

# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Gendered Languages Around the World

languageintelligence



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# About

Established in 1988, Language Intelligence was founded with a clear vision in mind: to create a company that prioritizes people while meeting the foreign-language needs of businesses worldwide. Starting as a language and culture training organization, Language Intelligence has since evolved into a leading provider of customized translation and localization solutions.

Our deep subject matter expertise, cultural understanding, and homegrown technology innovations empower businesses to seamlessly navigate foreign markets, overcome regulatory hurdles, and build connections on a global scale.

The Language Intelligence team includes experienced localization project managers, engineers, a multimedia production team, technology experts, and over 500 translators located all over the world all working to ensure your business thrives in diverse cultural contexts.

## Why we wrote this ebook

Language is more than just words. The concept of language intelligence involves immersing oneself deeply into a language, extracting its essence, and capturing its true meaning.

The ideals, beliefs, and cultural norms around DEI are varied across the world, and with our workplaces becoming increasingly more diverse, we recognize the relevance and significance of this topic. We hope this eBook will educate and spread awareness about the current cultural conversations about diversity, equity, and inclusion on a global scale.



# Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Gendered Languages Around the World

Language is an integral part of human communication and culture. It not only enables us to express our thoughts and ideas, but language molds and shapes how we see the world around us.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are fundamental aspects of modern society, with language playing a crucial role in promoting these values. However, many cultures and gendered languages around the world still present significant challenges when creating an inclusive environment for all.

Gendered languages are those that use different forms of words and grammar to distinguish between masculine and feminine genders. These linguistic features can be harmful and lead to gender bias, discrimination, and exclusion, especially against members of the LGBTQ+ community.

In this eBook, we will explore the topics of diversity, acceptance, and inclusion within gendered global languages and across the globe. We will delve into the history and evolution of gendered and inclusive language, and examine the gender binary and multiple means of gender expression. Additionally, we'll look at the global efforts being made when promoting gender-neutral language and how different cultures are taking steps to create a more inclusive and accepting world.

We hope that this eBook will inspire readers to think more deeply about the power of language in shaping our understanding of gender and identity, and how we can use language as a tool to promote inclusion and acceptance.



## What is Global DEI?

Standing for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, DEI is the term used by organizations to increase overall cultural understanding and acceptance throughout their workplace.

When combined, each of these three concepts works to promote a diverse workplace for multicultural, multilingual, global communities.

## Diversity

Refers to the range of human differences, including but not limited to a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, sex, socio-economic status, language, national origin, culture, religion, political preferences, physical abilities, and value systems.

## Equity

The fair and just treatment of all, regardless of how an individual identifies. Where equality makes the assumption all people should be treated the same, equity acknowledges and addresses structural inequalities and takes into consideration a person's unique circumstances when adjusting an outcome.

## Inclusion

The active engagement of all members of a workforce, no matter their status. Inclusion allows those to feel as if their voices can be heard, they are properly supported, and they can make meaningful contributions, regardless of who they are or what they do for the business.



# The Growing (Global) Need for DEI in the Workplace

As the world becomes more interconnected and globalized, investing in DEI initiatives becomes increasingly important for businesses. Here's why your organization can benefit when investing in a comprehensive DEI strategy.

- To foster a sense of belonging for all employees
- To improve the quality of decision-making in the organization
- To drive employee motivation and productivity
- To give opportunities to all
- To generate fresh insights
- To encourage innovation
- To promote higher employee retention, satisfaction, and morale
- To enhance an organization's global image
- To create a competitive business advantage
- To protect company culture
- To reach a more extensive candidate pool
- To increase sales revenue and overall profits

# What is Gendered Language?

No two countries in the world view gender the same way. So how can organizations create an inclusive environment with multilingual employees when the perception of gender changes immensely worldwide?

It starts with understanding the diverse relationships between language and gender.

## Gendered Language Use Around the World

There are more than **7,000**<sup>1</sup> languages spoken throughout the world, but half of the world's population speaks only **23** separate languages.

Of the world's most commonly spoken languages, **9 out of 10**<sup>2</sup> are gendered, accounting for **38%**<sup>3</sup> of the world's population.

The four most spoken gendered languages are Hindi, Spanish, Arabic, and French.

