

# Gender-Neutral Language in Japanese Universities

専門分野

Diversity, Identity

キーワード

gender-neutral, singular they, pronouns

## 研究目的・概要

My research focuses on the intersection of gender equality, identity, and language. Currently, I am exploring how gender-neutral language is perceived and used among Japanese university students. I focus on the pronoun called singular they (ST), which is 'they' or any of its related forms used to refer to a single person without stating gender. The past decade has seen a massive global shift away from generic 'he' and 'he or she' constructions, and toward the use of ST. Singular they offers several benefits: it is a simple, concise construction; it helps speakers avoid problematic gender stereotypes; and it creates a more inclusive society by not assuming a gender binary. While ST is now endorsed by most major style guides and dictionaries and is the generic pronoun of choice for inner-circle English speakers, in Asia its use is more varied, influenced by both cultural and linguistic factors. My research shows that many Japanese students choose 'he or she' or even generic 'he' to refer to gender-neutral nouns, potentially causing problems for these students both socially and professionally. This points to the need to teach singular they and other gender-neutral language in Japan, to give students tools to communicate without gender bias.



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