

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN SPANISH

In a similar respect to many other romance languages, inclusive language is not easy in Spanish due to its gendered nature. According to The Royal Spanish Academy (RAE), whose mission is to ensure the stability of the Spanish language, the problem is mixing grammatical gender with sexism, as the language itself cannot be sexist, but its use can. However, Spanish speakers have adapted the language in a few ways in order to recognise that need for inclusivity¹. These are:

1. One way to do this would be to use either the symbol “@” or simply just an “x” in place of the gendered vowels.

“Los chicos van al colegio.”

“L@s chic@s van al colegio.”

“Lxs chicxs van al colegio.”

2. However, while these solutions can only be used in written form, we might want to avoid them as people with visual impairments who depend on an automatic narrator to read a text will struggle to understand the message, particularly if the @ symbol is used. Therefore, the solution used most frequently in spoken Spanish would be the use of the letter “e” instead of the “o” or the “a”.

For example, “Les chiques van al colegio.”

“Bienvenides a todes.”

“Mis amigues y yo.”

This also works for adjectives:

Original: “Tu amigo es muy divertido y generoso.”

Inclusive: “Tu amigue es muy divertide y generose”

3. Spanish norm dictates that when different genders appear in one group, or even when not referring to any gender in particular, masculine must be used as the neutral gender. The rule goes as follows:

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- 100 women = use of the feminine agreement
- 100 men = use of the masculine agreement
- 99 women, 1 man = use of the masculine agreement

However, some people have proposed that we should simply use the pronoun that represents the majority. If there are 99 women and just one man, it seems to make sense that we would use the feminine or that we use a more inclusive term.

- a. Use of generic words (*la gente/la ciudadanía/las personas...*).

“La cultura nos pertenece a todos” > “La cultura pertenece **a toda la ciudadanía**”.

“El gobierno apoya los derechos de los chilenos” > “El gobierno apoya los derechos **de la población chilena**”.

- b. Use of the masculine and the feminine (*todas y todos*).

“Bienvenidas y bienvenidos a todas y a todos”.

While all these strategies seem to be more commonly used by the speakers, RAE does not accept the use of “e”, “x” and “@”, asserting that the masculine gender already works as the neutral one and, therefore, there is no need to use different spellings. However, RAE does accept alternatives 3a and 3b when one wants to be more neutral gender in the speech.

4. Finally, some Spanish speakers who do not identify with feminine pronouns “ella-ellas” nor masculine pronouns “él-ellos” have started to use other pronouns that they feel best suits their identity. The most common ones are “elle-elles”.

For example, in English we might say “They are short.” In Spanish this could become “Elle es bajo.”

Further resources:

Fundeu. [Lenguaje inclusivo: una breve guía sobre todo lo que está pasando.](#)

López, Artemis, ‘[Tú, yo, elle y el lenguaje no binario](#)’, *La linterna del traductor. La Revista multilingue del Traductor*.

NACIONES UNIDAS. [Lenguaje inclusivo en cuanto al género.](#)

Soler Montes, Carlos, ‘[Mapa dialectal del lenguaje inclusivo en el mundo hispánico](#)’ (2022).

Universidad del País Vasco. [Uso inclusivo del castellano](#) (2018).