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People's Beliefs and Opinions about the Use of Gender-Inclusive Language in English

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Resumen

En los últimos años, el lenguaje inclusivo de género ha generado interés dentro de las instituciones educativas y en la vida cotidiana de las personas. Sin embargo, el lenguaje inclusivo de género también ha provocado muchas controversias, dudas y debates de todo tipo. Por ello, esta síntesis de investigación tiene como objetivo reportar las opiniones, creencias, razones en contra y a favor de la implementación del lenguaje inclusivo de género en el idioma inglés. Para mostrar estas razones, creencias y opiniones se analizaron 20 estudios empíricos. Estos estudios se basan únicamente en investigaciones realizadas en los últimos 20 años con enfoques cualitativos y cuantitativos. Luego del análisis de datos, se obtuvieron varios resultados tanto positivos, como la implementación de un lenguaje inclusivo de género para crear un ambiente más tolerante, como negativos, como es la pérdida de tiempo que provoca la aplicación de este nuevo tipo de lenguaje. También se encontraron diferentes opiniones y creencias que difieren en muy pocos aspectos, pero en su mayoría son positivas con respecto al uso de un lenguaje inclusivo de género. En general, se concluye que, si bien hay más resultados positivos que negativos, los negativos no deben ser ignorados, ya que son fundamentales para el progreso de la sociedad. Asimismo, se recomienda realizar más investigaciones sobre el uso del lenguaje inclusivo de género en las destrezas y sub destrezas del idioma inglés y en como alentar a las instituciones educativas a implementar un lenguaje inclusivo de género a través de un proceso integral y paciente. También se recomienda motivar a las personas a comprender que el lenguaje inclusivo de género no es lo único en lo que hay que trabajar para eliminar el sexismo y el lenguaje excluyente dentro del inglés.

Palabras clave: lenguaje inclusivo de género, LGBTQIA+, inglés, creencias, opiniones

Abstract

In recent years, gender-inclusive language has generated interest within educational institutions and in people's daily lives. However, gender-inclusive language has also caused many controversies, doubts, and debates of all kinds. For this reason, this research synthesis aims to report the opinions, beliefs, reasons against, and in favor related to the implementation of gender-inclusive language in the English language. To show these reasons, beliefs, and opinions, 20 empirical studies were analyzed. These studies are based solely on research carried out in the last 20 years with qualitative and quantitative approaches. After the data analysis, several results were obtained. Both positive, such as the implementation of gender-inclusive language to create a more tolerant environment, or negative, such as the loss of time caused by applying this new type of language. Different opinions and beliefs were also found that differ in very few aspects but are mostly positive regarding the use of gender-inclusive language. In general, it is concluded that although there are more positive than negative results, the negative ones should not be ignored, since they are essential for progress in society. Likewise, it is recommended to carry out more research on the use of gender-inclusive language concerning English language skills and sub-skills, and on how to encourage educational institutions to implement gender-inclusive language through a comprehensive and patient process. It is also recommended to encourage people to understand that gender-inclusive language is not the only aspect that needs to be worked on to eliminate sexism and exclusive language within English.

Keywords: gender-inclusive language, LGBTQIA+, english, beliefs, opinions

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Dedication

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Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on gender-inclusive language, which had provoked debates about the correctness of this type of language and its necessity. According to The United Nations (2023), gender-inclusive language is seen as a form of communication that avoids various types of discrimination based on sex, social gender, or gender identity. However, authors such as Vergoossen et al. (2020) pointed out that there are some arguments against gender-inclusive language that are based on beliefs and values of a group of people, such as a community. For these contradictions, it is important to deeply understand why people react to gender-inclusive language as they do. It is necessary to collect and analyze people's beliefs, opinions, reasons against and reasons in favor of gender-inclusive language. For this research synthesis, the following research questions were formulated.

1. What are the reported beliefs and opinions of people about the use of gender-inclusive language in English?

2. What are the reported reasons against the use of gender-inclusive language in English?

3. What are the reported reasons against the use of gender-inclusive language in English?

This research report is structured in five chapters. The first chapter provides a description of the research, including background, problem statement, justification, research questions, and study objectives. The second chapter is dedicated to the theoretical framework, where key concepts proposed by various authors in relation to fundamental terms of gender-inclusive language, such as belief or opinion, are presented. In addition, in the second chapter, the literature review which covers the description of the different articles selected for analysis can be found. In the third chapter, the methodology is presented, detailing the process used to carry out the synthesis of the research and the criteria considered for the selection and inclusion of the studies. Additionally, the data analysis, which constitutes the fourth chapter, involves evaluating the different studies analyzed and grouping them into various categories. Finally, the last chapter shows conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 1

Background

Gender-inclusive language has been gaining more attention in recent years. However, there are still some doubts about whether it is correct or necessary to use this type of language. According to the United Nations (2023), gender-inclusive language refers to, ''speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate against a particular sex, social gender or gender identity, and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes.'' In addition, Forsey (2020) claimed that gender-inclusive language is a type of language used to avoid certain phrases or words that can express ideas of sexism, bias, or denigration of a particular group of people due to their gender or sex.

