

Preservice Spanish teachers' perceptions on linguistic sexism: Towards the integration of norm and GFL procedures

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Abstract

This article examines preservice Spanish teachers' perceptions of linguistic sexism, norm, and use in Spanish. Analysis of 723 participants' answers showed that sexism and linguistic non-adequacy were associated. Results proved that the exclusion of women from the generic masculine in Spanish was considered sexist, and that participants used some Gender Fair Language (GFL) mechanisms to make women visible when deemed necessary, especially with professions. Also, regardless of its adherence to norm, linguistic sexism was perceived as grammatically wrong. Thus, GFL criteria were finding their way into use even if contrary to norm. Therefore, policies based on direct intervention in the training of preservice teachers Spanish as a first language would produce a more egalitarian use of language.

Keywords

Language Usage, Language Planning, Preservice Teacher Education, Sex Equality, Spanish Language

1. Introduction

The use of gender-fair language (GFL) procedures implies the speaker's recognition of language-inherent sexism as a factor contributing to social gender inequalities (Gabriel et al., 2018; Koeser et al., 2015), mainly in the use of grammatical masculine referred to both genders forms, known as generic masculine, in relation to groups that include

women (Parks & Robertson, 2004; Pauwels, 1998; Sarrasin et al., 2012; Swim et al., 2004) or trans-gender people (Patev et al., 2019; Tordoff et al., 2021). Fighting sexist language is key to achieving social change through language use, and educational centres appear to be ideal places for the dissemination of GFL. That premise is followed by a large number of linguistic studies which apply a gender perspective, and also by subsequent feminist language planning policies that have proven successful in GFL implementation and, consequently, in fostering equality in the social representation and visibility of women (Lomotey, 2015, 2018; Nissen, 2013, Winter & Pauwels, 2006a). Among actions to fight linguistic sexism, the focus is placed on those mechanisms that directly address speakers' habits. Some consist of the creation of morphological procedures for the feminine form or the modification of terms relating to prestigious professions or occupations, which normally appear in the masculine form (Budziszewska et al., 2014; Formanowicz et al., 2013; Gabriel et al., 2008; Horvath et al., 2016). Mercedes Bengoechea's work (2011) provided a comprehensive analysis of the difficulties of incorporating those alternatives into the use of the generic masculine in educated speakers' language, despite the profusion of rules and laws on the topic in Spain, as well as the publication of guidelines, style books and GFL manuals (Guerrero Salazar, 2007; 2013). To date, Spanish speakers have not sufficiently acknowledged those efforts (Lomotey, 2018; Maldonado García, 2015), and, specifically in the Andalusian educational context, GFL initiatives have been proven to be unsatisfactory (Cubero et al., 2015).

The present study seeks to address this research gap by examining the link between the standard norm and the perception of GFL procedures from the perspective adopted by preservice Spanish language teachers. Thus, it also highlights the privileged position that preservice teachers have regarding GFL dissemination. Additionally, this study

examines several factors that may explain some speakers' preferences for certain GFL procedures to the detriment of others. It also considers why preservice Spanish teachers incorporate GFL procedures that are not recommended under the grammatical norm. Therefore, the present study seeks to provide an insight into the results of GFL dissemination policies among preservice Spanish teachers of Spanish as a first language and modifications of some GFL procedures, not included in the standard norm, that enhance women's visibility.

1.1. Sex and gender in Spanish language

The Spanish Royal Academy of the Spanish Language (RAE) and the Association of Academies of the Spanish Language (ASALE) –which brings together 22 academies of the Spanish Language of Spanish speaking countries–, establish the Spanish standard norm in its diverse geographical varieties, which are the speakers' linguistic preferences transformed into models of good use. Even if researchers are far from agreement on labelling the Spanish language as sexist (Bengoechea 2008), there seems to be a certain degree of understanding regarding sexist discourse recurrent within the language (Márquez Guerrero, 2016; Medina Guerra 2016).

