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**Gender-inclusive language: a pedagogical approach to the
study of the relationship between gender-biased language and
gender inequality**

Author

Sara Ortega Aranda

Supervisor

Ignacio Guillén Galve

Grado en Estudios Ingleses y Facultad de Filosofía y Letras
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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a contrastive analysis between the English and Spanish languages with regard to gender inclusive and non-inclusive language. First of all, I have conducted a study about the potential impact of biased language in the exclusion of women in daily speech as well as in the creation of stereotypes. Secondly, I have offered a pedagogical approach for English language students to work on gender-inclusive language and gender roles. Additionally, the pedagogical proposal will be complemented with quantitative research so as to back up the theory discussed and to inquire into participants' perceptions about this issue. Thus, this paper aims to raise awareness on speakers (particularly adolescents) of the negative influence that biased language has on shaping the society. Only by making this issue widely known and talked about in educational contexts can we change the situation.

Key words: gender-inclusive language, biased language, sexist language, grammatical gender, gender stereotypes

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo ofrece un análisis contrastivo entre las lenguas española e inglesa con respecto al lenguaje inclusivo y no inclusivo de género. En primer lugar, he llevado a cabo un estudio acerca del impacto negativo del lenguaje sesgado en la en la creación de estereotipos y en la exclusión de la mujer en el habla. En segundo lugar, he ofrecido un método pedagógico para estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera con el objetivo de trabajar en el lenguaje inclusivo de género, así como en los roles de género. Además, se ha complementado dicha propuesta pedagógica con un estudio cuantitativo para corroborar la teoría desarrollada y para conocer la opinión de los participantes sobre este tema. Por consiguiente, el presente trabajo busca generar conciencia en los hablantes sobre la influencia negativa del lenguaje sesgado en la construcción de la sociedad. Solamente a través de promulgar e impartir en las clases dicho tema podremos cambiar la situación.

Palabras clave: lenguaje inclusivo de género, lenguaje sesgado, lenguaje sexista, género gramatical, estereotipos de género

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Thanks to the faculty of language, human beings are able to communicate, transmit thoughts, feelings, knowledge and ideas. Every language changes and adapts to the new reality and needs of the community that makes use of it. Only dead languages seem immutable. We only have to look at how technological changes and social media have recently introduced unimaginable words such as "to google", "blogger" and "tweet". Nonetheless, this technological-related language revolution has not been the only one that has taken place in these times.

Throughout history, women's role in society has been discriminated and set aside. This is a social problem that, to a greater or lesser extent, is witnessed worldwide; and as a consequence of the androcentric culture, males' viewpoint has dominated society. The feminist movements, which had its origins in the 1970s with the help of books such as Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Betty Friedan's T*he Feminine Mystique,* aim at overthrowing this patriarchal system that makes women scarcely visible. The feminist movements' vindications of social changes came hand in hand with linguistic reforms due to the fact that sexist communication contributes to the reinforcement of attitudes and stereotypes (Steiner, 1990). According to Lakoff's (1975) contention in *Language and Woman's Place*, language does not merely have a descriptive use, but it also provides certain insights we have about the world and can therefore lead to the undervaluation or overvaluation of particular situations depending on the way we use language. Likewise, this deeply-rooted problem and the need of a social and linguistic change have been witnessed in both English and Spanish: according to linguists such as Richmond (1982), both languages reflect an asymmetrical treatment of women and men, since the masculine gender is generic, and women are explicitly visible only if they are "marked" through a morphological process (cf: the use of *-ess* as in "hostess" in English, or the morpheme *-a* as in "amiga" in Spanish); besides, both languages use male-centred and female-discriminatory proverbs, apart from other expressions and single words that strengthen the stereotyped and social representation of women and men. Therefore, non gender-inclusive language (such as the use of gender-marked nouns or expressions that reinforce and perpetuate gender-stereotypes) has negative

connotations since it can limit both men and women their possibilities of their own development as persons, rejecting certain attitudes, wishes or behaviours.

For this reason, the language used by teachers towards students can affect the transmission and internalisation of a certain culture and thought with regards to language. As Pauwels (2003) explains, language education is a key agent in the spread of change resulting from linguistic reform, so it is partly up to the teachers to "do their bit" to raise awareness. Even though gender-inclusive language is a trendy topic nowadays, it is hardly ever mentioned nor taught in schools, thus students are not up-to-date on this relevant issue.

Regarding the choice of the subject, I believe it is closely linked to BA Degree in English Studies, particularly to the field of the use of language. As a future English philologist, and hopefully an English teacher, it is important for me to make sure that I use language inclusively (for example, using gender-neutral words). In addition, the commitment with the language is also moral, given that what I say and teach will (either directly or indirectly) influence my students. Therefore, I think it would be interesting to focus interest on the point of view of morality and conscience, but less on correcting grammatical errors.

Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation is to research into the social importance of gender-neutral language and to offer a pedagogical proposal in order to work on gender roles and inclusive language both in English and in Spanish in the classroom. The main objective of this proposal is to raise students' awareness of the importance of the normalisation of the use of inclusive language in classrooms in order to educate everyone in equality and foster the critical thinking of students regarding this issue from the earliest educational levels.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 DEFINITIONS

This section presents the main concepts underpinning the dissertation.

Linguistic sexism:

It refers to the use of words and expressions that are discriminatory on the basis of sex (Lei, 2006).

Equivalent in Spanish: sexismo lingüístico

Biased language:

It alludes to words and expressions that are offensive and denigrating on the basis of "age, sex, race, ethnicity, social class, or physical or mental traits" (Nordquist, 2020).

Equivalent in Spanish: lenguaje sesgado

Gender-inclusive language:

According to UN (1999), gender-inclusive language refers to the oral and written language that are non-discriminatory towards "a particular sex, social gender or gender identity", and that avoids preserving gender stereotypes. Using non-discriminatory language is the most powerful way to eradicate every kind of sexism and to promote gender equality.

Equivalent in Spanish: lenguaje de género inclusivo

Masculine generic:

It is the use of the masculine gender or the masculine inflexion to designate a collective that includes both men and women. For example, in the sentence *the evolution of man*, the word *man* comprehends the whole human race, so theoretically would not exclude women.

Equivalent in Spanish: masculino genérico

The main challenge to achieve efficient gender-inclusive communication is the confusion between grammatical gender, sociocultural gender and biological sex.

Grammatical gender:

As Lyons et al. (1969) note, this term indicates "the association which traditional grammar established between sex and gender" (p. 283). Grammatical gender refers to the "three main noun-classes recognized in Greek and Latin: "feminine", "neuter" and "masculine"" (Stanley, 1977, p. 50). Spanish, as a romance language, uses a two-gender system of concord with the noun; that is to say: the noun of a sentence determines the gender of its modifiers: *La <u>casa</u> blanca / El <u>amigo</u> guapo.* English lacks this grammatical system since words are not marked by the gender. Alternatively, the gender is mainly appreciated in pronouns. ***Her** car is colourful*.

Equivalent in Spanish: género gramatical.

Gender:

According to the UNESCO, gender is a social construct: it refers to the roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a determined society considers appropriate for human beings of both sexes. The organisation points out that the concept of gender is essential because it reflects "how women's subordination (or men's domination) is socially constructed. As such, the subordination can be changed or ended. It is not biologically predetermined nor is it fixed forever."

Equivalent in Spanish: género

Biological sex:

It is the biological feature characteristic of human beings.

