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中譯英口譯中性別未定單數指稱詞之譯法

Interpreting Gender-Indefinite Singular References from
Mandarin Chinese to English

陳曦

Hsi Chen

指導教授：范家銘 博士

Advisor: Damien Chiaming Fan, Ph.D.

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MASTER'S THESIS ACCEPTANCE CERTIFICATE
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Interpreting gender-indefinite singular references from Mandarin Chinese to English

本論文係陳曦（R10147015）在國立臺灣大學翻譯碩士學位學程完成之碩士學位論文，於民國 113 年 10 月 18 日承下列考試委員審查通過及口試及格，特此證明。

The undersigned, appointed by the Graduate Program in Translation and Interpretation on October 18, 2024, have examined a Master's Thesis entitled above presented by HSI CHEN (R10147015) and hereby certify that it is worthy of acceptance.

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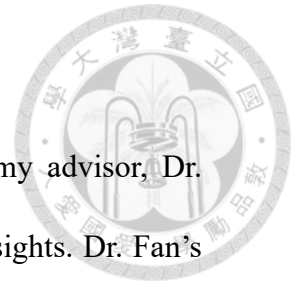
范永銘

（指導教授 Advisor）

張嘉倩

李根男

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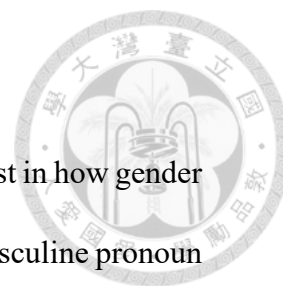
摘要

近數十年來，性別多元與包容意識提升，語言中之性別表現也逐漸受到矚目。其中，英文使用男性第三人稱代名詞「he」指稱性別未定之單數名詞的用法引起熱烈討論，許多學者指出此種用法隱含偏見，並探討是否有其他用法可取而代之，以達到性別中立及包容。儘管英文中性別特定和性別包容之代名詞廣受討論，卻少有文獻提及此類指稱詞在跨語言溝通中的用法，尤其是英文和中文之間的交流。因為英文目前仍缺乏廣為使用之性別包容單數代名詞，翻譯此類指稱詞並不容易，且口譯時多語言且跨文化之溝通背景可能使得口譯更為艱難。

因此，本研究透過語料庫分析專業口譯員對於性別未定單數指稱詞之英文口譯，選擇 15 段線上公開之中譯英口譯影片，從中擷取性別未定之單數指稱詞，進行標註並彙整為自編語料庫進行分析。分析結果顯示專業口譯員翻譯性別未定單數指稱詞時傾向使用較中性之口譯方法，並偏好使用代名詞。此外，根據分析結果，口譯員選擇口譯方法的主要影響因素包含所指稱名詞相關職業性別刻板印象以及指涉性，且各因素會交互影響，顯現口譯員處理性別未定單數指稱詞時需考量的因素繁雜，具挑戰性。

關鍵字：性別、性別未定指稱詞、代名詞、語料庫、通用男性代詞、偏見、刻板印象

Abstract



The growing emphasis on gender inclusivity has heightened interest in how gender is represented in language. A particular focus has been the use of the masculine pronoun “he” for gender-indefinite singular references, which scholars have critiqued as biased. This critique has spurred discussions on neutral alternatives. While a considerable body of research exists on the use of gender-specific and gender-neutral pronouns in English, little attention has been paid to this issue in cross-linguistic communication, particularly between Mandarin Chinese and English. The absence of a widely accepted gender-inclusive singular pronoun in English complicates the interpretation of gender-indefinite references. This challenge is exacerbated in interpreter-mediated contexts, where multilingual and cross-cultural dynamics add complexity.

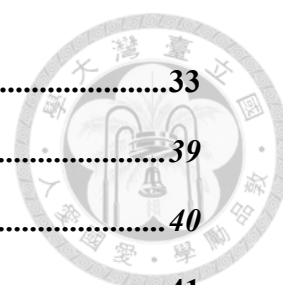
This study seeks to address this gap through a corpus-based analysis of how professional interpreters render gender-indefinite singular references from Mandarin into English. The corpus comprises 15 online video recordings of Mandarin-to-English interpreted speech. The findings indicate that interpreters generally aim for gender inclusivity when faced with such references, with a clear preference for pronoun-based strategies. Furthermore, the gender of occupational antecedents and the definiteness of the reference were found to have an influence on interpreters’ choices. The study also reveals that these choices are shaped by the interaction of multiple variables, underscoring the complexity of dealing with gender during interpreting tasks.

Keywords: gender, gender-indefinite reference, pronoun, speech corpus, generic masculine, bias, stereotype

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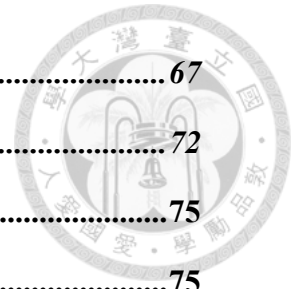


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Chapter 1 Introduction



In recent decades, there has been an increasing awareness of gender diversity and inclusivity, highlighting the significance of gender representations in language. This attention has particularly centered on personal pronouns, which serve as crucial tools for individuals to express their identities and to convey respect for others' gender identities (Johnson et al., 2021; Palanica et al., 2022).

The prescriptive use of masculine “he” as a generic pronoun for gender-indefinite references in English has thus been challenged by many, questioning its neutrality and inclusivity (Gardelle, 2015; Hamilton, 1991; Miller & James, 2009; Silveira, 1980). More gender-inclusive alternatives to the generic “he” have been explored, among which a singular “they” emerged as the most popular choice, although scholars showed varying views about its use (Bradley, 2020; Foertsch & Gernsbacher, 1997; LaScotte, 2016; Sanford & Filik, 2007; Zuber & Reed, 1993). Past literature also reported a range of factors behind language users' comprehension of or approaches to gender-indefinite references, including gender stereotypes (Foertsch & Gernsbacher, 1997; Miller & James, 2009), demographic backgrounds (Balhorn, 2009; Dong et al., 2023; Hamilton, 1991; Meyers, 1990; Miller & James, 2009; Silveira, 1980), and speech contexts and content (LaScotte, 2016).

Rendering such gender-indefinite references can be even harder in interpreter-mediated communications, where social, cultural and cognitive factors can pose special challenges as interpreting is a multidimensional task in nature (De Sutter & Lefer, 2020). Due to the lack of an agreed-upon gender-inclusive singular pronoun in English, interpreters can have problems rendering gender-indefinite singular references into

English. This is even more the case when interpreting from Mandarin Chinese to English. As third-person singular pronouns sound the same in spoken Chinese, interpreters cannot tell the referent's gender from the pronoun but have to rely on contextual cues.

Despite these challenges and evidence showing that addressing gender-related issues can be a common concern among interpreters (McDermid et al., 2021), little attention has been given to the interpretations of gender-indefinite singular references. Given this gap in past literature, the present study seeks to examine past interpretations of gender-indefinite singular references by professional interpreters via a corpus-based approach with statistical analysis. The author's aim was to produce descriptive, quantitative results to address the following research questions:

1. How did professional interpreters interpret gender-indefinite singular references from Mandarin Chinese to English?
2. What are interpreters' tendencies in interpreting gender-indefinite singular references to English?
3. What are some possible factors behind the interpretations of gender-indefinite singular references, e.g., types of antecedents or the gender of interpreters?

By answering these questions, this study aims to provide insights about the gender-related practices in Mandarin to English interpretation in Taiwan and the potential factors behind these choices, which may highlight some existing patterns and issues and inform future research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review



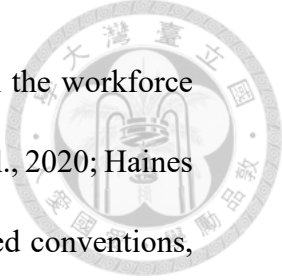
2.1 Gender Stereotypes and Biases

Increasing awareness of gender equality and inclusivity, propelled by feminist movements, has brought attention to gender stereotypes and biases. One type of stereotypes that stands out is those associated with occupational roles, which stem from and in turn reinforce gender division across fields and occupations. Many studies noted that occupational titles often evoke gender assumptions. For instance, nursing is often associated with females, while truck driving is stereotypically linked to males (Deaux & Lewis, 1984; Foertsch & Gernsbacher, 1997; Haines et al., 2016).

Another prominent stereotype revolves around personality traits, particularly the agency-communion divide. Men are often considered more instrumental and competent, whereas women are believed to be more caring and empathetic to others (Haines et al., 2016). These stereotypes can lead to biased treatment, negatively impacting both genders, as women are often under-evaluated for their competence at work and men could be subject to detrimental effects on social functioning and even mental health (Ellemers, 2018).

Similar gender divisions and biases are also found in Taiwan (Peng & Hsung, 2011). In a survey facing Taiwanese high school students, nearly one-third of participants, including female students, believed that males do better in science than females (Chen, 2013). Stereotypical associations of males with agency and females with communion have also been identified in textbooks and classrooms of different levels of education (Chen, 2013; Hong, 2020).

However, in recent decades, there have been concerted efforts aimed at eliminating



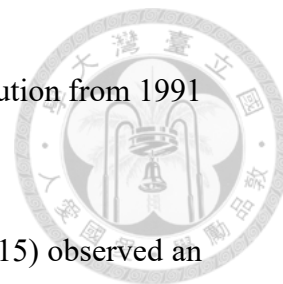
or reducing structural disparities and biases. Women's participation in the workforce and representation in various fields have risen significantly (Begeny et al., 2020; Haines et al., 2016). International organizations and governments have adopted conventions, laws and regulations to promote gender equality and inclusiveness, including the United Nations *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) and the *Gender Equality in Employment Act* in Taiwan. Researchers have therefore been intrigued to examine whether and how these societal changes affect people's perception of genders.

Building on the benchmark set by Deaux and Lewis (1984), Haines et al. (2016) examined four gender-related aspects: traits, role behaviors, occupations, and physical characteristics. Surprisingly, the results revealed a persistence of gender stereotypes over the course of three decades, despite societal changes.

The persistence of stereotypes has been corroborated by Begeny et al. (2020), who focused specifically on the veterinary profession, which has witnessed significant increases in women's representation for some time. The results indicated a systematic bias to consider male employees more competent than females. Ironically, this bias came from managers who believed that "women in their field no longer face bias" (p. 6). The biased belief could even translate into biased evaluation and treatment, e.g., unequal pay, of male and female professionals with identical performance.

Charlesworth and Banaji (2022), on the other hand, reported a consistent decrease in gender stereotypes across various demographic and geographic groups with a large data sample of nearly 1.4 million sessions from the Implicit Association Test. Lu (2011) also examined Taiwanese people's attitudes towards gender roles and noted a

significant increase toward egalitarian attitudes and gender role distribution from 1991 to 2001.



Different from an overall persistency or decrease, Croft et al. (2015) observed an asymmetry in changing gender roles, where the proportion of men engaging in communal roles did not grow despite women's expansion in more agentic pursuits. This asymmetrical change was attributed to possible factors including men's lower internalization of communal traits, lower social status of communal roles and therefore lack of incentives, and social sanctions including discrimination and lower income. A meta-analysis of 16 public opinion polls on gender stereotypes in the United States also provided evidence for this asymmetrical change in gender roles (Eagly et al., 2020).

While there is an ongoing debate about whether stereotypes have weakened in response to society-level changes, studies generally agree that these stereotypes are still far from eliminated (Begeny et al., 2020; Charlesworth & Banaji, 2022; Haines et al., 2016). Even in the study suggesting a steady decrease in gender stereotypes, the model predicted at least 37 to 74 years from 2018 for the implicit male-science/female-arts stereotype to disappear, and a much longer 134 years for the male-career/female-family stereotypes (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2022).

2.2 Gender Biases in the English Language

2.2.1 Generic Masculine Words

The English language reflects gender biases. One long-standing controversy centers on the use of male-marked “he” and “man” as generics prescribed by traditional grammarians (Foertsch & Gernsbacher, 1997). Prior studies suggested that “he” is “never truly sex-neutral” (Gardelle, 2015, p. 71) but contains and even reinforces a



male bias.

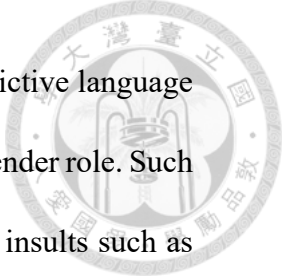
Notably, Silveira (1980) proposed a bi-directional “people = male” bias, arguing that thoughts about males are more closely associated with and more representative of those about people. The “people = male” direction indicates that people are more inclined to think of a given person as male when the gender is not specified. The other direction, “male = people” describes that a male is more likely to be thought of as a person, whereas females tend to be labeled with gender-specific terms. This “male-as-norm” (Dong et al., 2023, p. 1) tendency centralizes men and alienates women and other gender groups. Silveira also found a mutual causal relation between the bias and the use of generic masculine words where the two reflect and even reinforce each other.

Hamilton (1991) supported Silveira’s claims with empirical evidence from three studies. In the first study, 62 participants (30 male, 32 female) were asked to choose from two options to fill in the blanks in six sentences, among which are two target sentences about a man (David Akins) and a woman (Barbara White) respectively. Results showed that 25 participants, 13 male and 12 female, referred to David as a person or individual but to Barbara as the woman, while only 5 (3 male, 2 female) did the opposite, manifesting the “male = people” direction of the bias in both male and female participants. In the second study, Hamilton reanalyzed data collected in a previous study where participants (48 male, 48 female) were exposed to the same stories presented in masculine, neutral, and inclusive versions. Participants were then asked to describe their mental imagery in response to an open-ended question. Hamilton compared the number of female and male images for the neutral and inclusive versions, reporting a significantly stronger male imagery for male, but not female, participants.

In the third study, participants (13 male, 28 female) were asked to write a brief paragraph describing the “most typical person” and provide the “typical name” of this person (p. 397). Among all responses, 24 could be coded by gender, with 18 describing or naming a male as their typical person, and 6 describing or naming a female. This was significantly different from the expected gender-balanced distribution. The results from studies 2 and 3 confirmed male-biased imagery and a tendency to regard males as more prototypical, substantiating the “people = male” direction of Silveira’s hypothesis.

Miller and James (2009) also examined the inclusiveness of the generic “he” by replicating the experiment by MacKay and Fulkerson (1979). Participants were asked to read sentences describing a person of a specific occupation or in a specific activity (e.g. a truck driver or a patient) and answer whether the pronoun used could refer to female(s). There were 15 experimental sentences about a hypothetical person of unspecified gender, referenced by a generic masculine pronoun (“he” or “his”). For example, “a tour guide usually receives most of his business during the summer” (p. 495). If the masculine pronoun was truly generic, participants should give positive answers for all experimental sentences. However, a 75% error rate was found, suggesting that people tend to comprehend generic masculine pronouns in a gender-specific manner, which may exclude women and other gender groups from the narrative.

