

Definition of Key-Terms

Gender

According to the Cambridge dictionary the word gender has many definitions. The first one is " the physical and/or social condition of being male or female". An example for that is the following sentence " She felt that her destiny was shaped by her gender". The second meaning of the word gender is " all males, or all females, considered as one group", for example "I think both genders are capable of taking care of children." The last definition is that gender stands for "the grammatical arrangement of nouns,pronouns and adjectives into masculine, feminine, and neuter types in some languages".

(<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/gender>)

Gender equality

Gender equality is one of the 17 sustainable goals of the United Nations. As defined by the UN gender equality means " Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes." (<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality>)

Stereotype

According to the Cambridge dictionary a stereotype means "a set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong."

(<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/stereotype>)

Prejudice

Based on the Merriam-Webster dictionary prejudice has several definitions. Some of them are the following: " injury or damage resulting from some judgment or action of another in disregard of one's rights", "preconceived judgment or opinion" , "an

adverse opinion or leaning formed without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge” , “an instance of such judgment or opinion, “an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, a race, or their supposed characteristics.” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/prejudice>)

Feminism

Feminism is “ the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state” (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/feminism>)

Gender-neutral

Gender-neutral are the words that “ relate to people and not especially to men or to women.” (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/gender-neutral#translations>)

Sexism

Sexism is identified as “prejudice or discrimination based on sex; *for example* discrimination against women” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sexism>)

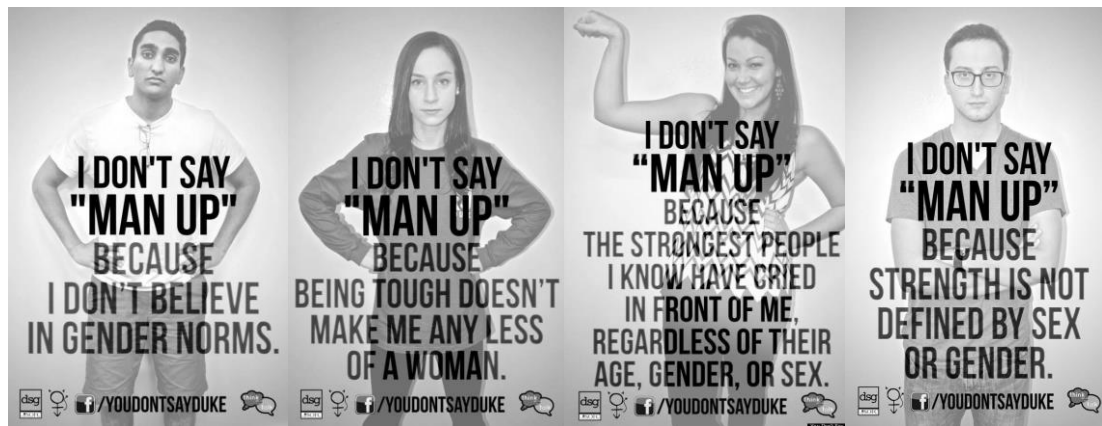
Gendered language

The language that “ reflects or involves gender differences or stereotypical gender roles”.(<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/gendered>)

Background Information

According to many researchers there are three types of language. The languages are categorized by the extent to which they signify gender grammatically and the ways they do it. It is important to understand those differences in order to realize what gendered language is, but we are going to focus more on English, since

it is the language of the international community and the official language of the conference. Gendered language is used to describe the languages that use both nouns and pronouns in order to mark gender. Such languages are Spanish, Hindi, Greek, German, French etc. Genderless languages is a kind of language that is characterized by the fact that it does not mark gender grammatically with nouns and pronouns. Mandarin, Turkish, Finnish and Hungarian fall under this category. Neutral languages are the ones that mark gender with third-person singular pronouns. English belongs to this category. Generally, neutral languages mark gender more often than genderless languages, but less than gendered languages. The way that English signifies gender is also very important and interesting. English uses a binary system, in which everyone is marked as "she" or "he". People that don't fall under these two categories aren't marked by any linguistic convention. As it is already mentioned we are going to focus on the English language. Even if English is considered to be a neutral language it still marks gender grammatically. It is vital to know that grammatical gender is only one form of gendered language. The following categories present the most common forms of gendered language and some specific examples in order to understand them better. In our everyday life we use nouns, verbs and phrases that categorize men and women based on their gender by giving them certain characteristics. The examples are countless, but some of the most common are the following: phrases like "run like a girl" or "fight like a girl" that imply that girls aren't able to be as good as boys in certain activities and the phrase "man up" which states that only men can be strong, brave and overcome difficulties. This is also a double stereotype, because it also suggest that men should be brave and strong and emotionless, no matter what. After these examples, it is clear that often everyday words portray women as weak and vulnerable and men as strong and insensitive.