Spanish grammatical norm includes the use of the generic masculine. Thus, the use of alternative GFL mechanisms is considered an unnecessary circumlocution (RAE-ASELE, 2017). Briz Gómez (2011) established three categories of alternative GFL mechanisms: (i) expressly accepted by the RAE, (ii) not considered incorrect by the language academies, and (iii) labelled incorrect by the RAE.

Studies undertaken into the English, French and German languages have associated the use of the generic masculine with negative attitudes towards women (Parks & Robertson, 2004; Sarrasin et al., 2012; Swim et al., 2004). One example is the relationship between

the grammatical gender of occupations and their social perception (Budziszewska al., 2014; Formanowicz et al., 2013; Gabriel et al., 2008; Horvath et al., 2016). Sczesny et al. (2016) concluded that when the masculine is used, women are considered to be a less prototypical exemplar, and less adequate or less preferred for the job. Following this line, other studies show that the use of alternatives to masculine generic, such as the use of pair forms (*maestros y maestras*) or collective nouns (*el profesorado*) foster a more egalitarian representation of women (Chatard, et al., 2005).

A clear discrepancy is established between the academies' standard linguistic norm accepted by Spanish speakers and the actions of other institutions to modify the use of some morphological mechanisms considered sexist. While essays that consider academic standard grammar as sexist for ideological reasons are still numerous (Cárdenas Sánchez, 2015; Rubio, 2016, Medina Guerra, 2016), other studies relegate linguistic sexism to the discourse sphere (Márquez Guerrero, 2013, 2016; Cubero et. al., 2015; Llamas Saiz, 2015).

Considering that they certify speakers' language use, the position of the Spanish language academies regarding grammar will only change when most speakers, in their everyday natural use, understand that the feminine as a more adequate form than the masculine in certain situations and use it accordingly (Fundéu, 2019). Definitively, the use of GFL is an effortful personal decision, which can be fostered through its everyday use, in both oral and written expression, and which requires awareness of it (Sczesny et al., 2015). The resolve to use GFL can be strengthened by compulsory education centres.

1.2.Linguistic sexism and education

There is a widespread consensus that education centres are paramount in the fight against sexist language and its adverse social consequences. This is further highlighted

by the abundant regional, national and European legal instruments addressing gender equality in educational contexts (Balaguer Callejón, 2018). For example, the objectives of the Andalusian *Law for the Promotion of Gender Equality* include the eradication of sexist language (Junta de Andalucía, 2018). To that end, it provides for a coeducational expert committee to observe language use, as well as the inclusion of GFL within curricular content for teachers as initial and continuing professional education. At a national level, the *Effective Equality for Men and Women Act* pursues the implementation of GFL (Spanish Government, 2009). Finally, the recommendations of the Council of Europe for *Preventing and Combating Sexism* aim to provide guidelines for the integration of gender equality, non-discrimination and human rights teaching methodologies and tools into curricula at all levels of education (Council of Europe 2019).

When addressing GFL in preservice teachers for primary and secondary education, it is important to highlight the influence of the teacher on educational practice as a standard/more adequate linguistic model . Although a deeper research on the development and the evaluation of GFL interventions and the outcomes of GLF use in school textbooks has to be made, deliberate use and repetition of non-sexist expressions by teachers seems to be a “subtle and implicit way of promoting use of GFL” (Sczesny et al., 2016, p. 7). In this context, primary and secondary teachers face a dilemma: on the one hand, they cannot ignore the standard norm as a model for linguistic adequacy for their students; on the other, they cannot forget that education centres are a privileged space for fighting sexist language and attitudes (Pauwels & Winter, 2006). Teachers must identify the different ways of discriminating in use of language –it can refer to sex or to sexual preferences, among other things– in order to draw up working plans to help eliminate those uses (Quiles Cabrera, 2016). In summary, from a pedagogical

perspective, teachers must transmit and raise awareness of respect and equality by using GFL in the classroom, particularly by using those GFL alternatives to generic masculine that are already used by educated speakers (Winter & Pauwels, 2006b).

