

CONBAT+



CONTENT BASED TEACHING ConBaT+ Are you sexist?

For the Teacher

Anna ANANIEVA

[26/01/2011]



EMPOWERING LANGUAGE PROFESSIONALS
VALORISER LES PROFESSIONNELS EN LANGUES
SPRACHLEHRENDE IN IHRER ROLLE STÄRKEN


European Centre for Modern Languages
Centre européen pour les langues vivantes
Europäisches Fremdsprachenzentrum





ARE YOU SEXIST? (SEXISM IN LANGUAGES)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introductory Information	3
1. Are we sexist?	5
Learner worksheet 1.....	6
2 . What is sexism?.....	7
Learner worksheet 2 : WHAT IS SEXISM?.....	8
Learner worksheet 3.....	10
3. How to avoid sexism.....	13
Learner worksheet 4.....	15
Learner worksheet 5 : How to avoid sexism in language.....	16



INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

AUTHOR: Anna ANANIEVA

E-MAIL: anananieva@gmail.com

INSTITUTE: Prof. Ivan Apostolov English Language High School, Sofia, Bulgaria

TARGET GROUP:

15 – 20 year olds

SUBJECTS:

Ethics, Civics, Citizenship, cross-curriculum

AIMS:

Main aim: to get aware and raise knowledge about sexism and particularly about sexism in languages: the problem of offending people, mostly women, by diminishing their role, using an inappropriate, old-fashioned words and phrases in language; to help the students reach their own ways to avoid sexism in the future.

Sub-aims:

1. Learn about the sexism in different languages
2. Identify the social causes for such language
3. Explore the different languages and cultures for more examples
4. Learn how to avoid sexism in language
5. Create their own ways of combating the sexism in languages

KEY COMPETENCIES REGARDING:

COMMUNICATION IN LANGUAGE(S):

- Raise students' awareness of sexist phrases and attitude in their own language
- Improve their reading and understanding ability by searching in texts for sexist findings in different languages
- Learn English / French / Spanish etc. vocabulary in a very broad way, searching through sayings, proverbs, statements, articles, etc.
- Learn about the language as a mirror of society, becoming aware of the fact that sexism in language is a reflection of sexism in people's minds.

LEARNING TO LEARN:

Anna Ananieva



CONTENT BASED TEACHING + PLURILINGUAL/CULTURAL AWARENESS
CONBAT

ARE YOU SEXIST

- Look for specific information via Internet, encyclopedias, books, etc. and learn how to use it critically in different languages
- Learn to extract the most important of given texts on a certain topic

DIGITAL COMPETENCES:

- Look for information on Internet and become how to sort it out.

SOCIAL AND CIVIC COMPETENCES:

- Become aware of one highly topical issue – sexism, expressed in different languages and respectively raise their understanding about inequalities in their or other societies.
- Work in teams of girls and boys together to see each other's views and build up collaboration qualities.

TIMING OF THE OVERALL ACTIVITIES:

Approximately 8 classes (about 1 month)

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Worksheets for each student, photocopied
- Internet for searching (possible at home, too)
- Recourses obtained from students






1. ARE WE SEXIST?

Notes for the teacher

- Boys think of the best qualities of the WOMAN and girls put down the best qualities of the MAN. At the end one student summarizes the most popular features for the GOOD MAN and GOOD WOMAN given from the class. (5-10 minutes).
- Students are grouped in teams of 4-5 and discuss the results of the inquiry. Possible questions to be debated – Is it fair to stress these features only for the good MAN/WOMAN? Are we sexist? What is sexist? What is its social reason? (5-10 minutes).
- Speakers from each team stand up and summarize the results from The teamwork. They stress who has been involved actively in the discussion and assess the team ability to reach all-agreeable answers to the questions given (20 minutes).

Timing: 40 min (1 period)

Material required: *worksheet 1*

Grouping:  (pairs), then teams of 4-5 , then  (whole class)

Focus on content:

- (Civics, Citizenship) – Identifying the state of sexism of the class

Focus on language:

- Working with English words for qualities and features



LEARNER WORKSHEET 1

AN IDEAL WOMAN IS...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

AN IDEAL MAN IS...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

AN IDEAL WOMAN IS ...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

AN IDEAL MAN IS ...

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Assessment:




- The **student that has summarized on the board and students speakers of each group** are given some points/ marks – according to their presentations.



