

Sexism in the *Daily Express*

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Theoretical Framework	3
2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)	4
2.2 Feminist Linguistics (FL)	5
2.3 Asymmetrical treatment of genders	6
2.4 Types of linguistic sexism	7
2.5 Similar research on the topic	10
3. Methodology	12
3.1 Corpus	12
3.2 Data Collection	12
4. Results and Discussion.....	16
4.1 ILS and non-sexist alternatives in 1996 and 2016.....	16
4.2 Androcentric pronouns in 1996 and 2016.....	17
4.3 Androcentric constructions in 1996 and 2016	19
4.4 Ordering of words in 1996 and 2016	22
4.5 Courtesy titles in 1996 and 2016	24
4.6 Derivational suffixes in 1996 and 2016.....	26
4.7 Sexual stereotyping in 1996 and 2016.....	27
4.7.1 Irrelevant reference to parenthood in 1996 and 2016.....	28
4.7.2 Irrelevant reference to physical appearance in 1996 and 2016	29
4.7.3 Different conception of genders in 1996 and 2016	30
4.7.4 Different representation of genders in 1996 and 2016	33
4.7.5 Presence of <i>Housewife</i> in 1996 and 2016.....	34
4.8 Irrelevant reference to gender	34
4.9 Summary of the analysis.....	36
5. Conclusions	38
6. Bibliography.....	39

List of Tables and Figures

Table 1. ILS and alternatives in 1996 and 2016.....	16
Table 2. Androcentric pronouns and alternatives in 1996 and 2016.....	17
Table 3. Androcentric constructions and alternatives in 1996 and 2016	19
Table 4. Policeman/-men vs. Officer/s in 1996 and 2016	21
Table 5. Ordering of words in 1996 and 2016.....	22
Table 6. Sexist courtesy titles and alternatives in 1996 and 2016.....	24
Table 7. Derivational suffixes and alternatives in 1996 and 2016	26
Table 8. Sexual stereotyping in 1996 and 2016.....	28
Table 9. Irrelevant reference to parenthood in 1996 and 2016.....	28
Table 10. Irrelevant reference to physical appearance in 1996 and 2016	29
Table 11. Irrelevant reference to gender in 1996 and 2016.....	35
Figure 1. ILS and alternatives in 1996	16
Figure 2. ILS and alternatives in 2016	16
Figure 3. Androcentric constructions and alternatives in 1996.....	19
Figure 4. Androcentric constructions and alternatives in 2016.....	19
Figure 5. Policeman/-men vs. Officer/s in 1996.....	21
Figure 6. Policeman/-men vs. Officer/s in 2016.....	21
Figure 7. Ordering of words in 1996	22
Figure 8. Ordering of words in 2016	22
Figure 9. Courtesy titles and alternatives in 1996	24
Figure 10. Courtesy titles and alternatives in 2016	24
Figure 11. Derivational suffixes and alternatives in 1996.....	26
Figure 12. Derivational suffixes and alternatives in 2016.....	26

Abstract: The purpose of this piece of research is to ascertain whether there is a decrease in the presence of linguistic sexism in twelve newspapers from the *Daily Express* published in 2016 in contrast to twelve from 1996. This study is approached from the perspectives of Critical Discourse Analysis and Feminist Linguistics, according to which discourse both constructs and reflects reality, and, as consequence, gender inequalities. This research focuses on seven instances of linguistic sexism and aims to study whether their presence is lower in 2016 than in 1996. Results show an observable decrease in linguistic sexism in publications from 2016, which is interpreted as the effect of the impact of feminism in the last 20 years.

1. Introduction

The current research aims to study the evolution of sexist language in the British tabloid the *Daily Express* from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Feminist Linguistics (FL). Based on the assumption that language both conveys and reinforces the values of a given society (Laine & Watson, 2014: 1), this study considers discourse in the press a powerful means of promoting as well as eradicating sexist tendencies on language. CDA sees discourse as a ‘social practice’ capable of both reproducing the status quo as well as transforming it (Wodak, 1996: 17 cited in Wodak, 1997: 6). Being aware of this may lead us to avoid certain expressions which involve the use of different types of linguistic sexism, among which the current study considers the following seven: I. The use of male pronouns as false generics (e.g. *he, his, himself*), II. Constructions with *-man/men* (e.g. *policemen, chairman, etc*), III. Systematic male-first order of words (e.g. *Brian McAllister, 54, and wife Margaret*), IV. The use of the sexist courtesy titles *Mrs* and *Miss* to refer to women instead of the non-sexist *Ms*, V. Derivational suffixation for female words (e.g. *Princess of Wales*), VI. The use of female nouns preceding dual words to indicate gender (e.g. *a woman driver*) and finally VII. The use of certain words denoting sexual stereotypes (e.g. *the bubbly blonde*).

The main objective of this research is to consider whether there has been a decrease in the presence of the previously mentioned types of linguistic sexism in twenty years (1996 and 2016) in the British tabloid *Daily Express*. The research question of the study is the following: Is there an observable decrease in the presence of linguistic sexism in the most recent publications of the *Daily Express* in contrast to those from 20 years ago? The hypothesis of the study is that there will be a decrease in the occurrences of some of these linguistic sexism whereas others will be more resistant to change. The use of male pronouns as generics, constructions with *-man/men*,

the presence of female nouns preceding dual nouns and the use of words denoting sexual stereotypes are expected to show a decrease in time because their use has an overtly sexist effect on discourse. The systematic male-first order, a predominant use of *Miss/Mrs* in contrast to the non-sexist *Ms* and derivational suffixation to indicate female gender are not expected to show a great contrast in these twenty years. Their presence in the most recent publications is expected to be high because despite being sexist, their use does not imply the disappearance of the female gender in discourse, as happens with other instances of linguistic sexism of this study. The use of derivational suffixes indicating female gender in particular is not expected to show a great decrease because when these words are used in isolation (e.g. *The Princess, the Duchess*) provide information about the gender of the individual they are referring to. Using the non-sexist *The Prince* in isolation to referring to a female individual may possibly confuse the interlocutor or reader.

2. Theoretical Framework

This research focuses on the presence of different types of linguistic sexism in the British tabloid *Daily Express*. The study belongs to the fields of Critical Discourse Analysis and Feminist Linguistics. CDA is a linguistic discipline ‘concerned with analysing [...] structural relationships of dominance, power and control as manifested in language’ (Wodak and Meyer, 2001: 2). FL conceives language as a ‘symbolical reflection of androcentric structures’ (Wodak, 1997: 10). The concept of structure appears in both definitions, which in this particular case relates to the hierarchical relationship existing between the two categories male/female both in language and society.

