

**ACCEPTANCE AND INCLUSIVITY IN THE CLASSROOM:
ENGLISH TEACHER TRAINEES' ATTITUDES TOWARD GENDER-NEUTRAL
LANGUAGE IN THEIR FUTURE TEACHING OF ENGLISH**

Bachelor's thesis

Pinja Vellamo

University of Jyväskylä
Department of Language and
Communication studies
English
May 2022

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanistinen tiedekunta	Laitos – Department Kieli- ja viestintätieteiden laitos
Tekijä – Author Pinja Vellamo	
Työn nimi – Title Acceptance and inclusivity in the classroom: English teacher trainees' attitudes toward gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English	
Oppiaine – Subject Englanti	Työn laji – Level Kandidaatin tutkielma
Aika – Month and year Toukokuu 2022	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 22 + 1 liite
<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Sukupuolineutraalin kielen ja yksikkömuotoisen 'they'-pronominin kasvava käyttö englannin kielessä on herättänyt nykypäivänä paljon julkista keskustelua. Tämä tutkimus pyrkii selvittämään englanninopettajaopiskelijoiden asenteita sukupuolineutraalia kielenkäyttöä kohtaan heidän tulevassa työssään englanninopettajana. Tutkimuskysymyksenäni ovat: missä pedagogisissa konteksteissa englanninopettajaopiskelijat näkevät itsensä käyttämässä sukupuolineutraalia kieltä ja mitä toistuvia teemoja ilmenee heidän vastauksissaan näihin pedagogisiin konteksteihin liittyen. Lisäksi pyrin selvittämään tunnistavatko englanninopettajaopiskelijat sukupuolittuneita ja sukupuolineutraaleja ilmauksia, millaisia sukupuolineutraaleja ilmauksia he ovat halukkaita käyttämään ja ovatko nämä yhteneväisiä heidän asenteidensa kanssa.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen aineisto koostuu kyselyvastauksista, jotka keräsin Google Forms-kyselyn avulla. Kyselyyn osallistui 35 englanninopettajaopiskelijaa. Kysely sisälsi yhden monivalintakysymyksen, laadullisia kysymyksiä ja Likert-asteikkokysymyksiä. Analyysissa paino oli laadullisten vastausten tarkastelussa. Teemoittelin laadulliset vastaukset käyttäen aineistolähtöistä sisällönanalyysia. Monivalintakysymyksen ja Likert-asteikkokysymysten analyysissa hyödynsin Google Forms-ohjelman ominaisuuksia.</p> <p>Tutkimustulokset osoittivat myönteistä suhtautumista sukupuolineutraalin kielen, kuten 'they'-pronominin käyttöön. Myös sukupuolittuneet ilmaukset tunnistettiin melko johdonmukaisesti. Sukupuolineutraalin kielenkäytön tilanteet jaoin seuraaviin pääteemoihin: opetustilanteet, ihmisiin viittaaminen ja kaikki mahdolliset tilanteet. Syyt sukupuolineutraalin kielen käyttöön jaoin puolestaan seuraaviin pääteemoihin: hyväksyntä ja inklusiivisuus, haitallisen kielenkäytön välttäminen sekä opettajan velvollisuus. Likert-asteikkovastaukset kuitenkin osoittivat, että vaikka asenteet sukupuolineutraalia kieltä kohtaan olivat myönteiset, ovat sukupuolittuneet ilmaukset juurtuneet englanninopettajaopiskelijoiden kielenkäyttöön ja sukupuolineutraalin kielen käyttö vaatii tietoista yrittystä.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords Gender-neutral language, Gender-inclusive language, Gender-fair language, Singular they, Attitudes, English language, Englannin kieli, Survey, Content analysis, Inductive content analysis	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository JYX	
Muita tietoja – Additional information	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	2
2.1	Language types - English as a natural gender language.....	2
2.2	Gender-neutral, gender-fair and gender-inclusive language	2
2.3	Previous research.....	4
2.3.1	Language and attitudes	4
2.3.2	Gender-neutral language and attitudes	5
2.3.3	The singular ‘they’	6
2.4	Gender-neutral language and teacher attitudes	6
3	PRESENT STUDY	7
3.1	Research questions and aim of the study.....	7
3.2	Data collection.....	8
3.3	Data analysis.....	10
3.4	Ethics	11
4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	11
4.1	Why English teacher trainees see themselves using gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English.....	12
4.1.1	Acceptance and inclusivity	13
4.1.2	Avoiding harmful language	13
4.1.3	Familiarity.....	13
4.1.4	Teacher responsibility.....	14
4.2	Situations where English teacher trainees see themselves using gender-neutral language.....	14
4.2.1	Teaching situations	15
4.2.2	Referring to people	15
4.2.3	Every possible situation	15
4.3	Situations where English teacher trainees see themselves using the singular ‘they’	15
4.4	Likert-scale comparisons.....	16
5	CONCLUSION.....	21
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	23
	APPENDICES	27
	APPENDIX A: FINAL SURVEY	27

1 INTRODUCTION

One of the defining features of language is its ability to change and evolve. Language change reflects new ideas and new social phenomena. In short, language is a reflection of society. Furthermore, as social awareness increases, language changes. Words and expressions that were previously seen as appropriate can now be viewed as harmful and discriminatory. In the past, feminists and academics in the seventies began to discuss and question overt sexism in language, such as generic masculine terminology and pronouns (Blaubergs 1980: 135-136). It was argued that this type of terminology, meaning linguistic forms that refer to men as well as people in general such as policeman, chairman, mailman etc. shaped consciousness, maintained sexist stereotypes and as a result made women invisible, reinforcing the perception of men as the human norm (Kleinman et al. 2021: 62).

Today, the topic of sexist language reform is still an active topic of conversation. In the past few years, the use of gender-neutral language, which advocates for the use of genderless forms of nouns and pronouns, has been making headlines. Various media reports have covered stories of teachers who refuse to use queer student's personal pronouns such as the singular 'they' and students who are advocating for the use of more inclusive language (Burke, 2021; Reilly, 2019; Stafford, 2022; Wertheimer, 2021). However, despite this discourse surrounding the use of gender-neutral language in classrooms, studies concerning gender-neutral language and student attitudes are sparse. In this thesis, my goal is to shed light on this topic.

Sarrasin et al. (2012: 114) explain that although there have been some changes in the use of language over time, the use of gender-neutral language has not become widely accepted or standardized. This is for example the situation with the singular 'they,' a gender-neutral pronoun that is often viewed as being ungrammatical. Bradley (2020: 2) explains that language experts and style guides have even discouraged the formal and written use of 'they' based on this perception of ungrammaticality. Sarrasin et al. (2012: 114) further explain that "ongoing arguments against gender-neutral language include its perceived inelegancy, cumbersomeness, and long-windedness, its difficulty to read and comprehend, as well as its ineffectiveness."