Equivalent in Spanish: sexo biológico

## 2.2 LINGUISTIC CONTROVERSIES ABOUT GENDER AND LEXICOGRAPHY

By and large, each country has a regulatory body that is responsible for regulating the official languages, registering them and managing the speakers to have access to them so that they can make a proper use of language. Unfortunately, these academies, in addition to registering the use, also tend to favour some denigrating expressions that allow neither society nor language to advance on an equal footing.

The Royal Spanish Academy (RAE) is the main Spanish regulatory institution, which has been the cause of numerous controversies regarding feminist language. The most popular controversy is widely known as *Polémica Bosque*, which emerged in relation to inclusive language. Ignacio Bosque (2015) wrote an article where he discredited the guidelines that support the feminization of words, asserting that they go against the grammatical norms (with arguments in favour of masculine generic). Similarly, some RAE's tweets on the matter have become highly popular. By Twitter, RAE academics reply to many doubts regarding Spanish orthography, grammar and definition of words, but frequently it allows its out-dated background to be glimpsed. For example, here there is a tweet written by a user to denounce the definition of *fácil*:
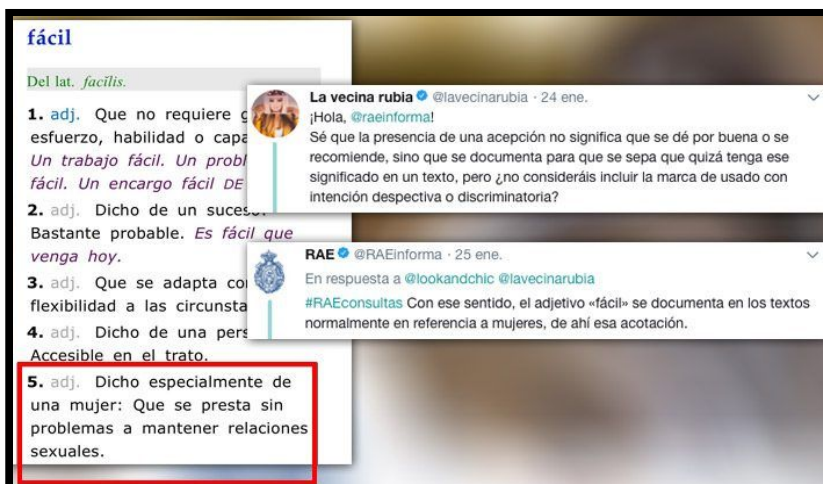

In the case of English language, there is neither an authority or an official dictionary that regulates it. Nevertheless, speakers rely on high-quality published dictionaries and grammar guides such as Oxford Dictionary, which has been the centre of attention over linguistic sexism several times. For example, the anthropologist Michael Oman-Reagan

noticed that "rabid feminist" is the example given for the definition of "rabid" and complained about it on Twitter:
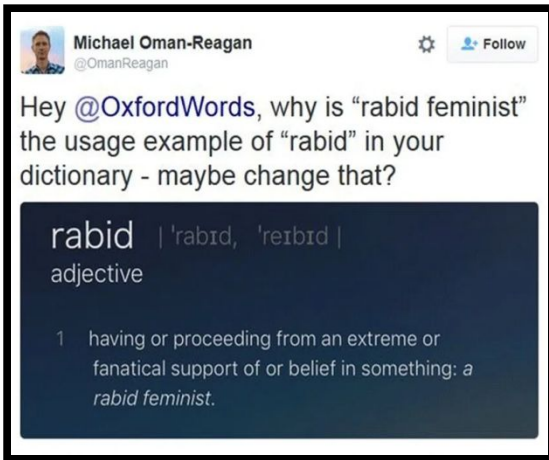
As a consequence, thousands of tweets against this usage and hashtags such as #Oxfordsexism were posted. The Oxford Dictionaries Twitter account eventually replied to Oman-Reagan's tweet:
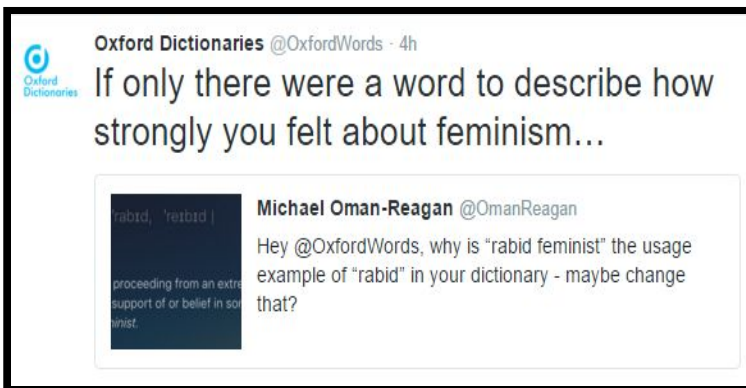
3. TEACHING GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

School mirrors today's society, it is a representation of the world we live in. As Nilsen (1977) argues, schools keep on transmitting thought systems and sexist attitudes detrimental to women. The school is the students' second home, where they acquire most of the knowledge they need in order to coexist in society, that is the reason why it

is highly important to promote pervasive non-sexist educative models so that they avoid reproducing biased patterns outside schools. The development of a culture of equality implies a transformation of morals and beliefs with regards to gender. In order to achieve it, speakers ought to become language aware in order to make an inclusive language use within the norm, and to be conscious of the derogatory connotations that some feminine equivalents have inherited from social sexism.

Richmond et al. (1982) claim that a good method to create a gender-inclusive classroom environment is to limit the masculine generics and male examples. They assert that the use of the masculine in place of generic distorts gender perceptions and has long-term psychological effects on women, making them believe they are excluded in discourses, and letting them remain in an inferior position. Proof of these ideas is a 1974 study which showed that teenagers drew more males than females when they were asked about "early man", whereas the number of females that were drawn rose when they were asked about "early person" (Ontario Women's Directorate, 1993, p.13).

Additionally, academic discourse ought to be free from gender stereotypes, avoiding labelling people on the basis of sex. No one should take for granted that women, by the mere fact of being women, are dependent, tender, anxious, sociable and sensitive, whereas men are independent, active, competitive, aggressive and dominant. For this reason, it is imperative that discursive mechanisms when it comes to describing feminine profiles are by no means distinct from those used to describe males. As a matter of fact, Maass & Arcuri (1996) contend that connotative words were used more frequently in texts addressing women. Conversely, most of the information about men revolves around their professional career, whereas texts about women mainly revolve around their family and domestic life. Moreover, they tend to be described according to their physical appearance, clothing, and hairstyle, in contexts where these issues are trivial and undermine their professionalism. These preconceived ideas on gender roles not only modify one's self-concept on women, but they also bring to light the expectations that the society has on women, discouraging them from working outside the traditional, domestic field.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is contributing to the creation of an enabling environment for gender equity by means of different methods. For example, the organisation published in 1999 an online guideline under the title "Guidelines on Gender-Neutral Language" with linguistic alternatives that can be applied to achieve a gender-inclusive communication in both languages. This document became the first gender-inclusive language guideline recognised in all official languages, the Spanish among them. The most relevant strategies are:

Firstly, they recommend avoiding gender-biased expressions or any word combination that reinforce gender stereotypes. In daily conversations, it is common to hear expressions with sexist and discriminatory nature towards women. Some of the discriminatory expressions the UNESCO has provided are:

ENGLISH	SPANISH
● *She throws/runs/fights like a girl.*	● *Actúa como una niña.*
● *In a manly way.*	● *Se comporta como un hombre/como una señorita.*
● *Oh, that's women's work.*	● *Es fuerte como un hombre.*

These expressions have a sexist cultural background, as they reinforce the fixed idea that men are strong and brave and women are compliant and fragile.

