

## How does language Define Gender (language)?

Language doesn't have a masculine or feminine for nouns, unless they refer to biological sex. (e.g man, boy Mrs etc). so gendered language is 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 to people in general, such as 'a doctor' should know how to communicate with his patients.

The use of gendered language, like the example above, perpetuates what academic Allyson June **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 the norm.

This can lead woman being excluded or rendered invisible. there are examples of this in studies, **notably by Casey miller and Kate swift**, that describes 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 gendered - neutral language to English learners?**

Gendered-neutral language is no longer acceptable in many sectors of 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 tongues are grammatically gendered languages. saying something like 'a doctor should know how to communicate with his parents' may be perfectly acceptable grammatically for these learners, because in their own language 'doctor' is probably masculine from a grammatically perspective.

In my experience it crops up everywhere and at any level. it should be dealt with a long time before learners arrive at their undergraduate studies. But this doesn't seem to be the case. students are shocked anytime this is brought up and teach them how to avoid it.

Gender 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 gendered-neutral concepts, as in my earlier examples, where a gender-neutral subject (a doctor) is assigned as a masculine pronouns (his patients). This also include job titles that are gender-specific, such as security man/security woman, when there is no need to specify the sex of the person. That's why we nowadays tend to have a gender-neutral terms for professions. In this context, we would use 'security officer'.

Another less obvious instance is the use of words that were once equivalent, 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 word has been rendered less prestigious, or has developed sexual connotations.

Another example is the tendency for the male version to come first in binomials such as 'men and women', 'brothers and sisters', 'boys and girls' 'mr and Mrs'. Many words that incorporate the word 'man', such as man-made, man kind, man power, have perfectly acceptable gender-neutral alternatives: for example 'artificial' or synthetic', human kind', and 'work force'.

## **Reasons why sexist people should avoid to use the terms like 'man kind'?**

It's true that some people may consider finding an alternative for 'man kind' 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 of society that women have made, and still make today.

In the end, it's 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 contribution and roles in society, then we can try to avoid these words. People's attitude will be more respectful, and we may create a more tolerant and equal society.

The academic Deborah Cameron **writes**: Anti-feminists are fond of observing that eliminating generic masculine pronouns does not secure equal pay. Indeed it does not- whoever said it would? Eliminating generic masculine pronouns precisely eliminates masculine pronouns. And in so doing it changes the repertoire of social meanings and choices available to social actors.

I think we owe it to all women- Our mother's, wives, sisters and daughters- to actively think about the language we use, and choose to use words and expressions that are inclusive and do not belittle, discriminate or cause offence. Teachers also have duties to teach this aspect.

This can also be a problem with students whose first language has grammatical gender.

### **Practical ways to bring gender-neutral language into the syllabus.**

From the research I have done in this subject, I can assure you that mainstream English-language coursebooks don't teach this aspect of language at all. If teachers want to teach it, they are going to have to do it themselves.

'A teacher should correct his students' work following clear criteria'. Once the use of 'his' is highlighted, it is discussed whether women can be teachers (of course they can) and they bring the assumption of male gender to the students' attention. They then discuss how prevalent the assumption is, and why it might be harmful to women and girls.

### **Ways to correct gender language in a gentle way so that the students can't feel embarrassed or upset.**

This area needs to be handled delicately, as some students react negatively. Some just think it's ridiculous and political correctness gone mad. Others become offended and feel they are being attacked. Many just don't understand how harmful this kind of language can be.

Teachers should try to correct mistakes in a more light-hearted way when the students are speaking, and may ask them explicitly whether, for example, only men are teachers or doctors. You don't need to do this very many times for students to become aware of the issue and leave what to look out for. If they use gendered language in their written work, then you highlight it, together with other general grammar and lexical problems. You encourage them to think of an alternative way to express the concept which is a good way to stretch and improve their skills.

### **The use of a gender language is a 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.

Gendered language is pervasive, but people aren't necessarily aware of it. It is advisable to keep your eyes and ears open. When you come across it, do something about it.