


Theory Vs. Reality: Gender-Inclusive Language in Teaching Plans and Teacher Practices



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WHAT IS THE SITUATION REGARDING GIL
IN SPAIN NOW?



- Even the two main Spanish culture and language related institutions disagree:

“No one should tell others how they must speak; rather, unity should be maintained while respecting each individual”
(García-Montero 2025)

EL DEBATE

FUNDADO EN 1910

PORTADA ESPAÑA ECONOMÍA OPINIÓN INTERNACIONAL SOCIEDAD **CULTURA** RELIGIÓN SALUD Y BIENESTAR



El director de la Real Academia Española, Santiago Muñoz Machado, en la biblioteca de la RAE - Europa Press

Las veces que la RAE rechazó el lenguaje inclusivo en contra del parecer del Instituto Cervantes

LO MÁS LEÍDO

EL DEBATE

- 1 Cayetana Álvarez de Toledo fuera de la política: marquesa, divorciada y con amigos en la realeza
- 2 Hacienda confirma cuánto dinero le puedes dar a un familiar sin tener que pagar

Every time the Spanish Royal Academy rejected GIL despite the differing stance of the Instituto Cervantes.

ntoso pasado de
Maura: deudas,
a punta de pistola y
in ver a sus hijos



WHAT ABOUT EDUCATION?

RECOMENDACIONES PARA UN USO ADECUADO DEL LENGUAJE EN LAS UNIVERSIDADES

Desde la Ley Orgánica 3/2007, de 22 de marzo, para la igualdad efectiva de mujeres y hombres, que en su artículo 14 estableció en su apartado 11 como uno de los criterios generales de actuación de los Poderes Públicos *"La implantación de un lenguaje no sexista en el ámbito administrativo y su fomento en la totalidad de las relaciones sociales, culturales y artísticas"*, las Universidades Españolas atendiendo al cumplimiento de esta Ley han introducido en el sistema universitario del Estado Español diferentes estrategias para sensibilizar sobre la importancia de un uso adecuado del lenguaje desde la perspectiva de género.

RECOMENDACIONES PARA UN USO ADECUADO DEL LENGUAJE EN LAS UNIVERSIDADES

Documento aprobado por el Pleno de Políticas de Igualdad de Género en su sesión del 19 de julio de 2024



"Since Organic Law 3/2007, of March 22, for the effective equality of women and men, which in Article 14 established in section 11, as one of the general criteria for the actions of the Public Authorities, 'the implementation of non-sexist language in the administrative sphere and its promotion in all social, cultural, and artistic relations Spanish universities, in compliance with this Law, have introduced various strategies within the State's university system to raise awareness of the importance of appropriate language use from a gender perspective"

Dónde hacer uso de la Guía

En general, deberíamos seguir las recomendaciones de esta Guía en la redacción de cualquier texto producido por la Administración. Incluimos a continuación algunos ejemplos:

- **Documentos internos, externos y en línea:** notas internas, avisos, comunicaciones, circulares, correos electrónicos, correspondencia, nóminas, contratos, convenios, convocatorias, actas, protocolos, programas informáticos, bases de datos, normativa, solicitudes, formularios, anuncios, páginas web, publicidad.
- **Publicaciones en papel y en línea:** manuales, libros, publicaciones periódicas, boletines, tesis y otros trabajos de investigación.
- **Intervenciones orales.**

Where to Use the Guide

In general, we should follow the recommendations of this Guide when drafting any text produced by the Administration.

Below we include some examples:

- Internal, external, and online documents: [...]
- Printed and online publications: manuals, books, periodicals, bulletins, theses, and other research papers.
- Oral interventions.

Papel de la Universidad

La Universidad es generadora y difusora del conocimiento, un referente para la sociedad, el lugar en el que se forma a quienes formarán. Es preciso considerar la lengua como un vehículo de transmisión cultural que posibilite una identidad social con criterios igualitarios.

“The University is a generator and disseminator of knowledge, a point of reference for society, and the place where those who will go on to educate others are trained. It is essential to consider language as a vehicle of cultural transmission that makes possible a social identity grounded in principles of equality.”

