FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA

(Non) Binary voices:

Shaping Inclusive Language in *Reddit*

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Traballo Fin de Grao

Curso académico 2024-2025

Santiago de Compostela, 1 de xullo do 2025

Traballo de Fin de Grao presentado na Facultade de Filoloxía da Universidade de Santiago de Compostela para a obtención do Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

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Abstract in English

Contemporary society is, above all, characterized by its diversity. Just as people must adapt to innovations and evolution, so too must our language. For this reason, the use of nonbinary pronouns and inclusive language is becoming increasingly common. Challenges emerge with pronoun-antecedent agreement, particularly with the use of singular *they* and *everyone*, as well as the corresponding reflexive forms *themself* and *themselves*. Additional complexities arise when adapting neutral pronouns in gendered languages such as Spanish and Galician, which exhibit inflections for grammatical gender, i.e. masculine, feminine, and, in some cases, neuter (e.g. *niño*, *niña* and *niñe*). These linguistic shifts may have legal and cultural implications, especially for nonbinary people as demonstrated by the Trans Language Activism (TLA), which advocates for the integration of neutral and neopronouns into social norms. This BA thesis sets out to examine these issues and explore the relationship between inclusive language, identity formation and grammatical rules. The focus will be on the usage and forms of *they* and neopronouns such as *ze* and *xe* within the (non)binary community, as represented in a sample of threads extracted from *Reddit* (e.g. *r/NonBinaryTalk*) using the R programming language. The hypothesis that is put forward is that *they* will become the preferred pronoun for both binary and nonbinary communities when referring to themselves and individuals whose gender is unspecified, thus adopting a more neutral linguistic position. After carrying out a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data, it will be argued for the necessity of adopting inclusive language practices in media, education, and policymaking to foster a more equitable society.

Keywords: inclusive language, nonbinary pronouns, grammatical gender, identity formation, *Reddit* discourse analysis

Abstract in Galician

Se hai algo que caracteriza a sociedade contemporánea, esta é a súa diversidade. Así como as persoas deben adaptarse ás innovacións e á evolución, tamén debe facelo a nosa lingua. Por esta razón, o uso de pronomes non binarios e da linguaxe inclusiva estase volvendo cada vez máis común. Xorden desafíos coa concordancia entre pronomes e antecedentes, particularmente co uso do *they* singular e *everyone*, así como coas formas reflexivas correspondentes *themself* e *themselves*. Tamén existen complexidades adicionais á hora de adaptar pronomes neutros en linguas con xénero gramatical, como o español e o galego, que presentan flexións para o xénero masculino, feminino e, nalgúns casos, para o xénero neutro (por exemplo, *neno*, *nena* e *nene*). Estes cambios lingüísticos poden ter implicacións legais e culturais, especialmente para as persoas non binarias, como o demostra o *Trans Language Activism* (TLA), que avoga pola integración de pronomes neutros e neopronomes nas normas sociais. Este TFG proponse examinar estas cuestións e explorar a relación entre linguaxe inclusiva, formación de identidade e as normas gramaticais. O enfoque centrarase no uso e nas formas de *they* e de neopronomes como *ze* e *xe* dentro da comunidade (non)binaria, tal como se representa nunha mostra de fíos extraídos de Reddit (por exemplo, *r/NonBinaryTalk*). A hipótese que se formula é que *they* se converterá no pronome de preferencia tanto para as comunidades binarias como non binarias á hora de referirse a si mesmas e a individuos cuxo xénero non se especifica, adoptando así unha posición lingüística máis neutral. Tras realizar unha análise cualitativa e cuantitativa dos datos, argumentarase a necesidade de adoptar prácticas de linguaxe inclusiva nos medios de comunicación, na educación e nas políticas públicas para fomentar unha sociedade máis equitativa.

Palabras chave: linguaxe inclusiva, pronomes non binarios, xénero gramatical, formación da identidade, análise do discurso en *Reddit*

Abstract in Spanish

Si hay algo que caracteriza a la sociedad contemporánea, es su diversidad. Así como las personas deben adaptarse a las innovaciones y a la evolución, también debe hacerlo nuestro lenguaje. Por esta razón, el uso de pronombres no binarios y lenguaje inclusivo se está volviendo cada vez más común. Surgen desafíos con la concordancia entre pronombre y antecedente, particularmente con el uso del *they* singular y *everyone*, así como con las formas reflexivas correspondientes *themself* y *themselves*. Hay también complejidades adicionales al adaptar pronombres neutros en lenguas con género gramatical, como el español y el gallego, que presentan flexiones para el género masculino, femenino y, en algunos casos, para el género neutro (por ejemplo, *niño*, *niña* y *niñe*). Estos cambios lingüísticos pueden tener implicaciones legales y culturales, especialmente para las personas no binarias, como lo demuestra el *Trans Language Activism* (TLA), que aboga por la integración de pronombres neutros y neopronombres en las normas sociales. Este TFG se propone examinar estas cuestiones y explorar la relación entre lenguaje inclusivo, formación de identidad y las normas gramaticales. El enfoque se centrará en el uso y las formas de *they* y de neopronombres como *ze* y *xe* dentro de la comunidad (no)binaria, tal como se representa en una muestra de hilos extraídos de *Reddit* (por ejemplo, *r/NonBinaryTalk*). La hipótesis que se plantea es que *they* se convertirá en el pronombre de preferencia tanto por las comunidades binarias como no binarias al referirse a sí mismas y a individuos cuyo género no se especifica, adoptando así una posición lingüística más neutral. Tras realizar un análisis cualitativo y cuantitativo de los datos, se argumentará la necesidad de adoptar prácticas de lenguaje inclusivo en los medios de comunicación, la educación y las políticas públicas para fomentar una sociedad más equitativa.

Palabras clave: lenguaje inclusivo, pronombres no binarios, género gramatical, construcción de la identidad, análisis del discurso en Reddit

Quiero dedicar este trabajo, ante todo, a mi familia, cuyo apoyo ha sido el pilar más firme a lo largo de todo este proceso.

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"If you don't think representation matters, you're probably well represented."

Bernice King (Feb 25, 2022 at https://x.com/BerniceKing)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Description of the problem

As stated in the sentence that heads this project, representation is a key aspect in society. This quote captures a central issue in gender discourse: the unequal linguistic visibility of marginalized identities. Language plays a central role in affirming or denying identity, and in a world shaped by binary norms, individuals who do not identify as exclusively male or female often remain linguistically invisible or misrepresented. One of the defining features of contemporary society is its growing diversity, and as individuals must adapt to social and cultural change, language must evolve alongside them. In this context, the adoption of inclusive language and nonbinary pronouns is becoming progressively more widespread.

In recent years, online spaces have become critical spaces for this negotiation, with platforms like *Reddit* offering users both anonymity and community support to explore and assert gender identities beyond traditional categories. This BA thesis examines how inclusive language, particularly the use of nonbinary pronouns, functions as both a communicative and a claiming tool. Through the analysis of user interactions on *Reddit*, this study explores not only what pronouns are the most used, but how and why they are chosen, offering insights into the interplay between language, identity and visibility in gender-diverse communities.

Language, like society, is in constant evolution. The English pronoun system reflects this change, having developed from a complex, inflected system in Old English to a simplified, natural-gender-based system in present-day English. Throughout history, forms have disappeared (e.g. *thou*, dual pronouns) while others have emerged or undergone shifts in meaning, most notably the singular *they*, which dates back to the 14th century and has gained renewed relevance today. As this BA thesis explores, pronouns are not static tools of reference but evolving linguistic resources shaped by historical, social and ideological forces. Understanding their development is essential to contextualize current debates around inclusive and nonbinary pronoun use.

Moreover, challenges emerge with pronoun-antecedent agreement, especially when using singular *they* with indefinite pronouns like *everyone*, and when choosing between reflexive forms such as *themself* and *themselves*. Also, the situation becomes even more complex in gendered languages like Spanish or Galician, which require grammatical agreement for masculine, feminine and sometimes neuter forms (e.g *niño*, *niña*, *niñe*). These evolving linguistic practices carry broader social and legal implications for nonbinary individuals, as shown by movements like Trans Language Activism (TLA), which promotes the normalization of neutral and neopronouns within public discourse.

1.2 Objectives of the research

This study aims to examine these issues and explore the relationship between inclusive language, identity formation and grammatical rules. The focus will be on the usage and forms of *they* and neopronouns such as *ze* and *xe* within the (non)binary community, as represented in a sample of threads extracted from *Reddit* (e.g. *r/NonBinaryTalk* and *r/neopronouns*) using the R programming language. Specifically, the Research Questions (RQs) that this BA thesis seeks to answer are the following:

- **RQ1:** Which pronouns are predominantly used in *Reddit*?
- **RQ2:** Do nonbinary pronouns coexist with binary ones, and if so, what is the prevalence of each pronoun?
- **RQ3:** Does the claiming of pronouns allow for inflectional morphology (i.e. are non-nominative forms listed)?
- **RQ4:** How do (non)binary communities refer to themselves and individuals whose gender is unspecified in *Reddit*?
- **RQ5:** Are there discernible differences between binary and nonbinary communities in this respect?
- **RQ6:** Does the assertion of nonbinary pronouns correlate with specific profiles?
- **RQ7:** What may be the motivations for the choice of one pronoun instead of another?

The hypothesis that is put forward is that singular *they* will emerge as the preferred pronoun among nonbinary individuals, both for self-reference and when referring to others whose gender is unspecified. This tendency is expected to reflect a broader shift

toward neutral and inclusive language practices. It is also hypothesized that users outside nonbinary communities, represented by the subreddit *r/neopronouns*, may adopt *they* for similar reasons, as a default form that avoids gendered assumptions.

This BA thesis offers a novel contribution to the field, as to the best of my knowledge, there is currently a lack of research specifically examining the use of nonbinary pronouns within *Reddit* communities. While a few studies touch on related topics, such as gender identity discourse or linguistic practices in *Reddit* spaces, they either dedicate only a small section to pronoun use (e.g. Darwin 2017; Monaco and Prospero 2024) or focus on broader questions of identity and representation (e.g. Youngquist 2023). These works will be briefly discussed in Section 2.5.2. Nonetheless, this BA thesis remains unique in offering a detailed and comparative analysis of pronoun use. By focusing on user-generated content in this platform, the present study provides new insights into how language practices around gender identity are negotiated in online discourse, being a close tool to interpret how in real life conversations between these communities function.

The structure of this BA thesis is as follows. Section 2.1 provides an overview of the pronoun paradigm over the history of English whereas Section 2.2 discusses the status of pronouns in descriptive reference grammars and relevant work published on this topic. Section 2.3 moves on to grammatical innovations and their challenges in modern use, and Section 2.5 summarizes specific case studies in sociocultural contexts, media discourse and policy frameworks. All this sets the background for the second part of this BA thesis. After carrying out a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data in Section 3, in Section 4 it will be argued for the necessity of adopting inclusive language practices in media, education and policymaking aimed at fostering a more equitable society. The BA thesis ends in Section 5 with a summary of the ideas discussed, some concluding remarks and ideas for future research.

2. STATE OF THE ART

2.1 Personal pronouns: past and present

Language evolves alongside societal changes, reflecting shifts in culture, identity and communication. As Barber (1994) states, "all living languages change, though the rate of change varies from time to time and from language to language" (31). The English language has undergone a huge number of variations and changes from the Old English period to the present day. A text written in Old English is not comprehensible for modern speakers, being a consequence of language evolution. Every part of speech has undergone some form of change throughout history, and pronouns are not less than the others, with some becoming obsolete (the case of *thou* or *thee*), and others emerging obtaining contemporary uses (the case of neopronouns such as *ze*). Pronouns are an essential part of language, but they are not static. This section provides a historical overview of English pronouns, studying those that are obsolete and introducing new ones characteristic of modern English.

The historical evolution of the English language from a grammatical gendered language to one that primarily uses natural gender has been described as a complex shift. Scholars have found it difficult to point out what stages it involves (Curzan 2003, 31). The most significant changes in the English language occurred during the transition from Old English to Middle English, making this period one of the most difficult stages to study. This was likely caused by two key factors. First, the existing gaps in the written records, which make the changes seem more drastic than they probably were, compressing what happened in several centuries into a 200-year span. Second, this period marks the transition from the consistent and conservative literary form that characterized the West Saxon dialect in Old English to one more diverse in the Middle English dialects (Curzan 2003, 31).

Old English differs significantly from present-day English. The Old English period was characterized for being highly inflected, which means that Old English was a language that used different endings in the words to express distinct grammatical functions, including case, number, gender, tense, mood and person (Barber 1994, 87). As shown in Table 1, Old English pronouns, too, were inflected based on case, number and gender. Although inflections were lost later on, personal and interrogative pronouns maintained them somehow in modern English, because "core items such as pronouns […]

tend to resist change" (Brinton and Arnovick 2017, 195). The concept of number in Old English had a peculiarity, as there was a unique dual form, used when referring to exactly two people. Therefore, when discussing number, Old English had singular, dual and plural pronouns (Frey 1970, 44). The notion of person was also reflected in this part of speech, which included a distinction between first, second and third person pronouns, as modern forms. Gender classifications included feminine, masculine and neuter, elements still present in modern English but with a different application.

Table 1. Old English personal pronouns

Old English personal pronouns				
First person				
	Singular		***Dual***	***Plural***
Nominative	ic		wit	wē
Accusative	mē		unc	ūs
Genitive	mīn		uncer	ūre
Dative	mē		unc	ūs
Second person				
	Singular		***Dual***	***Plural***
Nominative	þū		git	gē
Accusative	þē		inc	ēow
Genitive	þīn		incer	ēower
Dative	þē		inc	ēow
Third person				
	Masculine	***Neuter***	***Feminine***	***Plural***
Nominative	hē	hit	hēo	hī
Accusative	hine	hit	hī	hī
Genitive	his	his	hire	hira
Dative	him	him	hire	him

Source: Adapted from Brinton and Arnovick (2017, 195)

By the end of the Old English period, the country was affected by the occupation of two different groups: the Vikings and the Normans, which were both of Scandinavian origin. Both brought with them their respective languages, Old Norse and Old French, which significantly shaped the English language (Barber 1994, 127). The Norman Conquest of 1066 marked the beginning of Middle English, with Norman French dominating the ruling classes, and provoking significant changes in vocabulary and

pronunciation. During the transition, Norman French and Old English merged, leading to the development of Middle English, characterized by a simplification of inflections.

The English pronoun system underwent significant changes during the Middle English period. One of the most notable developments was the elimination of the dual form, simplifying distinction to singular and plural forms. The gradual loss of grammatical gender followed the Norman Conquest, largely due to the transition from a highly inflected language to a more analytical structure. While most parts of speech lost gendered endings, personal pronouns preserved their case distinctions more clearly than nouns (Tålig 2008, 9). Moreover, as inflectional endings disappeared, so did the morphological markers of gender, leading English to adopt a natural gender system based on biological sex (male, female or inanimate). Consequently, grammatical gender remained only in personal pronouns and a few lexical items, with natural gender now mainly expressed through pronoun choice (Classen 1919, 98). Another consequence of this morphological simplification was the increased reliance on pronouns, especially as personal verb endings declined. Whereas pronouns had been optional in Old English syntax, they became essential in Middle English sentence structure (Brinton and Arnovick 2017, 288).

Because of the influence of Norman French, the language in the Middle English period suffered a lot of changes and variations; it is a hard period to study because of the great variability that existed inside the same language. The main challenges for modern speakers is that the same word could have several spellings, as there was not a set spelling system, and there was also different dialects present (Kleinman 2009, 4). This means that Table 2, which includes the set of pronouns compiled from different literary texts, could vary from one textbook to another.

