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Towards More Inclusive Practices in Applied Linguistics: A Study of Journal Editors' Views on Using 'Who' with Nonhuman Animals with Implications for Language Education

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Towards More Inclusive Practices in Applied Linguistics: A Study of Journal Editors' Views on Using 'Who' with Nonhuman Animals with Implications for Language Education

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Abstract: Like racism or sexism, speciesism highlights how people fail to give due respect to nonhuman animals. After more than 20 years since the publication of Dunayer's (2001) seminal work, *Animal Equality: Language and Liberation*, speciesism appears to remain a controversial issue. In this article, we explore the issue of speciesist language by considering the views of journal editors on one point raised in the seventh edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2020): that the relative pronoun *who* should only be used with humans and not with other animals. The results of this study suggest that while some motion seems to be taking place towards greater use of *who* with nonhuman animals, the American Psychological Association's current policy does have a large degree of support. Implications for language education are considered with the aim to enact more inclusive practices in applied linguistics and language education for a just and sustainable world.

Keywords: speciesism, inclusivity, nonhuman animals, language choice, critical pedagogy, inclusive practices, sustainability

*Currently, misleading language legitimizes and
conceals the institutionalized abuse of nonhuman
animals. With honest, unbiased words,
we can grant them the freedom
and respect that are rightfully theirs.*
(Dunayer, 2003, p. 62)

Introduction

Dunayer (2001, 2003) lamented how standard English usage perpetuates speciesism. That is, like racism or sexism, speciesism highlights how people fail to give due respect to nonhuman animals. This form of prejudice, as Dunayer (2003, p. 61) pointed out, is “sustained in part by biased, misleading words”. After 20 years, this appears to remain a controversial issue, with the journal *Society & Animals*, for example, as the only journal to our knowledge which requires contributors to “use language that is respectful of our relation to animals of other species”.

In this article, we explore the issue of speciesist language by first presenting a study that reports on the views of journal editors on one point raised in the seventh edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2020): that the relative pronoun ‘who’ should only be used with humans and not with other animals. This instruction in the American Psychological Association (APA) Manual has also recently attracted some resistance from applied linguists (see, e.g., Chau & Jacobs, 2021). We then make a call for language teachers to step out of their traditional roles of focusing on language as a fixed object and to promote student awareness of changes and choices in the language that they use with nonhuman animals. We argue that such awareness empowers students and teachers as changemakers in their efforts to enact inclusive practices for a just and sustainable world.

Language, Society and Worldviews

Whorf (1912) and Fishman (1971) posited that language and society impact each other. Thus, language changes lead to changes in how people think and act, and people’s thoughts and actions impact language. A fairly recent example of this interaction can be seen in English in a change in the use of nouns (e.g., *firefighters* instead of *firemen*; see Treichler & Frank, 1989). This change reflected a partial but ongoing social change

to open occupations that had been dominated by males to greater female participation. Similar changes have taken place in some other languages, for example, Slovene (Popič & Gorjanc, 2018).

In addition to changes in nouns, other elements of language can also change. Bejan (2020) contended that pronouns are the most political of all language elements. Examples of changes towards more gender inclusive pronouns include the move away from ‘generic *he*’ (Pennycook, 1994), as in ‘A doctor should recommend plant-based diets to his patients’. This example sentence might now be seen in various more inclusive forms, including ‘Doctors should recommend plant-based diets to their patients’. In another example of pronoun change concerning gender, only in 2021 did the authors of the current article become aware of a new term, ‘neopronouns’ (Marcus, 2021), such as the use of ‘ze’ and ‘zir’ for people who wish to avoid expressing gender. Neopronouns have emerged in part to provide people more flexibility in how to present themselves to others.

