○ *CHAIRPERSON* OR *CHAIRMAN*? – A STUDY OF CHINESE EFL TEACHERS' GENDER INCLUSIVITY

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Given the potential influence of teachers' linguistic practice on children's language use and gender role development, the present study seeks to examine the extent of linguistic discrimination present in teachers' language. A total of 215 Chinese EFL teachers were invited to participate in the survey, which included a series of elicitation tests on their selection of English words for occupational titles, and the choice of generic pronouns anaphoric to people of unknown gender. The findings revealed that, while gender-biased language is still widely used, non-sexist linguistic reform has had an impact on Chinese EFL teachers, some of whom have expressed a concern with regard to avoiding sexist language. The study also found that choice of generic pronouns co-varied with such factors as semantic meaning, word structure and the gender stereotypes associated with particular occupations.

KEY WORDS: China, gender, generic pronoun, occupational title, sexism

INTRODUCTION

All living languages undergo changes in various ways (Crystal, 2006; Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2014). The changes adopted in a speech community may gradually be accepted as norms over time. Among the various factors that have contributed to linguistic changes, the feminist movement, which started in the 1970s in the West, has an important role to play. In addition to being a social campaign, this movement is also a linguistic campaign that aims to achieve gender equality in people's expressions. Its influence on the English language has been observed in the shift from sexist (also known as 'gender-biased' or 'gender-exclusive') English, such as 'If someone comes, please ask him to wait', 'All men need water to survive' and 'The gunmen are terrorists' to gender-inclusive (also known as 'gender-neutral' or 'gender-fair') English, such as 'If someone comes, please ask him or her/them to wait', 'All people/humans need water to survive' and 'The assassins are terrorists', in contexts where people in general are referred to or where the gender is unknown.

Linguistic reform against discriminatory language began, and has gone furthest, in inner circle countries where English is the dominant language (Jacobs, Zhuo, Jocson, Ong, & Austria, 1996; Pauwels & Winter, 2006). Guidelines advocating gender-neutral language as the norm to which writing should conform have been compiled by broadcasters, media and public institutions (e.g. Commercial Radio Australia, 2004; Nilsen, 1987; Snooks & Co., 2002). Previous studies have revealed that non-sexist language has been increasingly used in inner circle countries (e.g. Pauwels, 1997, 2001; Pauwels & Wrightson-Turcotte, 2001;

Holmes, Sigley, & Terraschke, 2009). Given the fact that English is now being used by more people in the outer circle, and the expanding circle countries, for international communication than by native English speakers in the inner circle (Crystal, 2003), it is timely to study whether non-native speakers of English are aware of the need to avoid using sexist language in order to promote gender equality. The investigation will give us insights about how different speech communities respond to the widespread concerns about linguistic sexism, and will allow us to explore the relationship between inner-circle Englishes and outer-circle Englishes. My earlier study on young people's language choice (Lee, 2007) revealed that linguistic sexism was still prevalent among Hong Kong students. According to McCormick (1994), sexist language is learned and is not given in a child's language development. Educators' choice of gender-inclusive or -exclusive expressions is deemed important in learners' language development and their gender attitude formation. However, scant attention has been paid to this field of study to date. In an earlier study, Jacobs et al. (1996) investigated 35 Asian educators' views on the issue of gender-inclusive English. The limitations of the study were that the number of respondents was too small to generate conclusions, and that attitudes may not represent the words people actually use or speak. The present study aimed to fill these gaps.

In view of the increasing number of young people learning English as a foreign language in China in recent years (Andrews, 2011), the present study aims to explore Chinese educators' awareness of the importance of avoiding sexist language through investigating their choice of occupational titles and generic pronouns in reference to people of unknown gender.

THEORETICAL ISSUES

We construct and organise experience through language (Poynton, 1989). Language plays an important role in the construction of identity for both individuals and groups within a community. A central impetus for linguistic reform is social change (Winter & Pauwels, 2006). Divergent views emerge on the relationship between language change and social change, and the subsequent attitudes towards linguistic reform. Two approaches have been adopted to study the relationship between language and world view, both problematical in various ways. According to the 'determinist' approach, desired social changes cannot be effected without linguistic reform (Spender, 1980). For example, to urge men to take on childcare responsibilities and household chores, there is a strong need to change the linguistic naming and labelling. One way is to replace gender-exclusive vocabulary such as 'Mother's Room' and 'domestic maid' with gender-inclusive terms 'Parenting Room' and 'domestic helper', respectively. Meanwhile, another group of scholars see that language reflects reality, with Lakoff (1975) being its prominent advocate in feminist language reform. According to the 'language reflects reality' approach, language change, which follows social change, occurs naturally, and therefore it is unnecessary to intrude into the linguistic system. Winter

and Pauwels (2006) point out two problems with this approach: not only does it fail to address the desire to strive for linguistic equality in light of the social change for gender equality, it also cannot predict the lag between the social change and its instantiation in the language system.

Given that language is unlikely to be either simply a reflection of social norms or solely a catalyst for social change (Mills, 2008), the stance adopted in this paper is an integrated approach to the nature of the relationship between linguistic reform and social change. The integrated approach allows us to see the extent to which the linguistic system represents social practices and values on the one hand, and to understand the extent to which the linguistic representation acts as a catalyst for social change on the other.

The educational sector plays a significant role in the spread of change resulting from linguistic reform (Pauwels, 2000; Sunderland, Cowley, Abdul Rahim, Leontzakou, & Shattuck, 2000). The educational system provides a context for us to explore the tension between linguistic prescriptivism and linguistic reform in relation to gender-neutral language (Pauwels & Winter, 2006). While formal language education is regarded as the main vehicle for students' learning of grammatical rules and the language system (e.g. the choice of a singular pronoun in reference to a singular antecedent for number agreement), it is also seen as a key agent in the spread of language change (e.g. use of non-sexist singular *they* as a generic pronoun). According to Cochran (1996), classroom teachers will, in their role as the primary English language models for students, have an impact on fostering language change among their students through their own choice of sexist or non-sexist language. Cronin and Jreisat (1995) examined how modelling related to sexist or non-sexist language usage in high school students and found that participants with non-sexist instructions used significantly more non-sexist language.

