

CAN A LEGAL DICTIONARY GO FROM SEXIST TO INCLUSIVE?: THE *DICTIONARY OF LEGAL TERMS* AS A CASE OF POINT

Eivor Jordà Mathiasen*

Abstract

Linguistic sexism can be present in any text, even in those that appear to be neutral. One clear example of this is dictionaries, as they exhibit a certain image of our society through multiple mechanisms, such as the selection of both entries and definitions. This paper analyses the *Dictionary of Legal Terms* (DLT) by Enrique Alcaraz Varó, Brian Hughes and Miguel Ángel Campos, and through this analysis the aforementioned mechanisms are highlighted. Furthermore, a comparative study of the 10 editions of the DLT allows us to observe how one particular dictionary's treatment of gender has evolved through the years and to determine to what extent the sexism that is implicit in language has been taken into account, both when the dictionary was being written for the first time and also during its successive modifications. Lastly, some alternatives are offered up, the use of which can help to avoid sexist language being included in dictionaries.

Keywords: Lexicography; bilingual dictionaries; law dictionaries; legal language; linguistic sexism.

UN DICIONARI JURÍDIC POT PASSAR DE SEXISTA A INCLUSIU?: EL *DICTIONARY OF LEGAL TERMS* COM A CAS D'INTERÈS

Resum

*El sexisme lingüístic pot trobar-se en qualsevol text, fins i tot en els que semblen neutres. Un clar exemple d'això són els diccionaris, ja que mostren un determinat reflex de la societat mitjançant diversos mecanismes, com la mateixa selecció d'entrades i definicions. Aquest article analitza el *Dictionary of Legal Terms* (DLT), d'Enrique Alcaraz Varó, Brian Hughes i Miguel Ángel Campos, i posa de manifest els mecanismes esmentats. A més a més, un estudi comparatiu de les 10 edicions del DLT ens permet observar l'evolució al llarg dels anys del tractament del gènere en un diccionari concret i determinar fins a quin punt s'ha tingut en compte el sexisme que hi ha implícit en el llenguatge, tant en el moment en què el diccionari es va escriure per primer cop com a les successives modificacions posteriors. Finalment, s'ofereixen algunes alternatives, l'ús de les quals pot ajudar a evitar que s'inclouguin llenguatge sexista als diccionaris.*

Paraules clau: Lexicografia; diccionaris bilingües; diccionaris jurídics; llenguatge jurídic; sexisme lingüístic.

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1 Introduction

Our contemporary society is, to a certain extent, aware of gender issues. Both the media and public opinion currently pay great attention to gender-related issues such as cases of gender-based violence. Governments and parliaments have also increased their own awareness of such topics and a number of countries have passed laws against sex-based and gender-based discrimination (see Burry & Prechal 2008 for a review of gender equality law in the European Union). Also, linguistics has evolved to pay greater attention to linguistic sexism, as it becomes increasingly aware of the key roles language plays in the transmission of ideologies. The world, as we believe it to be, is nothing more than a human construct. Thus, words become responsible for organising, categorising and classifying of the world we live in (Forgas 1996a). In the process of generation and dissemination of the social imaginary, words are fundamental weapons. Other aspects of language are indeed instrumental in conveying meaning (mainly grammar and discourse), but lexicon is of paramount conceptual relevance. As Calero (1999a: 149) points out, lexicon more than any other aspect of language contributes most crucially to the process of the generating ideology.

As tools for the transmission of words and meaning, dictionaries are cornerstones in this scenario, sometimes even becoming vehicles for linguistic reforms involving social changes (Moon 1989: 64). In this regard, multiple studies into the ideology present in dictionaries stress the fact that lexicographical works are always a reflection of a particular ideology (D’Oria 1988, Moon 1989, Desmet, Rooryk & Swiggers 1990, Pascual & Olaguíbel 1991, Jammes 1992, Kahane & Kahane 1992, Cowie 1995, Ezquerro 1995, Farina 1995, Fishman 1995, Gous 1995, Kim 1995, Wierzbicka 1995, Forgas 1996a, Calero 1999a, Hornscheidt 2008, Ogilvie 2013, Moon 2014, among others). Thus, each of these texts is the result of both a selection of words and a strategic preparation of how best to present the content (entries, equivalences, definitions, examples of use, references and labels). It is becoming increasingly obvious that the work of the lexicographer is not at all neutral. Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine to what extent lexicographers are slaves of their time as mere ‘use notaries’ (Pascual and Olaguíbel 1991: 81), or co-responsible for not only the particular use of words and senses but also their evolution.