Research shows the fundamental role of education centres in the dissemination of GFL and, consequently the social perception of men, women and non-binary people, confirming that the use of GFL favours women's visibility (Chatard et al., 2005; Verweken et al., 2015) or lesbian, gays, transexuals, intersexuals or queers inclusion (Mitton et al., 2021; Tordoff et al., 2020). This is exemplified by the work of Dessel et al. (2017) which confirms that the language used by secondary teachers is a determinant for students' perception of their LGBTQ+ peers and the terminology they use when addressing those peers. There is also the work of Poteat et al. (2019) which states that teachers' oral interventions are an essential tool in order to fight homophobic language. Also, the masculinisation of teaching spaces, that is, the invisibilization of female students and the transmission of sexist stereotypes centred in male roles within the teaching practice, is fundamentally produced through language (Castillo et al., 2014). In this line, it was proved that female students received less information from teachers due to the majoritarian use of the generic masculine, as they confirmed that male students received prevailing communication and support from teachers through the use of sexist language (Castillo et al., 2014).

In university education and teacher training, studies on GFL use and its influence on students show a positive trend for certain contexts and languages (Sarrasin et al., 2012). Over the years, a diffusion of GFL use has been identified (Nissen, 2013), as shown by the use of the *at* symbol to refer to both sexes or, for Spanish speakers, the predilection for epicene nouns (Bengoechea & Simón, 2014). In the case of French, German or English speakers, studies have shown that students with negative attitudes towards

women found more difficulties in identifying sexist language and were more unreceptive to GFL (Sarrasin et al., 2012).

Unfortunately, research also highlights that university students still need to become familiarised with and aware of GFL. Patev et al. (2019) studied the link between use of GFL in everyday communication and factors that impede its dissemination, concluding that speakers found GFL use easier when their exposure to it was greater (Patev et al., 2019). The same study identified some of the impediments to the use of GFL, such as its difficult usage and the lack of specific rules on it, as well as linguistic tradition. In the Spanish context, Jiménez Rodrigo et al. (2011) identified language economy and the respect for grammar rules as main reasons for the lack of implementation of GFL among students. These results are consistent with those of Pauwels & Winter (2006) for primary, secondary and university teachers. The study showed that, unlike older teachers, younger ones with a less awareness of grammatical adequacy seemed to adopt GFL more naturally, as they used it more frequently and, as a consequence, they found it easier to use.

In the case of written productions, respect for the standard norm increases for both students and teachers. For example, Kuhn & Gabriel (2014) concluded that university lecturers avoided GFL in academic university texts, despite other variables favouring its use, such as higher linguistic competence or having received specific training in GFL. Also, XXXX (2020) analysed 187 academic texts produced by Spanish preservice teachers and their results showed the existence of a balance between the GFL guidelines recommendations and the standard norm included in the syllabus. Even if preservice teachers were aware of and open to GFL, they showed preference for the use of generic masculine when they considered that necessary and they did not recognise this particular practice as sexist language use. One of the main findings of XXXX (2020) is

that preservice teachers gave preference to those GFL mechanisms that followed the standard norm and which are included in the Spanish language school syllabus. Hence, these mechanisms offer enormous potential for transforming language and society.

In summary, the integration of GFL use in teaching practices has become one of the main assets when fighting gender stereotypes and has helped promote equality between men and women. Therefore, there is an apparent need to analyse preservice Spanish teachers' perceptions of sexist language and GFL procedures already included in the standard norm of Spanish language.

2. The present study

The first aim of this study was to investigate preservice Spanish teachers' perception on linguistic habits in Spanish language through relevant examples linked to linguistic sexism that lead to conflict between GFL mechanisms and the normative authority of the RAE and the ASELE. It also sought to identify the association, established in those examples, between generic masculine use from a grammatical perspective and its sexist connotations.

The study is based on the assumption that the training received by preservice Spanish teachers, from both a linguistic and a GFL use perspective, has resulted in the incorporation of procedures alternative to use of generic masculine for those educated speakers, and also in recognition of them as part of Spanish normative grammar. Also, this study is grounded in the idea that the linguistic model used by Spanish teachers as educated speakers is a determinant in the dissemination of GFL among students they teach. The present study explored, for the first time, the results of language education in relation to the linguistic sexism of university students of Philology, Communication and Education Sciences of the University of XXXX (Spain).