Guía para un
**uso no
sexista
de la lengua**



BUT THEN AGAIN...



Cada vez son más universidades las que han editado guías para adaptar el lenguaje inclusivo - EFE

El lenguaje inclusivo asalta la universidad española: así son los criterios para «evitar la jerga sexista»

Cada vez son más los centros educativos superiores que editan guías para adaptar su día a día, llegando al extremo de autorizar

→ Un e
leng

"Inclusive language ASSAULTS Spanish universities: these are the criteria for 'avoiding sexist jargon'."

LO MÁS LEÍDO

EL DEBATE

- 1 Por primera vez, un experimento realizado en el CERN muestra cómo era el universo momentos después del Big Bang
- 2 Hacienda confirma que los

"CC.OO. denounces that the University of Valladolid has rejected non-sexist language in its statutes, stating that this decision 'renders 50% of the community invisible'"



Antonio Largo, rector de la Universidad de Valladolid

VALLADOLID

CC.OO. denuncia que la UVa ha rechazado el lenguaje no sexista en sus estatutos: "Invisibilizan al 50% de la comunidad"

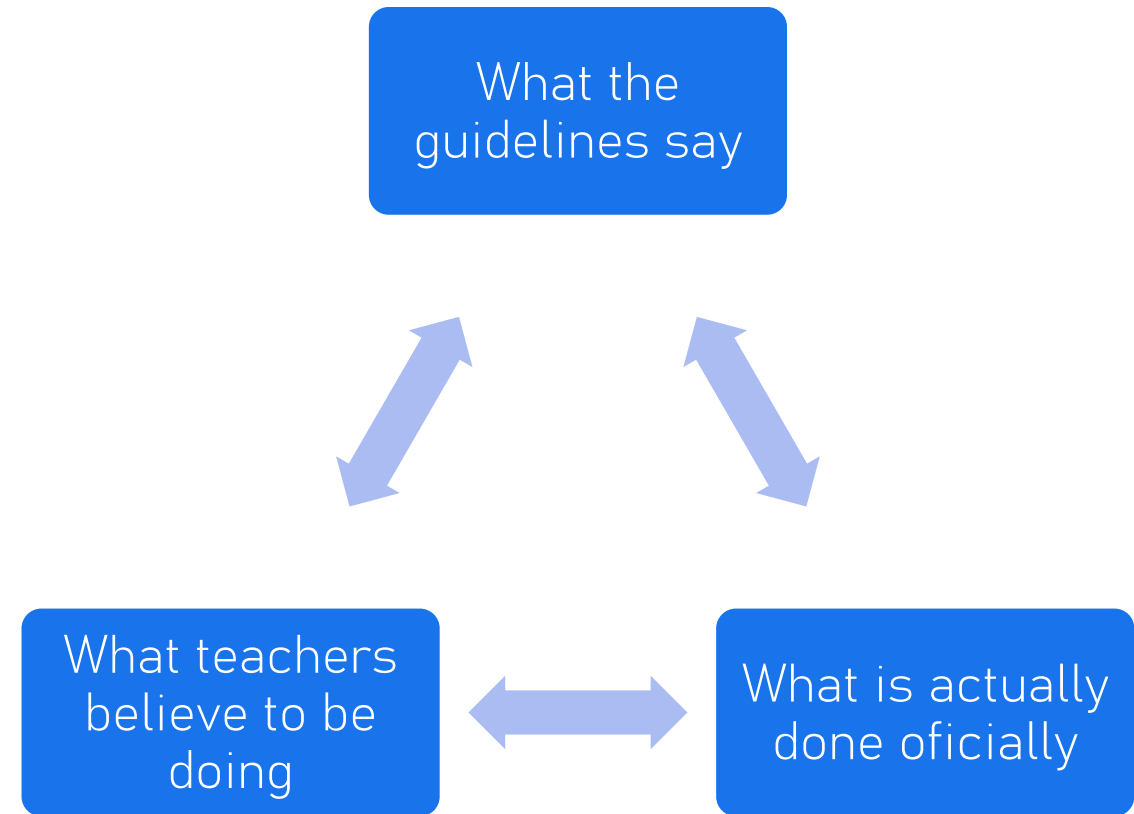
- El sindicato pide a la institución académica "revisión lingüística que asegure una comunicación inclusiva, respetuosa y ajustada al marco normativo".
- **Más noticias:** "La UVa destrozada": exigen la dimisión del rector por su "nefasta gestión" con el personal docente e investigador

