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# GENDER INEQUALITIES AND INCLUSION: A LINGUISTIC APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF HIDDEN DIFFERENCES IN CARE ECONOMY

A LINGUIST POINT OF VIEW – ISABELLA CHIARI



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# GENDER-FAIR LANGUAGE OR INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

TWO PERSPECTIVES: ONE BACKGROUND

# WHY LANGUAGE IS RELEVANT?

- The way we perceive women and men in society is partly grounded in the way we **SPEAK** or **WRITE** about these two groups. With language we **BUILD** representations.
- Cross-linguistic comparisons will remain useful for documenting the effect of language on thought (and on social constructs)
- Most cross-linguistic comparisons of grammatical gender effects on mental representations have documented interesting variations.



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**SPEAK UP** 

# GENDER AND SEX

- The **WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION** summarises the difference between sex and gender in the following way:
- **SEX** refers to “the different **biological and physiological** characteristics of males and females, such as reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones, etc.”
- **GENDER** refers to "the **socially** constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed.
  - The concept of gender includes five important elements: relational, hierarchical, historical, contextual and institutional. While most people are born either male or female, they are taught appropriate norms and behaviours – including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and work places. When individuals or groups do not “fit” established gender norms they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion – all of which adversely affect health
- And then we have **GRAMMATICAL GENDER**



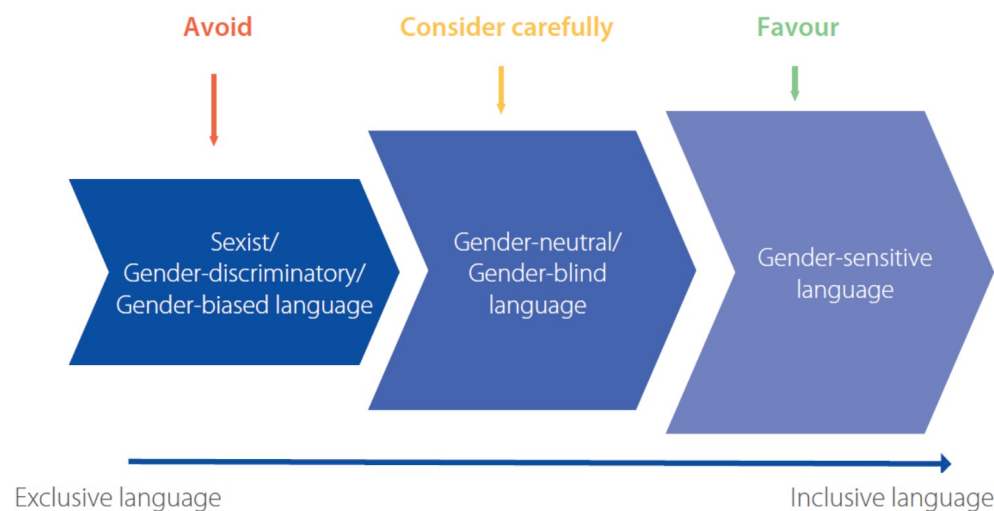
# TWO VIEWS OF THE ISSUE

## GENDER-FAIR LANGUAGE

- This approach reflects the assumption that language, here gender-fair language, is a tool to **influence** people's gendered perception of reality.
  - Countries with grammatical gender languages (e.g., French, German, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, Arabic,) suggest that they are perceived in a less gender-typed manner when they are described in gender-fair language, more specifically in pair forms.
  - Languages without grammatical gender (e.g. English, Turkish)

## INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

- The inclusive language approach is broader and includes issues such as: gender, disability, sexual orientation, race, age, diverse vulnerable groups.