## Gender Categories of Global Languages

The languages of the world can be split into three separate categories



### Gendered

Where nouns and pronouns have a categorized gender  
*(Spanish, French)*



### Genderless

Where nouns and pronouns don't have a marked gender  
*(Mandarin, Finnish)*



### Natural Gender

With gendered pronouns and genderless nouns  
*(English, Danish)*

# Grammatical Gender vs Natural Gender

Throughout global languages, not all genders are considered the same

## Grammatical Gender

Where gender is based on arbitrary assignment<sup>4</sup>, without regard to the referent of a noun.

**Le livre** - The masculine word for book in French.

**Die Katze** - The feminine word for cat in German.

**O coração** - the masculine word for heart in Portuguese.

**La foto**- the feminine word for a photograph in Spanish.

## Natural Gender

Where gender is based on the sex, or lack of sex, of the noun. Natural gender is typically used as a classification for people and animals<sup>5</sup>.

**Girl** - Feminine

- *She is smart.*

**Boy** - Masculine

- *He is silly.*

**It** - Neuter, does not have a gender associated.

- *What color is the table? It is brown.*



# Pronouns

There has always been language to describe an individual's gender identity, but their meanings and usage have gained global prominence within the past decade. Here is a quick guide on pronoun use in English.

## What is a pronoun?

A pronoun is a word that can replace a noun in a sentence, allowing us to shorten our sentences and make them sound less repetitive.

*It, Who, What, This, That, Something, Nobody*

## What is a personal pronoun?

Personal pronouns are used to refer to a particular person<sup>6</sup> or thing. They are used as a method of identification and can be singular, gendered, or gender-neutral. Simply, pronouns are how we identify ourselves apart from our name and are how someone refers to you in conversation.

*I, Me, He, Him, She, Her, They, Them*

## What do pronouns tell us?

Pronouns give context to our conversations. They establish formality and provide detail on how many people were talking to and who we are talking about.

## What is a neopronoun?

Neopronouns are words created to serve as a pronoun without expressing gender and are used in exactly the same way as the traditional pronouns of he/she/it. The “*neo*” in the word connotes that these pronouns are newer in our linguistic structure.

Neopronouns have recently become more popular within the global LGBTQ+ community. Commonly, neopronouns are chosen as a way to self-identify<sup>7</sup> by non-binary and gender non-conforming individuals.

## English Gender Neutral Pronouns and Neopronouns<sup>8</sup>

They/Them/Themselves

Ze/Zir/Zirs

Ze/Hir/Hirs

Xe/Xyr/ Xyrs

Ey/Eir/Eirs

Ae/Aer/Aers

Fae/Faer/Faers

## Examples of Gender Neutral and Neopronouns Used Around the World

Spanish - le/elle/elles

French - iel/ellui - ael/aels

German - xier/xies/dier

Portuguese - elu/ elus

Swedish - hen/hens

Russian - Они

# Gender Identity & The Gender Spectrum

The world's perception of gender identity is constantly evolving. In order to understand the intricacies of gender<sup>9</sup>, we need to bring awareness to the multiple facets of gender identity and expression that exist.

It's important to note that like gender identity, language is always changing. Some terms in usage now are different from those used in the past. For example, historically, the word "queer" has had negative connotations, but has been taken back as a term of endearment for the LGBTQ+ community.

## Gender Identity

Is one's own internal sense of self and gender, and that could be a woman, a man, neither, or both. As an extremely personal view of self-expression, an individual's gender identity is not outwardly visible to others and does not always equate to their physical presentation.

## Sex

Refers to a person's biological makeup, and is assigned at birth on the basis of external anatomy. There are three categories of sex; male, female, or intersex.

## Intersex

A term for an individual born with shared male and female characteristics. There are many different ways someone can be intersex, such as having a combination of male and female genitals and internal sex organs, contrasting chromosomes and hormones, or a combination.

## Gender

Is seen as a social construct of norms, behaviors, and roles associated with one gender or another. The three classifications of gender are male, female, or non-binary.

## Non-binary

A gender identity where the individual does not conform to the traditional narrative of male or female genders. Non-binary individuals can identify as both male or female, neither male nor female, or somewhere in between. Another term used interchangeably for non-binary is "genderqueer."

## Gender Expression

How someone outwardly presents their gender, typically through their behavior, appearance, and clothing. Society classifies these behaviors to be traditionally masculine or feminine, however, an individual's gender expression is completely subjective and personal.

## Sexual Orientation

Refers to a person's physical, romantic, and emotional attraction to others. Common sexual orientations include straight, bisexual, gay, and lesbian.

## Agender

Describes individuals who do not identify as any gender, either male or female.

## Cisgender

The adjective used to describe a person whose gender identity and expression align with the sex they were assigned at birth.