Pauwels and Winter (2006) investigated the dual roles of classroom teachers (primary, secondary and tertiary) as 'guardians of grammar' and as 'agents of social language reform' in relation to their own and their students' use of generic pronouns. The findings revealed that Australian teachers showed a clear preference for generic *they* in their own and students' writing. Some younger teachers (below 30) seemed to be unaware of the traditional prescriptive criticism against generic *they* regarding its violation of grammatical concord, preferring to use the generic *they* option inside and outside the classroom. Pauwels and Winter (2006) concluded that the high use of non-sexist pronouns among Australian teachers confirmed their role as 'linguistic reformers' or at least as 'implementers' or 'spreaders' of linguistic reform (p. 138). Leading the way as 'agents of change' were female teachers who intervened in students' writing in their attempt to promote the avoidance of sexist language. Some other studies, however, reveal that teachers are generally more conservative and tend not to flout normative rules, probably because of their professional role and their familiarity with prescriptive rules (e.g. Lee, 2001; Lee & Collins, 2006; Mittins, 1970). The contradictory results in these studies

confirm the crucial role of teachers, who may promote or oppose language change in the process of linguistic reform.

GENDER AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Most English personal nouns (e.g. *teacher, doctor, lawyer, cleaner*) are gender-neutral and can be pronominalised by either masculine or feminine pronouns. Nevertheless, a number of English users show a clear gender bias in their language use, even in contexts where there is no gender specification. Many high-status professions, such as those of *judge*, *astronaut* or *surgeon*, are traditionally pronominalised by generic *he*. In contrast, some occupational terms, such as *nurse*, *clerk* and *secretary*, are usually regarded as female jobs, with generic *she* being used for anaphoric reference (Gibbon, 1999; Lee, 2007). Hellinger (2001, p. 109) has labelled this occupational segregation as 'social gender', which is connected with stereotypical assumptions with regard to the appropriate social roles for men and women. Deviations from such assumptions often lead to gender marking, either with adjectival pre-modification (e.g. *female astronaut*, *woman doctor, male secretary*), or with the feminine suffixes *-ess/-ette* (e.g. *actress, goddess, millionairess*, *waitress, usherette*).

Debates on the issue of gender-biased language have been ongoing since the 1970s, and it has been argued that language has an effect on society through repeated use (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). Proponents of gender-fair language argue that the use of gender-biased language can lead to gender asymmetry and denigration of women, and the use of gender-neutral language will help to create a more egalitarian society (Miller & Swift, 1976; Spender, 1980). Therefore, a major aim of the feminist linguistic reform is to eschew gender-biased language and replace it with gender-neutral language. Although people who oppose the reform have argued that requiring inclusive language restricts freedom of speech (Ravitch, 2003), and is a form of censorship (Kingston & Lovelace, 1977), supporters of gender-neutral language have commented that the traditional use of the generic *he* and *man* to refer to 'all people', rather than to males only, leads to ambiguity, exclusiveness and inequity (Martyna, 1978), does not reflect social reality (Carter, 1980), perpetuates the deprecation of women and gender stereotyping (Henley, 1989) and constructs unequal power relationships (Shaw & Hoeber, 2003).

There are suggestions of using gender-neutral words, such as *human*, *human being*, *person* or *people* to replace *man*, and gender-neutral morphemes, such as *officer* (e.g. *police officer*), *fighter* (e.g. *firefighter*) and *person* (e.g. *spokesperson*) to replace compounds of *man*, although not every coinage has had equal success. While *police officer* and *firefighter* have gained general acceptance, *craftsperson* and *ombudsperson* are only occasionally used (Mills, 2008). The *-person* morpheme is treated with derision by opponents of 'political correctness' (Baker, 2010).

Meanwhile, a number of pronoun alternatives have been proposed in order to secure gender equity. These include reversing pronoun usage (i.e. *he* changes to *she* and vice versa), using generic *she*: 'If *anyone* wants to go, *she* should tell me first', and alternating between feminine and masculine pronouns throughout a text. However, none of these strategies has gained much acceptance. A more popular method is the use of a paired pronoun *he or she* (*him or her*, *his or her, herself/himself*): 'If *anyone* wants to go, *he or she* should tell me first'. This gender-fair alternative is common in formal registers, despite criticisms of its awkwardness in speech and when it is repeatedly used (Jochnowitz, 1982; Nilsen, 2001; Swan, 2005). It also sounds odd when it is used in interrogative tags: *Everybody is quiet, isn't he or she?* Another popular alternative nowadays is generic *they* despite a long history of debate with regard to its acceptability (Baron, 1986; Bodine, 1975; Burchfield, 1981; Fowler, 1965; Lee, 1999; Lee & Collins, 2009; Partridge, 1965; Pauwels, 1998, 2001). Nilsen (2001) comments that generic *they* may have come into the English language earlier if not because of the vigilance of English teachers. Many handbook writers and writers' guides in contemporary usage acknowledge the use of generic *they* (or its inflected forms *them* or *their*), both as an anaphoric pronoun and also as a determiner in informal English (e.g. Allen, 2008; Baranowski, 2002; Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999; Swan, 2005). Nevertheless, the levels of acceptability of generic *they* vary according to the linguistic context. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) commented that, at the time of their study, generic *they* was still infrequent, even colloquially, with definite antecedents like *my teacher* or *the photographer*, and unheard of with proper names as antecedents. Benatar (2005) adds that generic *they* does not jar when used as a pronoun for *everybody*, but may jar with *somebody*, and with words such as *individual*.

Until now, scant attention has been paid to aspects of gender-inclusive language reform in outer and expanding circles. Among the few studies conducted, Pauwels and Winter (2004) analysed student and academic texts in the Singapore and Philippines components of the International Corpus of English. The results showed that generic *he* remained the dominant variant, although the paired pronoun emerged as the preferred gender-inclusive alternative in the Philippines data. My earlier Hong Kong study on debatable usages (Lee, 1999) included an investigation of the choice of generic pronouns anaphoric to indefinite pronouns (e.g. *everyone, someone*), and it was found that generic *he* was widely used, although the paired pronoun was not uncommon. My more recent study (Lee, 2007) provided information on Hong Kong students' acceptability of some selected gender-exclusive and -inclusive usages and vocabulary. The findings revealed that linguistic sexism remained prevalent among young people in Hong Kong, although some individuals had taken care to avoid gender-biased language by replacing the generic *he* with non-sexist singular *they* when the antecedent had a strong plural meaning, or with the paired pronoun *he or she* when the gender indeterminate antecedents were preceded by definite determiners.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study aims to investigate Chinese educators' use of sexist and non-sexist language based on the premise that teacher talk is a powerful primary agent in the socialisation of children (Rainer, Dangel, & Durden, 2010; Zhao, 2011). The words teachers use and the ways in which they speak will have a great influence on children's language development and attitude formation (Poynton, 1989). Constant exposure to gender stereotypes through teachers' instructions can influence children's language, thought and behaviour (Cronin & Jreisat, 1995).