Secondly, the UNESCO recommends making gender visible only when it is relevant for communication by using both feminine and masculine words. For example, in the following sentence, as the subject's identity is unknown, it is suggested to include both pronouns instead of the masculine one.

- *When a staff member accepts an offer of employment, **he or she** must be able to assume that the offer is duly authorized.*

However, "overusing this strategy in English may be distracting to the reader, in particular in narrative texts", so another technique that could be helpful to avoid gendered pronouns is the use of gender-neutral personal pronouns such as *they, one, you*, or we can also just eliminate them whenever possible:

- *A substitute judge must certify that **he** has familiarized **himself** with the record of the proceedings. → Substitute judges must certify that **they** have familiarized **themselves** with the record of the proceedings.*

Finally, it is advisable not to make gender visible if it is not relevant for communication. For instance, as I pointed above, it is claimed that the masculine generic *man* (or the Spanish equivalent *hombre)* as well as the *–man* suffixes words discriminate women**,** so it should be replaced with another synthetic neutral forms. Besides, they create ambiguity in the message to the detriment of women since depending on the context, it can refer to everyone or can exclude women (Lledó, 1992).

Less inclusive	More inclusive
Mankind	*Humankind*
Man-made	*Hand-made*
Hombre	*Persona / ser humano*

The compound *–man* and *–ess* are frequent in occupational titles, which imply an association to gender roles, so the current tendency is to eliminate this specification by simply using another gender-neutral alternative:

Less inclusive	More inclusive
Actress	*Actor*
Waitress	*Server/ Waiter*
Fireman	*Fire-fighter*

Regarding professions, charges and jobs in Spanish language, it is advisable to name the occupations in relation to the sex of the person: *presidenta, jefa, jueza, auditora*. However, for this to happen, the society should overcome the mental barriers in order to eliminate the social sexism that impregnates the language in sexism.

3.1 GRAMMATICAL GENDER IN THE SPANISH LANGUAGE

The rules of gender agreement with nouns in English language are dissimilar, so the configuration of inclusive language varies from one language to another. English language is a natural-gender language which means that nouns do not make distinctions on basis of sex (although as I mentioned above, there are some exceptions, such as the gender-marked suffixes in occupational titles). However, Spanish is a grammatical gender language, so it is necessary to resort to gender inflexion. Spanish participles and adjectives possess a two-gender system that concord with the noun's gender they go with. Whereas for some linguists such as Ignacio Bosque the masculine generics does not pose a gender-biased problem, others such as Lledó (1992) and Aliaga (2017) believe that its use is a big contributor to the exclusion of women. In sentences where the noun is masculine or feminine there is no complication, as in *Juan y su amigo pasean juntos* and *Martina y Alba pasean juntas*. However, the problem arises in sentences where masculine and feminine elements mix, since the participle or adjective systematically used is masculine (Lledó, 1992). To illustrate this, the writer María Aurèlia Capmany made public a sentence that exemplifies with precision this idea*: Una mujer y un perro fueron atropellados por un coche*. In this sentence, the participle takes the masculine due to the animal's sex, which in the words of Lledó, this implies that "it is not even necessary that a man appears so that the woman loses her linguistic identity" (p. 39).

Therefore, the UNESCO suggests avoiding making the gender visible if the communicative situation does not require it. There are varied solutions; however, most of them present some drawbacks.

One solution to the use of the masculine generic in plurals would be the use collective nouns and other generic constructions. For example:

- A collective noun (example: *la vicepresidencia* instead of *los vicepresidentes*)
- Abstract structures such as *la comunidad* and *el cuerpo de*
- Processes instead of people (for instance: *la evaluación* as a replacement of *el evaluador)*

Another strategy is the use of "pairings", that is to say, to double both genders: *mis vecinos y vecinas de Zaragoza.* Nevertheless, the UNESCO advises not "to overuse this strategy in English nor in Spanish**,** as it may be distracting to the reader, in particular in narrative texts. It may also create inconsistencies or render the text less accurate" (1999)

When writing, a helpful solution would be using typographic strategies. On the one hand, we can both use the forward slash [/] or brackets [()] to make the feminine explicit. Nevertheless, the UNESCO also recommends not to use it frequently for the same reasons. For example:

- *El/La Director/a se ocupará de coordinar la campaña de promoción.*
- *El informe deberá presentarse al (a la) Auditor(a) para que lo certifique.*

Despite the Royal Spanish Academy's disapproval, the use of -@ –x and –e in final words is gaining popularity among Spanish speakers: the aim is that these so-called "neutral genders" serve to include both sexes: *Todes /tod@s/ todxs vinieron a la fiesta de cumpleaños*. On the contrary, José Luis Aliaga Jiménez (2017) notes that despite these are economical strategies, the unpronounceable *x* and @ letters hinder the legibility of the text as they cannot go beyond the writing register. Even though the suffix *-e* is easier to pronounce and its usage is gaining popularity particularly especially in Latin America, it would imply changing the whole Spanish grammatical structure. This *-e* suffix strategy has been highly criticized by many scholars, among them Arturo Pérez Reverte, who explicitly argued:*"¿Decir 'todes les niñes'?, me niego. No me da la gana. No porque sea académico, porque yo soy un escritor profesional (...) me niego a que me digan cómo tengo que escribir para no ser machista"*(Guillén, 2019).

3.2 THE CLASSROOM AS THE MAIN CONTRIBUTOR TO ACHIEVE AN INCLUSIVE THOUGHT SYSTEM

According to Oakhill et al. (2005), even though the neutralisation of languages contribute to minimise possible gender discrimination, our culture and traditions (to a greater or lesser extent) are ingrained with stereotyped attitudes: we presuppose that a businessperson is male and a maid is female, among others. In particular, films and literature have been the biggest agent on promoting and reproducing a fixed stereotyped feminine princess in young girls. In particular, Disney cinematography could be understood, in a certain way, as a 'princess factory' with "a powerful influence on children's media, [which] contributes to a new 'girlhood' that is largely defined by gender" (England et al., 2011, p. 556). These stories and films repeat and embellish these messages wrapping them in a magic atmosphere, songs, and happy endings (cf. princesses are rescued by the male hero and live happily ever after), and their female protagonists share a set of characteristics: women are submissive, pretty and incomplete without the protection of the male 'dominant' figure. This means that princesses can only acquire happiness and well-being through the figure of a manly hero who rescues them from all evil or injustice. The female, in return for protection, must assume doing house chores, maintain their beauty, have children and take care of them. The transmission of all these values, apart from reflecting "the cultural anxieties of the 20th century" (Brook, 2016), also help internalize and perpetuate its reproduction in those young consumers.

The classroom is the other main educative context where themes of social significance are introduced. To eradicate existing prejudices and reach equality, it is advisable that teachers provide information on this subject. They should take into account that apart from movies and books, some textbooks reinforce stereotyped messages through images, which shape each other's self-perception on gender and attitude towards women.. Images present reality in a fragmented and selective way. As Pugsley (1991) indicates, when there is a coherence relation connecting text and image, it is easy to decode the information, that is, to retain the image and the verbal content

simultaneously; however, if the image does not hold onto the text, part of the verbal content may be lost or misinterpreted. For that reason, it is essential that women are captured in environments where they are not frequently visible: exercising, belonging to high-rank jobs or in workfields which traditionally belonged to men. Similarly, men should appear within the domestic setting, or working in any other occupation that traditionally have been considered "feminine" (Swim et al., 2004). That is to say, it is needed to show people according to their professional achievements and functions instead of on the basis of sex.

