

INVESTIGATING THE USE OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN CHILE

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i. Abstract

This study explores and documents a variety of inclusive language devices (or gender-neutral language devices) used in contemporary Chilean Spanish, comparing them with the inclusive pan-ethnic term ‘Latinx’ as documented by Salinas (2020) in the United States higher education context. This study aims to uncover and document attitudes towards inclusive language, how these vary in society, and the reasons behind the recent rise in prominence of inclusive language in Chile, at least in certain societal groups. This study analyses qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews in order to (1) discover which inclusive language devices are used in Chile, and (2) explore how individuals understand, interpret, and use a variety of inclusive language devices. Based on the findings of the qualitative data, this study analyses quantitative data gathered from Twitter and blog posts published in Chile using the trend tracking tool, Talk Walker, with the aim of establishing the extent to which the inclusive language devices which involve replacing the final ‘o’ or ‘a’ indicating gender in nouns with either ‘@’, ‘x’ or ‘e’ are used online, in a largely informal and non-academic environment. The study then compares these results from social media to the use of inclusive noun endings in academic writing from the Universidad de Chile’s website, to explore the extent to which different inclusive language devices are used in Chilean academia. Finally, this study discusses the results of the data in relation to Salinas’ (2017) conceptualisation of *voces perdidas* and *voces de poder* to determine to what extent the use of inclusive language in Chile is reflective of grass-roots desire for increased linguistic representation, or whether it is a top-down process imposed by an external force. The results of this study indicate that in Chile, inclusive language tends to be used largely by younger generations in informal spaces, however there is some desire to use inclusive language in higher education settings. Individuals do not largely believe that inclusive language has been ‘imposed’ upon Chile and believe that it comes from a desire for inclusivity. Understandings of whether inclusive language aims to include ‘everyone’ without prioritising the masculine grammatical gender or whether it aims to represent non-binary and gender non-conforming people vary.

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To anyone who has ever experienced marginalisation or violence on the basis of their identity.

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vi. Abbreviations

RAE – Real Academia Española (Spanish Language Authority)

Cis gender – an individual who identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Non-cis gender – an individual who does not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Assigned at birth – refers to the gender which an individual is given when they are born, which may differ from that with which they identify.

1. Introduction

This study aims to document the use and understanding of inclusive language devices, as well as the attitudes towards these, in the context of modern-day Chile in both written and spoken media. This study focuses on the inclusive language devices which have become prominent in Chile in the face of recent political movements and shifts, including in relation to the *Mayo Feminista* in 2018 and the *Estallido Social* of 2019. These saw a wave of protest erupt across the country, culminating in the drastic change to Chile's political scene with the election of former student leader and leftist, Gabriel Boric, as president of the country (Bartlett, 2021). The inclusive devices in question involve replacing the gendered noun endings 'o' (denoting a masculine noun) and 'a' (denoting a feminine noun) with either 'e', 'x', or '@' to denote gender neutrality in nouns and their corresponding grammatical elements relating to animate subjects. In traditional Spanish, it is impossible to refer to animate or inanimate entities without assigning them either the masculine or feminine grammatical gender, as the language does not possess a neuter option for nouns¹ (García, 2019).

Although the study focuses on the context of modern-day Chile, it recognises the multitude of both pre- and postcolonial identities which exist within the region, and how the country's history with colonisation and dictatorship may have impacted the attitudes towards, and the use of the inclusive language devices in question. This study examines social and linguistic gender, particularly exploring how indigenous gender systems of the Mapuche people who lived in what is the modern-day Chilean geographical area pre-European colonisation, differ from those imposed by colonial agents. This study draws upon Butler's idea of social gender being a 'culturally constructed' (1990) phenomenon through 'the repetition of acts through time' (1988). This study also draws upon the representation of social gender in linguistic structures (see García, 2019), considering psycholinguistic theories and theories of linguistic relativity from scholars including Boroditsky, Schmidt and Phillips (2003) and Segel and Boroditsky (2011). These theories provide insight into how grammatical gender may shape one's perceptions of genders beyond the binary and the non-gender when one's native language obliges one to categorise their entire world according to the binary masculine and feminine grammatical gender options.

¹ The neuter option does exist in Spanish; however, this is restricted to adjectives which are not assigned gender when used in isolation. For example 'lo importante' (the important).

Due to the nature of the conflicting identities which exist in the Chilean geographical region, this study considers critiques of inclusive language devices, particularly considering that of Guerra and Orbea (2015), who denounce the inclusive term ‘Latinx’, commonly used in the United States as an alternative to ‘Latino’ or ‘Latina’, as linguistic imperialism’. According to these authors, the term has been ‘imposed’ externally by English speakers to ‘fix’ a problem with Spanish which these authors do not believe exists. Similarly, Salinas (2020) revealed that some Latin American students at US universities believe that ‘Latinx’ is largely used in English-speaking academia and not in the wider community. Whilst this study shall not focus upon the specific term ‘Latinx’, and rather the wider use of inclusive language in Spanish, the author believes it important to consider these critiques in the wider context of the postcolonial region.

This study uses both qualitative and quantitative data to answer the following research questions related to the use and understandings of inclusive language devices in the context of Chile, as well as the attitudes toward these devices:

1. To what extent do people in Chile relate to and understand a variety of inclusive language techniques?
2. To what extent is inclusive language used in a variety of situations in Chile compared to the US?
3. Reality or linguistic imperialism: to what extent is inclusive language *voces perdidas* or *voces de poder*?

Research questions (1), (2) and (3) were addressed using the qualitative data set, which was collected by means of interviews. Eight Chilean volunteers participated in thirty-minute semi-structured interviews over Zoom, which were conducted in Spanish. Some participants chose to switch to English at certain moments to demonstrate their points, however proficiency in English was not required in order to participate in the study. Participants were required to be Chilean or have had long term residency in the country, be at least eighteen years old and be a native Spanish or indigenous language speaker. The recruitment poster was shared online only, and interviews took place via Zoom video link, and therefore this would have involuntarily excluded participants without internet access. Interviews were semi-structured to create space for angles which the researcher had not considered previously, whilst keeping the interviews to a similar structure for certain set

points of comparison. The questions from the interviews and the recruitment poster can be found at the end of this paper in chapter (8).

The interviews aimed to firstly identify which inclusive language devices are used in Chile, and in which contexts with the purpose of compiling a list of search items to collect the quantitative data set. In order to do this, the interviewer presented the participants with a variety of nouns which used one of the following inclusive devices ('x', 'e' or '@') attached to the noun stem (the noun, minus the gendered ending, for example 'amig'). These nouns were selected by the author based on personal observation of actual usage - for example, in a tweet or other media. I decided to select items that had been used authentically in order to avoid observer bias or acting as 'linguistic imperialism'.

Participants were firstly asked a few demographic questions, such as age and gender identity in case patterns emerged to suggest that demographic features tended to influence one's use of inclusive language. To determine which inclusive language devices were likely to be used in Chile, they were then asked whether they recognised seeing the inclusive language device presented to them in one of the nouns, as mentioned above. To help determine the situations in which inclusive language was likely to be used in Chile, they were asked whether the device would be used in their country, by whom, and in which contexts (for example, in academic texts, informal conversations). They were also asked whether they would personally use an inclusive language device, and if so which one(s) and in which context(s), before being asked whether they believed that family members and people in wider Chilean society would use inclusive language and general attitudes towards it. These interview questions aimed primarily to address Research Question (1) and to some extent Research Question (2).

Regarding Research Question (3), i.e., to what extent is inclusive language *voces perdidas* or *voces de poder*, Salinas (2020) and Guerra and Orbea (2015) raise concerns surrounding the accessibility of the use of 'x' for monolingual Latin American people. Therefore, participants were asked whether they believed the letter to be difficult to pronounce in Spanish and whether they believed the specific term 'Latinx' was used more in Chile or in the US. Further, participants were asked whether they believed it a privilege to be able to understand or use inclusive language in order to gain insight into whether factors such as access to certain educational institutions or various social issues may impact whether an individual recognises or uses inclusive language.

Research question (2), i.e., to what extent is inclusive language used in a variety of situations in Chile compared to the US, was primarily addressed using the quantitative data set. This data was collected from social media sites such as Twitter, and from Spanish language blog posts using a social data intelligence tool called Talk Walker (<https://www.talkwalker.com/>). The usage of eight different search terms identified by interview participants as inclusive language devices used in the Chilean context was tracked over a seven-day period. Each noun stem was subjected to one of the three inclusive devices that this study aims to investigate (the inclusive noun endings ‘x’, ‘e’ and ‘@’) in the plural form. Results were filtered by region in order to collect data sets for Chile and the US so that comparisons in the use of inclusive language between the regions could be made. Unfortunately, when collecting data from the Universidad de Chile’s website for academic texts, there was no option to filter by language, and consequently some of the noun stems with the ‘e’ ending returned French language results (for example, ‘elles’), and on other occasions, using an inclusive noun ending would simply return the masculine or feminine version of the noun. Therefore, the decision was taken to exclude these from the results due to the unreliable nature of the data and the lack of search filters on the website. Where results have been excluded for this reason, it has been clearly marked in the table of results.

The author wishes to take this opportunity to clarify how her own subjectivity may impact the approach to this study and inform the analysis of the data. The author is strongly in favour of inclusive language and believes in the importance of linguistically recognising gender identities which do not fit within the ‘man/woman’ binary and takes an intersectional approach to feminism. Therefore, it is possible that the author may unwittingly favour the use of inclusive language in the data analysis.

This study is structured as follows:

1. The literature review (chapters (2) and (3)) firstly aims to establish Chile’s social, political, and cultural context as justification for the timeliness of this investigation, particularly in the wake of the *Mayo Feminista* and *Estallido Social*. The literature review then aims to explore the social construction of gender, giving light to indigenous gender systems which existed in Chile before the European colonisation of the region. The final section of the literature review will build upon the social construction of gender by introducing the construction of gender in language and discusses this in

relation to theories of linguistic relativity. The literature review aims to establish the differences between social and linguistic gender, whilst also examining how they build upon each other in order to inform the analysis of the data in later chapters relating more specifically to the research questions.

2. Chapter (4) focuses on the research question (1), i.e., ‘To what extent do people in Chile relate to and understand a variety of inclusive language techniques?’. This chapter firstly introduces the qualitative data and the data collection methods used, and clearly presents the demographic data for the eight interview participants. This chapter then explores attitudes towards inclusive language in Chile. Finally, the chapter explores the multiple levels of privilege which participants associate with accessing inclusive language, such as social and educational privilege.
3. Chapter (5) discusses research question (2), i.e., ‘To what extent is inclusive language used in a variety of situations in Chile compared to the US?’. This chapter discusses the process of collecting the quantitative dataset for social media, blog, and academic data and clearly presents this data in table format. This chapter then discusses the use of the inclusive suffixes: ‘x’, ‘@’, and ‘e’ in informal and academic written formats using data from both the quantitative and qualitative datasets. Finally, the chapter draws upon the qualitative dataset to give insight into the use of inclusive language in spoken situations.
4. Chapter (6) focuses on research question (3), i.e., ‘Reality or Linguistic Imperialism: To what extent is inclusive language *voces perdidas* or *voces de poder*?’. This chapter explores Guerra and Orbea’s (2015) claims that inclusive language devices are imposed upon Latin American people from outside, rather than having developed authentically. This chapter draws upon recent social movements in Chile and social shifts in the wake of the transition to democracy in 1990 to explore why these inclusive language shifts were not prominent previously, since the communities which they aim to represent have always existed with varying degrees of visibility. The latter half of this chapter explores power dynamics in terms of ‘imposing’ or regulating language, and how this may impact the use of, or resistance towards, certain inclusive language devices.

5. Supporting information, including the questions used to collect the qualitative dataset, as well as the participant recruitment poster, can be found at the end of this paper in chapter 8, following the conclusion chapter.

2. Context and Social Gender

This chapter aims firstly to establish the context of this project in order to justify its timeliness by discussing recent social movements in Chile in response to the neoliberalism of the 1990s and 2000s and the impact of Chile's transition to democracy in 1990. This section then examines the construction of social with the aim of establishing how these differ from linguistic gender constructions in chapter (3). Section (2.2) of this chapter then explores gender systems in indigenous Chile to demonstrate that sex does not equal gender, and to also respect those other understandings of gender which existed within the region which this study focuses upon existed within the region pre-colonisation. Understanding how indigenous gender systems differed from that which has become dominant in the region today is important in the discussion of intersecting identities, which is also a feature of this chapter, given that there is likely to be conflict between pre and postcolonial gender systems within the region. This chapter also explores the representation of intersecting pan ethnic and gender identities in section (2.4). Following from this, section (2.5) explores power dynamics in relation to the emergence of inclusive language. This section considers both that inclusive language may be a result of marginalised gender identities reclaiming their voices (Salinas, 2017), whilst equally considering Guerra and Orbea's (2015) argument that inclusive language was imposed upon a community against its will from an external power. Sections (2.3), (2.4) and (2.5) particularly establish the background for answering research question (3).

2.1 Context

This study is particularly interested in inclusive language in Chile from 2018 onwards, because of the social movements and political shifts which have been happening in the country since this date. This section discusses the *Mayo Feminista* and the *Estallido Social* movements of 2018 and 2019 respectively, considering the significant role that the youth and university culture played in both instances (see Márquez, 2020 and Rivera-Aguilera, Imas, and Jimenez-Diaz, 2021). In order to discuss the use of inclusive language in Chile, it is fundamental to acknowledge the country's current social, cultural, and political climate, as well as considering the impact of Chile's recent history, and the impact that this has had upon understandings and perceptions of gender.

In 1973, Chile entered into a military dictatorship, which would govern the country until 1990 (see Guzmán and Godoy, 2018). The military dictatorship resulted in drastic institutional changes at political, economic, and sociocultural level (Garretón, 1999). During the military dictatorship years, feminist activism articulated itself with other organisations to

resist authoritarianism and patriarchal oppression (Contreras, 2021). In fact, women and feminist organisations worked under clandestine positions to support other organisations in the fight to regain democracy (Contreras, 2021). Upon the return to democracy in 1990, space opened up for critical discourse surrounding the rules defining the behaviours and identities that categorise men and women, and from the mid-1990s, one began to observe different lifestyles: in particular, these saw women, who had played a significant role in the fight to return to democracy, stepping away from traditional gender roles (Guzmán and Godoy, 2018).

The 1990s and Early 2000s saw a period of relative social stability in terms of neoliberalism, however this was to change in the 2010s, with 21st Century feminism in Chile characterised as a ‘response’ to 1990s neoliberalism (see Rivera Berruz, 2018). In May 2018, thousands of women took to the streets of Chile to protest against sex-based violence in universities, which also became a critique of heteronormative structures (Contreras, 2021). Contreras defines these heteronormative structures as the social, political, and economic regime which define heterosexuality as the only ‘normal’ manner of expressing one’s sexual desires (2021: 163). This movement became known as *Mayo Feminista*. Beginning at the Universidad Austral, the protests quickly gained momentum and spread across campuses throughout the country, although Contreras (2018) explains that their exact agendas often differed. However, the movement eventually came to focus upon changing the ‘heteropatriarchal system’ and the privileges associated with ‘gender, race, and class’, in order to create a more just society (Contreras, 2021: 164). This suggests that there was a sentiment of discontent towards the previously accepted structures of society, and that perhaps at least the student community no longer felt that it accurately represented their desires and identities. Indeed, Contreras (2021) states that, whilst the feminist movement initially only considered cis-gendered women, the *Ola Feminista* came to have a more intersectional approach. That is to say, it gave way to another way of thinking putting feminism into action. Rivera-Aguilera et. al. (2021) also explain that the Latin American youth particularly began to feel a shared sentiment of inequality. Crucially, one of the demands of the student demonstrations was for an increase in the use of inclusive language (Contreras, 2021), which could similarly represent a shift in how individuals identify, resulting in a need to linguistically represent identities outside of ‘man’ and ‘woman’. It is therefore important that this study explores the role of higher education in influencing the use of inclusive language across Chilean society, as well as considering its influence on an individual’s understanding and use of inclusive features.

