Gender-sensitive Communication

Gendering in-animate objects

Assigning a gender to an inanimate object by using gendered pronouns to discuss it applies cultural connotations to characteristics. These connotations are related to gender stereotypes and help to perpetuate them.

You should use the pronoun _it_ to talk about inanimate objects.

Examples

Gender-insensitive language
The ship slipped her moorings.

Gender-sensitive language
The ship slipped its moorings.

Gender-insensitive language
Delegates are free to make presentations in their mother tongues and translations will be provided.

Gender-sensitive language
Delegates are free to make presentations in their native languages and translations will be provided.

Gender-insensitive language
Last month, France and her citizens woke up to snowfall.

Gender-sensitive language
Last month, France and its citizens woke up to snowfall.

Tip: When personifying inanimate objects (i.e. for a cartoon story) think: what objects have been given a gender and is this based on stereotypes? It is also important to include both

male and female characters rather than treating the male as neutral.

FamVeld, All aboard our gender-neutral ship!, Shutterstock