

(NON-)INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN THE SPANISH CRIMINAL CODE: ANALYSIS AND PROPOSAL

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Abstract

Inclusive language is the type of language that uses a range of grammatically sound formulae to encourage a vision of the world in which both women and men are included in order to overcome linguistic sexism and androcentrism. The consistent use of inclusive language demasculinises job-market realities that have traditionally been dominated by males, as is the case of the legal professions. In Spain, the legal field has changed drastically in the last decades, to the extent that more than half of the judges and magistrates in the country are female. Despite that, the legal codes on which sentences are based have not evolved with regard to the use of inclusive language. This paper presents the results of the systematic analysis of gender-marked lexicon in the Spanish Criminal Code (1995, last modified 2023). The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Code allows us to draw some conclusions regarding a) the overwhelming presence of non-inclusive or gender-biased terms, and b) the frequency of use of each of those terms and its implications. The data obtained indicate that the Spanish Criminal Code is biased for gender inasmuch as it resorts to masculine forms in almost 100% of the cases. As a feasible alternative, this article introduces some language suggestions to make the Criminal Code more neutral and inclusive.

Keywords: inclusive language, gender-marked legal lexicon, gender-neutral legal lexicon, Spanish Criminal Code

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Resumo

A linguagem inclusiva é o tipo de linguagem que utiliza uma série de fórmulas gramaticalmente sólidas para encorajar uma visão do mundo em que tanto as mulheres como os homens estão incluídos, a fim de superar o sexismo linguístico e o androcentrismo. O uso consistente de uma linguagem inclusiva desmasculiniza as realidades do mercado de trabalho que têm sido tradicionalmente dominadas pelos homens, como é o caso das profissões jurídicas. Em Espanha, o campo jurídico mudou drasticamente nas últimas décadas, a ponto de mais de metade dos juízes e magistrados do país serem mulheres. Apesar disso, os códigos jurídicos em que se baseiam as sentenças não evoluíram no que diz respeito ao uso de linguagem inclusiva. Este artigo apresenta os resultados da análise sistemática do léxico marcado pelo gênero no Código Penal espanhol (1995, modificado em 2023). A análise quantitativa e qualitativa do Código permite-nos tirar algumas conclusões sobre a) a presença esmagadora de termos não inclusivos ou tendenciosos em termos de gênero e b) a frequência de utilização de cada um desses termos e as suas implicações. Os dados obtidos indicam que o Código Penal espanhol é tendencioso em termos de gênero, na medida em que recorre às formas masculinas em quase 100% dos casos. Como alternativa viável, este artigo apresenta algumas sugestões linguísticas para tornar o Código Penal mais neutro e inclusivo.

Palavras-chave: linguagem inclusiva, léxico jurídico com marca de gênero, léxico jurídico neutro em quanto ao gênero, Código Penal espanhol

1. Introduction

Inclusive language may be defined as the type of language that uses a range of grammatically sound formulae to encourage a vision of the world in which both women and men are included in order to overcome linguistic sexism and androcentrism (see Bringas *et al.*, 2012). In this regard, it has been noted that the consistent use of inclusive language

contributes to social change inasmuch as it de-masculinises job-market realities that have traditionally been dominated by males, as is the case of the legal professions.

In the last decades, the legal field has changed drastically in Spain, to the extent that in 2023 the country hosted 5,343 judges and magistrates, i.e., 11.13 per 100.000 inhabitants, of whom 56.2% were female (La Justicia en datos, 2024). In spite of this self-evident organic change, the legal codes on which judicial sentences are based have not evolved at all with regard to the use of inclusive language. The lack of inclusive terms may arguably give rise to biased interpretations of the law, a fact which necessarily prompts a review of the gender-marked lexicon in the codes so as to try and make them more inclusive and, therefore, more objective regarding gender.

