Language and gender

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
INTERMEDIATE | B1-B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Tick the correct category for each term.

Term | Pronoun | Job title | Concept | Practice

1 gender-neutral pronoun [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

2 singular 'they' [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

3 inclusive language [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

4 gendered term [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

5 linguistic sexism [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

6 default masculine [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

7 non-binary [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

8 chairperson [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

2 Correct the mistake in each sentence.

1 She used singular of they. _____

2 The company promotes inclusive of language. _____

3 That job title is gendered of. _____

4 Researchers studied linguistic of sexism. _____

5 English traditionally used default of masculine forms. _____

6 He identifies as non binary. _____

7 They updated the chairperson of title. _____

8 She prefers gender neutral of pronouns. _____

3 Choose the term that best fits each context.

1 For a pronoun not specifying male or female: gender-neutral pronoun / a gendered term.

2 For using 'they' to refer to one person: singular they / plural they only.

3 For language avoiding unnecessary gender assumptions: inclusive language / gendered language.

4 For a word that specifies male or female: gendered term / a neutral word.

5 For the historical use of masculine forms to represent everyone: default masculine / balanced representation.

6 For someone whose identity doesn't fit strictly male or female: non-binary / strictly binary.

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4 Complete the sentences with words from the box.

default masculine | gendered term | gender-neutral pronoun | inclusive language | linguistic sexism | non-binary | singular they | they

1 Style guides increasingly recommend using 1 _____ when a person's gender is unknown.
2 Researchers studying 2 _____ examined how everyday vocabulary can unintentionally exclude certain groups.
3 English historically relied on a 3 _____ pronoun to represent people of any gender, a practice many now consider outdated.
4 The organisation adopted 4 _____ across all its official communications.
5 'Waitress' is considered a 5 _____, unlike the more neutral 'server'.
6 Some 6 _____ people prefer pronouns other than he or she.
7 Using singular 7 _____ has become standard in most modern style guides.
8 A truly 8 _____ can refer to anyone without assuming their gender.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

Why gender-neutral language has changed

Linguists studying the evolution of gender-neutral language note that shifts such as replacing 'chairman' with 'chairperson' reflect broader changes in social attitudes rather than purely linguistic developments occurring in isolation. Critics of these changes sometimes argue that language reform amounts to unnecessary interference in natural linguistic evolution, while proponents counter that language actively shapes perception, meaning terms that default to masculine forms can subtly reinforce assumptions about who belongs in a given profession. Research on this question remains genuinely mixed, though several studies suggest that gendered job titles can measurably affect how people, including children, imagine who typically performs a particular role, lending some empirical support to advocates of more consistently inclusive terminology.

1 What do linguists note that shifts like 'chairman' to 'chairperson' reflect? _____
2 What do critics of these changes sometimes argue? _____
3 What do proponents counter, regarding language and perception? _____
4 What can terms that default to masculine forms subtly do, according to proponents? _____
5 What does the text say about research on this question? _____
6 What do several studies suggest gendered job titles can measurably affect? _____

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6 **Rewrite each phrase using the term in capitals.**

1 They used 'they' to refer to one unknown person. SINGULAR THEY _____

2 The word 'waitress' specifies a gender. GENDERED TERM _____

3 The company avoided unnecessary gender assumptions in its writing. INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE _____

4 English historically used masculine pronouns as the default. DEFAULT MASCULINE _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 100-120 word account of how gender-neutral language has changed workplace communication. Include specific examples.

[ ] Use at least ten target expressions. [ ] Include polite, precise wording. [ ] Organise the account clearly.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Categories

1 Pronoun 2 Practice 3 Practice 4 Job title/Concept 5 Concept 6 Concept 7 Concept 8 Job title

2 Corrections

1 used singular they 2 promotes inclusive language 3 gendered 4 studied linguistic sexism
5 default masculine forms 6 identifies as non-binary 7 the chairperson title 8 gender-neutral pronouns

3 Suitable terms

1 gender-neutral pronoun 2 singular they 3 inclusive language 4 gendered term 5 default masculine 6 non-binary

4 Sentences

1 gender-neutral pronoun 2 linguistic sexism 3 default masculine 4 inclusive language 5 gendered term 6 non-binary 7 they 8 gender-neutral pronoun

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 Broader changes in social attitudes rather than purely linguistic developments occurring in isolation.
2 That language reform amounts to unnecessary interference in natural linguistic evolution.
3 That language actively shapes perception.
4 Subtly reinforce assumptions about who belongs in a given profession.
5 That it remains genuinely mixed.
6 How people, including children, imagine who typically performs a particular role.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 They used singular they. 2 'Waitress' is a gendered term.
3 The company used inclusive language. 4 English used default masculine forms.

Over to you

Answers will vary. Check range, respectful register and clear organisation.