ABSTRACT

LANGUAGE AS A COLONIZED TERRITORY. 
A FEMINIST ATTEMPT TO DE-COLONIZE LANGUAGE

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This paper is an attempt to analyze the importance and consequences of self-naming and self-labeling for one’s personal and political identity. I particularly dwell on the label “feminist” and its use-misuse-refuse in the context of identity building and formation for women and men who are engaged in or deal with women’s issues, either in feminist activism or in academia.

In order to understand and analyze the importance of labeling and naming, I first tackle the relationship between language, knowledge and power, as well as their influence on the process of defining one’s identity. To this end, I try to give some reasons for the non-arbitrariness of some words, as well as of the grammatical gender in Romance languages, namely Romanian and French. I focus on a few linguistic structures and use of particular words in these two languages. I particularly deal with the construction of a third grammatical gender, the neuter, in Romanian, in comparison to the two grammatical genders existent in French, trying to see how the application of Irigaray’s theory on the genders of nouns functions for Romanian. I also discuss various definitions and understandings of feminism(s) and feminist(s) as such, and their shifting meaning over time and in particular cultural contexts. In this respect, I inquire into the reasons why the label “feminist” has been and still is rejected by some women and men who are involved in gender issues, as well as the meaning of this rejection for the formation of their private and public identities.