Other social changes, in addition to the change towards more inclusive gender roles, have their reflection in and are reinforced by language changes. Motivated by Dunayer’s (2003) call for attention to English and speciesism, the present article focuses on language change relevant to how humans view and treat nonhuman animals. Forces fomenting change in this area include recent research on the intelligence, social lives and emotions of other animals (Ackerman, 2016; Balcombe, 2016; de Waal, 2016; Leach et al., 2023; Mikhalevich & Powell, 2020). A plethora of such studies suggest that other animals should be viewed as fellow sentient beings worthy of consideration, rather than as objects meant only to serve human needs.

At least two pronoun changes, in addition to other language changes (Dunayer, 2001), have been suggested in response to the view that nonhuman animals deserve the status of fellow sentient beings. In an open letter to the Associated Press (AP), a major news agency serving newspapers and broadcasters, Jane Goodall, the noted primatologist, and about 80 other academics and animal advocates urged AP to alter the guidance given in its influential *Associated Press Stylebook* so that when referring to nonhuman animals, people use *she/her/hers* and *he/him/his* when the referent’s sex is known, regardless of species, and the gender-neutral *they*, or *he/she*, or *his/hers* when their sex is unknown (Goodall et al., 2021). The letter

urges the use of *who* instead of *that* or *which* when referring to individual nonhuman animals.

In addition to style guides used in the media, such as the AP style guide, another set of style guides provides direction to academic journals, books, and university assignments or theses on such matters as referencing, formatting and grammar. The seventh edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2020) is one such guide used in psychology and many other academic fields. The guide's 2020 edition provides guidance on matters such as race, disability, gender and sexual orientation. The use of singular *they*, for example, now receives support (Section 4.18). Also, in regard to nonhuman animals, the manual highlights that nonhuman animals who are used in research deserve ethical and humane treatment. This latter advice accords with actual changes in the use of nonhuman animals in research. For example, Fears (2016) reported that U.S. medical schools are phasing out the use of live animals to teach surgery.

Perhaps less in line with humans' better treatment of other animals is APA's call to refer to nonhumans used in research as 'subjects', but to refer to humans as 'participants' (Section 4.18). However, perhaps APA's suggested bifurcated designation does accord with reality, as human animals have the right to choose whether to participate in studies, whereas nonhuman animals lack this right (Arck, 2019). The present study centres on another animal-related point in the seventh edition of the APA Publication Manual, that is, the instruction not to use the relative pronoun 'who' with animals other than humans: "Use the relative pronoun 'who' for human beings; use the relative pronoun 'that' or 'which' for nonhuman animals (e.g., rats, chimpanzees) and for inanimate objects" (Section 4.19). This likening of nonhuman animals to inanimate objects occurs again in Section 4.11 with the instruction that authors should not "attribute human characteristics to animals or to inanimate sources—doing so is called anthropomorphism".

The APA Manual's guidance could be respectfully labelled as an act of speciesism. (Full disclosure—the authors of this article regularly use the APA guide in our writing and teaching.) Goodall (1990, cited in Gilquin & Jacobs, 2006) encountered speciesism in the 1960s, when she submitted a paper about her research with chimpanzees. She had given her participants names, but the editors told her to use numbers instead.

Furthermore, the editors told her not to use 'who' when referring to the chimpanzees. Goodall challenged the editors back in the 1960s, and as can be seen in her joint 2021 letter to the Associated Press, referred to above, more than half a century later, she still needs to challenge speciesist rules that group nonhuman animals with objects. Happily, the paradigm as to how humans treat other animals may be shifting. For example, laws are prohibiting various abuses of factory farming, including practices which cruelly confine pigs and chickens (e.g., egg-laying hens forced to live in the space of approximately an A4 piece of paper; see Allen et al., 2019). Additionally, Shapiro (2024) highlighted that substitutes for animal-based foods continue to improve in quantity, taste, convenience, healthfulness and price, thereby offering hope that humans may be able to treat other animals more 'humanely' without sacrificing food preferences.