Mallinson and Inscoe (2020) mentioned that gender-inclusive language in English had its origins in the 1960s when a group of people, part of the feminist movement, tried to make the English language more equitable. Since then, people have been encouraged to use gender-neutral terms instead of the ones that have a clear reference to the male gender (e.g., firefighter for firemen, humanity for mankind, partner for wife/husband, police officer for policeman). Mallinson and Inscoe (2020) mentioned that today the term *gender-inclusive language* is also used to include other groups of people (not only women) who feel the need to be represented through their language. These groups are part of the LGBTQIA+ communities.

The idea of gender-inclusive language can be controversial. There are two strong and opposing points of view. On the one hand, there are authors, organizations, and people who agree with the use of gender-inclusive language. For example, Jacobs et al. (1998) found that students at a Singapore college positively agree with using gender-inclusive language in English. The authors of this study reported that these students have incorporated this type of language into their writing. Moreover, Herzer (2021) mentioned that gender-inclusive language helps to include people who do not consider themselves as women or men, but as non-binary people (a term used to refer to people who do not identify themselves as male or female).

Gender-inclusive language is created for and by people or communities that have felt excluded by the rest of society due to their sex, gender, or sexual orientation. These statements are supported by Peever (2021) who claimed that the use of gender-inclusive language is a way of showing consideration and acceptance in many languages for these excluded people, such as the LGBTQIA+ community. Therefore, the key idea of gender-inclusive language is to avoid

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hurtful and stereotypical language that makes some minorities feel left out, misunderstood, or disrespected.

Additionally, according to the Enago Academy (2022), gender-inclusive language can avoid referring to only men or the male gender (e.g., the best man for the job) by using a neutral noun (e.g., the best person for the job). On the other hand, there are authors, organizations, and people who do not support the idea of using gender-inclusive language. For instance, Morikawa (2022) stated that this type of language is useless because it does not help in the fight for equity and the inclusion of certain minorities. The author also mentioned that this kind of language goes against some grammar and spelling rules of languages such as English. For instance, Gupta (2021) proposed the use of the word womyn in order to take the MAN out of the word woman. Furthermore, Berger (2019) stated that according to data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), hatred towards LGBTQIA+ groups has increased in recent years and that the attempt to include gender-inclusive language in the English language has been one of the reasons for this increase. Finally, many politicians disagree with the use of gender-inclusive language. For example, Rule (2022) commented that the French Minister of Education, Jean-Michel Blanquer, mentioned that gender-inclusive language was not part of the future of his language.

Statement of the Problem

When using gender-inclusive language, there are several conflicts when it comes to maintaining some grammatical rules in languages such as English. For instance, people who belong to or support LGBTQIA+ groups tend to change the use of the possessive form of she or he for *zee* or *hir*. This occurs not only in English but in many languages around the world (Breibart & Lobato, 2022). In addition, Tremeer (2020) says that grammar rules tend to change over time in a natural way. However, forced changes often cause conflict in people, especially if they feel pressured to speak using a specific type of language, such as gender-inclusive language. Moreover, Vergoossen et al. (2020) stated that some of the arguments used by people against gender-inclusive language are based on the beliefs and values of a society or community. For example, some Christian people declare that there are only men and women in the world, so there is no need to include an extra pronoun for non-binary people, a gender that, according to these Christian people, does not exist.

Our research aims to analyze published empirical studies on gender-inclusive language within the English language in order to examine the beliefs and opinions of the general public about

this issue. We examine two points of view: the people who agree and those who disagree with this type of language. Then, from this analysis, we can draw our main conclusions.

Justification

As mentioned above, this research paper aims to analyze the beliefs and opinions about the use of gender-inclusive language reported in published research studies. The reason is that this topic raises concerns about using gender-inclusive language in English (and other languages). There is a need to understand if gender-inclusive language can be used without causing confusion in the communities and trying to show respect towards those who believe this language should be used. We analyze the ideas that support the use of this type of language, as well as the ideas against using gender-inclusive language.

According to Berger (2019), in recent years, gender-inclusive language has become more important not only in informal social settings but also in other contexts such as educational or government institutions. This author stated that these increases in the importance of gender-inclusive language are because the groups of people who belong to this community are tired of having to explain how they would like to be called, and they want this to be a language like any other. In addition, Lopes (2021) highlighted the challenges that these minority groups can face in the process of fighting in order to achieve the acceptance and incorporation of gender-inclusive language in society as a whole. For example, Vergoossen et al. (2020) mentioned that in Sweden it is recommended that their citizens use the object pronoun *hen* when addressing non-binary people, something that many people do not want to do because they consider this pronoun unnecessary.

According to Wyborn et al. (2018), the objective of a research synthesis is to develop new knowledge through the process of analyzing research studies that already exist. Since we have found several previous studies on this topic, we think we have sufficient information to carry out a research synthesis on the use of gender-inclusive language. Thus, it is our aim to gather enough information from primary research in order to synthesize insightful data and contribute to the understanding of this topic.

Research Questions

After analyzing existing studies on gender-inclusive language for our research project, the following questions have arisen.

- What are the reported beliefs and opinions of people about the use of gender-inclusive language in English?