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA is a field in linguistics which takes interest in the relation between language and power. It aims to critically investigate social inequalities as they are expressed and legitimized in discourse. The starting point of CDA is the assumption that discourse is both 'socially constituted as well as socially conditioned' (Wodak, 1997: 6). This comment on the nature of discourse relates to the notion of 'discourse as social practice', a central concept in CDA studies. The relation of discourse and society as understood by CDA is captured in the previous definition: discourse is produced by a society with certain values and hierarchies which are ultimately mirrored in discourse (socially conditioned), and, at the same time, discourse offers the opportunity of transforming these values and hierarchies (socially constitutive). According to CDA, social inequalities are reproduced and promoted in discourse. Being aware of the presence of such social inequalities at a linguistic level may be considered useful to start denouncing and, eventually, may contribute to their eradication in society. The goals of CDA may be summarized as follows: 'CDA starts prevailing social problems and chooses the perspective of those who suffer the most and critically analyses those in power, those who are responsible and those who have the means and the opportunity to solve such problems' (van Dijk, 1986: 4). In the current research, women are 'those who suffer the most' due to their discriminatory representation in language and discourse. Van Dijk, whose research in critical discourse studies focus on the relations between power, discourse and ideology, understands the nature of *the news* 'as a journalistic discourse [...] which plays a crucial role in mass communication' (van Dijk, 1990: 18). The crucial role to which Van Dijk refers comes precisely from this double nature of discourse understood as being both *socially conditioned* and *socially constitutive*: journalistic discourses are socially conditioned to certain ideologies,

values, dominant groups and hierarchies and at the same time offer the opportunity to challenge them.

2.2 Feminist Linguistics (FL)

FL is concerned with gender differences in conversation, discourse (oral and written) and language systems. The current research is focused on instances of linguistic sexism both in written discourse as well as in the English language system. FL takes interest into a wide range of gender differences such as ‘voice, pronunciation, choice of words, argumentation, lexicon, syntax, interaction and conversational behavior, [...] visual features and modes of non-verbal communication’ (Wodak, 1997: 11). Assuming that the relationship between the two categories ‘female’ and ‘male’ in language is not equal but hierarchical, feminist scholars in every field seek to unveil and criticize androcentric views which in the case of language systems usually take the form of linguistic sexism in order to denounce their discriminatory nature against women. From a feminist perspective, language is considered to be ‘a symbolical reflection of androcentric structures’ (Günther and Kotthoff, 1991: 7 in Wodak, 1997: 10) in which the representation of women and men is not an equalitarian one. As will be commented in section 2.3 (Asymmetrical Treatment of Genders), English language system has morphological rules which work according to a sexist logic where the category ‘male’ is the norm and the category ‘female’ represents the ‘other’, the ‘abnormal’, the ‘marked’ version (1997: 7). Considering the historical role of men as ‘norm-makers’ may give the clue to understanding such an asymmetrical treatment of the two categories: ‘men signaled their authority in language through their roles in the dictionary-making process, in the writing of normative grammars, in the establishment of language academies and other normative language institutions and through their involvement in language planning activities’ (Holmes, J. & Meyerhoff, M. 2003: 550). It was in 1970s

that the feminist linguistic movement started to challenge male dominance in language regulation and denounced that many linguistic rules and norms had a gendered nature such as sex-indefinite *he*, which was denounced in 1975 to have gained its dominant status as generic pronoun as result of male regulation.

2.3 Asymmetrical treatment of genders

Both speech communities and languages were considered by feminists in order to expose and document sexist practices. The asymmetrical treatment of male and female concepts and principles is a feature shared across languages and speech communities. Such asymmetry is the result of treating the male category as the prototype for human representation, i.e. using the male category as a generic which includes both genders (Holmes, J. & Meyerhoff, M 2003: 551). In doing so, the female category becomes invisible in language. Women are usually made visible through ‘marked’ forms which derive from male forms through morphological processes. Feminists consider that this asymmetry in gender representation reflects the ‘male-as-norm’ principle according to which male is the normal, the universal, which at the same time implies that the female category is the abnormal, the exception. The tendency to represent men as the norm eventually results in a sexist representation of society in language in detriment of women. Such asymmetrical treatment of gender in language concerns feminists because they consider language as an expression of perceived values and status in society (Holmes, J. & Meyerhoff, M 2003: 553). It can be argued, therefore, that the social conception of women as dependent to men and the conception of men with no reference to women is reflected in language through this asymmetrical treatment of genders, in other words, a sexist understanding of gender results in a sexist treatment of gender at the linguistic level. A brief outline of the most significant linguistic asymmetries will be provided in section 2.4 (Types of Linguistic Sexism).

2.4 Types of linguistic sexism

The male-as-norm principle referred to in section 2.3 is manifested in a different treatment of the female/male categories.

a. Androcentric pronouns or determiners as generics

The use of male pronouns or determiners as generics leads to the disappearance of females in language because ‘women are invisible in language when they are subsumed in generic expressions using masculine forms’ (2003: 550). The use of male pronouns as generics has been concerning feminist scholars since the 1970s. In 1975 a paper named ‘Androcentrism in prescriptive grammar’ was written to denounce that the use of *he* as generic pronoun was the result of male regulation. Bodine’s paper claims that prior to the 19th century, *they* was used as a generic singular pronoun and that generic *he* was inserted into English in an attempt by grammarians to improve English (Love, J. 2012: 1). Using a male pronoun as a generic implies that every human being represented under such form is a male unless proven the opposite (Bodine, 1975). A study on the matter was carried out and it proved that the use of male forms as generics ‘evoke a disproportionate number of male images’ on individuals in detriment of female images (Gastil, 1990: 629). Such results shed light on what people actually understand when a male pronoun is used for generic representation, that is, a male image.

b. Androcentric constructions with *-man/men*

There are many nouns in English containing *-man/men* e.g *policeman, firemen*, etc. As it is the case with male pronouns, these forms are usually used as generics to refer to a group of people consisting of both female and male individuals. Again, the female category is subsumed in the generic corresponding with the male form. An alternative to these sexist compounds is using forms containing *person/people* instead,

e.g. *chairperson* instead of *chairman*. Compounds with *-woman/women* may also be an alternative, e.g. *policewoman*. Although reference to gender is arguably irrelevant (Laine & Watson, 2014: 5), it is more proper from a non-sexist perspective to introduce a female referent with a compound with *woman* than with a compound with *man* if the referent is female. Despite this, when the referent is a mixed group of people made up with both females and males, a compound with *-men* as a generic is the option usually used. If such is the case, a dual counterpart –if existing- would prove a good option, e.g. *police officers* instead of *policemen* (Sorrels, D. 1983: 27).

