

**Gender bias in linguistics textbooks:  
Has anything changed since Macaulay & Brice (1997)?**  
Paola Cepeda<sup>a</sup>, Hadas Kotek<sup>b</sup>, Katharina Pabst<sup>c</sup>, and Kristen Syrett<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Stony Brook University

[paola.cepeda@stonybrook.edu](mailto:paola.cepeda@stonybrook.edu)

<sup>b</sup> Massachusetts Institute of Technology

[hkotek@mit.edu](mailto:hkotek@mit.edu)

<sup>c</sup> University of Toronto

[katharina.pabst@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:katharina.pabst@mail.utoronto.ca)

<sup>d</sup> Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey – New Brunswick

[kristen.syrett@rutgers.edu](mailto:kristen.syrett@rutgers.edu)

**Gender bias in linguistics textbooks:  
Has anything changed since Macaulay & Brice (1997)?**

**ABSTRACT**

Macaulay & Brice (1997:798) surveyed example sentences in eleven syntax textbooks published between 1969–1994 and found that virtually all of the authors ‘favor male-gendered NPs as subjects and agents, and regularly stereotype both genders’. In this paper, we address the question of whether constructed example sentences in more recent textbooks show similar gender bias. We present an analysis of six syntax textbooks published between 2005–2017, from which we randomly sampled 200 example sentences each. We find that the gender skew and stereotypes reported in 1997 are still present today. Male-gendered arguments are almost twice as frequent as female-gendered ones, and more likely to occur as subjects and agents. In addition, example sentences often perpetuate gender stereotypes. We discuss some broader implications and potential interventions to prevent the implicit perpetuation of gender biases in linguistic materials.\*

**Keywords:** gender representation; implicit bias; stereotypes; linguistic textbooks; syntax

---

\* For comments and questions on this work, we would like to thank audiences at the LSA 2018 Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, as well as at Brandeis University, MIT, SOAS, the University of Connecticut, the University of Oregon, the University of Toronto, and Yale University. We would additionally like to thank our anonymous *Language* reviewers and the editors Andries Coetzee and Natasha Warner for their careful feedback on the manuscript. We thank and acknowledge our colleagues Katharine Donelson and Miranda McCarvel, who participated in the early data collection and ideation portions of this work. Special thanks go out to Colleen Brice and especially to Monica Macaulay for her continuous support of this project and her invaluable comments on various stages of the manuscript and work. Finally, we thank COSWL/COGEL for its many years of solidarity and advocacy for gender equity in the field of linguistics.

**1. INTRODUCTION.** Textbooks are tools for the dissemination of knowledge and, at the same time, for the socialization of learners and new trainees in a field (Brugeilles & Cromer 2008; Mustapha & Mills 2015). As such, they are considered authoritative not only in terms of discipline-specific content, but also with respect to the transmission of dominant values, norms, and social behavior. Trainees use the assigned textbooks repeatedly during a course; therefore, it is natural to assume that they are influenced by them.

In linguistics, constructed example sentences are essential instruments in teaching and in the representation of both the data for linguistic analysis and the source of evidence for the hypothesis and theories. This is particularly true of syntax, which relies more heavily on constructed example sentences than other fields. Macaulay & Brice (1997; henceforth, M&B) tested the hypothesis that the use of gender-neutral names such as *Alex*, *Bobby*, *Chris*, and *Dana* in syntax textbooks' example sentences, as advocated for by the then-recently published *LSA Guidelines for Nonsexist Usage* (1996), may suggest that such examples do not exhibit gender bias. After analyzing example sentences from eleven then-current syntax textbooks, M&B concluded that 'the majority of constructed example sentences in syntax textbooks are biased toward male-gendered NPs, and [...] contain highly stereotyped representations of both genders' (p. 822).<sup>1</sup>

In this paper, we study recently published syntax textbooks to test whether the problem of gender bias has been rectified in the twenty plus years since M&B's groundbreaking work. Our results indicate that the majority of problems identified by M&B in 1997 still plague the field of syntax and, by extension, the field of linguistics today. In short, we find that male-gendered arguments are overrepresented in linguistic examples and are presented in a more positive light compared to female arguments. In this paper, our goal is to draw linguists' attention to this widespread problem, which affects everyone who is engaged in teaching or research involving example sentences—a large proportion of the field—and to suggest some preliminary steps toward a solution. In what follows, we begin by first presenting the main results of M&B. We then present our current study and its results, and conclude by discussing broader implications for linguists and educators.

**2. PRELIMINARIES.** M&B. M&B presented two reports: a careful study of a single textbook, first published in Macaulay & Brice (1994), and a comparative study of ten additional textbooks,

whose goal is to ascertain whether the gender imbalance found in the first study generalizes across other textbooks. We concentrate here on the latter study, whose design and results inspired our own study, which we present in Section 3.

M&B studied ten syntax textbooks published between 1969 and 1994. Seven textbooks were written by masculine-presenting authors (based on names and gender presentation, assessed by the authors), and three by feminine-presenting authors. 200 example sentences were randomly sampled from each textbook, and coded for the following factors in 1.

- (1) M&B's coding
  - a. Gender of the argument (male, female, other)
  - b. Grammatical function (subject, direct object, indirect object, oblique)
  - c. Theta roles (agent, patient, experiencer, recipient, etc.)
  - d. Lexical choices (pronouns, proper names, violence, appearance, etc.)

Here we summarize some of the main findings. We refer the reader to M&B for a more comprehensive discussion, and for example sentences illustrating each one of the findings below.

In short, M&B find that example sentences introduce male-gendered protagonists at higher rates than female-gendered ones and that they perpetuate gender biases, as summarized in 2. When women are overrepresented in example sentences, this, too, is done in a way that perpetuates stereotypes, as in 3.

- (2) Male-gendered arguments in M&B<sup>2</sup>
  - a. Male-gendered arguments appear more often than female-gendered arguments.
  - b. Male-gendered arguments are more likely to be subjects and agents than female-gendered arguments.
  - c. Male pronouns are mentioned more often than female ones.
  - d. Male proper names are mentioned more often than female ones.
  - e. Men are described as intelligent or engaged in intellectual activities, such as book reading/handling, more often than women.
  - f. Men are described as having occupations more often than women, and in a wide range of occupations.
  - g. Men tinker with cars more often than women.
  - h. Men perpetrate violence more often than women.
- (3) Female-gendered arguments in M&B

- a. Women often lack proper names, and are referred to with kinship terms (*X's wife, mother*) more often than men are.
- b. Women have their appearance described more often than men.

These findings are illustrated below in 4 with selected examples from M&B:

- (4) Selected examples from M&B<sup>3</sup>
- a. *Every painting of Maja and photograph of Debbie pleased Ben.* (p. 803)
  - b. *Harry watches the fights and his wife the soap operas.* (p. 807)
  - c. *Bill is proud of his father and tired of his mother.* (p. 807)
  - d. *The man is hitting the woman with a stick.* (p. 812)
  - e. *The man who shot her believed there was someone else who was seeing Helen.* (p. 812)

In addition, the syntax textbooks studied by M&B commonly used example sentences that contained explicit and suggestive language, as in 5.

- (5) Explicit and suggestive language in example sentences from M&B
- a. *After Rambo as a lover, she was exhausted.* (p. 813)
  - b. *She's fond of John naked.* (p. 813)
  - c. *She'll soon tire of her sexploits.* (p. 813)
  - d. *John's turned on by Mary in tight trousers.* (p. 813)
  - e. *John doesn't beat his wife because he loves her.* (p. 814)
  - f. *John forced Mary to be kissed by Bill.* (p. 814)
  - g. *I can't imagine you in kinky boots.* (p. 815)
  - h. *What a nice pear Mary's got!* (p. 815)

Finally, the gender of the textbook author played an important role: masculine-presenting authors were on average much more likely to use biased examples, whereas feminine-presenting authors tended toward a more balanced sample.<sup>4</sup> M&B conclude that their 'results clearly illustrate the need for such scrutiny: females are simply not significant actors in the world constructed in most corpora of example sentences' (p. 816).

**3. GENDER BIAS IN CURRENT SYNTAX TEXTBOOKS.** The study we present in this paper is designed to test what has changed in the twenty plus years since M&B. We selected six syntax textbooks

published between the years 2005 and 2017. Three of the textbooks were written by masculine-presenting authors or author teams, and three by feminine-presenting ones.

To foreshadow, the main findings of our study are presented in 6, which we illustrate in detail in this section.

- (6) Main findings of the present study, based on example sentences found
- a. Male-gendered arguments are almost twice as frequent as female-gendered ones. Even accounting for this skew, the following patterns hold.
  - b. Male-gendered arguments are more likely to appear as subjects, while female-gendered arguments are more likely to appear as direct and indirect objects.
  - c. Male-gendered arguments are more likely to appear as agents and experiencers, while female-gendered ones are more likely to appear as patients and recipients.
  - d. Male subject pronouns are used more frequently than female ones.
  - e. Men are more likely to have occupations and to handle books.
  - f. Men are more likely to perpetrate violence and their violence tends to be more severe.
  - g. Women are more likely to exhibit negative emotions.

Following Macaulay & Brice (1994, 1997), we decided not to disclose the names of the textbooks or their authors in this study, because our goal is not to single out individuals or textbooks, but to draw attention to a pervasive and systematic problem in linguistics and related fields.<sup>5</sup> For further evidence of the pervasiveness of this issue, please see Bergvall (1996); Lee & Collins (2010); Lee (2014), Lewandowski (2014); Tarrayo (2014); Cépeda (2018); Richy & Burnett (2020); Kotek et al. (2021); inter alia.

Before introducing our analysis, we would like to make clear two things. First, while our focus is on tracking surface-level arguments as they appear in linguistic examples, and how male and female arguments compare in their appearance and usage, we take the trends we document to be correlated with the individuals and populations to whom these pronouns and proper names refer. Thus, to the extent that we make any statements about male and female arguments, these statements can, in many ways, be taken as a proxy for statements about men and women. These points bring us to a second issue we wish to address head on.

Second, we recognize that gender is not binary, and that equating proper names as well as the pronouns *he* and *she* with specific gender identities is a problematic simplification. Given that most of the examples in M&B's original sample and the data we analyze here are

constructed and, therefore, do not refer to actual individuals, and the fact that we believe that this is the assumption made by the authors of the textbooks we study, we follow M&B in interpreting *he* as referring to (cis and trans) men and *she* as referring to (cis and trans) women. However, we acknowledge that these constructed example sentences do not reflect the full spectrum of possible pronouns and gender identities (for a discussion on the conceptual representation of gender, see Ackerman 2019). Similarly, in our own study, we coded proper names as male or female based on our subjective representations of their referents. We acknowledge that this may not necessarily match the identities of those who carry these proper names in real life.