- What are the reported reasons supporting the use of gender-inclusive language in English?

- What are the reported reasons against the use of gender-inclusive language in English?

Objectives

General Objective

- To synthesize the published information regarding the use of gender-inclusive language in English.

Specific Objectives

- To examine the reported beliefs and opinions of people about gender-inclusive language in English.
- To analyze the reported reasons supporting the use of gender-inclusive language in English.
- To analyze the reported reasons against the use of gender-inclusive language in English.

Chapter II

Theoretical Framework

In this section, different concepts, and key terms, proposed by different authors are exposed, analyzed, and reasoned. These terms have been essential in developing and guiding this work. Likewise, this theoretical framework has guided the researchers of the present study to approach the sensitive subject of applying gender-inclusive terminology in the English language. In order to understand the complexity of gender-inclusive language and what people have to say about it, the following key terms have been selected: belief, opinion, gender, gender-inclusive language, and LGBTQIA+.

Belief

According to Österholm (2010), beliefs can play a role in shaping our understanding of the world and guiding our actions in some contexts. Also, this author mentioned that the utility and validity of the belief concept may depend on the specific research questions and theoretical frameworks that are used. However, Österholm (2010) suggested that beliefs are not essential to understanding human behavior or cognition. Then, it is possible that other constructs, such as goals, motives, or values, may be more fundamental in explaining why people think, feel, and act the way they do. Similarly, Graham (2016) talked about two different meanings that beliefs can have. The first refers to evidence, reasoning, and critical thinking. The second one is based on tradition, culture, or personal values, and may not necessarily be supported by rational or empirical evidence. Furthermore, beliefs can be understood as both an individual cognitive process and a community social phenomenon.

Beliefs can be the key to understanding how people see the world. Rao et al. (2009) claimed that beliefs work as 'internal commands' to even indicate when something could be true or false. In addition, Cobern (2015) defined beliefs as acceptance of a proposition as true. According to this author, this acceptance may include lies in beliefs, something completely different to knowledge, which needs evidence and logic. For this reason, Cobern (2015) thought that topics such as religion can perfectly fit as an example of belief.

Opinion

According to Pande (2021), an opinion can be debatable and can be modified. This means that when there is a group of people who share different opinions on the same subject, it is possible to reach an agreement or a middle ground. Beliefs, on the other hand, are very difficult to discuss and do not offer solutions or chances for modification. Opinion represents some feeling or position towards a certain subject. Hasa (2022) declared that an opinion, as is the

case with a belief, is not necessarily based on science, but that it is simply what we think about something or someone. This author also emphasized that an opinion is, in other words, an idea that a person might have based on his or her perceptions, which may come from their experience and knowledge. Moreover, an opinion and a belief can work collectively. That is, several people can share the same opinion or belief on a specific topic. In addition, Gunsch (2022) suggested that an opinion is closely related to a belief and, in most cases, is based exclusively on subjectivity. This means that while for some people something may be true, for others it may be totally false.

Kumar (2019) affirmed that people must know how to provide their opinion, which according to the author, is not that difficult since people have to emphasize that what they are saying is only their opinion. In addition, Pande (2021) added some other tips to give an opinion in the best way, affirming that opinions can lead to respectful discussions in which we can reach a mutual agreement. Despite all this, people have to be very careful when having discussions, since they may be violating a very important moral and legal law: not respecting the opinions of others. Therefore, people must be careful in their way of addressing the person, and provide their opinions in a coherent, respectful, and responsible manner.

Gender

In order to understand this term, it is important to differentiate it from sex. Torgrimson and Minson (2005) differentiated gender from sex using a biological and societal perspective. Therefore, gender refers to the way in which a person sees himself or herself, that is, if he or she identifies himself or herself as a man, woman, or other genders that exist today. On the other hand, sex refers to the reproductive organs that were given to each individual at the moment of his or her birth. Within this concept, gender stereotypes are presented. According to the United Nations (2023), a gender stereotype is "a generalized view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by, women and men." For example, some people think that certain jobs are to be performed by men or women only.

The history of the origin of gender has many branches. Newman (2021) stated that gender has always been seen as binary in the United States. For a long time, the way people have addressed both the male and female genders has never been a problem. However, since the 1990s new terms for gender identities have appeared in society. For instance, Newman (2021) talked about the term cisgender, which refers to people who identify themselves with the gender they were born with. Likewise, this author mentioned transgender people, who do not identify with the sex they were born with. In addition, Newman (2021) provided more terms that help people to understand a little more about what gender is.

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According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2023), gender is nothing more than a social construct. This organization stated that certain actions or characteristics are often singled out as typical or characteristic of a woman or a man. These characteristics can change during history so that what people once considered to be behaviors or hobbies that only men would use, now can be also considered as belonging to women. However, the WHO (2023) also warned that there are still stereotypes within gender that can negatively affect society. For example, a woman is considered feminine if she wears a skirt or heels and acts in a *delicate* manner, and if a woman has a slightly rougher manner she is assumed to be a lesbian. Therefore, the WHO (2023) claimed that humanity is still surrounded by discrimination, sexism, and machismo due to incorrect conceptions related to gender.

