

Gender-inclusive Language in the English Classroom

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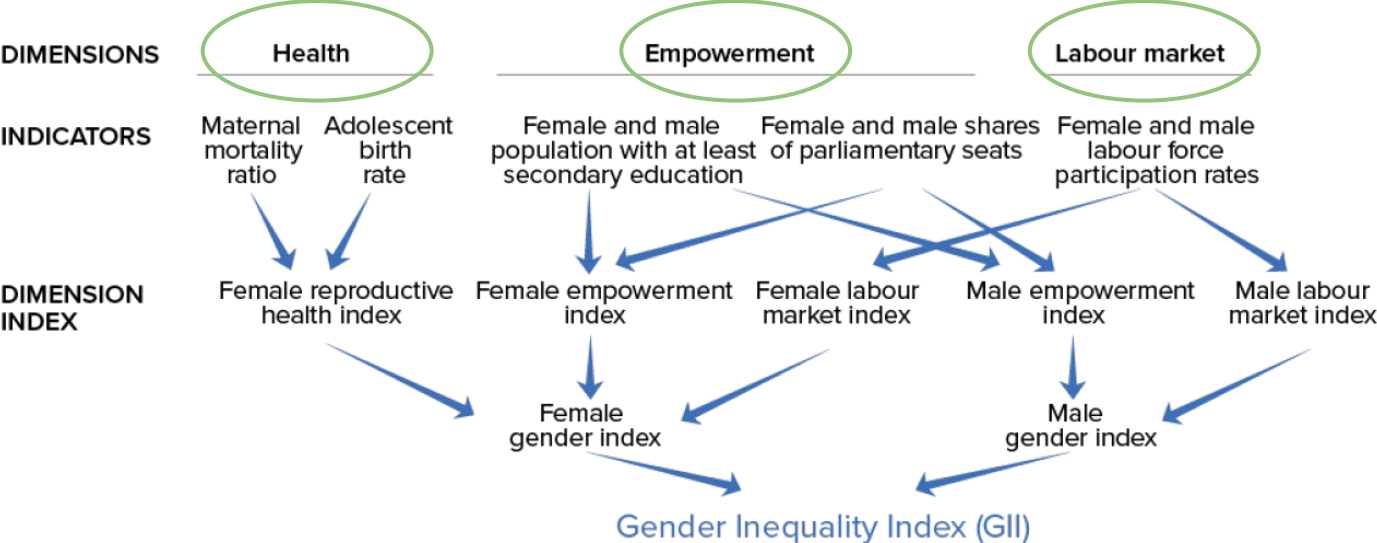
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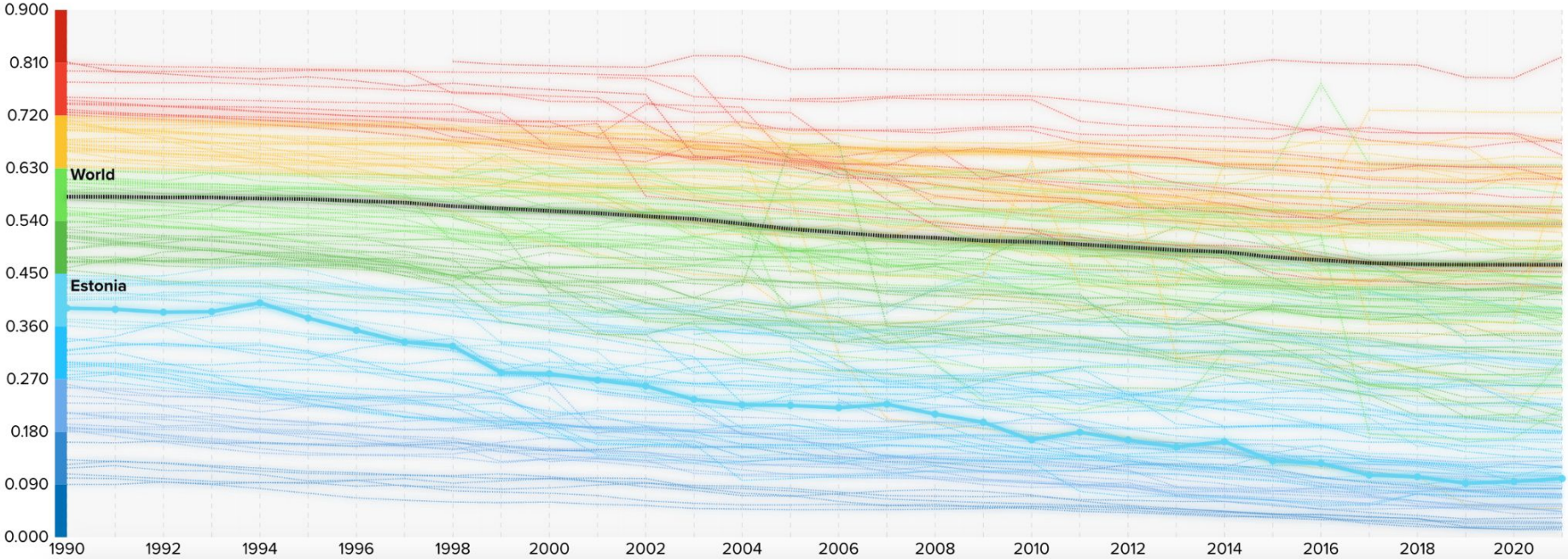
Workshop Agenda