On the 6th of October 2019, a wave of protests, which would become known as the *Estallido Social*, erupted across Chile. Salazar (2019) defines this as the spark that awoke the marginalised population due to this popular movement created by the youth who felt angry and excluded. What initially began as a demonstration of anger at the rise in the price of the metro fare quickly became a demonstration of resistance towards President Sebastián Piñera and the neoliberal policies which were increasingly regarded by citizens as unequal and unjust (Márquez, 2020). They further explain that the *Estallido Social* did not only make demands, but it saw citizens take actions which aimed to see the writing of a new Chilean constitution in the coming years (Rivera-Aguilera et. al., 2021). During many of the demonstrations, protestors would carry the flags of the Mapuche people to highlight the systematic abuse of indigenous people (Rivera-Aguilera et. al., 2021), further suggesting that the protests had come to acknowledge a broader range of systematic oppressions and inequalities which existed throughout Chilean society and taken a more intersectional approach to tackling them. The Chilean government reacted harshly to the protests and imposed strict measures in an attempt to stop them, reminding millions of Chileans of the dark years of dictatorship (Rivera-Aguilera et. al., 2021). It is particularly interesting to consider the angle that the *Estallido Social* was characterised by youth involvement here. Indeed, Rivera-Aguilera et. al. (2021) explain that the newer generations did not fear repression because they came from a place of exclusion, and thus their contributions to these social and political movements were significant. This is interesting to consider in relation to the dictatorship. It is possible that the younger generation, almost thirty years on from the end of authoritarianism in the country, was far enough removed from the trauma of a military dictatorship that they no longer feared the possible consequences of demanding a new political system representational of a new national identity that no longer aligned with that which was represented in the 1980 constitution.

Since the end of the Chilean dictatorship in 1990, ‘the division between authorized knowledge and forbidden knowledge has been quite substantial, even radical’ (Márquez, 2020: 669) and that ‘while the former exists within disciplinary specializations, other knowledges exist outside university walls’ (2020: 669). This suggests that whilst university campuses were recorded as the birthplace of the 2018 *Mayo Feminista* and whilst the youth played a significant role in the *Estallido Social* of 2019, perhaps shifts in culture, identity and knowledge which could have led to the emergence of inclusive language devices were not solely confined to higher educational spaces. Márquez further explains that on the streets during the *Estallido Social*, ‘things and ideas circulate freely without waiting for authorization’ (2021: 669). That

is to say, a phenomenon such as the emergence of inclusive language devices would not need to wait for official recognition before it could gain notability at least to some degree, nor would it be confined to academia.

In the context of this study, this could result in noticeable differences between the use of inclusive language in different situations. For example, the quantitative dataset might attest that the use of inclusive language devices in unregulated spaces where ‘forbidden knowledge’ does not need to seek approval, such as in informal conversations amongst friends, is more prominent than in academic papers and publications, where perhaps the language used would be confined more to ‘authorised knowledge’. On the 20th of October 2021, the Universidad de Chile announced that it had received an official request from two conservative congress representatives to disclose details of courses, materials, and members of staff involved in teachings about ‘gender ideology’, ‘gender studies’, ‘feminism’ and ‘sexual diversity’. In response, the University stated that it ‘rejects any form of censorship’ and highlighted the importance of social debate around such topics both within its classrooms and amongst wider society, particularly in the aftermath of *Mayo Feminista* and the *Estallido Social*. The Chilean government appears to be attempting to censor academic debate around gender, and such censorship is unquestionably undemocratic. This could also be an indicator of a conservative attitude towards gender in wider society that might be attested in the qualitative dataset. Whilst recent social movements, largely characterised by the youth, have demonstrated a demand for rethinking gender, it would also appear that this remains unofficial, or ‘unauthorised’ discourse.

2.2 Introduction to the Social Construction of Gender

In examining gender, both in a social and linguistic capacity, it is fundamental to be able to distinguish between sex and socially constructed gender. Gender and sex are inherently different. Whilst sex is a biological factor, gender is ‘culturally constructed’ (Butler, 1990: 8) and cannot necessarily be considered a ‘cultural interpretation of sex’ (1990: 10). Gender is ‘a constructed identity’ ‘instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous’ (Butler, 1988: 520), that is to say, gender is an identity category which is socially constructed through ‘the repetition of acts through time’. As French feminist theorist Simone de Beauvoir wrote, ‘one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman’ (1997: 295), in other words, ‘female’ does not produce cultural meaning, rather one learns to adhere their female body to the predetermined, historically, and socially constructed requirements of the female gender, thus becoming a ‘cultural sign’ interpretable in a given social historical context (Butler, 1988: 522). We are not born a gender, rather we ‘become’ one by adhering to a set of rules and performing

predetermined acts which are interpreted by wider society as constituting that specific gender identity.

As Butler argues, gender is not inherently attached to sex: even if we assume a stable man/woman gender binary for a moment, there is no reason why the social construction of “men” should only become an interpretation of the male body, or that “woman” should exclusively be regarded as an interpretation of the female body (1990: 9). Butler further argues that ‘there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two’ (1990: 9), regardless of whether sex is strictly and unproblematically binary. At this point it is important to note that whilst biological sex is often regarded as binary male/female, intersex people do exist, and have been historically subject to violence and erasure, including gender assignment as either male or female at a young age. Carrera, DePalma and Lameiras (2012: 1004) refer to this as ‘genital mutilation of intersex children’ to adhere to a rigidly prescriptive sex/gender binary world (see Amato, 2016). Whilst gender is frequently perceived as a parallel to sex operating in a strictly male/man female/woman binary, it is fundamentally important to recognise, and thus validate, gender identities which fall outside of this binary. Carrera et. al. affirm that biology, medicine, and anthropology provide evidence that there are many diverse social identities which exist beyond the rigidly accepted social model of social gender being attached to one’s genitalia (2012: 1000). It is more than conceivable that non-conforming gender identities exist, if as Butler writes, genders exist through the performance of certain acts. It is also perfectly conceivable that one can conform to and identify with a gender which does not fit the ‘male body = man, female body = woman’ binary expectation; they do not have to ‘perform’ their gender according to the binary belief that this theatrical performance is bound to one’s genitalia. If gender is, in fact, created through the repeated performance of a set of culturally interpreted actions, then it is certainly possible to produce a culturally intelligible construction through the repetition of a set of actions outside of the binary man/woman. Further, if gender is not strictly bound to sex, why should there be any reasonable grounds to suggest that there can be no more than three genders? ‘Gender’ could become an endless possibility of social structures and categories which break away from the common belief that gender and sex are intrinsically connected. Equally, there could be no gender, if we consider that gender is created by gendered acts, that gender itself does not exist, rather the acts that constitute it do, and that without the continued repeated performance of these acts, gender would cease to exist (Butler, 1988: 522).

To say that gender is ‘cultural fiction’ (Butler, 1988: 522) is not to say that gender is not socially important. Quite the contrary, as Crenshaw states, ‘to say that a category such as race or gender is socially constructed is not to say that the category has no significance in our world’ (1991: 1296). Culture acts as a way of projecting meaning or making sense of a thing or concept, and these shared understandings are the reason we interpret the world around us in largely the same way (Hall, 1997). According to Hall (1997), ‘cultures consist of the maps of meaning, the frameworks of intelligibility, the things which allow us to make sense of a world which exists but is ambiguous as to its meaning until we’ve made sense of it’. Meanings therefore arise from a concept because of a shared knowledge and understanding of what constitutes that concept; a culture comes to exist around that shared understanding of an idea. This could be said of gender; we all have a shared understanding of what constitutes a ‘man’ and what constitutes a ‘woman’ in our society. The gender binary is used as a means of social categorisation and organisation and is embedded in us from a very young age, sometimes even before we were born. Meaning comes to exist because of conceptual maps which set out the limits of understanding and which are shared amongst members of a group, culture, or society and without which, the world would be completely unintelligible (Hall, 1997). Butler (1990) discusses the case of ‘Herculine the hermaphrodite’, an intersex individual whose gender identity could be considered to lie outside of a European conceptual understanding of sex and gender identity. Butler even acknowledges that the ‘linguistic conventions’ which produce the gendered body find themselves limited by Herculine, whose body is said to disrupt the set of rules which govern a shared cultural understanding of the links between sex, gender and desire (1990: 32). Herculine is unintelligible to a gender binary which relies on unambiguously male bodies performing ‘men’ who desire women and unambiguously female bodies performing ‘women’ who desire men. Herculine’s biologically sexed body cannot correlate to one of the two opposing gender identities in a manner which fits with the understanding of gendered bodies following from sexed bodies, and therefore Western society cannot make sense of Herculine.

It is the shared understanding of gender as a fixed binary in a western context that shuns the experiences and existence of non-conforming gender identities. Our understanding of what constitutes gender on a sex-based conceptual map that sets out that male=man and female=woman is restrictive in regard to what we can comprehend outside of this fixed binary understanding of social cultures. Carrera et. al. (2012) highlight that unexamined gender stereotypes and the polarised construction of opposing gender categories not only lead to

oppression in the form of sexism and homophobia (and arguably, transphobia), but also that people who do not conform to the gender binary highlight the inadequacy of the system, often having their experiences and existence ignored and marginalised. (Binary) gender is a tool used to police and control individual identity (Butler, 1988). As such, it sets out the limits of what is and is not acceptable in terms of gender performance on a conceptual map. Butler (1988: 527) argues that certain acts which can be ‘interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity’ can either adhere to or contest the limits of gender identity set out by our shared perception of what is and is not acceptable according to the gender binary. ‘Performing one’s gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect, and performing it well provides the reassurance that there is an essentialism of gender identity after all’ (Butler, 1988: 528). From a contemporary perspective, Butler’s understanding of gender is challenged by Herculine the ‘hermaphrodite’, who Butler refers to by the binary gendered pronouns, ‘she/he’ (1990: 32), a subtle, unintentional, yet still very real oppression of someone who does not fit within the linguistic bounds of gender identity. Gender is expected in society. As a society, we prescribe the future and experiences of a foetus based upon the genitalia it develops in the womb. We show this off to our friends, our families and our neighbours with balloons and confetti in pink or blue at ‘gender’ reveal parties. Our intersex children are subject to ‘reparative’ surgery at a young age so that they can have a sex attributable to the gender binary; thus the child is able to exist upon our conceptual map of gender (Carrera et. al., 2012). This is an ‘either or’ scenario which we project onto our new-born children before we have even decided upon their name, an ‘either/or’ scenario often reflected through language in the form of personal pronouns in English, and in Spanish, through gendered markers. Gendered markers must mark an animate noun as either male/masculine or female/feminine (García, 2019), thus removing the possibility for linguistic recognition outside of man/woman/male/female and further perpetuating the essentialism of the gender binary.

Carrera et. al. highlight seemingly innocent actions which reinforce this gender binary for children at a very early age, particularly in schools. For example, school children are often organised by their teachers according to binary gender for activities such as ‘lining up, playing games, desk placement and dress code’ (2012: 1008), thus reinforcing the polarity of ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ identities. A report by Guasp (2009) concluded that three in five primary school teachers who recognised the occurrence of homophobic bullying in their schools said that boys ‘who behave or act like girls’ are bullied and that one in six recall girls ‘who behave or act like boys’ or who are interested in sport experience homophobic bullying. In the report, one primary

school teacher even acknowledges the rigidity of the gender binary and that bullying is a direct consequence of a child's deviation from the polarised identities it prescribes. The teacher noted that:

'People seem to be very definite in their ideas of what a "proper" boy or a "proper" girl should do or be interested in. It takes very little deviation from these so-called norms for a person to be singled out and picked on.' (2009: 11).

As early as primary school, the gender binary and the belief that deviating from it is 'wrong', are so deeply entrenched that children who are, or are perceived to be, homosexual and/or gender non-conforming experience the 'punishment' for their non-adherence to a heteronormative world. Categories have meaning and consequence, and certain values which we attach to these categories in turn create social hierarchies (Crenshaw, 1991). Therefore, those who *do* adhere to the values of the polarised categories supported by the gender binary have the power to inflict suffering upon, and marginalise, those who do not. This contributes to the idea of cultural hegemony, which is the 'domination or rule maintained through ideological or cultural means', implemented often through 'social institutions', which allows 'those in power to strongly influence the values, norms, ideas, expectations, worldview, and behaviour of the rest of society' (Cole, 2020). In this case, social constructions of gender in society and culture police how society understands and accepts gender ideas, expectations, and norms. In other words, the 'rule' of adhering to the gender binary in accordance with the sex that one is assigned at birth results in the 'punishment' of people who do not conform to this model through our 'tacit agreement with the way that things are' (Cole, 2020).

The culture of reproducing gendered acts without examining them is a harmful act to those who do not, or who are perceived to not conform to these expectations. As in the words of Carrera et. al., 'people whose experience does not conform to the gender binary serve to highlight its inadequacy' (2012: 995-996). It is further important to consider that social identities are multifaceted constructions, and that it is important not to take solely a European approach to analysing gender identity throughout history and across a multitude of cultures, which may not have shared a gender binary system parallel to that of Europe and postcolonial America (see Dozono, 2017).

This section has explored the construction of gender through the repetition of acts, as well as how deeply entrenched our understandings of gender have become for social organisation. Building upon this, the next section shall examine alternative indigenous gender

systems in the Americas which existed prior to European colonisation, and how these gendered social categories produced meaning in similar and different senses to how gender identity categories produce meaning and consequence in a contemporary western setting. It shall also discuss how pre- and post- colonial gender systems have intersected within Chile, and the consequences of this for those who are not seen to conform with the heterosexual, binary gender, dominant gender system imposed by colonial agents.

2.3 Gender Systems in Indigenous Chile

Building upon the social construction of gender discussed in the previous section, this section shall explore how gender systems in indigenous Chile differed from that which is dominant today, which came following the European colonisation of the region in the 15th and 16th centuries. Examination of the intersections of identity within Latin America does not only involve examining the intersections of ethnic/cultural identity with gender identity. Whilst ‘gender’ is frequently interpreted as the social categories of ‘man’ and ‘woman’, and also as grammatical categories (particularly in Indo-European languages, with the noun categories typically being masculine, feminine and neuter in gender, and sometimes animate and inanimate), etymologically the word derives from the Latin ‘genus’, and is an anglicised borrowing via the Old French ‘genre’ meaning ‘kind’ or ‘sort’ (Oxford English Dictionary, 2020) (Corbett, 1991: 1), thus serving as a reminder that ‘gender’ does not necessarily need to denote sex-based categorisation, rather the categorisation could theoretically be based on other factors for social organisation. Because this study aims to analyse gender non-conforming identities and their subsequent representations in the Spanish language in a modern, postcolonial context with a focus on Chile, the author recognises the importance of considering and discussing pre-colonial Mapuche identities. In particular, this study shall consider the stance that gender is a set of ‘contextualized cultural practices’ (Dozono, 2017: 430) and that certain acts of gender in Mapuche culture, such as *machi* sexual acts, can be understood neither in terms of a modern European concept of gender, nor through modern notions of homo, hetero or bisexuality (Bacigalupo, 2007).

