

Gender-Fair Language in Teaching and Learning: The Experiences of Key Stage 2 English Teachers

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Abstract: This qualitative descriptive–exploratory study examined the experiences, awareness, classroom practices, challenges, and support needs related to the use of gender-fair language (GFL) among Key Stage 2 English teachers in the Gubat South District, Schools Division of Sorsogon. The study was anchored on Social Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012), Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981), Critical Discourse Analysis Theory (Fairclough, 1995), and Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which collectively explain how teachers' language both reflects and shapes gender norms in the classroom.

The research was guided by national and international mandates on gender equality, including Republic Act 9710 (Magna Carta of Women), DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2017 (Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy), and the Safe Spaces Act (RA 11313), alongside global frameworks such as UNESCO's Guidelines on Gender Equality in Education (2019) and United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5). These policies highlight the teacher's role in modeling inclusivity through language, making classroom discourse a critical site for promoting equality.

A qualitative descriptive–exploratory design was employed using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews. FGDs captured collective insights, while interviews provided deeper personal reflections, particularly from teachers unable to attend group sessions due to scheduling and logistical constraints. Data were analyzed thematically, with triangulation ensuring credibility and depth.

Findings revealed varying levels of awareness and application of GFL. Some teachers consciously used inclusive terms, gender-neutral job titles, and balanced classroom examples, while others relied on traditional, gender-biased language due to limited familiarity. Awareness was shaped by exposure to professional development and policy discussions, but opportunities were uneven across schools. Teachers identified several challenges, such as linguistic barriers, socio-cultural influences, and institutional gaps.

Teachers recognized the positive impact of GFL in fostering inclusivity, respect, and equitable classroom interaction, highlighting the importance of consistent modeling. Teachers emphasized the need for institutional support mechanisms, including continuous professional development, provision of inclusive materials, and stronger policy reinforcement.

The study concludes that while policies exist to promote gender-fair language, their translation into consistent classroom practice remains uneven. Responsive interventions are necessary to strengthen implementation.

This study demonstrates that language is not merely a medium of instruction but a powerful tool that shapes learners' perceptions of identity, equality, and fairness. By situating the research within global, national, and local frameworks, and by documenting the realities of teachers in Gubat South District, the study advances the discourse on gender-fair language as both a pedagogical practice and a social imperative.

Keywords: *Teaching and Learning, Gender-Fair Language, Key Stage 2 Teachers, Gender Stereotypes, Linguistic Barriers.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Language is more than a tool for communication. It is a mirror of society's values, beliefs, and power structures.

The words we use do not simply describe reality; they shape how individuals perceive themselves and others. In classrooms, where young minds are molded, the language teachers choose can either reinforce traditional gender

stereotypes or challenge them, opening the door to equality. This makes the use of gender-fair language (GFL) essential for creating learning spaces in which every learner feels seen, respected, and valued. GFL promotes balance among all genders, avoiding terms that carry bias or exclusion, and instead fostering inclusivity and mutual respect.

Scholars in sociolinguistics argue that language is not neutral; it carries ideological weight. According to Sapir-Whorf's linguistic relativity hypothesis, the way people speak influences how they think. Thus, when teachers use gender-biased language, they inadvertently shape learners' perceptions of gender roles. Conversely, inclusive language broadens learners' horizons, affirming that all genders can participate equally in society.

Across the world, institutions such as UNESCO and the United Nations have emphasized the teacher's role in using gender-responsive communication. The UNESCO Guidelines on Gender Equality in Education (2019) highlight that when teachers consciously use inclusive language, they help ensure that learners, regardless of gender, are equally represented in school dialogue. These global efforts remind educators that language is not static; it is a living practice that must evolve toward equity.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, explicitly calls for eliminating discriminatory practices in education. Language, as a daily practice, is central to this goal. When teachers adopt GFL, they contribute to SDG 5 by ensuring that classrooms are spaces of equity and empowerment.

International organizations have long recognized that education is a powerful driver of social change. UNESCO, for instance, has consistently advocated for gender equality in classrooms, emphasizing that language is one of the most immediate and visible means of promoting inclusivity. When teachers use gender-neutral terms, avoid stereotypes, and represent all genders fairly in examples and materials, they contribute to dismantling systemic bias. This is not a superficial adjustment but a transformative practice that challenges long-standing assumptions about gender roles and identities.

In the Philippines, this commitment is upheld by Republic Act 9710, the Magna Carta of Women, which mandates the elimination of gender discrimination in all spheres, including education. Complementing this law are the Department of Education's Gender and Development (GAD) programs, which call on schools to remove gender bias from learning materials, teaching methods, and daily communication. DepEd urges teachers to demonstrate gender sensitivity in instruction, feedback, and classroom interactions, areas where language deeply influences learners' attitudes and self-concept.

Further strengthening this framework is DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2017, also known as the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy. This order institutionalizes gender equality within the education system by mainstreaming

gender in all policies, programs, projects, and activities. It requires schools to ensure gender parity in staffing, create enabling environments for learners and employees, and integrate gender sensitivity into curriculum design and classroom practices. The order explicitly aligns with the Magna Carta of Women, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, and international commitments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). By embedding gender responsiveness into the very structure of education, DepEd Order No. 32 underscores that inclusivity is not optional, it is a mandate that must be consistently upheld in every classroom.