Until very recently, Spanish lexicography had paid little attention to non-sexist language usage. However, the call for lexicography to account for gender has been made for decades in general (Graham 1975, Whitcut 1984, Kramarae, Treichler & Russo 1985, Benhamou 1986, Hennessy 1994, Hoey 2001, Williams 2008, among others), as well as specifically in a Spanish context (Hampares 1976, Sau 1981, Forgas 1986, 1996a, 1996b, 1999, 2001, García Meseguer 1993, Marco 1996, Olmedo 1996, 1997, 1999, Bengoechea 1998, Marco & Alario 1998, Lledó 1998, 2004, Calero 1999a, 1999b, 2001, 2006, Mediavilla 1998, 2002, Rubio 1998, Vargas 1998, Ribero 1999, Jiménez 2001, Andrés 2002, Guerrero 2004, Hernández Sánchez & López Martínez 2007, among others). Given the role played by dictionaries in transmitting meaning (which inevitably entails an ideological component), lexicographers must pay greater attention to the ideology implicit in any dictionary. In this regard, studies on dictionary ideologies (Pascual & Olaguíbel 1991, Kahane & Kahane 1992, Forgas 1996a or Calero 1999a) have repeatedly shown that lexicographical works reflect the prejudices and beliefs of their writers. Thus, each dictionary is the result of a deliberate selection of words and a carefully planned strategy as to how to present its contents. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the work of the lexicographer is by no means neutral. Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine to what extent lexicographers are *slaves* of their time as mere *use notaries* (Pascual and Olaguíbel 1991: 81), or co-responsible for those uses and their evolution.

In order to both analyse the ideological traits dictionaries and contribute possible alternatives to avoid sexist language in this type of text, we shall assess the 10 editions (from 1993 to 2012) of the *Dictionary of Legal Terms* by Enrique Alcaraz Varó, Brian Hughes and Miguel Ángel Campos (DLT). As an essential reference in English and Spanish bilingual legal lexicography, and thanks to its numerous editions and revisions, the DLT represents a very useful tool to assess how much attention lexicographers actually pay to issues of gender. Broadly speaking, we can state that the DLT has followed the Spanish lexicographical tradition in supporting linguistic sexism through mechanisms such as entry selection and ordering, the use of generic masculine, the wording of definitions, or the examples of use. While the 2012 edition incorporated several corrections regarding treatment of gender, it is also undeniable that some important aspects of linguistic sexism have not been dealt with and are still to be found in the dictionary.

The methodology used for this research has been a content analysis wherein all gender related terms contained in the 10 editions of the DLT were coded. As a result, all terms referring to any aspect of gender (including kinship relations, family ties, marriage, divorce, sexual offences, prostitution, abortion, sexual relationships, positive discrimination) were reviewed. This selection was based on the work of Lledó (1998) where the author analyses semantic groups of words where men and women are treated unequally. Furthermore, specific law-related terms were also analyzed. The table below shows the total number of gender-related entries found in each edition of the dictionary, both in the English-Spanish section and in the Spanish-English section.

	TOTAL NUMBER OF ENTRIES English-Spanish	GENDER RELATED ENTRIES English-Spanish	TOTAL NUMBER OF ENTRIES Spanish-English	GENDER RELATED ENTRIES Spanish-English
1 ^a	9000	146	12900	177
2 ^a	9000	146	12900	175
3 ^a	10800	150	15600	187
4 ^a	11300	165	15800	192
5 ^a	11300	165	15800	192
6 ^a	11700	165	15800	192
7 ^a	15000	208	23300	262
8 ^a	15000	208	23300	262
9 ^a	15000	208	23300	262
10 ^a	16500	233	24700	267

Table 1. Total number of entries vs. gender related entries

The table below shows the percentage of gender-related entries in each semantic field found in the DLT in both sections.

	English entries	% total	Spanish entries	% total
1) Kinship relations	9	5.2	9	3.3
2) Family ties	7	4.0	16	5.8
3) Marriage	52	30.1	85	31
4) Divorce	22	12.7	38	14
5) Non-marital relationships	4	2.3	15	5.5
6) Tax law	2	1.2	5	1.8
7) Positive discrimination	1	0.6	2	0.7
8) Sexual offences	20	11.6	19	6.9
9) Prostitution	17	9.8	20	7.3
10) Abortion	5	2.9	16	5.8
11) Male violence against women	5	2.9	8	2.9
12) Non-criminal sexual conduct	29	16.1	38	13.9
13) Homosexuality/Transsexuality	3	0	0	1.1
TOTAL	173	100%	274	100%

Table 2. Comparative of semantic fields of gender related terms in Spanish and English entries

In order to systematise our analysis of gender treatment in the DLT, we shall concentrate on the two main mechanisms which generally lead to a text having a discriminatory effect: concealing women and focusing on women. Regarding the concealment of women, one generally notes a scarce feminine presence in Spanish dictionaries, both from the quantitative and qualitative points of view (Rubio 1998). This derives from an androcentric perspective in lexicographical texts that designate men as subject par excellence. According to available studies (see Mediavilla 2002), Spanish dictionaries conceal women by resorting to a number of strategies. Firstly, by offering entries exclusively in the masculine or explained through a definition which refers to a masculine subject. Secondly, by limiting some semantic fields to the male sphere, such as ergonyms (words referred to professions). Furthermore, men are depicted in a wider range of age groups and social statuses in dictionaries (and the DLT, too), as if men inherently participated in a larger field of activity and women were relegated to a much narrower stereotype.

