

## CONSIDERATION OF GENDER-FAIR EXPRESSIONS IN DEVELOPING WRITTEN TEXTS: WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO FOUR UNIVERSITIES IN ETHIOPIA

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### ABSTRACT

Currently foreign language learning in general, writing skills development in particular has strong role in solving social problems in the society. Learner-centered writing classes where the principles of modern communication are implemented through active teacher-to-student and student-to-student interaction, a number of deep-rooted misconceptions established in the society for time immemorial can get at least rudimentary remedial solutions. Accordingly, the major objective of this study was to investigate the extent to which both writing instructors and students endeavoured in alleviating gender-biased dictions on both impromptu and extemporaneous essays produced for a variety of purposes. The study was designed largely in harmony with the principles of quantitative method. Consequently, the researcher decided to employ sample essays written by the students and questionnaires administered to both Advanced Writing Skills course instructors and students who were taking the course as major data gathering tools. For the purpose of triangulation, however, semi-structured interviews conducted with both writing instructors and students were used as additional data collecting tools to get qualitative data. In like manner, 58.3 % of the sample essays which were written by the students consisted of male referenced topics such as “Everyone has **his** own way”. In using pronouns, 66.6% of the essay writers used masculine pronouns (he/him) more frequently to represent both sexes. Similarly, while they were using common nouns, 82.5% of the writers did not give attention to appropriate gender-fair expressions that suit both sexes. In further investigation, 75.8% of the writers preferred to select male major characters such as Haile Gebresillassie, Tilahun Gessesse, Haylom Araaya, PM Meles Zenawi, inter-alia., in their biographical essays. The other mind striking finding was that 80% of the respondents utilized the occupation titles such as engineer, pilot, president, etc., to refer to only males. When we look into the data from the instructors’ questionnaire, 50% of them confirmed that they did not frequently guide their students how they had to use appropriate gender-fair expressions when they produced various types of essays. In the same way, the data from students’ questionnaires revealed that instructors of the course did not give any guideline as to how they had to use appropriate gender expressions. Further, the data collected through interview indicated that most writing instructors considered gender-unfair expressions on students’ writing as merely a problem of diction. In conclusion, the issue of gender in the course, Advanced Writing Skills classes in four of the universities selected for this study, has not yet got full attention.

**KEYWORDS:** Diction, Gender-Fair Expressions, Neutralization, Occupational Titles