

Are sexist language assumptions empirically grounded?

A priming test of sexist language hypotheses.

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What are the sexist-language concerns in Spanish?

The Spanish is a Gendered Language

Sexist Language Concerns

Gender is encoded usually by the final vowel

Feminine: -a (eg. "catedrática", the spanish for female professor) **Masculine: -o** (eg. "catedrático", the spanish for male professor)
Neutral: -e (eg. "estudiante", the spanish for male or female student)

Masculine words change to Neutral in the plural case

The neutral case is assumed to be equivalent to masculine by anti-sexist contenders because it is preceded by masculine determinant in the neutral case: **el** estudiante / **los** estudiantes

The plural case is what mostly worries to anti-sexist contenders because is the common way to refer profession names

Are these concerns empirically grounded?

Testing sexist assumptions empirically

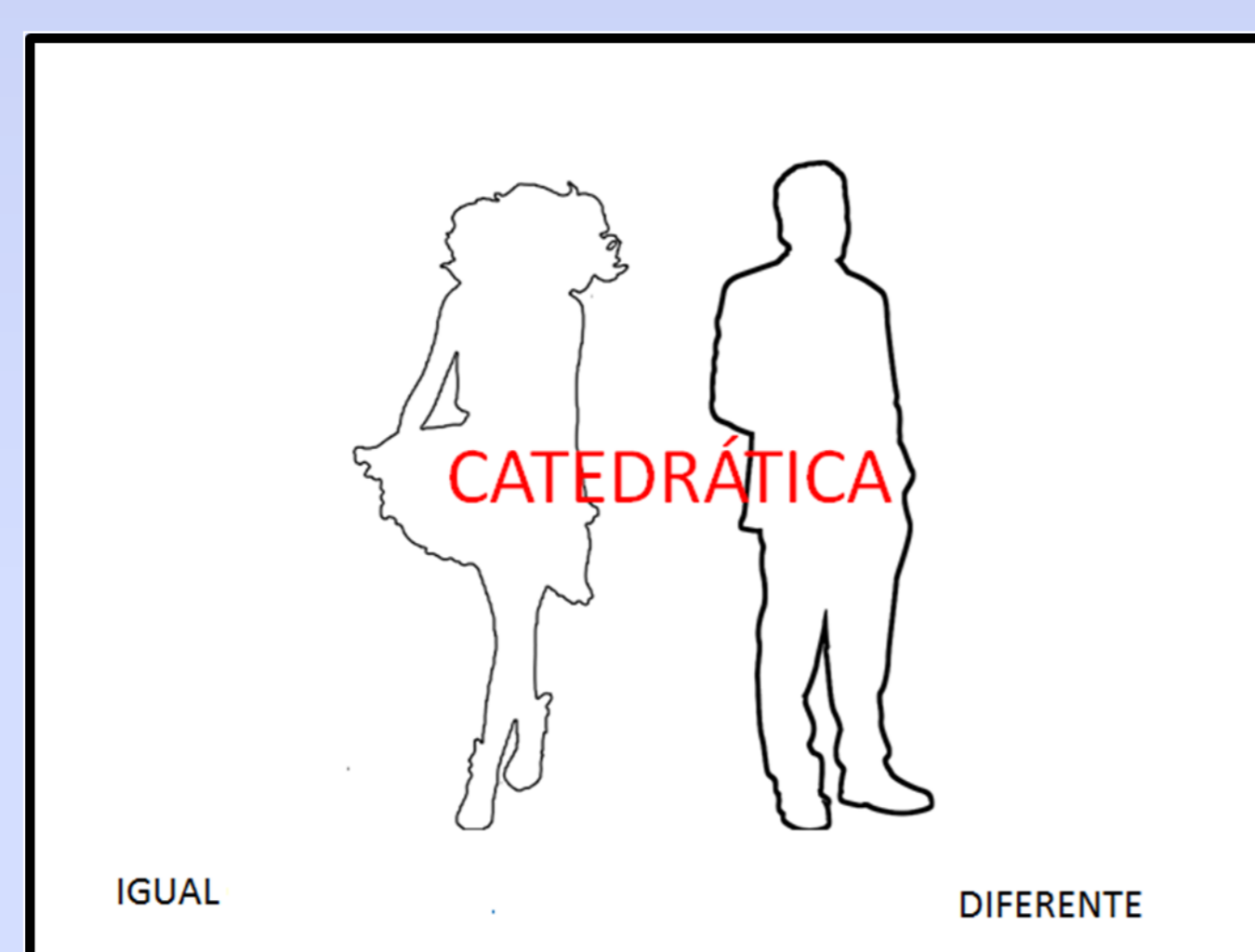
Hypotheses

Sexist assumptions

1. The neutral case (both singular and plural) is semantically represented as masculine
2. The masculine plural refers to only male subjects

Methodology

Task

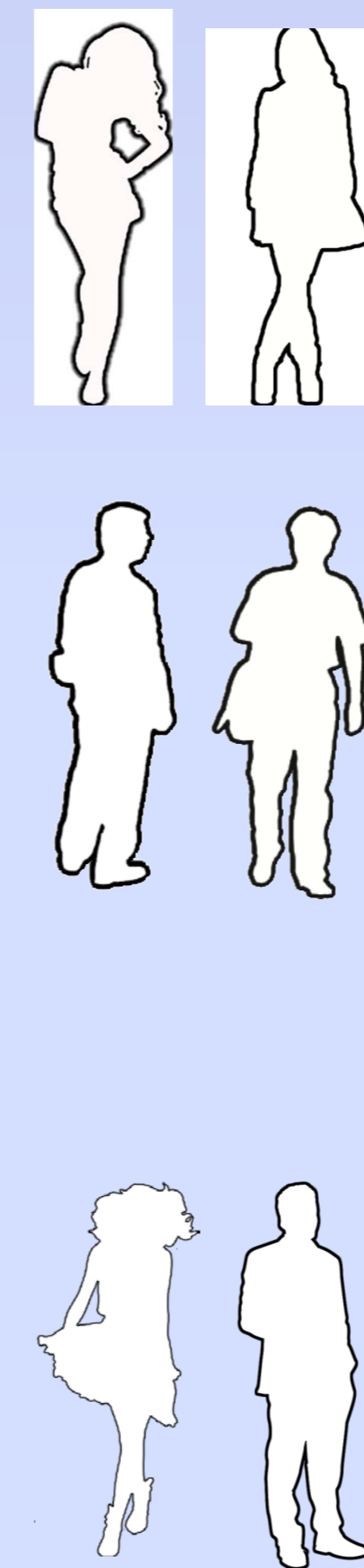


Press "same" or "different" key to indicate if both figures are of the same sex or not

Materials

"Different"

"Same"



Targets

Primes

108 Profession Names referred in anti-sexist language style guides

64 M/F words (catedrático/catedrática)

54 neutral words ("estudiante")