In this thesis, I am interested in the attitudes and opinions of English teacher trainees on gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English: if they are likely to use gender-neutral nouns and the singular 'they' and in which contexts. Additionally, I am interested in seeing whether teacher trainees recognize the differences between gender-neutral and gendered language, what forms of gender-neutral language they are willing to use, and if this is consistent with their attitudes toward

gender-neutral language, which consequently may have some implications for their pedagogy. The attitudes and opinions of English teacher trainees suggest whether the next generation of English teachers is likely to use gender-neutral language in their teaching. Further, it will suggest whether future English learners will learn about gender-neutral language from their English teachers.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Language types - English as a natural gender language

Languages can greatly differ in the way gender is present in them. For example, so called *genderless languages* such as Finnish and Turkish are genderless by nature, as they express gender lexically or with lexical gender nouns, but not grammatically. In contrast, *grammatical gender languages* such as French and German have assigned grammatical gender to all nouns, personal pronouns, and other grammatically dependent words (Sczesny et al. 2016: 2-3). These assigned grammatical genders are more commonly known as masculine, feminine or neuter forms. As a *natural gender language*, English falls somewhere in the middle of the two categories. English has some features of grammatical gender languages, such as gendered personal pronouns ('he/she'), but most personal nouns are gender-neutral (Sczesny et al. 2016: 2-3). Exceptions to this rule are some lexical words such as 'girl and boy,' 'woman and man' and 'mother and father'. English lacks masculine, feminine and neuter forms, hence, personal pronouns are the largest indicator of sex in the language. (Stahlberg et al. 2007: 165).

Prewitt-Freilino et al. (2012: 279) theorize that the endorsement of gender-inclusive language might be the most successful for natural gender languages such as English, as the changing of the language would not affect legibility as much as it would with grammatical gender languages. In addition, as opposed to genderless languages, natural gender languages such as English can include gender-symmetrical forms in pronouns and nouns, consequently making women more linguistically visible (Prewitt-Freilino et al. 2012: 279). By following this logic, the promotion of gender-neutral terminology and the singular 'they' could also be successful, consequently increasing the visibility of gender minorities in the English language.

2.2 Gender-neutral, gender-fair and gender-inclusive language

First, the concept of gender-neutral language must be defined. Researchers, organizations, and activists often use terms such as gender-fair, gender-inclusive and gender-neutral language interchangeably, or with only slight differences, sometimes creating some confusion around the

terminology. However, it is important to note that in theory, all of these terms are used to achieve similar goals: to reduce discrimination and sexism by avoiding linguistic gender biases. Yet in practice, gender-neutral language might be the most inclusive term.

First, the *United Nations Guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English* presents several language strategies for the United Nations staff in order to improve inclusivity in all communication (United Nations n.d.). These strategies include avoiding sexist expressions such as “she throws/runs/fights like a girl,” using feminine and masculine pairings to make both men and women visible and using gender-neutral words such as “‘humankind’; ‘humanity’; ‘human race’” instead of “mankind” (United Nations n.d.). Then, in the context of *gender-fair language*, Sczesny et al. (2016: 2) state the following: “GFL as aims to abolish asymmetries in referring to and addressing women and men, for example, by replacing masculine forms (*policeman*) with gender-unmarked forms (*police officer*), or by using both masculine and feminine forms (i.e., *the applicant... he or she* instead of *the applicant... he*)” Finally, in the context of *gender-neutral language*, Sarrasin et al. (2012: 114) introduce proposed gender-neutral terminology such as using “firefighter” in place of “fireman” and “they” or “s/he” in place of the generic “he”. Similarly, Sellers (2014: 4) describes gender-neutral language as “absent of gendered assumptions” and mentions the use of the singular ‘they’ along with neopronouns such as ‘ze/zis’.

These examples reveal the slight differences in terminology: while research that uses the terms gender-fair and gender-inclusive language often has an emphasis on feminization strategies, research concerning gender-neutral language seems to promote neutralization strategies, although not exclusively. It is important to note then that language that is truly neutral in terms of avoiding any emphasis on gender does not reinforce gender binarism for example using ‘he or she,’ but instead advocates for genderless options such as the singular ‘they.’ This is important as a substantial amount of research focuses on increasing the visibility of women, but disregards those outside the gender binary. Especially the terms gender-fair or gender-inclusive language tend to refer to language strategies that advocate for women’s rights, whereas the term gender-neutral language more often refers to language strategies that recognize the existence gender minorities. Hence, the term gender-neutral language is used in this thesis as an exclusively genderless term.

2.3 Previous research

2.3.1 Language and attitudes

Does language shape the way one thinks? As Prewitt-Freilino et. al (2012: 268-269) note, many studies have theorized that systems of language do not merely reflect cultural customs and people's mindsets, but also actively construct and shape people's thoughts and attitudes. It would then be significant what type of language people use and avoid using. Indeed, research has demonstrated for example that using sexist language is closely linked with having sexist beliefs and attitudes. A study by Swim et al. (2004) where the correlation between sexist beliefs and using sexist language was assessed via a survey demonstrated that those high in the Modern Sexist scale were more likely to use sexist language than those low on the scale. It has also been demonstrated that the use of masculine generics creates mental biases towards men when visualizing examples of generic people (Stahlberg et al. 2001, as quoted by Sczesny et al. 2016: 2). This is often the case even when being specifically told that masculine generics refer to all genders (Harris et al. 2017: 933). For example, even when being told that both 'he' and 'they' pronouns referred to men as well as women, college students who were advised to use the gender-neutral 'they' when completing sentences revealed thinking of fewer men than those who used the 'he/him' generics (Hamilton 1988, as quoted by Harris et al. 2017: 933).

Research indicates that these types of attitudes, opinions and biases can have profound consequences in the context of real life. One simulated hiring experiment displayed that participants rated women applicants as less suitable for higher-power jobs when the job descriptions used male instead of paired forms (he and she) (Horvath et al. 2013, as quoted by Harris et al. 2017: 933). In a series of mock-interviews by Stout and Dasgupta (2011), participants were sorted into groups and exposed to gender-exclusive, gender-inclusive or gender-neutral language. Their sense of belonging in the workplace, feelings of motivation and identification with the job, and perceived sexism were all measured (Stout and Dasgupta 2011: 760-762). Overall, results indicated that women felt a lower sense of belonging, less motivation and a disidentification with the job when male forms were used, compared to groups who were exposed to gender-inclusive or gender-neutral language (Stout and Dasgupta 2011: 765-766).

On a societal level, countries where most of the population spoke a gendered language had lower levels of gender equality compared to countries where natural gender languages or genderless languages were spoken, even when factors such as religious tradition, geographic location or system

of government were considered (Prewitt-Freilino et al. 2012). This would indicate that language is not only powerful in the mind of the individual, but on a collective level as well. The reinforcement of gender-neutral forms in English could have the power to increase equality on a larger, societal scale.

2.3.2 Gender-neutral language and attitudes

Language change and especially the use of gender-neutral language is often met with resistance and hostility. This was proven by Gustafsson et al. (2015) through a series of questionnaires in Sweden in 2012, when results showed that the attitudes toward the new official Swedish gender-neutral pronoun, 'hen', were highly negative. Similarly, Bonnin and Coronel (2021) conducted a survey with over four thousand participants on attitudes toward gender-neutral Spanish in Argentina, and results showed that although participants were willing to accept non-binary forms of words in theory, they struggled with adopting this type of language themselves. However, with time and familiarity, attitudes can change. When a follow-up study on the attitudes toward 'hen' was conducted using the same research methods, attitudes toward the new gender-neutral pronoun were already more positive in the span of two years (Gustafsson et al. 2021). The use of 'hen' had also increased between the years of 2015 and 2018, indicating that the gender-neutral pronoun will in fact remain in use (Gustafsson et al. 2021: 609-610).

On the other hand, sexist attitudes seem to hinder the acceptance of gender-neutral language as well. Sarrasin et al. (2012) investigated sexism and attitudes toward gender-neutral language with a hypothesis that students in the UK would express less resistance toward gender-neutral language compared to Swiss students, who had a shorter history with its implementation. While this turned out to be true, results also showed that attitudes toward gender-neutral language were a reflection of participant attitudes toward women. (Sarrasin et al. 2012: 122). Hence, "No matter how long gender-neutral language has been implemented and how much it is used, subtle sexist beliefs seemed to find their expression in overlooking potentially sexist language use and in opposition to language changes" (Sarrasin et al. 2012: 121).