A generic is a personal pronoun that can be used to describe both genders such as “one” and “they”. “He” a pronoun that applies only to the male gender is frequently used as a generic. An example is “the student should do his homework and he should bring them to class”, defying a student as exclusively male. The usage of words like “Chairman”, “Policeman”, “Freshman” etc. instead of their gender-neutral synonyms, highlights that we suppose that there is still male dominance in those fields. Of course there are some other language options like “police officer” or “policewoman” but they aren’t widely used.

Gendered language and gender equality

Gender inequality is a problem that the international community has been facing for several years. It is indeed a problem , because as shown by several studies it affects the behavior and the mindset of children and adults. The truth is that progress has been made for example the state of Washington has changed its language towards a more gender neutral one. Words like penmanship, freshmen and watchmen are replaced by handwriting, first- year students and security guards. Still we haven’t achieved to make a huge impact through eliminating or reducing gendered language in order to help into reaching the fifth sustainable goal of the United Nations, namely the gender equality. The language is the way we express ourselves, communicate with other people, exchange our thoughts and our ideas. The way we use this precious tool should be helping us to improve our society, instead of discriminating and categorizing other human beings. Our language mirrors our thoughts and our perception of the world and gendered language equals gendered thought. All men are strong, emotionless and fearless. All women are

sensitive and vulnerable. We should all understand that these stereotypes that our language promotes are harmful for both genders and for the relationship between men and women in general. This happens due to the fact that gender language affects our perception about ourselves. For example women and men report that their prototype of police officers and firefighters is male and this may be due in part to gendered language.



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Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Interaction:

Interaction is an international nongovernmental organization ,that aims among others to achieve gender equality and considers gendered language as a type of light lexical discrimination .Therefore in 1992 it funded the Commission on the Advancement of Women (CAW) in order to advance female empowerment and establish gender equality .This commission organized campaigns against gender mainstreaming in both Asia and Africa.

UN WOMEN :

UN Women organization was the result of General Assembly resolution 62/208 in 2006 ,which underlined the need of a Non-Governmental Organization to preserve gender equality and eliminate the discrimination against women .Since then UN Women has created multiple commissions to support its service such as the division for the Advancement of Women (DAW),which mostly focuses in the coordination of the UN’s system work



¹ the picture above shows the 17 sustainable goals of UN. Gender equality



on gender equality ,encourage responsibility , and supervise the ongoing missions and campaigns. the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which role is to gather data and analyze the changes in Women status through the years and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), that is in charge of combating gender mainstreaming.



Equality Now

Equality Now is a Non-Governmental Organization in 1992, which aims to protect women rights and “make equality reality “. Its primary focus is the women status in the society, which is directly related in the everyday issue of gendered language .Moreover the organization’s goal is to reform discriminatory laws and practices, and bring justice and equality to women and girls. Equality Now leads and participates in a variety of activities and campaigns that aim to hold governments accountable to the pledges they have made to preserve the fundamental rights of women and girls around the world.

Timeline of Events

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENTS
1948	UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights
1966	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
1966	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
1967	UN Declaration on The Elimination of Discrimination Against Women –

1979	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women CEDAW –
1980	The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing (the phrase gendered language was firstly introduced)
1995	Beijing Platform for Action also known as the Fourth Conference on women .
1999	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
2006	UN General Assembly resolution 63/311 which aimed to reduce the discrimination of both genders and also led to the Creation of UN Women

Relevant UN Treaties, Resolutions and Events

UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights – 1948

UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights is undoubtedly the most important declaration that has ever been signed. It establishes the 30 basic human rights that every human being has. This declaration has played a vital role in gender equality as it ratifies it with the rights 1, which states All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood ,2 according to which Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.



