Are you sexist?

For the student

Anna Ananieva

Are you sexist? (Sexism in languages)

Anna ANANIEVA

1 HOW SEXIST ARE WE?

Grouping : (individual)

AN IDEAL WOMAN IS…	**AN IDEAL MAN IS…**
……………………..	……………………..
……………………..	……………………..
……………………….	……………………..
……………………..	……………………..
……………………………..	……………………..
……………………..	……………………..
……………………..	……………………..

AN IDEAL WOMAN IS…	**AN IDEAL MAN IS…**
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LEARNER WORKSHEET 2: WHAT IS SEXISM?
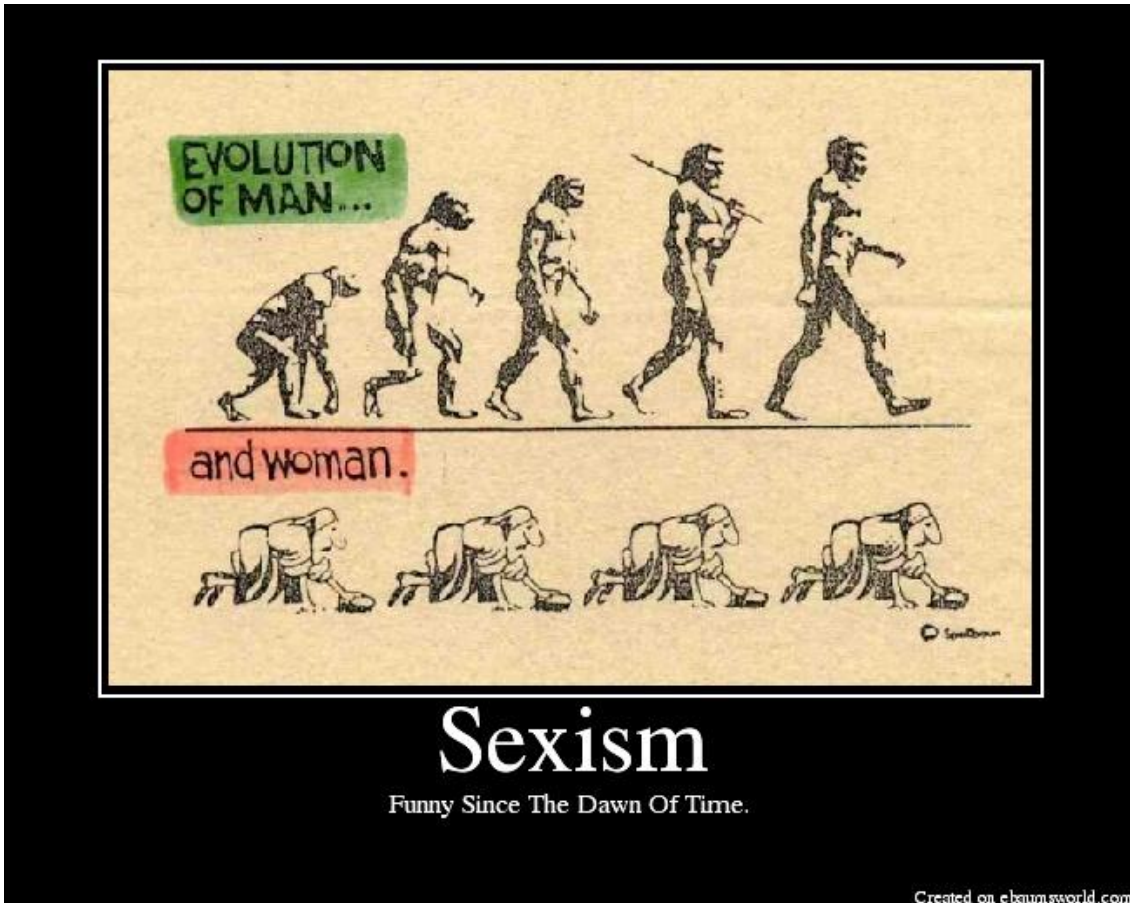
DEFINITIONS of Sexism

The belief that one sex (usually the male) is naturally superior to the other and should dominate most important areas of political, economic, and social life. Sexist discrimination in the United States in the past has denied opportunities to women in many spheres of activity. Many allege that it still does.