Table 2. Middle English personal pronouns

Middle English personal pronouns		
	First person	
	Singular	***Plural***
Nominative	ich, i, ic	wē
Accusative	mē	us
Genitive	mi(n), my	ūre, our

Middle English personal pronouns				
Second person				
		Singular		***Plural***
Nominative		þū, þou, thou, þow		ȝe, yē
Accusative		þē, thee		eow, ȝew, you
Genitive	þī(n), thy			eower, ȝower, your(e)
Third person				
	Masculine	***Neuter***	***Feminine***	***Plural***
Nominative	hē, ha (a)	hit, it	schō, schē/shē, he, ho, hēo	þei, þai, thai, they/hi, hy
Accusative	him	hit, it	hire, hir	þeym, thaym/hem, hom, ham
Genitive	his	his	hire, here	þair(e), thair, ther/hyr, here

Source: Adapted from Brinton and Arnovick (2017, 289)

Here the Old English pronouns can be compared to the new set to observe key changes. One of the most significant developments was the complete elimination of dual forms, as well as the loss of separate dative and accusative cases, which merged into a single objective case (Brinton and Arnovick 2017, 288). The third-person pronoun set underwent several changes, the Old English feminine form *he/ho/hēo* appeared in early texts, while a new form *schō/schē* also emerged, which was the origin of the modern pronoun *she*. This shift helped avoid the possible confusion with the masculine *he.* In late Old English, the third-person plural pronoun *they* was borrowed from Old Norse and, by the Middle English period, it appeared alongside native forms (Brinton and Arnovick 2017, 288–89). Although singular *they* was not yet recognized as an independent pronoun during Middle English, the first written record present in history is dated from this period (D. Baron, n.d.), as will be discussed later in this section. Furthermore, a reduced form of the first-person singular pronoun *i* appeared, which later evolved into the standardized capital *I*. Similarly, *it* became the prevalent unstressed form for the third-person singular neuter pronoun. The genitive form of the third-person singular neuter remained *his* during this period, with *its* emerging at a later stage (Brinton and Arnovick 2017, 289).

The Modern English period is frequently divided into two: Early Modern English and Late Modern English. The Middle English period finished with the triumph of English over French, although there was still Latin, a language that was not that easy to defeat (Barber 1994, 175). A major shift in pronoun usage occurred in Early Modern

English with the increasing use of the pronoun *you* to substitute *thou*. Therefore, the main change of this period involved the second-person singular pronouns: the pronoun *you* became the preferred form for addressing individuals politely, while *thou* was reserved for informal interactions, often directed at lower classes, children or animals (Barber 1994, 186). On another level, the neuter third-person pronoun *it* became standard in this period, dropping the *h* in most cases (Brinton and Arnovick 2017, 354). The pronoun set during the Early Modern English period can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Early Modern English personal pronouns

Early Modern English personal pronouns				
		First person		
		Singular		***Plural***
Nominative		I		we
Accusative		me		us
Genitive		my, mine		our, ours
		Second person		
		Singular		***Plural***
Nominative		thou		ye/you
Accusative		thee		you/ye
Genitive		thy, thine		your, yours
		Third person		
	Masculine	***Neuter***	***Feminine***	***Plural***
Nominative	he	(h)it	she	they
Accusative	him	(h)it	her	them
Genitive	his	his, it, its	her, hers	their, theirs

Source: Adapted from Brinton and Arnovick (2017, 350)

No significant changes in the pronoun system are observed during the Late Modern English period. As Brinton and Arnovick (2017) noted: "morphological features of Modern English were fairly well established by the end of the Early Modern period" (405) (see Table 3).

Moving on now to present-day English, as mentioned before, even after the loss of grammatical gender, the language still retains traces of natural gender in its vocabulary and pronoun system. This is evinced by the third person singular pronouns *he* and *she* and certain nouns with gendered forms such us *actor-actress* or *waiter-waitress.* The remaining aforementioned gendered pronouns (i.e. *he* and *she*) have caused some

challenges for speakers, particularly in cases where the referent is not explicitly stated or its gender is unknown. This issue has gained significant attention in recent years, particularly as feminist and LGTBQ+ movements became more prominent. As a solution, the use of singular *they* is increasingly spreading. Contrary to popular belief that it is a modern form, the reality is that it dates back to Old English, with the first recorded usage in 1375, as traced by the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The first written evidence is present in the poem *William and the Werewolf* (D. Baron, n.d.):

(1) *Hastely hiȝed* ***eche*** *. . .* ***þei*** *neyȝþed so neiȝh . . . þere william &*
Hastily hurried **each** … **they** approached so near … there William &

his worþi	*lef*	*liand*	*i-fere.*
his worthy	lover	were lying	in company

Free translation: Each man hurried… till **they** drew near… where William and his darling were lying together (D. Baron, n.d.).

Over the years, there has been a significant tension among grammarians regarding the use of singular *they* versus the generic *he* as a gender-neutral referent (Bodine 1975, 130). Proponents of the generic *he* defended its universality, but some critics pointed out that this practice excludes women and other genders. In modern society it arose as an issue especially in feminist movements, which fight for the inclusion of female figures in the language. Furthermore, the use of generic *he* has become more complex with the inclusion of nonbinary individuals, those who do not identify exclusively as male or female. This BA thesis will focus on the role of singular *they* in addressing these challenges, as this use of the personal pronoun *they* is becoming increasingly popular in our modern society (Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández 2024, 175).

2.2 Are pronouns content or functional words?

Language constantly evolves, with lexical and semantic changes being the most conspicuous types of change (see for instance the insights provided in Burridge and Bergs 2017: Chapter 2). In the field of Linguistics, there are two types of words: content and functional words. Understanding the difference between these two is crucial in analysing lexical and semantic change, as content words tend to change more frequently than functional words.

The primary difference between these two categories is their role in language. Content words carry the main meaning in a sentence, while the purpose of function words is more grammatically related (Huddleston and Pullum et al. 2002). Considering the focus of this BA thesis on the use of pronouns, it can be confusing to classify this part of speech as functional or as content words. Moreover, as stated by Boye and Bastiaanse (2018): "the distinction between function and content words is too vague to license precise criteria for determining whether a word belongs to one class or another" (3). Scholars have not an ultimate response to this issue, as many do not agree on how to classify pronouns (Krauthamer 2021, 9). The most extended belief is that pronouns are function words, as they belong to a more fixed category compared to content words (see the work by Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams 2019, among others).

As it is difficult to set a fixed difference, the distinction can be made more easily by introducing in this analysis open and closed word classes. In principle, function words belong to the closed class category whereas content words pertain to the open word class (Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams 2019, 35). This means that the parts of speech that are traditionally classified as function words, such as pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, articles, determiners, auxiliary and modal verbs, and particles, rarely introduce new forms into a language as opposed to content words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs which are frequent sources of new terms (Boye and Bastiaanse 2018, 3). The question that arises here is whether pronouns can really be considered as open words or as closed ones. To this aspect I shall turn next.

Traditionally, pronouns have changed little over time, reinforcing their classification as function words. Historically, they have been considered resistant to change, but some exceptions can be studied, as already shown in Section 2.1, for example, the decline of *thou* and the generalization of *you* for singular and plural, which highlight how the pronoun system can shift in response to social factors (Curzan 2003). In fact, "that pronouns are perceived as a 'closed class' (e.g. Wales, 1996: 12–19) means that some speakers view changes in pronouns as a threat to linguistic integrity (see linguistic purism, Walsh, 2016)" (cited in Hekanaho 2022, 3).

In contrast to this, in contemporary English, pronouns are experiencing a significant transformation, introducing several new forms by its speakers, the ones known as *neopronouns* (see Section 2.3 below). This type of innovations can be analysed not only as a grammatical phenomenon but also as a sociolinguistic one. Individuals advocate for the addition of new pronoun forms that reflect their identity, as these forms carry

lexical and semantic load, which are features typical of content words. This shows how pronouns not only serve as semantic roles but are also markers of social meaning and personal identity (Zimman 2017). Therefore, taking all this into consideration, the conclusion is that pronouns are "homogenous word classes" (Boye and Bastiaanse 2018, 6). In other words, although traditionally classified as function words, pronouns are increasingly adopting features typical of content words. This shift challenges conventional linguistic views and illustrates how social evolution can reshape or re-examine the most stable elements of grammar. We will turn to this point next, in Section 2.3, where grammatical innovations will be discussed in further detail.

2.3 Grammatical innovations

Present-day English has evolved including some adaptations and innovations into language to become more inclusive. The most notorious one and the focus of this BA thesis is the addition of the singular *they* form, but also the inclusion of other pronouns like *ze* and *xe,* known as neopronouns. The main goal of creating a more inclusive language is to make individuals feel more included and confident with their self-identity. The term *gender identity* is described to be "a component of gender that describes a person's psychological sense of their gender" (*American Psychological Association* 2024). Understanding this concept is crucial as it represents a dimension of identity through which individuals define or describe themselves. It is closely tied to how they want to be referred to and perceived by others. Thus, language plays an essential role here, as it is the most immediate tool people have to express themselves. Therefore, not only individuals are creating innovations into the language, but also institutions and grammars are following and adapting their norms to create a more inclusive language and consequently a more inclusive world.

The most common innovation is the use of singular *they,* not only to use it when the gender of the referent is unclear, which is the generic use of the pronoun, but also to address individuals who do not define themselves with the masculine or feminine pronoun, which is a specific use. Many style guides are including norms to generalize its use. The *American Psychological Association* states in its 7th edition manual that:

> When referring to individuals whose identified pronouns are not known or when the gender of a generic or hypothetical person is irrelevant in the context, use the singular "they" to avoid making assumptions about an individual's gender. […]

> When writers use the singular "they", it reduces bias in the way that readers perceive the individuals referred to in the text and thereby helps ensure that readers do not feel ostracized by that text. (*American Psychological Association* 2020, 140)

Other style guides also discuss the problem of biased language which could exclude some individuals. For instance, the *MLA Handbook* defends in its 9th edition the use of singular *they* not only when it is the person's chosen pronoun, but also "to refer to a specific person whose gender is unknown or not relevant to the context" *(Modern Language Association of America* 2021, 92). We will come back to this in Section 2.4. Moreover, a conclusion is approached in this manual that:

> In formal writing, the use of singular *they* has been considered a less desirable option than revising to plural constructions or rephrasing without pronouns. But it has emerged as a tool for making language more inclusive because it helps writers avoid making or enabling assumptions about gender. (*Modern Language Association of America 2021, 92)*

The *Chicago Manual of Style* does also include norms to eliminate biases in language in its 17th edition, which reads:

> *They* and *their* have become common in informal usage, but neither is considered fully acceptable in formal writing, though they are steadily gaining ground. For now, […] be wary of using these forms in singular sense. This advice […] applies mainly to generic references, where the identity of the person is unknown or unimportant. For references to a specific person, the choice of pronoun may depend on the individual. Some people identify not with a gender-specific pronoun but instead with the pronoun *they* and its forms or some other gender-neutral singular pronoun; any such preference should generally be respected. (University of Chicago press 2017, 361; my italics)

Moreover, many descriptive reference grammars, like Huddleston and Pullum et al's *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language* (2002: Chapter 5) or Quirk et al's *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (1985: Chapter 6) discuss the use of this form; note, however, that its use to refer to nonbinary individuals is not contemplated yet. This may be due to the fact that this new function of singular *they* became more prominent in recent years as the debate around gender inclusivity and representation in language gained visibility across both academic and public spheres. As it can be inferred by the norms of linguists and institutions like the ones mentioned above, the use of singular *they* shifted from a generic use included in many grammars and

dictionaries, which is advised to be avoided in formal writing (University of Chicago press 2017, 261), to a specific use adopted as the preferred pronoun for individuals who might not identify neither as male or female.

Alongside this shift, sociolinguistic developments have influenced the evolution of language introducing adaptations, such as neopronouns that are not yet fully integrated into formal grammatical aspects. Neopronouns are new words added to the language which function as pronouns. As stated by Renström (2025) "it is a word that did not exist in the language before and has been created with a specific meaning" (2). But it is important to note that not all nonbinary pronouns are classified as neopronouns, and not all neopronouns are necessarily used by nonbinary individuals (Renström 2025, 2). A great example of this is the use of singular *they,* which can be seen as a nonbinary pronoun or merely as a generic pronoun, as explained before. English speakers introduce initiatives to the language such as *ze* and *xe*, which are the most common neopronouns, although not as widespread as singular *they* (Renström 2025, 3).

The number of neopronouns can vary over time and become more extended. Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández (2024) offered a list adapted from *Wikipedia* (2023), shown in Table 4. Nonetheless, neopronouns are a difficult phenomenon to study, as they are not used that often (Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández 2024, 177). As an example, we can take the study made by Hekanen (2021), in which the author examined four extensive linguistic corpora and only found over one hundred instances of the three neopronouns researched (*ze*, *xe* and *zie*). This illustrated their relative scarcity in natural language use (Hekanen 2021, 14).

Table 4. List of proposed neopronouns

	Firstly attested	**Nominative**	**Accusative**	**Dependent genitive**	**Independent genitive**	**Reflexive**
THON	1884	*thon* is laughing	I called *thon*	*thons* eyes gleam	that is *thons*	thon likes *thonself*
E	1890	*e* is laughing	I called *em*	*es* eyes gleam	that is *es*	e likes *emself*
AE	1920	*ae* is laughing	I called *aer*	*aer* eyes gleam	that is *aers*	ae likes *aerself*
TEY	1971	*tey* is laughing	I called *tem*	*ter* eyes gleam	that is *ters*	tey likes *temself*
XE	1973	*xe* is laughing	I called *xem/xim*	*xyr/xis* eyes gleam	that is *xyrs/xis*	xe likes *zemself/ximself*
TE	1974	*te* is laughing	I called *tir*	*tes* eyes gleam	that is *tes*	te likes *tirself*
EY	1975	*ey* is laughing	I called *em*	*eir* eyes gleam	that is *eirs*	ey likes *emself*

	Firstly attested	Nominative	Accusative	Dependent genitive	Independent genitive	Reflexive
PER	1979	*per* is laughing	I called *per*	*per* eyes gleam	that is *pers*	per likes *perself*
VE	1980	*ve* is laughing	I called *ver*	*vis* eyes gleam	that is *vis*	ve likes *verself*
HU	1982	*hu* is laughing	I called *hum*	*hus* eyes gleam	that is *hus*	hu likes *humself*
E	1983	*e* is laughing	I called *em*	*eir* eyes gleam	that is *eirs*	e likes *emself*
ZE, MER	1997	*ze* is laughing	I called *mer*	*zer* eyes gleam	that is *zers*	ze likes *zemself*
ZE, HIR	1998	*ze* is laughing	I called *hir*	*hir* eyes gleam	that is *hirs*	ze likes *hirself*
SIE, HIR	2001	*sie* is laughing	I called *hir*	*hir* eyes gleam	that is *hirs*	sie likes *hirself*
SEY, SEIR, SEM	2013	*sey* is laughing	I called *sem*	*seir* eyes gleam	that is *seirs*	sey likes *Sem self*
FAE	2020	*fae* is laughing	I called *faer*	*faer* eyes gleam	that is *faers*	fae likes *faerself*

Source: Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández (2024, 176); based on *Wikipedia* (2023)

The difference between neopronouns and the use of singular *they* is the attitude and acceptance of speakers towards them. It is easier for individuals to recognize a more familiar pronoun like *they*, which has already been used for centuries with a generic meaning, than to acknowledge newer concepts with which they are not as familiar, like neopronouns. Also, neopronouns become more accepted if they are used for a specific person (Hekanaho 2021, 2022) or when they are phonetically similar to other existing pronouns (Rose et al. 2020). Namely, "*ze* may not be as strongly connected to a generic use and may hence include nonbinarity to a larger degree" (Renström et al. 2024, 256). For instance, Renström et al. (2024) introduce a study in which they state that "825 participants (98.0%) had knowledge about singular *they* as a nonbinary pronoun, whereas 206 (24.4%) had knowledge about *ze* as a nonbinary pronoun" (266). For this experiment, the total number of participants was 837 with totally different descriptions (Renström et al. 2024, 263).