However, as the use of language can shape attitudes, it also has the power to reduce discrimination and reinforce positive social change. Research has indicated that the use of gender-fair language has the potential to significantly reduce stereotypes and discrimination through change in language policies and individual language behavior (Sczesny et al. 2016). Additionally, gender-fair language could help eliminate the male bias (Lindqvist et al. 2019). However, as Patev et al. (2019: 335) point

out, research concerning this area of studies is mostly focused on the gender binary. The use of gender-neutral language could have the potential to further reinforce inclusivity toward everyone, especially gender minorities.

2.3.3 The singular ‘they’

Similar to ‘hen’, there has been debate whether the singular ‘they’, currently the most commonly used gender-neutral pronoun in the English language, should be officially recognized and accepted. Contrary to widely held belief, pronouns are not in fact immune to linguistic variation and change, which can be proven by looking at words such as ‘thou/thee’ or ‘ye/you’ and their lack of use in modern English (Bradley 2020: 1-2). Through interviews with fifty-four progressive gender activists, Saguy and Williams (2022: 11) identified three distinct uses for the singular ‘they’ that challenge gender norms and language rules: “(1) as a nonbinary personal pronoun, (2) as a universal gender-pronoun, and (3) as an indefinite pronoun”, when the gender of a person is unknown. They describe that “a new generation of language reformers is taking up the cause of singular they to challenge prevailing gender norms and practices.” Saguy and Williams (2022: 22).

Indeed, the singular ‘they’ has had a major impact in gender and language politics, particularly in challenging the gender binary. However, as with gender-neutral language in general, resistance to the singular ‘they’ often emerges from attitudes. By measuring linguistic prescriptivism as well as hostile and benevolent sexism, Bradley (2020: 8-9) concluded that resistance to gender-neutral language such as the singular ‘they’ emerges from linguistic conservatism and sexist attitudes, especially when the gender binary is challenged. Although the history of the singular ‘they’ is relatively long, ‘he/she’ pairings can still often be considered as superior. Zhang et al. (2020) discovered that based on survey answers, the most popular pronouns among over eight hundred Chinese EFL students was ‘he or she’, followed by ‘they and ‘he’. They explain that L2 learners adapt emerging language changes slower, and that since the singular ‘they’ is still not widely accepted into the English grammar, textbooks often do not encourage its use (Zhang et al. 2020: 134). Attitudes toward gender-neutral language and the singular ‘they’ in English-speaking countries can therefore influence language learning around the world.

2.4 Gender-neutral language and teacher attitudes

Vizcarra-Garcia (2021) studied the perceptions toward gender-inclusive language from a teacher-perspective. Through semi-constructed interviews with nine teachers in a teacher education program on the adoption of gender-inclusive language, results showed that all participants were in favor of

adopting gender-inclusive language in the classroom (Vizcarra-Garcia 2021: 115). Participants expressed that using gender-inclusive language in the classroom encourages gender-equality, emphasizes inclusivity, helps students become more understanding and gender sensitive, boosts student confidence and consequently, class participation. Finally, teachers thought of gender-inclusive language as “the newest standard in education.” (Vizcarra-Garcia 2021: 114). Similarly, Sellers (2014) studied how the use of gender-neutral language could help create a safe space of her classroom for all gender identities. Through qualitative approaches such as reflective journals and student assessments, she concluded that by focusing on using gender-neutral language in the classroom, her own attitudes as a teacher shifted to become more aware of her students’ individual identities and gender expressions. Consequently, she was able to be more inclusive and encouraging toward all different gender identities. (Sellers 2014: 20-21).

On a larger scale, however, similar studies are scarce. Paiz (2019: 2) discusses the lack of research on the area of ‘queering’ English language teaching, emphasizing the dire need for queer education “to ensure that LGBTQ+ identities and lives are not rendered invisible and silent.” Pauwels and Winter (2014: 5) state that “education and the educational domain are identified as important catalysts in the adoption, implementation and spread of language reform”. According to Sczesny et al., (2016: 5) guidelines regarding the implementation of gender-fair language in educational materials are sparse in most countries, although schools have a significant role in the implementation of inclusive language. In other words, there are practically no standardized uses for gender-fair or gender-neutral language in classrooms.

In the context of foreign language learning and English, the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (Finnish National Board of Education 2014: 197) states the following: “Gender equality in language choices and language learning is reinforced through various language choice information that appeals to students, through encouraging students to make choices that genuinely interest them regardless of gender, and through covering a variety of different subjects in teaching as well as using varied and functional ways of working”. However, the curriculum has no mention of gender-fair, gender-inclusive or gender-neutral language. The decision to use gender-neutral language in the classroom falls then to the hands of schools and individual teachers.

3 PRESENT STUDY

3.1 Research questions and aim of the study

The aim of the present study is to get an understanding of English teacher trainees' attitudes and opinions toward the use of gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English.

The research questions are as follows:

1. In what pedagogical contexts do English teacher trainees see themselves using gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English?
2. What recurring themes arise in their explanations on their language use in those contexts?

3.2. Data collection

The data was collected using a survey. With a survey, one can identify and examine patterns, and make generalizations without having to talk to a large portion of the population (Curtis and Curtis 2011: 123). As an alternative method, personal interviews were considered. However, as Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009: 10) point out, research methods such as personal interviews are great for longer and more detailed participant explanations. As the purpose was to collect data from a larger number of people for a small-scale study, conducting a survey was the most suitable method. There are many ways to conduct a survey: through postal services, telephone, the Internet, social media, or even face-to-face contact (Denscombe 2014: 8-9). For such a small-scale study, an Internet survey was the fastest and most convenient way to collect data. The survey was created using Google Forms on a university Google account for its easy accessibility and high level of security.

To test the functionality of the survey, a pilot survey was conducted. Practical issues, such as the length of the survey, accuracy of the questions, and clarity of the overall survey can be tested beforehand via pilot surveys, which are known as “preliminary surveys undertaken to test whether a survey questionnaire has been properly designed” (De vaus 1986 as quoted by Curtis and Curtis 2011: 134). The pilot survey was distributed to a group of English teacher trainees in order to test it from the point of view of the target group. Based on the received feedback, the layout of the survey was changed from two to three sections for clarity, and a few more survey questions were added. Additionally, motivated by Patev et al. (2019: 337), an explanation of gender-neutral language was added for the participants.

The final version of the survey was distributed to the mailing list of English students at the University of Jyväskylä twice. Several other subject organizations of Finnish universities for English students were contacted as well via email. This process included first finding all subject organizations of Finnish universities for English students, then finding the contact information of the representatives

of those subject organizations, and finally sending an email to those representatives explaining the purpose of the survey, and other details such as the length and format of the survey. In the end, two additional subject organizations agreed to distribute the survey. The survey was open for two weeks from 8.2.2022 to 21.2.2022.

The final survey consisted of three parts that included one multiple choice question, open-ended questions, and Likert-scale questions. A copy of the survey can be found at the end of this thesis (see APPENDIX A). As Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009: 26) explain, closed-ended questions have an advantage of being easy and straightforward to organize without researcher subjectivity interfering with the results. The motivation for including a closed-ended multiple-choice question (APPENDIX A: 1.1) came from the study by Patev et al. (2019), where participants were asked whether they were acquainted with any transgender or gender nonconforming individuals. The purpose of the multiple-choice question in the present study was to discover how many participants saw themselves using gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English.