2. WHAT IS SEXISM?

Timing: 120 min (3 periods)

Material required: *worksheets 2, 3*

Grouping:  (pairs), then teams of 4-5 , then  (whole class)

Focus on content:

Becoming aware of sexism in language

Focus on language:

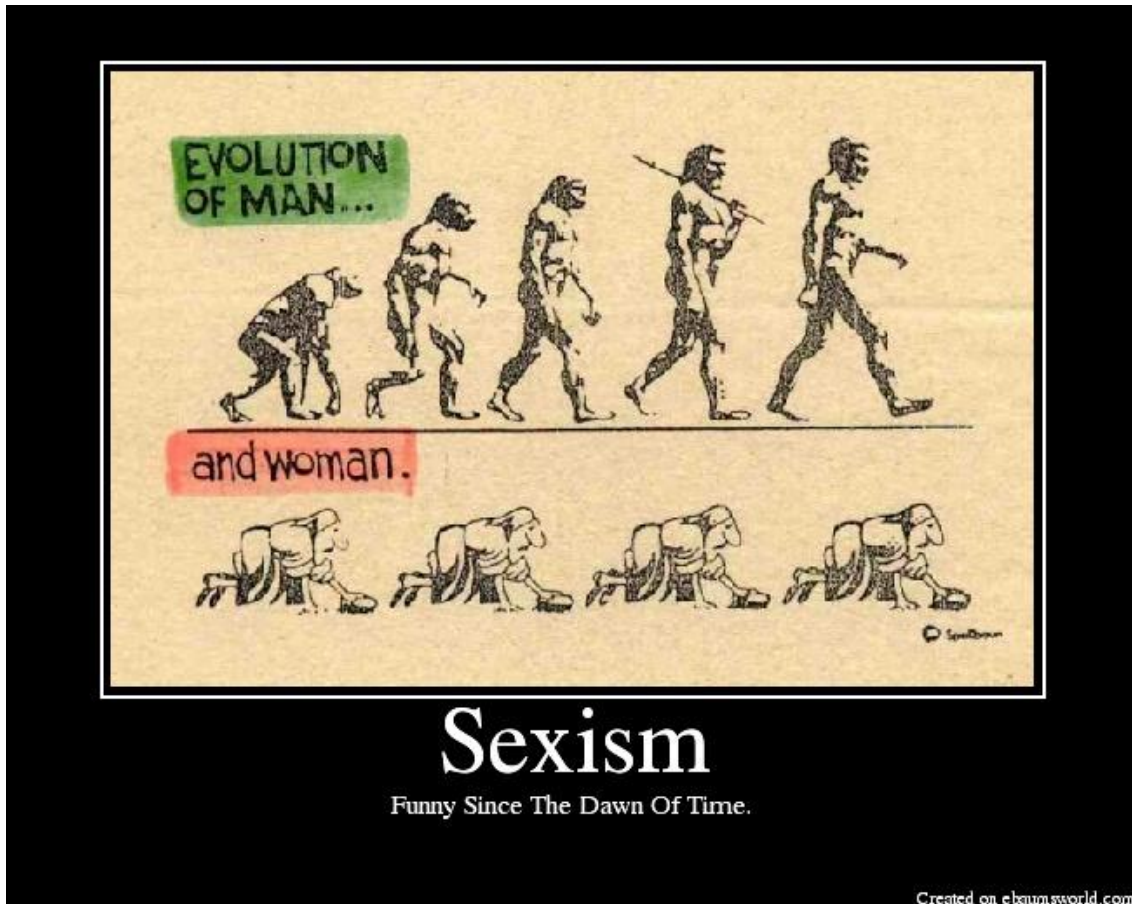
- Working with English and other languages words for qualities and features
- Searching through definitions, becoming aware of specific meanings of the words that could sound and mean different things in different languages

Notes for the teacher:

- Students are given worksheet 2 and worksheet 3 with definitions and examples of sexism in different languages. First, they work individually, going through all the texts. They mark the definitions they personally like the best. Ss can add more examples of their own on any language they know (5-10 minutes).
- Then students are invited to work in pairs so that they can compare their choices with the preferences of their mate and make comments in pairs (5-10 minutes).
- Then group them in teams of 4-5 (the previous ones) and let them share the experience and collaborate so that they show each their preferences of definition of sexism in different languages and try to summarize the opinion of the group. (20minutes). Ss can add more examples of their own or any language they know.
- Students speakers from each team (now preferably different from those in the previous period) are presenting in turn the conclusions their team has drawn (40 minutes). Ss are given for homework to search in Internet for as many examples of sexist language in different languages as they can find.
- Student perform on a stage some of the examples of sexism, found in different languages, given or created before the class, first normally, then changing their roles – boys are pretending to be girls and girls address them with some of the sexist language examples (40 minutes).



