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Para Todes: ¿Sí o No? The Use of Inclusive-Language Alternatives in the Spanish Language in Montevideo, Uruguay

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PARA TODES: ¿SÍ O NO?
THE USE OF INCLUSIVE-LANGUAGE ALTERNATIVES IN THE SPANISH LANGUAGE
IN MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY

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By Gabrielle Goulet

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the attitudes towards the possible implementation of gender-neutral language, through the use of the *-e*, on official documents and schools in Montevideo, Uruguay, and how the attitudes of Spanish speakers in Uruguay align with the country's history of inclusivity. In this context, Uruguay is considered an inclusive country because there is evidence of legal changes that promote gender equality, thus creating an gender-inclusive environment. This thesis utilizes a mixed-methods approach which includes both qualitative and quantitative research. The findings show that many people will use inclusive language when asked of them. They also believe that this usage is something that people should be allowed to use freely. However, most respondents were against the use of inclusive language through the use of the *-e* on official government documents and the teaching of the *-e* in schools.

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Terminology

Gender (in language): According to Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics, "a

grammatical feature, in a family with person, number, and case. In the languages that

have grammatical gender– according to a representative typological sample, almost half

of the languages in the world– it is a property that separates nouns into clauses" (Audring

1).

Gender-fluid: Merriam-Webster defines this term as "of, relating to, or being a person whose

gender identity is not fixed" ("Gender-fluid").

Gender-inclusive language: language that includes both masculine, feminine and or neutral

variations of a word (ex: profesores y profesoras, chicos y chicas, hola a todos y todas,

niñes)

Gender-neutral language: speaking or writing in a way that includes all genders in a way that

does not exclude, discriminate against, or assume a particular sex, social gender, or

gender identity. This definition is a culmination of various sources that includes the

United Nations definition of gender-inclusive language ("gender-inclusive language

means speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate against a particular sex,

social gender or gender identity, and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes" and

Dictionary.com's definition of inclusive language ("language that avoids the use of

certain expressions or words that might be considered to exclude particular groups of

people, esp gender-specific words, such as "man", "mankind", and masculine pronouns,

the use of which might be considered to exclude women") ("United Nations

Gender-Inclusive Language;" Dictionary.com).

Inclusivity: The Cambridge Dictionary defines inclusivity as"the fact of including all types of

     people, things, or ideas and treating them all fairly and equally" ("Inclusivity")

Nonbinary: Merriam-Webster defines the term as "relating to or being a person who identifies

     with or expresses a gender identity that is neither entirely male nor entirely female"

     ("Nonbinary").

Transgender: Merriam-Webster defines this term as "of, or relating to, or being a person whose

     gender identity differs from the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth"

     ("Transgender").

Note on terminology:

This survey examines the use of gender-neutral language through the use of the *-e* at the end of nouns and adjectives in Montevideo, Uruguay. Although I investigate gender-neutral language, the term gender-inclusive language cannot be dismissed. Gender-inclusive language *can* encompass the use of gender-neutral variations. However, it is more commonly found including binary genders. Therefore, the two are very similar. However, separate definitions are still required in order to distinguish between the two and explain why the term gender-neutral language is favored over the use of the term gender-inclusive language. Other terminology is included to provide context and coherency throughout this work.

Introduction

Spanish is declared the official language in 21 countries, and there are over 500 million

Spanish speakers worldwide ("What Countries Speak Spanish?"). This puts into perspective just

how many people use the Spanish language. The topic of this thesis, which involves altering the

Spanish language in order to create gender-neutral alternatives to gendered nouns and adjectives,

is applicable to many people. Among the countries that speak Spanish, Uruguay is one of them.

Uruguay, a small country located in South America, does not typically make global

headlines in relation to levels of violence, political unrest, or severe economic decline. What

Uruguay can be recognized for, however, are the efforts it has made as a country towards social

and gender-based inclusion in recent decades. Efforts promoting inclusivity can be seen through

various laws and policies that have been implemented. As it will be shown in a later chapter,

Uruguay has been among the first countries, and the leading country, for the creation of specific

laws that relate to gender and gender equality. Such work towards inclusion encompasses the

introduction of variations to the Spanish language that do not restrict one to using the masculine

or feminine gender while speaking.

Variations to the Spanish language can be seen through the use of *-x, -@,* and/or the *-e.*

These variations have reached the global level, with the use of the *-x* and the *-@* being seen

throughout the United States as well as in other Spanish speaking countries. But, what is the

extent of the use of these gender-neutral alternatives? The work done in this thesis aims to study

the social and linguistic limitations that the use of the gender-neutral alternative *-e* pushes. The

questions I analyze in this thesis are: What social movements exist in Montevideo, Uruguay that

promote the use of gender-neutral language? How do the citizens of Montevideo, Uruguay feel

about this topic? How would they feel if gender-neutral language had a greater presence in

society? Lastly, to what extent does inclusivity in Uruguay, specifically in Montevideo, play into this topic?

This thesis aims to answer these research questions by looking at the gender-neutral alternative through the use of the grammatical morpheme *-e* in Montevideo, Uruguay. While these questions may not be so easily answered, this thesis investigates the topic and draws conclusions through the voluntary participation of respondents to a survey. This thesis aims to answer the following hypotheses:

1. The results of the survey will show that respondents' attitudes towards the use of the *-e* will be positive.

2. Respondents will have heard about gender-neutral language and they will be comfortable or indifferent towards other people's use of gender-neutral language.

3. Pertaining to the question on how people would feel if the government used gender-neutral language on official documents, respondents will feel comfortable or indifferent.

The thesis is organized into three chapters, all of which lead up to the final results of the survey. The first chapter examines the history of the Spanish language in order to understand the origin and meaning of grammatical gender in Spanish. In doing so, this chapter not only demonstrates how grammatical genders have existed before Spanish developed into its own language, but it also highlights how susceptible languages are to change. The second chapter investigates how Uruguay can be considered an inclusive country through the analysis of certain laws that are specifically related to gender, gender identity, and gender relations.. The third chapter provides context regarding social movements that currently exist in Montevideo, Uruguay and how those social movements align, or do not align, with global institutions' views

on the use of the grammatical morpheme *-e* used to create gender-neutral Spanish. I then share

my methodology and the results of the survey. The final section of the thesis includes a

discussion of the challenges and limitations throughout the work followed by the final

reflections.

Literature Review

The topic of inclusivity is one that gains more and more relevance every day. As indicated by Christine M. Riordan in her article published in Harvard Business Review, "while many organizations are better about creating diversity, many have not yet figured out how to make the environment inclusive–that is, create an atmosphere in which all people feel valued and respected and have access to the same opportunities" (1). While her article is based on how to create an inclusive work environment, its central point is clearly defined by its title, "diversity is useless without inclusivity." In order to create an inclusive environment, it is first important to start at the most basic level: the language someone uses when talking to, or referring to, another person.

Chapter One of this thesis examines the emergence of gender-inclusive and gender-neutral language in greater depth, but the key concept is that gender-neutral language has emerged and presented itself in various ways. While gender-inclusive language can include the use of doublets and writing in a way that avoids the generic masculine, gender-neutral alternatives, in gendered languages such as Spanish, aim to change the endings of nouns and adjectives to ensure that there is no indication of a certain gender or that certain genders can be assumed. The variations of gender-neutral language endings in Spanish include the *-x, -@, -e*. There has also been a small suggestion promoting the use of the letter u.[1]

As early as the 1990s and the emergence of "LatinX," alternative endings to words have been proposed as an alternative to the traditional *-o* and *-a* endings (Noe-Bustamante). The *-x*

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[1] The use of the letter u is a less prominent social movement that was proposed by two researchers at the American Psychological Association. The world of psychology, as the researchers state, recognizes the importance of making everyone feel welcome and included. The reasoning behind the letter u is that the letter e still makes many words remain generic masculine, as seen in examples such as "doctores" and "profesores" where an *-e* is present but the words are masculine (Irizarry-Robles). This form of creating a gender-neutral alternative is insightful, but it is very recent and has therefore not gained much traction. For that reason, it is not discussed further in this thesis.

paved the way for other variations to emerge, including the -*@* and the -*e* (Slemp 61). While

there is not a plethora of previous research on people's attitudes towards these very new

linguistic variations, a few studies reveal key information that contribute to the field. For

example, Katie Slemp, in her article "Attitudes Towards varied inclusive language use in Spanish

on Twitter", studies the -*x, -@,* and the -*e* among Spanish speakers on Twitter. Her work reveals

issues that people have with each variation. For example, the use of -*x* has received a lot of

criticism "for not following phonological and syllable structure in Spanish, for being a borrowing

from English, and, by language purists, for being an attempt to dismantle the heritage of the

Spanish language" (Slemp 61). In addition, from a global perspective, the limitation with the

term LatinX is that it is a movement mainly concentrated in the United States. Nonetheless, the

research shows that "the most popular inclusive marker was -e, followed by -x" (Slemp 67). In

fact, "the newest inclusive marker, -e, has the highest average acceptability score, and the -x has

the lowest" (Slemp 67). This data further highlights a limitation of the -*x*; it is not widely

accepted among Spanish speakers. Thus, people turn to using other gender-neutral variations.

 Regarding the -*@*, Slemp writes that it became popular with the popularization of the

personal computer as a quick and easy way to provide an inclusive alternative (Slemp 60). This

shows that the -*@* emerged in written contexts, and not spoken contexts. In fact, the largest

limitation with the -*@*, as well as the -*x*, as seen through pure observation and further backed by

Slemp's work, is that it is very difficult to pronounce (Slemp 69). In addition, the -*@* symbol is

meant to represent both the grammatical morphemes -*o* and -*a* at the same time. This means that

the use of the -*@* only encompasses binary genders. Lastly, as the Real Academia Española, or

the RAE, points out, the -*@* is not a linguistic sign (Lomotey 392). Slemp's work showed that

overall "language attitudes towards inclusive language are positive in relation to hypothetical tweets for each of the inclusive markers" but, as stated above, the -*e* was the most favored (71).

