



Inclusivity in the Making: An Imperative Need for Gender – Fair Language Reforms

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ABSTRACT

In an environment of naturally gendered language, he and she are only inclusive to those who identify as male and female. Where does this bequeath those who do not identify along the lines of those gendered terms? Predicaments like misgendering occur, which gender-neutral pronouns can minimize. The presence of gender-inclusive pronouns inside the university campus will serve as a medium for them to be addressed as they identify. Through descriptive research design, further exploration of the research problem transpired. The random sampling method was applied to identify the respondents and Google forms were utilized for the data gathering. Descriptive statistics made the presentation of quantitative descriptions possible. The results show that female and junior high school students are the most interested respondents. LGBTQIA+ members were also shown to have preferred pronouns. The respondents were moderately aware of the topic and were very supportive of recommending policies to the university. The researchers concluded that although the respondents were moderately aware of the topic, further discussion on this topic is needed. Additionally, LGBTQIA+ members were given the medium to be addressed as they identify. Lastly, the recommendation of gender-fair language reform and preferred pronouns policies was found relevant.

Keywords: gender-fair language reforms, level of awareness, LGBTQIA+, preferred pronouns, recommended policies.

1. Introduction

As the world grows old day by day and the people living in it learn more, new concepts and ideas are introduced. Discovering the addition to the original binary gender (men and women), the LGBTQIA+ community was formed. LGBTQIA+ holds or stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (or sometimes questioning), intersex, asexual, and others. The “plus” represents other sexual identities, including pansexual and Two-Spirit. Since the 1990s, the acronym’s first four letters (LGB and T) have been used (Cherry, 2020). However, there has been an increased awareness of the need to be inclusive of other sexual identities in recent years to offer better representation (Cherry, 2020). It is secret that they call out for their lives: employment, education, and even healthcare. The concept of Gender Inclusion is what they have been pushing for. Gender inclusion refers to the equal treatment and rights given to people regardless of their gender; recognized as valuable members of society. This inclusion also applies to language because there were still biases even in language. According to the University Massachusetts Lowell, bias in language refers to language even or unbalanced language or not fair representation. Biased language includes expressions that isolate and exclude people because of their age, sex, race, ethnicity, social class, or physical/mental traits (Nordquist, 2019). Many countries already started to take a step up by acknowledging and implementing gender-fair language to combat these biases. Gender-fair language (GFL) aims to reduce gender stereotyping and discrimination. It also aims to abolish asymmetries in addressing women and men, for example, by replacing masculine forms of language (policeman) with gender-unmarked forms (police officer) or by using both masculine and feminine forms (Sczeny et al., 2016). Sweden took GFL to a more profound concept by introducing gender-neutral pronouns. Language constrains how individuals can be referred to using pronouns. In many languages, only female and male (binary) gendered third-person pronouns are available to refer to a single individual (she and he) (Prewitt-Freilino et al., 2012). Members of the LGBTQIA+ community often face the pain of being misgendered since pronouns for non-binary individuals and as a generic singular pronoun form. The hen was added to the Swedish Academy Glossary (SAOL) in 2015 (Vergoossen et al., 2020). It is undeniable that Biliran Province State University has a large population. With 800 estimated enrollees each school year that has a growing number of students identifying themselves as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. The researchers believe that the students should be educated about gender-fair language to avoid gender stereotypes, discrimination, and micro-aggression. Moreover, with many related pieces, the study’s objective recommended LGBTQIA+ protection policies to the university is what sets it apart from the others. The study aims to determine the reforms needed for Gender-Fair Language in Biliran Province State University. **Specific Objectives:** 1. Determine the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of: (grade level and strand) 2. Determine one’s level of awareness toward gender-fair language at Biliran Province State University. 3. Determine the preferred pronouns for the members of the LGBTQIA+ community. 4. Recommended gender-fair language reforms and preferred pronouns policies to the University.

2. Methodology

The research design that was seen most fit by the researchers is the descriptive research design. Through the employment of this scheme, further exploration of the research problem was made possible. This research design was utilized when there was a need of the researchers to pursue a specific phenomenon further. This method also allowed the researchers to assess and measure the variables mentioned in the research. The phenomenon identified of the researchers is the lack of gender-fair language on the campus. Hence, this led to discovering the roots and other facets of the problem. And therefore, point towards a better understanding of the phenomenon. To identify the number of the respondents, the researchers used the formula provided by the National Education Association. With an estimated 1000 students and a 90% confidence level, the formula resulted in 214 respondents from Biliran Province State University Laboratory High School. The researchers applied the simple random sampling method to randomly and efficiently determine the respondents who participated in the survey to achieve the objectives of this research. The simple random sampling method accumulated the needed sample size of 214 from the estimated larger population of 1000 students in the Biliran Province State University-Laboratory High School. This sampling method help ensured the respondents an equal chance to be part of the survey

To comprehensively evaluates and analyse the data quantitatively, this study also used the Likert scale, which is under the ordinal scale – this entitled rating or ranking of responses regarding the level of awareness about gender – fair language. Personal perceptions were conveniently operationalized by the use of Likert scales in the study. The percentage of the total summation of responses was given an equivalent numerical score.