Motivations of this study

- Many European institutions, including universities, have developed active policies to promote inclusive language in the last decades. Spain is not different.
- However, constant social resistance and recent literature indicate that the effective implementation of these recommendations is uneven and depends on attitudinal, ideological, and pragmatic factors (Guerrero-Salazar, 2021; UNESCO, 2011; Pfalzgraf, 2024).
- There is an urgent need for further sociolinguistic analyses applied to institutional contexts, with particular attention to the discrepancy between prescriptive norms and actual linguistic practices, so this gap can be filled (and GIL is used across all university bodies).

Data and methodology

- **Mixed methodology** to test our hypothesis:
“there is a gap between the guidelines and recommendations and the actual linguistic behaviour of university teachers”
 - **documentary analysis** of course guides/syllabi
 - **ad hoc anonymous survey** administered to the **teaching staff** involved in the Modern Languages Degree at the UAM



Data and methodology

(1) 50 Syllabi:

- Only those taught in Spanish (multilingual degree)
- Focus on parts written/modified by coordinators
- Manual search for all instances where coordinators had to make a choice (conscious or unconscious) regarding the explicit use of non GIL, or include a GIL option.

(2) **24 responses** to the ad-hoc **survey** that gathered

- awareness of and adherence to the university's Guidelines (2022)
- opinion on the implementation of GIL alternatives in their daily teaching practice

Research questions

- RQ1: How is inclusive language reflected in official course syllabi?
- RQ2: How well do instructors know the institutional guidelines on inclusive language?
 - What practices do instructors report in oral and written contexts?
 - What attitudes and obstacles shape instructors' use of inclusive language?
- RQ3: Is there a gap between policy, declared practice, and documented linguistic reality?

Analysis and results (Course Syllabi)

Presence of sexist language

- Internal distribution of linguistic sexism

Presence of non-sexist language

- inclusive strategies identified

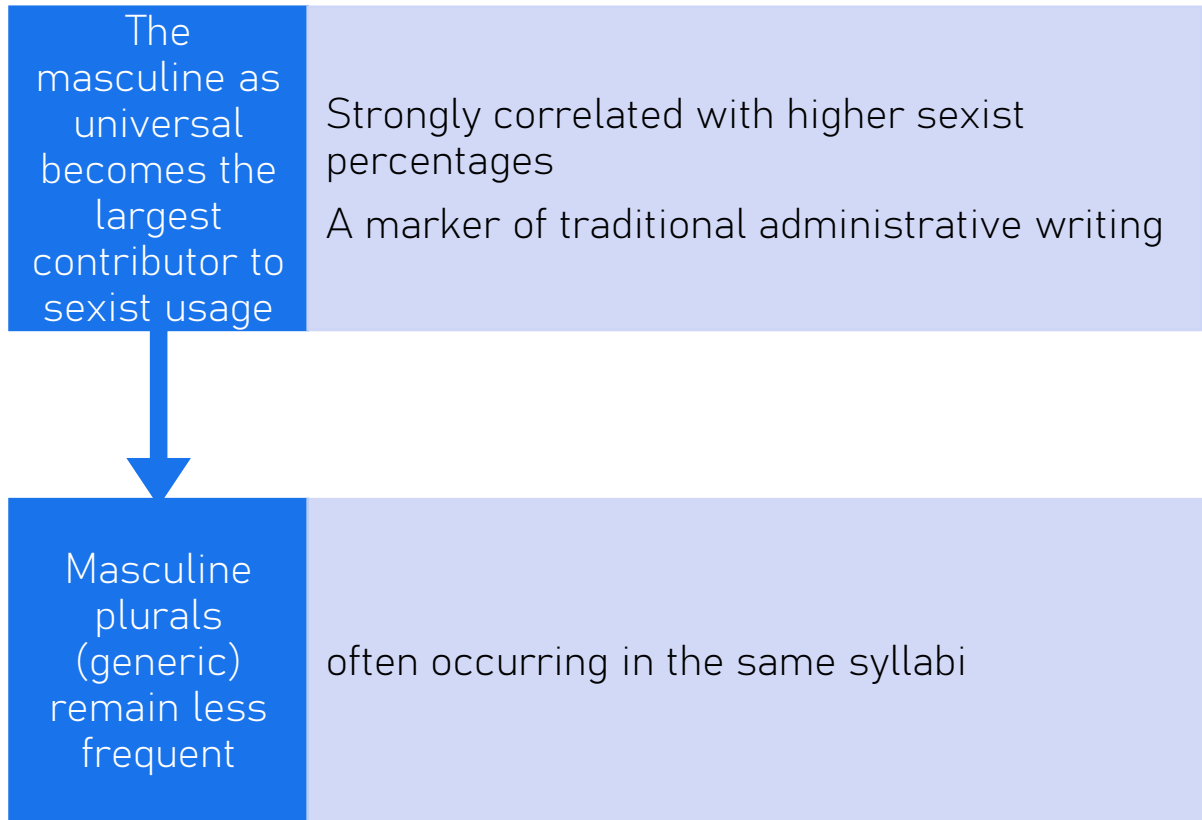
Three codes (same subject, same program, same coordinator, exact same content) which massively skewed the 1st distribution were removed




