



## **MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

# **PSYCHOLOGY OF COMMUNICATION**

## ***GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS***

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## Psychology of Communication: Gender Perspectives in Teaching, Learning and Instructional Materials

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### Abstract

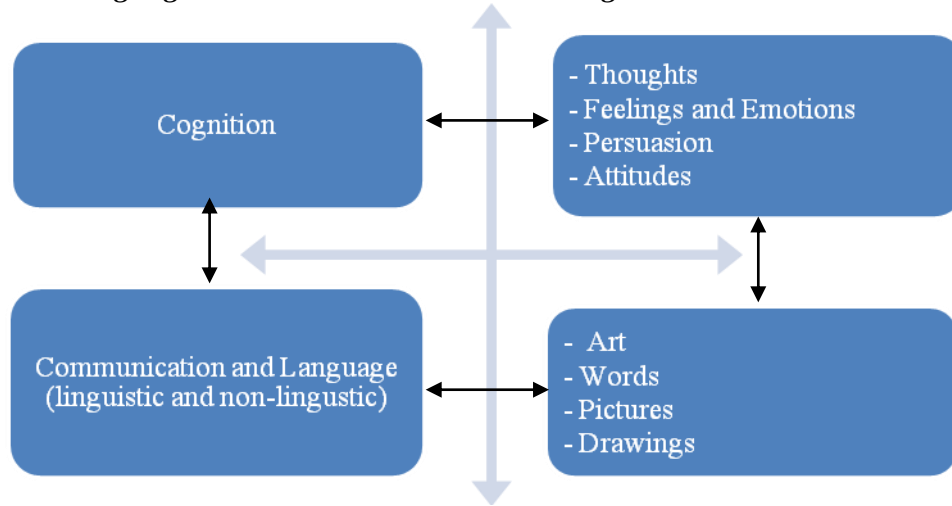
This paper on psychology of communication relates to gender and the use of language and other forms of communication in teaching, learning and instructional materials. Language has been identified as one of the perpetrators of gender stereotypes. In a patriarchal system, the use of language extends to education, the school and the classroom. Subsequently, teaching and instructional materials tend to portray certain stereotypes of males and females girls and boys in certain perspective. This in turn affects the way teachers communicate with pupils and students in school, as well as the way boys and girls learn and feel about themselves and others. This paper recommends continuous review of teaching, learning and instructional materials to be learner friendly and free from gender bias in order to enable improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools.

### Language and Communication, Cognition, Persuasion and Interaction

Communication involves language. Language has both content and context which are intricately connected. The content involves various aspects of our lives such as knowledge, religious and cultural representations. The context includes our environment, religion, beliefs, social values and norms. While religion reflects the faith and spiritualism, beliefs include mental habits that are sometimes parallel to our physical habits and hence vulnerable to manipulation. Thus, language in form of words as a basis of communication as well as other structure of communication within language (such as stories and narratives, poetry and drama, proverbs and riddles, songs and dances) and outside language (such as art, pictures and drawings) are all a means of manifesting our cognitive processes.

Language includes both the use of linguistic (words, phrases, songs and dance, drama and poetry, proverbs, riddles and wise sayings) and non-linguistic practices (art, pictures and drawings). Thus, language inherently also includes persuasion and coercion. This is because language involves both communication, and the means by which we express ourselves (thoughts, feelings and emotions, persuasion and attitudes). In essence, language and communication has a context and content. Therefore, language and cognition are interconnected as demonstrated in *Figure 1*:

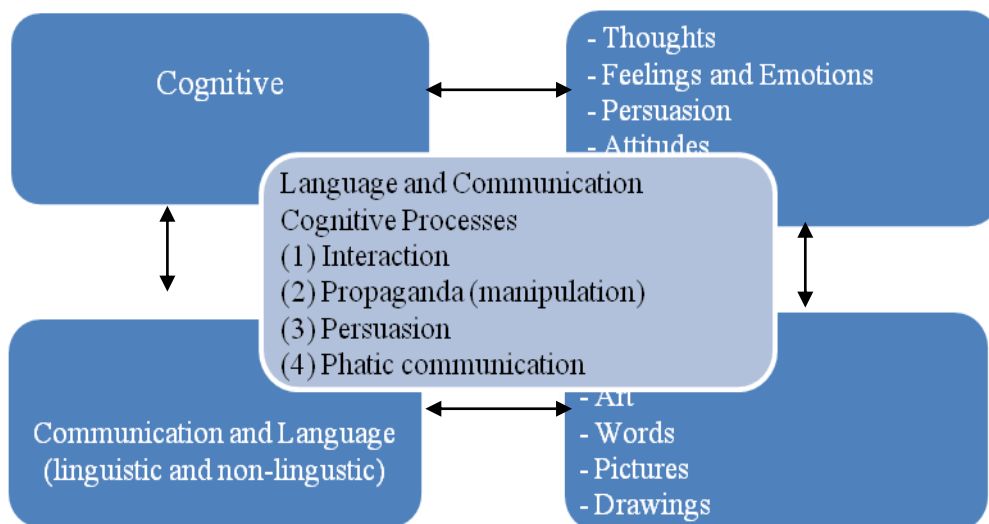
**Figure 1: Language as Communication: The Cognitive Process**



Communication including language and other varieties of communication enables us to communicate our thoughts, feelings and emotions as well as our persuasions, perspectives, beliefs and values. This purpose is achieved in various ways, including in our general interaction with one another.