c. Male-first order of words

Traditionally, female names were systematically written after male names (e.g. *parents Kevin Loughlin and Lynnete Thornton*). Systematically ordering nouns placing the male on the first place and the female on the second is sexist. Placing words in alphabetical order might be a non-sexist alternative to such traditional practice (1983: 35).

d. Sexist courtesy titles

The asymmetrical treatment of the two categories is extended to female courtesy titles. As opposed to non-sexist masculine title *Mr*, *Mrs* and *Miss* are two possible titles used to refer to women depending on their marital status. The assumption underneath this different treatment of the two categories is that ‘woman is a sexual being dependent on man, whereas man is simply defined as human being whose existence does not need reference to woman’ (Holmes, J. & Meyerhoff, M. 2003: 553). The feminine courtesy title *Ms* is non-sexist and therefore preferable to *Mrs* or *Miss*. It is worth noticing that titles *Ms* and *Mr* are still distinguishing between female and male. Some scholars may

call for removing sex-identifying courtesy titles entirely and suggest the use of *M.* for everyone (Sorrels, D. 1983: 35).

e. Female nouns as derived from dual nouns

Another instance of the male-as-norm principle in language is displayed in the asymmetrical use of suffixes as indicators of gender. *Doctor, poet, actor, author, etc.* are neuter nouns which should be used to refer to both female and male referents. Despite this, these forms are usually used to refer to the male category only and the feminine counterpart becomes the result of attaching a derivational suffix to the form e.g. *poetess, actress, etc.* Such morphological process reveals that dual nouns such as *poet* or *actor* are socially understood as being male. Again, the female form is the 'marked version', the abnormal. *Priestess, Tigress, Princess, etc.* are words which diminish females because the system sets the male as the norm and different word endings are needed for the secondary category, i.e. the female (1983; 25).

f. Sexual stereotyping

Women's role in society is represented in discourse. When a woman is portrayed as a housemaker, a servant, a sexual object and as an emotional and unintelligent creature (1983: 82) a sexist and asymmetrical representation of society is performed. To stress one of these four roles when introducing a female referent is a sexist tendency which may take the form of an irrelevant reference to physical appearance or parenthood, among others (Laine & Watson, 2014: 5).

g. Irrelevant reference to gender

Dual nouns are sometimes preceded by female nouns in an attempt to indicate the gender of the referent e.g. *lady lawyer*. As is the case with derivational suffixes,

some compounds made up with a feminine noun plus a dual noun may reveal that the dual word in isolation is understood as referring only to male referents. *Nurse* or *Baby-sitter* are dual nouns socially understood as feminine so compounds such as *male nurse* or *male baby-sitter* may also be used in an attempt to indicate a deviation from the socially assumed gender of the dual word. Both *nurse* and *baby-sitter* are nouns whose meaning somehow relates to the action of taking care of someone, a task which has been historically attributed to women. This may be the reason why *nurse* and *baby-sitter* are usually understood as feminine whereas *lawyer* tends to be understood as masculine. In order to adapt language to the demands of present day society, these slight differences in meaning should be avoided so that the gendered connotations of these words may be altered in time.

2.5 Similar research on the topic

The current research shares many similarities with Laine and Watson's study (2014), which focused on the evolution of sexism in the 'World News' section of *The Times*, a British newspaper, throughout five decades (from 1965 to 2005). Many types of linguistic sexism to be considered in the current research were included in Laine and Watson's study, such as 'male-as-norm' tendencies i.e. using male pronouns to refer to a mixed reality of both women and men, among others. The results of their study confirmed their hypothesis: the presence of some of the sexist mechanisms considered had decreased in time (e.g the use of generic *he* was almost non-existent by 2005), although other types of linguistic sexism such as 'agent nouns that reveal the gender [...] were more resistant to change' (2014: 1).

Secondly, Gastil's study (1990) is relevant for the current research because it provides interesting evidence regarding the use of *he* as a false generic. In his study he

shows that although the pronoun *he* is used to refer to both genders, it ‘evokes a disproportionate number of male images’ (1990: 629). The effect of using *he* as a generic leads to an invisibilization of women in the imaginary of society, a fact which, at the same time, provides a reason for incorporating non-sexist mechanism of communication in our daily language.

3. Methodology

3.1 Corpus

The *Daily Express* was chosen as source of data mainly because it offers a digital archive of newspapers ranging from 1900 up to now. The data of this research was selected from 24 randomly chosen newspapers from the *Daily Express* organized in two different sets according to their date of publication: 12 newspapers from 1996 and 12 newspapers from 2016. The 24 newspapers used in the research were chosen using a random table (Appendix 3). The newspapers were downloaded from the official archive of the *Daily Express*.¹ A newspaper for every month of the two years (1996 and 2016) was selected. Sections included in the research were those dealing with current affairs such as *News*, *Business* or *Property* as well as news focusing on celebrities or popular figures (*Gossip*) or providing the opinion of a given journalist on a particular topic (*Comment*) were also included. The Sports section, TV programming and any kind of advertisement were not included in the research because language in advertisements might be different to journalistic language. The Sports section and the TV programming were not included because the former is a section usually dealing with male individuals so representation of females was not expected to be very high in it. As for the latter, content of TV programming is not journalistic so there is no need to use it in this research.

3.2 Data Collection

The data used in this study was collected in a chart (Appendix 1) from the reading of the 24 newspapers, excluding the previously mentioned sections. The result is 809 observations showing one of the seven types of linguistic sexism on which this

¹ <http://www.express.co.uk/paper-archive>

research is focused. A column for each type of linguistic sexism was used to organize the observations according to the type of phenomena they represent. The date of publication of the newspaper as well as the page number and the section from which the observations were extracted are specified in the chart. The 24 newspapers in PDF format are included in the CD under the label of Appendix 2.

a. Androcentric pronouns or determiners as generics

All male pronouns or determiners used as generics found in the sample are included in the chart. Alternatives to this generic reference to people are not numbered because the frequency of the target phenomenon was expected to be very low. However, instances in which there was a clear avoidance of the male singular pronoun were also numbered as it is the case with observations presenting a plural pronoun or determiner combined with a singular referent e.g. *If your best friend is sad, give them a hug.*

b. Androcentric constructions with *-man/men*

The chart includes all the instances of compounds with *-man/men* found in the two sets of newspapers. Alternatives to these constructions are also numbered. Some of them are constructions with *person/people* or *woman/women*. Other alternatives are non-sexist forms e.g. *firefighter, police officer.*

c. Male-first order of words

All instances found reproducing a sexist ordering of words are included in the chart. Alternatives to male-first order are also included.

d. Sexist courtesy titles

All instances presenting a sexist courtesy title *Mrs* or *Miss* are included in the chart. Instances showing the non-sexist alternative *Ms* are also numbered.