Baron (1981) offered a historical insight about pronouns that were created between the 19th and 20th centuries. This could be considered the first neopronouns. Since the term *neopronoun* did not exist yet, he describes them as *neologisms*. In Baron's article the author presents some invented third-person gender-neutral pronouns which could be viewed as early examples of neopronouns. Some examples are: *thon/thons*: the most common neologism and a blend of "that one"; *ne/nis/nim,* the earliest epicene pronoun

found; and *ze/zim/zees/zeeself*, dated from 1972. Other forms explained by Baron (1981) can be found in the glossary of his article "The Epicene Pronoun: The Word that Failed".

Furthermore, there is another innovating process, which are the nounself pronouns, "a category of new pronouns typically derived from specific words, often nouns associated with individuals' identity" (Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández 2024, 177). An example of a nounself pronoun is *fae*, derived from an Irish old form of the word *fairy* (Miltersen 2016, 42; as cited in Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández 2024, 177).

These innovations challenge traditional prescriptive norms, creating tension between prescriptive and descriptive approaches to language. *Prescriptivism* refers to a set of established norms that a language must follow, being closely related to standardization and linguistic traditionalism. By contrast, *descriptivism* is related to objectivity, as it involves how language is naturally spoken and written. That is, linguistic rules are drawn from how language is used in practice (Sheidlower 1996). The adoption of these innovations manages to reflect real-world language practices, contributing to their normalization and eventual acceptance. Once fully integrated into language and acknowledged by linguists and grammars, the descriptive shifts can become prescriptive, especially in the context of inclusive language reforms. As showed in studies such as the previously mentioned by Renström et al. (2024) or as concluded by Hekanaho (2020), the use of singular *they* is more integrated and accepted into language than neopronouns are, which are not yet recognized by most dictionaries and grammars.

These developments not only reflect the dynamism between prescriptive and descriptive norms but also emphasize the role of language in fostering more inclusive forms of expression. While some innovations are already gaining recognition, others remain in the early stages of acceptance. Nonetheless, their emergence demonstrates the important linguistic and cultural shifts, which challenge traditional structures and underscores the adaptability of language to reflect and respect diverse identities.

2.4 Challenges in modern usage

The use of novel pronoun forms can also create some challenges for speakers, particularly regarding grammatical agreement. Pronouns function as substitutes for nouns which are typically mentioned before. When this happens, it is expected that the antecedent and the pronoun will agree in person, number and gender. However, the introduction of new pronoun forms can complicate this expectation.

Various strategies have been introduced into language to address this problem, such as the use of *s/he*, *he or she*, *he/she*. There is also a dispute when it comes to what pronoun should be used when gender is unspecified, particularly when the antecedent is an indefinite pronoun, for instance, when using *someone, anyone, everyone* or *each* (Zuber and Reed 1993, 516). Being these grammatically singular, an issue arises on which pronoun adjusts better. Many grammarians advocate for one of the options mentioned before or decide to use generic *he*. But, in recent years a prominent solution has occurred with the increasing acceptance of *they* as a singular, gender-neutral pronoun.

With respect to example (2) d. below, "Everyone loves their mom" (D. E. Baron 1981, 83), some may think that the use of *their* with the singular antecedent *everyone* is grammatically incorrect or inconsistent, as it does not meet the requirement of grammatical agreement. But because English lacks of a third-person pronoun that is neutral in both number and gender, speakers must opt for the variants they have (Laitinen 2007, 686). The traditional norm would accept the use of *his* in these cases (see 2 a), regardless of the gender of the referent, but as time goes by, this option is becoming less and less frequent. The options for a sentence like this include these alternatives:

(2) a. Everyone loves his mom. (D. E. Baron 1981, 83)
    b. Everyone loves her mom. (my own example)
    c. Everyone loves his or her mom. (D. E. Baron 1981, 83)
    d. Everyone loves their mom. (D. E. Baron 1981, 83)

In our modern society, speakers increasingly prefer the last option, to avoid any problems in terms of misgendering or making assumptions about the gender of other individuals. This is the generic use of singular *they*, a form that, as already noted, has been present for centuries. However, the use of this pronoun is more complicatated than it seems, especially when using a specific antecedent. If the indefinite pronoun is substituted by a specific person, having a sentence like "John loves their mom" (Krauthamer 2021, IX), the issue comes with some misinterpretations, as it can seem that it is not John's mom to whom the pronoun is referring. But there is another possibility, that is, John is using *they/them* pronouns (Krauthamer 2021, IX) or the speaker is trying to not assume the gender of the individual. And although it is still controversial, singular *they* as a nonbinary pronoun is becoming widely accepted and even endorsed by some style guides and dictionaries, as we have previously shown. The adaptation of pronouns

to reflect inclusivity is now one of the major linguistic developments, although not yet fully recognized by every speaker.

More challenges come along with the use of singular *they*. A question might arise when using this form, as to what reflexive pronoun goes with it: *themselves* or *themself*. Just like singular *they*, the corresponding reflexive pronoun also has a generic and a specific use. As stated in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, when *themself* is referencing a singular pronoun or noun, three different senses can be attested:

a. "With an antecedent which is grammatically singular, but refers collectively to the members of a group, or has universal reference (e.g. *everyone*, *each person*, *nobody*)" (OED ; s.v. *themself*, pronoun I.2.a.)
b. "With a generic or indefinite antecedent referring to an individual (e.g. *a person*, *someone*, *the patient*), used esp. so as to make a general reference to such an individual without specifying gender." (OED ; s.v. *themself*, pronoun I.2.b.)
c. "Used to refer to a person whose sense of personal identity does not correspond to conventional sex and gender distinctions, and who has typically asked to be referred to by the pronouns *they*, *them*, etc." (OED ; s.v. *themself*, pronoun I.2.c.)

Meanings in a. and b. are closely related to the generic use of singular *they*. Their first use dates back to 1450 and 1463 respectively, being a form that has been present for centuries now. However, the specific use in c. is relatively new, as it is first recorded in 2011. Although accepted by many dictionaries and style guides, the use of *themself* is still controversial, with strong critiques. As Davenport (2020: 7) notes,

> *themself* has increased in use to combat this plurality issue […]. It is possible that the believed incorrect grammatically of its use is influenced by a political agenda that does not believe in the validity of nonbinary, gender nonconforming, agender, genderfluid, or other identities.

Even with the increasingly acceptance of the pronoun *they* for nonbinarity, its reflexive form still has a long way until being fully integrated into language and become standardize (Davenport 2020, 39).

Moreover, generic *he* is starting to be recognized as more and more problematic as time goes by. As Curzan (2003) points out: "modern grammarians and style guide writers have reached a consensus: generic *he* is sexist and should be avoided" (58). This issue

generated a huge debate among modern grammarians as well as between English speakers. Many scholars have fought the idea that it is simply a grammatical question more than a social or semantic problem, but feminists opt to fight for the recognition of the social implications the use of generic *he* can have. Curzan (2003) defends the idea that "in a natural gender system, the pronoun *he* can no longer be a purely grammatical form with no meaningful content about the gender of the referent" (58). Therefore, taking into consideration these statements, other options should be preferred. Just as discussed in Section 2.3, style guides are encouraging to avoid biased language in formal writing, and the use of generic *he* does not fulfil these requirements.

Notwithstanding, English can be considered to be in a privileged position in terms of inclusive language, as it is defined as a non-gendered language. The only part of speech that tends to create challenges in terms of gender inclusivity is pronouns, along with a small number of gendered nouns that retain older forms. However, in other languages it is not as simple as introducing a new pronoun. In many gendered languages, such as Spanish or Galician, other parts of speech, including nouns, articles and adjectives, must also agree in gender, complicating the adoption of inclusive forms. These languages exhibit inflections for grammatical gender, i.e. masculine, feminine, and, in some cases, neuter. Consequently, there are more instances of gender marking and, therefore, more potential for gender bias.

As in English, the traditional solution in Spanish has been the use of generic masculine. Yet, "scholars have begun to investigate the consequences of using the masculine generic in comparison to other more inclusive alternatives, such as slash forms (*médicos/as*), disjunctions (*médicas o médicos*), or even emerging options like the ending vowel -e (*médiques*) or the consonant -x (*médicxs*)" (Yeaton, Muelas-Gil, and Scontras 2023, 2). The well-known linguist Teresa Moure, in her awarded book *Queer-emos un mundo novo* (2012), argues that inclusive forms such as the –@, -x or -* endings (e.g. *galeg@s, galegxs, galeg*s*) can be valuable tools to promote gender nonconformity and disrupt binary structures. However, she also warns that these options may pose problems in pronunciation, particularly when adopted without deeper reflection or broader institutional support. Therefore, these attempts face greater challenges to become standard and normalized, especially in comparison to changes in nongendered languages like English. In the case of Spanish, the *Real Academia de la Lengua Española* does not yet recognize such forms as part of formal or prescriptive grammar (Yeaton, Muelas-Gil,

and Scontras 2023, 3). Interestingly, the Nobel Prize Mario Vargas Llosa, also a former member of the RAE, publicly showed his disagreement with the use of such alternative forms (VIX 2022).[1]

In conclusion, although English still faces challenges on the path to full inclusivity, its characteristics place it in a more favorable position compared to gendered languages. As noted, "*grammatical gender* languages like Spanish, tend to be linked to a higher degree of gender discrimination in their cultures, in comparison to *natural gender languages*, where gender is not morphologically marked" (UNESCO 2011; Prewitt-Freilino et al. 2021, as cited in Yeaton, Muelas-Gil, and Scontras 2023, 3; emphasis in the original).

2.5 Case studies in activism, media and policy

The best way to observe the impact of inclusive language and nonbinary pronouns is by studying how they are applied in language use. This leads us to a descriptive approach of these developments in everyday contexts. For this, this section examines representative cases in three key linguistic environments: in social and cultural settings, in media discourse and in politics. Given the extensive body of literature on nonbinary pronouns, this BA thesis will focus on a limited selection of representative articles for each context, rather than attempting an exhaustive review.

It is essential to observe how speakers implement innovations into language, as it is the path to fully integrate them and normalize them. Each of the domains studied in this section provide a key role in shaping public understanding and acceptance of gender identity. Firstly, media representations can normalize the diverse gender identities; secondly, activism often drives visibility and pushes for systemic change; and lastly, policy determines the practical recognition and protection of these identities within institutional frameworks.

[1] The full interview can be accessed in the link below: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hpjxkJgHD3E.

2.5.1 Social and cultural dimensions of pronouns

Language evolution goes hand by hand with social and cultural dimensions. It is the constant use of innovations in any social context what normalizes them. In the case of pronouns, they are becoming more and more tied to being tools for self-identity (Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández 2024, 171). They are no more merely grammatical elements, but social markers of identity (Zimman 2017, 86).

Lal Zimman has introduced a sociolinguistic phenomenon that he calls Trans Language Activism (TLA), which he defines as "an array of ever-shifting practices, ranging from formal advocacy for institutional change to conversations in which trans people and our allies and accomplices seek more inclusive and affirming language in everyday interactions" (Zimman 2024b, 3). What this means is that TLA focuses on transforming everyday practices to affirm and respect diversity in gender identities. It is focused on avoiding misgendering (Zimman 2024a), the act of referring to someone with pronouns that do not align with their identity (Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández 2024, 174). For this, activists promote the use of gender-neutral language, which often involves metalinguistic communication, where speakers explicitly discuss, choose, or explain their pronouns as part of self-expression. Also, they have the right to define their own gender identities as well as to how they want to be addressed linguistically, embracing therefore linguistic creativity, encouraging new pronoun formations and a more flexible use of language. The activism typically takes the form of recommendations aimed at reducing misgendering, rather than rigid rules (Zimman 2024a).

In his research, Zimman (2024a) argues that "pronouns can be seen as a social construct, when people talk about *pronouns*, they aren't necessarily talking about the same thing linguists are". Today, pronouns are not merely grammatical elements, but they are deeply connected to social contexts (Zimman 2017, 86). When individuals discuss pronouns, they are often referring to the social implications, rather than their linguistic function. More broadly, although the number of words that determine gender in English is relatively small, their use is highly common. This frequency only emphasizes their role in shaping and reflecting societal gender norms (Zimman 2017, 89). Supporting this view, Román Irizarry et al. (2025) show that innovations in gender marking, such as nonbinary morphemes like -e or -x in Spanish, carry both cognitive and sociocultural significance. Their findings suggest that although these new forms may slightly increase cognitive effort, they provide more inclusive ways of expressing gender and reflect evolving social

perspectives on gender diversity. This aligns with studies in computational linguistics, they have demonstrated that English is conceived as a gender biased language, having consequences in how language plays a role in social contexts. For instance, a study based on word embedding by Caliskan et al. (2022) reveals a masculine default in language, where male-associated terms are more common and linked to more powerful or prestigious roles. These findings emphasize how pronouns and gendered language contribute to systemic gender bias, reinforcing the importance of inclusive linguistic practices.

2.5.2 Inclusive pronouns in the media

In recent years, social media has become a safe space for identity expression, particularly among the LGBTQ+ community. One notable practice is the possibility of adding personal pronouns in user bios, as a way of including gender identity and promoting inclusive language (Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández 2024, 172).

A recent study by Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández (2024) offers a detailed analysis of how nonbinary individuals use inclusive pronouns in their X (formerly *Twitter*) bios. By analyzing 1,980 accounts across different US cities, they explored which pronouns are most common, how they are combined, and what this reveal about online identity practices. The results were that singular *they* is by far the most used as a nonbinary pronoun, while neopronouns are less frequent, and are often in combination with other pronouns. Considering their research, it is demonstrated that there is a complex relationship between language, personal identity and online interactions. The patterns chosen by users highlight the diverse and evolving ways people express gender identity in digital contexts (Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández 2024, 191). These practices are common in several social media, such as *Instagram* or *Reddit*, being the latter the one studied in this BA thesis. The research by Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández (2024) has, in fact, been taken as a model for this BA thesis, as explained in Section 3.

Although the present study focuses on *Reddit*, only a few academic works have addressed the use of nonbinary or inclusive pronouns on this platform. One example is Youngquist (2023), who explores identity labels in the subreddit *r/lgbt* using distributional semantic models. While the study offers valuable insights into how queer identity is constructed online, pronouns are only briefly mentioned and are not the central

focus. Darwin (2017) includes a short section on pronoun preferences among users of a genderqueer community, noting the popularity of *they/them*, as well as the use of neopronouns and pronoun rejection altogether. However, this aspect appears only as part of a broader discussion on coming out practices, rather than as a dedicated linguistic analysis. Another relevant contribution is the work by Monaco and Prospero (2024), which discusses gender beyond the binary in *Reddit* communities, as part of a broader reflection on online youth discourse. Their analysis highlights the importance of *Reddit* as a space for gender negotiation and mentions the importance of pronoun use to affirm gender identity. These studies confirm the growing interest in identity construction in digital platforms.

2.5.3 Practical and legal aspects

The standardization of grammatical norms around gendered language demonstrates how linguistics is deeply tied to social and legal frameworks. This can be exemplified with the formal endorsement of generic *he* in the 19th century. Lindley Murray, in his *English Grammar* (1795), advocated for the use of generic *he*, as he states that using *they* with a singular noun as antecedent is incorrect. Following this, it became not only a grammatical norm or theory proposed by some scholars, but also a law in 1850 through an Act of Parliament, which established that "he or she" should be replaced by "he" (Curzan 2003, 59). The 1850 Act declared:

> An Act for shortening the language used in Acts of Parliament […] that in all acts words importing the masculine gender shall be deemed and taken to include females, and the singular to include the plural, and the plural the singular, unless the contrary as to gender and number is expressly provided (Evans and Evans 1981, 221).

