**FIELD SOCIAL SCIENCES PHILOSOPHY**

**TOPIC HOW LANGUAGE DEFINES GENDER**

**DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

Gender, this is a social difference between man and woman

Language plays significant roles in defining and shaping our understanding of gender, here are few ways in which language influences our perception of gender

**WAYS IN WHICH LANGUAGE INFLUENCES OUR PERCEPTION OF GENDER**

1. Grammatical gender, some language assign gender to nouns, categorising them as masculine, feminine, or neuter. Example in Spanish the word of "table" [mesa] is feminine while for "chair" (sila) is masculine , these grammatical gender can create association and assumptions about objects, often regulating cultural gender norms. The use of gendered language can reinforce stereotype and expectations related to gender roles.
2. pronouns, they are essential aspect of language that can reflect and reinforce gender identity. Many language have gender specific pronouns such as "he" and “she" in recent years there has been an increasing recognition and use of gender neutral pronoun like "they", "ze" or "xe" to acknowledge individuals who do not identify strictly as male or female. The availability and acceptance of gender neutral pronouns vary across language and culture.
3. Titles and honorifics, language often includes gender\_ specific titles and honorifics that are used to address individuals in different social context for example in English "Mr" is used to address male while "Mrs" is used to address female, these titles can reflect and reinforce gender norms and expectations.

In recent years there has been a move towards using gender titles like "mx" or eliminating titles altogether to promote inclusively and respect individuals gender identity.

1. Linguistic construct and stereotype, language can influence our perception of gender by using specific linguistic constructs and stereotype, certain adjectives or descriptions maybe more commonly associated with one gender, leading to biases and assumptions for instance words like "strong” and assertive are often linked to masculinity while words like nursing or emotional are associate with femininity, these linguistic associations can contribute to gender stereotype.
2. Socialization and communication, language is a vital tool for socialisation, and through language, societal norms and expectations related to gender are transmitted. from childhood, individuals learn gender specific words, phrases and behaviours, that are considered appropriately for their gender identity

Language can shape how we perceive ourselves and others, influencing the construction of gender identities and roles

It is important to note that language is not static, and it evolves societal changes and shifts in gender perception.

However, efforts are being made to promote gender inclusive language by using gender neutral terms, avoiding stereotypes and recognising diverse gender identities.

English doesn’t have really a grammatical gender as many other languages do. It doesn’t have masculine or feminine for nouns, unless they refer to biological sex ( eg ..women, boy, Ms etcc) so gendered language is commonly understood as language that has a bias towards a particular sex or social gender.

Other languages assign gender based on the ending of the word.for example Spanish words that end in -a are usually feminine even though a table doesn’t physically have gender

1. The role of language in gender sensitivity

* Gender – sensitive language is gender equality made manifest through language. Gender equality in language is attained when women and men – and those who do not conform to the binary gender system -are addressed through language as person of equal value dignity, integrity and respect

1. The theories related to language and gender

* When language is expressed, it is considered that men and women use different expressions. There are some theories that has been proposed relate to this concern such as the deficit theory, the dominance theory, the radical theory, the difference theory and the reformist theory.

**How language affects gender**

* Self-regulating social behaviour requires the presence of language. A child expresses his or her feeling and emotions through language. The child learns how to use language to influence other people’s behaviour, the same rules often apply to adults as well

**The importance of gender in English language**

* While gender plays an important grammatical role in most language (with masculine, feminine and sometimes neuter nouns as well as personal pronouns or verbs that change depending on gender) English makes life little easier for us in this respect but this hasn’t always been the case.

Gender differences in language

* Gender differences in language can be sign of cognitive differences, but can also by themselves be the cause of for such differences. Females have a slight linguistic advantage over males but effect size are small, and gender explains very little of the variance seen in normal populations

**THE GENDERED LANGUAGE**

Gendered language is commonly understood as language that has a bias towards a particular sex or social gender. In English, this would include using gender- specific terms referring to professions or people such as “businessman “or ‘waitress’ or using the masculine pronouns (he, him, his) to refer people in general, such as a doctor should know how to communicate with his patients

The use of gendered language, like the examples above, perpetuates what academic Allison jule calls “the historical patriarchal hierarchy that has existed between men and women where one (man) is considered the norm and the other (woman) is marked as other as something quite different from norm’

This can lead women being excluded or rendered invisible. There are examples of this in studies, notably by cases Miller and Kate swift, that describe that when people are given words like “businessman “and ‘fireman’ the vast majority of them will later describe, illustrate or visualise men doing these jobs

The benefits of teaching gender -neutral language to English learners

* This type of language is no longer acceptable in many sectors of the society, so learners should be taught how to avoid it. It is not accepted in academia, research, publishing, and many business contexts- all sectors that learners are often involved in,or will be once they have left school or university
* It also needs to be taught because many learners’ mother tongue-tied grammatically gendered language. Saying something like ‘a doctor should know how to communicate with his patients may be perfectly acceptable grammatically for these learners, because in their own language ‘doctor’ is probably masculine, from a grammatical perspective.