International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) – 1966

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) is a crucial covenant which eliminated the discrimination against women with its third article that urges states to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) – 1966

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) was signed in 1966 and it prohibits the discrimination of women in the workplace, in education and in healthcare system.

UN Declaration on The Elimination of Discrimination Against Women –1967

Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was signed in 1967 and consists of 11 articles related to gender equality that set the equality of genders before the law, preserves women full electoral rights and equality in marriage

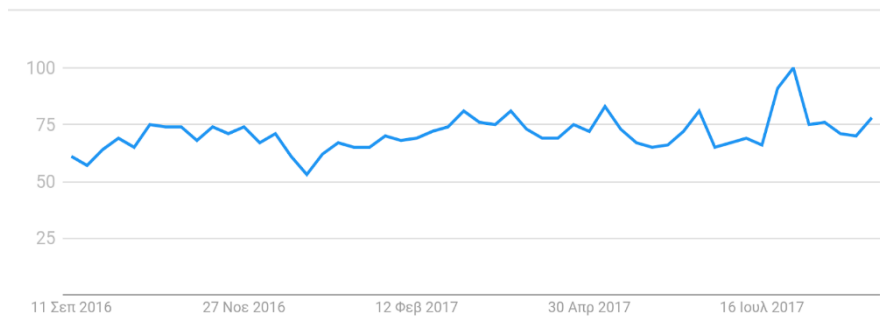
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women CEDAW – 1979

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women CEDAW (1979) is the most important international treaty in gender equality and gendered language consequently. It has been ratified by 189 member states, and it is a milestone in gender equality. International law has changed after this treaty which consists of 16 articles.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Agreements and declarations

Gendered language is subjected to the general problem of the discrimination of both genders, because gendered language itself is a form of discrimination. Therefore, although there is not any agreement focusing exclusively in gender language, a considerable amount of agreements on gender discrimination have gender language as an example of gender discrimination. Such examples is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1966, which underlines the importance of eliminating discrimination of different sexes and language discrimination. This unfortunately did not result in the reduction of the use of gendered language. Moreover, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1966 clearly states the the indigenous language shall not be used to offend others and limit the participation of parts of the society in cultural life . However both attempts have failed to deal with the matter of gender language.



Possible Solutions

Gender conditioning can affect the choices men and women make and when they grow up learning that they aren't the ideal image of a particular role, their options are limited. One solution could be raising public awareness to the topic. Many people and especially young ones don't even know the existence of gendered language and they certainly don't know ways to avoid it. Informative campaigns with advertisements on television, radio and social media from NGO's that are interested in gendered language would be ideal. Public speeches in universities or in workplaces from experts like psychologists that will explain the connection between gendered language and gendered thought and the effects on children's perspective of the world and the two genders could be also helpful. This way parents will be aware of the of gender language and the effects on children and they can try to replace gendered words with more neutral ones in order not to impose any gender roles on their child. Education is also something that will make drastic change. Teaching children in school, as a part of the English lesson or in the form of an informative seminar and adults through documentaries in their workplace ways to avoid gendered language is vital. Instead of sexist nouns, verbs and phrases they could learn to use their non-sexist synonyms (for example the word "mankind" could be replaced with the word "humankind" or the word "police man" with a more gender-neutral word like "police officer"). Generics can also be replaced (for example instead of "every student should have books and he should do his homework" we can say "every student should have books and they should do their homework"). So, educative seminars for children and adults will be helpful in order to teach them non-sexist alternatives. Finally, an other more drastic solution would be

changing the legislation and not allowing gendered worlds to be in formal documents. That would require a committee to determine which words are gendered and how the process will be done in order to be easier for the people to adapt to those changes. This measure is an extreme one but with the right preparation it could lead to good results.

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