This paper presents the systematic analysis of the 616 articles comprised in the Spanish Criminal Code (1995, last modified 2023) and the results stemming from that analysis, as well as a number of suggestions to try and solve the issues arising from the use of non-inclusive language in the Code. This work is organised as follows: the remainder of the Introduction provides a brief overview of grammatical gender in Spanish from a purely linguistic perspective and delves into some of the laws that regulate the use of inclusive language in Spain and in Europe. Section 2 explains the methodology used to undertake the analysis presented. Section 3 explores the Spanish Criminal Code and presents the results of the analysis of the gender-marked lexicon referring to legal professions as well as to the perpetrators and victims of the crimes recorded in the Code. Section 4 provides the discussion of the results. Section 5 offers some language suggestions to make the Spanish Criminal Code more gender-neutral and inclusive. The final section offers the conclusions of this study.

1.1. Grammatical gender in Spanish

When referring to the study of language, gender is the “grammatical category of nouns, pronouns, adjectives and determiners that has an effect on agreement and may reflect the sex of animate beings grammatically” (Bosque, 2018, p. 139). The notion of ‘gender’ is somehow linked to the opposition inanimate (genderless) versus animate (gendered) entities and, within the latter, it makes an explicit distinction between males and females from a strictly biological point of view.

In present-day Spanish – which classifies nouns, their accompanying determiners and adjectives as well as pronouns according to grammatical gender – , most words referring to animate entities with a biological sex have a congruent grammatical gender assignment (Harris, 1991), that is, in the vast majority of cases nouns with a female referent are feminine, while those with a male referent are masculine; nouns referring to things as well as collective nouns are considered to be of unmotivated gender, which means that they are arbitrarily marked for gender².

Regarding the history of grammatical gender in Spanish, when the first grammars of the Romance languages began to be produced in the 17th century, it was decided that, with the disappearance of the neuter gender of Latin, those nouns referring to inanimate entities would be distributed more or less randomly between the masculine and feminine genders (Simone, 2001). Most crucially, the masculine started to be used as the unmarked option – the so-called ‘generic use’ of the nouns – to refer to those creatures, i.e., animals and human beings, with a masculine biological gender, and *also* to the entire species without any further distinction. As a result, masculine nouns were adopted as the unmarked option to refer to a group of people and/or animals comprising both males and females, as exemplified below.

(1) **Los** *estudiantes acabaron los exámenes.*

²There are many exceptions to this rule. In order to have a thorough yet succinct account of the morphological procedures that Spanish nouns undergo in order to form the feminine as well as the peculiarities of certain groups of nouns that are invariable in terms of gender, refer to Giammatteo (2021).

Students finished their exams.

- (2) **Todos** quieren tener vacaciones.

Everyone wants to have a holiday.

- (3) **Los argentinos** tienen un bonito acento.

Argentinians have a nice accent.

- (4) **Muchos** piensan que lloverá todo el invierno.

Many people think it will rain this winter.

- (5) **Un hijo** te cambia la vida.

A child changes your life.

- (6) **El perro** es el mejor animal de compañía.

Dogs are the best pets.

It must be noted that the use of the masculine as the default option to denote both male and female beings is a standardised use based on social habit and choice, not a natural characteristic of the language, and may therefore be judged as sexist, gender-biased and non-inclusive in today's world, where gender equality is advocated for as the *sine qua non* of any society that aims at being truly democratic.

Since language plays a significant role in the construction of one's vision of reality, the impact of the use of the generic masculine in Spanish cannot be labelled as a strictly linguistic issue, as there is no doubt that it has an imprint on cognition (for a recent research study on the impact of sexist language on the brain, see Neoh *et al.*, 2023). Indeed, the use of allegedly neutral but truly discriminatory linguistic options undoubtedly contributes to consolidating a vision of the world that is also discriminatory, and may eventually be translated into practices of overt sexism. Hence the need to analyse the language used in different types of documents – for example, laws and legal codes – and point out those cases where non-inclusive language should be corrected, which is precisely what the present work aims to achieve.