Despite the widespread use and legalization of this linguistic practice, the problem of gender exclusion preceded. In 1851, there was an attempt to change the latter Act but it was unsuccessful (Bailey 2020). The principle established in 1850 remained in the Interpretation Act 1978, which stipulates that:

> In any Act, unless the contrary intention appears, --
>
> (a) Words importing the masculine gender include the feminine;
> (b) Words importing the feminine gender include the masculine;

(c) Words in the singular include the plural and words in the plural include the singular (United Kingdom Parliament 1978).

Today this legislative framework remains, allowing the use of gendered language by claiming that it is legally inclusive of all genders. However, this topic was revisited in 2007 during a debate in the UK Parliament, where the former Leader of the House of Commons, Jack Straw, expressed his opposition to this practice. In this debate, he defended that: "Government Bills will take a form which achieves gender-neutral drafting so far as it is practible […]. This policy already applies to tax rewrite Bills and is consistent with the practice in many other jurisdictions in the English-speaking world." (House of Commons 2007). Therefore, although no new Act was passed, the government's policy has been to use gender-neutral language in legislation (Bailey 2020). This indicates that while gender-neutral drafting is not legally mandatory yet, the increasing initiatives and innovations indicate that the right path is being followed toward achieving a more inclusive and gender-neutral status in legislation, and consequently in society, supported by the linguistics and grammatical norms discussed throughout this BA thesis.

This is the legal framework in the UK, but it is also a topic discussed in many countries. As follows in other English-speaking countries like the United States, the debate over the use of inclusive language is emerging. While the UK has a more centralized and legislative approach to language in legal contexts, the US lacks federal or state law mandating the use of gender-neutral or inclusive language (Piontek and Donovan 2022). Thus, in the US, policies on inclusive language and pronouns often depend on administrative interpretations and court decisions, especially in education. For this, Title IX, a federal law in the US that was enacted as part of the Education Amendments of 1972, has been taken as a model. It states that: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." (U. S. Congress 1972). As can be read, it was originally designed to fight for sex-based discrimination in education, nevertheless, it has evolved to include protections against discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation, thanks to the enforcement made by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in June 2021. As remarked in this new interpretation:

> OCR has long recognized that Title IX protects all students, including students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, from harassment and other forms of sex discrimination. […] But OCR at times has stated that Title IX's prohibition on sex discrimination does not encompass discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. (US Department of Education and Office for Civil Rights 2021, 32637).

So, with the problem recognized, the OCR extended the applications of the law to avoid discrimination based on students' sexual orientation or gender identity, that includes respecting pronoun usage, names and gender expression in classrooms and administrative contexts (Piontek and Donovan 2022). Therefore, this interpretation of the original law can be seen as a turning point demonstrating that linguistic choices are very relevant for society, which needs some form of legal representation.

Although, in recent years, several US states have introduced legislation that restricts the use and discussion of gender-affirming pronouns, especially within public education. These restrictions often prohibit actions such as requiring the use of a transgender student's chosen pronouns, allowing educators to use affirming pronouns, or even discussing pronouns and inclusive language as part of curricular content (Zimman 2024a). In 2024, the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) traced 533 bills in the US that were against LGBTQ+ rights, being 209 of them bills restricting student and educator rights (American Civil Liberties Union 2024). This is the reason of the importance of the interpretation of Title IX, explicitly including discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation, to reinforce the obligation of acknowledging students' identities, including their chosen pronouns.

A comparison can be drawn with Spanish universities such as the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela (USC), where the protocol is grounded in national and regional legislation designed to promote inclusivity and respect for gender identities (Universidade de Santiago de Compostela 2017). The laws included in this protocol are Law 15/2022 on equality and non-discrimination, Law 4/2023 for LGBTIQ+ rights and trans equality, and Law 10/2022 promoting sexual freedom in education. With these laws it is obligatory the inclusion of gender and sexual diversity in education and institutional practice, closely related to Title IX in the US. The protocol emphasizes the use of inclusive language, the recognition of diverse gender identities, and the integration of a gender perspective in university policies.

To conclude, the examination of inclusive language across social contexts, media and politics reveals that language is not only a tool for communication, but also a powerful site of identity negotiation, resistance and social change. While inclusive language continues to face resistance in some spheres, it also fosters visibility, respect and recognition for marginalized identities.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

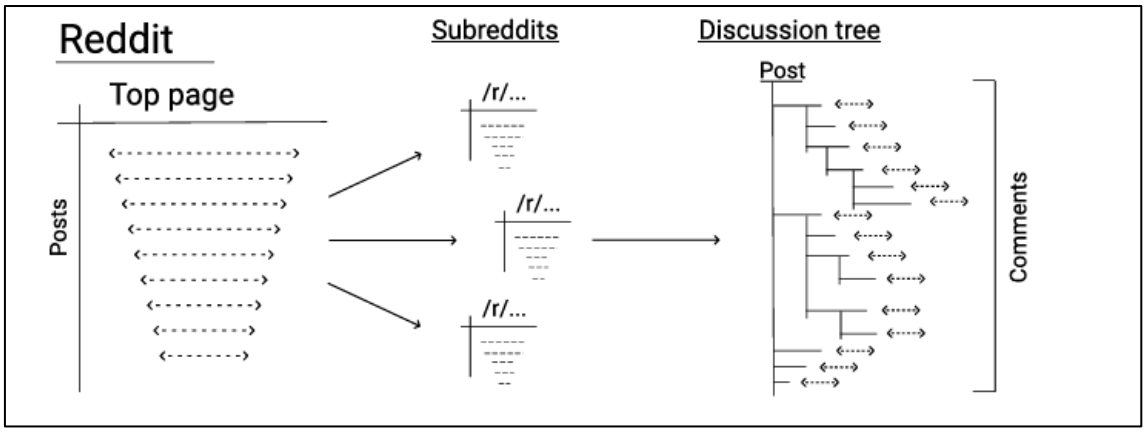
3.1 Data collection

The methodological approach for this research is focused on analysing the use of inclusive language and nonbinary pronouns in online discourse. For this, one of the most widely used platforms was selected, *Reddit* (Medvedev, Lambiotte, and Delvenne 2019, 1). This study applies both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis to a dataset of posts on selected subreddits (e.g. *r/NonBinaryTalk* and *r/neopronouns*) to answer the research questions presented in Section 1.2. *Reddit* has been selected for this study for many reasons. Not only for its popularity, as it is "the largest online discussion forum in the world as of today" (Medvedev, Lambiotte, and Delvenne 2019, 2), but also for the facility in terms of its ethical issues, an aspect that I will discuss in the next section.

3.1.1 *Reddit*: features and ethical issues

Reddit is an online platform launched in 2005, which is used for sharing news, rating web content, and engaging in discussions (Medvedev, Lambiotte, and Delvenne 2019, 2). In December 2022 it was estimated to have around 57 million daily active users (Statista 2024).

Reddit functions with a system in which registered users can submit posts that will become publicly visible and open for voting and commenting (Medvedev, Lambiotte, and Delvenne 2019, 2). Also, *Reddit* is divided into individual communities called subreddits, creating each its own discussions focusing on a specific topic (Medvedev, Lambiotte, and Delvenne 2019, 3). Users have the liberty to establish their own specific rules in the subreddits, these users are called volunteer moderators and play a key role in guiding what content is posted and how discussions unfold (Fiesler et al. 2024, 4). Furthermore, comment threads are organized in a tree-like structure, the original post being the root. The replies to the comments form interconnected nodes based on who responded to whom, as shown in Figure 1.



Source: Medvedev, Lambiotte, and Delvenne (2019, 3)

Fig. 1. The schematic structure of the *Reddit* platform

One key difference between *Reddit* and other social media, like *X* (Twitter) or *Facebook*, is that on *Reddit* users follow the topics, the subreddits, rather than individual people, prioritizing anonymity (Medvedev, Lambiotte, and Delvenne 2019, 3). Moreover, it is an open-access platform where users discuss a broad range of social and cultural issues, being easy to make extended research on several topics. Given its pseudonymous nature and rich content, I find it a valuable opportunity for examining inclusive language and nonbinary pronouns. As stated by Kiesling (2024): "online forums such as *Reddit* also provide a wealth of data about how people conceive of their own identities and how they talk about them" (121; my italics). However, it is still important to highlight the ethical issues that research in this platform can bring. Whereas the comments selected for this study come from accessible subreddits, it is acknowledged that the public nature of the data does not eliminate the researcher's ethical responsibility. The basic principles that are expected to be respected in terms of ethical concerns are "minimizing harm, obtaining informed consent, and protecting subject privacy and confidentiality" (Fiesler et al. 2024, 3). Also, as highlighted by Fiesler et al. (2024), users may not be aware that their posts could be used for academic purposes, emphasizing the necessity of a cautious and respectful approach. Since it is not possible to obtain individual consent from users on platforms of this nature, this study will adhere to the ethical principles of minimizing harm, respecting privacy and preserving anonymity. Additionally, *Reddit* was selected as the most appropriate platform, as it requires no registration to read posts. Furthermore, to

register the only verification needed is a username and a password, prevailing confidentiality on what is submitted (Fiesler et al. 2024, 4).

It is important to point out that the study was initially aimed to be analysed based on user-generated content on *X* (Twitter), following Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández (2024). However, due to ethical and practical limitations it could not be considered a suitable source for research: its open Application Programming Interface (API) was closed in 2023 (Fiesler et al. 2024, 2).

3.1.2 Building the corpus

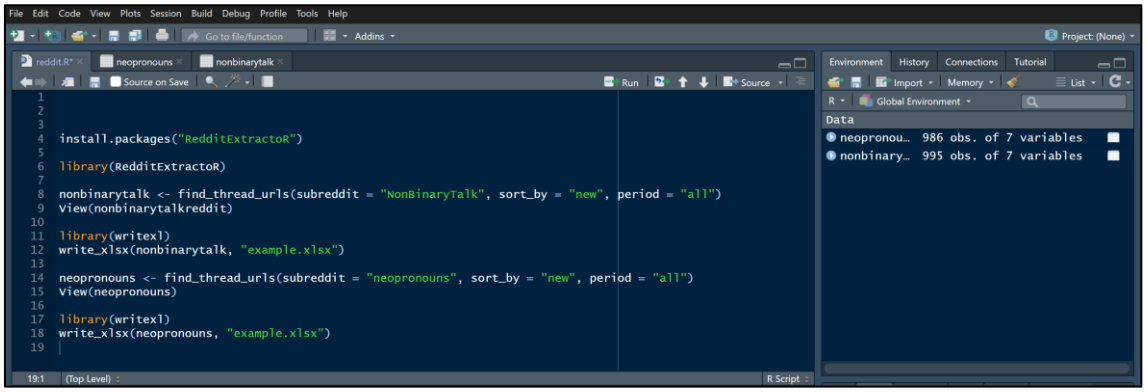
For the corpus of the present study, two key subreddits were selected based on their immediate link with the topics of nonbinary identity and the linguistic practices associated with it. First, the subreddit *r/NonBinaryTalk* was chosen to examine the correlation between nonbinary individuals and their way of addressing each other. Second, the subreddit *r/neopronouns* was also crucial to study the relationship between the use of emerging linguistic practices and how individuals define themselves, not necessarily identifying as nonbinary.

As a first approximation to data collection, I manually extracted all comments included in the post "Regarding Neopronouns" included in the "highlighted section" (see Figure 6 in Section 4.1) of the subreddit *r/NonBinaryTalk* (for the whole dataset see Appendix). Since this post only contained 53 comments[2] provided by 40 different profiles, the sample data was increased as detailed in the following paragraphs.

For the extraction of the larger set of data, the R programming language was used (R Core Team 2025). This allowed for the automatic collection of user posts from the selected subreddits mentioned above, which are publicly accessible threads. The posts were extracted using the *RedditExtractoR* package (Rivero 2021) in R; the exact R script used included the commands shown in Figure 2. The data extraction was carried out by retrieving the URLs of recent threads, and the parameters given were to sort them from the newest to the oldest; the idea was to prioritize recent and relevant discussions as well as to trace ongoing change. No specific dates where asked, using the filter of "all" to include posts from the entire archive of the subreddit. The searches were conducted in June 2025 and even if we asked for the extraction of all posts in the subreddit only a

[2] Note that the counter reveals 60 comments (see Appendix). However, after manually counting the different comments, only 53 appear in the post to this date (June 2025). The moderator may have deleted some offensive comments.

sample was retrieved by algorithm created (upon approval of our data distribution request, we believe we will be able to extract the complete dataset; see data availability statement in Section 6). This is certainly a limitation for a comprehensive study on the topic. Still the sample extracted was larger than expected: it amounted up to approximately 1000 tokens for each subreddit, specifically 995 for *r/NonBinaryTalk* and 986 for *r/neopronouns*. For time and space reasons, to have a balance and manageable database for both subreddits the initial plan was to delimit the sample to the 30 most recent posts in each subreddit. However, since some of those posts were authored by the same user, the number of unique users was lower than 30. Thus, in order to reach a round number of 30 individual users per subreddit, the range of analysed posts was slightly expanded. As a result, 33 posts were reviewed for *r/NonBinaryTalk* and 35 for *r/neopronouns*. Once all the data was extracted, it was exported to an Excel spreadsheet, enabling easier filtering and review. This output was then manually examined to select comments directly addressing nonbinary pronouns and inclusive language.



Note: The script retrieves recent threads from the subreddits *r/NonBinaryTalk* and *r/neopronouns* sorted by date and exports the data to Excel for further analysis. Date of extraction: 03/06/2025.

Fig. 2. R script used to extract thread data using the *RedditExtractoR* package

3.2 Data analysis

After collecting the *Reddit* comments from the subreddits *r/NonBinaryTalk* and *r/neopronouns*, the next step was to analyse the data in relation to the research questions in Section 1.2. The analysis followed a quantitative approach (RQs 1-3) keeping track of the absolute frequency of specific pronouns, combined with a qualitative analysis to interpret how users make their pronoun preferences and how communities refer to other

individuals (see RQs 4-7). This mixed method allowed for both, a statistical overview of pronoun usage and a deeper understanding of linguistic choices and identity-related practices.

As already noted, the first stage of the analysis focused on the highlighted post "Regarding neopronouns" in *r/NonBinaryTalk.* Each comment under this post was manually analysed, and relevant information was recorded in a spreadsheet, with variables aligned with the research questions, examining the following aspects:

1. **Pronouns** chosen by the users, directly stated by them in the post, or included in their *user flair* (see Figure 3): "a special tagging system that moderators can enable for their community" (Reddit Help 2025).
2. **Coexistence between binary and nonbinary pronouns**, that is, whether these preferred pronouns take only a nonbinary form, or are present along binary ones (e.g. *they/she*, *he/xey*, *they/him/it/xe*)
3. **Inflectional morphology**, that is, whether the pronouns are stated only with its subject form or they also take the accusative and genitive form (e.g. *they/them*, *xe/xem*, *they/xem*).
4. **Profile**: how the use of these pronouns relates to a specific profile. For instance, gender identities.
5. **Motivations** for the choice of specific pronouns. Some users may use *they* due to recognition and familiarity.
6. **Topics**: what themes are the most common among binary and nonbinary users (e.g. appearance and gender expression, struggles with identity and family, experimentation with pronouns, neopronoun recommendation and usage).