Equally important is the Safe Spaces Act (Republic Act 11313), which protects individuals from gender-based harassment in public spaces, workplaces, online platforms, and educational institutions. Within schools, the law emphasizes the creation of safe, respectful environments where learners are free from verbal, non-verbal, and physical harassment. Language plays a central role here: discriminatory remarks, sexist jokes, or biased feedback can create unsafe spaces that undermine learners' confidence and dignity. By practicing GFL, teachers not only comply with the Safe Spaces Act but also actively contribute to building classrooms where respect and equality are the norm. This law complements DepEd's policies by ensuring that inclusivity is not limited to curriculum design but extends to everyday interactions, safeguarding learners' rights to safety and respect. These policies are not abstract ideals; they are practical guidelines meant to shape everyday teaching. Teachers are encouraged to avoid gendered job titles like policeman or chairman and instead use inclusive alternatives such as police officer or chairperson. Classroom examples should portray boys and girls equally in diverse roles, challenging stereotypes that limit aspirations and reinforcing the idea that all learners can pursue any path. Feedback should be equitable; teachers must avoid praising boys for leadership while valuing girls primarily for neatness or obedience. Lesson plans should integrate gender-sensitive materials, ensuring that stories, exercises, and activities represent both male and female characters in empowering roles.

In the Bicol Region, gender-awareness seminars and training programs have been introduced to strengthen teachers' ability to use GFL in daily lessons. These initiatives aim to bridge the gap between policy and practice, equipping educators with the skills to consciously choose inclusive language.

Yet, despite these efforts, turning policy into consistent classroom practice remains a challenge. Within the Schools Division of Sorsogon, many programs promote gender responsiveness, but teachers' actual levels of awareness, implementation, and perceived barriers differ from school to school. Some educators may fully embrace GFL, while others struggle with ingrained habits, lack of training, or limited resources.

This uneven implementation highlights the need for sustained support. Policies alone cannot transform classroom culture; teachers must be empowered through continuous professional development, peer collaboration, and accessible teaching materials that model inclusivity. Without these supports, even well-intentioned educators may find it difficult to consistently apply GFL in their teaching.

Expanding the use of gender-fair language is not simply about compliance with laws and policies. It is about shaping the next generation's worldview. When learners grow up in classrooms where inclusivity is modeled through language, they are more likely to carry those values into society. Conversely, when bias is normalized through speech, stereotypes are perpetuated, and inequality persists.

By situating this study within the global framework (UNESCO, UN, SDG 5), the national framework (RA 9710, DepEd Order No. 32, RA 11313), and the local context (Bicol Region, Gubat South District), it becomes clear that language is both a micro-level practice and a macro-level policy concern. Teachers are at the intersection of these forces, and their choices in everyday communication have profound implications for learners' development and for society's progress toward gender equality.

The concern is especially relevant in Gubat South District, where Key Stage 2 English teachers play a pivotal role in shaping how young learners understand identity and fairness. At this stage, children are forming their sense of self and social awareness. The language teachers use, whether in instructions, examples, or feedback, serves as a model that can affirm equality or sustain bias. When a teacher consistently uses "he" to refer to generic individuals, students may internalize the idea that men are the default. Conversely, when teachers use "they" or alternate between "he" and "she," learners see that all genders are equally represented. When teachers praise boys for assertiveness but girls for neatness, they unintentionally reinforce stereotypes that limit both boys' and girls' potential.

Yet, little is known about how these teachers actually apply gender-fair language, what difficulties they encounter, and what support they need to make inclusivity a constant part of their teaching. This gap in knowledge underscores the importance of research and dialogue in the district. Understanding teachers' practices, challenges, and perspectives is crucial for designing interventions that not only promote awareness but also ensure that inclusivity becomes embedded in everyday classroom communication.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to examine the classroom experiences, awareness, practices, challenges, and support needs related to gender-fair language among Key Stage 2 English teachers in Gubat South District.

➤ *Specifically, This Study Aimed to:*

- Describe the classroom-level experiences of Key Stage 2 English teachers in using gender-fair language.
- Determine the level of awareness of gender-fair language among Key Stage 2 English teachers.
- Identify how teachers employ gender-fair language in the teaching–learning process.
- Determine the challenges encountered by teachers in implementing gender-fair language in the classroom, particularly linguistic and socio-cultural factors.
- Propose support mechanisms that may enhance the effective use of gender-fair language in English instruction.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive–exploratory research design utilizing Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and individual semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection methods. A qualitative approach was selected to allow for an in-depth exploration of teachers' shared and individual experiences, perceptions, and meanings regarding the use of gender-fair language in classroom instruction.

The descriptive component of the design emphasized the documentation and portrayal of teachers' actual experiences, awareness, and practices in applying gender-fair language. It provided a clear and detailed account of how Key Stage 2 English teachers in Gubat South District use language in their classrooms, highlighting both inclusive practices and instances where traditional gendered expressions persist.

The exploratory component recognizes that limited researches had been conducted on gender-fair language implementation at the district level, particularly in rural contexts. Thus, this study aimed to uncover new insights into the challenges teachers face, the socio-cultural factors influencing their language use, and the kinds of support mechanisms they believe would strengthen their ability to practice inclusivity. By adopting an exploratory stance, the study goes beyond description to probe deeper into underlying issues, contextual realities, and emerging themes that may not yet be well-documented in existing literature.

FGD was used to capture collective views, shared experiences, and group interaction related to gender-fair language practices. This method allowed participants to build on each other's ideas, highlighted common challenges, and surfaced collective strategies for promoting inclusivity. Individual interviews were conducted to obtain more detailed, personal, and reflective responses from participants who were unable to join the FGD or whose perspectives required deeper exploration. The combination of these two qualitative methods strengthened the richness and depth of the data while remaining purely qualitative in nature.

