

Promoting global gender-fair language in college English classrooms: A study of student awareness and usage in a state college

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Abstract: The study investigates the level of awareness and extent of usage of gender-fair language (GFL) in English classroom instruction among Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) majors in English students at a state university in the Central Philippines. Using a descriptive-correlational design, the research employed a researcher-made instrument based on established GFL principles, collecting data from respondents selected via stratified random sampling. The primary aim was to examine overall awareness and use of GFL, as well as differences by sex and year, and to assess the relationship between awareness and use. Results indicated that students' awareness and usage of GFL were at least moderate, with female students showing significantly higher awareness than males. No significant sex difference was found in overall use. A statistically significant positive correlation was observed between awareness and usage, suggesting that higher awareness correlates with greater GFL practice. The study recommends expanding GFL in educational programs and extending institutional support to enhance inclusivity. These findings underscore the importance of language in shaping gender perceptions and the need for long-term gender-fair efforts in academic settings.

Keywords: College English classrooms, Global gender-fair language, State college, Student awareness and usage.

1. Introduction

The global concern along with the struggle to achieve gender equality, is accompanied by efforts to introduce gender-fair language. Ansara and Hegarty [1] argued that language is seen as an important tool for determining gender, like whether something is perceived as feminine or masculine, where gender most often imposes a dichotomy. Use of gender-fair language is an important contribution to gender equality because formulations have been found to influence cognitive representations and behavior. The long struggle to achieve gender equality is actually accompanied by efforts to introduce gender-fair language. The promotion of gender-fair language in college English classrooms is a crucial aspect of fostering gender equality. Research has shown that gender-fair language ensures inclusivity, promotes the visibility of genders, and challenges deep-seated norms of gender asymmetry.

Moreover, language, being an instrument to voice out ideas and emotions, is the core of humanity. It is generally a part of what makes man fully human and thus cannot be separated from becoming human. Language not only grows out of society's values and its "reality," it also helps form those values and reality.

In the Philippines, efforts to introduce Gender-Fair Language have been made at the institutional level, such as by the Civil Service Commission and the Commission on Higher Education, reflecting a broader societal commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. The Commission made actions to introduce gender-fair language, however the importance of such language is something that not everyone, including officials and faculty, was able to comprehend and the process of having the entire university populace to fully understand GAD is and its core messages took a great deal of time and effort [2].

Philippine Higher Education: These teachers in PHHE have also acknowledged the important role of GFL in teaching, which creates a balance between the claims of supposedly male and female in a particular text/voice, thus, adding gender equality in the learning classroom visualized by genuinely feminizing the proceedings. They mention using GFL-themed materials and activities to create an inclusive learning environment, implying the phenomenon among students is only awareness or engagement at a moderate level with GFL [3].

Executive Order 273 (Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development) [4] envisions a society to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, as enunciated in the UN Fourth World Conference Platform for Action, through various Gender and Development programs and activities like the Gender Sensitivity Program. Gender- fair language is a focus of Gender and Development. In general, gender fair language is thought of as grammatical correction for gender inequalities in language, assuming that language and society reflect one another [5]. Gender-fair language aims at analyzing and changing the elements of language that cause misinterpretation and misunderstanding about sexual identities.

Further, CMO 1, series 2015 (Policies and Guidelines on Gender and Development in the Commission on Higher Education and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) [6] stipulated the importance of gender mainstreaming in higher education being the central site for facilitating the skills, knowledge, and expertise important to economic and social development.

There are many reasons which needed this study to be conducted by the researcher, such as the issue of the important role of gender and demand for working with language for language depicts how society relates to the issue of gender and the reflections perceptions and behavior of the moralistic codes inculcated in the minds of the masses plays a vital role now-a-days for the gender equality of the organization, which is the burning question in every household, organization and society. In the growing acknowledgement in the world in the time that gender – fair language is very important because it could create more equity and respect for all in different sectors of the community, and especially in educational institutions. This increased consciousness creates a demand for more comprehensive studies focused on student awareness and usage of gender-fair language within college English classrooms. Also, the contribution to the field since the results of this study could provide essential data and evidence for the development of instructional material while supporting the implementation of gender-fair language policies and curricula in colleges and universities globally. By contributing to the body of literature on gender-fair language, the study supports the ongoing pursuit of gender equality through language education.

Cognizant to the need to contribute to the body of literature on gender-fair language as a social responsibility, and the empirical observations on the incidences on the use of non-gender sensitive language of the students who are English in specialization in a state university, a higher tertiary education in the Negros Occidental, Philippines which is a melting pot of different linguistic variations and where English is used as the second language, this study will be embarked. This study will navigate the topical issues associated with implementing gender-fair language in schools, whilst also delivering data to assist in producing more gender-fair teaching materials and aid future policy decision-making and curriculum design.

2. Research Objectives/Problem Statements

This study aims to determine the level of Awareness and Usage of Gender – Fair Language in English Classroom Instruction among College Students in a State University for the First Semester of the Academic Year 2024– 2025.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following:

1. What is the level of awareness of the students in gender fair language in English classroom instruction when taken as a whole and when grouped according to sex and year level?
2. What is the extent of usage of gender fair language in English classroom instruction when taken as a whole and when grouped according to sex and year level?

3. Is there a significant difference in the level of awareness of the students in gender fair language in English classroom instruction when taken as a whole and when grouped according to sex and year level?
4. Is there a significant difference in the extent of usage of gender fair language in English classroom instruction when taken as a whole and when grouped according to sex and year level?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the level of awareness and the extent of usage of gender fair language in English classroom instruction?
6. Based on the findings of the study, what instructional material can be proposed?