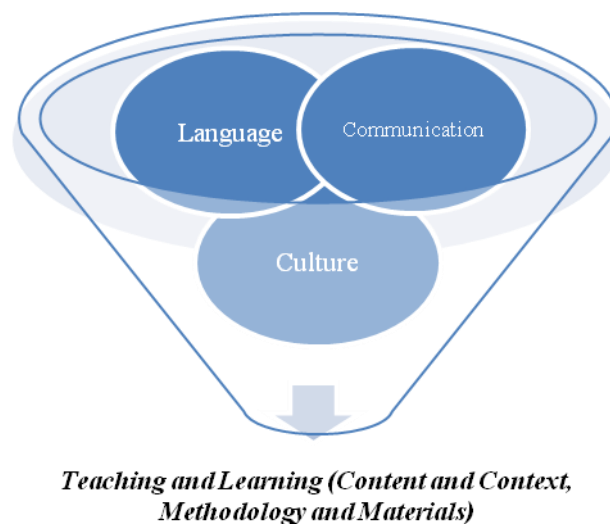
Language and communication has an amalgam of four dimensions, that is, Interaction, Propaganda (manipulation), Persuasion and Phatic communication (I use the acronym IPPP). This underlines the importance of language and other forms of communication as represented in *Figure 2*:

**Figure 2: Language as Communication: The Interaction and informative Transaction**



Thus, language and other forms of communication are both a form of conversation as well as cognitive processes. This underlines the importance of communication in teaching and learning and includes teaching (content and context) and learning materials.

**Figure 3: Teaching and Learning: Content, Context and Methodology Interaction**



Our relation to and understanding of our world has a major impact on our worldview. This includes the way we perceive and understand our world (language, communication and culture) including our understanding of what it is to be a human being, to be female or male, a boy or a girl. Language and communication is a part of our cognition in which we demonstrate our understanding of the complex processes through which people become members of a community (society). Subsequently, we construct our worldviews, basic attitudes, values and norms. This is how we create our social gender. Traditional societies such our Kenyan context will link perspective with education, teaching and learning process including the teacher in the classroom. A gender responsive strategy is needed in order to delink the gender stereotypes and this paper argues for supporting positive activities.

For the purpose of this paper, thoughts, feelings and emotions and interaction processes are treated as follows: (1) they are forms of cultural representation; (2) they are cognitive processes; and, (3) arising out of 1 and 2, significant cognitive and interactive processes have considerable importance in the teaching and learning process. Language and art includes diverse range of human activities in creating visual, auditory or performances to express our human experience. This in turn places language and communication, gender and education as

a basis of discourse and forms the rationale for this paper on the psychology of communication, gender and language.

### **Psychology of Communication: Gender Implications**

Our understanding of our world arises from our social, cultural and psychological orientation. This includes our language, our environment and our perception of our world. Psychology of communication pinpoints that language and other forms of communication have tremendous impact in shaping our perception and understanding of the world. This includes how we interpret our world, people and events around us and how we fit into it. This includes stereotypes. Bootzin, Bower, Crocker and Hall (1991) defined stereotypes as complex mental representations of different types of people, containing information that we know, or are convinced to be generally true. Stereotype may be either an accurate or an inaccurate generalization about members of a category.

In terms of gender, we need to pay careful attention to the following instances:

- (1) Gender and language.
- (2) Gender roles and stereotypes.
- (3) Gender and media including advertising.
- (4) Gender in education (including the classroom teaching and learning materials).

Our perception of people in terms of gender is often extended in the education system including in schools, curriculum, in text books (language, pictures and drawings) and to the child/ren. This includes the following:

- *Stereotype of roles.* Men are generally more likely than women to be depicted in working (formal) roles, whereas a large majority of female characters are depicted in non-working (informal) roles. Also, boys and males are portrayed in prestigious roles such as driver, senator, president, governor, pilot, clergy and engineer while girls and women are allocated other assistant roles such as nurse, domestic roles and care givers. The type of working role (power + prestige = dominance) and non-working role (low prestige – power = subordinate) has been found to differ between sexes yet this has an impact in that it applauds males and diminish females. Males are likely to acquire high self esteem and aggressively work towards achieving high goals while women may be discouraged to work towards minimal achievement. Books and

publications and examples given in class must include both males and females as achievers and in high social positions.

In addition, organizations must promote both males and females in the organizational levels, including the executive and top management.

