

¿Cómo suena la inclusión?

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Reflecting on the inclusive language and genre in Spanish

Keywords	Inclusive language; gender; ideology; linguistic power; reflection
Course(s)	SPAN 102
Class Time	50 Minutes

Outcomes

At the end of this activity, students will...

- Recognize that language structures (such as grammatical gender) can reflect social and cultural ideologies.
- Identify and compare traditional versus inclusive Spanish forms (e.g., -o/-a vs. -e/-x/@).
- Reflect critically on their own attitudes toward inclusive and non-binary forms of Spanish.
- Express informed opinions about the role of the RAE and how language change can support or resist social inclusion.

Resources

- Excerpts from ¿El español es una lengua sexista? (reading material)
- Online access to RAE (www.rae.es)
- Data extraction from my research about inclusive language in social media (X)
- Board, projector, or Padlet for class reflections

Procedure:

1. Warm-up: Language and Gender Brainstorm (5 min)

- Ask: “¿Qué palabras en español tienen género? ¿Qué pasa cuando hablamos de grupos mixtos?”
- On the board, list examples under masculino / femenino.
- Introduce inclusive alternatives (amig@s, amigxs, amigues) and invite quick reactions in English or Spanish.

2. Reading and Small Group Discussion (15 min)

- Students read selected sections of ¿El español es una lengua sexista?
- In groups of 3–4, discuss questions:
- How are genders assigned in Spanish?
- Is Spanish more sexist than English?
- Why do some people promote inclusive language?
- Each group shares one insight with the class.

3. Micro-Survey: Inclusive Reactions (10 min):

- Display inclusive forms: todes, amigxs, niñe, latin@, latinx, elle.
- Students rate each on a 1–5 scale for:
 - a. Intelligibility (easy to understand)
 - b. Comfort (comfort using it)
 - c. Acceptance (social acceptability)
- Pair-share: Which forms felt natural or strange? Why?

4. RAE Exploration: “¿Qué nos dice la RAE?” (10 min):

- In pairs, visit www.rae.es and search words (presidente/presidenta, bombero/bombrera, elle).
- Note whether the inclusive forms are accepted and discuss RAE’s reasoning.
- Whole-class reflection: “¿Creen que las decisiones de la RAE afectan la igualdad de género?”

5. Closure and Reflection (10 min):

- Individual reflection (Spanglish allowed):
“What surprised you most about today’s discussion? Do you think inclusive language helps create equality or causes confusion? Why?”
- Invite a few students to share their reflections aloud.

Additional Information

This activity can be adapted for heritage speakers, more advanced courses, or bilingual classrooms by expanding the RAE analysis to include media examples or tweets that use inclusive forms. It can also connect with later units on professions, allowing students to rewrite gendered sentences in inclusive forms.

Rationale

This activity implements key principles of (CLA) by prompting students to question how language encodes gender ideologies and by fostering reflection on the authority of linguistic institutions like the RAE. It encourages dialogue in both English and Spanish to empower multilingual voices, builds sociopolitical awareness, and connects linguistic forms to real issues of inclusion, identity, and power.

References

- Shapiro, S. (2022). Critical Language Awareness in the Classroom.
- ¿El español es una lengua sexista? (article)
- Henao-Muñoz, J., Guzmán Hernández, A., Torres Cirina, D., Kim, J., Acevedo Cardona, D. A., & Negretto, G. (2024). "Building a Repository for Inclusive Spanish Language to Develop Resources for Best Practices and Pedagogical Implementation.