Unfortunately, none of the textbooks we examined nor any others that we are aware of challenge the stereotypical uses of proper names. Likewise, none discuss pronoun use—or language use more generally—in gender diverse communities. This in itself is a problem that deserves our attention. In Section 4, we offer suggestions for authors and instructors to integrate some of the existing work in this area into their instructional materials.

**3.1. METHODS AND DESIGN.** We randomly sampled 200 examples from each textbook, for a total of 1,200 examples. The resulting sample contained a total of 2,697 third-person arguments. Each argument was coded for gender, falling into one of five distinct categories in 7.

- (7) Gender categories in the present study
- a. Male (e.g., *John, the king, he*)
  - b. Female (e.g., *Mary, the queen, she*)
  - c. Both (e.g., *John and Mary*)
  - d. Ambiguous (e.g., *Alex, the janitor*)
  - e. Other (e.g., *the building*)

Gender-neutral NPs like *the professor* were coded as ambiguous unless they were co-indexed with the pronouns *he* or *she*. Likewise, gender-neutral or ambiguous names were only coded as male or female if they co-occurred with a pronoun that identified their gender in the example.

Names were coded independently by two authors, to ensure agreement. This was especially important for names that were potentially ambiguous (e.g., Kim or Jan). Only upon agreement, names were gendered as included in this sample. A potentially ambiguous name was coded as male or female if it co-occurred with a pronoun or other gender-specific description (e.g., *wife*), or if it triggered gender agreement (in relevant languages) in the same example or in



an immediately surrounding example where it was clear that the same protagonist was being described.

Out of the 2,697 third-person argument sample, 833 (30.9%) were coded as male and 429 (15.9%) as female, making male arguments almost twice as common as female arguments. Conjoined NPs like *John and Mary* represent 0.4% of the sample, ambiguous arguments 15.1%, and other arguments 37.7%. See Figure 1. Given that we are particularly interested in gendered arguments, the rest of the discussion focuses on the 1,262 arguments that were coded as male or female.

<INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE>

All arguments were coded for the factors listed in 8, inspired by M&B's coding.

- (8) Coding in the present study
- a. Gender of the argument (male, female, both, ambiguous, other)
  - b. Grammatical function (subject, direct object, indirect object/oblique)
  - c. Theta roles (agent, patient, experiencer, recipient, etc.)
  - d. Type of activity portrayed in the sentence (physical, emotional, intellectual, etc.)
  - e. Lexical choices (pronouns, proper names, reading and writing, occupations, cars, etc.)

We additionally coded one factor that was not considered in M&B, the language of the example, with results as shown in Table 1.

<INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE>

A chi-square test of independence showed that there is no significant association between language of the example and argument gender:  $X^2(1, N=1,262) = 0.9707, p = .32$ . Therefore, in the remainder of this section, we present combined results that are not broken down by language.

**3.2. RESULTS.** We begin by examining the overall distribution of gendered arguments in each individual book. We then discuss the results for the first two factors of interest in 8a-b (grammatical function and theta roles). We then turn to the results relating to lexical choices in

the examples. This analysis includes pronouns and proper names, the type of activity portrayed in the sentence, and other lexical choices.

OVERALL DISTRIBUTION OF GENDERED ARGUMENTS. We observe a large overall imbalance between female-gendered arguments (N=429) and male-gendered arguments (N=833) in our sample, such that male-gendered arguments are almost twice as prevalent in example sentences as female-gendered ones. As Figure 2 shows, this imbalance is present in all of the books: male-gendered arguments are more frequent than female-gendered arguments in each and every book we examined.

<INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE>

One finding that stood out is that there was a single female author who, for English examples only, used a higher rate of female-gendered than male-gendered arguments. We speculate that this author was aware of gender in her deliberate choice of example sentences, but in the case of non-English examples, she was forced to use existing examples from the literature, and those caused the overall skew.

To account for the fact that male-gendered arguments are overrepresented in our sample, in the rest of this section we show the proportions and counts of the factor of interest (grammatical function, theta role, proper names, etc.) by gender. This will allow us to observe trends that go beyond this general skew and could be attributed to these other factors of interest.

DISTRIBUTION OF GRAMMATICAL FUNCTION AND THETA ROLE BY GENDER. We next consider the distribution of the arguments' grammatical function by gender, illustrated in Figure 3. We find that 82.2% of male-gendered arguments occur in subject position, as in 9a, while only 72.3% of all female-gendered arguments occur in subject position. We observe the opposite trend for the non-subject grammatical functions, as in 9b-d, where female-gendered arguments are proportionally overrepresented in all three categories. Of all female-gendered arguments, direct objects represent 18.2%, indirect objects 7.2%, and obliques, 2.3%. This contrast with the distribution within male-gendered arguments, with direct objects making up 13.0%, indirect objects 3.6%, and obliques 1.2% of all male-gendered arguments.

- (9) Coding for grammatical function
- a. subject: **He** heard John.
  - b. direct object: I like **her**.
  - c. indirect object: Kim passed the ball to **Lee**.
  - d. oblique: John loaded the truck with **hay**.

<INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE>

We ran a logistic mixed effects model using the lme4 package (Bates et al. 2015) in R (R Core Team 2020), predicting **gender** (male or female) from **grammatical function** (subject or non-subject).<sup>6</sup> Random intercepts were included for each book. Specifically, we used the following code to run this model: `glmer(gender ~ grammatical.function + (1|book), data, binomial)`. The results show that the likelihood of a female argument increases in non-subject position, with a statistical effect of grammatical function. These results are reported in Table 2.

<INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE>

Turning our attention to the distribution of the arguments' theta role by gender (represented in Figure 4), we observe that male-gendered arguments are overrepresented compared to female-gendered ones as agents (53.7% vs. 46.2%, 10a) and as experiencers (20.6% vs. 18.9%, 10b). Female-gendered arguments are comparatively more likely to be patients and recipients (10c-d), with 25.6% and 7.2% of all female-gendered arguments occurring in these roles, respectively, in contrast to 21.5% and 3.8% of all male-gendered arguments. Other theta roles make up 2.1% of all female-gendered arguments and only 0.4% of all male-gendered arguments.

- (10) Coding for theta roles
- a. agent: **He** ran.
  - b. experiencer: **John** saw Mary.
  - c. patient: Ahmed expected **her**.
  - d. recipient: They gave **Mary** flowers.

<INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE>

Given the strong correlation between grammatical function and theta role, such that **agent** and **experiencer** are most often subjects, and **patient**, **recipient**, and other theta roles are often *non-subjects*, we refrain from reporting a separate statistical model for this data, to avoid co-linearity problems. This is not meant as a claim as to causality—that is, whether grammatical function, theta role, or some combination are the underlying cause for the trends we observe in Figures 3 and 4.

LEXICAL CHOICES IN EXAMPLE SENTENCES. In the remainder of this section, we delve deeper into our sample by turning our attention to the lexical choices made by authors. As we will see, this will allow for a more detailed discussion of trends in our data, but on the other hand will prevent us from offering statistical analyses, as we often examine multiple levels of a factor of interest simultaneously and the resulting numbers are therefore quite small. Nonetheless, we will note that the observed trends point in the same direction, namely of men being overrepresented in the sample and stereotypes of both men and women being perpetuated.

First, we consider example sentences that contain proper names. We remind the reader that we coded proper names as male or female based on our subjective representations of their referents; we acknowledge that this does not necessarily match the identities of those who carry these proper names in real life.

We find that out of the total of 1,262 arguments considered in this study, 714 were proper names. The use of proper names is relatively equal for male-gendered and female-gendered arguments: 241 out of 429 (56.2%) of all female-gendered arguments are proper names, whereas 473 out of 833 (56.8%) of all male-gendered arguments are proper names. See Figure 5.

<INSERT FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE>

Examining the sample more closely, we find that the most frequently used male name in our sample, *John*, occurs almost twice as often as the most frequently used female name, *Mary*, as reported in Table 3. The trend for this particular dyad represents the overall trend we see when comparing male and female names. Note that the top five most frequently used names by

gender—and in fact, the majority of names in our sample—exhibit a bias that strongly favors Western, Caucasian-sounding proper names. For example, most have an origin in Old English, Germanic, or Latin languages, and a strong connection to the Bible.<sup>7</sup>

<INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE>

Next, we consider the use of pronouns in our sample. See Figure 6. We find that female-gendered arguments are less likely than male-gendered arguments to be subject pronouns (18.2% compared to 22.8%). The proportions of non-subject pronouns are similar across female- and male-gendered pronouns.

<INSERT FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE>

We now consider the overall distribution of gender by the type of activity portrayed in the examples, as shown in Figure 7. **Physical** activities are those such as giving someone something or receiving something from someone, buying or selling something, kissing someone, finding things, eating, dancing, snoring, singing, cleaning, stealing, or even saying something. **Emotional** activities include liking, loving, hating, enjoying, admiring, wanting, and so on. **Intellectual** activities include existing, being a particular way, being someone, or possessing some knowledge. **Perceptual** activities most often include seeing or observing something. **Violent** actions are admittedly a type of physical activity, but one that takes a turn in a violent direction, such as killing, biting, spearing, beating someone or something, hitting, attacking, and so on. **Other** includes being somewhere, or having a property.

We find that that female-gendered arguments are more likely to be associated with physical (59.4% vs. 54.3%) and emotional activities (17.3% vs. 15.9%), while male-gendered arguments are more likely to be associated with intellectual activities (11.9% vs. 7.2%). The distributional analysis shows that men also occur more frequently in perceptual (7.1% vs. 6.5%) and violent activities (5.3% vs. 3.5%).

<INSERT FIGURE 7 ABOUT HERE>

Finally, we turn our attention to more fine-grained lexical choices in our sample. Here, we show a by-book breakdown of the numbers, to illustrate some differences between the books. As a consequence, the overall numbers we consider are quite small, but several trends are nonetheless clearly observable. On the other hand, the small numbers will allow us to examine individual lexical choices at a more fine-grained granularity, down to individual lexical items. This is where trends concerning stereotypical choices in the sample become evident.

We begin by considering the distribution of gendered arguments by book, as shown in Table 4. We find a skew toward male-gendered arguments (112 vs. 63 female-gendered arguments), which is consistent with our finding that male-gendered arguments are used more frequently in example sentences in general. (In Table 4, other relatives are *sister*, *mother-in-law*, *brother*, *uncle*.) Concerning the kinship terms represented in Table 4, we find a mild female skew (14 female-gendered arguments compared to 21 male-gendered ones). In addition, the NP *woman* occurs less often than *girl* (22 vs. 26 times), but the NP *man* is almost twice as frequent as *boy* (56 vs. 29).

<INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE>

We moreover find 25 male-gendered arguments with occupations, compared to 10 female-gendered ones, as listed in 11. The lexical choices show that, in general, women do not have any profession, aside from student, since they are defined as aspiring to a profession, not having it, or as royalty. By comparison, men have diverse professions, including in academia, law enforcement, government, and manufacturing, among others.

(11) Occupations associated with women vs. men

a. Occupations for women

student (4), (wants to become) a policewoman, (wants to be appointed) president, (John believes she is) the best candidate, (not a) teacher, Queen of Denmark, Queen of the USA.

b. Occupations for men

student (4), baker, professor, Dean, doctor, prince, gardener, teacher, (not a) teacher, manufacturer of tires, chief, interior minister, captain, runs a restaurant, jeweler, probationary officer, dustmen, fishmonger.

Turning to gender representation with respect to activities involving books, we first find that men are much more likely to read than women, as shown in Table 5.

<INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE>

Notice that a single book in the entire sample mentions women as the subject of a reading event, whereas all but one book portrays men in such contexts. Moreover, both example sentences that involve women as the subjects of reading events involve *indirect* evidence of reading: 12a-b. We additionally find the example sentence shown in 12c, which is the only other example that mentions a woman in any context involving reading.

(12) Women hardly read books

- a. *Mary tried to read the book.*
- b. *Aled said that Elin will read the paper.*
- c. *She snarled at the students who hadn't read the book.*

Considering other activities involving books, we find that men are twice as likely to be subjects of such activities (see Table 6). This is perhaps expected given that male-gendered arguments are overall twice as likely to be subjects in our sample.

<INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE>

Beyond the numbers shown, however, we find that men are also much more versatile in their handling of books, as shown by the selection of predicates in 13:

(13) Book-related predicates associated with women vs. men

- a. Women handling books  
receive, give, buy, buy for (their) children, try to read, keep
- b. Men handling books  
give, receive, buy, read, claim to read, hard for X to read, will finish, can/is able to finish, write, sell, put on shelf, find, consult

We turn next to example sentences involving violence. In general, in these sentences, men perpetrate violence more often than women (22 vs. 10 examples). They also occur more frequently as the objects of violence (13 vs. 8 examples). This is not unexpected given their

overall overrepresentation. However, when examining the nature of the predicates chosen, as in 14, we observe that men are more ‘creative’ in the types of violence that they inflict and that, in general, they cause greater harm than women.

(14) Violence-related predicates associated with women vs. men

a. Female agents

kill (oneself, a goat, \**wh*), swat, bop (someone) on the head, slap (someone) upside the head, hit a ball

b. Male agents

kill (a person, a dog, a bear, a bird), hit (a person, oneself, with a stick), strike oneself, massacre, swat, hurt, spear a kangaroo, attack a bear, blow up a building, crash a longboat, crash a semi-truck, break a window

c. Female patients are

killed (by someone, by a tiger, deliberately), swatted, bopped on the head, mugged, hit with a stick

d. Male patients are

killed, swatted, slapped upside the head, hurt, hit, stricken, attacked with a knife, get a noogie

There are only two example sentences in which women hurt women, both involving a woman inflicting self-harm, and both ungrammatical. Notice moreover that the example sentence in 15a has a male subject.

(15) Women don’t hurt other women

a. \**John thinks that herself killed Mary.*

b. \**Herself bopped Heidi on the head with a zucchini.*

Now let us consider example sentences reflecting affection in our study. We find that the overall number of male-gendered and female-gendered arguments in the example sentences is similar, although there are always more male than female tokens in every category shown in 16. Given that male-gendered arguments appear as subjects twice as often as female-gendered ones (see Figure 1), this can be interpreted as a skew toward women subjects in affection-related examples.

The list in 16 shows the predicates associated with male and female agents in affection-related examples, broken down by the recipient of the affection. Predicates are ordered by the frequency with which they occur in example sentences. Overall, women overwhelmingly *love*



men (10 tokens). Men *love*, *kiss*, and *like* women more or less equally (7, 7, 5 tokens, respectively).

(16) Affection-related predicates associated with women vs. men

- a. Women's affection toward women: (3 tokens)  
love oneself
- b. Men's affection toward men: (5 tokens)  
love (oneself, someone else)
- c. Women's affection toward men: (15 tokens)  
love (someone, intensely/half-heartedly), be in love, kiss, admire, like
- d. Men's affection toward women: (20 tokens)  
kiss, love, like, be serious about
- e. Women's affection toward non-gendered objects: (13 tokens)  
kiss (a leprechaun, a kitten, a clown's nose, someone), like (a violin, cookies, a picture of John, a red apple), \*smile the breadbox, love apples
- f. Men's affection toward non-gendered objects: (19 tokens)  
like (beer, pictures of oneself, portrait of oneself, his students, chocolate, *wh*), love (phonology readings, phonology class, syntax assignments, his children, *wh*), kiss (a puppy, a platypus, *wh*)

Matters change when we consider negative emotions, as in 17. This is the only lexical category considered in this study where we find a clear skew toward female-gendered subjects: we find a total of 8 predicates in 14 examples where female subjects exhibit negative emotions, compared to 7 predicates in 8 examples where male subjects exhibit negative emotions. Recall that overall male-gendered arguments are twice as likely to be subjects as female-gendered ones, which makes this skew even more striking. The increased number of female subjects in these examples is perhaps correlated with the fact that all but one of the example sentences containing the verb *hate* in our sample had a female subject.

(17) Negative emotion predicates associated with women vs. men

- a. Women's emotions  
hates (no object, NYC, phonology, phonology class, her job, *wh*), seems angry, is angry, is unhappy, detests sprouts, snarls at someone, considers (man) a fool, wants to know why you stopped loving her

b. Men's emotions

hates a professor, seems angry, is angry, does not love sausage, thinks he might have insulted (someone), thinks Roosevelt is a fool, afraid (of the dark, of his boss)

Moreover, when we find juxtaposition of positive and negative emotions in the same example sentence, men exhibit the positive emotion and women the negative one, as in 18a, although there are also examples like 18b, where men exhibit both. This recalls a similar finding in M&B, exemplified in 4a-b above.

(18) Men are positive, women are negative

a. *Bruce loved and Kelly hated phonology class.*

b. *What does Calvin like but Rory hate?*

We note a bit of progress from M&B's study. In 1997, M&B found that men stereotypically drive and handle vehicles in their sample. By comparison, in our study we found very few example sentences containing mention of driving and drivers. There are likewise very few example sentences that mention a person's appearance. We find a total of three predicates describing men: *tall*, *not tall*, and *want to be appealing*, and a single predicate used twice to describe a woman: *fat*.

In addition, there are very few example sentences that describe a person's intelligence. When such a description is given, it is always of a man. Examples 19 and 20 show the positive and negative descriptions of men found in our sample. Women were not the object of either type of description.

(19) Women believe that men are geniuses.<sup>8</sup>

a. *I met the man that Mary believed to be a genius.*

b. *Joan believes he is a genius even more fervently than Bob's mother does.*

(20) Men are also foolish.

a. *This is the guy who my cat is smarter than \_\_\_ / him.*

b. *John wants to seem stupid.*

c. *Stalin thinks that Roosevelt is a fool.*

d. *Wilma considers Fred to be foolish.*

e. *My idiot of a neighbour wastes stacks of water on his garden.*

Furthermore, we no longer find example sentences that assert that pictures and painting of women are pleasing to men (see 4c above, as well as discussion in M&B). In fact, the predicate

*please* was not found in our sample at all (see 21). Out of 17 example sentences about pictures, paintings or photos, 15 are of men, one is of a woman (in an ungrammatical sentence), and one does not mention the content of the painting. Only five sentences mention women at all. Along the lines of our findings above, men are more versatile in their actions toward paintings and pictures.

(21) Women vs. men handling paintings and pictures

a. Female agents

like, (expected to) buy, sell

b. Male agents

like, buy, see, expect (woman) to buy, know a picture is hanging

We also noted some trends concerning gender stereotypes in our example sentences. We find that, on one hand, men engage in sports and own property, as in 22 and 23. On the other hand, women do household chores and are more likely to be involved in romantic relationships, as in 24 and 25.

(22) Men are associated with sports.

a. *Art said he played basketball in the dark.*

b. *Lasorda sent his starting pitcher to the showers.*

(23) Men own property.

a. *My father is looking for the cows.*

b. *Mohammed buys a house.*

(24) Women do household chores.

a. *The woman bought rice for the children.*

b. *Paula baked a pudding for her dolls.*

c. *Halima is cooking porridge.*

d. *Bouki has already ironed their laundry.*

(25) Women are associated with romance.

a. *The hare stole the elephant's wife.*

b. *Slavko left his wife.*

c. *Mary may wonder if John cheats on her.*

d. *\*Whose girlfriend did he send flowers to?*

Finally, although not nearly as many as in M&B's sample, we find a handful of example sentences that we consider inappropriate due to the explicit or implicit messages they convey.

(26) Inappropriate example sentences

- a. *I went to the National Gallery today, but it brought back painful memories of B, so I went back to Soho and paid two pounds to watch a fat girl with spots remove her bra and knickers through a peephole. I watched her through a peephole. She didn't remove her underclothes through a peephole. Query: are there night classes in syntax?*
- b. *Mary entertained the men during each other's vacation.*
- c. *He drove her hard, he stole her fame or would have if he could have.*
- d. *But Vita could not write the last act, because she did not know how to.*

#### 4. DISCUSSION.

##### 4.1. HAS ANYTHING CHANGED SINCE M&B?

Unfortunately, not really.

Quite a few of M&B's (1997) findings concerning example sentences in textbooks published between 1969 and 1994, summarized in 2 and 3, are replicated in our findings for textbooks published between the years 2005 and 2017. We list our findings in 27, previously presented in 6.

(27) Main findings of the present study, based on the example sentences

- a. Male-gendered arguments are almost twice as frequent as female-gendered ones. Even accounting for this skew, the following patterns hold.
- b. Male-gendered arguments are more likely to appear as subjects, while female-gendered arguments are more likely to appear as direct and indirect objects.
- c. Male-gendered arguments are more likely to appear as agents and experiencers, while female-gendered ones are more likely to appear as patients and recipients.
- d. Male subject pronouns are used more frequently than female ones.
- e. Men are more likely to have occupations and to handle books.
- f. Men are more likely to perpetrate violence and their violence tends to be more severe.
- g. Women are more likely to exhibit negative emotions.