- *Games and sports.* Males are often shown engaged in physically active pastimes such as sports, rock-climbing or canoeing while few show women do these activities. There is need to place examples of girls and women in various sports activities.
- *Examples and illustrations.* Books and examples must carefully weigh the benefits of examples, and instances of gender stereotypes should be avoided unless they have reproductive roles in which case both sexes should be highlighted as well as their role.
- *Stereotype of Child/ren.* Many books are directed at children, yet the books contain information and images that propagate gender stereotypes. These include girls holding dolls, grooming themselves such as putting on make-up, brushing their hair and generally worrying about their appearance (few display boys doing these things). On the contrary, majority of examples feature little boys playing games and in varying shapes, sizes and moods. It is worse when the boys are untidy, naughty, rowdy and carefree but all the more looking intelligent and made to appear as more desirable to parents, teachers and other people, sometimes even being applauded even when in a pathetic state. Further, young boys are often playing with action toys such as trucks and super-hero figures (but rarely girls are shown in such active roles). Such images have a (negative) lasting effect on the child/ren.

The gender policy in education (Republic of Kenya, 2007) implied that books and publications including research must be continually reviewed to ensure that they do not perpetuate such gender stereotypes.

### **Instances of Gender Stereotypes**

A major form of gender socialisation is the portrayal of girls and women in various contexts, including books. This includes subtle stereotyping (adopted from Goffman (1976) that I have included as example basis for this paper:

1. *Functional ranking:* This is the tendency to depict males in executive roles and as more functional when collaborating with women. This is the example, of male as head of household and in charge.

2. *Ritualization of subordination.* This is the portrayal of girls and women as objects of males, including as mother, girl friend and wife.
3. *Feminine touch.* This is the tendency to highlight only the femininity of women such as mothers and caregivers. Girls and women may be more caring and concerned but they are much more than mere objects of cradling or caressing.
4. *Stereotypical family roles.* In many instances especially in textbooks and in class, fathers are depicted as distant, far away and detached from their families, while mothers take care of the child/ren. Additionally, fathers are depicted as relating primarily to their sons, while mothers are close to the daughters. Such stereotypes tend to perpetuate a patriarchal system and further divide the family along gender lines as they espouse stereotypes.

Stereotyping has elements of perception. Perception is the procedure by which we try and interpret information about the environment in which we live. There is a relationship between stereotype and perception since our perception is also our reality. In our instances in traditional societies, our perception reinforces our rigidity. Thus, language and communication is part of culture as had been explained in *Figure 3*.

### **Gender perspectives in learning and instructional material**

Communication is both verbal and non-verbal. Language both reflects and shapes the way we view the world since language is a part of culture (the development in *Figures 1, 2 and 3*). The effect of language and communication is particularly relevant in the field of teaching and learning, schools and education. Also, the transmission of information and ideas is either conscious or unconscious.

The Ministry of Education aims at institutionalized gender responsive quality education (Republic of Kenya, 2007). This includes provision of (1) adequate, (2) age appropriate, (3) suitable gender responsive teaching and learning resources. This paper emphasizes on the gender responsiveness and that is why there is further prominence on a critical review of both the curriculum and the teaching learning materials. Age appropriateness and inclusion together with children with special needs, school and class environment and use of examples are part of integration. In addition, the prominence on psychology of communication includes gender responsive pedagogy so that teaching and learning approaches including content and context has engendered standards and is sensitive to gender mainstreaming.

I have tried to outline the policy objectives and strategies towards gender responsive research and publications within the gender policy in education (Republic of Kenya, 2007) as follows:

**Table 1: Gender Responsive Books, Publications and Research**

	<b>Concept</b>	<b>Development of reviewed perspective</b>
	Objective	Promote gender responsive and quality books, publications and research to enhance teaching and learning materials.
	Policy Statement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop and publish gender responsive books, publications and research.</li> <li>2. Sensitize, train and advice authors and editors on gender issues and concerns.</li> <li>3. Establish mechanisms and structures to monitor delivery of gender responsive books, publications and research.</li> </ol>
	Policy Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Design and develop books, publications and research that promote gender responsiveness.</li> <li>2. Sensitize staff and stakeholders on gender responsive books, publications and research.</li> <li>3. Train authors and editors on gender issues and concerns in writing, research and publications.</li> </ol>

### Language and Use of Language

Various studies have been conducted on gender and language (Bolinger, 1980, 1987; Cameron, 1975, 1995; Graddol and Swann, 1989; Lakoff, 1975, 1998; Kramarae, 1981; Smith, 1985; Spender, 1980, 1982, 1998). This is because language has a context and content (Halliday and Hasan, 1989). Scholars reveal that language has a gender bias and that the language used in naming people and characters is often biased, often with an advantage to the males and a disadvantage to the females (Coates, 1986; Giles, 1979; Kabira, 1991; Wango, 1998a, 1998b. 1999). This includes the use of generics that have a masculine connotation such as man, mankind, manpower, man-made, early man, headmaster and policeman (Miller and Swift, 1990; Oduol, 1990; Pyonton, 1990; Warren, 2002). The continuous use of phrases such as father and mother, husband and wife, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, master and mistress, and boys and girls makes the world appear male; it is as if males come before females. Similarly, words such as maid, housewife and matron have a feminine inclination. These words and phrases have an obvious gender bias. There are also the vocatives (that is, forms of address) that bestow (positive) status, demean (negative), or patronize such as sir, mr, mrs or miss. Teacher education and development must include a review of teaching and learning materials to ensure gender responsiveness.