Much of the above scholarship fits under the umbrella of ecolinguistics, which, according to the website of the International Ecolinguistics Association (2024),

explores the role of language in the life-sustaining interactions of humans, other species and the physical environment. The first aim is to develop linguistic theories which see humans not only as part of society, but also as part of the larger ecosystems that life depends on. The second aim is to show how linguistics can be used to address key ecological issues, from climate change and biodiversity loss to environmental justice. (para. 1)

The works of Stibbe (e.g., 2021, 2024) are frequently cited in ecolinguistics research.

Method

As noted earlier, the purpose of this study was to investigate the views of editors of scholarly journals on one point raised in the seventh edition of the APA Publication Manual: that the relative pronoun 'who' should only be used with humans and not with other animals. While some consider this to be merely a grammatical issue, the researchers for the present study saw it as a fundamental conceptual issue at the heart of how humans behave.

The study addressed the following research questions (RQ):

RQ1: Are journal editors aware of the APA guidance to refrain from the use of the relative pronoun ‘who’ with respect to animals?

RQ2: In the journal editors’ opinions, how powerful is language in shaping people’s worldviews?

RQ3: In the journal editors’ opinions, how fairly do humans treat nonhuman animals?

RQ4: Is there any relationship between dietary habits and the use of the relative pronoun ‘who’ in reference to nonhuman animals?

RQ5: Do the journal editors’ use the relative pronoun ‘who’ in reference to nonhuman animals in their own practice?

Survey

To address these questions, we employed a survey approach using a blend of dichotomous/forced choice (four items), visual analogue rating (four items), and open-ended formats (four items). The survey was prefaced with an information page detailing requirements and an estimated time commitment, followed by choices to exit without proceeding to the survey or to opt in with implied consent. The Qualtrics survey management software was used for collecting and collating the data. Ethics approval was obtained from James Cook University.

Two demographic items were used to determine participants’ age and gender. We used four dichotomous-response items as follows:

- a) Does this journal have an editorial policy concerning the use of the relative pronoun ‘who’ in reference to nonhuman animals?
- b) If so, is the policy in favour of using ‘who’ in reference to nonhuman animals?
- c) Prior to our contacting you, were you aware of the APA guidance to refrain from the use of the relative pronoun ‘who’ with respect to nonhuman animals?; and
- d) With respect to your own writing, do you use the relative pronoun ‘who’ in reference to nonhuman animals?

We used four visual analogue scale items as follows:

- a) In your opinion, how much does the language we use impact the beliefs and

actions of ourselves and others?

- b) In your opinion, how fairly do humans treat nonhuman animals?
- c) How would you describe your diet? 0 = Plant-based diet with no animal-based products consumed at all (i.e., vegan); 100 = Animal-based with food from animals (e.g., meat, milk, eggs) consumed at every meal; and
- d) How strong is your own preference as to the use of the relative pronoun ‘who’ in reference to nonhuman animals?

Visual analogue scales ranged from 0 to 100 for each item, with scale anchors ranging from 0 = not at all to 100 = completely for items a, b, c and d. Each of these items was followed by an open-ended prompt to “Please explain your response”.

Recruitment

To locate journals to include in the study, we used Google to find academic journals in many fields, including (in alphabetical order) anthropology, biology, linguistics, philosophy, psychology, sociology and zoology. The reference section of articles in some of these journals provided the names of other journals. Then, we searched the web for email addresses of editors and editorial board members of these journals. We also hoped to find more respondents by using snowballing (i.e., in our invitation email [please see Appendix], we asked people to forward our survey to appropriate others). We sent the invitation three times to approximately 130 editors. Each time, we sent to additional editors. We have no way of knowing how many potential respondents received the survey via snowballing.

Participants

A total of 48 people completed the survey, indicating at least the name of the journal for whom they perform an editorial role. However, of those 48, not all completed all survey items. For instance, 10 (24.4%) completed only editorial policy and demographic items including age, gender, and title of journal. Mean age of the 33 participants who reported age data was 56 years ($SD = 14.42$). Of the 36 respondents who provided gender identification, the majority were male (56%) and one individual identified as non-binary.