By employing a descriptive–exploratory design, the study ensured that it not only described the current state of

teachers' awareness and practices but also explored the broader contextual factors and institutional supports that shape their ability to implement gender-fair language. This dual focus provided a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, making the research both practical for immediate application and valuable for informing future policy and program development.

The participants of this study consisted of Key Stage 2 English teachers handling Grades 4 to 6 in public elementary schools in the Gubat South District, Schools Division of Sorsogon. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who had direct and relevant experience in English language instruction and classroom language use.

Participants were selected based on the following criteria: currently teaching English in Grades 4 to 6, assigned in public elementary schools within the Gubat South District and lastly willing to participate in either a focus group discussion or an individual interview.

Ten participants took part in the Focus Group Discussion and individual semi-structured interviews. This ensured that their experiences and perspectives were included in the study.

IV. RESULTS

This chapter presents the qualitative findings of the study on the use of gender-fair language in Key Stage 2 classrooms, derived from focal group discussions and semi-structured interviews with Key Stage 2 English teachers in the Gubat South District. The results are organized in accordance with the five subproblems of the study and reflect teachers' experiences, levels of awareness, instructional practices, challenges, and perceived support mechanisms related to gender-fair language.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, and selected verbatim excerpts are presented to substantiate the identified themes and ensure that the findings are grounded in the participants' perspectives. This chapter provides a systematic presentation of the results, which serve as the empirical basis for the discussion and recommendations in the succeeding chapter.

➤ *Experiences of Key Stage 2 Teachers on the Use of Gender Fair Language in the Classroom*

- *Conscious Use of Gender-Fair Language*

Participants consciously apply gender-fair language in their teaching practice. Participant 2 shared, "In my classroom, I consciously use gender-fair language by addressing students as learners or everyone instead of grouping them by gender." Similarly, Participant 4 stated, "I say learners instead of boys and girls. I also assign tasks regardless of gender." Participant 5 added, "Sometimes, when I am doing comparisons of roles in the household, I make sure to use gender-fair language." Meanwhile, Participant 10 emphasized respect in word choice, saying, "When teaching comparative sentences, I use gender-fair

language. In English teaching, I may not be intentional in using gender-fair language, but I am intentional in choosing the best terms that promote respect."

- *Inclusive Classroom Practices*

Participants highlighted inclusive strategies beyond word choice. Participant 3 explained, "During English lessons, everybody is given a chance to answer or share their thoughts and ideas, without interrupting their bodily gestures." Participant 9 also noted, "Sometimes, during recitation and when making questions, I use gender-fair language." Participant 1 emphasized, "on giving instructions and giving examples in lesson and calling pupils attention". These responses show efforts to create equitable participation and fairness in classroom interactions.

- *Unconscious or Unintentional Use*

Participants admitted that their use of gender-fair language is more unconscious than deliberate. Participant 6 reflected, "Consciously, no. But unconsciously, I use gender-fair language in lessons about nouns and pronouns." Participant 7 echoed this sentiment, saying, "Unconsciously, I am used to the term learners, but consciously I don't think about it much." Participant 8 said, "I unconsciously use gender-fair language"

➤ *Students' Responses to Gender-Fair Language*

- *Positive and Natural Responses*

Some learners respond well to gender-fair language. Participant 1 noted, "They already know that both boys and girls can have the same occupation." Participant 4 shared, "My learners respond positively and naturally." Similarly, Participant 10 observed, "They are responsive according to the instructions given." These responses show that many students accept gender-fair language without resistance.

- *Curiosity and Questions*

Participant 3 explained, "They ask why I used such terms, and I take the time to explain it to them." Participant 7 echoed this, saying, "They are curious and ask why I use such terms, but they are not resistant." This indicates that learners are inquisitive and open to understanding the rationale behind inclusive language.

- *Limited Awareness or Familiarity*

Participant 2 mentioned, "It did not make a noticeable difference because the learners are at an intermediate level and are not yet fully aware of gender-related language." Participant 8 added, "It sounds different to them because they are not familiar with the terms." Participant 5 also observed, "They are not that specific in answering when I use gender-fair language." These responses highlight the need for more exposure and explanation. Other learners are less aware or familiar with gender-fair language.

- *Difficulty in Identification*

Participant 6 shared, "They cannot really identify the person if I use gender-neutral terms." This suggests that learners may need clearer guidance and contextual examples

to fully grasp inclusive language. Some students struggle to interpret gender-neutral terms.

- *Non-Reactive or Neutral Responses*

Participant 9 explained, “Most of the time, pupils do not notice. They are non-reactive whether I use gender-biased or gender-fair language.” Participant 1 added, “They already know that boys and girls can have the same occupation.” This indicates that for some students, gender-fair language does not significantly affect their engagement. A few learners do not show noticeable reactions.

- *Conflicts or Uncertainty in Using Gender-Fair Language*

- *No Conflict or Uncertainty*

Participant 1 and 3 simply stated, “No, not conflicted.” Participant 4 added a positive perspective, saying, “Using gender-fair language now feels natural and helpful in creating an inclusive classroom.” These responses suggest that for some teachers, gender-fair language has already become a comfortable and integrated practice.

- *Initial Uncertainty but Improved with Practice*

Participant 2 explained, “At times, I was unsure at first, especially when shifting from commonly used terms. But with practice, it became natural and clearer for both the students and me.” This highlights the role of consistent practice in overcoming uncertainty. This acknowledged initial hesitation but noted improvement over time.

- *Challenges with Vocabulary and Familiarity*

Participant 5 admitted, “Yes, because there are still words and language that I am not familiar with.” Participant 9 echoed this, saying, “Sometimes, because I am not really knowledgeable enough about gender-fair terms.” These responses show gaps in vocabulary and knowledge. Participants expressed difficulty due to unfamiliarity with certain terms.