3. Framework

This study was anchored on gender fair language theory by Formanowicz, et al. [7]. Gender fair language (GFL) is language used to reduce gender bias in one's mental representation, or mental understanding of an idea. Gender fair language includes gender-neutral and gender-inclusive language. Formanowicz, et al. [7] studied the use of gender-unfair language, especially while referring to those of masculine generics, which has restricted the visibility of women as well as the cognitive availability of female exemplars. This also helps to keep gender stereotyping and social discrimination at bay. The main aim of gender-fair language (GFL) is to reduce gender stereotyping and gender discrimination. One of the approaches to make gender-fair improvements is through both written and spoken language, ensuring that women and men are treated equally. Neutralization and feminization are the two ways in which we can reduce gender discrimination and stereotyping.

This also in pursuant to CMO 1, series 2015 (Policies and Guidelines on Gender and Development in the Commission on Higher Education and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)) [6] emphasizing the importance of gender mainstreaming in the higher education being the central site for facilitating the skills, knowledge and expertise important to economic and social development. Gender awareness is necessary because no one is ever completely able to 'step outside' of the social and cultural processes that partly shape our identities, values, and perceptions, but we can still develop ways of reflecting and ways of interrogating ourselves, and this is very important.

The awareness and usage of gender-fair language in the English classroom is the focus of this study. The respondents of the study were the BSED English who were enrolled in a state university in Central Philippines. These respondents were asked to rate their awareness and usage of the gender- fair language used in their English classroom instruction. The study also gathered the respondents' demographic profile, like the year level and sex, which served as essential variables to their level of awareness and extent of usage of the gender- fair language in their English Instruction.

Finally, the result was utilized to create instructional material focusing on gender-fair language. The figure below is a schematic diagram illustrating the conceptual framework of the study. The antecedent variable includes sex and year level. The independent variable includes the level of Awareness and Extent of Usage of gender-fair language in the English classroom. The dependent variable includes the instructional material developed based on the findings of the study.

Below is the schematic diagram.

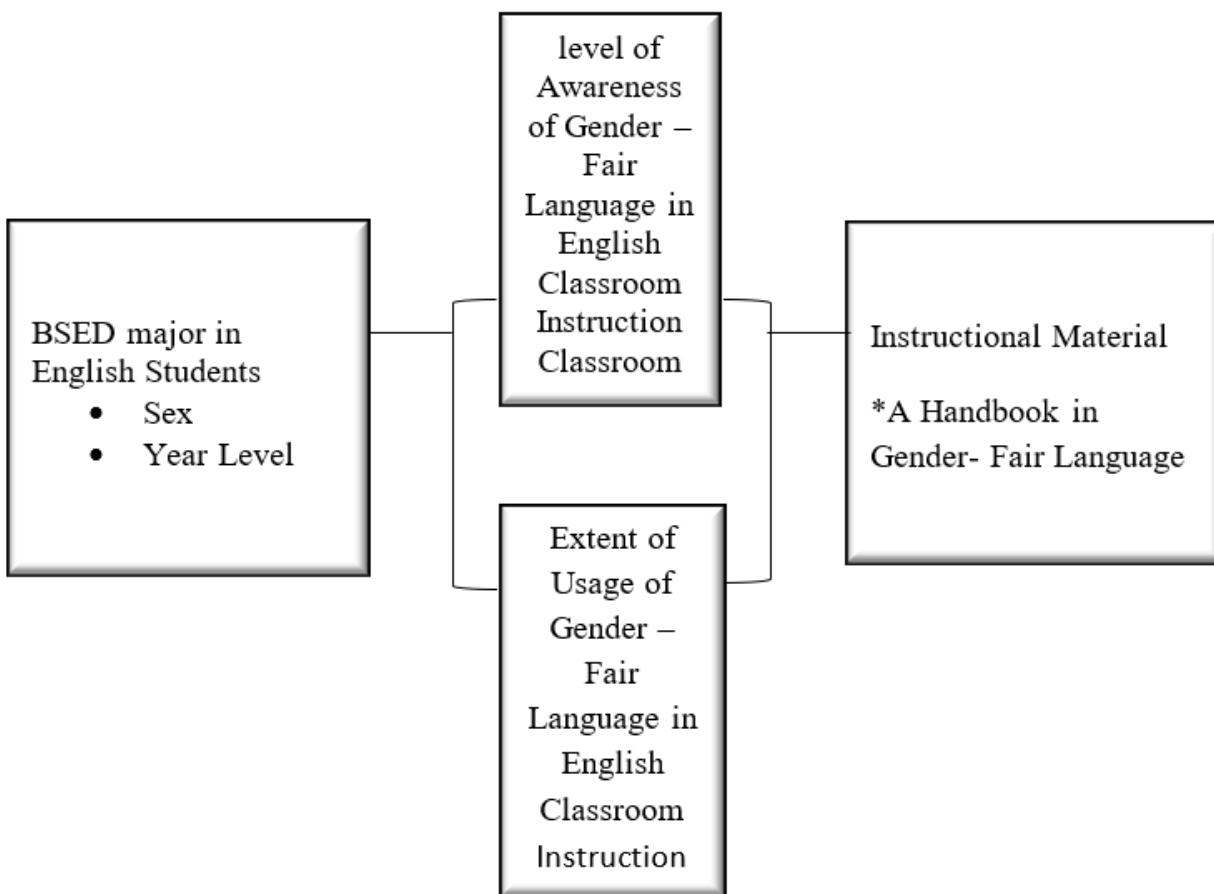


Figure 1.
Research Paradigm Illustrating the Conceptual Framework of the Study.