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It is the use of language which devalues members of one sex, almost invariably women, and thus fosters gender inequality. It discriminates against women by rendering them invisible or trivializing them at the same time that it perpetuates notions of male supremacy. (University of the Philippines Open University)

Sexism is a political issue today. It affects the language we choose to use. Many people speaking or writing English today wish to avoid using language which supports unfair or untrue attitudes to a particular sex, usually women.

When Neil Armstrong stepped onto the moon he uttered a memorable sentence: "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." If he had landed on the moon in the mid-'90s no doubt he would have said a much more politically correct sentence: "That's one small step for a person, one giant leap for humankind." Less poetic but certainly more literally representative of the whole of the human race! (Linguarama Language courses)

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LEARNER WORKSHEET 3

- **Read these examples of Sexism in Languages:**

ENGLISH

- "A director must be committed to the well-being of *his* company." but "A nurse is expected to show *her* devotion by working long hours."

- Job names often include reference to the sex of the person: "We're employing some new work*men* on the project." "I'm talking to a group of business*men* next Friday." "The chair*man* cannot vote." "He is a *male* nurse" "I have a *woman* doctor." The use of such words tends to reinforce the idea that it is not normal for women to be in professional, highly paid, technical and manual jobs. Also, that it is not natural for a man to work in such a caring (and generally poorly paid) role as that of a nurse.

- Mothers and fathers have very different roles in our lives normally. Interestingly, when used as verbs they also have very different interpretations. One can say "Terry mothered the children of the village" even when she was not the biological mother of any of the children. However, "Terry fathered the children of the village" is way different and is consistent only with his being the biological father of all of the children. Where it gets quite funny is when one contrasts "Terry mothered her kittens" with "Terry fathered his kittens."

- We refer to a generic person as "he," or "his" and use female forms of words like "actress" when "actor" will do and the ridiculous word "aviatrix" to mean a female aviator.

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- All men are mortal.   Julia is a man.   Therefore, Julia is mortal.

- Like other animals, men nourish his babies with milk.

- The word MASTER means "host", but the word MISTRESS has only the surface meaning of "hostess", its connotative meaning is "lover", a woman who depends on the man. "He grew tired of his wife and went out for a mistress."

- Many women are labelled as married or unmarried when they give their title as *Mrs* or *Miss*. Men are all *Mr* and do not have to reveal their marital status.

- Men use female terms to put other men down, as when they say things like "John's a pussy," or "throws like a girl," and the like.

SPANISH

In Spanish one always uses the male forms of pronouns and nouns when the meaning includes both male and female. An example of such usage would be the male form of the pronoun "nosotros" (meaning "we") to include both male and female. The female "nosotras" can only be used if only women are referred to. (Ellos and ellas, the masculine and feminine form of "they," is another similar example.) This Spanish sexism also spills over to nouns. An example would be the use of the word "hijos" to mean both sons and daughters grouped together as a single term. "Hijas" would only be used when referring to "daughters" only.

In Spanish , it is usually quite easy to change an -o to an -a, or to add an -a to an ending such as -or (la camarera, la doctora). Other endings can be left alone or changed (la juez but la alcaldesa). -ista is left alone. (One problem is el policía, "police officer", since la policía means "the police force". The only useful feminine term is la mujer policía.) A fashion current in Spain is to use the at sign (@) to replace -o or -a, especially in political writing (¡Ciudadan@s!)

FRENCH

In French, feminine job titles are created by adding -e (l'avocate), -eure (la docteure), -euse (la travailleuse), -esse (la mairesse), or nothing in some cases such as -iste or -logue (la psychologue). More generally, "non-sexist" styles can include the use of brackets or capital letters to insert feminine endings (étudiant(e)s or étudiantEs) or repeat gendered words (toutes et tous, citoyennes et citoyens).

Words that formerly referred to a dignitary's wife (l'ambassadrice) can be used to refer to a woman in that position; this, like other "non-sexist" forms, is much more common in Quebec than in France.Although the marriage titles have mainly dropped out of use, many cite the possible confusion as a reason for continuing to use such as Madame le Président or Madame l'ambassadeur. For this reason, these remain the most frequent, at least in France.

GERMAN

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In German, creating a feminine job title is usually done by adding -IN to the word in question. Job descriptions are usually formulated addressing both sexes (INFORMATIKER ODER INFORMATIKERIN). Sometimes a form of contraction with capitalization inside the word is used ("InformatikerIn"), which is considered by some people as a corruption of the language, especially if it is overdone by creating feminine forms of gender neutral words (for example a German feminist who called a group of non-feminist women ARSCHLÖCHERINNEN - female assholes).