Specifically, the present study addressed the following three research questions: (1) Do preservice Spanish teachers of Spanish language perceive morphological procedures that include women in generic masculine as sexist? (2) Do preservice Spanish teachers avoid generic masculine and favour the use of GFL in Spanish language? (3) Does GFL modify the preservice Spanish teachers' perception of the grammatical contexts that they should teach?

3. Methods

3.1. Sample

The simple random sample used consisted of 723 preservice Spanish teachers ($M_{Age} = 21.61$, 84.1 % women). All participants were enrolled in the University of XXXX (Spain) as final-year undergraduates or Master's students during the first semester of 2019 and were training to teach Spanish as a first language.

Besides the high number of participants, the sample can be considered optimal for two main reasons. Firstly, all subjects were final-year Education Sciences students, or postgraduates from other degrees studying the Official Master's in Secondary School, Vocational Training and Languages Centre Teaching. Secondly, they all had completed internships in Primary or Secondary Education Centres, or Official Language Schools. Thus, they had experience of learning and teaching GFL processes included in the syllabus at different levels of education.

3.2. Rating scale

A scale entitled 'Norm, Use and Gender in Spanish Language' was constructed (<https://forms.gle/uJahfW4aeSuRUgy79>). It contained 35 items (37 items with a Likert scale of 1-5, with 1 being strong disagreement and 5 being strong agreement). The scale, designed and adapted to the Spanish language, was based on the *Gender-Specific Language Scale* (McMinn et al., 1994), the *Measure Attitudes Toward Sexist/Nonsexist*

Language scale updated and validated by Parks and Robertson (2000), and the scale *Detection and Use of Sexist Language* (Swim et al., 2004).

The objective of the scale was to analyse preservice Spanish teachers' opinions of the normative character of the mechanisms used to avoid the generic masculine included in GFL guidelines, as well as the perceived influence of those mechanisms on the subjects' everyday communication. Therefore, the scale established three a priori dimensions that dealt with participants' perception of each of the examples provided from three different perspectives. Dimension 1 was denominated *Norm* and dealt with the perception of standard educated Spanish norm. Subjects were asked about the adequacy of the examples in Spanish (*Is this sentence correct from a grammatical perspective?*). In Dimension 2, called *Use*, subjects were asked whether they would use that sentence in their own written or oral texts (*I would use this sentence in my oral or written texts*). Dimension 3, *Sexism*, reflected the perception of the examples as presenting sexist connotations in Spanish (*This sentence has sexist connotations*).

The validity of the method was determined after administering the scale using the Multidimensional Scaling-PROXCAL (Borg, Groenen & Mair, 2013; O'Hare, 1980; Rodríguez, Pozuelo & León, 2014). The reliability for the whole scale, estimated by a Cronbach's Alpha, was .82. The validity analysis of the scale with DAF and TCC statistics was adequate.

Table 1

Psychometric indicators (reliability and validity) referred to the scale.

Dimension	Cronbach's alpha	Imbalance measurements				Adjustment measures	
		NRS ^a	Stress I	Stress II	S-Stress	DAF	TCC
D1. Norm	.796	.006	.079	.122	.009	.993	.996
D2. Use	.737	.008	.087	.173	.012	.992	.996

D3. Sexism	.893	.008	.088	.174	.008	.992	.996
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^a Normalised Raw Stress

The rating scale was individually administered using *GoogleForms* and there was no set amount of time to finish it. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

4. Data analysis and results

Firstly, a descriptive analysis has been performed based on frequency distribution and averages and standard deviations for each item included in each of the three dimensions. Scores offered by using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test ($p < .01$) showed that the sample did not follow a normal distribution. That led to the application of non-parametric tests (Wilcoxon and Mann-Whitney U). The effect size of the differences among the three dimensions was examined using Cohen's d , as well as the correlation coefficient applying Spearman's Rho. The analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 22, in all cases except the Cohen's d test, which was calculated using the author's formula.