# GENDER IN LANGUAGE

- Referring to *a woman and a man* or to *a man and a woman* is not perceived as being the same, and the resulting biased representations – toward the first person mentioned – have been well documented (Hegarty et al., 2016).
- There are some universal features such as the existence of **lexical gender words** (e.g., *woman, father, male, female*) or the possibility of combining lexical gender elements with other nouns (as in English *girlfriend, male teacher*).
- Most research on grammatical gender and gender representations has reflected the extent to which formal features of a language, such as the existence and number of grammatical gender categories (i.e., gender marking of pronouns, and/or nouns), may contribute to (biased) gender-related representations.
- In gendered (e.g., French, German) and semi-gendered languages (e.g., English, for which this feature only applies to pronouns), the masculine form tends to be used either *specifically* – referring exclusively to **men** – or in a so-called *generic way* – when there are **female and male referents**, or when the gender of referents is **unknown** or **irrelevant**. (Gygax et al. 2019)
  - Interestingly, the dual meaning of masculine forms is often grounded in **historical androcentric (and sexist) pressures**



# EFFECTS OF GRAMMATICAL GENDER AND LEXICON ON PERCEPTION

- “Recent studies from countries with **grammatical gender languages** (e.g., French) found both children and adults to more frequently think of female jobholders and to consider women’s success in male dominated occupations more likely when the jobs were described in pair forms (i.e., by explicit reference to male and female jobholders, e.g., *inventeuses* et *inventeurs*; French feminine and masculine plural forms for *inventors*), rather than masculine only forms (e.g., *inventors*).“Vervecken, et al. 2015.
- According to a recent typological sample, they occur in **40% of the world’s languages possess grammatical gender** distinctions (Corbett, 2013a). From those, **75% have a gender distinction based on sex**.
- This distinction is relevant for research of the way gender distinction affects our representation of women and men.



# 3 TYPES OF LANGUAGES : DIFFERENT CHALLENGES

## 1. Natural gender languages

- English
- personal nouns are mostly gender neutral and don't classify inanimate nouns according to different genders
  - Most personal nouns behave similarly, meaning that they are not specified for sex or gender identity (e.g. child, people, individual, person)
- there are personal pronouns specific to each gender
  - (e.g., my child – she, your teacher – he).

## 2. Grammatical gender languages

- German, Italian, Arabic
- every noun (human and inanimate) has a grammatical gender
  - It. figlio (m. son), figlia (m. daughter), sole (m. sun), luna (f. moon)
  - Ger. der Sohn (m) die Tochter (f), die Sonne (f) der Mond (m)
  - Ar. الابن (m) الابنة (f) - الشمس (f) القمر (m)
- the gender of personal pronouns usually matches the reference noun
- These nouns control agreement of various other lexical categories such as determiners, adjectives or pronouns.

## 3. Genderless languages

- Turkish
- most human nouns as well as pronouns are generally unspecified for gender
  - Tur. Öğretmen (teacher), kişi (person) güneş (sun), ay (moon)
  - O (he/she)
- The structure of these languages
- do not enforce the use of gender-marked forms, even though this information can be conveyed by lexical means, such as the Turkish erkek “man or male” or kız “girl.”







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# EXAMPLES FROM THE FAMILY DOMAIN

CARE ROLES, RECONCILIATION AND THE STEREOTYPES MODEL AND

# THE 'RECONCILIATION' STEREOTYPE

«Family and labour market changes have been dramatic and have presented modern welfare states with new social risks. Policy makers have tended to promote women's employment and to assume that care work will increasingly be commodified.» Lewis, 2006.

CARE GAP coiveived «reconciliation»

- work-family reconciliation arises from asymmetric gendered behaviour
  - Women have entered labour market more than man have entered household work: gender inequality



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**SPEAK UP** 

# GENDER-DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE

There are three broad categories under which much gender-discriminatory language falls:

- **STEREOTYPES**: assigning gender when gender is unknown or irrelevant as a result of stereotypes.
- **INVISIBILITY** and omission: language which casts the male as the generic norm and keeps women from being visible in public life.
- **SUBORDINATION AND TRIVIALISATION**: language which paints one gender, often women, as inferior, or belittles them.



