ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 5| May 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691 || ISI Value: 1.188

GENDER-FAIR LANGUAGE: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ON ITS IMPLEMENTATION

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Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra21718
DOI No: 10.36713/epra21718

ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explored the implementation of gender-fair language in secondary schools, focusing on practices, institutional strategies, and educator insights as guided by DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2017. The study utilized a qualitative research design using phenomenological approach with 13 secondary English teachers in the Schools Division of Davao de Oro chosen through purposive sampling. Thematic content analysis was used as a data analysis tool. Thematic analysis identified key aspects of gender-fair language adoption: motivation in its use, positive impact on students, and effective teaching strategies. Additionally, institutional support, professional development, and curriculum adjustments emerged as critical elements in strengthening implementation. Findings highlight how schools intensify integration through training, advocacy, and resource development, while educators emphasize the need for more inclusive instructional materials and langua
ge adaptation. Despite progress, barriers such as cultural resistance, lack of training, and limited resources persist. Strengthening policies, refining curriculum, and implementing targeted professional development programs are essential in overcoming challenges and fostering a more inclusive learning environment. By equipping educators with the necessary knowledge and tools, schools can reinforce gender-fair language practices that promote respect, equality, and awareness among students, contributing to a progressive educational system.

KEYWORDS: *Education, Gender-Fair Language, English Language Teaching, Secondary School Teachers, Phenomenology*

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education (DepEd) introduced the Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy (GRBE) to advance gender equality by integrating a gender-responsive framework into basic education. This initiative seeks to support the well-rounded development of Filipino students by guaranteeing equitable access to high-quality, culturally relevant education, which includes the incorporation of gender-fair language in learning materials (Department of Education) Language is an integral part in communication and education. It serves as an instrument not just in expressing ideas but also in shaping ideas and recognizing diversity. Since language evolves through time and people come with different perspectives and personalities, linguistic sensitivity is needed to be considered. Gender-inclusive language is implemented to minimize biases and promote fairness by reducing stereotypes and discrimination in communication.

The Department of Education characterizes gender-fair language as communication that is non-sexist and mindful of gender sensitivity. Similarly, the Center for Genomic Regulation defines gender-inclusive or gender-neutral language as a broad concept that embraces non-sexist, inclusive, and gender-fair expressions. The primary goal of gender-inclusive language is to eliminate word choices that could be viewed as biased, discriminatory, or degrading by suggesting that a particular sex or gender identity is the default. Implementing gender-fair and inclusive language helps diminish gender stereotypes, drive social progress, and promote gender equality (Stadler).

Despite ongoing initiatives, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) has identified persistent gender biases and stereotypes within educational curricula, teaching methods, learning materials, and media. Research underscores the continued difficulties in establishing gender-responsive and inclusive education, especially in areas such as curriculum development, instructional approaches, assessment strategies, educational facilities, and teacher training in the Philippines (Hernandez and Cudiamat).

Research in Colombia emphasizes the crucial role of gender in English language teacher education, equipping educators with insights from both social and educational perspectives. This analysis also influences teaching practices related to gender inclusivity (Mojica and Castañeda-Peña). Likewise, studies in Argentina examine how gender and sexuality concepts can be integrated into language instruction, identifying opportunities for educators to incorporate gender-related discussions in foreign language teaching (Banegas).

A study conducted in the Philippines explored how Filipino college English teachers perceive the advantages, strategies, and obstacles associated with integrating gender perspectives into English Language Teaching (ELT). The findings highlighted a gap in existing research concerning Filipino ELT

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educators' perspectives on incorporating gender-related themes into English language instruction (Tarrayo).
In compliance with DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2017, secondary schools in the Schools Division of Davao de Oro have adopted strategies to promote gender-fair language. However, despite training programs, many school administrators and faculty members continue to face challenges in fully grasping its importance. Raising awareness of Gender and Development (GAD) and its core principles across the entire school community requires substantial effort and time.

Recognizing these obstacles, the researcher explored teachers' approaches to implementing gender-fair language, their understanding of gender perspectives, and their effectiveness in fostering gender inclusivity in their teaching methods. This study also investigated practical strategies for integrating gender perspectives into English Language Teaching (ELT).

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and understand the lived experiences of secondary school English teachers on the implementation on the use of gender fair language. Moreover, it aims to articulate how secondary schools intensify the implementation and the insights of secondary school English teachers on the on the implementation on the use of gender fair language.