It is also convenient to promote cooperation and teamwork in order to avoid representing men and women as incompatibles, to normalise the social relations involving sexes, and to make women visible in the discourse, taking into account not only the background, but also the form of the message by using the non-discriminatory and inclusive strategies that both languages offer. In this way, it would counteract the masculine overrepresentation ("Gender-Inclusive Guidelines | Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies", 2020). Some interesting activities to put into practice would be revising proverbs, watching films, doing readings and analysing lyrics. Doing exercises related to daily life is an effective way to induce students to minimise existing sexism. As a result, they would also share this vision and raise other people's awareness of the current situation and the negative impact on us caused by talking and acting as our patriarchal society has taught us so far.

3.3 GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDENTS

In this section I present an educational method to teach English language students (ELS) gender-inclusive language. The content of this guidebook is based on the learning objectives and on the strategies provided by the UNESCO. The aim of this practical approach is to provide linguistic tools for students and teachers in order to represent women and men equally and to increase awareness of the significance of normalising the use of inclusive language in schools as a way to educate them on social and gender equality issues. I have divided this section into two parts:

For the first part of my proposal (exercises one to four) I have taken as a basis inclusive-language elements, from which a comparison between both languages will be drawn. In this way, they will develop their linguistic skills so as to reflect on the existing differences regarding the lexicon and pronominal categories, in addition to promoting an integrating and respectful use of the tongue and second language. Similarly, they will be able to identify, and therefore distinguish the differences between gender-inclusive and non-inclusive language. In line with this, the teachers should alert the harmful consequences of gender assumptions to students and provide them examples of stereotyped and sexist writing so they can look for the most appropriate and inclusive alternative. These exercises should help students familiarise themselves with these non-sexist alternatives and put them into practice when writing or speaking.

WORKSHEET SAMPLE:

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1) Stereotyping professions: Which occupational titles refer explicitly to males? Circle the gender-neutral words and translate them into Spanish.

STEREOTYPES: They are generalised and fixed images formed by oversimplifying individuals' distinct identities.

BUSINESSMAN	BUSINESS PERSON	BUSINESS EXECUTIVE
ATHLETE	SPORTSMAN	SPORTSPERSON
ARTIFICIAL	HANDMADE	MANMADE
HUMAN RESOURCES	MANPOWER	LABOUR FORCE

WEATHERMAN	METEOROLOGIST	WEATHER FORECASTER
CHAIRPERSON	CHAIRMAN	PRESIDENT
POLICE OFFICER	POLICEMAN	MEMBER OF THE POLICE
MAIL DELIVERER	POSTMAN	LETTER CARRIER

a) What makes you think these words exclude females?

……………………………………………………………………………………………………

2) Stereotyping professions: Which occupational titles refer explicitly to females? Circle the gender-neutral word.

AUTHORESS	AUTHOR
CLEANING LADY	CLEANER
WAITER	WAITRESS
TEA ATTENDANT	TEA LADY
LADY OF THE HOUSE	HOUSEKEEPER
ASSISTANT	GIRL FRIDAY
HOUSE WORKER	MAID

What makes you think these words exclude men?

....

3) Language quiz: propose a more gender-inclusive alternative.

The *stewardess* served the burger to the famous football player.

....

A long time ago, *mankind* used horses as vehicles.

....

Nicholas hoped the teacher would give *his* opinion.

....

The *authoress*, Sandra Barneda, hosted a book signing at Hotel Palafox.

....

Ask George's *mother* to cook him a better lunch tomorrow.

....

4) Stereotypical expressions: Which of the following expressions are discriminatory? Can you think of an equivalent in Spanish? Can you find masculine generics to refer to both men and women?

EXPRESSIONS	DISCRIMINATORY?	SPANISH EQUIVALENT?
You can't judge a book by its cover	Yes/ no	

To act like a gentleman	Yes/ no	
An apple a day keeps the doctor away	Yes/ no	
Fatherland	Yes/ no	
To man up	Yes/ no	
Act like a lady	Yes/ no	
Manly	Yes/ no	
To be a sissy	Yes/ no	
Fathering / Mothering	Yes/ no	
Maiden name	Yes/ no	
A picture is worth a thousand words	Yes/ no	
Read one's mind	Yes/ no	