Then, the Likert-scale questions of the survey (APPENDIX A: 3.1-3.8) were inspired by a number of studies that used similar methods in their research on attitudes toward gender-fair, gender-inclusive or gender-neutral language (e.g. Bradley 2020; Gustafsson et al. 2021; Gustafsson et al. 2015; Patev et al. 2019; Sarrasin et al. 2012). For instance, Bradley (2020) used Likert-scale questions to determine whether attitudes toward the singular ‘they’ originated from linguistic prescriptivism or attitudes toward gender. Participants in Bradley’s study rated the grammaticality of thirty-six sentences that included the pronouns ‘she/her’, ‘he/him’, and ‘they/them’ on a five-point scale. Similarly, in the present study, English teacher trainees rated how likely they were to use certain words or expressions in their future teaching of English on a five-point scale.

Finally, the open-ended questions (APPENDIX A: 1.2-2.2 and 3.9) were motivated by Vizcarra-Garcia (2021) and Saguy and Williams (2022), who conducted interviews in order to study attitudes toward gender-inclusive language and the singular ‘they’. In the context of surveys, Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009: 36) explain, “Although we cannot expect any soul-searching self-disclosure in the responses, by permitting greater freedom of expression, openformat items can provide a greater ‘richness’ than fully quantitative data. Open responses can yield graphic examples, illustrative quotes, and can also lead us to identify issues not previously anticipated.” Therefore, to get a deeper understanding of participant attitudes in the form of qualitative results similar to the two studies mentioned above, the survey had an emphasis on open-ended questions. These open-ended questions

included clarification questions, where participants could further explain their choices in previous sections, and short-answer questions, where participants could express their thoughts without restrictions.

3.3 Data analysis

As the survey included one multiple choice question, Likert-scale questions, and open-ended questions, both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis were needed. For quantitative analysis, the features of Google Forms automatically created statistics of the multiple-choice answer and the Likert-scale answers. By examining and comparing the quantitative and qualitative results of the survey, consistencies and contradictions could be discovered. The purpose of this was to discover whether teacher trainees recognized gendered and gender-neutral language in use, and what type of forms they were willing to use.

As a method of qualitative data analysis, content analysis was chosen. Content analysis is a method of textual analysis in which documents (any written texts) can be objectively analyzed in a systematic manner (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2018: 117). Content analysis “allows researchers to analyze relatively unstructured data in view of the meanings, symbolic qualities, and expressive contents they have and of the communicative roles they play in the lives of the data's sources.” (Krippendorff 2018: 51). Discourse analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis were also considered as methods of data analysis, however, content analysis is focused on discovering the meanings of a text, whereas Discourse analysis is more interested in how these meanings are produced (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 117). As the goal was not to focus on how meanings were produced, but on the actual meanings of participant answers, content analysis was the most suitable method.

The goal of the study was to gather information without a specific theory to guide the process. Hence, the process for data analysis is completely data-driven, meaning that participant answers are the basis for the analysis. The form of data analysis in the present study is *inductive*, as opposed to deductive. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) as quoted by Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018: 122-127), *inductive content analysis* follows a three-step process: 1) Reduction, where data irrelevant to the study is eliminated and relevant expressions are reduced into simple formats 2) Clustering, where expressions describing the same phenomena are grouped into subcategories, named descriptively and further combined into main categories. 3) Abstraction, where the researcher connects the main categories to theoretical concepts and makes final conclusions. In the present study, following this process, data is first thoroughly read, color-coded, and reduced. Then, reduced expressions are

composed into subthemes and main themes based on relevance, repetition, and importance. Finally, data is linked to the theoretical framework of the study and final conclusions are made.

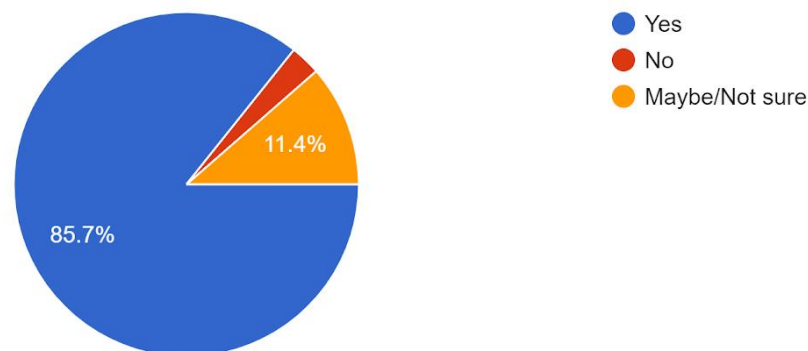
3.4 Ethics

Conducting a study with human participants requires careful ethical considerations. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009: 79–80) compile five ethical principles of data collection in survey research: 1. Participation should not harm the participants in any way 2. The privacy of the participant must be respected, 3. Participants' need to be provided with enough information regarding the study so that they are able to give their consent, 4. Children need to have an authority's permission to participate and finally 5. The researcher's promised level of confidentiality must be kept. The first question of the survey was a consent and privacy note, which the participants had to agree on to continue answering. Although the survey was aimed at university-level students, nonetheless, participants had to confirm that they were over 18 years old. Following the university guidelines, participants were informed of the purpose of the survey and other important details in the consent and privacy note. The collected data is completely anonymous, and the survey answers are presented in a way that do not reveal any participant's identity.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1: Do you see yourself using gender-neutral language in your future teaching of English?

1.1 Do you see yourself using gender-neutral language in your future teaching of English?
35 responses



Overall, a total of thirty-five participants took part in the survey. A clear majority, thirty participants (85.7%) saw themselves using gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English. Four participants (11.4%) were unsure about their use of gender-neutral language and only 1

participant (2.9%) did not see themselves using gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English. Using a test of confidence interval of a proportion, these results are statistically significant with a 99% confidence interval.

4.1 Why English teacher trainees see themselves using gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English

Table 1: Reasons for using gender-neutral language (main themes & subthemes)

Main themes	Subthemes
Acceptance and inclusivity (19 instances)	Acceptance and inclusivity (11 instances) Gender equality (3 instances) Recognizing gender minorities (3 instances) Avoiding offending anyone (2 instances)
Avoiding harmful language (11 instances)	Language as a tool of power (6 instances) Avoiding reinforcing stereotypes (5 instances)
Familiarity (7 instances)	Already using gender-neutral language (4 instances) Gender-neutral language is easy (3 instances)
Teacher responsibility (6 instances)	-

As the following analysis of main themes shows, most teacher trainees had positive attitudes toward the implementation of gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English. Although participants had several reasons for using gender-neutral language, in general, they expressed an understanding of how the use of gender-neutral language can improve inclusivity for everyone in the classroom, including gender minorities, and how gendered language or sexist stereotypes can be harmful for all students, regardless of gender. Participants recognized the power of sexist language and how discriminatory language can reinforce gender stereotypes. Many teacher trainees were eager to use gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English as well as teach gender-neutral language to their future students.

As Table 1 shows, some of the main themes of the present study are consistent with the findings of Vizcarra-Garcia (2021) on teacher attitudes toward gender-inclusive language. In both studies, participants viewed the use of gender-neutral or gender-inclusive language as an opportunity to be

inclusive, create an accepting classroom environment, and reinforce gender equality. Participants in both studies recognized the potential of this type of language as a tool in teaching their students to become more accepting and gender sensitive. Additionally, participants in both studies recognized that the use of gender-neutral language is an emerging trend and teachers have the responsibility to implement its use as well.