Although China now has the largest English learning population in the world (He & Zhang, 2010; Zhao, 2011), the development of gender research in China is still at a beginning stage. Little attention has been paid to the impact of non-sexist linguistic reform on Chinese English. Teachers' English use is considered especially essential in the language development and gender reproduction of learners in mainland China, because their exposure to English is generally limited to school textbooks and teachers' instructions (Geng, 2007; Lee, 2009). If teachers fail to adopt gender-free language and strategies, the vicious circle of gender stereotyping will continue (McCormick, 1994).

The present study aims to provide insights about how the Chinese education sector responds to the widespread concerns about linguistic sexism. The study involves an investigation of mainland Chinese EFL teachers' selection of job titles and generic pronouns anaphoric to people of unknown gender. The aim is to examine the extent to which Chinese EFL teachers' linguistic practice is affected by the feminist-inspired English usages as reflected in their use of sexist or non-sexist expressions. To address this aim, the participating teachers were required to indicate their choice of English occupational titles and generic pronouns through elicitation tests. In order to posit the factors that may affect their selection of generic pronoun, the morphological structure and semantic meanings of the antecedents were examined. The items selected for the tag test and the slot-filling test fell into three primary categories: (1) gender-neutral occupational terms (e.g. *nurse*, *police officer*, *doctor*), (2) gendered occupational terms with the morpheme *–man* (e.g. *chairman, salesman*, *fireman*), and (3) indefinite pronouns (e.g. *someone*, *everybody*, *anyone*). The slot-filling test further examined the relationship between the pronoun choice and the definiteness in noun phrases. The definite/indefinite distinction is commonly expressed by the definite article *the* and genitive pronouns (e.g. *my, our*), and the indefinite article *a(n)*.

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

The data for the present study were obtained via a set of elicitation tests. The tests were presented to a convenient sample of 215 Chinese EFL teachers who joined a professional development programme held in Guangdong Province: 98 (45.6%) fell into the 21-30 age range; 103 (47.9%) were 31-40 years old; and 14 (6.5%) were aged 41-50. Of these, 75.3%

were primary school teachers with the remainder being high school teachers. 83.3% of the participants were female. The preponderance of female teachers reflected the fact that there is heavy gender imbalance of primary school teachers in China (All-China Women's Federation, 2009).

A limitation of the study was that only a few participating teachers were aged over 40. As a result, only two different age groups (aged 21-30 and over 30) were examined to explore apparent-time implications in the statistical analyses. Chi-square analysis (χ^2) was applied to the results being compared.

The participating teachers were given the following instruction at the beginning of the survey:

> This study requires spontaneous responses. You MUST NOT consult a dictionary or ask others for help. Once you have answered a question, DO NOT go back to the previous questions for checking or correction.

To assure validity, the study adopted multiple research tools to examine the variables from different perspectives. Four types of elicitation tests were employed: an ethical dilemma test, a translation test, a tag test, and a slot-filling test. The ethical dilemma test followed the approach adopted by Swim, Mallett, and Stangor (2004), whereas the other three tests were a replication of my Hong Kong study of young people's attitudes towards sexist language (Lee, 2007). An advantage of administering elicitation tests is that they are capable of generating a large amount of comparable data and can be controlled to ensure uniformity (Lee, 1999, 2007).

TYPES OF TESTS

Translation test. The test examined the teachers' choice of gender-inclusive or -exclusive occupational terms. They were supplied with a list of seven Chinese occupational terms (e.g. 警察, 消防員) and were required to translate them into English. Their use of gender-neutral or gender-biased language (e.g. *police/police officer* vs. *policeman, firefighter vs. fireman*) may indicate the comparative popularity of these two sets of vocabulary among Chinese EFL teachers. One limitation of the study was that only a short list of occupational titles was included in the translation test. The occupational terms chosen for the test, nevertheless, are some common job titles. It was anticipated that participants' choice of the gender-fair or gender-biased terms in the test would reflect Chinese EFL teachers' gender awareness in relation to occupational terms.

Ethical dilemma test. This test, together with the tag test and the slot-filling test, was used to investigate the teachers' preference for generic pronouns. Given four scenarios with characters of different gender-unmarked occupations or positions (e.g. manager, employee, nurse, doctor, student, etc.), the teachers were required to write down how they would resolve each of the dilemmas. A sample scenario is given below:

A manager discovers a long-serving employee has been stealing money from the company. What should the manager do?

Tag test. In this test, the teachers were presented with 10 sentences and required to decide which pronoun to use in the tag. For example, for the sentence *A nurse looks after patients*, the relevant tags are *doesn't he?, doesn't she?, don't they?*, or *doesn't he/she?*.

Slot-filling test. In this test, the teachers were presented with 20 sentences, from each of which a word was missing. Their task was to fill in each blank with a pronoun so as to complete the meaning of the sentence. The teachers were thus forced to indicate their general preference for one or another variant form. For instance, for the sentence *If anyone rings, please ask _____ to leave a message*, the teachers were required to select whether to use *her, him, them* or *him/her* to complete the sentence.

The quantitative data obtained through the elicitation tests were strengthened by the data collected through email correspondence with three teachers after the tests. Although the number of teachers participating in the email follow-up was small, the discussion provides insights into the reasons for their language choice in the tests. The questions asked were based on the teachers' language use in the tests. The following are examples of the questions asked:

Teacher 1:

1. In the translation test, you used words ending with *-man* (e.g. *fireman, postman, chairman, businessman, salesman*). Where did you learn these words? Do you use words like *chairperson*, *fire fighter* or *shop assistant*? Why or why not?

2. In the story completion test, you used the paired pronoun *he/she* throughout to refer to the doctor, the student and the employee. Where did you learn the paired pronoun *he/she*?

