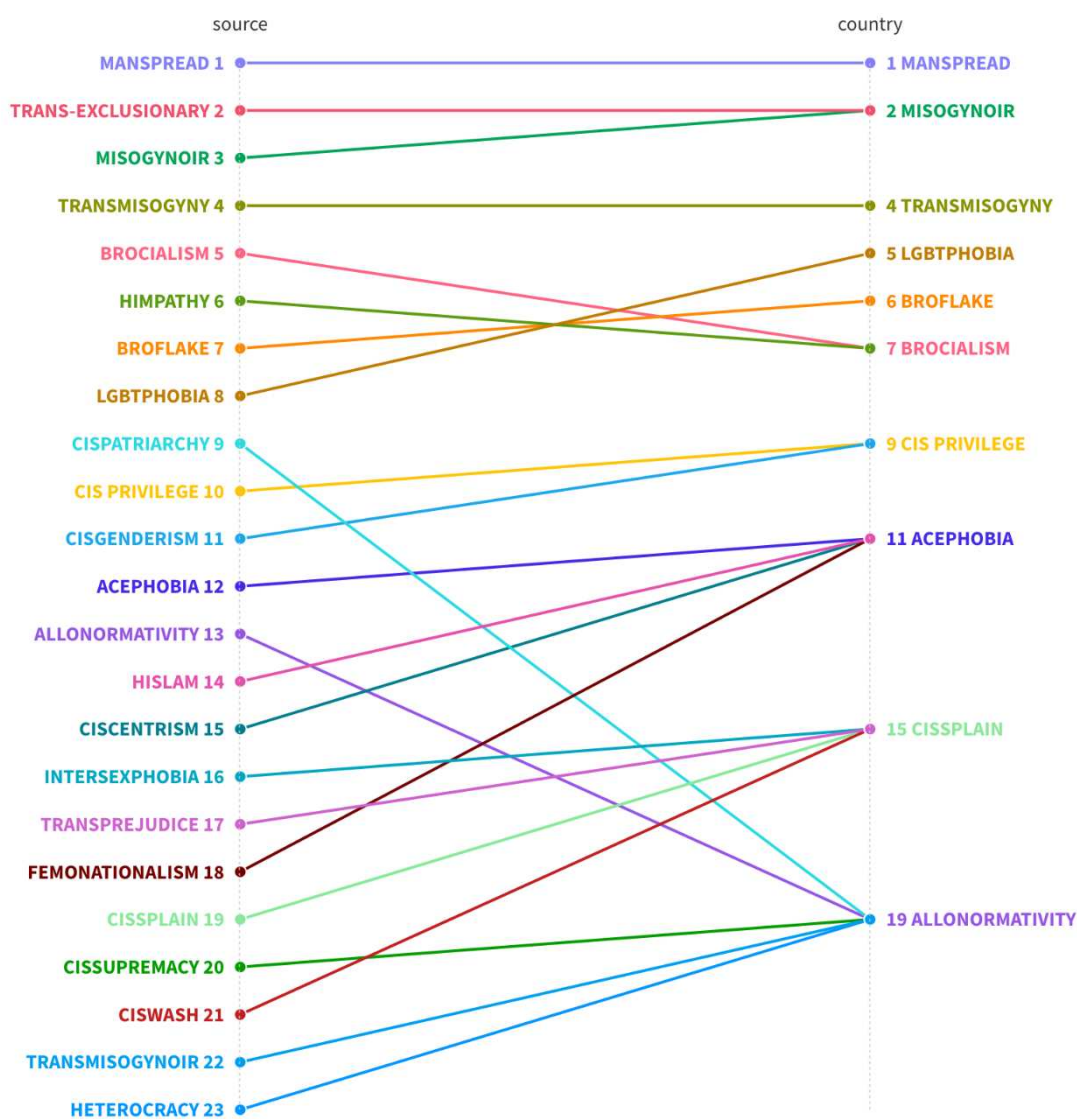


Figure 8. Ranking of neologisms according to source frequency and number of countries

²² Note that this corresponds to third column in Figure 2.

Focusing on the neologisms *brocialism* and *LGBTphobia* for example, we observe that even if *brocialism* (5th in source) appears in more sources than *LGBTphobia* (8th in source), it is *LGBTphobia* (5th in country), and not *brocialism* (7th in country) which occurs in more countries. Once again, diffusion depends on the variable observed. If we use source frequency to measure diffusion, *brocialism* is considered more diffused than *LGBTphobia*, but it is the opposite if number of countries is used to measure diffusion.

While some neologisms are found in several countries, as indicated in the table above, it should also be noted that there are countries where more neologisms occur than others. The map below represents the distribution of neologisms across the world, with each point colour representing a neologism. We can see that more neologisms occur in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, for example. On the other hand, there are countries where only a single neologism is present, such as Bangladesh, Japan, or Kenya. Even though a single country can have multiple neologisms, this does not mean that each neologism has the same frequency within that country. The point size corresponds to raw token frequency. We can see that while *misogynoir* (in dark orange) is more frequent than *manspread* in the United States and in South Africa for example, it is the other way around in the United Kingdom and in Canada.

This map shows how different variables, here frequency and number of countries, can be combined.

5 10

- BROCCIALISM
- BROFLAKE
- CISGENDERISM
- FEMONATIONALISM
- HIMPATHY
- HISLAM
- INTERSEXPFOBIA
- LGBTPHOBIA
- MANSREAD
- MISOGYNOIR
- TRANS-EXCLUSIONARY
- TRANSMISOGYNY
- CIS PRIVILEGE
- CISCENTRISM
- HETEROCRACY
- TRANSMISOGYNOIR
- TRANSPREJUDICE
- CISWASH
- CISSPLAIN
- ALLONORMATIVITY
- ACEPHOBIA
- CISSUPREMACY
- CISPATRIARCHY

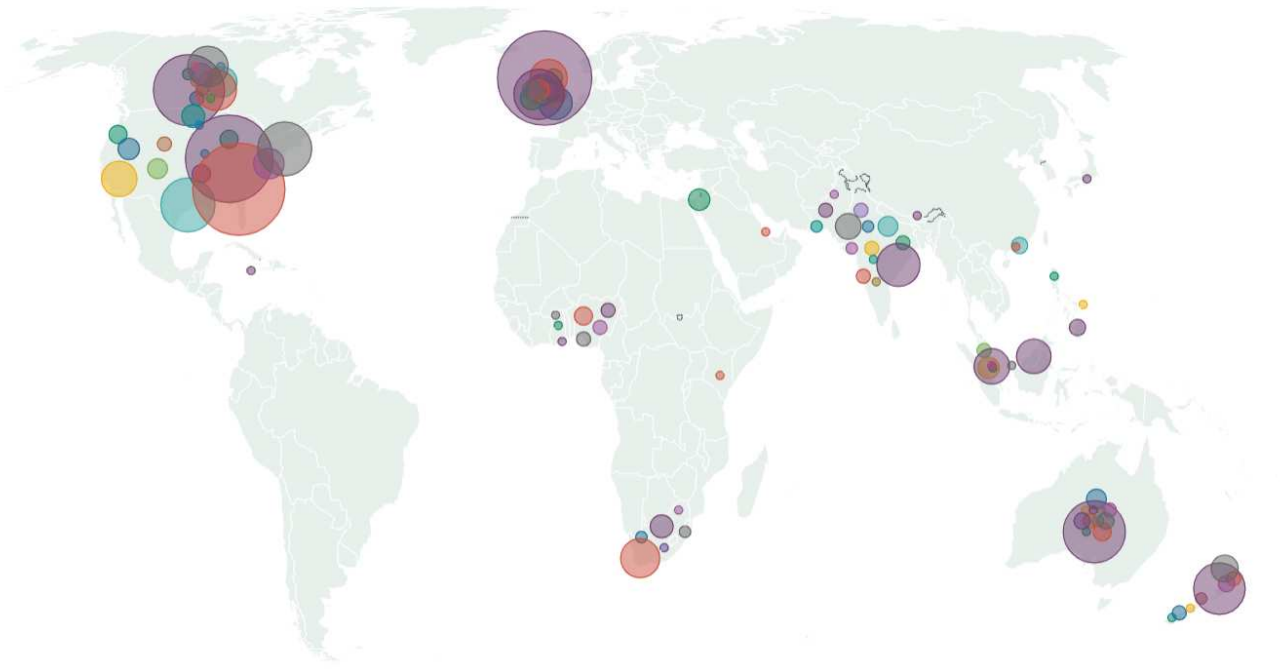


Figure 9. Diffusion of feminist neologisms around the world with frequency measures

5.1.4 The life span of feminist neologisms

The last variable which will be discussed individually, before combing all seven diffusion variables, is the temporal one, which corresponds to measuring the life span of neologisms. One neologism might be highly frequent, and thus seem well-diffused; however, this high frequency could be due to a spike in usage over a short time span. Another neologism might, in turn, be less frequent but occur over a longer time span. In that case, the neologism occurring over a longer time span could be considered more diffused than the one occurring over a shorter period of time. The table below presents each neologism, along with how many days they have been used, in a decreasing order. It should be noted that the days do not have to be consecutive. For example, the number of active days for the neologism *acephobia* is 5. The neologism first appeared on 10 August 2017, then on 4 February 2020, 10 September 2020, 28 October 2020 and finally on 17 January 2021. For the purposes of this variable, the fact that the neologism appears several times on some of these dates is not taken into account.

On average, feminist neologisms occur 32 days in the NOW corpus. This value can be used to give a simplistic interpretation of the diffusion of feminist neologisms in the corpus. Those that appear for more than 32 days could be argued to be diffused, those below this average are not. According to this metric, *manspread* once again seems to be the most diffused since it occurs over a period of 295 days, far more than any other neologism.

Even for neologisms that appear around the same time, there are clear differences. Thus, it could be argued that *trans-exclusionary*, which appears 45 days in the corpus, is more diffused than *broflake* (12 days), *himpathy* (17 days) and *LGBTphobia* (23 days). All of these appear for the first time in the corpus around 2016-2017.

Neologisms	Active days
manspread	295
misogynoir	148
transmisogyny	96
trans-exclusionary	45
brocialism	34
LGBTphobia	23
cis privilege	18
himpathy	17
cisgenderism	13
broflake	12
acephobia	5
ciscentrism	5
hislam	5
intersexphobia	5
femonationalism	3
transprejudice	3
cissplain	2
ciswash	2
allonormativity	1
cispatriarchy	1
cissupremacy	1
heterocracy	1
transmisogynoir	1
Average	32

Table 16. Number of active days for each neologism

However, neologisms can first occur in the corpus over a wide period of time. *Cisgenderism*, for example, first occurred in 2010, and *cispatriarchy*, in 2020. It is therefore not surprising that *cisgenderism* occurs during more days than *cispatriarchy*. Because of this, the temporal variable was adjusted to measure the *proportion* of active days since the first occurrence of a neologism which is represented in the table below in a decreasing order.

Neologism	Proportion of active days
manspread	0.13030
misogynoir	0.05514
transmisogyny	0.02896
trans-exclusionary	0.01841
cispatriarchy	0.01613
brocialism	0.01501
himpathy	0.01419
LGBTphobia	0.01221
broflake	0.00900
cis privilege	0.00493
allonormativity	0.00400
acephobia	0.00385
cisgenderism	0.00323
hislam	0.00307
ciscentrism	0.00297
intersexphobia	0.00282
transprejudice	0.00183
femonationalism	0.00140
cissupremacy	0.00135
cissplain	0.00129
ciswash	0.00103
transmisogynoir	0.00086
heterocracy	0.00028
Average	0.01445

Table 17. Proportion of active days of each neologism

To measure the proportion of active days, the total number of days during which a neologism occurs was divided by the total number of potential active days during which a neologism could have occurred, which corresponds to the total number of days between the first day of occurrence and the last collection day (28/02/2021). For example, the neologism *cisgenderism* occurs during 13 days in the corpus. Its first occurrence was on 20 February 2010. Since the collection of occurrences ended on 28 February 2021, the neologism could

have occurred during 4,028 days, i.e. the total number of potential active days. To measure the proportion of active days, the total number of active days (13) is divided by the total number of potential active days (4,028), which makes 0.00323.

Here again, the comparison between neologisms in terms of diffusion is different depending on whether the measure is based on token frequency or life span (with the exception of five neologisms: *manspread*, *LGBTphobia*, *allonormativity*, *transmisogynoir*, and *heterocracy*). This is shown in the graph below representing the neologisms ranking according to token frequency in the first column and proportion of active days in the second column.

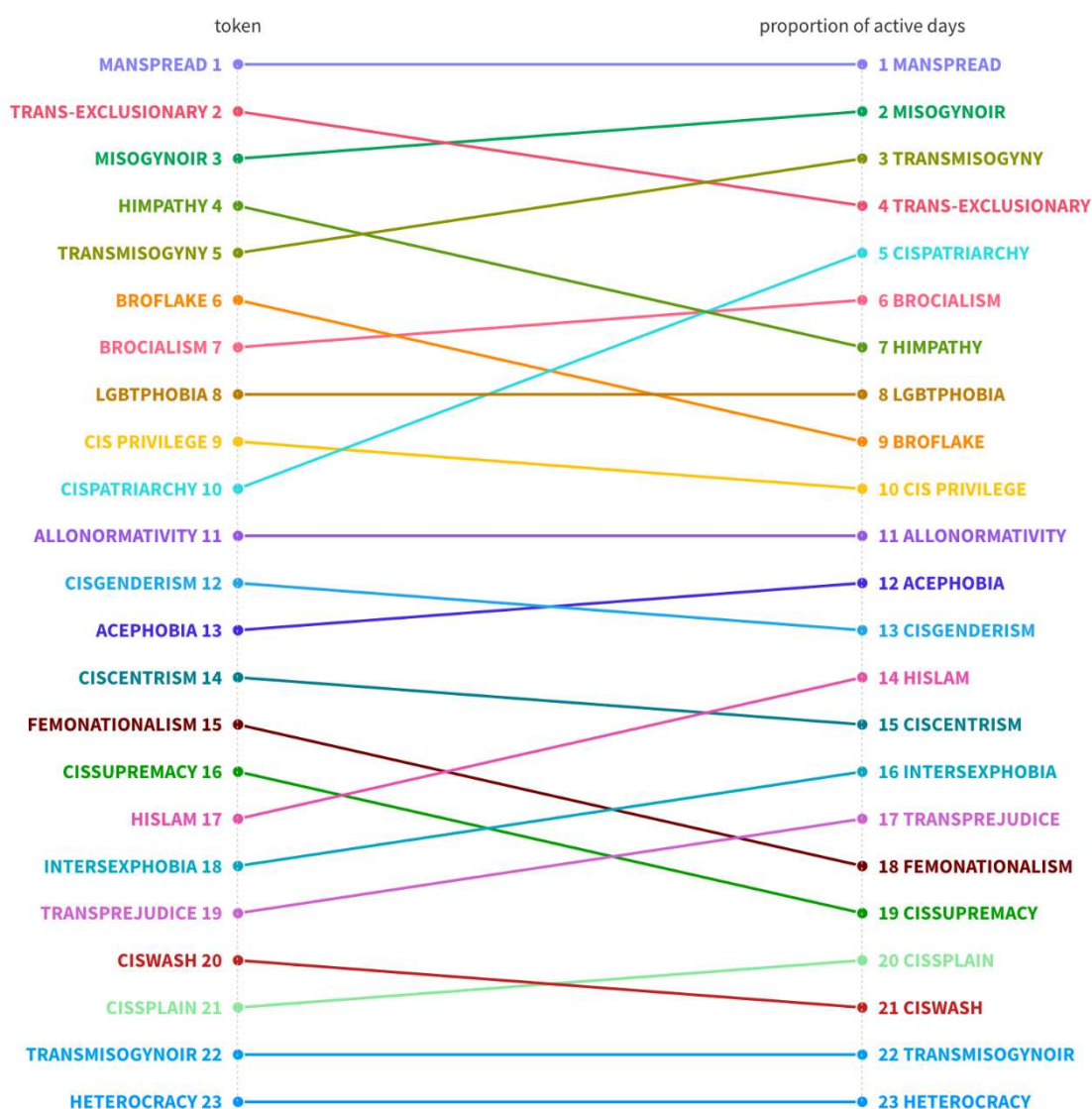


Figure 10. Neologisms ranking according to token frequency and proportion of active days

For example, according to the token frequency of *misogynoir* and *trans-exclusionary* in the table below, the latter is more frequent than the former, thus suggesting that *trans-exclusionary* is more diffused than *misogynoir* (as shown in Table 11, this is also the case for both page and source frequencies). However, looking at the proportion of active days suggests that it is the opposite, since it is higher for *misogynoir* than for *trans-exclusionary*.

Neologism	Token	Proportion of active days
misogynoir	0.0205	0.0551
trans-exclusionary	0.0265	0.0184

Table 18. Comparison of token frequency and proportion of active days between *misogynoir* and *trans-exclusionary*

In addition to frequency, the temporal variable can also be compared to other measures of diffusion such as the context of usage discussed before. Below are the life cycles of four neologisms occurring around the same time, with the proportion of occurrences in (non-) FGS pages also being represented in these graphs.

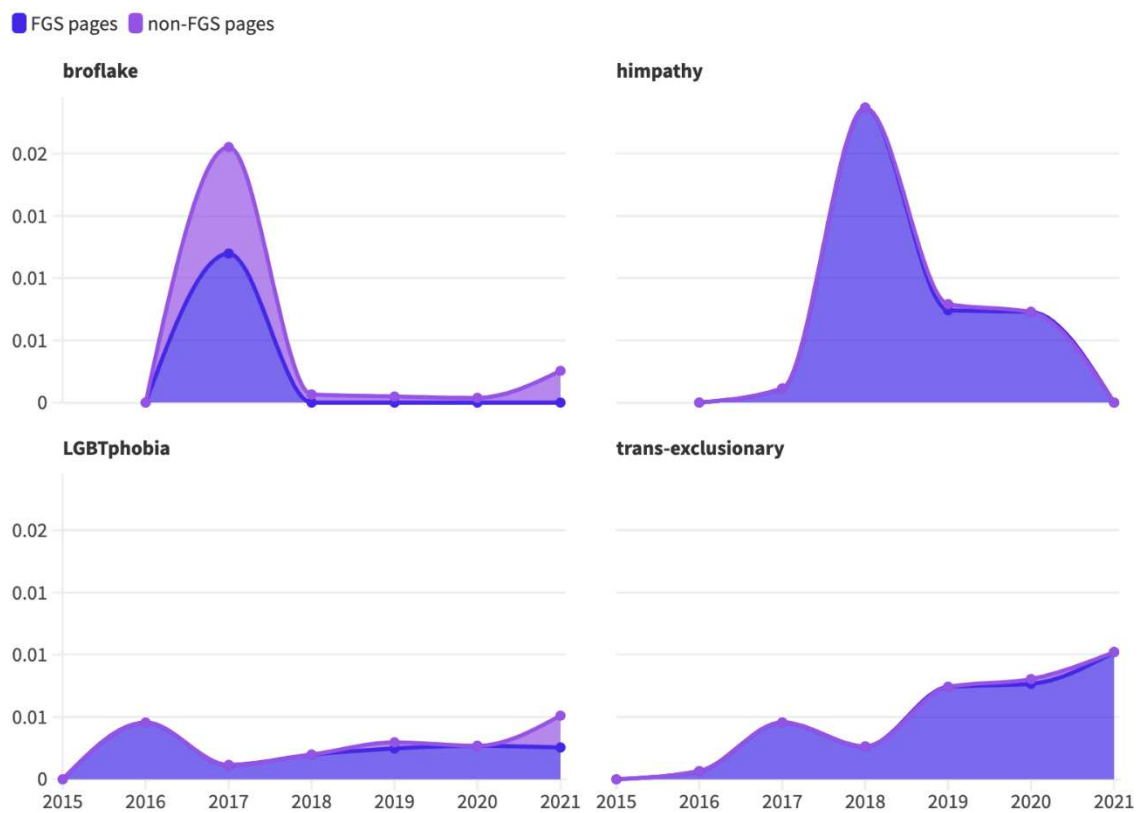


Figure 11. Lifecycles of *broflake*, *himpathy*, *LGBTphobia*, and *trans-exclusionary* with distribution across (non-)FGS pages

Here we find that while *broflake*, *himpathy* and *LGBTphobia* have shorter life spans, they occur more often in non-FGS pages than *trans-exclusionary*. In fact, although it occurs for fewer days, *broflake* is the one which occurs the most in texts which are not about FGS. On the other hand, while *trans-exclusionary* occurs for 45 days, and thus the longest, it is the one with the lowest occurrences in non-FSG texts. Once again, combining several variables gives a different picture, and we find that having a longer life span does not necessarily mean higher diffusion. In fact, Fischer (1998) takes this temporal aspect into consideration in her study of neologisms since she argues that, in addition to reaching a certain frequency, a lexeme must appear over a couple of years to complete the institutionalisation process. However, she does not specify how often, i.e. during how many days, it must appear during these years.

These findings, based on the comparison between the life span and frequency variables, as well as occurrences in non-FGS pages to measure the diffusion of neologisms, are in line with the previous comparisons between different types of variables. The degree of diffusion depends on the variable used to measure it. It is for this reason that all of the variables discussed so far have been combined into a diffusion index.

5.1.5 From token frequency to the diffusion index

So far, the analysis of the diffusion of feminist neologisms has focused on the *comparison* between different variables: frequency measures (token, page, and source), contexts of usage ((non-)FGS pages and sources), a geographical variable (number of countries), and finally, a temporal variable (proportion of active days). What is needed, however, is a *combination* of all seven variables with the diffusion index. Because these variables are on a different scale, we use the min-max normalisation (MMN) method presented in the methodology chapter (Section 3.3) which normalises values on the basis of the minimum and maximum values of each variable. The two tables below gather the values of the seven diffusion variables for each neologism, before and after the MMN.

Focusing on the variable token frequency, we can see in Table 19 that the neologism *heterocracy* has the lowest token frequency value (0.00009), while *manspread* has the highest one (0.05279). As a result, the MMN assigns the token frequency of *heterocracy* the value 0 and *manspread* the value 1 (Table 20). The token frequency value of the other neologisms is calculated on the basis of this new scale ranging from 0 to 1. The same method is applied to the seven variables so that they are all on the same scale.

Neologism	Token	Page	Source	Prop. of non-FGS pages	Prop. of non-FGS sources	Countries	Prop. of active days
acephobia	0.00096	0.38348	0.38348	0	1	3	0.00385
allonormativity	0.00157	0.34332	0.34332	0	1	1	0.0040
brocialism	0.00385	1.83632	1.35024	0.44118	1	7	0.01501
broflake	0.00538	1.27504	1.20004	0.82353	1	8	0.00900
cis privilege	0.00203	0.87341	0.87341	0.16667	1	6	0.00493
ciscentrism	0.00077	0.30231	0.30231	0.20000	0.80000	3	0.00297
cisgenderism	0.00124	0.62081	0.57305	0.15385	0.83333	6	0.00323
cispatriarchy	0.00172	1.08812	1.08812	1	1	1	0.01613
cissplain	0.00024	0.13007	0.13007	0	1	2	0.00129
cissupremacy	0.00063	0.12183	0.12183	0	1	1	0.00135
ciswash	0.00030	0.11198	0.11198	0	1	2	0.00103
femonationalism	0.00068	0.16408	0.16408	0	1	3	0.00140
heterocracy	0.00009	0.04886	0.04886	0	1	1	0.00028
himpathy	0.01070	1.56742	1.31993	0.05263	0.93750	7	0.01419
hislam	0.00056	0.31227	0.31227	0.80000	1	3	0.00307
intersexphobia	0.00053	0.28968	0.23174	0	0.50000	2	0.00282
LGBTphobia	0.00275	1.41868	1.13494	0.08000	0.90000	9	0.01221
manspread	0.05279	19.33540	9.66770	0.56145	0.98324	17	0.13030
misogynoir	0.02050	8.41078	5.50335	0.26543	0.98113	13	0.05514
trans-exclusionary	0.02651	13.05242	7.79962	0.04472	0.95918	13	0.01841
transmisogynoir	0.00015	0.08456	0.08456	0	1	1	0.00086
transmisogyny	0.01051	5.00199	3.76387	0.14851	0.89474	11	0.02896
transprejudice	0.00034	0.18736	0.18736	0	0.66667	2	0.00183

Table 19. Value of each diffusion variable before the MMN

Neologism	Token	Page	Source	Prop. of non-FGS pages	Prop. Of non-FGS sources	Countries	Prop. of active days
acephobia	0.01662	0.01735	0.03479	0	1	0.12500	0.02740
allonormativity	0.02811	0.01527	0.03061	0	1	0	0.02858
brocialism	0.07149	0.09268	0.13529	0.44118	1	0.37500	0.11327
broflake	0.10056	0.06358	0.11968	0.82353	1	0.43750	0.06706
cis privilege	0.03695	0.04275	0.08572	0.16667	1	0.31250	0.03572
ciscentrism	0.01290	0.01314	0.02635	0.20000	0.60000	0.12500	0.02064
cisgenderism	0.02194	0.02966	0.05450	0.15385	0.66667	0.31250	0.02264
cispatriarchy	0.03104	0.05389	0.10804	1	1	0	0.12187
cissplain	0.00288	0.00421	0.00844	0	1	0.06250	0.00776
cissupremacy	0.01029	0.00378	0.00759	0	1	0	0.00817
ciswash	0.00409	0.00327	0.00656	0	1	0.06250	0.00574
femonationalism	0.01136	0.00597	0.01198	0	1	0.12500	0.00855
heterocracy	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
himpathy	0.20141	0.07874	0.13214	0.05263	0.87500	0.37500	0.10696
hislam	0.00906	0.01366	0.02738	0.80000	1	0.12500	0.02145
intersexphobia	0.00834	0.01249	0.01901	0	0	0.06250	0.01947
LGBTphobia	0.05049	0.07102	0.11291	0.08000	0.80000	0.50000	0.09171
manspread	1	1	1	0.56145	0.96648	1	1
misogynoir	0.38744	0.43356	0.56706	0.26543	0.96226	0.75000	0.42193
trans-exclusionary	0.50147	0.67423	0.80579	0.04472	0.91837	0.75000	0.13943
transmisogynoir	0.00122	0.00185	0.00371	0	1	0	0.00441
transmisogyny	0.19774	0.25682	0.38622	0.14851	0.78947	0.62500	0.22055
transprejudice	0.00479	0.00718	0.01440	0	0.33333	0.06250	0.01193

Table 20. Value of each diffusion variable after the MMN

Based on this normalisation, each neologism can be assigned a diffusion index which corresponds to the average of the values after the MMN of the seven diffusion variables. The average has been selected as the index because it allows us to maintain a scale ranging from 0 to 1. This diffusion index allows us to observe the degree of diffusion by combining all the variables. The table below presents the diffusion index for each neologism in a decreasing order.