For reasons of convenience, item categories were established pursuant to their linguistic characteristics and sexist character in accordance with the inversion rule of Blakar (1973) and Meseguer (1978), on which GFL recommendations are based. The category *MascGen* included those items that used the generic masculine and common nouns without a determinant identifying them as female. Those that adhere to the standard Spanish grammar (*MascGen*) are distinguished from those that are not correct from a grammatical perspective, even if they are frequently used in Spanish (*MascGen**). If a radical approach on GFL is applied, all these examples are to be considered sexist as they foster women's invisibility under the grammatical masculine. The second category,

LengInc, comprised those examples that include women under the masculine grammatical gender and which are included in GFL. This category has been divided into four groups of items: those that use collective nouns and feminine epicenes (*LengInc*), those examples with an alternative in masculine (*LengIncF*), those advised against by the RAE as they are considered redundant (*LengIncR*), and examples of GFL which are grammatical or orthographically incorrect (*LengInc**).

Table 2

Statistical data categorised dimensions (mean and standard deviation)

	D. 1 Norm	D. 2 Use	D. 3 Sexism	Items
<i>MascGen</i>	3.78 (.77)	3.25 (.73)	1.85 (.79)	3, 5, 8, 9, 17, 20, 23, 31
<i>MascGen*</i>	3.45 (.79)	2.91 (.79)	2.72 (.85)	1, 2, 7, 19
<i>LengInc</i>	4.03 (.51)	3.65 (.52)	2.11 (.69)	11, 12, 18, 22, 28, 29
<i>LengIncF</i>	4.46 (.60)	3.94 (.70)	2.28 (.92)	4, 13, 21, 26, 27
<i>LengIncR</i>	3.74 (.43)	3.51 (.49)	1.59 (.63)	6, 10, 14, 15, 30
<i>LengInc*</i>	4.30 (.63)	3.71 (.73)	2.30 (.84)	16, 24, 25, 32

4.1. Preservice Spanish teachers' perception of linguistic sexism in the use of generic masculine

Each research question will be answered. According to the perception on linguistic sexism in the Dimension 3, *MascGen* (M= 1.85, SD = .79), results indicate that preservice Spanish teachers do not perceive those morphological procedures that include women in the grammatical masculine gender as sexist. The perception of linguistic sexism in the Dimension 3 rises in the case of those incorrect items included in *MascGen**, in which the mean reaches a 2.27 (SD= .85). It is paradoxical that preservice Spanish teachers willingly accept clearly sexist and incorrect constructions. Perception of sexism is increased when the determinant *el* appears in masculine in these

constructions, which is a morphological characteristic of the Spanish language. In an item-by-item analysis, it can be observed that the generic masculine referring to prestigious professions such as *médico* (M =3.22) and *juez* (M =3.54) is considered to present a higher degree of sexism when compared with others such as *músico* (M =1.38) and *asistente social* (M =1.80). Significant differences regarding grammatical adequacy were established ($p < .01$) by the Wilcoxon test ($Z = -18.238$), identifying in Dimension 3 those incorrect expressions categorised in *MasGen** (M= 2.72) as more sexist than those correct examples in the *MascGen* category (M=1.85), presenting a large effect size ($d = 1.060$). Significant differences according to sex (Mann-Whitney U) were only observed in five items in Dimension 3, all being examples of *MascGen*. Men perceived four of them as more sexist.