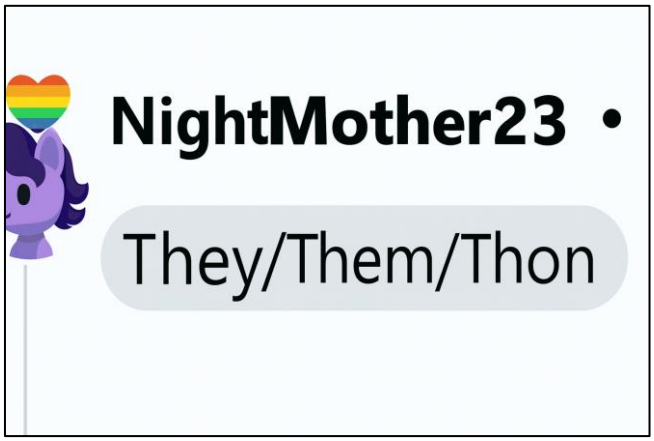


Fig. 3 Example of *user flair*

A total of 68 posts pertaining to 60 different users were extracted to different spreadsheets: two spreadsheets in total, one for each subreddit (*r/NonBinaryTalk* and *r/neopronouns*). Each post was reviewed individually, and the spreadsheet was filled out with values corresponding to the predefined variables (i.e. pronoun usage, coexistence of pronouns, inflectional morphology, user profiles or topics). This allowed for both a structured and comparative analysis of linguistic practices and motivations for pronoun choices across different communities. For the identification of themes, I used a Large Language Model (LLM). The specific details of the LLM, the prompt created, and the output are included in Table 5, following the general recommendations to acknowledge the use of LLMs in academia and specifically in data analysis in the field of Linguistics (Atkinson-Abutridy 2024). Upon approval, the entire dataset will be openly accessible at the following Open Science Framework (OSF) link: https://osf.io/qmcrp/.

Table 5. Prompt used for the identification of themes

Prompt used for the identification of themes	
Name	Theme identification
Goal	Identification of main themes
Model	Duck.ai[3]
Prompt	Classify into 5 different topics the text included in the text colum in both excel sheets. Consider only the first sheet. [For the excel sheets see the OSF link included above.]
Output	The text data from the first sheet in the **neopronouns.xlsx** file can be grouped into the following 5 topics based on their content and keyword patterns: 1. **Personal Identity & Experience** Keywords: like, preferred, gender, use, using, person *Posts discussing how individuals experience or express their identity through neopronouns.* 2. **Experimentation with Pronouns** Keywords: pronouns, try, wanna, void, paws, neo *Posts about exploring, trying out, or creating new neopronouns.* 3. **Neopronoun Recommendations & Usage** Keywords: specifically, neos, love, new, names, users *Posts asking for suggestions or sharing favorite neopronouns.* 4. **Searching for Fitting Pronouns** Keywords: heya, looking, fit, people, similar, oliver *Posts seeking neopronouns that align with personality or identity.* 5. **Character & Aesthetic Associations** Keywords: characters, feel, thank, really, wondering, know *Posts that associate neopronouns with fictional characters, aesthetics, or feelings.*

[3] The model selected was Duck.ai as, contrary to other LLMs, does not record or store any of the chats, and the conversations "are not used to train chat models by DuckDuckGo or the underlying model providers (for example, Open AI and Anthropic)" (DuckDuckGo 2025).

Prompt used for the identification of themes	
Output	The posts from the **nonbinarytalk.xlsx** file were grouped into 5 topics based on text content. Here's a summary of those topics: 1. **Struggles with Identity & Family** Keywords: don't, I'm, family, non, binary, struggling *Posts about personal struggles, coming out, and family dynamics.* 2. **Appearance & Gender Expression** Keywords: look, men, presence, queer, femininity *Posts exploring how gender is expressed through looks and fashion.* 3. **Body & Biology Concerns** Keywords: enby, hair, issues, biologically, day *Discussions around body image, gender dysphoria, and biology.* 4. **Mental Health & Support** Keywords: feel, tried, big, friend, hrt, years *Posts expressing emotional challenges, seeking support or advice.* 5. **Coming Out & Social Interactions** Keywords: told, nb, time, worried, school, kid *Experiences related to being open about identity in social settings.*

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the results of the analysis of *Reddit* posts and comments collected from the subreddits *r/Nonbinarytalk* and *r/neopronouns*. The goal was to examine how users employ and refer to nonbinary and inclusive pronouns in online discourse. The findings are organized according to the research questions outlined in Section 1.2, combining both quantitative observations (e.g. pronoun frequencies and usage patterns) and qualitative insights (e.g. motivations, self-descriptions, and discourse strategies). The 68 posts and the 53 comments included in the post "Regarding neopronouns", in which 40 different users participated, accumulated a total of 100 users.

4.1 Results

One of the first limitations encountered in the quantitative analysis was the number of users that did not explicitly state their pronouns. This was more common in the subreddit *r/NonbinaryTalk*, where discussion often covered topics beyond pronoun usage. In this subreddit, 14 users did not express their preferred pronouns. Thus, their profile was examined more thoroughly to find out information related to their pronoun usage. The highlighted post "Regarding neopronouns", which focused explicitly on pronouns and was included in this subreddit, revealed more instances of users explicitly stating their pronouns. These were often shared either within the comment or through the *user flair*, a customizable label that users can display next to their username and where they can add pronouns, roles, identities or affiliations relevant to the subreddit's theme (Reddit Help 2025). Here only 11 out of 40 users did not specify their pronouns. Finally, in the subreddit *r/neopronouns,* a higher percentage of users indicated their pronouns (only two users did not express this information). This may be due to the nature of the subreddit itself.

Among those who did share their pronouns, the main distinction was between users who employed monopronouns, i.e. when a person goes by a single pronoun form (Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández 2024, 182), and those who used rolling pronouns, defined as "the use of multiple pronouns that can be used alternately or shift over time" (LGBTQ Nation 2022). The results show that among users who use *neopronouns* (i.e. new words that function as pronouns; see Section 2.3 in this BA thesis) it is more common to go by rolling pronouns. Also, of the 73 users who stated their preferred pronouns, 49 of them, that is 67.12%, use more than one pronoun form (see Table 6).

Table 6. Monopronouns and rolling pronouns users

Monopronouns and rolling pronouns users				
Pronouns	***r/NonBinaryTalk***	***r/neopronouns***	**"Regarding neopronouns"**	**TOTAL**
Not stated	14	2	11	27
Monopronouns	10	1	13	**24**
Rolling pronouns	6	27	16	**49**
TOTAL users	30	30	40	100

As shown in Table 7 below, among the 73 users who declared their pronouns, as expected (see hypothesis in Section 1.2 of this BA thesis), the most frequently used was singular *they*. This pronoun appeared both as a sole pronoun and as part of rolling pronoun sets (e.g. *they/she*, *they/he*, or *they/xem*). It is also important to highlight here that among the four users that declared to use "any pronouns", three of them specified certain preferences or exclusions. One user preferred *he/it*, *hy/hymn* or *ix/ixs*; another stated a preference for *they/it* while rejecting *she/her*; and the third user accepted all pronouns except *he/him*. These nuances highlight the complexity and individuality of pronoun selection, which may not always fit neatly into rigid classification systems. Lastly, one difficulty encountered during the classification process was how to categorize the pronoun *it*, particularly among users in the subreddit *r/neopronouns*. Nine individuals included the pronoun *it* in their sets. Although *it* can be interpreted as a nonbinary pronoun, it was not classified under either the neopronoun or binary categories due to its ambiguous status and context-dependent usage. Unlike neopronouns, which are often newly coined and explicitly designed for gender expression, *it* has historically carried dehumanizing connotations when used for people (Norris and Welch 2020). As such, its inclusion is often a personal, subversive or reclaimed choice, making it distinct from both binary and neopronouns. In Table 7 below, this corresponds to the "*It* and other pronouns" category. Only six users are accounted in this category because, among the nine that employ *it*, one individual shares this pronoun with a form of *they,* therefore one *it* is in the category of "included *they*", and the other two *it* forms are inside the preferences of "any pronouns" as mentioned before.

Table 7. Categorization of pronoun usage

Categorization of pronoun usage				
Pronouns	***r/NonBinaryTalk***	***r/neopronouns***	**"Regarding neopronouns"**	**TOTAL**
Included *they*	13	10	20	43 (58.9%)
Only binary pronouns (e.g. *he*, *she*)	3	0	3	6 (8.2%)
Only neopronouns (e.g. *ze/zir*)	0	4	5	9 (12.3%)
Binary and neopronouns	0	4	1	5 (6.8%)
"Any pronoun"	0	4	0	4 (5.5%)
It and other pronouns	0	6	0	6 (8.2%)
TOTAL	16 (21.9%)	28 (38.5%)	29 (39.7%)	73 (100%)

Zooming in now on monopronouns, as shown in Table 8, out of the 24 users who used monopronouns, 14 opted for the form *they/them,* confirming its status as the most common nonbinary pronoun in the dataset (see the hypothesis presented in Section 1.2 of this BA thesis). Interestingly, the masculine form *he/him* appeared more frequently than *she/her*, with five users choosing the former and only one the latter. Among the users who exclusively employed neopronouns, the forms listed were *fairy/fai/fair*, *star/stars/starself* and *xe/xem*, reflecting the range of personalized and nontraditional pronoun choices found within the sample.

Table 8. Monopronoun forms

Monopronoun forms				
Monopronouns	***r/NonBinaryTalk***	***r/neopronouns***	**"Regarding neopronouns"**	**TOTAL**
They/them	7	0	7	14 (58.3%)
He/him	3	0	2	5 (20.8%)
She/her	0	0	1	1 (4.2%)
Neopronouns	0	1	3	4 (16.7%)
TOTAL	10 (41.7%)	1 (4.2%)	13 (54.2%)	24 (100%)

The findings presented in Table 9 seek to provide an answer to RQ3. It shows that it is more common for individuals to state their pronouns with inflectional morphology when using monopronouns. Within my group of 100 *Reddit* users, 42 allowed for inflectional morphology when declaring their pronoun choices and, as expected, considering Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández' (2024) findings, only 18 of these inflected forms were part of rolling pronouns.

Table 9. Inflectional morphology in pronoun sets

Inflectional morphology in pronoun sets				
Inflectional morphology	***r/NonBinaryTalk***	***r/neopronouns***	**"Regarding neopronouns"**	**TOTAL**
Monopronouns	10	1	13	24 (out of 24)
Rolling pronouns	1	10	7	18 (out of 49)
TOTAL	11	11	20	42 (out of 73)

When analyzing the 49 sets of rolling pronouns, we find that the most common first chosen pronoun for users is singular *they,* followed by the masculine pronoun *he*, accounting for 28.6% and 24.5% of this restricted dataset (see Table 10). The order in which pronouns are listed often indicates user preference, making the first element particularly relevant. Notably, as presented before, it is interesting to see the appearance of the form *it*, as even more users opt for this choice rather than the binary form *she.* Out of the 73 users who stated their pronouns, 33 of them combined binary and nonbinary pronouns. This is shown in Table 11.

Table 10. First chosen element in rolling pronouns

First chosen element in rolling pronouns				
Rolling pronouns	***r/NonBinaryTalk***	***r/neopronouns***	**"Regarding neopronouns"**	**TOTAL**
They	1	3	10	14 (28.6%)
He	3	7	2	12 (24.5%)
She	2	1	2	5 (10.2%)
Neopronoun	0	5	2	7 (14.3%)
It	0	7	0	7 (14.3%)
Any pronoun	0	4	0	4 (8.2%)
TOTAL	6 (12.2%)	27 (55.1%)	16 (32.7%)	49 (100%)

Table 11. Coexistence between binary and nonbinary pronouns

Coexistence between binary and nonbinary pronouns				
Rolling pronouns	***r/NonBinaryTalk***	***r/neopronouns***	**"Regarding neopronouns"**	**TOTAL**
Coexistence binary and nonbinary	7	15	11	33 out of 49 (67.3%)

Moving on now to the neopronouns found in the analysis of the data, 40 out of the 100 users declared to use or included them in their pronoun sets (see Table 12). The most frequently used was *xe,* which appeared in the pronoun lists of eight users, although only one employed it as a monopronoun. This was followed by *ae/aer* and *ze/zir,* as each was included in two different individuals' pronouns set. It is interesting to remark that many users combine these forms with familiar binary or nonbinary pronouns (e.g. *he/they/sin/shark/it*). Additionally, a significant number of users employed nounself pronouns, often inspired by nature, animals, aesthetics or objects, with *star/stars* being mentioned twice, once in combination with *it.* In total, 15 users incorporated nounself forms, often alongside other pronoun forms, which reflects a deeply personalized approach to gender expression. Some examples found are:

1. *glit/glitch/glits/glitches/glitchself*,
2. *moon/they/paw/cute/vamp/leaf/void/cloud*,
3. *it/he/star/cosmic/angel/prince*
4. *it/doll/bunny*.

Notably, some individuals offered a distinction between their choices for online interactions or in-person communication, occasionally reserving emoji-based or nounself pronouns (e.g. *paw/pawself/*🐾, *he/they/de/bat/nep/plum/*🍁/🍒) for digital contexts. This suggests a degree of contextual use in pronoun use. For the whole set of pronouns found in the post "Regarding neopronouns" consult Appendix.

Table 12. Number of users that employ neopronouns

Number of users that employ neopronouns				
	r/NonBinaryTalk	***r/neopronouns***	**"Regarding neopronouns"**	**TOTAL**
Neopronouns	0/30 (0%)	28/30 (93.33%)	12/40 users (30%)	40/73

Focusing now on the qualitative analysis, the ways users communicate and refer to one another reveal notable patterns. In the subreddit *r/neopronouns,* several users requested "pronouns tryouts", inviting others to use specific pronouns when addressing them. These requests were consistently met with respect, as can be seen in Figure 4, where other users referred to others using their chosen pronouns without hesitation or correction.

Also, a particular unique case involved one individual who declared to use a first person neopronoun form, concretely *li,* and actively used this form when commenting in other posts, as seen in Figure 5. Generally, when users declare their preferences, others in the community respect and use pronouns that align with their desires, acknowledging and demonstrating a supportive and affirming use of language.