HEBREW

In Hebrew, which has a high degree of grammatical gender, virtually every noun (as well as pronoun of second and third degree) is attributed as either masculine or feminine. Therefore, there are laws constituted in Israel that require job ads to be written in a non-sexist form, often with a separator '/' (e.g. "dru'shim/ot", "maz'kir/a") to explicitly proclaim that the job is offered for both males and females equally.

BULGARIAN

In Bulgarian all female surnames and second names (people have 3 names obligatory) end in –*ova*, which means that they belong to their father (second name) and to their family (third name). Later, when married, the woman takes her husband's family as a third name. This way a married woman's name sounds like this: ***Maria, belonging to Peter (her father), belonging to Alexander (her husband's family).*** Another example of sexism in this language is the expression "mazhko momiche" – Man-like girl, with the meaning of ***strong woman***. But if you try to say "zhensko momche" – Girlish boy – it already means ***a gay***, which is still insulting in the most parts of the society.

- **Now, please try to add more languages and examples!**

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3. HOW TO AVOID SEXISM

LEARNER WORKSHEET 4 WHY AVOID SEXISM IN LANGUAGE?
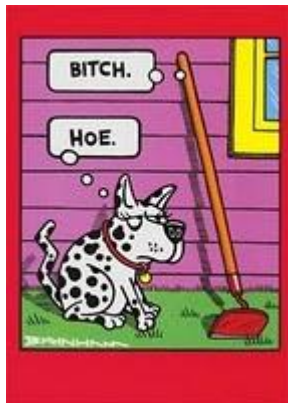
Sexist language creates an image of a society where women have lower social and economic status than men. Using the non-sexist language may change the way that users think about gender roles. Working against sexist language is combating men's violence against women. It's one step. It's easier to start saying "you all" instead of "you guys" than to change the wage gap tomorrow. Nonsexist English is a resource we have at the tip of our tongues. Let's start tasting this freedom now

The notion of females being the "weaker sex," if only because women are generally physically weaker than males, is likely to be with us for a very long time. The sad thing is that physical strength is not much of an asset in a world in which being smart and educated is of critical importance for success

Some non- sexist <u>changes so far:</u>

1979 - hurricanes renamed alternately by female/male names: they no longer 'flirt with the coast'.

1980s - increasing pressure to ensure non-sexist usage - don't assume that an author is *he*, drop derivatives like *authoress, usherette*, use *chair* for *chairman* etc.

1990s - 'When ancient man developed early agriculture' becomes 'When ancient people developed agriculture' but this still hides the fact that the earliest cultivators of plants were women. So what do you think?

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LEARNER WORKSHEET 5: HOW TO AVOID SEXISM IN LANGUAGE

How to change our language to become polite, modern and benevolent

Instead of: **Try:**

Actress   Actor

Hostess   Host

Waitress   Server

Policewoman   Police officer

Spokesman   Spokesperson

Does everybody know what   Does everybody know what

he wantS   **they want**

Man is a species who suckles his young   **Humans are a species who suckle their young**

The man we want for the job   **The person we want for the job**

The man on the street   **The average person**

                                         The ordinary person

                                         People in general

Manning the office   **Staffing the office**

Change to the plural form

Each student must complete his   **Students must complete their assessments by Friday**

assessment by Friday.

Change to the passive form

He must return it by the due date.   It must be returned by the due date

Use indefinite pronouns and articles:

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A student who wants his essay returned.

Anyone who wants an essay returned...
Anyone wanting essays returned...

Instead of: **Try:**

She's a tomboy   **She's an adventurous/daring girl**
He's a sissy   **He's a sensitive/caring boy**

Men and Women   **Women and Men**
Boys and Girls   **Girls and Boys**
Husbands and Wives   **Wives and Husbands**

Fathers and Mothers   **Mothers and Fathers**
Sir or Madam   **Madam or Sir**

manpower   **personnel, staff, workforce,**

                                                   available workers, human
                                                   resources

workman   **worker**
workmanship   **quality of work, work skill**

REMEMBER: Do not overdo it; try to be moderate and follow your common sense:

Instead of   **Try**

A baby cries when he or she is tired   Babies cry when they are tired

In an excerpt of a feminist church service   *This is surely taking the sexism of*

the hymns were referred to as "hers"   *English a little too far!*

and instead of "Amen" they said "Awomen".

Now try to find similar examples in yours and other languages

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