Research Questions
1. What are the lived experiences of English teachers on the implementation of the use of gender fair language as stipulated in DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2017 (Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy)?
2. How do schools intensify the implementation on the use of gender fair language?
3. What are the insights of teachers on the implementation of the use of gender fair language?

Theoretical Underpinnings
The connection between language and gender has been a longstanding area of exploration in sociolinguistics and related fields. This study is based on the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, also referred to as the Theory of Linguistic Relativity (1929), which suggests that language not only mirrors societal structures but actively influences and shapes them. According to this theory, the language people use influences their perceptions and thought processes, affecting both communication and broader societal interactions. Language serves as a powerful tool that can perpetuate and reinforce sexist ideologies, making it essential to critically examine its role in shaping social realities (Clemente and Temporal).

METHOD
A qualitative phenomenological design was employed to examine teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding gender-fair language in English language instruction. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of shared experiences and meanings among participants, with the researcher analyzing their narratives through an interpretive process (Creswell). By adopting a phenomenological lens, the study aimed to capture firsthand accounts from teachers, gathering insights through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

This study focused on six English language teachers for in-depth interviews and seven teachers for a focus group discussion. In selecting the number of participants, the researcher adhered to Creswell's recommendation that a study group should comprise three to fifteen members (Creswell). The researcher determined that this sample size was sufficient to achieve information saturation. The interview was done virtually through an online platform such as Google Meet. The study utilized purposive sampling to select participants. In qualitative research, determining sample size focuses on its depth and relevance rather than sheer numbers. Also referred to as judgment sampling, this method involves deliberately choosing individuals based on specific characteristics they possess (Guetterman).

The study included secondary school teachers from the Schools Division of Davao de Oro who specialize in teaching English subjects. Participants could be of any gender and age, provided they had at least three years of teaching experience.

Following data collection, the researcher initiated qualitative data analysis, which involved transcription, coding, and thematic analysis. Transcription required careful listening to ensure accuracy, while coding allowed for organizing the information into meaningful thematic categories. The researcher listened to the recorded interviews multiple times before transcribing them and familiarizing themselves with the responses. Additionally, triangulation was applied to strengthen the research methodology by incorporating multiple data collection techniques, including focus groups, individual interviews, and observations.

Finally, the researcher coded, indexed, and categorized textual data to develop a framework for thematic analysis. The recurring appearance of specific codes indicated emerging themes, shaping the overall findings of the study.

The researcher ensured the reliability of the study by addressing credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. To establish credibility, the researcher engaged deeply with participants and used member verification to validate the results (Krefting 217–218). The dependability of the study stemmed from the accurate portrayal of the perspectives of the participants, allowing a clear understanding of the phenomenon (Bitsch 86). Confirmability was upheld by grounding findings in thorough inquiry rather than personal bias (Tobin and Begley 392). Additionally, the transferability of the study was considered to facilitate its applicability to different contexts (Bitsch 85)

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Lived Experiences of English Teachers on the Implementation of the Use of Gender Fair Language

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Experiences in Implementing Gender-Fair Language	• Teachers face resistance from students, parents, and even colleagues. • There is a lack of training and limited gender-sensitive materials. • Cultural norms and traditional language use make adaptation difficult. • Some students find gender-fair language unnecessary or grammatically incorrect.
Positive Impact of Gender-Fair Language on Students	• Gender-fair language fosters inclusivity and respect. • Students become more aware of stereotypes and gender biases in media and literature. • It empowers students who do not conform to traditional gender roles.
Effective Teaching Strategies for Gender-Fair Language	• Role-playing and debates help students engage with gender-inclusive language • Text analysis of literature, media, and news helps students identify biases. • Writing exercises encourage students to use gender-neutral pronouns and avoid stereotypes.
Strengthening the Role of Schools in Gender-Fair Language Implementation	• Schools may provide training and workshops for teachers. • Policies and classroom materials may be updated to align with gender-fair language principles. • Student-led initiatives, such as clubs and campaigns, can promote gender inclusivity.

Experiences in Implementing Gender-Fair Language

Participants revealed that the implementation of gender-fair language is challenging because of the resistance from students, parents and even co-teachers, lack of training and limited access to instructional materials, and cultural norms and traditional language use make the adaptation of gender inclusivity difficult.