	Value
Total opportunities	785
Total sexist uses	510
Total non-sexist uses	275
% sexist	65%
% non-sexist	35%

	Value
Total opportunities	521
Total sexist uses	255
Total non-sexist uses	266
% sexist	48,9%
% non-sexist	51,1%

With outliers gone



- Inclusive practices appear in nearly all syllabi once the outliers are removed.
- The most common inclusive strategies (in order of prevalence):
 - ✓ Passive (“se evalúa...”)
 - ✓ Nominalizations (“la asistencia...”)
 - ✓ Collectives (“alumnado”, “equipo docente”)
 - ✓ Gender-neutral role nouns (“docente”, “persona responsable”)
 - ✓ Desdobles (full or partial –“os/as, as/os, alumnos y alumnas, las y los estudiantes”)
 - ✓ Subject omission (“es necesario...”)
 - ✓ Use of “each” (“cada estudiante”)
 - ✓ Pronouns like *quienes* (*whoever*)



Profile	Avg % Sexist	Avg % Non-sexist	N syllabi
(0) Highly Inclusive	18.10%	81.90%	13
(1) Mixed / Transitional	55.06%	44.94%	26
(2) Highly Sexist	80.19%	19.81%	8

Cluster 0 – Highly Inclusive (13 syllabi)

- ~18% sexist / 82% non-sexist
- Consistent use of inclusive strategies (collectives, neutral nouns, passives, desdobles).
- Represents **strong, consolidated inclusive writing.**

Cluster 1 – Mixed / Transitional (26 syllabi)

- ~55% sexist / 45% non-sexist
- **Alternation** between masculine universal and inclusive forms.
- Indicates **partial awareness but inconsistent implementation.**
- Largest and most “typical” group → **key target for training.**

Cluster 2 – Highly Sexist (8 syllabi)

- ~80% sexist / 20% non-sexist
- **Frequent masculine universal; almost no inclusive strategies.**
- **Traditional, unupdated templates.**

A comienzo de la asignatura se indicará las lecturas obligatorias y el día en el que los/as alumnos/as han de comentarlas públicamente.

30 horas de esta asignatura serán impartidas por:

Docente / Lecturer: [REDACTED]

Departamento de Filología Española / Department of Spanish Philology

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras / School of Arts

Despacho: 3.14 (Sala de Becarios) - (Módulo IV) / Office: 3.14 (Sala de becarios) - (Module IV)

Correo electrónico / Email [REDACTED]

Horario de atención al alumnado: se anunciará al comienzo de curso / Office hours: TBA by the beginning of the course

1.14. Referencias de consulta

“Compulsory readings will be announced... as well as the day the (masc/fem) students (masc/fem) need to...”