-Find the respective appropriate expressions for each discriminatory expression in the word search.

```
A A W G A V C U Y R C E S Y X H E K G O O U V E V
Z W N F S K A L B R R J Z A M T V U M F G K V J P
H W F K B J R O G Y L E V A R B B E N D I A H Q K
W F E Q U V H P G N C T N X X V X C F I R K O S N
L F I X V Y T Z L A X I B A K N S X Q B T P M V L
S T M L W X L L N B O A I K J E L O E P W N E X Z
Q S J X D I E E R G M X D Z D H X B Y U G S L Y V
B Y D F P D K F V N L E Q O L P O Q A X U Q A Z S
V E L V H W B Z I I O Y V L O T G D E T T N N I H
J M P M A Q F S J T T B I R T H N A M E W D D P C
Y K M O P B R D H N B I J I N O S W E Y Q Z F V K
V W R Q L B N R V E C Q S X V G V R S G L H R A G
V R S I F I T Z J R V Y L N A Z K N R V S I J O J
D Z T S R V T Z Z A C D V Q E V C W Y W E D U L K
W T P E D L H E D P G B Q N A S I M K J K B P J H
D K E L D A O Q U X P U V L J R T Z Y G D I U H G
R C T C L A F T G S D K K J I W B C O L L R T X G
A M P U T R O G H C G T K F U V D F A Q F W Y A N
V T T Y S B O X Y R F U B F A H G W O I H Q X Q M
Y U W N E V F R Y F J K H R Q U Z I W Y F U C Q G
U H V W R R J M H K R L A O K W B V P O K Q A Z L
A Q E Z A T E H P U X W T V S W S H N L O J R C H
L A B G E V W Z R O F Y H L K T T S C M L K D J D
K K Y W C M E Y Z V K N N P J I E R F V A D Y O C
H N Q Q Q T L A M R S M G A W O V I J I D R N G E
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(see solutions in *appendix 1.*)

The second part deals with Disney and its reinforcement of fixed images. The aim of this section is that students identify and familiarise with gender discrimination in Disney films through language and visual images. They will analyse elements such as word choice, characters' personality traits and plot to identify the reasons why these elements are considered sexist. The following examples are taken from the Disney film *Mulan* (1998). The protagonist, Mulan, stands for a decisive change in the history of Disney and society because she is the first character who breaks the fixed feminine cannons and stereotypes proving that motherhood, beauty, obedience and sweetness are not important features to become a heroine; that the only request is to fight proactively for her own safety and wellbeing (Brook, 2016). The consequence of the reproduction of these ideas has reinforced the inclusion, diversity, feminism in a patriarchal society that focus on the obsessive importance of the body and image care.

5) Watch the film *Mulan*.

-Analyse the following sentences. Describe the context when are they said and the reason why they are discriminatory.

"girls with good taste, calm, obedient, who work fast-paced, with good breeding and a tiny waist"

 "I knew there was something wrong with you! A woman!"

"hold your tongue in the presence of a man"

"she will never be worth here because she's a woman"

-Collect two more examples of non-gender inclusive language during the film.

-In groups, answer the following questions:

- Which roles belong to women and which roles belong to men? Does it mirror today's reality?

-Which are the main traits that portray men? And women? What is your opinion of it?

-Listen and pay attention to the lyrics of the song "A girl worth fighting for" of the film *Mulan*.

[…]
I want her paler than the
Moon with eyes that
Shine like stars
My girl will marvel at
My strength, adore my
Battle scars
I couldn't care less what she'll
Wear or what she looks like
It all depends on what
She cooks like
Beef, pork, chicken, mmm
[…]
My girl will think I have no faults
That I'm a major find
How 'bout a girl who's got a brain
Who always speaks her mind?
My manly ways and turn of

Phrase are sure to thrill her
He thinks he's such a lady killer

-How do male characters describe the "perfect girl"?

-How has Mulan broken with these stereotypes?

7) DISCUSSION

To conclude the activity, I suggest that students reflect on this topic. For instance: in groups, they can discuss if they frequently use biased language, if they had heard of gender-inclusive language beforehand, or how stereotypes are perpetuated in Disney films.

4. SURVEY

This section presents two specific questionnaires designed via Google Forms with the aim of getting to know the speakers' position on this issue. The first one is written in English and the second one in Spanish. I perceive the practical approach offered above as a tool that reflects and visibilises a social problem that is brought to light in the survey's results. As I see it, this pedagogical proposal is the basis and consequence of change, that is to say, by having a firm, inclusive and feminist educative system, speakers will make a bias-free use of language based on these principles. However, at the same time, for a reform in the educative curriculum to be carried out, social and linguistic awareness is needed; in other words, that speakers reconsider and discuss the gender-exclusive nature and use of language.

Survey one

In the first survey, 90 people have participated, all of them native English people, (current or former) English language students and English teachers. They include

questions with regards to attitudes and perceptions about the importance given to the use of non-sexist language and gender stereotypes.

<u>Survey two</u>

In the second survey collaborated 166 Spanish participants. It includes questions concerning the attitudes and perceptions of the difficulties and problems related to the use of sexist and non-sexist language in Spanish**.** I have also conducted a study to find the extent to which sexist set-phrases and other formulaic expressions are still present in daily life, and the way they contribute in the perpetuation of gender fixed images.

The questions were formulated in accordance with the linguistic elements that have been analysed and studied along this dissertation as a means to establish a connection between theory and practice. This survey was carried out with the intent to prove one of my objectives: to see how a practical case can support the theory discussed, and thus demonstrate that there is still internalised sexism, but at the same time there is awareness and intention to change all discriminatory use of language. However, there is no unanimous opinion up to what point which our lexicon or grammar is considered sexist, nor the most inclusive and economic strategy.

4.1 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part provides the results of both surveys together with a discussion of them. To organise it coherently, I have subdivided this part into two blocks: The first one deals with the participants' language consciousness and the second one with gender stereotypes in job-related language. Figures 1 to 9 belong to the first survey, and Figures A through D to the second one.

<u>FIRST BLOCK</u>

Have you ever studied the use of gender-inclusive language and linguistic sexism at high school or university?