1.2. The legislation about inclusive language

The legislation which regulates gender equality in connection to linguistic uses in Spain presents a clear tendency towards favouring inclusive language. As an example, Article 14 of Law 3/2007, on the effective equality of women and men, states that one of the general criteria of action of the public powers is “the implementation of non-sexist language in the administrative field and its promotion in the totality of social, cultural and artistic relations” (our translation). Similarly, at the European level, the *Report on non-sexist language in the European Parliament* (2008) indicates that “[t]he purpose of non-sexist language [...] is to avoid lexical choices that could be interpreted as biased, discriminatory or degrading by implying that one sex is superior to the other”, as “[t]he use of non-sexist language is more than just a matter of political correctness” and “[l]anguage powerfully influences attitudes, behaviour and perceptions”. The text goes on to establish that the European Parliament, as an institution, “fully supports the principle of gender equality, and the language it uses must reflect this fact” only to finish by pointing that “[t]o this end, it is important to establish guidelines that ensure, to the extent possible, that non-sexist language is the norm, rather than the exception, in parliamentary documents”. The European Parliament guidelines open an exception for legal texts, a fact that arguably contributes to the long-lasting effects of sexist language on the legal domain. In Spain, in spite of the above-mentioned directives, legal texts have not managed to achieve the systematic use of inclusive language. In fact, the use of gender-biased language is overwhelmingly dominant and translates into an accordingly biased view of reality where the masculine not only dominates the linguistic reality but also the extralinguistic reality reflected in those legal documents.

The dominance of non-inclusive terms in the legal documents in Spain – norms, laws, codes, etc. – indicates that, in spite of some attested efforts to make these texts inclusive, sexist and androcentric values are still dominant. Precisely because of that, these values are presented as neutral, objective, normal and natural, and are thus acquired uncritically and

unconsciously, both by men and women, giving rise to what philosophers have termed “symbolic domination” (Bourdieu, 1991), which leaves a powerful yet mutable mark in the collective mind and behaviours of the individuals making up contemporary societies.

As a corpus with a specific jargon and a very precise function, the body of the legal texts that regulate the actions and behaviour of the members in a given society needs an accurate, unambiguous formulation with a language that expresses its normative requirements clearly and meticulously. The case of the Spanish Criminal Code is analysed in the remainder of this paper in order to actually prove the existence of gender-biased linguistic uses and the need to implement a number of strategies to make it more inclusive and, as a result, much more precise and faithful to the social reality ruled by it.

2. Methodology

2.1. Materials

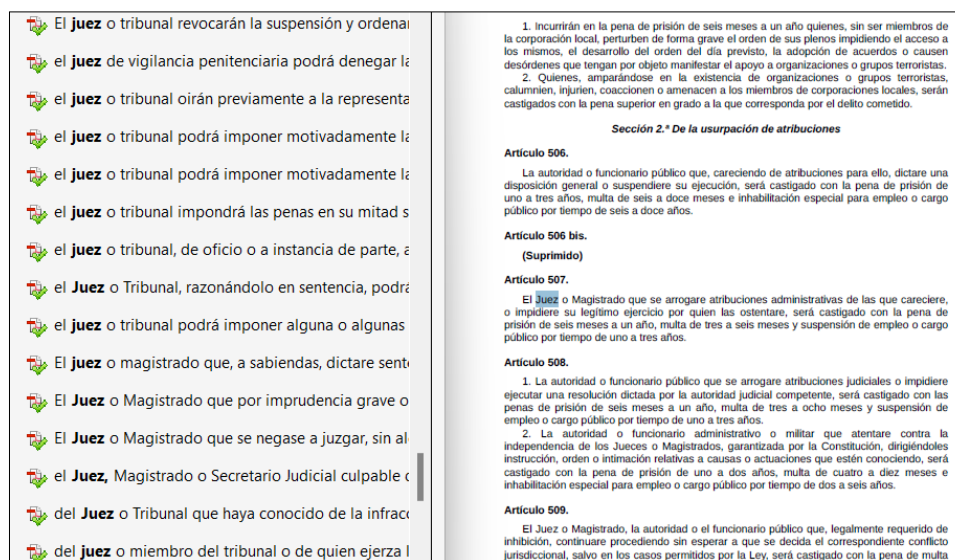
In this study, the entire Spanish Criminal Code, made up of 616 articles, was analysed. The Code was issued in 1995 and last modified in 2023, and comprises a total 123,370 words. It is structured into a Preliminary Title, two Books, three Additional Provisions, eleven Transitional Provisions, one Derogatory Provision, and seven Final Provisions. Book I deals with general aspects of Criminal Law and includes the general rules on criminal offences, liabilities, punishments, security measures and other consequences of a crime. Book II tackles the specific aspects of Criminal Law, which include each separate crime and its corresponding punishment.