3. In the tag test, you used different kinds of pronouns (*she, he, he/she*) in reference to different occupations. Why?

    *   Why did you use the feminine pronoun *she* to refer to *nurse* and *secretary*?
    *   Why did you use the masculine pronoun *he* to refer to *chairman, everybody, police officer* and *fireman*?
    *   Why did you use the paired pronoun *he/she* for *doctor, teacher* and *shop assistant*?

Teacher 2

1. Why did you use *she* or *her* to refer to *nurse* (C1 and D2) and *secretary* (C9 and D19) in the tests?

2. Why did you use *he* or *him* in reference to other occupations (e.g. *doctor, manager, salesman, engineer*)?

3. Sometimes you used the pronoun *they*, *them* or *their* (e.g. *everybody* in C3, *everyone* in D3, *each child* in D14). Why?

Teacher 3

1. In C1 you used *she* in reference to *nurse*, but in D2 you used *her/him*. Why?
2. When *-man* is used (e.g. *chairman, businessman*), you usually used *him* as a pronoun. Why?
3. In C3, you used *they* in reference to *everybody*, but in D3 you used *his* for *everyone*. Why?
4. You often used *he/she* in reference to different occupations (e.g. *manager, doctor*). Why? Where did you learn the paired pronoun *he/she*?

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

TRANSLATION TEST

As Table 1 shows, while the *-man* compounds were more widely used for some occupations (e.g. *chairman, businessman, postman* and *policeman*), gender-neutral terms were in popular use for some others (e.g. *salesperson*, *shop assistant*, *spokesperson*, *speaker*, etc.). Among the *-man* compounds, some were deeply entrenched. Compared to just over half of the Hong Kong students who opted for *chairman* and *businessman* (Lee, 2007), approximately 90% of the Chinese EFL teachers used these male terms in the translation test. This may be due to the preponderance of men in the worlds of politics and business in mainland China (Yu, 2010). For example, past and present leaders in China are all men (e.g. Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping). In addition, the common evocation of Mao Zedong as 'Chairman Mao' has probably popularised the word *chairman*.

Table 1. Translation test results

	Occupation terms	Aged 21-30	Over 30	Total
(1)	警察			
	policeman	76 (77.6%)	93 (79.5%)	169 (78.6%)
	gender-neutral (e.g. *police officer, police*)	22 (22.4%)	24 (20.5%)	46 (21.4%)
*(2)	消防員			
	fireman	61 (62.2%)	90 (76.9%)	151 (70.2%)
	gender-neutral (e.g. *firefighter*)	36 (36.7%)	24 (20.5%)	60 (27.9%)
(3)	郵差			
	postman/mailman	86 (87.8%)	99 (84.6%)	185 (86%)
	gender-neutral (e.g. *post officer, post person, 'poster'*)	12 (12.2%)	18 (15.4%)	30 (14%)

**(4)	主席			
	chairman	94 (95.9%)	101 (86.3%)	195 (90.7%)
	gender-neutral (e.g. *chairperson, president*)	4 (4.1%)	16 (13.7%)	20 (9.3%)
(5)	商人			
	businessman	85 (86.7%)	101 (86.3%)	186 (86.5%)
	gender-neutral (e.g. *businessperson, merchant*)	12 (12.2%)	14 (12.0%)	26 (12.1%)
(6)	發言人			
	spokesman	59 (60.2%)	64 (54.7%)	123 (57.2%)
	gender-neutral (e.g. *spokesperson, speaker*)	39 (39.8%)	52 (44.4%)	91 (42.3%)
(7)	售貨員			
	salesman	45 (45.9%)	46 (39.3%)	91 (42.3%)
	gender-neutral (e.g. *salesperson, shopkeeper, shop assistant, seller*)	53 (54.1%)	69 (59.0%)	122 (56.7%)

Note: *marks the item that shows significant differences between the two groups of teachers, with a higher proportion of the younger teachers preferring the gender-neutral variants (p < .05, df = 1). **marks the item that shows significant differences between the two groups of teachers, with a higher proportion of the older teachers preferring the gender-neutral variants (p < .05, df = 1).

Post-test email correspondence revealed that textbooks also played a very important role in the teachers' choice of vocabulary variants. While two teachers indicated that they had learnt the -*man* compounds from textbooks, the shift from sexist English to non-sexist English in contemporary textbooks also contributed to their choice of some gender-neutral vocabulary. As Table 1 shows, approximately half of the teachers opted for titles such as *spokesperson*, *speaker*, *shop assistant*, *salesperson* and *shopkeeper*. My current textbook study allowed a corpus search for selected job titles in 26 primary and secondary textbooks used in China, and I found that the gender-neutral terms *shopkeeper(s)* appeared 31 times, and *shop assistant(s)* appeared 12 times. The mixed use of gender-exclusive and -inclusive terms for different occupations, as found in the present study, suggests possible impacts on teachers' language choice from old learning and new learning via educational materials published in different eras, respectively.

Of the seven items tested, two showed significant differences between younger and older teachers with regard to their choice of masculine or gender-neutral generic constructions. However, no consistent preference was shown. Compared with the over-30 age group, the younger teachers used the gender-inclusive terms more often (e.g. *firefighter*) for (2) 消防員 (χ^2 = 6.643, p = .01), but the masculine term (*chairman*) for (4) 主席 (χ^2 = 5.818, p = .016).

ETHICAL DILEMMA TEST

One limitation of the ethical dilemma test is that a number of teachers did not include pronouns to refer to the antecedents in their writing. One reason might be that they deliberately did not include pronouns to avoid sexism, but a more probable reason, based on their short writing, is that many teachers failed to elaborate because of their lack of linguistic competence (Lee, 2009). Despite the limited data collected, the teachers' selection of the masculine or feminine pronouns reveals their spontaneous responses to the gender image that they perceived for the occupations. As seen in Table 2, gender disparity is obvious. Almost all the social roles tested were strongly associated with pseudo-generic *he*. One reason for this might be the transfer from the non-parallel pronominalisation in Chinese, which, similar to English, also uses the masculine pronoun (他 'he') as a generic.[i] *Nurse* is the only exception, which was commonly regarded as a job for women: 25.1% of the teachers opted for generic *she*, which markedly outweighed other alternatives (1.4% for *he*, 1.9% for *they* and 2.8% for *he/she*). This echoes Tao's (2007) textbook study, which revealed that nursing is a stereotypical job for females in the school texts published in China. It may be argued that these findings reflect the reality of male nurse scarcity in China: in 2002 there were 5,000 nurses working in hospitals in Foshan City, Guangdong Province, but only eight were male (Shan, 2002). Although more male nurses have joined the profession in recent years, the ratio of male to female nurses remains very unbalanced. In 2013, the number of male nurses accounted for only one percent of all the nurses in the country (CNTV, 2013).