- *Influence of Traditional Language Use*

Participant 6 shared, “Yes, because I am used to using a definitive gender identity. I feel the need to identify if the person is really male or female to help learners understand.” Participant 7 added, “Sometimes I feel hesitant about using it, maybe because we are used to the old ways.” Participant 8 was more direct, stating, “Yes, I’m really conflicted in using it.” These responses reflect the challenge of shifting away from ingrained habits and cultural norms. Participants linked their hesitation to traditional ways of speaking.

- *Certainty as a Teaching Principle*

One participant emphasized the importance of confidence in teaching. Participant 10 remarked, “You should not teach if you are unsure or conflicted; you should be certain about what you will discuss.” This underscores the belief that teachers must be clear and confident in their language use to effectively guide learners.

- *Influence of Gender-Fair Language on Teaching Style and Classroom Atmosphere*

- *Promoting Inclusivity and Respect*

Participant 1 explained, “It promotes inclusivity, builds a positive environment that fosters self-confidence and respect among learners, improves academic performance, and enhances my professional development.” Participant 2 added, “Using gender-fair language helps reinforce respect, inclusivity, and awareness in the classroom.” Participant 5 highlighted its modeling effect, saying, “Gender-fair language has influenced my teaching style in meaningful ways by modeling respect and values to my learners.” Similarly, Participant 7 noted, “It makes the classroom more inclusive, with no activities that separate girls and boys.” Participant 6 and 8 mentioned, “It makes my teaching style more inclusive.” Several participants emphasized that gender-fair language fosters inclusivity and respect in the classroom.

- *Enhancing Classroom Interaction*

Participant 3 shared, “The discussion becomes more open and livelier.” Participant 4 reflected, “It made my teaching style more inclusive and thoughtful.” Participant 9 also described integration into lessons, stating, “By explaining and using gender-fair language in simple lessons, I integrate it naturally into teaching.” Participants observed that gender-fair language positively affects classroom dynamics.

- *Careful Language Use*

Participant 10 explained, “I became more careful in choosing the language I use in teaching.” This shows heightened awareness of how language impacts learners. Participant 10 mentioned becoming more deliberate in their word choices.

- *Familiarity with the Concept of Gender-Fair Language*

- *Basic Familiarity*

Participant 1, 6, 7, and 8 said, “familiar with the basics.” Participant 6 added, “I’m not familiar with the details, but the basics.” Participant 9 explained, “I have basic familiarity. I have some knowledge” Participant 10 also shared, “I’m not really familiar with the advanced concept, but I am open to learn it.” Participant 3 mentioned, “A bit familiar.” These responses suggest that some teachers have initial awareness but need more guidance on practical application. Others are open to learning. Participants admitted that they are not familiar with the concept of gender-fair language.

- *Clear Understanding and Application*

Participant 2 explained, “I understand the basics of gender-fair language and make an effort to use it in my teaching.” Participant 4 provided a more detailed definition, saying, “I’m quite familiar with the concept of gender-fair language. It means using words and expressions that include all genders and avoid bias, such as saying students instead of boys and girls.” Participant 5 affirmed, “I am familiar with it, and I understand its purpose.” These responses reflect

teachers who are more confident in both the concept and its classroom application.

➤ *Sources of Learning About Gender-Fair Language*

- *Personal Study and Self-Learning*

Participant 1 shared, “I first learned about gender-fair language through personal study and from colleagues.” Participant 5 echoed this, saying, “I first learned it through personal studies and Gender and Development (GAD) related seminars.” These responses highlight the role of self-directed learning and professional seminars in building awareness. Participants learned about gender-fair language through their own initiative.

- *Social Media and Online Sources*

Participant 2 explained, “I learned about it from social media videos and started applying some of the tips in my classroom.” Participant 3 added, “From social media.” Participant 9 also noted, “From online sources.” These responses show how digital platforms contribute to teachers’ exposure to gender-fair language as participants mentioned social media and online platforms as sources.

- *Formal Training and Seminars*

Others gained knowledge through structured training programs. Participant 7 stated, “From GAD training, as a subtopic in a district seminar.” Participant 8 shared, “It was mentioned during INSET training.” Participant 10 added, “Through school education, training, and seminars.” Participant 4 and 6 mentioned, “I first learned it from seminar.” These responses emphasize the importance of institutional training in introducing gender-fair language.

➤ *Teachers’ Awareness of Gender-Fair Language in the District*

- *Varied Levels of Awareness Among Teachers*

Participant 2 explained, “I believe awareness of gender-fair language varies among teachers in our district. Some actively use it, while others may not know much about it because it is not widely emphasized in our professional development programs.” Participant 5 added, “I think so, but maybe the level of understanding and practices varies.” These responses suggest uneven exposure and application across the district. Some participants believed that awareness exists but differs in depth and practice.

- *Basic or Unconscious Awareness*

Participant 4 reflected, “I think so, but perhaps like me, they are also partially aware of gender-fair language. However, it is continuously and unconsciously used in the classroom.” Participant 1 and 3 added, “Yes, but basic awareness. This indicates that while awareness may be limited, unconscious practices still occur. A few participants noted that teachers may be using gender-fair language without consciously realizing it.

- *Awareness Without Consistent Practice*

Participant 7 remarked, “Teachers are aware, yes. But practicing it, I would say no.” Participant 10 added, “I think yes, but it is not that visible in the application.” This highlights the gap between awareness and actual classroom implementation. Thus, participants believed teachers know about gender-fair language but do not consistently apply it.