A finding in M&B that was not apparent in the current study concerned how often men tinker with cars. Similarly, unlike M&B, we no longer find that women have their appearance described more often than men do. Instead, we find a very small number of examples that describe physical appearances in general. On the other hand, we find that women exhibit a greater proportion of emotions, especially negative ones, in the example sentences in our sample, a finding not investigated in the original M&B study.

In short, **the vast majority of problems that afflicted example sentences in syntax textbooks twenty plus years ago are still present today.** The main improvement from M&B relates to explicitly suggestive and sexual examples, like those shown in 4 and 5. While we still find such example sentences, they are no longer as blatant or numerous. In general, then, the discrepancies are made more difficult to detect, although they remain present: the skew now requires a broader lens to observe. However, we find a great range of ways in which implicit gender biases are present in our sample, such that men are overrepresented and presented more favorably, and women are presented more stereotypically.

The results we present here also reflect the findings of Kotek et al. (2021). These authors examined example sentences in articles published between the years 1997–2018 in three major journals in theoretical linguistics (*Language*, *Linguistic Inquiry*, and *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*). They showed that the majority of findings observed in M&B and in the study presented here for syntax textbooks are replicated in journal papers as well. Male-gendered arguments outnumber female-gendered ones at a 2:1 ratio. Male-gendered arguments are more likely to be subjects, and female-gendered arguments non-subjects. Male-gendered arguments are also more likely to have occupations and to perpetrate violence, while female-gendered arguments are more likely to be represented in examples discussing emotion, especially as non-subjects, and be referred to using kinship terms. While example sentences perpetuate many stereotypes, they contain very little sexually explicit or suggestive language. This pattern remains stable, with little change, over the course of the twenty years of that study.

Also in line with our findings, studies on constructed example sentences in linguistics publications written in Spanish and French (both languages with grammatical gender) show a strong bias favoring male-gendered arguments. C epeda (2018) presents evidence of significant gender bias in introductory Hispanic Linguistics textbooks written in Spanish. Human arguments marked with masculine gender agreement occur twice as often as those marked with feminine

agreement, and they are twice as likely to occur as the subject and agent of the example sentence. The most frequently used male name, *Juan*, occurs at more than double the rate of the most frequent female name, *María*. As for stereotypes, violence is mostly perpetrated by men, women are frequently passive, and intellectual activities most often involve men.

Richy & Burnett (2020) found a strong male bias in the use of gendered noun phrases in syntax articles in French linguistics journals. They conducted two lexical studies. The first one is similar to ours. The results show that references to men are four times the number of references to women, and human male-gendered arguments are more likely to appear as subjects, agents, and experiencers. Their second study investigated the syntactic distribution of masculine-marked noun phrases potentially intended as gender neutral. They found that ambiguous NPs are different from unambiguous masculine NPs in terms of grammatical functions, although they are less likely to be non-subjects than feminine NPs. As in the studies mentioned above, many examples relied on stereotypical gender roles.

The outcomes of our study as well as of the others just summarized suggest that **implicit gender biases are present in constructed example sentences across the field of linguistics, regardless of the language and type of publication**. In sum, then, not much seems to have changed since M&B's publication in 1997.

#### 4.2. IS THIS REALLY A PROBLEM?

Yes, it *is*.

Although we are not aware of any studies on the concrete impact of gender-biased linguistic examples on readers, there is reason to believe that the patterns observed here could perpetuate at least three broader undesirable situations and trends connected to gender-biased attitudes in the field: gatekeeping of students from entering and remaining in the field, the erasure of nonbinary and genderfluid identities, and lack of equal access in faculty hiring and retention.

First, consider the role of textbooks in modeling the shape, values, and priorities of the discipline. If a lack of diversity awareness by educators, scientists, and communicators is reproduced in instructional materials, then this implicit bias could be taken to represent a general lack of diversity in a field in terms of a number of demographic variables. In the case of gender, this deficiency only confirms and reinforces inequities and discriminatory practices between

people of different genders (United Nations 1996). What's more, this lack of awareness can affect the growth of a scientific field. In their discussion of gender bias in economy textbooks, Polanyi & Strassmann (1996) argued that the representations of gender in the stories told through examples or case studies act as gatekeepers in the discipline. Textbooks and authors are the face of the profession to young students, and they model the practices and values of a field. Gender-biased examples may inhibit the recruitment of young students and researchers interested in linguistics who embrace values that they find to be in conflict with what they consider to be the prevailing views in the field.

Second, another fact connected to the impact of gender biases and gatekeeping in the discipline is the erasure of gender identities outside of the binary. The gender dichotomy we find in linguistics textbook examples certainly contributes to this erasure. In our sample, for instance, we did not find any representation of non-binary or genderfluid identities. In a study on gender identity and gendered spaces in universities and colleges, Thorpe (2017) argues that gender identities challenging structural binarism and cissexism are frequently constructed by means of exclusion and relegated to a position of 'other'. This is an undesirable result of the lack of inclusion in the textbooks in our field. Although presumably unintentional, our textbooks are oppressing and erasing identities outside of the binary and outside of heteronormative relationships. As Polanyi & Strassmann (1996) point out, the stories we present in our textbooks must explicitly add language that takes the readers away from stereotypical or default representations of gender and sexuality. To do so, it is crucial to rethink the way we as scientists and instructors create and select our constructed example sentences as a way to open up spaces in which discussions about awareness and inclusion can be held carefully, respectfully and comprehensively (Thorpe 2017).

Finally, gender bias also affects faculty hiring and retention. Using information from Silva (1996), Bergvall (1996) reported that women at that time represented 59% of the assistant professors in the field, and 44% of the associate professors, but only 25% of the full professors. In other words, 25 years ago, women were a majority in the entry level of the linguistics faculty career, but their presence decreased as their rank rises. Bergvall also pointed out that the results of Hall & Trechter's (1996) survey on women's career paths (supported by the Linguistic Society of America's Committee on the Status of Women in Linguistics, now known as the

Committee on Gender Equity in Linguistics) suggest that women leave Linguistics due to causes more complex than simply ‘family issues’.

Echoing the message we convey from the findings in this manuscript, we note that the situation reported in Bergvall (1996) has not changed in the last 25 years. Data from the 2019 LSA Annual Report on the Status of Linguistics in Higher Education (Linguistic Society of America 2020a) show that men make up a larger percentage than women in tenure-track and tenured positions; in contrast, there are more women in part-time or non-tenure track jobs (p. 15). From 2013 to 2019, women held more tenured, tenure-track and non-tenure track positions than men per department, but in the same period, they never exceeded the average number of positions in the full professor or assistant professor ranks (p. 17).

To put the numbers in perspective, consider the data for 2019. On average, men had a slight advantage over women in the number of assistant professor positions per department: 1.24 vs. 1.14 (p. 15, 17), which may suggest there is equal representation of men and women at the assistant professor level. However, this apparent equal representation is deceiving (as also observed by Haugen & Margaris 2020). First, women have obtained overall more Ph.D. degrees than men. A sample from the last eight years is shown in Table 7.

<INSERT TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE>

On average, women obtained over 58% of all doctorates in that time period. Second, the number of men obtaining Ph.D. degrees has more or less remained constant since 1966, while the number of women obtaining Ph.D. degrees has consistently increased (Linguistic Society of America 2020a:24). We interpret these data as showing that there is a gender skew that favors men in hiring processes into tenure-track positions in linguistics departments, which will then lead to skews at the higher ranks with time. This skew most certainly affects the diversity and make up of our field with regard to gender representation. The cases discussed above would greatly benefit from explicit interventions. With affirmative, equitable opportunities, diversity will naturally occur (Prescod-Weinstein 2018).

The problem is not restricted to the field of linguistics, or even academics itself. By now, ample research across the disciplines of cognitive and social psychology, cognitive science, and language and gender illustrates that not only does gendered language actively promote and



perpetuate stereotypes, but inclusive language results in an increased perception of women and marginalized groups being represented in positions of leadership, being heroes and heroines, being considered for certain positions and opportunities, and having the qualities and characteristics conventionally associated with their male counterparts (Hansen et al. 2016; Leslie et al. 2015; Sczesny et al. 2016). The effects of gendered, sexist language pervasive among educators and media are observed not only in higher education; they are documented in children as young as preschool and early elementary age (Bian et al. 2017; Cartei et al. 2020; Wolter et al. 2016). Thus, the message we are sending is that a move toward more inclusive language is not only exigent for linguists for the benefit of our field, but more generally in a broader social context.

#### **4.3. SO, WHAT CAN WE DO TO (FINALLY) ALLEVIATE THE PROBLEM?**

We must begin by recognizing that we cannot accept the status quo and that we must act to change it. Here we discuss some potential interventions to prevent the implicit perpetuation of gender biases in the discipline of linguistics. These pertain not only to the creation and selection of example sentences, but more broadly to adjusting our behavior as scientists and educators in the field.

It is well known that some example sentences are widely used in our field because they have become the canonical illustrations of a linguistic phenomenon. This status, however, does not mean that such data are unbiased and lack representation problems. Textbook authors (especially those with a notable reputation in the field) play a significant role in maintaining and even creating our discipline's culture—as do researchers, faculty, presenters, and all linguists in their various roles.

As scientists and educators, linguists using second-hand examples must be aware of the implicit and explicit bias the literature may convey, and consciously decide to fairly represent diverse gender identities (beyond binary genders) and other type of identities, which may result in adapting or avoiding these examples altogether. We acknowledge that this takes time and effort. Even though stereotypes are being challenged more and more in our society, they are engrained in everyday interactions as well as in our field's literature. Moreover, as we have shown here, biases are often difficult to detect, requiring a broader lens to observe.

We encourage authors and instructors to revise their publications and teaching materials, both when citing existing example sentences and when creating new ones, so that they represent individuals in a more equal and inclusive way. Increasing the number of examples with female, non-binary, and genderfluid protagonists, diminishing stereotypical representations of all genders, and controlling for the grammatical function and theta roles of these arguments, are necessary changes that will undoubtedly have a positive impact on the field.

We recommend that readers consult the LSA's *Revised Guidelines for Inclusive Language* (COSWL et al. 2016) as a first step to thinking about and using inclusive language. Gender inclusion is not only about participation and representation, but also about the characterization of genders (Graells et al. 2008). To diversify the use of proper names, the reader may consult Kirby Conrod's list of non-binary names,<sup>9</sup> the purpose of which, as described by the author, is 'to provide linguists with names to use in example sentences, which historically have suffered from significant gender bias'. Similarly, Konnelly et al. (2021) have created a database of names for every letter of the English alphabet drawn from different languages and cultures, categorized by gender (feminine, masculine, non-binary). As for pronouns, the reader can learn more about how to integrate some of the existing work on singular *they* (e.g., Ackerman 2019; Bradley et al. 2019; Conrod 2019; Konnelly & Cowper 2020) and other gender-neutral pronouns into their publications and teaching materials. Helpful suggestions for promoting gender-inclusive language can also be found in Zimman (2017, 2018). Finally, we discourage attempts at jokes in examples, especially when stereotypes are concerned; the truth of the matter is that what one person considers funny may be offensive to others.