This was confirmed by the experience shared by IDI 2:

> *"The process also comes with challenges, such as addressing deeply ingrained cultural norms and biases that may resist change. Limited access to gender-sensitive teaching materials and resources can make it difficult to consistently incorporate inclusive practices. Additionally, some teachers feel the need for more comprehensive training and professional development to confidently implement these strategies."*

It was also validated by FGD 1:

> *"... familiar ko sa concept being a GAD (Gender and Development) Focal for years. Though nakatraining ko gamay, dili siya gihapon sayon itudlo basta sa mga bata. When discussing about professions or historical figures, I avoided gender stereotypes, using terms like 'firefighter' instead of 'fireman' and highlighting contributions of people of all genders. At first, ang uban students consider the changes unusual, and ang uban mo-question why necessary nga inga ana, nga usbon pa man."*
>
> (… I am familiar with the concept, having been a GAD (Gender and Development) Focal for years. Although I have had some training, it is still not easy to teach, especially to children. When discussing professions or historical figures, I avoided gender stereotypes, using terms like 'firefighter' instead of 'fireman' and highlighting contributions of people of all genders. At first, some students found the changes unusual, and others would question why it is necessary to do it that way, to even bother changing it.)

The ideas were furthered by FGD6:

> *"Challenging ang implementation aning gender-fair language. Nakaapil kog training and sadly, nakakita gihapon ko sa uban module nga gendered gihapon ang content. Nalipay gani ko kay student mismo nakapoint sa gendered term nga gigamit pero majority sa students wala gihapon kabantay. So dili gyud ta kaexpect nga mapractice na sa mga bata kay mismo gani kita dili kaayo sweto aning gender-fair language."*
>
> (Implementing gender-fair language is challenging. I attended training sessions, and sadly, I still found some modules where the content remained gendered. I was glad when a student pointed out a gendered term being used—but most of the students did not even notice. So, we really cannot expect children to practice gender-fair language if even we adults are not that familiar with it.)

These experiences highlight significant challenges in implementing gender-fair language. The resistance from various stakeholders, such as students, parents, and co-teachers, as well as the lack of training and resources, are common barriers to adopting inclusive practices. Cultural norms and traditional language use further complicated efforts to promote gender inclusivity.

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Tarrayo highlights several obstacles in integrating gender perspectives into English Language Teaching (ELT), such as resistance to change, limited resources, and the challenge of maintaining balance. Since gender issues are deeply embedded in many societies, teachers, students, and educational administrators often resist these changes, viewing them as a threat to traditional norms. While educators recognize the significance of incorporating gender concepts into ELT, some students, especially those with minimal exposure to gender-related discussions, struggle to adjust. Additionally, teachers value their academic freedom in selecting gender-focused materials but acknowledge that integrating gender perspectives into ELT adds to their workload and responsibilities.

Effective Teaching Strategies for Gender-Fair Language

The participants described some experiences where students become aware, empowered and fostered with inclusivity and respect.

IDI4 expressed:

"One memorable experience was when a student expressed appreciation for the use of gender-fair language in my lessons. They shared that it made them feel more included, especially since they do not conform to traditional gender roles. Another was during a debate where I asked students to discuss gender equality in language. It was eye-opening to hear different perspectives, especially from students who initially resisted the idea but later understood its importance."

It was added by IDI5:

"An experience that stood out was when a student thanked me for discussing gender-fair language. They shared that it made them feel more included because they do not conform to traditional gender norms. It was a reminder that language is powerful—it can either exclude or empower people. Then on a separate moment was when we were analyzing a news report, and a student pointed out that it assumed only men could be engineers. It was a great discussion because it showed that students were becoming critical thinkers about gender representation in the media."

It was additionally validated by FGD1:

"In my Personality Development classes, one significant experience was incorporating gender-fair language when teaching topics like self-esteem, leadership, and communication skills. For instance, instead of saying 'ladies should be graceful' or 'men should be assertive,' I used inclusive language like 'everyone can benefit from assertiveness' or 'poise and grace are valuable traits for all.' During group discussions and role-playing exercises, I encouraged students to use gender-neutral terms and avoid assumptions about roles based on gender. For example, in a mock interview activity, I ensured that students assigned leadership positions, such as CEO or manager, without attaching them to a specific gender."