Rejecting the argument of a male-biased English, some researchers protested that anti-male bias exists in English, too, although less often in pronouns but in daily language use. August (1986) observed three evident kinds of anti-male bias in modern English. The first kind includes gender exclusive language omitting males, commonly seen in language erasing males as parents and victims, such as equating “mother” with

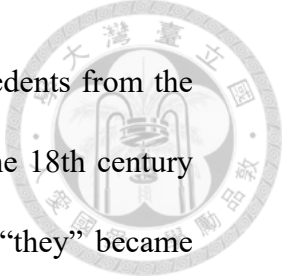


“parent” as in “mother tongue” (p. 116). Secondly, there is gender-restrictive language applicable to males only, imposing constraints of a socially prescribed gender role. Such language includes expressions of toxic masculinity like “be a man” or insults such as “sissy” (p. 117). The last kind of anti-male bias is negative stereotyping, implicit or overt, such as the disproportional attribution of negative traits such as “crime” and “evil” to the male. While less explored, these anti-male bias in the language may also affect the interpretations.

Understanding the gender bias rooted in language use holds significant relevance for this study, especially the link between the male bias and the use of generic masculine language. On one hand, if the gender bias reinforces the use of gendered language, it may be a fundamental factor behind interpreters’ approaches to interpreting gender-indefinite references. On the other hand, the power of language to sustain the bias underscores the importance of investigating and understanding how interpreters navigate these linguistic and gender-related challenges. Or else, the use of biased language could alienate certain gender groups, making it challenging for them to relate to gender-neutral references in dialogues.

2.2.2 Alternatives for Generic References

Recognizing the male bias in generic language points to the need for gender-inclusive alternatives. While “he or she” and “s/he” have been suggested, they could be clumsy to use and still conform to the traditional binary categorization of male and female. Efforts to introduce new gender-neutral singular pronouns like “xe” and “hen” have not yet gained mainstream acceptance (Dong et al., 2023; Foertsch & Gernsbacher, 1997). The adoption of a singular “they” has become a popular alternative to avoid male



bias. In fact, “they” was found to be widely used with singular antecedents from the 14th to 17th century until such usage was called ungrammatical in the 18th century (Speyer & Schleef, 2019). By the end of 18th century, the pronoun “they” became reserved for plural references in prescriptive grammar. However, in recent decades, the use of “they” as a gender-neutral singular pronoun has become increasingly common, even gaining acceptance in the latest edition of the *Publication Manual* by the American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association, 2020; Bradley, 2020; Zuber & Reed, 1993).

Despite this general acceptance and usage, the use of “they” for gender-indefinite singular nouns remains a subject of debate among researchers. Foertsch and Gernsbacher (1997) asked participants to listen to sentences containing gender-indefinite antecedents and pronouns “he,” “she,” or “they” and measured participants’ processing time. They concluded that “they” is cognitively acceptable as a singular anaphor when the antecedent is nonreferential. However, they also reported a detrimental effect of a singular “they” on comprehension when the antecedent indicates a specific person but not a group of people in general. This is supported by Sanford and Filik (2007) who found a significant number-mismatch effect between a singular “they” and singular nouns. Eye-tracking studies showed that comprehension is slowed down when “they” is paired with singular antecedents, though the mismatch is soon accommodated.

Despite the controversies, LaScotte (2016) reported a positive trend toward increased awareness of gender inclusivity and the popularity of the singular “they” as an alternative gender-inclusive pronoun. LaScotte examined the use of pronouns of 38

native English speakers “in free response to questions including a singular, genderless referent” (p. 62) through an online survey. Despite the preference for the generic masculine “he” in prescriptive grammar, a remarkable 79% of participants adopted gender-inclusive approaches, with singular “they” being the most popular. This shows a rising awareness of gender inclusivity and the increasing use and acceptance of such language, which may result in different interpretations across generations.

2.3 Gender Biases in the Mandarin Language

A similar gender bias is also found in the Mandarin language, e.g., a larger number of pejorative terms associated with females and a male-first word order (Shih, 1984). Farris (1988) observed that Mandarin does not have grammatical gender but contains a covert gender category that is attached to language by social norms, thoughts, and stereotypes, which also reflects Silveira’s bi-directional “people = male” bias. In the “male = people” direction, expressions containing masculine references are more often generalized, whereas generic feminine expressions are rare. For example, everybody can be “雄心萬丈” (*xióng xīn wàn zhàng*¹, extremely ambitious) though the first character “雄” (*xióng*, male of species) literally translates to masculinity (Shih, 1984).

In the “people = male” aspect of this covert gender labeling system, terms originally intended to be generic gradually acquire masculine connotations. This results in a gender asymmetry, where “maleness” is oftentimes the “usual” and unmarked category, whereas the “femaleness” marking needs to be overtly added to specify the gender. A case in point is the Mandarin character “子” (*zǐ*, offspring, child) and the term

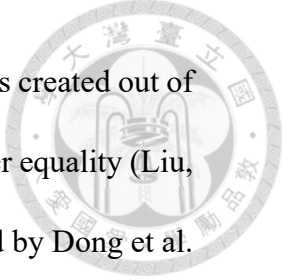
¹ All Chinese characters quoted, including titles of Chinese references, were transliterated according to the Hànyǔ Pīnyīn from the transliteration system of the Ministry of Education of Taiwan. URL: <https://crptransfer.moe.gov.tw/index.jsp>

for grandchildren “孫子” (*sūn zǐ*, grandchild), which are supposedly gender-neutral. Though they could still be used for generic references, both have come to encode a covert masculine mark under the traditions of male dominance. An opposing term “孫女” (*sūn nǚ*, granddaughter) with an overt feminine mark “女” (*nǚ*, female) has thus been introduced to make up that gap for “granddaughters” in the lexicon (Farris, 1988).

Gender biases are also seen in occupational nouns in Mandarin, as evident by prevalent expressions such as “護士小姐 (*hù shìxiǎo jiě*, Miss nurse),” despite the gender-neutral professional title “護理師 (*hù lǐ shī*, nurse),” and “警察先生 (*jǐng chá xiān sheng*, Mr. police officer)” (Yeh, 2018). Moreover, just as in English, many occupational nouns in Mandarin, especially those with expertise and positive images, seem to have no overt marks of gender but carry innate masculine connotations. When a person’s gender is against that connotation, an extra gender label needs to be attached to explicate the case, as in “老闆娘” (“*lǎo bǎn niáng*, boss-woman”) (Farris, 1988) and “女總統” (“*nǚzǒng tǒng*, female president”) (Shih, 1984).

Farris (1988) also argued that third-person singular pronouns “他” and “她” (both pronounced *tā*) in written Mandarin provide further evidence for Silveira’s “people = male” bias. The first *tā* “他,” created with the Chinese radical “亻” representing humans, should be gender-neutral. The feminine *tā* “她,” with a “女” radical marking femininity, is used exclusively for females. However, like the generic he in English, “他” is not truly gender-neutral and conveys masculinity. The masculine connotations in a pronoun with a “human” marking and this usage of a male-biased generic pronoun again manifest the bidirectional “people = male” hypothesis.

It is worth noting that the feminine *tā* was introduced relatively recently in the



early 1910s and mirrored the English “he/she/it” structure. In fact, it was created out of an effort to increase female presence in the dialogue and promote gender equality (Liu, 1920, as cited in Dong et al., 2023). However, an experiment conducted by Dong et al. (2023) revealed that 78.4% of participants continued to use the male-biased “他” for gender-indefinite references. The scholars therefore argued that the original purpose for creating the feminine pronoun failed and people still generally assume gender-indefinite referents to be male. Nevertheless, this argument overlooked the fact that the feminine *tā* was a relatively new creation in Mandarin, fundamentally different from the long-established feminine pronoun “she” in English. While the use of “he” for masculine references and “she” for feminine ones is mandatory in the English grammar, it is not strictly the case in Mandarin. Some people use “他” for all third-person singular references, regardless of the gender. Despite the growing adoption of “她,” the use of “他” for women is still widely accepted and understood. Therefore, the preference given to “他” may instead be taken as resistance to the recent creation of gender-specific pronouns and even an effort to stay gender-inclusive, whether conscious or not.

Even if a male bias is likewise found in Mandarin, as argued by Dong et al. (2023), it must be noted that the gendered pronouns in Mandarin have the identical pronunciation *tā*, making it easy to use *tā* for singular references without introducing gender biases when interpreting to Mandarin. In contrast, when interpreting from Mandarin to English, interpreters can face challenges in finding gender-inclusive interpretations or anaphors.

2.4 Possible Factors Affecting Interpretating Methods

In addition to the “people = male” bias, many factors may also be responsible for

people's approaches to gender-indefinite references and how interpreters render these references.



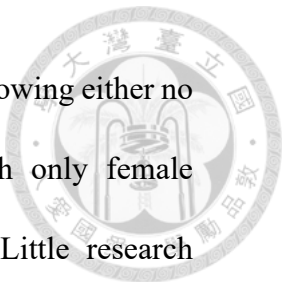
2.4.1 Stereotypes in the Antecedent

Research has demonstrated that stereotypes associated with the antecedent could influence language users' comprehension or choice of references, especially occupational stereotypes which were found to be strongly associated with the translation of the gender non-specific pronouns (Cho et al., 2019). A mismatch between the gender stereotype associated with an antecedent and the following pronoun, e.g., a masculine antecedent "truck driver" paired with a feminine pronoun "she," could hinder comprehension (Foertsch & Gernsbacher, 1997). Notably, when the antecedent is predominantly male, there is a significantly higher likelihood of interpreting the generic "he" as exclusively male (Miller & James, 2009).

2.4.2 Demographic Differences of Language Users

Demographic features of the language users, including interpreters themselves and the speakers, could also be decisive as they may affect interpreters' perception of the speaker, their comprehension of the speech and therefore their interpretation.

One possible factor is the gender of language users. Past studies have identified a gender difference in general language usage (Lakoff, 1973; Su, 2012) (for studies on English, see Lakoff, 1973; for studies on Chinese, see Su, 2012) and in particular the choice or comprehension of gender-indefinite references. For example, when exposed to gender-neutral nouns, females reported significantly less male imagery than males (Hamilton, 1991; Silveira, 1980). Several studies have also shown that females are less likely to choose generic masculine references (Balhorn, 2009; Dong et al., 2023;



Meyers, 1990). However, other research results suggested otherwise, showing either no sex difference (Miller & James, 2009) or even the opposite, with only female participants opting for generic masculine terms (LaScotte, 2016). Little research examined the correlation between gender and approaches to gender-indefinite references in Mandarin, possibly because all third-person singular pronouns sound the same in speech. Nevertheless, Dong et al. (2023) reported a stronger tendency for male respondents to consider gender-unspecified referents as male, suggesting a gender difference in the approach to such references.

The age of language users may be another factor given the considerable progress toward gender inclusivity in recent decades (Begeny et al., 2020; Department of Gender Equality, 2023; Dong et al., 2023; Haines et al., 2016). It would be reasonable to assume that younger generations, supposedly raised with a higher awareness of gender inclusivity, would be more likely to opt for gender-inclusive languages though existing studies have not found a significant age difference in this regard (Dong et al., 2023).

2.4.3 Speech Contexts and Content

Despite encouraging progress, women still face unequal participation in many male-dominated fields like science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine (STEMM) (Begeny et al., 2020). This is also true in Taiwan, where females account for less than 30% of science or engineering students in higher education (Department of Statistics, 2016). This underrepresentation may lead to a preference for male references in texts or speech related to these fields.

Another possible factor is the speech context. Evidence suggests that people may favor “he or she” in written, formal settings (LaScotte, 2016). However, the time

constraints of interpreting tasks may lead to different preferences.

2.5 Rendering Gender in Cross-Language/Cultural Communications

Although a considerable amount of literature examined the use of gender-specific and gender-inclusive pronouns in English, this subject remains largely unexplored in cross-language communications, especially between Mandarin and English. Still, some translation and interpretation studies offer valuable insights.

2.5.1 Challenges in Translating or Interpreting Between Mandarin and English

Before focusing on gender, it is important to note the challenges specific to cross-language communication tasks between Mandarin and English. Wang and Zou (2018) reported significant differences in the linguistic structures of the two languages, which require more processing capacity to overcome. Zero-subject clauses are typical in Mandarin, which is heavily context-based, while such clauses are generally ungrammatical in English. An example is provided in Shi (2019).

Example 1.

Speaker A:	張三	看見	李四	了
Literal Translation:	<i>Zhāng sān</i>	see	<i>Lǐ sì</i>	[perfective marker]
	嗎			
		[question marker]		
Translation:	Did <i>Zhāng sān</i> see <i>Lǐ sì</i> ?			
Speaker B:	看見	了		
	See	[perfective marker]		
Translation:	“[He] saw him.”			

As shown in the example, in such sentences, the unstated subject can only be drawn from the context and often has to be added in the English translation.

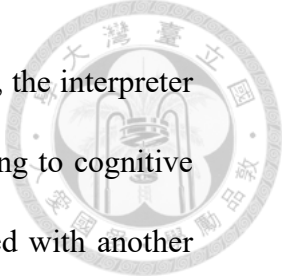
Also distinct are the modifying structures of the two languages, which is often front-loaded (left-branching) in Mandarin and back-loaded (right-branching) in English. Wang and Zou (2018) examined the interpretation of front-loaded modifiers in Mandarin and found that most interpreters devoted effort to render them into back-loaded structures in English, as shown in Example 2 provided by Wang and Zou. The gloss and markings are all from the original paper, where the modifiers are put in double braces or brackets and the modified noun is underlined. The source text was rendered from Simplified Chinese to Traditional Chinese in this research.

Example 2.

Source Text:	關於{{管好通脹預期、抑制通貨膨脹所採取的}} <u>措施</u> ，在我的《政府工作報告》裡已經詳細地講了。
Gloss:	As for {{managing well the inflation expectations and curbing inflation}} measures, in [[my]] <u>Government Work Report</u> I have in details talked about it.
Interpretation:	I have explained the <u>measures</u> {{that we will adopt to control inflation and manage inflation expectations}} in [[my]] <u>Government Work Report</u> in great details.

These differences could lead to different approaches to references, requiring reordering efforts during translation and interpretation.

In addition, past research noted that there is “no category of number” in Mandarin (Iljic, 2005; Liu, 2015). The closest to a plural marker in Mandarin is the suffix 們 (-*men*), but plurality in Mandarin does not always entail the use of -*men*. A noun without any classifier or number marker like -*men* can be plural or singular in nature. For example, if there is a plural marker in the Mandarin, the interpreter could either translate

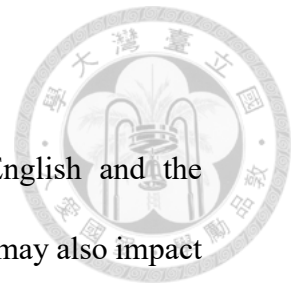


that into singular or plural, depending on the context. If it is unmarked, the interpreter has to decide whether to render it in the singular or plural form, adding to cognitive stress. When the singular form is adopted, the interpreter is then faced with another challenge regarding gender. As overt gender markers exist in English but not in spoken Mandarin, the interpreter again must decide whether to assign a gender or to adopt other methods to avoid introducing a gendered pronoun. While this could mean greater flexibility in rendering nouns without number markers from Mandarin to English, it could present additional cognitive stress for interpreters.