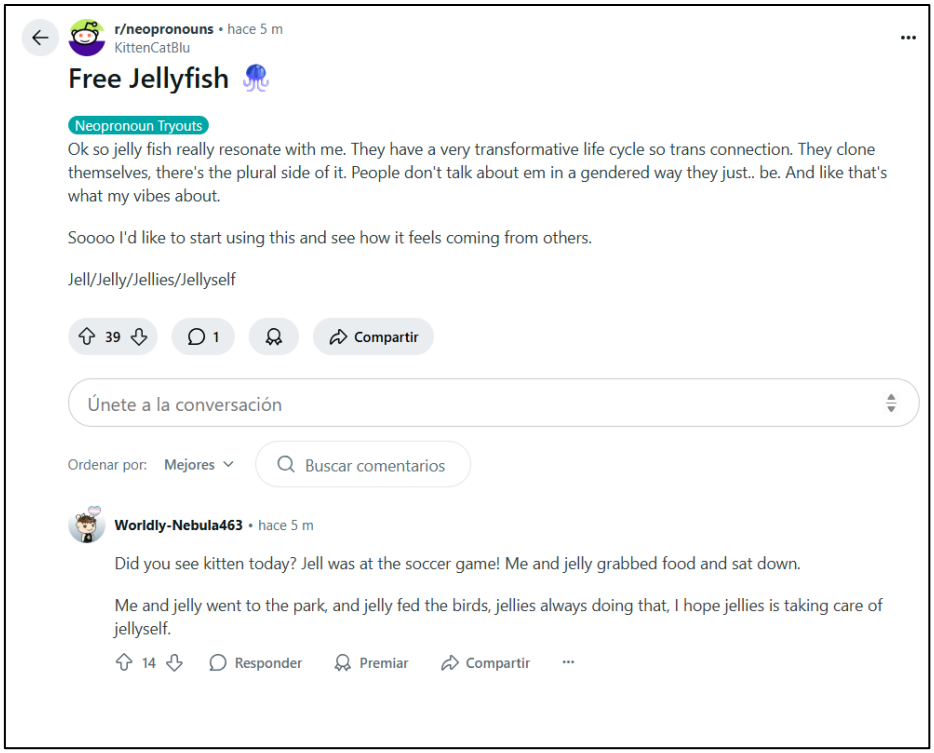


Fig. 4 *Reddit* users interacting using neopronouns

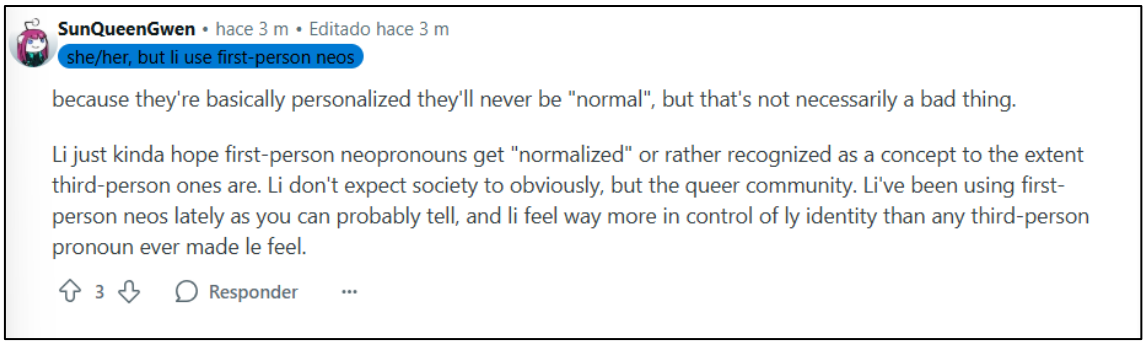


Fig. 5 *Reddit* user using first person neopronouns

Moreover, it is interesting to observe how users approach self-identification. In terms of their identity, it was surprising the number of individuals who expressed themselves freely with respect to their gender. Considering the nature of the subreddit *r/NonBinaryTalk*, in which it is expressed in the description that is "a 'general forum' where non-binary people can come together to socialize and discuss any topic" (see Figure 6), I assumed that all users that participated in the subreddit, as well as in the highlighted post "Regarding neopronouns", are nonbinary. In the subreddit *r/neopronouns*, however, the variety of self-identities is quite noticeable, with a total of seven different gender identities. Table 13 lists them and shows that nonbinary, genderfluid and agender are the most frequently ones in the subset analysed. The diversity of terms used reflects once again the fluidity and complexity of identity expression in these online spaces. This aspect will be further discussed in Section 4.2.

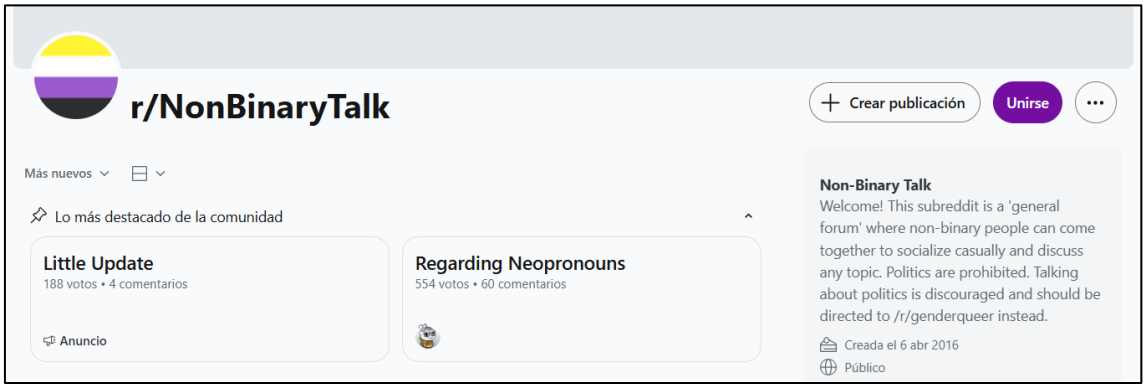


Fig. 6 Front page and community description of the subreddit *r/NonBinaryTalk*

Table 13. Gender identities in *r/neopronouns*

Gender identities in *r/neopronouns*	
Identities	**Users**
Unspecified	5
Nonbinary	9
Genderfluid	5
Agender	4
Xenogender	3
Transgender	2
Genderqueer	1
Gendervoid	1
TOTAL	**30**

Although a total of 100 *Reddit* users were analysed across the three datasets, certain research questions, particularly those involving gender identity comparisons, required a more balanced approach. The *r/NonBinaryTalk* subreddit and the highlighted post "Regarding neopronouns" of this subreddit are explicitly intended for nonbinary users. This means that we have one community that is overrepresented. To compare gender identity categories and related patterns in a consistent way, only the 60 users from the two main subreddits (*r/NonBinaryTalk* and *r/neopronouns*) were considered to address RQs 4 to 7.

As shown in Figure 7, a clear distinction can be observed between the two communities, as the frequency of rolling pronouns is lower among nonbinary individuals by comparison with the subreddit involving a wider variety of gender identities. Also, it is more common for the group that interact in *r/neopronouns* to declare their pronouns set, but as mentioned before, this is probably conditioned by the nature of the subreddit.

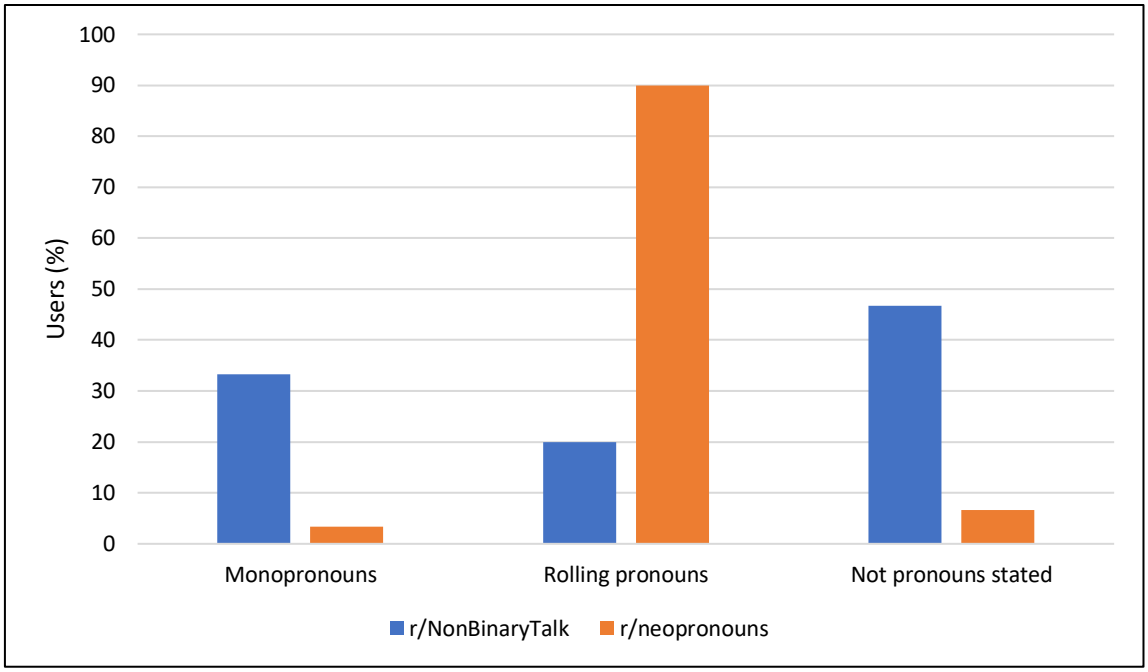


Fig. 7 Distribution of pronouns across communities

Regarding the most frequent pronoun in each community, the expected result was clearly confirmed (see hypothesis in Section 1.2 of this BA thesis), as in both subreddits the most common form was singular *they.* Among the 44 users who stated their pronouns in these two subreddits, 23 (52,27%) included *they* in their pronoun set. Notably, only in the nonbinary group did seven users report using *they/them* exclusively as a monopronoun, while none in the other community did so. Although the use of singular *they* was more common among nonbinary individuals, the difference between the two subreddits is tight, as shown in Figure 8.

Strikingly, three users from the nonbinary community referred to themselves using only binary pronouns. However, none of the nonbinary users in the sample preferred neopronouns, whereas users in the *r/neopronouns* subreddit showed greater diversity in this regard, reflecting a higher degree of openness and experimentation within this group. In general, *r/neopronouns* had a greater proportion of users selecting neopronouns, with 28 profiles using these forms, being the two left the only users who did not state their pronouns. The *r/neopronouns* community also showed a higher use of the pronoun *it* (seven users), since there is no declaration of this pronoun in *r/NonBinaryTalk*. In the latter, *they* and *he* were more frequently used as the first pronoun in the rolling pronoun sets.

All in all, the data suggests that *r/NonBinaryTalk* leans toward affirmation and social legibility using more widely recognized pronouns, whereas *r/neopronouns* functions as a more exploratory and creative space, where language is used as a flexible tool for self-expression.

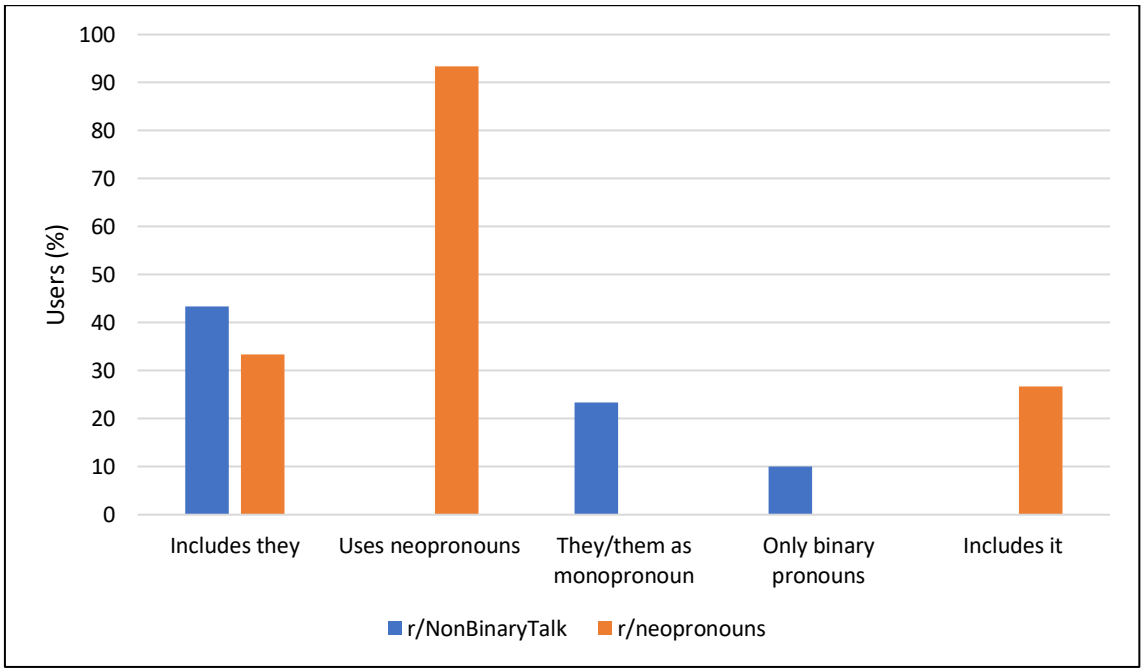


Fig. 8 Tendencies across *r/NonBinaryTalk* and *r/neopronouns* communities

While the post "Regarding neopronouns" was excluded for this comparison due to its overlap with the nonbinary-focused subreddit, it offers useful insight for qualitative contrast. A key difference emerges when contrasting the post and the subreddit *r/neopronouns*. Although both are centered on the same topic, i.e. neopronouns, they are directed at different audiences. *r/neopronouns* is open to all users, regardless of their gender identity, whereas the post is situated within a space exclusive for nonbinary individuals. The difference is reflected in their pronoun choices, nonbinary individuals stick to more widely recognized forms, especially singular *they*, but still demonstrate respect and openness toward neopronoun use. Posts in *r/NonBinaryTalk* frequently address concerns around representation, acceptance or dysphoria, topics less frequently found in *r/neopronouns*, where users often explore pronouns more freely, highlighting innovation, playfulness, and personalization, sometimes without reference to fixed gender identities (see Figures 9 and 10 for thematic insight of each subreddit). These findings suggest that while both spaces promote inclusivity, they reflect different orientations. *r/NonBinaryTalk* is oriented toward recognition and legitimacy of nonbinary identities,

whereas *r/neopronouns* reflects a more experimental and expressive approach to language and self-identification.

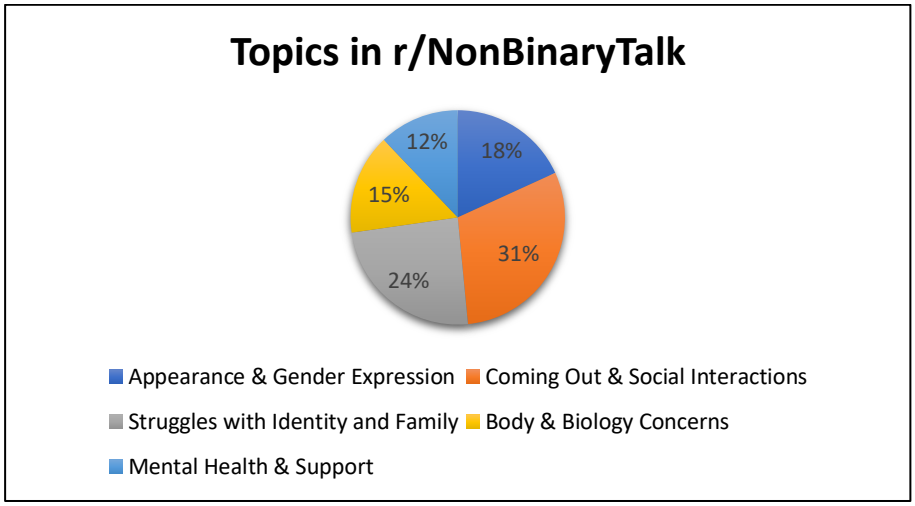


Fig. 9 Main themes in *r/NonBinaryTalk*

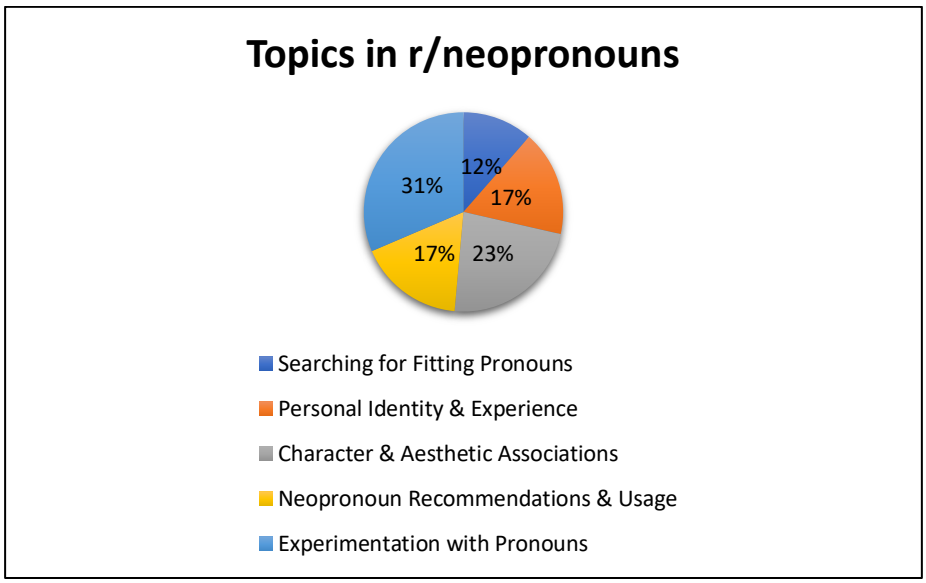


Fig. 10 Main themes in *r/neopronouns*

Furthermore, as it can be observed following the analysis, nonbinary pronouns suggest a strong link between pronoun use and identity affirmation, this can be more clearly seen and studied in *r/NonBinaryTalk*, as it is frequent to read discussions about gender identity, dysphoria or social experiences (see Figure 9). By contrast, users in *r/neopronouns* were less likely to center their posts on gender and instead focused on

linguistic experimentation. Here, pronoun use served more expressive or aesthetic purposes rather than strictly identity-related ones (see Figure 10).