Neologism	Diffusion index
manspread	0.9326
trans-exclusionary	0.5477
misogynoir	0.5411
transmisogyny	0.3749
broflake	0.3731
cispatriarchy	0.3307
brocialism	0.3184
hislam	0.2852
himpathy	0.2603
LGBTphobia	0.2437
cis privilege	0.2400
cisgenderism	0.1802
acephobia	0.1745
femonationalism	0.1661
allonormativity	0.1575
cissplain	0.1551
ciswash	0.1546
cissupremacy	0.1471
transmisogynoir	0.1445
heterocracy	0.1429
ciscentrism	0.1426
transprejudice	0.0620
intersexphobia	0.0174

Table 21. Diffusion index of each neologism

Taking all variables into account, the diffusion of neologisms is quite different from when one looks at diffusion variables individually. For example, the two least diffused neologisms are no longer *heterocracy* and *transmisogynoir*, even though they remain among the least diffused, but *transprejudice* and *intersexphobia*. This is shown in the figure below representing neologisms ranking according to token frequency in the first column and diffusion index in the second column.

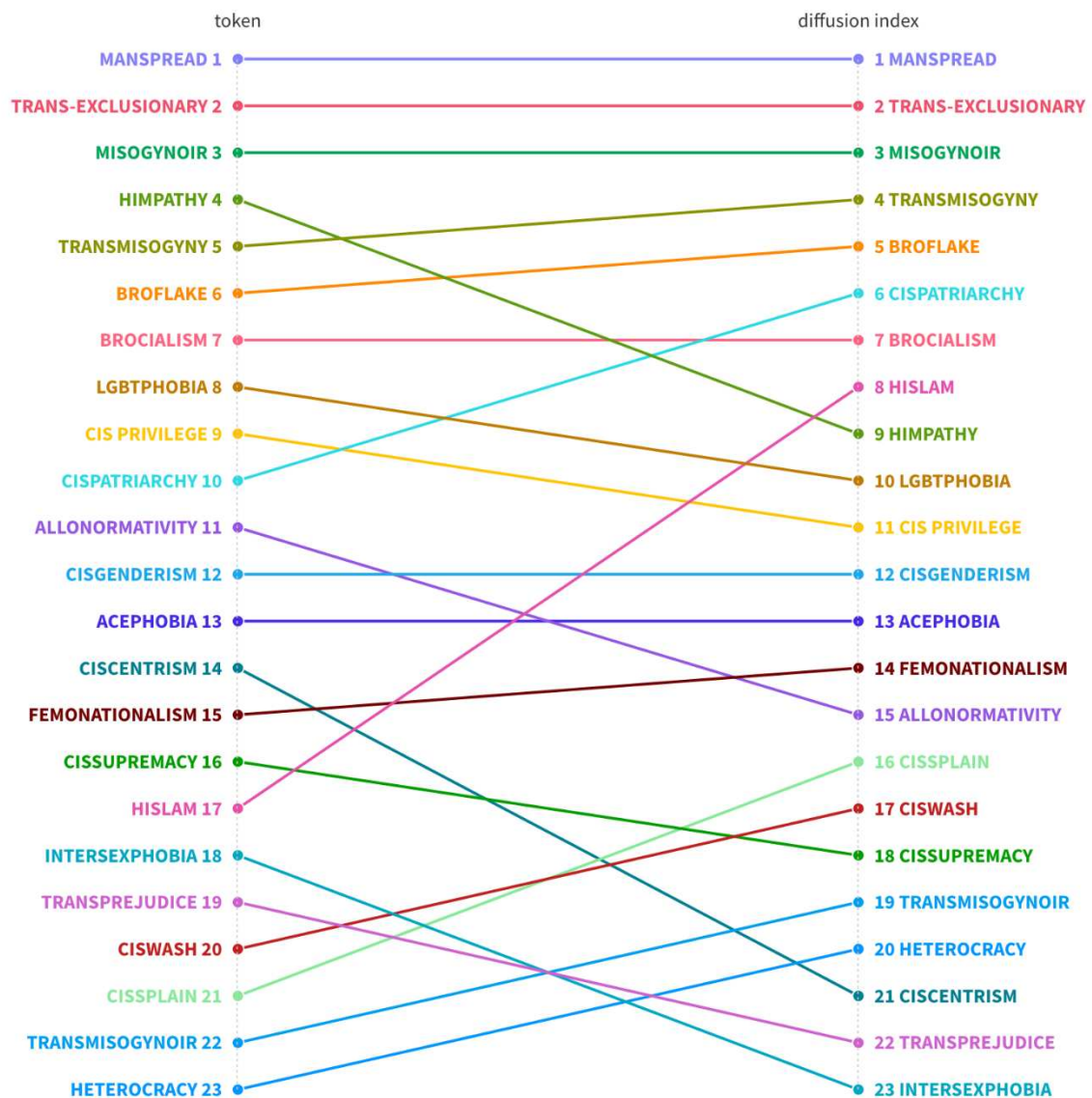


Figure 12. Ranking of neologisms according to token frequency and diffusion index

Because frequency measures are not the only ones taken into account, even hapaxes are no longer considered the least diffused neologisms. Even though they only occur once in the corpus, they occur in a source which is not specialised in FGS, therefore giving the maximum value 1 to one of the variables, i.e. proportion of occurrences in

non-FGS sources. Neologisms like *ciscentrism*, *transprejudice*, and *intersexphobia*, on the other hand, do occur in FGS sources. The changes are not limited to neologisms on the lower end of the diffusion process. Except for six neologisms (which remain constant), all of them appear more, or less, diffused when comparing token frequency values to the diffusion index. The neologism *hislam* in particular shows the biggest change (from 17th to 8th) which is mainly due to the fact that it mostly occurs in non-FGS pages, as discussed above. As for neologisms on the higher end of the diffusion process, the first three neologisms remain the same, namely *manspread*, *trans-exclusionary*, and *misogynoir*. *Manspread* is invariably the most diffused, regardless of the variable used. In a way, it ticks all of the diffusion boxes, and its diffusion index shows that it is indeed far more diffused than the other neologisms, even *trans-exclusionary* and *misogynoir*, as shown in the graph below.

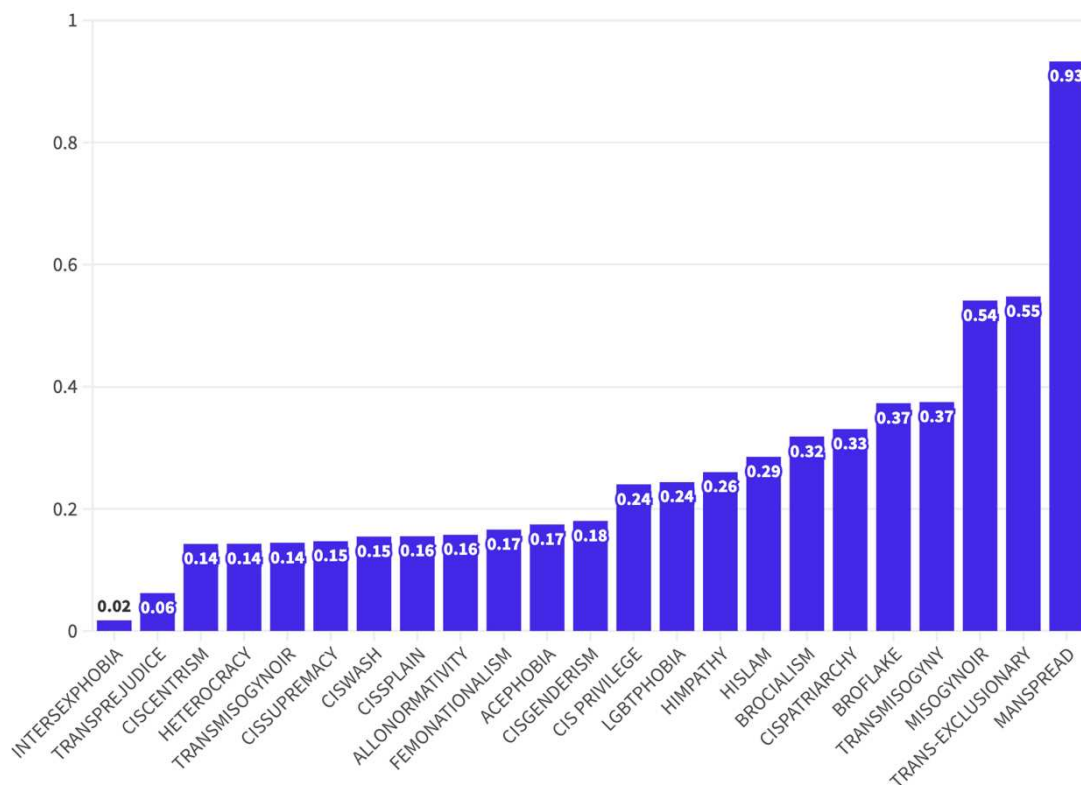


Figure 13. Diffusion index of neologisms

While frequency does seem to equate to diffusion for neologisms like *manspread*, the multidimensional nature of diffusion should not only be considered for low frequency neologisms, but also when comparing neologisms with close frequency values. Previous studies on the social dynamic process of neologisms have taken this multidimensionality

into account. For example, and as mentioned before, Fischer (1998) uses a temporal variable in addition to token frequency. Kerremans (2015) also takes into account different variables to categorise neologisms according to degrees of conventionalisation, for example, by looking at number of sources and number and types of pages, in addition to token frequency. However, these variables are not always applied systematically. Some neologisms for example might not be highly frequent but occur in several types of pages, as is also the case for some of the feminist neologisms studied here. To counter this, Kerremans (idem: 115) interprets degrees of conventionalisation in terms of prototypicality, in the sense that there are prototypical conventional neologisms, as well as prototypical non-conventional ones. For example, a prototypical non-conventional neologism would be one that has a low token frequency and only occurs in the same type of source. However, using different diffusion variables to compare degrees of diffusion among feminist neologisms reveals that most neologisms do not show a clear pattern of diffusion. Despite the lack of order in the diffusion patterns, this diversity can still be taken into account in order to compare the diffusion process of several neologisms using the diffusion index.

The results of the study on neologism diffusion indicate that the neologism *manspread* is a successful form of feminist linguistic activism. However, an analysis based solely on diffusion is insufficient to assess the success of this type of feminist linguistic activism, and usualisation has to be taking into account as well.

5.2 Usualisation: the political meaning of neologisms

Previous studies on feminist neologisms have identified a link between diffusion and semantic change. Ehrlich and King (1994) argue that, when used outside of a feminist community, feminist neologisms can get redefined to ridicule and trivialise the denoted phenomena, and thus be depoliticised, in the sense that they lose their intended feminist meaning. This can be done by expanding the meaning of feminist neologisms. For example, the authors found that the meaning of *date rape* was broadened to include all types of sexual interaction and to make it appear to be the intended feminist meaning. More recently, Bridges (2017), looking at *mansplain*, explains that “a word can be reappropriated to different social groups with converse meaning, as it is applied in new contexts” (idem: 101). These findings echo the other sub-process of conventionalisation,

namely usualisation, and how it can contribute to semantic change and be influenced by diffusion (Schmid 2020).

5.2.1 Redefinition in (non-)feminist contexts

In order to observe whether or not feminist neologisms get redefined as they get diffused, we can compare the number of occurrences where neologisms are redefined in different contexts. More specifically, we can compare occurrences of redefinition in texts about FGS, or sources specialised in it, to those that are not. This was done by observing the two usualisation variables corresponding to the semantic dimension: meaning and redefinition (see Section 3.3.3). First, the meaning used in each occurrence of the feminist neologisms was annotated. Then, all meanings which did not correspond to the original meaning were coded as redefinitions. The tables and figure below present the number and percentage of occurrences in which neologisms are redefined in (non-)FGS pages and sources.

	FGS page		Non-FGS page		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
redefinition	69	6.45	109	29.62	178	12.39
no redefinition	1000	93.55	259	70.38	1259	87.61
total	1069	100	368	100	1437	100

Table 22. (Non-)redefinition in (non-)FGS pages

	FGS source		Non-FGS source		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
redefinition	2	2.86	176	12.87	178	12.39
no redefinition	68	97.14	1191	87.13	1259	87.61
total	70	100	1367	100	1437	100

Table 23. (Non-)redefinition in (non-)FGS sources

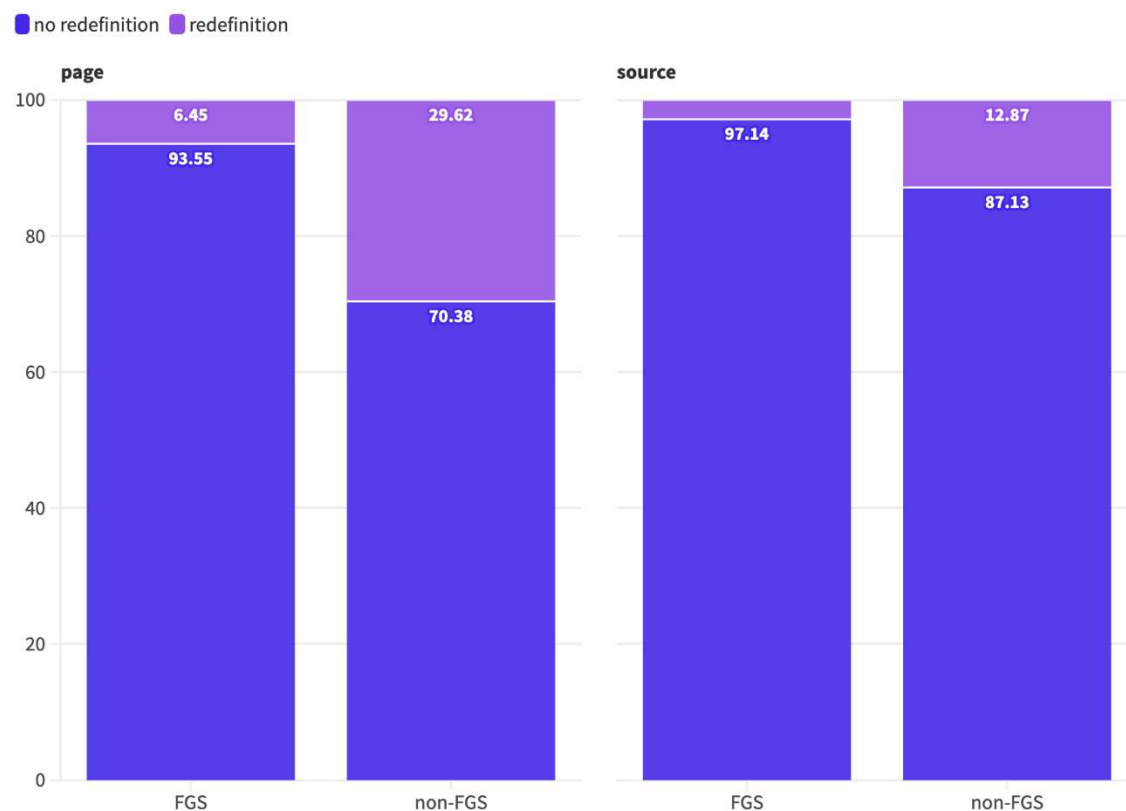


Figure 14. (Non-)redefinition in (non-)FGS pages and sources as percentages

Two main observations can be made from these numbers. First, comparing the proportions of redefinition in pages and sources, we find that there are fewer cases of redefinition in the latter than in the former. This does not come as a surprise since it would be expected that authors writing for FGS sources are less likely to redefine feminist terms than authors of an article on FGS, but not necessarily in an FGS media outlet. The cases of redefinition in FGS sources concern two occurrences of *manspread* in the media *NewNowNext*, which is now named *Logo News* and reports LGBTQ news. Both occurrences refer to a male model's posture in an underwear advertising campaign.

- (19) Lil Nas X Strips and **Manspreads** for New Calvin Klein Campaign.
(*NewNowNext*, 29/02/2020)

In this example, the meaning of *manspread* is redefined, and even depoliticised, in the sense that it no longer uses the feminist meaning of men sitting with their legs wide open, especially in public transport, therefore taking the space of others. As for FGS pages, almost all cases of redefinition also concern *manspread*, except for one occurrence of *trans-exclusionary* reporting JK Rowling's comments on the fact that including trans men because they were born women is not trans-exclusionary. The fact that almost all

cases concern the most diffused neologism, *manspread*, goes in line with the linguistic literature on (feminist) neologisms stating that higher diffusion leads to semantic change. This is also confirmed by the second observation, which is that when comparing types of pages and sources, we find more redefinitions in non-FGS pages and sources. Here again, all redefinitions concern *manspread*.

The fact that there are very few cases of redefinition can be explained by the low diffusion of most neologisms. However, while they might not undergo semantic changes, other strategies can be put into place to depoliticise these terms, as we will see in the following sub-sections. But first, we will examine the usualisation process of the most diffused neologism *manspread*.

5.2.2 The usualisation of a diffused neologism: the case of *manspreading*

5.2.2.1. Can women manspread too? A quantitative analysis of semantic variation

Looking at the different meanings of *manspread* in a quantitative way, we can clearly see how diffusion can lead to semantic variation, and potentially to depoliticisation, more specifically by obscuring the gendered dimension of such behaviour.

Meanings	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Total
men spreading their legs in public transport	0.023	0.112	0.024	0.060	0.026	0.014	0.012	0.017	0.026
men taking up (metaphorical) space	0	0.025	0.019	0.021	0.018	0.014	0.011	0.003	0.013
people taking up space	0	0.017	0.003	0.004	0.001	0.002	0.001	0	0.002
(people with) entity taking up space	0	0	0.001	0.001	0.004	0.004	0.004	0	0.002
women taking up space	0	0	0.001	0.003	0	0.002	0	0	0.001

Table 24. Meanings of *manspread* over time (normalised frequency)

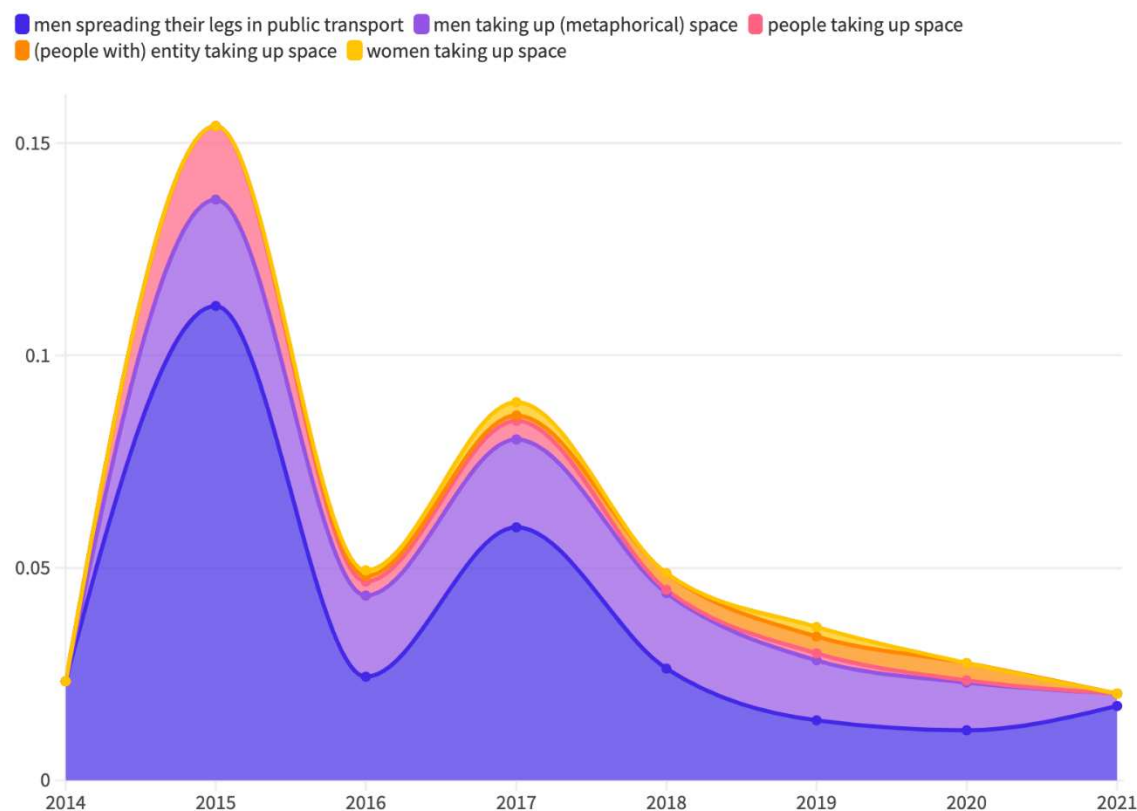


Figure 15. Meanings of manspread over time (normalised frequency)

In 2014, the world (or at least the one depicted in the NOW corpus) discovers *manspreading*, which is either defined as the act of a man spreading his legs in public transport, as shown in Example 20, or when not defined, used in a similar context, as in Example 21.

- (20) The term “**manspreading**” has been coined as a reference to men spreading their legs wide, into a V-shaped formation while slouching, ultimately taking up extra space on public transportation. (The Globe and Mail, 27/12/2014)
- (21) Kelley Rae O’Donnell, who confronts **manspreaders** and posts their photos online, captures an image of one on a train in New York, Dec. 12, 2014. It is the bane of many female subway riders, a practice with a name almost as off-putting as the act itself: manspreading. (Allentown Morning Call, 27/12/2014)

However, since its emergence, there is more to manspreading than just denouncing men spreading their legs in public transport. While still referring to this act, manspreading is understood as being representative of the behaviour of men feeling entitled to own the space, as mentioned in the following example.

- (22) “**Manspreading** is representative of much broader issues around patriarchy, engrained misogyny and male privilege, and it's a legitimate concern, one that people should be vocal about. Men are able to exist in public spaces that women simply can not,” said Ms. Carr [...]. (The Globe and Mail, 27/12/2014)

This can explain the generalisation of its meaning to include cases where men take up space in general, even in a metaphorical sense, which, as we will see, emerged in 2015.

As shown in Figure 15, the year 2015 corresponds to the first considerable increase in the usage of *manspread*. Most of the occurrences are related to two main events: the neologism being one of the candidates for the Word of the Year for 2015, and the launching of a campaign against manspreading in New York.

- (23) Its runners-up include trendy buzzwords like; clean-eating, shaming (online), **manspreading** and dadbod. (You, 05/11/2015)
- (24) New York's transit authority launched a campaign against '**manspreading**', with a Tumblr dedicated: Men Taking Up Too Much Space On The Train. (The Independent, 16/01/2015)

With this increase in usage, more general meanings have also arisen, for example manspreading is not limited to public transport but can happen on the stage of a theatre or at fashion shows. Manspreading knows no borders.

- (25) Hobbies and techie toys explain his stunning lack of self-awareness, and he “**manspreads**” all over the Festival Theatre stage and Eo Sharp's slick, modern sets. (Toronto Star, 28/06/2015)
- (26) It was all displayed in front of an enthusiastic crowd that included the LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton brass and the photographer Jürgen Teller, **manspreading** in the front row in T-shirt and gym shorts. (The New York Times, 11/09/2015)

The extension of its meaning does not, however, necessarily mean its depoliticisation.

- (27) In the crowded cafes, trains and streets of our cities it's not unusual to find yourself involuntarily eavesdropping on a stranger's private business. I recently encountered the auditory equivalent of “**manspreading**” when a large man shouted into his mobile phone on crowded public transport, subjecting his captive audience to a series of loud conversations. He seemed to be garnering support from colleagues to help justify his indiscriminate use of the company credit card

to view pornography in his hotel room on a business trip. (The Conversation, 16/12/2015)

However, there are also cases in which the meaning is expanded and loses its political meaning as a result of such expansion.

(28) What's unprecedented about the **man-spreading** uproar isn't that there are people on this Earth who have the gall to take up more public space than they need [...]. (Macleans, 15/01/2015)

(29) And be proactive: if you see a **manspreader** in a crowded carriage, insist that they move their bag/legs so that others can sit down. In fact, I'll go you one further. You know the people who sit on a train with their bag on the next seat in a tacit attempt to discourage you from perching there? As soon as the train starts to fill up, make a show of sitting in that exact seat first. Together, we can reclaim the seats -- and we don't need police help to do it. (The Telegraph, 01/06/2015)

In these examples, the meaning of *manspreading*, despite the source word *man* is expanded to the act of *people*, thus losing the gendered nature of such behaviour and its feminist meaning.

The usage of *manspreading* decreases in 2016. When it comes to the distribution of meanings, the original meaning remains the dominant one; however, the more general meaning of "men taking up (metaphorical) space" is almost as frequent. While the frequency numbers for the meaning of "people taking up space" decrease, two new meanings emerge, also related to who, or even, to what can manspread. More specifically, we find that women and entity can 'manspread'.