2.2. Analytical method

In order to conduct the study, firstly, manual searches were conducted of all the nouns and pronouns referring to the different figures that play a role in the context of a criminal offence in their linguistic context (i.e., the legal professions involved in it as well as the

perpetrators and the victims of a crime). Figure 1 shows a screen capture of a manual search in the digitalised version of the Spanish Criminal Code.

Figure 1. Screen capture of the manual search of the noun *juez/a* in the Spanish Criminal Code



Secondly, in order to verify that the manual searches had been conducted correctly, the same searches were carried out using AntConc, which also facilitated the analysis of the words that collocated most often with the nouns analysed, as presented in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Results of the most common collocates of the noun *juez/-a* using AntConc.

Collocate Types		6 Collocate Tokens		410 Page Size		All hits		1 t	
	Collocate	Rank	FreqLR	FreqL	FreqR	Range	Likelihood	Effect	
1	el	1	214	214	0	1	938.352	4.145	
2	o	2	180	0	180	1	566.834	3.291	
3	podrá	3	10	0	10	1	31.598	3.572	
4	instructor	4	3	0	3	1	28.674	7.887	
5	en	5	1	0	1	1	19.496	-3.717	
6	magistrado	6	2	0	2	1	11.721	5.565	

Thirdly, the results obtained were manually pruned, as a number of nouns were ambiguous as regards their morphological status – i.e., they could work as nouns and also as adjectives, in which case only the nominal occurrences were taken into consideration. Once the nouns were individualised and separated from the adjectives with the same form, the

nouns with an absolute frequency of appearance higher than ten were kept, in order to analyse their occurrences. Lastly, the relative frequency for each term was calculated so as to provide a more transparent measure of their prevalence.

2. Results

As stated in the Introduction, the analysis of the gender-marked lexicon in the Spanish Criminal Code was intended as an empirical experiment to prove the overwhelmingly dominant use of the so-called “generic masculine” in the text.

Table 1. Results in raw frequencies and normalised frequencies.

Term	Raw frequency	Normalised frequency $NF = (nt / nw) \times 1,000$
Definite article + relative pronoun		
English translation		
<i>El que</i> The one who	244	1.977
<i>Los que</i> The people who	135	1.094
Noun		
<i>juez/jueces</i> judge/-s	338	2.739
<i>funcionario/-s</i> public official/-s	156	1.264
<i>(el/ los) penado/-s</i> convict/-s	97	0.786
<i>(el/ los) culpable/-s</i> guilty person/people	71	0.575
<i>reo/-s</i> convict/-s	71	0.575
<i>(un) tercero, terceros</i> third party/-es	69	0.559
<i>(el/ los) responsable/-s</i> responsible one/ones	52	0.421
<i>(el/ los) sujeto/-s</i>	51	0.413

subject/-s		
<i>autor/-es</i> author/-s	39	0.316
<i>(el/ los) condenado/-s</i> convict/-s	36	0.291
<i>abogado</i> attorney, solicitor	12	0.097
<i>magistrado/-s</i> judge/-s	12	0.097
<i>(el/ los) cómplice/-s</i> accomplice/-s	11	0.089
TOTAL	1394	11.299

As shown in Table 1, a total thirteen nouns were searched and selected, given that, as explained in the previous section, their raw frequency of occurrence in the Code was equal to or higher than ten. As mentioned above, some of the nouns encountered are ambiguous in Spanish, as they can function as nouns and as adjectives, i.e., their form is exactly the same, as is the case of *penado* and *condenado* (convict/-ed), and *tercero* (third party/third). For this study, only those instances in which the word was a noun were analysed and the word/s accompanying them was/were taken into account. Besides, those cases when the word was used in the singular and the plural were always signalled and added to the final count, as in both cases the option chosen in the Code was the generic masculine. Moreover, three of the nouns analysed are invariable for gender – *culpable*, *responsable*, and *cómplice* –, which made it particularly crucial to delimit their grammatical status as nouns as well as their grammatical gender, which was elucidated by analysing the determiner that preceded them and/or the modifiers that followed them.