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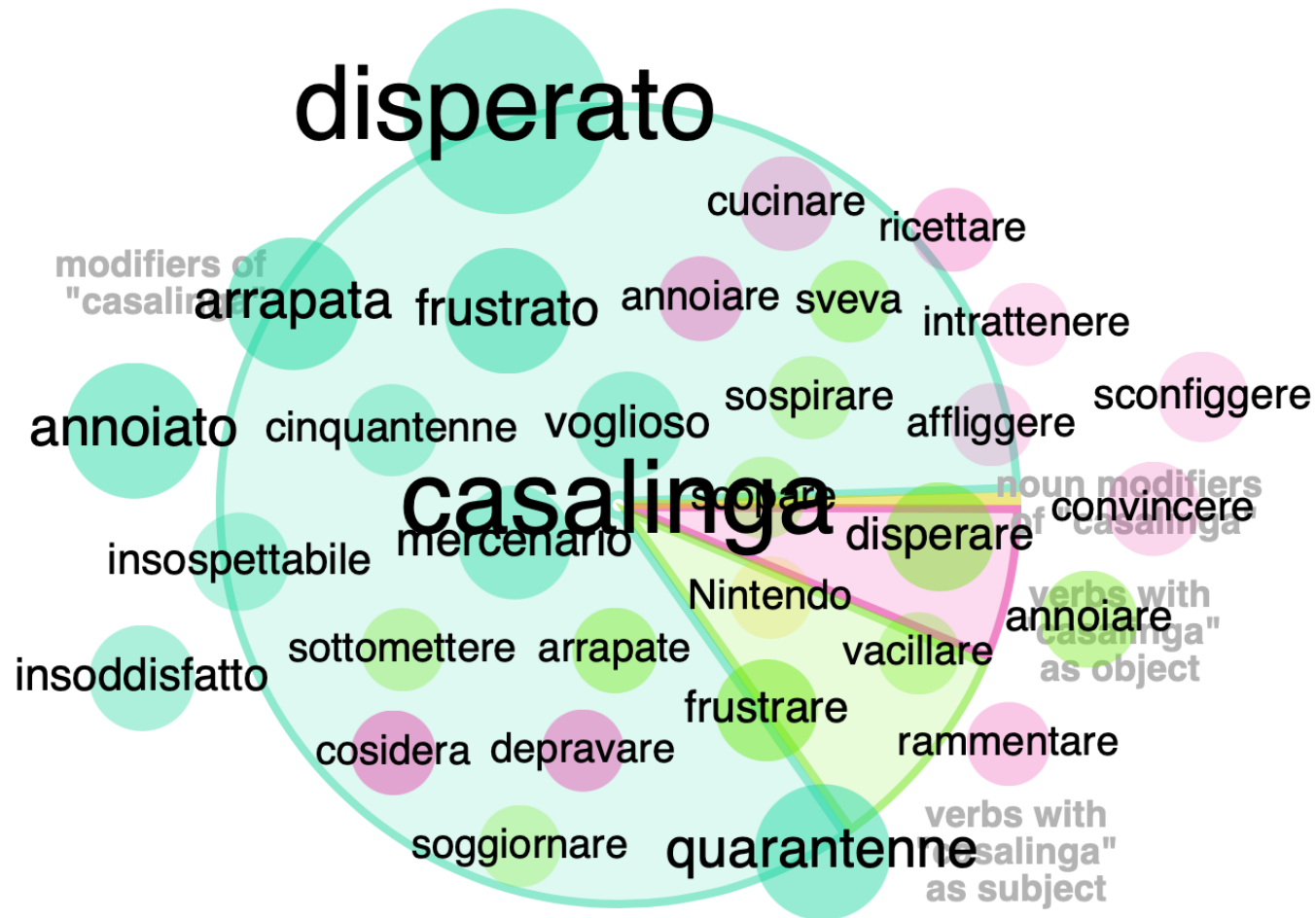
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**SPEAK UP** 

casalinga as noun 28,343x ...