Table 1
Equivalent Numerical Score Used to identify the Level of Awareness

Total Weighted Percentage	Level of Awareness
0-20%	Unaware
30-40%	Slightly Aware
50-60%	Moderately Aware
70-80%	Aware
90-100%	Fully Aware

3. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the study results and deliberates implications of data generation by 214 sample sixes in Biliran Province State University-Laboratory High School (BiPSU-LHS). The interpretation of the responses that were gathered will be based on the four objectives: (1) Determine the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of Grade Level, Strand, and Gender, (2) Determine one's level of awareness toward gender-fair language, (3) Determine the preferred pronouns for the members of the LGBTQIA+ community, (4) Recommend gender-fair language reforms and preferred pronouns policies to the University.

Demographic Profile

The demographic profile of the respondents was completed by BiPSU – LHS students who participated in the study. Table 2 shows the demographic profile index data reported concerning the respondent's gender, grade level, and stand.

Gender.

The gender of BiPSU-LHS participants were categorized into Asexual, Bisexual, female, Gay, lesbian, male, Queer, Transgender, and Others that are also aprt of LGBTQIA+ Community.

The majority of the respondents were female, followed by the male, bisexual, agy and other members of LGBTQIA+, respectively. Although seven respondents prefer not to say their gender, most of the answered came from the other genders; ranking female the highest percentage with 38.3%, followed by male with 24.8%, Bisexual with 12.1%, Gay with 9.3%, Lesbian with 5.1%, Queer with 1.4% and Transgender the lowest with 0.9%. The results show that all genders are open to parcipicate and discuss this concept, but females showed the most interest among all the genders.

Grade Level and Strand.

The grade level BiPSU-LHS participants were categorized into Grades 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and for the strand, there were ABM, HUMSS, STEM, Junior High School. The highest number of participants was from Grade 12, covers 80 out the 214 respondents: 46 were from STEM, 44 from HUMSS, and 32 from ABM. At the same time, the least number of participants were from Grade 7, with seven responses. The result showed that the majority of the respondents were Junior High School students with 42.2% compared to other strands, given that JHS has a bigger population compared to all SHS strands combined.

TABLE 2
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variables	Levels	Counts	% of Total
Gender	Asexual	4	1.9%
	Bisexual	26	12.1%
	Female	82	38.3%
	Gay	20	9.3%
	Lesbian	11	5.1%
	Male	53	24.8%
	Others that is also part of LGBTQIA+ Community	6	2.8%
	Prefer not to say	7	3.3%
	Queer	3	1.4%
	Transgender	2	0.9%
Grade Level	Grade 10	41	19.3%
	Grade 11	27	12.7%
	Grade 12	80	37.7%
	Grade 7	7	3.3%
	Grade 8	27	12.7%
	Grade 9	30	14.2%
Strand	ABM	32	15.2%
	HUMSS	44	20.9%
	STEM	46	21.8%
	JHS	89	42.2%

Level of Awareness toward gender – fair language at Biliran Province State University

Based on the result, it shows that there was a lack of learning and awareness about gender-fair language that made the students failed to answer some of the questions correctly and not achieve the criteria of being 90-100% fully aware. When asked if the respondents know what gender-fair language is, the result showed that the respondents already had an idea about this concept. However, in some questions about gender-neutral terms, some of the percentage of the total scores are low and it presented that the respondents need more clarifications and improvement about learning gender-neutral terms.

Table 3
Level of Awareness of the Respondents

Questions	Levels	Counts	% of Total
Do you know what gender-fair language is?	I don't know	18	8.4%
	Maybe	40	18.7%
	No	27	12.6%
	Yes	129	60.3%
Gender-fair language helps avoid gender stereotypes, discrimination, and microaggression, do you think it is relevant in your university?	I don't know	15	7.0%
	Maybe	55	25.7%
	No	12	5.6%
	Yes	132	61.7%
If we were to avoid sexist terms, would you agree to change the common usage such as the word "anchorman" to "anchorman", "policeman" to "police officer" and other terms?	I don't know	19	8.9%
	Maybe	41	19.2%
	No	7	3.3%
	Yes	147	68.7%
Do you think there are already enough gender-fair language reforms for the LGBTQ community in your university?	I don't know	31	14.5%
	Maybe	70	37.2%
	No	95	44.4%
	Yes	18	8.4%
Do you think this gender-fair language reforms could help reduce gender discrimination for the LGBTQ students in your university?	I don't know	28	13.1%
	Maybe	25	11.7%
	No	1	0.5%
	Yes	160	74.8%
What is the gender neutral language/term for the word fireman?	Firewoman	7	3.3%
	Fire-Fighter	172	80.4%