e. Derivational suffixation for female words

All instances of derivational suffixation resulting in female nouns are included in the chart. Alternatives to such forms (i.e. no reference to gender through suffixation) are also included.

f. Sexual stereotyping

Instances of sexist representation of female and male categories found in the sample are included in the chart. Instances numbered in this category show: I. Irrelevant reference to parenthood (e.g. *The mother-of-two*) II. Irrelevant reference to physical appearance (e.g. *The Russian beauty*) III. Different conception of genders (e.g. *Being a mother is different than being a father*), IV. Different representation of genders at a linguistic level (e.g. *Said and his wife*) and finally V. The presence of the word *housewife* in contrast to its non-sexist equivalent *housemaker*. Alternatives to these categories dealing with sexual stereotyping were not numbered because the target phenomenon was expected to be low.

g. Irrelevant reference to gender

As has been previously commented on, making an irrelevant reference to gender reveals that dual nouns are socially understood as being male gendered. Being dual nouns, reference to gender is, in principle, irrelevant. Instances of this phenomenon are included in the chart. Male nouns preceding dual nouns are also included. Alternatives

to this instance of linguistic sexism were not included because the frequency of the target phenomenon was expected to be low.

4. Results and Discussion

A total of 809 observations were collected from the two sets of newspapers. 444 observations correspond to publications from 1996 and 365 to publications from 2016.

4.1 ILS and non-sexist alternatives in 1996 and 2016

Table 1 presents the times and percentages of appearance of instances of linguistic sexism (ILS) and non-sexist alternatives (Alternatives) collected from publications in both years (1996 and 2016). Table 1 and Figures 1 and 2 show the percentages of appearance of instances of linguistic sexism and non-sexist alternatives in both years. The data shows that there is a decrease of 7% in the presence of instances of linguistic sexism in publications from 2016 in relation to 1996.

	1996		2016	
	Times	%	Times	%
ISL	386	87%	291	80%
Alternatives	58	13%	74	20%
Total	444	100%	365	100%

Table 1. ILS and alternatives in 1996 and 2016



Figure 1. ILS and alternatives in 1996

Figure 2. ILS and alternatives in 2016

4.2 Androcentric pronouns in 1996 and 2016

Table 2 indicates both the times and percentage of appearance of male pronouns and determiners used as generic in both years. Newspapers from 1996 presented 12 instances of this type of linguistic sexism whereas it was non-existent in newspapers from 2016. Two alternatives in which there was a clear avoidance of the male-pronoun were found among the most recent publications.

	1996		2016	
	Times	%	Times	%
AndrocentricPronouns	12	100%	0	0%
Alternatives	0	0%	2	100%
Total	12	100%	2	100%

Table 2. Androcentric pronouns and alternatives in 1996 and 2016

The presence of Androcentric pronouns falls from 12% to 0% in 2016. It might be the case that authors in 2016, aware of the discriminatory effect produced by using a male pronoun/determiner as a generic, might have intentionally avoided them. The following are instances collected in newspapers from 1996 in which a male pronoun/determiner is used as generic. All of them can be found in Appendix 1:

- 1) You don't need to be a builder nor a [...] just a practical person who is keen to run his own business. (1996, January, page 36, Business Express)
- 2) Anyone could in just 20 minutes improve his memory. (1996, April, page 41, Education and Training)
- 3) The days of the entrepreneur putting his fortune into football are over. (1996, May, page 63, City)
- 4) There is nothing to stop a bus driver packing up his job and begin selling homes. (1996, August, page 25, Money)

5) Don't mention bacon sandwiches in front of a porker – he may be sensitive.

(1996, May, page 22, News)

Whereas the author of example 1 avoided using the word *man* as generic by choosing *person* instead, the possessive determiner *his* is male gendered. Such is the case with examples 2, 3 and 4, in which a male possessive determiner is used to refer to an individual (*anyone, an entrepreneur, a bus driver*) who could be either female or male. Example 5 presents the personal pronoun *he* referring to a porker. The author in this case decided not to use the prototypical pronoun *it* for animals and chose the sexist *he* as generic instead. Choosing a male pronoun or determiner to refer to people or animals in which gender is not specified (*person, anyone, a porker, an entrepreneur, a bus driver*) might lead to the idea that authors from 1996 possibly assumed that a given element was male unless proven the opposite.

No instances of female pronouns or determiners used as generics were found in the sample. Despite this, newspapers from 2016 presented two cases in which there was an intentional avoidance of this ILS:

6) If your other half tends to nod off rather than whisper sweet nothings during pillow talk, don't blame them, blame their hormones. (2016, April, page 11, News)

7) If you are trying to help someone vulnerable manage their bills... (2016, June, page 22, The Crusader)

Despite the fact that *your other half* and *someone vulnerable* are singular nouns, the authors of this pair of observations decided not to use a singular pronoun/determiner to refer to them. Instead, they used a plural element, which might be understood as an attempt to avoid the use of a singular gendered form.

4.3 Androcentric constructions in 1996 and 2016

Table 3 indicates the times and percentage of appearance of constructions with *man/-men* (Androcentric constructions) in contrast to the non-sexist alternatives found in both years, 1996 and 2016. There is a decrease of 18% in the presence of Androcentric constructions in the most recent publications. Figures 3 and 4 represent the presence of both Androcentric constructions and alternatives in both years.

	1996		2016	
	Times	%	Times	%
Androcentric Constructions	93	86%	50	68%
Alternatives	15	14%	24	32%
Totals	108	100%	74	100%

Table 3. Androcentric constructions and alternatives in 1996 and 2016

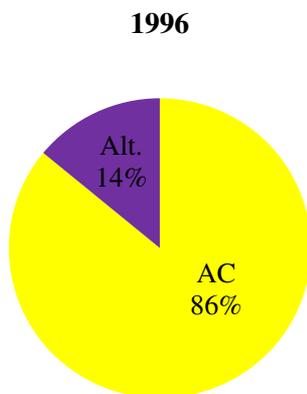


Figure 3. Androcentric constructions and alternatives in 1996

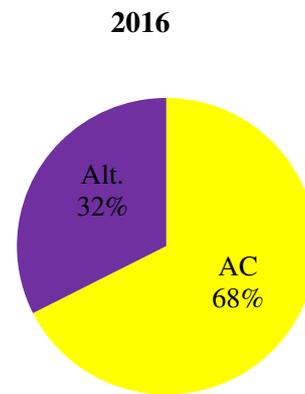


Figure 4. Androcentric constructions and alternatives in 2016

Constructions with *man/men* such as *policeman* were less frequent in newspapers from 2016. Some examples containing an Androcentric construction collected from the sample were:

- 8) Four firemen needed hospital treatment (1996, January, page 4, News)

- 9) Outside, a cordon of policemen moved into position (1996, August, page 5, News)
- 10) Three dozen top businessmen urged voters to quit (2016, June, page 4, News)
- 11) ... the callous killing of three unarmed policemen (2016, August, page 25, News)
- 12) Dawn, a mother-of-two, is chairman of “Flowcrete” (1996, September, page 62, Business Life)
- 13) New BFA chairman Pam Bader (1996, January, page 35, Business Express)
- 14) A revolution in the way men treat animals (1996, May, page 22, News)
- 15) One in five poochies has become man’s fair weather best friend (2016, February, page 12, News)

Examples 8, 9 and 10, present a construction with *men* (*firemen*, *policemen*, *businessmen*, *policemen*). Examples 12 and 13 show a construction with *man* (*chairman*) which is being used to refer to a female, both from 1996. Examples 14 and 15 show a generic use of the words *men* and *man*, from 1996 and 2016 respectively. As previously mentioned, a decrease of 18% in Androcentric constructions is observed in the most recent publications. In contrast, there is a rise in the presence of non-sexist alternatives, among which the following were found:

- 16) ...three unarmed police officers (2016, August, page 25, News)
- 17) John Longworth, co-chair of the Leave Means Leave pressure group (2016, November, page 4, News)
- 18) Four years ago six firefighters had to be brought by boat to put out a small fire (2016, November, page 32, News)

Example 16 offers a non-sexist alternative (*officer*) for sexist *policeman/-men* which was collected 24 times. The total number of alternatives to Androcentric constructions in both years is 39. 24 of these 39 correspond to the word/s *officer/s*. The 24 occurrences of *officer/s* correspond to a 62% of the total of alternatives. Table 4 compares the percentages in which *policeman/-men* appeared in contrast to their non-sexist alternative *officer/s* in both years. Figures 4 and 5 represent the percentages of appearance of both options in the two years.

	Policeman/-men		Officer/s	
1996	8	80%	8	33%
2016	2	20%	16	67%
	10	100%	24	100%

Table 4. Policeman/-men vs. Officer/s in 1996 and 2016

The results show a decrease of 47% in the presence of the Androcentric constructions *policeman/-men* in 2016 in favor of its non-sexist equivalent *officer*.

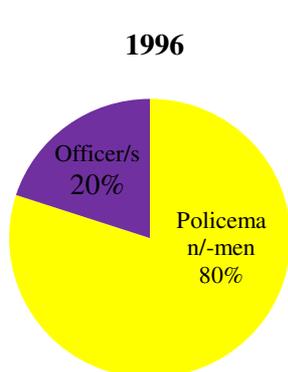


Figure 5. Policeman/-men vs. Officer/s in 1996

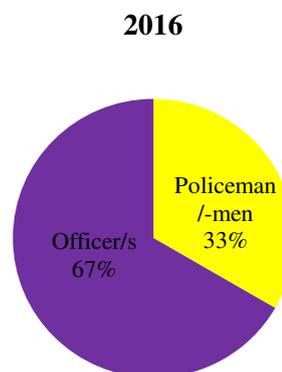


Figure 6. Policeman/-men vs. Officer/s in 2016

4.4 Ordering of words in 1996 and 2016

Table 5 shows the numbers and percentages corresponding to the presence of words which were ordered following a male-first pattern (Sexist ordering of words) in both years. Non-sexist alternatives are also included. Newspapers from 2016 presented a decrease of 9% in the presence of instances showing a male-first order. Figures 7 and 8 represent the presence of this sexist pattern and its non-sexist alternative in both years.

	1996		2016	
	Times	%	Times	%
Sexist Ordering of Words	67	80%	34	71%
Alternatives	17	20%	14	29%
Totals	84	100%	48	100%

Table 5. Ordering of words in 1996 and 2016

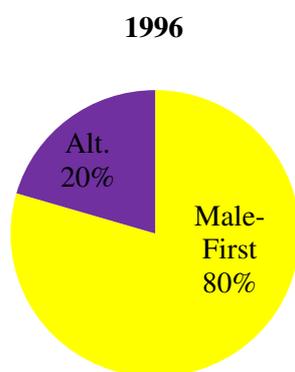


Figure 7. Ordering of words in 1996

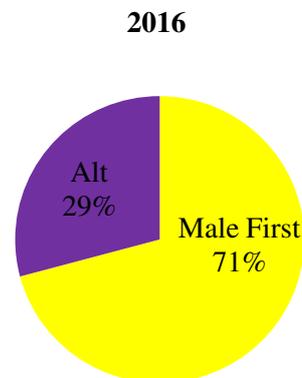


Figure 8. Ordering of words in 2016

Names ordered according to a sexist pattern in which male nouns systematically occupy the first position are, as previously mentioned, a 9% less frequent in 2016. Observations 19 and 20, from 1996 and 2016, present the traditional male-first order of nouns:

- 19) *New owners John and Jane Ayers plan a hotel inside a National Park for country lovers.* (1996, February, page 40, Commercial Property)

20) ...Simon and Julie Marshall transferred the cash to Brown's account (2016, May, page 18, News)

Pairs of nobility titles such as *Prince and Princess* and *Duke and Duchess* found in the sample were always ordered according to a male-first pattern. This is exemplified in examples 21 and 22 and it might be explained considering that higher classes are less concerned with gender equality -at least at a linguistic level- than the lower ones.

21) *The end of the 15-year marriage of the Prince and Princess of Wales may be just days away.* (1996, July, page 1, News)

22) *The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are expected to attend today.* (2016, July, page 3, Gossip)

Similarly, no instances of *she and he* or *she or he* were found in the sample. The preferred order in both years is *he and she/he or she*, with the male pronoun in the first position, as is illustrated in the following examples. Example 24, from 2016, shows an insistent use of the male-first order. Such a systematic repletion of the male-first pattern might be understood as an indication of how deeply ingrained is the male-first order even nowadays.

23) They have found this amazing man or woman. Everyone should go. He or she is absolutely brilliant. (1996, May, page 8, Comment)

24) One in five thinks it is perfectly acceptable to check Twitter or Facebook while he or she is in stationary traffic. And one in seven says he or she takes photos on mobile phone while he or she is moving. One in four said he or she checked messages... (2016, September, page 2, News)

4.5 Courtesy titles in 1996 and 2016

Table 6 shows the times and percentages of appearance of the sexist courtesy titles *Mrs* and *Miss* as well as their non-sexist alternative *Ms*. The proportion of sexist courtesy titles in relation to their alternative is constant in both years. Figures 9 and 10 illustrate the percentage of appearance of both sexist courtesy titles and of their non-sexist equivalent.