2.5.2 Addressing Gender in Translation

A few translation studies explored the challenge of addressing gender in translation. Ergun (2010) revisited significant works in feminist translation and sociolinguistics, emphasizing the dual role of language as a tool for both “oppression and empowerment” (p. 309). She analyzed various approaches by translators to feminize texts, such as adopting feminine terminology or rendering gendered text gender-neutral, and vice versa. However, she also cautioned that such approaches could risk erasing the gender context, stifling critical discourse, or reinforcing societal gender stereotypes.

Meng (2020) conducted a detailed textual and paratextual analysis of the English translation of the Chinese novel 沉重的翅膀 (*chén zhòng de chì bang*, *Leaden Wings*). She identified linguistic sexism in the use of masculine terms “man/men” for generic references and child terms like “girl(s)” for adult females, centralizing males and downgrading females. Despite the translator’s and publisher’s deliberate efforts to feminize the work, patriarchal ideologies seeped into the translation through deeply



ingrained sexism inherent in the English language.

Studies by Ergun and Meng revealed sexism ingrained in English and the complexities of translating gendered and genderless references, which may also impact interpreters' approaches, especially under time constraints.

More specifically, some studies explored the translation of gender-neutral pronouns, though with more focus on machine translation (MT). Prates et al. (2018) examined how Google Translate rendered sentences like “he/she is an engineer” from 12 gender-neutral languages, including Mandarin Chinese, into English. They discovered that Google Translate exhibited a prominence of male defaults, generally opting for male pronouns more often than female or gender-neutral pronouns. Notably, the number of female pronouns used for translating Mandarin Chinese was as low as 1.865%, the second lowest among all tested languages, only higher than Japanese. Though not discussed by Prates et al., this low percentage of female pronouns used in the translation from Mandarin Chinese may be associated with the use of “他” in the source text. As mentioned above, “他” in written Mandarin is supposedly gender neutral but has come to carry a male bias. Moreover, the scholars also compared the frequency of female pronouns used with the frequency of real-world women participation in the professions. The average percentage of female pronouns used across occupations and languages was 11.76%, lower than the 35.94% participation rate of female workers reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States. This showed that Google Translate was not merely reflecting the imbalanced gender distribution in real life but imposing a negative bias.

Cho et al. (2019) also investigated how different MT systems translated Korean



gender-neutral pronouns—“개 (kyay, s/he)” and “그 사람 (ku salam, the person)” — into English, focusing on the influence of three factors: formality, politeness, and polarity (categorized as negative judgment, positive judgment, or neutral expressions, such as occupational terms that convey neither positive nor negative judgment). Similarly, they found a dominance of translation into males and a significant association of occupation words with the translation. Two of the three systems, Google Translate and Kakao Translator, generated translation reflecting social prejudice regarding the occupations. On the other hand, Naver Papago translated some male-stereotyped roles into female pronouns and vice versa, possibly as a result of the team’s deliberate modification aimed at reducing bias. It would be interesting to see if interpreters exhibit similar patterns reflecting or efforts rejecting the biases.

2.5.2 Addressing Gender in Interpretation

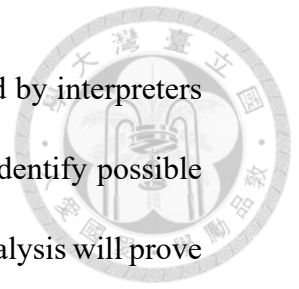
Yañez (2023) explored the gender-aware approaches in simultaneous interpreted speech between Spanish and English, which discussed the situation of Ukrainian women and transwomen. The analysis showed that interpreters adopted gender-neutral forms for nouns like “the Minister” until the gender was made evident. The finding demonstrated the interpreters’ capacity and efforts in selecting more egalitarian language, possibly to stay in line with the corresponding framework of the European Parliament. In addition to using gender-neutral language, the interpreters also took various approaches, including additions, compensations and emphasis, to assist in the discussion of gender issues. For example, when discussing the issue of surrogacy, the interpreter rendered “la mercantilización de los cuerpos de las mujeres” (the commoditization of women’s bodies) into “women’s bodies being sold and bartered”

and “las madres” (the mothers) into “surrogate mothers” (p. 383). By adopting and adding explicit terms, the interpreter highlighted the issue of surrogacy. Such example shows the proactive role interpreters may play in the discourse. This draws the attention to the issue of interpreter agency. An increasing number of studies discussed the social responsibility of translators and interpreters, seeing them as agents not only facilitating but also permitting participation in social change (Drugan & Tipton, 2017). However, the acceptable extent of intervention by interpreters remains under question. More proactive approaches, such as eliminating biases in the source speech, may not always be ideal as some would argue that they violate the principle of fidelity.

Another particularly relevant study by McDermid et al. (2021) focuses on interpreting gender-indefinite pronouns from American Sign Language (ASL) to English. The experiment involved 22 interpreters who interpreted four stories from ASL to English, followed by structured interviews. The study identified eleven strategies, including the use of different person pronouns, antecedent repetition, and deletion, with “they” being the predominant choice. Given the possibility of identifying similar trends, these strategies can serve as a valuable reference for coding similar interpreting methods found in the present study. In addition, in the interviews, more than half of the participants expressed the need to address gender-related issues, indicating that this is a common challenge deserving exploration and resolution.

The challenge encountered by ASL interpreters is closely mirrored by those interpreting from Mandarin to English. Since both ASL and spoken Mandarin do not distinguish gender in pronouns, interpreters are required to independently determine how to convey gender-indefinite singular references. Addressing this gap in the existing

literature, the current study aims to investigate the approaches adopted by interpreters when dealing with singular, gender-indefinite references, seeking to identify possible patterns and influencing factors. It is anticipated that this descriptive analysis will prove beneficial to both future interpreters and researchers.



Chapter 3 Methodology



The current study employed a corpus-based approach to examine how professional interpreters render gender-indefinite singular references and produce descriptive outcomes. This method aims to “analyze the actual patterns of language use” in real-life assignments rather than experimental settings (Bennett, 2010).

3.1 Data Collection and Sampling

The researcher built a corpus using online public video recordings of Mandarin-to-English interpreted speech. These online materials were selected due to their ready accessibility and the possibility of replaying them for detailed analysis. The authentic interpreting setting depicted the gender-indefinite references interpreters face in real life and their corresponding interpretations. Furthermore, the use of public materials, presumably uploaded or live streamed with consent from both interpreters and the host organization, aids in minimizing the risk of copyright infringement.

The data were collected from YouTube, the largest online video platform as of November 2023. Materials were found through Chinese keywords “論壇 (forum)” and “中文頻道 (Mandarin channel)” as well as from recommended videos. For the interest of this study, only videos with Mandarin to English interpretation were included. The scope of the study was limited to events held in Taiwan or by Taiwanese organizations. As of November 26, 2023, a total of 33 sets of recordings were found (recordings of the same event, even on different days, are considered one set of materials). A majority of 29 were in the simultaneous mode and only 4 performed consecutively. This was partly because some materials of consecutive interpretation in diplomatic settings had been excluded in the first place given the high possibility of a pre-translated script,

which may fail to reflect interpreters' spontaneous choices. As the limited number of CI materials available may not be representative, this researcher decided to focus the study on the simultaneous interpretation (SI) materials found. To ensure the selected materials contain enough data, two sets of SI materials with less than 30 minutes of Chinese-to-English interpretations were also excluded.

From the remaining 27 sets of materials, 10 were chosen for the main analysis, with dates ranging from September 8, 2020 to December 2, 2023. These materials were selected to include interpreters of different biological sexes and diverse subject fields. Of the ten sets of materials, two were interpreted by a pair of male interpreters, four by a pair of female interpreters, and four by one male interpreter and one female interpreter. The ten events respectively discussed topics regarding smart cities and women's empowerment, the promotion of the food industry, the energy industry, discrimination against women, smart medicine, e-mobility, the culture and history of Taiwan, machine tools, human rights, and international trends across disciplines.

Preliminary processing of one selected video revealed a limited number of gender-indefinite singular references occurring. To gather more data, two more interpreter-mediated videos were selected, which were the presidential and vice-presidential debates of Taiwan. The two events were held respectively on December 30 2023 and January 1 2024, with the interpretation broadcast live on YouTube by Taiwan Plus. In both events, speeches by the candidates were interpreted by female interpreters, whereas questioners and the MC were interpreted by male interpreters. Both debates covered a wide range of topics related to national governance, including energy security, public housing, and society aging.

To further expand the corpus, a search was conducted again on YouTube in April 2024, using different keywords including “國際研討會 (international symposium),” “國際論壇 (international forum)” and “全球 論壇 (global, forum).” As of April 24, 2024, 17 more sets of materials were found. Among these, three sets were further selected to be included in the corpus considering the diversity of topics and the sex of the interpreter pairs. The three events respectively discussed net-zero and sustainability, digital transformation of the workforce, and post-pandemic economy. Two of the events were interpreted by a pair of male and female interpreters, whereas the other one was by two male interpreters.

With these newly added sets of materials, the length of all Mandarin to English interpreting materials selected for the corpus totals around 43 hours 22 minutes and 36 seconds. Table 1 below contains the information of all selected materials.

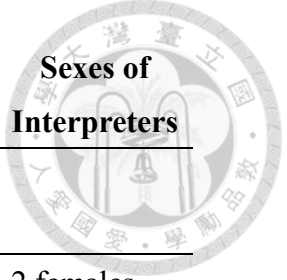
Table 1

Selected Materials

Event Date	Event Name (English)	Event Name (Mandarin)	Subject Field	Sexes of Interpreters
2020/09/08	2020 Food & Beverage Franchise Asia- Pacific Summit	2020 連鎖餐 飲亞太高峰會	The food industry	1 male, 1 female
2021/04/27	2035 E Mobility Taiwan International Press Conference	2035 E Mobility Taiwan 國際 記者會	E-mobility	1 male, 1 female
2021/06/23	Forum on International	2021 酷刑防 制國際運作暨	Human rights	2 females



Event Date	Event Name (English)	Event Name (Mandarin)	Subject Field	Sexes of Interpreters
	Practice of OPCAT-NPM & Human Rights of Fishermen	漁工人權專業 論壇		
2021/08/25	Post-Pandemic Workforce Digital Transformation International Forum	後疫情時期勞 動力數位轉型 國際論壇	Digital Transformation of the Workforce	1 male, 1 female
2021/10/14	2021 International Smart Medical Forum	2021 跨域推 進 智慧醫療 再進化	Smart medicine	2 females
2021/11/02	Master Thinkers Forum 2021	2021 大師智 庫論壇	Post-pandemic economy	2 males
2021/11/10- 14	2021 Taiwan Creative Content Fest: The Forum— Welcome to the Metaverse: The Wild West for Creative Industries	2021 TCCF 國際趨勢論壇 —請登入元宇 宙	Metaverse	2 females
2021/12/02	TIMTOS (Taipei International Machine Tool Show) x TMTS 2022 Global Press Conference	TIMTOS x TMTS 2022 全球記者會	Machine tools	2 males
2022/03/23	Smart City Leading Women Summit	智慧城市女性 領袖峰會	Smart city and women empowerment	2 males
2022/10/30	Polyphonic Lecture: How the	多聲道講座： 基隆海港飲食	Culture and history of	1 male, 1 female

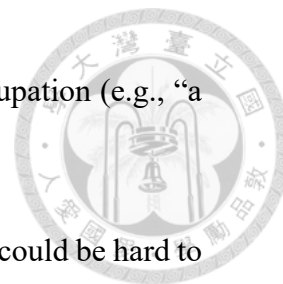


Event Date	Event Name (English)	Event Name (Mandarin)	Subject Field	Sexes of Interpreters
	Culinary Keelung born at the Port	文化	Taiwan	
2022/11/28- 12/02	Review Meeting of the ROC (TAIWAN) CEDAW Fourth National Report	消除對婦女一 切形式歧視公 約(CEDAW) 第四次國家報 告國際審查會 議	Discrimination against women	2 females
2022/12/02	2022 TEEMA Global Networking Forum	2022 電電公 會國際鏈結論 壇	The energy industry	1 male, 1 female
2023/12/30	2024 Taiwan Presidential Debate	2024 總統選 舉電視辯論會	Various	3 females, 1 male
2024/01/01	2024 Taiwan Vice- Presidential Debate	2024 副總統 選舉電視辯論 會	Various	3 females, 1 male
2024/03/20	Net Zero City: Low Carbon Sustainable New Economy Forum	2024 淨零城 市低碳永續新 經濟論壇	Net zero and sustainability	1 female, 1 male

3.2 Data Extraction and Analysis

To build the corpus, gender-indefinite singular references were first extracted from the videos. The segments were transcribed at least one sentence before the antecedent and at least one sentence after the interpretation of the reference to include the context of the occurrence. In this study, “gender-indefinite singular references” are defined as references to a preceding person, an “antecedent,” whose gender is not specified in the speech. Possible “antecedents” include but are not limited to a proper name, an

indefinite pronoun (e.g., “someone”), or an unspecified person by occupation (e.g., “a teacher”).



Due to the absence of clear number markings, singular references could be hard to define in Mandarin. For example, 消費者 (*xiāo fèi zhě*, consumer) may refer to “a consumer” or all “consumers” as a collective. To identify singular references more precisely, only indefinite references with a singular quantifier (e.g. 一個消費者 [*yī ge xiāo fèi zhě*, a consumer]) or definite references (e.g. 鄭創辦人 [*zhèng chuàng bàn rén*, Founder Zhèng]) were included in the corpus. Pronouns attached right after the antecedent, for example, “消費者他” (*xiāo fèi zhě tā*, consumer third-person singular reference), were also ruled out as they function more like appositions or fillers, instead of references.

Furthermore, speakers sometimes use references inconsistently for the same antecedent, or pair singular references with plural antecedents, and vice versa. For example, a speaker mentioned “這些專家” (*zhè xiē zhuān jiā*, these experts) but then referred to the experts with both “他 (*tā*, third-person singular pronoun)” and “他們 (*tā men*, they).” To avoid overcounting, plural references to singular antecedents and singular references to plural antecedents were not counted. When inconsistency of references arises, only singular references were included in the corpus.

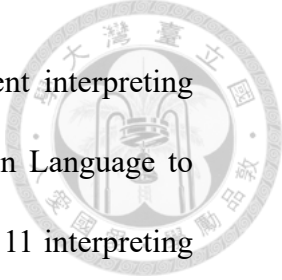
In addition, references to people in names were left out of the analysis. This researcher originally planned to include names in the corpus since names were found to be common among gender-indefinite singular references and may be a cause of concern for interpreters. Nevertheless, names were found to contain gender cues or refer to celebrities whose gender may be readily known to interpreters. Given the difficulty

to establish objective criteria for defining which were the gendered or household names to exclude, all references in names were left out of the corpus.

References to speakers or guests present on-site or virtually, regardless of the forms of references, were excluded given the high possibility of interpreters knowing their gender.