As also shown in Table 1, a specific search was made for the formulaic *el que* (singular) and *los que* (plural), which are made up of the masculine form of the definite article and an invariable relative pronoun. In the Code, these formulae are often used to define an agent (or, less often, a patient) in generic terms.

- (7) ***El que**, por sufrir alteraciones en la percepción desde el nacimiento o desde la infancia, tenga alterada gravemente la conciencia de la realidad.*

The person who, because s/he has a perception impairment since birth or childhood, suffers a serious alteration in his/her awareness of reality.

- (8) *En el caso de hallarse constituido en autoridad **el que** cometa cualquiera de los delitos expresados en los capítulos anteriores de este Título, [...]*

In the event that the person who commits any of the crimes expressed in the previous chapters of this Title is constituted as an authority, [...]

- (9) *Son cómplices **los que**, no hallándose comprendidos en el artículo anterior, cooperan a la ejecución del hecho con actos anteriores o simultáneos.*

Accomplices are those who, not having been included in the previous article, cooperate in the execution of the deed with previous or simultaneous deeds.

- (10) *Se impondrá la pena superior en grado a la prevista en el apartado 1 de este artículo e inhabilitación absoluta de seis a doce años a **los que** realicen los hechos prevaliéndose de su condición de autoridad, agente de ésta o funcionario público.*

A higher penalty than that provided for in section 1 of this article as well as absolute disqualification ranging from six to twelve years will be imposed on those who carry out the deeds by taking advantage of their status as an authority, an agent of authority or a public official.

3. Discussion

Thirteen nouns and two formulaic uses of the article were analysed in context. Some of those nouns alluded to the legal professions (for instance, *juez*), and the formulae were most typically used in order to describe crimes and their punishments.

In light of the results provided in Section 3, there is no doubt that the Spanish Criminal Code presents a perspicuous tendency towards the use of the generic masculine in all those

cases in which the extralinguistic referent potentially includes both males and females. As noted above, this is true for all the legal professions – *juez* (338 occurrences), *funcionario* (156 occurrences), *magistrado* (12 occurrences), *abogado* (12 occurrences) –, as well as for all the individuals involved in the commission of a crime and subject to trial and its subsequent punishment – *penado* (97 occurrences), *reo* (71 occurrences), *culpable* (71 occurrences), *tercero* (69 occurrences), *responsable* (52 occurrences), *autor* (39 occurrences), *condenado* (36 occurrences), *cómplice* (11 occurrences). Furthermore, the definitions and descriptions of the various crimes in which there is an explicit but generic agent and/or patient tend to include the formulae *el que* (244 occurrences) and *los que* (135 occurrences), also in the masculine. Conversely, there is not a single occurrence of any of the reported nouns in the feminine. In other words, females do not exist, at least linguistically speaking, in the Code. Additionally, even in those cases where an inclusive alternative could be used – for instance, using *la persona que* or *las personas que* instead of *el que* and *los que* –, this possibility tends to be discarded. The more gender-neutral expressions *la/-s persona/-s que* are used more than 600 times, but this only happens when the expression is followed by an adjective that requires the use of a generic noun, such as *persona* (e.g. *física, jurídica, condenada, implicada, querellada, agraviada, detenida, desvalida*, etc.). In sum, not only do the seemingly neutral terms disprove their potential neutrality but they actually become synonyms for “male”, as there is only one linguistic, and thus, cognitive, reality being projected onto the society regulated by the Criminal Code.