Participants shared compelling experiences that underscore the transformative potential of gender-fair language in fostering awareness, empowerment, inclusivity, and respect among students. For instance, students expressed appreciation for lessons incorporating gender-fair language, noting how it made them feel included, especially individuals who deviate from conventional gender norms. Activities like debates on gender equality and critical analysis of media representations encouraged students to think critically and challenge stereotypes.

The linguistic relativity theory of Benjamin Lee Whorf proposes that language actively influences the way we perceive the world and process thoughts. This theory has been applied to gender-fair language, emphasizing its role in fostering inclusivity and challenging traditional gender norms. For instance, research highlights that gendered linguistic structures can reinforce biases, while gender-neutral language promotes equality and respect by reshaping societal attitudes and perceptions (Bruyas and Perrin).

Effective Teaching Strategies for Gender-Fair Language

Most participants share how they incorporate experiential learning strategies like role-playing scenarios and media analysis and facilitate discussions that encourage students to critically analyze and challenge gender-biased language help students grasp gender-fair language in a practical way.

It was validated by IDI1:

"I host debates or oral presentation where students discuss gender roles and the importance of inclusive language. I also conduct role-playing activities where students assume characters that challenge traditional gender stereotypes."

It was added by IDI4:

"We have activities where students revise traditional fairy tales using gender-fair language. They also act out scenarios that promote inclusivity and respect for all genders."

The idea was supported by FGD3:

"Sa klase namin we do role plays. They act out situations where gender-fair language is used, helping them practice it in real-life contexts.and then mag-assignment that will encourage students to write essays or speeches using gender-neutral terms."

(In our class, we do role plays. They act out situations where gender-fair language is used, helping them practice it in real-life contexts. And then, they are given assignments that encourage them to write essays or speeches using gender-neutral terms.)

Role-playing activities and debates are effective methods for promoting gender-fair language and fostering inclusivity and respect among students. These interactive approaches allow students to engage with concepts of inclusivity in practical contexts, encouraging critical thinking and challenging traditional gender norms. For example, revising traditional fairy tales using gender-fair language and acting out scenarios that promote inclusivity help students internalize the importance of inclusive communication. Assignments such as writing essays or speeches using gender-neutral terms further reinforce these practices.

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Vygotsky's sociocultural theory remains relevant in contemporary education, emphasizing the role of social interaction in learning. Recent studies have explored the application of this theory to gender-fair language, illustrating how collaborative activities such as role-playing and debates support Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, where students enhance their learning through structured interaction with peers and educators (Wibowo et al.).

Strengthening the role of schools in gender-fair language implementation

The participants emphasized the importance of how schools advocate for policies that institutionalize gender-fair language in curricula, policies, and communication. Professional development and continuous reinforcement are necessary to ensure long-term adoption among teachers and students. Successful implementation requires collaboration among administrators, educators, and students.

It was validated by IDI1:

> "There is limited training… to embrace from the traditional norms, also limited access to gender fair teaching resources. Modify textbooks, worksheets, and teaching guides to include gender fair language and examples. For instance, replace outdated terms and ensure balanced representation in character depictions."

It was added by IDI2:

> "…not enough resources and materials that fully align with gender-fair principles, as many textbooks and teaching aids still contain gender-biased content. Additionally, limited training and support on gender sensitivity leave some teachers feeling unprepared to implement these practices effectively."

This was supported by FGD7:

> "The school has yearly trainings on GAD. But with regards sa gender fair language medyo limited pa ang inputs. Naa naman sa mga lessons pero still dili pa gyud ana ka intensive."
> (The school has yearly trainings on GAD. But with regards to gender-fair language, the inputs are still somewhat limited. It is already included in some lessons, but it is still not that intensive.)

Enhancing how schools integrate gender-fair language plays a vital role in promoting inclusivity and equity. Participants emphasized the need for schools to advocate for policies that institutionalize gender-fair language in curricula, policies, and communication. Professional development and continuous reinforcement are essential to ensure the long-term adoption of these practices among teachers and students. Collaboration among administrators, educators, and students is also vital for successful implementation. However, challenges such as limited training, insufficient resources, and the persistence of gender-biased content in teaching materials hinder progress. Participants emphasized the need to revise textbooks and teaching guides to incorporate gender-fair language while ensuring characters are portrayed with balanced representation.