(30) She also likes to paint women in power poses; she has painted her sister in a "**man-spreading**" position, unapologetically taking up space, her elbows held high and cocky, legs swung open. (The Guardian, 02/01/2016)

(31) An Asian businesswoman appears to lay down the law at a boardroom table full of dudes; a white woman in a long dress "**manspreads**" on a subway car [...]. (Toronto Star, 11/10/2016)

While it might be surprising that women are depicted as manspreading, the idea here is that of women reclaiming space. As for entities manspreading, it should be noted that the first occurrences involving entities are about people using entities to take up space, such as ideas on social media.

- (32) These are people who want their ideas to take up the absolute most space possible. Like **Manspreading**, but of digital space.... (New Republic, 19/12/2016)

One year later, this is not necessarily still the case, as the following examples from 2017 show.

- (33) Gradually the left brain -- focused, blinkered, cocky, loud -- **manspreads** over the right until everything tips out of whack and (since our minds make our world) civilisation dies. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 05/10/2017)
- (34) What it is *is* a tremendous western, sprawled **manspreadingly** over seven episodes, telling some long-buried truths to America. (The Guardian, 03/12/2017)

While the usage of the entity-meaning remains stable, the other meanings are all increasing, including the newer ones. In 2017, there is a second peak in the usage of *manspreading*. The conventionalisation of *manspreading* might also explain why it was added to *Wiktionary* that year. In 2018, almost all the meanings decrease, and even the use of applying manspreading to women disappears. The only one that does not decrease is the one referring to entities. However, it should be noted that, as in the previous example, all contexts are restricted to television shows.

- (35) Interminable TV episodes are the **manspreading** of television storytelling (Vulture, 22/04/2018)

In 2019, the two most frequent meanings of *manspreading*, men sitting with their legs in public transport and men taking up space in general, are equally frequent. All the other meanings, except for the entity-meaning, which remains stable, are increasing, including the one referring to women which reappears, as shown in the following examples.

- (36) “Come on, keep guessing -- this is fun” Nora says, swaggering around the stage in Hay’s wonderful **man-spread** of a performance. (The Globe and Mail, 27/03/2019)
- (37) In body-swap rom-com “Secret Garden,” we have endless amounts of fun watching Hyun Bin show Ha Ji Won how to put on a bra, or Ha Ji Won **manspreading** as she sits deep in thought. It makes no sense that their characters end up in each other’s bodies, but good sense is not what we’re here for! (Soompi, 25/07/2019)

While the previous examples of women manspreading were related to the idea of reclaiming space, it is not the case here. It should be noted that these are all references

to fictional characters, either in the context of a theatre performance, or of a female character swapping her body with a male character in a movie. In 2020, the meaning referring to women disappears again. That year, all the meanings decrease, except for the entity meaning again which keeps on being stable (but still referring to television shows specifically).

In 2021, the only two meanings left were in the context of public transport and men taking up space in general, but the data for that year are limited (two months only).

(38) And here were the front-liners: A shirtless, wannabe Viking with red and blue smeared on his cheeks. A guy in jeans **man-spreading** on Pelosi's chair with his iPhone on the desk. A maskless dude posing for a photographer with stolen property. (Macleans, 07/01/2021)

(39) Still the simple fact -- and President Biden wants us to return to facts -- is that men have no greater need for either the subway seat, or a free breathing nose, than either women or children. [...] I am left with the conclusion that man slippage is like **manspreading**. We -- some of us -- do it because we are, well, men. And you know what men are like. (The New York Times, 20/01/2021)

The first example of *manspreading* refers to the position of a Trump's supporter at the US Capitol attack. The second example is from an article drawing an analogy with men wearing masks, but not putting them on their noses during Covid. These examples show that the use of the term *manspread*, even with its original or close meaning, continues to be adapted and applied to new contexts, which is a sign of its conventionalisation.

To sum up, we have seen that as *manspread* has diffused, new meanings have appeared, and in particular, expanded meanings. It can refer to the behaviour of people regardless of gender as well as to things. Because the gendered dimension of this behaviour is no longer present, these uses clearly illustrate cases of depoliticisation. However, even in cases where the neologism is used to refer to men's behaviour, the feminist (political) dimension of this neologism can be questioned by using discursive strategies, such as obliteration (i.e. making it believed that it is the creation of feminists' imagination), as identified by Ehrlich and King (1994).

5.2.2.2. Discursive strategies of depoliticisation

While the neologism can be used with its original meaning, it does not necessarily mean that the term and its meaning are endorsed, as shown by the meta-linguistic usages in the examples below.

- (40) There are a few flaws with this neighbourhood nad-watch [sic] suggestion. Firstly, what constitutes a **manspread**? Are legs at a 40-degree angle acceptable? What about 45 degrees? At what point do you have to go straight to Facebook without passing Go? And secondly, spreading is subjective. One man's spread may be another man's slouch. We're all built differently - but public transport seats tend to be uniformly the same. (The Telegraph, 30/01/2015)
- (41) Consider, for example, the number of neologisms that use "man" as a derogatory prefix and that have entered everyday media language: "mansplaining", "**manspreading**" and "maninterrupting". Are these primarily male behaviours that justify the gender-specific terms? [...] Sitting with legs apart may be a guy thing, but there is plenty of visual documentation of women hogging extra space on public transport with purses, shopping bags and feet on seats. (Stuff, 11/07/2016)

In both examples, we find that the authors do not deny the gender-specific nature of *manspreading*, but they do not seem to support the feminist agenda behind the coinage of this term either. In example (40), manspreading is not due to men feeling entitled to own the space but to the lack of space in public transports. In the following example, even though it does not say that women can manspread, it is explained that they can take up too much space too.

Similarly to Ehrlich and King (1994) who explain that the term *sexual harassment* can be depoliticised by omitting crucial aspects of its meaning, such as the fact that it often happens in contexts of power relations, several usages of *manspread* obscure the fact that it happens because of men's sense of entitlement. This allows for different types of justification, such as biological ones (examples 42-43), and as a result of that depoliticising its meaning.

- (42) [...] men's-rights activists have argued that **man-spreading** is a biological necessity; sitting with legs closed, they contend, might damage the testes. It may be the first time in history that a men's organization has accused a feminist cause of literally busting its balls. (Macleans, 15/01/2015)
- (43) I had to explain **manspreading** to a woman friend. First I laughed when she told me what it was, then I explained the equipment differences to her and how sometimes it required a little extra leg room. (Reason, 24/01/2021)
- (44) "**Manspreading**": Men don't need another disgusting-sounding word thrown into the vocabulary to describe something they do... You're just taking too much room on this train seat, be a little more polite.... (ABC News, 31/12/2015)

The last example justifies the act of manspreading by a lack of politeness. Men are not sexist, but simply rude. The author does not deny the fact that men take too much space in public transport, but it is just something they do. However, pointing out acts that are perceived as so trivial and harmless that they are no longer noticed as acts of ordinary sexism is exactly the point of naming manspreading.

In addition to omission, another strategy identified by Ehrlich and King (1994) is the obliteration of the denoted concept to make people believe that what is named comes straight from the imagination of feminists. In the following examples, we find that men *allegedly* take too much space (examples 45-46) and that manspreading is a non-issue (example 47).

- (45) Yet despite the crush, some passengers – men, usually, it is alleged - want to take up more room than is entirely necessary by spreading themselves across more than one seat. They are seemingly oblivious to what they are doing, or else they don't care. But now, a grassroots campaign against so-called “**man-spreading**” – the habit of male passengers parting their legs and placing them in a “V” - is about to get a boost. (The Independent, 20/12/2014)
- (46) The last time they came to my attention was about two years ago in the context of the (rather dumb) debate over ‘**manspreading**’, men allegedly taking up too much space on public transit by sitting with their legs apart. (Metro News, 13/12/2016)
- (47) STAY FOCUSED, #METOOERS A couple of years ago, the feminist movement lost focus and embarrassed itself by spending time and energy on the non-issues of “**man spreading**” and “mansplaining”. Now, the #MeToo movement is wasting its time and energy trying to ban some cheesy song from the '40s that no one cares about, especially men. (Ottawa Sun, 06/12/2018)

Finally, there are also occurrences of *manspread* where the authors do not use any of the strategies mentioned above. They do not generalise or obscure aspects of the meaning, nor do they obliterate the concept, yet the authors distance themselves from the neologism and/or what it denotes.

- (48) The further irony is the most patronising people I've ever encountered are the people who explain to me why it's fine to use words and phrases such as “mansplain”, “**manspreading**”, “toxic masculinity”, “fragile masculinity”, and to use “straight white male” as a pejorative [...]. The proponents of identity politics discuss these concepts as if they were talking about the second law of thermodynamics [...]. (The Irish Times, 18/05/2017)

- (49) While Western women demand the freeing of the nipple, and the banishment of **manspreading**, up to 7,000 Yazidi women and children, captured after the August 2014 capture of now liberated Ninevah province of Kurdish Iraq, are enslaved by ISIS. (Digital Journal, 24/03/2016)

In the last example, the author does not support women who denounce the act of manspreading. Interestingly enough, there is a feminist neologism to name the kind of ideas described in this example: *femonationalism* (i.e. the convergence of a nationalist discourse with feminist ideas).

Overall, we find that even when *manspread* is not used with new meanings, such as the expanded ones presented in the previous section, other discursive strategies can be used to depoliticise its feminist-intended meaning. If the process of usualisation can lead to the depoliticisation of the most diffused neologism, we will see whether this is also the case for less diffused neologisms.

5.2.3 The usualisation of neologisms with lower diffusion

5.2.3.1. Symbolisation and semantic variation

The term *manspread*, although the most diffused, is not the only feminist neologism to have had its moment in the spotlight. In December 2017, the term *broflake* was one of the candidates for Word of the Year by the Oxford dictionaries. This event explains the fact that December 2017 brings together almost half of the total number of occurrences since its first appearance in the NOW corpus in July 2017. The various articles commenting on this event then use the definition proposed by the Oxford dictionaries, as in the following example:

- (50) **Broflake** - a man who is readily upset by progressive attitudes, from the derogatory use of “snowflake”. (BBC News, 14/12/2017)

Prior to this event, however, the term showed some slight semantic variations, particularly in relation to the characteristics of the “bro”.

- (51) For those of you unfamiliar with the term; a **Broflake** - derivative from the term used to describe sensitive millennials ‘Snowflakes’ - refers to “straight men offended by any activity which is not directly designed for him.” (Irish Independent, 08/07/2017)

While this definition highlights the sexuality of broflakes, another use focuses on their race:

- (52) Like snowflakes, **broflakes** are especially sensitive to issues of race, class and gender. They are, however, the inverse of the snowflake community demographically and are disproportionately likely to be white, male, and making prank videos on YouTube. (Mashable, 06/08/2017)

After these two articles, *broflake* almost exclusively occurs in articles that do not focus on FGS but on language. It should be noted that although being shortlisted could have helped make it more diffused, the neologism only occurs once in each year and always with a meta-linguistic usage. However, this might also explain why it was added in Wiktionary in January 2018. It is now defined in the crowdsourced dictionary as “an overly-sensitive man or boy who is easily upset or offended, especially one upset about loss of male privilege”.

Another *bro*-neologism found in the crowdsourced dictionary is the term *brocialism* which first occurs in 2014 in the NOW corpus, more specifically in an article presenting a lexicon of “*bro*- terms”. In this article, *brocialists* are defined as:

- (53) the *keffiyeh* and horned-rim glasses wearing bros who like to get involved with any and all social justice movements, if by “get involved” you mean “try their damndest to take over” (Rabble, 19/12/2014)

This definition associates brocialists with any social movements, which could seem in line with its source word *socialism*, but most usages of *brocialism* focus more particularly on feminism. The brocialist’s relationship to feminism varies. He seems to support it but, actually, does not, as in this article commenting on members of the Labour Party.

- (54) The **Brocialists** make much of the fact that Labour has the highest number of female MPs of all parties - 98 - but for Siddiq that is not enough. “It needs to be equal at every level of the party, from special advisers to press officers.” [...] All the fringe events about gender equality in the world can not make up for this simple yet startling fact: many female MPs told me they didn’t want to go on the record because they feared Momentum “would set out to get” them. (The Telegraph, 29/09/2016)

Sometimes the brocialist can downplay feminism:

- (55) The stereotype of the “**brocialist**” -- who insists that only “class” matters and that feminism is splitting the Left. (The Telegraph, 25/03/2016)
- (56) a **brocialist** [a male socialist or progressive who downplays women’s issues] (The Guardian, 06/08/2017)

Or even be a misogynist:

- (57) In 2016, Clinton supporters touted their candidate’s feminist credentials, painting rival Bernie Sanders as a stodgy mansplainer buoyed by a gang of misogynistic **brocialists** intent on thwarting Hillary’s quest to break the glass ceiling. (The Red Hook Star-Review, 03/04/2019)

While it seems that the consistent features of a *brocialist* is to be a man and a socialist, this term is also used once to question whether women can be brocialists in an article about liberal feminism and Hillary Clinton:

- (58) Are Hayes, Watkins, Savali and Jones **brocialists** and manarchists? Or have they internalised misogynistic attitudes? (Green Left Weekly, 04/11/2016)

As mentioned above, the most frequent use of *broflake* is as defined in the Oxford dictionaries. Although the neologism has not become more diffused, the case of *broflake* nevertheless illustrates how the meaning of a word can be stabilised by institutional power, which is one of the forces that affect usage (Schmid 2020: 105).

There is another form of authority that can influence the usage of a neologism, as exemplified by the term *himpathy*. The term was coined by the philosopher Manne, who first defines *himpathy* in the book *Down Girl* published in 2017. Because the coiner and the definition she gives to the neologism are identified, it is this definition that is most frequently used, as illustrated in the following examples:

- (59) This year, in her book “Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny”, Professor Kate Manne gave us the term “**himpathy**”, defined as “the inappropriate and disproportionate sympathy powerful men often enjoy in cases of sexual assault, intimate partner violence, homicide and other misogynistic behaviour.” Sounds familiar? (Hong Kong Free Press, 05/01/2019)
- (60) You have this concept called “**himpathy**”, which you define in the book as “the disproportionate or inappropriate sympathy extended to a male perpetrator over his similarly or less privileged female targets or victims, in cases of sexual assault, harassment, and other misogynistic behavior.” (The New Yorker, 07/09/2020)

Unsurprisingly, *himpathy* is frequently used to comment on cases where men are accused of misogynistic behaviours and sexual violence, and more specifically in reference to #MeToo.

- (61) Drop the ‘**himpathy**’: Clarion call of Sydney Writers’ Festival’s #MeToo moment. (The Sydney Morning Herald, 12/05/2018)

While there seems to be a peak of usage in 2018, it should be noted that more than half of the occurrences are part of an interview with Kate Manne in *Jezebel*. However, it is interesting to see that even in this specific context, semantic variation can be found.

- (62) I’m actually working on expanding it at the moment, but in the book, I concentrate on the case where it’s the excessive or inappropriate sympathy extended to a male agent or wrongdoer over his female victim. [...] I’ve been working on thinking about **himpathy** as a more general family of moral biases that make us more sympathetic to male victims than counterpart female victims. [...] I think **himpathy** describes a whole set of ways that we tend to be overly focused on, and tend to give sympathetic attention to, men and boys in ways that are systematically distorting. (Jezebel, 08/02/2018)

In opposition to the neologisms *broflake* and *brocialism* for which semantic variations can be found in different articles written by different authors, here semantic variation is found in one article and is due to the coiner herself who is working on a generalisation of its definition.

Similarly to the findings related to the semantic change of *manspread*, the semantic variations displayed by these neologisms do not necessarily lead to their depoliticisation. However, we have seen that even when *manspread* is used with its original meaning, or one close to it, it may be depoliticised through certain discursive practices. We will see whether this is also the case for less diffused neologisms.

5.2.3.2. Contextualisation and discursive strategies

Because of the low diffusion of these neologisms, it is not surprising to find that they are often used meta-linguistically. These usages correspond mainly to the definition of the neologism, but also sometimes to its origin, such as the name of the coiner when they are known. These metalinguistic usages can then highlight the feminist origins of these neologisms.

- (63) The trans feminist writer and activist Julia Serano coined the term “**trans-misogyny**” to denote how the privileging of masculinity over femininity intersects with the social toll of gender nonconformity, compounding the disadvantage that trans women face. (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 20/01/2019)
- (64) These writers are but a small sample of the artists and intellectuals whose output resisted the force of what contemporary feminist critic Moya Bailey has termed **misogynoir**. (National Post, 22/02/2019)
- (65) European liberals, secularists, and right-wing politicians have usurped women’s rights and feminism to encroach upon religious freedom, women’s bodies, and migration under a banner that feminist scholar Sara Farris calls “**femonationalism**”. (The Nation, 07/05/2019)

Other metalinguistic usages that do not necessarily mention the coiners can still reveal how such neologisms can be associated with specific linguistic communities, and even though they might not be feminist communities specifically, they remain related to social justice movements. While it means that these neologisms did not lose their political nature, the association with specific linguistic communities is often used to diminish these terms.

- (66) By their shibboleths you will know them: SJWs don’t like “mansplaining”, “whitesplaining”, “straightsplaining” or “**cisplaining**”. (The Irish Times, 06/12/2016)²³
- (67) For a couple of years it seemed like campuses across North America were descending into a fact-free realm of moral and cultural relativism. Everything was about trigger warnings, owning your privilege and **cisgenderism** (if you don’t know that last one, trust me, you’re better off for it). (Toronto Sun, 01/07/2017)
- (68) The document is filled with fashionable academic jargon like “positionalities”, “hybridities”, “nepantlas” and “**misogynoir**”. It includes faddish social-science lingo like “cis-heteropatriarchy” that may make sense to radical university professors and activists but doesn’t mean much to the regular folks who send their children to California’s public schools. (My Broad Band, 20/08/2019)

In these examples, the neologisms are not redefined, in fact, they are not defined at all, sometimes arguing that this is in the interests of the readership (example 67). Authors

²³ As for *mansplain*, *straightsplain* was coined before 2010, which is why it is not addressed in this study.

can distance themselves from the use of these neologisms by highlighting not only who uses them, but also how they are used.

- (69) How long this will go on, then, depends on how long it will take for those people to feel reassured that someone besides Trump will represent their concerns without backing down in the face of catcalls about racism, sexism, **LGBTQ-phobia**, Islamophobia, or any other number of labels deployed mostly to extinguish their dissent. (Mother Jones, 04/01/2016)
- (70) So Badham pre-empt criticism by accusing everyone who disagrees with her of being “**brocialist**” or “manarchist” bullies. (Red Flag, 06/11/2016)

These examples recall the idea of agonistic words by Angenot (2014) as demonising labels serving the sole purpose to condemn people and behaviours. However, Husson (2017), based on an analysis of two recent feminist neologisms, shows that this is not how they are used. Instead, they can be used to describe and categorise cases of systemic oppression to construct and reinforce their analyses (see Section 2.2). This is also what is suggested by the examples above which explain the origins, and in particular, the feminist coiners (examples 63-65), as well as the following ones:

- (71) It’s why **misogynoir** was created, because for black women misogyny was, at best, half their problem. It’s why a great female comedian such as Amy Schumer is often seen giving many fucks about the perils of being female but zero when it comes to those poor and/or brown. It’s why we celebrate Equal Pay day to highlight the additional four months (in the US) it takes for a woman to make what a man makes in a year. But that’s for a white woman; for black women it’s an additional seven months. (The Guardian, 17/02/2017)
- (72) People in and outside the community weren’t aware of the levels of systemic, institutional racism, and sexism - and then the combination of the two which specifically affects black women - so, **misogynoir**. There is a myth that we are subject to the same hurdles as everyone else, as white women, black men, white men, even Asian women, Asian men. It’s not better or worse, it’s different. You can’t empower yourself if you don’t know what you’re subject to. (Al Jazeera, 01/09/2018)

In these examples, the neologism *misogynoir* is considered useful because it highlights the type of misogyny Black women experience, a difference which has not always been recognised. Looking at the co-texts in which these neologisms are established also gives an indication of the fact that what they denote is recognised as

forms of oppressions. A common usage is to present terms such as *intersexphobia* and *transmisogyny* along other forms of oppressions, more specifically in the form of lists.

- (73) Homophobia, transphobia and **intersexphobia** impact most severely on black, poor and rural LGBTQI people due to race, class and geographic inequalities, placing them in perilous conditions of discrimination, violence and hardship. (Daily Maverick, 30/05/2017)
- (74) Both “Thrive” and “Twelfth Night” draw on a similar performative style, a buoyancy, a comedy, and tropes around love and gender and seafaring and ‘cross-dressing’”, Feldman said in a release. “But where ‘Twelfth Night’ stops, ‘Thrive’ hopefully continues, subverts, and interrogates in terms of gender, feminism, misogyny, **transmisogyny**, queerness, sexuality, identity, mis-gendering, mis-categorizing and what the very real historical costs of these are. (Staunton New Leader, 02/03/2020)
- (75) A feminist is not sexist, racist, casteist, classicist or **LGBT-phobic** in their actions and at least works towards fighting these as prejudices too. (21/08/2020, Live Wire)

These lists show that these neologisms denote oppressions which are recognised along with sexism or homophobia, for example. At the same time, they are rarely the first ones to be presented, thus giving the impression that they are still understood as add-ons, rather than central. It also means that people using such lists do not engage with the specificities of what is being denoted, but that the differences which are named and central to these neologisms are concealed in a series of oppressions.

The examples presented so far in this section show how the use of these neologisms is established in feminist contexts, and sometimes more generally in social justice movements. By commenting on these communities and their linguistic practices, these terms are also established in communities that want to distinguish themselves from the communities associated with these neologisms. Even in these examples, the neologisms do not lose their political nature, in fact the authors highlight them as a way to distance themselves from the usage of these neologisms.

Despite their low degree of diffusion, these neologisms can also be used in different contexts. As shown in the previous section, *brocialism* is mostly used to refer to political figures, even when it shows cases of semantic variation. For example, it is used throughout the years to refer to the socialist British politician and former leader of the Labour Party Jeremy Corbyn. However, it is also used in more unexpected domains. In

2019, the comedian Russell Brand explains that his wife takes care of their children on her own because he is too sensitive. Several articles comment on this story, in which the same comment from Twitter is quoted:

- (76) Russell Brand embodies **brocialism**. Wants credit for being all woke and sensitive while still expecting the women in his life to do the actual work. (PEOPLE, 22/01/2019)

The neologism is also used to describe fictional characters as *brocialists*, such as characters of the Avengers or the narrator of a novel, as shown in in the following examples:

- (77) 5 years later, reformed Nationalist, Steve Rogers, leads a team consisting of Dr David Banner (who has learnt to control his toxic masculine rage), Scott Lang (a micro-micro aggression policer), Thor (a liberal Scandinavian **brocialist**) [...]. (The Daily Blog, 01/05/2019)
- (78) Stephens has done a masterful job of making our narrator aggressively boring despite holding exciting revolutionary views. He's pure **brocialist**. (The Spinoff, 08/01/2021)

Also used in a fictional context is *ciscentrism*. While it first occurs in an article focusing exclusively on FGS matters, it is quickly used in articles which also refer to other domains, such as cinema and music.

- (79) Even if a man doesn't want the job, a man's gonna get the job because, as Tyrion and Varys note, the lords of Westeros are stuck in the dark ages (and also **cis-centric**) and want their leader to be a freaking MAN! (Jezebel, 06/05/2019)
- (80) Even though "Tell Them Where To Go" is more of a nod to the Girls Rock movement and their dismantling of the **cis-centric** framework of women and girls, it also hints at the underground spaces that have created movements and scenes. (Noisey, 29/10/2018)

While the articles from which these examples are extracted do focus on FGS matters, they also extend the usage of neologisms to other contexts, and this is what can lead neologisms to be used in contexts which are not centred around FGS. This is exemplified by different occurrences of *transmisogyny*. The first two examples below are taken from articles that focus on gender representation, which is not the case for the third one.

- (81) Obsidian Entertainment Removes **Transmisogynistic** Joke From Pillars of Eternity at Gamers' Urging. (The Marie Sue, 03/04/2015)
- (82) My second thought was that this was going to either going to be a terrible three-camera sitcom with horrible **transmisogynist** jokes, or every episode was going to be a Very Special Episode. I couldn't have been more wrong. Here are five reasons why you should be watching *Transparent*. (The Spinoff, 20/09/2016)
- (83) G.L.O.S.S. raged against the world's mistreatment of trans and non-binary people across their two records, burning down the whole absurdity of **transmisogyny** with beautiful anger in the spoken intro to Demo's "G.L.O.S.S. (We're From the Future)." (Paste, 23/11/2019)

Like with *ciscentrism*, these examples refer to the entertainment industry, more specifically video games, cinema, and music. The example referring to a video game corresponds to the title of the article from which it is taken. As the title indicates, the article focuses on the representation of gender identity. The second example is also from an article centred around this question. The article addresses a series in which the main character is a trans woman, and deals with the representation of the experience of gender transition. While these two examples are centred around gender issues, this is not the case with the last example, which is taken from an article ranking the best punk albums of 2010s. The term is used to describe one album presented among other albums which do not address issues of gender, feminism or sexuality.

As we saw with the metalinguistic uses described above, the political nature of neologisms can be brought to the fore. However, this does not necessarily mean that the political agenda of these neologisms is supported. On the contrary, the feminist origins of these neologisms can be put forward to deprecate these terms and what they denote. Neologisms can also be used in other domains that are not necessarily related to feminism or political issues. While these uses do not necessarily highlight the political nature of these words, we have seen that this does not mean that they are depoliticised.

