

University Students' Preferences for Gender Specific and Gender Neutral Occupational Terms and Gender Neutral Singular Pronouns: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT The present study reports on University of Swaziland students' preferences in the use of occupational naming terms and gender neutrality in third person singular pronouns' use. This case study employed the survey design to source information from 80 respondents. An 18-item self-administered questionnaire and follow up interviews sourced data on students' preferred occupational terms and gender neutral pronouns and the rationale for the particular preferences. Findings indicated that despite the increasing calls for gender neutrality in language use, university students still prefer gendered terms for sex-specific references and reserve gender neutral terms for references to persons of unknown sex. In terms of pronoun preferences, double pronoun constructions and the use of the androgynous 'they' represent the most preferred strategies of dealing with the pronoun problem among the university students. The study recommended the recognition of the language the users view as practical in any form of language planning.