Keywords
STUDIOS

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# GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN GAMES AND ITS LOCALIZATION CHALLENGES

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# What is 'genderize'?

**genderize** in British
*or* **genderise** (ˈdʒɛndəˌraɪz)

verb *(transitive)*

to make distinctions in (a group) according to gender

*Collins English Dictionary.* Copyright © HarperCollins Publishers

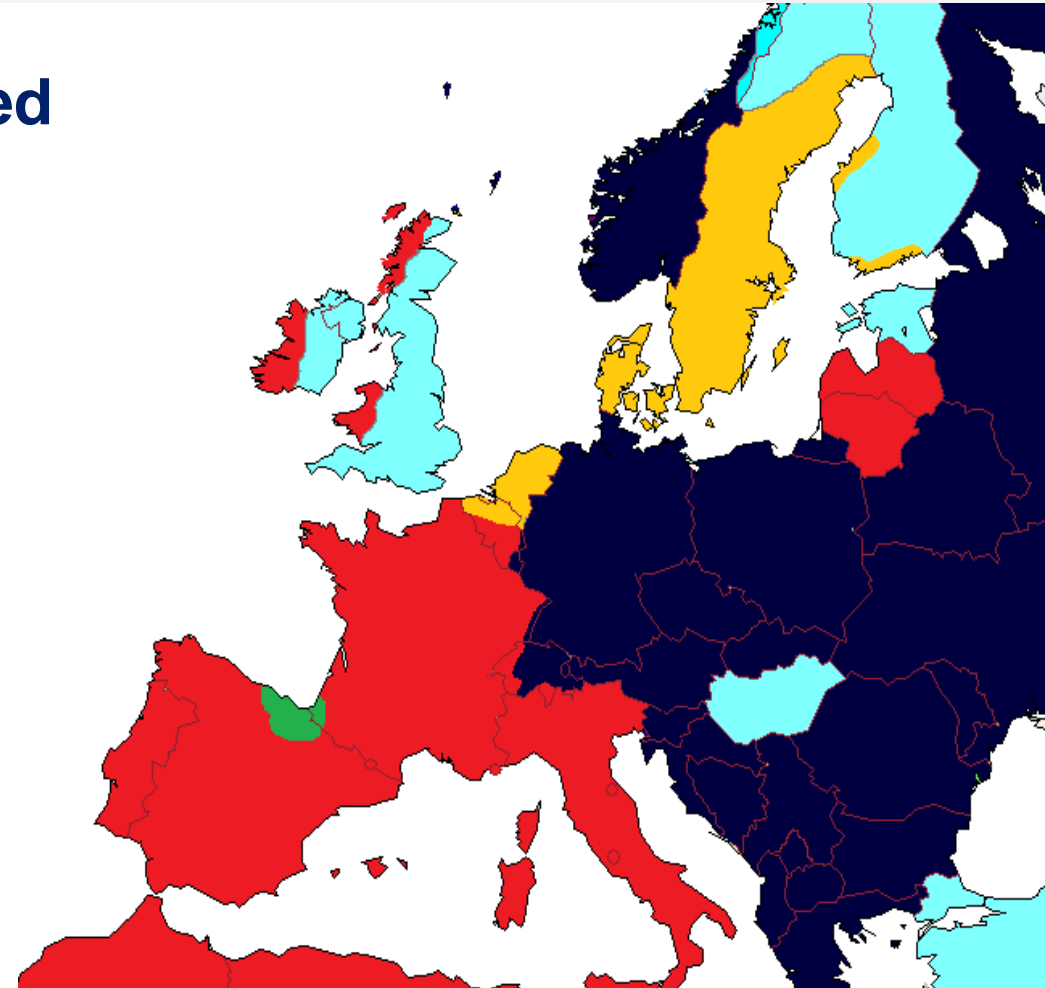Example:    *genderize a mailing list by analyzing first names.*

# Grammatical gender

**6,900 languages in the world → ¼ gendered**

Common systems of gender division:

- **Light blue**: no gender
- **Yellow**: common/neuter
- **Green**: animate/inanimate
- **Red**: masculine/feminine
- **Dark blue**: masculine/feminine/neuter

# What is 'gender inclusive language'?

**Gender inclusive language is a form of language that is not biased toward a particular sex or social representation of gender.**

**Gender neutrality:**
- when the gender of the person referred to is unknown or indeterminate
- when we want to include in our speech people who identify themselves as non-binary or genderless

# Gender inclusive language: challenges

**Advocates:**
- **Gendered language often implies male superiority**

**Detractors:**
- **Gender-inclusive language leads to unnatural grammar**

# When should we use gender-inclusive language?

- **Player's gender unknown**

- **Non-binary characters**

# Examples (I)

## The Sims 4 *(Electronic Arts, 2014)*

- Flexible creation menu (May 2016)

# Examples (II)

**Fallen London** *(Failbetter Games, 2009)*

- 3rd option in character creation

> **May we ask whether you're a lady or a gentleman?**
>
> ○ A lady
>
> ○ A gentleman
>
> ○ My dear sir, there are individuals roaming the streets of Fallen London at this very moment with the faces of squid! Squid! Do you ask them their gender? And yet you waste our time asking me trifling and impertinent questions about mine? It is my own business, sir, and I bid you good day.

# Examples (III)

## Sunless Sea *(Failbetter Games, 2015)*

- Preferred form of address



**"Madam."**
More zee-captains choose this than you might expect.

Go

**"Sir."**

Go

**"Citizen."**
A term of address popular among those of egalitarian sentiments.

Go

**"my Lord."**
Perhaps you really do come from a noble family. Who's to know?

Go

**"my Lady."**
Perhaps you really do come from a noble family. Who's to know?

Go

**"Captain."**
'Captain' will do perfectly well ashore as well as at sea, thank you.

Go

# Examples (IV)

## Sunless Sea *(Failbetter Games, 2015)*

- Androgynous characters



**THE ALARMING SCHOLAR**

The Alarming Scholar is mercurial, to say the least. A creature of sudden moods and provoking teeth. Possibly her (is it her?) appointment as University Maritime Liaison was precautionary: to keep his (is it his?) razor-sharp enthusiasm from causing too many injuries in the faculty.

"Ah yes," the Scholar whispers breathily. "I have a budget for acquisitions. What have you brought me?"

If you have any knowledge items that the Scholar will buy, they'll appear below.

# How 'gender-inclusive language' is used?

**How?**
- Using not gender-specific nouns & pronouns
    - <u>Example</u>: *policeman/policewoman → police officer*
    - <u>Example</u>: *he/him & she/her → they/them*

- Duplicating structures (gender-binary)
    - <u>Example</u>: *"he or she" / "actor and actresses"*

- Restructuring the sentence
    - <u>Example</u>: *"when you were a little boy" → "in your childhood"*

# Using gender-inclusive language:
# French, Italian, German, Russian & Spanish

## French

- Creation of neuter & inclusive language
  - *Lo/lu ; li/lia (articles), ille ; iel/yel (pronouns)*
- *Adding gender endings:*
  - *Cher.e.s ami.e.s*

## Russian

- Avoid constructions using gender endings
  - *Impersonal or plural verb forms*
  - *No solution to accommodate for gender fluidity*

## German

- Use of asterisk to indicate variations
  - Example: *der\*die Priester\*in*

## Spanish

- Use of @, 'x' or 'e' to replace *a/o*
  - Example: *todos → tod@s / todxs / todes*

## Italian

- Use of asterisk to replace *a/o*
  - Example: bambino/a → bambin\*
- Use of @ to indicate plural
  - Example: ragazzi/e → ragazz@

# Challenges in localization

- Current academic standards do not support inclusive language

- More costly

- Length restrictions

- Not supported in dubbing or text-to-speech engines

# Conclusions

- Rely on sensitive readers

- Society changes, language needs to adapt

- Multiple approaches

- No unique rule to *rule them all!*