5.3 Conclusion of Chapter 5

The neologisms of the contemporary feminist movement vary not only in terms of the experiences they denote, but also in their degree of conventionalisation. What is the degree of diffusion of feminist neologisms? The answer does not only depend on which neologism we look at, but also on how diffusion is measured. One neologism, however,

ticks all the boxes: *manspread*. It is not only the most diffused because it is the most frequent, but also because it appears outside texts about FGS, in several countries, and has the longest life span. However, the diffusion profile of most neologisms is not as simple as for this neologism. What is a more diffused neologism? One that is more frequent or that occurs in more countries? One that is more frequent or that has a longer life span? This study does not pretend to give a final answer to these questions. What we surely need to do is to take into account the multidimensionality of diffusion and not just rely on the frequency variable, because as we have shown, frequency does not always mean diffusion. In addition, diffusion does not always mean the success of these neologisms.

The study of social processes pertaining to neologisms is a relatively new field of research, and among the studies that have been conducted on this topic, it is not uncommon to refer to these processes in terms of success or failure. To name but a few of these studies, Boulanger (1997), for example, attempts to identify the factors that contribute to the success of neologisms. Similarly, Metcalf (2002) argues that the success or failure of neologisms can be predicted to some extent. The notion of success is also present in more recent studies (e.g. Würschinger *et al.* 2016; Link 2021).

It might be tempting to say that FLA has succeeded if it is used outside the language community where it originates. But this is not necessarily the case for linguistic innovations that have a political dimension. The notion of usualisation must therefore be taken into account in the analysis of the conventionalisation of neologisms. It is by doing so that we can mitigate the idea that *manspread*, the most widely used neologism, is the one that is necessarily the most successful. It is precisely because it is the most diffused that it finds itself going through semantic changes and sometimes even depoliticisation. Moreover, even though it is still most frequently used with its original meaning or close to it, other strategies can be put in place to depoliticise the neologism. A quantitative analysis must then be complemented by a qualitative analysis of its use. What about less frequent neologisms? Although there are no clear cases of redefinition, we can nevertheless observe the presence of some semantic variations. These semantic variations do not necessarily lead to depoliticisation. On the contrary, because these neologisms are in the early stages of their diffusion, their political nature is still very much present. However, it can also be emphasised to highlight the disagreement with these neologisms, what they denote, and the community associated with them.

Chapter 6. Questionnaire results

The utility of feminist neologisms

The aim of this chapter is to answer the third and final research question: does the knowledge of feminist neologisms influence the perception of utility of the denoted concepts? The notion of utility is used to provide a first exploration of the power of naming, since a parallel has been observed between utility types defined by Kerremans (2015) and the hypostatisation effect, as developed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.3). To answer this research question, a questionnaire was set up in order to observe the relationship between word knowledge and perception of utility of a denoted concept. In addition, a cumulative linked mixed model was designed to statistically test the degree of such relationship. Before discussing the participants' answers on utility and word knowledge in Section 6.2 and the results of the statistical test in Section 6.3, the participants' characteristics will be described in Section 6.1.

6.1 Demographic information about participants

In total, 112 participants completed the questionnaire, among which 54 participants were only exposed to definitions (DEF-only condition) and 58 participants were shown both the neologisms and their definitions (NEO+DEF condition). As mentioned in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3), the participants, in addition to being divided into two conditions, were also divided into three sets. Each participant read eight definitions (and neologisms in the NEO+DEF condition), excluding fillers, which are not taken into account in the analysis. In the DEF-only condition, the 54 participants had to answer four questions per definition, which resulted in the collection of 1,728 observations. In NEO+DEF, the 58 participants

answered three questions per neologism and definition, which resulted in 1,392 collected observations. This gives a total of 3,110 observations.

	DEF-ONLY	NEO+DEF
Participants	54	58
Neologism per participant	8	8
Questions per neologism	4	3
Observations	1728	1392

Table 25. Questionnaire observations

In addition to completing the task on utility, i.e. answering questions on utility and word knowledge, participants were asked to provide demographic information, more specifically on language, age, education, and gender. The number (and percentage) of participants per answer to these questions are presented in the table below.

Most participants speak British English (56%), are between 18 and 29 years old (62%), obtained a higher education degree (77%), are not members of a gender expansive community (89%), and are women (70%). Overall, participants are not equally distributed across demographic categories, for example, out of the 112 participants only one participant has less than a secondary school degree or speaks another language variety (which they did not specify). This imbalance has been taken into account in the statistical model, as we will see when discussing statistical results.

Demographic information	Answers	N	%
Language variety	United Kingdom	63	56
	United States	27	24
	India	7	6
	Australia	5	4
	Canada	5	4
	New Zealand	2	2
	Africa	2	2
	Other (N/A)	1	1
Age	18-29	69	62
	30-39	19	17
	40-49	15	13
	50+	9	8
Education	Higher education degree	86	77
	Secondary school degree or equivalent	25	22
	Less than secondary school degree	1	1
Member of a gender expansive community	No	100	89
	Yes	8	7
	N/A	4	4
Gender	Woman	78	70
	Man	30	27
	Non-binary	4	4

Table 26. Answers to demographic questions

6.2 Descriptive findings on utility and word knowledge

6.2.1 Question *a* on utility score

In both conditions, the participants were first asked to rate the usefulness of the denoted concepts on a scale from 1 to 5 (question *a*). On average, participants gave a utility score of 3.5 (as shown in Table 28). The table and graph below show the distribution of responses according to utility scores.

Utility score	DEF-ONLY		NEO+DEF		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	41	9.32	56	12.07	97	11.18
2	43	9.77	80	17.24	123	14.84
3	81	18.41	88	18.97	169	18.79
4	151	34.32	123	26.51	274	29.02
5	124	28.18	117	25.22	241	26.17
Total	440	100	464	100	904	100

Table 27. Number of responses by utility score

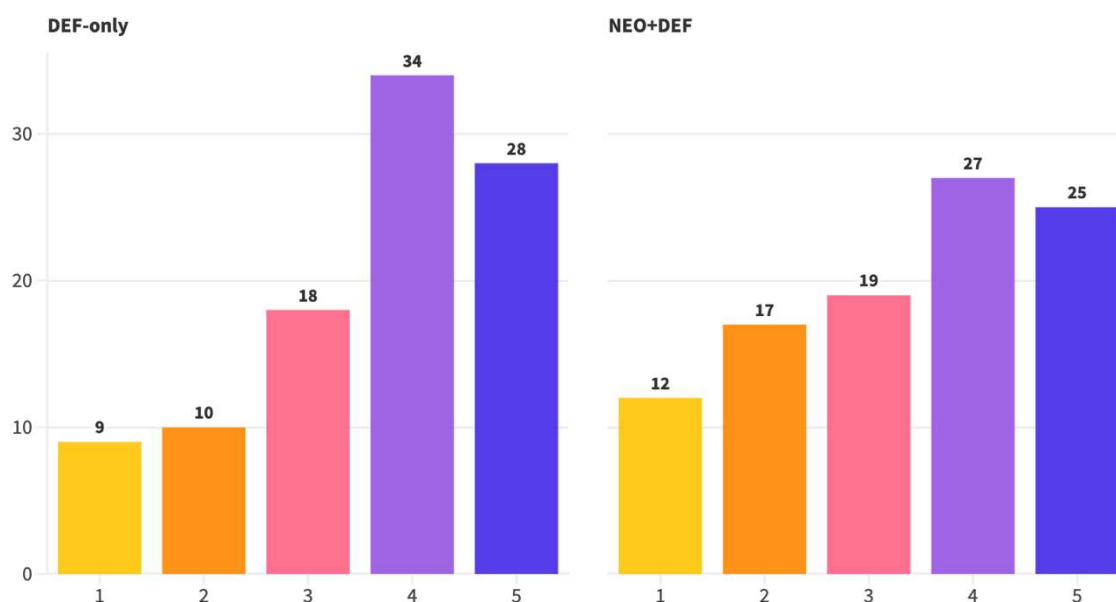


Figure 16. Percentage of responses by utility score

In the DEF-only condition, the average utility score is 3.6 and, in the NEO+DEF condition, the average is 3.4. Although the results are very close in both conditions, it may seem surprising that the score is higher in the condition which does not present the neologisms to participants (DEF-only). However, it should be noted that the responses to the questions on knowledge of neologisms (questions *c* and *d*) showed that some participants in the DEF-only condition knew the word corresponding to the definition, as we will see below.

Concerning the utility score depending on neologisms, the table below shows the average utility score for each neologism in a decreasing order (combining both conditions for the abovementioned reason regarding word knowledge).

Neologisms	Average of utility score
manspreading	4.09
trans-exclusion	3.90
cis privilege	3.88
transprejudice	3.88
transmisogyny	3.83
misogynoir	3.80
transmisogynoir	3.79
intersexphobia	3.78
heterocracy	3.76
ciswashing	3.75
LGBTphobia	3.63
acephobia	3.52
allonormativity	3.35
cisgenderism	3.35
cissplaining	3.33
cissupremacy	3.33
brocialism	3.27
broflake	3.25
hislam	3.25
brogressivism	3.10
himpathy	3.08
ciscentrism	3.03
cispatriarchy	2.90
femonationalism	2.88
Average total	3.49

Table 28. Average utility score of each neologism

Based on the information presented in this table, it might be tempting to already establish a link between knowledge of neologisms and their average utility score. Indeed, going back to the results on diffusion score discussed in the previous chapter, we find that the four most diffused neologisms: *manspreading*, *trans-exclusion*, *misogynoir* and *transmisogyny* are among the six neologisms with the highest average utility score. However, it should be

noted that *transprejudice* which is also one of the neologisms with the highest average utility score is one of the least diffused neologisms. Moreover, the degree of diffusion is not the most reliable variable for establishing a link between word knowledge and utility. This interpretation must be verified by observing the actual word knowledge of the questionnaire's participants based on their answers to questions *c* and *d*. Before discussing these answers, we will first look at the justifications given by participants for the utility score.

6.2.2 Question *b* on utility types

The answers to question *b* asking participants to justify their score were annotated according to three utility types identified by Kerremans (2015): (i) holistic, (ii) societal, and (iii) personal. Holistic utility corresponds to concepts combining individual meaning components in a concise and expressive way. Societal utility corresponds to the presence of the denoted concepts in society, and personal utility to concepts to which speakers can personally relate or by which they are personally affected. The table below presents the distribution of these answers across the three utility types with an additional category unknown for answers such as “unsure”, as explained in Chapter 3 on methodology (Section 3.4).

Utility type	N	%
Holistic	498	55
Societal	283	31
Personal	76	8
Unknown	47	5
Total	904	100

Table 29. Number of responses by utility types

The table above shows that the most common justification is a holistic one, followed by societal and personal ones. However, these justifications can be used to explain both low and high utility scores, which is why these results need to be combined with the utility scores described above, as done in the table and figure below.

Utility type	1		2		3		4		5		Average utility score
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Holistic	47	9.44	77	15.46	87	17.47	152	30.52	135	27.11	3.5
Societal	25	8.83	25	8.83	41	14.49	96	33.92	96	33.92	3.8
Personal	14	18.42	15	19.74	28	36.84	13	17.11	6	7.89	2.8
Unknown	11	23.40	6	12.77	13	27.66	13	27.66	4	8.51	2.9
Total	97	10.73	123	13.61	169	18.69	274	30.31	241	26.66	3.5

Table 30. Number of responses by utility types across utility scores

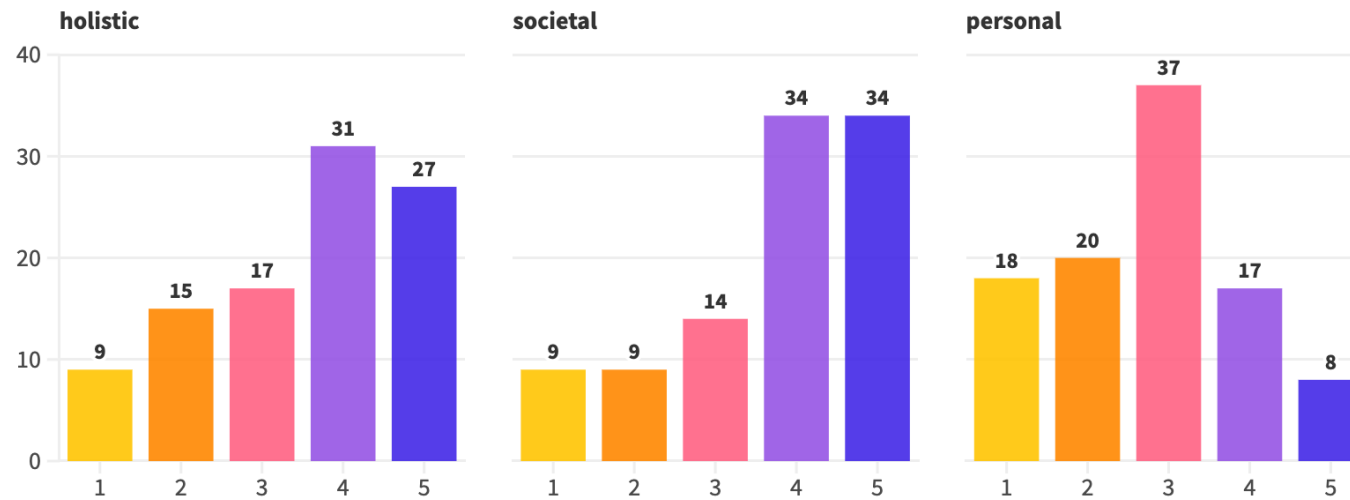


Figure 17. Number of responses by utility types across utility scores as percentages

Overall, we find that participants giving personal justifications tend to give a lower utility score, with an average of 2.9, than participants giving societal (3.8 average) or holistic (3.5 average) reasons. What this seems to suggest is that the effect of naming experiences on the perception of utility does not seem to (only) amount to a confirmation bias effect. Typical answers related to personal utility are that the participants have never heard the term or denoted concept before, that they would not use it, or that they have never encountered what is described or people affected by it, as illustrated by some of the examples. These justifications can be found in both conditions.

- (84) I've never seen nor met black trans women (221_C1S1 on *transmisogynoir*)²⁴
- (85) never encountered this view (108_C1S3 on *allonormativity*)
- (86) in my experience, can happen with anyone (59_C2S1 on *manspreading*)

On the other hand, participants giving holistic and societal justifications tend to give higher utility scores. Concerning holistic utility, typical answers are that the denoted concept is clear, concise and easy to understand.

- (87) A good description of the meaning which gives a comprehensive view of what it is (171_C1S1 on *brocialism*)
- (88) Provides a clear definition of the word (21_C2S1 on *cissplaining*)
- (89) Accurately describes feelings against a named group of people. Fails to mention whether this prejudice results in harmful consequences (115_C1S3 on *transprejudice*)

As for the societal utility, participants often point out the topicality of the denoted concept and the fact that it should be brought to attention.

- (90) This phenomenon happens a lot in current society. (18_C1S3 on *transmisogynoir*)
- (91) important to understand and identify this phenomena (64_C1S2 on *trans-exclusion*)
- (92) I think it is relevant with the unfortunate rise of certain misogynistic influencers such as Andrew Tate and the influence that they have on young boys and men (240_C2S1 on *brocialism*)

²⁴ The examples are followed by the participant id, condition and set numbers, as well as by the neologism the answer corresponds to. Condition 1 corresponds to the DEF-only condition and Condition 2 to the NEO+DEF condition. In this case, the participant was in Condition 1 and Set 1 and comments on the definition of the neologism *transmisogynoir*. Note that even though the neologism is given here, participants in Condition 1 were only shown the definition.

Interestingly, some answers highlight the social relevance of the denoted phenomena to argue that naming them is not necessary, as shown in the following examples.

- (93) we don't need a separate word for these range [sic] of behaviours. They are discrimination of course. (189_C1S2 on *ciswashing*)
- (94) A real issue that doesn't need its own new word (132_C2S1 on *transmisogynoir*)

While the existence of the denoted concept is accepted, the idea that there is or could be a word for it is not, even in the DEF-only condition where participants are not presented with the corresponding neologism. In these examples, we find that participants do not reject the concept but the potential word for it. While still confirming the idea of hypostatisation, these answers offer a different perspective on it, which is that because the denoted phenomena already exist, naming them is not necessary. However, it is only because these participants are already aware of these phenomena that they do not need a word for them, while feminists argue that having a name can also help *others* to become aware of such phenomena.

The following first two examples (95 and 96) seem to illustrate a similar view point: a neologism is not necessary because the existence of the phenomenon is already accepted by the participants. However, looking at other answers explaining utility scores (examples 97 and 98) from the same participants 211 and 10 show that this might not be the case.

- (95) Most societies seem to be influenced by heterosexual values, there doesn't need to be a word for it. (221_C1S1 on *heterocracy*)
- (96) Phenomenon has always existed; no need for neologisms. (10_C2S2 on *misogynoir*)
- (97) Who cares if a man is manspreading? Usually they don't mean anything by it or don't even realize they are doing it. (221_C1S1 on *manspreading*)
- (98) We don't need a new word that exists purely to drive a socio-political agenda. (10_C2S2 on *cisprivilege*)

In these last two examples, we find that it might not be because participants accept the existence of these phenomena that they do not accept neologisms for them, but because they do not want to question the existence of these phenomena. This question relates to the participants' attitudes towards feminism, and gender-and-sexuality-related matters in general, an aspect which has been addressed in studies observing arguments against another type of FLA, namely gender-fair language. Among such studies, Parks

and Robertson (1998) have identified the argument that sexism is acceptable, thus leading to the idea that sexist language is acceptable, an argument which is still found nowadays. For example, Vergoossen *et al.* (2020) have studied criticism against gender-fair language in Swedish and have found that in addition to sexist beliefs, cisgenderist ideas are also used to criticise gender-fair language, more specifically non-binary pronouns. These studies and the examples above highlight an important methodological aspect, which is to take the individuality of participants into account, since some participants might give more or less high utility scores because they have more or less favourable attitudes towards the topics in question. This is one of the reasons why the individual factor is taken into account in the statistical model when testing the hypothesis.

Another reason which could influence participants to give more or less high utility scores is their attitudes towards language change. As seen in some of previous utility score justifications, whether participants accept the existence of the denoted phenomena, as in examples (93) and (94), or question them, as in example (98), they agree on their disagreement as to the creation of neologisms. This is also exemplified by the following answers from the same participant:

- (99) Is English turning German, trying to combine everything possible into new words now? (132_C2S1 on *cissupremacy*)
- (100) Again I do not think this word needs to exist (132_C2S1 on *ciscentrism*)

In these examples, the participant does not accept the creation of new words for the denoted phenomena, for example by commenting on English turning into German, thus rejecting the novelty of such forms. Like with attitudes towards sexism, attitudes towards language change have also been observed in studies on arguments against gender-fair language. For example, Blaubergs (1980) identifies two arguments related to language change in English, the first one being that change is too difficult, inconvenient or impractical, and the second one is that it would destroy historical authenticity and literary works. Arguments pointing to conservative views of language have also been identified for other languages, such as French (e.g. Abbou *et al.* 2018; Coady 2020), Swedish (Vergoossen *et al.* 2020), Slovak, Czech and Polish (Ivanová & Kysel'ová 2022).

The question of participants' attitudes towards the novelty of such forms is linked to the extent to which they know these forms. Here again, this link has been explored in the literature on gender-fair language. Sauter *et al.* (2023), for example, have found that linguistic knowledge of inclusive writing in French is positively correlated with positive

attitudes towards such forms. Similarly to the answers to question *a* on utility score, this highlights that word knowledge should be taken into account, as there might be a difference between answers to question *b* on utility type from participants who are exposed to a neologism for the first time and those who knew it before the questionnaire.

6.2.3 Questions *c* and *d* on word knowledge

Since participants in the condition DEF-only were only presented with the definition, two particular questions were asked about word knowledge: question *c* on whether they have ever encountered a word for this meaning and question *d* on what the word is or might be, if they did not know it. As explained in the methodology chapter, if a participant answered that they have encountered a word for this meaning and provided the expected neologism, the answer was coded as 1. When more than one participant answered that they had encountered a word for this meaning but provided the same unexpected answer, it was coded as 1. For example, several participants gave the term *misogyny*, when the definition provided was the one of *brocialism*. For all other cases, including when participants answered that they had never encountered a word for this meaning, the answer was coded as 0. The table below presents the average word knowledge score of neologisms based on the answers from the DEF-only condition in a decreasing order.

On average, the neologisms received a word knowledge score of 0.29, which shows that the vast majority of participants did not know these neologisms. One neologism was known by none of the participants who read its definition: *allonormativity*. Out of 19 participants who read it, three argued that they knew the word; however, none of them answered with the expected neologism to question *d* since two of them answered that they were unsure and the last one answered that it was the “opposite to asexual”. For the majority of neologisms, more participants reported not knowing the word than those knowing the word.

One of the neologisms for which more participants reported that they knew the word is *manspreading*, which received the highest word knowledge score in line with the diffusion analysis presented in the previous chapter on conventionalisation (Section 5.1.5). Out of the 17 participants who read its definition, three answered that they did not know a word for it, the remaining 14 all answered that they knew a word for it and gave the expected neologism.

Neologisms	Average word knowledge in the DEF-ONLY condition
manspreading	0.82
transprejudice	0.74
LGBTphobia	0.68
acephobia	0.47
cissupremacy	0.47
trans-exclusion	0.42
heterocracy	0.41
cisprivilege	0.37
transmisogyny	0.37
brocialism	0.29
broflake	0.26
brogressivism	0.26
misogynoir	0.26
ciswashing	0.21
ciscentrism	0.18
transmisogynoir	0.18
cissplaining	0.12
cisgenderism	0.11
cispatriarchy	0.11
femonationalism	0.11
himpathy	0.11
hislam	0.05
intersexphobia	0.05
allonormativity	0.00
Average total	0.29

Table 31. Average word knowledge score in Condition DEF-only

Looking at the answers to question *d* which asked participants what the word is or might be for the presented definition shows that *manspreading* is the only neologism for which all the participants who reported that they knew the word gave the expected neologism. For some neologisms, such as *ciswashing*, *heterocracy*, and *transprejudice*,

the participants who replied that they knew the word all gave a different word than the expected neologism. In the table below are the answers from all the participants who reported that they knew a word for the presented definition of *ciswashing*, *heterocracy*, and *transprejudice*, with the number of participants per answer in brackets.

Expected neologisms	Answers
ciswashing	transphobia (4), prejudice (1), trans-omission (1)
heterocracy	heteronormative (5), heteropatriarchy (2), heterosexism (2), heterocentrism (1), heterogenous (1), western society (1)
transprejudice	transphobia (14), discrimination (1), evangelical (1), humanity (1)

Table 32. Answers from participants in Condition DEF-only who reported that they knew a word for the definition of *ciswashing*, *heterocracy*, and *transprejudice*.

We can see that for these neologisms, none of the answers given were the expected ones. However, since some answers appeared more than once, such as *transphobia* for the definition of *transprejudice*, they still received a word knowledge score of 1. For these three neologisms, the majority of responses from participants who answered that they knew the word received a word knowledge score of 1, which is the case for most neologisms.

For some neologisms, however, the majority of responses from participants who answered that they knew the word received a word knowledge score of 0. For these neologisms, answers to question *d* are presented below with the number of participants per answer in brackets. As for the previous neologisms, none of the answers for *cisgenderism* and *cispatriarchy* correspond to the expected neologisms. However, among these answers one term, *cisnormativity*, was given by multiple participants for the definition of *cisgenderism*, and *patriarchy* for the definition of *cispatriarchy*, as a result the word knowledge score for these answers was coded as 1. For the definitions of *himpathy*, *hislam* and *intersexphobia*, at least one answer corresponds to the expected neologism, but here again, this is not the case for the majority of answers.

Expected neologisms	Answers
cisgenderism	binary (1), cishnormativity (2), conversion (1), evangelical values (1), gender assignment discrimination (1), gender conformity (1), stereotypes (1)
cispatriarchy	cis (1), life (1), male dominated (1), patriarchy (2), straight / white (1)
himpathy	boy's club (1), himpathy (2) no tolerance to sexual voilance [sic] (1), not sure (1), patriarchy (1), victimblaming (1)
hislam	don't know (1), hislam (1), male driven culture (1)
intersexphobia	being judgemental (1), gender bias (1), intersexphobia (1)

Table 33. Answers from participants in Condition DEF-only who reported that they knew a word for the definition of cisgenderism, cispatriarchy, himpathy, hislam, and intersexphobia

In the NEO+DEF condition, in which both the neologism and definition were provided, the answers could be coded as either 0.5 or 1. The word knowledge score 0.5 corresponds to participants who had never encountered the word with this meaning. Because they were in the NEO+DEF condition, it means that even though they did not know the word prior to the questionnaire, they were exposed to it for the first time. The word knowledge score 0.5 allows us to distinguish these participants from those in the DEF-only condition who did not know a word for the presented definition and were not exposed to the neologism (which corresponds to the word knowledge score 0). If a participant answered that they had encountered the word with this meaning before, and therefore knew it prior to the questionnaire, the answer was coded as 1. The table below presents the average word knowledge score of neologisms based on answers in Condition NEO+DEF in a decreasing order.

Overall, word knowledge scores in Condition NEO+DEF are consistent with the ones in Condition DEF-only. On average, the neologisms received a word knowledge score of 0.62 in the NEO+DEF condition, which shows that the vast majority of participants did not know these neologisms, similarly to the DEF-only condition. Here again, *manspreading* is the neologism which received the highest word knowledge score and *allonormativity* was known by none of the participants.