It is worth noting that second-person singular pronoun “你” (*nǐ*) in the original Mandarin speech could sometimes be comprehended and interpreted as a gender-indefinite singular reference. This is because aside from the propositional use to address somebody, *nǐ* is also used in an impersonal or dramatic sense, as defined by Biq (1991). Biq divided the use of *nǐ* in conversational Mandarin into four categories: propositional, impersonal, dramatic, and metalinguistic. The impersonal use of *nǐ* refers to an indefinite pronoun, whereas the dramatic use refers to a character in a described scenario. In both cases, it is possible that *nǐ* be interpreted into a third-person singular reference. However, this researcher noted that *nǐ*, even if used dramatically or impersonally, was often directly rendered as “you” by interpreters, likely because such impersonal use of the second-person pronoun “you” was also found in English, as noted by Biq. Given this slight tendency to interpret *nǐ* as a gender-indefinite singular reference, all occurrences of *nǐ* were ruled out of the analysis.

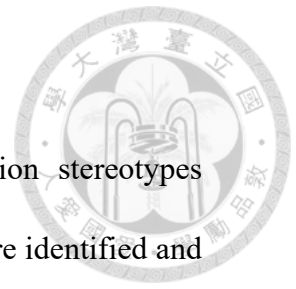
Following the methodology adopted by Liu (2023) on interpreters’ use of first-person pronouns (FPP), the dataset of this study was annotated through behavioral profiling for a series of language-internal and -external variables, including the age of the speaker at time of the event, the biological sex of the speaker and the interpreter, and the speech topic.



Each item in the corpus was then coded into groups of different interpreting methods following the approach of a similar study on American Sign Language to English interpretation. In the study, McDermid et al. (2021) identified 11 interpreting methods, which were “he,” “she,” “guy,” “they,” “you,” “we,” “indefinite,” “role,” “agent deletion,” “object deletion,” and “superordinate.” The same codes of methods were adopted for the coding of the present study. For methods not identified in the previous study, grounded codes were formulated based on open coding, same as how McDermid et al coded the results. The data was coded by this author alone twice, with a one-week interval to ensure reliability of the coding. The intra-coder reliability rate was 96.4%. Identifying and coding these methods professional interpreters used in real life help answer the first research question.

After the corpus was established and coded, the frequency distribution of the coded groups was examined to describe the distribution of interpreting methods for the second research question. Given that past research has noted inconsistent use of pronouns for references (McDermid et al., 2021), each reference, even to the same antecedent, was treated as an independent entry in this study as it reflects one separate decision made by the interpreter.

To answer the third research question, statistical analyses were performed to examine the correlation between the coded corpus items and the annotated variables to examine potential factors influencing interpreters’ strategies. Past literature identified three major kinds of factors likely to affect approaches to gender-indefinite references: stereotypes of the antecedent, demographic differences of the language user, and speech contexts and content. Descriptive statistics were adopted to identify trends and patterns



in the interpreting methods and variables.

The first possible factor examined in this study is occupation stereotypes associated with the antecedent. Antecedents related to occupations were identified and compiled into lists respectively. The items were then classified as “male-dominant,” “female-dominant,” “neutral” or “conflicting” based on past studies before being examined for correlation with interpreting methods.

Another possible factor examined was the demographic characteristics of the speaker or the interpreter. Considering the difficulty of identifying all speakers and interpreters in the online materials and gathering accurate demographic information, the age of the speakers and the interpreters, though a potential factor, was excluded. Only the biological sex of the speakers and that of the interpreters were analyzed in this study.

To examine the effect of speech content on the interpreting methods, this study originally planned to compare the data annotated for different speech topics. A special focus was given to the Smart City Leading Women Summit, where the gender-related speech context was assumed to influence the interpretations of gender-indefinite references. However, given the randomness of occurrences, no instances of gender-indefinite references were found in some sets of materials, including the Smart City Leading Women Summit. The listed entries were highly concentrated on only a few topics, which correspond with the occupational stereotypes identified. To avoid repetition, no separate analysis was performed for the speech topics.

In addition to variables noted in past literature, some language-internal variables, such as the antecedent type and definiteness, were identified and analyzed. The results

of the analyses are presented in the next chapter.



Chapter 4 Results



This chapter discusses the coding and annotation results of the corpus entries, followed by the analysis of interpreting methods and annotated variables.

4.1 The Corpus

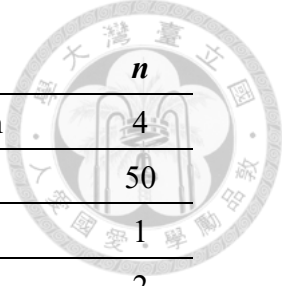
Analysis of all 15 sets of selected materials yielded a total of 112 occurrences of gender-indefinite singular references from 12 sets of materials. This number is substantially lower than the 741 occurrences collected in the experiment by McDermid et al. (2021). Unlike the experimental setting which allowed insertion of references of interest, the corpus entries were drawn from the real-life speeches. Therefore, the number of occurrences could not be controlled before the data were processed.

Table 2 shows the number of occurrences from each set of materials. No gender-indefinite singular references were found in 3 sets of materials: the 2020 Food & Beverage Franchise Asia-Pacific Summit, Taipei International Machine Tool Show x Taiwan International Machine Tool Show 2022 Global Press Conference, and Smart City Leading Women Summit. In contrast, the three events that contributed the most occurrences focused on human rights, smart medicine, and anti-discrimination against women respectively. These events featured numerous case studies shared by the speakers, contributing to the higher frequency of gender-indefinite references.

Table 2

Breakdown of Occurrences by Event

Event	<i>n</i>
2035 E Mobility Taiwan	1
Forum on International Practice of OPCAT-NPM & Human Rights of Fishermen	23



Event	<i>n</i>
Post-Pandemic Workforce Digital Transformation International Forum	4
2021 International Smart Medical Forum	50
Master Thinkers Forum 2021	1
2021 Taiwan Creative Content Fest	2
Polyphonic Lecture: How the Culinary Keelung born at the Port	3
Review Meeting of the ROC (TAIWAN) CEDAW Fourth National Report	22
2022 TEEMA Global Networking Forum	3
2024 Taiwan Presidential Debate	1
2024 Taiwan Vice-Presidential Debate	1
Net Zero City: Low Carbon Sustainable New Economy Forum	1
Total	112

4.2 Interpreting Methods

Table 3 shows the eleven interpreting methods identified. S

Table 3

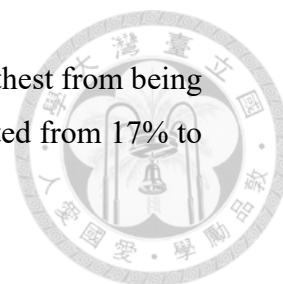
Interpreting Methods Adopted

Method	<i>n</i>	% ^a
He	31	27.7
They	19	16.9 ^b
Role	17	15.2
Shared agent	11	9.8
Rephrasing	9	8.0
Agent deletion	8	7.1
He or she	5	4.5
You	4	3.6
Possessive adjective deletion	4	3.6
Object deletion	3	2.7
Guy	1	0.9
Total	112	100

^a Percentages have been rounded off to one decimal place.

^b The rounded numbers originally summed up to 100.1%, so the second decimal place

was examined. “They” (16.96%) and “he or she” (4.46%) were the furthest from being rounded off and the rounded percentage of “they” was therefore adjusted from 17% to 16.9% for a sum of 100%.

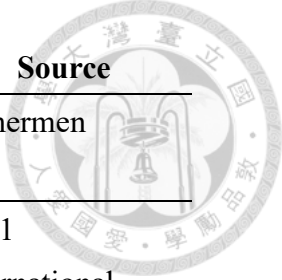


Seven of these methods were consistent with those identified by McDermid et al. (2021), which include using the pronoun “they,” “he,” “you,” repeating the noun used for the antecedent (coded as “role”), using a masculine noun (coded as “guy”), omitting the reference serving as the agent of a sentence (coded as “agent deletion”) and omitting the reference as an object in the sentence (coded as “object deletion”). Examples of these methods are provided in Table 4 below. The antecedent in the source speech (SS) is underlined, and the reference is marked in double underlines. These methods account for 74.1% of all interpreting methods.

Table 4

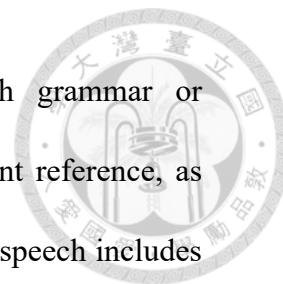
Examples of Interpreting Methods Consistent with McDermid et al. (2021)

Method	Source Speech	Target Speech	Source
He	我收到 <u>一個學生</u> 的 complaint, <u>他</u> 說:	I received a complaint from one of our students. He said that ...	2021 International Smart Medical Forum
They	那我們這行業的巨頭 的 <u>一個高層</u> 曾經對我 們說過, <u>他</u> 覺得這是一 個奇蹟	And one of the senior managements of this company said to us that they find us a miracle ...	2021 International Smart Medical Forum
Role	<u>勞工法庭的法官</u> 他也 對海上勞動不熟, 所 以 <u>他</u> 也沒有固定工時	...because this judge is not very familiar with fisher who works on high sea. So this judge doesn't really	Forum on International Practice of OPCAT-NPM & Human Rights of



Method	Source Speech	Target Speech	Source
		specifically talk about the working hours.	Fishermen
You	以後醫生真正的精準醫療，就是直接可以判斷一個病人， <u>這個</u> 人是不是糖尿病？ <u>他</u> 是不是應該直接去打腸泌素 GLP-1，還是直接打胰島素，還是吃 metformin？	Basically, you can see very accurately how you can prevent certain diseases or when you might start needing insulin or things like that.	2021 International Smart Medical Forum
Guy	那其中一個讓我印象非常深刻就是 <u>一個退伍軍人</u> …… <u>他</u> 那天在跟我敘述他穿這個改變了他的生活的什麼	So, I was particularly impressed, I was particularly impressive um with one of the users So, um that user, that gentleman was sharing with me his experiences with Keeego.	2021 International Smart Medical Forum
Agent Deletion	<u>他</u> 本來在菲律賓就訂了一個契約，然後仲介跟 <u>他</u> 訂的契約相當不錯	. . . the local contract established in Philippines was a good one	Forum on International Practice of OPCAT-NPM & Human Rights of Fishermen
Object Deletion	我收到一個學生的complaint， <u>他</u> 說：……我就跟 <u>他</u> 講沒有那麼可怕啦……	I received a complaint from one of our students. He said that And I said it's not that scary. . .	2021 International Smart Medical Forum

This study identified four additional methods. The first method, termed “shared



agent,” involves instances where the interpreter utilizes English grammar or conjunctions to connect messages without introducing an independent reference, as demonstrated in Example 3 below. In such cases, although the source speech includes a reference that serves as the agent of the sentence, the interpreted message omits this reference and instead relies on the previously mentioned agent. In the examples, literal translations of the grammatical function of words are put in brackets. Given its gender-indefinite nature, the third-person pronoun was transcribed in the generic form “他” and written as *ta* in the literal translation.

Example 3. Shared agent

Mandarin SS: 要不然 這個加害人 就是行為人呢 施暴的一方

Literal translation: Or else the victimizer which is the actor the perpetrator

他 其實 是被 推定為 他 不適合

[*tā*] in fact [passive] presumed to be [*tā*] unsuitable

擔任 親權的 保護 教養者的。

to serve as of parental protector educator.

Interpreter 17: The perpetrator basically is presumed to be inadequate to have the custody of the child.

Source: Review Meeting of the ROC (TAIWAN) CEDAW Fourth National Report

The second method involved using the subjective, objective, or possessive forms of the combined third-person pronouns “he or she.”

Example 4. He or she

Mandarin SS: 一個 兒童 並不是 商品 兒童的 存在

Literal translation: A child is not product child's existence

也 不是 一個 物質 被 製造出來

either not a material [passive] produced

Interpreter 18: A child is not a commercial product. He or she is not a material,

just being manufactured.

Source: Review Meeting of the ROC (TAIWAN) CEDAW Fourth National Report



The third method, termed “possessive adjective deletion,” involved omitting the possessive adjective. For example, “他的約” (*tā*, third-person singular pronoun; *de*, possessive marker; *yuē*, contract) was simplified to the pronoun “it” without the use of a possessive marker, as shown in Example 5 below.

Example 5. Possessive adjective deletion

Mandarin SS:	其實	監察院	我們	曾經	視訊
Literal translation:	Actually	the Control Yuan	we	past	video chat
	過	<u>這個</u>	等於是說	被害人	
	[past tense]	this	who is	victim	...
	因為	<u>他</u> 的	約	就是	兩
	because	[<i>tā</i>] [possessive mark]	contract	specified	two
	年	你	才能	下	船
	years	[2 nd person pronoun]	can	leave	ship
Interpreter 5:	The Control Yuan held the virtual interviews of the victims. They said that since it is a two-year contract...				
Source:	Forum on International Practice of OPCAT-NPM & Human Rights of Fishermen				

The final method identified, termed “rephrasing,” refers to instances where interpreters restructured the sentence to convey a similar meaning. This method differs from methods like “agent deletion,” “object deletion,” “shared agent,” or “possessive adjective deletion,” where only specific parts of the sentence were altered or omitted.

Example 6. Rephrasing

Mandarin SS: 結果 是 那個 被子 已經 蓋到 嬰兒

Literal translation: Results are that blanket already covered baby
 的 鼻子 所以 救
 [possessive mark] nose ... so save
 了 那個 嬰兒
 [past tense] that baby



Interpreter 7: The baby was covered by the blanket. ... so thanks to the system, we could detect this risk.

Source: 2021 International Smart Medical Forum

Notably, four methods identified by McDermid et al. (2021) were not observed in this study. These include the use of the third-person singular feminine pronoun “she,” the first-person plural pronoun “we,” indefinite pronouns like “somebody,” and superordinate terms such as “a person” instead of “a friend.”

To address the second research question, the frequency and percentage of each interpreting method were analyzed. Among all methods employed, the most common was the use of the generic masculine pronoun “he,” which appeared 31 times, accounting for 27.7% of all instances. This was followed by the use of “they,” which occurred 19 times (16.9%). The repetition of “role” ranked third, with 17 occurrences (15.2%). Several interpreters adopted methods involving alterations to sentence structure. These included the use of “shared agent” 11 times (9.8%), “rephrasing” 9 times (8.0%), “agent deletion” 8 times (7.1%), “possessive adjective deletion” 4 times (3.6%), and “object deletion” 3 times (2.7%).

The use of personal pronouns other than “he” and “they” was less frequent. Variations of “he or she” appeared 5 times (4.5%), and the second-person pronoun “you” was used 4 times (3.6%). Only one instance of a masculine noun was observed, where the interpreter referred to a veteran, whose gender was not specified until later in the



speech, as a “gentleman” (coded as “guy” following McDermid et al., 2021). No similar usage of a feminine noun was found.

