

On Sexist Attitudes in English

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Abstract. This paper deals with a few aspects of the English language, which are conducive to forming negative and discriminatory attitudes towards women. The authors believe that language, culture and the development of society are closely interrelated. Language may reflect and shape society by embodying and disseminating relations of power. Dominant groups within cultures have created biases in language that disparage and belittle certain groups within society, one of the groups being women. This in-built discrimination can be obvious, as seen in the so-called pairs of words *buddy / sissy*, *callboy / callgirl*, where the female words acquire a clearly negative meaning, or in food, plant and bird metaphors, where women are treated as decorative and delicious objects or silly creatures. It may also be more subtly disguised, as illustrated by the generalized use of the nouns *man* and *mankind* or the pronouns *he* or *his*. The use of masculine pronouns for people in general is an example of a linguistic mechanism that operates to keep women invisible or secondary in status to men.

Changes occurring within and beyond the language are discussed. Thus, due to women's rights advocates significant steps have been taken towards creating consensus against sexist language. More and more conscientious speakers of English try to use gender-free language.