A range of recommendations including the National Council of Teachers of English (1975) and various scholars such as Warren (2002), Kabira, Masheti and Wanjiku (1994), Kabira and Masinjila (1997), Merriellyn and Underwood (1978) and Leach (2003) have suggested ways of revising language and communication including in advertising Goffman (1976), education (Leach, 2003) and other sectors. For instance, the following phrases must be used, mother and father, wife and husband, sisters and brothers, sister and brother, daughters and sons, daughter and son, mistress and master, and boys and girls and thus normalise the world.

### **Gender in Pictures, Graphs and Illustration**

According to various cultural systems, males are perceived to carry the responsibility of public and responsible (prestigious and powerful) activities, that is, the productive activities of society, while women's tasks are within the more private sphere, reproductive: rearing and looking after children. This leads to gender stereotyping.

There are various gender frameworks for analysis such as National Council of Teachers of English (1975), the ABC of gender analysis (Kabira and Masinjila (1997) as well as various suggestions of improving language and ensuring a more gender balanced language and communication (Goffman, 1976; Merriellyn and Underwood, 1978; Miller and Swift, 1990; and, Leach, 2003).

An analysis of pictures, graphs and illustrations includes the following:

- (1) *Action*. You need to ask who acts in what role/s? This includes consideration on involvement such as who takes part in the action. There are two types of action: production and reproduction actions. Production activities are carried out to produce goods and services and include generation of income, thus are prominent. Reproduction actions are more aligned to gender such as collecting water, nursing children, cooking and fetching firewood. Women are often displayed in such lower roles that tend to indicate that they maintain the family rather than in the more economic roles.
- (2) *Location*. It is important to note who is seen where? This is related to what they are doing. Such portrayal has obvious bias as seen in the examples below.
- (3) *Power, position and prominent*. Action and location are directly related to power. Power includes authority and influence. A picture, sentence or illustration can bestow power and influence, or deprive them from a group.

Some of the pictures, drawings, diagrams and illustrations on power, location and action include the following:

- Ex 1.** Picture of a man on a tractor, and a woman (presumably wife) walking behind and dropping seedling > Men (males) ride on tractors and use machinery (technology), women work have no power (could imply they do not use technology).
- Ex 2.** Pictures of male doctor and female nurse, male pilot and female steward > Males become doctors while females (women) are nurses, males are pilots while women serve, they provide services. This has issues of power, position and prestige.
- Ex 3.** Picture of tall male next to short woman (presumably wife) > Males are tall (hence authoritative and powerful), women are short (less powerful, dominated by males).
- Ex 4.** Pictures and diagrams of male scientists and conspicuous absence of females > Only males learn and make use of science and technology, and not females.
- Ex 5.** A boy assisting a girl > Boys are bright, girls require assistance. It also implies that girls are helpless and while males have the power.
- Ex 6.** Picture of angels visiting a person, or appearing to someone > pictures and illustrations of angels are often portrayed as males, while persons being visited is either male or female. Most visits are to males (males more spiritually endowed).  
Make angel unisex - neither male nor female.

These examples are stereotypical of gender roles in society and hence not part of the learning process. Therefore, they must be consciously avoided and deleted from mainstream learning as well as in the teaching and learning materials.

### **Layout of teaching learning materials**

The general layout of teaching and learning materials will include the title of books, charts, numbers and diagrams. Writers and editors must ensure that the activities and illustrations do not depict any gender bias. Gender stereotyping must be consciously avoided. This includes the activities by persons of either gender as well as sizes of picture, patterns, power and the power distribution.

#### **(a) Naming / Nouns**

Conduct an analysis and summarises the gender-specific names and nouns in the text (book, report, article, or manual). Analysis should include the following:

- (1) *Naming*. Who is named and who is not named?  
 (2) *Action*. What are they doing (named or unnamed)?

You can conduct an analysis of the characters that appear in the text or report as follows (see Table 5 for an analysis of characters in this text):

**Table 2: Analysis of Characters**

Named females	Unnamed females	Named males	Unnamed males

It is important to be careful with use of names because in certain instances, the gender of an unnamed person, whether male or female, in a prominent or pejorative role may be assumed. This is particularly common for words assumed to be generic. In several instances, the so called generics such as angel, headmaster, manager, captain and shepherd are assumed to be male.

**Ex 7.** The headmaster is in. > Headmaster is male, so only males can be in charge of an organisation / institution such as a school.

**Ex 8.** The headman is in charge of our village. > Headman is male, so only males become leaders.

**Ex 9.** Picture of male (head master, chief) addressing school or *baraza* (public gathering).

**Ex 10.** The angel visited him. > Angels are males and visit males.

**Ex 11.** The child is with the maid. > Women are the ones who look after children, only women are house helps.

**Ex 12.** The shepherds watched over their flocks. > Shepherds are males.

**Ex 13.** She is barren / She was barren. > It is women who cannot bear children. This is connected to the traditional 'function' of women in reproductive role.

Also, the number of males and females may be the same but the task being performed by certain gender is biased.