Lastly, user motivations for choosing specific pronouns varied across datasets. Many expressed a desire for personal comfort or authenticity, stating that certain pronouns aligned better with their identity. Others cited visibility, wanting to normalize neopronouns or challenge binary norms. Some mentioned safety or context, using different pronouns in offline environments. In *r/neopronouns*, motivations also included linguistic creativity and self-expression, highlighting the role of pronouns not only as identity markers but also as tools for experimentation and personalization (see Figures 9 and 10 above).

4.2 Discussion

This study aimed to examine how nonbinary and inclusive pronouns are used and discussed across *Reddit* communities, with a focus on linguistic patterns, user motivations and identity expression.

The findings connect with the expectations found in the literature. For instance, RQ1 asked which pronouns are predominantly used in *Reddit* communities related to gender identity. The results showed that singular *they* was the most widely used pronoun, both as a monopronoun and in combination with others like *he* or *she*. This suggests that singular *they* is not only the default neutral form, but it is also widely accepted across different identity contexts, as those found in *r/neopronouns*. Moreover, these findings align with Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández (2024), who also observed *they/them* as the most common nonbinary pronoun on *X*. This only highlights its dominance even in spaces like *Reddit*, which is a more experimental place than other social media. Its prominence may be attributed to its increasing social recognition and to the institutional adoption encouraged for formal writing thanks to institutions like APA or MLA, among others. Also, its relative ease of use in English is notable, as demonstrated in the comment showed in Figure 11 that aligns with one of the challenges that I presented in Section 2.4. The answer to the comment is also interesting as it can be linked to RQ7, being a clear case of pronouns chosen for identity reasons.

Ariel_sfiorivanolevi • hace 17 d

Italian and Spanish speaker here! Neither Spanish nor Italian have official neutral pronouns and conjugations (because in Spanish and Italian is not only pronouns, but also all adjectives and verbs that are conjugated to feminine or masculine) so it is a bit annoying having a profoundly gendered language. In Spanish the neutral version is made with an "e" instead of "a" and "o", and I actually like it and think it sounds good. In Italian there are at least two different ways to make the neutral, I don't love how one of them sounds and both sound a bit unnatural to me, I tend to use them to talk about other people or to use a neutral plural to talk about groups. What I actually like about Spanish and Italian more than English, though, is that YOU can choose which pronouns and conjugations to use for yourself. In English you can only ask other people to use your correct pronouns, but you don't personally have ways to gender yourself correctly, because the first person in English is neutral. While the first person in Spanish and Italian needs gendering sometimes. At time it can be annoying because you have to choose how to refer to yourself with other people, and maybe you don't really know how you will feel more comfortable, but overall I like that even if other people misgender me, I still have the power to gender myself correctly, it's empowering! What I used to do is to mix the feminine and the masculine, without using neutral forms. Now I'm leaning more towards referring to myself in masculine terms. Curious to hear about other people and other languages!

25 Responder ···

Stock-March-3938 • hace 17 d

I founded interesting when you said abt mixing masculine and feminine pronouns. But that's the thing with me I don't identify with he/him neither with she/her. Maybe it's because I'm in early stages of the process. Anyways, I've struggling a bit with it being a native Portuguese speaker and living in Brazil

3 Responder ···

Fig. 11 Comment from a post in *r/NonBinaryTalk*

Moreover, more experimental forms such as *xe/xem*, *ze/zir* and nounself pronouns were also present, but their frequency was significantly lower, suggesting that while neopronouns are gaining visibility, singular *they* remains the most accessible and socially viable option for many users, particularly among nonbinary identities. The data presents a tension between linguistic innovation and social acceptability, where users may prefer singular *they* because it offers both gender inclusivity and recognition (Hekanaho 2022). This idea can be supported with the comment of one of the users in the post "Regarding neopronouns" (Figure 12), where it is stated that neopronouns are becoming more prominent again, but they remain still less common than *they/them*.

Bright_Ices • hace 3 a

I'm pleased to see neopronouns coming up again. A bunch of my friends used various neos 20 years ago, and I've been a little sad thinking they/them might have entirely replaced neos. I feel like there's room for everyone in Pronoun Town.

18 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

Fig. 12 User comment in the post "Regarding neopronouns"

With respect to RQ2, the data shows a clear pattern of coexistence between binary and nonbinary pronouns, reflecting a flexible and context-dependent approach to gender expression. Also, it is worth noting the appearance of the nonbinary pronoun *it*, because individuals including it in their pronoun sets fight against the extended belief that it is a neutral pronoun used for objectification and dehumanising, as stated by Norris and Welsh (2020) who defend that "when applied to a person, the pronoun *it* is dehumanising and dangerous, especially if that person's identity has already been subjected to dehumanisation in their lifetime" (9).

Also, this blending of pronoun types suggests that for many individuals, pronoun use is not about rigid categorization but about accommodating personal identity. It is common among individuals to change their pronoun preferences over time. The tendency to list multiple pronouns may also function as a form of code-switching, allowing users to adapt their pronoun usage across different environments, whether for more formal or informal contexts, or depending on digital or in real life discourses. Another reason is clearly linked to gender identity, as many individuals identify themselves as *genderfluid*, a term referred to people who experience shifts in their gender identity over time or depending on the context (Queer Lexicon 2024), aligning with their pronoun preference and variability.

Generally, users in these communities tend to list their preferred pronoun first, a common practice that reflects personal preference as well as serving as a guide for others to respect them. The order allows for the interpretation of the prominence of each pronoun within the rolling sets. In the collected data, *they* continues to be the most frequently listed in first position, reaffirming its role as the dominant form. However, unexpectedly, the difference in frequency between *they* and the masculine pronoun *he* is not as significant as anticipated (see hypothesis in Section 1.2 in this BA thesis). The predominance of this binary form is particularly noteworthy, as its use might be influenced by factors such as social acceptability or familiarity. As highlighted by Perales et al. (2025) it could be chosen for pragmatic reasons, as individuals sometimes may adopt binary expressions to improve communication, ensure safety, access resources or navigate gendered spaces (Barbee and Schrock 2019).

Following with RQ3, it would be expected that inflectional morphology was more common in monopronouns than in rolling pronouns, as stated by Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández (2024) in their study. However, consulting the findings of my research,

we can appreciate that this pattern is not as common in *Reddit*, as some users also apply inflectional morphology when using rolling pronouns. The difference between these two tendencies is reasoned by these authors, as they highlight that the contrast may partly stem from *X*'s 160-character bio limit, which leads users with rolling pronouns to prioritize space, often omitting inflectional forms to include other personal details (Loureiro-Porto and Ariza-Fernández 2024, 182). In the case of *Reddit*, the platform offers users greater flexibility in how they present their pronouns, either through comment content, user flairs or longer profile descriptions. This may help explain why users on *Reddit* are more likely to include full inflectional forms, whether they use monopronouns or rolling pronouns.

Focusing on RQ4, in terms of self-reference, most users relied on clear pronoun declarations or identity markers such as *nonbinary*, *genderfluid* or *agender*. The latter refers to individuals who do not identify with, feel or relate to any gender. Although often considered part of broader umbrella terms like *trans* or *nonbinary* (Queer Lexicon 2024), *agender* was commonly stated independently and clearly reflected in users' pronoun choices, as many of these individuals included the form *it* in their pronoun set. The way users referred to others varied across communities. In *r/NonBinaryTalk*, users often defaulted to inclusive forms (especially *they*) or avoided gendered reference altogether. This suggests a community that prioritizes clarity, affirmation and social legibility, strategies that likely stem from a desire for recognition and validation within broader gender discourse, as studied also by Hekanaho (2022), as well as sharing a norm of linguistic respect. In contrast, *r/neopronouns* reflected a more experimental and fluid approach. Users in this space identified with a wider range of gender terms, including *xenogender* and *gendervoid*, and frequently adopted neopronouns, emoji pronouns or nounself forms. *Xenogender* refers to identities that are described using concepts outside traditional gender norms, such as nature, objects or abstract ideas (Queer Lexicon 2024). This gender identity is closely related to the choice of nounself pronouns. On the other hand, *gendervoid* describes the complete absence of gender, distinct from *agender* in that it implies a sense of emptiness where gender might otherwise exist (Queer Lexicon 2024).

The diversity of gender expressions appears closely tied to the use of pronoun forms, which function not just as tools for identification but also as means of exploration and play. St Amant et al. (2025) define "pronouns as a tool" as a theme in their qualitative study, noting that participants view pronoun selection as both a personal practice and a

social strategy, used to articulate identity, explore different gender positions and communicate effectively. While both communities value inclusivity, *r/NonBinaryTalk* emphasizes clarity and the affirmation of known identities, whereas *r/neopronouns* leans toward linguistic innovation and flexible self-expression, even in contexts where identity remains undefined.

These conclusions can be linked to RQ5, while both communities promote inclusive language, the differences observed in pronoun use and identity expression suggest contrasting needs and strategies. In *r/NonBinaryTalk*, where all users are presumed nonbinary, pronoun choices tend to center around forms that are more widely recognized (e.g. *they*, *he*), pointing to the need of being understood and affirmed in social contexts. This tendency stems from the effort of maintaining visibility and validation in contexts where gender norms are typically binary (Perales, Ablaza, and Elkin 2025). By contrast, users in *r/neopronouns* engage with pronouns in ways that seem less oriented toward recognition and more toward self-definition. Here, pronouns operate not only as markers of identity but also as expressive elements, symbolic, aesthetic or even playful. This aligns with the findings traced by Miltersen (2016), as the users studied in the article selected pronouns based on personal associations, traits or interests, often in playful and fluid ways, supporting the idea that pronouns in spaces like *r/neopronouns* are used less for recognition and more for self-definition. This difference between the two communities may indicate a tension between two needs: on the one hand, to be understood within familiar social and linguistic frameworks, and on the other, the urge to push beyond or reshape those very frameworks. Thus, the distinctions between the two groups are not merely stylistic, but they reflect deeper questions about how language is used to shape identity, for the sense of belonging and the limits of societal understanding. These differences are supported by Hekanaho (2022), who finds that *they* is the most socially intelligible nonbinary form, being more accepted than more experimental forms like neopronouns.

RQ6 explored whether the use of nonbinary pronouns correlates with specific user profiles. The data shows some correlation between gender identity and pronoun use, though the patterns are not rigid. Nonbinary users tended to prefer more widely recognized forms like *they*, while identities such us *genderfluid*, *agender* and *xenogender* were more often linked to neopronouns or nounself forms. This suggest that pronoun choices may reflect how individuals position themselves in relation to gender, whether

seeking recognition within existing norms or expressing a more fluid, unconventional identity.

Interestingly, the most linguistically experimental profiles were not necessarily those with clearly defined nonbinary identities, but rather those associated with more conceptually open categories like *xenogender* or *gendervoid*. This suggests that the use of nonbinary pronouns or neopronouns may not simply correspond to identity labels, but rather reflect the individual's approach to gender, language and self-expression. In this sense, pronoun choice becomes less about declaring a fixed identity and more as a practice of exploring, resisting norms or playing creatively with language.

Lastly, RQ7 explores why users select the pronouns they do. The motivations behind these choices vary across individuals but revealed some recurring themes. For many individuals, especially in *r/NonBinaryTalk*, pronoun selection appeared to be linked to a desire for recognition and clarity, aligning with familiar forms like *they* or *he* (Perales, Ablaza, and Elkin 2025) to ease interaction and ensure understanding. In contrast, users in *r/neopronouns* often framed their pronouns as tools for experimentation, personal alignment or emotional connection. Several comments explicitly invited others to try out pronouns in conversations, suggesting that some users were actively testing how different forms felt in practice. Others described their choices as expressions of aesthetics, identity play or even online vs. offline distinctions. This range of motivations highlights that pronouns are not merely grammatical tools, but also serve emotional, social and political functions, signalling how individuals want to be seen, related to and understood within and beyond binary norms.

Overall, the findings highlight the complexity and intentionality behind pronoun use across gender-diverse communities. *Reddit* proved to be the adequate space to study these practices as it is a tool that resembles in real life discourse thanks to its community-based structure, but always prevailing anonymity. Comparing this medium with more constrained platforms like *X*, *Reddit* offers greater flexibility to express complex aspects of their gender identity and to experiment with language in a way that is less subject to public judgment or pressure, as each subreddit is directed at a specific audience, making it more accepting and contextually supportive.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As language continues to evolve in response to shifting social norms, this study contributes to understanding how emerging pronoun practices reflect identity recognition, inclusion and respectability. For this, the *Reddit* platform was used to explore two different communities represented by the subreddits *r/NonBinaryTalk* and *r/neopronouns* and to observe how individuals used nonbinary and inclusive pronouns. Through the quantitative and qualitative analysis of 100 user interactions, it was possible to identify clear patterns, such as the most commonly pronouns (e.g. *they*, *he* and neopronouns) and how these choices reflect broader identity strategies and linguistic innovation. A noticeable contrast appeared between the two communities: *r/NonBinaryTalk* users tended to favor widely recognized pronouns and displayed more consistent identity categories (e.g. nonbinary), whereas *r/neopronouns* users showed greater diversity in gender identities (including *genderfluid*, *agender*, *xenogender*) and more experimental use of neopronouns, nounself forms and even emoji-based pronouns. These findings support the idea that language serves not only as a tool for self-identification but also as a medium for community-building and innovation.

The analysis confirmed the central hypothesis: *they* is the most frequently used pronoun among both binary and nonbinary individuals, highlighting its status as a broadly accepted gender-neutral form. Nevertheless, pronoun use is not always uniform, the coexistence of *they* with binary pronouns like *he* or *she*, especially in rolling pronoun sets, demonstrates the fluid and flexible ways individuals construct and communicate their identities in digital spaces, probably reflecting their in-person interactions.

Choosing *Reddit* as the corpus for this study proved to be methodologically suitable. Its structure, based on topic-centered subreddits and pseudonymous user interactions, offers a more protected and focused environment for users to express their identities without the pressure that can be associated to more public platforms like *X*. The anonymity provided by *Reddit* likely encourages more honest and varied linguistic practices, especially among individuals with nontraditional gender identities. However, this study has its limitations. The sample size, 100 users across three datasets, represents only a small part of *Reddit*'s diverse user base. Moreover, the absence of diachronic data means that the findings cannot be generalized across all digital communities or over time. Future research could expand this analysis to track how the use of nonbinary pronouns evolves in specific platforms over time, as well as examine the reception of pronoun use

by audiences outside gender-diverse communities. It could also adopt a longitudinal perspective to study how individuals' pronoun preferences change across different stages of their lives, an area of potential interest for psycholinguistic inquiry. Additionally, this study contributes to the growing academic conversation on data transparency and replicability in social media research. By collecting and, upong approval, openly distributing *Reddit* datasets and methodological steps, this project aligns with recent efforts in corpus linguistics to improve reproducibility and responsible data reuse (see Laitinen and Rautionaho 2025).