Table 3

Differences between men and women in Dimension 3. Perception of sexism in items in *MascGen** category

Items	Women	Men	Dif.	Z (p)	Women n=608	Men n=115	d
	AR	AR			M (σ)	M (σ)	
2	372.79	304.93	67.86	-3.309 (.001)	3.62 (1.397)	3.12 (1.528)	.341
3	355.99	393.80	-37.81	-2.006 (.045)	1.84 (1.222)	2.16 (1.473)	.236
9	355.84	394.54	-38.7	-2.071 (.038)	1.85 (1.258)	2.19 (1.550)	.241
19	352.17	413.96	-61.79	-3.005 (.003)	2.67 (1.537)	3.16 (1.657)	.306
20	354.94	399.31	-44.37	-2.461 (.014)	1.73 (1.229)	2.16 (1.615)	.300

Note: A.R. = average range; Dif. = differences; Z= Mann Whitney U test statistic; (p)= probability of occurrence associated with Z value; M y σ = mean and standard deviation; d= Cohen's value

Finally, an unexpected result appeared in the Dimension 3 analysis. The first research question underlies the hypothesis of the association of the generic masculine with linguistic sexism, perceived as excluding and opposing inclusive language. However, in

the *LengInc* category, a remarkable number of participants gave all items marks from 3 to 5 points systematically, that is, they perceived GFL mechanisms as sexist.

A mean of 40.19% of the participants perceived linguistic sexism in the examples in the feminine for which there is an alternative in Spanish grammar included in *LengIncF*.

For item 26, the percentage increased to more than half of the sample, as 393 participants perceived linguistic sexism in the feminine term *jueza*, a prestigious occupation for which the feminine *la juez* is also correct. Examples of GFL included in *LengInc**, which are incorrect from a grammatical or orthographical point of view, were perceived as sexist by a mean of 39.76% of the participants. This perception reached its highest in item 16 with 472 preservice teachers considering it sexist.

Perception of sexism appears to a lesser degree in those examples of GFL that are correct from a grammatical or orthographical point of view and included in *LengInc*, reaching a mean of 33.44% of participants. It also features in the use of pair forms and explicative appositions deemed redundant by the RAE contained in *LengIncR*, with a mean of 28.04% of subjects.

Data show that more than a third of the participants systematically considered that the examples included in *LengInc* that make women visible are another form of linguistic sexism. This trend became more acute in the examples that were further from the Spanish linguistic standard norm and the preferences of the RAE.

4.2. Preservice Spanish teachers' GFL use

To answer the second research question, which examines whether participants avoid the use of the generic masculine in favour of GFL, Dimension 2 (*Use*) data were analysed.

A significance level $p < .01$ was obtained through the application of the Wilcoxon test to

compare the means of all items using generic masculine, *MascGen* and *MascGen** (M= 3.09, SD= .550) with all those using GFL, *LengInc*, *LengIncF*, *LengIncR* and *LengInc** (M= 3.70, SD= .471). Therefore, participants had a greater perception of the use of GFL than they did of the generic masculine, regardless of grammatical adequacy. The *d* Cohen tests scores 1.19, which is considered to be a very large size effect ($d=12$). Spearman's Rho between the use of *MascGen* (generic masculine) and *LengInc* (GFL) ($r = .423^{**}$, $p < 0.1$) indicated a positive correlation. This confirmed that when the generic masculine is used, its inclusive component is also considered.

To examine generic masculine use, the analysis was replicated with the examples of *MascGen* (M=3.25, SD= .73) and *MascGen** (M=2.91, SD = .79). Significant differences were found ($Z = -8.769$), scoring $p < .010$, which show that those sentences using generic masculine which are grammatically correct are more frequently used than those that are incorrect, with a moderate size effect ($d = .45$).

The analysis of the use of GFL for Dimension 2 *Use*, referred to the items included in *LengInc* (M = of 3.65, SD = .52) and in *LengIncR* (M= 3.51, SD = .49), confirmed a preference for collective nouns and feminine epicenes over the use of pair forms in the same sentence, considered redundant by the RAE. A trend favouring collective nouns was identified ($Z = -5.991$, $p < .01$), with a small size effect ($d = .227$).

Those examples in *LengInc**, which used GFL considered incorrect by the RAE, presented a higher frequency use ($X=3.71$ y SD= .73) than those items included in *LengIncR* (M = 3.51, SD = .49), which were considered redundant. The effect size was small ($d = .321$).