## Transgender

The term to describe someone whose gender identity does not align with the gender they were given at birth.

# Exploring Global Languages and Global DEI

Language is one of the most significant cultural markers that shape our identity, community, and worldview. Understanding the diversity of global languages and their cultural contexts is becoming more critical than ever in our globalized and interconnected world.

Gender is a fundamental aspect of human identity and a crucial factor in the social and cultural structures of societies worldwide. However, the way gender is viewed and expressed varies significantly across the world. The adoption of diversity, equity, and inclusivity differs from language to language, where some languages lend themselves well to adapting to inclusive languages, with others being more rigid and uncompromising.

We are going to discuss how the ideas of gender and inclusion are viewed in languages around the world and explore how different cultures and communities embrace, reject, and/or adapt for members of the LGBTQ+ communities.

## عربى (Arabic)



- Arabic is the official language of 22 countries, and is spoken in countries spanning from the Arabian Peninsula to the Western Sahara. There are an estimated 371 million<sup>10</sup> native Arabic speakers around the globe.
- Arabic is a deeply gendered language, with every noun, pronoun, and adjective having an assigned gender. This applies to singular and plural forms of nouns, and the masculine tense is used as the default when referring to a group of individuals.

- There are no dual or plural pronouns in the Arabic language, which has caused activists to create their own<sup>11</sup>:

أنتما and هما are used for both male and female groups.

- However, using these dual or plural pronouns can be grammatically complex, so some Arabic dialects have evolved their language to adapt.

In the Tunisian dialect of Arabic, female pronouns are used for everyone, regardless of sex, as a method of gender inclusivity.

In the Moroccan dialect, speakers have adopted the gender-fluid pronouns of **نتينا** to address all genders while speaking.

In Lebanon, activists have introduced the gender-neutral pronoun “*ent*”.

## Čeština (Czech)



- The Czech language has three grammatical genders, masculine, feminine, and neuter.
- Gender infiltrates deeply<sup>12</sup> within the Czech language because names and surnames are gendered.

Female names end in an *e* or *an a*, and female surnames have the suffix “*ová*”.

Male surnames typically end in “*ý*”.

Gender-neutral pronouns in Czech are “*oni/je/jejich/se*”

- The Czech government makes it very hard for transgendered individuals to formally complete their gender transition. In order to apply for full gender-confirmation surgery, trans people are required to divorce their spouses or same-sex registered partners, live for a year within their preferred gender, relinquish their ability to have biological children, and choose from a small pool of gender-neutral names to use during their transitional period.

The Czech government requires these individuals to pass a “real life test” where they have to answer invasive personal questions in order to meet the requirements for gender transition surgery.

Once the surgery is completed, the individual is allowed to re-apply for a specific male or female name and change their gender on legal documents.

## Nederlands (Dutch)



- Dutch has a variety of gender-neutral identifying terms that can be used by non-binary individuals;
  - *Ouder* (parent), *sibbling* (sibling), *kleintje* (child), *vriend* (friend), *lief* (romantic partner).
- Dutch gender-neutral pronouns are *hen/hen/hun*.
- Certain public signage in train stations, town centers, and airports in the Netherlands have been updated to use gender-neutral language.

## Suomi (Finnish)



- Finnish is a genderless language, meaning all adjectives, nouns, and verbs are gender-neutral.
- In Finland, personal pronouns do not specify whether the subject is a woman or a man, it is simply neutral.
- To foster inclusivity and ensure non-binary individuals feel seen and supported, the Fins have officially created a gender-neutral pronoun<sup>13</sup>. Unlike the other Finnish pronouns used, *hän* refers to women, men, and people of other genders alike. There is no social status associated with this word, and it is meant to be used to describe people of all socio-economic and gender backgrounds.

## Français (French)



- There are 40 French-speaking countries<sup>14</sup> and territories around the world, with a total of 280+ million global speakers<sup>15</sup> in countries on almost every continent.
- For French speakers, the most common way of adopting inclusive language is to use the existing neutral forms whenever possible. Instead of adding new characters to words, French speakers choose to simply use the more formal, neutral tense when reading, writing, and speaking.
- For non-binary individuals looking for a gender-neutral pronoun, *iel/ellui* has increased in use within the past few years.
- The feelings of inclusivity and equality aren't as prevalent within the French government as of late. There has been some public pushback from the French government and linguistic authorities about the use of gender-neutral language, both formally and informally:

In 2017, French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe announced the ban<sup>16</sup> on using gender-neutral French in all official government documents<sup>17</sup>.