Ultimately, this research highlights how pronouns can carry a deep personal and political weight. These practices may seem minor to those who feel linguistically represented by default, but for those who are suffering marginalization can hold significant meaning. For nonbinary individuals and gender-diverse communities, the ability to name and refer to oneself and others authentically is not only about language but about recognition, safety and visibility. Just as Bernice King reminds us with the quote that opens this BA thesis: "If you don't think representation matters, you're probably well represented". The findings here only reaffirm that inclusive language is not a passing trend or a merely matter of grammar, but a necessary shift toward a more equitable and affirming world.

6. DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All materials referred to in the article can be found here: https://osf.io/qmcrp/. The data is currently held in **private mode**, pending approval for distribution, in accordance with the **FAIR principles** (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) to support responsible data sharing in research (see Laitinen and Rautionaho 2025).

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8. APPENDIX

“Regarding Neopronouns” r/NonBinaryTalk

r/NonBinaryTalk • hace 3 a
laurenhuzzah MOD They/Them

Regarding Neopronouns

It has been brought to the mod team's attention that there has been a surge in discourse regarding neopronoun usage. Everyone is welcome and to be supported for their identity on this subreddit, even if it is something you do not identify with yourself, or do not entirely understand. This is a subreddit meant to foster discussion and create community, and while conversations surrounding neopronouns should exist, it should not be breaking subreddit rules to do so. Harassment of other users and disrespecting pronouns, including neopronouns, directly violates the rules laid out.

It is alright to ask questions and have conversations, but it should not involve harassment of others or a refusal to use correct pronouns because it is not something you understand. Discussions require respect, and going in with the intention to learn, not harass or demean others for their identity. If any of this continues to occur, please report the posts or comments in question so that the moderation team may respond accordingly.

554 | 60 | Compartir

Únete a la conversación

Ordenar por: Más nuevos | Buscar comentarios

Successful-One-675 • hace 8 m
They/Sun/Any Pronouns
Awesome sauce
1 | Responder | Premiar | Compartir

Aware-Hearing-915 • hace 9 m
They/He/Xe
Yes. I agree. ALL pronouns and identities should be respected. ❤️ 🟪🟩🟨🟦 ❤️
1 | Responder | Premiar | Compartir

grey_bean624 • hace 1 a
They/Xem
Thank you, i use they/xem pronouns and I appreciate this.
1 | Responder | Premiar | Compartir

J00NNy99eDDy • hace 2 a • Editado hace 2 a
Joan (She/They) - Enby Transfem
Not a fan of neopronouns for many reasons, but fuck me! The respect for other people's sensibility and choices is the base of all conversations; a huge hug to every neopronoun user! 💛🤍💜🖤
8 | Responder | Premiar | Compartir

GodTierDino • hace 2 a
he/xey gender: N/A
as a he/xey myself, I appreciate this💜
4 | Responder | Premiar | Compartir

ya_boi_sn33p_ • hace 2 a
As a person who uses multiple xenogenders, I approve of this post.
3 | Responder | Premiar | Compartir

arthorpendragon • hace 2 a
plural
people who care about you will use your pronouns and others wont care to.
2 | Responder | Premiar | Compartir

butwhykai1 • hace 2 a
Genuine question please don’t get offended. If it’s so bad that if I were to ignore the pronouns you have chosen for yourself why is it okay for you to refer to people as “CIS” because i would identify as a man not a Cis man, it’s a genuine question 👍
4 | Responder | Premiar | Compartir

randomaccount7373737 • hace 2 a
It's an adjective. It's like saying "blonde woman", the blonde part doesn't mean she's not a woman.
6 | Responder | Premiar | Compartir

r/NonBinaryTalk | Unirse

Non-Binary Talk
Welcome! This subreddit is a 'general forum' where non-binary people can come together to socialize casually and discuss any topic. Politics are prohibited. Talking about politics is discouraged and should be directed to /r/genderqueer instead.

Creada el 6 abr 2016
Público

41 mil Members | 11 Online

ETIQUETAS DE USUARIO
Livid-Negotiation257

REGLAS DE
1 Triggering content must have [TW] in front of the title
2 No NSFW content allowed
3 No disrespecting others pronouns/gender-identity
4 No harassment or bullying
5 No posts allowed by accounts less than 1 day old
6 Don't commercialize other subreddits.
7 No selfies or images

RELATED COMMUNITIES
r/NonBinary 271.194 miembros
r/naobinarie 1328 miembros

MODERADORES
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u/CedarWolf He/She/They
Ver todos los moderadores

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[eliminado] • hace 2 a

People don't tho, not normally. I just say "men" to mean men. I only need another word if I'm specifically pointing you out in a group of trans people; it is not a pronoun. Trans and cis are scientific terms and opposites that have existed for molecules for very many years, just simple prefixes. Because trans and cis already had meanings and have opposite meanings, then it doesn't make sense to say you're not a man who is cis unless you just don't believe in trans people at all. But like, look around

4 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

Trash_Panda174 • hace 2 a
They/Them

"cis" or "cisgender" just means you identify as the gender you were assigned at birth there's nothing wrong/bad about it, I'm not sure why people think it's so horrible but ignoring someones pronouns and calling a cisgendered person cis are not the same thing.

Sorry if this doesn't answer your question, I'm not the greatest at understanding/wording things, i tried my best.

10 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

Bright_Ices • hace 3 a

I'm pleased to see neopronouns coming up again. A bunch of my friends used various neos 20 years ago, and I've been a little sad thinking they/them might have entirely replaced neos. I feel like there's room for everyone in Pronoun Town.

17 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

[eliminado] • hace 3 a

neopronoun users are valid as hell and i love u all

9 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

Kaii4lifepeeps • hace 3 a

I use neopronouns

13 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

Thestarcatpillow • hace 2 a

COOL

5 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

[eliminado] • hace 3 a

Comentario eliminado por usuario

Responder Compartir

PunkWithAGun • hace 3 a

As a xe/xem user, that is the correct pronunciation and "xe is" would be grammatically correct :)

6 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

slurpyspinalfluid • hace 3 a

generally xe is

9 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

SomeCosmicEntity • hace 3 a • Editado hace 3 a
She/Them

Neos are valid! 🖤💜🤍💛

17 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

ehh730 • hace 3 a
Custom Flare

Þank you! neopronouns and noun/nounself pronouns are one of those þings where even if you're LGBT there's still a lot of people who discriminate against ðem

22 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

cyberanarchist_ • hace 3 a

appreciate the thorn symbol fr

15 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

2manyparadoxes • hace 1 a

And the eth

2 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

Savv_16XL • hace 3 a
They/Them

Fr

6 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

wolfenby • hace 3 a
They/Them

in addition to using they/them/.../themself, i use wolf/wolfs/wolfself, vi/vir/vis/virs/virself [vee/veer/vee's/veer's/veer-self; like deer but with a V], ne/nem/nir/nirs/nemself + pup/pups + star/stars + fang/fangs [+ 🐺/🐺s/🐺self, wolf/wolfs emoji equivalent. emoji pronouns are strictly for online use (they're not meant to be verbalized) + most people use them for fun :]<3]

(i hardly/never hear my main set, they/them, ever used for me 😐 i never hear my neos 💀 [if there's no -self, i don't use the reflexive of that set])

29 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

hxv3npenguins_ • hace 6 m

I also go by star/stars/starself! I identify as Astralgender!

1 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

Thestarcatpillow • hace 2 a • Editado hace 2 a

Today they (wolf enby) bought some cake for virs freind Tomas. But star siding know witch one Tomas wanted. Then fang had a brilliant idea! 🐺 called Tomas up and asked Tomas wanted chocolate cake for the cake So nem went to go get one But the store was out so pup went to the bake shop to get Tomas a cake and it worked yaaaay

11 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

wolfenby • hace 2 a

They/Them

thank :D!! (i kinda forgot bout this comment 🐺 💧)

5 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

Thestarcatpillow • hace 2 a

Haha welcome I do my best Sorry the story telling bad I dident know how to use them In s comment? If makes sense

3 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

wolfenby • hace 2 a

They/Them

you're fine & yea 🎃 twas a lil hard to decipher but, i understood enough of it :'3 (grammar & spelling wasn't the best but the story was oki 🐺 ✨)

2 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

Thestarcatpillow • hace 2 a

Haha yea my sense of grammar is autocorrect

3 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

Sugarfreak2 • hace 3 a

This is probably the reason I don't use neopronouns. I think even if I started going by them I don't know that anyone would ever use them. People already have enough trouble with they/them... but I'm sure with time that'll change. Hang in there!

38 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

SnooBeans6591 • hace 3 a

They/He/Neo-*

Yes, I can imagine a world where one set of neo-pronouns get enough popularity as to get integrated in the language and used by everyone, but not that everyone just invent their own favorite set of neo-pronouns and have them used by everyone else.

13 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

I_eat_naughty_kids • hace 3 a

Most of the non-English neopronouns are just gender-uniform pronouns used mostly to not discriminate women, anyway.

Like, in languages that have masculine and feminine version of "citizen", neopronouns are used to indicate any citizen regardless of gender

17 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

trippingfingers • hace 3 a • Editado hace 3 a

Neopronouns. Just another way i can remind myself that you know yourself better than i do, and i don't have to get your reasoning to give you respect.

82 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

FellowBeetlejuicers • hace 3 a

💛💛💛💛

💜💜💜💜

💜💜💜💜

🖤🖤🖤🖤

51 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

[eliminado] • hace 3 a

Comentario retirado por un moderador

8 Responder Compartir ···

FellowBeetlejuicers • hace 3 a

Check the sub icon

9 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

Transtaglia • hace 3 a

He/Him

Happy to see this policy by the mods. It's irritating how neos are the go-to low-hanging fruit for bad faith hot takes in general LGBTQ spaces.

94 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

[eliminado] • hace 3 a

Comentario eliminado por usuario

Responder Compartir

hebsbdvdskfhd • hace 3 a

They/Them

i'm so sorry you have to go thru that. your pronouns and identity are valid, no matter what anyone else says! sending nothing but good wishes and love 💕

14 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

GaianNeuron • hace 3 a

make gender total destroy

Thank you. I don't use neos myself, and beyond a surface understanding I don't know that it'll ever "click" to me why others find them a good fit, but **neither of those are reasons that I can't or shouldn't respect others who do**.

340 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

Zoloe • hace 2 a

From what I could gather, it's just a comfort thing. Like the way you might feel more comfortable with people using a pronoun you wish them to use that is more "traditional," it validates them for who they believe they are. It's like roleplaying without playing. Being respectful of that, or at least acknowledging it if we don't understand, seems to be the best solution. People using neopronouns are really no different from anyone else using any other pronoun, they just made it for themselves instead of using the choices presented by society. It's like making a custom character in a video game, but you mod the game to have more options that you like for yourself. In this case, you're in an MMO and you're editing the server side of things so people can recognize the changes you've made for yourself. Adding on though, rather than changing the existing stuff.

Does that make sense?

13 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

NightMother23 • hace 2 a
They/Them/Thon

Gosh, I love this explanation so much and I am going to use this to explain to everyone. If people can mod games, I can mod life. Let me live MY life! You rock.

7 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

ItsNiqilis • hace 1 a
They/she ~ Queer

" A life-modder " is one a heck of a title and I love it

4 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

GaianNeuron • hace 2 a
make gender total destroy

Understanding it from a theoretical perspective was never the issue. It's one of those things that's simply outside my sphere of experience, and that's perfectly okay -- just like how being enby is outside of much of the trans experience, and being trans is outside of the cis world's experience.

What I mean to say is that while my understanding *can only* be on that theoretical level, there's still no reason at all that I shouldn't respect neos in the same manner that I'd respect anyone's pronouns.

12 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

Zoloe • hace 2 a

Right. I do believe that you can come to understand, pretty well, another person's experience, with enough meditation on the idea and placement of yourself within another person's life, at least at a surface level. Surface being, what would life be like if you were in the same situation. Maybe impossible for some to have that much openness of mind to try and internally experience this type of life. But, I think with some openness and willingness to learn, it's possible. You'll never experience the *exact* same life as another, but I think the openness can be triggered in someone if they have a loved one who is going through it, especially if that love will go above and beyond any other ideology they hold.

SophiaElvenKitten • hace 3 a

I hope you don't mind I add my own two cents and a bit of my journey to using (Fairy/Fai/Fair) pronouns... and no I don't actually think I'm a fairy (lol!). I'm non-binary and if I had been a kid in the mid 20teens I might have mistakenly thought I was trans... and possibly wrongly (for me) transitioned because I knew I wasn't a girl.... as a kid I remember wishing I was a boy because I knew I wasn't a girl in elementary school ... I never knew what dysphasia was but I knew that something was wrong. Though I have always liked dresses. So transitioning to male (and at once point I really wanted to be a "not girl" which from what I knew was ..."Um boy I guess?!?!" ...I am non-binary. So the surface level trans "narrative" would have been wrong FOR ME. But I'm sure if I actually met trans people they'd reassure me that I wasn't broken and that I didn't have to be a girl or boy! When I remember my early childhood I wanted to be a fairy sooo bad because fairies were beautiful and clothed in flowers... but didn't have a gender (it wasn't something so concrete I just knew I hated girly things and being "girly" but I wanted to be a fairy because fairies were not "girls" or girly) but I remember how desperately I wanted to be a fairy. Like I wanted to be a fairy like a desert wants for water. starting at 2-3 years old 20+ years ago so I had no way of knowing that strong icky sense of wrongness... was called gender dysphasia. (I also didn't realize how strongly I felt from a deep primal emotional ouch place in my soul that fairies were non-gendered beings. My dad mentioned off hand that sure I HATED most "girly" things when I was little but I liked fairies and fairies are girly and female ... so from the depths of my soul I retorted "NO!!! fairies don't have a gender but they're beautiful and clothed in the delicate beauty of nature" sooooo.... I googled it.... Most depictions of fairies are female. So that's why I use Fairy/Fai/Fair pronouns because the self that I've always wanted to be the beautiful and ethereal yet gender less being I knew in my soul in the pit of my stomach was me looked a heck of a lot like fairies before I was old enough to understand what that meant. If you've gotten this far thank you for reading!!

24 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

NotMirandaCrosgrove • hace 1 a

i LOVE this!

2 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

alttwofiftyfive • hace 2 a

I really wanted to be a faerie too, I love seeing this post!!!!

9 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

otherstxr • hace 2 a

If you don't mind me asking, what were your first references to fairies? It's just that when I think of fairies the first things that come to mind are the Tinker Bell movie series and Winx, I remember the world in Tinker Bell had both male and female fairies while Winx was mostly composed of female or feminine fairies, that's why I never thought of fairies as a genderless concept as interesting as it sounds, the way you described them feels similar to the gems in Steven Universe, they might be beautiful and ethereal and girly but they still are genderless aliens. Hope this doesn't feel like I'm dismissing or invalidating your experience, that's not what I mean, I just want to understand your pov

15 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

SophiaElvenKitten • hace 2 a

My egg doner had a lot of the Cicely Mary Barker's Flower Fairies as stamps and I didn't see a gender specifically. I wanted to be a fairy because they were inexplicably beautiful and ethereal though I didn't know those words at the time

15 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

Accomplished_Art_766 • hace 3 a

Exactly! All honestly, while I don't use them on myself, but props to everyone who does.

29 Responder Premiar Compartir ···

cdx234 • hace 3 a

You worded how I feel much better than I could.

87 Responder Premiar Compartir ···