**Ex 14.** Picture of male (head master, chief) addressing school or *baraza* (public gathering), but the number of females being addressed is much larger > Males rule females.

Ensure that:

- (1) Neither males nor females are under-represented, or over-represented. This is by ensuring a balance (*see Table 8*).
- (2) There is no gender imbalance in terms of characters in the manual, book or report.

This could easily be remedied by changing the names of some of the characters and ensuring equal allocation of task for each gender.

### **(b) Pronouns**

The English language has several personal pronouns. In gender analysis, it is the third person singular that has gender inclinations. The pronouns includes the possibility of using of a 'non-specific' gender pronouns or 'unisex' (and perhaps gender-neutral) if one is careful and gender sensitive.

**Table 3: Singular personal pronouns in standard modern English**

Singular		Personal Pronouns				
		Subject	Object	Possessive determiner	Possessive pronoun	Reflexive
First		I	Me	My	Mine	Myself
Second		You		Your	Yours	Yourself
Third	Masculine	He	Him	His		Himself
	Feminine	She	Her		Hers	Herself
	Neuter	It		Its		Itself
	Nonspecific	They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themselves

The pronouns may be interchanged and this is increasingly in common practice to avoid gender bias (himself or herself used 3 times in this paper). This is important when the gender need not be specified (note use of child 5 times, child/ren 12 times, spouse 2 times and parent/s 3 times in this paper). As in *Table 2*, you can conduct an analysis of the prominence of females and males as well as the actions and find out the extent of gender balance or bias (see an analysis of use of pronouns (*Table 3*) in this paper (*Table 4*)).

**Ex.15.** He is a teacher. > Male is prominent.

**Ex.16.** She is a farmer. > Female in a less prominent (privileged) position as farming is socially not perceived as prestigious as teaching.

Similarly, you need to conduct an analysis and summarise the feminine (she) and masculine (he) pronouns including the object and possessive pronouns.

**Ex 17.** Asha was not in school today. > Girls do not attend school, are often absent.

**Ex 18.** He saw an angel. > Angels visit males, angels are seen by males and by implication males have a high positioning in the spiritual realm.

Another category can be added, that which is called a disjunctive construction. An example is ‘he or she’, ‘his or her’ or ‘himself or herself’. This is a mechanism to ensure that both male and female are included in a text. Such mechanisms are recommended for use fairly in a text or manual. However, you can also conduct an analysis to find out the prominence in a paper and hence the extent of gender sensitivity and effective balance (or bias). The following *Table 4* summarises the use of pronouns in this paper focussing particularly on the marked masculine and feminine pronouns.

**Table 4:** Use of Pronouns in this Paper

Feminine	Number	Masculine	Number	‘Disjunctive’	Number
She	23	He	23	He or she	5
				She or he	4
				S/he	3
Her	14	Him	4	His or her	4
				His / her	3
				Her or his	2
				Her / his	3
Hers	1	His	1		
Herself	7	Himself	7	Himself or herself	5

In this paper (*Table 4*), ‘he or she’ is used 5 times, ‘she or he’ 4 times, ‘his or her’ 4 times, ‘her / his’ 3 times, ‘his / her’ 3 times, ‘himself or herself’ 5 times. In this paper, the strategy of using plural forms (teachers, pupils, students, spouse, and couple) is predominant to avoid gender-specific pronouns. The single pronoun has been very rarely used in the paper and

most of the instances are in the examples provided in the text rather than in actual prose. This is a feature of deliberate attention to gender.

Another category is the disjunctive construction – such as ‘he or she’, ‘his or her’, ‘her or his’, ‘s/he’, ‘himself or herself’, and ‘his / her’. This is mechanism to ensure that both male and female are included in the text and is also highly recommended in formal research, reports, texts and manuals. Such mechanisms are used quite often in this paper. However, there is need to be careful in use, especially in use of phrases particularly when the male is placed first (thus seemingly more prominence that the females).

**Table 5: Naming and Characters in this Text**

Named females	#	Unnamed females	#	Named males	#	Unnamed males	#	Pairings	#
Asha	4	Girl	10	Hassan	6	Boy	5	Girls and women	9
Rose	7	Girls	42	Tom	8	Boys	21	Women and girls	2
Mary	1	Female	30	Kamau	3	Male	48	Boys and males	2
Hamir	1	Females	25	Hamisi	1	Males	52	Males and females	10
Atieno	1	Woman	2	Otieno	1	Man	7	Female and male	4
		Women	31			Men	5	Females and males	2
		Daughters	5			Sons	5	Male and female	4
		Daughter	1			Son	1	Girls and boys	5
		Mother	7			Father	7	Boys and girls	4
		Mothers	3			Fathers	2	Boy or girl	1
		Sister	5			Brother	2	Girl and boy	2
		Sisters	3			Brothers	1	Daughters and sons	2
		Wife	10			Husband	2	Sons and daughters	2
		Mistress	2			Master	2	Female / male	4
		Mrs	2			Mr	2	Male / female	3
		Matron	2					Master / mistress	3
		Maid	5					Master and mistress	1
		Girlfriend	2			Boyfriend	1	Mistress and master	1
								Father and mother	2
								Mother and father	2
								Husband and wife	1
								Wife and husband	1
								Brothers and sisters	1
								Brother and sister	1
								Sister and brother	1
								Pupils / students	3
								Parent/s	2
								Couple	5
								Human	3
								Girl / boy	1
								Boy / girl	1