This supports Bandura's social learning theory, which highlights how modeling and reinforcement influence the development of behaviors and attitudes. Recent studies have applied this theory to educational settings, demonstrating that institutional policies and collaborative efforts significantly influence the adoption of inclusive practices (Smith and Johnson)

Table 2
Major Themes and Core Ideas on How Schools Intensify the Implementation on the Use of Gender Fair Language

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Strengthening Institutional Support and Policies	• Clear policies and guidelines reinforce gender-fair language implementation. • School leadership, administrative support, and policies create an inclusive environment.
Providing Training and Professional Development	• Workshops, seminars, and gender sensitivity training improve teacher confidence and effectiveness. • Continuous professional development is necessary to sustain inclusive practices.
Integrating Gender-Inclusive Teaching Strategies	• Teachers integrate gender-fair language in classroom discussions, lesson planning, and assessment materials by using gender-neutral terms and avoiding gender-biased language. • Use of gender-neutral terms, inclusive literature, and discussion-based learning. • Encouraging students to identify and critique gender biases. • Embedding gender inclusivity across subjects and activities.
Engaging Student and Advocating Awareness	• Encouraging students to adapt and practice gender-fair language. • Creating safe spaces for discussions on gender inclusivity.
Ensuring Communication and Representation	• Revising official school documents to include gender-fair language. • Ensuring school materials, signage, and announcements reflect gender inclusivity.

Strengthening Institutional Support and Policies

The participants that schools reinforce gender-fair language use through policies, training, and curriculum design. When school leadership consistently uses gender-fair terms in official communications, meetings, and policies, it sets the tone for expected behavior among teachers and students.

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In fact, this was validated by IDI5:

"Knowing that there is a legal basis for gender-fair language makes the implementation easier. When I have administrative support and resources, I feel more confident in implementing gender-fair language. It also motivates me to continuously improve my teaching methods."

It was added by FGD5:

"One factor that helped in the implementation is the school policy. That the school should be gender-responsive and with collaboration sa faculty and staff. And like the other participants ang mga training gyud."

(One factor that helped in the implementation is the school policy—specifically, that the school should be gender-responsive and collaborative with both faculty and staff. And like the other participants mentioned, the trainings were really a big help.)

In addition, training programs may encourage teachers to model gender-inclusive communication in both written and spoken interactions.

This was further validated by IDI4:

"Schools can conduct gender sensitivity training for teachers, update instructional materials, and integrate gender-fair language into policies and announcements."

Schools play a crucial role in reinforcing gender-fair language through institutional policies, training programs, and curriculum design. When school leadership consistently employs gender-inclusive terms in official communications, meetings, and policies, it establishes a standard for expected behavior among teachers and students. Institutional support, including legal frameworks and administrative backing, enhances educators' confidence in implementing gender-fair language, motivating them to refine their teaching methods. Additionally, gender-responsive school policies, faculty collaboration, and training programs contribute to the successful integration of gender-fair language in educational settings. Training initiatives may encourage teachers to model gender-inclusive communication in both written and spoken interactions, ensuring that gender sensitivity becomes an integral part of the learning environment.

Recent research reinforces these perspectives. Ramirez highlights the crucial role of gender-fair language proficiency among students, stressing the need for instructional materials and training to enhance awareness and usage (Ramirez 36). Likewise, Laxa examines how educational materials influence gender perceptions and advocates for a more inclusive approach to gender studies in basic education. These studies emphasize the importance of institutional support and training in promoting gender-fair language practices in schools.

Providing Training and Professional Development

Most participants emphasized the need for structured, interactive training to fully integrate gender-fair language into their classrooms.

This was validated by IDI1:

"Professional development programs should be conducted to train teachers and staff on the principles of gender sensitivity and the use of gender fair language… Self-improvement through study and practice boosts my confidence in using gender-fair language, making my communication more natural and impactful."

This was further validated by IDI3:

"…continuous training and seminar for teachers and provision of resources and materials on gender-fair language. They make me more confident in implementing gender-fair language. When I have the necessary support and resources, I can effectively integrate gender-fair language in my lessons without hesitation."

The idea was supported by FGD2:

"Naka-attend kog mga GAD Trainings, that is why I am being mindful of the terms to be used in the classroom, and with this I educate the students about GAD advocacy".

(I have attended several GAD (Gender and Development) training courses, that is why I am more mindful of the terms I use in the classroom. Because of this, I also educate my students about GAD advocacy.)