Within Chile, it is possible that there will be some conflict between these pre- and postcolonial identities (as evidenced in Bacigalupo’s 2007 book, *Shamans of the Foye Tree*), particularly as 25% of the country’s population is said to be Mestizo (a person of both European and Indigenous American descent) (Sawe, 2017). One must first begin by reflecting upon how our worlds are constructed with regard to gender, and the importance of this when examining pre- and postcolonial gender systems and beliefs. Dozono (2017) discusses how European

colonisation led to a possible inability to make sense of indigenous gender systems which did not fit with a European understanding of gender. He further affirms that academics tend to present European gender binary categories as ‘universal and natural’ throughout world history, rather than categorising it as one of many ways of understanding and interpreting gender in a variety of historical contexts (2017: 429). To argue for the importance of examining gender through a variety of lenses rather than purely a European lens is not to say that sexes bore no relation to constructed gender norms and practices, or that sex did not play a role in the perception, construction and understanding of an indigenous world. Rather, it is important to not solely rely on the European approach to gender being bound to men’s and women’s roles when examining the roles of gender and gender systems in world history, as doing so erases ‘vast historical complexity’ in terms of understanding social roles and categories across world history (Dozono, 2017: 429). For example, in pre-Colombian Mexico, *muxes* were considered a third gender, occupying a position in society which would exist outside a European idea of binary gender. *Muxes* still exist in the Oaxaca region today (Dickerman and Lopez Torres, 2019). Mirandé describes *muxes* as:

‘biological males who also manifest feminine identities in their dress and attire, but they [*muxes*] are not transsexual nor are they seeking to become women. They both self-identify and are generally recognized and accepted as a third gender, rather than as men or women, adopting characteristics of each gender.’ (2016: 385).

Furthermore, and more specifically to Chile, for the indigenous Mapuche people of what is now modern-day Chile and Argentina, gender was used as a means of categorisation on a more spiritual level and played an important role in shamanic rituals. In Mapuche culture, *machi* and *machi weye* were social categories of people who were said to have special spiritual powers and were central to ritualistic aspects of Mapuche culture. Whilst *machi* could be of any sex, they embodied masculine, feminine and co-gendered identities for healing purposes and could transgress gender binaries and combine gender roles to become whole and divine (Bacigalupo, 2007). Rather than occupying a third gender, *machi* appear to be gender-fluid. Their gender identities are a performance relating to spirituality; their societal roles are distinct and performed, creating categories which incur meaning. ‘Mapuche believe *machi* gender identities are determined by spirits who subject *machi* to a series of hierarchical gendered relationships which sometimes result in sexual variance among *machi*’ (Bacigalupo, 2007: 4). Bacigalupo discusses how the spirits who decide upon the gender identity of the *machi* were not interested in their sex, rather their ‘gendered discourses and performances’ and that *machi*’s

experiences and practices were ‘shaped by gendered relationships that had little to do with their sex or their roles as men or women in everyday life’ (2007: 7). Further, sex and generational social categories bear spiritual importance to Mapuche, as they believe that the contrast in these energies is necessary to balance the universe. These categories, and even transgressing them, are further important to *machi* healing rituals (Bacigalupo, 2007). Mapuche are also categorised, or gendered, by the Old Man, Old Woman, Young Man, Young Woman in a four-point system. The old couple control knowledge about life and about the universe, whilst the young couple’s energies are representative of the ‘unbridled forces of life energy and sexuality’ (Bacigalupo, 2007: 69). Mapuche believe that the balance in energies between youth and elderly is important and that ‘sexual fluids must remain balanced and controlled through social rules, gender roles, marriage, kinship, and divine mandates’ (Bacigalupo, 2007: 69) thus indicating that whilst *machi* rituals transgress gender roles to fulfil specific purposes, sex-based gender roles did hold significant categorical value and meaning within Mapuche society and were important for social organisation.

Although *machi* cross from one binary to another and sometimes embody a co-gendered identity, they are ‘different from ordinary women and men’, however, they cannot be defined in terms of a modern western understanding of sex, gender, and sexuality. Co-gendered identities further played a role in the Mapuche people’s interpretation and categorisation of the world around them for categorising and making sense of certain non-human objects. To the Mapuche people, the foye (cinnamon) tree served as an important symbol of *machi* gender fluidity and fitted with the Mapuche conceptual map of gender ambiguity and fluidity. ‘The masculine and feminine aspects of the foye tree and its white, hermaphroditic flowers legitimate *machi*’s ritual transvestism, their sexual variance, and their co-gendered ritual identities’ (Bacigalupo, 2007: 1-4). The importance of gender for spiritual order is further presented through Mapuche expressing uncertainty towards plants which do not fit within their spiritual cosmic ordering (Bacigalupo, 2007), thus indicating that spiritual gender categories presented themselves and their importance in many aspects of the Mapuche world. European understandings of man/woman binary gender could result in a reduced ability among these cultures to comprehend performative expressions of gender identity beyond the binary limits. For Mapuche, social organisation around spirituality was seemingly regarded as of such high importance that even plants which do not fit within their understanding of cosmic ordering are regarded with suspicion, a phenomenon which perhaps is related to Mapuche conceptual maps and understandings of social categories relating to human ordering.

European colonisation of the Americas largely erased the indigenous people's 'ways of knowing'. This included erasing indigenous gender systems and understandings of gender, and also changed relationships with Gods and genders, replacing these with European methods of understanding gender (Dozono, 2017). The European colonisation of the Americas was brutal, and the gender variance of the *machi* was in part used by Spanish conquistadors as justification for the domination and colonisation of indigenous people and their lands (Bacigalupo, 2007). The conquistadors imposed their European gender classification systems upon the Mapuche; a classification system which considered anything outside of the binary 'man' and 'woman' social gender categories as 'unnatural'. The conquistadors considered 'hermaphrodites' as representational of sexual, moral and social chaos and a 'monstrous fusing of male and female bodies and genders' (Bacigalupo, 2007: 124). Spanish conquistadors further used rhetoric of sexual deviancy and polygamy of *machi* and Mapuche chiefs as a weapon against the indigenous people to justify 'colonisation and evangelisation', portraying indigenous Mapuche people as 'witches' and 'sodomites' who were unfit to rule, thus subjecting them to colonial powers and social organisational systems (Bacigalupo, 2007). Furthermore, Spanish and Mapuche attitudes to gender varied greatly, resulting in the colonisers portraying *machi* and *machi weye* as 'feminine' by European standards, placing them as 'inferior' to masculine powers (Bacigalupo, 2007). As Bacigalupo highlights, Spaniards and Mapuche valued masculinity and femininity differently. In Mapuche culture, a man becoming a *machi* did not lose his powers, status, or privilege as a consequence of becoming a co-gendered spiritual individual. Unlike in Spain, indigenous Mapuche people greatly valued femininity and feminine gender roles were considered important for the stability of the universe. This portrayal of *machi* and *machi weye* as more feminine by Spanish standards created a narrative of *machi* as 'object' who partook in 'sodomitical' practices, and thus was inferior to the construct of Spanish masculinity. In fact, following the declaration of Chile as a nation state in 1818, *machi* had their political powers stripped from them and were represented as feminine by majority discourse (Bacigalupo, 2007). Mapuche people faced punishment for not performing gender 'correctly' according to the newly imposed, Catholicised gender binary. *Machi weye* and female *machi* in Chile were forced to conform to a Spanish narrative and understanding of sexual and gender norms, modesty and behaviours, and convert to Christianity in order to avoid persecution (Bacigalupo, 2007). In fact, some contemporary Mapuche interviewed by Bacigalupo believed the *machi* identity to be assigned to an individual as a punishment for homosexuality, particularly for male *machi*. These colonial narratives still exist within Chile

today, holding power as the national majority discourse, and, as the next paragraph shall illustrate, have infiltrated Mapuche's attitudes towards gender, sexuality, and desire.

Contemporary Chile evidences the coexistence of indigenous and colonial gender narratives and perspectives. Bacigalupo highlights how it is no longer easy to distinguish between colonial and indigenous gender systems, as Mapuche people have largely embraced an interwoven, hybrid understanding of gender role and ideologies (2007). However, as previously mentioned, Mapuche attitudes towards God and gender have changed since Mapuche lands were first colonised. One symptom of this change in attitudes towards spirituality and gender is evidenced through *machi*, who were previously a fairly even mix of males and females, but who in modern times are more commonly female, although male *machi* do still exist (Bacigalupo, 2007). In Spanish, the noun *machi* has been ascribed to the feminine grammatical gender, employing the feminine article 'la' (Bacigalupo, 2007: 212). Important to note is the change in attitudes of Mapuche people towards the gender roles and identities of *machi* in a contemporary setting, in particular, the attitudes of Mapuche towards male *machi*. Homophobic discourse, stemming from the colonising Catholic understanding of sex, gender, and sexuality and its demonisation of anything which did not conform to its understanding of gender binary and heterosexuality, appears to have crept into Mapuche discourse surrounding gender fluidity. *Machi* males are frequently marginalised for challenging the male-dominant national discourse of contemporary Chile as they embody feminine gender roles without fully breaking away from masculinity (Bacigalupo, 2007). Bacigalupo (2007) evidences homophobic discourse encountered in conversations about *machi* with contemporary Mapuche. Whilst almost revered pre-colonisation, contemporary male *machi* are frequently subject to ridicule, with Mapuche men joking about their 'manliness' and referring to them using Spanish homophobic slurs, a feat which Bacigalupo (2007) attributes to the internalisation of Catholic discourses around homosexuality, through which 'any form of sexual or gender variance is viewed as unnatural and threatening to family values, society, and morality' (2007: 165). Yet whilst homophobic attitudes towards *machi* who are deemed, at least perhaps according to a European definition, to be 'men', Bacigalupo notes that the same Mapuche men who mocked male *machi* in one instance, also greatly respected them and 'recognized the importance of their traditional co-gendered performances and transvestism during rituals that ensured health, wholeness, and well-being' (2007: 164). However, unlike during the colonial period, when according to Bacigalupo, at least one gender identity outside of the man/woman binary was widely recognised by Mapuche, the Mapuche men interviewed asserted that male *machi* are

men; more specifically ‘special men, like priests who don’t have a family because they dedicate themselves to God’ (2007: 174). They further believe that, unlike other men, *machi* and priests ought not to fight or have women, thus indicating that, whilst perceiving male *machi* as ‘men’, they believe that their identity as a spiritual person requires them to perform a set of actions which create them as a separate, ‘special’ social category. They describe male *machi*’s sexual desires as different to those of the accepted Chilean national rhetoric of the heterosexual man, and their gender roles as differing from those of the macho man. Contemporary *machi* males do often try to ‘assert’ their masculinity by reviving and masculinising ‘their colonial roles as spiritual warriors by associating themselves with contemporary military authorities’ (2007: 167). Male *machi* attempt to attribute themselves to postcolonial constructs of binary gender, perhaps in order to escape the ‘punishments’ which Butler (1990) describes as a common consequence of gender non-conformity, in this case, homophobic abuse.

As predicted, there is clear conflict between pre- and postcolonial identities amongst Mapuche, particularly in regard to negotiating gender identity systems and spirituality. Catholic majority discourse in postcolonial Chile has widely infiltrated Mapuche society, culture and understanding of the world. To varying extents, modern Mapuche regard male *machi*’s gender performances through what Bacigalupo refers to as ‘the lens of national perceptions of homosexuality’, with some Mapuche believing that a male *machi*’s gender performance becomes more feminine because they inherit their *machi* spirituality and powers from their maternal side (2007: 175). There is clear conflict in Mapuche perceptions of *machi* identity, with European Catholic undertones of internalised homophobia appearing through the beliefs that *machi* co-gendered identity exists as a punishment for homosexuality and the use of homophobic slurs to refer to male *machi* clashing with indigenous reverence and respect for the traditionally important role that *machi* played in rituals central to the Mapuche people’s understanding of their pre-colonial universe. The Mapuche attitude which valued both masculinity and femininity for their crucial roles in creating a balanced universe has been largely overshadowed by hegemonic discourse in Chile, which not only punishes male *machi*’s co-gendered identities with homophobic slurs and marginalisation from national discourse, but also has consequences for the social roles of *machi* females. For example, whilst female *machi* do not seemingly face homophobic discrimination for their co-gendered identities and performances, they have been marginalised by the Chilean state’s male-dominant power structures on the basis of their ethnic identity, poverty status and lack of access to education,

as well as because of their gender and traditional healing ritual practices (Bacigalupo, 2007: 213).

Catholic ideals of gender have penetrated both Chilean national and Mapuche discourses surrounding the gender roles of women and the co-gendered gender roles of female *machi*. The Catholic image of the Virgin Mary alongside ‘machismo’ (sexist) culture has resulted in a shift in expectations: Mapuche women are now either expected to remain pure as virgins, or become dedicated mothers and wives, with both expectations requiring them to become subordinate to male-dominant narratives of authority (Bacigalupo, 2007: 213). To an extent, this Catholic, male-dominated discourse constrains female *machi* too. Whilst it is largely accepted that female *machi* transgress gender roles and take on a co-gendered identity, performing acts which may otherwise be interpreted as constitutive of a masculine identity in the eyes of Chilean national discourse, including taking on public ritual roles and traveling away from the home by themselves to perform rituals and visit patients, they are also generally expected to act in accordance with the image of the good, subordinate woman, performing the gendered expectations of ‘good daughters, mothers and wives’ in daily life (2007: 213). Female *machi* in contemporary society are expected to conform to and perform a European rhetoric of femininity as subject to masculinity, partially abandoning a traditionally co-gendered role to adhere to a greater extent to an imposed binary gender system. Attempts by female *machi* to transgress gender norms or to hold their own power away from male figures of authority, both traditional and postcolonial figures, are punished with marginalisation and often result in them being labelled with derogatory terms such as ‘*brujas*’ (witches) and ‘*mujeres de la calle*’ (women of the street) (Bacigalupo, 2007: 213). Whilst Bacigalupo acknowledges the clear conflict between pre- and postcolonial identities and their attitudes and perceptions towards *machi* of all sexes, Bacigalupo discusses that it is Chilean national discourse which holds power over *machi*’s gender identities and sexualities, with this discourse frequently weaponised against *machi*, with the labels “homosexual” and “witch” appearing in state discourse as ‘political tools to denigrate machi and Mapuche and to mold them to the gendered expectations of the Catholic state’ (2007: 253). Although *machi* of all sexes face different forms of discrimination on account of their co-gendered identities, it is clear that these types of discrimination are influenced by the homophobic, male-dominant, rigidly binary gender identity rhetoric of the Catholic, colonial Chilean state.

This section has explored how indigenous Mapuche gender systems for social organisation differed from that which was introduced to the region as a result of European

colonisation. This section has also explored the conflict between indigenous and colonial gender systems in the region and how that has led to some *machi* facing homophobic discrimination on the basis of their spiritual gender identity. Building upon this, the following section shall explore the intersections of identity, with an emphasis on Crenshaw's 'intersectional theory' (1991). The examination of how social identities intersect will allow for the analysis of language which aims to represent multiple facets of an individual's identity, for example, terms which aim to represent one's pan ethnic identity and gender identity simultaneously. The following section frequently calls upon the proposed inclusive pan ethnic term 'Latinx' to help illustrate examples.