“Teacher” (Neutral)

“The student body” (generic)

“Teacher’s (masc. sing.) explanations”
→ Explanations

“The (fem/masc) tutor (masc/fem) will set the sessions the student (masc. sing.) needs to attend obligatorily → that must be attended

2.1. Presencialidad

La metodología de enseñanza-aprendizaje del TFG comprende tres tipos de actividades:

A. Actividades presenciales

- Exposiciones a cargo del profesor en las que se expondrán los requisitos y la metodología de un trabajo académico complejo.
- Tutorías de seguimiento: sesiones programadas de asesoramiento individual para el seguimiento del trabajo de fin de grado. La/el tutor/a determinará las sesiones o tutorías presenciales a las que deberá asistir obligatoriamente el estudiante y fijará el plan de trabajo.

B. Actividades no presenciales

- Trabajo individual académicamente dirigido.

3. Sistemas de evaluación y porcentaje en la calificación final

3.1. Convocatoria ordinaria

La evaluación de la asignatura se basa en un examen final y en trabajos de clase individuales o en grupo. La asistencia y participación activa del estudiante no es obligatoria aunque sí altamente valorada. Los criterios de evaluación son como sigue:

“The student’s (masc. sing.) attendance and active participation is not mandatory...” →
“Attendance and active participation is not mandatory...”

3.1. Convocatoria ordinaria

La asignatura contempla un sistema de evaluación continua que valora el esfuerzo constante y la intervención activa del alumno en las diferentes actividades del curso. Los componentes del sistema de evaluación y su peso porcentual en la calificación final en la convocatoria ordinaria son:

- Asistencia e intervención en las clases y tutorías: 10%.
- Evaluación continua (realización y entrega de prácticas; tests y/o pruebas parciales programadas al término de cada bloque temático): 60%.
- Prueba final: 30%.

Descripción de la prueba final. La prueba final consistirá para todos los estudiantes en dos preguntas como mínimo. Además, quienes hayan obtenido menos del 50% de la calificación establecida para alguno de los tests y/o pruebas parciales deberán responder a una pregunta o preguntas adicionales referidas a los contenidos del bloque temático correspondiente.

"The student's (masc. sing.) active participation is valued" →
"active participation is valued"

"The final test will consist FOR ALL THE STUDENTS (masc. plu) of at least two questions. Besides, those who get less than 50%..."

"Attendance (to, at least, 90%) is mandatory..."

"Those who do not attend..."

"...which entails group work from week 1 in teams set by the teaching team (collective)"

"Coordinator" (masc/fem)

"...Throughout the course, we analyze (plural)..."

1.10. Requisitos mínimos de asistencia

La asistencia (como mínimo, 90% de las sesiones) es imprescindible. No podrán incorporarse a la asignatura quienes no asistan desde la primera semana de clase (por lo que, quienes no se hayan podido matricular por ser o haber sido Erasmus, tendrán que asistir a clase antes de formalizar la matrícula o ya no podrán incorporarse al curso, que conlleva trabajo en equipo desde la primera semana en equipos fijados por el equipo docente).

1.11. Coordinador/a de la asignatura

<https://autoservicio.uam.es/paginas-blancas/>

1.12. Competencias y resultados del aprendizaje

1.12.1. Competencias / Resultados del proceso de formación y aprendizaje

Esta asignatura presenta una introducción teórica y aplicada a las tareas de auditoría y asesoría lingüísticas. A lo largo del curso analizamos textos de distintos ámbitos profesionales para evaluar cómo estos reflejan la identidad de la marca a la que representan y encajan en su contexto

What we can take from this part of the study

- ✓ The majority of syllabi do lean toward inclusive or partially inclusive writing.
- ✓ The linguistic landscape:

Non-sexist 51.06% VERSUS Sexist 48.94%

- ✓ This suggests
 - ✓ A shift towards gender inclusive language
 - ✓ Relatively high awareness across instructors
 - ✓ Strong potential for institutional training to consolidate the transition