Structured and interactive training programs are essential for integrating gender-fair language into classrooms. Professional development initiatives equip teachers with the principles of gender sensitivity, fostering confidence in their ability to use inclusive language effectively. Continuous training, seminars, and access to resources further enhance educators' ability to implement gender-fair language without hesitation. Additionally, participation in Gender and Development (GAD) training encourages mindfulness in communication, enabling educators to advocate for gender inclusivity in their teaching practices.

Integrating Gender-Inclusive Teaching Strategies

Some participants shared how they align their instructional materials and training programs with gender-fair language to foster an inclusive learning environment. This includes revising textbooks, lesson plans, and communication materials to reflect gender-sensitive language. They also encourage students to critically examine traditional gender biases in language and promote discussions on inclusivity.

It was validated by IDI2:

"Effective strategies include using gender-neutral terms consistently, incorporating inclusive language in lessons and activities, engaging students in discussions about gender equality, modeling respectful language, and encouraging students to critically analyze texts for bias. Interactive activities like role-playing and group projects also help reinforce these concepts in a relatable way for our Grade 8 students."

It was added by IDI3:

"I promote gender-fair language by modeling inclusive communication, integrating it into lessons, correcting biased terms, and encouraging students to use gender-neutral expressions… I employ Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) strategy wherein students are really involved in hands-on activity to create gender-based environment."

The idea was supported by FGD2:

"…the use of gender-neutral terminologies, equal representation of gender, and I give task assigned in line with my students' interest, dili kay based kung babae or lalaki sila. Everyone get to experience activities regardless

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of their gender identity. Kuntahay mag role play sila, they are free to dramatize whichever way prefer nila so long that it is part of their performance tasks."
(…the use gender-neutral terminologies, ensure equal gender representation, and assign tasks based on my students' interests—not on whether they are male or female. Everyone gets to participate in activities regardless of their gender identity. For example, if they are doing a role play, they are free to portray whichever role they prefer, as long as it is part of the assigned task.)

Integrating gender-inclusive teaching strategies involve revising instructional materials, lesson plans, and communication approaches to reflect gender-sensitive language, fostering an inclusive learning environment. Educators employ strategies such as using gender-neutral terms, engaging students in discussions on gender equality, and incorporating interactive activities like role-playing to reinforce inclusivity. Research supports these approaches, highlighting that gender-sensitive pedagogy enhances student engagement and literacy development (William et al.).

Engaging Student and Advocating Awareness

Some participants shared how they align their instructional materials and training programs with gender-fair language to foster an inclusive learning environment. This includes revising textbooks, lesson plans, and communication materials to reflect gender-sensitive language. They also encourage students to critically examine traditional gender biases in language and promote discussions on inclusivity.

This was validated by IDI2:

"I promote gender-fair language by consistently using inclusive terms, correcting biased language in a non-judgmental way, incorporating gender-neutral examples in lessons, and encouraging students to do the same. I also facilitate discussions and activities that highlight the importance of gender equality and respect."

IDI6 added:

"…students engage more critically with language. When they realize how words shape social perceptions, they become more mindful of their communication. It also makes my classroom more inclusive, where students feel respected regardless of their gender identity."

This was validated by FGD2:

"With the learnings I have from training, mas ma-foster nako nga more inclusive among classroom because students feel valued, respected and accepted which leads to a productive learning environment."
(With the knowledge I have gained from the training I create a more inclusive classroom environment where students feel appreciated, respected, and welcomed, which contributes to a productive learning environment.)

Engaging students in discussions and critical reflections on gendered language fosters awareness and inclusivity in the classroom. By consistently using gender-fair language, correcting biased terms in a non-judgmental way, and facilitating activities that highlight gender equality, educators create a respectful learning environment. Research supports this approach, showing that gender awareness in classrooms enhances students' understanding of social perceptions and promotes inclusivity (Generale and Cubing).

Ensuring Communication and Representation

Participants embraced the idea that schools can influence perceptions of gender inclusivity by modifying official communications, learning materials, and signage to reflect gender-fair language.

As expressed by IDI2:

"Schools can develop gender-fair services and communications by using inclusive language in all official documents, promoting gender-neutral terms in signage and announcements, offering training on gender sensitivity for staff, and ensuring that materials reflect diverse gender representations. Additionally, schools can create platforms for open discussions on gender equality and engage the community in these efforts."

IDI 3 uttered:

"Schools can implement inclusive policies, training teachers and staff, use gender-neutral language in school documents, and promote awareness programs"

This was further validated by FGD3:

"With the school GAD budget, we have training but also the school must establish clear guidelines for gender-fair language in all official communications and collaborate with the student leaders to organize events, posters, and campaigns to raise awareness about gender-fair practices."