➤ *Self-Assessment of Awareness of Gender-Fair Language*

- *Basic Awareness*

Most participants assessed their awareness of gender-fair language as basic. Participant 1 stated, “My awareness is at a basic level.” Participant 3 echoed this, saying, “My awareness is still basic.” Participant 4 added, “I consider my awareness basic.” Participant 5 affirmed, “My awareness is basic.” Participant 7 also noted, “My awareness is basic.” Participant 8 shared, “I am at a basic level of awareness.” Finally, Participant 9 said, “My awareness is basic.” These responses show that the majority of teachers recognize only a foundational understanding of the concept.

- *Moderate Awareness*

A smaller group described their awareness as moderate, indicating partial understanding and ongoing learning. Participant 2 explained, “I would describe my awareness as moderate since I understand the concepts but am still learning.” Participant 6 reflected, “I assess my awareness as moderate.” Participant 10 also shared, “I would say my awareness is moderate.” These responses suggest that while some teachers have moved beyond the basics, they still see room for growth in applying gender-fair language.

➤ *How Do Teachers Employ Gender Fair Language in the Classroom*

- *Establishing Respect and Inclusivity in Classroom Practices*

Participant 1 shared, “I create classroom rules about respect and promote inclusive education.” Participant 10 reinforced this broader approach, stating, “I put fairness into all aspects of teaching and learning.” These responses highlight the importance of embedding fairness and inclusivity into classroom culture. Hence, participants emphasized creating a respectful and inclusive classroom environment as a strategy.

- *Using Neutral and Inclusive Terms*

Participant 2 explained, “I use gender-fair language by replacing gender-specific instructions with inclusive terms, so all students feel equally responsible and included.” Participant 4 added, “I use neutral terms and encourage students to speak inclusively. I also praise students who use neutral language.” Participant 5 noted, “One strategy I use is consistently applying gender-neutral terms.” Participant 7 emphasized, “I always use the word learners to avoid bias.” These responses show deliberate efforts to normalize inclusive terminology. Thus, participants focused on consciously choosing neutral language.

- *Integrating Gender-Fair Language into Activities and Lessons*

Participant 3 shared, “I apply strategies such as think-pair-share, grouping, and other collaborative activities.” Participant 8 explained, “I integrate gender-fair language when students are filling out forms.” Participant 9 added, “I lecture students about how to use gender-fair language.” Participant 6 added, “I use gender-fair language in group work.” These responses demonstrate how teachers embed inclusivity into both instructional methods and classroom tasks and integrate gender-fair language through specific teaching strategies and activities.

- *Examples of Classroom Activities Where Gender-Fair Language Is Applied*

- *Inclusive Group Activities and Collaboration*

Participant 1 shared, “I use inclusive learning materials and ensure equal participation in group activities.” Participant 6 explained, “I use group work on topics like common and proper nouns, and compound words, though making long sentences with gender-fair terms can be a challenge.” Participant 8 added, “I integrate gender-fair language in group activities, especially when discussing the difference between sex and gender.” Participant 9 noted, “I apply it in lessons on nouns and group activities, though sometimes the integration is limited.” Participant 10 reinforced this approach, saying, “I organize group collaboration activities that give equal opportunities for both genders to excel.” These responses highlight how collaborative learning tasks serve as a platform for practicing gender-fair language. Thus, emphasized the use of group activities to promote inclusivity.

- *Replacing Gender-Specific Instructions with Inclusive Language*

Participant 2 explained, “For example, in teaching GMRC, instead of saying ‘Boys should help their fathers, and girls should help their mothers,’ I use inclusive language and encourage everyone to help their parents or guardians at home.” Participant 5 also emphasized fairness in examples, stating, “I balance examples and word choices to fairly represent all genders.” These strategies show conscious efforts to normalize inclusivity in everyday classroom instructions. Hence, participants described modifying instructions and examples to avoid gender bias.

- *Creative and Expressive Activities*

Participant 3 shared, “I ask students to compose a short poem where they use gender-fair terms.” Participant 7 described role-play activities, saying, “I conduct role-playing activities where anyone can be the leader, regardless of gender.” These activities encourage learners to actively practice inclusive language in expressive and interactive contexts. Other participants integrate gender-fair language into creative tasks.

- *Recitation and Oral Reading*

One participant highlighted oral activities as opportunities to apply gender-fair language. Participant 4 stated, “I apply gender-fair language during recitation and

oral reading activities.” This shows that even routine classroom practices can be adapted to reinforce inclusivity.

- *Adjusting Teaching Materials to Reflect Gender-Fair Language*

- *Using Neutral and Inclusive Terms*

Participant 2 explained, “When preparing lesson materials, I use neutral and inclusive terms and include examples that show all genders participating in various activities and roles.” Participant 4 added, “I change gendered words and replace them with neutral examples.” Participant 5 noted, “I adjust by reviewing textbooks and changing the use of common pronouns if necessary.” Participant 6 also shared, “I change people’s titles in discussions, especially in subject-verb agreement lessons.” These responses highlight deliberate adjustments to ensure materials reflect fairness and inclusivity. These emphasized consciously replacing gendered words with neutral and inclusive language.

- *Creating or Editing Materials*

Participant 7 said, “I manually edit materials; if I make a mistake, I can easily erase and correct the writing on the board.” Participant 10 emphasized proactive creation, stating, “I create my own materials that suit the needs of the learners, ensuring they reflect fairness.” Participants 8 and 9 added, “adjustments are made in group activity materials.” These responses show practical ways teachers adapt or design resources to integrate gender-fair language and describe strategies of directly editing or producing their own materials.