4. A proposal for the use of inclusive language in the Spanish Criminal Code

This section presents some suggestions that are in line with the regulations explored in Section 1.2, which aim at achieving the total substitution of the generic masculine for a number of linguistically sound alternatives which will make the legislation truly inclusive from linguistic as well as cognitive and social perspectives. The most significant change must

be aligned with the avoidance of the so called “generic masculine” in the designation of professions and activities in the legal field – i.e., avoiding the identification of women through masculine terms, which falsifies the reality of a field where more than a half of the professionals are indeed women.

Generally speaking, there are various strategies that may be easily implemented to fight grammatical sexism and subsequently used in any written text, bearing in mind the most appropriate formula for each context. The most common strategies are three, namely neutralisation (or generalisation), specification, and the creation of neologisms (see Bringas *et al.*, 2012). In the following paragraphs, we will define each of them and provide alternatives for the non-inclusive terms found in the Spanish Criminal Code and analysed in Section 3.

a. Neutralisation or generalisation

This strategy avoids the use of gender-marked forms, replacing the non-inclusive term with a collective or truly generic term.

In the case of the Spanish Criminal Code, this strategy could – and should – be used whenever possible, as it is the most gender-neutral and linguistically agile. Thus, masculine nouns such as *jueces*, *magistrado*, *abogado*, and *funcionario* should be substituted with the collective nouns *Judicatura*, *Magistratura*, *Abogacía*, and *Funcionariado*, while the masculine formulae *el que* and *los que* could be replaced by *la persona* and *las personas*. This way, the required transformations could be automatically implemented with a simple substitution device applied by a text processing software. The following examples, all taken from the Code, illustrate the transformations suggested above, with the collective nouns signalled in bold.

- (11) [...] *en el caso de que tales actuaciones no se hubieran producido, antes de que el Ministerio Fiscal, el Abogado del Estado o el representante procesal de la Administración autonómica, foral o local de que se trate, interponga querrela o denuncia* [...] → [...] *en el caso de que tales actuaciones no se hubieran producido, antes de que el Ministerio Fiscal, la **Abogacía** del Estado*

o el representante procesal de la Administración autonómica, foral o local de que se trate, interponga querrela o denuncia [...]

[...] in the event that such actions had not occurred, before the Public Prosecutor's Office, the State Attorney or the procedural representative of the autonomous, provincial or local Administration in question, files a complaint or complaint [...]

→ [...] in the event that such actions have not occurred, before the Public Prosecutor's Office, the State Attorney's Office or the procedural representative of the autonomous, provincial or local Administration in question, files a complaint or complaint [...]

- (12) [...] *el culpable fuere autoridad, funcionario público, facultativo, trabajador social, docente o educador y obrase en el ejercicio de su cargo, profesión u oficio.* → [...] *el culpable fuere autoridad, **funcionariado** público, facultativo, trabajador social, docente o educador y obrase en el ejercicio de su cargo, profesión u oficio.*

The guilty party is an authority, public official, physician, social worker, teacher or educator and is acting in the exercise of his or her position, profession or trade.

- (13) *A los que se hallen encargados por cualquier concepto de fondos, rentas o efectos de las Administraciones públicas.* → *A las **personas** que se hallen encargados por cualquier concepto de fondos, rentas o efectos de las Administraciones públicas.*

To those who are responsible for any concept related to funds, income or effects of the public Administrations. → To the people who are responsible for any concept of funds, income or effects of the public administrations.

b. Specification

This strategy makes the gender of the agents involved explicit, either through symmetrical grammatical gender marks, or other (ortho)graphic means.

This strategy could be applied when the frequency of appearance of a term is relatively low, and there is not an easy gender-neutral alternative and/or the use of a mark for the

feminine has a specific purpose – for instance, when the victims of a specific type of crime are women, which naturally leads to the use of the feminine, as may be observed in the example below, extracted from the Code.

- (14) *Que sea necesario para evitar un grave peligro para la vida o la salud física o psíquica de **la embarazada** y así conste en un dictamen [...]*

That it is necessary in order to avoid a serious danger of the pregnant woman's life or physical or mental health and this is stated in an opinion.