Schools can foster gender inclusivity by modifying official communications, learning materials, and signage to reflect gender-fair language. Implementing inclusive policies, training educators, and promoting gender-neutral terminology in school documents help create a more equitable learning environment. Additionally, schools can engage students and the community in discussions on gender equality through awareness programs and collaborative initiatives. Research supports these approaches, emphasizing that gender-sensitive education enhances inclusivity and representation in academic settings (Laxa). Establishing clear guidelines and allocating resources for gender-fair language further strengthens institutional commitment to gender equity.

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Table 3
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the English Teachers Insightson the Use of Gender Fair Language

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Adapting Gender-Fair Language	• Teachers encounter difficulties in implementing gender-fair language due to cultural resistance, lack of training, and limited instructional resources, leading to inconsistency in application. • Misunderstandings, reluctance to change, and the perception that gender-fair language is unnecessary create barriers to its full adoption in educational settings. • While some educators acknowledge the importance of gender sensitivity, they struggle with unlearning traditional language norms and integrating inclusive communication effectively.
Modification of Instructional Materials	• Teachers address challenges by modifying instructional materials, engaging in self-directed learning, and attending training programs to enhance their understanding of gender-fair language. • Schools may facilitate continuous professional development and awareness campaigns to reduce resistance and encourage inclusive language practices. • Collaboration among educators and institutional support, such as resource allocation and open discussions, strengthens efforts to normalize gender-fair communication in classrooms.
Gender-Inclusive Instructional Materials	• Schools can support the integration of gender-fair language by updating policies, developing inclusive instructional materials, and reinforcing gender-sensitive training for teachers and staff. • Capacity-building programs, including workshops on inclusive language practices and curriculum integration strategies, equip educators with practical tools for implementation. • Providing accessible resources, monitoring progress, and engaging student leaders in awareness campaigns ensures sustainable institutional efforts toward gender inclusivity.

Adapting Gender-Fair Language

Most participants shared the challenges in implementing gender-fair language due to cultural resistance, lack of training, and inconsistent application. They highlighted the need for continuous professional development and institutional support that fosters confidence and acceptance in gender-inclusive communication.

In fact, this was expressed by IDI6:

> "All educators should be equipped with the right knowledge so that we can reduce stereotypes in communication. But the shift to use gender fair language is not easy because some may not be accepting with its use, and teachers may be confused on its inconsistent application across different subjects."

It was also perceived by FGD3:

> *"Yes, naay mga cultural barriers. Though naay mga trainings pero I still feel at times nga dili ko confident mo-integrate sa gender fair language kay naay conflicting concepts. So basin ma-misunderstood na nuon ang purpose nganong need siya i-apply."*
> (Yes, there are cultural barriers. Although we've had trainings, I still sometimes feel unsure about how to integrate gender-fair language because there are conflicting concepts. I worry that the purpose behind applying it might be misunderstood.)

It was agreed by FGD6:

> *"... Challenging lang sa part na lisod i-unlearn ang mga naandan, and you need resources to kanang mapa-enhance ang learning on the gender fair language."*
> (It is also challenging because it is hard to unlearn what we have been used to. Plus, you need proper resources to further enhance learning about gender-fair language.)

Implementing gender-fair language in educational settings presents challenges such as cultural resistance, lack of training, and inconsistent application. Educators emphasize the need for continuous professional development and institutional support to foster confidence and acceptance in gender-inclusive communication. Some teachers struggle with unlearning traditional language norms and integrating gender-fair language due to conflicting concepts and misunderstandings. Research highlights that structured training programs and inclusive policies can help overcome these barriers and promote gender-sensitive communication (Saqib et al.). Schools need to allocate sufficient resources and offer training to facilitate the successful implementation of gender-fair language in classrooms.

Modification of Instructional Materials

Most participants shared the challenges in implementing gender-fair language due to cultural resistance, lack of training, and inconsistent application. They highlighted the

ISSN (Online): 2455-3662
EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
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need for continuous professional development and institutional support that fosters confidence and acceptance in gender-inclusive communication.