Recently, the use of the gender-neutral alternative -*e* has become a large topic of debate. The benefits to using this alternative word ending, as stated by Slemp are that "there is no debate as to its pronunciation" and that "it mimics existing nouns and adjectives in Spanish" (61). In the Rio de la Plata region, more specifically, there are noticeable movements towards using the letter -*e*. This social movement manifests itself in local campaigns, street signs, and in the academic world. Just as with the other forms of alternate endings (-*x*, -*@*, -*u*), the -*e* also functions at the end of words so as to create an inclusive alternative. The difference from the -*x* and the -*@*, however, is that it encompasses people of all genders when referring to both individuals and groups. For example, using the term *todes* instead of *todos*, which both mean "everyone" or "all" but one is grammatically masculine.

A study was conducted in Argentina to examine how people feel about adoptability and acceptability towards the letter -*e* as a gender-neutral alternative in the Spanish language. The study tested whether participants were willing to express acceptance over actually adopting the use of inclusive language. It also tested to see if inclusive language was more acceptable if people used it at the beginning of a sentence or phrase (Bonnin 4). The study, which reveals various findings about people's attitudes, demonstrated that most respondents accepted the use of the generic masculine. This is an important finding because it relaxes one of the fears of people who are against gender-neutral language, which is that "it will 'deform' the language, i.e., that those who use it will abandon the standard morphology of grammatical gender" (Bonnin 7). Because so many respondents still accepted the use of the masculine generic form in order to refer to a group, this study highlights how the need for a gender-neutral alternative does not

intend to derail any existing grammar structures or completely challenge a language that is

thousands of years old. Instead, gender-neutral language has emerged to create more ways in

which people can feel accepted while being addressed.

Research on inclusive language has also been conducted in Spain, where inclusive

language is not a new concept either. A study conducted by Benedicta Adokarley Lomotey titled

"Making Spanish gender fair: a review of anti-sexist language reform attempts from a language

planning perspective" examines the impact of feminist language planning in Spain. Although the

study was conducted in Spain, its results are relevant to other regions as well because the study

answers a fundamental question in the debate of gender-neutral language: Why not use a generic

form of the word? The study gathered information from previous research on Spanish feminist

language planning to compile the results that outline the limitations of "the implementation of

non-sexist Spanish language policies from a language planning perspective" (Lomotey 384). The

article demonstrates that there are many issues with simply using the generic masculine of the

word, among which are "inequity, ambiguity, and sex-exclusivness" (Lomotey 384). The main

argument of the article is that the acceptance and use of inclusive language or gender-neutral

language heavily depends on local and political circumstances.

The works from Slemp, Bonnin, and Lomotey highlight two key findings that are

important to this thesis: the use of -e is already emerging as the preferred gender-neutral

alternative among Spanish speakers, and, while the generic masculine is still preferred, it is not

enough to simply use the generic masculine. According to Katie Slemp, the use of the ending *-e*

"has been used for years by activists in Latin America" (Slemp 63). The studies mentioned above

highlight the fact that gender-neutral alternatives are gaining attention because other efforts are

falling short in creating an inclusive Spanish language. In particular, the *-e* seems to be leading

the way in acceptance and accessibility due to the fact that, unlike the *-x* and the *-@*, the *-e* is something that is both recognizable and pronounceable. For that reason, the *-e* was chosen as the gender-neutral alternative to study.

Chapter I: How and Why Did Gender-Neutral Language Emerge? A Brief History of

Spanish

For anyone that is a native English speaker, it might be difficult to imagine words as being assigned grammatical genders. But, for the majority of Romance languages, this is a normal feature of the language that has been around for centuries. In fact, "all major modern Romance languages, apart from Romanian, have a binary grammatical gender system" (Slemp 61). So, why is it that grammatical genders exist? According to German grammarian Grimm in 1890, grammatical gender is an extension of natural sex and, by using this idea, this is how the grammatical gender of words can be assigned (Sancha Vázquez 6). His explanation, although very poetic, lacks a proper explanation of grammatical genders. To fully understand where grammatical genders come from, one must look back even further.

Simply put, Spanish, as well as the rest of the romance languages are derived from the Indo-European language family (Díaz-Campos 160). This language family, which is estimated to be 5,000 years old, is the language family that is spoken throughout most of Europe and South Asia (Díaz-Campos 160). In Latin, the following grammatical genders existed: masculine, feminine, and neutral. As pointed out by Manuel Díaz-Campos et. al. in their book, grammatical gender "no está necesariamente relacionado con una distinción entre sexo masculino y femenino. El género es un concepto gramatical que las palabras en español han heredado a través de su evolución histórica del latín"[2] (120). Therefore, it is important to note that there is a difference between words that simply end in an -*o* or an -*a* as a result of linguistic evolution, grammatical rules and structure, and words that actually reflect the gender of a person (for example, personal pronouns that assume or reflect the natural interpretation of gender affiliation). There are even

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[2] Is not necessarily related with a distinction between masculine and feminine sex. Gender is a grammatical concept that words in Spanish have inherited through their historical evolution from Latin. (my translation).

debates in Latin as to where the gendered language system came from. In his book titled *Gender from Latin to Romance: history, geography, typology,* Michele Loporcaro writes "There are several aspects of the Latin gender system that are a matter of debate, concerning gender assignment, on the one hand, and the architecture of the gender-marking system, on the other" (17). The book proposes theories as to where scholars attempt to explain how gender assignments emerged. However, after providing the theories, Loporcaro writes "for the description of Latin as a historically documented language, reference to the semantics does not offer a general account for gender assignment at any stage" (28). Loporcaro then goes on to say that "in Latin too, semantic assignment rules occur—as in any language—accounting for the assignment of masculine or feminine gender to nouns denoting humans and superior animals. As for inanimates, though, masculine and feminine are arbitrary" (28). This coincides with modern-day Spanish in the sense that inanimate objects in Spanish have a grammatical gender, but it is not meant to reflect whether that object is seemingly masculine or feminine. For example, the inanimate object "book" is *el libro* in Spanish. Loporcaro's work demonstrates that the word *el libro* does not have the grammatical masculine ending and determiner because it is a "masculine" word. Rather, its determiner and ending were arbitrarily assigned.

Referring back to Latin, Loporcaro indicates that "The neuter, on the other hand, was the only gender value to display a broad correlation with the semantics, since all of its nouns denoted [-animate] reference, apart from class-denoting terms (e.g. animal)" (28). This demonstrates that there was a system to the neuter category that shows that grammatical gender was in fact assigned by certain characteristics. The grammatical genders originally assigned to the Latin neutral have presented themselves in more modern languages. This is clear when Loporcaro states "The fact that the neuter was the only gender in the system to display a semantic

correlation will have to be borne in mind while discussing the Romance successors of the Latin gender system" (28). This statement helps to possibly explain why certain words in Spanish have the grammatical genders that they have been assigned; the words were derived from the Latin neuter and their grammatical gender was in fact assigned because of a particular semantic meaning.

Spanish, came from a version of Latin that was said to be "vulgar Latin" (Díaz-Campos 160). Vulgar Latin was used to describe the type of Latin that was used among people in their everyday life, and it is said that this "vulgar Latin" could be used to distinguish between regional and social differences throughout the decades (Díaz-Campos 160). It is written that by studying the characteristics of vulgar Latin and comparing them to characteristics in modern languages "se puede apreciar el inicio de procesos de variación que ocasionaron cambios lingüísticos que sirven para entender la estructura actual de las lenguas romances incluyendo el español"[3] (Díaz-Campos 161). Thus, it is important to include the discussion of vulgar Latin because it highlights that linguistic variation is at the very heart of the Spanish language.

A distinct change that can be seen throughout the transition from Latin, to vulgar Latin, and later to Spanish, is the loss of the neutral gender. Loporcaro explains that "in systems in which the neuter underwent change, it mostly merged with the masculine" (30). That is not to say that the languages favor the masculine form, and every language is different. When it does come to gender assignment rules in modern Romance languages, Loporcaro writes that "such a binary system is trivially not semantically based, as shown by the fact that nouns denoting inanimate objects are distributed idiosyncratically over masculine and feminine" (52). This demonstrates that gender in grammar is different and separate from the biological makeup of a

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[3] One can appreciate the beginning of the processes of variation that led to linguistic changes that serve in order to understand the current structure of the Romance languages, including Spanish (my translation).

person. This is also shown by the fact that the Spanish language does have grammatical genders beyond the masculine and feminine binary. Although it is commonly believed that Spanish is a two-gendered language, having lost, or rather, merged the original Latin neutral form into the present-day masculine form, there are six grammatical categories in total.

In Spanish, there is the neutral gender, common gender, epicene gender, ambiguous gender, in addition to the common masculine and feminine genders ("Los géneros gramaticales del español son seis y ninguno es violento"). The four gender types outside of the masculine and gender categories function for nouns that are not easily identifiable as masculine or feminine. For example, the common gender has one form but can be used to refer to both masculine and feminine. This includes words such as *testigo* and *cantante*, in which the word only has one form but can refer to a gender by using the articles *el* or *la* before the word. The epicene gender has a grammatical gender marker but can refer to both sexes, which can be seen in words like *la víctima* and *el personaje*. The ambiguous gender are words that have a both masculine and feminine variation. The ambiguous gender includes words such as *el mar, la mar, el calor,* and *la calor*. Lastly, the neutral gender refers to words such as *aquello*, *lo masculino*, among others ("The Gender of Nouns in Spanish"). All of these grammatical gender variations in Spanish show that grammatical gender is a complex organization system that does not always indicate a direct correlation to the gender of the object or person. The two intersect, however, in instances where a person does not agree with, or want to be associated with, the "grammatically correct" version of the words that refer to them. Thus, the emergence of gender-neutral alternatives.