Table 2. Ethical dilemma test results

	Item		*he*	*she*	*they*	*he/she*
(1)	*manager*	21-30	20 (20.4%)	0	0	1 (1.0%)
		Over 30	38 (32.5%)	0	0	2 (1.7%)
		Total	58 (27.0%)	0	0	3 (1.4%)
	employee	21-30	53 (54.1%)	0	0	12 (12.2%)
		Over 30	73 (62.4%)	0	1 (0.9%)	13 (11.1%)
		Total	126 (58.6%)	0	1 (0.5%)	25 (11.6%)
(2)	*nurse*	21-30	0	23 (23.5%)	2 (2.0%)	4 (4.1%)
		Over 30	3 (2.6%)	31 (26.5%)	2 (1.7%)	2 (1.7%)
		Total	3 (1.4%)	54 (25.1%)	4 (1.9%)	6 (2.8%)
	doctor	21-30	14 (14.3%)	1 (1.0%)	3 (3.1%)	3 (3.1%)
		Over 30	13 (11.1%)	0	2 (1.7%)	2 (1.7%)
		Total	27 (12.6%)	1 (0.5%)	5 (2.3%)	5 (2.3%)

	patient	21-30	6 (6.1%)	0	0	0
		Over 30	14 (12%)	0	0	0
		Total	20 (9.3%)	0	0	0
(3)	*professor*	21-30	17 (17.3%)	0	0	3 (3.1%)
		Over 30	28 (23.9%)	0	0	1 (0.9%)
		Total	45 (20.9%)	0	0	4 (1.9%)
	*student	21-30	47 (48.0%)	0	0	19 (19.4%)
		Over 30	64 (54.7%)	0	0	11 (9.4%)
		Total	111 (51.6%)	0	0	30 (14.0%)
(4)	*teacher*	21-30	9 (9.2%)	1 (1.0%)	0	0
		Over 30	16 (13.7%)	2 (1.7%)	0	1 (0.9%)
		Total	25 (11.6%)	3 (1.4%)	0	1 (0.5%)
	student	21-30	52 (53.1%)	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	7 (7.1%)
		Over 30	81 (69.2%)	0	0	6 (5.1%)
		Total	133 (61.9%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	13 (6.0%)

Note: *marks the item that shows significant differences between the two groups of teachers, with a higher proportion of the younger teachers preferring the paired pronoun ($p < .05$, df = 1).

A pleasing finding is that the gender-inclusive paired pronoun *he/she* is not uncommonly used in China these days, which is in line with the increasing popularity of the Chinese paired pronoun 他 (她) 'he(she)' in newspapers and magazines (Wang, 2010). Among the four variants tested in the study, the paired pronoun *he/she* was second only to the generic *he*, and was used by over 10% of the teachers for (1) *employee* and (3) *student.* One teacher in the email correspondence attributed her choice of the dual pronoun to her learning of this usage in school, and the social reality that students and employees can be male or female. This suggests that textbook authors' language choice, and the social roles engaged in by the two genders, can affect teachers' English use, which in turn will induce learners' language change.

A comparison of the two age groups' choice of generic *he* and the paired pronoun shows a tendency of the older group to opt for generic *he* (see Table 2). However, no significant differences were found, except for scenario (3) with *student* ($\chi^2 = 4.179$, p = .041).

TAG TEST

The results of this test echoed the findings of the ethical dilemma test, in that there were no significant differences between the two age groups in their choice of generic pronouns. The

investigation, nevertheless, noted teachers' varied attitudes towards the lexical items. As shown in Table 3, the Chinese teachers opted for generic *he* and generic *she* for different professions. Prestigious occupations, or those jobs that have traditionally been dominated by men, were still commonly associated with generic *he*, for example 86% for (4) *police officer* and 79.5 % for (5) *doctor*. Conversely, generic *she* was widely used by the teachers for such occupations as (1) *nurse* (82.8%), (9) *secretary* (38.1%) and (10) *shop assistant* (35.8%), indicating that these jobs are commonly associated with women. The impact of the social gender was confirmed in the email correspondence. Two teachers justified their choice of masculine *he* by saying that professions such as *police officer*, *chairman* and *fireman* were mostly taken by men. They also indicated that they had used the pronoun *she* for *nurse* and *secretary* because they thought that these professions were dominated by women. These findings reveal that the choice of the pronouns was based on 'living experiences', as suggested by one of the teachers.

Table 3. Tag test results

Item		*he*	*she*	*they*	*he/she*
(1) *nurse*	21-30	6 (6.1%)	86 (87.8%)	0	6 (6.1%)
	Over 30	13 (11.1%)	92 (78.6%)	1 (0.9%)	10 (8.5%)
	Total	19 (8.8%)	178 (82.8%)	1 (0.5%)	16 (7.4%)
(2) *chairman*	21-30	94 (95.9%)	0	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)
	Over 30	110 (94.0%)	1 (0.9%)	1 (0.9%)	4 (3.4%)
	Total	204 (94.9%)	1 (0.5%)	2 (0.9%)	5 (2.3%)
(3) *everybody*	21-30	40 (40.8%)	1 (1.0%)	28 (28.6%)	2 (2.0%)
	Over 30	52 (44.4%)	0	44 (37.6%)	3 (2.6%)
	Total	92 (42.8%)	1 (0.5%)	72 (33.5 %)	5 (2.3%)
(4) *police officer*	21-30	82 (83.7%)	2 (2.0%)	2 (2.0%)	6 (6.1%)
	Over 30	103 (88.0%)	0	2 (1.7%)	11 (9.4%)
	Total	185 (86.0%)	2 (0.9%)	4 (1.9%)	17 (7.9%)
(5) *doctor*	21-30	78 (79.6%)	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	13 (13.3%)
	Over 30	93 (79.5%)	4 (3.4%)	0	15 (12.8%)
	Total	171 (79.5%)	5 (2.3%)	1 (0.5%)	28 (13.0%)
(6) *salesman*	21-30	92 (93.9%)	2 (2.0%)	0	2 (2.0%)
	Over 30	103 (88.0%)	2 (1.7%)	2 (1.7%)	5 (4.3%)
	Total	195 (90.7%)	4 (1.9%)	2 (0.9%)	7 (3.3%)