Results and Discussion

As shown in Table 1, most respondents indicated that (a) their journal does not have a specific policy regarding the use of ‘who’ with nonhuman animals; (b) in the few cases in which their journal had a policy, five had a policy against the use of ‘who’ and two had a policy in favour; (c) most respondents were not aware of the APA policy; and (d) about two-thirds of respondents who provided data on their own use of ‘who’ with nonhuman animals indicated that they did not use it, although some indicated that circumstances affected their use. This variable usage is consistent with Gilquin and Jacobs’ (2006) finding that some dictionaries, reference grammars and newspaper and news agency style guides approved the use of ‘who’ in some cases (e.g., when the nonhuman animals were companion animals).

Chi-square tests for independence revealed no significant relationship amongst any of these dichotomous variables. Fisher’s exact test significance values are reported due to cells having expected counts less than 5. A chi-square test of independence showed that there was no significant association between the journal having an editorial policy concerning the use of ‘who’ and whether or not editors were aware of the APA guidance with respect to this, $\chi^2 (1, N = 35) = .81$, $p = .576$. Phi effect size = .152. Nor was there any significant association between the journal having an editorial policy concerning the use of ‘who’ and whether or not editors themselves use ‘who’ in reference to nonhuman animals, $\chi^2 (1, N = 35) = .28$, $p = .689$. Phi effect size = -.089. A third chi-square test of independence showed that there was no significant association between editors being aware of the APA guidance about the use of ‘who’ and whether or not editors themselves use ‘who’ in reference to nonhuman animals, $\chi^2 (1, N = 35) = 2.34$, $p = .181$.

Table 1

Dichotomous Item Responses (N = 35)

Yes/No Items	Count Yes	Count No	Total
Does this journal have an editorial policy concerning the use of the relative pronoun ‘who’ in reference to nonhuman animals?	7	28	35
If so, is the policy in favour of using ‘who’ in reference to nonhuman animals?	2	5	7
Prior to our contacting you, were you aware of the APA guidance to refrain from the use of the relative pronoun ‘who’ with respect to nonhuman animals?	6	29	35
With respect to your own writing, do you use the relative pronoun ‘who’ in reference to nonhuman animals?	13	22	35

Table 2 summarizes the score means and distributions of the visual analogue scale items. On average, the respondents’ opinions tended to endorse a strong impact of language and to view human treatment of nonhuman animals as unfair. Preference for using ‘who’ in reference to nonhuman animals tended towards mid-range, and the respondents tended towards a mixed diet of plant-based and animal-based foods.

Score distributions of visual analogue scale scores are further summarized in Figure 1a–d.

Table 2
Visual Analogue Item Responses (N = 35)

Visual analogue items (0–100)	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
In your opinion, how much does the language we use impact the beliefs and actions of ourselves and others?	72.14	23.93	5–100
In your opinion, how fairly do humans treat nonhuman animals?	36.36	19.55	0–73
How would you describe your diet?*	41.47	30.80	0–100
How strong is your own preference as to the use of the relative pronoun ‘who’ in reference to nonhuman animals?	51.08	40.16	0–100

Note. *0 = Plant-based diet with no animal-based products consumed at all (i.e., vegan); 100 = Animal-based with food from animals (e.g., meat, milk, eggs) consumed at every meal.