2.4 When Identities Intersect

As this chapter has previously mentioned, intersections of indigenous Latin American and postcolonial European identities can be expected to be present during examinations of gender identity and pan-ethnic identity. Moreover, the previous section has evidenced the co-existence, conflict and mixing of indigenous Mapuche and European Catholic ideas surrounding gender identity and gender roles within a modern Chilean context. This section shall draw upon the previous section on gender roles and gender identities in indigenous and contemporary and examine them alongside theories of gender identity performance, examining these in relation to what Crenshaw (1991) coined as 'intersectional theory'. Intersectional theory aims to challenge feminist and anti-racist rhetoric which excludes or ignores 'intragroup differences' (1991: 1242). That is to say that intersectional theory aims to examine the ways in which multiple different identities can exist within the same identity category and how these differences amongst members of the same group can result in certain members facing oppressions through the multiple facets of their constructed identities. For example, within the category of 'women', some aspects of certain individuals' identities may lead to a particular woman experiencing what Crenshaw describes as 'routine violence' towards women differently. For example, intersections of race and class may result in some women, particularly working-class and Black women, having different experiences of gender-based violence than to their white, middle-class counterparts, whose voices, Crenshaw states, feminism is created to amplify and represent (1991). Crenshaw further states that intersectional identities, such as the identity category of 'Black woman', which sees an intersection of marginalised race and gender identity, are often omitted from social justice discourse, with such discourse frequently dominated by the most privileged members of the identity group in question. For example, Crenshaw states that, just as feminism tends to centre the needs of white women, anti-racist

movements tend to focus upon the needs of Black men, thus excluding the oppressions which Black women face from both discourses (1991: 1252). In terms of this investigation, focus shall be afforded to intersections of multifaceted identities within the broader category of people who self-identify, to some extent, as Latin American, or as a national of a state within the Spanish speaking geographical area of Chile, particularly focusing on how Chilean national discourses and Spanish language grammatical constructions can lead to the oppression of Latin American people who do not identify with the binary man/woman gender system.

It would be impossible to truly analyse and study inclusive Spanish language and its social and cultural background without delving somewhat into intersectional theory. Whilst Crenshaw's paper primarily focuses on the intersecting identities constructing the identity of a Black woman, it is important to also consider the implications of the intersecting 'Latin' (a person of Latin American/ Hispanic descent) and non-binary identities ('x') when discussing the term 'Latinx'. As Crenshaw highlights, identity-based struggles are often discussed as if they occur 'on mutually exclusive terrains' (1991: 1242). It is vital that this investigation acknowledge and discuss the oppressions faced by queer and non-gender conforming identities, and the oppression of Latino/a/x people in relation to postcolonial identities, paying particular attention to how these identities intersect and the possible implications of official policy upon people who identify within this identity intersection. When discussing 'Latinx', one must similarly consider identity politics in the context of official policy towards gender identity and trans rights. Whilst Chile has, since December 2019, implemented a policy which allows any person over the age of 14 the legal right to change both their first name and their sex on legal documents to be in line with their gender identity (Registro Civil, 2019), the policy also states that the law (specifically law 21.120) recognises gender identity to be how one feels within themselves as to whether they are either a man or a woman, (Registro Civil, 2019) and thus the law does not afford space to non-binary identities. An online document regarding the law and the legal process necessary to officially change one's gender in Chile produced by Chile Atiende consistently refers to individuals, such as to civil officials and those who seek to change their gender identity using binary grammatical gender. For example, civil officials are referred to as '*el o la oficial civil*' ('the MASC. or the FEM. civil servant') and people seeking to change their official gender identity are referred to as follows:

‘La persona requirente será reconocido o reconocida e identificado o identificada según la nueva identidad de género’. (Chile Atiende, 2020).²

So, a trans person can be recognised as a man or as a woman according to how the individual self-identifies, but the linguistic choices of this document perhaps suggest that non-binary folk are not afforded the same privilege of recognition. Whilst both transgender as well as non-binary folk have suffered much oppression throughout history, it is ultimately the gender binary which prevails as the shaper of policy for recognising gender identities which do not correlate with the one which the individual was assigned at birth. Put simply, a policy which ought to protect and give official recognition to gender identities other than the gender identity assigned at birth was created with European gender binary ideals in mind, consequently erasing non-binary and non-conforming gender identities from the debate. Even gender identity policy within Chile, which ought to bring validity to non-cis gender identities, affords no space to non-binary folk, or people who otherwise feel at odds with traditional constraints of gender binary. It should be noted that this policy only seeks to officially recognise and validate European ideals of gender identity within the man/woman binary, and therefore is inadequate to officially recognise and protect indigenous gender identities, such as the *machi* co-gendered identity, further excluding marginalised Mapuche people from Chilean state national discourse.

It is perfectly viable that this study shall encounter similar intersections of identities as it examines the representation of multifaceted identities in language. Regarding pan-ethnic identity within Chile, this study shall consider both postcolonial European ‘Latin-o/a/x’ identities and pre-colonial indigenous pan-ethnic identities, particularly focusing around the Mapuche identity, as discussed in the previous section. Further, this study shall examine the simultaneous linguistic representation of pan-ethnic and gender identity in the Spanish language, affording particular attention to marginalised non-conforming and non-binary gender identities which are often said to be omitted and erased from the Spanish language’s binary gendered grammar system.

This section has examined how the language used to explain Chile’s recently updated policy on trans peoples’ right to identify according to their preferred gender identity does not allow for the linguistic recognition outside of the man/woman gender binary. This may similarly result in *machi* people being unable to linguistically represent themselves in the

² ‘The applicant will be recognised MASC. or recognised FEM. and identified MASC. or identified FEM. in accordance with their new gender identity.’

official language of postcolonial Chile. The next section shall therefore build upon power dynamics in the use of inclusive language, particularly focusing upon the term ‘Latinx’ in academia in the United States.

2.5 Voces perdidas and voces de poder: Power Dynamics in ‘Latinx’ Academia

Recently, the term ‘Latinx’, which aims to simultaneously represent ‘Latin’ pan-ethnic identity (an individual of Hispanic descent) and non-binary or non-specified gender identity (‘x’) has received increased attention and usage, particularly in academic circles (Salinas, Doran and Swingle, 2020). The term has even been subject to some academic investigation, although this has largely been confined to US, English speaking academia which is not accessible to the monolingual Spanish speaker, whom the term itself ought to represent (Salinas, 2017). It is important to consider that ‘Latinx’ could become simultaneously liberating and oppressive. Salinas (2017) coins the terms *voces perdidas* (lost voices) and *voces de poder* (voices of power) to discuss and reflect the dynamics of power and oppression in academia, particularly when discussing the multitude of intersecting identities which exist under the umbrella of ‘Latinx’. Whilst it is difficult to pinpoint the exact moment that the term ‘Latinx’ emerged, ‘it appears to have been born out of the LGBTQIA community in the U.S. as a way to resist the gender binary’ (Salinas and Lozano, 2017: 3).

To an extent, the birth of the term ‘Latinx’ amongst a marginalised community as a means of linguistic self-representation could indicate a movement rising up from the *voces perdidas*. A voice which perhaps in this instance is seeking to ‘heal and be liberated’ from oppressions they have been subjected to. In particular, these *voces perdidas* in the form of the Latin American LGBTQ+ community in the United States perhaps coined the term to liberate themselves from the binary gendered terms relating to Latin American identity categories, particularly for community members who do not identify with the man/woman gender binary. Linguistic gender identity categories previously posed an ‘either/or’ situation when linguistically reflecting one’s identity in the Spanish language. Salinas and Lozano recognise that ‘Latinx challenges the ideologies of language, culture, and gender, and is a way to recognize the importance of the intersectionality of social identities’ (2017: 2). In this sense, ‘Latinx’ could be perceived as liberating, as it allows people of Latin American origin who do not identify with the gender binary to hold some power regarding the way the intersection of their pan-ethnic and gender identities is represented in a language which has historically not made space for gender neutral representation. This sentiment is shared by Salinas who affirms

that ‘the initial usage of the term Latinx can be viewed as form of *voces perdidas* that was developed as a form of liberatory practice or social movement based on an identity that aims to empower and recognize to become *voces de poder*’ (2020: 163). In other words, ‘Latinx’ was originally a means of an oppressed community taking control of the linguistic representation of their own identity.

On the contrary, ‘Latinx’ could be interpreted as *voces de poder*; Salinas highlights that ‘Latinx will continue to evolve and it may become more favourable among higher education and social activist spaces, but it will also have limited use’ (2020: 150), a sentiment shared by some of the participants in the study reported in the same paper. Guerra and Orbea (2015) similarly object to ‘Latinx’, declaring that ‘English speakers can’t seem to stop imposing their social norms on other cultures’ which they consider ‘too backwards’ in comparison to their ‘own progressive learnings’ and take this as an invitation to ‘fix’ the Spanish language from an outside perspective (2015, para. 2). They further add that the ‘vast majority’ of people within Latin America would ‘likely be confused and even offended by this attempt to dictate to them how their language is to be structured and how they ought to manage their social constructs’ (2015: para. 2). Salinas (2020) appears to agree with the sentiment that ‘language can be viewed as a tool of colonialism that has erased other forms of culture existence (2020: 153). Salinas discusses this in terms of European settler colonialism erasing indigenous gender systems which recognised genders beyond the man/woman gender binary (2020), however this theory could be similarly applied to a postcolonial Latin America with a term ‘used almost exclusively within the United States’ (Guerra and Orbea, 2015: para 2) imposed by US academia upon a language which relies heavily on gender to remain authentic. The pair state that: ‘if you take the gender out of every word, you are no longer speaking Spanish. If you advocate for the erasure of gender in Spanish, you then are advocating for the erasure of Spanish’ (2015: para 3).

Similarly to Guerra and Orbea’s (2015) critique, qualitative data from Salinas’ 2020 study evidence issues of accessibility with the term ‘Latinx’. Between the two articles, a number of issues of inclusivity arose, on both a linguistic and social level. Salinas’ (2020) study which documented voices of Latin American students at US universities and colleges in relation to the term ‘Latinx’ in particular highlighted issues of comprehension, and that although some students in the study may use, or at least understand the term, they would not use the term when returning to their families and communities (Salinas, 2020). Of the three students who self-identified as ‘Latinx’, none would use the term at home with their families

and would instead self-identify within the gender binary as ‘Latinas’. One student further testified that she felt ‘privileged to analyse the term *Latinx*’ (2020: 163) and that her family have not been afforded the same privileges, such as the opportunity to study queer theory. A number of students in Salinas’ study testify that ‘Latinx’ is mostly used in ‘privileged’ higher education spaces, with another further testifying that ‘it is privileged to say the ‘x’ is gender inclusive’ (2020: 162). It would appear from these testimonies that access to higher education and courses on ‘queer theory’ are rather necessary in order to make sense of the term ‘Latinx’, which would therefore render the term inaccessible to many members of the community to whom the term ought to relate, particularly given that Latin American people in the US aged 25-29 represent the lowest percentage of people with a Bachelor’s degree or higher qualification (15%) (Salinas, 2017: 746).

The impact of access to US higher education as a factor for understanding the term ‘Latinx’ is further reflected through testimonies of participants from Salinas’ (2020) study regarding the perceptions of gender non-conformity amongst the wider Latin American community in the US. Of the three participants who self-identified as ‘Latinx’, only one, Fey, self-identified as genderqueer. They did not disclose their non-conforming ‘Latinx’ identity to their family and community because of fear of being misunderstood as being “mad at the world and that they are cannibals” (2020: 162). This evidence suggests that perhaps gender non-conformity, at least perhaps in its contemporary western understanding, is not something frequently discussed in Latino/a/x communities, and perhaps is a discussion which is largely centred around US academia and identity politics. In fact, a 2017 study by Salinas and Lozano revealed that between 15th November and 21st November 2016, ‘Latinx’ was used over 9000 times across three social media platforms, with 87.5% of this usage occurring within the United States. Only 0.5% of cases occurred in Argentina, with a further 0.5% occurring in Colombia and 0.4% occurring in Spain (Salinas and Lozano, 2017: 7). This evidence particularly points to ‘Latinx’, as Salinas predicted, not much existing outside of a US context, particularly amongst the communities to which the term should theoretically belong.

Furthermore, other participants in Salinas’ study evidence that ‘Latinx’ may perhaps be an oppressive *voz de poder*, imposed upon the communities to which the term ought to pertain. Whilst participants in the study revealed that they did not use the term ‘Latinx’ within their communities because they did not want to become the oppressive *voces de poder* dominating the *voces perdidas*, perhaps one ought to consider that they were *voces perdidas* themselves to an extent. Some of the participants evidence that US academia influenced them to use the term,

with some expressing a feeling of being ‘policed by university staff’ in regard to its usage, with others expressing that they would only use the term in higher education settings (2020: 163). US academia is a largely English monolingual establishment and in 2013, students of Latin American descent represented only 15% of individuals in the US aged 25-29 with a Bachelor’s degree or higher (Fry and Taylor, 2013). Therefore, perhaps US university staff ‘policing’ the usage of ‘Latinx’ act as *voces de poder*, imposing a term upon a wider community which, as highlighted by other participants, do not have the privilege of accessing the higher educational institutions where such ideas are discussed. One could consider that, if created to be representational of the community, the term ‘Latinx’ ought to have risen up from the *voces perdidas* to challenge the *voces de poder*, rather than being imposed upon the *voces perdidas* by the *voces de poder* in a move which some, including Guerra and Orbea (2015) denounce as ‘linguistic imperialism’.

As Crenshaw affirms, ‘categorisation is an exercise of power’ which can work both ways (1991: 58). Oppressed people can categorise themselves to exercise their power over their own identity, for example, gender non-conforming people of Latin American origin coining the term ‘Latinx’ to empower themselves through creating a term to represent their pan-ethnic and gender identity is an exercise of power from an oppressed group. On the other hand, *voces de poder* can also exercise their power through categorisation, as appears to be the case within US academia with the imposing of ‘Latinx’ upon some students. Scharrón del Río and Aja (2015) discuss how decolonising language has multiple paradoxes, one of which being that ‘language can act simultaneously as oppressor and liberator’. Clearly, whilst it may be liberating for some, ‘Latinx’ oppresses others, creating a situation of conflict at the point where multiple facets of peoples’ identities intersect with one another.

This chapter has set out the social, political, and cultural context for this investigation. It has then explored the social construction of gender as the interpretation of certain repeated acts considered fundamental to social organisation and has paid attention to how gender systems and social organisation differed in indigenous Mapuche culture. This section has also discussed intersectional theory and the difficulties in linguistically representing non-binary gender identities in the Spanish language. This section has also discussed power dynamics in terms of introducing the proposed gender-inclusive, pan ethnic term, ‘Latinx’ in the US. Building upon this, the next chapter shall focus on the construction and representation of gender in Spanish grammar. This will allow for analysis of propose inclusive devices later in the study. Further, the following section shall explore psycholinguistic theories to explore how binary

gendered language and the masculine generic can lead to identities being obscured in order to further justify the relevance of this project. Finally, this project will expand upon the power dynamics around inclusive language explored in this section considering intersectional theory, with a greater emphasis on the accessibility of certain inclusive strategies from a linguistic viewpoint.

3. Language and Gender

Chapter (3) focuses upon the construction of grammatical gender and the linguistic representation of social gender as discussed in chapter (2). Section (3.1) introduces the reader to the linguistic construction of gender in Spanish to allow the author to be able to analyse the datasets later in the study. Sections (3.2) and (3.3) then discuss how the masculine/feminine binary in the Spanish language and the masculine generic lead to the invisibility of women and people of marginalised gender identities, further reinforcing the relevance of this study. Section (3.4) builds upon the idea of ‘linguistic imperialism’ from the angle of the inaccessibility of certain inclusive language devices, in particular considering the difficulties faced by monolingual Spanish speakers when pronouncing the letter ‘x’, which is sometimes used as an inclusive language device. This further builds the foundations necessary for analysing the data corresponding to research question (3) later on.