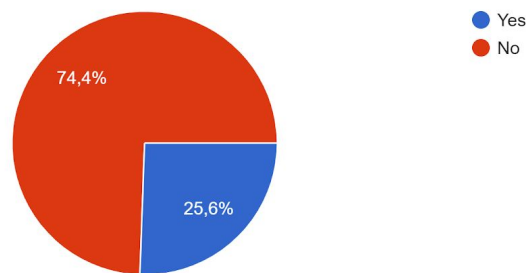90 respuestas

● Yes
● No

74,4%

25,6%

Figure 1.

Figure 1. indicates that the 74,4 % out of 90 participants had never studied gender-inclusive language and linguistic sexism compared to the 25,6 % who did. Such data would appear to illustrate a lack of awareness or importance towards this subject by our educational system. Even though little by little it is starting to acquire more visibility, it is essential to make students aware of how biased language works and of the positive and beneficial effects of the use of gender-inclusive language (Swim et al, 2004). Education is power, it is the only power that makes us free, and thanks to it we can open the eyes of those who believed that sexism is solved, or even worse: that it does not exist.

Do you believe this is a significant issue?
90 respuestas

● No, since I consider that language is simply a method of communication, but it isn't the way to achieve gender equality
● Yes, because language is the main vehicle of transmission of cultural habits, hence it determines our way of thinking.
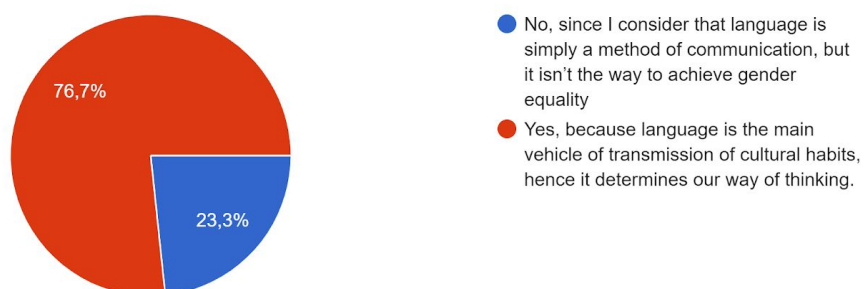
76,7%

23,3%

Figure 2.

However, even though the vast majority did not study inclusive language at school, Figure 2. shows that a 76, 7 % out of 90 participants take interest in this topic and consider it is an important issue in our daily lives. They agree that language is the main vehicle of transmission of cultural habits, hence it determines our way of thinking. On the other hand, a 23.3% did not show affectation by the use of non-sexist language, giving little importance to it due to the fact that they perceive language simply as a method of communication rather than a way to achieve gender equality.

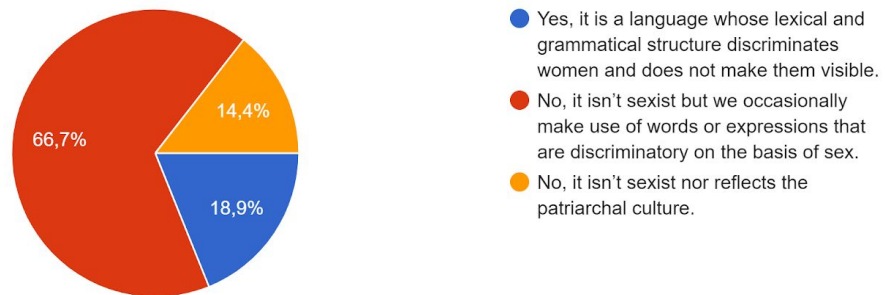Do you think English language is inherently sexist?
90 respuestas

- Yes, it is a language whose lexical and grammatical structure discriminates women and does not make them visible.
- No, it isn't sexist but we occasionally make use of words or expressions that are discriminatory on the basis of sex.
- No, it isn't sexist nor reflects the patriarchal culture.

Figure 3

¿Piensas que nuestro lenguaje es sexista?
166 respuestas

- Sí, es un lenguaje cuya estructura léxica y gramatical discrimina e invisibiliza a la mujer.
- No, el lenguaje no es sexista pero en ocasiones utilizamos vocablos o expresiones discriminatorias por razón de sexo.
- No, el lenguaje no es sexista ni refleja el predominio de una sociedad patriarcal.

Figure A.

Opinions regarding the following questions differ. Figure 3. illustrates that a 66,7 % of the participants believe English is not inherently sexist, but at times we select words that can be discriminatory on the basis of sex, compared to figure A, which indicates that a 44, 6 % of the participants do not perceive Spanish as a sexist language unless we make explicit use of offensive words. Alternatively, 14, 4 % of the participants in survey one and a 11.4 % of the participants in survey two consider neither language is sexist or reflects the patriarchal culture, whilst the rest of the participants (18,9 % and 44% respectively) assert both are languages whose lexical and grammatical structure discriminates women and does not make them visible. Therefore, it can be appreciated a significant contrast between both languages.

En nuestra lengua utilizamos el masculino genérico para referirse a un grupo mixto o a una persona de género desconocido. ¿Crees que es justo?
166 respuestas

- Sí, y no por ello oculta a la mujer.
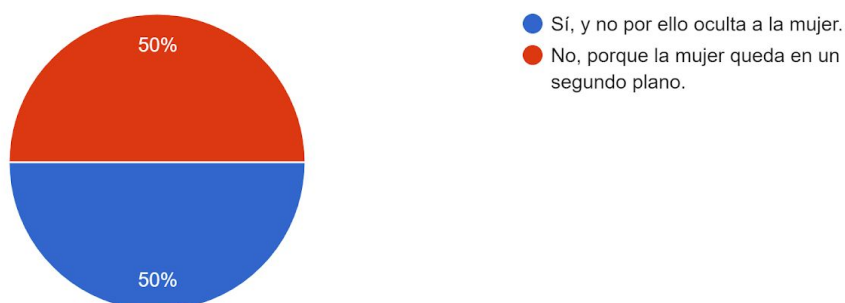- No, porque la mujer queda en un segundo plano.

Figure B.

Figure B. demonstrates that 50% of the participants believe that in Spanish language masculine generics do not conceal women, whereas the other 50 % disagrees.

¿Alguna vez has escrito la grafía "x" o "@" para referirte a un grupo mixto? P.ej: "amigxs" / "amig@s"
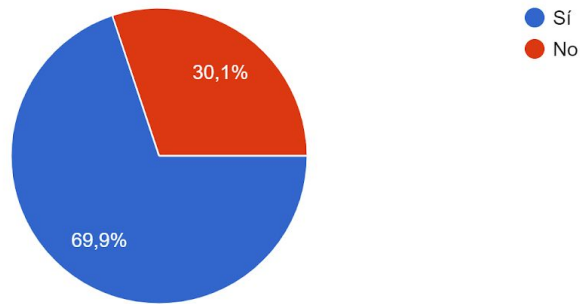166 respuestas

Figure C.

Whereas the English language alternatives to biased language are simpler and agreed, in Spanish there are multiple strategies but there is no consensus on the one that satisfies everyone. When it comes to writing, the solution looks simpler because the symbols x and @ can easily replace the masculine generic. In fact, a 69, 9 % out of 166 participants have used it at some point, as Figure C displays.

En caso de que hubiese una reforma lingüística, ¿cuál sería tu mejor alternativa al masculino genérico?
166 respuestas

Figure D.

Conversely, according to Figure D., the best solution hit upon by participants in oral register is to use abstract and collective nouns (62.7%), compared to the 15, 1% who prefer doubling up on genders, and a 6.1% who conceive the morpheme -*e* is as the most ideal substitute. Another alternative suggested is a combination of the first two. However, some participants detracted with these strategies (see appendix 2). It is very likely that none of these strategies have not been caught on because they may not be operational enough to change their speech habits; others even find them ridiculous, artificial and little efficient. In particular, it called my attention the answer of one of the participants: "Por favor, dejemos de decir tonterías. Eso no demuestra más que un desconocimiento total de la formación de nuestra lengua. Soy filóloga!".

SECOND BLOCK

The following block deals with gender job-related stereotypes. Participants were asked to fill the gaps with a third-person pronoun and therefore guess the sex of the person. The results of this research has brought to light some asymmetries as they clearly show a gender imbalance. Despite English also defaults to a masculine noun to address anyone of an unspecified sex, the choice of gender is determined by two main factors, such as the weight of tradition and the fact that certain occupations or highest ranks are carried out mainly by men.

My boss should improve ___ management practices.
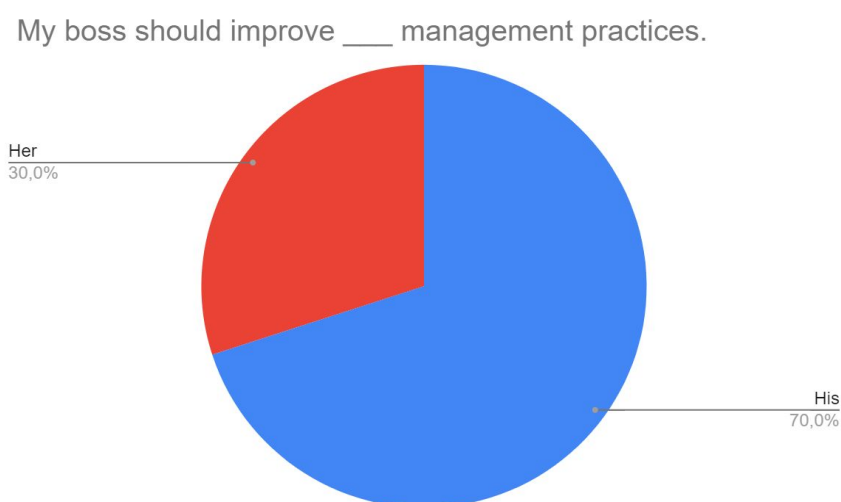
Her
30,0%

His
70,0%

Figure 5.

The royal family's servant refused to work very demanding hours. ___ plucked up the courage to confront them
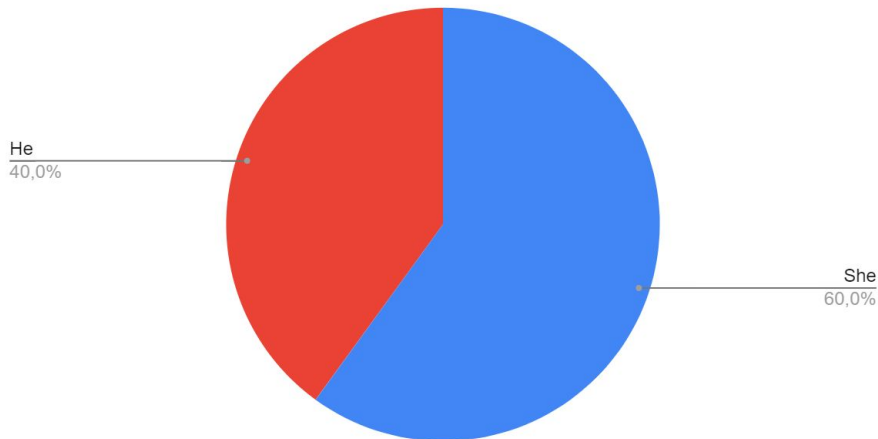
Figure 6.

For example, in the sentence "My boss should improve ___ management practices" of Figure 5, 70 % of the participants wrote "his" to refer to the boss, whereas in Figure 6, 60% of the participants associated "servant" with a female. Therefore, when it comes to occupations and careers, we still need to overcome the mental barriers to eliminate social sexism that gender discrimination impregnates our language. Thus, we should learn to separate the feminine gender from the professions considered feminine by historical and cultural tradition, which make up the female role. The masculine gender, instead, is used for professions of greater social prestige and employed only (or generally) by men, which presupposes a subordinate status of women regardless of her particular situation.