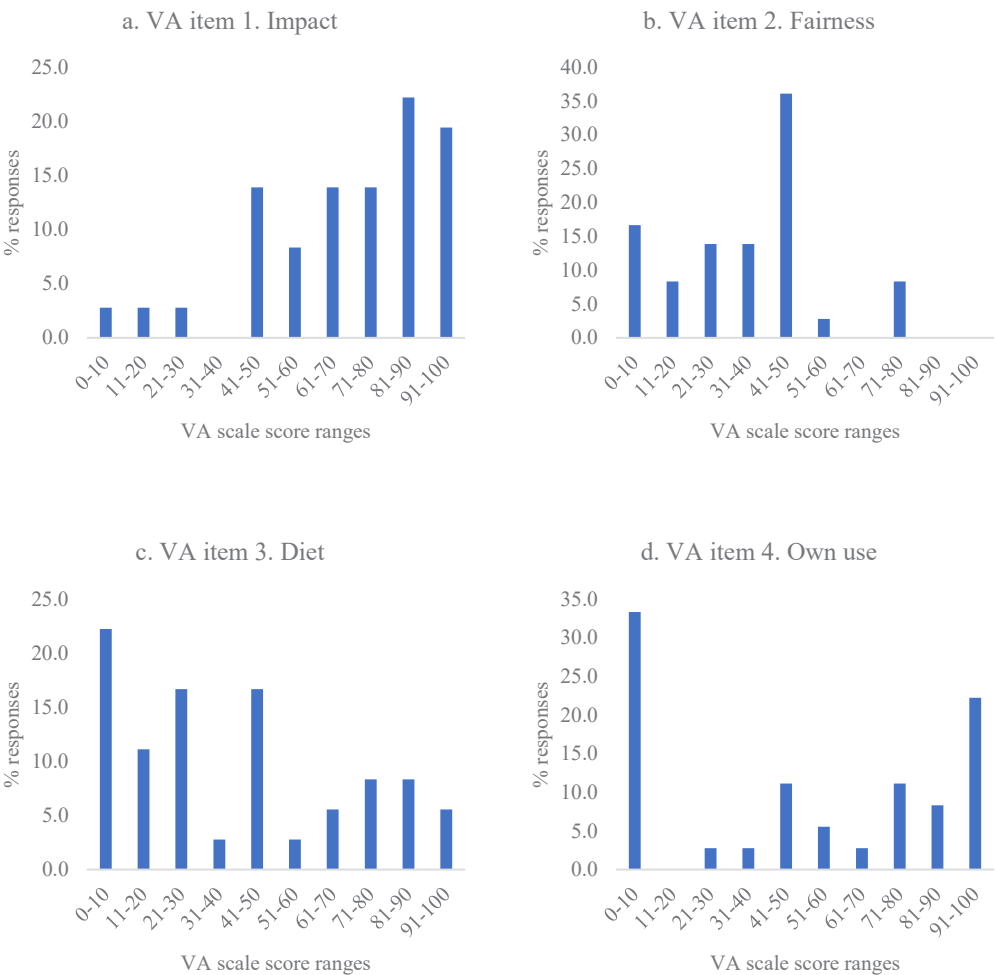


Figure 1
Visual analogue scale score distributions (% across score categories) for four items

Table 3*Correlations amongst the continuous variables*

Variables	1	2	3	4
1 In your opinion, how much does the language we use impact the beliefs and actions of ourselves and others?				
2 In your opinion, how fairly do humans treat nonhuman animals?	0.125			
3 How would you describe your diet? Zero indicates 'entirely plant based' and 100 indicates 'entirely animal based'?	0.129	.468**		
4 How strong is your own preference as to the use of the relative pronoun 'who' in reference to nonhuman animals?	.378*	-0.111	0.168	

Note. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

A Pearson's correlation analysis indicates a moderate and positive relationship between opinion about fair treatment of nonhuman animals and diet. The positive correlation indicates that stronger opinion that humans treat nonhuman animals fairly relates to more of an animal-based diet.

The correlation analysis also reveals a moderate and positive relationship between strength of opinion about how much language impacts beliefs and actions and strength of own preference to use 'who' in reference to nonhuman animals. These results are summarized in Table 3.

