

# Re: Gender in language

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- *From:* John Flynn <[johnpf@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:johnpf@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
  - *Date:* Fri, 29 Sep 2006 08:59:51 -0500
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Nathan Sanders wrote:

John Flynn wrote:

Nathan Sanders wrote:

[snip]

Just because some linguistic feature (or more appropriately, the \*potential\* for that feature) is "hard-wired" doesn't mean every language must have that feature.

Which makes me wonder why it is believed to be "hard-wired" and not, instead, a learned feature.

Are blue eyes learned? Not every human has them...

I'll ask again, but this time try to stick with language.

Why do you think that it is "hard-wired" and not a learned feature?

Remember, I'm talking about language here. Not physical features of an organism. Language. The thing that takes children several years to learn. The thing that newborns do not possess the moment they emerge into the world.

See the decades-old debate between behaviorists and nativists for more extensive arguments and evidence from both sides.

## Re: Gender in language

I'm painfully aware of the debate. However, that specific debate (of nativist versus behaviorist) is not the one that is appropriate. There are more positions to take than merely "behaviorist" if one believes the nativists are naïvely simplistic in their view of biology.

I'm just saddened that people still leap immediately to the "It's all in the genes, people!" approach to language as if merely wanting it to be true makes it so. I think there is enough proof for and against nativism to make anyone interested in the truth stand back and go "Hmmm, it's a tough decision that can't be decided on yet." Anyone who can decide one way or the other (and is not merely in thrall to some ideology they picked up in their formative years) is either acting very rashly or has some definitive evidence that no one else is aware of.

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johnF

"Biology has moved on from the time when viruses were all the rage to a time when genes are much more trendy."

-- The Doctrine of DNA, Richard C. Lewontin

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