Wilcoxon signed rank test showed significant differences between dimensions 2 *Use* ($M = 3.60$) and 3 *Sexism* ($M = 2.08$). With a trend towards *Use* ($Z = -22.17$, $p < .01$), a huge size effect was identified ($d = 2.88$). Finally, Spearman's rho test shows a negative correlation between Dimensions 2 *Use* and 3 *Sexism* ($r = -.209^{**}$). Data indicate that the greater the sexist connotation observed in the sentence, the lower its use (Table 4). Consequently, participants avoided the use of those sentences they consider sexist.

4.3. Preservice Spanish teachers' perception of GFL and grammar

Data obtained from the descriptive analysis of Dimension 1 *Norm*, including GFL examples whose use is not recommended or is incorrect, *LengIncR* and *LengInc**, clearly show a high perception of the normative character of these examples, as opposed to the RAE's criteria. It is paradoxical that, even if participants are preservice teachers with a solid linguistic education, *LengInc** presented a higher mean ($M = 4.30$, $SD = .63$) than *LengIncR* ($M = 3.74$, $SD = .43$).

Also, significant differences were identified between *LengInc* and *LengIncF* ($Z = -19.481$, $p < .01$). The use of pair forms or the @ symbol was deemed as more correct to refer to both men and women, with a large size effect ($d = 1.04$). Data indicate that participants considered normative examples of use that are currently not recommended or not included in Spanish standard grammar or orthography. All items regarding GFL showed similar results, except item 11.

Results reveal that participants tended to consider GFL procedures correct, whether or not they are accepted by the RAE. No significant differences regarding sex were found according to the Mann-Whitney U test, or in the item-by-item analysis. The Wilcoxon signed rank test showed significant differences between dimensions 1 *Norm* ($M = 4.07$)

and 3 *Sexism* ($M = 2.08$), ($Z = -23.24$, $p < .05$), favouring *Norm* with a large size effect ($d = 1.07$).

Spearman's rho showed a negative correlation between Dimensions 1 *Norm* and 3 *Sexism* ($r = -.226^{**}$, $p < .01$). As in the previous section, it was established that participants tended to consider GFL mechanisms correct, regardless of the RAE's opinion. It can also be stated that the closer to the normative standard the examples are, the less sexist they are deemed.

Table 4

Sum of the statistical analysis applied to the three dimensions (mean, Spearman's rho, Wilcoxon and Cohen's d)

Dimension	M D1/D2	ρ	Z	p	d
Use*Norm	3.60 / 4.07	.616 ^{**}	-22.17 ^b	.00	1.08
Use*Sexism	3.60 / 2.08	-.209 ^{**}	-23.04 ^b	.00	2.88
Norm*Sexism	4.07 / 2.08	-.226 ^{**}	-23.24 ^b	.00	1.07

^{**}. Correlations are significant in level 0.01 (bilateral). b based on positive ranges.

Regarding the normative aspect, significant differences between men and women were identified in items 3 ($p = .00$), 9 ($p = .00$), 20 ($p = .01$), 21 ($p = 0.3$), 22 ($p = .02$) and 27 ($p = .04$). However, they all presented small size effects, between .25 and .36. With the exception of 27, women considered all items more grammatically correct.

Table 5

Differences between men and women in Dimension 1 of the items included in *LengInc*

Items	Women		Men		Z (p)	Women n=608	Men n=115	d
	AR	AR	Dif.	M (σ)		M (σ)		
3	373.54	300.98	72.56	-3.52 (.00)	3.05 (1.58)	2.48 (1.61)	.36	

9	373.73	299.97	73.76	-3.59 (.00)	3.00 (1.61)	2.41 (1.64)	.36
20	368.63	326.93	41.7	-2,43 (.01)	4.42 (1.07)	4.02 (1.50)	.31
21	367.76	331.53	36.23	-2,12 (.03)	4.42 (1.07)	4.10 (1.42)	.25
22	369.24	323.70	45.54	-2,37 (.02)	4.01 (1.40)	3.70 (1.52)	.21
27	357.37	386.47	-29.1	-2,01 (.04)	4.71 (.66)	4.83 (.55)	.20

Note: AR.= average range; Dif. =differences; Z= Mann Whitney U test statistic; (p)= probability of occurrence associated with Z value; M and σ = mean and standard deviation; d= Cohen's value.