Gender-Inclusive Language

According to Remigio and Talosa (2021), gender-inclusive language is a new way of communicating with each other and the purpose of this language is to achieve equality, promote equal opportunities, and respect all individuals. Sczesny et al. (2015) also mentioned that it is essential to know the psychological mechanisms involved in using gender-inclusive language since interpersonal communication contributes to stereotypes via mass media, spoken utterances, and written words. According to the authors, language is not only a way of transferring information from one person to another, but is also used to define categorizations and hierarchies, thus forming gender constructs. For example, when we hear the word lawyer, we quickly think of a man and when we hear the word nurse, we think of a woman.

During the last few years, gender-inclusive language has been increasingly recognized. Kouire-Towe and Bobker (2022) pointed out that the oldest dictionary in the United States, Merriam-Webster, and the Oxford English Dictionary have added the word *they* to their pages. This word is now recognized by these two large dictionaries as singular and part of the non-binary group. This term, according to these authors, is only the tip of an iceberg that talks about the enormous number of new terms that appear daily. In addition, all these new terms have the function of talking about gender identity or sexual orientation. Similarly, the BBC News (2019) mentioned that the pronoun *they* is increasingly popular among celebrities, social networks, and, especially, adolescents to refer to themselves as non-binary people. However, according to this newscast, this word does not have to be used that way, since *they* is only used to refer to plural nouns.

LGBTQIA+

According to Wandrekar and Nigudkar (2020), LGBTQIA+ are the initials for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/ questioning, intersex, and asexual. Also, the + sign refers to other sexual orientations or identities. LGBTQIA+ is a term commonly used. In this light,

Leadley (2017) stated that usually people define this term as one that refers to the sexual activity of a human being, but it goes far beyond deciding who you have sex with or who you feel attracted to; it is about who you love. The author pointed out that these types of relationships play a very important role in the development of a human being as they become a core part of our identity. She also mentioned that in the past people who belonged to the LGBTQIA+ community did not have the opportunity to be open about their emotions and feelings, but this has changed in the last few decades as changes in the law have allowed people in the community to express their feelings without fear.

Dixon and Dougherty (2013) explained that the term LGBTQIA+ helps us understand how the meaning of this term is generating a greater meaning in what we usually know as family. That is, people are beginning to accept that a homosexual couple can form a family and be seen as normal as a traditional family. In the future, orientations and identities can generate greater diversity. Then, with a more complex understanding of this term, people are going to have an open mind and see their future with other eyes.

Literature Review

The use of gender-inclusive language has been a debated topic in the communities. The controversy lies in the division that exists between people who think that the implementation of this type of language is absurd and people who believe that it is totally important to promote gender equality with the use of gender-inclusive language.

Starting from the idea that the use of gender-inclusive language is a critical and debated topic with many points of view, the purpose of this chapter is to analyze three important aspects that will help to develop the study and answer its research questions. The literature review section will be divided into the following parts: Gender-inclusive language changes within the English Language, gender-inclusive language in the English Language within educational institutions, and the effects of using gender-inclusive language within the English Language in the day-to-day life of people.

Gender-inclusive Language Changes within the English Language

There are several studies that show how academic materials can intervene in the gender-inclusive language within the English Language. For example, Lee and Collins (2010) found that Australian and Hong Kong textbooks reinforce traditional gender roles and stereotypes with males often depicted as active and dominant and females as passive and supportive. However, Australian textbooks tend to be more progressive and inclusive compared to Hong Kong textbooks, featuring a wider range of gender roles and activities for both males and females. In addition, Shah (2012) suggested that gender inclusion is a neglected aspect in English textbooks in Pakistan. Shah (2012) argued that there is a lack of representation and

diversity in the portrayal of genders in textbooks, which can reinforce gender stereotypes and limit the educational opportunities and potential of students. Furthermore, there is a necessity to include gender perspectives and promote gender equality in education in Pakistan.

According to Grove (2021), another way that people belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community use to distinguish themselves is through the use of the pronouns *they / thei*. The use of this pronoun in a singular way can be an important step toward creating a more inclusive and equitable society. However, there are some challenges and controversies surrounding the use of gender-neutral language, including resistance from those who see it as an unnecessary or confusing shift from traditional grammatical rules. In the same way, Sendén et al. (2015) found that introducing a gender-neutral pronoun in a natural gender language can lead to changes in attitudes and behavior over time, with participants becoming more accepting and inclusive of non-binary gender identities. However, the rate of change varies among individuals, with some being resistant to adopting the new pronoun. The authors suggested that continued exposure to and use of the gender-neutral pronoun can facilitate greater acceptance and usage over time.

Brauer (2017) argued that binary gender assumptions complicate efforts to meet the name and pronoun needs of transgender students. This situation occurs because society often assumes that their gender identity and expression must fit into either a male or female category, making it challenging for transgender individuals to express themselves authentically without being misgendered or excluded. Brauer (2017) emphasized the importance of creating safe and inclusive learning environments that respect the gender identities and expressions of all students. Additionally, Saguy and Williams (2021) argued for the social and linguistic acceptance of the singular *they* pronoun in the English language. These authors discussed the historical and contemporary contexts of gender-neutral language use and suggest that the singular *they* can be a significant and meaningful tool for inclusivity and social change. Saguy and Williams (2021) also acknowledged the challenges around the use of gender-neutral language but argued that efforts to promote gender inclusivity and recognition of non-binary individuals are essential.

