

How Nonbinary Singular “They” is Implemented in US Universities

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Objectives

This presentation will provide a systematic analysis of linguistic changes at major and leading US universities, specifically focusing on the usage of the nonbinary Singular “they/them.” Suggestions on how this linguistic transition could be shared in EFL classrooms follow.

Cases at American Universities

The official websites of the four US universities listed on the right have been reviewed in order to see how the nonbinary Singular “they” is implemented in academic settings in the US.
The following three findings provide an effective approach.

- Harvard University
- University of Washington
- University of Wisconsin Madison
- Yale University

Finding 1: Providing knowledge and action models to create an inclusive community

- 1. Definition**
Conveying what “(gender) pronouns” are.
- 2. Purpose of using nonbinary pronouns**
Explaining “Why” universities are implementing new usage of pronouns is essential.
- 3. How to use “my pronouns” and nonbinary Singular they**
To create inclusive environments on gender identity, a new communication style is introduced along with a new gender pronoun, nonbinary Singular “they.”
- 4. How to apologize when making mistakes**
To raise awareness, even mistakes are included in the learning process.
- 5. Easy access to proper information on “LGBTQ,” “Pronouns” & “Gender Pronouns” on each university site.**
Readers/students not only broaden their knowledge but also become enlighteners.

University of Washington, Office of the University Register, Pronouns FAQs

Is “they” a singular gender-neutral pronoun?

Yes, **they/them** pronouns have been used as singular gender-neutral pronouns for centuries, and Merriam-Webster recently updated the definition of the word “they” in its dictionary, citing use of they to refer to a “single person whose gender identity is nonbinary.”

The Number of Search Results on Website (2022/3/3)

	LGBTQ	Pronouns	Gender pronouns	(nonbinary) Singular they
Harvard Uni.	6,160	4,370	592	89
Uni. of Washington	6,040	4,290	172	72
University of Wisconsin Madison	3,510	2,260	117	23
Yale University	6,060	2,180	60	24

Finding 2: Providing opportunities for actual use of pronouns

- 1. Ss sign up preferred gender pronouns on the class roster:**
Ss let the teacher know about preferred gender pronouns. This functions as awareness raising and promotes inclusiveness.
- 2. Ts implement “my pronouns” and nonbinary Singular “they” in class:**
New communication models are introduced by faculty members such as in self-introductions.
- 3. Ss choose preferred gender pronouns on online-learning tools:**
Ss express and accept preferred gender pronouns in class
- 4. Websites show how to incorporate new usage of gender pronouns into everyday life:**
Detailed and practical exercises are introduced in order to make the new usage of pronouns habitual.

Online learning tools



Pronoun feature adopted by Zoom, Zoom website

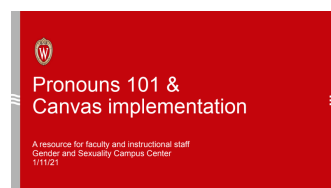


Stickers offered by Yale University, Office of LGBTQ Resources



Finding 3: Providing Faculty Development

Workshops & documents introduce new usage of pronouns step-by-step so that faculty members can implement nonbinary Singular “they” in academic settings. Although the benefit of a one-time workshop for faculty members is limited, hands-on guidelines provide not only information but also help the faculty understand pronouns and educate themselves.



e.g., University of Wisconsin-Madison, Pronouns 101 & Canvas Implementation

Pedagogical Suggestions in EFL

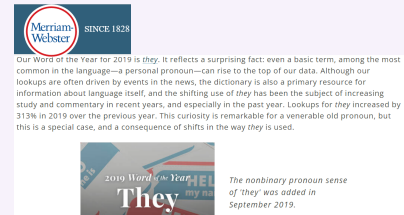
- Introduce the nonbinary Singular “they” in the latest English articles covering national, international and entertainment news.
- Introduce social media that include nonbinary pronouns.
- Elicit what Ss know about nonbinary pronouns, the LGBTQ+ movement, and related social and linguistic changes.
- Have Ss discuss the factors that contributed to this social movement in groups.
- Have Ss predict whether society and language will continue to change in the future, learning from the past. If yes, discuss how they will change.
- Have Ss find related material and share it in class.
- Watch contemporary communication using self-identified gender pronouns in the media.
- Have Ss experience using self-identified gender pronouns.
- Introduce updated APA/MLA writing guidelines.
- Have advanced learners practice using gender pronouns in academic writing.
- Throughout the lesson, raise awareness that Ss have only a little exposure to current English.

The English language textbook on the right includes an explanation of the nonbinary Singular “they.”

Forward Mode: English for Fashion Students
Nyui-Kozuka, Kawamorita & Collins (2022). Nan'Un-Do, Tokyo.

Sample Pedagogical Suggestion for EFL

Step 1: Introduce the nonbinary Singular “they” in the latest English articles covering national, international and entertainment news.



Step 2: Introduce social media that include nonbinary pronouns.



Step 3: Elicit what Ss know about nonbinary pronouns, the LBTQ+ movement, and related social and linguistic changes.



Step 4: Have Ss discuss the factors that contributed to this social movement in groups.

Step 5: Watch contemporary communication using self-identified gender pronouns in the media.
Have Ss experience using self-identified gender pronouns.



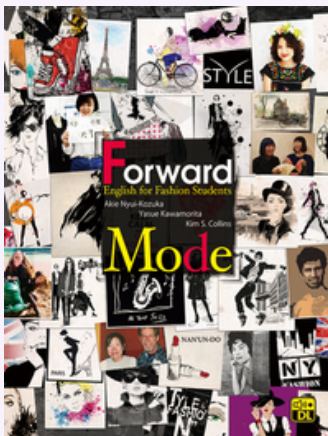
Step 6: Have Ss find related material and share it in class.

Gender Neutral Language Workshop

In addition to the background knowledge that participants need to know, this workshop helps raise awareness of gender-neutral language. The workshop also includes practical training for gender-neutral Japanese and English expressions, aiming to help participants acquire and apply gender-neutral language.



<https://www.genderneutl.com/>



Forward Mode: English for Fashion Students

This bilingual English textbook is written in both English and Japanese and provides explanations of the nonbinary Singular “they” and how gender pronouns she/he, he/him, they/them, etc. are used in the new style of communication.



<https://nanun-do.hondana.jp/book/b614538.html>

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They provide Gender Neutral-Language Workshops online for business people and educators on a regular basis.