The social need for gender-neutral alternatives derives from the emergence of non-sexist language. In Ben Papadopoulos's article titled "A Brief History of Gender Inclusive Language,", it is written "in many ways, the gender-inclusive forms of today follow from a legacy of global

feminist activism" (Papadopoulos 41). This shows that gender-inclusive and gender-neutral language is not a recent discovery, but rather one that, like the Spanish language itself, has evolved from an earlier source. The article goes on to say that as early as the 1970s, "feminist anti-seixst language reformists have argued that the dominance of the masculine linguistic gender is directly reflective of women's subjugation in society and that this linguistic sexism must be rectified" (Papadopoulos 41). This relates to the Spanish language because, in Spanish, the way in which to address an audience in which there is at least one male person in attendance traditionally requires the use of the generic masculine. This left women feeling excluded and the feminist groups proposed different ways to avoid using the generic masculine; they proposed their own version of inclusive language. Later, gender-neutral language emerged to move beyond the male and female binary.

Gender-neutral language emerged as an alternative to the traditional masculine/feminine grammatical assignment and includes substituting the masculine/feminine endings with flexive morphemes such as -*x,* -*@,* and -*e.* As mentioned earlier, attempts at inclusivity are not entirely new. For example, the history behind the origin of the -*x* varies, but its purpose of providing a gender-neutral alternative can be seen as early as 1990 when resistance towards the term "Hispanic" grew in the United States (Noe-Bustamante). As an alternative, the term "Latino" emerged (Noe-Bustamante). Merriam-Webster says that "LatinX" then emerged within the first decade of the 2000's as a term "for those of Latin American descent who do not identify as being of the male or female gender or who simply don't want to be identified by gender" (Merriam-Webster). In addition, an article by Katie Slemp shows that "the first innovation to appear that circumvented the gender binary in Spanish was in 2004, when the -x was incorporated" (Slemp 61). Today, according to Merriam-Webster, the term "LatinX" is defined as

a gender-neutral term to "Latino" or "Latina." While the *-x* may have emerged originally in the 1990s as a way to create a new identity, in 2004 it was used as a way to create gender-neutral alternatives for words (Slemp 62). In 2018, the term "LatinX" was officially added to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (Merriam-Webster). This early form of gender-neutral language is important to discuss because it highlights one of the earliest forms of officially recorded gender-neutral language.

The use of the morpheme *-e* became solidified in the mid 2010s (Papadopoulos 44). But, according to Papadopoulos in his article, the *-e* was around long before 2010. This is shown when it is written "the e morpheme was originally proposed in 1976 as a solution to the problem of linguistic sexism" by Alvaro Garcia Meseguer (Papadopoulos 44). Meseguer proposed that the use of the grammatical morpheme *-e* "would reduce the frequency of the masculine gender to that of the feminine gender, thereby equalizing the two" (Papadopoulos 44). By 2010 the use of the *-e* was used as an alternative that extended beyond the binary, rather than just trying to neutralize the amount of masculine words that existed in the Spanish language (Slemp 61). So, although the *-e* may have been proposed as early as 1976, it only stabilized as a gender-neutral alternative in 2010. As it will be shown in other chapters, the grammatical morpheme *-e* has gained more and more attention in recent years, even gaining the attention of the Real Academia Española. Now, in 2023, no official changes have been made to the Spanish language. However, the debates on gender-neutral language and the new proposed endings are consistently a topic of discussion, which demonstrates people's willingness to make changes to the Spanish language.

This chapter demonstrates how languages adapt and change over time. The history of Spanish shows how the Spanish language in itself is a product of change. So, then would it be an outlandish idea to propose the introduction of the *-e* as a gender-neutral alternative to the Spanish

language? As the language continues to evolve and transform in today's world, how would

people feel when it comes to altering a part of the language that can be argued is as old as Latin

itself?

Chapter II: Uruguay as an Inclusive Country: Examples and Comparisons

Uruguay, is a country that has made obvious efforts towards the progression of human rights. A major way in which it has taken strides in the field of human rights is through policies that relate to gender and gender inclusion. In fact, for the years 2014, 2015, and 2016, Uruguay was deemed the top country on *America's Quarterly* Social Inclusion Index, beating out its neighboring countries (Tummino). The index, among other categories, examines women's rights, LGBTQ+ friendliness, and civil society participation by both race and gender within a given country. In the America's Quarterly article, it is written "simply put, the country does a better job than its peers of protecting people regardless of their gender, sexual orientation or race" (Tummino). By highlighting a few laws and policies on topics that are typically considered progressive, one can clearly see how Uruguay has made great efforts in creating a country that is welcoming and accepting of all.

One example of this can be seen through the fact that civil unions between same-sex couples were permitted in 2008, and same-sex marriage became legal in 2013 (Masci). This made Uruguay the second Latin American country to legalize same-sex marriage, after Argentina, and only the twelfth country in the world at the time to make this change (Masci; Tummino). According to The World Bank's article titled "Uruguay: A Global Leader for LGBTI Rights," "over-half of Uruguayans in 2013 supported same-sex marriage." Further supporting the idea that the passing of this law had a large amount of public support, research done in 2012 by AmericasBarometer showed that "the law received support from representatives of all political parties" and "Uruguayans rank second in the Americas in expressing support for gay marriage, just one tenth of a point below Canada" (Boidi 1). The article continues, "Argentina, the third-ranked country with high support for marriage between same-sex individuals, falls more

than 10 points lower than Uruguay" (Boidi 1). This demonstrates how, even though Argentina legalized same-sex marriage before Uruguay, public support for same-sex marriage was stronger in Uruguay, providing insight as to how people react in relation to what are generally considered progressive and inclusive issues.

Although it was not the first country in Latin America to legalize same-sex marriage, Uruguay was the first to legalize adoption for same-sex couples in 2009 (Reuters). As stated above, same-sex marriages were not legalized until 2013, so this was also the first time that unmarried couples could adopt children (Reuters). To put Uruguay in perspective, both Argentina and Brazil legalized same-sex adoption in 2010 (Montero 449). So, even though Uruguay legalizes same-sex marriage after Argentina, it was ahead of the curve by legalizing same-sex adoption before Argentina. The legalization of this, despite the fact that marriage for same-sex couples was not legal at the time, demonstrated how Uruguay allowed for the inclusion of everyone when it came to creating families.

Another accomplishment in the work towards inclusion occurred in 2012 when Uruguay became the second country in Latin America, and the first in South America, to legalize abortion (Wood). The decriminalization of abortion in Uruguay happened in large part due to the opinion of the public and its support on the matter. As early as the 1990s, "public opinion polls showed that support for decriminalization hovered at about 60%" (Wood 104). By 2003, public support increased to 63% in favor of the decriminalization of abortion (Wood). Throughout the 1990s, abortion became a priority issue for feminist movements that then included labor movements as well (Wood). The fact that this issue surpassed the sphere of feminist movements to also include other movements further highlights the importance of this issue in Uruguayan society. It was not long until more sectors became involved in the movement. The medical sector, public health

officials, and even "the most prestigious university in Uruguay began producing and disseminating information on abortion and, in 2008 declared its institutional support for legal abortion" (Wood 104). The law passed in 2012 made abortion free within the public health system and legal during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy (Wood).[4]

It is crucial to point out in this scenario that the legalization of abortion in Uruguay was an inclusive effort that relied on the support and work of everyone. While one might argue that passing any law or creating any real change requires the efforts of everyone, the way that the Uruguayan government responded and handled the requests from the public demonstrates that, as a country, Uruguay listens to the demands of its citizens and wants to work towards eliminating policies and practices that can cause harm to particular groups of people. Even with the restrictions, the law in Uruguay is a step towards inclusion considering the fact that abortion is completely illegal in Brazil and only became legal in Argentina in 2020. In an article by Mariela Daby and Mason W. Moseley, it is written "The fact that Uruguay is the only democratic country in the region that has fully legalized abortion throughout its territory, and where public opinion has shifted to the point that a majority of the population favors legalized abortion, offers evidence for the importance of changing societal norms in placing the abortion debate on the public agenda" (362). This once again highlights the importance of the role of society in making substantial changes. So, if there were going to be changes pertaining to the implementation of gender-neutral language it is likely that the push would start from the people and from social movements.

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[4] In cases where the woman's health is at risk, there is no time constraint to carry out an abortion (Wood 105). The law itself, although a huge step in advancing the rights of everyone in Uruguay, still contains restrictions. For example, a woman that wishes to carry out an abortion must first meet with a gynecologist, social worker, and a mental health professional. In addition, it is required that "the woman be a resident in Uruguay for at least one year before she can seek an abortion" (105). In addition, it is required that "the woman be a resident in Uruguay for at least one year before she can seek an abortion" (105).

Lastly, another example of a law that promotes inclusion is a more recent law commonly known as the "Trans Law" in Uruguay. In 2009, Uruguay allowed for people to change their name and gender through a process outlined in Law 18620 because "In Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay gender identity is recognized as a right" (Stewart 202). The law stated that "Toda persona tiene derecho al libre desarrollo de su personalidad conforme a su propia identidad de género, con independencia de cuál sea su sexo biológico, genético, anatómico, morfológico, hormonal, de asignación u otro"[5] ("Ley N° 18620, de Regulación Del Derecho a La Identidad de Género, Cambio de Nombre Y Sexo Registral.").