Not surprisingly, the elaborations provided by the respondents on their responses evidenced a wide variety of practices and views. For example, on the question, "In your opinion, how much does the language we use impact the beliefs and actions of ourselves and others?", some comments indicated belief in a strong role for language:

Language affects patterns of thought and cognition, which in turn affect how we act towards the world around us, including non-human animals. In this case, the use of relative pronoun "which" or personal pronoun "it" has the potential consequence of degrading non-human living beings to the status of objects in the minds of speakers. (R22)

In contrast, other comments referred to a negligible role:

it is important but I have seen a lot of gender-or ethnical-related issues that are (unfortunately) still there while much of the world is busy playing with words. (R03)

Clearly, issues such as the ones dealt with in the present study cannot escape current debates around language which intersect with debates about 'wokeness' and 'cancel culture' (Obiakor & Algozzine, 2021). We believe that actions speak louder than words, as stated by the respondent who saw a negligible role for language. At the same time, we agree with the respondent who recognized the influential power of language. Similarly, Obiakor and Algozzine (2021, p. 1), in the context of improving education, argued for a culture "where we become and celebrate doers, and not talkers, ...measurable change agents".

The survey also asked, "In your opinion, how fairly do humans treat nonhuman animals?" Here, the range extended only from those respondents who strongly condemned human behaviour (e.g., "we eat them, destroy their homes, mess up the environment" [R001]) to those who noted a wide variety of human behaviours (e.g., "Complicated and nuanced; cruelty exists but also mistreatment by people from ignorance

and from most people, I hope, fair treatment” [R005]). None of the respondents felt that nonhuman animals were there for humans to use as we wish (BBC, 2014) or that nonhuman animals were a gift to humans from a divine force and, as a result, humans would be ungrateful if we did not take advantage of this gift (Szűcs et al., 2012).

A third survey question which invited comment was, “How would you describe your diet (from entirely plant-based to entirely animal-based)?” Among the more nuanced responses to this question was the following:

I make no attempt to avoid animal-based products in my diet. I do attempt to discover the origins of the food in my diet, and to avoid buying food produced with what seems to me like a great degree of cruelty, but I know that I am fortunate that I can afford to make such choices. (R017)

On one hand, meat consumption continues to rise worldwide (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development/Food and Agriculture Organization, 2018). On the other hand, Stein (2019) reported an increase in the number of flexitarians, that is, people who often eat plant-based diets. A step further away from plant-based diets is reducetarianism, in which people reduce their meat consumption (Martinko, 2019).

A fourth question asked those who undertook the survey to elaborate on their response to the question, “With respect to your own writing, do you use the relative pronoun ‘who’ in reference to nonhuman animals?” Some respondents who did not use ‘who’ with nonhuman animals attributed their choice to tradition and what they had been taught. Going against standard practice can be particularly difficult for non-native speakers of what are considered standard or high-profile versions of a language such as English. Such people already risk having their competence and even their intelligence questioned due to their language proficiency (Yeo et al., 2017). Will their interlocutors perceive their nonstandard use of ‘who’ as a conscious choice or another error (see, e.g., Man & Chau, 2019; Man et al., 2021; Smidt et al., 2021)?

This preliminary investigation was limited in a few regards. Most importantly, the low number of respondents, 48, and the incomplete responses of a

significant minority of those limited the inferences that could be made from our data and the number of statistical tests that could be done with the data. The low number may have been due to a number of factors: (a) the survey could have been sent to decision-makers at more journals; (b) the survey was usually sent to only the editor-in-chief, rather than to the entire editorial board; (c) prestigious people in a variety of fields could have been recruited to put their imprimatur on the survey prior to sending to others; (d) some incentive could have been offered to encourage a higher response rate; and (e) authors of articles that mentioned nonhuman animals could have been surveyed. Another limitation of this study was that no follow-up was done to go deeper into participants’ responses (e.g., conducting semi-structured interviews with selected participants). As the use of ‘who’ with nonhuman animals constitutes something of a challenge to the present norm in relative pronoun use, it might have been interesting to address diachronic change by asking participants about any movement in their thinking and practice in the matter. Finally, an additional problem that the researchers encountered was that more than one-third of participants did not respond to all the items. In some electronic surveys, this problem is dealt with by designing the survey such that respondents cannot submit their responses unless all items have been completed.