(7) teacher	21-30	69 (70.4%)	7 (7.1%)	1 (1.0%)	12 (12.2%)
	Over 30	77 (65.8%)	8 (6.8%)	1 (0.9%)	15 (12.8%)
	Total	146 (67.9%)	15 (7.0%)	2 (0.9%)	27 (12.6%)
(8) fireman	21-30	95 (96.9%)	0	1 (1.0%)	0
	Over 30	105 (89.7%)	0	1 (0.9%)	3 (2.6%)
	Total	200 (93.0%)	0	2 (0.9%)	3 (1.4%)
(9) secretary	21-30	45 (45.9%)	36 (36.7%)	0	11 (11.2%)
	Over 30	45 (38.5%)	46 (39.3%)	2 (1.7%)	15 (12.8%)
	Total	90 (41.9%)	82 (38.1%)	2 (0.9%)	26 (12.1%)
(10) shop assistant	21-30	45 (45.9%)	34 (34.7%)	1 (1.0%)	12 (12.2%)
	Over 30	46 (39.3%)	43 (36.8%)	3 (2.6%)	15 (12.8%)
	Total	91 (42.3%)	77 (35.8%)	4 (1.9%)	27 (12.6%)

In addition to social gender associations, the morphological structure of the occupational terms also has an impact on the teachers' choice of generic pronouns. The present study shows a serious problem of masculine bias with occupational compounds that include the morpheme -man. The acceptance rate for generic he was over 90% for (2) chairman, (6) salesman and (8) fireman. A comparison of the acceptance rates of generic he for (6) salesman (90.7%) and its gender-neutral variant, (10) shop assistant (42.3%), indicates that the image of men is more likely to be associated with a gender-exclusive term than with a gender-neutral term. These findings confirm those of previous studies (e.g. Lee, 2007; Schneider & Hacker, 1973), in that compound words that contain the morpheme -man are pseudo-generics, because women are often excluded. Teachers should therefore replace gender-biased terms with gender-neutral expressions in the interests of promoting gender equity in schools.

In a similar manner to the ethical dilemma test, the tag test revealed that the dual pronoun he/she is not uncommon among Chinese EFL teachers. It was chosen by over 10% of the teachers in reference to gender-unmarked occupational terms (e.g. (5) doctor, (7) teacher, (9) secretary and (10) shop assistant). However, when referring to the occupational terms with the morpheme -man, only 1.4%–3.3% of the teachers chose the paired pronoun. This confirms that the -man compounds are not gender-inclusive.

A comparison of the paired pronoun and generic they reveals that the former is more popular among Chinese EFL teachers. Unlike Australian native English speakers, who show a high level of acceptance for generic they (Lee, 1999; Pauwels, 2001; Pauwels & Winter, 2006),

many Chinese EFL teachers, similar to Hong Kong students (Lee, 2007), are still resistant to the use of plural pronouns with a singular reference. The findings show that only 0.5%–1.9% of the participants opted for generic *they* (see Table 3), suggesting that the Chinese teachers, who are familiar with prescriptive rules and are considered models of grammatical correctness, sacrifice gender equality for number agreement. An exception lies with (3) the indefinite pronoun *everybody*, for which 33.5% of the teachers chose generic *they*. The meaning of the sentence itself might be a factor that determines the teachers' pronoun choice, as the sentence *Everybody came late* could be rephrased as *All the people came late*, which requires a tag with the plural pronoun *they*. This supports Peters' (2004, p. 538) assertion that 'They/them/their are now freely used in agreement with singular indefinite pronouns and determiners, those with universal implications such as *any(one)*, *every(one)*, *no(one)*'.

SLOT-FILLING TEST

The findings of this test confirm that the pronoun choice is associated with the stereotypical assumptions with regard to the appropriate occupational roles for men and women. As shown in Table 4, approximately 70% of the teachers opted for generic *he* in reference to high-status occupations: *doctor*, *lawyer*, *manager* and *engineer*. Only 0.9%–2.8% of the teachers used generic *she* for such careers. In contrast, a much higher proportion opted for generic *she* for traditionally female-dominated jobs, such as *nurse* (82.3%) and *secretary* (47.4%). This suggests that, although many of these job titles are not morphologically marked for gender, they have a strong social gender association. For jobs that show less social gender association (e.g. *teacher*, *cleaner* and *clerk*), generic *he* still dominates, with the acceptance rates ranging from 55.8% – 61.9%.

Table 4. Slot-filling test results

Item		he	she	they	he/she
(1) *anyone*	21-30	56 (57.1%)	1 (1.0%)	10 (10.2%)	4 (4.1%)
	Over 30	60 (51.3%)	0	8 (6.8%)	9 (7.7%)
	Total	116 (54.0%)	1 (0.5%)	18 (8.4%)	13 (6.0%)
(2) *a very good nurse*	21-30	4 (4.1%)	82 (83.7%)	0	10 (10.2%)
	Over 30	3 (2.6%)	95 (81.2%)	1 (0.9%)	13 (11.1%)
	Total	7 (3.3%)	177 (82.3%)	1 (0.5%)	23 (10.7%)
(3) *everyone*	21-30	58 (59.2%)	0	21 (21.4%)	10 (10.2%)
	Over 30	69 (59.0%)	0	23 (19.7%)	15 (12.8%)
	Total	127 (59.1%)	0	44 (20.5 %)	25 (11.6%)
(4) *a teacher*	21-30	62 (63.3%)	8 (8.2%)	6 (6.1%)	18 (18.4%)
	Over 30	70 (59.8%)	8 (6.8%)	3 (2.6%)	30 (25.6%)
	Total	132 (61.4%)	16 (7.4%)	9 (4.2%)	48 (22.3%)
(5) *a businessman*	21-30	84 (85.7%)	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	3 (3.1%)
	Over 30	98 (83.8%)	2 (1.7%)	4 (3.4%)	7 (6.0%)
	Total	182 (84.7%)	3 (1.4%)	5 (2.3%)	10 (4.7%)
(6) *someone*	21-30	53 (54.1%)	12 (12.2%)	6 (6.1%)	23 (23.5%)
	Over 30	55 (47.0%)	12 (10.3%)	7 (6.0%)	40 (34.2%)
	Total	108 (50.2%)	24 (11.2%)	13 (6.0%)	63 (29.3%)
(7) *the sportsman*	21-30	93 (94.9%)	0	0	3 (3.1%)
	Over 30	109 (93.2%)	0	0	7 (6.0%)
	Total	202 (94.0%)	0	0	10 (4.7%)