Neologisms	Average of word knowledge in the NEO+DEF condition
manspreading	0.84
cisprivilege	0.76
LGBTphobia	0.74
intersexphobia	0.69
trans-exclusion	0.69
cispatriarchy	0.67
transmisogyny	0.67
transprejudice	0.67
cisgenderism	0.64
acephobia	0.63
heterocracy	0.63
ciswashing	0.62
broflake	0.60
misogynoir	0.60
cissplaining	0.59
femonationalism	0.57
himpathy	0.57
hislam	0.57
ciscentrism	0.56
transmisogynoir	0.56
brogressivism	0.55
cissupremacy	0.53
allonormativity	0.50
brocialism	0.50
Average total	0.62

Table 34. Average word knowledge score in the NEO+DEF condition

Three neologisms present different trends in the two conditions: *cisprivilege*, *LGBTphobia*, and *transprejudice*. The table below presents the number of answers in each condition and for each word knowledge score. The highest number for each neologism in each condition is shown in bold.

	DEF-ONLY		NEO+DEF	
Neologism	Word knowledge 0	Word knowledge 1	Word knowledge 0.5	Word knowledge 1
cisprivilege	12	7	10	11
LGBTphobia	6	13	11	10
transprejudice	5	14	14	7

Table 35. Number of answers for *cisprivilege*, *LGBTphobia*, and *transprejudice* in each condition and for each word knowledge score

In the case of the neologisms *LGBTphobia* and *transprejudice*, most responses in Condition DEF-only received a score of 1 but of 0.5 in Condition NEO+DEF. The fact that most participants answered that they had never encountered this word for this meaning in Condition NEO+DEF can be explained by the answers given to question *d* in Condition DEF-only discussed above. As already mentioned, most answers given for the definition of *transprejudice* was the term *transphobia*. Similarly, the majority of responses to the definition of *LGBTphobia* did not correspond to the expected neologism but to the term *homophobia*. In the case of *cisprivilege*, the situation is reversed: in Condition DEF-only the majority of responses (12/19) received the word knowledge score 0, but in Condition NEO+DEF more responses received the word knowledge score 1 (11/21). A potential explanation could be that for most of the answers that received a score of 0, the participants replied that they knew a word for this definition to question *c* but did not give the expected neologism. However, this is not the case, since of these 12 participants, 11 said they did not know the word. Another explanation is that since it is not possible to know whether participants really knew the word before the questionnaire in Condition NEO+DEF, it is possible that some people may claim to know it when they do not. However, it should be noted that *cisprivilege* is the only neologism to present such a difference in the results between the two conditions.

6.3 Statistical findings on word knowledge and utility

As mentioned above, the individuality of the participants was taken into account in the statistical model, which is more specifically a cumulative linked mixed model (described in Section 3.4.2.2). As a reminder, this model is relevant for the type of data collected with the questionnaire for two main reasons. First, the model enables us to take into account the discrete nature of the dependent variable, i.e. the utility score. Second, since

several neologisms were seen by each participant, the observations are not independent from each other. As discussed above, this aspect is particularly important to consider since different factors could influence participants to give more or less high utility scores. The individuality of each participant is accounted for by the cumulative linked mixed model which takes into account the dependence between observations.

The hypothesis is that the knowledge of a word increases the perception of utility of the denoted concept. Before presenting the results of the statistical model, the table and graph below show the number of responses for each level of word knowledge (0, 0.5, and 1) and their distribution across the utility scores (from 1 to 5).

The descriptive findings based on the answers to question *a* (Table 27 and Figure 16 in 6.1.1) show that participants in Condition DEF-only gave a higher utility score than participants in Condition NEO+DEF, which might seem surprising given that neologisms were not shown in Condition DEF-only. However, as mentioned, some participants in Condition DEF-only already knew some of the neologisms for the presented definitions, which is why answers to questions *c* and *d* on word knowledge need to be taken into account.

On average, participants in Condition DEF-only who did not know the neologism for the presented definition (word knowledge 0) gave a utility score of 3.4. Participants in Condition NEO+DEF who did not know the neologism before the questionnaire (word knowledge 0.5) gave a utility score of 3.2. Participants in both conditions who knew the word before the questionnaire (word knowledge 1) gave a utility score of 4.1.

Word knowledge	1		2		3		4		5		Total		Average utility score
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
0	37	11.86	41	13.14	69	22.12	104	33.33	61	19.55	312	100	3.4
0.5	47	13.47	70	20.06	68	19.48	96	27.51	68	19.48	349	100	3.2
1	13	5.35	12	4.94	32	13.17	74	30.45	112	46.09	243	100	4.1
Total	97	10.73	123	13.61	169	18.69	274	30.31	241	26.66	904	100	3.5

Table 36. Number of responses by word knowledge score across utility scores

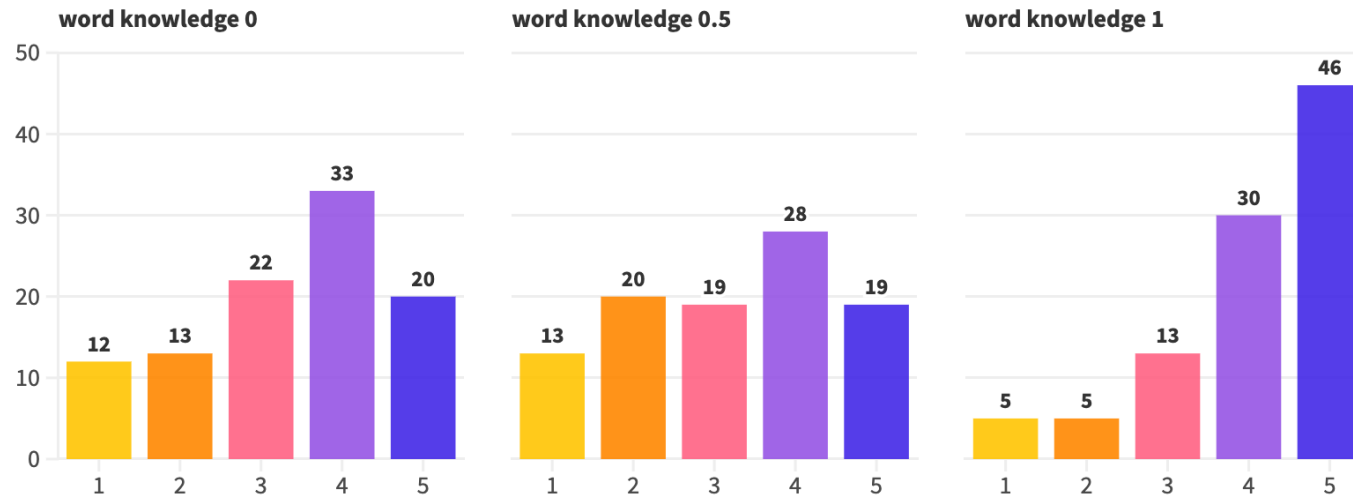


Figure 18. Number of responses by word knowledge score across utility scores as percentages

These results suggest that participants who encountered a word for the first time (word knowledge 0.5) did not perceive the denoted concept more useful; on the contrary, they perceived it as less useful than participants who did not know a word for it (word knowledge 0). On the other hand, the knowledge of a word prior to the questionnaire (word knowledge 1) increases the perception of utility, which is confirmed by results from the statistical model reported in the table below.²⁵

Variable	Estimate	Std. Error	z	p
Word knowledge 0.5	0.1784	0.2492	0.716	0.47405
Word knowledge 1	1.3626	0.2117	6.436	1.22e-10***
Transparency	0.5009	0.1723	2.908	0.00364**
Language variety Canada	-0.1127	1.0111	-0.111	0.91127
Language variety India	-1.1793	0.8000	-1.474	0.14042
Language variety New Zealand	-1.5749	1.1396	-1.382	0.16696
Language variety Other	-4.3756	1.6142	-2.711	0.00671**
Language variety South Africa	-1.0579	1.1529	-0.918	0.35884
Language variety UK	-0.1678	0.6435	-0.261	0.79432
Language variety US	-0.1888	0.6670	-0.283	0.77713
Age 30-39	0.4330	0.3861	1.121	0.26217
Age 40-39	-0.3954	0.4058	-0.974	0.32987
Age 50+	-1.6349	0.5919	-2.762	0.00574**
Education Less than secondary school degree	-5.5113	1.6857	-3.269	0.00108**
Education Second school degree or equivalent	0.2771	0.3403	0.814	0.41551
Gender expansive No	0.4782	0.7106	0.673	0.50097
Gender expansive Yes	0.1836	0.9703	0.189	0.84990
Gender Non-binary	0.9397	1.0207	0.921	0.35727
Gender Woman	0.4215	0.3158	1.335	0.18198

Table 37. Results of the cumulative linked mixed model

²⁵Formula: `clmm(utility_score ~ word_knowledge_score + transparency + language_variety + age + education + gender_expansive + gender + (1|id), data = UQ_results)`

Focusing on the word knowledge variable for now, we find that knowing the word prior the questionnaire (word knowledge 1) is the most significant variable (p value < 0.001) for the utility score. The estimate value (second column) corresponds to the odds that the participants who knew the word before the questionnaire would give a higher utility score, when keeping all the other variables constant (e.g. taking into account the participants' characteristics). In other words, there is a positive relationship between word knowledge before the questionnaire and utility score when controlling for all the variables. The fact that participants who are familiar with these neologisms show a higher perception of utility of the denoted concepts is in line with the literature on entrenchment, a mental process described below.

if we metaphorically assume that a word can be written into the lexicon [i.e. the mental one, HJS], then each time a word in processing is mapped onto its lexical representation it is as though the representation was traced over again, etching it with deeper and darker lines each time. Each time a word is heard and produced it leaves a slight trace in the lexicon, it increases in lexical strength. (Bybee 1985: 117 in Schmid 2008: 20).

This description of entrenchment reveals how frequency of exposure is a necessary component of this mental process; however, according to Schmid, this is in tension with the literature on hypostatisation. Entrenchment is supposed to be a psychological correlate of hypostatisation, but while the degree of entrenchment is linked to frequency of exposure as just explained, hypostatisation, on the other hand, applies to all content words whether established or not and does not depend on the degree of familiarity. The results from the questionnaire show that even though encountering these neologisms for the first time is not correlated with the perception of utility of the denoted concepts, the fact that it lowers such perception remains noticeable. Feminist linguistics have not commented on the degree of exposure necessary to have an effect on people's minds; however, the literature on the hypostatising effect of new words seems to suggest that being exposed to a word for the first time can have an impact. Schmid (2008) argues that hypostatisation is not only about having full-fledged concept, but also about "pseudo-concepts" for which he suggests the following definition: "the impression that there is some sort of societally relevant concept out there which might turn out to be worthy of more solid entrenchment in the future" (idem: 28). However, the results of the

questionnaire suggest that the denoted concept is not relevant to the participant, or at least less so that when a word is not presented.

There may be a methodological reason for these findings, more specifically related to the annotation system, which explains why participants who were exposed to a neologism for the first time tended to give a lower utility score. Even though some participants in Condition DEF-only answered that they knew a word for the presented definition, the word knowledge for some of their answers were still annotated as 0 because they did not correspond to the expected neologisms and the suggested words were not given by at least two participants (see for example the answers in Tables 32 and 33 above). In order to find out whether it is indeed this annotation decision that explains the lower utility score in the case of neologisms seen for the first time, a different annotation system was tested. This second annotation system assigns the word knowledge score 1 to all responses which confirm knowing a word for the given definition, i.e. answering yes to question *c*, regardless of the actual word given in question *d*.

Word knowledge	Average utility score: annotation system 1	Average utility score: annotation system 2
0	3.4	3.2
0.5	3.2	3.2
1	4.1	4.1

Table 38. Average utility scores for both annotation systems

The table above shows that, with the second annotation system, the utility score averages are the same (3.2) for participants who claim to not know a word for the given definitions and those who are exposed to a neologism for the first time. In other words, there is no difference in the perceived utility of the denoted concepts when not knowing a word for such concept and encountering a word for the first time. While these results do not reject the idea of “pseudo-concepts”, they cannot confirm it either.

A potential explanation for these results could be the participants’ view on language change mentioned above, which is exemplified by some of these answers:

- (101) ‘misogyny’ is already a word (144_C2S1 on *brocialism*)
- (102) that is not an actual word (170_C2S2 on *broflake*)
- (103) seems like a made-up term (109_C2S3 on *transprejudice*)

The circumstances in which these participants discovered these terms for the first time, i.e. in a questionnaire, may have reinforced the impression that these words are not ‘real’, and as such not worthy of more solid entrenchment. It should be noted that, as presented in the methodology chapter (Section 3.4.2), participants were not told that the questionnaire was about new words but about new ideas in changing societies.

With regard to the statistical analysis, the cumulative linked mixed model was also tested with the second annotation system (see Table 39 below). Unsurprisingly, the results are similar in terms of the degree of significance of the correlation between knowledge of a word prior to the questionnaire and perception of utility.²⁶

In addition to word knowledge, other variables have been added to the statistical model, more specifically the transparency score, as well as demographic information about participants related to language variety, age, gender, and education. As shown in the table below summarising the results from the statistical model, four of these are correlated with utility score, among which one, the transparency score, is positively correlated and three, language variety (other), being over 50, and having less than a secondary school degree, are negatively correlated.

²⁶Formula: `clmm(utility_score ~ word_knowledge_score + transparency + language_variety + age + education + gender_expansive + gender + (1|id), data = UQ_results_AS2)`

Variable	Estimate	Std. Error	z	p
Word knowledge 0.5	0.4085	0.2525	1.618	0.10574
Word knowledge 1	1.5721	0.2071	7.593	3.13e-14***
Transparency	0.5233	0.1707	3.065	0.00218**
Language variety Canada	-0.2415	0.9990	-0.242	0.80895
Language variety India	-1.3608	0.7915	-1.719	0.08558
Language variety New Zealand	-1.6471	1.1259	-1.463	0.14348
Language variety Other	-4.3117	1.5950	-2.703	0.00687**
Language variety South Africa	-1.1183	1.1388	-0.982	0.32610
Language variety UK	-0.3280	0.6379	-0.514	0.60713
Language variety US	-0.4214	0.6618	-0.637	0.52431
Age 30-39	0.3812	0.3812	1.000	0.31731
Age 40-39	-0.6161	0.4003	-1.539	0.12378
Age 50+	-1.7326	0.5841	-2.966	0.00301**
Education Less than secondary school degree	-5.4235	1.6727	-3.242	0.00119**
Education Second school degree or equivalent	0.2456	0.3351	0.733	0.46362
Gender expansive No	0.3833	0.7020	0.546	0.58505
Gender expansive Yes	0.0554	0.9557	0.058	0.95377
Gender Non-binary	1.0766	1.0057	1.070	0.28441
Gender Woman	0.4286	0.3115	1.376	0.16892

Table 39. Results of the cumulative linked mixed model with the second annotation system

With word knowledge, transparency is the only other positively correlated measure with utility score (p value < 0.005). This means that when a neologism is more transparent, the concept it denotes is more likely to receive a higher utility score. The other variables are all negatively correlated with utility score. These negatively correlated measures from strongest to lowest are (i) education, more specifically having less than a secondary to school degree, (ii) age, more specifically being over 50, and (iii) language variety, more specifically from a variety which has not been provided by the participant. A negative correlation means the participants who correspond to these characteristics were less likely to give a high utility score to the denoted concepts. These

results, however, should be interpreted with caution, since participants are not distributed equally across the demographic categories. More specifically, one participant reported having less than a secondary to school degree, eight participants are above 50 years old, and one participant reported using another language variety. Consequently, the same statistical test was carried out again without variables related to demographic information. The results are reported in the tables below.²⁷

Variable	Estimate	Std. Error	z	p
Word knowledge 0.5	0.1561	0.2589	0.603	0.5465
Word knowledge 1	1.3571	0.2144	6.328	2.48e-10***
Transparency	0.4896	0.1723	2.841	0.0045**

Table 40. Results of the cumulative linked mixed model without demographic variables (annotation system 1)

Variable	Estimate	Std. Error	z	p
Word knowledge 0.5	0.3757	0.2619	1.435	0.15139
Word knowledge 1	1.5625	0.2090	7.477	7.62e-14***
Transparency	0.5158	0.1708	3.020	0.00253**

Table 41. Results of the cumulative linked mixed model without demographic variables (annotation system 2)

Overall, the results of the model that excludes demographic variables remain very close to those of the model that includes them. Knowing the word prior to the questionnaire (word knowledge 1) and transparency are still positively correlated with utility score and the significance levels remain the same (p value < 0.001 for word knowledge and p value < 0.005 for transparency).

6.4 Conclusion of Chapter 6

The aim of this chapter was to answer the third and final research question: does the knowledge of feminist neologisms influence the perception of utility of the denoted concepts? The hypothesis was that the knowledge of a word increases the perception of

²⁷ Formula for annotation system 1: `clmm(utility_score ~ word_knowledge_score + transparency + (1|id), data = UQ_results)`; Formula for annotation system 2: `clmm(utility_score ~ word_knowledge_score + transparency + (1|id), data = UQ_results_A52)`

utility of the denoted concept. To answer this research question and test the hypothesis, a questionnaire was set up with two conditions for manipulating the variable of word knowledge: in one condition, only the definition was presented to the participants (DEF-only condition), while in another condition, both the neologism and the definition were presented (NEO+DEF condition).

The results show that, on average, participants who knew the neologism prior to the questionnaire gave a higher utility score than participants who did not know the neologism, and the statistical test confirms that these findings are significant. As a result, the hypothesis is confirmed, even if only to some extent. When a participant did not know a neologism prior to the questionnaire but was exposed to it for the first time, they were more likely to give a lower or similar utility score than a participant who did not know a neologism prior to the questionnaire but was not exposed to it at all. These findings cannot confirm expectations related to the notion of pseudo-concept defined by Schmid (2008). It is therefore suggested that a more in-depth study be carried out on the first exposure to a word, discussed in the concluding chapter. We will also consider another question: is it really knowledge about the word or the discourse around the denoted concept that increases the perception of utility of the concept? The answer to this question brings together the processes of coinage, conventionalisation and hypostatisation of feminist neologisms.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

Since the rise of feminist linguistics in the 1970s, much of the attention paid to feminist linguistic activism (FLA) has focused on gender-fair language, both within and outside feminist spheres, both within and outside academia. But FLA did not stop at suggesting alternative forms to masculine generics. Based on the observation of the lack of (appropriate) names to describe women's experiences from their points of view (Daly 1974; Spender 1990), neologisms to name these experiences, such as *sexual harassment*, were coined. Similarly to the 1970s feminist movement, contemporary feminism is also accompanied by the emergence of neologisms to name experiences, such as *himpathy* or *misogynoir*. By studying the coinage, conventionalisation and hypostatisation processes of these more recent feminist neologisms, this thesis aims to contribute to feminist linguistics by studying an overlooked part of FLA, i.e. the disruption approach. This chapter first presents a summary of the main findings, together with the theoretical and empirical implications of these findings for both feminist linguistics and neology studies. After suggesting avenues for further research, the final section of the thesis offers broader perspectives.

7.1 Summary

By collecting and analysing feminist neologisms coined in contemporary feminism, the aim of this thesis was to answer three research questions:

- RQ1.** To what extent do recent feminist neologisms allow for a redefinition of feminist linguistic activism?
- RQ2.** What is the degree of conventionalisation (i.e. diffusion and usualisation) of feminist neologisms?

RQ3. Does the knowledge of feminist neologisms influence the perception of utility of the denoted concepts?

In order to answer the first research question, feminist neologisms were collected from the crowdsourced dictionary *Wiktionary*, using semantic, morphological and temporal criteria, giving a total of 24 neologisms whose meanings were analysed. Although the collection of neologisms has been somewhat limited by the source chosen and by the morphological criterion, it has nevertheless made it possible to redefine the starting definition of the disruption approach, which focuses on the domination of men over women. As suggested by the title of Chapter 4 “Feminist linguistic activism beyond female-male relationships”, the majority of neologisms are not fully captured by this definition and therefore extend it. Most neologisms illustrate an intersectional understanding of FLA, by addressing the problems of, and with, white feminism, such as *femonationalism*, or by being encapsulated by trans and queer feminism, such as *transmisogyny*.

Neologisms from contemporary feminism give a central place to the experiences of people who are minoritised or marginalised because of their gender or sexuality, as well as their race or religion. Lakoff (2004) questioned the possibility that women, who criticised men naming for women, would in turn make meanings for other women. Contemporary neologisms are a reminder of the importance of naming from one’s own perspective. They do not pretend to name universal experiences but rather privilege naming for oneself by acknowledging differences. Because these results are based on an analysis of neologisms that meet certain selection criteria, it is essential to test these results with a wider sample of neologisms, for example by extending the morphological criteria that they must meet. Nevertheless, it complements the few studies carried out on the more recent feminist neologisms which have been limited to the analysis of one to three neologisms (e.g. Husson 2017; Bridges 2019; Lutzky & Lawson 2019).

After having provided an inventory of the feminist neologisms that have been coined, we investigated whether these neologisms were used and how. This is the second research question, addressed in Chapter 5, on the degree of conventionalisation of feminist neologisms. The present thesis contributes to previous studies on recent feminist neologisms which have mostly focused on how they are used. The present study also investigates the extent to which these neologisms are used, by doing so it provides a more comprehensive analysis of the conventionalisation process of recent neologisms.

More specifically, they have been analysed in the NOW corpus. Because this corpus includes a large number of texts from various sources, it is well suited for this kind of study which could and should also be extended to follow-up studies with corpora which are not restricted to the field of news, to ensure a higher degree of representativity of the results. Nevertheless, this study has allowed us to make important methodological and theoretical contributions to our understanding of the process of conventionalisation of (feminist) neologisms which includes diffusion and usualisation.

Looking at diffusion, the corpus study reveals that *manspread* is the most diffused neologism: it is the most frequent neologism (in number of tokens, pages or sources). It occurs more frequently in contexts which are not related to feminism, gender or sexuality, occurs in more countries, and has the longest life span. While *manspread* ticks all the diffusion boxes, measuring and comparing the degree of diffusion of other neologisms proved to be more complex. The comparison between the seven variables indicates that there is not one diffusion pattern but reveals the multidimensionality of the process. For example, some neologisms are used frequently but only for a short time, others are used for longer periods but only in contexts linked to feminism, gender or sexuality. The lack of a discernible pattern is primarily attributable to the relatively limited diffusion of the neologisms under examination. Nevertheless, given that these neologisms are, in fact, representative of most neologisms, which do not become (highly) diffused, it is necessary to propose a way to take this multidimensionality into account. The diffusion index proposed in this thesis, using the min-max normalisation method, proves to be an appropriate tool for systematically studying the multidimensionality of neologisms at all stages of diffusion.

In addition to diffusion, conventionalisation is also made of usualisation. Starting with the most diffused neologism, *manspread*, we find that in the course of its diffusion, it goes through semantic changes, in particular generalisation, which confirms the relationship between diffusion and usualisation. While this aspect is in accordance with the well-established relationship between diffusion and semantic change in the literature on linguistic change, other aspects are noteworthy, particularly in relation to depoliticisation. More specifically, the analysis shows that the extended meanings of *manspread* do not necessarily indicate the depoliticisation of this term, since it can notably be used to refer to men taking up space in general. Moreover, the fine-grained analysis of the uses of all neologisms regardless of their degree of diffusion has revealed they can also be used with their intended meanings while having their political

dimension downplayed. This confirms the importance of supplementing quantitative semantic analyses with qualitative analyses, even for the most diffused neologisms.

The study of social processes pertaining to neologisms is a relatively new field of research, with the first large-scale empirically-driven study in this area being conducted less than 30 years ago (Fischer 1998). Some of these studies refer to a high degree of diffusion of neologisms as success. Metcalf, for example, explains that “the success or failure of new words is not entirely random” (2002: 155) and Boulanger (1997) tries to identify what makes a neologism “successful”. Looking at the conventionalisation of feminist neologisms reveals that this is a rather simplistic understanding of diffusion, and that it needs to be nuanced, since their diffusion means that they can potentially lose their political meaning. Further research needs to be done on neologisms with a political dimension to explore the potential tension between the processes of diffusion and depoliticisation. Recent studies show that there is an interest in neologisms with a political dimension (Zollo 2019), for example related to environmental (Gjesdal & Lyse Samdal 2016; Balnat & Gérard 2022) or migration issues (Šinjori 2019). These are all the more relevant for neology studies that one of the motivations behind the coinage of neologisms is to reflect social changes (Schmid 2016: 69; Pruvost & Sablayrolles 2019: 28-29).

The third research question (Chapter 6) pertains to the influence of the knowledge of feminist neologisms on the perception of utility of the denoted concepts. The perception of utility, observed by means of a questionnaire, is used as a first exploration of the hypostatisation process because of its parallels with the three utility types (holistic, societal and personal). What emerges from the questionnaire results was the significant positive relationship between the perception of utility and the knowledge of neologisms prior to the questionnaire. However, when participants did not know the neologisms prior to the questionnaire and were exposed to them for the first time through the questionnaire, they were more likely to give a lower or similar utility score than participants who did not know these neologisms prior to the questionnaire and were not exposed to them through the questionnaire. As a result, these findings cannot confirm the idea that the first exposure to a word creates a pseudo-concept, i.e. the impression that there is a somewhat relevant concept potentially worthy of further entrenchment (Schmid 2008).

This questionnaire is only a first exploration of the hypostatisation process and several avenues for development have emerged. One of them would be to manipulate

the context of first exposure to investigate the potential effect of linguistic conservatism on the perception of the denoted concepts. This could be done by comparing the results of participants who are exposed to a word for the first time in different contexts, among which a supposedly authentic text, with participants who encounter a concept for the first time only with its definition. Even if we try to reduce the effect of the context of first exposure, another question that poses a challenge is whether it is even possible to observe and measure the effect of the knowledge a word from its first exposure if the effect is the creation of a pseudo-concept. After how many exposures can this effect be observed? To do this, the participants would have to be exposed to the same words several times, and different durations would have to be tested between each exposure. To ensure that they are not exposed to them between each test, non-existent words would need to be tested. Future studies should also take into account participants' characteristics, not only to ensure better demographic representativeness but also with regards to their opinions on linguistic change and on the themes addressed by the neologisms.