The French Academy, which stands as a decision-maker for matters pertaining to the French language, issued a statement saying that inclusive writing would harm the French language and put the language in “mortal danger.”

## Deutsch (German)



- The German language has 3 genders - masculine, feminine, and neuter. The masculine plural is often chosen to refer to both men and women and is used as the default if the speaker does not know the gender of the individuals in a group.
- The *Binnen-i*, a capital I, has been introduced as a grammatical gender marker to replace generic masculine profession terms. So the masculine term *Lehrer* (teacher) would become *LehrIn* and can be used to describe a male, female, or non-binary teacher.
- The *Gender-Gap* and/or *Gendersternchen* (Gender Star) is also used in an effort to be inclusive<sup>18</sup>, and it is where a person puts a \_ or a \* character after the root of the word and before the gendered ending.

*Student* (student) becomes *Student\_in* or *Student\*in*.
- German nonbinary neopronouns are: *Dey, hen, em, sier, en, and xier*.

## תִּירְבֵּעַ (Hebrew)



- Hebrew is the official language of the State of Israel, and today Hebrew is spoken by about 9 million people<sup>19</sup> worldwide.
- Hebrew is a highly gendered language, where pronouns are inseparable from almost every sentence and where all verbs and adjectives are slightly changed depending on the subject's gender.
- The masculine form is always used as the default grammatical tense when talking to a group, in formal situations, if there is a mixed group of people, and when you do not know the genders of the people you are speaking to.
- There are no neo-pronouns and gender-neutral grammar in Hebrew.

However, some Hebrew speakers are bypassing these constraints by:

Choosing specific words that are spelled the same for each gender and combining them with a gerund to get around distinct gendered language.
- Adding both masculine and feminine variations of a word into the same sentence when addressing multiple people.
- Placing “.” and “/” to connote different language variations, such as **שלום לכולם/ן**



## हिंदी (Hindi)



- Hindi is one of the 22 official languages of India<sup>20</sup> and is predominantly spoken in 7 other countries in Southeast Asia. As of early 2023, there are 602 million Hindi speakers across the globe.
- Hindi is a gender-centric language, and a neuter gender does not exist. Linguistically, Hindi is structured in the way that the gender of the subject decides their inflection. The masculine gender is used as the default, making inclusivity difficult.
- Pronouns in Hindi do not express gender, rather they express a relationship of distance<sup>21</sup> that is either physical, social, or referential. This means pronouns are not used in Hindi in the same way they are in many other global languages.

The pronouns most closely resemble the English terms this/that/these/those.

- There is a plural masculine form that can be used by non-binary individuals, but this causes an additional level of confusion because this form is generally used to express a level of formality and respect. So it would seem culturally inappropriate for a parent to use this form with their child.

## Magyar (Hungarian)



- Hungarian is a genderless language, where there is no grammatical gender and no gendered pronouns. This applies to all adjectives and nouns.
- Every person, regardless of their sex or gender assigned at birth, is referred to in the same way.

The nominative case for a singular third person is *ő*.

The singular possessive pronoun is *övé*.

The plural possessive pronoun is *övék*.

- Hungarian law is not accepting<sup>22</sup> of the LGBTQ+ community. In recent years, lawmakers have:
  - Enacted a law that bans depictions of LGBTQ+ people in school materials and youth television shows,
  - Ended the legal gender recognition for transgender and intersex individuals,
  - Amended the Hungarian Constitution to define marriage as only between a man and a woman,
  - Prohibited same-sex couples to adopt.

## Italiano (Italian)



- Italian is the national language<sup>23</sup> of Italy, and there are an estimated 85 million speakers of Italian across the globe.
- There have been multiple discussions about the schwa, or *scevà* (ə), symbol as a mark of inclusivity within the Italian language.
- This suffix is used to refer to multiple people in a gender-neutral way, replacing the ending of the word with the symbols, ə, \*, or @.

*Maestro* (masculine) and *Maestra* (feminine) would become *maestrə*, *maestr\**, *maestr@*.

- However, as in Spanish and Portuguese, these words are for written text only because they are not pronounceable in spoken language.
- Gender activists have proposed the pronoun ending of *u/ū* to connote a non-binary subject, but this has not been accepted and used on a widespread scale.

## 日本 (Japanese)



- Japan has a gender-neutral grammatical structure for its nouns or adjective agreement. However, it is the pronunciation of the Japanese words that give clues about the gender of the subject<sup>24</sup>.