4.2.1 Gendered or Neutral

McDermid et al. (2021) classified interpreting methods into “gendered” and “neutral” categories, analyzing their use in stories related to female- or male-dominated occupations. Building on this approach, the methods in this study were categorized similarly. The “gendered” group included “he” and “guy,” while all other pronouns and interpreting methods were categorized as “neutral.”

Table 5 below presents the breakdown of methods within each category. All “gendered” methods were masculine. No female-exclusive terms were used by any of the interpreters, which aligns with the “people = male bias” proposed by Silveira (1980).

Table 5
Gendered or Neutral Methods

Gendered			Neutral		
Method	<i>n</i>	%	Method	<i>n</i>	%
He	31	27.7	They	19	16.9
Guy	1	0.9	Role	17	15.2
			Shared agent	11	9.8
			Rephrasing	9	8
			Agent deletion	8	7.1
			He or she	5	4.5
			You	4	3.6
			Possessive adjective deletion	4	3.6
			Object deletion	3	2.7
Total	32	28.6		80	71.4



“Neutral” methods were adopted in over 70% of entries, while “gendered” methods accounted for 28.6%, slightly lower than the 30.5% found in McDermid et al. (2021). The higher percentage of neutral methods suggests that interpreters tended to favor gender-neutral approaches when addressing gender-indefinite singular references.

Although “he or she” is grouped as gender-neutral in this study and in previous research, it is important to note that some argue that it still adheres to a binary gender framework, excluding other identities on the gender spectrum (LaScotte, 2016).

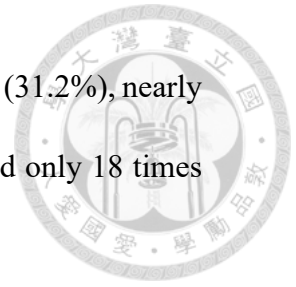
4.2.2 Pronouns, Syntactic Variations and Nouns

To analyze the grammatic attributes, the interpreting methods were divided into three categories: “pronouns,” “syntactic variations” and “nouns.” Table 6 below provides a breakdown of the methods within each category.

Table 6
Breakdown of Methods into Pronouns, Syntactic Variations, and Nouns

Pronouns			Syntactic Variations			Nouns		
Method	<i>n</i>	%	Method	<i>n</i>	%	Method	<i>n</i>	%
He	31	27.7	Shared agent	11	9.8	Role	17	15.2
They	19	16.9	Rephrasing	9	8	Guy	1	0.9
He or she	5	4.5	Agent deletion	8	7.1			
You	4	3.6	Possessive adjective deletion	4	3.6			
			Object deletion	3	2.7			
<i>Total</i>	59	52.7		35	31.2		18	16.1

“Pronouns,” including “he,” “they,” “you,” and “he or she,” were used 59 times, accounting for over half (52.7%) of the occurrences. This indicates the interpreters’ tendency to render the gender-indefinite singular reference using pronouns. The next



most common category was “syntactic variations,” with 35 occurrences (31.2%), nearly twice as many as the least popular category, “nouns,” which were used only 18 times (16.1%).

4.3 Annotated Variables

To investigate potential factors influencing interpreters’ choices, whether conscious or unconscious, the corpus entries were annotated with a range of variables. These included the speaker’s sex, the interpreter (anonymized by number), the interpreter’s sex, antecedent type, dominant gender in the occupation, and definiteness. The variables and their corresponding labels are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7
Annotated Variables and Labels

Variable	Label
Speaker Sex	Male, Female, N/A (Not Applicable)
Interpreter	Interpreters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 27, 28, 32, 33, 35
Interpreter Sex	Male, Female
Antecedent Type	Occupation, Indefinite Pronoun, Pronoun, Rank, Noun
Dominant Gender in the Occupation	Male, Female, Neutral, Conflicting, N/A
Definiteness	Definite, Indefinite

4.3.1 The Sex of Speakers

Due to the corpus-based approach, it was not possible to account for the self-reported gender identities of the speakers and interpreters. Therefore, only their biological sexes were inferred and categorized as either male or female. An exception

occurred in one entry where the speaker represented a non-binary community group, Taiwan Non-binary Queer Sluts. To respect the speaker’s explicit rejection of the binary classification, this entry was annotated as “N/A (not applicable)” for the speaker’s sex.

Table 8 below presents the speaker’s sex alongside the number and percentage of gendered and neutral methods used. Out of 112 total entries, 17 were delivered by biological female speakers, and 94 by biological male speakers. The remaining entry, as previously explained, was from a speaker who rejected the binary classification and was annotated as “N/A.”

Table 8

Sex of Speaker Versus Gendered or Neutral Methods

Sex of Speaker	Female		Male		N/A	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Interpreting Methods						
Gendered	4	23.5	28	29.8	0	0
Neutral	13	76.5	66	70.2	1	100
Total	17	100	94	100	1	100

Some scholars argue that male imagery or the use of generic masculine forms occurs more frequently when the speaker is male (Balhorn, 2009; Dong et al., 2023; Hamilton, 1991). Following this rationale, one might expect interpreters to be more inclined to employ gendered, particularly masculine, language when interpreting for male speakers. In this study, the proportion of gendered methods used for male speakers (29.8%) was indeed higher than for female speakers (23.5%), indicating a 6.3% difference. However, due to the small sample size of this corpus and the unequal distribution of male and female speakers, this difference does not appear substantial

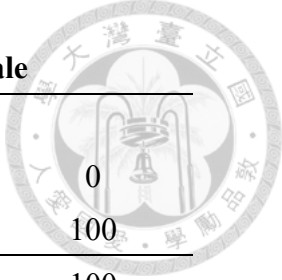
enough to validate the aforementioned argument. Notably, the interpreter employed the phrase “he or she” for a speaker who advocated for non-binary gender identities. While “he or she” is generally regarded as more inclusive than single-gender pronouns, it still reinforces a binary classification that the speaker explicitly opposed (Keener & Kotvas, 2022; Speyer & Schleef, 2019).

4.3.2 The Sex of Interpreters

In total, 35 interpreters were identified from the selected materials, with each assigned a unique number during the annotation process. Due to the difficulty of verifying interpreters’ identities, interpreters from different events were treated as distinct individuals. The only exception was a male interpreter who served as the emcee and media representative interpreter for both the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Debates. Given the close timing of these events, their broadcast on the same platform (TaiwanPlus), and the striking similarity in the interpreter’s voice across both debates, it was assumed that the same individual (Interpreter 21) provided interpretation for both events. Although 35 interpreters (15 male, 20 female) were identified in the materials, only 17 were involved in interpreting the extracted references. Six male interpreters were responsible for 10 occurrences, while the remaining 102 occurrences were interpreted by 11 female interpreters. Table 9 provides a breakdown of the number and percentage of “gendered” and “neutral” methods used by interpreters of different sexes.

Table 9
Sex of Interpreters Versus Gendered or Neutral Methods

Sex of Interpreter	Female		Male	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%



Sex of Interpreter	Female		Male	
Interpreting Methods				
Gendered	32	31.4	0	0
Neutral	70	68.6	10	100
Total	102	100	10	100

Notably, all instances of gendered methods were interpreted by female interpreters, while none of the male interpreters used male-biased or other gendered methods. This finding contradicts previous research, which suggested that women are less likely to use generic masculine references (Balhorn, 2009; Dong et al., 2023; Meyers, 1990). Instead, it aligns with the experimental results reported by LaScotte (2016), where generic masculine terms were used exclusively by female participants when answering a free response question.

4.3.3 Antecedent Type

During the annotation process, five labels were developed to categorize antecedent types. Some speakers referred to the antecedent by its “occupation,” including a “judge,” a “soldier,” or a “doctor.” Another type of antecedent is an “indefinite pronoun” like someone. A “pronoun” such as *tā* was also used as an antecedent in some cases, where the interpreter had to infer the antecedent from the context. Others referred to individuals by their “rank” within an organization, such as a “高層 (*gāo céng*, senior management level)” or a “leader.” Additionally, any other forms of antecedents, typically common nouns like “friend,” “baby,” or “victim,” were labeled as “noun.” The number of different antecedent types and corresponding interpreting methods are provided in Table 10 below.



Table 10

Antecedent Type Versus Interpreting Methods

Interpreting Methods	Gendered (n)	Neutral (n)	Total (n)
Antecedent Type			
Indefinite Pronoun	7	2	9
Noun	3	53	56
Occupation	16	21	37
Pronoun	2	1	3
Rank	4	3	7
Total	32	80	112

The most common type of antecedents was “noun,” occurring 56 times, followed by 37 “occupation” antecedents. “Indefinite pronoun,” “noun” and “pronoun” each appeared less than ten times. For the “noun” type, interpreters adopted considerably more neutral methods than gendered methods. On the other hand, the number disparity of gendered and neutral methods was much smaller for “occupation” antecedents. For the other types of antecedents, gendered methods were more commonly used, but the difference was marginal given the small data size of the categories.

4.3.4 Dominant Gender in Occupation

All 37 entries with “occupation” antecedent types were further annotated for the dominant gender in the occupation, categorized as “male,” “female,” “neutral” or “conflicting.” Based on past research, certain occupations were annotated as “male” due to either stereotypical male associations or the predominance of men in the field. These occupations included judges, soldiers, radiologists (Cater et al., 2018), doctors (Morehouse et al., 2022), legislator candidates (Dinhof & Willems, 2023), computer science engineers (Jaoul-Grammare, 2023), water engineers, US presidents, and

professors (Eriksson, 2013). In contrast, novelists were labelled a female-dominant occupation because its superordinate term, “writer,” has been categorized as female-stereotyped (Wan & Chang, 2024). Similarly, caretaking migrant workers were considered female-dominant, with 99.2% of such workers in Taiwan being female as of 2020 (Directorate-General of Budget, 2020).

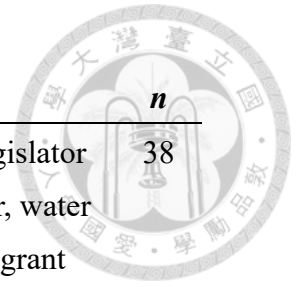
Two occupations—docents and consultants—were marked as “neutral” since no prior research has indicated any specific gender stereotype associated with them. Two entries were classified as “conflicting.” One involved medical professionals, which include both male-stereotyped professionals, such as physicians, and female-stereotyped ones, such as nurses. The second “conflicting” entry concerned the interpreters’ translation of “清潔人員 (*qīngjié rén yuán*, janitors)” as “housekeepers.” While janitors are stereotypically male, housekeepers are dominantly female (Wan & Chang, 2024), leading to the entry being categorized as containing “conflicting” gender stereotypes.

In addition to “occupation” antecedent, nine entries were also annotated as “male” for dominant gender. These entries, although presented as a “role” or “pronoun,” clearly referred to migrant workers in the fishing industry, a heavily male-stereotyped occupation (Yodanis, 2000). All other entries that did not involve occupational references were marked as “N/A.”

Table 11 shows the labels and the breakdown of the occupational antecedents according to the dominant gender.

Table 11

Labels for Dominant Gender of “Occupation” Antecedents



Label for Dominant Gender	Antecedents	<i>n</i>
Male	Judge, soldier, radiologist, doctor, legislator candidate, computer science engineer, water engineer, US president, professor, migrant worker (fishing)	38
Female	Novelist, migrant worker (caretaking)	4
Neutral	Docent, consultant	2
Conflicting	Medical professionals, janitor/housekeeper	2

To examine the use of interpreting methods for antecedents with different dominant genders or stereotypes, Table 12 below categorizes the interpreting methods of the 46 entries annotated for dominant gender as either gendered or neutral.

Table 12

Dominant Gender Versus Gendered or Neutral Methods

Interpreting Methods	Gendered (<i>n</i>)	Neutral (<i>n</i>)	Total (<i>n</i>)
Dominant Gender			
Male	19	19	38
Female	0	4	4
Neutral	0	2	2
Conflicting	0	2	2
Total	19	27	46

The gendered methods “guy” and “he” were used exclusively for male-dominant occupations. Interestingly, the gender-binary phrase “he or she” was only used for male-dominant entries as well. For male-dominant entries, gendered methods were used as frequently as neutral methods. On the other hand, the eight entries with female-dominant, neutral or conflicting antecedents were all interpreted with neutral methods.



4.3.5 Definiteness

Corpus entries were also annotated based on the definiteness of the antecedent. If the antecedent referred to a specific individual, the entry was marked as “definite.” For example, when a speaker mentioned receiving complaints from one of his students, it was categorized as “definite” because the speaker was referring to a particular student who had complained, rather than any student in general. In contrast, antecedents labeled as “indefinite” did not refer to a specific individual but rather to a general or hypothetical example, as in the statement “a competent computer engineer would go to Google, Facebook, Microsoft, etc.” Table 13 presents the number of gendered and neutral methods used for definite and indefinite antecedents.

Table 13
Definiteness Versus Gendered or Neutral Methods

Interpreting Methods	Gendered (<i>n</i>)	Neutral (<i>n</i>)	Total (<i>n</i>)
Definiteness			
Definite	30	36	66
Indefinite	2	44	46
Total	32	80	112

When interpreting the 66 entries with definite antecedents, interpreters used gendered and neutral methods in similar proportions. In contrast, for indefinite antecedents, neutral methods were employed significantly more frequently. These results suggest that interpreters are more likely to use gendered methods for definite antecedents, while they tend to favor neutral methods with indefinite ones. This finding

is consistent with previous observations in comprehension studies. Foertsch and Gernsbacher (1997) observed a delay in the comprehension of the gender-inclusive singular “they” when paired with a specific antecedent, as there “should be no ambiguity about gender” (p. 110).

4.4 Patterns of Pronoun Usage

As findings suggested that pronouns were the most popular interpreting methods adopted, the four pronouns used in this study were further examined in this section.

4.4.1 The Use of “He”

“He” was used 31 times, making it the most frequently employed method in this study. While this finding aligns with the prevalent use of “he” as a generic singular pronoun, as noted in past literature (Gardelle, 2015; Hamilton, 1991; Miller & James, 2009; Silveira, 1980), it is important to examine other variables that may have affected its popularity.

Of the 31 occurrences of “he,” more than half (18 times) were used for male-dominant antecedents, indicating a correlation between the gender stereotype and the masculine pronoun usage. Additionally, “he” was paired with definite references in 29 out of 31 cases, a frequency significantly higher than its use with indefinite references, which occurred only twice.

4.4.2 The Use of “They”

The pronoun “they” was the second-most common interpreting method in this corpus, which was consistent with previous studies that have noted its prevalence and increasing use for generic singular references. However, this study found that “they” was frequently used in conjunction with the pluralization or omission of the antecedent,

particularly in indefinite contexts, as shown in Table 14. This usage differs from the pairing of “they” with a singular antecedent commonly observed in English language studies.