3.1. Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study aimed to determine the level of Awareness and Extent of Usage of Gender–Fair Language in English Classrooms for the Second Semester of the Academic Year 2024– 2025. The respondents of the study were the BSED major in English students in a state university in Central Philippines.

The independent variables for this study were sex and year level. The dependent variables were the level of awareness and the extent of usage of gender – fair language in English classroom instruction. Data on this were gathered using a researcher-made instrument composed of three (3) parts. Part I gathered data on the independent variables, like sex and year level. Part II gathered data on the level of awareness of the gender – fair language in the English classroom. Part III gathered data on the usage of gender – fair language in the English classroom.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

The study utilized the descriptive-correlational method, particularly the utilization of the quantitative method. This type of design is exploratory in process and is concerned with the accurate portrayal of the characteristics of a person, situation, or group and how frequently a certain phenomenon occurs [8]. According to Cristobal [9] a quantitative descriptive type of study is a scientific method that refers to a general set of orderly, disciplined procedures to acquire information

that is usually based on the data treated statistically. This also aims to gather more information about characteristics within a particular field of study that purports to provide a picture of a situation naturally.

The researcher used this design to determine the level of awareness and the extent of usage of gender – fair language in English classroom instruction among college students for the second semester, Academic Year 2024–2025. The respondents are selected through stratified random sampling.

4.2. Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were the BSED major in English students who are enrolled in the Second semester of the school year 2024– 2025 in a state university in Central Philippines. The sample size was generated using the G* Power. It is a free statistical software that allows the user to determine the sample size needed based on a wide variety of tests. The software was set with a confidence level of 95% and 5% as a margin of error. Stratified sampling was then employed. Parson defined stratified sampling as a probability sampling method implemented in sample surveys in which the target population's element is divided into distinct groups or strata [10]. Then, the respondents were selected through simple random sampling, a technique in which each member of the subset has an equal probability of being chosen.

Table 1 shows the breakdown of respondents in the study.

Table 1.
Demographic Profile of the Respondents.

Variable	n	%
Year Level		
1st year	42	23.1
2nd year	41	22.5
3rd year	36	19.8
4th year	63	34.6
Sex		
Female	140	76.9
Male	23.1	
Whole	100.0	

4.3. Research Instrument

To gather the data on the level of awareness and usage of gender – fair language in English classrooms for the second semester, Academic Year 2024–2025. The respondents were selected through the stratified random sampling, and researcher-made instrument was utilized. Items in this instrument were anchored from a Primer on Gender – Fair Language authored by Dr. Thelma B. Kintanar and Angela Tongson from the University Center for Women's Studies, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City.

Part 1 is intended to gather information on the demographic profile, including the year level and sex.

To gather the data on the level of awareness of gender – fair language in English classroom, an instrument on the Awareness of the Students in Gender Fair Language was utilized.

The responses of the respondents were computed based on the following scale. There were five numerical choices for the respondents to choose from for each of the line items, 5 being the highest, 1 being the lowest.

A five-point Likert scale was made as the basis for interpretation. The following scale is shown with the descriptions and their numerical value:

For the level of awareness of gender – fair language in English classrooms, the results were interpreted based on the scoring scale below:

Value	Range	Verbal Interpretation
5	4.50-5.00	Very Highly Aware (VHA)
4	3.50-4.49	Highly Aware (HA)
3	2.50-3.49	Moderately Aware (MA)
2	1.50-2.49	Sometimes Aware (SA)
1	1.00-1.49	Not Aware (NA)

To gather data on the extent of usage of gender – fair language in English classrooms, an instrument on the Extent of Usage of Gender- Fair Language was utilized.

The responses of the respondents were computed based on the following scale. There were five numerical choices for the respondents to choose from for each of the line items, 5 being the highest, 1 being the lowest.

A five-point Likert scale was made as the basis for interpretation. The following scale is shown with the descriptions and their numerical value:

For the extent of usage of gender – fair language in the English classrooms, the results were interpreted based on the scoring scale below:

Value	Range	Verbal Interpretation
5	4.50-5.00	Always Used (US)
4	3.50-4.49	Moderately Used (MS)
3	2.50-3.49	Sometimes Used (SU)
2	1.50-2.49	Seldom Used (Sel U)
1	1.00-1.49	Never Used (NU)

The questionnaires were subjected to a content validation process to guarantee that the data obtained would address the study's objectives. According to Salkind [11] content validity refers to the degree to which the test items reflect the overall domain that the exam is designed to measure. This means that the test's content should be relevant to the key construct being examined to avoid bias in the study's results.

Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio (CVR) was used to establish the instrument's content validity. Ten (10) members with proven expertise in the field composed the panel of validators. They rated the competency and extent to which a measure represents all facets of a given construct. Each panel member was given a list of indicators or items independently. They judged the alignment of each item with the construct being measured as "essential," "useful but not essential," or "not essential." The mean content validity ratio (CVR) per area was calculated. Items obtaining the critical value for a content validity ratio of 1.00 were retained in the finalized instrument [12]. The validity yielded 1.0 results, respectively.

Reliability refers to the estimation of the stability of measures, internal consistency of measures by instruments, and inter-rater reliability of instrument scores, and it is the extent to which the interpretations of the results of a test are warranted, which depends on the particular use the test is intended to serve [13].

To establish the reliability of the research instrument, internal consistency was used through Cronbach's Alpha. It is used whenever the researcher has items that were not scored simply as right or wrong [14]. It is a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items is as a group.