The present thesis encourages further parallels between gender-fair language and feminist neologisms in the study of their impact on our mental and social representations. While the study of the impact of neologisms on our representations is only in its early stages, that of gender-fair language is well advanced (Section 2.3.2), and as such can be used as an inspiration. It is evident that there is a distinction to be made between testing the impact of nouns that refer to abstract notions and events and those that refer to job titles, for example. Nevertheless, the results of the questionnaire revealed similarities to be explored with regard to the factors influencing the perception of these two approaches to FLA, such as linguistic conservatism. These findings demonstrate that gender-fair language and feminist neologisms should not be studied in isolation, but rather enhance and enrich each other.

7.2 Further research

In addition to the avenues for development mentioned above, this research could be expanded in a number of ways. A logical extension of the present study is to expand the collection of neologisms, not only in terms of the selection criteria mentioned above, but also in terms of the sources from which to collect them. Social media would be a particularly fitting source given its relevance to both feminist and neology studies.

Digital activism is one of the defining characteristics of contemporary feminism (Crossley 2018; Jouët 2018), and feminist online discourse has been at the heart of numerous studies these past years (e.g. Keller *et al.* 2018; Mendes *et al.* 2019; Trovato 2023; Foubert *et al.* (forthcoming)). As far as neology studies are concerned, the internet and social media are of growing interest in terms of collecting neologisms and analysing conventionalisation (e.g. Grieve *et al.* 2016; Schmid *et al.* 2020; Würschinger & McGillivray 2023).

In addition to the collection of neologisms, the present research could also be expanded in terms of the analysis of the diffusion process, for example by exploring other aspects of the spatial diffusion. Feminist English neologisms do not only diffuse to different English-speaking countries, but also to non-English speaking ones. The study of spatial diffusion could therefore also involve a multilingual study in order to analyse whether these neologisms are borrowed or translated into the language of the country where they diffuse. A follow-up question to explore would then be whether translated gendered neologisms, such as *manspread*, keep their gendered component or whether it gets lost in translation. Regarding the usualisation process, it would be possible to explore which meaning gets diffused when feminist neologisms undergo semantic changes in its language of origin. This kind of research could be done hand in hand with translation studies in which the issue of translating neologisms remains a vibrant question (e.g. Talebinejad *et al.* 2012; Hanaqtah 2019; Awadh & Shafiull 2020). In the recent years, feminist and queer issues have also gained traction in translation studies (Epstein & Gillett 2017; Castro & Ergun 2019; Baer & Kaindl 2020). Sharing her experience of translating as a feminist, Grunenwald explains that she “learnt to say things that didn’t yet exist in French. Translating forces us to see blind spots, to identify what has no name, no recognised existence. To recognise what is not thought of in one language but is in another”²⁸ (2021: 5).

The final set of prospects that I would like to suggest goes back to the observation that led to the coinage of neologisms which emerged in the 1970s, i.e. the absence of names to refer to common experiences, or in some cases the absence of *appropriate* names. The act of naming thus represented a means of reframing such experiences in a different light. This is related to the profiling processes happening when producing new

²⁸ Original quote in French: “J’ai appris à dire des choses qui n’existaient pas encore en français. Traduire nous force à voir les angles morts, à identifier ce qui n’a pas de nom, pas d’existence reconnue. À reconnaître ce qui n’est pas pensé dans une langue mais qui l’est dans une autre” (Grunenwald 2021: 5).

words (Schmid 2008), which in broad terms, refer to the idea that naming means making choices in terms of which aspects one wants to highlight or, on the contrary, background. For example, the act of sending pictures of one's genitals to someone who has not asked for these can be called *cyber-flashing*, which highlights a legal framework. This is not the case of (*unsolicited*) *dick pics* which is also commonly used to refer to such pictures. A morphological analysis of feminist neologisms could be carried out focusing on onomasiological variation, that is how the same concept is named differently, to observe the different ways in which experiences can be profiled differently.

This morphological analysis could serve as the basis of psycholinguistic experiments on how different names for the same experience impact the social and cognitive representations of the experience. Such experiments could be informed by the literature on metaphors, which has shown that different metaphors do not only frame the same experience differently (Semino *et al.* 2018), but that these differences also have an impact on how the same issue is conceptualised, and the decisions resulting from this conceptualisation. For example, Thibodeau and Boroditsky (2011) investigate two metaphors related to crime, CRIME IS A BEAST and CRIME IS A VIRUS, and show how being exposed to one or the other influences the decisions taken against crime. The fact that “metaphors can influence how people conceptualize and in turn approach solving an important social issue” (idem: 5) could also be explored with regards to feminist neologisms. After exposing two groups of participants to the same description of an experience, with the only difference being the name for this experience (e.g. *cyber-flashing* and *dick pics*), participants could answer questions on their perceptions of this experience.

The question of the influence of neologisms on our social and cognitive representations remains an open one. The results of the questionnaire in the present thesis show that there is abundant room for further investigation on determining the extent to which the knowledge of a word influences the perception of the denoted concepts, as well as other factors involved in this perception. For the time being, the fact that participants who knew a word prior to the questionnaire were more likely to give higher utility scores raises an important question: is it really knowing about the word or the discourse around the denoted concept that increases the perception of utility of the concept? The relationship between word and discourse is at the heart of the last section of this thesis which brings together the processes of coinage, conventionalisation and hypostatisation of feminist neologisms.

7.3 Towards the creation of discursive spaces

Feminist linguistics suggests that discourse around an experience is facilitated by the existence of a name for such experience. Spender, for example, commenting on neologisms from the 1970s such as *sexual harassment*, points out that “there are now more than a few books or articles devoted to structuring the reality of sexual harassment” (1990: 185) and supports this idea by referring to Farley (1978):

The phrase *sexual harassment* is the first verbal description of women’s feelings about this behaviour [...]. With this new awareness, sociologists, psychologists, and management experts are now reexamining the matrix of male-female relations in the workplace [...]. And for the first time, studies documenting a wide pattern of sexual coercion are being publicized. (idem: 14)

However, these observations prompt us to consider a somewhat circular line of reasoning. If we support the hypothesis that naming has the power of hypostatisation, is it possible to identify instances potentially forming a discourse without a name encompassing it as a whole? In order to reject this circular reasoning, we have to go back to the creation of feminist neologisms in the 1970s, which reveals that naming experiences is not a necessary condition to identify discourse, in fact it is not even a necessary condition to constitute discourse. When women shared their experiences of sexual harassment in consciousness-raising groups, they did not have a specific name for it. Without a name, they shared what was eventually identified as constituting discourse and, as a result, would be named *sexual harassment*. This was only possible because discursive spaces, such as consciousness-raising groups, were created in the first place. This suggests that the only necessary condition for the constitution and identification of discourse is to open up discursive spaces, as Butler explains: “the resignification of speech requires new contexts,” and continues by saying “speaking in ways that have never yet been legitimated, and hence producing legitimation in new and future forms” (1997: 41).

Feminist neologisms are the products of the creation of feminist discursive spaces, and, in turn, enable new feminist discursive spaces to emerge. This can be observed in the literature on sexual harassment mentioned by Farley (1978), but also in the neologisms of contemporary feminism. As argued by Spender who explains that now that sexism is named, other names should follow: “sexist behaviour itself needs to be differentiated, subdivided and classified among more refined lines so that we can engage

in more sophisticated analyses” (1990: 186). The neologism *manspread* is an example of such names coined because sexism could be categorised, one of these categories being ordinary sexism. Similarly, the once neologism *misogyny* made it possible to coin other ones such as *misogynoir* and *transmisogyny*, which then led to the coinage of *transmisogynoir*.

Feminist neologisms do not only lead to the creation of new feminist discursive spaces, but also of discursive spaces outside of feminist spheres. Naming acts as a bridge that enables the diffusion of a discourse within a feminist community around experiences that did not necessarily need to be named in order to be recognised towards a non-feminist community. However, using these neologisms outside the community from which they originate can be met with resistance. This resistance can be linked to a form of linguistic conservatism, since after all this approach is that of linguistic disruption, but not only that. As Ahmed points out with regard to the term *sexism*:

When we say ‘that’s sexist,’ we are saying ‘no’ to that, as well as ‘no’ to the world that renders such speech or behaviour permissible; we are asking individuals to change such that these forms of speech and behaviour are no longer acceptable or permissible. (2015: 9)

Naming experiences means challenging linguistic norms, and by doing so, gives the possibility to challenge social norms as well. Here again, new discursive spaces need to be created to keep social norms in motion, which “involves creating opportunities for critical interventions and transformations that come from the margins, that is, from the agency of those whose voices have been silenced or disproportionately constrained” (Medina 2006: 189). If the aim of feminist linguistic activism is challenging structures of discursive practices, an essential step is the acquisition of discursive agency, that is broadly speaking the ability to tell one’s own story on and in one’s own terms, but it should not stop there.

From the 1970s onwards, feminist linguists, and more generally feminist scholars, have highlighted the importance of moving from a state of silence and exclusion to the acquisition of discursive agency, or “the transformation of silence into language and action” (Lorde 1978). This can be done by turning experiences without names into experiences with names. Experiences were named because without names and discursive spaces, these shared experiences were thought to be nothing more than personal issues. The names emerging from these discursive spaces helped to realise that these personal

experiences were also social issues. Feminist linguistics can identify lexical gaps and observe the production and reception of those who have gained discursive agency, as done in the present thesis by means of corpus studies for example. However, as far as feminist linguistic activism is concerned, this is not enough. In addition to encouraging the acquisition of discursive agency, it is also crucial to provide support to those who have gained discursive agency.

Once experiences with names have been shared, what happens to the personal dimension again? What happens once we have gained discursive agency? Moving from a space in which experiences can remain unnamed and still believed to exist to spaces where these experiences may be named but met with resistance is not an easy endeavour. As a result, challenging discursive practices means creating discursive spaces where it is possible for people to tell their stories on and in their own terms, as well as listening to and supporting them. The critical task of fostering the creation of spaces for new experiences with names to emerge and be received goes beyond the frame of feminist linguistics alone. This must be done along with feminist scholars from other disciplines and activists, which also means creating discursive spaces between them.

Since its coinage in the 1970s, the term *sexual harassment* has become conventional and the existence of the experience it names is unquestionable. We no longer have to imagine a world without this term. Whether the same thing can be said of the more recent feminist neologisms 50 years from now remains to be seen. What is certain, however, is that whenever these terms are coined, they offer the people living these experiences a potential world with the discursive spaces and recognition they need.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Transparency questionnaire overview

Welcome page
Welcome to this questionnaire on the knowledge of new words. First of all, thank you for your participation, which will be completely anonymous. Before you start the actual questionnaire, you will be asked a few questions about your background.
Background information
Is English (one of) your first language(s)? Do you mainly use English at home/at work/in your daily life? Which national variety of English do you speak? Select your age group. What is your highest level of education? Are you a member of the gender expansive (i.e. transgender and/or non-binary) community? What is your gender?
Task
You will be presented with 8 new words. For each word, you will be asked to: a. State whether you knew the word before. b. State whether you knew its meaning before. c. Identify the parts of the word. For example, for the word “Brexit”, the parts are “Britain” and “exit”. There can be two or three parts per word. d. Give the meaning of the word or what you think the meaning of the word is.
Example of task
CISWASHING Do you know this word? Do you know its meaning? What are the parts of the word? Guess if you don’t know. What is the meaning of the word? Guess if you don’t know.

Final page

Do you know what this questionnaire is about and what it will be used for?

Your answers to the questionnaire remain fully anonymous. However, should you wish to receive a more detailed debrief of the results, please provide an email address where I can contact you. Thanks again for your participation.

Appendix 2. Transparency questionnaire participants

	Set 1	Set 2	Set 3	Total
Participants	32	31	34	97
Language variety				
UK	12	14	19	45
US	11	8	4	23
Australia	5	6	4	15
Ireland	0	1	3	4
New Zealand	1	1	1	3
Canada	1	0	1	2
India	1	0	1	2
Malaysia	1	0	0	1
Singapore	0	1	0	1
South Africa	0	0	1	1
Age				
18-29	17	16	24	57
30-39	12	11	5	28
40-49	2	2	2	6
50+	1	2	3	6
Education				
Higher education degree	30	26	26	82
Secondary school degree or equivalent	2	5	8	15
Less than secondary school degree	0	0	0	0
Gender expansive community				
No	28	28	27	83
Yes	4	3	7	14
Gender				
Woman	20	20	23	63
Man	12	12	9	33
Non-binary	1	2	2	5
Genderqueer	0	0	1	1
Genderqueer, transfeminine gay	0	1	0	1

Appendix 3. Utility questionnaire overview

Welcome page
Welcome to this questionnaire on new ideas in changing societies. First of all, thank you for your participation, which will be completely anonymous. Before you start the actual questionnaire, you will be asked a few questions about your background.
Background information
<p>Is English (one of) your first language(s)?</p> <p>Do you mainly use English at home/at work/in your daily life?</p> <p>Which national variety of English do you speak?</p> <p>Select your age group.</p> <p>What is your highest level of education?</p> <p>Are you a member of the gender expansive (i.e. transgender and/or non-binary) community?</p> <p>What is your gender?</p>
Task (DEF-only condition)
<p>In this part of the questionnaire, you will be presented with 12 definitions. For example, “the belief that children's needs and preferences take precedence over those of their parents or other adults”. This will then be followed by four questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Rate how useful this meaning is. Justify your answer. State whether you have ever encountered a word for this meaning. Give what the word might be or what the word is for this meaning.
Example of task
<p>Definition: to ignore, deny, or minimize the gender identity of a trans person or trans people, or the role that a trans person or trans people played in an event.</p> <p>How useful is this meaning?</p> <p>Why/Why not?</p> <p>Have you ever encountered this meaning?</p> <p>What is the word for it or might the word for it be?</p>

Task (NEO+DEF condition)

In this part of the questionnaire, you will be presented with 12 words and their definitions. For example, “kindergarchy: the belief that children's needs and preferences take precedence over those of their parents or other adults”. This will then be followed by three questions.

- a. Rate how useful this meaning is.
- b. Justify your answer.
- c. State whether you have ever encountered this word with this meaning.

Example of task

Ciswashing: to ignore, deny, or minimize the gender identity of a trans person or trans people, or the role that a trans person or trans people played in an event.

How useful is this meaning?

Why/Why not?

Have you ever encountered this word with this meaning?

Final page

Do you know what this questionnaire is about and what it will be used for?

Your answers to the questionnaire remain fully anonymous. However, should you wish to receive a more detailed debrief of the results, please provide an email address where I can contact you. Thanks again for your participation.

Appendix 4. Utility questionnaire participants

	DEF-ONLY condition			NEO+DEF condition			Total
	Set 1	Set 2	Set 3	Set 1	Set 2	Set 3	
Participants	17	18	19	16	21	21	112
Language variety							
UK	8	10	14	9	12	10	63
US	7	3	3	4	5	5	27
India	0	2	1	2	1	1	7
Australia	1	1	1	0	1	1	5
Canada	1	1	0	0	2	1	5
New Zealand	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
South Africa	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Other	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Age							
18-29	13	11	12	8	14	11	69
30-39	2	3	3	4	2	5	19
40-49	1	4	3	3	1	3	15
50+	1	0	1	1	4	2	9
Education							
Higher education degree	11	13	13	14	16	19	86
Secondary school degree or equivalent	5	5	6	2	5	2	25
Less than secondary school degree	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Gender expansive community							
No	13	16	18	15	19	19	100
Yes	3	0	1	1	1	2	8
N/A	1	2	0	0	1	0	4
Gender							
Woman	11	15	15	11	17	9	78
Man	3	3	4	4	4	12	30
Non-binary	3	0	0	1	0	0	4

Appendix 5. Collected neologisms (in alphabetical order)

Neologism	Wiktionary publication date	Wiktionary definition
acephobia	02.12.2014	Fear, dislike, or hatred of asexual people and/or human asexuality.
allonormativity	04.09.2020	The assumption that all human beings are allosexual, i.e. that they experience sexual attraction to other people.
brocialism	11.11.2015	Socialism or progressivism which downplays women's issues or reinforces masculinist attitudes or ideas.
broflake	19.05.2020	An overly-sensitive man or boy who is easily upset or offended, especially one upset about loss of male privilege.
cis privilege	12.04.2013	The social advantage enjoyed by those who are cisgender/cissexual.
ciscentrism	19.01.2014	Centering on or overemphasizing cissexuality and/or cissexual people.
cisgenderism	06.02.2013	Cisgender attitudes and beliefs generally
cispatriarchy	03.08.2019	The assumed dominance of cisgender men.
cissplain	27.11.2019	To explain transgender issues, people or behavior to a trans person (as a cis person) in a condescending manner, presuming the listener's inferior understanding.
cissupremacy	18.01.2014	The ideology that regards cis people as superior to trans people, or diminishes the rights, concerns, etc. of trans people.

ciswash	07.11.2015	To ignore, deny, or minimize the gender identity of a trans person or trans people, or the role that a trans person or trans people played in an event.
femonationalism	12.08.2019	The association between a nationalist ideology and some feminist ideas, especially when having xenophobic motivations.
heterocracy	27.01.2016	A society influenced by heterosexual values
himpathy	25.04.2020	Inappropriate sympathy given to men or boys, especially those who are guilty of sexual transgressions.
hislam	18.08.2018	Islam which reinforces masculinist attitudes or ideas or downplays women's issues.
homocapitalism	29.09.2018	Capitalist appropriation and assimilation of sexual diversity, specially pertaining to the gay, cisgender, western, white, and upper middle class men.
intersexphobia	22.01.2016	Discrimination against people with intersex conditions.
lgbtphobia	02.10.2015	A negative attitude towards LGBT people.
manspread	14.03.2017	To splay one's legs open whilst sitting on public transport, thus occupying more than one seat.
misogynoir	19.01.2015	Hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against black women.
trans-exclusionary	23.02.2017	Excluding trans people (especially trans women).
transmisogynoir	12.05.2018	Hatred of, contempt for, or prejudice against black trans women.

transmisogyny	21.09.2013	Hatred of or contempt for transgender women.
transprejudice	30.07.2016	Prejudice against transgender people.

Résumé substantiel en français

1. Introduction

S'il y a bien une question linguistique qui se retrouve régulièrement au cœur de l'actualité ces dernières années, c'est celle de la représentation des genres dans la langue. Pourtant, elle n'est pas nouvelle. Elle a commencé à faire l'objet d'une attention particulière il y a 50 ans, avec l'émergence de la linguistique féministe dans les années 1970. L'une des principales observations de la linguistique féministe à propos de la langue est son biais masculin, ce qui a mené à proposer des alternatives pour contrer celui-ci. L'alternative la plus connue est celle du langage inclusif²⁹, comme moyen de contrer le masculin générique qui est l'emploi de la forme masculine pour se référer à tout le monde sans distinction de genre ou lorsque le genre du référent est inconnu (Hellinger et Bußmann 2001), comme dans « le genre **du référent** ». Le langage inclusif est une forme d'activisme linguistique féministe (ALF) qui a fait l'objet d'une grande attention dans les années 1970, attention qui subsiste tant dans les sphères féministes qu'en dehors de celles-ci, tant dans le monde universitaire qu'en dehors de celui-ci.

Cependant, la nature androcentrée du langage n'a pas seulement été observée en termes de surreprésentation des hommes, mais aussi dans l'absence de noms pour désigner les expériences des femmes. En partageant leurs histoires au sein de groupes de parole, ces femmes ont réalisé que ce qu'elles pensaient être des problèmes individuels était en fait commun à toutes. Ces expériences communes étaient pourtant sans nom. Un exemple de ces expériences est le comportement inapproprié des hommes, en particulier au travail, comme des avances sexuelles. Pour pallier cette absence de noms, les femmes ont alors été encouragées à nommer ces expériences et c'est dans ce contexte que *harcèlement sexuel* a été créé. Ce type d'ALF a été qualifié d'approche de perturbation, *disruption approach*, qui, selon la définition de Pauwels, comprend « la création de

²⁹ Depuis les années 1970, de nombreux termes ont été utilisés dans la littérature pour désigner les alternatives au masculin générique, comme le langage non-sexiste, neutre ou inclusif. Tout au long de cette thèse, j'utilise le terme *gender-fair language*, que je traduis ici par *langage inclusif*, pour englober plusieurs stratégies visant à éviter le masculin générique, parmi lesquelles la neutralisation et la féminisation.

nouveaux mots [...] pour souligner la subordination des femmes et la domination des hommes »³⁰ (2003 : 555).

Le fait de créer des néologismes pour nommer des expériences de son propre point de vue ne s'est pas arrêté après les années 1970. L'évolution du féminisme a donné lieu à l'apparition de nouveaux termes. Comme l'explique Spender, « il est prévisible que d'autres noms émergeront de cet état plus fort »³¹ (1990 : 186). Parmi les néologismes anglais les plus récents, nous pouvons citer *himpathy*, qui désigne la sympathie inappropriée dont bénéficient souvent les hommes puissants en cas de comportement misogyne, *manspread*, qui désigne la pratique des hommes qui écartent les jambes, généralement dans les transports publics, et *transmisogyny*, qui fait référence à la misogynie à l'égard des femmes transgenres. La transformation d'une expérience innommée en une expérience nommée est au cœur de la présente thèse, qui se concentre plus particulièrement sur les néologismes anglais créés dans le féminisme contemporain. L'objectif principal de cette thèse est de contribuer à la linguistique féministe en se penchant sur cette approche de l'ALF jusqu'à présent peu étudiée.

Les études du langage inclusif peuvent se résumer en trois points, qui sont les suivants : (i) rassembler les formes de langage inclusif, (ii) évaluer si elles sont utilisées ou non, (iii) observer dans quelle mesure elles ont un impact sur les représentations sociales et cognitives. L'attention portée au langage inclusif depuis les années 1970 est évidente dans le nombre de lignes directrices publiées pour encourager son utilisation : plus de 3014 publiées à ce jour dans plus de 40 langues (Elmiger 2024).

Si la proposition de formes linguistiques nouvelles est évidemment une étape nécessaire du changement linguistique induit par le féminisme, ces alternatives doivent être utilisées à la fois au sein et en dehors de la communauté dont elles sont issues. Cela correspond en partie à la définition de la *conventionnalisation*, qui se compose de deux sous-processus : la *diffusion* et l'*usualisation* (Schmid 2020). En termes généraux, la diffusion correspond à la mesure dans laquelle les néologismes sont utilisés en dehors des contextes sociaux et linguistiques dont ils sont issus, et l'*usualisation* à la manière dont les néologismes sont utilisés.

³⁰ Citation originale en anglais : “the creation of new words [...] to highlight women’s subordination and men’s domination” (Pauwels 2003: 555).

³¹ Citation originale en anglais : “that more names will emerge from this stronger state is predictable” (Spender 1990: 186).

De nombreuses études de corpus ont donc été menées pour mesurer l'efficacité du langage inclusif en termes de sa diffusion, en comparant l'utilisation d'alternatives au masculin générique. Par exemple, Cooper (1984) compare l'emploi générique du pronom masculine *he* (« il »), et ses alternatives inclusives, comme *he/she* (« il/elle ») dans un corpus composé de textes anglais américains de genres et de domaines variés publiés dans les années 1970. Il ne s'agit là que d'un exemple d'analyse de l'utilisation du langage inclusif parmi d'autres, allant de l'étude de corpus d'anglais général (comme celle citée) à, plus récemment, des manuels de mathématiques allemands (Moser et Hannover 2014) et du droit du travail français (Bracchi 2019).

Outre un changement linguistique, les motivations sous-jacentes à la mise en œuvre d'un langage inclusif impliquent un changement des représentations mentales et sociales. En d'autres termes, le langage inclusif ne permet pas seulement une représentation plus égalitaire du genre dans la langue, mais aussi dans notre esprit et dans la société. Mesurer l'efficacité du langage inclusif implique également d'évaluer l'impact de son utilisation sur ces représentations. Le langage inclusif a fait l'objet de nombreuses études, plus particulièrement dans le domaine de la psycholinguistique (pour un aperçu, voir Sczesny *et al.* 2016 ; Gygax *et al.* 2021).

En ce qui concerne les études des néologismes féministes, certains comptes rendus d'ALF mentionnent la création de néologismes féministes, comme Pauwels par exemple qui, comme mentionné plus haut, définit l'approche de perturbation comme « la création de nouveaux mots [...] pour souligner la subordination des femmes et la domination des hommes » (2003 : 555). Il faut cependant souligner que le langage inclusif reste au centre de ces comptes rendus. Pour ce qui est de la question de si oui ou non ces néologismes sont utilisés, l'étude d'Ehrlich et King (1994) est la seule qui observe l'usage des néologismes féministes qui ont émergé autour des années 1970. Elles observent comment des néologismes tel que *sexual harassment* sont utilisés dans la presse et résument leurs conclusions comme suit : « nous montrons dans quelle mesure ces termes sont redéfinis et souvent dépolitisés à mesure qu'ils s'intègrent dans une communauté de discours plus large, souvent sexiste »³² (idem : 61).

Ces observations sont similaires à celles faites dans la littérature sur le changement linguistique. Pour revenir à la notion de conventionalisation, bien que la diffusion et

³² Citation originale en anglais : “we demonstrate the extent to which these kinds of terms get redefined and often depoliticized as they become integrated into the larger, often sexist, speech community” (Ehrlich & King 1994: 61)

l'usualisation concernent des aspects différents du développement des néologismes, elles ne sont pas indépendantes l'une de l'autre, comme l'explique Schmid : « une fois établis dans une communauté, quelles que soient sa nature et sa taille, les types peuvent être dissociés de leurs motivations d'origine et se diffuser dans d'autres communautés sans continuer à être associés aux motivations et aux situations d'utilisation d'origine »³³ (2020: 126). Malgré des observations similaires et un intérêt pour un objet d'étude commun – le changement linguistique – la linguistique féministe et les études de la néologie ont très peu dialogué, et peu de parallèles ont été établis entre les deux. Cette thèse se situe donc à l'interface entre deux cadres théoriques et empiriques : la linguistique féministe et les études de la néologie.

