

## **Preferred Gender Neutral and Inclusive Language used by Spanish Speakers in the United States**

Gender neutral and inclusive language have been gaining momentum and the way we use language to talk about ourselves is rapidly changing across the world. Spanish language is a masculine dominant binary language. Even though attempts to reform the language to address the lack of gender neutral and inclusive terms date to the early 2000s, the Royal Academy of Spanish Language prevents any changes related to language inclusivity or neutrality (RAE, 2020). Since the United States is a country in which inclusivity and neutrality in languages is becoming so mainstream, it is imperative to think about how Spanish language can adapt to these undeniable social changes. It is also important to start thinking about curricular reforms that would address changes to the grammar in Spanish and Heritage Language classes to validate all students including their identity. To start working on these reforms, we need to first think about what the preferences of Spanish speakers are when it comes to inclusive and neutral language. Research on gender neutral and gender inclusive language in Spanish is fairly new but more and more academics are starting to embark on studying this sociolinguistic phenomenon. In Spanish, the trend of this research mainly focuses on corpus linguistics studies (Linares, 2019; Slempp, 2020; Kalinowski, 2020). These studies share the different ways in which Spanish speakers are modifying the language to show inclusivity. These corpus studies mainly address written Spanish found in social media and some of the findings cannot translate to spoken Spanish. Scholars in Argentina are pioneers in research of inclusive language in regard to spoken Spanish. Approaches taken by Bonning and Coronel in 2021 inspired the research work that is presented in this abstract. In their research, Bonning and Coronel study Argentinians' attitudes towards inclusive language. In their findings, Argentinians' attitudes towards "non-binary" and "non-standard" options were relatively positive with 74.2% of participants finding them acceptable. This study presented many limitations, including the limited number of phrases used in the survey and the use of inclusive language in only nouns (amigues, chiques y todes). This study did not investigate the use of pronouns and gender markers in adjectives. Since the use of pronouns is prominent in the United States, a study that prioritizes the use of pronouns is imperative.

This current study presents the results of a survey conducted in early 2022 about preferences and attitudes towards gender inclusive pronouns by Spanish speakers in the United States. The researcher looked for participants who were both native and non-native speakers of Spanish. The survey was delivered via social media and its results indicated how complex preferences regarding gender neutral and inclusive language among native Spanish speakers are. This session will present the quantitative data collected and the intricacies in qualitative responses regarding this topic. Results indicate that the use of gender-neutral pronouns like "elle" and "nosotres" are in general, becoming more common by Spanish speakers. Gender non-conforming individuals reported that the use of traditional binary pronouns is still acceptable. Also, even though some Spanish speakers still feel comfortable using the masculine gender to denote gender neutrality, the use of "-e" is becoming more common in pronouns, nouns, and adjectives. Spanish speakers are also finding gender neutral alternatives to address gender neutrality whenever possible. Participants offered words that already lack gender (words that already end in "e", or collective nouns) when talking about groups of people. Finally, participants weighed in the use of the term "latinx" as a gender-neutral option, including preferred alternatives to the term.

## References

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