1. Define and discuss the importance of gender-inclusive language
2. Explore strategies to make language more gender-inclusive
3. Use these strategies to detect and modify gender-biased language

Gender Inequality Index



Gender Inequality Index



Research Foundation

- Language both reflects and reinforces cultural patterns of thinking (Comrie, 2023)
- The classroom environment that teachers create impacts the mindset and beliefs of students (Kroeper et al., 2022)
- Students who feel at risk of confirming negative stereotypes about their social group have higher cognitive load, resulting in less academic focus and lower performance (National Institute of Health, 2023)
- Removing gender-biased language in the classroom and in examinations can have a positive impact on female student achievement, without negatively affecting male achievement (Cohen et al., 2023; Kricheli-Katz and Regev, 2021)



Why use gender-sensitive language?

In order to tackle gender inequality, we must look at the way we communicate. Using gender-sensitive language can:

- ✓ Make it easier to see important differences between the needs of women and men;
- ✓ Challenge unconscious assumptions people have about gender roles in society;
- ✓ Lay the foundation for greater gender equality throughout society;
- ✓ Raise awareness of how language affects our behaviour;
- ✓ Make people more comfortable with expressing themselves and behaving in ways that were once not considered 'typical' of their gender.

My language goals

1. Recognize and challenge limiting stereotypes.
2. Be inclusive and avoid omission and making others invisible.
3. Be respectful and avoid trivialization and subordination.
4. *Be kind, patient, and understanding with myself and those around me.*

Strategies for recognizing and challenging stereotypes

1. Use gender-neutral pronouns when a person's gender is unknown
2. Avoid irrelevant information about gender
3. Avoid stereotypes as descriptive terms

Strategies for avoiding omission and invisibility

4. Don't use man as a neutral term
5. Use inclusive images.

Strategies for avoiding subordination, and trivialization

6. Use the same naming conventions for all genders
7. Pay attention to word phrase hierarchy

1. Avoid gendered pronouns when the person's gender is unknown

- A generic *he* can be substituted with *he or she* or *they*
- Inanimate objects in English use pronoun "it"

Language with gender-bias



The number of years an electrician spends training depends on what country he is from.



Gender-neutral language

The number of years an electrician spends training depends on what country they are from.

2. Avoid irrelevant information about gender

- If gender isn't essential to meaning, don't use language that marks gender



Language with gender-bias

The group chairman and I work together closely.



Gender-neutral language

The group chair/chairperson and I work together closely.

2. Avoid irrelevant information about gender

- If gender isn't essential to meaning, don't use language that marks gender



Language with gender-bias

Alex is a career woman.



Gender-neutral language

Alex is focused on her career.

Alex is career-focused.

2. Avoid irrelevant information about gender

- If gender isn't essential to meaning, don't use language that marks gender



Language with gender-bias

Each application must submit his CV.



Gender-neutral language

Each applicant must submit a CV

Each applicant must submit their CV.

3. Avoid stereotypes as descriptive terms

- Stereotypes and clichés often depict women as weaker or less capable and men as strong and unemotional



Language with gender-bias

Mark's lady-like handshake didn't impress his new boss.



Gender-neutral language

Mark's weak handshake did not impress his new boss.