	1996		2016	
	Times	%	Times	%
Sexist Courtesy Titles	72	74%	93	74%
Alternatives	25	26%	33	26%
Total	97	100%	126	100%

Table 6. Sexist courtesy titles and alternatives in 1996 and 2016

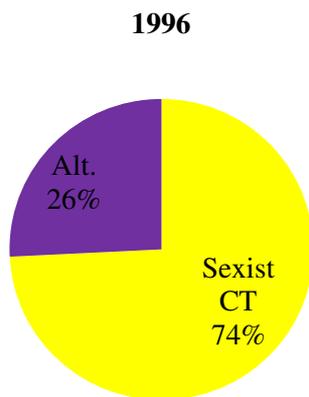


Figure 9. Courtesy titles and alternatives in 1996

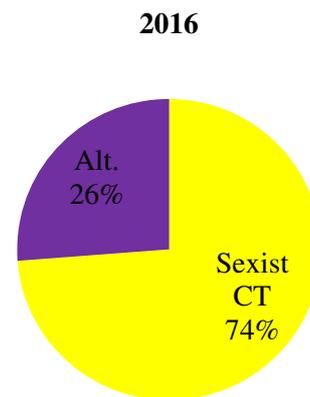


Figure 10. Courtesy titles and alternatives in 2016

Surprisingly, the proportion of sexist courtesy titles *Mrs* and *Miss* is the same in both years. Such phenomena might be explained considering that it was often the case that a given name appeared more than once in the same piece of news, introduced every time by the same courtesy title, which might have made the numbers look disproportionate. *Miss Collingbourne* in example 25 appears a total of 9 times in the piece of news from which it was collected.

25) Miss Collingbourne, 26, was already living in fear of her half-sister. (2016, December, page 24, News)

In contrast, there were two cases registered in which both a sexist and a non-sexist title were employed in the same piece of news to refer to the same individual. Such is the case with examples 26 and 27, from 1996:

26) In his 11th-hour rescue of Miss Harman, he said there was no going back from the party's commitment to comprehensive education. (1996, January, page 5, News)

27) Here Stuart Sexton, a former special adviser to two Education Secretaries - Sir Keith Joseph and Mark, now Lord, Carlisle- explains why Ms Harman was right... (1996, January, page 5, News)

Examples 28 and 29 from 2016 illustrate the same phenomena. *Wrightson* is referred to as *Miss Wrightson* 4 times and once as *Ms Wrightson* in the same piece of news:

28) The girls, who cannot be named, deny murdering alcoholic Miss Wrightson. (2016, February, page 13, News)

29) The court was told the girls had let themselves into Ms Wrightson's unlocked home... (2016, February, page 13, News)

Instances showing the use of the non-sexist courtesy title *Ms* include the following:

30) Legal experts say if they remain unanswered, Ms Paltrow, 43, may be granted everything she has requested. (2016, March, page 11, Gossip)

31) Ms Rolls, an advertorials manager from Harpenden in Hertfordshire, returned to work full-time after the birth of her first baby. (2016, May, page 25, News)

Despite it is not the case with every non-sexist courtesy title found in the sample, titles appearing in examples 30 and 31 might have been chosen according to the content of the piece of news in which they appeared. Example 30, from 2016, was found in a piece of news dealing with Gwyneth Paltrow’s divorce. Such detail might be significant because it might be the case that the author chose the non-sexist title to avoid referring to her marital status. Example 31, from 1996, might be significant because it was extracted from a piece of news which dealt with women’s rights at work and pregnancy. The choice of the non-sexist *Ms* might have been motivated by the author’s awareness of the sexist nature of *Mrs* and *Miss*, the use of which would have had a negative effect in a piece of news in which a discriminatory behavior was being denounced.

4.6 Derivational suffixes in 1996 and 2016

Table 7 shows the proportion of appearance of female words as derivates in both years 1996 and 2016. Figures 11 and 12 represent such proportions.

	1996		2016	
	Times	%	Times	%
Derivational Suffixes	78	99%	76	99%
Alternatives	1	1%	1	1%
Total	79	100%	77	100%

Table 7. Derivational suffixes and alternatives in 1996 and 2016

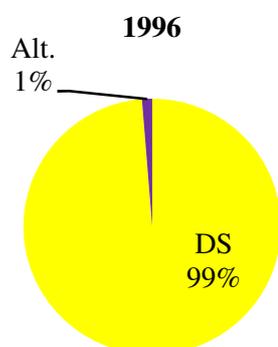


Figure 11. Derivational suffixes and alternatives in 1996

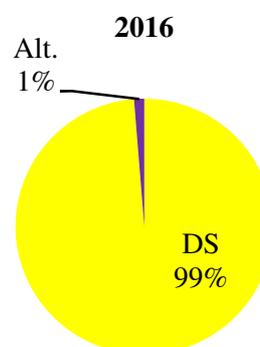


Figure 12. Derivational suffixes and alternatives in 2016

As it can be observed in Table 7, there is no evolution in the use of Derivational affixes to indicate gender in 1996 and 2016. Only once in each of the two years was found an alternative to the sexist derivatives. Examples 32 and 33 show the only two instances found reproducing a non-sexist alternative, one from each year:

32) Quotation by Lynn Redgrave, female: “What saved me was becoming an actor” (1996, December, page 74, Life)

33) Quotation by Emma Stone, female: “We [Jennifer Lawrence and Emma Stone] really do love each other and care about each other as people beyond being actors” (2016, November, page 23, Day and Night/Gossip)

Meaningfully, both instances are quotations by two different women who call themselves *actors*. It might be the case that both in 1996 and in 2016 the word *actor* was used to refer to women in oral speech, but not in written, at least not in this particular newspaper. Non-sexist alternatives to *Duchess* (34) and *Princess* (35) were not found in any of the years. Using the word *actor* for women but not *Prince/Duke* might be explained considering that cinema stars might be more concerned with gender inequalities than individuals from royalty and nobility.

34) He and the Duchess of Cornwall, who joined him (2016, May, page 7, Gossip)

35) a year after Princess Diana’s death (2016, May, page 7, Gossip)

4.7 Sexual stereotyping in 1996 and 2016

Instances showing an irrelevant reference to parenthood or physical appearance and instances reproducing a different conception or representation of genders in both years are presented in Table 8 under the label of Sexual stereotyping. As it can be observed, there is a decrease of 22% in Sexual Stereotyping in the most recent publications.