Likewise, we encourage our readers to avoid the use of problematic example sentences, even if they are canonical and often cited. Readers can be more conscious about gender representation when creating their own example sentences simply by assuming that those different identities are their readers and students. To reduce the chances of problematic second-hand example sentences continuing to circulate in the literature, we encourage readers to diversify the literature, sources, and resources used in their linguistics courses. If they choose to use such examples or if their students include them in presentations and papers, readers should nevertheless take the opportunity to discuss with their students why the sentences are problematic and how they could be altered to be more inclusive, so as to create a safe environment for learning. This approach is an excellent way to raise awareness about biased

language, especially among linguists or students taking linguistics courses. Readers could also go beyond adding an institutionally mandated statement regarding diversity and equity to their course syllabi for compliance purposes; adding a pledge of their own (and keeping it) will force them to be explicit about their level of commitment. These actions show students and others that people who might have more power relative to them are aware of equality, are willing to combat and/or condemn the misrepresentations of diverse identities, and are working to, ‘facilitate the inclusion of marginalized groups for whom it can be said: “When they enter, we all enter”’ (Crenshaw 1989).

The reader must not think that these are the only steps to undertake. Using Stromquist et al.’s (1998) approach to the hidden curriculum, it is not enough that the representations of gender in linguistics textbooks be non-sexist: they must be *antisexist*. The advancement of gender equality in linguistics will benefit from these suggestions only if they are accompanied by processes aiming to remove structural barriers and eliminate the gender-biased (and in general unequal) norms and stereotypes that prevent faculty, students, and staff from achieving their full potential. In this context, while we understand that textbooks and other academic works that our discipline is already using cannot be changed instantaneously, they must nonetheless ‘be interpreted from a gender perspective and be recast in a light to encourage and develop a critical mind’ (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2008). Recommendations on how to this can be found in the literature (e.g., Stewart & Valian 2018; Namboodiripad et al. 2019; Sanders et al. 2020), some of which we consider here.

As long as this kind of reflection and work is left to individual instructors, change cannot and will not happen. We support systematic action at the linguistic community level. Specifically, we encourage departments to have open and frank discussions about their pedagogical materials, to engage in regular peer observations of teaching and course materials and course design, to make faculty mentors available to junior researchers and graduate students to usher in a new generation of sensitive, informed instructors, and to form curriculum committees that will, among other duties, regularly evaluate the materials used by regular and adjunct faculty to teach undergraduate courses in linguistics. In addition, we encourage members of the larger linguistics community to form work groups and consortiums to discuss these problems, issue recommendations, and circulate them widely on social media and formal avenues.

Another way to prevent the implicit perpetuation of gender biases in linguistics is to seek expert training and education in equality and inclusion issues in general and in gender sensitization in particular. The reader must not expect members of underrepresented groups to be the ones taking on the burden and teaching them how to be more inclusive. There are, at this point, numerous resources to engage in self-education and participate in institutionalized training centering on diversity and inclusivity issues.

Supporting students and colleagues in the field also means that we must make the effort to learn how our students and colleagues pronounce their names, and practice these pronunciations, without making them go through the painful experience of repeating their name again and again for us. Whenever possible, the reader might ask their students to record in advance how they pronounce their name, or help to identify an IPA version. Especially in intercultural contexts, misnaming can be felt as disregarding one's identity (McMaster 2020).

It should be noted that gender is deeply connected to other identities, and that the experience of gender is different depending on those other identities. Therefore, we must not forget that gender bias is compounded for people of color, members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community, people with disabilities, and members of other groups which have traditionally been excluded from academia. We firmly believe that linguists are in a privileged position to influence equality and social justice, and in doing so, to contribute to our communities, our discipline, and our society. We invite the reader to familiarize themselves with the *LSA Statement on Race* (Linguistic Society of America 2019) and the *LSA Statement on Racial Justice* (Linguistic Society of America 2020b).

We encourage everyone in the field to call out microaggressions and harassment. As we need to improve our field's climate and address the issues of bias, harassment and violence occurring in our field (for data on this, see Namboodiripad et al. 2019), calling out negative behavior on the spot sends the message that this behavior is considered an aberration, not the norm.

Since we started presenting the findings reported in this paper in different conferences, explicit conversations have been had regarding gender representation and diversity in the field of linguistics, and some professional practices have been advanced to avoid gender-biased examples in the linguistic academic literature. Contra what at the beginning of the century was considered 'a step, albeit limited, toward censorship and constraints on freedom of speech or at

least the appearance of such' (Postal 2003), these conversations in the field show that advocating for inclusive language is promoting inclusion and respect for our fellow linguists and students, rather than censorship. Even more, this attention is a necessary ingredient in encouraging equal opportunity and treatment in our field as well as free expression and interchange of good science.

Despite these conversations in the last few years, there is no evidence to suggest that there has been a significant reduction in gender bias in constructed examples sentences in the same time period. Evidently, there is still much left to do. Some might find this surprising, given M&B's **call to arms** decades ago, which was backed up with the sort of carefully collected and analyzed empirical data that linguists as language scientists appreciate. Moreover, their conversation did not take place in a vacuum; the Committee on the Status of Women in Linguistics was well established, and their concerns and findings circulated among linguistics circles, well in advance of the publication of M&B's article in what was then and still is the flagship journal of the LSA and a top-tier linguistics journal in the field. What went wrong? Why didn't the linguistics community hit the ground running with a fresh batch of new syntactic examples and a new outlook on introducing young impressionable minds to the field via carefully crafted linguistic examples that were inclusive, diverse, and more generally unoffensive?

While we cannot say for certain, we will hazard a guess. It is the same reason that decades later, each of the coauthors of this paper can report instances at conferences and other scholarly venues of the same sorts of examples being presented and cited: it was left to (senior) individuals to make a voluntary change in their own practices, and undesirable practices were allowed to continue. It is clear that we cannot simply hope that researchers and instructors will read articles like this or the ones we cite, reflect on their previous practices, and commit to making a change for the better. We as a linguistics community have to push for such a change, provide alternatives to the status quo, have open and active discussions about this issue in journals, at conferences, and on social media, and endorse and advance inclusivity and diversity at a higher level, among departments, programs, publishers, within the review process, and so on. We cannot simply ask people to change their behavior, and hope for the best: we must make it easy for them to make these changes, demand that they be made, and make clear what the consequences are within the field of allowing the patterns to continue—clear consequences regarding exclusion of researchers and erasure of identities, as we outline above.

**5. CONCLUSION.** In this paper, we have presented a quantitative and qualitative study of the distribution and content of male-gendered and female-gendered arguments in constructed example sentences in syntax textbooks published between 2005–2017. Our study shows that there is an evident gender bias that favors the representation of men. In our sample, male-gendered arguments occur almost twice as often as female-gendered ones, and they appear as subjects, agents, and experiencers more often than female-gendered ones. Male subject pronouns are used more than female ones. As for stereotypes, men are more likely to have occupations, handle books, and spread violence, whereas women are more likely to exhibit emotions, especially negative ones. In sum, men are numerically overrepresented and portrayed in a more positive light, whereas women are represented in a more limited way. This pattern has been prevalent in the field of linguistics for decades now, as initially reported by M&B in 1997 for textbooks going back to the mid-1960s. Therefore, there is a pressing and ongoing need to change these representations in linguistics teaching materials.

We have argued here that increased gender and diversity awareness will have a positive impact on our field in at least three areas. First, as textbooks model the discipline, gender-inclusive content may open the doors for more a diverse body of linguists. Second, gender-inclusive practices could prevent the erasure of gender identities. Finally, gender-inclusive practices could contribute to the elimination of the current skew that favors men in hiring processes for assistant professor positions in linguistics. Accordingly, we have presented some suggestions to actively prevent the implicit perpetuation of gender biases in linguistics. We encourage researchers and faculty to consciously and actively decide to fairly represent diverse gender identities (beyond the binary) and other types of identities. A first step is to increase the number of examples with female, non-binary and genderfluid protagonists and to eradicate stereotypical representations of all identities. On top of that, it is crucial to accompany these changes with processes aiming to remove structural barriers supporting gender inequalities and others that go beyond the gender sphere and that prevent linguists from achieving their full potential.

The concrete impact of gender-biased linguistic examples in the field has not been studied. Future research in this area must address the type and extent of impact of example sentences on different groups. More specifically, it would be interesting to compare the impact of

sexist vs. inclusive textbooks, and students' attitudes toward them. More generally, studies are needed on how the implicit and explicit content of textbooks and other publications as well as the perceived climate and culture of our field may affect the gender configuration of the discipline in terms of students, faculty, and professionals outside of academia. This should go beyond gender to consider intersectional identities, as well.

## REFERENCES

- ACKERMAN, LAUREN. 2019. Syntactic and cognitive issues in investigating gendered coreference. *Glossa: A Journal of General Linguistics* 4(1). 117. Online: <http://doi.org/10.5334/gjgl.721>
- BATES, DOUGLAS; MARTIN MÄCHLER; BEN BOLKER; and STEVE WALKER. 2015. Fitting linear mixed-effects models using lme4. *Journal of Statistical Software*, 67(1). 1–48.
- BERGVALL, VICTORIA L. 1996. Humpty Dumpty does syntax: Through the looking-glass, and what Alice found there. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*, 14(2). 433–443.
- BIAN, LIN; SARAH-JANE LESLIE; and ANDREI CIMPIAN. 2017. Gender stereotypes about intellectual ability emerge early and influence children’s interests. *Science*, 355(6323). 389–391.
- BRADLEY, EVAN D.; JULIA SALKIND; ALLY MOORE; and SOFI TEITSORT. 2019. Singular ‘they’ and novel pronouns: gender-neutral, non-binary, or both? *Proceedings of the Linguistic Society of America*, 4(36). 1–7.
- BRUGEILLES, Carole, and CROMER, SYLVIE. 2008. *Promoting gender equality through textbooks: A methodological guide*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- CARTEI, VALENTINA; JANE OAKHILL; ALAN GARNHAM; ROBIN BANERJEE; and DAVID REBY. 2020. “This is what a mechanic sounds like”: Children’s vocal control reveals implicit occupational stereotypes. *Psychological Science*. 31(8). 957–967.
- CÉPEDA, PAOLA. 2018. Gender representation in Hispanic Linguistics textbooks. Paper presented at the Hispanic Linguistics Symposium, Austin, TX.
- Committee on the Status of Women in Linguistics (COSWL), with additional input from LSA committee chairs (2016). *Guidelines for inclusive language*. Online: [https://www.linguisticsociety.org/sites/default/files/Inclusive\\_Lg\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://www.linguisticsociety.org/sites/default/files/Inclusive_Lg_Guidelines.pdf)
- CONROD, KIRBY. 2019. *Pronouns raising and emerging*. Ph.D. dissertation. University of Washington, Seattle, WA.
- CRENSHAW, KIRBY. 1989. Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black Feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*. 139–167. Online: <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>