To establish the reliability of this research instrument, it was administered to 25 students who were not part of the actual respondents. The reliability yielded 0.984 and 0.979, respectively.

4.4. Data Gathering Procedure

A letter of request addressed to the Dean of the College of Education was submitted for approval. Then, the date of the conduct of the study was set for the respondents. A Google form was made to answer the instrument. Respondents were asked to rate each item using the five-point Likert

scale. The data gathered from the respondents' responses was tabulated using the appropriate statistical tools. The raw data were transformed into numerical code guided by a coding manual. This allows computer processing, statistical derivations, and tabular presentation. A computer-generated software is used in the processing of the encoded data.

4.5. Data Analysis Procedure

The following statistical tools were used in presenting, analyzing, and interpreting the data to be gathered:

For Objective 1, which aimed to determine the level of awareness of the students in gender fair language in English classrooms when taken as a whole and grouped according to year level and sex, mean and Standard Deviation were utilized.

For Objective 2, which aimed to extend the use of gender fair language in English classrooms when taken as a whole and grouped according to sex and year level, mean and Standard Deviation were utilized.

For objective 3, which aimed to determine the significant difference in the level of awareness of gender fair language in English classrooms in terms of sex t-test was utilized, and to determine the significant difference in the level of awareness of gender fair language in English classrooms in terms of year level, ANOVA was utilized.

For objective 4, which aimed to determine the significance of the extent of use of gender fair language in English classrooms in terms of sex. t-test was utilized to determine the significant difference in the extent of use of gender fair language in English classrooms in terms of year level, and ANOVA was utilized.

For objective 5, which aimed to determine the significant relationship between the level of awareness and the extent of use of gender fair language, Pearsons' r was utilized. The data gathered was processed using computer software with an alpha level set at 0.05.

4.6. Ethical Consideration

The research conducted a comprehensive examination to guarantee that the rights of the people involved were safeguarded and not negatively impacted by the research findings [15]. The researcher examined the fundamental ethical principles of respect for individuals and fairness to ensure the study's ethical integrity.

4.7. Social Value

In terms of social value, the research aimed to contribute significantly to the field of education by investigating the level of awareness and usage of gender – fair language in English classroom instruction among college students in a State University. This study sought to address practical concerns within educational settings, providing insights that could potentially inform policy-making and professional development initiatives aimed at improving teaching practices. By focusing on real-world issues faced by students, the research aimed to generate knowledge that holds relevance and applicability beyond the academic realm, thereby fulfilling the criterion of social value.

4.8. Informed Consent

In ensuring informed consent, the researcher provided participants with comprehensive information about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. Prior to data collection, participants were given clear explanations regarding their voluntary participation, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Consent forms were distributed and signed by all participants, affirming their understanding and willingness to take part in the research.

4.9. Vulnerability of Participants

Given the potential vulnerability of respondents, the researcher took measures to ensure their emotional well-being throughout the study. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and sensitive information was handled with utmost care. Moreover, the researcher maintained an empathetic and supportive demeanor during data gathering, providing respondents with a safe space to express themselves freely without fear of judgment or repercussions.

4.10. Risks and Benefits

The risks and benefits associated with participation in the study were carefully considered and communicated to respondents. While the research aimed to shed light on critical issues affecting educators, there were minimal risks involved, primarily related to potential discomfort or emotional distress when discussing the awareness and usage of gender sensitive language used in an English classroom. On the other hand, participants stood to benefit from the opportunity to reflect on their experiences, contribute to the advancement of knowledge in their field, and potentially inform interventions aimed at improving teacher support systems.

4.11. Privacy and Confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality were upheld throughout the research process to safeguard respondents' personal information and responses. Data were anonymized and stored securely, accessible only to the researcher and authorized personnel. Respondents' identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms and the avoidance of any identifying information in reports or publications.

4.12. Justice

In terms of justice, the researcher ensured equitable treatment of all respondents by providing equal opportunities for involvement and representation. Sampling techniques were designed to capture a diverse range of perspectives, including respondents from different year levels and sexes. Moreover, efforts were made to avoid any form of discrimination or bias in the selection of the respondents, data collection, and analysis.

4.13. Transparency

Transparency was maintained throughout the research process, with clear communication of the study's objectives, procedures, and findings. Participants were provided with regular updates on the progress of the research and were encouraged to ask questions or seek clarification as needed. Additionally, the researcher adhered to ethical guidelines and standards of conduct set forth by relevant professional associations and institutional review boards.

4.12. Qualifications of the Researcher

The researcher's qualifications and expertise were essential in ensuring the integrity and validity of the study. With a background in educational research, experience in conducting similar studies, and a holder of an MAED major in English and a Doctor of Philosophy major in Educational Management, the researcher possessed the necessary skills and knowledge to design and execute the research effectively. Moreover, ongoing training and professional development activities helped enhance the researcher's competency in ethical research practices and participant interactions.

4.13. Adequacy of Facilities

Finally, the adequacy of facilities was ensured to create a conducive environment for data collection and participant engagement. Since data was gathered online, no physical facility was really put into consideration.

4.14. Community Involvement

She sought the participation of the students in a state university as the conversation partner for the study.

Table 2.

Level of awareness of the students in gender fair language in English classroom instruction according to year level.