4.1.1 Acceptance and inclusivity

By far, with 19 instances, the largest main theme was teacher trainees' desire to make their future classroom an accepting and inclusive environment for all students. In general, participants expressed that using gender-neutral language would be an effective way to make everyone feel welcome in their future classroom. In 3 instances participants mentioned that gender-neutral language is a tool toward better gender equality. One participant mentioned that everyone should have the same opportunities and representations in the classroom. Additionally, in 3 instances, participants specifically mentioned gender minorities and acknowledged that some of their future students might belong to these minority groups. Participants discussed that respecting and validating the identities of those students could include using gender-neutral language. Finally, in 2 instances, teacher trainees mentioned that they would not want to accidentally offend someone, and hence would use gender-neutral language by default.

4.1.2 Avoiding harmful language

With 11 instances, the second largest main theme was avoiding the use of harmful language. Teacher trainees recognized that word choices hold power, and that language has a strong effect on people's attitudes and opinions. For example, one participant mentioned that sexist language reinforces sexist attitudes. In 5 instances teacher trainees mentioned wanting to avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes. For example, one participant mentioned that using 'policeman' while teaching could make non-male students feel like this profession was out of their reach. In all 5 instances participants implied that they would avoid nouns ending with '-man' to avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes.

4.1.3 Familiarity

Being familiar with gender-neutral language was mentioned in 7 instances. 4 participants explained that they already use or are aiming to use gender-neutral language in their everyday life, so extending that to classroom use would not be a problem. Additionally, in 3 instances, participants mentioned that using gender-neutral language is easy. One participant wrote that since they are a native Finnish

speaker, gender-neutral language comes natural to them, while another participant wrote that it is easier to use the singular ‘they’ instead of ‘he/she.’

4.1.4 Teacher responsibility

Teacher responsibility was mentioned in 6 instances. Participants felt that it was their responsibility as future English teachers to introduce their students to the use of gender-neutral language. For example, participants mentioned that since the use of gender-neutral language is increasing, English teachers have the responsibility to make sure their students learn to use it in an English-speaking environment. Additionally, two teacher trainees mentioned that it was their responsibility to teach gender-neutral language to their students in order for them to become more accepting.

4.2 Situations where English teacher trainees see themselves using gender-neutral language

Table 2: Situations participants see themselves using gender-neutral language in (main themes & subthemes)

Main themes	Subthemes
Teaching situations (26 instances)	Occupation vocabulary (9 instances) Teaching gender-neutral language (8 instances) Example sentences (5 instances) Teacher-talk (4 instances)
Referring to people (19 instances)	When gender is unknown (5 instances) When discussing people in general (5 instances) When referring to students (4 instances) When gender is irrelevant (3 instances) When referring to a nonbinary student (2 instances)
Every possible situation (14 instances)	-

As the following analysis of main themes shows, participants presented detailed examples of situations where they would see themselves using gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English. Multiple participants specifically mentioned teaching gender-neutral language to their students, which suggests that some English learners have a chance of learning gender-neutral language from their English teachers. However, as Table 2 shows, participant answers had a clear

emphasis on verbal situations. Unlike with Vizcarra-Garcia's study (2021: 113), where participants brought up using inclusive language in materials, such "books, handouts, power point presentations, and other multimedia resources", situations described by teacher trainees in the present study were limited to verbal situations, such as teacher-talk.

4.2.1 Teaching situations

With 26 instances, the largest theme was using gender-neutral language in teaching situations. This included using gender-neutral language when teaching about titles and professions to students (9 instances), teaching gender-neutral language to future students (8 instances) and when presenting example sentences (5 instances). Again, participants brought up the idea that using gender-neutral language for job titles would avoid limiting one's ideas of future professions. In 4 instances, teacher trainees wrote that they would try to make their own teacher-talk as gender-neutral as possible. One participant expressed that when starting with a new class, they would ask their students' preferred pronouns and state their own as well.

4.2.2 Referring to people

In 19 instances, teacher trainees expressed that they would use gender-neutral language when referring to people. This main theme included referring to a person whose gender is unknown (5 instances), when discussing people in general (5 instances), and using gender-neutral language when gender is irrelevant or does not play an important role in a situation (3 instances). Additionally, participants expressed that they would use gender-neutral language by default when referring to their students (4 instances) or when someone in their class was non-binary (2 instances).

4.2.3 Every possible situation

In 14 instances teacher trainees wrote that they would use gender-neutral language in all possible situations. Most participants did not specify their answers relating to this theme, however, one participant mentioned that some mistakes would naturally occur as gendered language is somewhat ingrained to people's speech. However, despite that, they would still aim to use gender-neutral language as a default.

4.3 Situations where English teacher trainees see themselves using the singular 'they'

In situations where future English teachers saw themselves using specifically the singular 'they,' two apparent themes emerged from the survey answers: *respecting one's personal pronouns* (18

instances) and *referring to someone whose gender is unknown* (17 instances). First, with 18 instances, participants expressed that they would use the singular ‘they’ in situations where they knew ‘they/them’ were either some of their students’ or other people’s personal pronouns. Lastly, in 17 instances, participants discussed using the singular ‘they’ when referring to anyone whose gender or pronouns are not known. One participant mentioned that they would use the singular ‘they’ whenever referring to a person of an unknown gender if it did not disrupt the comprehensibility of the sentence. Other themes in the present study included similar answers as in the previous question, however, these subthemes did not provide any new information and were left out of this section. Similar to the findings of a previous study, participants in the present study recognized two out of the three functions for the singular ‘they’ that Saguy and Williams (2022) had discovered among gender activists: using the singular ‘they’ as a personal pronoun and as an indefinite pronoun when the gender of a person is unknown.

4.4 Likert-scale comparisons

The Likert-scale section of the survey revealed that participants recognized the differences between gender-neutral and gendered language quite well, however, some inconsistencies were discovered in their attitudes toward gender-neutral language and which forms of gender-neutral they were willing to use. In some parts, participants were unanimous with their answers. For example, all participants were unlikely or somewhat unlikely to use the generic ‘he’ when referring to people in general. One participant elaborated on this, recognizing the generic ‘he’ as a gendered expression.

“I personally tend to avoid gendered expressions, e.g. using they instead of generic he.”

Figure 2: Likert-scale answer 3.4 (his)