“IT CAN BE DONE” → “IT SHOULD BE DONE”

Analysis and results (Surveys)

(1) Sociodemographic data

- Gender
- Teaching experience
- Knowledge of the institutional guide

(2) Awareness, attitudes & perceptions

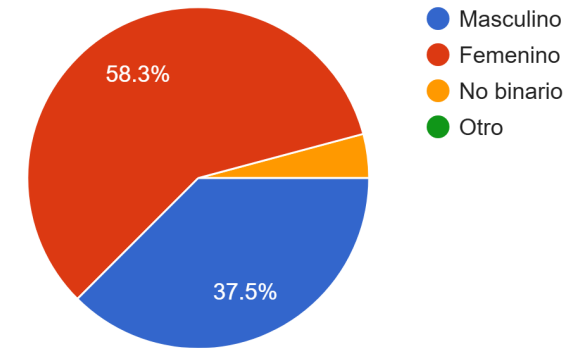
- Level of agreement with standard believes

(3) Self-reported practices of GIL

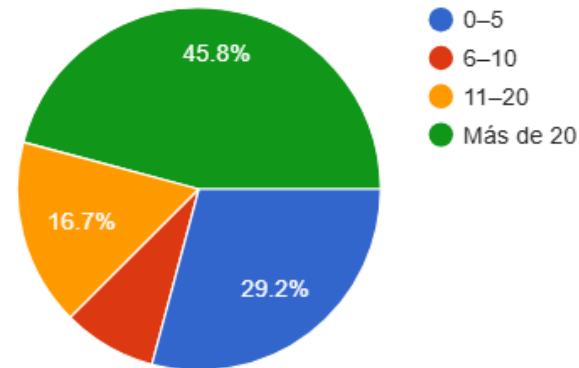
- In oral interaction (classes)
- In written documents (syllabi)
- Strategies used

(4) Training, dialogue & perceived barriers

Gender



Teaching exp.



Guidelines level of clarity: **4,47/5**

Guidelines level of applicability : **3,65/5**

Knowledge of guidelines



(2) Awareness, attitudes & perceptions (1 = disagree / 5 = agree)

	MEAN	IN A NUTSHELL
"GIL contributes to and promotes equality"	4.33	Strong general support
"Masculine generic is sufficient and does not need GIL alternatives"	2.33	Moderate rejection
"Inclusive language reduces readability"	2.21	Low readability impact
"Students expect GIL in the classroom"	3.50	Moderate belief
"I feel institutional pressure to use GIL"	2.42	Low-moderate pressure
"I would like to have further practical training"	3.08	Solid demand for training

COMMON BELIEF	MEAN	GENDER			TEACHING EXPERIENCE			
		Female	Male	NB	0–5 yrs	6–10 yrs	11–20 yrs	+20 yrs
“GIL contributes to and promotes equality”	4.33	4.43	4.11	5.00	4.29	5.00	4.25	4.27
“Masculine generic is sufficient and does not need GIL alternatives”	2.33	2.07	2.89	1.00	1.71	2.50	2.25	2.73
“Inclusive language reduces readability”	2.21	2.07	2.56	1.00	1.86	1.50	1.75	2.73
“Students expect GIL in the classroom”	3.50	3.29	3.67	5.00	3.29	4.50	3.25	3.55
“I feel institutional pressure to use GIL”	2.42	2.00	3.11	2.00	2.00	2.50	2.25	2.73
“I would like to have further practical training”	3.08	3.43	2.33	5.00	3.71	4.50	3.25	2.36

◆ Gender effects

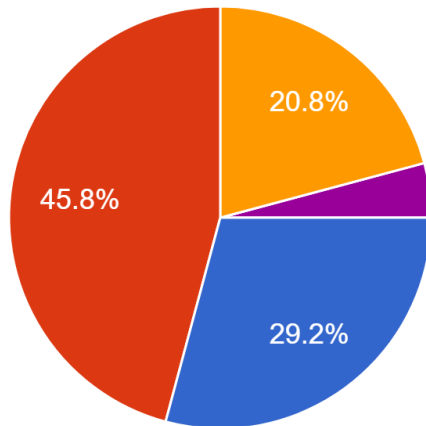
- Masculine respondents → more support for masculine generic, higher perceived difficulty, more pressure
- Feminine and non-binary respondents → more supportive of inclusive language, greater desire for training