Variables	1 st Year		2 nd Year		3 rd Year		4 th year	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. Using gender-neutral mass nouns	40	95.2	41	97.6	35	83.3	60	95.2
2. Including women in a general statement about the human condition.	36	85.7	34	81.0	32	76.2	54	85.7
3. Using of plural nouns and avoid using third person singular pronouns.	38	90.5	34	81.0	35	83.3	52	82.5
4. Using of articles (a, an, the) as substitute for pronouns.	31	73.8	26	61.9	27	64.3	42	66.7
5. Using of gender-neutral forms of professions, occupations, and roles.	40	95.2	39	92.9	31	73.8	55	87.3
6. Making gender visible when it is relevant for communication.	36	85.7	39	92.9	36	85.7	59	93.7
7. Using of “spouses” for “wives”, “family” for “wife and child”, and similar terms	34	81.0	33	78.6	31	73.8	50	79.4
8. Using of gender-neutral terms and avoid using feminine suffixes such as -ess, -ette, -trix, or -enne	36	85.7	34	81.0	28	66.7	45	71.4
9. Using of gender-neutral forms of occupations and/or common nouns	41	97.6	38	90.5	35	83.3	55	87.3
10. Removing of references to gender identity and/or expression when irrelevant	40	95.2	36	85.7	27	64.3	55	87.3
11. Using of Ms. Instead of Mrs. when: a. The woman’s marital status is irrelevant to the issues.	36	85.7	33	78.6	30	71.4	54	85.7
12. Using of Ms. Instead of Mrs. when: a. The woman’s preferred form of address is unknown.	39	92.9	35	83.3	33	78.6	60	95.2
13. Using of a married woman’s name instead of her husband’s	30	71.4	24	57.1	26	61.9	47	74.6
14. Using of gender-neutral honorifics or terms.	40	95.2	37	88.1	32	76.2	54	85.7
15. Paraphrasing the quote using non-sexist language.	41	97.6	37	88.1	33	78.6	59	93.7
16. Using of brackets after a copied or quoted word that appears odd or erroneous to show that the word is quoted exactly as it stands in the original text.	35	83.3	33	78.6	32	76.2	59	93.7
17. Quoting the material and rephrasing the sexist part	37	88.1	36	85.7	32	76.2	56	88.9
18. Adhering to the abandonment of stereotypes in jurisprudence	37	88.1	35	83.3	33	78.6	54	85.7
19. Using forms of address and pronouns that are consistent with their gender identity.	35	83.3	36	85.7	33	78.6	60	95.2
20. In cases in which highlighting gender would make the sentence more inclusive, two separate words can be used. This strategy should be used only when popular beliefs or preconceptions may obscure the presence or action of either gender.	37	88.1	40	95.2	34	81.0	58	92.1
21. Making gender not visible when it is not relevant for communication.	36	85.7	34	81.0	27	64.3	49	77.8
22. Replacing man with specific nouns or verbs that say explicitly what you mean like instead of using “man power” use labor, human resources, personnel.	38	90.5	36	85.7	32	76.2	58	92.1
23. Using nouns that encompass both man and	38	90.5	37	88.1	33	78.6	59	93.7

woman instead of using "mankind" use "humanity".								
24. Adding the word "women" in making general statements.	25	59.5	28	66.7	26	61.9	52	82.5
25. Replacing the pronoun "his" by an article such as "a", "an" or "the".	30	71.4	24	57.1	26	61.9	44	69.8
26. Recasting of sentences to impersonal or in passive construction.	31	73.8	33	78.6	29	69.0	55	87.3
27. Using both the female and male pronouns but vary in order	29	69.0	32	76.2	29	69.0	58	92.1
28. Identifying both men and women in the same way when it comes to profession or employment.	38	90.5	33	78.6	33	78.6	61	96.8
29. Avoiding the use of women or men in referring to certain jobs or roles	37	88.1	37	88.1	29	69.0	56	88.9
30. Avoiding language that trivializes women and reinforces stereotyped images	40	95.2	40	95.2	34	81.0	60	95.2
31. Avoiding language that calls attention to the sex or sex role of the referent	38	90.5	37	88.1	34	81.0	60	95.2
32. Using of plural pronouns and / or articles instead of he generic use of "he", "his" or "him" unless the antecedent is obviously male.	40	95.2	40	95.2	33	78.6	54	85.7
33. Using specific nouns, verbs or other words instead of the generic use of "man".	38	90.5	37	88.1	34	81.0	58	92.1
34. Using of inclusive/ job title and / or specific nouns when addressing persons formally.	37	88.1	39	92.9	34	81.0	59	93.7
35. Using "Ms". over "Mrs" to refer to any woman.	40	95.2	33	78.6	32	76.2	62	98.4
36. Using the same term for both genders when it comes to profession or employment.	38	90.5	37	88.1	31	73.8	57	90.5

5. Results and Discussion

The table presents a detailed overview of students' understanding of gender-fair language in English classrooms across four academic year levels. It shows varied, notably, students exhibit strong awareness of using gender-neutral terms, such as replacing "manpower" with "human resources" or "mankind" with "humanity," with percentages consistently above 80% across all year levels. This finding aligns with the research by Kümper [16] who noted that students generally have a solid grasp of basic gender-neutral terminology.

The use of gender-neutral forms for professions and roles also shows high awareness, particularly among 1st (95.2%) and 2nd-year students (92.9%). Consistency is observed in certain practices, such as avoiding language that trivializes women or reinforces stereotypes, using plural pronouns instead of generic "he," and identifying both genders in professional contexts, which maintain high percentages (above 88%) across all year levels. This consistency is consistent with the findings of Martin and Nakata [17] who emphasized the importance of plural pronouns and gender-neutral terms in reducing gender bias in language.