Table 14

The Use of “They” and Antecedents

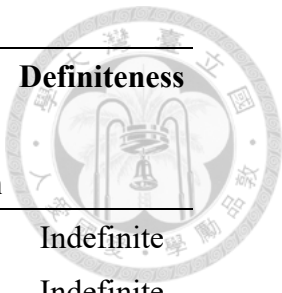
	Definite	Indefinite	Total
Antecedent Pluralization or Omission	3	9	12
No Pluralization or Omission	1	6	7
Total	4	15	19

4.4.3 The Use of “He or She”

Another noteworthy observation is the presence of “he or she,” or equivalent variations such as “him or herself,” in the current study. This contrasts with the study by McDermid et al. (2021), where such usage was not observed. Since “he or she” is generally considered as more gender-inclusive, its presence may indicate interpreters’ awareness of a gender-indefinite context or an effort to remain gender-inclusive. Thus, examining the content and context of these instances could provide valuable insights. A total of five occurrences were identified, two by interpreter 7 and three by interpreter 18, both of whom were female. The details of these five occurrences are outlined in Table 15.

Table 15

Instances of “He or She”

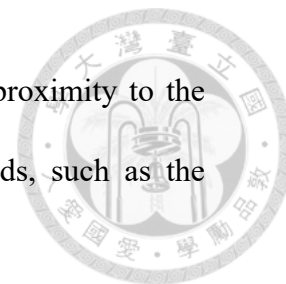


No	Speaker's Sex	Interpreter Sex	Interpreter's Sex	Antecedent	Dominant Gender in Occupation	Definiteness
1	M	7	F	Radiologist	Male	Indefinite
2	M	7	F	Patient	N/A	Indefinite
3	F	18	F	Perpetrator of Sexual Harassment	N/A	Indefinite
4	N/A	18	F	Transgender Legislator Candidate	Male	Definite
5	M	18	F	Child	N/A	Indefinite

Among the five occurrences, instances 1 and 4 were paired with antecedents of male-dominant occupations: a radiologist and a legislator candidate. However, it is important to note that in instance 4, the antecedent was explicitly stated as transgender, though the speaker did not specify whether it referred to a transgender man or a transgender woman. Instance 3, although not directly involving or annotated for occupational gender stereotypes, featured the antecedent “a perpetrator of sexual harassment,” which is often more strongly associated with men (August, 1986). No apparent stereotypes were found for the other two references: “a patient” and “a child.”

A close analysis further revealed that “he or she” was more often used for indefinite references. Except for the reference to the transgender legislator candidate, all other instances of “he or she” referred to an unspecified individual within a group rather than a “definite” reference to a specific person.

Interestingly, while other methods were sometimes used repeatedly for the same antecedent, “he or she” appeared only once for each antecedent across all five instances.



Subsequent references to the same antecedent, even when in close proximity to the original “he or she” usage, were interpreted using different methods, such as the pronoun “he,” as shown in the following example.

Example 7. Combined Use of “He or She” and “He”

Mandarin SS: 一個 影醫部的 主治醫師

Literal translation: A of the radiology department attending physician
看 他 的 資深度 如何 他
depending on [tā] possessive seniority how [tā]
可能 沒有 辦法 在一個晚上 看
may not be able to overnight examine
一千個 胰臟癌的 病人 的
a thousand of pancreatic cancer patient possessive
片子 長得 怎麼樣
image look like how

Interpreter 7: And for a radiologist, for him or her, he wouldn’t be able to scan more than a thousand images from different patients, from more than a thousand patients.

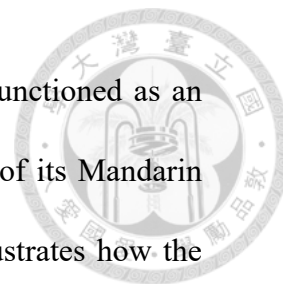
Source: 2021 International Smart Medical Forum

4.4.4 The Use of “You”

While the second-person pronoun “you” was identified in both this study and McDermid et al. (2021), differences in its usage were observed. McDermid et al. suggested that “you” was associated with the literal translation of the direct, first-person address in the source speech. An example provided was the interpretation of a sentence as “I said, ‘You really teach in elementary schools?’” instead of using reported speech.

In contrast, the four occurrences of “you” in this study were used differently. In one instance, “you” was employed as a second-person pronoun to directly address the

questioner who was present online. In the other three cases, “you” functioned as an “indefinite pronoun in casual speech,” similar to the impersonal use of its Mandarin counterpart *ni*, as defined by Biq (1991). The following example illustrates how the interpreter used “you” as an indefinite pronoun for both the antecedent of “a professor” and the gender-indefinite singular reference.



Example 8. “You” as an Indefinite Reference

Mandarin SS: 一個 教授 沒有 數位 授課 的

Literal translation: A professor without digital teaching of
能力 這個 教授 就 留 在 二十世紀
ability this professor only stay at the 20th century
進不了 二十一世紀
cannot enter the 21st century

Interpreter 35: So, as a professor, if you are not able to teach online, then you
need to be left behind in the twentieth century. You are not
able to come into the twenty-first century.

Source: Master Thinkers Forum 2021

Chapter 5 Discussion

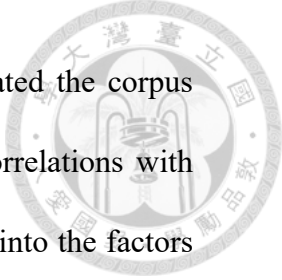


Chapter 4 presented the results of the corpus analysis, addressing the following research questions:

1. How did professional interpreters interpret gender-indefinite singular references from Mandarin Chinese to English?
2. What are interpreters' tendencies in interpreting gender-indefinite singular references to English?
3. What are some possible factors behind the interpretations of gender-indefinite singular references, e.g., types of antecedents or the gender of interpreters?

This corpus-based study identified 11 interpreting methods, 7 of which were consistent with those previously identified by McDermid et al. (2021) in their analysis of ASL to English interpretation. These shared methods accounted for 74.1% of all instances, indicating a significant overlap in the methods used by ASL-English interpreters and Mandarin-English interpreters. This commonality suggests the broader applicability of certain interpreting techniques in managing gender-indefinite references in cross-linguistic contexts.

Further analysis highlighted a preference among interpreters for gender-neutral methods, which suggests an effort—whether conscious or unconscious—to align with modern expectations of gender-sensitive language. Grouping the strategies into three categories—"pronouns," "syntactic variations," and "nouns"—revealed that interpreters favored the use of pronoun-based strategies, despite the absence of a universally accepted gender-inclusive singular pronoun in English.



In addition to identifying interpreting methods, the study annotated the corpus entries for key variables, which were then examined for potential correlations with interpreters' linguistic choices. These variables offer valuable insights into the factors that may influence interpreters' decisions when handling gender-indefinite references. The following sections will explore the implications of these findings and their relevance to existing research, with a focus on how occupational stereotypes, contextual cues, and language structures affect interpreters' approaches to gender neutrality.

5.1 Interpreters' Tendency

5.1.1 Tendency for Neutral Methods

The interpreters employed neutral methods in over 70% of the instances in the corpus, indicating a clear tendency towards gender neutrality when interpreting gender-indefinite references. This finding is consistent with the increasing adoption of gender-neutral pronouns, such as “they,” as highlighted by LaScotte (2016), which reflects a broader shift towards inclusive language among native English speakers.

While LaScotte's (2016) research primarily focuses on the use of gender-neutral pronouns by native speakers, professional interpreters in multilingual contexts face additional complexities. These challenges arise particularly when navigating grammatical differences between languages like Mandarin and English. The absence of grammatical gender in spoken Mandarin requires interpreters to make frequent decisions on how to render gender-indefinite references in English, where the expectation for gender specification is more pronounced. This study highlights several interpreting strategies beyond pronoun usage, such as syntactic restructuring (e.g., agent or object deletion), noun repetition, and rephrasing. These methods, also

identified by McDermid et al. (2021), serve as valuable tools for interpreters to avoid reinforcing gender biases and to align with the growing global emphasis on gender-neutral language.



For professional interpreters, these methods may not merely represent grammatical choices but could reflect an increased awareness of the broader social and cultural shifts towards inclusivity. In McDermid et al. (2021), more than half of the interpreters expressed concerns about handling gender references, indicating a deliberate effort to avoid reinforcing stereotypes through language. This heightened awareness underscores interpreters' cognitive capacity to consciously select gender-neutral or anti-stereotypical language, suggesting that interpreters actively engage with the sociolinguistic impact of their choices. These findings support the claims of Yañez (2023), who analyzed the gender-sensitive language adopted by interpreters of the European Parliament and discussed the role interpreters may play in fostering gender-aware ethical practices, especially in gender-related discourse. While interpreters of international organizations could follow the institutional guidelines on gender-sensitive language, such guidelines may not have been promoted as much in Taiwan. This draws the emphasis to the importance of incorporating gender sensitivity and awareness into interpreter education, further equipping interpreters to minimize unintended bias and stereotypes in their output.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the preference for neutral methods does not entirely eliminate gender biases in this study. The generic masculine pronoun “he” was still the most frequently used form, revealing a male bias. Factors such as associated stereotypes and the definiteness of antecedents may contribute to this bias,

as will be discussed in subsequent sections.

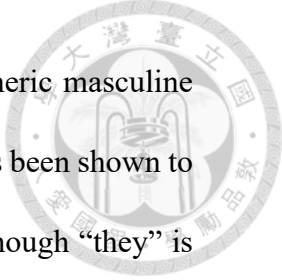
5.1.2 Tendency for Pronoun-Based Methods

The categorization of interpreting methods into “pronouns,” “syntactic variations,” and “nouns” revealed that interpreters predominantly favored pronoun-based approaches, such as the use of the generic “he” or “they,” when rendering gender-indefinite singular references. This preference is evident in the three most frequently used methods: the pronouns “he” and “they,” and the repetition of the antecedent’s “role.” These methods are particularly favored for their conciseness and ease of integration into sentences across various grammatical forms, including subjective, objective, and possessive cases. Such flexibility enables interpreters to maintain the flow of the interpretation without restructuring entire sentences, which is a crucial advantage in simultaneous interpreting, where cognitive load is a key consideration (Wang & Zou, 2018).

Additionally, unlike first- or second-person pronouns such as “we” and “you,” which involve perspective shifts, third-person pronouns do not require interpreters to manage the cognitively demanding task of switching perspectives, as demonstrated by Köder et al. (2015). By avoiding these perspective shifts, interpreters could reduce processing time and conserve cognitive resources during interpretation. This efficiency likely contributes to the preference for pronoun-based methods, as they offer both linguistic clarity and cognitive ease.

However, the frequent use of “he,” “they,” and the repetition of the antecedent’s role highlights the ongoing challenge of addressing gender inclusivity in English. While “he,” “they,” and “role” emerged as popular options for interpreting gender-indefinite





singular references, each presents limitations. The repeated use of generic masculine “he” conflicts with the general preference for gender-neutrality, as it has been shown to carry a male bias, potentially disadvantaging other gender groups. Although “they” is increasingly used as a singular generic pronoun, it has not yet achieved universal acceptance. Furthermore, the repetition of “role” was deemed “awkward” and redundant by some participants in McDermid et al. (2021). These challenges underscore the lack of a truly gender-neutral singular pronoun in English and the need for a more universally accepted approach. Such an approach could streamline the interpretation of gender-indefinite references and reduce the cognitive and linguistic challenges interpreters face in these situations.

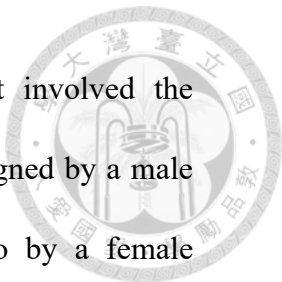
5.2 Annotated Variables and Possible Factors

Five variables were identified and examined for their possible impact on how the interpreters dealt with gender-indefinite references.

5.2.1 Sex of the Speaker

The analysis revealed a 6.5% difference in the use of gendered methods for male and female speakers, with 29.8% of gendered methods used for male speakers compared to 23.5% for female speakers. This difference was not considered significant given the limited number of female speakers involved in this study. These results suggest that the speaker’s sex does not significantly influence how gender-indefinite references were interpreted. This finding contrasts with previous literature, which associates male speakers or writers with a higher likelihood of using generic masculine or male-biased language (Balhorn, 2009; Dong et al., 2023; Hamilton, 1991).

A similar pattern was observed in the study by McDermid et al. (2021), although



it was not explicitly discussed by the scholars. Their experiment involved the interpretation of four stories from ASL to English, with two stories signed by a male storyteller (about an elementary teacher and an engineer) and two by a female storyteller (about a truck driver and a secretary). In the stories created by the male signer, 31.1% (112 out of 360) of the interpretations used gendered methods. Similarly, 29.9% (114 out of 381) of the interpretations of the female signer's stories employed gendered methods. Overall, no significant difference was found in the use of gendered methods between stories signed by male or female storytellers, implying that the storyteller's sex has little impact on the interpreting methods chosen.

The discrepancy between the findings of these interpreting studies and prior research on gendered language may be attributed to the mediation of interpreters. While the masculine expressions and imagery noted in previous studies were the direct output of the speakers or writers, the results in McDermid et al. (2021) and the present study were produced by the interpreters, not the speakers themselves. This mediator role of the interpreter, positioned between the source and target speech, may have diminished the influence of the speaker's sex on the interpreting methods adopted.

5.2.2 Sex of the Interpreter

Contrary to previous claims that men are more likely to use generic masculine forms, all male interpreters in this study adopted gender-neutral methods. Interestingly, all instances of gendered methods, specifically the use of the generic "he" and masculine nouns, were produced by female interpreters. While this finding may seem unexpected, it is consistent with the results from LaScotte (2016), where the majority of participants using generic masculine forms were also female. Although LaScotte's

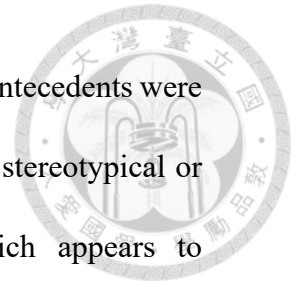


study did not make a generalized argument about this trend, the interview responses provided valuable insight into its possible causes. Many participants expressed support for generic masculine constructions, stating that they perceived these forms as referring to both genders or individuals of unknown gender, particularly in formal contexts. This preference may stem from the influence of prescriptive grammar, which has historically endorsed the use of the generic masculine. One participant specifically recalled learning this usage in grammar lessons, suggesting that formal language education may shape the linguistic choices of language users.

It is important, however, to acknowledge the limited number of male interpreters in this study—only 10 out of 112 entries. While the findings indicate a trend toward gender neutrality among male interpreters, the small sample size limits the ability to draw definitive conclusions. A larger sample of male interpreters could potentially reveal different patterns, offering a more nuanced understanding of gendered language use in interpretation. Therefore, further research with a more balanced dataset is necessary to determine whether these initial observations hold true across a broader range of interpretations and contexts.