Likewise, multiple studies into lexicography and gender have found cases of bias (García Meseguer 1977, Violi 1991, Mediavilla 1998, Calero 1999b) such as highlighting certain semantic fields and associating them exclusively with the feminine. In this way, reality is presented from a partial perspective insofar as focusing attention on specific issues distorts reality as much as overlooking women and their presence in other social spheres and aspects of life. One such example in dictionaries is the disproportionate use of lemmas relating to specific semantic fields. In this respect, Lledó (1998) conducted an interesting study into the lexicon used in the DRAE (the official dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy of Language) to refer to women, in which she identified that women are subject to specific treatment in semantic fields referring to sexuality, kinship, marital status, certain degrees and professions, physical features, moral attributes and obscenities.

Such strategies are examples of *indirect sexism* (Mills 2008: 12), or sexism on a discursive level, which cannot be inferred from linguistic signs on a syntactic level (lexical or grammatical), but rather through assumptions implicit in the discourse itself. Indirect sexism is generally interpreted through the lens of intentionality since it is fundamentally based on assumptions or ambiguities. Mills (2008: 136) acknowledges that sexism has become more difficult to combat inasmuch as it is a complex and unstable phenomenon. One might liken it to an evolutionary survival process whereby sexism conceals and adapts itself so as to prevent its eradication. In the case of the DLT, indirect sexism basically manifests by presenting a stereotypical image of both men and women, an image which, as we shall see, is presented in different environments: occupational, family, sexual and partner relationships.

2 Forms of linguistic sexism in dictionaries

2.1 Concealing women

There are several mechanisms by means of which dictionaries conceal women and this is appreciable on different linguistic levels. As far as the grammatical level is concerned, the most powerful mechanism is the so-called ‘generic masculine’, by which the masculine is meant to encompass all genders. From those in the field of lexicography who advocate for non-sexist language comes the view that the generic masculine ends up offering an androcentric interpretation of the world in which women are obscured. As Lledó (1998: 49) points out when referring to the DRAE, there is a tendency to use a false generic masculine androcentrically, thus excluding women from speech and, by extension, from the world. Regarding indirect sexism, we will see that the most powerful linguistic tool used to conceal women is the exclusion of certain terms and even whole semantic fields from the dictionary. Just as noteworthy is the strategy of basing definitions and examples on male and female stereotypes reflecting a markedly patriarchal society.

2.1.1 Generic masculine

Until 2007, the use of the generic masculine in the editions of DLT was constant, most of the nouns and adjectives being presented exclusively in the masculine form. Nevertheless, the masculine as generic in Spanish was not used systematically in this dictionary, and in some cases we found separate entries for the masculine and the feminine. In the Spanish-English section of the dictionary, this was to be found in terms such as “*alcahueta*” and “*alcahuete*”, “*buscón*” and “*buscona*”, “*esposa*” and “*esposo*” or “*viuda*” and “*viudo*”. This is a potential source of confusion, since if the dictionary includes terms in the feminine, it may be understood that the masculine is used only to make exclusive reference to men. A further curiosity of this double usage in the DLT was its prevalence in terms relating to prostitution and marriage.

In the English-Spanish section, we predominantly found that equivalences for nouns and adjectives referring to persons of neutral gender in English were automatically presented in masculine in Spanish. So, we had “*agnado*” as the equivalence for “agnated”, “*juez*” for “judge” or “*violador*” for “rapist”. In the case of nouns with gender variation in English, the double formulation was reproduced in the equivalences. Some examples were: “*adúltero, adúltera*” for “adulterer”, “adulteress”, “*empresario, hombre de negocios*” for “businessman”, “*empresaria, mujer de negocios*” for “businesswoman”, or “*testadora*” for “testatrix” and “*testador*” for “testator”. As far as definitions in Spanish of the English entries are concerned, generic masculine was again the norm when the gender of the person was not specified. Therefore, it may be concluded that, as regards the Spanish equivalences and definitions of the dictionary’s English entries, the strategy of the authors was to reproduce the English style of presentation without paying any regard to the gender-related differences that exist between the two languages.