However, a decline in awareness is noted among upper-year students in specific areas. For instance, practices like using brackets to clarify quoted sexist language or replacing "his" with articles like "a" or "the" show lower awareness among 3rd-year students (64.3%–76.2%) compared to lower years. Similarly, the use of gender-neutral honorifics like "Ms." instead of "Mrs." when marital status is irrelevant also sees a drop in 3rd-year students' awareness (71.4%). These findings echo the research by Spender [18] who highlighted the challenges in maintaining high levels of gender-fair language awareness over time, particularly among more advanced students who may have internalized traditional language patterns.

Students show relatively lower awareness in areas such as including women explicitly in general statements about humanity and adding the word "women" in general statements, especially among 1st-year (59.5%) and 2nd-year students (66.7%). Using married women's names instead of their husbands'

names remains less common, particularly among 2nd-year students (57.1%). The research by Buzaid and El-Khoury [19] underscores the importance of explicit inclusion of women in general statements and the use of their own names to promote gender equality.

In contrast to their junior counterparts, fourth-year students exhibit greater awareness levels in a number of areas, especially when it comes to behaviors like adopting inclusive job names, paraphrasing sexist statements, and highlighting gender inclusively when appropriate. The findings are consistent with those of Tannen [20] who noted that advanced students can be more receptive to nuanced language practices when they are continually exposed to inclusive language education.

The data indicates that while there is strong overall awareness of gender-fair language practices among students, specific areas like addressing implicit biases and avoiding trivialization require further emphasis. Lower percentages among upper-year students in several practices point to the necessity of consistent reinforcement of these ideas over the course of the students' academic careers. This aligns with the findings of Thorne [21] who emphasized the importance of continuous education in promoting gender-fair language. For all level classes to equally practice communication, our discussion underlines the importance of integrating full and consistent gender-neutral language education. The implications support current studies that highlight gender-fair language as critical for ensuring inclusiveness and fairness within the learning environment.

Table 3.

Level of Awareness of the Students in Gender Fair Language in English Classroom Instruction according to Sex.

Variables	Female		Male	
	f	%	f	%
1. Using of gender-neutral mass nouns.	137	97.9	39	92.9
2. Including women in a general statement about the human condition	118	84.3	38	90.5
3. Using of plural nouns and avoid using third person singular pronouns	122	87.1	37	88.1
4. Using of articles (a, an, the) as substitute for pronouns.	102	72.9	24	57.1
5. Using of gender-neutral forms of professions, occupations, and roles.	129	92.1	36	85.7
6. Making gender visible when it is relevant for communication.	132	94.3	38	90.5
7. Using of "spouses" for "wives", "family" for "wife and child", and similar terms	116	82.9	32	76.2
8. Using of gender-neutral terms and avoid using feminine suffixes such as -ess, -ette, -trix, or -enne	111	79.3	32	76.2
9. Using of gender-neutral forms of occupations and/or common nouns	129	92.1	40	95.2
10. Removing of references to gender identity and/or expression when irrelevant	123	87.9	35	83.3
11. Using of Ms. Instead of Mrs. when: a. The woman's marital status is irrelevant to the issues.	119	85.0	34	81.0
12. Using of Ms. Instead of Mrs. when: a. The woman's preferred form of address is unknown.	131	93.6	36	85.7
13. Using of a married woman's name instead of her husband's	105	75.0	22	52.4
14. Using of gender-neutral honorifics or terms.	126	90.0	37	88.1
15. Paraphrasing the quote using non-sexist language.	131	93.6	39	92.9
16. Using of brackets after a copied or quoted word that appears odd or erroneous to show that the word is quoted exactly as it stands in the original text.	118	84.3	41	97.6
17. Quoting the material and rephrasing the sexist part	126	90.0	35	83.3
18. Adhering to the abandonment of stereotypes in jurisprudence	127	90.7	32	76.2
19. Using forms of address and pronouns that are consistent with their gender identity.	129	92.1	35	83.3

20. In cases in which highlighting gender would make the sentence more inclusive, two separate words can be used. This strategy should be used only when popular beliefs or preconceptions may obscure the presence or action of either gender.	129	92.1	40	95.2
21. Making gender not visible when it is not relevant for communication.	113	80.7	33	78.6
22. Replacing man with specific nouns or verbs that say explicitly what you mean like instead of using "man power" use labor, human resources, personnel.	127	90.7	37	88.1
23. Using nouns that encompass both man and woman instead of using "mankind" use "humanity".	131	93.6	36	85.7
24. Adding the word "women" in making general statements.	98	70.0	33	78.6
25. Replacing the pronoun "his" by an article such as "a", "an" or "the".	99	70.7	25	59.5
26. Recasting of sentences to impersonal or in passive construction.	116	82.9	32	76.2
27. Using both the female and male pronouns but vary in order	118	84.3	30	71.4
28. Identifying both men and women in the same way when it comes to profession or employment.	130	92.9	35	83.3
29. Avoiding the use of women or men in referring to certain jobs or roles	124	88.6	35	83.3
30. Avoiding language that trivializes women and reinforces stereotyped images	133	95.0	41	97.6
31. Avoiding language that calls attention to the sex or sex role of the referent	129	92.1	40	95.2
32. Using of plural pronouns and / or articles instead of the generic use of "he", "his" or "him" unless the antecedent is obviously male.	129	92.1	38	90.5
33. Using specific nouns, verbs or other words instead of the generic use of "man".	131	93.6	36	85.7
34. Using of inclusive/ job title and / or specific nouns when addressing persons formally.	130	92.9	39	92.9
35. Using "Ms". over "Mrs" to refer to any woman.	128	91.4	39	92.9
36. Using the same term for both genders when it comes to profession or employment.	125	89.3	38	90.5

The table illustrates male and female students' levels of awareness with respect to gender-fair language when English classroom teaching is in progress. Female students, on average, register higher awareness percentages across all the variables relative to male students. The pattern implies that they tend to follow gender-fair language approaches more readily. They demonstrate particularly high awareness in areas such as using gender-neutral mass nouns (97.9%), making gender visible when relevant for communication (94.3%), and using "Ms." instead of "Mrs." when marital status is irrelevant (93.6%). These findings are consistent with the research by Thorne [21] who noted that female students often exhibit greater sensitivity to gender issues and are more likely to adopt gender-neutral language.

