



The World of Languages
and Languages of the World

Nouns and Gender

Today, let's talk about gender in language.

Why this lesson?

- We can see that some languages give nouns (words for things) a gender.
- We can explore how important this is and how it changes the way we think about things.
- We can spot masculine and feminine nouns by looking for patterns.



How can we categori se nouns?

Can you think of any way we could create groups of nouns?

Talk about this with your partner



We can group nouns by...

countable v
uncountabl
e

bottle v
water

Or we could group nouns by...

animate (alive /
able to move) v
inanimate (not
living / able to
move)

Click to add text

dog v collar

Or we could group nouns by gender...

- masculine v feminine v neuter
- Consider German ...
- pen (*der Kuli masculine*) v school (*die Schule feminine*) v exercise book (*das Heft neuter*)

Grammatical Gender

- In English nouns have no grammatical gender.
- Some languages have masculine and feminine nouns. This has nothing to do with if something is male or female - an object, like a table or chair, can't be male or female! It's the *word* that carries the gender.
- Some languages have three genders: masculine, feminine or neuter.
- It's quite tricky for English speakers to understand this.
- When you learn a language, you have to learn the noun and the gender of the noun.

Natural Gender in Words

- Some words are masculine or feminine depending on the biological sex of the person in question. In English, for example, we have a waiter and a waitress.
- What problems might there be with this?

Draw a quick
sketches of
people doing
the following
jobs ...

firefighter



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graph TD; A[firefighter] --> B[architect]; B --> C[paleontologist]; C --> D[train driver]; D --> E[doctor]
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architect

paleontologist

train driver

doctor



•Did you mostly draw men for these jobs? Don't worry! You're not on your own - check out this video from "Redraw the Balance".



[A Class That Turned Around Kids' Assuptions of Gender Roles! - YouTube](#)



Would your drawings have been the same in a language like Spanish where we specify the gender of the person doing the job?

- firefighter - *bombero v bombera*
- architect - *arquitecto v arquitecta*
- paleontologist - *paleontólogo v paleontóloga*
- train driver - *conductor de tren v conductora de tren*
- doctor - *médico v médica*

Can you spot how Spanish shows if the job is done by a man or a woman?

In Romance Languages there is often a pattern found in gender.

In the table the different words for “garden” are all masculine (**green**) and the words for “kitchen”, “door” and “house” are all feminine (**yellow**).

Do you think this affects the way that French, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian people view these objects?

	French	Spanish	Portuguese	Italian
GARDEN	jardin	jardín	jardim	giardino
KITCHEN	cuisine	cocina	cozinha	cucina
DOOR	porte	puerta	porta	porta
HOUSE	maison	casa	casa	casa

When we look up nouns in “gendered languages”, it is important to note the gender as well as the word. Use www.wordreference.com to fill out this table. Then use a colour code to show the gender: green for masculine and yellow for feminine.

	French	Spanish	Portuguese	Italian	Catalan	Romanian
knife	couteau			coltello	ganivet	cutit
fork		tenedor	garfo	forchetta		furculiță
spoon	cuillère	cuchara	colher		cullera	

How did you do?

- Choose your favourite word for each item and justify your choice.
- Can you see any patterns?
- Do you think that the Portuguese see knives differently and Italians see spoons differently to their fellow speakers of Romance languages?

	French	Spanish	Portuguese	Italian	Catalan	Romanian
knife	couteau	cuchillo	faca	coltello	ganivet	cutit
fork	fourchette	tenedor	garfo	forchetta	forquilla	furculiță
spoon	cuillère	cuchara	colher	cucchiaio	cuchara	lingură

These 2 paragraphs in Spanish about this Picasso Painting mean the same but look different. Can you spot the 6 differences and suggest why they're different?

El cuadro famoso se llama "La mujer que llora". Picasso lo compuso en 1937. Me gusta mucho porque es curioso y distinto. ¿Qué piensas de él?

La pintura famosa se llama "La mujer que llora". Picasso la compuso en 1937. Me gusta mucho porque es curiosa y distinta. ¿Qué piensas de ella?



Did you find all six?

El cuadro famoso se llama “La mujer que llora”. Picasso lo compuso en 1937. Me gusta mucho porque es curioso y distinto. ¿Qué piensas de él?

La pintura famosa se llama “La mujer que llora”. Picasso la compuso en 1937. Me gusta mucho porque es curiosa y distinta. ¿Qué piensas de ella?



A final
thought...



Ιπποπόταμος
WoLLoW the HiPPo

What do you think of gendered
languages? Does it make things easier
or harder?