Item	Age				
(8) *a doctor*	21-30	75 (76.5%)	1 (1.0%)	1 (1.0%)	14 (14.3%)
	Over 30	77 (65.8%)	1 (0.9%)	5 (4.3%)	26 (22.2%)
	Total	152 (70.7%)	2 (0.9%)	6 (2.8%)	40 (18.6%)
(9) *each student*	21-30	63 (64.3%)	0	10 (10.2%)	12 (12.2%)
	Over 30	65 (55.6%)	0	7 (6.0%)	26 (22.2%)
	Total	128 (59.5%)	0	17 (7.9%)	38 (17.7%)
(10) **the cleaner*	21-30	62 (63.3%)	13 (13.3%)	0	19 (19.4%)
	Over 30	58 (49.6%)	21 (17.9%)	0	35 (29.9%)
	Total	120 (55.8%)	34 (15.8%)	0	54 (25.1%)
(11) *the spokesman*	21-30	83 (84.7%)	0	0	13 (13.3%)
	Over 30	91 (77.8%)	1 (0.9%)	0	22 (18.8%)
	Total	174 (80.9%)	1 (0.5%)	0	35 (16.3%)
(12) *an athlete*	21-30	75 (76.5%)	0	2 (2.0%)	17 (17.3%)
	Over 30	75 (64.1%)	2 (1.7%)	3 (2.6%)	32 (27.4%)
	Total	150 (69.8%)	2 (0.9%)	5 (2.3%)	49 (22.8%)
(13) *a chairperson*	21-30	75 (76.5%)	0	2 (2.0%)	17 (17.3%)
	Over 30	87 (74.4%)	3 (2.6%)	1 (0.9%)	22 (18.8%)
	Total	162 (75.3%)	3 (1.4%)	3 (1.4%)	39 (18.1%)
(14) *each child*	21-30	43 (43.9%)	0	37 (37.8%)	14 (14.3%)
	Over 30	53 (45.3%)	1 (0.9%)	32 (27.4%)	26 (22.2%)
	Total	96 (44.7%)	1 (0.5%)	69 (32.1%)	40 (18.6%)
(15) *the new clerk*	21-30	64 (65.3%)	10 (10.2%)	0	20 (20.4%)
	Over 30	69 (59.0%)	10 (8.5%)	2 (1.7%)	31 (26.5%)
	Total	133 (61.9%)	20 (9.3%)	2 (0.9%)	51 (23.7%)

(16) anyone	21-30	69 (70.4%)	1 (1.0%)	4 (4.1%)	18 (18.4%)
	Over 30	75 (64.1%)	3 (2.6%)	6 (5.1%)	30 (25.6%)
	Total	144 (67.0%)	4 (1.9%)	10 (4.7%)	48 (22.3%)
(17) your lawyer	21-30	73 (74.5%)	1 (1.0%)	0	20 (20.4%)
	Over 30	76 (65.0%)	5 (4.3%)	0	33 (28.2%)
	Total	149 (69.3%)	6 (2.8%)	0	53 (24.7%)
(18) our manager	21-30	75 (76.5%)	0	0	19 (19.4%)
	Over 30	81 (69.2%)	3 (2.6%)	0	29 (24.8%)
	Total	156 (72.6%)	3 (1.4%)	0	48 (22.3%)
(19) my secretary	21-30	34 (34.7%)	40 (40.8%)	0	19 (19.4%)
	Over 30	26 (22.2%)	62 (53.0%)	0	24 (20.5%)
	Total	60 (27.9%)	102 (47.4%)	0	43 (20.0%)
(20) the engineer	21-30	74 (75.5%)	1 (1.0%)	0	18 (18.4%)
	Over 30	88 (75.2%)	2 (1.7%)	0	23 (19.7%)
	Total	162 (75.3%)	3 (1.4%)	0	41 (19.1%)

Note: *marks the item that shows significant differences between the two groups of teachers in their choice of the generic *he* and the paired pronoun *he/ she* (p < .05, df = 1).

In a similar manner to the tag test, for job titles that contain the morpheme -*man* (e.g. *businessman, sportsman* and *spokesman*) the teachers tended to use generic *he* for anaphoric reference; the acceptability rates ranged from 80.9%–94%. Conversely, the acceptance of generic *he* decreased for gender-neutral job titles; the acceptance rates were 69.8% for *athlete* and 75.3% for *chairperson*. This confirms the findings of the tag test and my earlier Hong Kong study (Lee, 2007) that the morpheme *man* is a pseudo-generic, which may stop people from evoking female imagery.

Another noteworthy finding is that the plural co-referent *they* was not uncommonly used among the Chinese EFL teachers when the context suggests a strong plural meaning, as observed in the following examples. The noun phrases in question are preceded by either the morpheme *every* or the inclusive determiner *each*, meaning 'all'.

(3) *Everyone* should do *his* own work	59.1%
Everyone should do *their* own work	20.5%

(14) We will give *each child* a gift so that *he* will go home happily	44.7%
We will give *each child* a gift so that *they* will go home happily	32.1%

In their email correspondence, two teachers commented that they found the generic pronoun *they* acceptable when the context suggested plural meanings. One teacher found herself in a dilemma when deciding which pronoun to use. To her, *everybody*, *everyone* and *each child* have a plural meaning but are singular in form and the use of *they*, *them* or *their* to refer to these noun phrases violates number agreement. The teacher, however, added that she had learnt generic *they* from her teacher. This demonstrates the important role of teachers as the promoters of gender-inclusive language reform.