College Students

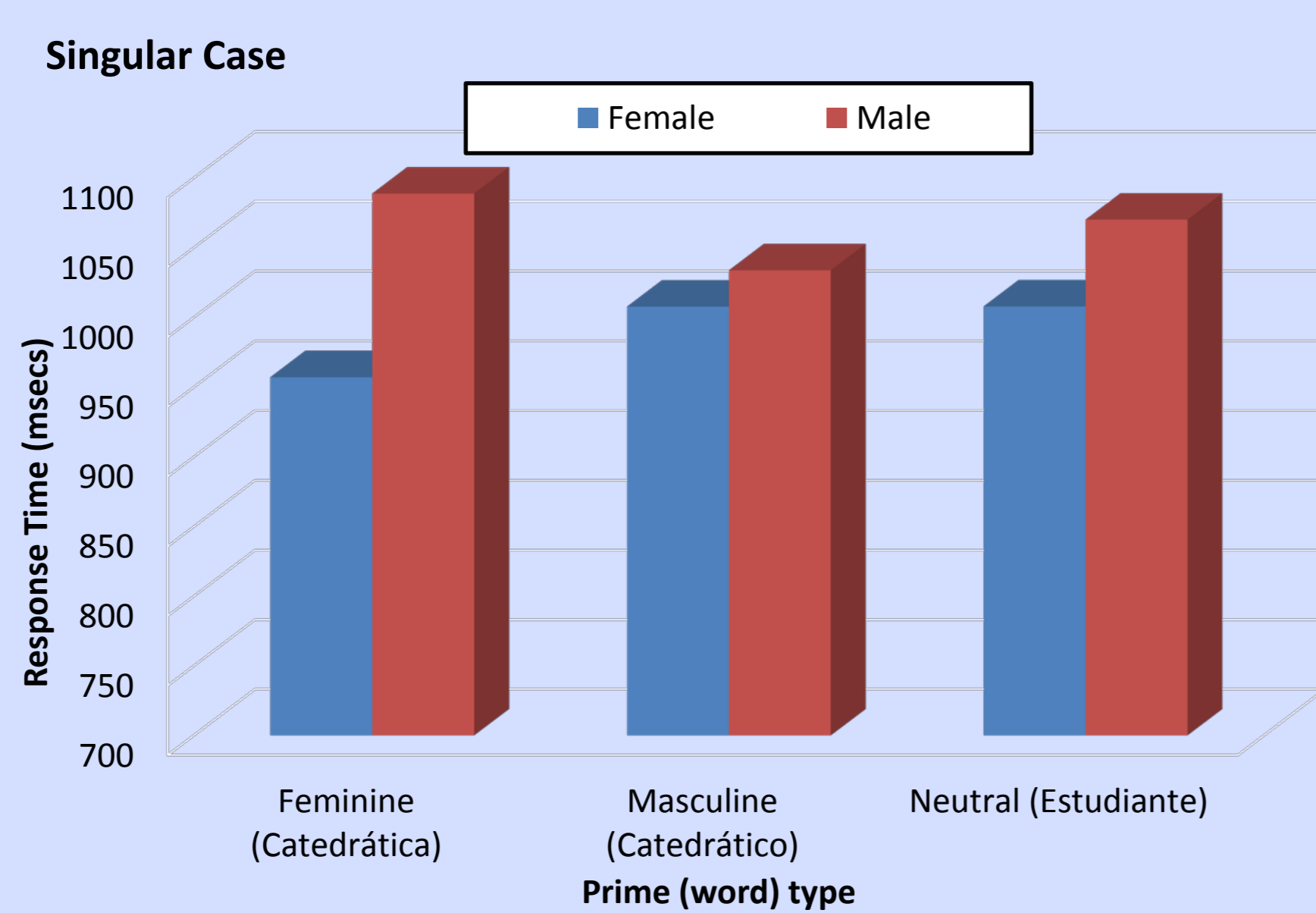
Participants

Singular
21 female
7 male

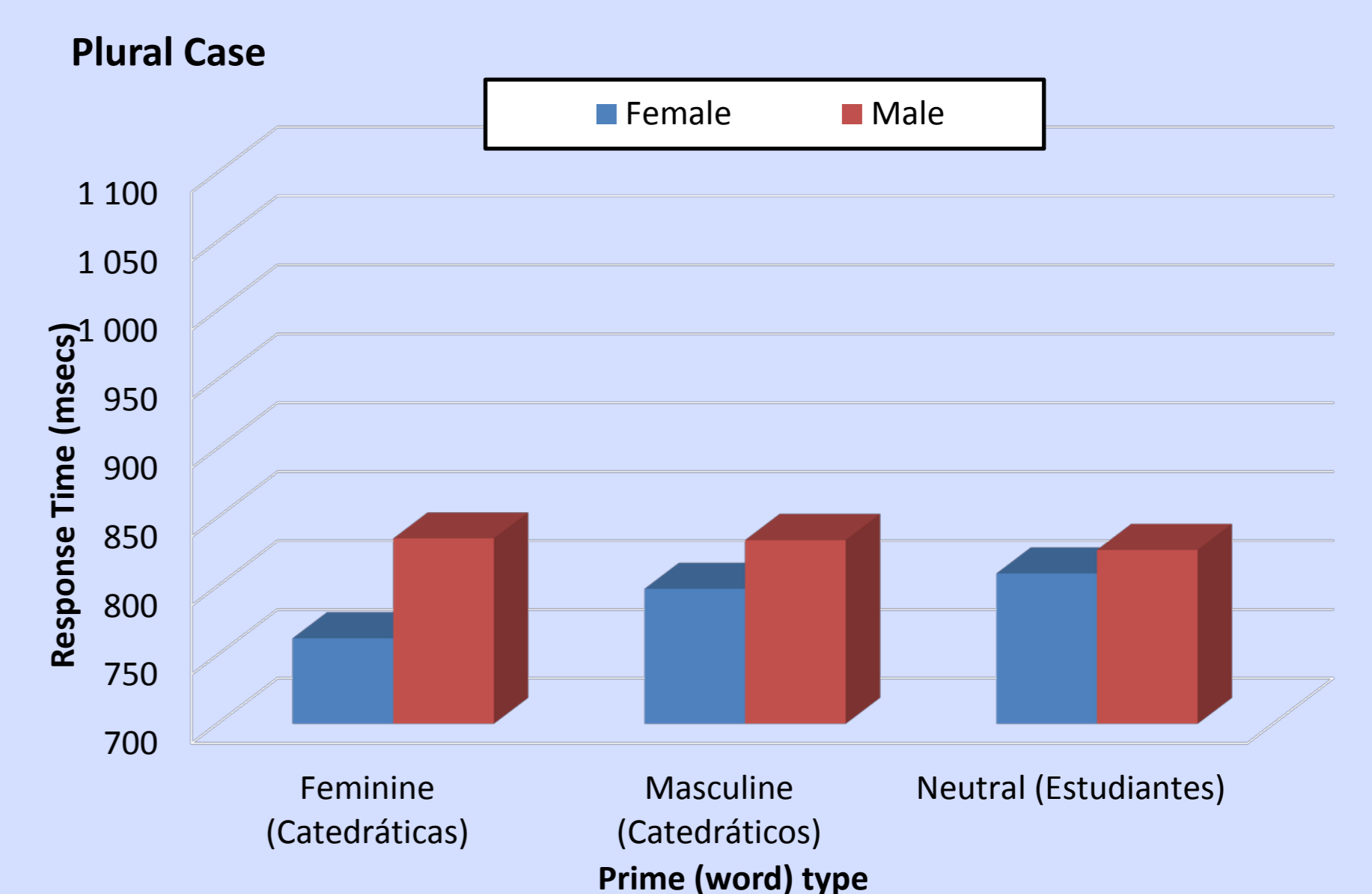
Plural
43 female
10 male

Results

Participants, both in the plural and singular case, behave as standard grammar hypothesis predict



Sexist Concerns are not empirically grounded



Discussion

If anti-sexist proposals were right we should see, in the masculine case, the inverse pattern of the feminine. Nevertheless, what we obtain is a pattern which is different from the feminine and equal to the neutral. This supports the general rule of the RAE.

Our results question the anti-sexist statements. Maybe this fight against women discrimination deserves efforts in other more productive fields.

References:

- Rosinski et al. (1975) Automatic semantic processing in Picture-Word interference task. *Child development*, 8, 643-647.
- Tipper, S. P., & Driver, J. (1988). Negative priming between pictures and words in a selective attention task: evidence for semantic processing of ignored stimuli. *Memory and Cognition*, 16, 64-70.
- «Guía de uso no sexista del lenguaje de la Universidad de Murcia». Unidad para la Igualdad entre mujeres y hombres, *Universidad de Murcia*, 2011.