The speech style of Japanese can be broken into a “women’s language”, *onna kotoba*, and men’s language, *otoko kotoba*. These styles of spoken Japanese are different based on their inflection, with the feminine style having higher-pitched sounds and the masculine style having lower, descending tones.

- Japan has very strict laws<sup>25</sup> against the LGBTQ+ community, especially transgender individuals. In order for a person to be recognized officially, a doctor must diagnose them with a gender identity disorder, and they must undergo medical sterilization. In addition, to be eligible for gender-affirming care, it is illegal for Japanese transgender people to have children or be married.

## 普通话 (Mandarin Chinese)



- Mandarin is the second most widely spoken language in the world, after English. The total number of global Mandarin speakers is estimated to be about 1.1 billion.
- In modern standard Chinese, the third-person pronouns for he and she are both pronounced the same, but the character is written differently. This creates a double-edged sword where Mandarin speakers can be inclusive when communicating with others, but not through written script.
- Gender markers in Mandarin are communicated via radicals. Radicals are characters that connote a specific meaning, and when combined form a Mandarin word.

Phonetic radicals give the rules about a character's pronunciation and grammatical radicals give context to the sentence's subject.

This means that the five pronouns all sound the same when spoken, and look vastly different in script.

- Unlike other languages, Mandarin does not assign gender to nouns.
- When it comes to the Chinese LGBTQ+ community, homosexuality was decriminalized in 1997<sup>26</sup>, but there is currently no legal protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

## Norsk (Norwegian)



- The Norwegian language distinguishes between three genders, masculine, feminine, and neuter.
- In early 2022, The Language Council of Norway confirmed the gender-neutral pronoun *hen* will enter the official Norwegian language within a year.
- *Hen* gained prominence in Norway after its popularity in Finland, and has become much more popular with the Norwegian people in recent years.
- Adding a formal gender-neutral pronoun<sup>27</sup> to the Norwegian language has been debated for a while, as there has been some difficulty mirroring their use within Norwegian speech patterns.

## Português (Portuguese)



- Portuguese is the official language of nine countries<sup>28</sup>; Portugal, Brazil, Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé, and Príncipe and East Timor. It is also used as the base of 20 Creole languages and is spoken by an estimated 257 million+ speakers worldwide.
- As with Spanish, gender neutrality in the Portuguese language<sup>29</sup> has been implemented by using the letters *x* and *ue*, as well as the symbol *@* to replace the vowel that marks gender.
- *Amigo* (male) and *Amiga* (female) become *amigx*, *amig@*, and *amigue*.
- Non-binary speakers have chosen to implement the gender-neutral pronouns of *elu/elus* to replace the *ele/ela* (he/she) pronouns.

## Русский (Russian)



- The Russian language has three genders, masculine, feminine, and neuter.
- Despite having two masculine and feminine grammatical structures, the Russian language can be inclusive with its various gender-neutral characteristics

For example, to address someone you do not know personally, you would use a gender-neutral phrase.

Additionally, you do not need to use a pronoun when you talk to someone. This can be achieved using the word *oni*.

- There is no formal feminine and no formal masculine tense, instead, a Russian speaker would use a universal, gender-neutral tense.
- However, there is no use of “they” in the Russian language.
- Members of the LGBTQ+ family face legal challenges<sup>30</sup> in Russia:

Same-sex marriage is illegal.

It is illegal to present as non-binary.

There are no legal protections around discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals.

In December 2022, the Russian government prohibited<sup>31</sup> the sharing of positive and even neutral information about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. In addition, it is now illegal to be publically “out” and display any same-sex behavior in public.

## Español (Spanish)



- Spanish is the most spoken of the Romance Languages and is the second most widely spoken global language in terms of native speakers. Spain’s colonial expansion has brought this language all over the globe, including regions in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. There are 21 Spanish-speaking countries around the globe with an estimated total of 548 million global speakers.

- Gender neutrality has been implemented by using the letters *x* and *e*, as well as the symbol *@* to replace the vowel that marks gender in the Spanish languages.

*Todos* (male) and *Todas* (female) become *tod@s*, *todxs*, *todes*.

- Spanish speakers have started to adopt the gender-neutral pronoun *elle* as an alternative for the standard *el/ella* (he/she) pronouns.

