GENDER AND LANGUAGE

gender exclusive forms – men and women use different forms that don’t overlap

* Gros Ventre (Am. Indian): women have palatalized velar stops, men have palatalized dental stops
  women: [kjatsa] ‘bread’
  men: [djatsa] ‘bread’
* Yukaghir (N. Asian): women and children have /ts/, /dz/, men have /tʃ/, /dʒ/, old people have /tʃj/, /dʒj/
* Chukchi (Siberian): men drop /n/ and /t/ between vowels
  women: [nitvaqenat]
  men: [nitvaqaat]
* Montreal French: men omit [l] in pronouns and articles more than women
  (in il, elle, la, les, etc…)
* Koasati (Muskogean): men produce [s] at the end of verbs but women don’t
  women: [lakaw] ‘he is lifting it’
  men: [lakaws] ‘he is lifting it’
  women: [lakawhol] ‘lift it’
  men: [lakawhos] ‘lift it’
* Japanese: different 1/2 sg pronouns for male/female speakers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>male</th>
<th>female</th>
<th>2 sg</th>
<th>male</th>
<th>female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 sg</td>
<td>‘watashi’</td>
<td>‘atakushi’</td>
<td>plain</td>
<td>‘kimi’</td>
<td>‘anata’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plain</td>
<td>‘boku’</td>
<td>‘watashi’</td>
<td></td>
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gender-variable forms – men and women speak differently based on overall rates
(percent who use forms, not absolute distinctions)
* English:
  men are less likely than women to use certain adverbs
    (adorable, charming, lovely, sweet)
  women use more “verbal hedges” (maybe, you know, sorta)
  women have more color terms (plum, apricot, mauve, chartreuse)

Pitch - (frequency of waves in VT) is often different between men (lower) and women (higher)
Somewhat influenced by vocal tract length, but difference is greater than it would be by physiology alone!
“Sexist” language
Gender-specific terms often used gender-neutrally
- ‘man’ and ‘mankind’ – used to refer to both men and women
- ‘he’ used as generic pronoun, or when gender is unknown
  E.g.: If anyone doesn’t like it, he should tell me.
  When a child is young, his language is non-adultlike.
But consider:
  Either the husband or wife has perjured himself.
  Was it your brother or sister who broke his leg?
NB: Cambridge Grammar of the English Language says that ‘he’ is never gender-neutral

gender-neutral 3rd sg pronouns?
  proposals have included: e, ey, em, eir, zie, co…
  CGEL advocates using they/them/their, and this is what is often used anyway

gender-neutral terms often used with assumed specific gender
  - officer of instruction – only men
  - nurse, elementary school teacher, secretary – women
  - doctor, steel worker, chancellor of the university – men
some historical influence on these assumptions
people sometimes specify gender when it goes against assumption
  cf. male nurse, female doctor

some terms have male/female pairs
  actor/actress
  prince/princess
  poet/poetess
  hero/heroine

increased use of gender-neutral terms in recent years
  postal worker (from mailman)
  firefighter (from fireman)
  police officer (from policeman)
  flight attendant (from stewardess)
  chair (from chairman)

what about denotation vs. connotation?
  bachelor – unmarried man (connotation: young, adventurous)
  spinster – unmarried women (connotation: old, knitting, lots of cats, wild hair)

Questions
what do you think?
are these trends “sexist”?
do these forms cause a sexist mentality or arise from it?