	I don't know	35	16.4%
What is the gender neutral language/term for the word businessman?	Business owner	57	26.6%
	Businesswoman	5	2.3%
	Business person	123	57.5%
	I don't know	29	13.6%
What is the gender neutral language/term for the word statesman?	Political figure	115	53.7%
	Diplomat	46	21.5%
	States woman	3	1.4%
	I don't know	50	23.4%
What is the gender neutral language/term for the word Congressman?	Congresswoman	8	3.7%
	Representative	137	64.0%
	Senator	24	11.2%
	I don't know	45	21.0%
What is the gender neutral/term for the word salesman?	Salesperson	159	74.3%
	Saleswoman	3	1.4%
	Marketer	22	10.3%
	I don't know	30	14.0%
What is the gender neutral/term for the word spokesman?	Front man	2	0.9%
	Spokeswoman	2	0.9%
	Spokesperson	177	82.7%
	I don't know	33	15.4%
What is the gender neutral/term for the word fisherman?	Seaman	19	8.9%
	Fisherwoman	1	0.5%
	Fisher	150	70.1%
	I don't know	44	20.6%
What is the gender neutral/term for the word deliveryman?	Courier	156	72.9%
	Messenger	22	10.3%
	Deliverywoman	2	0.9%
	I don't know	34	15.9%
What is the gender neutral/term for the word craftsman?	Maker	17	7.9%
	Craftsperson	152	71.0%
	Technician	10	4.7%
	I don't know	35	16.4%
What is the gender neutral/term for the word sportsman?	Contender	7	3.3%
	Athlete	177	82.7%
	Sportswoman	2	0.9%
	I don't know	28	13.1%

Preferred Gendered Pronouns and Language of LGBTQIA+

This part is intended only for the LGBTQIA+ community members. Table 3 included the LGBTQIA+ preferred gender, LGBTQIA+ preferred pronouns, and the offensive words LGBTQIA+ received. *LGBTQIA+ Preferred Gender*. This was categorized into Asexual, Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Queer, Transgender, other genders that are still part of LGBTQIA+ and the option for the non-members of LGBTQIA+ community; bisexuals ranked next with 39 respondents, followed by Gay with 20, Lesbian with 12, and Asexual with two respondents. *LGBTQIA+ Preferred Pronoun*. This was categorized into Everyone/ That person, He/Him, She/Her, Them/They/Their, Zie/Sie/Ey/Ve/Tey, and others. She/Her ranked the highest as the LGBTQIA+ preferred pronoun with 48 responses, while Zie/Sie/Ey/Ve/Tey and Everyone/That person ranked the lowest with only one response. Based on the result of the data, and it is seen that there was a lack of knowledge about the gender-neutral pronouns that were already legally used by other countries when the lowest-ranked pronouns were Everyone/That person and Zie/Sie/Ey/Ve/Tey. It was demonstrated that the gender-neutral pronouns like Zie/Sie/Ey/Ve/Tey sounded foreign and unfamiliar to the respondents, and this shows that there is a need to educate them about these terms used by other countries.

Table 4
Preferred Gender-Fair Language and Pronouns of LGBTQ

Variables	Levels	Counts	% of Total
In LGBTQIA+, what gender do you identify yourself?	Asexual	2	0.9%
	Bisexual	39	18.2%
	Gay	20	9.3%
	I am not part of the LGBTQIA+ community	120	56.1%
	Lesbian	14	6.5%

	Others	12	5.6%
	Queer	6	2.8%
	Transgender	1	0.5%
		1	0.5%
As a member of LGBTQIA+ what is your preferred pronoun you want to identify yourself?	Everyone/That person	122	0.5%
	He/Him/	8	10.3%
	Others	48	3.7%
	She/Her	30	22.4%
	Them/They/Their	1	14.0%
	Zie/Sie/Ey/Ve/Tey		0.5%

Recommended gender-fair language reforms and preferred pronouns policies.

This part included the recommended gender-fair language policies of the students. The respondents chose the policies already listed in the questionnaire and had the chance to suggest their own commended policies. In Table 5, the three gender-fair language reforms and pronoun policies that have the highest number of responses were; “Respect each student’s chosen name and pronouns,” with 179 votes; “When referring to or addressing specific individuals, use forms of address and pronouns that are according to their preferred gender identity,” with 158 votes; and “Create and sustain classrooms and school cultures in which students of all gender identities are seen, heard, respected, and protected.” With 144 votes. However, the respondents were asked about a specific policy they could recommend; most answered none. The majority of the respondents chose the policies that were already in the questionnaire. This concluded that the respondents were already satisfied with the options listed. Based on the data gathered, students valued a person’s gender identity and were willing to learn more about creating a student-friendly environment on the campus by practicing gender-fair language and the preferred pronouns of the LGBTQIA+ community members.