- GRAELLS-GARRIDO, EDUARDO; MOUNIA LALMIAS; and FILIPPO MENCZER. 2008. First women, second sex: Gender bias in Wikipedia. *Proceedings of 26th ACM conference on hypertext and social media*, 165–174. Association for Computing Machinery.
- HALL, KIRA, and SARA TRECHTER. 1996. Preliminary results of the individual questionnaires: COSWL Report. Paper presented at the LSA Annual Meeting, on behalf of the Committee on the Status of Women in Linguistics (COSWL), San Diego, CA.
- HANSEN, KAROLINA; CINDY LITTWITZ; and SABINE SCZESNY. 2016. The social perception of heroes and murderers: Effects of gender-inclusive language in media reports. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7. Online: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00369>
- HAUGEN, JASON D., and AMY MARGARIS. 2020. Faculty placements into Linguistics PhD programs across the U.S. and Canada: Market share & gender distribution. Poster presented at the 94th Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, New Orleans, LA.
- KONNELLY, LEX, and ELIZABETH COWPER. 2020. Gender diversity and morphosyntax: an account of singular *they*. *Glossa: A Journal of General Linguistics*, 5(1). 1–19.
- KONNELLY, LEX; POCHOLO UMBAL; and NATHAN SANDERS. 2021. The diverse names database: A tool for creating more equitable, diverse, and inclusive linguistic example sentences. Paper presented at the 2021 Annual Conference of the Canadian Linguistics Association. Online: <http://sanders.phonologist.org/Papers/konnelly-et-al-cla2021.pdf>
- KOTEK, HADAS; SARAH BABINSKI; RIKKER DOCKUM; and CHRISTOPHER GEISLER. 2021. Gender bias and stereotypes in linguistic example sentences. *Language*. To appear.
- LEE, JACKIE F. K. 2014. Gender representation in Hong Kong primary school ELT textbooks: A comparative study. *Gender and Education*, 26(4). 356–376.
- LEE, JACKIE F. K., and PETER COLLINS. 2010. Construction of gender: A comparison of Australian and Hong Kong English language textbooks. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 19(2). 121–137.
- LESLIE, SARAH-JANE; ANDREI CIMPIAN; MEREDITH MEYER; and EDWARD FREELAND. 2020. Expectations of brilliance underlie gender distributions across academic disciplines. *Science*. 347(6219), 262–265.
- LEWANDOWSKI, MARCIN. 2014. Gender stereotyping in EFL grammar textbooks: A diachronic approach. *Linguistik online*, 68(6). 88–99.

- LINGUISTIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA. 2020. The State of Linguistics in Higher Education. Annual Report 2019. Online:  
[https://www.linguisticsociety.org/sites/default/files/Annual\\_Rept\\_Final\\_2019.pdf](https://www.linguisticsociety.org/sites/default/files/Annual_Rept_Final_2019.pdf)
- LINGUISTIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA. 2020b. LSA issues Statement on Racial Justice. Online:  
<https://www.linguisticsociety.org/news/2020/06/03/lsa-issues-statement-racial-justice>
- LINGUISTIC SOCIETY OF AMERICA. 2019. LSA Statement on Race. Online:  
<https://www.linguisticsociety.org/content/lsa-statement-race>
- MACAULAY, MONICA, AND COLLEEN BRICE. 1997. Don't touch my projectile: Gender bias and stereotyping in syntactic examples. *Language*, 73(4). 798–825.
- MACAULAY, MONICA, and COLLEEN BRICE. 1994. Gentlemen prefer blondes: A study of gender bias in example sentences. *Cultural performances: Proceedings of the third Berkeley women and language conference*, ed. by Mary Bucholtz, A. C. Liang, Laurel A. Sutton, and Caitlin Hines, 449–461. University of California, Berkeley.
- MCMASTER, GEOFF. 2020. Getting foreign names right matters, psychology study shows. *Folio*. University of Alberta. Online: <https://www.folio.ca/getting-foreign-names-right-matters-psychology-study-shows>
- MUSTAPHA, ABOLAJI S., and SARA MILLS. 2015. Gender representation in learning materials in an international context. *Gender representation in learning materials: International perspectives*, ed. by Sara Mills & Abolaji S. Mustapha, 9–18. London: Routledge.
- NAMBOODIRIPAD, SAVITHRY; LYNN HOU; and CORRINNE OCCHINO. 2019. A survey of linguists and language researchers: Harassment, bias, and what we can do about it. Plenary panel at the 93rd Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America, New York City, NY. Online: <https://sites.google.com/umich.edu/lingclimatesurvey/home>
- POLANYI, LIVIA, and DIANA STRASSMANN. 1996. Storytellers and gatekeepers in economics. *Rethinking language and gender research: Theory and practice*, ed. by Victoria J. Bergvall, Janet M. Bing and Alice F. Freed. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- POSTAL, PAUL M. 2003. Policing the Content of Linguistic Examples. *Language*, 79(1). 182–188.
- PRESCOD-WEINSTEIN, CHANDA. 2018. Diversity is a Dangerous Set-up. Recreational antiracism won't change anything: a review of Jonathan Kahn's critique of implicit bias discourse.

- Medium*. Online: <https://medium.com/space-anthropology/diversity-is-a-dangerous-setup-8cee942e7f22>
- R CORE TEAM. 2020. *R: A language and environment for statistical computing*. R Foundation for statistical computing. Online: <http://www.R-project.org>
- RICHY, CÉLIA, and HEATHER BURNETT. 2020. Jean does the dishes while Marie fixes the car: A qualitative and quantitative study of social gender in French linguistics articles. *Journal of French Language Studies*, 30(1). 47–72.
- SANDERS, NATHAN; POCHOLO UMBAL; and LEX KONNELLY. 2020. Methods for increasing equity, diversity, and inclusion in linguistics pedagogy. *Proceedings of the 2020 Annual Conference of the Canadian Linguistics Association*. Online: [https://cla-acl.artsci.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/actes-2020/Sanders\\_Umbal\\_Konnelly\\_CLA-ACL2020.pdf](https://cla-acl.artsci.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/actes-2020/Sanders_Umbal_Konnelly_CLA-ACL2020.pdf)
- SCZESNY, SABINE, MAGDA FORMANOWICZ, and FRANZISKA MOSER. 2016. Can gender-fair language reduce gender stereotyping and discrimination? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7. Online: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00025>
- SILVA, DAVID J. 1996. Women in Linguistics in the Mid 1990's: A Preliminary Report. Presented at the LSA Annual Meeting, on behalf of the Committee on the Status of Women in Linguistics, San Diego, CA.
- STEWART, ABIGAIL J., and VIRGINIA VALIAN. 2018. *An inclusive academy: Achieving diversity and excellence*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.
- STROMQUIST, NELLY P.; MOLLY LEE; and BIRGIT BROCK-UTNE. 1998. The explicit and the hidden school curriculum. *Women in the third world: An encyclopedia of contemporary issues*, ed. by Nelly Stromquist, 397–407. New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- TARRAYO, VERONICO N. 2014. Gendered word (or world): Sexism in Philippine preschool English language textbooks. *Journal on English Language Teaching*, 4(2), 25–32.
- THORPE, AMELIA. 2017. Where do we go? Gender identity and gendered spaces in postsecondary Institutions. *Antistasis*, 7(1). 1–12.
- UNITED NATIONS. 1996. Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995. Online: <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/Beijing%20full%20report%20E.pdf>

- WOLTER, ILKA, EDITH BRAUN, and BETTINA HANNOVER. 2016. Reading is for girls!?! The negative impact of preschool teachers' traditional gender role attitudes on boys' reading related motivation and skills. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 6. Online: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01267>
- ZIMMAN, LAL. 2017. Transgender language reform: Some challenges and strategies for promoting trans-affirming, gender-inclusive language. *Journal of Language and Discrimination*, 1(1). 84–105.
- ZIMMAN, LAL. 2018. Pronouns and possibilities: Transgender language activism and reform. *Language and social justice in practice*, ed. by Netta Avineri, Laura R. Graham, Eric J. Johnson, Robin Conley Riner, and Jonathan Rosa, 176–183. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> We recognize that gender is not binary, and that equating male-gendered and female-gendered arguments with men and women without reference to other gender identities is an oversimplification. See Sections 3 and 4 for more discussion on this topic.

<sup>2</sup> When reporting the findings in M&B and in our study, we offer the grammatical function and theta role of the gendered arguments in the samples, as well as the descriptions associated with the men and women characterized in the example sentences.

<sup>3</sup> Page numbers correspond to the example's location in M&B.

<sup>4</sup> We acknowledge that the small sample size makes it difficult to draw generalizable conclusions about the effect of the authors' gender on their choice of example sentences.

<sup>5</sup> In general, our choice of books in this study relied on several factors, including: (a) ensuring a diverse representation of gender, (b) selecting authors from both within and outside North America, and (c) selecting books whose previous editions were not selected for M&B's 1997 study, to create an independent sample. As M&B also do not divulge the authors of the books they studied, this last step was done in consultation with Monica Macaulay (personal communication) by having her verify that our selections were not represented in that study.

<sup>6</sup> We choose to represent direct object, indirect object, and oblique together as "non-subjects" both in order to simplify the model and because we believe that the important factor is whether an argument is a subject or not. We do not see a meaningful difference between these non-subject roles for the discussion in this paper.

<sup>7</sup> The following five female proper names tied with 4 instances each: *Edith*, *Kim*, *Salma*, *Stacy*, and *Sue*.

<sup>8</sup> There are no example sentences with the predicates *brilliant*, *clever*, *intelligent*, and *dumb*, which did occur in M&B.

