

FICHA DE ACTIVIDAD

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TIEMPO	1 sesión
ÁREA	Socio - lingüística (inglés)
NIVEL	Bachillerato
DESARROLLO DE LA ACTIVIDAD	1.- Reading the text about language and sexism 2.- Debating about the use of inclusive language

British English/ADVANCED

ENGLISH

The LANGUAGE of INCLUSION

El inglés, como la mayoría de las lenguas, es sexista por naturaleza. Desde los años cincuenta, en el mundo anglosajón se empezaron a debatir y cambiar algunos términos para evitar el sexismo. Muchos de ellos han sido bien aceptados y asimilados en el lenguaje cotidiano, pero todavía hoy queda un largo camino por recorrer.

Sexual equality was enshrined in the law in Britain in 1975, but it was not until the 80s that some institutions started to eliminate sexist language from their documents.

English, like most languages, is androcentric, or sexist, in that it uses the word "man" to refer to both sexes. It would be hard to find a better example of the androcentric view than the award-winning TV series written and presented by Jacob Bronowski in 1973. Bronowski's subject was the rise of humanity, but he called it "The Ascent of Man." And yet English is ahead of other languages, for the movement to eliminate androcentric terminology has been going on at least since the time that Bronowski was broadcasting, and 1960s, when feminists started analysing gender bias³ in English. With women joining the workforce and entering the professions, people could no longer make assumptions⁴ about a doctor being a man, or a nurse being a woman. At first people started saying things like "lady doctor" and "male nurse" to make the situation clear, but these terms were often interpreted as somehow meaning "less than a real doctor or nurse."⁵ Sexual equality became enshrined⁶ in the law in Britain in 1975 with the passing of the Sex Discrimination Act. That was when it became illegal to advertise jobs as specifically for men or women. This immediately obliged personnel officers to use inclusive language, and they had to find alternative terms for many common words which were gender-specific (see box). Fortunately, the English language has a large enough vocabulary for alternatives to be found quite easily in most cases. At the same time, specifically feminine words (such as those with the -ess suffix – manageress, sculptress, authoress etc.) started to fall into disuse: nowadays, for example, female actors, or "actresses," usually refer to themselves as "actors."

GLOSSARY

- 1 in that - en cuanto
- 2 award-winning - premiado
- 3 gender bias - discriminación sexual
- 4 to make assumptions - dar por sentado
- 5 to enshrine - codificar
- 6 to countenance - aprobar, tolerar
- 7 Psalm - salmo

GENDER BIAS

The modern preoccupation with making the language more inclusive actually started in the 1950s

MEN ONLY

It wasn't until the 1980s that institutions such as universities and the Church started to eliminate sexist language from their documents. In 1988 Cambridge University decided to end the use of the masculine pronoun to denote



S. Lawless/T. Stone

members of both sexes in its Statutes and Ordinances. In the same year a Church of England commission suggested changes in the language of church services, replacing "mankind" with "the world," and "men" with "people," but they could not countenance replacing the male pronoun when referring to God.

GOOD GOD!

God didn't get the full treatment until 1995 when a new Inclusive Version of the New Testament and Psalms⁷ was published by Oxford University Press in the United States. In that version the Lord's prayer begins "Our Father-Mother in heaven," Jesus calls himself the "Human One," rather than the "Son of Man" and says, "All things have been handed over to me by

Terminology			
<i>Here are some examples of the old "androcentric" and the new "inclusive" terminology:</i>			
Old/androcentric	New/inclusive	Old/androcentric	New/inclusive
forefather	forebear, ancestor	headmaster/headmistress	head teacher
brethren	brothers and sisters/ sisters and brothers	air steward/air stewardess	flight attendant
manpower	personnel	policeman/policewoman	police officer
man-made	artificial	fireman	fire-fighter
mankind	humanity	housewife/househusband	home-maker
the rights of man	human rights/ citizens' rights	chairman/chairwoman	chair/chairperson
		spokesman/spokeswoman	spokesperson
the man in the street	the average person/ people in general/ the general public	salesman/saleswoman	salesperson
		waiter/waitress	server

my Father-Mother, and no one knows the Child (previously, Son) except the Father-Mother.' If some of these cases seem at all extreme to you, then consider the case of a woman in the USA whose name was Ellen Cooper-

man. She fought a year-long battle through the courts in New York state for the right to change her name to Cooperperson. And she won.

People tend to use sexist, even racist, terms without being aware of it.

Donald Watson