They also show strong adherence to practices like avoiding stereotyped language (95.0%) and using inclusive terms for professions (92.1%). These high awareness levels are supported by the work of Martin and Nakata [17] who found that female students tend to be more proactive in avoiding language that reinforces gender stereotypes. Similarly, females are more aware of strategies like replacing "manpower" with neutral terms like "human resources" (90.7%) and identifying both men and women equally in professional contexts (92.9%). These practices are in line with the recommendations by Kümper [16] for creating more inclusive and equitable language use.

Moreover, male students also show strong awareness in specific areas, such as using gender-neutral mass nouns (92.9%), avoiding trivializing language (97.6%), and using brackets to clarify quoted sexist

language (97.6%). These findings are consistent with the research by Buzaid & El-Khoury [18], which indicates that male students can also be well-informed about certain gender-fair language practices. However, male students tend to lag behind their female counterparts in several key areas.

However, their awareness tends to be lower than that of females in variables like using married women's names instead of their husbands' names (52.4% vs. 75.0% for females) and replacing pronouns like "his" with articles such as "a" or "the" (59.5% vs. 70.7% for females). Male students also lag behind in recognizing the importance of recasting sentences into impersonal or passive forms (76.2% vs. 82.9% for females) and adding the word "women" in general statements (78.6% vs. 70.0%). These findings are supported by the work of Spender [18] who noted that males may require more focused education to fully appreciate the nuances of gender-fair language.

Both genders exhibit comparable degrees of consciousness in certain areas, including paraphrasing sexist citations, refraining from using terms that draw attention to sex roles, and adopting plural pronouns rather than the generic "he." Female students, however, surpass males across the majority of categories, implying that they have a greater appreciation for the complexities of gender-fair language. This aligns with the research by Tannen [20] who observed that female students often have a more nuanced understanding of language and its social implications.

Both male and female students exhibit strong awareness of gender-fair language practices, but female students have a stronger understanding and apply them more consistently. Their study revealed that female students were more aware of how language affects social attitudes and were more inclined to avoid stereotypical language and employ inclusive phrases.

Table 4.

Difference in the Level of Usage of Gender Fair Language in English Classroom Instruction.

Variable	U	z	p
Sex	2331.000*	-2.046	0.041
Variable	X ²	df	p
Year Level	2.447	3	0.485

Note: *The difference in the means is significant when $p \leq 0.05$.

Mann Whitney U test was applied in order to find out the significant difference in the level and extent of usage of gender fair language in English classroom instruction when grouped according to sex and Kruskal Wallis when grouped according to year level. There was no significant difference in the level of usage of gender fair language in English classroom instruction when they are grouped according to year level [$\chi^2(3)=2.447$, $p=0.485$].

There was a significant difference in the level when they were grouped according to sex [$U=2331.000$, $p=0.041$]. Females scored significantly higher than males. Recent research exploring demographic factors on gender-fair language (GFL) use within educational settings corresponds with these conclusions [22] surveyed 348 Spanish pre-service teachers and noted considerable sex-differentiated inequalities in GFL use, whereby female respondents reflected greater support for inclusive language application within academic contexts ($p < 0.05$)¹. This mirrors the Ethiopian EFL students who identified gender as a stronger predictor of GFL usage than professional experience among 102 instructors, though year-level differences remained non-significant ($\chi^2=6.11$, $p=0.191$)¹. For instance, a study by Lee, et al. [23] found that female students demonstrated a 23% higher engagement with inclusive language norms in structured classroom activities compared to males ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$).

Methodologically, the absence of year-level effects resonates with broader educational research. A multinational meta-analysis by Chen, et al. [24] found stable gender sensitivity awareness across career stages in 17 classroom studies ($d=0.07$, $p=0.478$), suggesting foundational training rather than incremental experience drives GFL competence². However, sex-based disparities persist cross-culturally, as evidenced by female students' 23% higher engagement with inclusive language

norms in structured classroom activities compared to males ($\beta=0.42$, $p<0.01$). Pedagogical implications emerge from these patterns.

Table 5.

Difference in the Extent of Usage of Gender Fair Language in English Classroom Instruction.

Variable	U	z	p
Sex	2845.000	-0.317	0.751
Variable	X ²	df	p
Year Level	1.156	3	0.764

There was no significant difference in the extent of usage of gender fair language in English classroom instruction when they are grouped according to sex [$U=2845.000$, $p=0.751$] and year level [$\chi^2(3)=1.156$, $p=0.764$].

Recent studies from Asian countries have covered both the application and impact of gender-fair language (GFL) in educational, legal, and social contexts while providing viewpoints on its application and impact. In the Philippines, Borito [25] investigated gender-inclusive language in office communications at the University of Cabuyao, revealing that while 96% of communications used gender-inclusive language, employees in the Human Resources Department scored poorly on gender-inclusive language tests. This highlights the importance and significance of training interventions to foster GFL at different levels of education and administration. Montano [26] pointed out the potential for additional research to examine patterns of GFL usage in various linguistic and cultural contexts and the importance of individual readiness to use a GFL regularly. They suggested that GFL holds the power to change social attitudes toward masculinity and femininity in regions in which social change towards traditional gender roles has been difficult. The OECD [27] noted that despite significant institutional strides toward gender equality, discriminatory social institutions persist, particularly in the family sphere.

