
Gentyll English-Spanish non sexist on-line glossaries¹

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the *Gentyll* online glossaries: non-sexist bilingual English-Spanish glossaries of terms relating to human naming in various subject areas (agentives). Our team has been working for several years in the study of the penetration of non-sexist language policies in the language used in various sectors of social and professional activity. After close inspection of a good number of printed and online lexicographic and terminological resources we came to the conclusion that almost all of them ignore non-sexist language policies and recommendations, both in their structure and in their actual data. Being aware of this lack of gender-aware resources we have tackled the publication of a series of non-sexist glossaries which cover a number of fields of activity. We do not intend to devise neither a new theory nor a new methodology. Our objective, far more modest, is to unveil a new, gender-aware, perspective which, in our view, should inspire lexicography and terminology in the 21st century.

In this presentation we will start by summarising the principles underlying our glossaries together with the pre-requisites we bore in mind in their conception. Later we will detail the contents of the databases together with the methodology adopted in their compilation, to end with a sketchy enumeration of the main features of the query system we have developed in order to streamline online searches.

We firmly believe our glossaries are a contribution, modest indeed, to a new perspective that wishfully will inspire more ambitious works to come.

1. Introduction

The glossaries we present here are intended to respond to a long lasting need: the lack of terminological glossaries and dictionaries which give professional and occupational nouns equal consideration in the feminine and the masculine. This need becomes even more compelling in Romance languages in which masculine and feminine are usually morphologically distinct forms. After analysing a series of lexicographical and terminological resources our team has found that: a) The discourse of definitions sometimes constructs asymmetries between the sexes by establishing semantic differences between them which do not correspond to social reality; b) Terminographical/lexicographical resources do not always acknowledge sexual difference and tend to subsume human beings into males; c) Some dictionaries and most terminology data bases have not made their products reflect the deep transformation on gender naming occurred in the last decades.

In an attempt to promote a change in perspective, our glossaries have been created with the objective of making available to translators, lexicographers and terminologists a series of repositories of terms referring to women and men on various subjects which can be consulted in both feminine or masculine and which ALWAYS supply masculine and feminine forms, thus challenging androcentric bias. They follow non-sexist regulations and recommendations in an attempt at compensating a long-standing need for gender aware glossaries and dictionaries.

At present (March 2012) two glossaries are already available for on-line query at <http://gentyll.uah.es/glossaries.html>: One corresponds to the subject field of sports and the other to tourism and leisure activities. Glossaries covering other subjects are currently in the phase of compilation and we also expect to add new languages in a near future. In what follows we will focus on the details of the design and implementation of our databases and query software.

2. Pre-requisites

Taking into account the objectives of our work and the differences we wanted to make with respect to other mainstream repositories, at the time of undertaking the design of database structure and software functionality we kept in mind a number of assumptions. Namely, in simplified form:

- Both, databases and query software should make sex difference visible.
- Denominations for both sexes should be equally treated: the databases should include separate fields for both of them, and the software should display them evenly, in adjacent columns.
- Whenever possible, identical neutral terms for men and for women should be collected, in the case of English. Otherwise, the record should include a usage note.
- In Spanish, the feminine term should always be provided (even when it coincides with the masculine, to point out this fact). Again, when necessary, a usage note should be included.

3. Implementation

3.1 Databases

The structure of the databases is quite simple and responds to the requisites summarised above as well as to principles of common practice in terminography, such as those stated by Cabré (2000: 116) ‘terminography is guided by the facts that terms are indivisible units with form and content; that the form and content of terms tends towards an unambiguous relationship; that terms have a fixed place within a specific conceptual field, without which reference the term has no specific meaning; and that concepts are related to other concepts in the specific field they together constitute’. We also stuck to the principle of ‘high granularity’ (Wright 2000: 557) and the integrity principles stated by Kierzkowska (1993: 280).

Consequently, we have carefully seen that the terms: are non-ambiguous, do not contradict each other, do not coincide and do not exclude each other. As for granularity, we have ensured that different items are enclosed in separate fields; thus, in accordance to our postulates, apart from conventional fields we have included those necessary to accommodate female forms and usage notes in both languages.

For the compilation phase, we implemented a special purpose toolkit in Microsoft’s Access. The toolkit operated on a comprehensive form which allowed inserting and editing all data fields through a series of routines meant to ensure consistency and correctness. The toolkit also included utilities to export data to external XML, CSV and SQL format files, in order to facilitate migration to database servers.