The paper also uses the phrase 'girls and boys' (5 times) and 'boys and girls' (4 times) interchangeably though it uses 'males and females' 10 times, 'male and female' (4 times) and 'female and male' (4 times). There is a seemingly overuse of the masculine words male (48 times) and males (52 times) because the paper consciously avoids the use of the word 'man' (used 7 times mostly in the course of gender arguments). The word 'girl' and 'girls' appears 10 and 42 times respectively, women 31 times, female 30 and females 25 times while 'she' (23 times) and 'he' (23 times) are equal.

This paper describes gender and language use and also attempts a gender balance that is not always the case in many papers, texts or reports. For the purpose of this paper, integrating gender responsive pedagogy in teacher training programmes would promote improved content and ensure quality of standards in education. On the contrary and on many occasions a disjunctive construction may be used but even then, the male pronoun is often placed first. This gives prominence to the male despite the attempt at gender balance. For balance, it is better and recommended to put the female first as often as the male: 'she or he' / 'her(s) or his', or together, 's/he' otherwise the message is that the male takes precedence. An analysis of texts and the use of language in various ways will enable more effective communication that is gender sensitive and responsive to the needs of all. Analysis should include nouns, pronouns and the disjunctive as well as the gender-inclusive constructions. Gender-specific naming will in turn enable a more relevant presentation and perception of our world; that will embrace equity and fairness to all.

Analysis is important because words (nouns) and pronouns are specifically gendered. Additionally, it is important to be careful with use of names and pronouns, including the number of males and females. It is often that numerically you find there is a strong gender imbalance in terms of pronouns, usually in favour of the males. Additionally, the total of specific female pronouns may be assigned less important roles than their male counterparts. The task being performed by certain gender should not be biased because it somewhat distorts the world and may imply male dominance and female subservience. The suggestion of a significantly stronger 'male presence' in books, textbooks, research and other publications is not necessarily a representative of the population as a whole, but it is the effect and implications that would be concern in a country that aims at gender equity in a background of a highly patriarchal society.

### Writing and Editing Comments: Suggestions and Recommendations

This paper has adopted a strategy of using non discriminate communication as a strategy of ensuring effective gender representation. Additionally, the paper upholds effective communication free of gender bias. This is mechanism to ensure gender inclusion and avoid exclusion. Gender representation must also be evident in art and pictures, graphs and illustrations, language and folklore. Graphs including figures and scores should be gender-disaggregated. In addition, the use of the disjunctive constructions (such as ‘he or she’, ‘she or he’, ‘s/he’) should be checked so that the female pronoun is placed first as often as the male pronoun is. Also consider some of the other grammatical possibilities in *Appendix 1*.

**Table 6: Recommendations on Gender Sensitive and Improved Teaching, Learning and Instructional Materials**

Items	Recommendation / Intervention / Suggestion
Books, Articles, Research and other publications	Editing of educational books, research and publications
Textbooks: Cover page and title.	This includes cover photo / pictures to avoid distortion of image and gender stereotypes
Textbooks: Content	Language and language use
Teaching and learning materials	Language and language use, illustration
Picture, graphs and other illustrations	Specific consideration of the general layout of the materials
	Specific use of pictorials and illustrations
Male, pronoun ‘he’	Use plural nouns, eliminate the generic use of ‘man’ and unnecessary references to use of generic ‘man’

Gender-sensitivity must be included in terms of occupational skills and activities. Editors and reviewers should:

- (1) Provide general and (more) specific editing comments and suggestions; and,
- (2) Indicate with track changes suggested gender responsive terms / recommendations / suggestions.

In other instances especially in literature novels, drama and short stories, the characters are often male. In such an analysis, it is the portrayal of power that is important, along with the amount of space allocated to the character. You can suggest poems, novels and drama texts that have both female and male characters. Literature should also make a deliberate attempt to introduce women as partners in social economic development. A book, drama or poem with a ‘positive’ portrayal of females can be purposely sampled in order to address the issue of the otherwise widespread (negative, or lack of) portrayal of women and girls in



mainstream society. This is a deliberate strategy and hence presents a more egalitarian and positive focus on both males and females. Nonetheless, it should be noted that ‘gender’ is not just about women and girls and thus the portrayal of men and boys has to be considered too.

Overall, demonstrate a good show of gender-sensitive, inclusive use of language. A common device in this manual is to use the plural form and thus avoiding reference to gender. Additionally, other strategies should be adopted.

