Gendered Language

Three short exercises to demonstrate gendered language and unconscious gender bias.

## Exercise 1 – Ideal Characteristics

**Total time: 20 minutes**

*Before the class*

* Fill out the blank section in exercise 1 in the pupil worksheet, with either ‘person’, ‘woman’ or ‘man’ – make sure there is an equal split between the class.

*During the class*

5 minutes

* Hand out the worksheets and instruct pupils not to look at their classmates’ worksheet.
* Ask pupils to spend 5 minutes completing exercise 1 on their own. Ask pupils not to discuss with classmates.

15 minutes

* On the whiteboard write the three categories and list the characteristics pupils come up with for each.
* Next, as a class discuss and evaluate the degree of overlap between perceptions of the ideal person and the male and female stereotypes.

## Exercise 2 – Gendered Characteristics

**Total time: 13 minutes**

3 minutes

* Read out the list of characteristics below one by one. After each word ask pupils to write down if they think the word is associated with females, males or no gender.   
    
  *Ask pupils tick what first comes to mind – there are no right or wrong answers.*

1. Bossy
2. Assertive
3. Airhead
4. Simple
5. Charismatic
6. Bubbly
7. Gossiping
8. Feisty

10 minutes

* As a class review each of the words and ask pupils to discuss the possible reasons behind the association of the word with females, males or non-gender.

## Exercise 3 – Riddle

**Total time: 10 minutes**

3 minutes

* Display the below riddle on the board and ask pupils who the surgeon is.

**A father and son are in a horrible car crash that kills the dad.**

**The son is rushed to the hospital; just as he’s about to under the knife, the surgeon says, “I can’t operate – that boys my son!”**

7 minutes

* There are two possible answers to the riddle.   
  The surgeon is the boy’s mother, or the boy has two fathers.
* Discuss the points below with the class.
  + 86% of people don’t consider that the surgeon is a woman.
  + When the pronouns are changed to female, 24% more people get it right.   
    E.g. **A father and daughter are in a horrible car crash that kills the dad. The daughter is rushed to the hospital; just as she’s about to under the knife, the surgeon says, “I can’t operate – that girls my daughter!”**

## Pupil Worksheet

### Ideal Characteristics

List the 5 most important characteristics that an ideal ……………….. should have.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1 |  |
| 2 |  |
| 3 |  |
| 4 |  |
| 5 |  |

### Gendered Characteristics

Listen to a list of 8 different characteristics.   
  
After each word has been read out, mark a tick in the below table for whether you think the word is associated with females, males or no gender.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Females | Males | No gender |
| 1 |  |  |  |
| 2 |  |  |  |
| 3 |  |  |  |
| 4 |  |  |  |
| 5 |  |  |  |
| 6 |  |  |  |
| 7 |  |  |  |
| 8 |  |  |  |