## Kiswahili (Swahili)



- Swahili is one of the official languages of the African Union<sup>32</sup>, and is one of the 10 most widely spoken languages in the world.
- The Swahili language originated in East Africa and is commonly spoken in Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Somalia, Mozambique, Malawi, Comoros, Zambia, Namibia, and Botswana.

- In breaking from other African tribal languages, Swahili is a non-tonal Bantu language. Other African languages are tonal, meaning the inflection in the tone of the word will convey different meanings. Swahili was influenced by Arabic, meaning each word has one tone and its own separate meaning.
- Swahili is a genderless language, with gender-neutral pronouns<sup>23</sup> and titles.
- There are gender-specific words, like *mama* (mother), *baba* (father), *ndugu* (brother), and *dada* (sister), but almost all other titles are gender-neutral. All of the below job titles are used both for men and women in the profession.

*Daktari* (doctor)

*Muuguzi* (nurse)

*Mwalimu* (teacher)

### Swahili pronouns<sup>34</sup>

*Yeye* is used interchangeably for the pronouns he/him and she/her.

*Yake* is used interchangeably for the pronouns his and hers.

## Svenska (Swedish)



- Swedish is a bit complex in terms of gender as it has two gender pronouns, *han* (he) and *hon* (she), but its two grammatical genders of common and neuter don't correspond exactly to human gender. For example, the nouns for man and woman have the same grammatical gender.
- The Swedes are very progressive in terms of gender neutrality, and there's been a movement<sup>35</sup> for the creation of a gender-neutral pronoun<sup>36</sup> since the mid-1960s.
- The gender-neutral pronoun, *hen*, rose to prominence in Sweden in 2012 after the release of a popular children's book that used *hen* as the only pronoun describing the main characters.
- *Hen* was officially added<sup>37</sup> to the official dictionary of the Swedish language in 2015.

## Tagalog



- Tagalog, the language spoken in The Philippines, is an incredibly inclusive language because the Filipino culture embraces a fluid recognition and appreciation of gender.
- There are no he/she pronouns in Tagalog<sup>38</sup>, speakers only use the word *siya* (they) to refer to a person no matter their gender. There are additional indicators in the sentence to let the speaker know the gender of the person, such as their name, title, or classification.
- Gender-neutral terms such as *asawa* (spouse) and *kabiyak* (a romantic other half) have become prominent in the Filipino language due to indigenous influence.
- The Filipino people have a vast history of accepting and respecting members of the LGBTQ+ community during pre-colonial times.

One example of this is a *Babaylan*, a title of a mystical healer that was mostly held by women or feminized men. *Babaylans* could have romantic relations with members of the same sex without persecution or judgment.

*Bakla* is a Tagalog word that describes the practice of male cross-dressing<sup>39</sup>, and its identity is built on a performative cultural practice more so than the person's sexual orientation. Those who identify as *Bakla* are often considered a third gender and they can be either homosexual or heterosexual. Historically, the *Bakla* were renowned as community leaders and many *Bakla* individuals are regarded as celebrities today.

## Ubang



- The Ubang people live in southern Nigeria and are unique in that the men and women speak separate languages. There is not one shared language however both men and women understand the other language.
- The male language *Ofe* is completely different from the female language Araseke and it is illegal for either sex to speak the language<sup>40</sup> not assigned to them at birth.
- The only exception to this law is that all male children learn the language of the women until the age of 10. Boys are primarily raised by women until prepubescent, and making the choice to speak the male language<sup>41</sup> is seen as a sign of maturity and entrance into adulthood.
- The Ubang language is a tribal language that has been sustained solely by oral tradition. There are no formal, written accounts of this language.
- Some examples of how this language differs<sup>42</sup>:

English	Ofe (Male)	Araseke (Female)
Tree	Kitchi	Okweng
Dog	Abu	Okwakwe
Water	Bamuie	Amu
Goat	Bibiang	Deyire
Cup	Nki	Ogbala



## In Summary

Exploring the role of gendered language in promoting diversity and inclusivity has highlighted the complex and nuanced ways in which language use can reflect and shape cultural norms and beliefs. We have seen how gendered language can have a profound impact on how individuals interact with the world around them, and how small changes in language use can make a big difference in creating more welcoming environments for all.

As businesses increasingly operate in global contexts, investing in translation and localization becomes more critical than ever. By understanding the nuances of gendered language use in different languages and cultures, businesses can create a more inclusive and accepting environment.

The relationship between humans and languages is so deeply interwoven that it is impossible to have one without the other. That's why we believe translation and localization can only be accomplished by humans, for humans.

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