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.



[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](#))



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 workmen on the project." "I'm talking to a group of businessmen next Friday." "The chairman 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.
- All men are mortal. Julia is a man. Therefore, Julia is mortal.

Anna Ananieva



- 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 and 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

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!*

Assessment:

- The student that has summarized on the board and students speakers of each group are given some points/ marks – according to their presentations
- All students performing examples of sexism are given some points/ marks



3. HOW TO AVOID SEXISM



Timing: 160 min (4 periods)

Material required:

worksheet 4, worksheet 5

1-2 sheets for drawing,

Patafix - Blue Tack (clean, reusable mastic)

Grouping: teams of 4-5  , then  (whole class)

Focus on content:

Examples and presentations helping to avoid sexism

Focus on language:

- Working with English words for qualities and features
- Searching through words and phrases that could possibly substitute offensive sexist language, Ss enrich their vocabulary and raise their multiple meaning understanding of English, getting aware of specific meanings of the words that could sound and mean different things.

Notes for the teacher:

- students read some of their own found examples of sexism in different languages and comment on them. (40 minutes).
- Students are given worksheet 4 about why avoid sexism in language and work individually, then in pairs. They agree or disagree with the assertions and comment on them (10 minutes).
- Students are given 1-2 sheets of paper in order to draw their personal ideas about sexism and its use in language in cartoons/ drawings. They may work in pairs or teams with one picture. Then each S/ pair/ team show before the class their work and explain the idea. Put the works on the wall with Patafix. Enjoy! (30 minutes)
- Students go through the examples of substitution of sexist language with more polite and appropriate one first individually (10 minutes), then in pairs, discussing them (10 minutes) and at last in teams (the established ones). At the end, a speaker from each group presents before the class the conclusions their team has drawn. T leads a class discussion on the topic. More examples are given from different languages. One or more Ss can summarize the experience of the class.

Anna Ananieva



the end they present before the class their conclusions. All Ss are given for homework to write an essay on the topic: "My first project on Sexism in Languages – feelings, findings" – about 250-300 words (40 minutes).

- Students present their small sketches, previously prepared, showing some examples of sexism and the use of alternative words and phrases, avoiding the inappropriate language. (worksheet 5). All watch and enjoy (40 minutes).
- *(Optional, if there is time and enthusiasm)* One in 7-8 Students gathers all the proposals of examples of sexism in different languages and writes them at home on the computer. Then the 3 students in charge share their summaries to one student, who creates a Word file and turns it back to them. They then copy the summarized class sexism dictionary with the 7-8 Students from their group.



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 changes so far:

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?



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
young The man we want for the job

Humans are a species who suckle **their**
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.
date

It must be returned by the due

Use indefinite pronouns and articles:

A student who wants **his** essay returned.

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



Instead of:

She's a tomboy
He's a sissy

Men and Women
Boys and Girls
Husbands and Wives

Fathers and Mothers
Sir or Madam

manpower

workman
workmanship

Try:

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

Women and Men
Girls and Boys
Wives and Husbands

Mothers and Fathers
Madam or Sir

personnel, staff, workforce, available workers, human resources

worker
quality of work, work skill

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

Instead of

A baby cries when he or she is tired

In an excerpt of a feminist church service

the hymns were referred to as "hers"

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

Try

Babies cry when they are tired

This is surely taking the sexism of

English a little too far!



Now try to find similar examples in yours and other languages

Notes for the teacher:

- At the last performance parents and students' friends could be invited to enjoy the work of students.
- Arrange the exhibition of their drawings.
- Invite some local media to report the event.

Assessment:



- All the Students that have drawn pictures are given some points/ marks.
- All Students performing examples of sexism are given some points/ marks

References:

[The American Heritage@New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy](#), Third Edition

<http://dictionary.reference.com/help/ahcl.html>

[Marcus evans linguarama](#)

<http://www.linguarama.com/ps/index.htm>

[Helium Arts and Humanities](#)

<http://www.helium.com/items/762879-sexism-in-the-english-language>

[TalkTalk uk](#)

<http://www.talktalk.co.uk/reference/dictionaries/english/data/d0082785.html>

[Encyclopedia.kids.net.au](#)

<http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/>

[Alternet](#)

<http://www.alternet.org/story/48856/>

Acknowledgments:

My special gratitude to the colleagues-adherents:

Galya Dimitrova, Pedagogical adviser,

Zhivka Zhelyazkova, PhD

Evelina Ivanova-Vardzhiyska, PhD

Mariana Iordanova