Implications for Applied Linguistics and Language Education

In revisiting Dunayer (2003), we may ask ourselves to what extent there is hope that human language will in the foreseeable future be less biased towards nonhuman animals, thereby encouraging more benign treatment of nonhuman animals. The study reported in this article attempted to gain preliminary insights into this issue by considering the views and practices of people responsible for academic journals with regard to the use of the relative pronoun ‘who’ with nonhuman animals. This study was undertaken in response to guidance against such use in a leading arbiter of academic writing, the APA Publication Manual (2020). In broad overview, the results of this study could be seen as suggesting that while some motion seems to be taking place towards greater use of ‘who’ with nonhuman animals, the APA’s current policy does have a large degree of support, or at least compliance.

As to people's role in promoting language change, Simon (2021) quoted Dreyer, the copy chief at Random House publishers and also the author of *Dreyer's English: An Utterly Correct Guide to Clarity and Style*, as stating, "Writers should write the way they see fit to write, and the changes they wish to effect either will or won't be embraced broadly". Thus, perhaps, we could see language changes occurring or not occurring in a marketplace of ideas. Every time people use language to communicate, they potentially influence that marketplace, just as publication manual writers, editors, open letter writers and researchers attempt to sway public practices.

In the context of language education, all this suggests opportunities for teachers to play their role as changemakers (see, e.g., Chau & Shunmugam, 2021; Lie et al., 2022). That is, language teachers should consider stepping out of their traditional roles of focusing on language as a fixed object and, instead, promoting student awareness of changes and choices in the language that they use with nonhuman animals. There has been an important transformation in language education over the past two decades which has taken place as a result of a conscious effort to recognize the nature of language as being complex and dynamic (e.g., Larsen-Freeman, 2006), to give due respect to students as legitimate users of language (e.g., Man & Chau, 2019; Smidt et al., 2021), and to promote an appreciation of diversity in linguistic and cultural practices (e.g., Chau et al., 2022; García, 2014; Selvi, 2023; Wei & García, 2022). In fact, over two decades ago, in discussing the issue of sexist language (e.g., using *firefighters* instead of *firemen* in order to include females in that profession), Beebe (1998, p. 7) stated: "One could argue that it is not the duty of EFL teachers to cure their students of sexism". However, perhaps language teachers do have a duty to facilitate student awareness of changes and choices in the languages that they use.

Such awareness empowers students to assess their interlocutors and consider how their interlocutors may view them based on their language choices. Awareness also enables students to appreciate that languages do change and that they can have a role in what changes take place in the languages they use. Especially as the world comes to appreciate that second/foreign language users of a language are legitimate users of that language (e.g., Lie et al., 2022; Rose et al., 2021), students can appreciate that the choices they make in

relation to our fellow animals do have influence not just on the language choices of others but also can impact people's other actions, including the food they eat and the clothes they wear (see also Jacobs & Chau, 2021; Jacobs et al., 2022). Significantly, all this contributes to inclusive practices and a consideration of kinder treatment to nonhuman animals.

Assisting students in building their language awareness fits with the larger picture of critical pedagogy in language teaching (Crookes, 2022). Critical pedagogy attempts to widen students' learning beyond the specific subjects they study to also consider the wider society, students' role in that society, and how they might be able to improve the world. For instance, Freire (1970), a literacy educator in Brazil, is credited with the idea that students learn to read the word (i.e., they become literate) in order to read the world, that is, to be able to understand and improve the world for themselves and others. The word 'critical' in critical pedagogy has the same meaning as in the term 'critical friend' in qualitative research, where critical friends are there to support us, not to tear us down (Phan, 2021). Similarly, a Russian proverb states, "An enemy will agree, but a friend will disagree". In that spirit, the goal of the language change at the heart of our discussion is to make society kinder and greener.