The Wilcoxon signed rank test showed significant differences between Dimensions 1 *Norm* (M = 4.07) and 2 *Use* (M = 3.60), (Z = .616, p < .01), favouring *Norm* with a large size effect (d = 1.08) (Table 4). Spearman's rho showed a positive correlation between Dimensions 1 *Norm* and 2 *Use* (r = .616**, p < .01). Consequently, participants made more frequent use of those sentences deemed to follow the grammatical norms.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The current study aimed to shed light on preservice Spanish teachers' perception of linguistic sexism in Spanish language. It analysed the associations they made between norm, use, and linguistic sexism through a descriptive transectional study.

Results obtained showed that participants preferred to use expressions perceived as correct and included in normative Spanish while simultaneously seeking to avoid those expressions considered sexist. Morphological procedures including women in the masculine grammatical gender were not perceived as sexist and exclusionary, but rather as part of the Spanish standard norm. Therefore, their use was not restricted.

The present study has demonstrated that preservice Spanish teachers favour the use of GFL expressions that make the presence of women explicit, especially when referring to prestigious professions or occupations such as *juez* or *maestro*. This corroborates findings of previous studies regarding the importance of using feminine nouns for prestigious professions in such a way that a woman can be considered a prototypical

member of that profession (Sczesny et al., 2016; Budziszewska et al., 2014; Formanowicz et al., 2013; Horvath et al., 2016). Unexpectedly, there are some exceptions such as *médico*, in which no sexist bias is perceived when using the masculine form to address women, even if those exceptions are incorrect from a Spanish grammatical perspective. Similarly, some GFL mechanisms contrary to the Spanish normative grammar and orthography were accepted, such as using the *at* symbol as a gender morpheme including masculine and feminine forms. The results obtained supported the phenomenon of the acceptance of grammatically rejected procedures that was observed by Nissen (2013), confirming that tendency among preservice teachers. Results showed that a significant part of the sample presented some kind of reverse linguistic sexism that does not perceive the generic masculine as discriminatory, in keeping with the results of XXXX (2020) for academic language, and contrary to those of Sarrasin et al. (2012), Swim et al. (2004) and Parks & Robertson (2004). Even if their aim is to fight linguistic sexism, those GFL procedures that the RAE considers redundant and unnecessary, produce an unfortunate effect of reverse sexism, as they are perceived as sexist. That is, participants, who see the use of the generic masculine in Spanish as neutral, systematically rejected the use of GFL. This is coherent with the RAE's thesis and reinforces the idea that some GFL procedures do not succeed because they are opposed to grammatical norms (Jiménez Rodrigo et al., 2011). Thus, participants considered the exclusion of women from the generic masculine form sexist. Our study revealed that from a normative grammatical perspective, the GFL procedure presenting a higher degree of acceptance among the participants is the use of collective nouns and feminine epicenes, which are grammatically correct and accepted by the RAE provided they are not overused. These findings corroborate the tendency observed by Bengoechea and Simon (2014) and are coherent with previous research (XXXX,

2020), which supports these procedures being chosen on the basis of language economy as opposed to alternatives like pair forms.

Despite Spanish grammatical norm, participants deemed those uses that they perceived as non-sexist as being normative and correct in Spanish. Conversely, therefore, it can be stated that preservice Spanish teachers associate sexism with linguistic non adequacy.

The behaviour identified in teachers by Pauwels and Winter (2006) was also seen here, with those subjects who were further from the grammatical norm showing a more extensive use of GFL procedures, which can be attributed solely to the perception of linguistic sexism as grammatically wrong in Spanish, regardless of whether the expressions used observe the grammatical norm. This is a fundamental conclusion for this study as it points the way for the Spanish grammatical norm to develop taking into account the perception of linguistic sexism.

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