<sup>9</sup> Find Conrod's list here:

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1GF6c5qFFzTqYGukRYia8WcSam48tBHm\\_R6MJB5tJPiI/edit#gid=0](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1GF6c5qFFzTqYGukRYia8WcSam48tBHm_R6MJB5tJPiI/edit#gid=0)

**SPECIAL MATTER**

**Figures**

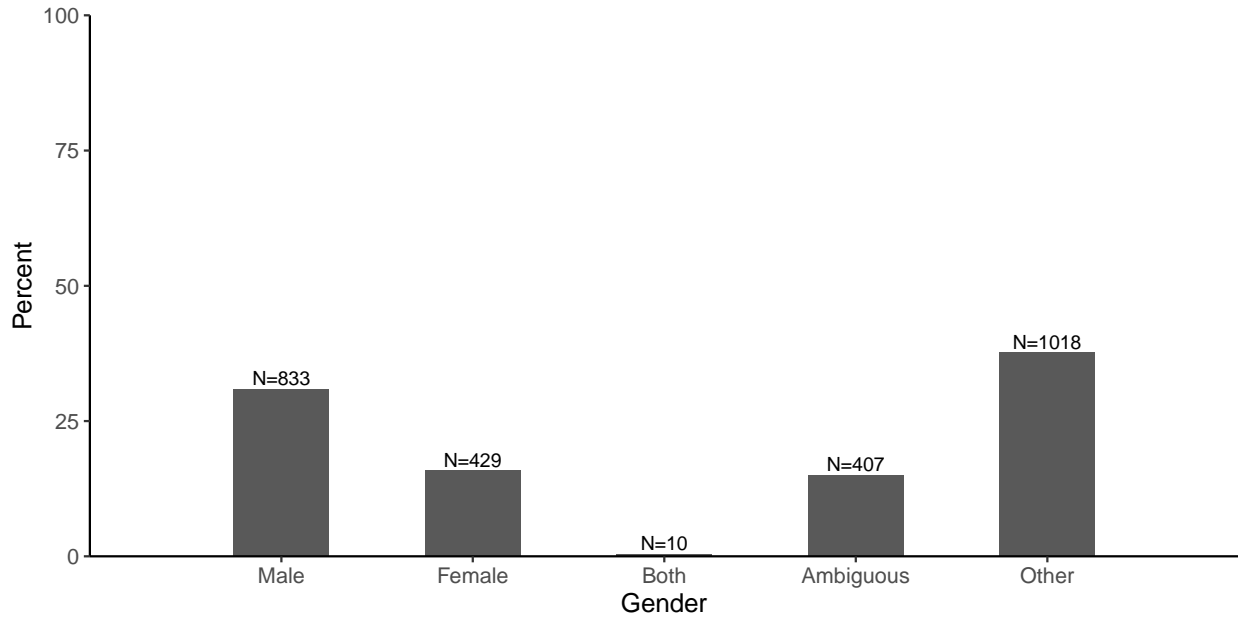


Figure 1: Overall distribution of gendered arguments in our sample

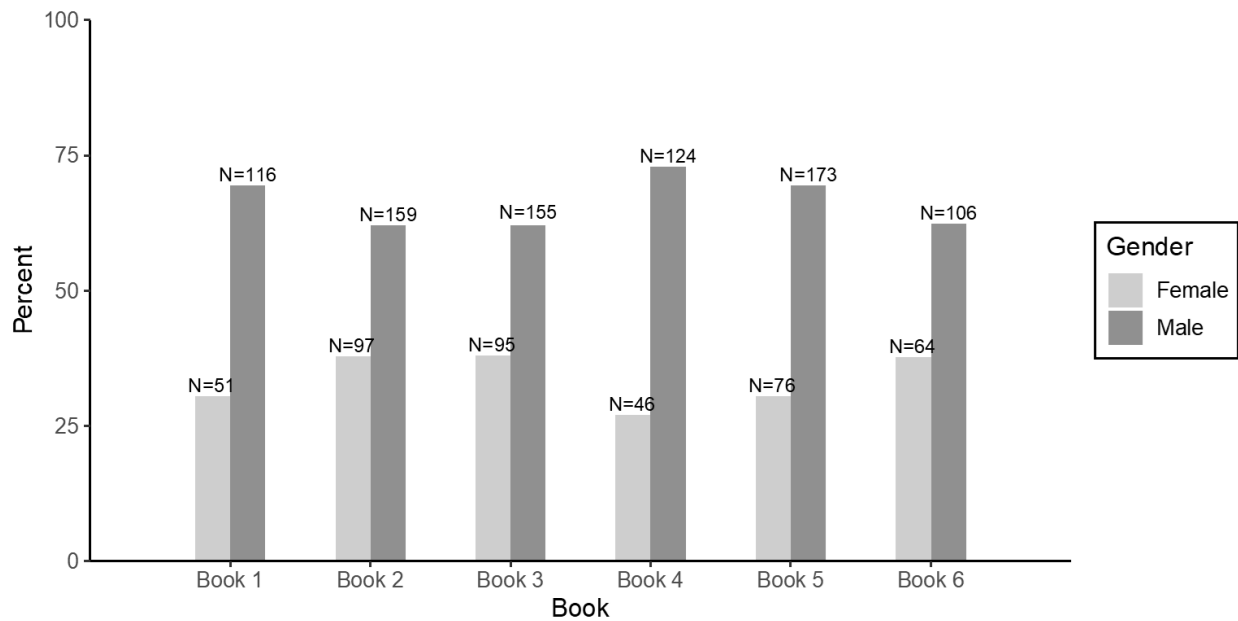


Figure 2: Overall distribution of gendered arguments by book

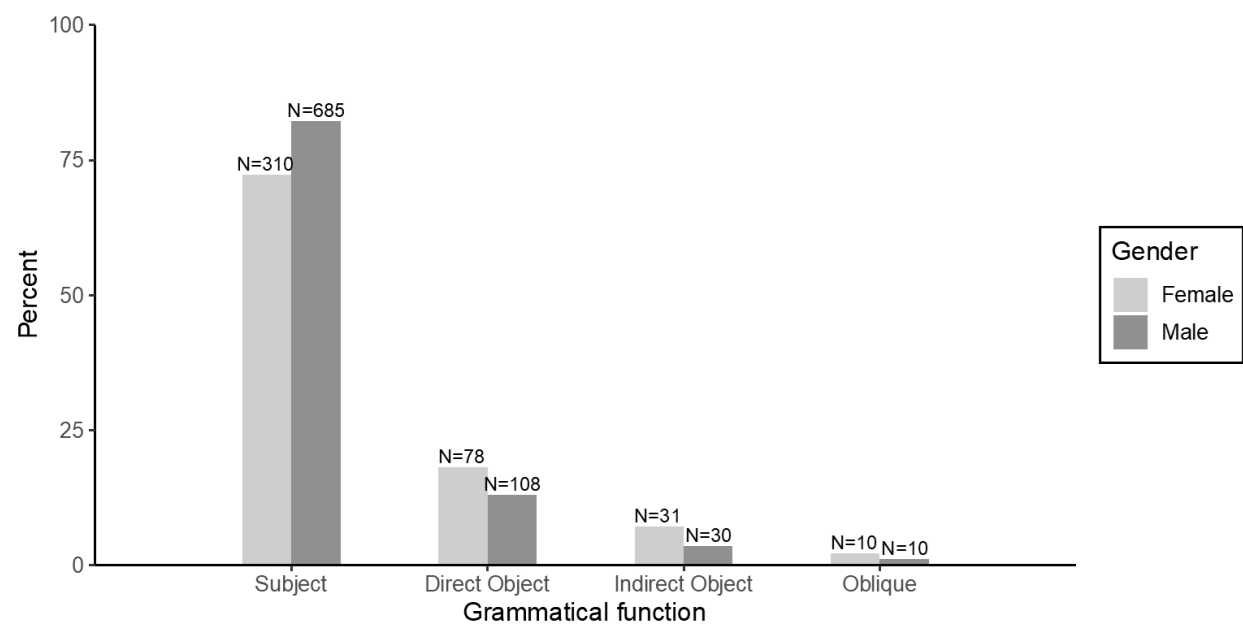


Figure 3: Distribution of grammatical functions by gender

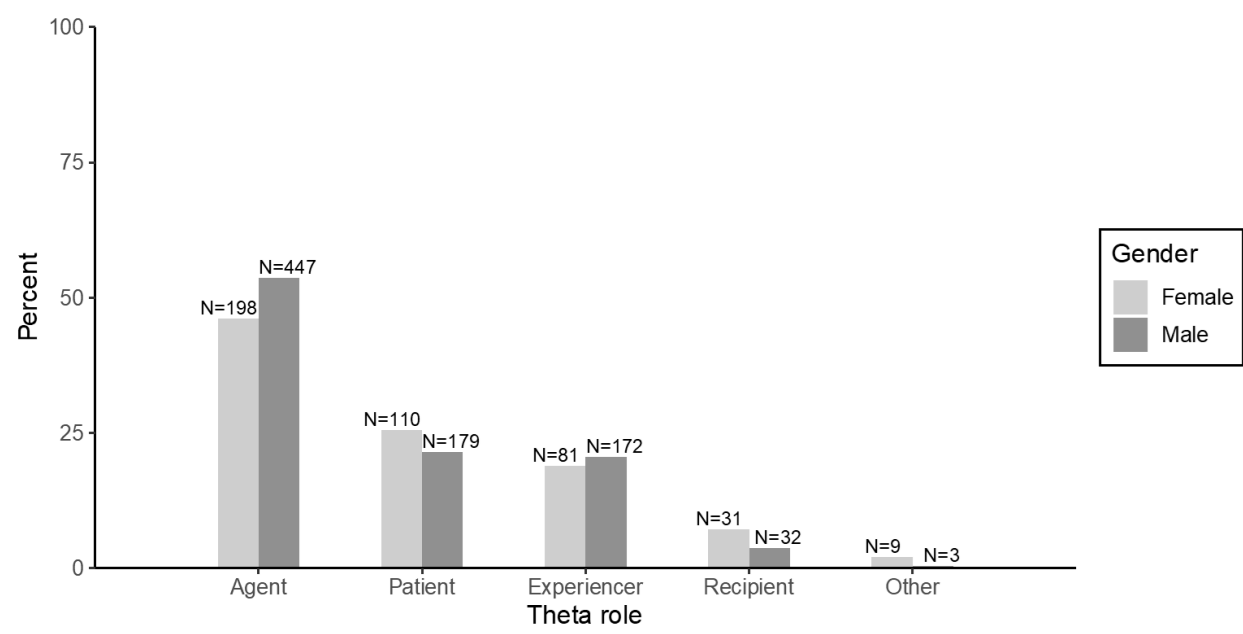


Figure 4: Distribution of theta roles by gender

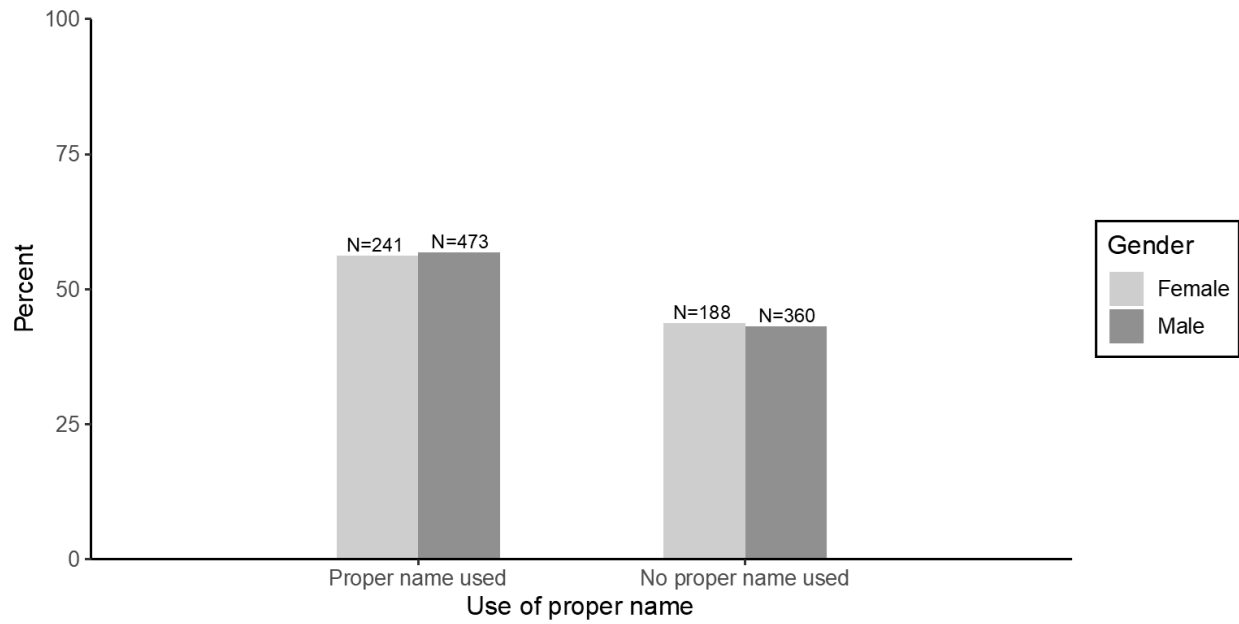


Figure 5: Distribution of use of proper name by gender

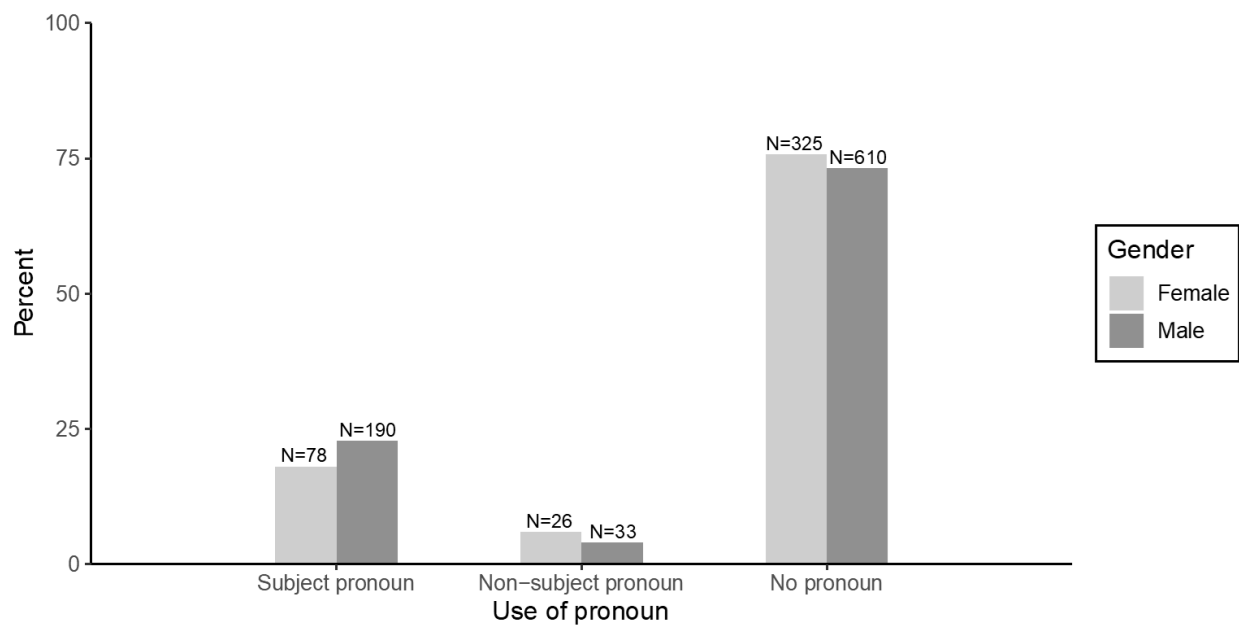


Figure 6: Distribution of use of pronouns by gender



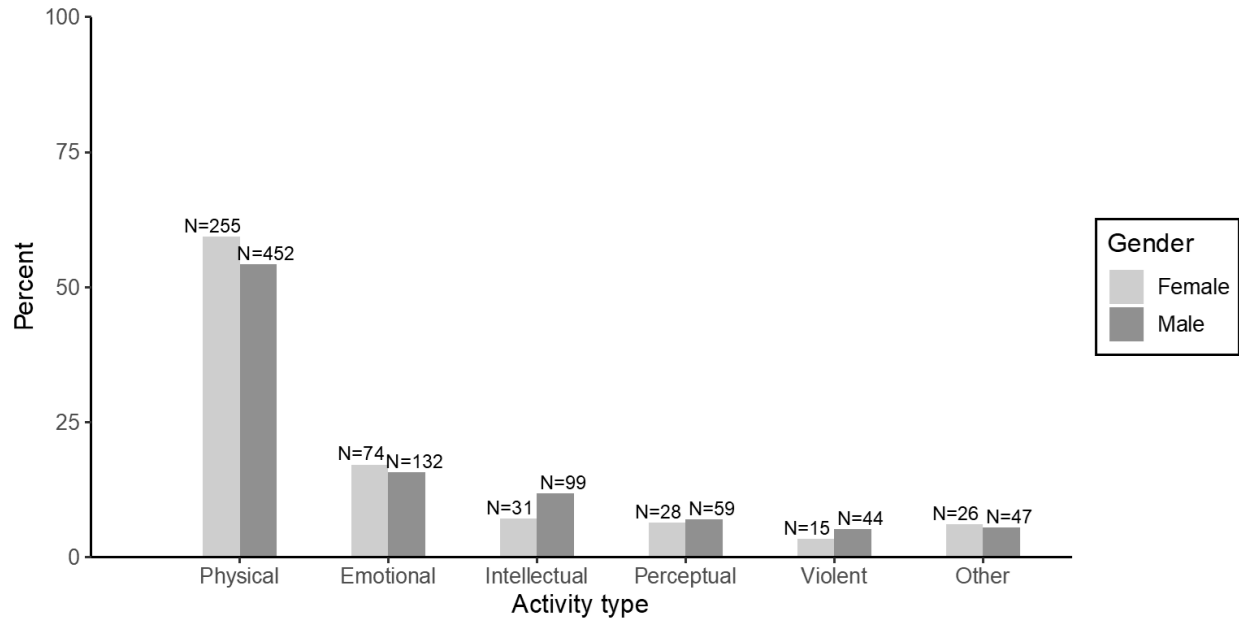


Figure 7: Distribution of activity types by gender

## Tables

Language	Female		Male	
	N	%	N	%
English	346	80.6	652	78.3
Non-English	83	19.4	181	21.7
<b>Total N</b>	<b>429</b>		<b>833</b>	

Table 1: Overall distribution of gendered arguments by language used

	Estimate	Std. error	z value	Pr(> t )	
Intercept	-0.81	0.09	-8.93	< 2e-16	***
<b>Fixed effects:</b>					
Grammatical function	0.59	0.14	4.13	3.64e-05	***
<b>Random effect:</b>					
Book		Variance	Std. dev.	N	
		0.02	0.14	6	

Table 2: Mixed-effects logistic regression on gender of the argument by grammatical function (subject=0). A random intercept for book is included. N = 1,262

Female names	N	Male names	N
Mary	93	John	173
Jill	10	Bill	42
Heidi	8	Peter	18
Susan	7	Harry	10
Edith, Kim, Salma, Stacy, Sue	4	Adrian	7

Table 3: Top five most frequently used proper names by gender

<b>Book (N count of category to left below)</b>							