3.1 A Brief Introduction to the Grammatical Construction of Gender in Spanish

This section introduces the reader to the grammatical construction of gender in Spanish, which is fundamental for the analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative datasets later in the study. Spanish is a grammatical gender language. That is to say, that unlike natural gender languages such as English, gender is grammatically marked, and ‘every noun is assigned feminine or masculine (or possibly neuter) gender’³ (Stahlberg et. al., 2007: 164). This means that one is almost compelled to reference the gender of a human subject when using the language (Stahlberg et. al., 2007), explained in the introductory chapter with the examples *la profesora* (the FEM. teacher) and *el profesor* (the MASC. teacher). As there is no neuter in the language, grammatical gender in Spanish must take one of either the masculine or feminine forms (García, 2019). In other words, it is almost impossible to refer to an individual in Spanish without categorising them according to the gender binary which is recreated and reproduced through grammatical structures. In contrast, in natural gender languages, such as English, ‘there is no grammatical marking of sex’⁴ with most personal nouns suitable for use when referring to a subject of any gender (Stahlberg et. al., 2007: 165). Personal and object pronouns, however, do have variable forms which index the gender of the person they are referring to (Stahlberg

³ The neuter does not exist for nouns in Spanish; however it does exist in some other grammatical gender languages.

⁴ Stahlberg et. al. (2007) use ‘sex’ consistently throughout their text when referring to the gendered social positioning of a subject in relation to grammar instead of ‘gender’. As explained in the first section of this literature review, the author maintains the stance that ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ are inherently different and ought not to be confused with each other. Therefore the author shall maintain the use ‘gender’ instead of ‘sex’ when discussing the social identity category of a subject.

et. al., 2007). Consequently, gender is less prominent in the English language than in the Spanish language. Spanish grammatical gender is indexed morphologically and phonologically, with feminine nouns commonly ending in ‘a’ (singular) or ‘as’ (plural), and masculine nouns most frequently ending in ‘o’ (singular) or ‘os’ (plural) for both living and non-living entities (García, 2019), although there are some exceptions (see García, 2019; Tapia-Arizmendi and Romani, 2012). Other gendered suffixes which commonly indicate the gender of the noun are ‘-o, -ario, -ero, -sor, -dor, -ón, -án, -ín, -és’ for the masculine gender and ‘-a, -aria, -era, -sora, -dora, -ona, -ana, -ina, -esa’ for the feminine (Tapia-Arizmendi and Romani, 2012: 73). The gender of the referent is further indexed through grammatical elements which concord with the gendered noun and form part of the same nominal phrase, including determiners and adjectives, which are modified in accordance with the gender of the noun to which they relate (García, 2019). For example, *el coche blanco* (the white car) demonstrates the masculine form of the definite article (*el*), and masculine concord of the adjective (*blanco*) to match the masculine grammatical gender of the noun. Personal pronouns, direct object pronouns and indefinite pronouns are also modified according to the gender of their subject (García, 2019). Whilst all nouns in Spanish are either masculine or feminine in gender, it is important to remember that ‘the grammatical gender of inanimate nouns such as “pencil”, “hope”, or “disease” does not express sex’ (Stahlberg et. al., 2007: 164). That is not to say that categorising inanimate nouns linguistically by gender does not have real world consequences, as shall be expanded upon later in this section.

When referencing a group of people, one must similarly choose between the two binary gender options to refer to the gender of the individuals comprising the group in question. In Spanish, the masculine generic has historically been used to refer to groups of mixed genders. As explained earlier, to refer to a group of children of mixed genders, one would use *los niños* (masculine), even if boys were significantly outnumbered by girls. Stahlberg et. al. (2007) and Tapia-Arizmendi and Romani (2012) describe this as a far-reaching linguistic asymmetry. Stahlberg et. al. explain masculine generics as:

‘linguistic forms that serve a double function: They are used sex-specifically in reference to male persons and generically in reference to mixed groups and to people whose sex is unknown or irrelevant. In this way they equate maleness and humanness’ (2007: 169).

They further explain that:

‘Masculine generics are found in all three language types but their frequency and form depend on the sex-referring forms available. In grammatical gender languages, masculine generics comprise masculine personal nouns and pronouns’ (2007: 169).

As Tapia-Arizmendi and Romani (2012) highlight, gendered asymmetries in language such as the masculine generic both overshadow the presence of women (or indeed, any non-masculine person) and may lead to ambiguity. As the pair explain, a phrase written in the masculine generic could be interpreted or understood in two different ways. For example, the Spanish phrase *los empleados serán afiliados* (the employees will be affiliated [with]⁵) could be interpreted as specifically referring to male employees, but also in a generic sense, whereby *los empleados* could refer to a group of employees of mixed genders (*empleados y empleadas*) (Tapia-Arizmendi and Romani, 2012: 76). Whilst the use of the masculine generic ought to be able to simultaneously reflect all genders as a ‘neutral or unmarked form’ (García, 2019: 12), the fact that Tapia-Arizmendi and Romani highlight its possible ambiguity perhaps suggests that this grammatical construction is not fit for the purpose it ought to serve.

More recently, a number of gender inclusive language devices have begun to emerge, as shall be the main focus of this research (see García, 2019 and Real Academia Española, 2018). However, many of these devices use letter patterns and symbols in place of the masculine generic ‘o’ at the end of nouns, which are not approved by the RAE (2018). The authority explains that it dislikes the use of ‘@’ and ‘x’ as noun endings (RAE, 2018: 21) and states that users of Spanish should avoid these. Furthermore, the guide published by the Real Academia Española explains how some nouns in Spanish keep the same form when referring to masculine and feminine entities (RAE, 2018). If the masculine ends in ‘-nte’, the feminine does not change, for example, ‘*adolescente*’ (‘adolescent’) and ‘*estudiante*’ (‘student’) (RAE, 2018: 24), which could perhaps reflect the ability of Spanish to reflect gender neutrality. Moreover, a guide published in 2016 on gender-inclusive language by the Gobierno de Chile (Chilean Government) promotes the use of strategies and resources which the Spanish language already possesses as these are already grammatically compatible with the language (Gobierno de Chile, 2016: 4) and provides suggested devices to traditionally masculine-dominated language. The guide frequently favours the use of generic terms which appear grammatically feminine, that is that they use the feminine article ‘*la*’ or employ a feminine noun ending (see Tapia-Arizmendi and Romani, 2012: 73), as a means of linguistic gender inclusivity. The guide

⁵ Author’s own translation.

gives a number of recommendations for gender inclusive language. For example, the guide suggests using '*la humanidad*' ('humanity', feminine generic) instead of '*hombre*' ('mankind' in this instance, masculine generic) to promote inclusivity in language (Gobierno de Chile, 2016: 5).

This section has introduced the construction of grammatical gender in the Spanish language. The following section shall explore the implications of grammatical gender, with a particular focus upon how the masculine generic form can lead to the obscuring of some gender identities. This will further support the relevance of exploring grammatical features which are able to specifically represent genders outside of the binary.

3.2 Interpretations of Collective Nouns according to Grammatical Gender

The previous section introduced the construction of binary grammatical gender in the Spanish language and has highlighted gender asymmetries that some grammatical constructions appear to create. This section discusses how a noun's grammatical gender in Spanish may affect how a user interprets that noun, and the wider implications of this. This section particularly informs the analysis of the qualitative data in section (4.3.3). Perissinotto (1982) looks at how some traditionally accepted Spanish nouns may be more appropriate for inclusivity purposes according to how individuals tend to attribute each noun in question to a specific gender. Perissinotto (1982) highlighted how using the masculine generic can result in the language user specifically interpreting (in other words, perceiving or understanding) an animate noun as more masculine, even when the noun may be referring to a mixed gender group. For example, the masculine generic singular *mexicano* (Mexican) was specifically interpreted as being exclusively masculine in 44.4% of responses, as masculine and feminine in 30.4% of responses and as exclusively feminine in 23.7% of responses (Perissinotto, 1982: 32). The pluralised form *mexicanos* (masculine generic) similarly saw masculine specific interpretation favoured (27.8%) as opposed to specific interpretation for the masculine and feminine (21.4%) with specific feminine interpretation being the lowest at 18.4%. Whilst *mexicano* and *mexicanos* ought to be quite generic terms, Perissinotto speculates that the percentage differences between specific interpretation of the term as masculine versus feminine show that there is a specific order in which the sexes appear in the linguistic conscience of the speaker, with the man taking priority and the woman coming in as an extension, or in second place (1982: 32).

As well as including a number of masculine generic nouns which demonstrated typically masculine gendered suffixes as described above, Perissinotto presented the subjects with two nouns which end in ‘e’ regardless of whether they are referring to a masculine or feminine (or perhaps non-binary or non-conforming) subject. The nouns were given in their pluralised forms and could both be translated as ‘candidates’ in English. Perissinotto presented them in the following sentences. The nouns and their corresponding grammatical elements are underlined:

1. *El puesto siguió vacante por falta de solicitantes.*
2. *Los pretendientes que declaren maliciosamente un hecho falso serán consignados.*

Interestingly, there were distinct gaps in the way in which the two terms were specifically interpreted. *Solicitantes* was specifically interpreted as masculine in 61.1% of responses, masculine and feminine in 51.8% of responses and as specifically feminine in 47.4% of responses. Perhaps surprisingly, *pretendientes* (candidates) was less frequently specifically interpreted as masculine (55.6%) despite the sentence displaying the noun’s corresponding grammatical elements using the masculine generic ‘o’ (*los* and *consignados*) whereas the sentence containing *solicitantes* did not display any corresponding grammatical elements at all which could perhaps have led to an unconscious masculine bias in the research subject. Furthermore, *pretendientes* was more frequently specifically interpreted as masculine and feminine than *solicitantes* (60.7%), and, most interestingly, specifically feminine on 63.2% of occasions. This is to say that despite the presence of clearly masculine grammatical elements ending in ‘o’ in correspondence to a noun whose suffix would remain the same regardless of the presence of different genders within the group, the noun was more frequently perceived to related to the feminine gender than the masculine.

These specific interpretations of ‘e’ ending nouns are interesting, particularly given that in a more contemporary setting, ‘e’ (or ‘é’) has been discussed as a possible alternative to the binary gender ‘o/a’ noun endings, as well as this form being proposed as ‘a new way to eliminate the “x” from Latinx, and to reject another term imposed on Latin American people’ (Salinas, 2020: 160) in debates around emerging gender neutral devices to the embedded binary gender in Spanish nouns. Some of the students in Salinas’ study testify that forms such as ‘Latiné’ and even ‘Latinu’ are used by their friends ‘outside the United States’ in Spanish speaking countries such as Mexico (Salinas, 2020: 160-161). Whilst both *pretendientes* and *solicitantes* had fairly high rates of specific interpretation as masculine nouns or feminine nouns, they both also had relatively high rates of specific interpretation as relating to both

masculine and feminine subjects (60.7% and 51.8% respectively) compared to other generic nouns presented as part of the study. It is therefore important to consider potential gender-neutral forms which have not, at the time of writing, been subject to so much attention from English-dominant academia. Devices using ‘e’ in place of ‘o’, ‘a’ and ‘x’ do appear to be experiencing some, if not limited, usage, evidenced in two Spanish-medium articles available on the Universidad de Chile website (Bodenhofer González, 2019 and Lempereur, Godoy, Fischer, Insunza and Lazo, 2019) and news articles, including the article ‘Lo que nosotres⁶ tenemos que decir’ (Barahona and Ruso for El País, 2020). This investigation shall consequently afford attention and consideration to these potential devices, alongside previously covered ‘Latinx’, particularly given that the ‘e’ is already used in ‘official’ Spanish language noun endings and that there is evidence of it being used in an authentic Spanish speaking environment. As this investigation aims to document the *voces perdidas* who are so often forgotten in these conversations, it is fundamental to consider and thoroughly investigate the usage of terms such as ‘Latine’ (or ‘é’) and ‘Latinu’ to avoid reproducing US-centred rhetoric and further silencing voices of communities who may feel that ‘Latinx’ was ‘imposed’ upon them.

On the other hand, certain generic terms in the Spanish language use the lesser used feminine generic form to refer to a group, regardless of the presence of other genders. For example, the noun (*la*) *persona* (person) is always feminine in Spanish grammatically speaking, as is the noun for people in general, (*la*) *gente*, which Perissinotto explains as being undoubtedly the most generic of all terms (1982: 32). Further, some nouns such as *accionista* have the ‘-ista’ suffix ending in ‘-a’ but may be used for both masculine and feminine subjects which can be reflected through the corresponding grammatical elements. For example, *es un accionista de la empresa* ‘he is a shareholder in the firm’ (Wordreference.com, 2020) demonstrates how the noun can be used to refer specifically to a masculine subject. In his study, Perissinotto examined the specific interpretations of the feminine generic ‘persona’ as well as the unchanging *accionista*. Interestingly, Perissinotto notes that *persona* had the lowest index of specific interpretation at just 14.3% for masculine and feminine (1982: 32), with the term specifically interpreted as masculine in 11.1% of responses and feminine in 15.8%. In contrast, there was virtually no difference in how *accionistas* was specifically interpreted (masculine and feminine, 55.4%; masculine, 55.6%; and feminine 55.3%). Interestingly, there was a smaller percentage difference across the three categories for specific interpretation of these two

⁶ ‘nosotres’ = ‘we’ using the inclusive ‘e’ instead of ‘o’ or ‘a’.

nouns, perhaps indicating that a more feminine ‘-a’ suffix increases the visibility and inclusion of women in the term. Other data from Perissinotto’s study indicates that in many instances, generic nouns which end in a typically masculine suffix, for example ‘-dor’, ‘-o’ or ‘-os’ are more specifically interpreted as referring exclusively to males. A number of these nouns in the study display a greater percentage difference in the degree to which each noun was specifically thought to relate to masculine or feminine subjects in favour of the masculine. These included *mexicano* (masculine 44.4% versus feminine 23.7%), *individuo* (masculine 38.9% versus feminine 28.9%) and *arquitecto* (masculine 66.7% versus feminine 57.9%). There were however a few exceptions for example *inquilinos* was interpreted as masculine in 11.1% of responses, compared to feminine in 42.1% and masculine and feminine in 32.1%. *Ser humano* (human being) similarly experienced greater specific interpretation as feminine despite the noun’s typically masculine ‘-o’ suffix, however the percentage differences for this noun were much smaller (masculine 33.3%, feminine 34.2%, masculine and feminine 33.9%). However, the often large percentage differences in favour of the masculine for generic nouns with a typically masculine suffix, coupled with the fact that *persona* had the lowest rate of specific interpretation, and that *accionista* showed marginal difference in favour of any given gender category, it is possible that, as Tapia-Arizmendi and Romani (2012) highlight, masculine generics do not sufficiently serve to mark the presence of women, or indeed other genders, and therefore these terms do not sufficiently serve to represent all genders equally and unanimously. In fact, as Perissinotto discusses, some of the masculine generic terms in this study seemingly illustrated that the speakers’ linguistic conscience placed the man foremost and the woman as second and an exception when using the masculine generic (1982: 32).

This section has discussed how a noun’s grammatical gender in Spanish can affect how a user interprets the noun, and how this may lead to some genders being excluded from representation in a given noun. The following section builds upon this by exploring theories of psycholinguistics which will demonstrate the significance of grammatical gender in our understandings and perceptions of our worlds. This will demonstrate the power of grammatical gender and is important for the analysis of the use and understanding of inclusive devices later in the study when discussing particularly the qualitative dataset, although it will inform the analysis of both sets of data.