Table 5

Recommend Gender-Fair Reforms and Preferred Pronouns Policies

Variables	Levels	Counts	% of Total
Recommend gender-fair language Reforms and pronoun policies for LGBTQIA+ community. Chose as much as you preferred/recommend.	Using the gender-neutral singular pronouns they, them, their, and theirs unless the gender of a singular personal antecedent is otherwise defined.	125	11.1%
	Respect each student’s chosen name and pronouns.	176	15.7%
	Advocate inclusivity of pronouns for LGBTQIA+ community in any academic and administrative forms within the campus.	128	11.4%
	Disseminate awareness within the campus regarding to gender-fair language reforms.	121	10.8%
	Foster safe environment inside the campus for the members of LGBTQIA+ community.	131	11.7%
	When referring to or addressing specific individuals, use forms of address and pronouns that are according to their preferred gender identity.	158	14.1%
	Create and sustain classrooms and school cultures in which students of all gender identities are seen, heard, respected, and protected.	144	12.8%
	Be cautious not to assume the gender preference of individuals.	131	11.7%
	I do not support or recommend gender-fair reforms in the university.	8	0.7%

Other Recommendations	Educate students on how to respect the LGBTQIA+ community.	1	5.6%
	Freedom of whoever they wanted to be and to whoever they will be attracted should be respected as well not just their pronouns. Because sometimes, they are scared to love to whoever they want because of the judgement even if their pronouns were accepted.	1	5.6%
	I do not have any more recommendations to recommend I hope my other recommendations can help.	1	5.6%
	None	9	
	Include other gender like pansexual	1	5.6%
	Inform and educate all about pronouns since it can be confusing.	1	5.6%
	Just respect each other	1	5.6%
	Racial slurs, and homographic slurs shouldn't be used to discriminate an individual	1	5.6%
We don't judge the person by their gender.	1	5.6%	

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the outcomes of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

- To determine the reforms needed for gender-fair language in the university, the researchers tested the level of awareness of the participants. The results show that 64% of the respondents were moderately aware of Gender-Fair language. The results show that the respondents have a general idea of the concepts, but further discussion is needed. This depicts that gender-biased language are conducted. The researchers then concluded that the conduction of programs about the topic is relevant and necessary.
- With the application of Muted Group Theory and linguistic relativity, the researchers concluded that minority groups like women and LGBTQIA+ community are severely affected by the use of language. Specifically, members of the LGBTQIA+ as a muted group and as a people who are prone to misgendered were shown to have their preferred pronouns. The presence of only male and female options in campus admission forms promoted the exclusion of LGBTQIA+ members. The community has been subjected to discrimination for the longest time, and through determining their preferred pronouns, they were given a medium to feel validated and given a chance to be addressed as they identify. Therefore, the implementation of Gender-fair language reforms inside the university will help promote gender inclusivity.
- The previous studies about gender-fair language reforms were only inclusive to men and women, leaving LGBTQIA+ members in the dark. With this study, the view towards gender-fair language was widened as we included the LGBTQIA+ community. With this, the researchers concluded that gender-fair language should not only be inclusive to men and women. Its primary goal is to level the playing field for all Gender and avoid gender bias. Nevertheless, the very idea of gender-fair language being only inclusive to men and women makes it inherently biased.

4.2 Recommendation

This study is devoted to adopting the gender-fair language and upholding the non-discrimination, acknowledgement, and equality values. The researchers led with the following recommendations:

- This study suggest that using Bias-Free Language or Gender-neutral language decrease the instance of discrimination. It includes discussing a particular section of Gender that includes numerous choices of gender-neutral language and terms to avoid. It also explains why the recommendation words are much more acceptable.
- The research also recommends respecting each student's chosen name and pronouns by using pronouns according to their preferred gender identity. With this, creating and sustaining classrooms and school cultures in which students of all gender identities are seen, heard,

respected, and protected will possibly happen.

3. In Table 3, the researchers built a safe space for LGBTQIA+ people and included them in the discussion. Although most of the respondents are moderately aware of the existence of Gender fair language, there still a need to conduct programs about this matter and should be held inside the university. Since most of the awareness programs so far were a discussion inclusive only of the language used toward males and females. The goal of these programs is to urge administrative services to give gender sensitivity in language the attention it deserves.
4. Based on table 5, the researchers would like to push for gender inclusivity on the campus by providing a preferred pronoun option in the school admission form. Moreover, for a preferred pronouns policy to be implemented on campus, ensure that everyone's pronouns are respected. For future researchers, there is a need to conduct the same study but on a larger scale

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