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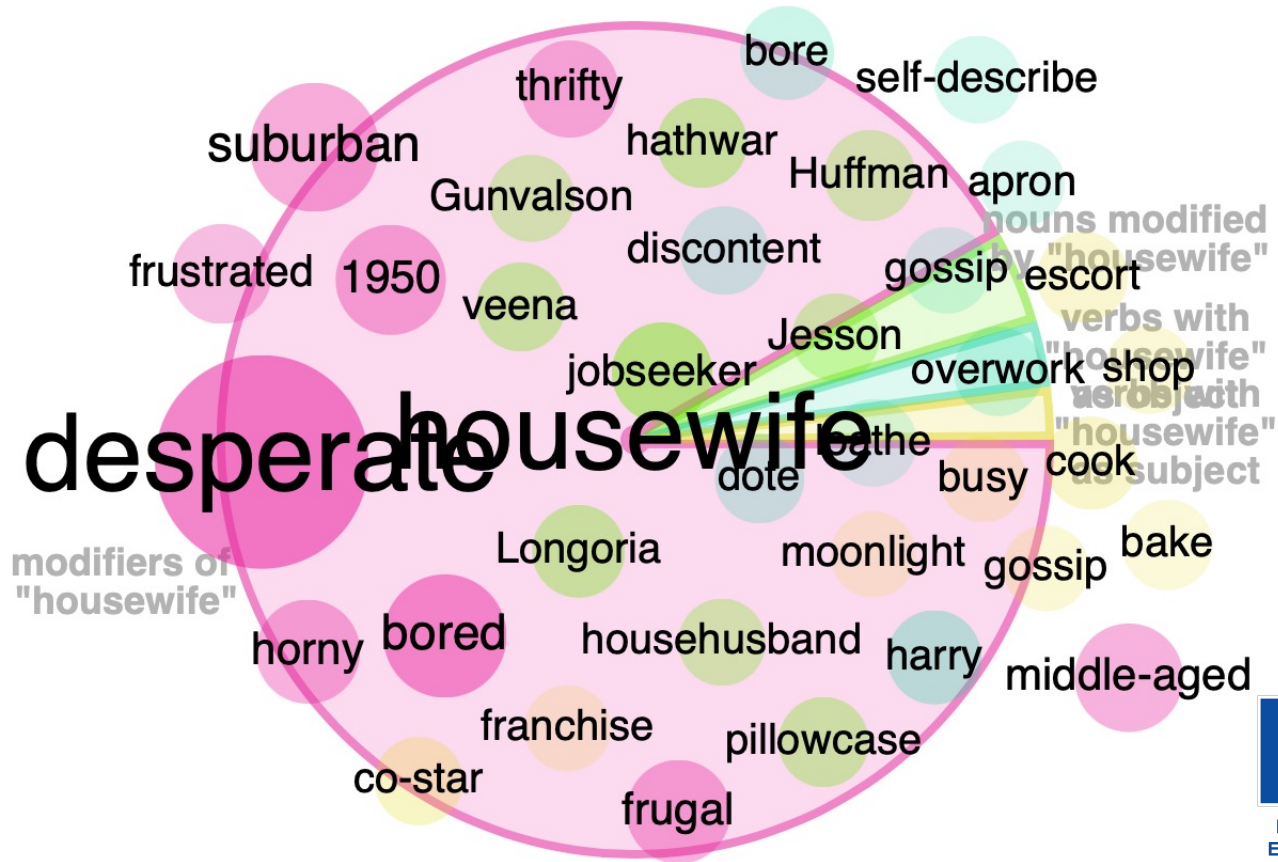


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housewife as noun 102,665x ...