Later, in 2018, Uruguay passed the "Integral Law for Trans People", or, Law 19684 (Stewart 202). The first article of the law includes the same statement as the first article of the 2009 law. The law then continues to guarantee rights to trans people such as the following: the inclusion of the category of "gender identity" on all official statistical documents (Article 5), a quota for the a percentage of trans people in the workplace (Article 12), and policies related to education should also include the inclusions of trans people (Article 15) ("Ley N° 19684."). One of the most distinct differences in this law is the fact that it allows for people under the age of 18 to legally change their name and gender, even in cases where the child cannot gain permission from their parents (Article 6) ("Ley N° 19684."). The 2018 law extends beyond the scope of the 2009 law and for that reason, the last article of the 2018 law states that the 2009 law is repealed ("Ley N° 19684."). The fact that the 2018 law built off the 2009 law demonstrates how Uruguay has made early efforts of inclusion, but is still working hard to further progress guaranteed rights for everyone.

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[5] Every person has the right to the free development of their personality that conforms with their own gender identity, regardless of their biological, genetic, anatomical, morphological, hormonal, assigned, or other sex (my translation)

All of these examples support the claim that Uruguay is working towards gender-based inclusion. In fact, an article from The World Bank states that "Uruguay has country specific data to support inclusion" ("Uruguay: A Global Leader for LGBTI Rights"). A closer analysis of the laws selected above highlights how women and members of the LGBTQ+ community are able to enjoy freedoms that are not so openly granted or guaranteed in other countries. Based on a history of inclusive efforts and support from the public, it was possible to draw conclusions and make the previously stated hypotheses. The survey results will prove if past trends on inclusion prevail into today's society or if they reveal different attitudes.

Chapter III: Social Movements on Gender-Neutral Alternatives: From Montevideo,

Uruguay to a Global Perspective

In Montevideo, Uruguay there are various groups at the local level that work towards creating inclusion. One such group goes by the name of Carnavalé and works in a particular part of Montevideo, Uruguay, hosting *tablados* for the public. A *tablado*, in its simplest terms, is a community event in which people gather and watch performances by various groups. The groups, typically composed of community members, dress up in unique outfits, sing, dance, and oftentimes engage with the audience. The goal of Carnavalé is to showcase these community groups and celebrate the culture of Uruguay in an atmosphere that is safe for everyone (Carnavalé). Their slogan "con e de encuentro," which means "with e of encounter" can be interpreted as a play-on to the spelling of Carnavalé. Their name is the word *carnaval* with an additional *e* at the end. But also, it also highlights their signature symbol, the letter e, and suggests their goal of encountering everyone in an inclusive space.

For anyone that attends one of the events hosted by Carnavalé, one of the most prominent decorations is the use of the letter e. Huge cut-outs of the letter e are attached to string and hung from any and every surface, as featured on Carnavale's Instagram posts from February 22, 2022 (Figure 1, left) and February 17, 2023, (Figure 2, right) ("¡Qué lindo la pasamos el sábado";
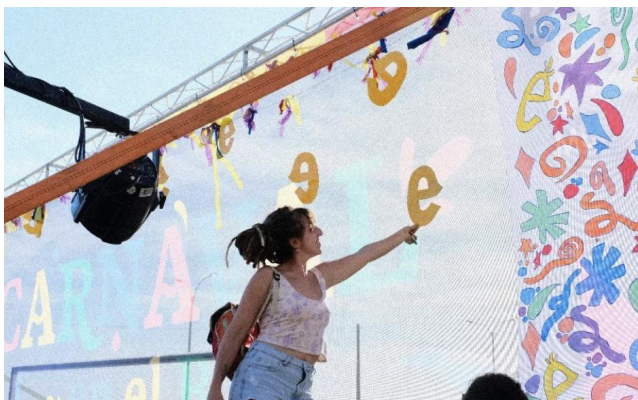

Figure 1: (right) Hanging the "e"'s   Figure 2: (left) Cardboard Cutout

"¡Así fue el tablado"). This symbol is meant to represent that the space is safe for *todes,* a gender-neutral form of the word *todos* (which translates to all or everyone). In using the letter e, this group is making a statement about inclusivity and the willingness of accepting this form of a gender-alternate ending as their preferred one.

At a more formal level, in the Universidad de la República in Uruguay, there was even a hearing made by the Consejo Directivo Central (CDC), which translates to the Central Board of Directors (my translation), about whether or not to allow for the use of *lenguaje inclusivo* (inclusive language) in the university. This group holds jurisdiction over the general affairs of the university and special affairs of the faculty ("Autoridades de la Universidad de la República"). The CDC based their argument in "la importancia que tiene, en una sociedad democrática, el respeto por la diversidad y, en particular, el respeto por la diversidad lingüística y por la diversidad de prácticas lingüístico-comunicativas"[6] ("CDC Rechaza proyectos que buscan prohibir los usos del lenguaje"). The CDC continued to make a statement in regards to those that might be against the use of *lenguaje inclusivo* by saying "que 'los colectivos que se autoidentifican y defienden sus derechos con la utilización de creaciones léxicas que no marcan el masculino como genérico no desnaturalizan el lenguaje ni lesionan derechos de otras personas'"[7] ("CDC Rechaza proyectos que buscan prohibir los usos del lenguaje").

In this discussion, it is clear that the Universidad de la República does not feel the need to to make any official changes, but rather that it should facilitate the discussion for this topic and be open to change ("CDC Rechaza proyectos que buscan prohibir los usos del lenguaje"). Despite the fact that no official changes requiring the use of gender-neutral language were

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[6] the importance, in a democratic society, of respect for diversity and, in particular, respect for linguistic diversity and for the diversity of linguistic-communicative practices

[7] That 'the collectives that self-identify and defend their rights with the use of lexical creations that do not mark the masculine as generic do not denaturalize the language or harm the rights of other people' (my translation)

implemented, the "CDC subrayó 'la necesidad de respetar el uso de diversos recursos lingüísticos- comunicativos no-binarios y de otras formas inclusivas en el lenguaje'"[8] ("CDC Rechaza proyectos que buscan prohibir los usos del lenguaje"). The CDC then recognized a few ways to use inclusive language, including the acknowledgement of the gender-neutral use of the -*e*. Susana Rostagnol, a representative from the CDC who spoke on this matter, said " 'hay quienes dicen que les resuena muy mal la *e* y decir *todes*, pero *todas y todos* ya es un paso'"[9] ("CDC Rechaza proyectos que buscan prohibir los usos del lenguaje"). This demonstrates that the educational sector is aware of the use of the gender-neutral alternative -*e*, but does not necessarily think it is the best option.

One possibility for the reason why the CDC does not think that the use of the -*e* is the best option is because the use of the -*e* is not an officially recognized variation in the Spanish language. In fact, movements promoting the use of gender-neutral Spanish do not stop at the borders of Uruguay. Rather, this subject has become a global topic with movements all across Spanish-speaking countries. In fact, the use of gender-neutral language has gained the attention of the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE).

On numerous occasions, the RAE has declared that it does not acknowledge gender-neutral language as a grammatically correct variation. One example of this can be seen through a Twitter chain in which a Twitter user was able to directly ask the RAE on its stance on inclusive language. A chain of tweets on the topic ensued. The Twitter user used the "#dudaRAE" tag in order to gain the attention of the RAE and receive a formal answer. While Twitter may not generally be considered a reliable source, the RAE promotes the use of Twitter on its website as

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[8] The CDC stressed 'the need to respect the use of diverse non-binary linguistic-communicative resources and other forms of language' (my translation)

[9] 'there are those that say the *e* and saying *todes* resonates very badly with them, but saying *todas y todos* is already a step' (my translation)

a way to quickly and efficiently answer questions ("Dudas rápidas"). So, when Twitter user

Claudio Ruiz asked the RAE a question through Twitter, the RAE responded and clearly outlined

its view on the subject within one day.

The Tweet read "Hola @RAEinforma tengo una #dudaRAE, este famoso lenguaje

inclusivo ¿es una jerigonza o un galimatías?"[10] (Ruiz). The RAE responded with a short and

concise statement,"#RAEconsultas Lo que comúnmente se ha dado en llamar «lenguaje

inclusivo» es un conjunto de estrategias que tienen por objeto evitar el uso genérico del

masculino gram., mecanismo firmemente asentado en la lengua y que no supone discriminación

sexista alguna"[11] (Ruiz). According to the RAE, the use of the grammatical masculine does not

discriminate because it is simply a feature of the language (Ruiz). This position aligns with the

RAE's statement in its first style manual from 2018 in which the gender-neutral alternatives of -*x*

and -*e* were rejected in the first chapter (Cataño). It was then stated that the use of the generic

masculine should be used instead because it functions to encompass all genders (Cataño).

While it may seem that the RAE does not budge when it comes to introducing new

concepts related to gender-neutral language, in 2020, the RAE briefly appeared to make progress

when it added the word "elle" to its *observatorio de palabras*[12] (Jackson). However, the addition

was closely followed by statements from the RAE that clarified that the use of "elle" was still not

officially established as a word (Jackson). In the same Twitter chain mentioned above, the RAE

answered questions related to the emergence of the pronoun "elle". The RAE writes that "la

forma «elle» y las terminaciones en «-e» en voces con flexión «-o/-a» son recursos facticios

promovidos en ciertos ámbitos para referirse a quienes no se identifican con ninguno de los

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[10] Hello @RAEinforma I have a #dudaRAE, is this famous inclusive language jargon or gibberish? (my translation)
[11] What has commonly been given the name "inclusive language" is a group of strategies that have the goal of avoiding the generic masculine, a firmly established mechanism of the language that does not assume any type of discrimination based on sex (my translation)
[12] Word observatory (my translation)

géneros del par binario, pero su uso no está generalizado ni asentado"[13] (Ruiz). The RAE follows

this response with another saying that the use of the -x, on the other hand, is foreign to Spanish

morphology and it is "innecesario (e impronunciable)"[14] (Ruiz). Once again, it is important to

note that this Twitter thread was active in 2021. Since then, "elle" can no longer be found on the

RAE's website, not even in the *observatorio de palabras*. This demonstrates that the RAE is

unwavering in its position that gender-neutral alternatives are not officially correct ways to write.