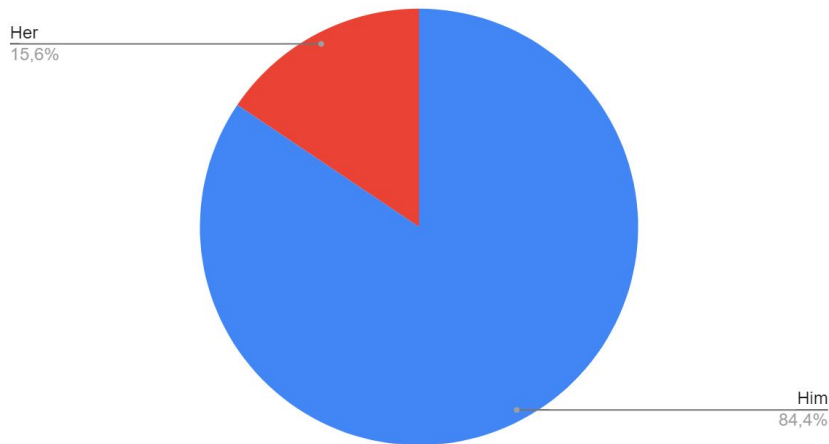Smith is such a good friend. I met _____ a couple of years ago.

Her
15,6%

Him
84,4%

Figure 7.

The point discussed above is very much related to the results of Figure 7, as the 84. 4% out of 90 people related "Smith" to a male figure. The formation and structuring of both languages, together with the mental associations caused by a male-centered society, prevent recognizing that "Smith" is a woman. In the view of Mills (1995), many asymmetries frequently appear when it comes to naming women and men. Proof of this is when men are called by their surnames and women by their first names. This association definitely owes to men's interest in establishing power-relationships.

The fireman helped extinguish the fire, but ____ couldn't make it.
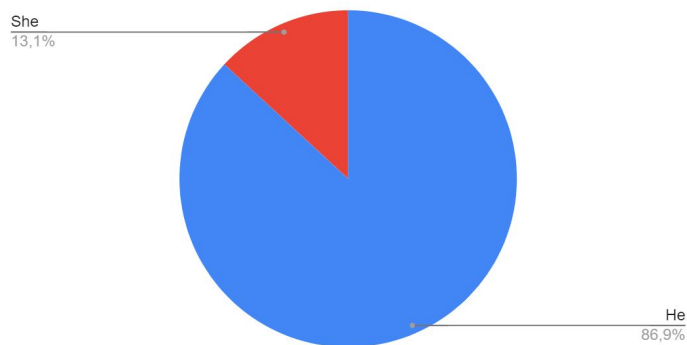
She
13,1%

He
86,9%

Figure 8.

Figure 8 proves that the marked form *-man* in the suffix reinforces the traditional gender hierarchy, since a 89, 9% of the participants associated "fireman" with a man. This reflects a sizeable lexical gap, since despite under a linguistic point of view it covers a mixed group, the vast majority of people associate it just with men, which helps reinforce the stereotype of male-dominated jobs.

Figure 9. (full answers in appendix 2.2)

Another area where linguistic sexism is commonly found is in semantic constructions. There are many discriminatory old sayings and expressions on the basis of sex that are perpetrated over time. According to Martín, "they are a source of stereotyping and misogyny, and have passed orally from generation to generation" (2011, 83). One point that caught my attention is that none of the examples of figure 9 provided by the participants allude to males. This fact proves Hall's contention (1995) that creating and perpetuating negative stereotypes and proverbs on women have been a powerful tool to reaffirm male supremacy, and to reduce women's social powerfulness. The most repetitive answers are: "mujer tenías que ser", "mujer al volante, peligro constante", "nenaza" and "esto es un coñazo". These expressions have a sexist cultural background,

where it is once again highlighted the conception that all women are weak, weeping and inept. Furthermore, there are expressions related to the domestic sphere, such as "chacha" and "vete a fregar", proving that in our culture the fixed idea that women is the one who must take care of the house is still deep-rooted.

5. CONCLUSION

Over the development of this dissertation, I have come to the conclusion that our androcentric vision is reflected in both languages, as scholars such as Lakoff (1975) and Mills (1995) indicate. Humanity is split into two biologically-defined groups, a fact that has nothing to do with abilities and personal attitudes of each human being. Instead, they are simply a product of a social construction that has been detrimental to humanity through its repression and frustrating individual's personality and goals. However, it is unavoidable not to absorb features of the society we live in where we have shaped our way of thinking and understanding the world. Thus, biased language transmits an idea of disdain and inferiority towards women with respect to men who, jointly and combined with the sexist, demeaning attitudes and messages conveyed in the classroom, dictionaries, literature, films or in daily conversation, turns into a powerful mind-shaping tool for adolescents. It can be appreciated in dictionary-makers such as the Spanish Royal Academic institution and Oxford Dictionary, in Disney films, textbooks and old sayings, which bring to light prescribed negative and stereotypical portrayals of women as compared to men.

In addition to this, biased language is not only embedded in lexical choices regarding gender stereotyping we make in daily communication, but also in the grammatical structure of both languages. Even though English grammar is not gender-marked, there are some asymmetries that show bias towards women, such as the use of explicit feminine suffixes to derive from the masculine form, masculine gender-marking words, or the masculine generic forms to comprise both sexes. In the case of Spanish, which is indeed a grammatical gender language, the masculine form is normative. Despite the controversies, as I have shown along the research and the survey's results, these grammar features have a negative effect in our mental representations, making women

invisible and showing male dominance in the process. As a consequence of this, many studies, language organisations such as UNESCO have proposed many solutions to develop a gender-neutral language which respects and visibilises women. However, while in English it has been easier to accept and change linguistic habits such as the replacement of masculine generics with plurals or neutral forms, plenty of Spanish speakers find themselves resilient to change it, whether it is because they are clueless about this subject, because linguistic authorities default this use, or because they don't find it discriminatory. However, there is a great part of people who pushes back against this norm and makes use of different gender inclusive-language strategies. Indeed, using these solutions does not mean going against any grammatical norm or sounding unnatural and odd, as both languages possess linguistic resources enough so as to replace any biased words.

However, in order to change this habit and adapt our speech through making it neutral and inclusive (whether in Spanish or English), it is imperative to familiarise oneself with this issue. For this reason, it is essential to review the linguistic model and the way language is taught in classrooms, as well as to modify the current educational curriculum. Similarly, we all should teach our social circle (particularly adolescents) that sexism still exists, that this is a reality we have to face; if we teach them to identify it and provide them tools, they will be able to combat it. It is fundamental to awaken the feminist consciousness during childhood so that we can keep on claiming the rights to equality and kids learn to use language in an equal and correct way.

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APPENDIX

1. Wordsearch solutions

act sensitively	to be polite	birth name
Bravely	Parenting	to be brave
homeland	to be weak	

2. Survey

En caso de que hubiese una reforma lingüística, ¿cuál sería tu mejor alternativa al masculino genérico?

- Añadir un símbolo neutral, cómo # en vez de la vocal, para referirse a un grupo mixto
- no creo que haya una mejor alternativa al masculino genérico, no supone una discriminación hacia nadie
- Creo que cada uno puede decirlo como quiera, tanto en masculino o en femenino, no me parece que discrimine a nadie. No veo motivo para utilizar opciones como las anteriores.