Gender-inclusive Language in the English Language within Educational Institutions

Gender-inclusive language is a very important topic within educational institutions. Ratanaphithayaporn and Rodrigo (2020) found in their study that the use of gender-inclusive language positively affects students' perception of their involvement in society. Furthermore, the use of gender-inclusive language can promote a more inclusive and welcoming environment for international students at the university. In addition, Sara (2020) focused on

the relationship between gender-biased language and gender inequality by proposing a pedagogical approach to using gender-inclusive language in education. She argued that an effective solution to promote gender equality in education by teaching students about the impact of language and the use of gender-inclusive language to counteract sexist biases. Sara (2020) also proposed that educators begin introducing non-sexist language in early childhood education by using non-sexist pronouns and language, avoiding gender stereotypes in the classroom, and employing inclusive language in materials such as textbooks and curricula.

Teachers have also an important role in the implementation of gender-inclusive language within education. According to Vizcarra-Garcia (2021), teachers express that inclusive language should not only be used orally, but also in written form in tests, essays, etc. However, this is just a way in which teachers express their full support for people who are part of the community by adopting the language in the classroom which only favors gender equality. In addition, Tarrayo (2022) explored the perspectives and practices of Filipino English teachers regarding non-sexist language in teaching materials and classroom practices. This author found that most teachers were aware of the importance of non-sexist language and recognized that the use of exclusionary language could perpetuate gender stereotypes and discrimination. However, some teachers expressed difficulties in applying non-sexist language in their teaching practices, citing difficulties in finding non-sexist terms and in adapting to new linguistic norms. In the same way, Tarrayo et al. (2021) explored the gender perspective in English language teaching in Philippine institutions of higher education. These authors noted that gender awareness in ELT can lead to a more effective and equitable teaching and learning environment. Similarly, Mose (2013) discussed the issue of gender-exclusionary language in secondary English textbooks. In her study, she highlighted the importance of using inclusive language in the classroom and how textbooks can help promote gender equality by using gender-neutral terms and avoiding gender stereotypes. Mose (2013) argued that the widespread use of exclusionary language in textbooks perpetuates gender inequality and limits students' ability to understand and appreciate the perspectives of all genders.

Finally, Pauwels and Winter (2005) found that gender-inclusive language practices are becoming more prevalent in Singaporean English-language education. These authors found that there was an increase in the use of gender-neutral pronouns and more inclusive language overall in the textbooks, which can promote equality and respect for all genders.

Effects of Using Gender-inclusive Language within the English Language in the Day-to-day Life of People

Gender-inclusive language is not controversial only in educational institutions or academic environments, but also it is a very debated topic within the day-to-day life of people. For

example, Hord (2016) mentioned that language is a reflection of social values and that the use of sexist language reinforces gender stereotypes and inequality. This author suggested in his study that linguistic change requires a shift in societal attitudes toward gender and called for continued efforts toward the use of gender-neutral language when communicating. In the same way, Velasco and Paxton (2022) cited the shift in language toward a more inclusive approach to gender and sexual identities from 1998 to 2016. These authors found that youth-focused organizations and newly founded groups had a greater intention to seek out new terminologies and words that were intended to broaden the language and be able to communicate appropriately with groups who felt part of the LGBTQIA+ community and other minorities.

According to Sczesny et al. (2015), sexism is not solely based on personal beliefs and attitudes toward women but also is perpetuated through unconscious biases, social norms, and language which is used to describe men and women. Nevertheless, the authors mentioned that interventions focused only on changing explicit beliefs might not be effective in reducing sexist behaviors and attitudes if underlying biases and social norms are not addressed.

Zimman (2017) argued that language plays a crucial role in shaping our understanding of gender identity and expression; promoting trans-identity-affirming and gender-inclusive language is essential to creating a more inclusive society. However, Zimman (2017) also recognized that language reform poses significant challenges, including language norms, resistance to change, and a lack of consensus on what constitutes appropriate language. For example, Remigio and Talosa (2021) investigated the general attitude of students towards gender-inclusive language and it could be noted that most of the participants, especially those with more knowledge about gender issues, had a positive attitude toward inclusive language. On the other hand, the study also revealed that some students still held negative attitudes toward inclusive language, and the main reasons for these attitudes were because of religious and gender beliefs.

In general, the studies showed that different groups of people who feel excluded within the traditional English Language have positive attitudes towards the use of gender-inclusive language. For instance, Travits and Perez (2019) found that language can have a significant impact on mass opinion as the way language is used in communication can affect how people view gender roles and can influence perceptions of different sexual orientations. The authors noted that promoting inclusive language can help create a more tolerant and supportive society for people of all gender identities and sexual orientations.