Also, when the definite article appears before a noun and the presence of the article is deemed essential, the only valid option would be to introduce the feminine article next to the masculine one and not necessarily after the latter. As an example, we could have nouns which are invariable for gender such as *responsable*, *culpable* and *cómplice*, preceded by both definite articles, *la/el responsable*, *el/la culpable*, *la/el cómplice*. This way, the Code would be much more specific when dealing with the agents of a crime and the subsequent application of a sentence and/or punishment.

An interesting case in the Spanish Criminal Code is that of *el reo*, which does have a feminine (accepted by the Spanish Academy, R.A.E.) but tends to be used in the masculine by default, as exemplified in (15) below.

- (15) *[...] en el caso previsto en el artículo 125 será suficiente que **el reo** se halle al corriente de los pagos fraccionados que le hubieran sido señalados por el juez o tribunal y preste, a juicio de éste, garantía suficiente con respecto a la cantidad aplazada.*

[...] In the case provided for in article 125, it will be sufficient for the prisoner to be up to date with the instalment payments that have been stated by the judge or court and to provide, in the judge's opinion, sufficient guarantee with respect to the deferred amount.

c. Creation of neologisms

This strategy corresponds to the new coinage of a feminine form for the nouns corresponding to professions or realities which have traditionally been ascribed to men or simply used in the masculine by default because of their etymology.

Such is the case of the noun *miembros* (members) in Spanish, much debated after some female politicians used the term in the feminine, which does not have an etymological origin. Indeed, the R.A.E. indicated that the term is invariable for gender. If the new coinage is taken as valid, terms such as *juez* and *magistrado* could be substituted by *los/las miembros de la Carrera Judicial* or *los miembros y las miembros de la Carrera Judicial*, thus delving into the possibility of coining a new morphology for otherwise masculine-only terms.

5. Conclusions

The present paper is based on the idea that inclusive language has the capacity to make the existence of women visible – whether in general terms or in specific professional fields – by using a number of linguistic strategies and formulae that promote a vision of the world in which both women and men are included.

As stated in the Introduction, the legal professions constitute a field where women are more numerous than men and yet, the linguistic reality denoted by legal texts obliterates females altogether. The analysis of the Spanish Criminal Code conducted in this research work has revealed a lack of correspondence between the social reality of a country like Spain, where the legal professions are dominated by women, and the language uses contained in the legislation, which neglects the existence of women by resorting to the constant use of the allegedly neutral masculine forms, as has been empirically proven. The critique towards non-inclusive language is not a matter of aesthetics or fashion, nor is it defended for being politically correct. On the contrary, it is a well-known fact that, beyond language itself, ascribing the morpheme corresponding to the masculine to any word that aims at meaning

both female and male in the extralinguistic world has an impact on how a speaking community conceives of reality. The crucial conclusion stemming from this analysis is that the use of the masculine as a generic gender makes women invisible in the Spanish Criminal Code, thus giving rise to grammatical sexism and, more importantly, social sexism, and allowing for a vision of Criminal Law (and the matters with which Criminal Law deals) according to which only males exist.

In spite of the current state of affairs, this work has also demonstrated that changing the linguistic uses attested in the Criminal Code to make its language more inclusive is a relatively easy task, as there are sound, easily implementable strategies in Spanish which could change the whole scenario with little to no effort on the part of both linguists and legislators.

All in all, inclusive language seeks to treat women and men symmetrically at the linguistic level but, above all, to gain precision and accuracy at the cognitive level without making invisible or stereotyping either sex, something that is crucially determining in legal documents such as the Spanish Criminal Code. As societies like the Spanish one change, so should legal language and codes in order to reflect reality with its new linguistic uses and to abandon older uses that are no longer suitable nor faithful to that reality.

To sum up, the research has proven the vital need to change the repertoire of terms and meanings that legal language conveys and to allow for a more egalitarian representation of reality that contributes to building more egalitarian ways of thinking and ruling within the legal professions. It is in the hands of linguistics and legal professionals to do so.

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