**Table 7: Actions and Words in Texts, Pictures and Illustrations**

Example / Text	Who performs action	Implications	Recommendation
Tom with a ball, Tom kicked the ball.	Tom	Boys play football, has the ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Include both Tom and Rose</li> <li>➤ Let illustration either have the two, that is Rose and Tom in different scenes with ball or ball in the middle so that none has advantage (if any has to have the ball, let it be the girl so that you can undo stereotype).</li> </ul>
Rose with ball, Rose kicked the ball.	Rose	Girls play football, has the ability	
Cover and other pictures with girl and boy	Presence of both male and female	Both girls and boys should be in school / class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Include both males and females</li> <li>- Interchange boy and girl, girl and boy</li> </ul>
Cover and other pictures with male teacher	Male	For science books, this can continuously discourage girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Include both females and males (consciously include missing gender and correct perception)</li> <li>- Interchange male / female, female / male</li> </ul>
Cover and other pictures with female teacher	Female	For arts and humanities, this makes the subjects feminine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Include both males and females (consciously include missing gender and correct perception)</li> <li>- Interchange female / male, male / female</li> </ul>
The cover picture of a girl or girls	Female	Girls and women are achievers	Girls’ in a picture is recommended when girls and women education is at the forefront

Adopt use of gender neutral terms, instead of man use male to mean the male gender but humanity or mankind to mean both female and male, instead of manageress say manager, instead of head master or headmistress use head teacher / principal or head, and so on

(Appendix I). You can also make women visible, for instance give deliberate examples such as prominent women in society, in the world or women leaders (president, prime minister): Deliberately interchange the pronouns and use feminine pronouns. Show women as people in their own right, and not only defined in relation to men, or viewed of possessions: such as the wife of, the girlfriend of, the widow of, for example, Hamisi and his wife Hamir...

**Table 8: Strategies for Gender Balanced Language and Communication**

Statement / Sentence	Strategy	Example with Strategy
- <i>Ex 19.</i> He gives his students a lot of homework.	Double the pronouns	- A teacher gives her / his students lots of homework.
- <i>Ex 20.</i> He has sons and daughters. - <i>Ex 21.</i> Come with your father and mother.	Deliberately interchange the pronouns	- The family has daughters and sons. - Come with your mother and father.
- <i>Ex 10.</i> The angel visited him. - <i>Ex 18.</i> He saw an angel.	Use 'unisex'	- They saw an angel. - The angel visited them.
- <i>Ex 13.</i> She is barren / she was barren.	Omit the pronoun	- The couple does not have a child.
- <i>Ex 7.</i> The headmaster is in. - <i>Ex 17.</i> Asha was not in school today. - <i>Ex 22.</i> Boys are talented in sciences while girls do well in arts. - <i>Ex 23.</i> Girls are very poor in maths and sciences. - <i>Ex 24.</i> Few girls make it to university. - <i>Ex 25.</i> Come with your father.	Use gender-neutral terms.	- The head teacher / principal is in - The pupil / student was not in school today. - Certain students are talented in sciences while others do well in arts. - Some students are poor in maths and sciences. - Few students make it to university. - Come with your parents.
- <i>Ex 26.</i> Girls get married. - <i>Ex 27.</i> Girls do not read / girls do not like reading. - <i>Ex 28.</i> Girls do not answer questions. - <i>Ex 29.</i> Girls are always crying. - <i>Ex 30.</i> Girls do not like school.	Avoid stereotypes: for example, allow girls and women to show initiative and use technology. Also allow males to show uncertainty or express their emotions.	- Both males and females are involved in marriage. - Students do not like reading. - Pupils / students do not answer questions. - Pupils / students perform poorly in maths and sciences. - Crying is normal. - Some pupils / students hate school.
- <i>Ex 31.</i> A man bought five mangoes and sold three of them. How many mangoes did he finally have? - <i>Ex 32.</i> Girls don't play cricket - <i>Ex 33.</i> Boys are good at	Avoid generalisations about abilities, positions or status according to gender.	- A trader bought five mangoes and sold three of them. How many mangoes were left? - Some students play cricket. - All students are good at maths. - Girls and boys play cricket.

Statement / Sentence	Strategy	Example with Strategy
maths.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Ex 12.</b> The shepherds watched over their flocks.</li> <li>- <b>Ex.15.</b> He is a teacher.</li> <li>- <b>Ex 34.</b> The head master of the school is Mr. Kamau.</li> <li>- <b>Ex 35.</b> The headman of our village is Mr. Otieno.</li> </ul>	Avoid assuming that the default is male, especially in the more prominent positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Girls and boys were grazing.</li> <li>- He is a teacher</li> <li>- She is a teacher.</li> <li>- He is a teacher. She is the head teacher.</li> <li>- The head teacher of the school is Mr. Kamau.</li> <li>- The Chief of our village is Mrs Mary Atieno.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Ex 11.</b> The child is with the maid.</li> <li>- <b>Ex 13.</b> She is barren / she was barren.</li> <li>- <b>Ex.16.</b> She is a farmer.</li> <li>- <b>Ex 36.</b> The secretary is in the office.</li> </ul>	Avoid assumptions that the default is female in subordinate positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The child is with the house help.</li> <li>- The couple do not have a child.</li> <li>- They had no child/ren.</li> <li>- Asha is a farmer.</li> <li>- Hassan is a farmer.</li> <li>- The office assistant is in the office.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Ex 37.</b> Tom kicked the ball.</li> <li>- <b>Ex 38.</b> My mother is a nurse.</li> <li>- <b>Ex 39.</b> My father is a doctor</li> </ul>	Check the text for bias. Try swapping the gender!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tom kicked the ball.</li> <li>- Rose kicked the ball.</li> <li>- My father is a nurse.</li> <li>- My mother is a doctor.</li> </ul>