Chapter III

Methodology

As mentioned previously, this research study is a research synthesis. A research synthesis constitutes "the integration and assessment of knowledge and research findings pertaining to a particular issue with the aim of increasing the generality and applicability of, and access to those findings" (Wyborn et. al, 2018, p. 1). Therefore, in order to achieve our main purpose, we collected 20 research articles to analyze the arguments against and in favor of gender-inclusive language in English. A thorough search was performed in order to get appropriate sources for this research synthesis.

The information or data was collected in the following online databases: Google Scholar, Tandfonline, Redalyc, IEEE Xplore, and others. The articles were selected based on the following criteria: First, our articles are of an empirical type because, through real observations or experiments, we can better understand the positions of participants studied by the researchers. Second, the articles are primarily from the year 2005 to the present since gender-inclusive language is a topic that has been in controversy in recent years. Finally, we use articles that include the beliefs and perceptions of people toward gender-inclusive language. Furthermore, the keywords for looking for studies were 1. inclusive language, 2. gender, 3. sexism, 4. minorities, and 5. LGBTQIA+, 6. machismo, and 7. ideologies. Also, there were not any restrictions related to the design of the studies. Thus, qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods studies were included so that we can find all the data we needed.

The journals that were revised are Language Sciences, Journal of Language and Social Psychology, Frontiers in Psychology, and Journal of Clinical Nursing, among others.

Chapter IV

Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the analysis of data that was collected in order to reach the objectives and answer the research questions that were posed at the outset of the study. In order to carry out an organic and understandable analysis, the studies have been grouped into four categories: reasons supporting the use of gender-inclusive language in English, reasons against the use of gender-inclusive language in English, beliefs of people about gender-inclusive language, and opinions of people about gender-inclusive language. It is important to highlight that these categories are framed within the concepts presented in Chapter 2.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that opinions, beliefs, and reasons, either to support or oppose gender-inclusive language in English, may present similarities; therefore, each category is analyzed and discussed in depth to offer a thorough critical analysis.

Reasons to Support the Use of Gender-inclusive Language in English

In this category, and thanks to the studies analyzed, the different reasons why people support gender-inclusive language within English can be presented. The reasons identified in the studies are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Reasons to Support Gender-Inclusive Language

Author/Year	Reasons to Support						
	A safer and more tolerant environment	Educational opportunities	Development of student's potential	Recognition of non-binary people	Fewer gender-based stereotypes.	Better communication with minorities	More future sensitive teachers
Travits and Perez, 2019	●						
Shah, 2012		●	●				
Brauer, 2017	●						
Saguy and Williams, 2021				●			
Hord, 2016					●		
Velasco and Paxton, 2016						●	
Sara, 2020					●		
Vizcarra-Garcia, 2021							●
Tarrayo, 2022	●						

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Table 1 presents seven reasons to support the use of gender-inclusive language found in the different studies: A safer and more tolerant environment, fewer gender-based stereotypes, educational opportunities, development of student's potential, recognition of non-binary people, better communication with minorities, and more future sensitive teachers.

It is important to highlight that some reasons have been identified in more than one study; for instance, providing a safer and more tolerant environment. According to Travits and Pérez (2019), the use of gender-inclusive language reduces the individuals' mental bias in favor of men, which in one way or another increases the salience of any of the members of the LGBTQ+ community. Likewise, Brauer (2017) mentioned that another way to maintain a safe and nondiscriminatory environment is to treat an individual according to his or her sexual orientation, regardless of how he or she is recorded in his or her identity documents. Furthermore, decreasing gender-based stereotypes was identified in two studies. Sara (2020) mentioned that no one should take for granted that women, simply because they are women, are sensitive, caring, or whiny, or that men are tough, hardworking, or less sensitive just because they are men. That is why the author encouraged the use of gender-inclusive language when giving discourses, avoiding labeling people by the physical characteristics they may have. In addition, Hord (2016) suggested that changing the grammatical way of referring to people would modify the stereotypes that exist today. By doing so, language would be used in a more general way, and men and women would not have to be labeled with a specific pronoun.

Reasons Against the Use of Gender-inclusive Language in English

Several research studies have presented reasons against the use of gender-inclusive language (Table 2).

Table 2

Reasons Against Gender-Inclusive Language

Author/Year	Reasons Against
Ratanaphithayaporn and Rodrigo, 2020	Gender-exclusion language.

Tarrayo, et al., 2021 **Sendén, et al., 2015**	Efforts for changing language.
Sczesny et al., 2015 **Mose, 2013**	Not effective in reducing sexist behaviors and attitudes.
Rioux, et al.,2022	Lack of awareness
Grove, 2021 **Zimman, 2017** **Hord, 2016** **Saguy and Williams, 2021** **Sendén, et al., 2015** **Pauwels and Winter, 2005**	Grammar issues.

In Table 2, the four reasons against the use of gender-inclusive language found in different studies, can be observed.

Gender-exclusion language, which is found in one study; effort for changing language, which is found in two studies; not effective in reducing sexiest behavior and attitudes, found in two studies; and grammar issues, found in five studies. All these reasons are of great importance when applying gender-inclusive language; therefore, each of them will be analyzed.