- Cuando se pueda, aplicar el género que se encuentra mayoritariamente, en caso de que no se pudiese hacer cambiarlo por un género neutro como podría ser el uso del morfema flexivo "e"
- O bien usar sustantivos abstractos (opción 3), o referirme a la mayoría en función del género que haya más en cada situación.
- El "masculino genérico" no es una marca de masculino, sino de "no género". La distinción de "todas" MARCA género femenino y número plural mientras que "TODOS" no lo hacen (solo marca número plural). En mi opinión es "genérico" y no "masculino genérico". En cualquier caso, creo que utilizar sustantivos abstractos o colectivos puede resultar una solución más favorecedora para la economía lingüística
- Me parece bien el masculino genérico
- No es necesaria tal reforma.
- Lo dejaría igual
- Respuesta 1 o 3
- Las tres opciones a elegir por la persona hablante
- Lo dejaría como está. Es una cuestión de sentido común y economía lingüística.
- quizá una combinación de todos ellos
- En este momento todo en femenino
- No sabría indicar una
- La combinación de varias de las anteriores. No creo que con una sola medida bastase, supongo que lo correcto sería la aplicación y combinación de varias de ellas (la primera y la tercera me parecen las más adecuadas y que ya están en uso)
- El neutro debería reconocerse como tal y mantener su significado neutro
- No lo tengo claro.
- Aludir a género femenino también para que no quepa duda, pero no por ello considerar el genérico masculino sexista necesariamente
- Ninguno, la economía lingüística no debe sacrificarse pq la mujer no queda mermada y no soy partidaria d ninguna alternativa
- Por favor, dejemos de decir tonterías. Eso no demuestra más que un desconocimiento total de la formación de nuestra lengua. Soy filóloga!!!
- Dejarlo como masculino genérico

2. 2

- Calladita estás más guapa - Esto me parece un coñazo (decir algo aburrido)	- Para las profesiones más denostadas la sociedad se refiere en femenino y profesiones más valoras en

- Mujer tenías que ser
- Por ejemplo referirse a algo genial como "es la polla" y por el contrario, para expresar que es una situación que no gusta se utiliza "es un coñazo".
- (...) como una nenaza// eres una nenaza
- Déjala está con la regla.
- Ser una guarra o zorra. No existe "ser un guarro" o "un zorro"
- "Mujer al volante, peligro constante", "mujer tenía que ser"
- Que coñazo
- "ser un coñazo", "ser una nenaza"...
- Llora como una niña
- Ser la polla o ser un coñazo
- "Eres un coñazo" (negativo y despectivo) / "Esto es la polla" (Positivo)
- la mujeres nos "arreglamos" para decir que nos ponemos guapas/elegantes pero los hombres no
- "Los niños no lloran" "porque uno realmente piensa"
- "Seguro que está con la regla"
- Llorar es de chicas
- Tu puta madre
- Es un coñazo
- Nenaza
- Macho
- Zorra
- Mujer tenías que ser (al aparcar)
- Ser un coñazo
- Lo que necesita es un buen polvo
- Vete a fregar
- Coñazo, nenaza
- ¡Es un coñazo!
- Que coñazo
- Mujer tenías que ser!
- Machada (discrimina al hombre)
- Cojonudo/Coñazo
- Zorra.
- Es un coñazo!
- "Nenaza" para un hombre. "Cojonudo", connotaciones positivas y "coñazo", connotaciones negativas. Ser una zorra frente a ser un zorro. Los chicos no lloran. Jefe en vez de jefa, de estudios, por ejemplo.
- No llores como una niña
- Coñazo
- Detrás de un hombre hay una gran mujer.

- masculino. Por ejemplo siempre nos referimos a la señora de la limpieza y no el señor de la limpieza.
- Puta
- Cojonudo
- Mujer tenía que ser
- Es un coñazo
- Tú marido
- Nenaza
- chacha
- La inexistencia de palabras en femenino como médico
- chacha
- A las enfermeras llamarlas: oye guapa, oye chati...
- Ser un coñazo
- Pelear como una chica
- Si, tira a fregar...
- "Chicos", sois unos campeones
- Mujer tenias que ser
- Principalmente calificativos o expresiones de por sí machistas por ej. "coñazo"
- Pares mínimos como zorro/zorra; masculino genérico.
- El masculino para nombrar a todos y todas
- Hijo de puta
- Tiene cojones, como elogio
- Distinto significado que se da a zorro, masculino y zorra, femenino.
- Los niños
- Mujer tenía que ser; Ama de casa: La mujer en casa ha de estar:
- Algo es un coñazo!
- El salto semántico
- Esto es un "coñazo". Esto es la "polla". Héroe vs heroína (droga).
- Usar padres oar referirse a familias en el ámbito educativo. No sé si entiendo la demanda
- Oficios, por ejemplo
- Cojonudo vs coñazo
- En ocasiones se utiliza la expresión el hombre para referís a la persona en general
- Los funcionarios... El masculino genérico...
- En algunas noticias cuando nombran a alguien u luego se refieren a la

- Coñazo, histérica
- x es un coñazo, x es la polla. Juegas como una nena.
- Esto es un golazo, esto es cojonudo
- "Tener un par de huevos: muestra de valentía
- Eres un nenaza: eres un cobarde
- Ser afeminado: algo negativo
- La utilización de la palabra "señorita"; un montón de frases hechas o refranes con significado despectivo para las mujeres: "mujer tenías que ser"; asociar la palabra "coñazo" a algo malo y "cojonudo" a algo bueno; el insulto "hijo de puta" (si quieres ofender a un hombre, se ve q no hay características personales criticables, y hay que recurrir a la madre de éste)
- En general se utiliza el masculino: los padres del colegio, los alumnos de la clase...
- Calladita que estás más guapa
- "Una mujer perra, diera, pública.....no es lo mismo q un hombre perro...."
- Cuarentona, solterona
- Cojonudo
- Maruja
- Esto es un coñazo (negativo) esto es cojonudo (genial)
- Ahora es más a nivel económico
- Coñazo
- Mujer (al volante) tenía que ser.
- Vieja, zorra, Maruja, coñazo frente a cojonudo, perra o perro, ...
- Hija/o de puta, por ejemplo
- Cuando se habla del "hombre" generalmente se refiere a hombres y mujeres. Cuando hablamos de "nosotros" es lo mismo. Por poner ejemplos sencillos y muy frecuentes
- Conduciendo: mujer tenía que ser

- mujer como su novia o su esposa y así "la mujer de ... he hecho esto" o referirse a algo bueno como que es la polla y a algo malo como que es un coñazo aunque entiendo que son cosas que van a ser difíciles de cambiar
- Que coñazo
- Zorra
- Esto es un coñazo
- Señora, señorita
- Nenaza
- Si, «esto es la polla» o «vaya coñazo»
- Coñazo
- Cojonudo
- Tú marido "te ayuda" en casa?
- Se habla y escribe siempre en masculino desde los medios de comunicación, a nivel individual, en todos los ámbitos
- Muchas: cojonudo, coñazo, maricón usado como insulto, nenaza, diferencia entre solteron y solterona, el masculino genérico,etc
- La mujer con la pata quebrada y en casa
- "El hombre" para referirse a la humanidad. Y muchísimas más.
- Viste como una zorra
- Si. Nombres de animales, en masculino se refieren a atributos positivos y en femenino se atribuyen a la prostitución de forma peyorativa./ Marica para referirse a un homosexual/ nenaza a un hombre q es/ histérica/ etc.
- Solterona
- Yo soy hombre y "ayudo en casa"/ Corres como una niña/ La jefa los tiene bien puestos....
- Esto es un coñazo
- Nenaza