- *Providing Explanations and Translations*

Participant 1 explained, “In discussions, I provide more explanation about situations to highlight inclusivity.” Participant 3 added, “I translate or provide equivalent terms that are considered gender-fair.” These strategies emphasize the importance of explanation and contextualization in adjusting materials and focus on clarifying concepts and offering equivalent terms.

- *Monitoring Language to Avoid Gender Bias*

- *Active Monitoring and Reflection*

Participant 1 shared, “Sometimes I monitor my language to avoid gender bias.” Participant 3 emphasized self-awareness, saying, “I give myself a constant self-reminder to avoid gender bias.” Participant 5 reflected, “Yes, I reflect on my word choices, especially when giving instructions and welcoming feedback from learners and colleagues.” Participant 7 admitted, “Yes, but sometimes I slip.” Participant 9 also noted, “Yes, I monitor my language, but sometimes I realize too late that I am not using it properly.” Participant 10 added, “I am intentional in promoting fairness, but unconsciously, my language may become gender-biased in the flow of the lesson.” These responses show that while teachers strive to monitor their language, lapses and unconscious bias can still occur. Hence, participants consciously monitor their language to avoid bias.

- *Partial or Situational Monitoring*

Participant 2 explained, “I focus more on the lesson content, though I try to use inclusive language when I notice gendered terms.” This indicates that monitoring is not always consistent, but happens when teachers become aware of potentially biased expressions and monitor their language only occasionally or when prompted by context.

- *Non-Monitoring*

Participant 4 stated, “No, sometimes I am unconscious of it.” Participant 6 added, “I don’t monitor because I don’t know if I will be biased.” Participant 8 also shared, “No, I don’t consciously monitor my language.” These responses highlight gaps in awareness and the need for training to help teachers recognize and address gender bias in language use. Participants admitted they do not consciously monitor their language.

- *Challenges Encountered by Teachers in Using Gender Fair Language in the Classroom*

- *Linguistic Challenges in Applying Gender-Fair Language*

- ✓ *No Significant Challenges Experienced*

Participant 1 stated, “As of now, I have never experienced such a situation.” Participant 3 similarly responded, “None.” Participant 6 explained, “In my mind, I don’t have a problem with it because I am not conscious of whether I am biased or not.” Participant 10 added, “Not really challenges, because I adjust the lesson to the level of the learners.” These responses suggest that for some teachers, gender-fair language does not present noticeable difficulties in practice. Participants reported that they do not encounter linguistic challenges in applying gender-fair language.

- ✓ *Challenges in Word Choice and Historical Accuracy*

One participant highlighted the difficulty of balancing inclusivity with historical accuracy. Participant 2 shared, “One challenge I face is choosing words that are neutral but still accurate, especially in historical contexts. For example, in teaching language, instead of saying ‘Men fought in the revolution and women stayed home,’ I carefully phrase it to be inclusive while still historically correct, such as mentioning that women like Gregoria de Jesús contributed to the revolutionary cause.” This reflects the challenge of maintaining factual accuracy while ensuring inclusivity in teaching materials.

- ✓ *Habit, Tradition, and Textbook Limitations*

Participant 4 explained, “Habit and tradition pose challenges, as we are used to saying ‘he’ or ‘boys and girls.’ Many teaching materials and textbooks still use gender-biased language, especially in traditional contexts.” This shows how established linguistic norms and outdated resources can hinder the consistent application of gender-fair language and points to ingrained habits and traditional teaching materials as barriers.

- ✓ *Grammar, Translation, and Vocabulary Issues*

Participant 5 stated, “Grammar and translation are challenges I encounter.” Participant 7 noted, “Grammar is a challenge for me.” Participant 8 added, “Grammar and vocabulary are challenges I face.” Participant 9 explained further, “Grammar is difficult because we are not always sure if we are using gender-fair or gender-biased language.” These responses highlighted the technical linguistic difficulties teachers face when applying gender-fair language consistently and identify grammar, translation, and vocabulary as their main challenges.

- *Socio-Cultural Factors That Make It Difficult to Use Gender-Fair Language*

- *Traditional Gender Roles and Norms*

Participant 1 explained, “Traditional gender roles, community expectations, and students’ prior experiences make it harder to consistently use gender-fair language in the classroom.” Participant 4 added, “Tradition, gender roles, and norms mostly influence learners and the community. Some families are not familiar with gender-fair language, making it difficult to introduce and instill among learners.” Participant 5 emphasized, “Tradition plays a role, as we are used to using binary gender terms.” Participant 6 noted, “The traditional mindset of the community makes it difficult to apply gender-fair language.” Participant 7 reinforced this, saying, “Tradition is hard to change, which makes it challenging to use gender-fair language.” These responses highlight how cultural norms and long-standing practices hinder the adoption of inclusive language. Participants identified tradition and entrenched gender roles as barriers.

- *Community Expectations and Influence*

Participant 3 shared, “Community expectations influence language use, since this is simply how people speak to one another.” This reflects how social norms within communities reinforce traditional language patterns, making it harder for teachers to introduce gender-fair alternatives. Participants pointed to community expectations as a factor shaping language use.

- *Student Backgrounds and Awareness*

Participant 8 explained, “Student backgrounds also matter, as some students are not yet aware of gender-fair language.” This suggests that the difficulty lies not only in community norms but also in learners’ readiness to understand and apply inclusive language. They mentioned that learners’ backgrounds and prior exposure affect the use of gender-fair language.