The first reason against gender-inclusive language is that it could become gender-exclusion language. The study conducted by Ratanaphithayaporn and Rodrigo (2020) showed that people prefer to keep things the way they think and not apply changes in their daily lives. Imposing this new way of language to individuals who do not want changes could result in the violation of their right to freedom of expression. However, for other people, continuing to talk

traditionally would lead to a feeling of exclusion for people who agree with gender-inclusive language.

The second reason against gender-inclusive language is that it takes a lot of effort to change a language. Sendén, et al., (2015), indicated that the implementation of new vocabulary words does not allow people to adapt quickly. In the same way, Tarrayo, et al., (2021) mentioned that there are still people who believe that sexist ideologies are a natural part of human culture. Therefore, it is very difficult to modify these ways of thinking, especially in people from older generations who could be more difficult to persuade.

The third reason against gender-inclusive language is that it is not effective in reducing the sexiest behaviors and attitudes. Sczesny (2015) argued that people with stronger sexist attitudes tend to use non-sexist pronouns less frequently than people with less sexist attitudes. The implementation of this language may change the language to some extent, but it does not imply that it will change people's minds to eradicate sexist behavior. Likewise, according to the study by Mose (2013), the language connotes some expressions or sexist attitudes, and when used, it is not guaranteed that these unfair attitudes towards minority groups will be eradicated.

The fourth reason against gender-inclusive language is that it presents grammatical problems. According to Grove (2021), when using *they* as a singular pronoun, there is a very noticeable problem in the agreement between the antecedent and the pronoun. Zimman (2017) also agreed that the use of *they* to refer to a singular individual does not convey any meaning. Likewise, Hord (2016) suggested that small words such as *ter, thon, or heer* could be implemented when referring to people in the LGBTQ+ community. Finally, Sendén et al. (2015) showed that the introduction of hen as a pronoun to refer to minorities has not been accepted by older generations, who prefer to maintain their traditional way of speaking and not alter it with these new expressions.

Beliefs of People about Gender-inclusive Language

This category presents the different beliefs that people have when implementing gender-inclusive language in English. These beliefs could resemble reasons against or supporting gender-inclusive language that were presented earlier in this analysis. However, it is necessary to specify and analyze people's beliefs related to gender-inclusive language.

Table 3

Beliefs of people about gender-inclusive language

Author/Year	Beliefs
Shah, 2012	- Religion makes it difficult to apply gender-inclusive language.
Tarrayo, et al., 2021	-English promotes respect and inclusivity in English Language Teaching (ELT).
Hord, 2016	-Lessen inequities between men and women.
Lee and Collins, 2010	-Evident trend in education

Table 3 shows the different beliefs of people related to gender-inclusive language. The first belief that people have about gender-inclusive language is how religion makes it difficult to use gender-inclusive language. According to Shah (2012), women form the majority of the population in Pakistan, and it is a complex situation as it is still a macho society and very religious. That is why the roles assigned to women are very orthodox, hence their contribution has been completely ignored. Likewise, female duties have been presented as typical activities that a woman should perform as a housewife, nurse, etc. This is related in one way or another to the religion of Islam, which does not allow women to be seen as anything more than a prototype. Then, applying gender-inclusive language would be almost impossible for people with this belief.

The second belief refers to the idea that English promotes respect and inclusivity in ELT. In this regard, the study conducted by Tarrayo et al. (2021) indicated that GFL (Gender Fair Language) ensures the inclusiveness of all minorities and promotes their visibility. Similarly, teachers reported that incorporating gender-inclusive language in ELT helps students develop social-emotional skills and create an inclusive space. To make this possible, some educational institutions in the Philippines used didactic materials and facilitated classroom interactions and activities that promote inclusion.

The third belief of people related to gender-inclusive language is about lessening inequalities between men and women. According to Hord (2016), language plays a very important role in

the way people organize their beliefs about gender. Implementing this language would take into account both genders, male and female. Therefore, the differences between men and women would decrease significantly.

The last belief that people have related to gender-inclusive language is the evident trend that this type of language has in education. In the study conducted by Lee and Collins (2010), Australia reflects a large trend in the use of gender-inclusive language, especially in educational texts. Australian writers tend to use the generic they to refer to any gender within minorities. In this way, this issue is becoming normalized and is being implemented more and more in people's daily lives and institutions.

Opinions of people about gender-inclusive language

This last category shows various opinions that were found in the analyzed studies. As in the category of beliefs, opinions have some similarities with the reasons included in this chapter. However, this category also has several important aspects to consider which contribute to the understanding of this study; therefore, it is necessary to differentiate it from the other categories.

Table 4

Opinions of people about gender-inclusive language

Opinions	Author/Year
Textbooks are discriminatory against women.	**Shah, 2012** **Lee and Collins, 2010** **Mose, 2013**
English is not sexist, but the way people use is.	**Sara, 2020**
Necessary for institutions.	**Brauer, 2017**

| Age as a factor for the acceptance of gender-inclusive language. | **Senden, et al., 2015** |

Table 4 presents four opinions that people have related to the use of gender-inclusive language found in the different studies. The first opinion people have about gender-inclusive language is that textbooks are discriminatory against women. According to Shah (2012), in Pakistan, the inclusion of women in texts is almost invisible, as the representation and roles assigned to women are much less than those assigned to men. Similarly, Lee and Collins (2010) mentioned that in Hong Kong, texts tend to present women with a very limited range of roles, and when this happens, most of these roles are related to housekeeping. In addition, Mose (2013) showed that people believe that book authors must adapt their texts to new ways of communicating, since this will encourage girls to venture fairly into some fields dominated by men.