3.4 Every student should learn *his* grammar.

35 responses

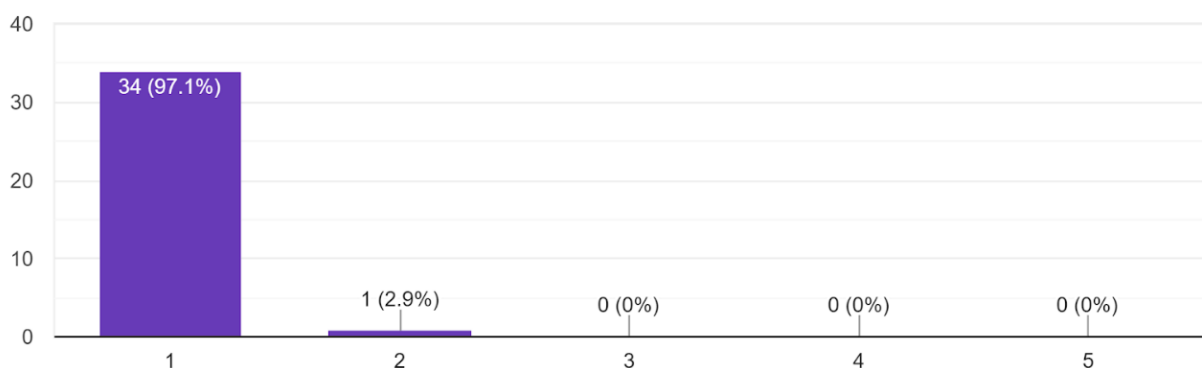
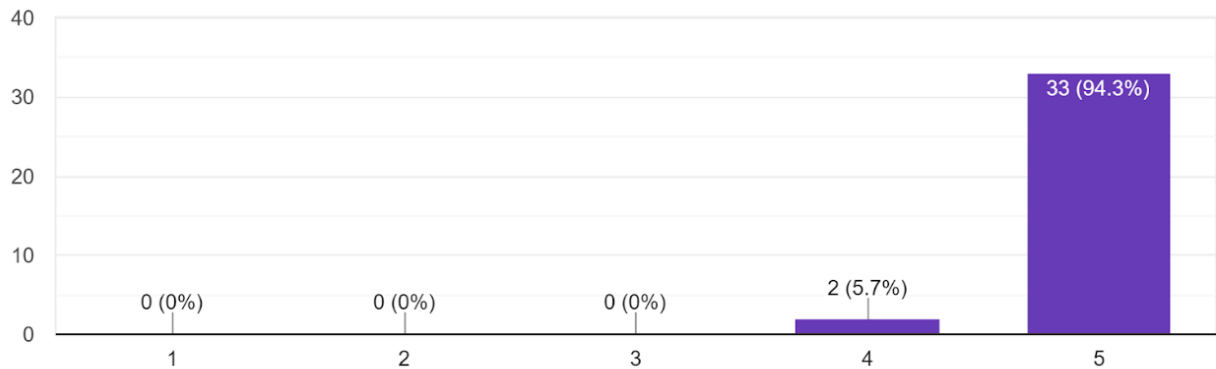


Figure 3: Likert-scale answer 3.5 (their)

3.5 Any student who needs help should raise **their** hand.

35 responses



Similarly, participants were unanimous with the use of the singular ‘they.’ Participants showed positive attitudes toward the use of the singular ‘they’ and many recognized it as being the most inclusive pronoun. Interestingly, all participants were somewhat likely or likely to use the singular ‘they’, even those who were unsure or did not see themselves using gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English. Many participants expressed that the singular ‘they’ flows better in speech.

“I am more likely to use the singular they because ‘his and her/he and she’ is quite clumsy and leaves out the rest. --”

“Not only do I find ‘his or her’ clunky compared to the flowing nature of ‘they’, ‘they’ is gender neutral and includes everybody regardless of gender. --”

As all participants were likely to use the singular ‘they’ and expressed rejection toward the generic ‘he,’ it can be noticed that despite the discourse concerning the endorsement of the singular ‘they’, the gender-neutral pronoun may already have a place in everyday speech, even among those who express resistance to gender-neutral language in general. However, as Figures 4, 5 and 6 show, gendered ways of speaking, can linger in the speaking habits of even those who endorse the use of gender-neutral language.

Figure 4: Likert-scale answer 3.1 (his or her)

3.1 Exchange worksheets with a classmate. Read **his or her** paper and correct the errors.

35 responses

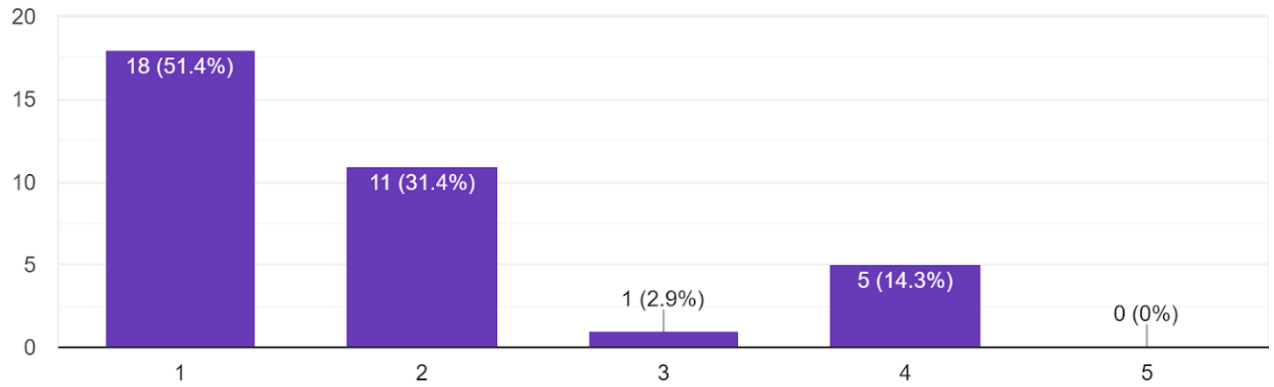
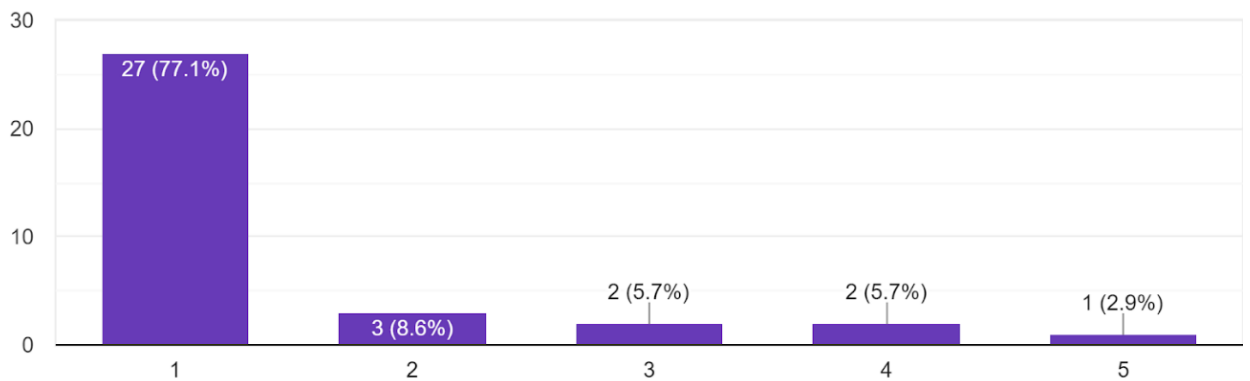


Figure 5: Likert-scale answer 3.8 (he or she)

3.8 If anyone figures out the answer, **he or she** must let me know.

35 responses



Participants were somewhat divided on the use of ‘his or her’ and ‘he or she’. Most of the participants recognized that these pairings are not completely inclusive and expressed that their use is clumsy, excluding, and effortful.

“They is not only more inclusive, but less laborious, so it would take more effort to say he or she. --”
“I don’t see any point in saying ‘his or her’ or ‘he or she’, when it’s quicker and more appropriate to say their. --”

However, some participants who saw themselves using gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English were still keen on using ‘he or she’ and ‘his or her.’ Although these teacher trainees recognized the importance of using gender-neutral language, they expressed that this type of language was rooted in their way of speaking and therefore might use it.

