

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 uncountable

bottle v water

Or we could group nouns by...

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

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 the 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 ...











•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' Assumptions 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 | <u>cuisine</u> | <mark>cocina</mark> | cozinha | <mark>cucina</mark> |
| DOOR | porte | <mark>puerta</mark> | porta | porta |
| HOUSE | <mark>maison</mark> | casa | <mark>casa</mark> | 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 | <mark>cutit</mark> |
| fork | | tenedor | <mark>garfo</mark> | forchetta | | <mark>furculiță</mark> |
| spoon | <mark>cuillère</mark> | <mark>cuchara</mark> | <mark>colher</mark> | | <mark>cullera</mark> | |

How did you do?

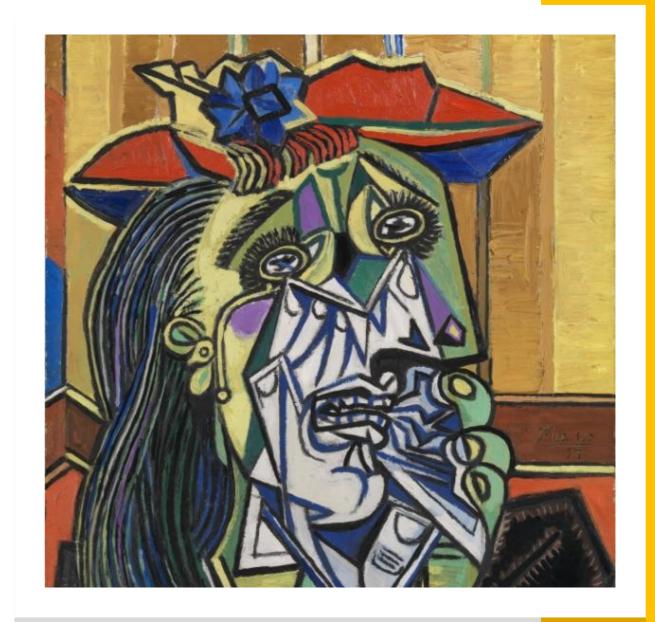
- •Choose your favourite word for each item and justify your choice.
- •Can you see any patterns?
- •Do you think that the Portuguese see knives differently and Italians see spoons differently to their fellow speakers of Romance languages?

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

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?

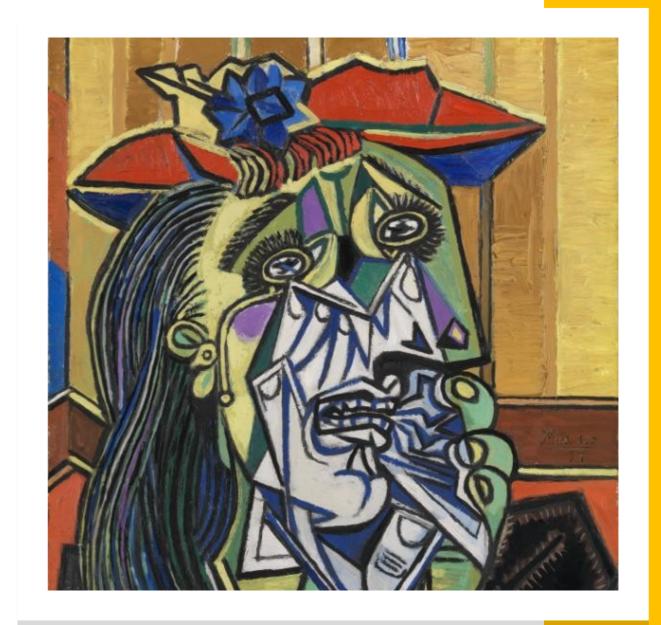
La pintura famosa se llama "La mujer que llora". Picasso la compuso en 1937. Me gusta mucho porque es curiosa y distinta. ¿Qué piensas de ella?



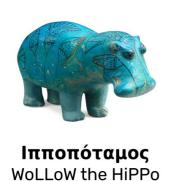
Did you find all six?

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A final thought...



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