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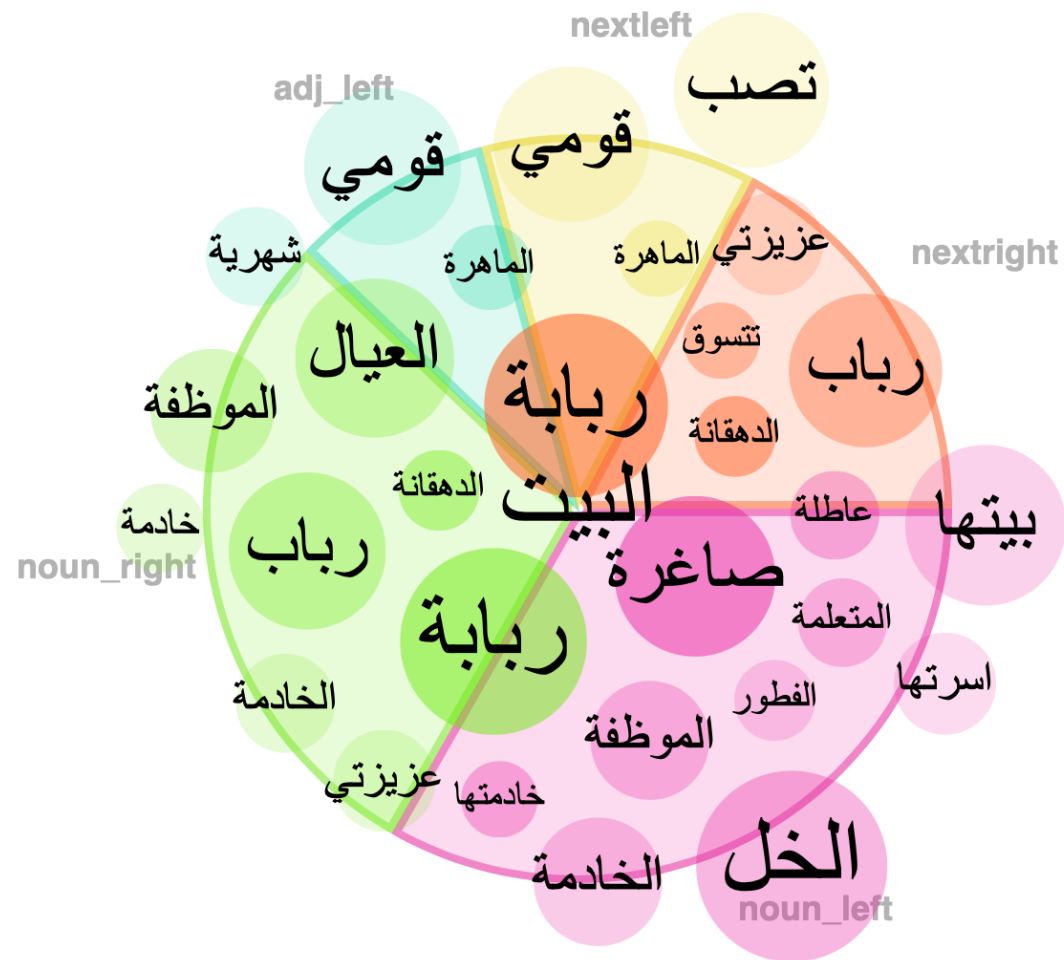
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3,899x ربة البيت ...