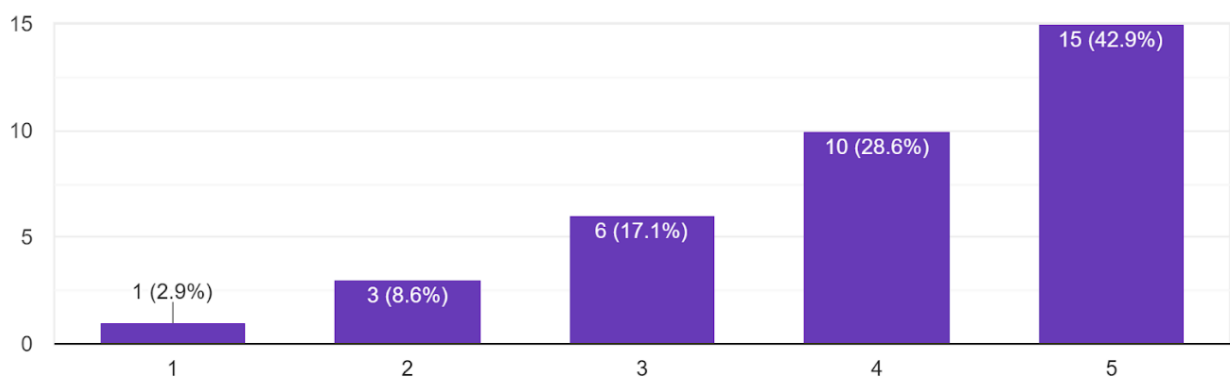
“Including both he and she was something I was taught in school. --”

“Even though I intend to use gender-neutral expressions, it is certainly possible for me to accidentally use an expression such as ‘girls’, ‘boys’, or ‘his or hers’ due to them being rooted in my subconsciousness because of my education. I don't see those expressions necessarily being harmful as the intentions are not. --”

Figure 6: Likert-scale answer 3.7 (freshmen)

3.7 New **freshmen** start their English course soon.

35 responses



The most dividing question was related to the use of the word ‘freshmen.’ Most participants, even those who saw themselves using gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English, were likely or somewhat likely to use the term. This was the most commented question on the final open-ended question, where participants could elaborate on their Likert-scale answers. Some participants recognized that although they are keen on using gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English, ‘freshmen’ is so commonly used that they had not thought of it as being gendered.

“I chose ‘somewhat likely to use’ in 3.7 with the word ‘freshmen’ simply because I might accidentally use it instead of first-year students, since I had not thought about the ‘men’ in the end and had not internalized that the term is not gender-neutral. --”

“I have never thought about the word ‘freshmen’ being a masculine word even though it clearly is, so I don't actively avoid using it. --”

“-- also the word ‘freshmen’ is something that feels gender-neutral to me because it's an old word and it doesn't actually mean ‘men’. --”

However, some participants thought of the word ‘freshmen’ as being a gender-neutral term.

“Words like freshman and 1st year student will include everyone that I need to address (girls and boys might not). --”

“-- I tend to go around the problem and address the people as ‘freshmen, students, pupils’ or whatever category they all might fall into. --”

Finally, although some participants recognized the term ‘freshmen’ as being a gendered term, they were still keen on using it as they considered it to be the most appropriate term.

“-- special in this list is ‘freshmen’, for which I can't think of a replacement term and don't see as too problematic for gender neutrality within speech.”

“-- On the other hand, putting freshmen at the same level with first-year students is based on flowness and ease of speech, it is easier to say freshmen even though I understand it is a gendered term. --”

“Sometimes there are not better words to describe things, e.g ‘freshmen’.”

Similar discrepancies were discovered by Bonnin and Coronel (2021), when participants were willing to accept gender-neutral forms but expressed resistance with adapting them to their own speech. Although most participants in the present study were willing to accept gender-neutral language and use it themselves in their future teaching of English, in some cases, the actual adaptability of gender-neutral language might be a different issue. Discrepancies can be explained by the fact that although attitudes toward gender-neutral language are positive, gendered language is ingrained in the minds of many as the default way of speaking. As many participants brought up, gendered ways of speaking such as using ‘he or she’ or ‘his or her’ are something they were taught for example at school and might even accidentally use. Furthermore, the word ‘freshmen’ is widely used among students and its gendered origins are therefore perhaps rarely thought of. Overall, these findings indicate that using gender-neutral takes a conscious effort, no matter how positive the attitudes toward it may be. Like Sellers (2014: 20) contemplated, “it can be challenging to be consistently aware and considerate of

one's language usage regarding gender in the classroom, such as through implementing gender-neutral language.”

5 CONCLUSION

This thesis has focused on English teacher trainees' attitudes and opinions toward the use of gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English. Most teacher trainees saw themselves using gender-neutral language in their future teaching of English. Additionally, teacher trainees saw themselves using gender-neutral language in various situations, which were sorted into three main themes using inductive content analysis: 1. Teaching situations, 2. Referring to people and 3. Every possible situation. Then, for the use of the singular 'they,' main themes of situations to use the gender-neutral pronoun were 1. Respecting one's personal pronouns and 2. Referring to someone whose gender is unknown. Finally, main themes of reasons for using gender-neutral language included 1. Acceptance and inclusivity, 2. Avoiding harmful language, 3. Familiarity and 4. Teacher responsibility.

These results suggest that even without regulated guidelines on the use of gender-neutral language in the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, gender-neutral language seems to be in the minds of many future English teachers. Although broader generalizations cannot be made about all English teacher trainees in Finland due to the small scale of the study, results indicate positive attitudes toward the use of gender-neutral language, and decent recognition of gendered and gender-neutral forms from future English teachers. Consequently, this also suggests that future English students are indeed likely to learn about gender-neutral language from their English teachers. The Likert-scale section of the survey showed that although teacher trainees were open-minded toward gender-neutral language in general, gendered ways of speaking lingered in ways speaking, often out of habit. However, it was still the goal of many future English teachers to use gender-neutral language and avoid gendered expressions as they recognized the importance of gender neutrality in speech.

It was important to get a preliminary understanding of the topic since the use of gender-neutral language is showing no signs of regression, and because studies concerning student attitudes toward gender-neutral language are sparse. More importantly, it is important to study gender-neutral language as it has the power to increase the visibility of gender minorities in the English language. The present study also serves as a basis for future research. This type of a survey study on a larger scale could provide information on a national level. However, as open-ended items on a survey can only provide a limited amount of information, additional research methods could provide deeper data.

As it was pointed out earlier, personal interviews are great for longer and detailed answers. Hence, further investigation on the topic using personal interviews could provide further qualitative insight. Additionally, the work of a teacher is not limited to the classroom. In the present study, participant answers had an exclusive emphasis on verbal situations. It would be relevant to study whether the use of gender-neutral language extends to other situations as well, such as communication between the school and parents and even other dimensions of education, such as different educational materials like textbooks.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Blaubergs, M. (1980). An analysis of classic arguments against sexist language. *Women's Studies International Quarterly* [online] 3 (3), 135–147. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-0685\(80\)92071-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-0685(80)92071-0).

Bonnin, J.E. & Coronel, A.A. (2021). Attitudes toward gender-neutral Spanish: Acceptability and adoptability. *Frontiers in sociology* [online] 6 (629616), 1–10. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2021.629616>.

Bradley, E.D. (2020). The influence of linguistic and social attitudes on grammaticality judgments of singular ‘they.’ *Language Sciences* [online] 78 (101272), 1–11. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2020.101272>.

Burke, M. (2021, June 9). Virginia teacher reinstated after speaking out against school pronoun policy. *NBC News*. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/virginia-teacher-reinstated-after-speaking-out-against-school-pronoun-policy-n1270127>.

Curtis, B. & Curtis, C. (2011). *Social research: A practical introduction*. SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: <https://www-doi-org.ezproxy.jyu.fi/10.4135/9781526435415>.

Denscombe, M. (2014). *Good research guide: For small-scale social research projects*. McGraw-Hill Education.