While the RAE is an official source when it comes to questions on Spanish language

rules, and thus worthwhile to discuss, it does not dictate the rules and grammar for

Spanish-speaking countries in the Americas. Rather, the RAE is part of a broader organization

that also includes 20 countries in the Americas called the Asociación de Academias de la Lengua

Española, or the ASALE ("La institución"). Uruguay is a part of this larger group and its branch

is called the Academia Nacional de Letras ("Academia Nacional de Letras (Uruguay)"). While

Uruguay does have its own organization separate from the RAE, it is relevant to point out that

the President of the RAE, Santiago Muñoz Machado, is also the president of the ASALE

("Santiago Muñoz Machado"). As a result of this shared position, it is likely that there is a

connection between the RAE's position on the use of the *-e* and that of the Academia Nacional

de Letras for Uruguay. In fact, an article from *El País* interviewing members of the Academia

Nacional de Letras for Uruguay shows that "en la Academia Nacional de Letras lo hemos

conversado, y estamos de acuerdo con la Academia de la Lengua Española, en que el lenguaje

inclsuivo es malo, no es positivo. No le agrega nada a la lengua"[15] ("La Academia Nacional de

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[13] The form "elle" and the "-e" endings in voices with an "-o/-a" inflection are factitious resources promoted in certain areas in order to refer to those who do not identify with any of the binary genders, but their use is neither generalized nor established (my translation)

[14] Unnecessary (and unpronounceable) (my translation)

[15] In the Academia Nacional de Letras for Uruguay we have talked, and we are in agreement with the Academy of the Spanish Language Spanish, in saying that inclusive language is bad, it is not positive. It does not add anything to the language (my translation)

Letras le dice no al 'todes'"). Not only does this view line up with ASALE, it also reflects the

RAE's position. This article was later shared on the website of Academia Nacional de Letras for

Uruguay, solidifying the credibility of this news source and formally sharing the organization's

position (Reyes).

One institute that applies to all countries, Spanish speaking or not, is the United Nations

(UN). On its website, the UN states "Given the key role of language in shaping cultural and

social attitudes, using gender-inclusive language is a powerful way to promote gender and

equality and eradicate gender bias" ("United Nations Gender-Inclusive Language."). This

statement illustrates how the UN recognizes that the way in which one speaks, the language one

uses, matters in promoting inclusion in society. The UN then continues to provide guidelines that

include ways in which UN staff can communicate while using gender-inclusive language and a

"toolbox" that provides the proper training to do so. In compliance with its efforts on being

accessible to everyone across various countries, the UN also created guidelines and a toolbox

which are available in six languages, including Spanish ("Naciones Unidas Lenguaje Inclusivo

En Cuanto al Género."). Many of the recommendations listed in the toolbox are similar to the

RAE's, and therefore the Academia Nacional de Letras de Uruguay and ASALE's, counter

arguments as to why the use of the gender-neutral alternative -e is not necessary.

The guidelines for using inclusive language in Spanish includes avoiding discriminatory

expressions, using both the masculine and feminine form of the words when addressing a group,

and choosing word alternatives that do not indicate one gender over the other. The UN provides a

list of words that can be used in place of the masculine or feminine word choice. For example, it

is written that *el equipo de investigación*[16] is more inclusive than *los investigadores*[17] ("Naciones

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[16] The research team (my translation)
[17] The researchers (generic masculine) (my translation)

Unidas Lenguaje Inclusivo En Cuanto al Género."). Another example of this type of

inclusive-language preferred by the UN is the recommendation to say, "Todas las personas tienen

derecho a un sistema de justicia"[18] instead of "Todos tienen derecho a un sistema de justicia"[19]

("Naciones Unidas Lenguaje Inclusivo En Cuanto al Género."). While these resources are aimed

at UN staff, the fact that the UN recognizes and even provides information on the importance of

speaking in a way that includes everyone regardless of gender highlights the UN's attitudes on

the matter. The UN's position on inclusive language does not mention the use of gender-neutral

alternatives, such as the use of -*e*. Whether or not the UN officially recognizes the use of

gender-neutral alternatives remains unclear, but what is clear is that the UN acknowledges the

need to use language that includes everyone and makes everyone feel welcome.

This chapter highlights how the need for people to use gender-inclusive language is

recognized at both local and international levels. While the UN, the RAE, the Academia

Nacional de Letras de Uruguay, and by extension the ASALE, offer attitudes about the topic,

these prestigious organizations seem to focus on inclusion at a binary level. These organizations

do not recognize the use of the -*e* as a gender-neutral alternative. Rather, they acknowledge that

there are alternative methods of addressing groups that already exist and do not require changes

to the language. These prestigious institutions act as credible sources for the various countries to

which they apply. By looking at the topic at a smaller level, it is clear to see that local people are

willing to have an open conversation on the matter. Unlike the previously mentioned

organizations, which are firm in their positions against the use of the -*e*, groups like Carnavalé

exist to promote the use of the -*e* and the Universidad de la República del Uruguay does not

promote it nor admonish it. By looking at all of these organizations, it is clear to see that, at a

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[18] Every person has the right to a justice system (my translation).
[19] Everyone (generic masculine) has the right to a justice system. (my translation).

local level, the use of the *-e* is promoted by some and sparking conversation for others. The

discussion of local contexts combined with the perspectives from official Spanish language

institutions provide context to the current factors that play into Montevideo's society that could

potentially influence the survey participant's attitudes while completing the survey.

Methodological Approach:

Due to the fact that the research conducted in this thesis required the use of an original survey, various methods and approaches were used in order to frame the survey and answer the questions proposed in the introduction. I used a mixed methods approach; I conducted both qualitative and quantitative research. The qualitative data presented itself in the form of researching policies that demonstrated Uruguay's efforts to create an inclusive country. The analysis of these policies was an important step in the research process in order to provide a foundation to base the hypotheses off of and to also attempt to set a precedent for possible future laws on gender-neutral language. My quantitative research consisted of the numerical values I obtained from my survey results.

The goal of my survey was to gauge the opinions of people in Montevideo, Uruguay. To do so, I created a 15-question survey, obtained IRB approval, and distributed the survey through the software Qualtrics. The survey was distributed to residents of Montevideo, Uruguay. Montevideo is home to 1.4 million people out of Uruguay's population of 3.5 million people ("Uruguay: Datos De Países y Estadísticas"). Because of its concentrated number of residents, Montevideo became the clear choice when choosing where to send the survey. It is also important to note that Montevideo is governed by the Intendencia de Montevideo, whose mayor is a member of the Frente Amplio, Uruguay's left wing political party, while Uruguay as a whole is under the control of president Luis Lacalle Pou, of the Partido Nacional, Uruguay's center-right political party ("Luis Lacalle Pou, presidente de Uruguay en entrevista con la BBC"). So, if there were to be people in favor of the implementation of the *-e*, it is likely that they would be within the sphere of the progressive government, thus in Montevideo. So, the population for this survey were residents of Montevideo. The survey was collected by snowball

sampling. The survey was initially sent out to personal contacts with varying backgrounds and then it was requested that those contacts share the survey with more people.

The survey included questions that looked at age, religion, political affiliation, educational level, gender, and if they were born in Montevideo or moved to Montevideo from somewhere else. Questions that asked about age were categorized based on educational groups. For example, the youngest age option was to choose the group 18-22. This age range aligns with the ages one would be attending college. The last age range is 60+, which aligns with the retirement age in Uruguay ("International Programs-U.S.-Uruguayan Social Security Agreement-Article 8."). By grouping the ages this way, there was the hope that more inferences could be made beyond just having the knowledge of what age the respondent was. I also included questions with the intention of finding out if the respondent had heard of the various gender-neutral language movements prior to taking the survey. These questions included not just the -*e*, which is known to be used in the region but also the most common forms of gender-neutral language alternatives. This was done in order to see if the gender-neutral alternative of -*e* was known by everyone or possibly just by a select few. In addition, I asked questions pertaining to which contexts the respondents had heard inclusive language. The context is important to include because it shows if people who had heard of any gender-neutral alternatives were exposed to it from a written or spoken context, or both. This is important because it reveals if people are actually using gender-neutral alternatives when they speak, or possibly only when they write.

The survey comes to an end with the proposal of a series of questions that create hypothetical situations: how would the respondent feel if gender-neutral language was used on official government documents and how would the respondent feel if gender-neutral language

was used in schools? I created these for the purpose of gauging the attitudes of people towards the use of gender-neutral language and, more specifically, the attitudes on the *-e*.