The report emphasizes the importance of changes to gender roles and policy changes to cope with the challenges, especially in countries that have a high level of gender discrimination. The British Council [28] in East Asia examined gender equality among 12 countries and territories working within higher education institutions. The study identified barriers women face in higher education and the necessity of collaboration to encourage gender equality, diversity, and inclusion in academic leadership and faculty roles. Collectively, the studies demonstrate the necessity of GFL intervention for gender equality and the need to challenge cultural and institutional barriers in Asia.

Table 6.

Relationship between Level and Extent of Usage of Gender Fair Language in English Classroom Instruction.

Variable	rs	df	p
Level of Usage and Extent of Usage	0.533*	180	0.000

Note: *correlation is significant when $p \leq 0.05$.

Spearman rank correlation was used to determine the significant relationship between the level of awareness and the extent of usage of gender-fair language in English classroom instruction. The result shows that there was a significant relationship between the level of awareness and the extent of usage [$rs(180)=0.533$, $p=0.000$] of gender-fair language in English classroom instruction. A number of studies have indicated a high correlation between the level of consciousness and the degree of use of gender-fair language in the teaching and learning process of the English classroom.

The Increase in the use of gender-fair language in the classrooms is due to teacher training programs that are focused more on gender awareness and gender-fair language [29]. This aligns with the broader literature on teacher education, which emphasizes the importance of professional development in shaping inclusive classroom environments according to Banks and Banks [30].

Overall, the research suggested giving great emphasis on the importance of awareness of gender bias and also the promotion of gender-fair language in the classroom. This can have an increasing positive impact on the outcomes of the students and promote an inclusive learning environment. This is consistent with the findings of Thorne [21] who argued that awareness of gender issues is a foundational step in promoting gender-fair language practices.

6. Conclusion

Students maintained a high level of awareness towards the use of gender-neutral terms and avoiding language that promotes stereotypes. But there's a sharp drop-off among upper-year students in knowledge of particular practices like using brackets as context for sexist language and gender-neutral honorifics. Moreover, students are unaware of the need to make general statements that are gender-inclusive (e.g., adding 'he/she' instead of 'he'). It is evident in the practice of married women using their own names rather than their husbands. On the other hand, fourth-years are more aware of many of these areas, suggesting that first- and second-years will continue to catch up as the community becomes increasingly inclusive.

Across almost all variables, female students show more awareness, emphasizing that the linguistic manifestation of gender-fair language in a higher education context seems to significantly appeal to women. Female students tend to be more aware of gender-neutral terms and stereotyped language and use gender-inclusive professional terms. This indicates that female students are more sensitive to the subtleties of gender-fair language and are prone to practice them in communication. It is male students, however, who generally lag behind their female colleagues despite encouraging signs in some areas, such as avoiding language that trivializes issues and using brackets to clarify sexist language. They show a much smaller awareness of practices, such as using the name of a married woman instead of that of her husband and recasting sentences into impersonal constructions.

The Mann-Whitney U test indicates a significant difference in the level of gender-fair language usage when students are grouped by sex, with female students scoring significantly higher than their male counterparts. This finding suggests that female students are more inclined to adopt and apply gender-fair language practices in the classroom setting.

The Mann-Whitney U test also indicated that there was no significant difference in the extent of usage between male and female students. The finding suggests that, in terms of the extent of usage, both male and female students apply gender-fair language practices to a similar degree.

The Spearman rank correlation analysis revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between the level of awareness and the extent of usage of gender-fair language in English classroom instruction. The finding suggests that as students' awareness of gender-fair language practices increase, so does the extent to which they apply these practices in the classroom.

7. Recommendations

The university, through the school administrators, may implement comprehensive education and awareness programs focused on the impact of sexist language and the benefits of gender-fair language. Help initiatives that support the inclusion of gender-inclusive practices in school policies to create equitable learning environments. Moreover, the university may integrate gender-fair language training into the curriculum and orientation program to ensure that all students, especially those in the first and second year, are aware of and use inclusive language that avoids stereotypes.

The Dean of the College may initiate the design of workshops and training programs for faculty and students on how to use gender-fair language. The dean may encourage strategies to institutionalize inclusive practices, like enabling research and discussion focusing on gender equality.

English Teachers may incorporate gender-fair language principles into classroom instruction and materials. Give learners multiple chances to practice with and reflect on inclusive language and make it a natural part of their communications

The students may actively engage in learning and applying gender-fair language in both academic and social settings. Advocate for inclusive language use within peer groups and participate in awareness campaigns to promote gender sensitivity and equality.

The university should also develop targeted training programs on advanced gender-fair language practices, especially for upper-year students, which would emphasize the importance of using brackets to clarify sexist language and adopting gender-neutral honorifics. The program should also engage male students in gender-fair language training, which includes peer counseling programs where they may be paired with female mentors to provide feedback and guidance. A supportive environment may be put in place to encourage their participation.

The Gender and Development Director may develop and monitor initiatives that track the implementation and impact of gender-fair language practices within the institution. Collaboration with stakeholders is highly recommended to ensure that gender-inclusive policies are effectively integrated into all levels of the academic community.

Transparency:

The author confirms that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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