For the publication stage we envisaged the use of more powerful resources, though we must admit we were burdened with a serious drawback from scratch: ours is a modest team endowed with modest resources. Consequently, we can only afford equally modest equipment, which imposed certain constraints on the design of our databases and query software. Accordingly, we adopted a platform based entirely on free software: the glossaries are hosted on a MySQL server running on a Squeeze- Debian machine.

3.2 Query system

The query software was also developed in several stages: first, for testing purposes, we implemented a sketchy prototype written entirely in PHP, along with a few scripts in JavaScript. This prototype served as a test bed to time the responses and to assess the consistency and robustness of our databases and indexing system. This ‘wind tunnel’ allowed us to evaluate different query strategies in order to find out the fastest and most flexible methodology to be implemented in the final version.

It is a well known shortcoming of this architecture that it tends to overload the server, which actually performs all the processing, imposing as a consequence unnecessary delays to users, as the browser needs to reload the whole page once and again with every new query. Therefore, in a second phase, we re-wrote our system using state-of-the-art AJAX technology. The server is now in charge of handling the queries only, while some Javascript code snippets on the side of the clients’ browsers sort and display the results conveniently on the screen. Moreover, after conducting a series of speed tests we decided to use JSON (<http://www.json.org/>) data-interchange format instead of the more ‘AJAX-orthodox’ XML to further reduce download time, thus streamlining the exchange of data between server and clients. The software has been exhaustively tested and so far it has proved to be stable, fast and reliable.

The most outstanding features of our query system are:

- It allows searching for terms in either English or Spanish using indistinctively masculine or feminine forms as search keys. Thus Spanish ‘ladrón’ or ‘ladrona’ or English ‘stealer’ will retrieve identical results from the *sports glossary* (see figure 1).
- It allows searching for all sub-areas simultaneously or restricting the search to any particular subarea. Searching for ‘judge’ in the sports glossary we get 162 terms (see figure 2 which shows only the first ten). Restricting the same search to ‘Badminton’ we get only 5 (see figure 3). Mind the usage notes for the Spanish feminine.
- It searches for whole terms or partial strings equally, without the need of adding wildcards. No need to say that, the longer and more accurate the search key, the more accurate and refined the answer, but we opted for a powerful simplified search as quite often users feel unsure as to what exactly they should search for or how to spell their queries. Searching for ‘capit’ will yield 19 matches that contain either ‘capitán’ or ‘capitana’ in Spanish. If we type ‘capt’ we will get similar results (24 matches for English ‘captain’). If we restrict the search to ‘Sailing’ we get the 2 matches in figure 4. Once again, mind the usage note for the English feminine.
- Search strings are ‘normalized’ through a simple kind of Soundex algorithm, so that the engine not only ignores case, but can provide answers even when the spelling of the query does not entirely match any term contained in the database. Thus, ‘companera’ (for ‘compañera’ with ‘n’ instead of ‘ñ’) will retrieve 23 matches of ‘compañera’; ‘tecnica’ will retrieve the 3 matches of ‘técnica’ displayed in figure 5.


Glossaries of terms for woman and man (Spanish - English)

[Introduction](#)
[Spanish](#)

Activity: Sports

Sub-area:
 Please, type word or term:


Examples: skier, acomodadora ...

Any
 'stealer': 1 matches found

#	Sport	Woman	Man	Sp Usage	Woman	Man	Eng Usage
1	Baseball	La ladrona de base	El ladrón de base	-	The base stealer	The base stealer	-

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Figure 1. Search for Spanish 'ladrón' or 'ladrona' in sports.


Glossaries of terms for woman and man (Spanish - English)

[Introduction](#)
[Spanish](#)

Activity: Sports


Sub-area:
 Please, type word or term:

Examples: skier, acomodadora ...

Any
 'judge': 162 matches found

#	Sport	Woman	Man	Sp Usage	Woman	Man	Eng Usage
1	Archery	La jueza de campo	El juez de campo	1	The field judge	The field judge	-
2	Athletics	La jueza	El juez	2	The judge	The judge	-
3	Athletics	La jueza árbitra	El juez árbitro	3	The judge's steward	The judge's steward	1
4	Athletics	La jueza de curva	El juez de curva	4	The track judge on the bend	The track judge on the bend	-
5	Athletics	La jueza de marcha	El juez de marcha	5	The walking judge	The walking judge	-
6	Athletics	La jueza de marcha	El juez de marcha	6	The walking events judge	The walking events judge	-
7	Athletics	La jueza de marcha	El juez de marcha	7	The judge for walking events	The judge for walking events	-
8	Athletics	La jueza de saltos	El juez de saltos	8	The judge for jumping events	The judge for jumping events	-
9	Athletics	La jueza de carrera	El juez de carrera	9	The judge for track events	The judge for track events	-
10	Athletics	La jueza de llegada	El juez de llegada	10	The finish judge	The finish judge	-

Figure 2. Search for 'judge' in the sports glossary.

