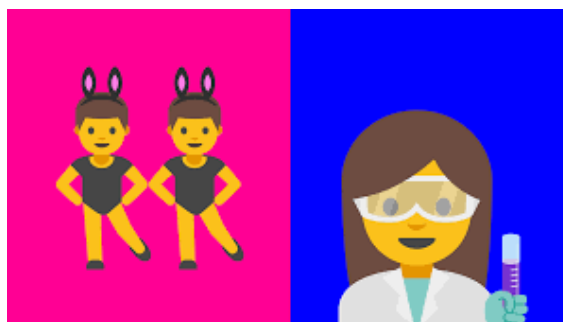


NextFOOD Newsletter article

Date: Nov 2020

“Who is *the* farmer? - Or: How a gender-sensitive communication can be integrated in NextFOOD”



In 2016, the EU issued guidelines on gender-sensitive language making the use of gender-sensitive communication a formal requirement in every document produced and word spoken. But “gendering language” is not a new thing. Already the French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir identified the impact language has on the social sex - i.e. on what is called ‘gender’ – including on the genesis and performance of gender, in her groundbreaking book ‘The Second Sex’ (Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, New York: Vintage Books, 1973, p.301). Later, academic scholars, among which well-known Judith Butler, studied the relationship between the human body and the social gender and concluded that the “natural” human body cannot be ascertained without looking at the culture that is surrounding it as it is ubiquitously “entrenched in a specific cultural language” (Judith Butler, *Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir’s Second Sex*. In: *Yale French Studies*, No. 72, Simone de Beauvoir: *Witness to a Century* (1986), pp. 35-49, p.46).

This is relevant also in NextFOOD, particularly where the project partners collaborate closely with communities and societies whose languages are an expression of their attitudes, values and socio-cultural norms including gender norms. A frequently encountered phenomenon is that, even though the word “farmer” is used for all members of the communities, more often only *male* members are considered and understood as the addressed target persons by researchers and educators alike. This continues to be the ‘norm’ despite the fact that women play a crucial role in agriculture and in society but often remain formally and linguistically excluded. Such dominance of one gender in language can not only reflect the assumptions and norms about gender but also influence readers and listeners while creating new or fortifying existing discrimination.

For policy development as well, gender-sensitive language plays a vital role in underlying the principle of equality and the importance that formulations have to contribute to this goal. Therefore, gender-sensitive data collection and analysis are crucial to create the evidence base for tailor-made policy formulations and gender-sensitive improvements.

Key to addressing gender stereotypes and to using language gender sensitively is to acquire an awareness about the power language has on gender. A short workshop was held within NextFOOD’s WP6 (communication) in order to examine this topic: Participants discussed how language can include or exclude, specifically address one gender or another, omit gender diversity altogether or... stir up confusion on what “politically correct” language would be to pay tribute to all individuals.

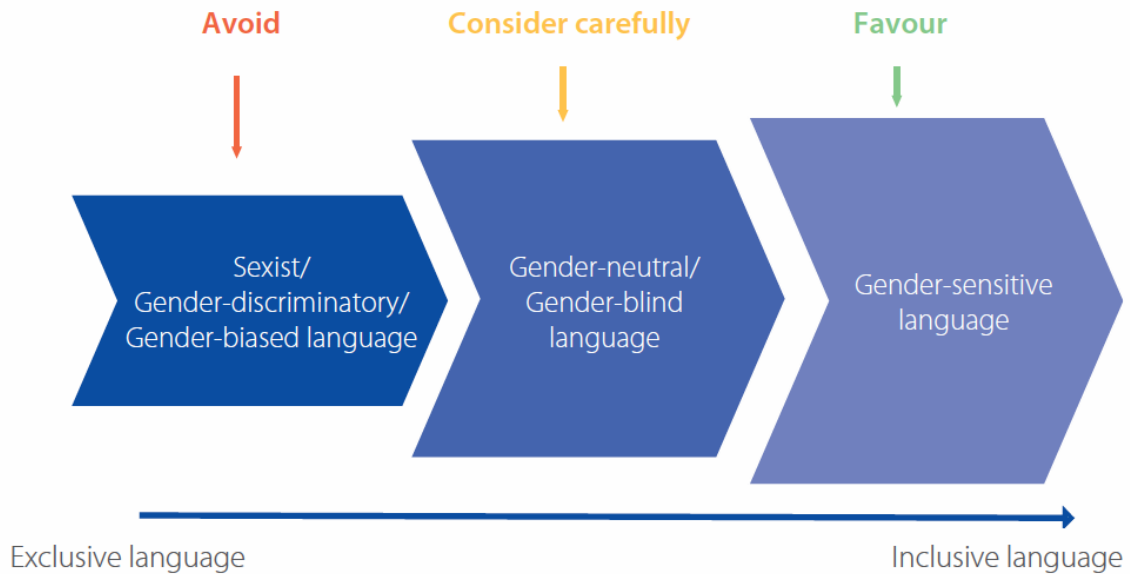


Figure 1: The scale shows three stages of gender inclusivity in language, from sheer sexist or gender-discriminatory language (to be avoided) to "gender-neutral/ gender-blind" language (to be considered carefully) to gender-sensitive language. Source: EIGE (2018).

More than anything, raising awareness helps to bring the topic to mind and to create an open (or internal) discussion on the potential impacts our language can have on gender, on conscious or unconscious expectations that are reflected through language and on stereotypes that we carry through the language.

Please be invited to join the guided workshop presentation with some tips on how to use gender-sensitive language accessible here for partners (duration: 10 min.):

[www.....](#)

Further links and resources with examples and concrete tips:

- [EIGE \(2018\), Toolkit on gender-sensitive communication](#).
- [EU \(2019\), Style Guide for Authors](#).

For any comments, questions or any thoughts you would like to share, please contact: norapistor@yahoo.de.