5.2.3 Antecedent Type

Among the various types of antecedents analyzed, a notable disparity was observed in how “noun” and “occupation” antecedents were interpreted. The majority of instances with “noun” antecedents were rendered using gender-neutral methods, further highlighting the interpreters’ general tendency toward inclusive language. This finding suggests that interpreters may be more inclined to avoid gendered language when dealing with common nouns, likely due to the absence of stronger gender



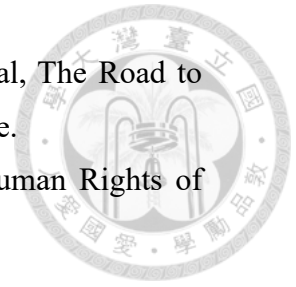
associations. In contrast, nearly half of the references to “occupation” antecedents were interpreted using gendered methods. This result corresponds with the stereotypical or dominant gender often associated with certain occupations, which appears to significantly influence interpreters’ choices, as will be discussed further in section 5.2.4.

Interestingly, seven out of nine references to “indefinite pronouns” were interpreted using gendered methods, diverging from the expectation that singular “they” would be the preferred choice for indefinite pronouns. Foertsch and Gernsbacher (1997) reported that when processing nonreferential antecedents such as indefinite pronouns, participants comprehended singular “they” faster than “he” or “she,” with 70% of participants spontaneously using “they” for such references. However, in this study, the preference for gendered methods with indefinite pronouns may be explained by the specific context in which these pronouns appeared. All nine instances of indefinite pronouns in the corpus shared the antecedent “someone,” which, while grammatically indefinite, referred to a specific person depicted on a poster. The poster only showed the person’s hands and forearms, giving no clues about the person’s sex. The first of these nine instances is provided as an example.

Example 9. Example 7. “Indefinite Pronoun” as an Antecedent

Mandarin SS:	這	是	2006	年	柏林影展	
Literal Translation:	This is	2006	year	Berlin	International Film Festival	
	的	最佳影片	The Road to Guantanamo	你	看到	
	of	Best Film	The Road to Guantanamo	you	see	
	這張	海報	有	一個人	顯然	他
	this	poster	there is	someone	obviously	[tā]
	在	遭受	酷刑			
	is	suffering	torture			

Interpreter 5: This is the best film in 2016's Berlin Festival, *The Road to Guantanamo*. This victim is a victim of torture.
Source: Forum on International Practice of OPCAT-NPM & Human Rights of Fisherman



As such, these instances were referential rather than truly nonreferential, distinguishing them from the types of antecedents discussed by Foertsch and Gernsbacher (1997). This context-specific referentiality likely prompted interpreters to select gendered methods, reflecting the complexities of interpreting seemingly indefinite pronouns when visual or contextual cues suggest a specific individual.

5.2.4 Dominant Gender in Occupation

The results indicate that in male-dominant occupations, interpreters employed an equal use of gendered and neutral language, while only gender-neutral language was used for occupations associated with female-dominant, neutral or conflicting stereotypes. This finding points to a clear correlation between occupational gender stereotypes and the way interpreters handle gender-indefinite references, particularly in professions historically dominated by men, such as doctors, engineers, and soldiers. In these traditionally male-dominated fields, interpreters may feel an implicit pull toward using masculine interpreting methods, reflecting deeply ingrained societal expectations about the professional roles of different genders. The influence of occupational stereotypes on interpreters' choices is not entirely unexpected. It is consistent with past research, which consistently shows that gender stereotypes significantly affect how individuals comprehend and produce gendered pronouns (Foertsch & Gernsbacher, 1997; Miller & James, 2009). This finding also provides further evidence for the

persistence of occupational gender stereotypes, as discussed by Haines et al. (2016).

These results suggest that interpreters may unconsciously be influenced by these stereotypes and, in some cases, reinforce them through their language choices, particularly in fields with strong gender associations. This underscores the ongoing challenge and importance of addressing gender issues in interpreting research and education, which may equip interpreters with strategies to recognize and minimize the influence of stereotypes and ensure the use of more inclusive language across all contexts.

5.2.5 Definiteness

The results indicated that references to definite antecedents showed an almost equal use of gendered and neutral methods, while nearly all references to indefinite antecedents were interpreted using neutral methods. These findings suggest that interpreters are more likely to adopt gendered methods for definite antecedents, whereas indefinite antecedents are more likely to be paired with neutral methods. This finding aligns with the observations of Foertsch and Gernsbacher (1997), who found that participants processed the gender-neutral “they” faster and used it more frequently when referring to indefinite pronouns. A possible explanation is that for definite references to a specific entity, the gender is often known (Foertsch & Gernsbacher, 1997). In such cases, interpreters may feel a need to assign a gender to the reference, even if the original speech does not specify one.

Notably, all gendered methods used in this study were masculine. This indicates that when interpreters feel compelled to assign a gender to a reference, they consistently opted for the masculine form. This tendency for masculine forms supports the “people



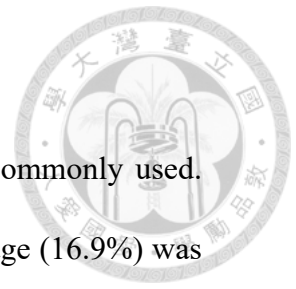
= male” bias proposed by Silveira (1980), which posits that in the absence of clear gender markers, the masculine is often assumed as the default.

5.3 Patterns in Pronoun Usage

5.3.1 The Use of “He” and Masculine Stereotypes

The pronoun “he” was used the most frequently in this study, accounting for 27.7% of all entries. This percentage was considerably higher than that found by McDermid et al. (2021), where “he” comprised only 8.8% of the references. The frequent use of “he” may provide further evidence supporting the “people = male” bias. However, this marked difference could also be attributed to the larger number of male-dominant antecedents in this dataset. In McDermid et al.’s study, each participant was asked to interpret two stories featuring male-dominant professions and two featuring female-dominant professions, ensuring an equal distribution of male-dominant and female-female antecedents. In contrast, this study found that 38 out of 46 annotated antecedents were associated with male-stereotyped professions, such as doctors, engineers, and soldiers, which may have contributed to the interpreters’ inclination to use the masculine pronoun.

This tendency, however, contrasts with the findings of McDermid et al. (2021), where participants assigned more neutral methods to masculine-stereotyped references. McDermid et al.’s findings support the idea of an asymmetrical change of gender stereotypes. Croft et al. (2015) found that more women are stepping into traditionally male-dominated fields, while the proportion of men taking on communal roles has not increased significantly. On the other hand, the findings of the present study suggest the persistence of gender stereotypes in male-dominant professions.



5.3.2 *The Use of “They” and the Non-Native Context*

In McDermid et al. (2021), the pronoun “they” was the most commonly used. While it was also the second-most popular choice in this study, its usage (16.9%) was considerably lower than the 36% reported by McDermid et al. One possible explanation for this decrease is the higher proportion of “he” used in this study.

Another factor contributing to the less frequent use of “they” could be the non-native context. While studies on English language use have reported increasing acceptance of singular “they,” such usage may not come as naturally for speakers of English as a foreign language (EFL). Singular “they” is often absent from English language textbooks or classes for non-native learners, whereas “he or she” constructions and generic “he” may be prescribed (Abudalbuh, 2012; Lee & Collins, 2010). This lack of exposure may hinder non-native speakers’ acquisition of singular “they,” potentially leading to processing costs and confusion when encountering it.

Speyer and Schleef (2019) built on Foertsch and Gernsbacher’s (1997) research by examining how well non-native English speakers could process singular “they.” They measured participants’ reading times for “they,” “he” and “she” paired with four antecedent types: indefinite pronouns, neutral nouns, masculine nouns, and feminine nouns. Participants were divided into three proficiency levels: B2, C1 and C2 based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR). In line with Foertsch and Gernsbacher’s (1997) findings, non-native speakers could process singular “they” without issues when paired with indefinite pronouns or neutral antecedents. However, some B2-level participants struggled to match singular “they” with singular masculine or feminine antecedents. This processing difficulty decreased

with higher proficiency, resolving at the C1 level for masculine antecedents and at the C2 level for feminine ones. Notably, all C2 participants actively used singular “they” to some degree.



Although there is no available data about the native languages of interpreters in this study, information from the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) provides some context. Nine Chinese-English interpreters are based in Taipei, and one is based in Taoyuan, with language combinations of Italian, English, and Chinese (Mandarin). All nine interpreters in Taipei list Chinese (Mandarin) as their A language and English as their B language, while the interpreter in Taoyuan has Italian as their A language, English as their B language, and Chinese (Mandarin) as their C language. While this represents only a small proportion of the Chinese-English interpreter community in Taiwan, it is not unreasonable to assume that the majority of Mandarin-English interpreters in Taiwan are non-native English speakers.

However, even for interpreters with English as their B language, professional interpreters' language competence is expected to be “considerably above CEFR Level C2” (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 107). Thus, it is unlikely that interpreters would have difficulties comprehending or producing singular “they,” in line with Speyer and Schleef’s (2019) findings. On the other hand, it is important to consider that many decisions made by interpreters are audience-oriented (Chang & Schallert, 2007). With the spread of English as a lingua franca, the interpretation into English serves audience members who are also non-native English speakers (Albl-Mikasa, 2014; Chang & Wu, 2014). Given the varying English proficiency among audience members, interpreters may opt alternatives to singular “they” to avoid confusion or processing difficulties for

their listeners. Consequently, despite its growing acceptance in purely English-speaking contexts, the normalization of singular “they” may be slower in cross-linguistic communication.

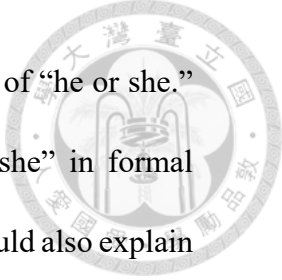


Additionally, even when “they” was used in this study, it was less frequently used in the generic singular, as would be expected based on previous research. Instead, interpreters in this study often pluralized or omitted the antecedent and used “they” as a plural pronoun, possibly to avoid the number-mismatch effect noted in past research (Sanford & Filik, 2007). While LaScotte (2016) also found that native speakers sometimes pluralized subjects to address issues of gendered language, only a small proportion of participants resorted to this method, so it was not extensively discussed.

The frequent modification of the antecedent in this study may reflect the absence of number marking in Mandarin, as noted by Iljic (2005) and Liu (2015). This suggests that pluralization may be a flexible and practical method for interpreting singular references from Mandarin into English, particularly for indefinite antecedents. Since these references do not refer to a specific individual, pluralizing them typically does not alter the meaning of the sentence.

5.3.3 The Use of “He or She” and Gender Sensitivity

In this study, “he or she” was used five times by two female interpreters, whereas no participants in McDermid et al. (2021) adopted this method. Generally considered more gender-neutral than the generic “he,” “he or she” implies the interpreter’s awareness of the gender indefiniteness of the reference. This subsection examines the context of these instances to determine whether specific variables may have drawn the interpreters’ attention to the gender-indefinite nature of the references.

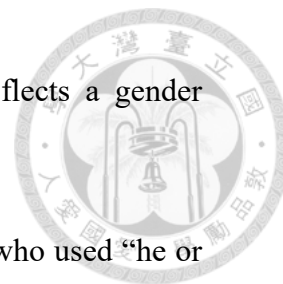


The formality of the interpreting task may have prompted the use of “he or she.” Native English speakers in LaScotte (2016) preferred using “he or she” in formal contexts, finding it more appropriate than “they,” “he,” or “she.” This could also explain the absence of “he or she” in McDermid et al. (2021), as the experimental settings may have lacked the formality of real-life interpreting assignments analyzed in this corpus-based study.

Another possibility is that, like the use of “they,” the presence of “he or she” in the corpus may be attributed to the Mandarin-speaking context in Taiwan. Zhang et al. (2020) investigated the perception of singular “they,” “he or she,” “he,” and “she” by Chinese university students learning English as a foreign language. They found that “he or she” was the most popular epicene pronoun among the participants, followed by “they” and “he,” with “she” being the least frequently used. Given the similar language and cultural backgrounds of China and Taiwan, such a preference for “he or she” may also exist among Taiwanese language users, though further research is needed to substantiate this claim.

A closer examination of the “he or she” instances may reveal more specific factors behind the interpreter’s choice. One instance involved a transgender antecedent and a speaker from a non-binary community group. Studies have emphasized the importance of addressing transgender people by their correct pronouns, as failing to do so may have detrimental effects on the addressee’s mental health (Sevelius et al., 2020). The transgender context likely heightened the interpreter’s awareness of gender inclusivity, contributing to the choice “he or she,” which is viewed as more inclusive than the generic “he.” Although the speaker’s objection to the gender binary could also have

influenced this choice, it seems less likely, as “he or she” still reflects a gender dichotomy.



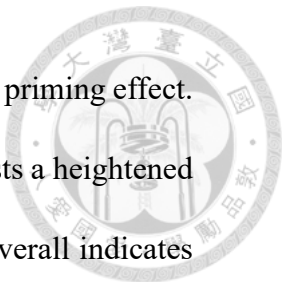
Another aspect worth exploring is the fact that both interpreters who used “he or she” were female. Past research has reported sex-related differences in gender sensitivity, with female participants generally showing higher sensitivity to gender issues. For example, Bert et al. (2022) found that female medical university students exhibited greater sensitivity to gender issues than their male counterparts, who held more stereotyped views. However, given the small sample size in this study, it is risky to generalize this argument, as the higher sensitivity could be attributed to individual differences. Therefore, all entries interpreted by interpreters 7 and 18 were examined to identify possible patterns.

Interpreter 7, who interpreted the 2021 International Smart Medical Forum, rendered 28 entries in the corpus: 10 using neutral methods and 18 using gendered methods. Of the gendered methods, 17 involved the use of “he,” and one involved a masculine noun. The frequent use of “he” and the masculine noun suggests that interpreter 7 may not align with the assumption that interpreters who use “he or she” are more sensitive to the unresolved gender of the antecedent and the embedded male bias in generic masculine expressions. However, it is noteworthy that the majority of the uses of “he” (14 out of 17) was for definite references to male-dominant occupations, revealing interpreter 7’s tendency to adopt masculine methods in such contexts. This also suggests that interpreter 7 may have been influenced by associated male stereotypes, providing evidence for the persistence of occupational gender stereotypes, as noted by Begeny et al. (2020) and Haines et al. (2016).

The two instances where interpreter 7 used “he or she” involved indefinite references. One reference was to “a radiology attending physician,” a male-dominant occupation, and the other was to “a patient,” a “noun” type antecedent with no specific gender stereotype associated. The indefiniteness of the references may explain interpreter 7’s choice of “he or she,” as indefinite references are less likely to evoke male imagery than definite ones, as discussed earlier in section 5.2.5.

Nevertheless, interpreter 7 also used “he” for two indefinite references. One of these instances occurred alongside an instance of “he or she,” which will be discussed later. The other was a reference to “an experienced physician.” Given that both “an experienced physician” and “a radiology attending physician” are indefinite and male-dominant, it is worth exploring why interpreter 7 adopted different methods for these references. One possible explanation is the description of “experienced” attached to the antecedent. Past research has found that academic and managerial success tends to be associated with male stereotypes (Stoeger et al., 2004; Willemsen, 2002). Although there is no existing literature linking experience level with gender stereotypes, the term “experienced” reflects approval of the antecedent’s occupational achievements. It is not unreasonable to assume that this description may have triggered male imagery, leading to the use of “he.”