Bien que le pouvoir des néologismes féministes sur les représentations sociales et cognitives ait été revendiqué, aucune étude n'a été réalisée sur le sujet, ce qui peut s'expliquer par le fait que leur effet n'a pas été défini avec précision. En s'inspirant de la littérature sur la néologie et la philosophie du langage, il est possible de définir l'effet potentiel des néologismes féministes.

La motivation qui sous-tend la création de ces néologismes ne se limite pas à dénoncer des comportements particuliers. Comme l'explique Spender, la dénomination est une « tentative d'ordonner et de structurer le chaos et le flux de l'existence qui, autrement, serait une masse indifférenciée »³⁴ (1990 : 163), une idée que l'on retrouve également en dehors de la linguistique féministe. Commentant l'effet des nouveaux mots, Schmid affirme que « les noms découpent un segment apparemment bien délimité dans le flux constant des événements qui se déroulent dans le monde qui les entoure. C'est ce qui donne l'impression d'avoir un concept pour quelque chose »³⁵ (2008 : 8). Le pouvoir de formation de concepts des mots est également connu sous la notion d'*hypostase*, tel qu'elle est abordée dans la philosophie contemporaine du langage et reprise par la linguistique (Lipka 1977). Bien que cette idée soit intuitivement séduisante, elle n'a pas été testée empiriquement.

³³ Citation originale en anglais : “once established in a community of whatever nature and size, types can be abstracted away from their original motives and diffuse to other communities without continuing to be associated with the original motives and situations of use” (Schmid 2020: 126)

³⁴ Citation originale en anglais : “attempt to order and structure the chaos and flux of existence which would otherwise be an undifferentiated mass” (Spender 1990: 163)

³⁵ Citation originale en anglais : “nouns carve an apparently neatly bounded segment from the constant flux of events going on in the world around them. This is what the impression of having a concept of something is all about” (Schmid 2008: 8)

Une étude présentant des résultats préliminaires suggère que la connaissance d'un mot pourrait avoir un impact sur la perception de ce qui est dénoté. Kerremans (2015) a conçu un questionnaire dans lequel l'utilité de plusieurs concepts a été évaluée. Elle a constaté que les participant·es qui ne connaissaient pas le nom pour les concepts présentés avaient tendance à juger ces concepts moins utiles. En outre, Kerremans a identifié trois types d'utilité à partir des justifications des scores d'utilité des participants : (i) holistique, (ii) sociétale et (iii) personnelle. L'utilité holistique correspond à l'idée que les concepts réunissent des éléments de sens individuels de manière succincte et expressive. L'utilité sociétale est liée à la présence et pertinence des concepts dénotés dans la société. L'utilité personnelle correspond aux concepts auxquels les locuteurs et locutrices peuvent se rattacher personnellement.

Ces résultats servent de base à l'étude du pouvoir d'hypostase des néologismes féministes dans la présente thèse, pour deux raisons. La première est que les résultats de Kerremans (2015) suggèrent que la connaissance d'un mot influence la perception du concept dénoté. Deuxièmement, les trois types d'utilité correspondent aux effets de dénomination présents dans la littérature linguistique féministe et à ceux d'hypostase dans la littérature de la néologie. Ces effets peuvent être résumés de la façon suivante : en formant un concept, les noms contribuent à rendre les concepts dénotés intelligibles pour soi et pour les autres, comme une confirmation de ses expériences et potentiellement de celles des autres.

2. Questions de recherche

Au total, 24 néologismes inventés dans le féminisme contemporain pour nommer des expériences qui, jusqu'à présent, n'ont pas été nommées, sont collectés et analysés dans la présente thèse. Plus précisément, elle cherche à étudier la signification de ces néologismes, la manière dont ils sont utilisés et l'effet qu'ils peuvent avoir sur notre perception des concepts dénotés. Ce faisant, elle tente de répondre à trois questions de recherche :

- QR1.** Dans quelle mesure les néologismes féministes récents permettent-ils de redéfinir l'activisme linguistique féministe ?
- QR2.** Quel est le degré de conventionnalisation (c'est-à-dire de diffusion et d'usualisation) des néologismes féministes ?
- QR3.** La connaissance des néologismes féministes influence-t-elle la perception de l'utilité des concepts dénotés ?

3. Méthodologie

Afin de répondre à ces trois questions de recherche, la première étape consiste à définir une méthode de collecte des néologismes. Les études précédentes sur les néologismes féministes récents étaient basées sur une présélection d'un à trois néologismes (Husson 2017 ; Bridges 2019 ; Lutzky et Lawson 2019). Dans la littérature de la néologie, la majorité des études collectent les néologismes à partir du corpus dans lequel ils seront observés. Le principal avantage de cette méthode est qu'elle permet de collecter un grand nombre de néologismes. Cependant, en raison de la spécificité de la présente étude, cet avantage se transforme en inconvénient. L'objectif de cette thèse n'est pas de comprendre la néologie en général, mais d'analyser un type spécifique de néologismes. L'utilisation de cette méthode impliquerait d'examiner le contexte d'un nombre considérable de néologismes candidats afin de déterminer s'il s'agit de néologismes féministes. Il serait plus facile d'avoir un accès direct à leur définition pendant le processus de collecte, ce qui est le cas de la méthode basée sur les dictionnaires « écrits par les foules » (Sajous et Hathout 2017), en anglais *crowdsourced dictionaries*, utilisée dans la présente étude.

Le principal avantage des dictionnaires collaboratifs est qu'ils s'appuient sur une technologie qui permet des mises à jour rapides, ce qui en fait une ressource pertinente pour la collecte de néologismes. De plus, certains néologismes collectés dans les dictionnaires peuvent ne pas se trouver dans le corpus et permettent d'analyser des néologismes non conventionnels. Plus particulièrement, le *Wiktionary* (version anglais du *Wiktionnaire*) a été sélectionné, notamment pour sa structure. Parmi les éléments des entrées lexicales peuvent se trouver des orthographes alternatives, définitions supplémentaires, citations, termes dérivés et apparentés. La normalisation des entrées et ces différents éléments sont particulièrement utiles pour collecter les néologismes.

Trois types de critères ont été définis pour collecter les néologismes : (i) sémantique, (ii) temporel et (iii) morphologique. Le critère sémantique exige que les néologismes dénotent un sens nouveau. Le critère temporel a été établi parce que le *Wiktionary* comprend à la fois des termes établis et des néologismes. Puisque cette étude se limite aux néologismes du féminisme contemporain, une année de création a dû être définie pour collecter ces néologismes. Des questions ont été soulevées quant au début des activismes féministes actuels (Rivers 2017: 22 ; Pavard 2018: 7 ; Oren et Press 2019: 4-5). Dans la présente étude, l'année 2010 a été choisie comme point de départ pour la création de néologismes. Ce choix a été fait davantage pour des raisons pratiques, plutôt que pour affirmer que 2010 est bien le début du féminisme contemporain. En effet, les usages de ces néologismes sont étudiés dans le corpus NOW (News on the Web), qui débute en 2010. Cela donne la possibilité d'observer leur conventionnalisation autour du moment où ils ont été inventés, et ce sur une période de 10 ans. Comme il est impossible de savoir exactement quand un néologisme a été inventé, plusieurs sources ont été utilisées : les dates d'inclusion et les citations du *Wiktionary*, de l'*Urban Dictionary* et de l'*Oxford English Dictionary*.

Afin de limiter le processus manuel de la collecte des néologismes féministes, un critère morphologique a été établi. L'un des principaux objectifs des néologismes féministes est d'aborder des questions liées au genre et/ou à la sexualité, ce qui peut être indiqué dans les mots sources utilisés pour constituer ces néologismes. Par conséquent, le critère morphologique exige que l'un des mots sources dénote le genre, la sexualité ou des termes établis liés au féminisme. À ce stade, il est important de souligner que cette étude ne prétend pas à l'exhaustivité, pour la simple raison qu'elle ne peut être atteinte. Étant donné que des néologismes sont inventés quotidiennement, les catégories se rapportant au genre et à la sexualité émergent également à un rythme rapide et « [a]ucune personne ne peut suivre la génération situationnelle de nouveaux mots dans toutes les communautés »³⁶ (Enke 2012 : 4). C'est pourquoi plusieurs sources ont été utilisées pour compiler la liste des mots sources (e.g. Killerman 2019 ; Zimman et Hayworth 2019). Après la sélection des mots sources, ceux-ci ont été tronqués afin de ne pas exclure les néologismes qui combinent au moins deux mots pour en créer un nouveau, notamment en utilisant des parties des mots sources, donc des mots-valises. La

³⁶ Citation originale en anglais : “[n]o single individual can keep up with the situational generation of new words across all communities” (Enke 2012: 4).

méthode utilisée pour tronquer les mots sources est basée sur celle développée par Kjellander (2019) qui utilise la notion de point de sélection, qui est le point de coupure où un mot candidat (dans notre cas un mot source) sera tronqué (Gries 2006).

Au total, 24 néologismes ont été collectés : *acephobia*, *allonormativity*, *brocialism*, *broflake*, *ciscentrism*, *cisgenderism*, *cispatriarchy*, *cisprivilege*, *cissplain*, *cissupremacy*, *ciswash*, *femonationalism*, *heterocracy*, *himpathy*, *hislam*, *homocapitalism*, *intersexphobia*, *LGBT/Q/Iphobia*, *manspread*, *misogynoir*, *trans-exclusionary*, *transmisogynoir*, *transmisogyny*, et *transprejudice*.

Sur la base de cette collecte, une analyse de corpus a été réalisée pour répondre à la deuxième question de recherche. Mesurer le degré de conventionnalisation ne signifie pas seulement regarder si des néologismes sont utilisés, même si c'est une étape nécessaire, mais aussi par qui et comment. Dans le cas des néologismes féministes plus spécifiquement, il est non seulement important d'examiner si ces néologismes sont utilisés, mais aussi s'ils sont utilisés par des féministes et des non-féministes, et comment ils le sont. L'un des aspects essentiels de la sélection du corpus consiste donc à garantir la diversité des sources.

Le corpus NOW (News On the Web) a été sélectionné. Il contient des textes en anglais publiés dans des journaux et magazines en ligne depuis 2010 et est mis à jour quotidiennement. Au moment de la collecte des données (février 2021), il contenait 12 milliards de mots. La diversité du corpus est révélée par le nombre de sources, plus de 8000, dans le corpus, parmi lesquelles figurent des médias locaux, spécialisés et grand public. Certaines sources se concentrent directement sur les questions de féminisme, de genre et de sexualité (FGS), comme *Feminism in India*, *LGBTQ Nation*, et *UK Gay News*. Chaque néologisme et ses formes alternatives ont été recherchés dans le corpus NOW. Les lignes d'occurrence (14 à gauche et à droite), 1437 au total, ainsi que les informations contextuelles (date, pays et source) ont été extraites du corpus et importées dans un document Excel pour annotation.

Afin de mesurer la diffusion des néologismes, sept variables ont été définies : fréquence de mots, fréquence de textes, fréquence de sources, proportion de textes non-FGS, proportion de sources non-FGS, pays, et proportion de jours actifs. Les trois premières variables permettent de savoir si non seulement un néologisme est fréquent mais s'il apparaît également dans de différents textes et sources. Les variables proportion de textes non-FGS et de sources non-FGS permettent de mesurer si ces néologismes sont utilisés en dehors de contextes liés aux féminisme, genre et sexualité. Le nombre de pays

permet de mesurer la diffusion spatiale et la proportion de jours actifs mesure leur cycle de vie. Afin de combiner ces variables, en plus de les comparer, un indice de diffusion a été créé pour tenir compte de la multidimensionnalité du processus. Cet indice se base sur la méthode de normalisation min-max (NMM) qui permet d'ajuster des valeurs mesurées sur des échelles différentes à une échelle commune. Pour chaque variable, NMM attribue 0 à la valeur minimale et 1 à la valeur maximale et ajuste ensuite les valeurs intermédiaires tout en préservant la forme de la distribution originale.

Alors qu'une approche quantitative est adoptée pour mesurer le processus de diffusion, l'usage, c'est-à-dire comment les néologismes sont utilisés, est observée de manière plus qualitative. Au total, neuf variables classées en trois dimensions d'analyse distinctes ont été définies. Ces dimensions sont (i) métalinguistique, (ii) sémantique et (iii) discursive. La dimension métalinguistique comprend quatre variables. La première variable est le type d'usage : méta-linguistique ou non. La deuxième variable correspond à la présence ou à l'absence de marqueurs métalinguistiques, tels que les guillemets. La troisième variable est la présence ou non d'une définition du néologisme par l'auteur. La quatrième variable de la dimension métalinguistique est l'utilisation ou non de néologismes dans des citations. La deuxième dimension est sémantique et comprend deux variables. La première variable est le sens du néologisme utilisé dans chaque occurrence et la seconde correspond au fait que la définition est une redéfinition ou non. La troisième et dernière dimension est la dimension discursive. Elle comprend quatre variables, dont certaines sont inspirées de l'étude d'Ehrlich et King (1994). La première variable est la stratégie d'expansion, qui correspond aux usages des néologismes élargissant le sens original. Lorsque cela se produit, le domaine auquel le néologisme s'appliquait à l'origine peut également être élargi, ce qui conduit à la deuxième variable, l'expansion du domaine. La troisième variable, la stratégie d'oblitération, est utilisée pour signaler que les concepts cités sont des créations féministes imaginaires. La quatrième et dernière variable de la dimension discursive est l'expression par l'auteur d'une distance par rapport au concept dénoté.

En ce qui concerne la troisième question de recherche, deux questionnaires ont été conçus pour observer la relation entre la connaissance des néologismes et la perception de l'utilité des concepts dénotés. Tout d'abord, un questionnaire sur la transparence des néologismes a été conçu. Celui-ci ne permet pas de répondre directement à la question de recherche mais de contrôler la variable de la transparence des néologismes qui pourrait potentiellement influencer la perception des concepts dénotés. Les néologismes

ont été présentés dans un questionnaire en ligne auquel 97 participant·es dont l'anglais est la langue première ont répondu. Plus précisément, la transparence formelle a été mesurée en leur demandant d'identifier les mots sources constituant les néologismes et la transparence sémantique en identifiant leur sens. À partir de leurs réponses, un score de transparence a pu être attribué à chaque néologisme.

Le questionnaire d'utilité qui permet de mesurer la relation entre la connaissance des néologismes et la perception de l'utilité des concepts dénotés est composé de deux conditions. Dans la première condition appelée « DEF-only », seule la définition des néologismes est présentée aux participant·es. Dans la seconde condition appelée « NEO + DEF », les néologismes et leur définition sont présentés. Les néologismes ont été divisés en trois ensembles de huit néologismes afin de les répartir en fonction de leurs mots sources et du degré de transparence, auxquels ont également été ajoutés quatre néologismes qui ne concernent pas le féminisme. Après avoir répondu à des questions démographiques (sur la langue, l'âge, l'éducation et le genre), chaque participant·e s'est vu attribuer l'un des trois ensembles et l'une des deux conditions.

Dans les deux conditions, la tâche consistait à attribuer un score d'utilité à la définition présentée et à fournir une brève explication. La connaissance potentielle des néologismes avant le questionnaire a également été évaluée. Dans la condition DEF-only, les participant·es devaient répondre aux questions suivantes : connaissez-vous un mot pour la définition présentée ? Quel est, ou pourrait être, ce mot ? Dans la condition NEO + DEF, les participant·es devaient indiquer si le mot pour la définition donnée était connu avant de répondre au questionnaire. Au total, 112 personnes ont complété le questionnaire d'utilité. Les réponses ont été annotées en termes de connaissance des néologismes et de type d'utilité. Le modèle statistique de type *cumulative linked mixed model* a été élaboré afin de prendre en compte la nature des variables observées ainsi que de la dépendance entre les réponses, puisque plusieurs observations par participant·es ont été collectées.

En résumé, différents types de méthodes ont été utilisés pour répondre aux trois questions de recherche : une collection de néologismes basée sur un dictionnaire collaboratif, une analyse de corpus au moyen de méthodes mixtes et l'élaboration de questionnaire. Dans la section suivante, les résultats obtenus pour chacune de ces questions sont présentés.

4. Résultats

Comme mentionné ci-dessus, la formulation de la première question de recherche, à savoir dans quelle mesure les néologismes récents permettent une redéfinition de l'ALF, trouve son origine dans la définition de l'approche de perturbation, qui est « la création de nouveaux mots [...] pour mettre en évidence la subordination des femmes et la domination des hommes » (Pauwels 2003 : 555). La présente étude porte sur 24 néologismes qui incitent les linguistes féministes à repenser la définition de l'ALF. L'approche de perturbation n'est pas monolithique ; sa définition ne peut être réduite aux relations femmes-hommes, mais doit refléter la variété des perspectives offertes par les féminismes contemporains.

Bien que certains néologismes, comme *himpathy* ou *manspread*, correspondent à la définition de départ, la majorité des 24 néologismes recueillis ne sont pas entièrement pris en compte par celle-ci et élargissent donc cette définition. La plupart des néologismes illustrent une compréhension intersectionnelle de l'ALF, en abordant les problèmes du féminisme blanc, comme l'illustre le néologisme *femonationalism* qui fait référence, entre autres, à une convergence inattendue du discours de certaines féministes avec le discours anti-islamique et nationalistes. D'autres néologismes participent également à l'extension de la définition de l'approche de la perturbation en étant intégrés dans le féminisme trans et queer, comme avec les néologismes *transmisogyny* ou *cisprivilege*. Les néologismes les plus récents redéfinissent la définition originale, non seulement parce qu'ils sont apparus après la définition originale, mais aussi parce que le féminisme, et donc son activisme linguistique, ont évolué depuis les années 1970.

Les néologismes issus du féminisme contemporain permettent non seulement de nommer les expériences des femmes par rapport aux hommes, mais aussi de donner une place centrale aux expériences des personnes minorisées ou marginalisées en raison de leur genre ou de leur sexualité, ainsi que de leur race ou de leur religion. Ces néologismes ne prétendent pas nommer des expériences universelles, mais privilégient une perspective intersectionnelle et mettent en avant le fait de nommer pour soi-même en reconnaissant les différences. Ces résultats étant limités à un certain nombre de néologismes répondant à certains critères de sélection, il est indispensable de poursuivre cette analyse avec un échantillon plus large de néologismes, par exemple en élargissant les critères morphologiques auxquels ils doivent répondre mais aussi en utilisant d'autres sources que les dictionnaires collaboratifs, comme par exemple les réseaux sociaux.

Après avoir étudié quels néologismes féministes ont émergé ces dernières années, l'étape suivante consiste à déterminer si ces néologismes sont utilisés et comment. Bien que le corpus NOW comprenne un grand nombre de textes provenant de sources diverses, il reste limité au domaine de la presse. Cette étude devrait alors être étendue à d'autres genres. Malgré cela, cette étude apporte des contributions à la fois méthodologiques et théoriques à notre compréhension du processus de conventionnalisation des néologismes (féministes).

En ce qui concerne la diffusion, l'étude du corpus révèle que *manspread* est le néologisme le plus diffusé : c'est le néologisme le plus fréquent (en nombre de mots, de textes ou de sources). Il apparaît plus fréquemment dans des contextes qui ne sont pas liés au féminisme, au genre ou à la sexualité, apparaît dans plus de pays et a la durée de vie la plus longue. Si *manspread* remplit toutes les conditions de diffusion, mesurer et comparer le degré de diffusion des autres néologismes s'avère plus complexe.

La plupart des néologismes étudiés ici en sont aux premiers stades de leur diffusion ou présentent des degrés de diffusion faibles ou intermédiaires, et la forme que prennent ces degrés de diffusion est très variable. Certains sont fréquents mais utilisés pendant une courte période, d'autres sont utilisés pendant une plus longue période mais uniquement dans des contextes liés au féminisme, au genre ou à la sexualité. Un indice de diffusion a donc été créé dans cette étude, en utilisant la méthode de normalisation min-max, pour tenir compte de la multidimensionnalité des néologismes.

Outre la diffusion, la conventionnalisation est également faite du processus d'usualisation. En ce qui concerne le néologisme le plus diffusé, *manspread*, nous constatons qu'au cours de sa diffusion, il subit des changements sémantiques, en particulier une généralisation, ce qui confirme la relation entre la diffusion et l'usualisation. Si cet aspect est cohérent avec la relation bien établie entre diffusion et changement sémantique dans la littérature sur le changement linguistique, d'autres aspects sont notables, notamment en ce qui concerne la dépolitisation.

L'analyse montre non seulement que les significations étendues de *manspread* n'indiquent pas nécessairement la dépolitisation de ce terme, puisqu'il peut notamment être utilisé pour désigner les hommes qui prennent de l'espace en général. De plus, l'utilisation du sens originel n'équivaut pas nécessairement à l'absence de dépolitisation, qui peut se faire par le biais de stratégies discursives. Cette dernière observation n'a pu être faite que sur la base d'une analyse fine des usages de ces néologismes et révèle

l'importance de compléter les analyses sémantiques quantitatives par des analyses qualitatives, même pour les néologismes les plus diffusés.

La troisième et dernière question de recherche sur l'influence de la connaissance des néologismes féministes sur la perception de l'utilité des concepts désignés est observée au moyen d'un questionnaire. Il est utilisé comme une première exploration du processus d'hypostatisation des noms en raison du parallèle entre les trois types d'utilité observés par Kerremans (2015), (i) holistique, (ii) sociétal et (iii) personnel, et les effets d'hypostatisation.

En ce qui concerne les types d'utilité observés dans les justifications aux scores d'utilité, la justification holistique est la plus fréquente, suivie par les justifications sociétales et personnelles. Dans l'ensemble, les participant·es qui donnent des justifications personnelles ont tendance à donner un score d'utilité plus faible que les participants qui donnent des raisons sociétales ou holistiques. D'autres aspects sont ressortis de l'analyse qualitative des justifications des scores d'utilité, dont celui du conservatisme linguistique des participant·es. Certaines réponses montrent que si l'existence du concept dénoté est acceptée, l'idée qu'il existe ou pourrait exister un mot pour le désigner ne l'est pas.

Ces réponses offrent une perspective différente sur l'hypostase qui est l'idée selon laquelle, puisque les phénomènes dénotés existent déjà, il n'est pas nécessaire de les nommer. Parce que ces participant·es sont déjà conscients de ces phénomènes, ils et elles considèrent qu'un néologisme n'est pas nécessaire pour les nommer. Pour les linguistes féministes, cependant, le fait d'avoir un nom peut également aider les autres à prendre conscience de ces phénomènes. Dans d'autres réponses, nous observons que ce n'est pas parce que les participants acceptent l'existence de ces phénomènes qu'ils n'acceptent pas de néologismes pour les désigner, mais parce qu'ils ne veulent pas remettre en question l'existence de ces phénomènes. Cette question est liée aux attitudes des participants à l'égard du féminisme et des questions liées au genre et à la sexualité en général, un aspect qui, comme celui de conservatisme linguistique, a été abordé dans des études observant les arguments contre le langage inclusif.

Pour ce qui est de l'influence de la connaissance des néologismes féministes sur la perception de l'utilité des concepts, les résultats du questionnaire montrent que les participant·es qui donnent un score d'utilité plus élevé connaissaient les néologismes avant de passer le questionnaire. Le modèle statistique confirme la relation positive significative entre la perception de l'utilité et la connaissance des néologismes. Lorsque

les participant·es ne connaissaient pas les néologismes avant le questionnaire mais y étaient exposé·es pour la première fois, elles et ils étaient plus susceptibles de donner un score d'utilité inférieur ou similaire à celui des participant·es qui ne connaissaient pas ces néologismes avant le questionnaire et n'y avaient pas été exposé·es du tout.

5. Conclusion

En plaçant cette recherche dans le cadre de la linguistique féministe et ces néologismes dans l'étude de l'activisme linguistique féministe, des parallèles ont été établis entre le langage inclusif et les néologismes féministes. En particulier, il a été observé que si les recherches sur le premier se concentraient sur la diffusion, les recherches sur les seconds se concentraient sur le processus d'usualisation, démontrant ainsi tous deux une vision limitée de la conventionnalisation. Si la présente étude s'inspire de l'étude du langage inclusif en intégrant une analyse du processus de diffusion, elle montre également la nécessité d'intégrer des analyses plus approfondies de l'usualisation dans l'étude de l'utilisation du langage inclusif. En d'autres termes, l'étude du langage inclusif ne devrait pas seulement consister à observer s'il est utilisé, mais aussi comment il est utilisé. Ceci est d'autant plus important que le langage inclusif est régulièrement au cœur des débats politiques (Loison *et al.* 2020 ; Abbou 2022 : 64-69).

La présente thèse vise également à encourager la poursuite des parallèles entre le langage inclusif et les néologismes nommant des comportements et des formes d'oppression en termes d'étude de leur impact sur nos représentations mentales et sociales. Alors que l'étude de l'impact des néologismes sur nos représentations n'en est qu'à ses débuts, celle du langage inclusif est bien avancée et peut donc être utilisée comme source d'inspiration. Il est évident qu'il y a une distinction à faire entre tester l'impact des noms qui renvoient à des notions et événements abstraits et ceux qui renvoient à des noms de métiers. Néanmoins, les résultats du questionnaire ont révélé des similitudes à explorer en ce qui concerne les facteurs influençant la perception de ces deux approches du FLA, tels que le conservatisme linguistique. Les résultats du corpus et du questionnaire démontrent collectivement que le langage inclusif et les néologismes féministes ne devraient pas être étudiés de façon isolée, mais plutôt se renforcer et s'enrichir.