- *No Perceived Difficulty*

Not all participants reported socio-cultural challenges. Participant 2 simply stated, “None.” Participant 9 also expressed a different perspective, saying, “I do not really conform to tradition and community expectations. I focus more on the objectives of the lesson and what should be taught and learned, including gender-fair language when possible.” These responses show that while socio-cultural

factors exist, some teachers consciously choose to prioritize inclusivity regardless of external influences.

➤ *Resistance to Gender-Fair Language*

- *No Resistance Encountered*

Most participants reported that they have not experienced resistance to gender-fair language. Participant 1 stated, “None.” Participant 2 affirmed, “No, I haven’t encountered resistance from students, parents, or colleagues regarding gender-fair language.” Participant 3 also said, “No.” Participant 4 added, “None so far.” Participant 6 shared, “None.” Participant 8 echoed, “None.” Participant 9 likewise noted, “None.” These responses suggest that for the majority of teachers, gender-fair language is either accepted or not questioned in their classrooms and communities.

- *Curiosity and Questions from Learners*

Participant 7 explained, “I haven’t encountered resistance, but children are sometimes curious and ask questions.” This indicates that students may seek clarification about inclusive terms, but such inquiries are not necessarily forms of resistance. Participants mentioned that while they did not encounter outright resistance, learners sometimes expressed curiosity.

- *Instances of Resistance or Challenge*

Participant 5 shared, “Yes, there have been instances wherein learners asked me why certain terms should be used to indicate gender equality.” Participant 10 reflected more broadly, saying, “Yes, because whenever there is change, there is always some resistance.” These responses highlight that resistance may arise either from learners questioning the rationale behind inclusive language or from the general challenge of shifting away from traditional norms, acknowledging experiencing some level of resistance.

➤ *Coping with Challenges in Using Gender-Fair Language*

- *Conscious Effort and Modeling Inclusive Language*

Participant 1 shared, “I cope by paying attention to my words in class and modeling inclusive language for the students.” Participant 4 added, “I cope with these challenges through continuous learning and by consistently modeling respectful language.” These responses highlight the importance of teacher awareness and role modeling in overcoming challenges by deliberately monitoring their language and modeling inclusivity for learners.

- *Explanation and Clarification*

Participant 2 stated, “Explanation is the key to coping with challenges.” Participant 3 explained, “I begin with simple changes, such as saying students instead of boys and girls, and explain the purpose when needed.” Participant 6 also noted, “I cope by explaining simply.” Participant 7 reinforced this approach, saying, “I simply tell learners that there are terms we can use and that we should respect them.” These responses show that clarifying the rationale behind gender-fair language helps learners understand and accept it emphasized explanation as their main coping strategy.

- *Open-Mindedness and Reflection*

Participant 9 shared, “I cope with challenges through open-mindedness, seeing both the pros and cons of resistance or difficulties.” This response suggests that adopting a balanced perspective helps teachers navigate challenges more effectively highlighted flexibility and reflection as a coping mechanism.

- *No Coping Mechanism Identified*

Participant 5 explained, “I cannot identify if I am using biased language, so I cannot provide a coping mechanism.” Participant 8 added, “I do not have a coping mechanism because I do not encounter hard challenges.” These responses indicate gaps in awareness and the need for more structured support.

➤ *Proposed Support Mechanism to Promote Gender Fair Language in the Classroom*

- *Expert-Led Training and Guidance*

Participant 1 stated, “Training from an expert would help me use gender-fair language more effectively.” Participant 3 echoed this, saying, “Training conducted by experts in gender-fair matters would be beneficial.” These responses highlight the need for specialized expertise to guide teachers in adopting inclusive language. Thus, participants emphasized the importance of training conducted by experts to ensure proper understanding and application.

- *Workshops and Practical Applications*

Participant 2 explained, “Workshops or training on how to use gender-fair language in teaching, with practical examples and guidance for different subjects, would be very helpful.” Participant 5 added, “Workshops like gender-sensitivity training would help teachers understand gender concepts and practice inclusive language.” Participant 7 reinforced this, saying, “Practical application training would help me integrate gender-fair language more effectively.” These responses emphasize the need for interactive and practice-oriented sessions, such as suggested workshops and hands-on training, as effective strategies.

- *Integration into Gender and Development (GAD) Programs*

Participant 6 noted, “We should be trained specifically on gender-fair language, especially in GAD (Gender and Development) seminars.” Participant 9 suggested, “Gender-fair language should be inserted into Gender and Development training programs.” These responses show that embedding gender-fair language into existing GAD initiatives can help institutionalize its practice and highlight the role of GAD seminars in strengthening awareness.

- *Deepening Understanding of Gender Concepts*

Participant 4 explained, “I need training that focuses on understanding gender concepts and comprehending them more deeply.” This highlights the importance of grounding teachers in the theoretical foundations of gender equality,

likely stressing the need for training that goes beyond language use to include conceptual understanding

- *District-Level and General Seminars*

Participant 8 shared, “Training and seminars conducted at the district level would be useful.” Participant 10 added, “Seminars and training should be conducted to clear out confusion about gender-fair language.” These responses reflect the need for institutional support and widespread dissemination of training opportunities, with greater emphasis on accessibility and broader implementation of training.

- *How School Administrators Can Support Teachers in Promoting Gender-Fair Language*

- *Providing Training, Seminars and Workshops*

Participant 2 shared, “Administrators can support teachers through training, guidance, and by creating a school environment that accepts and supports the use of inclusive and gender-fair language.” Participant 4 added, “Administrators should allow teachers to attend trainings and orientations about gender-fair language.” Participant 5 suggested, “Support can be given by providing training and workshops, updating school policies, and most importantly, leading by example.” Participant 6 noted, “The school head should organize seminars on this topic.” Participant 8 reinforced this, saying, “Administrators can invite resource persons to seminars to give teachers awareness of gender-fair language.” Finally, Participant 10 emphasized, “Administrators should provide training, materials, and monitor whether gender-fair language is implemented in teaching materials.” These responses highlight the need for structured and continuous training programs to strengthen teachers’ knowledge and practice, and emphasize the importance of professional development opportunities.