Is teaching students that they have choices making language learning more complicated for them? Yes, it probably is, but as Beebe (1998) pointed out, most language syllabi prepare students for other choices, such as the choice between more or less formal language and between academic and personal writing. Also, language change and variation causes difficulty for all language users, regardless of their proficiency and whether or not they are non-native speakers. At the same time, everyone can have fun playing the 'language choices' games. Let us not deprive our students of the chance to play.

One way to introduce students to the language choices game is to help them notice (Leow, 2019; Schmidt, 1990) variations in language. These variations can be diachronic (between different times) or synchronic (at the same time), and many factors can impact synchronic variations. One way to facilitate student noticing can be to compare two texts as to their use of *who* to refer to nonhuman animals, one from an organization representing conventional meat producers (e.g., <https://www.tyson sustainability.com/agriculture/animal-welfare-approach>) and another

text from an organization encouraging people to eat meat alternatives (e.g., <https://www.ciwf.com/about/our-impact/global-impact-review/#Cages>). Not surprisingly, the former does not use *who* to refer to the nonhuman animals who are used to produce meat, while the latter webpage does.

Conclusion

In this article, we have revisited the issue of speciesist language through a study which considered the views of journal editors on one point raised in the seventh edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2020): that the relative pronoun ‘who’ should only be used with humans and not with other animals. The results suggest that some motion appears to be taking place towards greater use of ‘who’ with nonhuman animals. We hope that more journals in applied linguistics will have explicit author guidelines as those of *Society & Animals* which require that contributors use language that reflects a respect for our fellow animals.

We have also argued that supporting students to develop their language awareness is part of enacting critical pedagogy in language teaching, part of efforts to widen students’ learning beyond the specific subjects they study to also consider the wider society, students’ role in that society, and how they might be able to improve the world through change in language use. Both students and teachers, in this regard, can join efforts to brainstorm more ideas in their creative language classroom that contribute to this direction.

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Appendix

You are one of about 100 academics who are being invited to participate in an ethics-approved online research project seeking to gain journal editors’ perspectives on the use of the relative pronoun ‘who’ in reference to nonhuman animals, together with some associated worldview perspectives on the treatment of nonhuman animals and the role of language. The purpose of the study is to investigate the views of editors of scholarly journals on one point raised in the new edition of the APA Publication Manual.

The 7th edition of the APA Publication Manual states “Use the relative pronoun ‘who’ for human beings; use the relative pronoun ‘that’ or ‘which’ for nonhuman animals (e.g., rats, chimpanzees) and for inanimate objects (Section 4.19).”

The study is being conducted by _____. If you agree to be involved in the study, you are invited to complete the survey, which we estimate would take less than 10 minutes of your time. The Qualtrics survey has 10 items including four demographic items.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you can stop taking part in the study at any time without explanation or prejudice. We do not anticipate any potential for distress or discomfort to you from completing the survey.

If you know of others who might be interested in this study, at other journals or at your journal, we would appreciate it if you would please forward this information to them so they can consider whether they would like to participate in the survey.

Thanks for considering.

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such questions as how the study, teaching and use of language and communication can help to make the world a better, more inclusive and sustainable place for humans and fellow animals, and how students, teachers and researchers can play a more powerful role in creating and promoting an ecologically just, respectful and compassionate community, from the neighbourhood to our planet.

Statement of Originality

The authors of this manuscript attest that this work is the result of original study, that it is not currently under review in other journals, that it was not published before in any format except in abstract form in conferences/university repositories, and that its similarity index with a similarity detection software is 10% or below.

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The authors declare none.

Declaration of AI Use

No chatbots, GenAI applications, translations, or paraphrasing tools were used in the creation of this manuscript.