It was stated by IDI2:

> *"...Schools can also develop and provide more inclusive resources and materials to support teachers. Encouraging open discussions about the importance of gender equality can help reduce resistance, while modeling inclusive language consistently in the classroom reinforces its value. Collaboration among teachers and community involvement can further foster understanding and acceptance."*

It was added by IDI3:

> *"...weaknesses can be addressed through continuous professional development, curriculum revision, administrative support, and awareness campaigns."*

It was also furthered by FGD5:

> *"To cope with the challenge, teachers need training and modern resources to supplement gender fair language use..."*

Educators address challenges in implementing gender-fair language by modifying instructional materials, attending training programs, and engaging in self-directed learning. Schools play a crucial role in providing inclusive resources and fostering open discussions on gender equality to reduce resistance and encourage acceptance. Continuous professional development, curriculum revision, and administrative support are essential in reinforcing gender-fair language practices. Research highlights that integrating gender perspectives into instructional materials enhances inclusivity and promotes equitable learning environments (Tarrayo). Institutional efforts, such as training and awareness campaigns, further strengthen educators' ability to implement gender-fair language effectively.

Gender-Inclusive Instructional Materials

The participants expressed the importance of revising textbooks, lesson plans, and classroom resources to reflect gender-fair language. Additionally, they highlighted the need for institutional support, such as training programs and updated learning materials, to ensure effective implementation.

This was confirmed by the statement shared by IDI2:

> *"To enhance the implementation of gender-fair language, I recommend the following: provide regular training for teachers and staff on gender sensitivity and inclusive language practices, develop and distribute gender-fair teaching materials to ensure all resources reflect diverse gender representations, and most importantly, monitor and assess progress to identify areas for improvement and celebrate successes in promoting inclusivity."*

It was also validated by FGD2:

> *"...capacity development training on integrating gender fair language, and also magprovide ug mga modules with guide and activities."*
> (We need capacity development training on how to integrate gender-fair language, and we also need modules with guides and activities.)

The ideas were furthered by FGD6:

> *"...updated na learning materials and training for teachers so we now how to effectively use the materials and naay mga strategies."*
> (We need updated learning materials and training for teachers so we know how to use them effectively, and also have strategies to go with them.)

The Gender and Development (GAD) Framework serves as a key theoretical foundation for integrating gender-inclusive instructional materials. This framework underscores the necessity of incorporating gender sensitivity into education to promote equitable learning experiences. This framework advocates for revising instructional materials, updating policies, and providing training to ensure gender-fair language is effectively implemented in schools (Reyes et al.). Research highlights that integrating gender perspectives into educational resources fosters inclusivity and promotes equitable learning experiences.

Implications for Teaching Practice

The integration of gender-fair language in classrooms necessitates systemic reforms within the Department of Education, including teacher training, curriculum revision, and institutional advocacy. Educators require continuous professional development to effectively implement gender-fair language, with structured programs that address common challenges such as cultural resistance and misunderstanding. Providing teachers with essential knowledge, skills, and resources enhances their capacity to foster inclusivity and eliminate stereotypes in communication.

Curriculum developers and administrators must prioritize the modification of instructional materials to ensure gender-neutral language and balanced representation. Official school policies may institutionalize gender-fair language, incorporating clear guidelines on its application in textbooks, lesson plans, and assessments. Schools may also foster a collaborative learning environment by involving students in discussions on gender sensitivity, reinforcing critical thinking through interactive learning approaches such as debates and role-playing activities.

Institutional endorsement helps standardize the use of gender-fair language across different subjects and grade levels. Legal frameworks and administrative backing not only strengthen policy implementation but also encourage faculty collaboration in refining instructional practices. Schools must allocate resources for training and awareness programs while engaging student leaders in campaigns that advocate gender-fair language and inclusivity in education

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Conclusion

The findings emphasize the significance of integrating gender-fair language into education to foster inclusivity, respect, and equity among students. However, barriers such as cultural resistance, lack of training, and limited resources continue to hinder the widespread adoption of gender-sensitive communication practices. Strengthening institutional policies, refining curriculum materials, and implementing structured professional development programs will be essential in overcoming these challenges.

By providing educators with essential training and resources, schools foster an inclusive learning environment that promotes critical thinking and heightens awareness of gender biases. The sustained commitment of administrators, teachers, and students to gender-fair language initiatives will contribute to a progressive educational system that promotes equality and social awareness.

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EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) - Peer Reviewed Journal
Volume: 11| Issue: 5| May 2025|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2025: 8.691 || ISI Value: 1.188

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