

Women and Men, Equal or Different?
**Ejemplo de unidad didáctica con actividades basadas en el lenguaje
sexista.**

Josefina Pérez Rolán

1) Match the first part of the incomplete sentences in column A with the second part in column B, then compare your answers with a partner.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| A | B |
| a) One man's meat is. . . | 1) no man. |
| b) Time waits for . . . | 2) through his stomach. |
| c) The way to a man's heart is. . . | 3) another man's poison. |
| d) He that eats till he is sick. . . | 4) must fall till he is well. |
| e) You can judge a man. . . | 5) shall never be drowned. |
| f) Dead men. . . | 6) wit every day. |
| g) He that is born to be hanged. . . | 7) by the company he keeps. |
| h) A woman's place is. . . | 8) have no friends. |
| i) Hell has no fury. . . | 9) he lays his hat. |
| j) Home is where. . . | 10) like a woman scorned. |
| k) A man may learn. . . | in the home |

2. What do these proverbs and sayings have in common?

3. What is the general message?

4. Do we have the same proverbs in Spanish? How would you translate them?

5. Read the following opinions and fill in the second column according to whether you agree or disagree with them.

MARRIAGE	YES/ NO
For love?	
For convenience?	
A shotgun wedding?	
is a contract.	
The husband is the breadwinner.	
The husband will take care of his wife.	
The wife will obey the husband.	
Better to live together without being married	

6. Work with a partner and think of FIVE personal characteristics your spouse should have for a successful relationship.

- a).....
- b).....
- c).....
- d).....
- e).....

7. Read the following text and say if you think it is written by a man or a woman.

Marriage, by its very (traditional) definition, is a sexist affair: it involves one male and one female (I'm using 'sexist' denotatively—without the 'pig' attached to it). And I suppose this is because, traditionally, the purpose of marriage was family, was to have and raise children. Now of course this view is fraught with questionable assumptions, glaring inconsistencies, and blatant errors. I'll give one of each: the connection between having and raising children is not at all necessary—hence the 'one male and one female' is not at all necessary; if the purpose of marriage is family, why do couples who do not intend to have children nevertheless marry—and why don't couples (routinely) divorce once the children are raised?; the marriage contract goes well beyond family concerns—indeed, it barely approaches family concerns—one pledges to love, honour, and obey the other, not the children.

However, the very mistaken connection between marriage and family is not my concern here. Rather, I'd like to suggest another reason for the connection between marriage and sexism. Insofar as marriage involves love, it involves, for many, taking care of the other. As if the other needed taking of. As if the other were, perhaps, a child (or an invalid).

First, this presents a logical problem: if they're both looking after each other, well, how can a child look after—another child? (Rather makes marriages like the blind leading the blind.) (Not an entirely unapt analogy.) There has to be a difference, some sort of distinction. The distinction is, surprise, sex: the husband is the father, he looks after his wife with respect to the male domain—he fixes things for her, he tells her stuff; the wife is the mother, she looks after her husband with respect to the female domain—she feeds him, clothes him, reminds him.

This division also avoids a second problem: without it, they'd each feel, as they are, treated like a child. How does a wife feel when her husband lets her know what colours go together? How does a husband feel when his wife changes the spark plugs? Inadequate, insulted, put down. No doubt responding with an eight-year-old's "I know that!" or "I can do it!" The sexist

division of labour justifies ignorance and incompetence within a certain domain; it therefore allows people to remain children, without embarrassment, within a certain domain. And this enables the other to take care of them, in that domain, without offense. (I suspect, therefore, the more whole a person is, the less feminine or masculine, the worse they fare in a marriage. And if women tend to be more whole than men, well, that would explain why men need marriage more than women do—I'm thinking of happiness/suicide studies—aren't unmarried men the worst off?)

And of course I wonder, how do same sex couples look after each other? Do they all negotiate some sort of butch/femme split? Or—and wouldn't this be simpler, wouldn't it be healthier—does their concept of love between adults not entail, not require, such nurture?¹

8. Underline the words you don't understand and place them into one of the two column according to whether you think they are essential or non-essential for comprehension of the text.

Essential words	Non essential words

A. STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH UNFAMILIAR WORDS

If you pay attention to the form of the word sometimes you understand its meaning. For example through MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS. You can do this through analysing affixes, that is, **prefixes and suffixes**. Suffixes normally determine the grammatical class of a word, for example the suffix *-ian* and *-er* usually indicate that a word is a noun, and the suffix *-ed* may indicate that the word is a verb or an adjective.

¹ This text was taken from the web site: <http://tittle.humanists.net/marriage.htm>, 13 Ma. 2005.

Using this strategy for dealing with unfamiliar words, fill in the first three columns of the vocabulary chart with words that are essential for comprehension. Then check in the dictionary to see if your guesses are correct.

Prefix	Unknown word	suffix	Word class	Right	wrong
	happiness	-ness	noun	right	

B. SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS.

Does your knowledge of grammar help you to check if your guess was right?
If you think that a word is a noun, is it preceded by an article?
If it is an adjective, is it next to a noun?
If it is a verb, is it accompanied by a subject?

C. CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

Which of the unfamiliar words are similar to words in your language?
Do you think they mean the same in English as they do in your language?

D. TRUE OR FALSE

Say whether these statements are T (true) or F (false). Be sure to note down where you found the answer in the text.

1. The author has a high opinion of marriage.
2. According to the author, marriage is a sexist affair because traditionally, the purpose of marriage was to have and raise children.
3. The marriage contract is limited to family concerns.
4. Marriage implies an unfair relation of submission.

E. Work with a partner and a dictionary to answer the following questions:

- a) What does the **butch/femme split** refer to?
- b) Sex-role stereotyping is assuming that certain traits, ways of behaving, interacting with others, working, etc., are 'naturally' associated with each sex. It is seen as inappropriate for one sex to act in a manner associated with the other sex. The following expressions are based on sex-role stereotyping, look them up and try to rewrite the sentences using neutral language:

She's a tomboy

He's a sissy

F. Sex-linked adjectives, e.g. feminine, masculine, manly, womanly, also arise from stereotyped notions about male traits (e.g. strength, assertion, aggression) and female traits (e.g. passivity, gentleness, concern).

♣ Here is a list of adjectives which describe physical aspects and character:

Pretty	Fat
Beautiful	Plump
Handsome	Thin
Good-looking	Slim
Average-build/Medium build	Shy
Tall	Romantic
Short	Talkative
Strong	Aggressive
Weak	Submissive
Quiet	Sensitive
Modest	Grumpy
Self-confident	cheerful
Vulnerable	

♀♂ Do you think the choice of the adjective varies whether you are a man or a woman? If so, make two columns according to whether they are usually applied to a man or a woman.

MAN	WOMAN

► **Can these words be divided into positive and negative?**

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE

G. DISCUSS WITH YOUR PARTNER.

- Which conclusions can you draw from each section?
- Can you think of similar equivalents in Spanish?

FALSE GENERICS

9. Look at these sentences which all contain words connected with MAN. Can you think of a less “man-centred” way of expressing the same idea? Talk to your partner and try to do this exercise without using your dictionaries.

- That’s a giant leap for **MANKIND**.
- Sometimes **MAN’S ACHIEVEMENTS** go wrong.
- The **COMMON MAN** is as apt a subject for tragedy in its highest sense as kings were.

The company lost two thousand **MAN-HOURS** because of strikes

NEW WORD FORMATION

10. As we can see language is sexist but something is being done to put an end to it, Can you guess which are the new terms for the following jobs? (you are given the answers, match them with the correct definitions)

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Fireman | a) Homemaker |
| 2. Policeman/woman | b) Fire-fighter |
| 3. Postman | c) Police officer |
| 4. Salesman | d) Cleaner/cleaning staff |
| 5. Housewife | e) Maintenance staff |
| 6. Cleaning woman/women | f) Congressional representative |
| 7. Maintenance men | g) Salesperson, sales staff |
| 8. Congressman | h) Mail carrier |

- **Is there anything peculiar about the formation of these words?**
- **How are they formed?**

OCCUPATIONAL SUFFIXES

11. Contrary to suffixes such as –ess, or –er, which indicate gender (for example actress, actor) there are other suffixes which are not indicative of any particular gender. Bearing this in mind could you say the names of the people who are involved in the following activities?

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| Psychology..... | Violin..... |
| Science..... | Magic..... |
| Maths..... | Physics..... |
| Music..... | Politics..... |

♠ **We need to make a conscious decision to try to eliminate offensive and derogatory language and to make our language inclusive of all people. Here's a reference guide to avoid sexist language:**

INSTEAD OF...	YOU COULD USE...
a male secretary	a secretary
a woman professor, doctor	a professor, doctor
barman, barmaid	bar person, bar staff
businessman	executive, business executive

chairman	chairperson, chair, facilitator, convenor, co-ordinator
clergyman	clergy, members of the clergy
craftsman	craftsperson, artisan
delivery man	deliverer, delivery clerk, courier
draughtsman	draughter
fireman	fire-fighter
fisherman, fishermen	fisher, fishing people
foreman	foreperson
founding fathers	founders, ancestors
gentleman's agreement	unwritten agreement, agreement based on trust
housewife, househusband	homemaker
lady	woman
laymen	lay people, laity
man, to (the office, stand, etc.)	to staff, work, serve at (on), operate, attend, direct
man of letters	writer, intellectual, scholar, author
man of science	scientist, biologist, chemist, etc.
man on the street, ordinary man	ordinary person, average person, people in general

♀♂ **FINAL TASK: Complete the leaflet using non-sexist alternatives**

man-day	
man-hour	
mankind	
manmade	
manning levels	
manpower	
Miss, Mrs	
one-man (operation, show)	
maintenance man	
spokesman	
stone age man	
the girls in the office	
tradesman	
workman	
workmanship	