Embedding inclusivity in communication: the power of words and visuals

Gender-sensitive communication

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How does language shape your worldview?

Oral

Job posting using exclusively masculine pronouns

Written

Visual

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Gender in Language (1/5)

Finnish	**Genderless language**	Nouns are not categorized by gender; 1 pronoun refers a person neutrally
French	**Grammatical gender language**	2 genders (feminine, masculine)
German	**Grammatical gender language**	3 genders (feminine, masculine, neuter)
Greek	**Grammatical gender language**	3 genders (feminine, masculine, neuter)
Polish	**Grammatical gender language**	3 genders (feminine, masculine, neuter)
Portugese	**Grammatical gender language**	2 genders (feminine, masculine)

- Most languages are gendered.

- Gender manifests in language structure, object designations, and references.

- Linguistic structures vary across languages, impacting information expression.

- Language is a dynamic system.

RESET project's languages

Niebel Viktoria. (2022). Toolbox for gender-neutral, diversity-oriented institutional communication (2.0). RESET project. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8095962

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Gender in Language (2/5)

Impact of Gender-Biased Language

- Reinforces stereotypes and prejudices

- Limits opportunities and potential

- Creates a hostile and discriminatory environment

- Contributes to systemic inequality

- Harms mental and emotional well-being

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Gender – sensitive language

"Realisation of gender equality in written and spoken language attained when women and men and those who do not conform to the binary gender system are made visible and addressed in language as persons of equal value, dignity, integrity and respect."

Gender – neutral language

"Language that is not gender-specific and which considers people in general, with no reference to women and men."

Definitions of gender-sensitive and gender-neutral language (EIGE)

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Gender – sensitive language

Every student should take responsibility for **his or her** own academic success

Salespeople instead of **salesman**

She is focused on her career instead of she is a careerwoman

Gender – neutral language

People do not fully appreciate the impact **they** have on the environment.

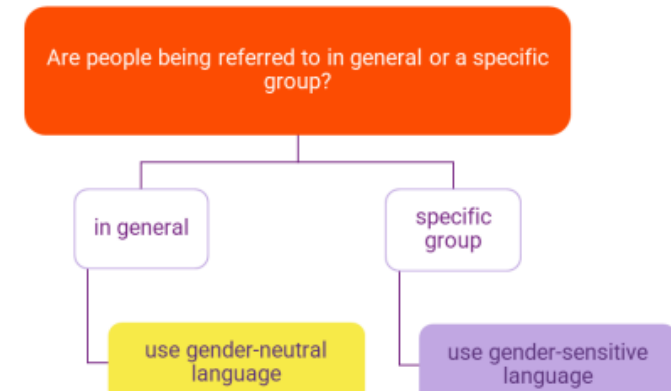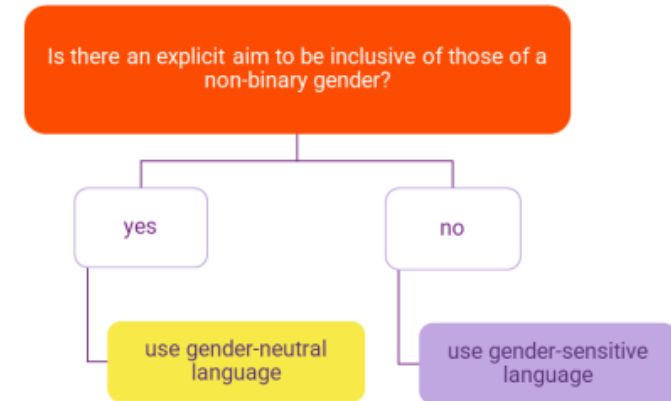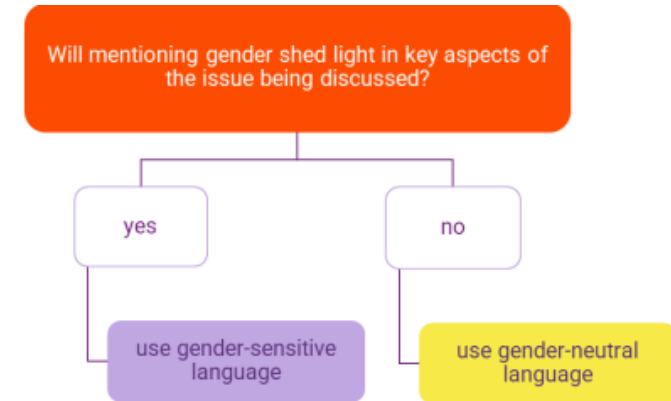The number of years an electrician will spend training depends on what country **they** are from.

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Gender in Language (5/5)

The following questions provided by the EIGE (2019) can be helpful in deciding which form is most appropriate for a text:

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Gender in Visual Communication

Cover of the Guide of "Images that change the world" (Gunnarsson, 2019)

The Gävle Challenge:
A 2012 campaign aimed to represent local life. However, the images revealed hidden biases.

A Call for Change:
Collaboration between the city and photographer Tomas Gunnarsson.

➢ To create a more inclusive and representative visual language.

✓ Success in highlighting blind spots and challenging stereotypes.

- Images shape our perceptions and can reinforce or challenge societal norms.
- Visuals should reflect the diversity of our communities.

Gender in Visual Communication

RESET checklist

1. Depiction in images and other visual material (graphs and videos): Focus on gender

Are women **depicted** differently in images than men?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Are men pictured actively doing things while women are passively pictured (*e.g. smiling at the camera, more in a decorative mode than involved in activities related to the context*)?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Have you considered to show women and men in roles, in which they are under-represented (*e.g. female professors, lecturers and PIs; male assistants and secretaries*)?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Have you thought about using abstract forms of representation in preference to depicting people or using drawings of people?

☐ Yes
☐ No

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Gender in Visual Communication

RESET checklist

2. Inclusion of people in the production of the images and other visual materials

Are people from marginalized groups or minorities actively involved in the development of a visual language or campaign?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Did you seek feedback on existing or new images/visual material given by people from marginalized groups or minorities?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Have you incorporated such suggestions and ideas into the development of visual material?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Did female photographers and/or voice actors have been engaged in the creation of (audio-)visual materials in fields in which they are underrepresented?

☐ Yes
☐ No

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AI and gender biased in translation

Source: Slava Polonski, 2022, "How to solve the gender bias problem in machine learning",
https://medium.com/@slavaxyz/how-to-solve-the-gender-bias-problem-in-machine-learning-artificial-
intelligence-google-8471bd75e80c

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RESET Toolbox for gender-neutral, diversity-oriented institutional communication

TOOL #1
- **PATHWAY** to gender-inclusive and diversity-oriented institutional communication

TOOL #2
- **CHECKLIST** on gender-inclusive and diversity-oriented visual communication

TOOL #3
- **RESPONSES TO RESISTANCES** – how to react to rejections of gender-inclusive communication

TOOL #4
- **TEMPLATE** of a questionnaire on institutional practices on gender-inclusive language

TOOL #5
- **TEMPLATE** of an interview-guideline on gender-inclusive language

TOOL #6
- **COMMENTED LINK COLLECTION** – useful guidelines and databases on diversity-oriented & gender-inclusive communication

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