As far as the professional world is concerned, we could also observe how the Spanish ergonyms were presented exclusively in the masculine form in the DLT in every edition from 1993 to 2007. The dictionary yet again stuck to the tradition prevalent in the field of Spanish lexicography of making women invisible in any description of the working world (Bengoechea 1998, Mediavilla 2002). This must not be understood as a merely grammatical matter, as has already been commented on, as what is taken for granted is that men will be found in each and every professional sphere, but not necessarily women. Some examples of this were: “*abogado*”, “*empleado*”, “*empresario*”, “*fiscal*”, “*juez*”, “*letrado*”, “*magistrado*”, “*ministro*”,

“*presidente*” or “*procurador*”. The fact that no feminine ergonyms are included points to an increasing degree of anachronism. Moreover, the DRAE has already incorporated those words with complete normality. We could even go further and accept terms like “*fiscalía*” or “*jueza*”. Regarding this question, we agree with Hampares (1976) or García Meseguer (1977), who defended the prescriptive value of dictionaries; that is the value of dictionaries as transformers of ideologies, by means of which the presence of women in every professional sphere could come to be seen as normal.

In the last edition of the dictionary from 2012, we can see how the indiscriminate use of the generic male form in Spanish is extensively corrected. Every one of the Spanish entries automatically reproduces the *o/a* system as a means of showing the derivation in both genders. It is exactly the same in the case of the equivalents in the English/Spanish section, as well as for the majority of definitions and examples of use. In this way, when any noun is presented, it is clearly possible that the subject in question could be either a man or a woman; therefore, any of the aforementioned inconveniences caused by the masculine generic form are easily avoided. It should also be pointed out that placing the masculine “o” ending before the feminine “a”, as is the norm in the field of Spanish lexicography, breaks with strict alphabetical order and also still attaches greater priority to the masculine form. So, although the feminine form is no longer concealed, it is subordinated to a certain extent. Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that a considerable effort has been made in the latest edition to treat genders more equally.

The English lemmatization in the DLT has never been a problem as the feminine form of nouns (in the cases where this appears) has been reproduced (“*adulterer/adulteress*”, “*testator/testatrix*”, “*widow/widower*”) systematically since the first edition. Therefore, we see a better implementation of the *principle of gender neutrality* (Williams, 2008) in English than in Spanish throughout the dictionary. While it is true that English has an abundance of neutral words as far as generic terminology is concerned, when terms in English do possess grammatical gender, the DLT entries have always included both the masculine and the feminine. In the definitions in English for Spanish entries it has also been normal to use terms embracing both genders (for example, the second equivalence for “*padre*” as “parent”) or expressions including the masculine and the feminine (such as “husband and wife” for “*cónyuges*”). The exceptions are nouns ending in ‘-man’ (“*gownman*”, “*hangman*”, “*talesman*”, “*venireman*”, “*workman*”, among others) where there are only few feminine forms offered. Curiously, the feminine forms of both these lemmas in English and also of their Spanish equivalents (“*gownman*”, “*togado*”) are still absent in the 2012 edition, which represents one of the few remaining examples of the generic masculine still to be found in the present-day dictionary.

2.1.2 Other ways of excluding women from dictionaries

As has been pointed out, it is not only grammatically that dictionaries have chosen to conceal women. There are many other forms of indirect sexism that consist in taking men to be exclusive subjects of action while invisibilizing women invisible in the same domain. This can happen on a discursive level, when apart from the generic masculine terms are used that refer exclusively to men (such as “*padre*” in the singular) and make men out to be protagonists in the situation described. Thus, with indirect sexism, not only do women disappear from the dictionary entries, but they are not even included in the equivalences, definitions or examples of use. Furthermore, this enhances the association of activity with men and, women, if they appear at all in the definition or example, are relegated to passive, dependent or secondary roles.

If we take the entry “*alimento[s]*” as an example, we can see the effect of indirect sexism in a dictionary. In the example put forth in the Spanish (“*Los hijos tendrán derecho a recibir alimentos de su padre tras el divorcio*”), it is assumed that the wife will be granted custody of the children after divorce and that the husband will be in a better financial position, and thus economically support the rest of the family. The English definition on the other hand, states “[...] the duty ceases when the children come of age or become independent, and also if the dependent status of the former spouse is altered by remarriage or by significant improvement in his or her financial position [...]”. By comparing the stereotypes reflected in the Spanish example with the explanation in English, it cannot be determined which parent will be granted custody of the children nor which parent will have more purchasing power in the latter. Thus, whereas the Spanish definition reflects sexist stereotypes, the one in English remains neutral in this regard.

Another way of making women invisible in dictionaries is through unequal definitions for the feminine and the masculine. This is the case of double entries, when the dictionary uses an article for the masculine and another one for the feminine (for example, “*alcalde*” and “*alcaldesa*”). In the articles in the first editions, there was clearly a disparity between the amount of information given in both entries. The article for “testator” for example, includes the definition “*testador, el que hace testamento*”, while “testatrix” is only defined as “*testadora*”. However, in double entries that have been more recently incorporated into the DLT, such as “businessman” and “businesswoman”, the information presented is symmetrical (“*empresario, hombre de negocios*” and “*empresaria, mujer de negocios*”). Other examples of double entries where genders are treated equally are “*esposa*” and “*esposo*” or “*viuda*” and “*viudo*”. In the latest edition of 2012, the problem of double entries in the other editions was easily resolved by using single entries (with a double ending *o/a*), as is recommended in gender-sensitive lexicography.