	Sexual stereotyping	
	Times	%
1996	56	61%
2016	36	39%
Total	92	100%

Table 8. Sexual stereotyping in 1996 and 2016

4.7.1 Irrelevant reference to parenthood in 1996 and 2016

Table 9 shows all the times of occurrence in which Irrelevant references to parenthood were found in the two years. Instances showing an irrelevant reference to motherhood are numbered in the first row (females) and instances showing irrelevant references to fatherhood are specified in the second row (males)

	Irrelevant reference to parenthood	
	1996	2016
Female	8	16
Male	1	10
Total	9	26

Table 9. Irrelevant reference to parenthood in 1996 and 2016

As can be observed in Table 9, Irrelevant references to parenthood are more frequent in 2016 than in 1996. Not only females but also males are represented in terms of parenthood in the most recent publications. Examples 36, 37 and 38 illustrate such phenomenon:

36) Headline: Mum fights 31k bill for barking dog Scally (2016, February, page 9, News)

37) But one thing he does not like is mother-of-two Amanda's toilet humor (2016, April, page 3, Gossip)

38) A father was last night fighting for his life in hospital after a suspected road-
rage attack. (2016, August, page 21, News)

Given that both genders are usually presented in terms of parenthood even when such references just provide peripheral information to the piece of news in which they appear, presenting individuals as *mothers* or *fathers* might no longer be considered sexist in 2016.

4.7.2 Irrelevant reference to physical appearance in 1996 and 2016

Table 10 shows the number of instances in which Irrelevant references to physical appearance were found in both years. Rows *Female* and *Male* correspond to the individual to whom the reference was made on.

	Irrelevant reference to physical appearance	
	1996	2016
Female	22	5
Male	2	0
Total	24	5

Table 10. Irrelevant reference to physical appearance in 1996 and 2016

As can be observed in Table 10, Irrelevant references to physical appearance are much less frequent in newspapers from 2016 than in newspapers from 1996. No references to physical appearance for males were found in 2016 whereas only 5 were found for females. Examples 39, 40, 41, 42, and 43 show irrelevant references to physical appearance in both years:

39) ...he is planning to buy a house with blonde Sarah Bowden (1996, October, page 3, News)

- 40) ...glamorous blonde writer (1996, July, page 31, William Hickey/Gossip)
- 41) ... her friend Lisa Heron, a 30-year-old blonde from Kent (1996, December, page 26, Weekend/Gossip)
- 42) ...looking as stern as her broad little apple-checked face would allow, she tells... (1996, July, page 44, Gossip)
- 43) Beauty Lisa Snowdon made a big splash in the jungle yesterday after flaunting her curves in the shower (2016, November, page 9, Gossip)

Examples 44 and 45 present the two instances for irrelevant reference to physical appearance for males found in 1996.

- 44) ...the second to handsome leading man Jeff Goldblum (1996, November, page 57, Preview/Gossip)
- 45) In those helmets and PVC jackets, firemen are irresistible. (2016, May, page 42, Life-Comment/Gossip)

4.7.3 Different conception of genders in 1996 and 2016

Example 44 presented in section 4.7.2 is of interest, moreover, because it is describing the male in question (*Jeff Goldblum*) as a *leading man*. Whereas features such as hair color (40) or face-shape (47) are emphasized in female's description, examples 46 and 47 (both from 1996) portray men as empowered, independent, confident individuals:

- 46) ...secure, supportive, restaurateur Richard Emmolo (1996, November, page 57, Preview/Gossip)
- 47) ...powerful film director Renny Harlin (1996, November, page 57, Preview/Gossip)

In contrast, the general conception of the female gender portrayed in 1996 newspapers is quite the opposite. Whereas independence and security are conceived as manly features, women were often portrayed as wives (examples 48 and 50) or mothers (55), as assistants to their partners (48, 58) and at the same time somehow needy of male support or presence to be efficient (51) or to feel relaxed in their company (51, 54). Women's descriptions are usually set in a domestic environment (54, 55), male's superiority is assumed (52) and success in a woman is understood as something which might affect negatively her sentimental life (49). Examples from 48 to 55, all from 1996, illustrate these ideas:

48) A clever wife can improve on a man's talents no ends (1996, August, page 11, Mary Kenny/Gossip)

49) Headline: Love's lost for leading ladies who go home alone [...] the more stronger the women, the more disastrous the love life (1996, February, page 23, Life/Comment-Gossip)

50) Sandra Howards, loving wife... (1996, October, page 7, News)

51) Headline: 'Justin Case' is the answer to every woman driver's prayer [...] Chap in a box that every woman driver should have, just in case. (1996, November, page 3, News)

52) Sophie, however, must be very careful about being too good [at shooting]. This could cause problems. It will arouse terrific jealousy, especially as she is a girl. (1996, November, page 33, William Hickey/Gossip)

53) Rhys Jones has described himself as the "female half of the relationship" with Smith. Hollywood wheeler-dealing is Mel's natural environment while

the spiraling neurosis of force suits Rhys' more tightly temperament. (1996, November, page 60, Preview/Gossip)

54) Quotation by Rhys Jones, male: "I'm like the wife waiting at home for the husband, wringing her hands". (1996, November, page 60, Preview/Gossip)

55) Quotation by Cretu, male: "She [his wife] now looks after the children and I carry on with my studio. Women have to adapt more than men. Being a mother means more changes than being a father..." (1996, November, page 68, Preview/Gossip)

Other similar instances reproducing a sexist conception of genders from 1996 found in the sample generalize men's will to be necessary for women, as if it was something inherent in their gender (56) and are portrayed as individuals with disproportionate sexual urges (57):

56) Men, of course, love to be needed... (1996, February, page 23, Life/Comment-Gossip)

57) Politicians live very unnatural lives. Separated from their families [...] it is unconceivable that men living on politically charge adrenaline should confine their sexual urges to Friday to Sunday when they return to the constituency. Especially when their wives, stuck at home all the week with the children, may be more interested in getting their problems and complaints out of their chests than in romance. (1996, June, page 8, Teresa Gorman/Comment)

Newspapers from 2016 also presented a pair of instances in which different types of gender conceptions were reproduced. Despite not so blatantly expressed as in 1996 instances, author of example 58 might have assumed that scorn is felt somehow

differently between the two genders and that females experience it more aggressively than males. In example 59, in contrast, Jennifer Aniston is compared to an *embarrassing uncle* who makes jokes about sex. Despite the fact that Aniston being a woman, the author did not compare her with an *aunt* but with an *uncle*, from which it might be interpreted that making jokes about sex is something conceived as typically male.