Interpreter 18, who interpreted at the Review Meeting of the ROC (TAIWAN) CEDAW Fourth National Report, rendered 17 entries, 16 of which used neutral methods. The only gendered method used was “he,” occurring once. “He or she” was used three times. Interestingly, interpreter 18 used “he or she” for a transgender legislator candidate, demonstrating sensitivity to gender inclusivity. However, this was



not the first instance in which “he or she” was used, which rules out any priming effect. The use of “he or she” alongside predominantly neutral methods suggests a heightened level of gender sensitivity. The low number of gendered expressions overall indicates that interpreter 18 preferred neutral methods, suggesting a conscious effort to acknowledge the gender indefiniteness of the references and avoid biased expressions. This makes the single instance of “he” particularly intriguing. Moreover, interpreter 18 used “he” to refer to a sex worker, a profession that is heavily female-stereotyped, with approximately 80% of sex workers worldwide being female (International Union of Sex Workers, 2023). This mismatched use of a masculine pronoun for a female stereotyped profession may not be intentional. It is possible that “he” might have been used generically, following traditional English grammar conventions, or the interpreter simply confused “he” and “she” due to the cognitive load in simultaneous interpreting. However, given that interpreter 18 did not use generic “he” in any other entry, it is reasonable to argue that this might have been an intentional choice to resist the stereotypical association of the profession with women. Though this hypothesis could not be validated due to the methodological limitations, similar intentional resistance was reported by McDermid et al. (2021). In that study, one participant recalled deliberately assigning a non-stereotypical gender to a truck driver to make the reference “less stereotypical” (p. 12).

A close analysis of the interpretations by interpreters 7 and 18 suggests that interpreters may be more inclined to adopt gender-biased methods when influenced by certain factors, such as associated stereotypes and the definiteness of the reference. However, with heightened sensitivity to gender issues, it is possible for interpreters to

avoid the use of gendered language and even subtly reject stereotypes.

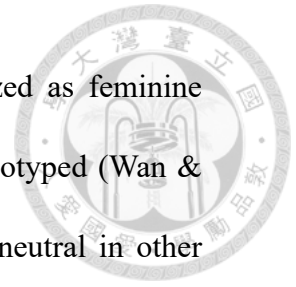
It is also noteworthy that when multiple references to the same antecedent occurred, “he or she” was used alongside other interpreting methods, rather than being repeated. For example, interpreter 7 initially referred to a radiology attending physician as “he or she” and later referred to the same physician as “he.” Similarly, interpreter 18 used “he or she” for “a child” and subsequently interpreted the following references using “they.” The adoption of different generic methods after the use of “he or she” supports the idea that interpreters exhibit varying levels of gender sensitivity. Moreover, the combination of “he or she” with other pronouns provides further evidence for the claim that “he or she” constructions can feel clumsy or stilted in verbal communications, especially when used repeatedly (LaScotte, 2016; McDermid et al., 2021). This demonstrates both the possibility and limitations of using “he or she” when interpreting gender-indefinite singular references.

5.3.4 The Absence of “She” or Other Feminine Methods

In contrast to the frequent use of the masculine pronoun “he” and the occurrence of the masculine noun “gentleman,” no feminine interpreting methods were used by any of the interpreters, despite the presence of female-stereotyped antecedents and the higher number of female interpreters in the corpus.

One possible explanation for the absence of feminine methods is that while female-dominant antecedents were present, the stereotypical association of these antecedents may have been weaker than those of male-dominant occupations. Two female-dominant occupational antecedents, “novelist” and a “caretaking migrant worker,” were identified in this study, each occurring twice. The argument for a weaker





feminine stereotype may stand true for “novelist.” It was categorized as feminine because its superordinate term, “writer,” was considered female-stereotyped (Wan & Chang, 2024). However, the synonym “author” was categorized as neutral in other studies (Gabriel et al. 2008), suggesting that the associated female stereotype for “novelist” may be less strong. Nevertheless, this explanation does not apply to a “caretaking migrant worker,” because it is strongly associated with feminine imagery, particularly within the context of Taiwan.

This disparity in the use of masculine and feminine pronouns may provide support for the “people = male” bias proposed by Silveira (1980). Silveira argues that people are more likely to think of a person as male, while females are rarely seen to be representative of people in general. Although a generic “she” has been promoted as a conscious alternative under second-wave feminism, its use remains rare in both stereotyped and non-stereotyped texts (Adami 2009; LaScotte, 2016).

Other contextual factors emerged through close analysis of the interpretations. In the segment containing the two references to a “novelist,” the speaker was discussing a conversation between himself and a friend. He repeatedly began sentences with phrases such as “我問他 (*wǒ wèn tā*, I asked *tā*),” “他說 (*tā shuō*, *tā* said),” and “我說 (*wǒ shuō*, I said).” The interpreter adopted “agent deletion” and “object deletion” for the references,² presumably to focus on the content of the discussion and to save time. The other segment containing the two references to a caretaking migrant worker was about the immigration regulations in Taiwan. Although the antecedent was “這位移工 (*zhè*

² For example, “他說很多篇都是在臉書上面先丟下去先發表過了 (he said many episodes were first posted on Facebook)” was interpreted into “it was essentially a collection of those online articles.”

wèi yí gōng, this migrant worker),” the speaker was referring to all migrant workers in Taiwan. This collective context, rather than the feminine stereotype, likely influenced the interpreters’ decision to use “they” instead of a gendered pronoun.



While the possibility of a male bias cannot be completely dismissed, close analysis suggests that the interpreter’s choice of neutral methods may have been more influenced by the broader context than by gender stereotypes.

Chapter 6 Conclusion



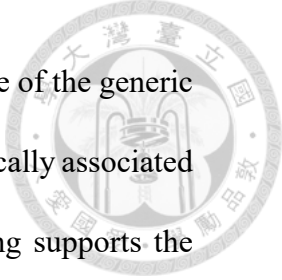
6.1 Conclusion

This study explored how professional interpreters rendered gender-indefinite references from Mandarin Chinese to English through a corpus-based approach. A total of 15 sets of online interpreted materials were examined, yielding 112 instances of gender-indefinite references interpreted by 17 interpreters (11 female and 6 male).

Eleven interpreting methods were identified in this study, including: using the pronoun “he,” using the pronoun “they,” repeating the antecedent’s “role,” using a “shared agent,” “rephrasing,” “agent deletion,” variations of “he or she,” using the pronoun “you,” “possessive adjective deletion,” “object deletion,” and using a masculine pronoun such as “guy.” Notably, seven of these methods were consistent with those adopted by interpreters in McDermid et al. (2021), suggesting these methods may be broadly applicable across different interpreting contexts.

Analysis of the corpus entries revealed a clear preference among interpreters for neutral interpreting methods, underscoring an overall tendency toward gender neutrality. This suggests that interpreters are increasingly aware of gender-related issues and are equipped with strategies to navigate these challenges in real-time interpreting tasks.

From a grammatical perspective, interpreters favored pronoun-based methods, likely due to their conciseness and flexibility. The use of such methods does not require sentence restructuring, allowing interpreters to avoid additional cognitive efforts. Among these methods, “he” and “they” were the most frequently used, as they do not involve perspective shifts and are well-established as potential third-person singular pronouns, though ongoing debates and limitations regarding their usage persist.

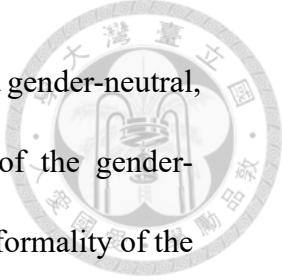


Despite the general trend toward gender neutrality, the frequent use of the generic “he” reveals a persistent male bias, particularly in professions stereotypically associated with men and in instances involving definite antecedents. This finding supports the continued influence of masculine occupational stereotypes and the “people = male” hypothesis proposed by Silveira (1980).

Contrary to prior expectations, the sex of the speaker did not significantly influence how gender-indefinite references were rendered. This may be attributed to the role of interpreters as mediators in cross-language communications. Similarly, the analysis of the interpreters’ gender produced unexpected results, with only female interpreters adopting gendered methods. While the small number of male interpreters in the corpus limits broad generalizations, previous research suggests that interpreting contexts and the prescriptive use of generic masculine forms may contribute to this phenomenon.

A closer examination of pronoun usage revealed further complexities. The lower frequency of “they” compared to McDermid et al. (2021) may be attributed to the non-native English-speaking context of both the interpreters and the audience. This finding suggests a potential gap in the adoption and usage of singular “they” between native and non-native English speakers. Additionally, the frequent pluralization or omission of antecedents paired with “they” supports this hypothesis, highlighting the flexibility required when addressing gender-indefinite references in Mandarin. The frequent modification of antecedents, either through pluralization or omission, further illustrates the freedom interpreters exercise when handling such references in Mandarin.

In contrast to McDermid et al. (2021), this study observed five instances of “he or



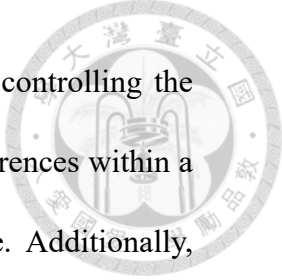
she,” all produced by female interpreters. Although generally considered gender-neutral, the use of “he or she” signals interpreters’ heightened awareness of the gender-indefinite context. The preference for “he or she” may be related to the formality of the events, as past research indicates a tendency for this construction in formal settings (LaScotte, 2016). Additionally, the non-native English context may have contributed to the choice, as “he or she” has been shown to be the most favored epicene pronoun among Chinese EFL learners (Zhang et al., 2020). This usage could also be linked to the gender sensitivity of individual interpreters, suggesting that some interpreters may actively work to mitigate this bias and avoid stereotypes. However, it is important to recognize that “he or she” remains a limited solution, as it reinforces a binary understanding of gender and can be awkward when used repeatedly.

This study marks an important first step in examining the interpretation of gender-indefinite singular references from Mandarin to English, providing a comprehensive overview of the methods employed, the interpreters’ tendencies, and the underlying factors of navigating such challenges in real-life interpreting tasks. The findings highlight the critical need to integrate gender sensitivity and awareness into interpreter education. By doing so, interpreters can be better equipped with strategies to avoid unintentionally introducing bias and stereotypes in their interpretations, thereby promoting more inclusive and accurate language use across diverse contexts.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research

While this study offers valuable insights into how interpreters navigate gender-related issues in real-life settings, it is important to acknowledge several limitations.

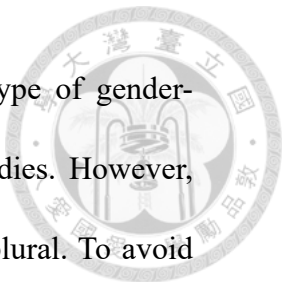
Given that gender-indefinite singular references occur unpredictably in real-life



interpreted speeches, the corpus-based approach posed challenges in controlling the size and diversity of the data. Some recordings contained multiple references within a short span, while others, despite being hours long, contained none. Additionally, although the selected materials covered a variety of topics, female-dominant antecedents were underrepresented in the corpus. Achieving balanced representation across different interpreter groups also proved difficult. For instance, despite efforts to include interpreter pairs of different sexes, only 10 of the 112 relevant entries were interpreted by male interpreters. These factors may have influenced the findings and should be considered when interpreting the results.

Despite its advantages, analyzing online videos also presents limitations in identifying the interpreters and, at times, the speakers. Consequently, obtaining accurate demographic information for analysis becomes challenging. Similarly, this study faced difficulties accessing gender-related information about the speakers and interpreters. Only their biological sex could be inferred, which may not accurately reflect their gender identities. The inability to capture more nuanced gender data potentially limits the depth of the analysis and its alignment with contemporary understandings of gender diversity.

Furthermore, the linguistic and pragmatic differences between Mandarin and English introduce additional complexities when analyzing gender-indefinite singular references. Unlike English, Mandarin does not consistently mark number (Iljic, 2005), leading to ambiguity regarding whether a reference is singular or plural. This lack of clear number markings in Mandarin speech makes it challenging to define and identify gender-indefinite singular references with precision. Moreover, nonreferential



references in hypothetical settings, such as “a teacher,” are a key type of gender-indefinite singular references often explored in English-language studies. However, such references in Mandarin can be interpreted as either singular or plural. To avoid skewing the results toward traditionally plural methods such as “they,” these ambiguous references were excluded from this study. As a result, a substantial amount of potentially valuable data was excluded, which might have further enriched the analysis.

As discussed in the Methodology chapter, references to personal names were also excluded from the analysis. However, references to personal names represent another significant type of gender-indefinite singular references and may be a point of concern for interpreters. Unlike hypothetical references, real-life figures offer an opportunity to examine potential gender mismatches between the original reference and the interpretation, making this an important area for further study.

To address these limitations, future research could benefit from adopting an experimental approach, as outlined by McDermid et al. (2021). This would allow for greater control over the materials, such as ensuring a balanced number of male and female interpreters and stereotypes, and enable the inclusion of the type of references excluded in this study. It would also facilitate the collection of more comprehensive demographic data about the interpreters, allowing researchers to isolate and analyze specific factors in greater detail. More in-depth research on the correlation between the use of gendered language and occupational stereotypes would also be beneficial, particularly focusing on feminine stereotypes, which are rather underrepresented in this corpus.

Additionally, this study highlights the multidimensional nature of interpreting

tasks. The choice of interpreting methods is shaped by the complex interplay of various factors. Conducting interviews with interpreters could provide valuable insights into their metacognitive processes and the considerations they weigh when handling gender-indefinite references, offering a deeper understanding of the challenges they face and the strategies they employ.

As this study focuses on SI materials, it would also be worthwhile to examine the interpretation of gender-indefinite singular references in the consecutive mode, which presents different challenges. Reliance on the working memory and note-taking in CI may bring forth distinct factors impacting the interpretation.

An additional area for future research could involve examining the impact of other variables, such as the presence of real-time subtitles, which were used in some of the materials in this study. Unlike spoken Mandarin, written Mandarin includes gender markers, which may influence how interpreters comprehend and render gender-indefinite references. Investigating the role of subtitles could provide valuable insights into how the written form of a language affects the interpretation process and the choices interpreters make in real-time.



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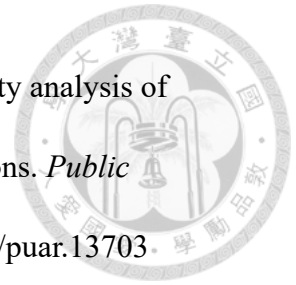
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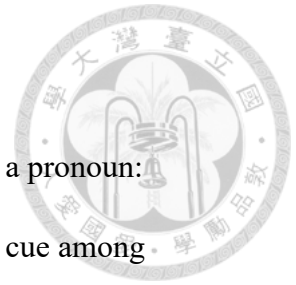
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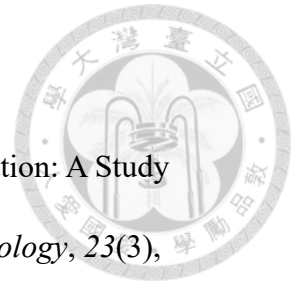
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