Regarding apparent dualities, the DLT also offers definitions referring to different concepts for the masculine and the feminine. For example, in the articles for “*buscón*” and “*buscona*”, the first one is defined as “petty thief” and the second as “whore”. As we can see, the masculine is conceived as generic, while the feminine is a pejorative noun exclusively related to women. This example highlights another drawback of apparent dualities (see García Meseguer 1977), the issue that some words can no longer be used in the feminine form and retain a meaning equivalent to the masculine due to the pejorative connotation they have acquired. As stressed by Calero (1999b: 97), this circumstance frequently arises from the feature in question being considered a uniquely feminine failing inapplicable to men. Taking all this into account, the trend in gender-sensitive lexicography towards considering double entries to foster inequality in the amount of information offered seems reasonable, since the definition of the feminine is usually subordinated to the masculine. Therefore, the preferable option is a single entry that takes both genders into account within the lemma.

2.2 Focusing on women

Those within the field of lexicography who are demanding a non-sexist use of language in dictionaries point to one particularly striking phenomenon: although women tend to be invisible in dictionaries, in some specific spheres of life too much attention is paid to them. This ends up being a highly efficient means of retaining and reinforcing certain social stereotypes. Once again, this strategy can be found at the two levels described in the previous section: the syntactic and the discursive. As regards the syntactic level, we have made use in this article of the term *generic feminine* to refer to words that are used exclusively in the feminine form and that have the feminising effect wherever they are applied. In other words, the role of the woman as the main player is so greatly enhanced that men are emphatically removed from the sphere of action altogether. By using the generic feminine, then, the stereotypical role of the woman as mother, wife and, in some cases, prostitute, is reproduced while, at the same time, the man is excluded from these occupations. On a discursive level, the dictionary also provides numerous cases of entries, definitions, examples of use and references in which a skewed image of the role of women in society is offered.

2.2.1 Generic feminine

The DLT links some semantic fields exclusively to women, as has generally been the trend in Spanish lexicography. The first issue that must be addressed is whether terms are allocated to the domain of women due to stereotyping and if those words could also be used for men. Furthermore, given the specialised nature of this legal dictionary where one would expect technical or semi-technical terms, it is worth asking whether those other terms belong in this kind of lexicographical publication at all. Although these words could also appear in a legal text, the question is whether they actually belong in a general dictionary especially given their potential ideological charge. In semantic fields that are, apparently, exclusive to women, for example *maternity*, there can exist some spheres of action shared by couples that are overlooked in the DLT, such as paternity leave. Other fields, like prostitution, which apart from not being exclusive to women, can be dealt with respectfully without the need to add discriminatory or derogatory aspects.

The most outstanding semantic field reserved for women is the one referring to pregnancy and maternity (“bear”, “maternal”, “maternity”, “maternity leave”, “surrogacy”, “surrogate mother”, in English, and “*baja por maternidad*”, “*claustró materno*”, “*madrastra*”, “*madre*”, “*madre adoptiva*”, “*madre sustituta*”, “*madre*

sustituta o de alquiler”, “*maternidad*”, “*materno*”, “*matriarcado*”, “*matricida*”, “*matricidio*”, “*parto*” and “*permiso por alumbramiento*” in Spanish). Pregnancy is a phenomenon exclusive to women, so its ascription to the feminine gender is obvious. Nevertheless, it is not readily apparent why words like “*bear*”, “*claustrero materno*” or “*parto*” should be part of a law dictionary. On the other hand, when we search in all the editions of the DLT for terms dealing with the father-child relationship, we find fewer words referring to men (“*paternal*”, “*paternity*” in English, and “*padrastrero*”, “*padre*”, “*padre de familia*”, “*padre putativo*”, “*paternidad*”, “*paterno*” in Spanish). Curiously, the entries “*baja por paternidad*” or “*padre adoptivo*” are not present, although both concepts exist in the Spanish legal system since at least the year of the first edition of the DLT (1993). Furthermore, paternity leave has recently been the object of several legal amendments in Spain, all of which have been accompanied by subsequent social debate.

In many studies into lexicography and gender, frequent reference is made to the disproportionate attention paid by dictionaries to the world of prostitution (Marco & Alario 1998, Forgas 1999, among others). Regarding legal language, the only possible justification for inclusion of this semantic field is the fact that prostitution used to be a criminal offence. If we look at how Spanish law deals with prostitution we see that since the new Spanish Criminal Code was passed in 1995, the only offences sanctioned (in Sections 187 and 190) are incitement or intimidation to engage in prostitution. This means that since 1995 Spanish criminal law has not punished prostitutes, but rather pimps. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that any dictionary like the DLT can be used to resolve terminological doubts arising in texts that could have been written some time ago. Therefore, the dictionary should include a balanced content of both out-of-date and current terms.