Dörnyei, Z. & Taguchi, T. (2009) *Questionnaires in Second Language Research : Construction, Administration, and Processing*. Taylor & Francis Group.

Gustafsson Sendén, M., Bäck, E.A., Lindqvist, A. (2015). Introducing a gender-neutral pronoun in a natural gender language: the influence of time on attitudes and behavior. *Frontiers in Psychology* [online] 6 (893), 1–12. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00893>.

Gustafsson Sendén, M., Renström, E., & Lindqvist, A. (2021). Pronouns beyond the binary: the change of attitudes and use over time. *Gender & Society* [online] 35 (4), 588–615. doi: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.jyu.fi/10.1177/08912432211029226>.

Harris, C.A., Blencowe, N., & Telem, D.A. (2017). What is in a pronoun? Why gender-fair language matters. *Annals of surgery* [online] 266 (6), 932–933. doi: [10.1097/SLA.0000000000002505](https://doi.org/10.1097/SLA.0000000000002505).

Kleinman, S., Copp, M., & Wilson, K.B. (2021). We've come a long way, guys! Rhetorics of resistance to the feminist critique of sexist language. *Gender & Society* [online] 35 (1), 61–84. doi: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.jyu.fi/10.1177/0891243220979636>.

Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (4th edition). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Lindqvist, A., Renström, E.A., & Gustafsson Sendén, M. (2019). Reducing a male bias in language? Establishing the efficiency of three different gender-fair language strategies. *Sex Roles* [online] 81 (1–2), 109–117. doi: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.jyu.fi/10.1007/s11199-018-0974-9>.

Paiz, J.M. (2019) Queering practice: LGBTQ+ diversity and inclusion in English language teaching. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* [online] 18 (4), 266–275. doi: [10.1080/15348458.2019.1629933](https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2019.1629933).

Patev, A.J., Dunn, C.E., Hood, K.B., & Barber, J.M. (2019). College students' perceptions of gender-inclusive language use predict attitudes toward transgender and gender nonconforming individuals. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* [online] 38 (3), 329–352. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X18815930>.

Pauwels, A., & Winter, J. (2014). Gender-inclusive language reform in educational writing in Singapore and the Philippines: a corpus-based study. *Asian Englishes* [online] 7 (1), 4–20. doi: [10.1080/13488678.2004.10801128](https://doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2004.10801128).

Prewitt-Freilino, J.L., Caswell, T.A., & Laakso, E.K. (2012). The gendering of language: a comparison of gender equality in countries with gendered, natural gender, and genderless languages. *Sex Roles* [online] 66 (3–4), 268–281. doi: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.jyu.fi/10.1007/s11199-011-0083-5>.

Reilly, K. (2019, November 15) 'This Isn't Just About a Pronoun.' Teachers and Trans Students Are Clashing Over Whose Rights Come First. *Time*. <https://time.com/5721482/transgender-students-pronouns-teacher-lawsuits/>.

Saguy, A. C., & Williams, J. A. (2022). A little word that means a lot: a reassessment of singular they in a new era of gender politics. *Gender & Society* [online] 36 (1), 5–31. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/08912432211057921>.

Sarrasin, O., Gabriel, U., & Gygax, P. (2012). Sexism and attitudes toward gender-neutral language: the case of English, French, and German. *Swiss Journal of Psychology* [online] 71 (3), 113–124. doi: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.jyu.fi/10.1024/1421-0185/a000078>.

Sczesny S., Formanowicz M., & Moser F. (2016). Can gender-fair language reduce gender stereotyping and discrimination? *Frontiers in Psychology* [online] 7 (25), 1–11. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00025>.

Sellers, C. (2014) Word associations, gender, and language: investigating gender assumptions and using gender-neutral language in a secondary English classroom. *A Rising TIDE: Action and Reflection on Teaching in Diverse Environments* [online] 7. <https://sites.google.com/smcm.edu/risingtide/past-volumes/volume-7-summer-2014?authuser=0>.

Stafford, M. (2022, March 9) Kansas teacher sues over preferred pronouns policy. *The Washington Times*. <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/9/kansas-teacher-sues-over-preferred-pronouns-policy/>.

Stahlberg, D., Braun, F., Irmen, L., & Sczesny, S. (2007). Representation of the sexes in language. In Klaus, F. (Eds.), *Social communication* (pp. 163–187). Psychology Press.

Stout, J. G., & Dasgupta, N. (2011). When he doesn't mean you: gender-exclusive language as ostracism. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* [online] 37 (6), 757–769. doi: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.jyu.fi/10.1177/0146167211406434>.

Swim, J.K., Mallett, R. & Stangor, C. (2004). Understanding subtle sexism: detection and use of sexist language. *Sex Roles* [online] 51 (3–4), 117–128. doi: <https://doi-org.ezproxy.jyu.fi/10.1023/B:SERS.0000037757.73192.06>

Finnish National Board of Education. (2014). *The National Core Curriculum for Basic Education*. https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/perusopetuksen_opetussuunnitelman_perusteet_2014.pdf.

Tuomi, J., & Sarajärvi, A. (2018). Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällönanalyysi. Tammi.

United Nations. (n.d.). *Guidelines for gender-inclusive language in English*. <https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml>.

Vizcarra-Garcia, J. (2021). Teachers' perceptions of gender inclusive language in the classroom. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation* [online] 4 (3), 110–116. doi: <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2021.4.3.12>.

Wertheimer, L. (2021, September 28) 'A very scary thing to tell someone': The debate over gender pronouns in schools, explained. *The Boston Globe*. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/09/28/magazine/very-scary-thing-tell-someone-why-gender-pronouns-matter-schools/>.

Zhang, X., Hong, K.H., & H, K. -H. (2020). Chinese university EFL learners' perceptions of the gender-neutral singular “they” in English. *English Language Teaching* [online] 32 (4), 127-146. <https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/ci/sereArticleSearch/ciSereArtiView.kci?sereArticleSearchBean.artiId=ART002666860>.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: FINAL SURVEY

PART 1

1.1 Do you see yourself using gender-neutral language in your future teaching of English?

Gender-neutral language refers to language that avoids bias towards a particular gender and is not gender-specific. This includes for example gender-neutral nouns (e.g. 'police officer' instead of 'policeman') and the singular they (instead of he/she).

Yes

No

Maybe/Not sure

1.2 If you chose 'Yes', please elaborate why

1.3 If you chose 'No', please elaborate why

1.4 If you chose 'Maybe/Not sure', please elaborate why

PART 2

2.1 Describe in what situations you would use gender-neutral language in your future teaching of English (answer “BLANK” if you would not use gender-neutral language)

2.2 Describe in what situations you would use the singular 'they' in your future teaching of English (answer “BLANK” if you would not use the singular 'they')

PART 3

How likely are you to use the following **bolded** expressions or words in your future teaching of English?

3.1 Exchange worksheets with a classmate. Read **his or her** paper and correct the errors.

1 - Unlikely to use, 2 - Somewhat unlikely to use, 3 - Not likely or unlikely to use, 4 - Somewhat likely to use, 5 - Very likely to use

3.2 All **boys and girls** have to listen carefully.

3.3 All **first-year students** have to study English.

3.4 Every student should learn **his** grammar.

3.5 Any student who needs help should raise **their** hand.

3.6 Someone left **her** books on the desk.

3.7 New **freshmen** start their English course soon.

3.8 If anyone figures out the answer, **he or she** must let me know.

3.9 Why are you more likely to use certain bolded expressions or words over others? Give examples based on your answers.