Throughout the survey, in order to not make anyone uncomfortable and to allow for the respondents' voices to be heard, various questions had follow-up questions asking the respondent to elaborate further. With questions pertaining to possibly sensitive topics, this feature was optional. Lastly, the survey asked how the respondent got into contact with the survey. The purpose of this question was to try to get an estimate to see how the survey was being further distributed outside of the initial pool of respondents. This question will help assess if there are certain biases or not in the results. The exact questions of the survey are included below for further examination:

<u>Survey:</u>

Before starting, confirm that you are older than 18 years old.
☐ Yes   ☐ No
—--
1. Age
☐ 18-22   ☐ 31-59
☐ 23-30   ☐ 60+
—--
2. Select the highest level of education that you have/are currently studying:
☐ Elementary education   ☐ Bachelor's Degree
☐ Middle school   ☐ Master's Degree
☐ High school   ☐ Doctorate Degree
☐ Secondary technical and vocational
   education
   2.1 Which cycle of middle school:
        ☐ Basic cycle   ☐ Second cycle
—--
3. Do you affiliate with a religion?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

☐ Prefer not to answer
   3.1 If yes is selected: Which region do you affiliate with (optional)
   _____

—--

4. Gender

☐ Male   ☐ Trans-gender
☐ Female   ☐ Prefer not to answer
☐ Non-binary/third gender   ☐ Other
☐ Gender-fluid
   4.1 If other is selected: Optional space to write the gender the respondent identifies with

—--

5. What part of the political spectrum do you consider yourself?

☐ Left   ☐ Right
☐ Center
   5.1 Which political party do you affiliate with? (optional)

   _____

—--

6. Where were you born?

☐ Montevideo   ☐ Tacuarembo
☐ Salto   ☐ Other
☐ Paysandú
   If other is selected, there would be a follow-up question where they can type in another
option
   6.1 Other: _____

—--

7. Have you heard of "gender-inclusive language"? Gender-inclusive language (or gender-neutral language), for the purpose of the survey, refer to speaking or writing in a way that does not exclude, discriminate against, or assume a particular sex, social gender, or gender identity. An example of gender-inclusive language would be: "Hola a *todes*." "*Niñes*, escuchen por favor." "*Elle* quiere que usamos el pronombre 'elle'." "Hola a *todxs*." Hola *chic@s*."

☐ Yes   ☐ No

   7.1 If yes, which one (select all that apply)
      ☐ X   ☐ e
      ☐ @   ☐ Other
         If other is selected
         7.2 Other: _____
*If no is selected, participants skip questions 8-10 and jump down to the second variation of question 8 "How would you feel…" and then continue with the rest of the survey

—---

8. In what contexts have you been exposed to gender-inclusive language?
- ☐ Written
- ☐ Spoken
- ☐ Both

8.1 In which <u>written</u> contexts have you been exposed to gender-inclusive language? (Select all that apply)
- ☐ Messages between friends
- ☐ Assignments from school
    - 8.1.1 Other: _____
- ☐ Official documents
- ☐ Other

8.2 In which <u>spoken</u> contexts have you been exposed to gender-inclusive language (Select all that apply)
- ☐ From/ with friends
- ☐ From/with family
- ☐ From/with teachers
    - 8.2.1 Other: _____
- ☐ In public settings
- ☐ Other

—---

9. Do you use inclusive language?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

9.1 If yes, in what contexts do you use gender inclusive-language? (Select all that apply)
- ☐ With friends
- ☐ With family
- ☐ In professional situations
- ☐ In academic settings
- ☐ When asked

—---

10. With what frequency do you use gender inclusive language?
- ☐ Always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ When people ask
- ☐ Never

—---

8. How would you feel when other people use gender inclusive language? (this question would only appear if "no" was selected for question 7. A respondent that chose no for question 7 would not have to answer questions 8-10, or 11 and would immediately be jumped to this question)
- ☐ Comfortable
- ☐ Uncomfortable
- ☐ Indifferent/ It would not bother me

—---

11. How do you feel when other people use inclusive language?
- ☐ Comfortable
- ☐ Uncomfortable
- ☐ Indifferent//it does not bother me

—---

12. How would you feel if the government recognized the use of the gender-inclusive language "e" (ex. 'elle' as in "elles son incluides"), and therefore it started to appear on official documents and public schools would then be able to teach it?

☐ Comfortable   ☐ Indifferent/It will not bother me

☐ Uncomfortable

    12.1 If Comfortable selected:

    Would you use gender-inclusive language

       ☐ Yes   ☐ Only if someone asked me to

       ☐ No   use it

    12. 1 If Uncomfortable is selected:

    What is the most accurate explanation as to why you would feel uncomfortable?

       ☐ It is too complicated to   ☐ It is not natural

           use/implement   ☐ It is not necessary

       ☐ It interrupts the flow of   ☐ Other

           speech

    Other: _____

—--

13. Do you think the use of gender-inclusive language is something that everyone should be able to practice freely?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Indifferent/ It does not matter to me

☐ Prefer not to answer

—--

14. Would you favor the teaching and/or use of the gender inclusive-ending "e" in the classroom? (Ex: Niñes, escuchen por favor)

☐ Yes   ☐ No

    14.1 If yes is selected:

    Why? (optional)

    _____

    14.2 If no is selected:

    Why? (optional)

    _____

—--

15. How did you come into contact with this survey?

☐ A group from the community
☐ From/within an academic institution
☐ A family member

☐ A friend (outside of an academic setting)

—--

Survey Results: How Do the Citizens of Montevideo, Uruguay Feel About This Topic?

The survey was open from January 9, 2023 to March 10, 2023. Over the course of a little over two months, the survey gained a total of 193 respondents. This section details the results of the survey.

To begin, of the 184 respondents who answered the question regarding age, Question 1, over half were between 31-59 years old (51.63%). The second-highest percentage of respondents were aged over 60 years old (22.28%) and this shows that roughly 73% of the survey was made up of what can be considered an older population. When it comes to level of education (Question 2), respondents were asked to choose the highest level of education that they already had or are currently studying. Of 184 participants, 182 responded to this question. The highest percentage of respondents have, or are currently studying to obtain, a Bachelor's degree (54.95%). The next highest percentage was for those that have a Master's degree (13.74%). This shows that it can be concluded that the majority (68.69 %) of the respondents are educated individuals. Question 4 asks about gender, for which 70.56% of the 180 respondents selected "woman." The second highest category selected was "man," making up 27.78% of the responses. Two people (1.11%) of the respondents said that they were gender-fluid and there was one person who said they were non-binary (0.56%).

When participants were asked if they were affiliated with any religion, Question 3, out of the 180 respondents for this question, 52.78% said they did not affiliate with a religion whereas 38.89% did affiliate with a religion. In terms of political affiliation (Question 5), there was almost an equal percentage of respondents that affiliate with the left or center of the political spectrum, with 43.82% of the responses being for the left and 42.70% for the center. These percentages were made from the 178 responses to this question. Only 13.48% of respondents

marked that they affiliate with the right side of the political spectrum. Once again, it is important to keep in mind Uruguay as a country is led by center-right wing president Lacalle Pou while Montevideo is under the direction of left-wing member Carolina Cosse ("Gobierno."). Thus, the fact that in total 86.52% of the respondents said they affiliate with the left or center makes sense given the fact that the survey was distributed throughout Montevideo, Uruguay. This does mean, however, the results may not be indicative of Uruguay as a whole.

Question 6 asks where the respondents were born, to which approximately 79.78% of the 178 respondents for this question were born in Montevideo, Uruguay. This shows that the majority of the respondents for this survey were born in the largest city in Uruguay, meaning that they are most likely to have been exposed to more diversity growing up.

Of the 176 responses to question 7, whether people had previously heard of inclusive language, 96.59% said yes and 3.41% said no. The participants were then prompted to answer a follow-up question that asked them which gender-neutral alternative they had heard of in order to create inclusive language. The question was framed as a "select all that apply" question and the most selected gender-neutral alternative that appeared was the -*e*. Of the 349 total selected gender-neutral alternatives, the -*e* was selected 119 times which makes up 34.10% of the results. The second highest was the use of the -*@* with 113 selections, 32.38% of the data. The -*x* was selected 101 times, making up for 28.94% of the data. Under further inspection, for those that only selected that they heard of only one gender-neutral alternative, the -*e* was selected the most. This data shows that many people already knew about the use of the grammatical morpheme -*e* as a gender-neutral alternative prior to taking the survey, further showing its presence in Montevideo, Uruguay.

When asked in what contexts people had contact with gender-inclusive language, asked in question 8, the category for both written and spoken contexts was the leading answer with 113 of the 163 responses (69.33%). In terms of written contexts (Question 8.1), *mensajes con amigos* had the highest count of responses (84 of 190, or 44.21%). The second highest category chosen was the *otro* category (73 selections, 38.42% of the 190 counted) in which participants were given the option to write in their own response. There were 54 written-in responses in which participants wrote situations in which they were exposed to written forms of gender-inclusive language. Among those responses, 20 had to do with social media (37.04%), and other written-in options included answers such as "correos y comunicaciones formales e informales", "oficinas públicas" and Whatsapp. When it comes to spoken contexts (Question 8.2), the most selected answer choice was in the streets/with strangers (78 of the 254 selections, or 30.71%). The second highest counted category was with friends (68 of the 254 selections, or 26.77%).

After respondents answered in what contexts they had possible contact with gender-neutral language, the respondents were prompted to answer if they personally use gender-neutral Spanish (Question 9). The results show that over three-fourths (80.37%; 131 of 163) of the respondents do not use gender-neutral Spanish, whereas 19.63% (32 of 163) do use it. As a follow-up question, the 32 who did use gender-neutral Spanish were asked in which contexts they utilize this gender-neutral language. The results show that most people use it with friends, followed by when other people ask them to use it (36.11% and 26.39%, respectively). The next highest selected answer was in academic spaces, with 15.28% of the responses.