The fact that dictionaries generally thoroughly cover prostitution denotes an interest in reproducing some stereotypes which show women as the object of sexual commerce. At the same time, connotation matters since synonyms of “*prostitute*” are still used to insult women. Therefore, lexicographers should be careful with this semantic field, because there are ideological reasons for its overrepresentation. The DLT only confirms this. We found that among all gender issue-related terms prostitution accounted for 7.5% of the Spanish entries and 10% of the English entries. Moreover, most of those words had been present in every edition from 1993 up to 2012. For example, the entry “*bawd*” was added in 2003, although the dictionary already contained “*bawdy*” and “*bawdy house*”. “*Prostitution*” also appeared in 2003, in addition to “*prostitute*” and “*prostitution ring*” which were already in the DLT. In the Spanish section, “*comercio sexual*” and “*prostituirse*” were added to “*prostíbulo*”, “*prostituta*” and “*prostitución*”.

The abundance of synonyms, archaisms, euphemisms and insults is also relevant to the issue of prostitution-related terms. The proliferation in the DLT of synonyms and derivatives (“*brothel*”, “*bawdy house*”, “*disorderly house*” and “*house of evil/ill repute*”, or “*burdel*”, “*casa de lenocinio*”, “*casa de prostitución*”, “*lupanar*” and “*prostíbulo*”) is unusually high when compared with other semantic fields. The amount of entries on a specific semantic field in a dictionary is highly relevant since a greater number of terms would imply greater relevance afforded to that field. When it comes to synonyms related to prostitution (such as “*bawd*” or “*alcahueta*”), we cannot find any justification for its overrepresentation vis-a-vis other semantic fields. Nor does it seem entirely justified for a legal dictionary to include euphemisms and insults. Nevertheless, we found expressions such as “*house of evil/ill repute*”, “*whore*”, and “*ramera*”. It should be noted that although some of the offensive entries, such as “*whore*” and “*alcahueta*” disappeared from the 2012 edition, the majority remain.

2.2.2 Other ways of focusing on women in dictionaries

On a discourse level, a dictionary can address female roles in many different ways. A skewed image of the role of women in society is apparent in not only the entries, but also the definitions, examples of use and references given by the DLT. Therefore, even though women are present in all of those sections, they are often assigned the role of merely accompanying men, as wives, mothers, etc. Furthermore, when women are centered it is once again limited to a handful of very specific domains: maternity, marital status and prostitution. In order to analyse indirect sexism, we shall first focus on the examples of use (both in Spanish and English) that reference women in some way and which appear in the DLT throughout every edition. The examples of use are meant to show how a term can be employed in context. The choice of the examples of

use, however, very often leads to a vision of society which is skewed, outdated and androcentric (see Lledó 1998, Forgas 1999, Rivero 1999, Calero 2001).

In examples of use like “It is unlawful to have sexual intercourse with a girl before she reaches the age of consent” for “age of consent”, stereotypes about gender relations are very much apparent in the DLT. Examples illustrating articles on marriage separation paint a clear picture of traditional marriage. Firstly, the text only refers to heterosexual marriage (ex. “care and control”, “file for divorce” or “*alimento[s]*”). Secondly, it is assumed that the lower social status belongs to women and, therefore, they are dependent on men. In these examples, we can also see the archetype of a woman whose main duty in life is to take care of her children. Last of all, the husband’s infidelity is curiously introduced as the cause of separation in various examples. This represents the stereotype of an active and polygamous husband as opposed to a passive and abandoned wife.

These examples also display an unbalanced image of sexual relationships. In these cases, Spanish dictionaries often offer the image of an active male and a passive woman (see Lledó 1998, Forgas 1999, Calero 2001), and the DLT is no exception. If we focus on the entry “carnal knowledge” (exemplified as “Carnal knowledge with a female under the age of consent constitutes rape”), we will realise that the passive individual is a “female” and the active individual is male. The same idea could be found in the example for “sexual advances” (“She rejected his most abhorrent sexual advances”). Lastly, it is surprising that certain terms in the DLT are illustrated through the indiscriminate use of examples relating to sexual relationships, whether they imply an offence (as in “molest”, exemplified as “He was convicted of molesting his two daughters”) or not (as in “sexual advances”, exemplified as “She rejected his most abhorrent sexual advances”).

Another recurring image that we found in the DLT was that of a woman playing a supporting role in a man’s life. This can be seen in examples referring to marriage and separation, where the husband is supposed to hold a higher position in the social scale and the wife is portrayed as dependant upon him. Curiously, one of the least varied elements throughout the many editions of the dictionary has been examples of use. This very likely reflects a view that examples are complementary and, as such, are not deserving of much attention. Nevertheless, examples of use can paint a very clear picture of certain, generally sexist, stereotypes.