The second opinion people have with the use of gender-inclusive language is that English is not sexist, but the way people use is. In the study conducted by Sara (2020), it was reported that one of the participants' opinions is that English is not inherently sexist, but sometimes the words used to refer to someone can be discriminatory to some people.

The third opinion that people have related to the use of gender-inclusive language is that it is necessary for educational institutions. Brauer (2017), mentioned that there are a large number of students within colleges who are beginning to show their sexual identity and that the fact that institutions are more open to this issue makes students feel more comfortable in these spaces.

The last opinion that people have about the use of gender-inclusive language is age as a factor in the acceptance of gender-inclusive language. In the study by Senden et al. (2015), it is shown that age is important when adopting new ideas, such as this type of language, since the new generations are more eager to adopt them, unlike older people (grandparents or even parents), who find it difficult to uproot the mentalities they have.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The objective of this study was to synthesize the published information on the use of gender-inclusive language in English. This research synthesis was divided into three main units of analysis: reasons in favor of gender-inclusive language, reasons against gender-inclusive language, and opinions and beliefs about gender-inclusive language. Furthermore, based on the analysis and the data of the reported studies, three main conclusions were drawn.

The first conclusion obtained in this study shows that there are seven strong reasons to support the use of gender-inclusive language in the English language: a safer and more tolerant environment, fewer gender-based stereotypes, educational opportunities, development of student's potential, recognition of non-binary people, better communication with minorities, and more future sensitive teachers. With everything mentioned above, it is evident that the general reason why gender-inclusive language should be applied is because it would create an environment of respect for other people. In this way, it would be demonstrated that the communities that have felt marginalized for several years are beginning to have more recognition and support from society, thus showing more humanity, empathy, and sensitivity for others.

The second conclusion highlights that there are also reasons against the use of gender-inclusive language. One of the reasons that has been more fully described in different studies is the fact that trying to change the traditional grammar to fit the gender-inclusive language is complex; therefore, it could be a total waste of time. Another reason that is described is that the use of gender-inclusive language would result in the exclusion of another part of the community that does not want to use this type of language. The last reason is that the implementation of gender-inclusive language does not guarantee that the exclusion, either of members or nonmembers of the LGBTQIA+ community, will be completely eradicated, since in one way or another there will be affected parties.

As a last conclusion in this study, different opinions and beliefs were observed. Regarding beliefs, religion, respect, sense of inclusivity, and gender equality were found. The first, religion, makes it difficult to use gender-inclusive language because within the ideology and the way of seeing life of certain religious groups, there are only two genders in humanity. Therefore, groups such as non-binary people are not taken into account. However, the other

beliefs analyzed could ensure the inclusiveness of all minorities, promote their visibility, and improve equality between men and women.

In terms of opinions, it was mentioned that the educational texts used to teach English are sexist themselves, and that is why it is necessary to start applying inclusive language in the institutions so that all their members have a sense of belonging. In addition, another opinion described was that English itself is not sexist, but in the way human beings use it is, inferring that it is not necessary to apply inclusive language but only to know how to use the one that already exists.

The use of gender-inclusive language can be a very complex and difficult issue to deal with in society; however, with the information obtained, it can be said that it has had great acceptance among people, especially in the new generations. Nevertheless, it cannot be ignored that there is a part of the population that does not agree with the use of this language, since they perceive it as unnecessary. It should be noted that beliefs, opinions, and reasons in favor or against the use of gender-inclusive language are described neutrally in this project.

Recommendations

Gender-inclusive language in English has been a topic of great interest, not only in educational institutions, but also in the daily life of people. For this reason, it is important to mention three important recommendations.

The first recommendation relates to further investigations on the use of gender-inclusive language in relation to language skills and systems of the English language, such as vocabulary and grammar. These investigations will help to better understand how to effectively implement gender-inclusive language in the English language without compromising grammatical structures or effective communication. In addition, these investigations will also allow the development of more precise strategies and resources to promote gender-inclusive language without creating issues or discomfort when communicating in English.

The second recommendation is to encourage educational institutions to implement gender-inclusive language through a comprehensive and patient process. The reason for this recommendation is that many people who are against gender-inclusive language feel obligated to use it, without even understanding why they have to or why it is important to use it.

The last recommendation is to look beyond gender-inclusive language. Implementing inclusive language could be positive towards eradicating sexism and gender exclusion in the English language; however, we must recognize that it is not the only solution and that sexism and gender exclusion is still a reality. The reason for this is that gender-inclusive language does not directly address the stereotypes and prejudices embedded in our society. These sexist

and discriminatory attitudes go beyond the use of pronouns and nouns, and are rooted in our beliefs and behaviors. Real change requires a holistic approach that goes beyond language. It is necessary to promote education and gender awareness from an early age, challenging stereotyped gender roles and promoting equal opportunities in all areas of life.

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