3. Avoid stereotypes as descriptive terms

- Stereotypes and clichés often depict women as weaker or less capable and men as strong and unemotional



Language with gender-bias

The team has to man up and enter the freezing water.



Gender-neutral language

The team had to be tough and enter the freezing water.

4. Don't use man as a neutral term

- Nouns that generalize all members of a group as male usually have an easy gender-specific or gender-neutral substitute

✗ Every man for himself.

✗ Man-kind

✗ Policeman/woman

✗ Businessman

✗ Repairman

✗ Workman

✓ Everyone for themselves.

✓ Humankind

✓ Police officer

✓ Business executive

✓ Technician

✓ Worker

4. Don't use man as a neutral term

- Nouns that generalize all members of a group as male usually have an easy gender-specific or gender-neutral substitute



Language with gender-bias

Man-made fabrics can actually require less manpower to manufacture.

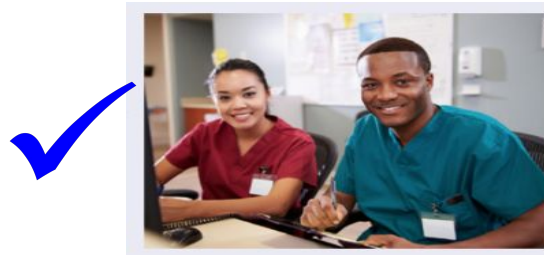
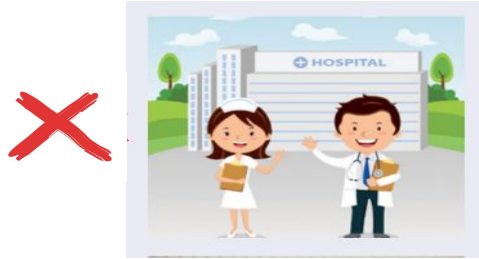


Gender-neutral language

Synthetic fabrics can actually require fewer human resources to manufacture.

5. Use inclusive images

- Though not language, images also reinforce stereotypes of gender, race/ethnicity, and ability
- Choose images that *show* equality in action



6. Use the same naming conventions for all genders

- Title and form of address should use the same standards and way of categorizing
- An equivalent of “Mr.” for women is “Ms.” Both “Miss” and “Mrs.” define a woman by her marital status and/or age
- Non-binary people may use a different title, like Mx.



Language with gender-bias

Yang and his research assistant Holly were conducting pioneering research.



Gender-neutral language

Yang and his research assistant Smith were conducting pioneering research.

7. Pay attention to word phrase hierarchy

- By mixing up the order of these “set phrases” we can challenge the idea that a gender is more central, default, or important

Common “Set Phrases”

- King and Queen
- Men and women
- Ladies and gentlemen
- Boys and girls
- Husband and wife

7. Pay attention to word phrase hierarchy

- By mixing up the order of these “set phrases” we can challenge the idea that a gender is more central, default, or important



Language with gender-bias

The husband and wife team established the charity themselves.



Gender-neutral language

The wife and husband team established the charity themselves.
The team of spouses established the charity themselves.

Practice with [sample texts](#)



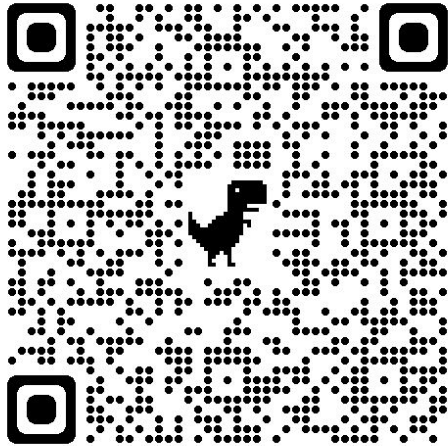
1. Read your sample text with your group.
2. Mark examples of biased language.
3. If time allows, make corrections to the biased language.

Reflection

1. What from today can you take to your teaching practice?
2. Are there any additional questions you would like addressed on this topic?

References and resources

This presentation:



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Additional Resources

[European Institute for Gender Equality Toolkit on Gender-sensitive Language](#)

[Guide to pronouns for educators](#)

[Information on the definitions of sex and gender](#)

[Inclusivity tips from a non-binary teacher](#)

[UNESCO Research on Gender Bias in Textbooks](#)

[United Nations Gender Inequality Index](#)

References

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