3.3 Psycholinguistic Theories: How Grammatical Gender in our Mother Tongues Affects the Way We See the World

This section builds upon discussions around the interpretations of gendered nouns in Spanish from the previous section by exploring theories of psycholinguistics to further inform analysis of the power of grammatical gender to affect our perceptions and understandings of the world. The studies mentioned previously are complemented by those carried out within the field of psycholinguistics, in which several scholars have studied how grammar in our native language can influence our perceptions and understandings of the world around us (see Boroditsky, 2001; Segel and Boroditsky, 2011; Gentner and Goldin-Meadow, 2003; Boroditsky, Schmidt and Phillips, 2003). The hypothesis that ‘language can influence thought’, also known as the ‘*Whorfian hypothesis*’ (Gentner and Goldin-Meadow, 2003: 3) essentially breaks down to what Gentner and Goldin-Meadow present as three main elements. Firstly, that ‘languages vary in their semantic partitioning of the world’, secondly that ‘the structure of one’s native language influences the manner in which one perceives and understands the world’ and thirdly that ‘speakers of different languages will perceive the world differently’ (2003: 4). Hypotheses surrounding the Whorfian hypothesis have been subject to much academic investigation, with scholars scrutinising how our native languages may affect our perceptions and understandings of things such as colour (see Gentner and Goldin-Meadow, 2003), how people of different speech communities may perceive time differently (for example, an English speaker may discuss time as if it were ‘horizontal’, whilst a Mandarin speaker may be more inclined to discuss it as ‘vertical’) (Boroditsky, 2001), and even how grammatical gender in language may result in certain abstract concepts (for example, ‘sin’) being personified in art according to the grammatical gender of the concept in the artist’s mother tongue (Segel and Boroditsky, 2011).

Gentner and Goldin-Meadow highlight that ‘language is a powerful mediator of cognition when we speak’ (2003: 11). This is to say that grammatical elements of our native languages have the power to, albeit subconsciously, shape and influence elements of our cognition including ‘where we make our category distinctions’. In other words, what Hall (1997) refers to as our shared conceptual maps which set out our shared understandings of the world may be impacted by elements of our native languages. Therefore, it is perfectly possible that understandings of the world may vary to some extent between different speech communities. In relation to language and gender, two particular studies stand out in their examination of how individuals from different European language communities appear to understand a concept according to grammatical gender in their native language. A study by

Segel and Boroditsky (2011) aimed to establish whether the grammatical gender of a noun in an artist's native language could be used to predict the gender which they would ascribe to an artistic personification of that noun in their artwork. The personified concepts examined in the study included 'love, justice, time, charity, fame, fortune, peace, truth, and many more' (2011: 2). The study examined works by artists whose mother tongues were Italian (422), French (213), German (129), Spanish (24) and Dutch (2). The study found that in 78% of cases, the researchers were able to predict the gender of a concept's artistic personification according to the grammatical gender of the concept's noun in the artists native language. The pair discovered that 'grammatically feminine entities were more likely to be personified as female (86% female, 14% male), and grammatically masculine entities were more likely to be personified as male (40% female, 60% male)' (2011: 2). Whilst the pair do highlight a slight feminine bias in personifications, and further that in some cases, other factors and experiences may have determined an artist's personification of a concept, it is quite apparent that grammatical gendering of nouns in one's native language affects to some extent how one categorises concepts.

In another study, Boroditsky et. al. (2003) investigated how native speakers of German and Spanish would describe an object through the medium of English, a natural gender language, and whether this bore any relation to the grammatical gender of the object in their native language. The researchers created a list of 24 object nouns, each of which had the opposite grammatical gender in Spanish and German (half were masculine in Spanish but feminine in German and the other half were feminine in Spanish but masculine in German). One group were native German speakers and the other were native Spanish speakers but both groups were proficient in English. The researchers asked each group to write down the first three adjectives they thought of when presented with the name for each object. Once the researchers had collected all of the adjectives used by the German and Spanish native speakers to describe each object, they presented these to a group of native English speakers who then had to rate each adjective as either 'describing masculine or feminine properties of the object' (2003: 70). The study revealed that Spanish and German speakers would produce adjectives which were rated as more masculine when describing an object which was grammatically masculine in their native language and would similarly produce more feminine-rated adjectives when describing an object which in their native language would be grammatically feminine.

The researchers also observed certain qualitative differences between the types of adjectives used by each speech community. One of the words examined in the study was 'key',

which is feminine in Spanish but masculine in German. German native speakers were reported to describe a 'key' as 'hard, heavy, jagged, metal, serrated, and useful' whilst Spanish speakers would describe it as 'golden, intricate, little, lovely, shiny, and tiny' (2003: 70). In addition, the word for 'bridge', which is masculine in Spanish but feminine in German, was met with similar treatment with regards to the type of adjectives the native speakers of each language would use to describe it. German speakers tended to describe a bridge as 'beautiful, elegant, fragile, peaceful, pretty, and slender' whilst in contrast a Spanish speaker would describe it as 'big, dangerous, long, strong, sturdy, and towering' (2003: 70). It is apparent in this study that grammatical gender plays an important role in how native speakers of different speech communities understand and categorise their worlds according to their native languages. Whilst some have argued that cultural factors could impact the variance in the cognition of certain nouns and concepts between speech communities, Boroditsky et. al. (2003) affirm that other studies 'showed that differences in thought can be produced just by grammatical differences and in the absence of other cultural factors' (2003: 77). Scholars such as Gentner and Goldin-Meadow raise the 'chicken-and-egg' question: what came first, 'the concept or the linguistic term' (2003: 12). Regardless, it is evident that at least in a contemporary setting, there is a strong link between grammatical gender in our native languages and our worldly perceptions, whether or not language originally came to be gendered according to historical or cultural perceptions of an object.

The cognitive impact of grammatical gender could have real-world consequences. Previously discussed was Hall's idea of 'conceptual maps' (1997), which set out the shared limits of understanding amongst members of a group, culture or society which render their world intelligible through a shared set of understandings related to concepts and ideas. Conceptual maps and their ability to create coherent, shared understandings of our worlds are fundamental for producing meaning; without them, nothing would have any meaning at all (see Hall, 1997). It also appears that grammatical gender, at least in some languages including Spanish, plays a fundamental role in the native speaker's cognition of certain nouns relating to objects, concepts and ideas making up the surrounding world. Therefore, it is possible that the constant reinforcement of the social gender binary through the masculine/feminine grammatical gender binary in the Spanish language could, at least to some extent, limit the speaker's ability to comprehend concepts which lie outside of their conceptual map, if one can assume that such a conceptual map would to some extent be determined by the cognitive impact of grammatical gender amongst the speech community.

As mentioned previously, Spanish speakers must categorise every single noun in the language as either masculine or feminine in gender. As Boroditsky et. al. (2003) highlight, native speakers of Spanish are likely to use adjectives rated as more masculine by English speakers when describing a noun which takes the masculine gender in Spanish, and more feminine adjectives when describing a noun gendered as feminine in their native language, even when describing an object through the medium of English. This suggests that a native Spanish speaker is inclined, or perhaps even compelled, to categorise the world around them according to grammatical gender, which may also affect the speaker's perception of an object's qualities. This phenomenon could create a binary divide in perceptions, understandings and expectations of the entire world shared and communicated through the medium of language. Therefore, one could argue that the cognitive impact of grammatical gender in language is such that in the current context, it could be difficult for the speaker to move away from understanding the world according to binary gender. As Butler says, 'performing one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect, and performing it well provides the reassurance that there is an essentialism of gender identity after all' (1988: 528). In this instance, binary grammatical gender could lead to the marginalisation of people who exist outside of the social gender binary, if one assumes that binary grammatical gender does contribute to erasing concepts outside of this binary from conceptual maps, or at least inhibits their comprehension.

Whilst it is important to note that a Spanish speaker may not necessarily disregard the existence of a non-binary or gender non-conforming individual because of binary grammatical gender, the impossibility of indexing a non-binary or non-conforming person using typically accepted grammar could result in marginalisation in other ways. For example, a gender non-conforming or non-binary person may be linguistically excluded from discourse and documents, therefore overshadowing, and negating their existence, which could in turn lead to a furthering of their oppression. It is therefore important to consider the wider impact that the acceptance and incorporation of a grammatical feature to index people who do not conform with binary gender may have at both an individual and societal level. As Tapia-Arizmendi and Romani (2012) highlight, the use of the masculine generic gender in language overshadows the presence of women, so one could therefore argue that the lack of non-binary linguistic representation could erase the presence of anyone who exists outside the limits of the gender binary. It is for this reason that this study shall investigate the possibility of including a gender-

neutral grammar which may help to recognise these marginalised identities, exploring the extent to which certain devices may already be used

This section has used psycholinguistic theories to explore how binary grammatical gender constructions and the masculine generic in Spanish can lead to certain gender identities, particularly the identities of non-binary people and women. This section has highlighted how this, to an extent, can exclude them from being represented linguistically, and consequently obscures them from society. This has informed argument in favour of including gender neutral and non-binary grammatical gender forms in the Spanish language. The next section shall build upon the idea of being excluded linguistically by also considering issues of accessibility regarding possible gender inclusive language devices.

3.4 Linguistic Imperialism: Issues of Accessibility

This section builds upon themes of linguistic exclusion from sections (3.2) and (3.3), and examines how an individual may be ‘excluded’ from proposed inclusive language devices for a variety of reasons in order to inform analysis as to whether or not such features are viable on a wider scale, and whether they are truly inclusive. This section is also fundamental to informing research question (3) i.e., ‘Reality or Linguistic Imperialism: To what extent is inclusive language *voces perdidas* or *voces de poder*?’’. It is important to be cautious, particularly as a non-native speaker of Spanish when discussing inclusive language use in Spanish. As mentioned in the previous chapter, scholars such as Guerra and Orbea (2015) have expressed their feelings that certain proposed gender-neutral devices, specifically the term ‘Latinx’ are ‘a blatant form of linguistic imperialism — the forcing of U.S. ideals upon a language in a way that does not grammatically or orally correspond with it’ (2015: para. 1). Whilst other proposed devices, such as ‘Latiné’ (see Salinas, 2020) have not been subject to such critique, it is similarly important to be cautious of one’s position as an English-speaking outsider when approaching the subject, particularly considering Guerra and Orbea’s (2015) article raising concerns over the colonial undertones of ‘English speakers’ ‘imposing’ language features to ‘fix’ Spanish according to their own ‘progressive learnings’. Given that much of the discussion around gender-neutral terms such as ‘Latinx’ happen within US English-speaking academic circles (Salinas, 2020), it is important to be cautious of the ‘erasure of Spanish’ (Guerra and Orbea, 2015), particularly considering that theories of psycholinguistics as discussed in the previous section could indicate that the Spanish language as it stands is important for navigating the Spanish-speaking world.

From a linguistic perspective, Guerra and Orbea raise issues regarding the pronunciation of the term, saying that the US pronunciation of ‘x’ ‘excludes all of Latin America’ (2015: para. 3) who cannot necessarily pronounce a letter which the pair describe as requiring ‘some fluency in English’ (2015: para. 3). They further raise their concerns that adapting to ‘Latinx’ would be too difficult for older people who have trouble adapting to ‘such a radical change’, further arguing that ‘Latinx’ ‘does not provide a gender-neutral alternative for Spanish-speaking non-binary individuals and thus excludes them’ (2015: para. 3). Salinas further raises concerns over the linguistic inclusivity of a term which aims to be ‘geographically inclusive of Latin American countries’ (2020: 153). He contends that ‘scholars have not considered how the “x” works for people from Latin American countries that are not mostly Spanish- or English-speaking including Brazil (Portuguese), French Guiana (French), and Suriname (Dutch)’ (2020: 153), and that certain indigenous languages, including the Quechua language which is spoken in ‘Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile, and Colombia’ do not have the letter ‘x’ in their alphabet (2020: 153). One could therefore consider that ‘Latinx’ is, as Salinas puts it, ‘*voces de poder*’ (2020: 156), as the term appears to be accessible only to English and/or Spanish speakers, and as it may have been imposed upon the Latin American community, rather than have arisen as a result of a desire to linguistically include non-binary and gender non-conforming people in this way. That is not to say that there is no desire from within Latin America to linguistically emphasise the existence of the non-binary and gender non-conforming communities as neither of these pieces examine terms much beyond the frequently discussed ‘Latinx’. However, it appears that ‘Latinx’ requires a level of education and knowledge of the English language to be understood, which is not accessible to all members of the Latin American community, and it may therefore be reasonable to speculate that the term is perhaps ‘linguistic imperialism’, or at least not a functional alternative to grammatical binary gender.

Participants in Salinas’ study also highlight the harm caused to their communities as a consequence of the imposition of terminology upon them from institutions of power, which as mentioned in the previous chapter, one could interpret as *voces de poder*, and the confusion and conflict this has caused within the community. This event could be considered ‘linguistic imperialism’ according to Guerra and Orbea, i.e. involving an outside force imposing a term upon a community where this term may not necessarily fit, without understanding the needs within that community and instead fixing a problem from an outside perspective (2015), even when those within the community may not consider there to be a problem at all. As much of

the literature exploring identity labels for people of Latin American descent are written in English by US universities, it is important to be critical of the labels these studies have centred in their work, as it is a possibility that these terms simply only exist within a US context. Two common identity labels relating to people of Latin American descent widely used in the US, 'Hispanic' and 'Latino' (which in some contemporary contexts has been altered to the gender-neutral 'Latinx', as explored previously) were both originally terms mandated by the US government to categorise people of Latin American descent for the purpose of being implemented in the US census (Taylor, Lopez, Martínez and Velasco: 2012) (Comas-Díaz, 2001). 'Hispanic' has etymological roots in the Latin word *Hispania* which later became *España* (Salinas and Lozano, 2019) and thus is often used to refer to all Spanish speakers or people of Spanish descent (Comas-Díaz, 2001). This term has often been criticised as 'conservative' and also being inadequate for describing all people of Latin American descent, as it does not include people of Latin American countries where the primary language is not Spanish, for example Brazil where the primary language is Portuguese (Comas-Díaz, 2001). 'Latino' has been described as 'recognising the diversity of this ethnic minority group' (Comas-Díaz, 2001: 116) because it encompasses people of Latin American countries which are not Spanish-speaking. Comas-Díaz also highlights that the term is often preferred to 'Hispanic' as it is exclusive of European Spanish speakers.

However, Taylor et. al. found that 'the government's system of ethnic and racial labelling does not fit easily with Latinos' own sense of identity' (2012: 9). Their report also finds that the labels are still not fully accepted by the group to which these terms have been assigned, a concern which was also raised by participants in Salinas' 2020 study. One of the reasons that participants in Salinas' study described as a barrier to them transferring 'Latinx' to their communities was that they felt that many members of their families and communities were still trying to make sense of the difference between 'Hispanic' and 'Latino', a feat which one student in the study referred to as the 'battle of the terms' (2020: 161). One student testified that their mother identified as 'Hispanic', and therefore translating 'Latinx' back home would be complicated as their mother would not be able to relate at all to the term (Salinas, 2020: 161). These testimonies suggest that, at least for US based Latin Americans, self-identifying according to identity labels imposed upon them by the US government is a cause for internal conflict and confusion, and it may therefore be necessary to take extra caution when introducing further terms, for example 'Latinx', which serve as identity markers for these communities, especially considering Guerra and Orbea's argument that gender-neutral terms

such as 'Latinx' are unnecessary because traditional Spanish already holds the answer in the form of the masculine generic, 'Latino' (Guerra and Orbea, 2015).