ر × > البيت



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SPEAK UP



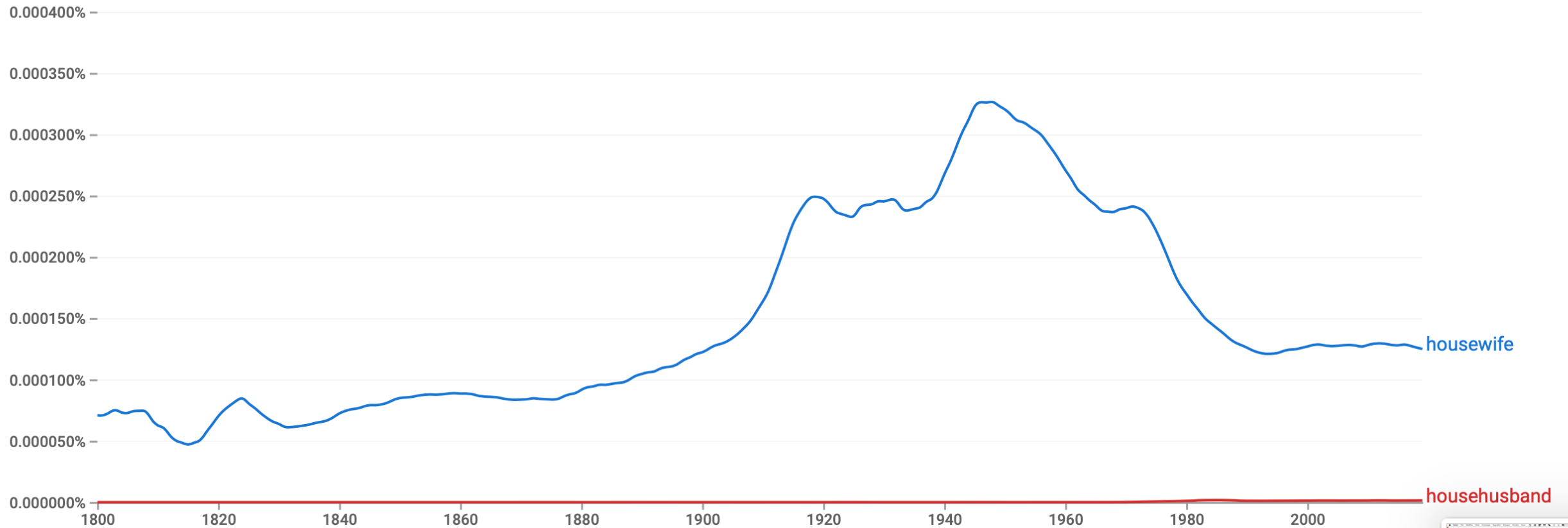
housewife,househusband

1800 - 2019

English (2019)

Case-Insensitive

Smoothing





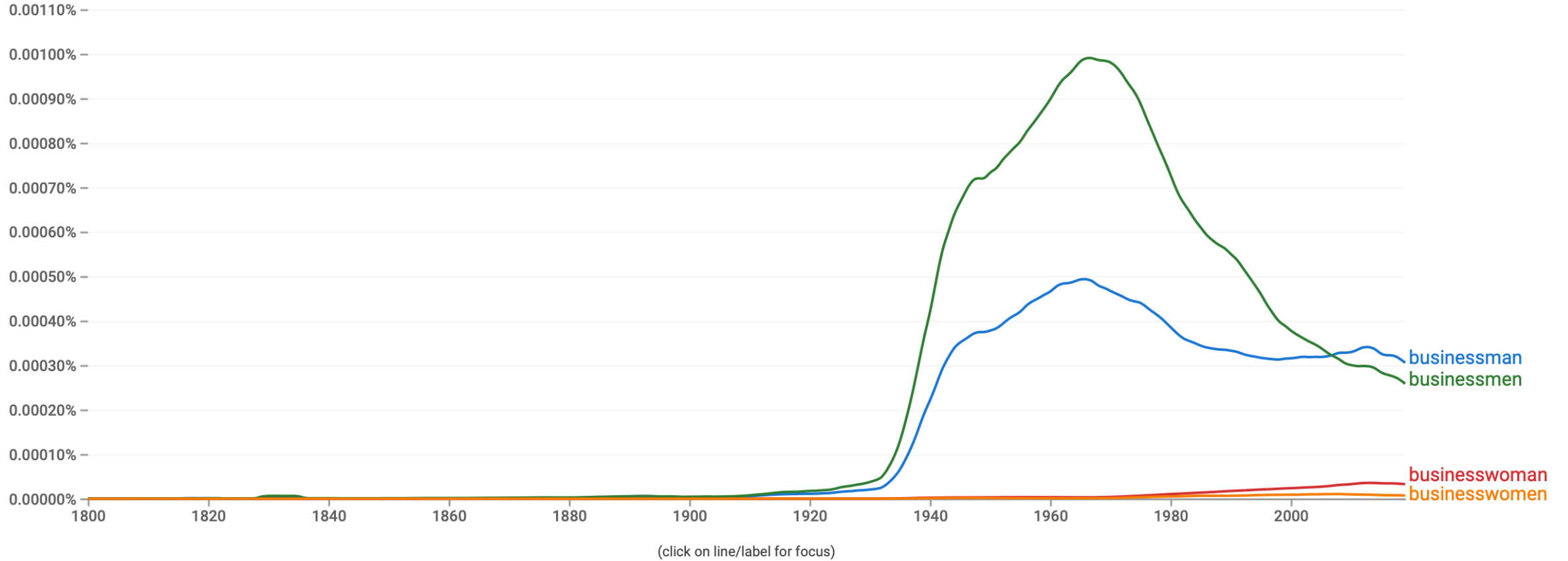
businessman,businesswoman,businessmen,businesswomen