58) Jennifer Lopez proves that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned (2016, March, page 16, Day&Night/Gossip)

59) Jennifer Aniston, fast approaching 50, is coming across like one of those deeply embarrassing uncles who make jokes about their –or worse, your- sex life in the totally deluded impression that it will keep them down with the kids. (2016, November, page 16, Virginia Blackburn/Gossip)

4.7.4 Different representation of genders in 1996 and 2016

A different representation of genders at a linguistic level was found in newspapers from both years. Example 60 refers to an undefined group of observers which, as can be inferred from the author's words, was assumed to be made up of men, which explains that the author mentioned that they *didn't kiss their wives goodnight*. Similarly, in example 61, advice is being given to those parents willing to save money in their children's education. The advice, however, suggests counting on *mothers of children* to get school material, instead of counting on *parents of children*. Example 62, from 2016, was collected from a piece of news dealing with the experience of a couple of refugees in London. Despite of both individuals having the same relevance in the piece of news, only the name and surname of the male is presented. The female is only presented as *his wife*.

- 60) Those early observers, huddled with their families on a hilltop, didn't kiss their wives goodnight (1996, March, page 11, Peter Tory/Comment)
- 61) Make friends with mothers of children in the next year from your child and hope for hand-me-downs (1996, August, page 27, Money/Business)
- 62) Saed Khalif and his wife, who are believed to have eight children, moved into the semidetached London property (2016, February, page 5, News)

4.7.5 Presence of *Housewife* in 1996 and 2016

The sexist compound word *housewife* was collected twice in each set of newspapers, both in 1996 and 2016. Alternatives to this sexist compound such as *homemaker* were not found in the sample, neither in 1996 nor in 2016. Examples 63, 64, 65, and 66 show the use of the sexist compound in both years.

- 63) ...has trained industrialists, trades unionists, business, professionals and sales people, housewives and students (1996, April, page 41, Education and Training)
- 64) Recently, a postman and a local housewife have taken up the sport (1996, December, page 30, Weekend/Gossip)
- 65) ...six out of seven housewives are happy (2016, July, page 13, Ann Widdecombe/Comment/Gossip)
- 66) Housewife Avil, 24, said (2016, December, page 27, news)

4.8 Irrelevant reference to gender

Table 11 shows the times in which instances of Irrelevant reference to gender were collected in both years. The *Female/Male* rows show the times in which a female/male word preceded a dual word in order to make reference to gender. As can be

observed in Table 11, it is less frequent to find female words preceding dual words in 2016.

	Irrelevant reference to gender	
	1996	2016
Female	6	1
Male	0	2
Total	6	3

Table 11. Irrelevant reference to gender in 1996 and 2016

Examples 67, 68, and 69 show an irrelevant reference of gender. It might be the case that authors of examples 67 and 68 decided to indicate gender in order to avoid confusion on the reader, assuming that if the reference was not included, the reader would possibly think that the individual was a male. Reference to gender in case 69 is redundant because the name of the actor playing the role of *lady pirate* (Geena Davis) was previously indicated in the piece of news.

67) He revealed that only half an hour after the killing a woman driver from the company had been attacked half a mile away from the scene of the murder.

(1996, April, page 20, News)

68) The woman kicked a woman officer in the stomach (1996, August, page 7, News)

69) [Geena] Davis as a swashbuckling lady pirate opposite Matthew Modine (1996, November, page 58, Preview/Gossip)

The following examples show the three cases in which an irrelevant reference to gender was found in newspapers from 2016:

70) ...filmed having sex with male model Alex Bowen (2016, June, page 25, William Hickey/Gossip)

71) Anthony Walgate, 23, a fashion student and part-time male escort (2016, November, page 27, News)

72) He was interviewed by two female police officers (2016, December, page 23, Comment)

Given that the gender of individuals in examples 70 and 71 is indicated in both cases in the names (Alex Bowden and Anthony Walgate), the word *male* as indicator of gender might be omitted in these examples. In contrast, author of example 72 might have specified the gender of the officers as an attempt to avoid confusion on the reader, she or he may be assuming that if such indication had not been made the reader would have thought that the officers were males.

4.9 Summary of the analysis

The initial hypothesis of this research was that there would be a decrease in the presence of Androcentric forms used as generics, Androcentric constructions, Sexual stereotyping and Irrelevant reference to gender in newspapers in 2016 in comparison with 1996. On the contrary, Courtesy titles *Mrs* and *Miss*, Derivational suffixes as indicators of gender and sexist ordering of words were not initially expected to show a great decrease in the most recent publications of the sample.

Results corresponding to the presence of Androcentric pronouns showed a decrease from 12% to 0%, supporting thus the initial hypothesis. Androcentric constructions in newspapers from 2016 are less frequent, showing a decrease of 18%, from 86% in 1996 to 68% in 2016. The initial expectation is confirmed by results. Likewise, Sexual stereotyping falls from 61% to 39%, as was expected in the hypothesis. Irrelevant reference to gender is also lower in 2016, where only 3 instances reproducing this ILS were found in contrast to 6 from 1996. Male-first order is less frequent in newspapers from 2016, with a decrease of 9%. Results support the initial

expectation of a small decrease from 1996 to 2016 in this particular ILS. Results corresponding to the presence of Derivational suffixes and the use of Sexist courtesy titles in the two years from the sample do not show a relevant contrast. Frequency of occurrence of these ILS is constant in the two years from the sample.

Instances of linguistic sexism are 7% less frequent in 2016, as seen in the results. Despite the decrease not being very sharp, it might be considered relevant because five of the seven ILS considered in this research show a decrease in 2016. The greater contrast between 1996 and 2016 newspapers might possibly come from the different conceptions of the two genders reproduced in the newspapers, blatantly sexist in 1996, defining women according to the social roles which they were expected to adopt. The decrease of 7% in linguistic sexism in the most recent publications might be understood as the effect of the impact of feminism in discourse throughout the last twenty years. Considering that CDA regards discourse as 'a social practice' capable both of reproducing the status quo as well as transforming it (Wodak, 1996: 17 cited in Wodak, 1997: 6), such decrease might be understood as a reflection in discourse of the advances of feminism in society. Publications from the *Daily Express* in twenty years time might possibly show a greater decrease in the presence of linguistic sexism, considering that awareness about gender inequality might increase in time.

5. Conclusions

The main objective of this research was to ascertain whether publications from 2016 presented a lower presence of linguistic sexism in contrast to those from 1996. Results support the initial hypothesis that certain instances of linguistic sexism (Androcentric pronouns, Androcentric constructions, Irrelevant reference to gender, Male-first ordering of words and Sexual stereotyping) would decrease in twenty years whereas others (Sexist courtesy titles and Derivational suffixes for females) would not. Despite a decrease of 7% not being very sharp, the main tendency observed among the seven instances of linguistic sexism considered is of decline, which might suggest that such decrease will continue in time. The decrease is understood as the effect of the impact of the feminist movement throughout the last twenty years, whose advances are mirrored in language.

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