Outre la linguistique féministe, cette thèse s'appuie également sur la littérature de la néologie, à la fois pour l'étude de corpus sur la conventionnalisation et pour l'étude par

questionnaire explorant l'hypothèse. En ce qui concerne l'étude de corpus, la comparaison entre les sept variables indique qu'il n'existe pas de modèle de diffusion unique, mais révèle la multidimensionnalité du processus. L'absence de modèle discernable est principalement due à la diffusion relativement limitée des néologismes étudiés. Néanmoins, étant donné que ces néologismes sont représentatifs de la plupart des néologismes, qui ne présentent pas une forte diffusion, l'indice de diffusion s'avère être un outil approprié pour étudier systématiquement la multidimensionnalité des néologismes à tous les stades de la diffusion.

L'étude des processus sociaux liés aux néologismes est un domaine de recherche relativement nouveau, la première étude empirique à grande échelle dans ce domaine ayant été réalisée il y a moins de 30 ans (Fischer 1998). Certaines de ces études associées un degré élevé de diffusion des néologismes à la notion de succès, comme par exemple Metcalf qui explique que « le succès ou l'échec des nouveaux mots n'est pas entièrement aléatoire »³⁷ (2002 : 155). L'étude de la conventionnalisation des néologismes féministes révèle qu'il s'agit d'une compréhension plutôt simpliste de la diffusion, et qu'elle doit être nuancée, car leur diffusion signifie qu'ils peuvent potentiellement perdre leur signification politique.

Il convient de poursuivre les recherches sur les néologismes ayant une dimension politique afin d'explorer la tension potentielle entre les processus de diffusion et de dépolitisation. Des études récentes montrent qu'il existe un intérêt pour les néologismes ayant une dimension politique (Zollo 2019), par exemple liés à des questions environnementales (Gjesdal et Lyse Samdal 2016 ; Balnat et Gérard 2022) ou migratoires (Šinjori 2019). Étant donné que l'une des motivations derrière la création de néologismes est de refléter les changements sociaux (Schmid 2016 : 69 ; Pruvost et Sablayrolles 2019 : 28-29), ces phénomènes sont d'autant plus pertinents pour les études de la néologie.

6. Organisation de la thèse

Cette thèse est organisée en sept chapitres. Après une présentation brève du contexte général qui mène aux questions de recherche de cette thèse (Chapitre 1), les dimensions théoriques et empiriques de la recherche sont exposées dans le chapitre de l'état de l'art

³⁷ Citation originale en anglais : “the success or failure of new words is not entirely random” (Metcalf 2002: 155).

(Chapitre 2). Plus précisément, il aborde quatre questions issues de la linguistique féministe, éclairées par la littérature sur la néologie : (i) Quels sont les problèmes linguistiques observés ? (ii) Quelles sont les solutions proposées ? (iii) Sont-elles utilisées et comment ? Et enfin, (iv) pourquoi est-il si important de changer la langue ?

Le chapitre 3 porte sur la méthodologie utilisée pour cette étude. Il commence par passer en revue les méthodes de collecte de néologismes utilisées dans la littérature avant de présenter l'approche du dictionnaire collaboratif utilisée dans cette thèse. Il décrit ensuite le corpus utilisé pour étudier la conventionnalisation des néologismes féministes, ainsi que les variables identifiées pour mesurer la diffusion et observer l'usage. En ce qui concerne l'exploration de la notion d'hypostase, les caractéristiques des questionnaires sont présentées, ainsi que la gestion des données en termes de collecte, d'annotation et de modélisation statistique.

Les chapitres 4 à 6 sont consacrés aux résultats de chaque question de recherche. Le chapitre 4 examine les résultats de la collecte de néologismes et la mesure dans laquelle ils permettent de redéfinir la notion de l'ALF. Il commence par présenter les néologismes qui répondent à la définition de Pauwels en dénonçant le comportement des hommes ou leurs réactions à ce comportement. Le chapitre explique ensuite comment les néologismes les plus récents s'inscrivent dans une définition plus large, montrant une compréhension intersectionnelle de l'ALF. Ces néologismes sont classés en deux catégories principales : ceux qui traitent des problèmes du féminisme blanc et ceux qui sont liés au féminisme trans et queer.

Le chapitre 5 porte sur les résultats de l'analyse du corpus en vue de répondre à la deuxième question de recherche sur la conventionnalisation des néologismes féministes. Le processus de diffusion est abordé dans la première partie du chapitre, dans laquelle sept variables sont d'abord comparées, puis combinées dans un indice de diffusion pour mesurer le degré de diffusion. Dans la partie suivante, le processus d'usage est observé, en se concentrant plus spécifiquement sur la nature politique de la signification des néologismes féministes.

La troisième question de recherche est traitée dans le chapitre 6, qui présente les résultats du questionnaire. Il présente d'abord les informations démographiques sur les participant·es, puis les résultats descriptifs sur la connaissance des néologismes et la perception des concepts dénotés, et enfin les résultats du modèle statistique testant la relation entre la connaissance des mots et la perception de l'utilité des concepts dénotés.

En conclusion, le chapitre 7 présente un résumé des résultats, examine les contributions apportées par cette thèse et propose des pistes de recherche pour l'avenir.

Zusammenfassung auf Deutsch

Eine der wichtigsten Beobachtungen der feministischen Linguistik seit ihrer Entstehung in den 1970er Jahren ist die androzentrische Natur der Sprache. Um diese männliche Einseitigkeit entgegenzuwirken, wurden sprachliche Veränderungen vorgeschlagen, darunter die inklusive Sprache, die auch heute noch weit über die feministischen und akademischen Sphären hinaus auf großes Interesse stößt. Allerdings beschränkt sich der feministische Sprachaktivismus (FSA) nicht auf die Schaffung inklusiverer Formen. Bewusstseinsbildende Gruppen wurden in den 1970er Jahren als eine wichtige Form des feministischen Aktivismus identifiziert. Diese Räume ermöglichten es Frauen zu erkennen, dass das, was sie für individuelle Erfahrungen hielten, in Wirklichkeit geteilt wurde. Diese gemeinsamen Erfahrungen wurden jedoch nicht benannt. Ein Beispiel für solche Erfahrungen ist das unangemessene Verhalten von Männern, insbesondere am Arbeitsplatz, wie etwa sexuelle Annäherungsversuche. Um das Fehlen von Namen auszugleichen, wurden die Frauen dann ermutigt, diese Erfahrungen aus ihrer Sicht zu benennen, indem sie z. B. den Begriff *sexuelle Belästigung* (*sexual harassment*) erfanden (Spender 1990).

Das Schaffen von Neologismen zur Benennung von Erfahrungen hat nach den 1970er Jahren nicht aufgehört, und auch der zeitgenössische Feminismus wird von solchen Neologismen begleitet. Zu den jüngsten englischen Neologismen gehört *himpathy*, das die unangemessene Sympathie bezeichnet, die mächtige Männer, denen frauenfeindliches Verhalten vorgeworfen wird, häufig genießen. Wie bei den Neologismen, die um 1970 erfunden wurden, wurde auch den jüngeren Neologismen wenig Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt. Die Umwandlung einer unbenannten Erfahrung in eine benannte Erfahrung steht im Mittelpunkt der vorliegenden Dissertation.

Insgesamt 24 englische Neologismen, die im zeitgenössischen Feminismus erfunden wurden, werden in der vorliegenden Dissertation gesammelt und analysiert. Genauer gesagt, versucht sie zu beobachten, welche Erfahrungen mit diesen Neologismen benannt werden, wie sie verwendet werden und welche Auswirkungen sie auf unsere Wahrnehmung der bezeichneten Konzepte haben können. Dabei versucht sie, drei Forschungsfragen zu beantworten:

1. Inwieweit ermöglichen neuere feministische Neologismen eine Neudefinition des feministischen Sprachaktivismus?
2. Wie hoch ist der Grad der Konventionalisierung (d. h. der Verbreitung und Usualisation) von feministischen Neologismen?
3. Beeinflusst das Wissen über feministische Neologismen die Wahrnehmung der Nützlichkeit der bezeichneten Konzepte?

Um diese drei Forschungsfragen zu beantworten, muss im ersten Schritt eine Methode zur Sammlung von Neologismen festgelegt werden. Bisherige Studien zu neueren feministischen Neologismen basieren auf einer Vorauswahl von ein bis drei Neologismen (Husson 2017; Bridges 2019; Lutzky & Lawson 2019). In der Literatur zur Neologie sammeln die meisten Studien die Neologismen aus dem Korpus, in dem sie beobachtet werden sollen. Der Hauptvorteil dieser Methode ist, dass sie eine große Anzahl von Neologismen sammeln kann. Aufgrund der Besonderheit der vorliegenden Studie verwandelt sich dieser Vorteil jedoch in einen Nachteil. Das Ziel dieser Dissertation ist nicht, die Neologie im Allgemeinen zu verstehen, sondern eine spezifische Art von Neologismen zu analysieren. Die Anwendung dieser Methode würde bedeuten, dass der Kontext einer beträchtlichen Anzahl von Neologismenkandidaten untersucht werden müsste, um festzustellen, ob es sich um feministische Neologismen handelt. Es wäre einfacher, während des Sammelprozesses direkten Zugang zu ihrer Definition zu haben, was bei der in dieser Studie verwendeten Methode auf der Grundlage von „der Menge geschriebenen“ Wörterbüchern (Sajous & Hathout 2017), auf Englisch *crowdsourced dictionaries*, auch kollaborative Wörterbücher genannt, der Fall ist. Im Einzelnen wurde das Wiktionary ausgewählt, insbesondere aufgrund seiner Struktur. Insgesamt wurden 24 Neologismen gesammelt, die semantische, temporale und morphologische Kriterien erfüllten: *acephobia*, *allonormativity*, *brocialism*, *broflake*, *ciscentrism*, *cisgenderism*, *cispatriarchy*, *cisprivilege*, *cissplain*, *cissupremacy*, *ciswash*, *femonationalism*, *heterocracy*, *himpathy*, *hislam*, *homocapitalism*, *intersexphobia*, *LGBT/Q/Iphobia*, *manspreading*, *misogynoir*, *trans-exclusionary*, *transmisogynoir*, *transmisogyny* und *transprejudice*.

Auf der Grundlage dieser Sammlung wurde eine Korpusanalyse durchgeführt, um die zweite Forschungsfrage zu beantworten. Den Grad der Konventionalisierung zu messen bedeutet nicht nur zu schauen, ob und von wem Neologismen verwendet werden, was dem Konzept der Verbreitung entspricht, sondern auch wie, was dem Konzept der

Usualisation entspricht (Schmid 2020). Dieser Aspekt ist besonders relevant für die Untersuchung feministischer Neologismen, da eine der Motivationen hinter ihrer Entstehung darin besteht, die Erfahrungen, die sie denotieren, in der Gesellschaft sichtbar zu machen. Es hat sich jedoch gezeigt, dass die Verbreitung auch zu einer Entpolitisierung ihrer Bedeutung führen kann (Ehrlich & King 1994). Im Fall von feministischen Neologismen ist es daher nicht nur wichtig zu untersuchen, ob diese Neologismen verwendet werden, sondern auch, ob und wie sie von Feministinnen und Nicht-Feministinnen verwendet werden. Ein wesentlicher Aspekt der Korpusauswahl besteht daher darin, die Vielfalt der Quellen zu gewährleisten. Ausgewählt wurde der NOW-Korpus (News On the Web). Es enthält englischsprachige Texte, die seit 2010 in Online-Zeitungen und -Magazinen veröffentlicht wurden, und wird täglich aktualisiert. Zum Zeitpunkt der Datenerhebung (Februar 2021) enthielt er 12 Milliarden Wörter. Um die Verbreitung von Neologismen zu messen, wurden sieben Variablen definiert: (i) Worthäufigkeit, (ii) Texthäufigkeit, (iii) Quellenhäufigkeit, (iv) Anteil der Nicht-FGS-Texte (nicht auf Feminismus, Geschlecht oder Sexualität fokussiert), (v) Anteil der Nicht-FGS-Quellen, (vi) Land und (vii) Anteil der aktiven Tage. Um diese Variablen nicht nur zu vergleichen, sondern auch zu kombinieren, wurde ein Verbreitungsindex erstellt, der der Multidimensionalität des Prozesses Rechnung trägt. Während zur Messung des Verbreitungsprozesses ein quantitativer Ansatz gewählt wird, wird die *Usualisation*, d. h. die Art und Weise, wie Neologismen verwendet werden, auf eher qualitative Weise beobachtet. Insgesamt wurden neun Variablen definiert, die in drei verschiedene Analysedimensionen (metalinguistisch, semantisch und diskursiv) eingeteilt wurden, um den *Usualisationsprozess* zu analysieren.

In Bezug auf die dritte Forschungsfrage wurden zwei Fragebögen entworfen, um die Beziehung zwischen dem Wissen über Neologismen und der Wahrnehmung der Nützlichkeit der bezeichneten Konzepte zu beobachten, die mit dem Konzept der Hypostase verbunden ist, das besagt, dass die Existenz eines Wortes die Existenz eines Konzepts nahelegt (Schmid 2008). Zunächst wurde ein Fragebogen zur Transparenz von Neologismen entworfen. Dieser dient nicht zur direkten Beantwortung der Forschungsfrage, sondern zur Kontrolle der Variable Transparenz von Neologismen, die potenziell die Wahrnehmung der bezeichneten Konzepte beeinflussen könnte. Der Nützlichkeitsfragebogen (inspiriert von der Studie von Kerremans (2015)) misst die Beziehung zwischen dem Wissen über Neologismen und der Wahrnehmung der Nützlichkeit der bezeichneten Konzepte und besteht aus zwei Bedingungen. In der ersten

Bedingung wird nur die Definition der Neologismen präsentiert. In der zweiten Bedingung werden die Neologismen und ihre Definition vorgestellt. In beiden Bedingungen bestand die Aufgabe darin, der präsentierten Definition einen Nützlichkeitswert zuzuweisen und eine kurze Begründung zu liefern. Die potenzielle Kenntnis der Neologismen vor dem Fragebogen wurde ebenfalls bewertet. Insgesamt füllten 113 englischsprachige Personen den Nützlichkeitsfragebogen aus. Die Antworten wurden hinsichtlich der Kenntnis von Neologismen und des Nützlichkeitsstyps annotiert und mit dem statistischen Modell *cumulative linked mixed model* analysiert.

Die Formulierung der ersten Forschungsfrage, inwieweit neuere Neologismen eine Neudefinition von FSA ermöglichen, hat ihren Ursprung in der Definition des Störungsansatzes, der die Schaffung von Neologismen ist, um die Unterordnung von Frauen und die Dominanz von Männern hervorzuheben (Pauwels 2003: 555). Die vorliegende Studie befasst sich mit 24 Neologismen, die feministische Linguistinnen dazu veranlassen, die Definition von FSA zu überdenken. Obwohl einige Neologismen, wie *himpathy* oder *manspread*, der Ausgangsdefinition entsprechen, wird die Mehrheit der 24 gesammelten Neologismen von dieser nicht vollständig erfasst und erweitert daher die Definition. Neologismen aus dem zeitgenössischen Feminismus ermöglichen nicht nur die Benennung der Erfahrungen von Frauen im Vergleich zu Männern, sondern rücken auch die Erfahrungen von Menschen in den Mittelpunkt, die aufgrund ihres Geschlechts oder ihrer Sexualität sowie ihrer Rasse oder Religion minorisiert oder an den Rand gedrängt werden. Da diese Ergebnisse auf eine bestimmte Anzahl von Neologismen beschränkt sind, die bestimmte Auswahlkriterien erfüllen, ist es unerlässlich, diese Analyse mit einer größeren Stichprobe von Neologismen fortzusetzen, z. B. durch eine Erweiterung der morphologischen Kriterien, die sie erfüllen müssen, aber auch durch die Nutzung anderer Quellen als kollaborative Wörterbücher, wie z. B. soziale Netzwerke.

Nachdem wir untersucht haben, welche feministischen Neologismen in den letzten Jahren aufgekommen sind, besteht der nächste Schritt darin, festzustellen, ob und wie diese Neologismen verwendet werden. Bevor wir auf die Ergebnisse dieser Studie eingehen, ist natürlich zu beachten, dass sie wie alle Korpusstudien durch den verwendeten Korpus begrenzt ist. Obwohl das NOW-Korpus eine große Anzahl von Texten aus verschiedenen Quellen enthält, bleibt es auf den Bereich der Presse beschränkt. Die Analyse müsste dann auf andere Genres ausgeweitet werden. Trotz dieser Einschränkung leistet diese Studie sowohl methodologische als auch theoretische

Beiträge zu unserem Verständnis des Konventionalisierungsprozesses von (feministischen) Neologismen.

Hinsichtlich der Verbreitung zeigt die Untersuchung des Korpus, dass *manspread* der am weitesten verbreitete Neologismus ist: Er ist der häufigste Neologismus (in Bezug auf die Anzahl der Wörter, Texte oder Quellen). Er taucht häufiger in Nicht-FGS-Kontexten auf, erscheint in mehr Ländern und hat die längste Lebensdauer. Während *manspread* alle Verbreitungsbedingungen erfüllt, erweist sich die Messung und der Vergleich des Verbreitungsgrads der anderen Neologismen als komplexer. Der Vergleich der sieben Variablen deutet darauf hin, dass es kein einheitliches Verbreitungsmodell gibt, sondern offenbart die Multidimensionalität des Prozesses. Das Fehlen eines erkennbaren Musters ist hauptsächlich auf die relativ geringe Verbreitung der untersuchten Neologismen zurückzuführen. Da diese Neologismen jedoch repräsentativ für die meisten Neologismen sind, die keine hohe Verbreitung aufweisen (Algeo 1993), erweist sich der Diffusionsindex als geeignetes Instrument, um die Multidimensionalität von Neologismen in allen Phasen der Verbreitung systematisch zu untersuchen.

Neben der Verbreitung wird die Konventionalisierung auch aus dem Prozess der Usualisation gemacht. In Bezug auf den am weitesten verbreiteten Neologismus, *manspread*, stellen wir fest, dass er im Laufe seiner Verbreitung semantische Veränderungen, insbesondere eine Expansion, durchläuft. Während dieser Aspekt mit der gut etablierten Beziehung zwischen Verbreitung und semantischer Veränderung in der Literatur zum Sprachwandel übereinstimmt, sind auch andere Aspekte bemerkenswert, insbesondere im Hinblick auf die Entpolitisierung. Die Analyse zeigt nicht nur, dass die erweiterten Bedeutungen von *manspread* nicht notwendigerweise auf eine Entpolitisierung des Begriffs hindeuten, da er insbesondere zur Bezeichnung von raumgreifenden Männern im Allgemeinen verwendet werden kann. Außerdem ist die Verwendung der ursprünglichen Bedeutung nicht zwangsläufig gleichbedeutend mit dem Fehlen einer Entpolitisierung, die durch diskursive Strategien erfolgen kann. Diese letzte Beobachtung konnte nur auf der Grundlage einer genauen Analyse der Verwendung dieser Neologismen gemacht werden und offenbart, wie wichtig es ist, quantitative semantische Analysen durch qualitative Analysen zu ergänzen, selbst bei den am weitesten verbreiteten Neologismen.

Die dritte und letzte Forschungsfrage zum Einfluss der Kenntnis feministischer Neologismen auf die Wahrnehmung der Nützlichkeit der bezeichneten Konzepte wird

mithilfe eines Fragebogens beobachtet. Die Ergebnisse des Fragebogens zeigen, dass die TeilnehmerInnen, die einen höheren Nützlichkeitswert angeben, die Neologismen bereits vor der Beantwortung des Fragebogens kannten. Das statistische Modell bestätigt den signifikanten positiven Zusammenhang zwischen der wahrgenommenen Nützlichkeit und der Kenntnis der Neologismen. Wenn die TeilnehmerInnen die Neologismen vor dem Fragebogen nicht kannten, aber zum ersten Mal mit ihnen in Berührung kamen, gaben sie mit größerer Wahrscheinlichkeit einen niedrigeren oder ähnlichen Nützlichkeitswert an als die TeilnehmerInnen, die die Neologismen vor dem Fragebogen nicht kannten und überhaupt nicht mit ihnen in Berührung gekommen waren. Die letztgenannten Ergebnisse sind nicht signifikant, geben aber Hinweise auf Verbesserungsmöglichkeiten. Die vorliegende Dissertation soll dazu anregen, weitere Parallelen zwischen verschiedenen Formen des feministischen Sprachaktivismus in Bezug auf die Untersuchung ihrer Auswirkungen auf unsere mentalen und sozialen Repräsentationen zu ziehen. Während die Untersuchung der Auswirkungen von Neologismen auf unsere Vorstellungen noch in den Kinderschuhen steckt, ist die Untersuchung der inklusiven Sprache bereits weit fortgeschritten und kann daher als Inspirationsquelle genutzt werden. Die Ergebnisse des Fragebogens zeigten Ähnlichkeiten, die es zu erforschen gilt, in Bezug auf Faktoren, die die Wahrnehmung dieser beiden Ansätze von FSA beeinflussen, wie z. B. Sprachkonservatismus und die Einstellung zu feministischen Themen.

Der feministische Sprachaktivismus hat sich vor allem auf inklusive Sprache konzentriert, so dass der Eindruck entsteht, feministischer Sprachaktivismus sei gendergerechte Sprache. Die vorliegende Dissertation trägt zur feministischen Linguistik bei, indem sie einen vernachlässigten Aspekt des feministischen Sprachaktivismus untersucht: feministische Neologismen. Diese Dissertation trägt auch zu neueren Studien bei, die ein Interesse an Neologismen mit einer politischen Dimension zeigen, z. B. im Zusammenhang mit Umweltfragen (Gjesdal & Lyse Samdal 2016, Balnat & Gérard 2022). Da eine der Motivationen hinter der Schaffung von Neologismen darin besteht, gesellschaftliche Veränderungen widerzuspiegeln (Schmid 2016: 69, Pruvost & Sablayrolles 2019: 28-29), sollten feministische Neologismen, die für die Neologiestudien relevant sind, weiter untersucht werden.

Diese Dissertation ist in sieben Kapitel gegliedert. Nach einer kurzen Darstellung des allgemeinen Kontextes, der zu den Forschungsfragen dieser Dissertation führt (Kapitel 1), werden die theoretischen und empirischen Dimensionen der Forschung im Kapitel

über den Stand der Technik (Kapitel 2) erläutert. Genauer gesagt werden vier Fragen aus der feministischen Linguistik behandelt, die durch die Literatur zur Neologie beleuchtet werden: (i) Welche linguistischen Probleme werden beobachtet? (ii) Welche Lösungsvorschläge gibt es? (iii) Werden sie verwendet und wie? Und schließlich (iv) Warum ist es so wichtig, die Sprache zu verändern?

Kapitel 3 befasst sich mit der für diese Studie verwendeten Methodik. Es beginnt mit einem Überblick über die in der Literatur verwendeten Methoden zur Sammlung von Neologismen, bevor es den in dieser Dissertation verwendeten Ansatz des kollaborativen Wörterbuchs vorstellt. Anschließend beschreibt er das Korpus, das zur Untersuchung der Konventionalisierung feministischer Neologismen verwendet wurde, sowie die Variablen, die zur Messung der Verbreitung und zur Beobachtung der Usualisation identifiziert wurden. Im Hinblick auf die Erforschung der Hypostase werden die Merkmale der Fragebögen sowie das Datenmanagement in Bezug auf Sammlung, Annotation und statistische Modellierung vorgestellt.

Die Kapitel 4 bis 6 sind den Ergebnissen der einzelnen Forschungsfragen gewidmet. Kapitel 4 untersucht die Ergebnisse der Sammlung von Neologismen und inwieweit sie eine Neudefinition des Begriffs FSA ermöglichen. Zunächst werden Neologismen vorgestellt, die Pauwels' Definition entsprechen, indem sie das Verhalten von Menschen oder ihre Reaktionen auf dieses Verhalten anprangern. Anschließend wird erläutert, wie die neueren Neologismen Teil einer umfassenderen Definition sind und ein intersektionales Verständnis von FSA aufzeigen. Diese Neologismen werden in zwei Hauptkategorien eingeteilt: solche, die sich mit den Problemen des weißen Feminismus befassen, und solche, die mit dem Trans- und Queerfeminismus in Verbindung stehen.

Kapitel 5 befasst sich mit den Ergebnissen der Korpusanalyse im Hinblick auf die Beantwortung der zweiten Forschungsfrage zur Konventionalisierung feministischer Neologismen. Der Verbreitungsprozess wird im ersten Teil des Kapitels behandelt, in dem sieben Variablen zunächst verglichen und dann in einem Verbreitungsindex kombiniert werden, um den Grad der Verbreitung zu messen. Im nächsten Teil wird der Prozess der Usability beobachtet, wobei der Fokus speziell auf der politischen Natur der Bedeutung feministischer Neologismen liegt.

Die dritte Forschungsfrage wird in Kapitel 6 behandelt, in dem die Ergebnisse des Fragebogens vorgestellt werden. Zunächst werden demografische Informationen über die TeilnehmerInnen präsentiert, dann die deskriptiven Ergebnisse über die Kenntnis von Neologismen und die Wahrnehmung der bezeichneten Konzepte und schließlich die

Ergebnisse des statistischen Modells, das die Beziehung zwischen der Wortkenntnis und der Wahrnehmung der Nützlichkeit der bezeichneten Konzepte testet.

Abschließend werden in Kapitel 7 die wichtigsten Ergebnisse zusammengefasst, die Beiträge dieser Dissertation erörtert und Vorschläge für die zukünftige Forschung gemacht.