1800 - 2019

English (2019)

Case-Insensitive

Smoothing



businesswoman 27,620x

6.0

4.0

2.0

0

-2.0

-4.0

-6.0

businessman 377,677x

heiress	39	8	6.2	0.9	...
socialite	95	82	7.7	4.3	...
businessman	453	202	6.7	4.6	...
philanthropist	367	3,076	7.8	9.1	...
entrepreneur	396	2,582	5.6	7.8	...
diplomat	30	837	3.3	6.9	...
politician	354	10,597	4.4	9.0	...
banker	22	1,793	2.7	8.0	...
tourist	0	1,000	—	6.9	...
industrialist	0	976	—	7.7	...



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# SOME PERSPECTIVES ON INTERVENTION

TECHNIQUES, PERCEPTION AND STEREOTYPING AND THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

# USING GENDER-FAIR OR INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

- Involves equally all member of the target audience (of any kind of communication)
- 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.
- Promotes values of inclusion and diversity
- Reduces stereotyping roles related to gender
- Remember there is **lexicon!**



# AND EUROPE

- In the multilingual environment of the European Parliament, the principles of gender neutrality in language and gender-inclusive language require the use of different strategies in the various official languages, depending on the grammatical typology of each language. (GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE in the European Parliament)

- <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-sensitive-communication/overview>



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# REWRITING EXERCISES

IN A GENDER FAIR PERSPECTIVE

# REVISE THE SENTENCES TO ELIMINATE THE BIAS.

1. A woman who possesses the necessary qualifications, nursing offers a life of unusual interest and usefulness. She will have limitless opportunities to improve herself and to help others.
2. Each laboratory assistant must perform the experiment at least once before he teaches it to the class.
3. The priest asked, "Are you ready to love and honor each other as man and wife for the rest of your lives?"
4. No matter how busy he is, a pilot should take the time to thank the stewardesses at the end of every flight.
5. My grandparents' days consist of waiting by the window for someone to come up the walk--whether friend, mailman or salesman.
6. The female lawyer conceded that her client was no Mother Teresa.
7. In some cases, if your insurance has been slow in paying and your doctor has his lab work done away from his office, you may receive a bill from a laboratory you have never heard of. If this happens, call your doctor's billing secretary and ask her to tell you exactly what the bill is for.
8. Though occasionally she may be called on to help others in the office, a secretary should take orders only from the manager she supports.
9. The beginning student should spend his time becoming familiar with primary rather than secondary texts, with classics rather than with books about classics.
10. The shift from animal and muscle power to machine power was a major achievement for man.





# SAMPLE ANSWERS

1. To those people who possess the necessary qualifications, nursing offers a life of unusual interest and usefulness. They will have limitless opportunities to improve themselves and to help others.
2. Each laboratory assistant must perform the experiment at least once before teaching it to the class.
3. The priest asked, "Are you ready to love and honor each other as husband and wife for the rest of your lives?"
4. No matter how busy the pilots are, they should take the time to thank the flight attendants at the end of every flight.
5. My grandparents' days consist of waiting by the window for someone to come up the walk--whether friend, mail carrier or salesperson.
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7. In some cases, if your insurance has been slow in paying and your doctor's lab work is done away from the office, you may receive a bill from a laboratory you have never heard of. If this happens, call your doctor's billing office and ask exactly what the bill is for.
8. Though occasionally they may be called on to help others in the office, secretaries [or assistants] should take orders only from the managers they support.
9. Beginning students should spend their time becoming familiar with primary rather than secondary texts, with classics rather than with books about classics.
10. The shift from animal and muscle power to machine power was a major achievement for humanity.