Conversely, when the indefinite pronoun was associated with a singular meaning, generic *they* was less commonly used:

(1) Anyone who wants to go to the party should bring *their* money	8.4%
(6) If you love someone, you must give *them* freedom.	6.0%
(16) If anyone rings, please ask *them* to leave a message.	4.7%

It is also worth noting that when the antecedent is singular with a definite reference, the level of tolerance of the paired pronoun *he/she* is higher than that of generic *they*. An examination of sentences (10) *the cleaner*, (15) *the new clerk*, (17) *your lawyer*, (18) *our manager*, (19) *my secretary* and (20) *the engineer* reveals that approximately 20% of the teachers opted for the paired pronoun, but almost none of them chose generic *they*. These findings are in line

with Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's (2003) proposition that *they* is still infrequently used with definite antecedents.

In a similar manner to the other tests, the slot-filling test did not find that age was a significant sociolinguistic factor contributing to the teachers' generic pronoun choice in the present study. Of the 20 items tested, only sentence 10 (*the cleaner*) showed significant differences between the two age groups, with a higher proportion of the older teachers preferring the dual pronoun *he/she* ($\chi^2 = 4.066$, $p = .044$).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

It is not my intention to make generalisations based on a single study, which has its own limitations, such as the limited age range of the participating teachers, and the small number of participants who entered into further correspondence explaining their language choices made in the written tests. Nevertheless, the findings of the present study shed new light on the acceptability of some selected sexist and non-sexist usages and lexis among Chinese EFL teachers. Unlike the Australian teachers in Pauwels and Winter's (2006) study who tended to adopt gender-inclusive alternatives, the Chinese EFL teachers were inclined to be guardians of linguistic prescriptivism and tended to sacrifice gender equality for linguistic purism. The common preference for gender-biased occupational terms and generic *he* suggests that many Chinese EFL teachers still operate under the influence of traditional male-oriented prescriptive norms. Nevertheless, it is encouraging to see that some teachers are aware of the importance of achieving linguistic gender equality and encapsulating a woman's perspective by using new -*person* or -*officer* compounds, and by experimenting with grammatical structures to avoid gender bias in 3rd person pronoun choice.

The present study also revealed that some gender-biased occupational terms are more resistant to non-sexist language reform. The coexistence of some commonly used gender-neutral occupational titles, such as *police officer* and *salesperson*, and gender-biased terms, such as *chairman* and *businessman*, indicates that some gender-neutral job titles have undergone faster changes than others. As mentioned by some teachers in the follow-up email discussion, their language choices were affected partly by school textbooks and their teachers, and partly by their lived experiences. How these factors affect the choice and popularity of the newly coined gender-inclusive occupational titles would be another interesting area for future research.

The present study also examined the factors affecting the selection of generic pronouns. Although pseudo-generic *he* is the predominant variant for anaphoric reference to indefinite pronouns and most occupational titles, there exist various factors that would affect the choice of the variants, one of which is social gender association. The different tests used in the present study provide evidence of the frequent 'generic' use of masculine pronouns in relation to occupations with strong male associations or with high social prestige, and widespread use of generic *she* with traditionally female jobs.

Another factor concerns the morphological structure of the antecedents. Comparing the antecedent containing the pseudo-generic morpheme -*man* and the antecedent containing the morpheme -*person*, generic *he* is more commonly used in reference to the former than the latter, which suggests that the use of -*man* to form compound words would make women become invisible.

Another factor relates to the definiteness and meaning of the antecedent. The paired pronoun *he or she* is more likely to be used anaphorically to refer to gender indeterminate antecedents when they are preceded by definite determiners, whereas the generic *they* is more likely to be used when the antecedent has a strong plural meaning.

It is encouraging to find that some Chinese EFL teachers have made attempts to avoid using sexist expressions, which is clearly of importance as a step to break the vicious cycle of gender inequality that has been in existence in China for centuries (Johnson, 1996; Shaffer, Joplin, Bell, Lau, Oguz, 2000). Nevertheless, the findings of the present study also reveal that a number of Chinese EFL teachers are not aware of the gender issues and have 'gender blindness' (Sadker & Silber, 2007, p. xiii). Many teachers reinforce gender bias through their sexist language choices. Students construct gender identity in the course of learning a language. One important role of teachers is to create school environments that are free from gender stereotypes and sexism, so as to empower students to develop their full potential, both academically and personally. Amare (2007) comments that with sexism in education, both men and women lose. To improve the situation, teachers should no longer see themselves as merely guardians of grammatical correctness; instead they should teach 'appropriate' language (Nilsen, 2001). They should act as agents of social language change (Pauwels & Winter, 2006), and they should be willing to break some prescriptive norms to spread gender inclusivity to successive generations. Teacher education programmes, which have been criticised as being slow to recognise gender bias (Choi, 2012; Sadker & Silber, 2007; Yu et al., 2012), should offer more courses to raise student teachers' gender sensitivity and integrate gender issues into the curricula, so that new teachers will not repeat the sexist lessons that they had in their own school days to the next generation, and will develop strategies to address the problem of gender inequality in the classroom.

Further, studies of this kind, which have attracted little attention in China to date, will conceivably alert pre-service and in-service teachers to the importance of avoiding gender-biased language and creating the non-sexist classroom. It would be of interest to study Chinese EFL teachers' and learners' attitudes towards gender-biased language again in several years' time to assess whether recent non-sexist linguistic reform around the globe, and the greater number of educational and career opportunities given to Chinese women in the new market economy and overseas, have any significant impact on the English use of educators and learners in China.

The present study relied mainly on the elicitation tests as its research tools and obtained artificial data about what generic pronouns and job titles the Chinese EFL teachers chose to use in a test environment. It has been argued that focusing on words in isolation and replacing them with gender-neutral terms alone cannot solve the gender inequality problem (Mills & Mullany, 2011). Teachers should avoid not only 'overt sexism' (e.g. generic pronouns and nouns, naming, semantic derogation) but also 'indirect sexism' (e.g. at the level of presupposition, humour or irony, collocation) (Mills, 2008). Future studies involving classroom observations would yield useful insights about what teachers actually say and write in the classroom, and provide useful resources for our understanding of how gender is produced through language and discourse.

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ENDNOTES

i   Chinese pronouns were devoid of gender distinctions until the New Culture Movement in the 1910s, with the coining of the feminine forms for the second (妳) and third (她) personal pronouns, which comprise the female radical (女) to increase women's visibility. While the more popular variants 你 'you' and 他 'he' have a supposed generic quality, they also denote the male gender by default (Ettner, 2002). Non-parallel pronominalisation in Chinese is similar to that in English, which also has the masculine pronouns as pseudo-generics.