◆ Experience effects

- Less-experienced faculty (0–10 years) → more inclusive, more willing to receive training, lower resistance
- Senior faculty (+20 years) → more traditional, more pressure felt, less interest in training

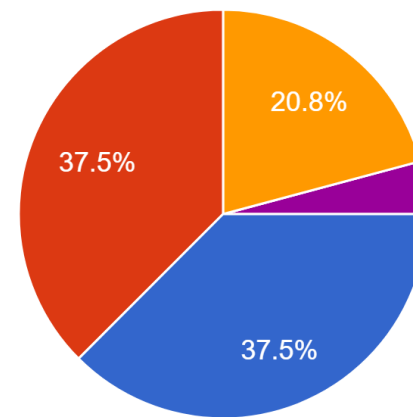
(3) Self-reported practices of GIL

Frequency of GIL in class



- Siempre
- Frecuentemente
- A veces
- Rara vez
- Nunca
- No me he fijado nunca

Frequency of GIL in documents



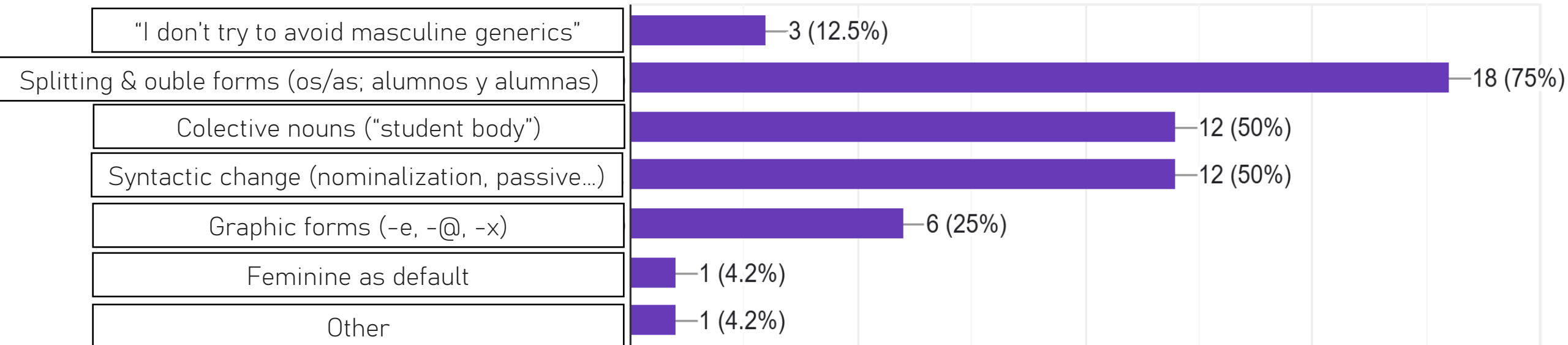
- Siempre
- Frecuentemente
- A veces
- Rara vez
- Nunca
- No me he fijado nunca

No correlation between GENDER, TEACHING EXPERIENCE and FREQUENCY OF USE OF GIL

Except for three outliers, RELATIVE HIGH FREQUENCY OF USE (“always” or “frequently”)

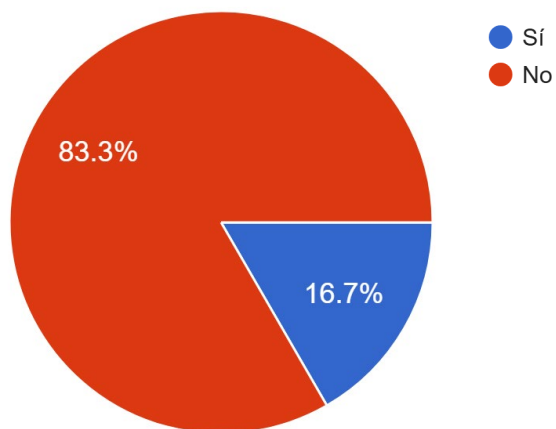
(3) Self-reported practices of GIL

- Chosen alternative(s) when they want to avoid masculine “generics”:

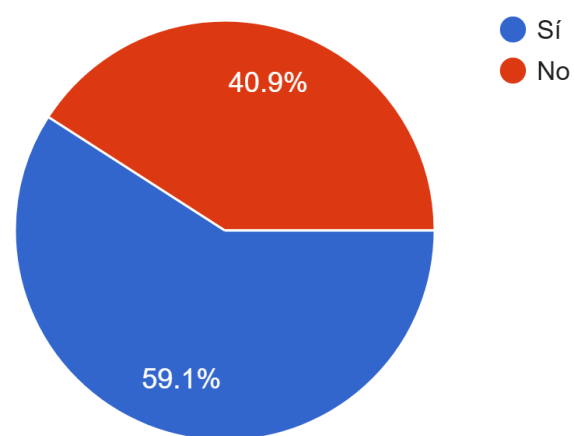


(4) Training, dialogue & perceived barriers

Have you received any specific training?



Would you like to receive it?



What are the main obstacles?

- Lack or habit
- Lack of training
- lack of clarity across guidelines
- Doubts concerning linguistic norm and acceptance
- Students' rejection
- Other teachers' rejection
- Lack of time to revise and learn

I believe that inclusive language *is not yet widely implemented* in actual practices and that *broader social awareness is needed beyond what the guidelines provide*. I think *many people do not want to be labeled as feminists*, either out of conviction or to avoid being singled out.

Linguistic practices and beliefs about language are generally not conceived as a space where social inequality is reproduced, *despite extensive research in sociolinguistics showing the opposite* — not only regarding non-sexist language, but also in areas such as linguistic racism or the ways in which language/variety correlate with social class and socioeconomic position. In other words, *many speakers do not recognize how deeply language participates in the construction and reinforcement of social hierarchies*, which *contributes to the persistence of this gap between institutional guidelines and actual linguistic practice*

It *is necessary to include non-binary people* and other gender-diverse identities.

The reluctance to attend training courses is mainly due to the *overload of teaching and administrative tasks*; under different circumstances, I would have no problem taking them.

Many *instructors believe that non-sexist language is a feminist exaggeration*; they either lack (or do not wish to develop) an *awareness of the importance of linguistic choices* in making certain groups visible and in shaping or dismantling ideological biases and social imaginaries. *The reliance on the linguistic norms imposed by the RAE does not help to narrow this gap.*

RQ3: Is there a gap between policy, declared practice, and documented linguistic reality?

- **Yes** — a clear and measurable gap exists, in three directions:

1. Policy vs. actual syllabi

- Institutional guidelines promote inclusive, non-sexist language.
- Many syllabi still contain large proportions of masculine universal forms.
 - Inclusive language is not yet fully institutionalized in written materials.

2. Declared practice vs. documented practice

- Instructors report more inclusive usage than what appears in syllabi.
- Self-report suggests commitment and awareness; syllabi reveal uneven implementation.
 - This suggests a gap between personal practice and formal documentation.

3. Attitudes vs. behaviour

- Many instructors believe inclusive language promotes equality, yet
 - senior faculty and masculine respondents still prefer traditional forms,
 - training uptake is uneven,
 - readability concerns remain strong.
- The gap is partly generational and partly ideological.

Conclusion and contribution to the field

Inclusive language is gaining ground, especially in oral use and among early-career instructors, but not yet fully reflected in written syllabi.

Knowledge of institutional guidelines remains limited, though instructors express strong interest in practical training.

Attitudes polarize along gender and experience: women, non-binary people, and junior faculty show strong support; men and senior faculty concentrate most resistance.

Inclusive practice exists, but inconsistently, and personal efforts do not always translate into the institutional documents where they matter most.

The gap between policy, practice, and documentation reveals the need for:

(1) clearer guidelines, (2) applied training, (3) revision of existing syllabi templates, (4) long-term cultural change within departments

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Thank you!
¡Gracias!

Questions? Feedback?

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