- *Policy Support and Proposals*

Participant 1 suggested, “School administrators can make a proposal focusing on the topic of gender-fair language.” Participant 5 also mentioned updating school policies as part of institutional support. These responses show that administrative initiatives can help institutionalize gender-fair language practices, likely pointing to the role of administrators in formalizing support through proposals and policies.

- *Financial, Moral, and Encouragement Support*

Participant 3 stated, “They can provide both financial and moral support.” Participant 7 added, “Clear support and encouragement from administrators is important.” These responses highlight that, beyond training, administrators’ encouragement and resource allocation are crucial in sustaining teachers’ efforts, which more or less emphasize the importance of moral and financial backing.

- *Supporting Collaborative Discussions*

One participant highlighted the value of collaborative dialogue. Participant 9 shared, “They can support focus group discussions initiated by the school head.” This

suggests that administrators can foster collective reflection and sharing of best practices among teachers.

- *Role of Curriculum Developers and Textbook Writers in Ensuring Gender-Fair Language*

- *Promoting Inclusivity and Fairness in Content*

Participant 1 stated, “Curriculum developers and textbook writers should be fair and promote inclusivity in every story.” Participant 2 reinforced this by saying, “They should design materials that use inclusive language and show all genders in diverse roles, ensuring examples are fair and balanced.” Participant 5 added, “They should include diverse role models and avoid writing biased examples.” These responses highlight the importance of ensuring that learning materials reflect equality and inclusivity. It was emphasized that the need for fairness and inclusivity in the stories and examples presented in textbooks.

- *Advocacy and Leadership in Gender-Fair Language*

Participant 3 explained, “They should act as advocates of gender-fair language, both in words and in deed.” Participant 4 expanded this role, saying, “They should use inclusive language in content and also train and guide teachers in applying it.” These responses suggest that curriculum developers and textbook writers are not only responsible for content creation but also for influencing and guiding teachers toward inclusive practices, as some participants viewed curriculum developers and textbook writers as advocates who should lead by example.

- *Integration and Normalization of Gender-Fair Language*

Participant 6 noted, “Curriculum developers and textbook writers should add balanced and gender-fair language in the books.” Participant 7 emphasized, “They should normalize the use of gender-fair language in textbooks.” Participant 8 added, “They should integrate gender-fair language throughout the textbooks.” Participant 9 suggested, “They should put terms in the books and curriculum that integrate gender-fair language.” Participant 10 concluded, “They should make gender-fair language more visible in both curriculum and textbooks.” These responses highlight the need for systematic integration so that gender-fair language becomes a standard practice rather than an occasional adjustment, which likely stressed the importance of embedding gender-fair language consistently throughout textbooks and the curriculum.

- *Practical Resources to Strengthen Gender-Fair Language Use*

- *Workshops, Seminars, and Peer Mentoring*

Participant 1 shared, “Workshops and peer mentoring would be helpful.” Participant 2 added, “Simple workshops, discussion sessions with fellow teachers, and reference guides showing how to use gender-fair language in Filipino and English lessons would be most useful.” Participant 7 stressed, “Workshops are really needed.” Participant 8 noted, “Guides and workshops on using gender-fair language would be beneficial.” Participant 9 reinforced this, saying, “Seminars and workshops would help strengthen

awareness and practice.” These responses highlight that teachers value collaborative and experiential learning opportunities and the need for interactive training sessions to strengthen awareness and practice.

- *Guides, Toolkits and Reference Materials*

Participant 4 explained, “Guides and toolkits, especially the United Nations Gender-Inclusive Language Toolbox, with step-by-step practical activities and examples, would strengthen gender-fair communication.” Participant 5 suggested, “Online guides and foundational reading materials would be helpful resources.” Participant 6 added, “Reading materials such as booklets with easy wording, comprehensible explanations, and short sentences would be useful.” Participant 10 concluded, “Guides that show how to integrate gender-fair language into teaching and learning would be very useful.” These responses show that teachers want clear, practical, and accessible resources to support their classroom practice. Likewise, participants pointed to the importance of accessible guides and toolkits.

- *No Resources Identified*

One participant did not identify any resources. Participant 3 simply stated, “None.” This suggests either a lack of awareness of available resources or a perception that no additional support is needed.

V. CONCLUSIONS

- Teachers’ experiences show that while some consciously apply gender-fair language, gaps in awareness and practice remain, requiring stronger emphasis in classroom teaching.
- There is a varied level of awareness among teachers in using gender-fair language in the teaching-learning process.
- Teachers integrate gender-fair language in the teaching-learning process.
- Teachers encountered linguistic and socio-cultural challenges in using gender-fair language.
- Strengthen gender-fair language use requires expert-led training, administrative backing, curriculum integration, and accessible resources to ensure inclusivity becomes standard practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement regular awareness campaigns and classroom demonstrations to encourage consistent use of gender-fair language.
- Organize structured training programs and workshops at the district level in the use of gender-fair language.
- Provide practical toolkits, guides, and peer mentoring systems on gender-fair language to strengthen.
- Develop school policies and administrator-led initiatives to address socio-cultural resistance and ensure ongoing support.
- Collaborate with district curriculum implementers and instructional materials writers to embed gender-fair language in instructional materials and normalize inclusivity.

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