Quantitative data from Taylor et. al.'s (2012) report provides a clear illustration of the divide in understanding and relating to these terms, as well as highlighting that these terms perhaps do not sufficiently represent the complex identities of the individuals within the communities. When asked whether they preferred 'Hispanic' and 'Latino', 51% had no preference, 33% preferred 'Hispanic' and 14% preferred 'Latino' (2012: 10). Whilst the US government provides only two pan-ethnic terms for people of Latin American descent to identify with, at least at an administrative level, Taylor et. al. (2012) report that only 24% of those surveyed identify as either 'Latino' or 'Hispanic'. Whilst the terms prescribed by the US government largely package all people of Latin American descent under the same two categories, 51% of those surveyed identified according to their family's country of origin, 'using terms such as Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Salvadoran or Dominican' (2012: 9). When the participants were asked whether all 'Latinos' in the US shared the same culture, only 29% agreed, whilst 69% expressed that many different Latin American cultures exist within the US (2012: 10). This could indicate that terms which place all people of Latin American descent, regardless of their country of origin and distinct cultures, into the same category may not be adequate linguistic representations of the complex, diverse, multi-layered and multi-faceted identities which this literature review has previously explored.

As Scharrón-del Río and Aja (2015) highlight, 'language can act simultaneously as oppressor and liberator'. For some, the US government's terms may suffice as a linguistic representation of their pan-ethnic identities. However, others may feel that they wish to linguistically represent the diversity of the myriad of Latin American identities which can coexist and intersect with each other and with other elements of personal and social identity. Some people who fall under the broader category of Latin American for example may wish to emphasise their specific national identity relating to their or their family's country of origin, whilst others may feel that terms such as 'Latino' and 'Hispanic' do not adequately create space for them to represent other elements of their multi-faceted identities, for example, to grammatically represent their gender, particularly if they do not identify with the masculine generic as represented under the term 'Latino'. Whilst terms such as 'Latinx' and 'Latiné', which have previously been discussed within this literature review, may act as liberators for some in terms of providing the possibility to 'challenge' and to identify outside of the gender binary and represent this linguistically, others may feel 'oppressed', confused, or offended by

what Guerra and Orbea perceive to be an attempt to ‘fix’ Spanish through the ideological lens of US academia. Further, it appears that geographically assimilating people of a multitude of Latin American countries under two, often confusing labels does not work for the communities to which the two labels ought to relate, considering that only 24% of Latin Americans within the US surveyed by Taylor et. al. (2012) self-identified according to either of the two prescribed labels. The fact that 51% of those surveyed preferred to identify according to their country of origin and the fact that 69% of participants believed that many different cultures exist within the umbrella term of the ‘Latino’ community may signify that terms such as ‘Latinx’ which aim to simultaneously reflect ‘Latin(o)’ pan-ethnic and gender non-conforming identities simply are not fit for purpose, as they are inadequate for distinguishing between identities relating to different Latin American nations and cultures.

The vast majority, if not all of the literature available which examines the term ‘Latinx’, including Salinas’ 2020 study, centres entirely upon the term’s use within a US setting with the papers published in English. The vast majority again gather data from young, university educated individuals who are proficient in English. A number of articles have raised concerns that ‘Latinx’ is inaccessible to those who do not have a firm grasp of the English language (see Guerra and Orbea, 2015). Even within a US context, understanding the difference between terms such as ‘Latino’, ‘Hispanic’ and ‘Latinx’ is likely to be complicated as Latin American immigrants, particularly those who were not born in the US, are the least likely group to be proficient in English within the US (Taylor et. al., 2012: 23), and therefore the least likely to be able to access the literature surrounding these discussions and the discussion around the newly emerging ‘Latinx’. In addition, study of inclusive terms such as ‘Latinx’ outside of the US and occasionally Mexico is practically non-existent. If a majority of Latin Americans within the US have a tendency to reject the identity label ‘Latino’ in a country where perhaps they are more accustomed to being regarded by governing bodies as one coherent group, then it may be reasonable to suspect that Latin Americans outside of the US may not identify with the ‘Latino’ label at all, regardless of what gender variations of the term represent and regardless of the individual’s ability to access the literature surrounding terms such as ‘Latinx’. It is perhaps reasonable to speculate that Latin Americans outside of the US may be more likely to identify with their country of origin and/or residence, as opposed to placing themselves under the broad umbrella of ‘Latin-o/a/x’, even if they do in some manner create new ways of linguistically indexing gender non-conforming identities along with their pan-ethnic or national identities.

It is for this reason that the author proposes to investigate terms used by individuals to self-identify, and to represent facets of their own identities which they consider important to convey linguistically outside of the privileged, English-speaking context of US academia. This study aims to act as a means of giving the *voces perdidas* in this discussion a place at the table of English medium literature regarding the term ‘Latinx’ and other language aiming to break with the gender binary which so often occupies space in the conversation as a *voz de poder*. This study, which will centre the voices and opinions of a variety of Chilean individuals, is not limited to those who are proficient to any degree in English, or to those who have access to higher education. The investigation aims to determine the extent to which terms such as ‘Latinx’, which have received such great attention within US academia, are used, or not used, within Chile, as well as aiming to build a picture of how the individuals participating in the study relate to these terms, if they relate to them at all, and analysing this data alongside data from US-centred studies including Salinas’ 2020 study into how Latin American students within the US relate to the term ‘Latinx’. This study also aims to document any other identity labels used within Chile to denote a gender non-conforming or non-binary identity. Finally, this study aims to investigate to what extent a number of new gender-neutral identity labels are relevant or necessary within a Chilean context, or whether the idea of creating new gender-neutral terminology simply is, as Guerra and Orbea put it, ‘linguistic imperialism’ within an English-speaking US context which is simply out of touch with the Spanish language amongst monolingual Latin American communities.

This chapter has explored the construction of grammatical gender in the Spanish language which will be fundamental to the analysis of both datasets in the following chapters. Further, this chapter has used psycholinguistic theories to explore the implications of grammatical gender in terms of how it affects our understandings of the world and how this may lead to the exclusion of people of certain gender identities from perceptions of the roles of certain nouns which will be important for the analysis of the qualitative dataset when examining understandings and perceptions of inclusive language in section (4.2). Lastly, this chapter has explored how a variety of social factors may prevent individuals and certain societal groups from accessing proposed inclusive language devices in Spanish. This will inform the analysis particularly of research question (3) in chapter (6), however this is also important when analysing the qualitative dataset in section (4.4) in terms of participant attitudes towards factors of privilege necessary for accessing the three principle gender inclusive noun suffixes examined in this study, ‘x’. ‘e’ and ‘@’.

4. To what extent do people in Chile relate to and understand a variety of inclusive language techniques?

This chapter aims to answer research question (1) by analysing the qualitative dataset to establish what inclusive language devices are used in Chile, the variety of attitudes towards these, and the impact of a variety of privileges. Section (4.1) sets out the methodology used to gather the qualitative dataset. Section (4.1.2) presents participant demographic data in table format. Section (4.2) uses the qualitative dataset to establish which inclusive language devices are used in Chile. Once these are identified, section (4.2.1) examines the different understandings of the inclusive devices. Section (4.2.2) explores participants' perceptions of their purposes and meanings. Section (4.3) explores the variety of attitudes towards different inclusive language, particularly noting how the standards set by the Real Academia Española (RAE) appear to influence how individuals perceive the appropriateness of these for a number of given reasons, including formality and cohesion of language. Section (4.4) examines factors of privilege relevant to one's ability to access inclusive language, and how this may consequently lead to certain groups being excluded from understanding and using certain inclusive devices in order to form a broader picture of whether inclusive devices may be more accessible to individuals of certain demographics. The inclusive language devices identified by participants inform the methodology for the quantitative dataset as presented in section (5.1).

4.1. Collecting Data

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected in order to answer the three main research questions related to the aims of the study:

1. To what extent do people in Chile relate to and understand a variety of inclusive language techniques?
2. To what extent is inclusive language used in a variety of situations in Chile compared to in the US?
3. Reality or linguistic imperialism: to what extent is inclusive language *voces perdidas* or *voces de poder*?

This chapter analyses and discusses the data related to research question (1). Chapters 5 and 6 analyse and discuss the data related to research questions (2) and (3).

4.1.1 Interviews

As the primary purpose of this study was to investigate the usage of and attitudes towards several Spanish inclusive language devices, qualitative data was collected via half-hour interviews with Chilean participants. These interviews aimed to discover the extent to which certain inclusive devices are used in Chile, uncover any inclusive devices used in Chile which this investigation had not previously considered, and to develop a broader understanding of how people in Chile understand, relate to, and accept these emerging linguistic forms. The qualitative data collected from the interviews conducted for this project were then examined in relation to the qualitative data collected by Salinas (2020) which focused on Latin American communities within the US.

From the qualitative data gathered in these interviews, participants consistently referred to what this investigation has previously referred to as ‘gender neutral’ language as ‘el lenguaje inclusivo’ (inclusive language). Therefore, these language devices shall henceforth be referred to as ‘inclusive language’ in order to respect the communities to which such language ought to pertain.

4.1.2 Participant recruitment and eligibility

Recruitment posters for the interviews were distributed on social media and shared by several colleagues with connections to Chile. They were shared by a Facebook page which posts about language learning to a large international following (over 500,000 followers).

Table 1: Table showing demographics of participants

Participant Name	Age	Nationality and Native Language	Gender	University educated?	Level of English proficiency
Juan	25	Chilean/ Spanish	Man	Yes	Intermediate/ advanced
Daniel	35	Chilean/ Spanish	Man	Yes	Advanced
Laura	22	Chilean/ Spanish	Non-binary/ woman	Yes	Advanced (C1)
Ana	21	Chilean/ Spanish	Woman	Yes	Intermediate

David	25	Chilean/ Spanish	Man	Yes	Intermediate/ Advanced (B2)
Lucía	23	Chilean/ Spanish	Woman	Yes	High Level
María	50	Chilean/ Spanish	Woman	Yes	Basic
Francisco	27	Chilean/ Spanish	Man	Yes (Masters)	Advanced

In order to be eligible to participate in the interviews, participants had to be at least 18 years of age, be a Chilean national or have long-term residential status in Chile and be a native speaker of Spanish or an indigenous language within the Chilean geographical region. There was no upper age limit, requirement of a certain educational level or other qualifying factor required to participate in the study, as this investigation aims to document a range of voices and opinions in relation to the topic from within Chile. However, as the interviews took place online, a certain degree of computer literacy was inherently required which may have discouraged certain age groups from partaking. No degree of English proficiency was required, and this question was only asked to explore Guerra and Orbea's (2015) claims of 'linguistic imperialism' and the idea that certain inclusive language devices are only accessible to those who also speak English proficiently.

4.1.3 Procedure

Participants were invited to a half-hour, semi structured interview in Spanish over Zoom to discuss their perceptions of the extent to which inclusive language was used in their country, their thoughts around the topic and how they relate to and understand this language. Participants were asked a series of questions around different inclusive language constructions and their perceptions and understandings of them. These questions included:

'Have you ever seen (device) before?'

'Why is this/are these device(s) used?'

'Are there certain situations in which this device is more likely to be used?'

‘Is inclusive language more frequently used orally or written? Or does this depend on the type of inclusive language?’

‘Do you personally like to use inclusive language? If so, when? Do you have a preferred type of inclusive language?’

‘Do you think it is a privilege to be able to understand and examine particularly new types of inclusive language?’

‘Are certain age groups more likely to use or accept inclusive language?’

All participants were given a ‘blank space’ at the end of the interview in order to express any further views or to share any other information which they had not had the opportunity to share earlier in the interview. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed, as agreed with each individual participant. All interviews were conducted in Spanish, although some participants chose to reference English to demonstrate their viewpoints. The information quoted from participants and used in this study has been transcribed and translated into English. All of the translations are the researcher’s own. Participant names have been changed to ensure anonymity. This project and the interviews conducted for it were approved by the Swansea University College of Arts and Humanities ethics committee.

This section has outlined the methodology for collecting the qualitative dataset for this study. The following sections examine this data in relation to topic covered in chapters (2) and (3) of this study.

4.2. Identifying inclusive devices

Firstly, it was necessary to establish exactly which inclusive devices are used authentically in Chile. Participants were presented with a few examples of nouns following different inclusive language techniques which had been identified during the literature review process, for example ‘amigxs’, ‘amigues’, ‘Latinx’, ‘Chilenes’, ‘Chilenxs’, ‘Chilenu’ to name a few. They were then all given the opportunity to disclose any other devices which they believed to exist in Chile. 100% of participants in the Chilean study recognised the use of ‘x’ as an alternative to the binary ‘o’ or ‘a’ noun suffix, as demonstrated in the term ‘Latinx’ as the focus of Salinas’ (2020) study. Furthermore, the inclusive noun endings ‘@’ and ‘e’ were frequently cited as commonly used inclusive language techniques in Chile. Whilst it became clear that the term ‘Latinx’ itself is scarcely used in Chile, most participants were conscious of its existence, and oftentimes still used or recognised inclusive language constructed with the ‘x’ other than

‘Latinx’, for example ‘amigxs’ and ‘compañerxs’. However, one participant in this study did not recognise the specific term ‘Latinx’ at all. He stated that he had seen the term without the ‘x’ (‘Latin’), although he did express that he was familiar with the term ‘amigxs’, which employs the ‘x’ as an alternative to the binary ‘o’ and ‘a’ traditional noun endings.

4.2.1 Understanding inclusive language.

Once they had identified the inclusive language techniques that they believed to be most used in Chile, participants were asked to explain what they believed the different terms meant, what they aimed to achieve and why they were used. Salinas (2020) concluded that participants in the US typically understood the inclusive term ‘Latinx’ in one of two ways: ‘a term for people who do not identify along the European settler-colonial gender binary, and inclusive for all people of Latin American origin and descent’ (Salinas, 2020: 159). In contrast, Chilean interview participants did not frequently express that they understood nouns constructed with the ‘x’ to be a means of breaking off specifically from what Salinas’ study described as the ‘European settler-colonial gender binary’. However, it is important to note that ‘Latinx’ as a term is likely to have a different perceived meaning than simply using the letter ‘x’ to neutralise gendered nouns. Participants tended to interpret ‘x’, and also sometimes ‘e’ as an alternative to binary noun endings, as a means of referring to a collective of people in an inclusive manner, without making explicit reference to one specific gender.

When asked to explain how they understood inclusive language, participants from Chile tended to comment on their perceived meanings of the grammatical construction of inclusive techniques. Grammatically, María explained that she believed the ‘x’ to be used in order to ‘neutralise [a word] or to be inclusive’. However in terms of her understandings of the core meaning of inclusive language, María explained it to be:

‘the way in which the other defines oneself or recognises oneself. Beyond sexual orientation, of the guise that divides society into binary categories, it has something to do with each person’s feelings, that is to say, it exceeds the rigid structures which regulate the language (in this case) and humanise the use of language to make each person feel part of the process that lives together with other people, I believe it is a way of opening spaces for participation in recognising the peculiarity which each human being possesses’.

This suggests that María is aware of the binary man/woman categories imposed by the grammatical frameworks of the Spanish language, and that inclusive language aims to break away from this and include a wider range of people outside of the fixed binary, thus

understanding inclusive language in line with the first interpretation laid out by Salinas (2020: 159). Similarly, Laura explained their understanding of inclusive language to be:

‘a language which permits the inclusion of gender-neutral people both linguistically and in thought. In turn, inclusive language allows for an expansion of thought within the culture of the Spanish language since it is currently so closed.’

Therefore, Laura’s understanding also fits with Salinas’ (2020) first interpretation, as such language allows for the inclusion of those who do not identify with the ‘European settler-colonial gender binary’, or non-binary or gender non-conforming individuals.