Although some of the gender categories are disappearing, traditional negative and unequal representation of girls and women still dominate in language and communication. These mirror the social gender roles in our society. However, certain stereotypes are still prevalent. Therefore, ensure (1) there are there equal numbers of female / male and boy / girl and girl / boy in the texts and illustrations; (2) images should not show stereotyped; (3) Consider role-models of both female and males are their presentation; (4) be careful with children books and readers; and, (5) ensure that both girls and boys are encouraged to achieve the best in their career.

## Conclusion

All communication is both interactive and informative. This includes language and other forms of communication especially as language relates to gender. In gender terms, the communication whether interactive or informative may thus be implicit or explicit although a hybrid often manifests itself and is blended in our everyday language and communication. Subsequently, the review of language, teaching and learning materials should not be just in primary or secondary school but should be extended to all levels, including general literacy and numeracy, research and publications. This is because it is possible to perpetuate gender

stereotypes in various disciplines at higher levels of education, in research and in high level publications such as books, magazines and journals. Research findings in particular must be specific if and when they cite findings that have gender implications.

Various guidelines have been developed to promote appropriate language including the use of gender-sensitive language (*Table 7 and 8, Appendix I*). In addition, curriculum, education and schools embrace a wider perspective, such as classroom organisation, interaction and management. Education must be responsive to the needs of children, and hence language and communication must be free and fair and promote equity in opportunities. It is important that gender sensitivity and responsiveness is inculcated in all spheres of our day-to-day life in the social political economic spectrum.

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### **Note on publication**

All the examples provided in this paper do not refer to any particular book or books, publisher or author/s. The examples are general based on examples cited or observed in several publications.

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**Appendix 1 Selected words that require improvement in use of language in Education  
(Classroom, Schools, Learning and Educational Materials)**

<b>Word / Phrase</b>	<b>Alternative (Gender sensitive language use)</b>
Better half, other half	Wife / husband, spouse
Boarding Master / Boarding Mistress	Teacher in Charge of Boarding
Brotherhood	Fellowship, solidarity, human fellowship, kinship
Businessman / business woman, businesswomen / businessmen	Business person, business people, business manager, business community,
Cameraman / camera woman	Camera operator, photographer, camera crew
Chairman / lady	Chair, chairperson, presiding officer, executive, head of firm
Craftsman	Craftspeople
Club master / mistress	Club Patron
Delivery boy	Messenger, office messenger, office assistant
Draftsman/woman	Draft technician, drafter
Father / Mother	Parent, guardian
Fireman	Fire-fighter, fire crew, fire brigade
Founding fathers	Founders
Girlfriend / boyfriend	Friend, spouse
Girl / Boy	Child/ren, pupil, student
Groundsman	Compound cleaner
He / she	Person, they, the, pupils / students
His / her	The
Himself / herself	the self, they
Headmaster / head mistress	Head teacher, principal
House boy / house girl	House help
House wife	Wife, spouse, customer, client
Husband / wife	Spouse
Maid	Domestic worker, house help, house assistant
Male nurse, female nurse	Nurse
Man	Person / people, human(s), human being(s), humanity, human species, human race, individual(s), we, society
Manager / manageress	Management
Man's discovery / achievements	Human discovery, human achievements
Manhood	Adulthood, maturity
Man-hour	Labour, work-hour, work-hours, person- hour, hours at work
Mankind	Humankind, humanity, human species, people, we, men and women, ourselves, human nature, the public, society, the human race
Manmade	Synthetic / artificial
Manpower	Human power, personnel, workforce, staff, employees, workers, labour, human resource,
Man and woman / man and wife	Couple, husband and wife, wife and husband
Master / mistress	Teacher
Master / mistress on duty	Teacher on duty
Matron	Hostels officer, hostels manager

<b>Word / Phrase</b>	<b>Alternative (Gender sensitive language use)</b>
Men	People, everybody, ourselves, humanity
Miss and mrs	Use 'Ms' even when a woman's marital status is known
Men at work	Work in progress
Mr Hassan and his wife Aisha / Mr Hassan and his better half	Mr Hassan and his spouse, Aisha Hassan Aisha and Hassan...
Office girl / boy	Office assistant
Policeman / police woman	Police officer, officer, police
Salesgirl/ salesman	Shop assistant, sales representative, sales assistant, sales staff
Shamba boy / girl	Gardener
Spokesman	Public Relations Officer, Corporate Relations Officer, speaker, spokesperson, representative
Stewardess	Flight attendant, cabin crew
Waiter / waitress	Server, attendant
Watchman	Security guard, security
Women doctor	Doctor
Workman's compensation / Workmen's compensation	Compensation, workers compensation