<b>Gendered NPs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Total N</b>
<i>woman/women</i>	1	3	7	3	6	2	<b>22</b>
<i>man/men</i>	5	10	9	15	12	5	<b>56</b>
<i>girl(s)</i>	6	3	6	0	7	4	<b>26</b>
<i>boy(s)</i>	2	4	13	3	7	0	<b>29</b>
<i>mother</i>	0	2	0	0	4	0	<b>6</b>
<i>father</i>	0	0	2	2	5	0	<b>9</b>
<i>wife</i>	1	0	1	1	2	0	<b>5</b>
<i>husband</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<i>guy(s)</i>	0	0	0	2	2	0	<b>4</b>
<i>girlfriend</i>	0	1	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
<i>boyfriend</i>	0	0	0	0	0	2	<b>2</b>
other female relative	1	0	0	2	0	0	<b>3</b>
other male relative	0	0	5	0	5	2	<b>12</b>
<b>Total N</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>175</b>

Table 4: Distribution of gendered arguments by book

<b>Book (N count of category to left below)</b>							
<b>Reading</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Total N</b>
Female subject	0	0	0	0	2	0	<b>2</b>
Male subject	3	2	0	5	2	1	<b>13</b>
<b>Total N</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>

Table 5: Distribution of gendered subjects in examples involving reading by book

<b>Book (N count of category to left below)</b>							
<b>Book handling</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Total N</b>
Female subject	1	3	1	1	1	4	<b>15</b>
Male subject	4	5	5	6	6	4	<b>29</b>
<b>Total N</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>44</b>

Table 6: Distribution of gendered subjects in examples involving book handling by book

	<b>2013</b>		<b>2015</b>		<b>2017</b>		<b>2018</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Women	172	60.4	160	55.6	119	57.2	148	59.4	<b>599</b>	<b>58.2</b>
Men	113	39.6	128	44.4	89	42.8	101	40.6	<b>431</b>	<b>41.8</b>
<b>Total N</b>	<b>285</b>		<b>288</b>		<b>208</b>		<b>249</b>		<b>1,030</b>	

Table 7: Distribution of earned doctorates in Linguistics by year

(Source: Data from Linguistic Society of America 2020a:24)