At what stages of learning process does it tend to crop up as an issue

* It crops up everywhere and at any level and it should have been dealt with a long time before learners arrive at their undergraduate studies. But this doesn’t seem to be the case.

**Techniques for spotting gendered language**

* Gendered language is generally not that difficult to spot. However, there are some examples which people may not have considered before
* The most obvious is the use of language that has a bias towards one of the sexes (usually male) for gender neutral concepts, as in my earlier example where gender -neutral subject a(doctor) is assigned a masculine pronoun (his patients) this also includes job titles that are gender specific such as policeman/woman, when there is no need to specify the sex of the person. That’s why we nowadays tend to have gendered neutral terms for professions .in this context we would use ‘police officer'

* Another less obvious instance is the use of words that were once equivalents, but have changed over time because of the way women were- and still are -seen and treated in society. compare the words in pairs such as ‘bachelor’ and ‘spinster’ or ‘master ‘and ‘mistress’ you can see that the female words have been rendered less prestigious, or has developed sexual connotations.
* One more example is the tenancy for the male version to come first in binomial such as ‘men’ and ‘women ‘brothers and sisters ‘boys’ and girls’ or ‘Mr or Mrs’. Many words that incorporate with word ‘man’, such as man-made, ‘mankind’, manpower ‘have perfectly acceptable gender-neutral alternatives: for example, artificial or ‘synthetic’, ‘humankind’, and ‘workforce’

Many peoples who are not sexist would use terms like ‘mankind ‘without a second thought. Why should they avoid these words?

* It is true that some people may consider finding an alternative for ‘mankind’ as an example of ‘political correctness gone mad’ but words like this still exclude women, or make them invisible, and they tend to demean the contribution to society that women have made and still make today
* In the end, it is a question of awareness. If we are aware that there are words and expressions that are used on a daily basis in our language, which could cause offence because they tend to demean women and girls and their contributions and roles in society then we can try to avoid these words. people’s attitudes will be more respectful and we may create a more tolerant and equal society.
* The Academic Deborah Cameron writes.’Anti -feminist are found of observing that eliminating generic masculine pronoun. And in so doing it changes the repertoire of social meaning and choices available to social actors’

I think I owe it to all women-our mothers, wives, sisters and daughters- to actively think about the language we use, words and expressions that are inclusive and do not belittle, discriminates, or cause offence. Teachers also have the duty to teach this aspect

**How big a problem is in the use of gendered language**

* It is mainly linguistic problem. Teachers should be aware that if students use gendered language in a context where it is not acceptable, it could cause them problems. I’ll leave you with an anecdote from an article by an English language teacher, Julia sudo

**HOW LANGUAGE SHAPES OUR PERCEPTION OF GENDER**

Language can influence how we see the world in terms of gender and it is also one of the many ways a culture manifest. we know that some cultures are more Conservative than others, some are more open-minded, some still have males as dominant figures, and others hold more antiquated views. Language can be very powerful tool to change these realities and enable us to become more inclusive in the society where gender, race, age, etc, do not play a role in the treatment a person receives

Let’s examine how language shapes our perception of gender and how this issue can be addressed.

Why Gender neutral terms matter

For those who do not spend much time thinking about how our language choices influence the world around us, the debate over gender -neutral language choices may not seem all that important. However, studies have shown that gendered language can have repercussions. A2019 study found that using gender -neutral pronouns actually increases positive attitude towards women and LQBTQ+ community. This happens by reducing the prominence of male identity, which can lead to less gender- based bias.

Language can direct or redirect our attention to certain aspects of reality. For example someone who is bilingual Spanish and English speaker, may find themselves less likely to use male and feminine distinctions when they speak English compared to when they speak Spanish, while it can be difficult to change an entire culture ,introducing gender- neutral language options can have impacts on the people who employ or are exposed to them for example Japanese is another language that have gender influences .The Japanese language reinforces how men and women should speak, with women being expected to be more polite, indirect and subtle .Many different language have inverted gender for the same nouns or concepts, but not all language have marked gender English does not, which makes it easier to convert to languages choices to gender neutrality .Introducing gender-neutral language choices in japan could lead to less of those stereotypical gender reinforcements