Question 10 asked participants with what frequency they use inclusive language. This question was included because, while some people may not use gender-neutral language themselves, they might still use it in certain circumstances. The most selected choice was

"never" which concurs with the fact that the majority of respondents said they do not personally use it. However, while 131 of the respondents from the previous question said that they do not personally use it, only 104 respondents in this question said that they use it with no frequency. This shows that even though some respondents do not use it personally, they do in fact use gender-neutral language in some instances. In fact, 17 respondents of the 131 that selected that they do not use inclusive language selected that they do use it when someone asks them to. In addition, 10 of the 131 respondents that selected "no" to personally using gender-neutral language said that they do sometimes use it. As a result, it can be inferred that people are willing to use gender-neutral language in certain situations, even if they do not personally use it as part of their normal vocabulary. The most selected answer for question 11, which asked how the participant feels when other people use inclusive language, was "indifferent/unbothered." While 43.20% of people felt indifferent/unbothered, what is interesting to see is that the second highest category was that people felt uncomfortable (36.69%, or 62 out of 169 responses).

The next set of questions proposed hypothetical situations in which respondentswere asked to answer how they would feel under a set of circumstances. Question 12, the first hypothetical question, asked how the participants would feel if the government recognized the use of the -*e* and, as a result, it started to appear on official documents. The answer to this shows that over half of the respondents would feel uncomfortable (89 out of 169 respondents, or 52.66%). For those that said they would feel comfortable, they were asked a follow-up question of if they would use it. The answer to this was an overwhelming yes with 25 of the 31 responses (80.65%). For those that selected uncomfortable, there was a follow-up question that asked what would be the closest reason for why they would feel uncomfortable. To this question, 67.05% of the respondents said that the use of inclusive language was not necessary. This is interesting

because Question 13 then asked if people thought that gender inclusive language was something

that people should be able to practice freely, to which 99 of the 166 respondents (59.64%)

responded yes. Question 14 asked if people would be in favor of the teaching of the

gender-neutral morpheme -e in classes, to which 108 of the 163 (66.26%) respondents answered

"no". The participants were then given the opportunity to elaborate on their responses. Of the

108 responses to the option "no", 70 chose to answer the optional follow-up question. I was able

to categorize a few of the responses into three main categories: "there are other ways of being

inclusive," "it is not necessary," and "it goes against rules of the Spanish language." The

response that appeared most out of these three were that the teaching of the -*e* was not necessary.

After looking at all the variables individually, I created graphs that cross-analyze

variables to look for greater significance in the relationship between variables. The figures are
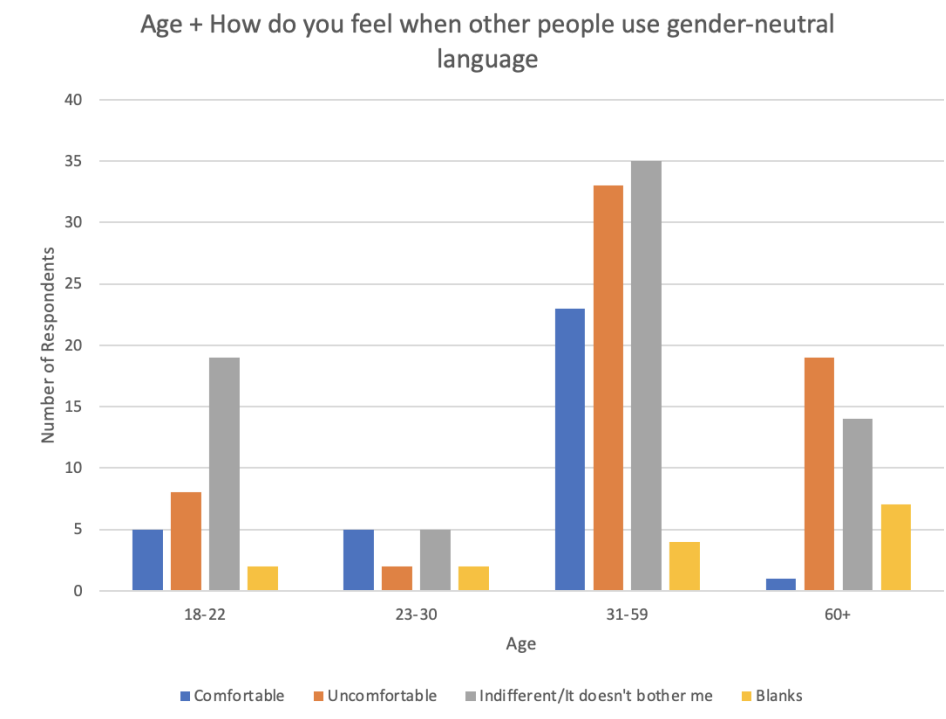
listed below.

Figure 3: Age and How Do You Feel When Other People Use Gender-neutral Language

Figure 3 analyzes questions 1 and 11 together, showing the relationship between age and how the respondent feels when they hear other people using inclusive language. This graph visually demonstrates that while most people across ages 18-59 feel indifferent or unbothered, the 60+ age category is very clearly uncomfortable when other people use gender-neutral language. This trend shows that the comfort levels surrounding other people using gender-neutral language can be looked at from a generational perspective. While those that are over the age of 60 are strongly against, the younger generations all strongly show that they feel unbothered. In fact, for ages 23-30, the number of people that feel indifferent is equal to the number that feel comfortable with other people using the *-e*.
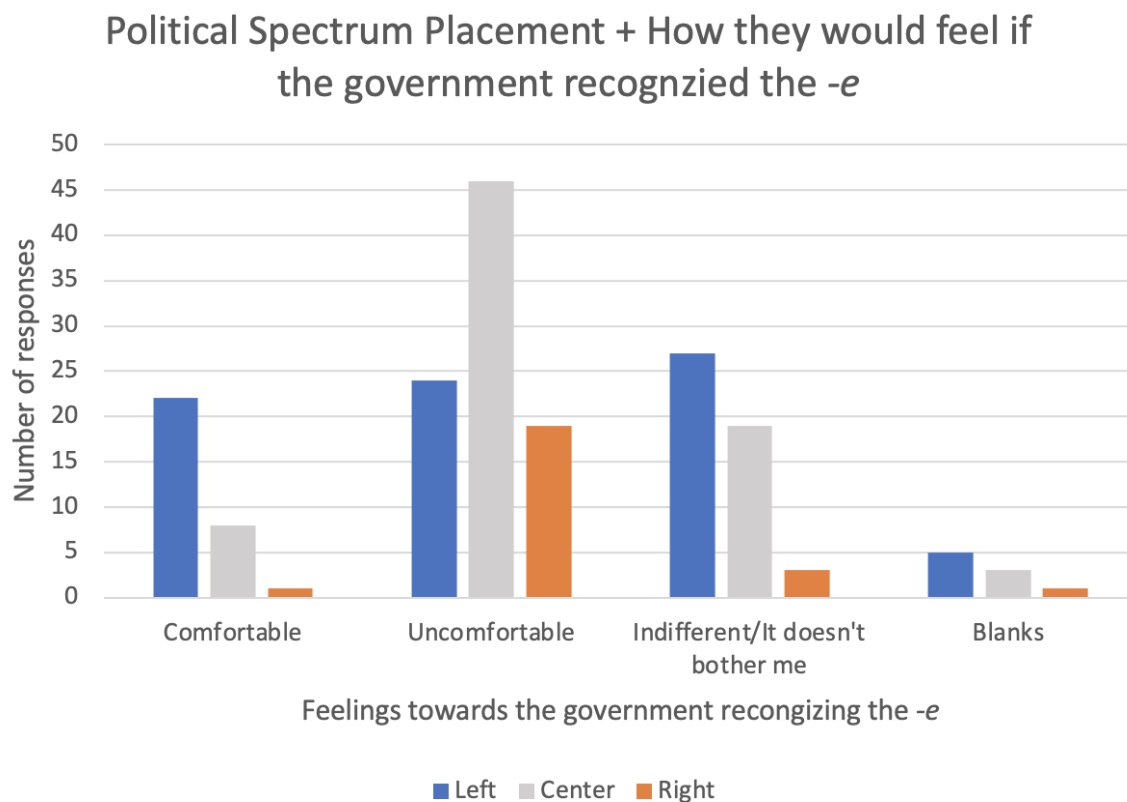
Figure 4: Political Spectrum Alignment and How Would You Feel if the Government Recognized the *-e*

Figure 4 presents the findings from Question 5 and Question 12 together in order to indicate if there is a relationship where people align on the political spectrum and how they would feel if the government officially recognized the -e and it started to appear on official documents. As the graph shows, those who affiliate with the center would be very uncomfortable. While the amount of respondents who align with the right was small in comparison to those from the left and the center, it is still clear to see that the respondents from the right would be very uncomfortable with the official recognition of the *-e*. In relation to the left side, the highest selected answer was indifferent/unbothered. This shows that the left side of the political spectrum would be the most open to the official recognition of the -e.