Last of all, there is an interesting case of a sexist cliché in the DLT, namely in the example selected for “*acoso sexual*”: “*Hasta un chiste verde puede constituir acoso sexual*”. It is a very ambiguous expression that could be interpreted positively or negatively from a gender perspective. Therefore, we find it out of place in a dictionary, which should feature examples that help to clarify the meaning of entries in context so as to avoid ambiguity. Thankfully, this example of use was also replaced in the latest 2012 edition with another that does meet the criteria of those calling for non-sexist use of language in dictionaries: “*La insistencia en referencias al sexo puede constituir acoso sexual*”.

Looking beyond the examples of use, indirect sexism may arise in any section of the dictionary, particularly in the definitions. The entry for “date rape”, for example, contains the following definition: “*acusación de violación por el acompañante que la invitó al cine, a pasear, a cenar, etc. y se aprovechó de ella forzando las relaciones sexuales*”. This definition clearly reflects traditional gender stereotypes regarding relationships. The male is again the active party--the one with agency forcing someone into non-consensual sexual intercourse. The woman is shown only as an object of desire. Likewise, the term “ravish” is also defined in a sexist way: “*violar [a una mujer]*”. Last of all, in the reference to “sexual intercourse”, the definition “*conocimiento carnal con penetración en la vagina*” once again assigns the active role to the man and the passive role to the woman.

The entry “*amparo y dependencia de la mujer casada*” in the Spanish section deserves special mention. It was in the dictionary its first five editions before disappearing completely in 2003. Nevertheless, this expression is surprisingly back again in the current edition as the definition for “coverture”, a clearly obsolete concept in which women lost their legal status after marriage. The use of such a long phraseological unit is remarkable and we should be in favour of incorporating phraseological units in dictionaries). It could also be argued that a dictionary specializing in legal terms should include legal concepts from other times. Nevertheless, in our opinion, lexicographical studies should reflect first and foremost the society of their time. Therefore, we

consider that the inclusion of out-of-date words should, at the very least, be balanced with words that are in current usage.

3 Alternatives

Having seen some of the most relevant problems concerning the use of sexist language in dictionaries, it is now time to offer up some alternatives. When it comes to Spanish, we are dealing a language where gender is obviously very relevant to a high percentage of words and expressions. In this regard, it is then vital to heed the distinction between grammatical and social genders (even if though distinction as the dividing line is often blurry, such as in the case of the generic masculine). We have, moreover, seen how sexism often sneaks into dictionaries via another mechanism which is somewhat more complex than simply assigning a gender to a word: indirect sexism. It is a form of sexism that does not manifest through a linguistic marker, but rather is hidden in speech itself. Nevertheless, it is possible to use language in a non-sexist way by taking enough care to do so. Where dictionaries are concerned, and given the normative nature of the language, this possibility actually becomes a necessity.

In this article, we first dealt with linguistic sexism as expressed through the concealment of women. On a linguistic level, the generic masculine is the most widely-used and most efficient mechanism with which to make women invisible in texts. In dictionaries, there are several efficient mechanisms to avoid this grammatical “inconvenience”. In the latest edition of the DLT, we have seen how the problem was easily resolved as far as the entries are concerned, by introducing the double gender system “o/a” for the Spanish entries. This system should also be applied consistently in every possible section of the dictionary, such as the hyperonyms heading the definitions, the equivalents, the references or the examples of use. Regarding the generic masculine, the importance of its removal from the field of ergonomics cannot be overstated as it is a reflection of female presence in society. The generic masculine should not be ignored in the English language either, even though it is much less common than in Spanish and mainly employed in nouns ending in ‘-man’.

A second way of concealing women in dictionaries that we have also commented on is the use of indirect sexism, especially in the definitions and examples of use. This kind of sexism, as we have described it, consists of taking the man to be the exclusive subject of the actions and making the woman invisible within that context. We have seen some examples in the DLT where the man takes on role of head of the household or is shown as the only subject of certain actions. In these cases, the lexicography cannot make use of established linguistic rules (such as the introduction of the double gender system “o/a” or the use of neutral hyperonyms in the definitions), since the sexism is concealed on a discourse level. Future lexicographers will have to take great care to ensure that the way definitions are worded, or the examples of use chosen portray men and women as equals. This could be achieved by alternating the gender of the subjects of the actions and, more importantly, by avoiding the depiction of clearly discriminatory situations in the dictionary.