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Glossaries of terms for woman and man (Spanish - English)

Introduction Activity: Sports [Spanish](#)

Sub-area: Please, type word or term:

Examples: skier, acomodadora ...


Badminton
'judge': 5 matches found

#	Sport	Woman	Man	Sp Usage	Woman	Man	Eng Usage
1	Badminton	La jueza de saque	El juez de saque	1	The service judge	The service judge	-
2	Badminton	La jueza de servicio	El juez de servicio	2	The service judge	The service judge	-
3	Badminton	La jueza de línea de saque	El juez de línea de saque	3	The service judge	The service judge	-
4	Badminton	La coordinadora de juezas y jueces de línea	El coordinador de juezas y jueces de línea	4	The line judge coordinator	The line judge coordinator	-
5	Badminton	La responsable de las juezas y los jueces de línea	El responsable de las juezas y los jueces de línea	5	The line judge coordinator	The line judge coordinator	-

Usage notes (Spanish terms):

- También *La juez*.
- También *La juez*.
- También *La juez*.
- Otras posibilidades: *la coordinadora de juezas y jueces, el coordinador de juezas y jueces*.
- Otras posibilidades: *La responsable de los jueces y las juezas de línea, La responsable del jurado de línea, El responsable de los jueces y las juezas de línea, El responsable del jurado de línea*.

Figure 3. Search for 'judge' in the sports glossary with 'Badminton' as filter.

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Glossaries of terms for woman and man (Spanish - English)

Introduction Activity: Sports [Spanish](#)

Sub-area: Please, type word or term:

Examples: skier, acomodadora ...

Sailing
'capit': 2 matches found


#	Sport	Woman	Man	Sp Usage	Woman	Man	Eng Usage
1	Sailing	La capitana de puerto	El capitán de puerto	-	The harbour master/mistress	The harbour master	1
2	Sailing	La capitana del equipo	El capitán del equipo	-	The team captain	The team captain	-

Usage notes (English terms):

- mistress* seems to have become obsolete. *master* is replacing *mistress* as sex-inclusive.

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Figure 4. Search for 'capit' in the sports glossary with 'Sailing' as filter.


Glossaries of terms for woman and man (Spanish - English)
 Activity: Leisure and tourism Spanish

Sub-area: Please, type word or term:
 Examples: hiker, cartero ...

Any
'tecnica': 3 matches found

#	Activity	Woman	Man	Sp Usage	Woman	Man	Eng Usage
1	Accommodation	La técnica de mantenimiento	El técnico de mantenimiento	-	The repairer	The repairer	-
2	Accommodation	La técnica de mantenimiento	El técnico de mantenimiento	-	The repair woman	The repair man	1
3	Travel	La técnica de mantenimiento de aeronaves	El técnico de mantenimiento de aeronaves	-	The aircraft maintenance mechanic	The aircraft maintenance mechanic	-

Usage notes (English terms):
 1. Sex-specific terms with *woman* or *man* are less and less frequent, being substituted by terms that do not specify sex (which are more comprehensive, more accurate and more consistent). Avoid the use of sex-specific terms (singular or plural) as indefinite, sex-inclusive occupational titles.

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Figure 5. Search for ‘tecnica’ in the Leisure and Tourism glossary.

4. Conclusion.

We expect this brief presentation may suffice to give an idea of the underlying principles, content, organization and operation of our glossaries. Above all, we would like to make clear our firm belief that terminology glossaries and indexes that collect terms referring to people should become sensitive to social and gender differences in order to more accurately fulfil their primary function. We believe, with Temmerman, that standardisation is not enough: ‘All relevant factors should be studied systematically. Terminology should not blindly accept standardisation, it should question and examine the phenomenon both sociologically and historically’ (Temmerman 2000: 37). In this regard, we are aware that there is (and we still have) a long way to go, but we hope our glossaries are one, if tiny, step in this new direction.

Note

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