Gender + Are you in favor of teaching the *-e* in class

Women
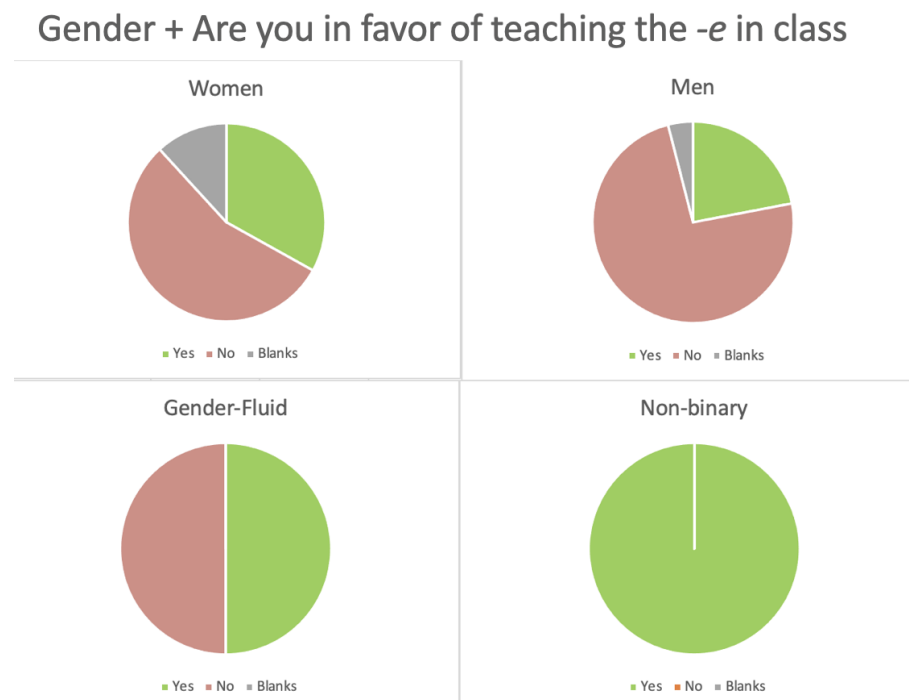
Men

Gender-Fluid

Non-binary

Figure 5: Gender and Are You in Favor of Teaching the *-e* in Class

Figure 5 visually demonstrates questions 4 and 14, which address the attitudes towards teaching the *-e* in schools. The pie charts clearly highlight that the percentage of men who are against the teaching of the *-e* in schools is much higher than those who are in favor of it. While

the percentage of women against the teaching of the *-e* in schools is also higher than the percentage of those who are for it, the difference between the two is not nearly as drastic. Thus, it can be inferred that women are more accepting of the use of the *-e*. In relation to the pie chart for the gender-fluid individuals, the two contradictory opinions are curious, but it would not be just to draw a general conclusion based on the opinions of two individuals. The same logic, that the sample is too small to draw generalized conclusions, is applied to the pie chart for the non-binary participant.

The overall findings of the survey show that most of the respondents are older, well-educated, and do not affiliate with a religion. In addition, an overwhelming number of the survey respondents were women. The combination of these demographics could indicate that people that took the survey are from similar socioeconomic backgrounds, and thus this survey excludes the opinions of those that do not conform to the leading responses. If not from the same socioeconomic background, the vast amount of responses for one category over the others at least shows that there is a large lack of responses from individuals that are younger, less-educated, religious, and identify with other genders besides female.

The survey also demonstrates that people have heard of gender-inclusive language in one form or another, with the *-e* being the most heard of. This shows that people are familiar with the use of the letter e as a gender-neutral alternative. But, the use of the *-e* is not a change that will be made in the recent future. This conclusion can be made because the survey shows that there are people who are not in favor of the official recognition and implementation of the *-e* on official documents by the government. In addition, based on the results of the survey, respondents are not in favor of the teaching of the -e in schools. As shown above, those who say they put themselves in the center of the political spectrum would be uncomfortable with the official recognition of the

-e and, as a result, would be uncomfortable if the *-e* began to appear on official documents. In its simplest terms, while people have heard of the *-e*, have been exposed to it in both written and spoken contexts, and believe gender-neutral language is something that people should be able to practice freely, people are still not entirely comfortable with the government officially recognizing the *-e* and it being taught in classes. While local campaigns might continue spreading awareness of the *-e*, it can be inferred based on the results of the survey that no official changes at the governmental level will be made in the foreseeable future.

Conclusion

Chapter I of this thesis showed that Spanish was born due to the changes in another language that evolved into its own separate language. In addition, the difference from the very first forms of Spanish, called vulgar Latin, and the Spanish that is spoken by millions today demonstrates that the Spanish language is, and always has been, susceptible to change. Chapter II of this thesis showed that Uruguay, when it comes to laws focused on gender and gender identity, can be considered a country that works towards making all of its citizens feel included. Chapter III demonstrated how there is local support for the use of the gender-neutral alternative -*e*, but that official organizations, such as the RAE and the Academia Nacional de Letras de Uruguay, do not recognize the legitimacy of the -*e*. In fact, these organizations are against the use of the -*e* and recommend using other forms, such as doublets and other generic word alternatives to be inclusive.

The survey results then demonstrated how respondents in Montevideo, Uruguay have in fact heard of the gender-neutral alternative -*e* and that, although most respondents do not use it themselves, the majority believe it is something that everyone should be able to practice freely. However, when it comes to being officially recognized by the government and used in schools, the survey results show that most respondents would feel uncomfortable. The combination of the chapters and the survey results show that although Uruguay can be considered an inclusive country, there is still work to be done in relation to the field of gender-neutral language. While languages are susceptible to change, it can be inferred that the implementation of the -*e* ending is one that will not happen organically in the foreseeable future due to the fact that it currently faces pushback not only from citizens of Montevideo, as shown by the survey, but also by official Spanish language institutions.

With regards to the hypotheses that were proposed in the Introduction of the thesis, some hypotheses were proven to be correct while others were not. Hypothesis 2 stated that people will have heard about gender-neutral language, which turned out to be true. The second half of the question, which hypothesized that people would feel comfortable or indifferent towards other people's use of gender-neutral language, resulted to be only partially correct. While the highest selected choice was indifferent, the second highest was not comfortable like the hypothesis proposed. Rather, the second highest selected answer was that people felt uncomfortable.

Hypothesis 3, stating that people would feel comfortable or indifferent towards the government's official use of the -*e*, was incorrect. Rather, the survey results show that over half of the respondents would feel uncomfortable. Hypothesis 1 stated that people's attitudes towards the use of the -*e* would be positive. This hypothesis is presented last because it cannot be answered by looking at a specific question. Rather, it requires an overall analysis. It can be concluded that Hypothesis 1 was proven incorrect because although people reacted positively when asked if using gender-neutral alternatives was a right everyone should be able to practice freely, the results to the hypothetical situations still show that people would feel uncomfortable to see it officially recognized. While this does not necessarily indicate that people are against the -*e* in general, it does not show that people's attitudes are positive, thus Hypothesis 1 cannot be declared as proven correct.

Throughout the survey and research process, I faced many challenges and limitations. First, it was crucial that the survey was distributed to members across various demographics. As the survey results show, over half of the respondents to the survey are currently studying to complete, or have already completed, their university degree. While this shows that the respondents are an educated group of individuals, it is hard to generalize to a greater population

when these survey results seem to reflect the ideas and beliefs of the educated class. In addition, not many people between the ages of 18-30 accounted for the demographics of the survey. This means that the survey is limited in its ability to capture the younger population attitudes towards this subject. As a result of the concentrated demographic, it is hard to make generalizations about the population as a whole.

The survey was sent out via an anonymous link with the hopes that snowball sampling would further spread the survey to a large number of responses, thus reducing bias and allowing for results that were reflective of the general population. However, the anonymous link provided its own set of limitations that revealed themselves throughout the process. The first limitation was that, although the respondents were asked to share the survey, there was no way of guaranteeing its distribution. The lack of incentive to distribute or complete the survey makes it probable that the respondent could take the survey as a favor and then not distribute it to more people. This also leads to the second limitation, which is that there were respondents that never completed the survey. In fact, 29 responses were left incomplete. This explains why some questions have a total number of responses that are different from other questions. The level of progress from the survey ranges from as little as 3% completed to 94% completed, which shows that there was not one specific question that deterred the respondents from continuing the survey. Rather, it is possible that the respondents had to attend to another obligation and forgot to finish the survey or they simply did not feel like completing the survey. Because I made the survey anonymous in order to make the IRB approval process faster, there was also no way to remind the participants to complete the survey because there was no way of knowing who completed the survey and who did not.

If given the chance to do the study differently, I would like to have a greater number of respondents. The sample size of the survey, although close to 200, was very small when considering Montevideo's population size of 1.4 million. In addition, further research could include surveying people that live outside of Montevideo, Uruguay to encompass people from all over Uruguay. How do people from rural parts of Uruguay feel about this topic? I would also like to reframe two questions to make the wording more precise and help eliminate the chances of misinterpretation. First, I would like to reframe the question that asks if people heard of gender-neutral language in spoken contexts to include the clarification of if they have heard of it in conversational contexts. It is possible that the options for "spoken contexts" were not interpreted as conversational contexts. Second, I would like to reword the question that asked where people were born to ask where people grew up, or to even include where they currently live. I believe rewriting the question in this way would provide more helpful information on whether or not this variable affects people's attitudes on the matter. This could also set the stage for further research. Does where someone grew up affect their current position on the matter?

In relation to contributions to the field, this thesis provides insight regarding how citizens of Montevideo, Uruguay feel about this topic, previously unstudied in the field of gender-neutral language. It highlights the fact that there is an emerging debate on changing the Spanish language to be more gender-neutral in Uruguayan society. Although a large percentage of the respondents in the survey did not want the *-e* to be officially recognized, there were still people that answered that they would be comfortable with the official recognition, and that demonstrates that this is a topic worth discussing. In addition, it should be noted that those who said they would be uncomfortable with the official recognition of the *-e* does not necessarily indicate that those people are against gender-neutral language as a whole. The survey results also showed that

nearly all of the respondents had heard of at least one form of a gender-neutral alternative. So, there is the possibility that they would have been in favor of the official recognition of a different gender-neutral alternative. This thesis suggests eliminating the gender-neutral alternative *-e* from that list, which can serve as a basis for future studies in the field.

This thesis promotes the discussion of the use of the *-e* as a gender-neutral alternative. The work done in this thesis shows that this topic, whether the *-e* is favored or not, is one that is relevant to today's society and should be included in debates on inclusion. While Uruguay, as a country, has made a name for itself as an inclusive country, the fact that the *-e* has emerged to the level that it has today shows that there is a demand for its presence. This thesis shows that there is still work to be done on the path to comprehensive inclusion in Uruguay.

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