We have also witnessed how dictionaries can make women invisible by means of unequal definitions for the feminine and the masculine. This is the risk run by any dictionary when it resorts to double entries, which eventually turn into apparent dualities (that is to say, full entries for the masculine and shortened or complementary ones for the feminine). When this happens, the image inevitably transmitted is that of the man playing the starring role and of the woman as supporting actress. Nor does it seem to make sense to double the entries (one for males and another for females) if the content remains unchanged. This would only increase the size of the dictionary. Therefore, the most sensible solution is to offer single entries, provided the subject can be a man or a woman, and use the double gender system “o/a” both to mark the words and as neutral hyperonyms.

As has been highlighted in this article, sexism does not only occur within a text due to the absence of women; focusing on women in certain contexts may also be discriminatory. We have used the term *generic feminine* to refer to the phenomenon of using the feminine gender when the feminine is only employed for words belonging to certain semantic fields (such as the family, kinship or prostitution). The effect produced by this seemingly innocent mechanism is the re-enforcement of certain social stereotypes. Dictionaries should avoid this whenever possible. Once again, there is no absolute “formula” to avoid this. Rather it is up to lexicographers to analyse the discourse implicit in each expression to check whether the image portrayed

of the women is discriminatory. Moreover, proportionality seems to be of great importance. In other words, a woman should be the subject of an entry as often as a man and the semantic fields featuring one gender or another should not be determined by undesirable social stereotypes. Lastly, special care should be taken to avoid the proliferation of synonyms for certain words; otherwise, the relevance of that content will be magnified. And, of course, there is no room in a technical dictionary for archaisms, euphemisms or insults.

4 Conclusions

In analysing two main forms of linguistic sexism in dictionaries (concealing women and focusing on women), we have been able to observe that both are equally effective at reflecting gender inequality within those texts. The concealment of women in a text serves to highlight the central role men play in our culture (and not to construct a generic, as has hitherto been claimed). The opposite strategy, however, that of focusing on women, may be equally counterproductive when, as we have seen, magnifying the female presence in certain social spheres (and only in some of them) has a highly discriminatory effect that helps to perpetuate female stereotypes of women as wives, mothers and prostitutes. As words are the most conceptual elements of language, it seems clear that the lexicon is crucial in the construction of ideologies. Therefore, practical lexicography should commit to acknowledging its own responsibility in terms of the transmitting certain social values. Obviously, creators of dictionaries are not the creators of language as they are tied to an existing terminology and network of meanings, but it is also true that their role in sifting or interpreting meaning is instrumental in the transmission of ideology.

While analysing the DLT, we have been able to confirm that a non-sexist use of language has not been a key criterion throughout its editions (with the exception of the latest 2012 edition). Sexist language, both on a grammatical and discursive level, has been shown to appear and disappear randomly from the first edition in 1993 on through to the latest one. This underscores how appropriate handling of gender was not a concern for the dictionary until 2012. Nevertheless, the latest edition introduced some change in this regard, as we have been able to confirm that attention has been paid to the treatment of gender for the first time and some relevant modifications have been made. The first of these modifications is the single entry with a double ending “o/a” (thereby avoiding both the generic masculine and apparent dualities). Interestingly, upon avoiding the use of the generic masculine (by means of double ending or the use of neutral terminology), the effect achieved is that of enhancing the visibility of women to a great extent in any text.

What our research has been able to establish just as well is that the use of sexist language on a discursive level (indirect sexism) is more difficult to detect, and therefore correct. Hence the continued presence of numerous sexist expressions in the definitions and examples of use in the DLT, even in the latest 2012 edition. A case in point is the example use for the entry “*alimento[s]*”, which offers a stereotypical image of the woman as mother and dependent on the husband. By and large, we have seen that the examples of use have not been revised and remain mostly unaltered. Similarly, terminology that forms part of semantic fields traditionally attributed to women (such as the family or prostitution) still takes up a disproportionate amount of the dictionary. Although it is true that some of the offensive entries, such as “whore” or “*alcahueta*”, have been eliminated, the bulk of the non-specialised terms that offer a stereotypical image of women are still present in the DLT. These findings indicate that another revision of the dictionary, a major reference work in the field of language, is in order. Indeed, we subscribe to the view of Russell (2011: 5) who points out, “these issues of sexism and androcentrism in dictionaries should not be discounted as peripheral concerns to the lexicographical project at large”.

As Butler (1990, 1993, 1997) has aptly argued, language has a specific capacity (*performativity*) to model the world we live in and shape individualities as a consequence of the ability of discourse to penetrate reality. Nevertheless, this same ability can be seen in positive light if we consider it as a means not just to perpetuate but rather transform prevailing values. At the very least, a lexicographical study should reflect the complexity of the society to which it refers. In the case of gender, understanding that “relations between men and women are constructed rather than natural” (Cameron 1992: 4) is crucial when establishing the meanings set out in a dictionary. Therefore, whenever dictionaries are published, we must insist on text analysis from both a grammatical and discursive standpoint. This would allow us to correct traditions in Spanish lexicography that perpetuate sexism in speech while considering it to be a merely “linguistic” issue.

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