‘Inclusivity for all’ was the most widely shared understanding across the interviews; however, understandings of who was being included varied. Ana understood inclusive language as aiming to ‘eliminate’ the fact that a word may exhibit an ‘explicit gender’ so that ‘all of the genders which exist can feel included in the participation of what the word means’. Francisco understood ‘x’ and ‘@’ as acting as a replacement for ‘a’ and ‘o’, thus allowing for words to be created that incorporate both men and women simultaneously, referring to the inclusion of ‘both genders’. Therefore, these results aligned with the second way of understanding ‘Latinx’ according to definitions provided by Salinas (2020), as participants appear to interpret these devices as aiming for ‘inclusivity’ rather than to break with the gender binary. This could be significant for considering Tapia-Arizmendi and Romani’s argument that using the masculine generic erases the presence of ‘women’ (and, arguably, all genders which are not masculine).

Chilean participants were specifically asked how they related in terms of pan-ethnic identity to the terms ‘Latinx’ (and other inclusive variations), ‘Latino’ and ‘Latina’. Salinas (2020) further explains how ‘Latinx’ was often understood to be an inclusive alternative to ‘Latino’ and ‘Latina’ for all people of Latin American descent, providing an option to identify outside of the gender binary (2020: 160). Despite ‘Latinx’ being considered an all-inclusive term for people of Latin American descent in the US, Daniel from Chile would prefer to identify with his Chilean national identity rather than the pan-ethnic ‘Latino/a/x/e’ identity label, as he believes that Chile and the Spanish spoken in Chile are very different to other parts of Latin America. He believes that ‘Latino’ does include him, but he prefers to identify as ‘Chileno’. On the other hand, although he does not like it, Francisco does feel included in ‘Latino’ as well as ‘Chileno’, because as he says, Chile is part of Latin America. His mother is from Argentina, which as he explains fits into the wider Latin American identity. Further, Lucía explained that she had seen ‘Latinx’ used predominantly by people from other continents to

refer to Latin American people. One could thus infer that there is a profound difference in the meaning of ‘Latinx’ in terms of the sense of community that it creates. Participants in Salinas’ (2020) study further describe that the wider Latin American community is ‘Latinx’ (2020: 162). It is therefore possible that people of Latin American descent use the term as an inclusive way of referring to their community in order to create a sense of cohesion due to their minority status in the US, which would not be the case for Chilean participants within Chile.

4.2.2 Perceived meanings and usage of different inclusive techniques

Participants were asked whether they would use different devices in spoken or written situations and why. Several participants expressed that the ‘x’ is often used in written language with the ‘e’ used more commonly in spoken language. It is even possible that the ‘x’ and the ‘e’, whilst sometimes believed to perform the same function, actually have slightly different, nuanced meanings, despite Juan and Laura expressing their belief that all three inclusive devices (‘x’, ‘@’ and ‘e’) shared a common goal.

Seven of the eight participants interviewed said that they personally use inclusive language in some situations. As a follow up to clarify a previous answer, Laura was asked whether they believed that inclusive language aimed to be inclusive of more than two genders. Laura, who self-identifies as feminine/non-binary and who has non-binary friends, explained that they would use ‘x’ (for example, ‘amigxs’) when referring to their friends as a collective. Laura would particularly use the ‘x’ as an inclusive device in WhatsApp chats where some of their friends identified as male, others as female and some as non-binary because it provided an ‘easier’ way of referring to everyone and meant that ‘everyone feels included in the group’. Laura appears to be using ‘x’ as an inclusive language device in two senses simultaneously; for indexing the presence of people who do not identify with the gender binary and also in order to be inclusive of all without specific reference to gender. Similarly, a participant in Salinas’ study explained that Latinx’ was introduced to her as being ‘more inclusive of genders that are not binary’ (2020: 159). In this instance, nouns constructed with ‘x’ act as more ‘neutral’ alternatives to the traditionally used masculine generic, which Tapia-Arizmendi and Romani (2012) describe as a ‘linguistic asymmetry’. As the pair further highlight, using the masculine generic as a term to encompass all genders has the possibility for ambiguous interpretation. García expresses that the masculine generic aims to act as a ‘neutral or unmarked form’ (2019: 12), however the possibility for ambiguity, as highlighted by Tapia-Arizmendi and Romani (2012) could be reason to argue that using an alternative form for referring to a

collective could reduce the specific interpretation of a noun as referring to a specific gender and to reduce the overshadowing of non-masculine gender identities.

In her interview, María explained that she believes strongly in the importance of using 'x' in written communications, and that she herself does so consistently. She explained how she understands 'x' to be an inclusive shorthand alternative to writing out both the feminine and masculine binary genders. However, when asked whether she thought that the 'e', which she had previously identified as an inclusive language technique sometimes used in Chile, would be an appropriate inclusive alternative to the binary 'a' and 'o' in spoken language due to it also being a vowel, María said she preferred to avoid using the 'e' in favour of binary gender nouns. She expressed that she believes 'x' to be primarily a written form and uses it in her writing in the name of inclusivity. She expresses that she dislikes the 'e' as a spoken form, explaining that she prefers to distinguish between genders when she speaks, for example, she would use the binary masculine and feminine 'ellas y ellos' or 'todas y todos' simultaneously when referring to a mixed gender group. She does explain that if a group to which she was referring asked her to use the 'e' form, she would do so.

Interestingly, when explaining that she prefers to use both the masculine and the feminine forms together in order to be inclusive in her spoken language, María prioritised the feminine form over the masculine. This linguistic choice is particularly worthy of note given that Spanish is a language which linguistically prioritises the presence of men over women through the use of the masculine generic to refer to 'a person or a group of people in general regardless of the presence of other sexes or genders' (García, 2019: 12). Tapia-Arizmendi and Romani denounce this as 'linguistic sexism', which they define as something which 'either ignores women, or treats them as men, or represents them as an exception' (2012: 69). Perissinotto even describes how laws that are written exclusively in the masculine generic place women as an 'extension' of the masculine, and do not 'include' women (1982: 32). By placing the feminine before the masculine, María is possibly making a political statement. She even specifically expresses that she believes inclusive language to be a 'political act' which one can use as a tool to seek 'social recognition'.

Perhaps María's linguistic choices are just that; her own 'political act' for the 'social recognition' of her feminine gender, prioritised and emphasised rather than being erased by male presence. Whilst María believes that the 'x' is inclusive, she does seem to only extend her gender inclusivity to the limits of the masculine/feminine gender binary. She does not

mention the possibility that ‘x’ could be a method for including genders beyond the masculine/feminine binary, something which is more widely recognised within Salinas’ (2020) interviews. However, perhaps the linguistic recognition of non-binary identities is not María’s war. As she explains, our inclusive language choices constitute political acts, a belief shared by Juan, and perhaps her political acts wish to emphasise and recognise the existence of women in language, as so often denied and overshadowed by the traditional use of the masculine generic throughout history. Whilst perhaps the ‘x’, and perhaps the ‘e’, do aim to be ‘inclusive for all people’ (Salinas, 2020: 159), these two letters do not specifically relate to women. Despite the fact that they do not necessarily overshadow the presence of women in the same manner as the masculine generic is said to have done (see Tapia-Arizmendi and Romani, 2012), they do not specifically emphasise their presence. Therefore, María’s emphasis and prioritisation of women in her linguistic choices does fit with her understanding of inclusive language as a political act, as using inclusive language provides her with a tool for promoting the linguistic recognition of women in the male-dominated Spanish language.

4.2.3 Confusions

Section (3.4) raised concerns regarding the accessibility of certain inclusive devices, citing education as a factor of privilege necessary for their use and understanding. All Chilean participants were therefore asked to state their level of education in the interviews, as this was something raised by Salinas’ (2020) participants as a barrier for accessing inclusive language. 100% of Chilean participants were university educated. Salinas’ participants tended to agree that university education facilitates a clear understanding of inclusive language. Among the Chilean participants, Juan, who agreed with the aim of inclusive language, appeared to be confused as to whether this aimed to include ‘gender’ or ‘sexuality’. Of ‘x’, he explains that he understands the linguistic device to be used to ‘refer to a group of people without referring to their sexual orientation or identity’. As Bucholtz and Hall (2004) explain, gender and sexuality are two distinct entities with sexuality often having been side lined by the focus on gender in the field of linguistics. Further, the pair highlight that earlier gender research tended to ‘collapse sexuality into gender’ Whereas Bucholtz and Hall define sexuality as: ‘The systems of mutually constituted ideologies, practices, and identities that give sociopolitical meaning to the body as an eroticized and/or reproductive site’ (2004: 470), Butler describes gender as a ‘culturally constructed’ (1990: 8) identity created through ‘the repetition of acts through time’ (1988: 520). Butler also affirms that gender cannot necessarily be considered as a ‘cultural interpretation of sex’ (1990: 10). Further, García (2019) highlights how the labelling of a

referent as ‘either female or male’ through Spanish language gender markers can conceal genders other than the masculine and can also misgender individuals (2019: 4).

Perhaps this is the point that Juan, the student who describes ‘x’ as being inclusive of sexuality, aimed to make. Spanish grammar indexes the grammatical gender of objects, although for nouns, adjectives and determiners relating to animate objects the grammatical gender reflects the social gender of the referent. The Spanish language does not express sexuality in either a grammatical or social capacity, and therefore there would be no need to make language ‘inclusive’ of what Juan describes as ‘other sexual identities’. In fact, he further explains that ‘x’ refers to people ‘just as people, not as men or women’, which suggests that he does understand the presence of gender in the grammatical fabrics of the Spanish language which ‘x’ is often regarded as combatting.

It is perfectly possible that Juan simply does not understand the distinction between gender and sexuality, a confusion which Bucholtz and Hall (2004) identify as often occurring. Indeed, as one particular participant in Salinas’ study raises, she believes she is privileged in having the opportunity to analyse ‘Latinx’, recognising that not everyone has the opportunity to ‘take courses on queer theory’ (Salinas, 2020: 163). Whilst Juan had studied at university, perhaps he simply had not encountered classes where gender and sexuality were discussed, and he did not disclose which subject he specialised in. Indeed, these are arguably niche topics and would certainly not be examined on every university course. Ana highlighted in her interview that students on university courses such as medicine might simply not have classes on such topics. Regardless of his specific knowledge of the distinctions between language and gender and language and sexuality, Juan does fundamentally understand the use of ‘x’ as an inclusive language technique for the equal and unanimous representation of a group of individuals without prioritising the masculine gender over others.

The theme of the linguistic inclusion of all genders is present across both this study and Salinas’ study. Perhaps one ought to focus less on the academic definitions of the social theories behind inclusive language when discussing this topic and focus more broadly on the intentions of these terms. Indeed, as participants in Salinas’ (2020) study highlight, not everyone in the Spanish-speaking community will have access to spaces where these theories are discussed and analysed. Further, perhaps one ought to consider that culture and public discourse regarding gender could influence different understandings of inclusive language in different contexts. Whilst specific understandings of inclusive language techniques, including

the 'x' may vary to a lesser or greater extent, it is important not to let this overshadow the widely shared, overarching understanding of linguistic gender inclusivity and representation.

4.3 Attitudes towards Inclusive Language Techniques

This section examines participant attitudes towards inclusive language. Participants in this study were questioned about their personal feelings and attitudes towards inclusive language techniques. Although seven out of eight participants agreed with the overarching aim of achieving a more inclusive language, or at least recognised the importance of inclusivity and representation, attitudes towards which inclusive language techniques should be used and when varied.

4.3.1 Cohesive and coherent Spanish

Seven out of the eight participants in this study believed in the 'importance' of inclusive language. A number of those further described using inclusive language techniques themselves, and, whilst the precise techniques and situations they were used in varied to some extent, the underlying theme of using such devices to promote inclusivity was prevalent throughout the interviews. However, not every participant agreed with the use of inclusive language. One particular participant expressed his strong dislike for the inclusive language techniques discussed, describing himself as a 'language conservative'. David, a university educated English teacher, proposed a number of arguments to support his feelings towards inclusive language, which largely centred around maintaining what he described as a 'good' Spanish which is coherent and easily understood by the outsider. David further explained that using what he called 'Chilean idioms' to achieve a neutral language can pose issues in that they may not be understood by all of Latin America, and that they can pose problems when translating into English, although he did not elaborate on where and how such problems may arise. Whilst David raises concerns that inclusive language may not be understood by people across Latin America, Daniel on the contrary testifies that people in Latin American countries including 'Colombia, Bolivia and Mexico' frequently use the previously discussed inclusive language techniques, but that he believes that these techniques are used 'a lot' in Chile. David himself admits that he has friends in Argentina and Mexico who use the 'e' device. Similarly, some students from Salinas' study explained that their friends outside the US, for example in countries such as Mexico would use inclusive language techniques similar to those examined so far in this investigation. They explained that, whilst their friends in Mexico may be less inclined to use 'Latinx', they would often use alternative forms such as 'Latiné' or 'Latinu'

(Salinas, 2020). Participants in the Chilean study described recognising the ‘e’ (or ‘é’) device, however none recognised or used ‘u’ to be inclusive.

4.3.2 Formality

The previous section raised concerns around the intelligibility of inclusive language outside of more regional dialect settings. This section shall therefore explore attitudes towards the use of inclusive language in formal settings. Throughout the interviews conducted, participants commonly expressed that ‘x’ and ‘e’ were mostly used in ‘informal’ contexts. Laura testified that ‘todos mis amigas’ (‘all of my friends’ – using the inclusive ‘e’ for ‘amigas’ instead of the masculine generic ‘amigos’) now use this type of inclusive language in written contexts. They did not, however, employ an inclusive device when agreeing ‘todos’ with ‘amigas’, leaving ‘todos’ as a masculine generic. Participants frequently expressed that they or their peers used these inclusive devices, particularly ‘x’ in written but not spoken contexts, with María explaining that she would opt for expressing both binary genders in an oral context. Juan expressed his concerns that ‘x’ is too difficult to pronounce in Chilean Spanish, as it would require a change in aspiration which is further complicated by the rapid pace at which he says Chileans speak. One prevalent theme throughout the interviews was the attitude that ‘x’ and ‘e’ provided devices acceptable in informal contexts, such as with friends and on social media, but were not appropriate in formal contexts. Laura further testified that many of their friends were not permitted to use these devices in their academic works, instead having to employ traditionally accepted language.

The attitude that ‘x’ and ‘e’ are not so appropriate to more formal contexts was shared by Juan. Whilst he explained that he is not against the inclusive language techniques previously discussed in this study, particularly ‘x’ and ‘e’, he does believe that there are pre-existing means of referring to a group of individuals in Spanish without emphasising a specific gender. David similarly commented that ‘there are other ways to refer to all genders at the same time’. David explained that in a guide for inclusive language at university, he had seen recommendations for terms such as ‘profesorado’, ‘alumnado’, ‘administrativo’ (‘teachers’, ‘students’, ‘administrators’) to be used in order to be inclusive whilst adhering to the grammatical rules of Spanish. It should be noted however that this manner of ‘inclusive’ language use does employ masculine nouns, although they do not refer to individuals in the same way as other masculine generics. The view expressed by David and Juan that there are already ways to use language inclusively in Spanish reflects the stance taken by the Gobierno de Chile (Chilean Government) in a guide published in 2016 on gender-inclusive language. The guide promotes the use of

strategies and resources which the Spanish language already possesses as these are already grammatically compatible with the language (Gobierno de Chile, 2016: 4) and provides suggested devices to traditionally masculine-dominated language. Juan describes how he believes ‘camaradas’ (colleagues/comrades) to be a suitable inclusive alternative to ‘caballeros’ (gentlemen) (WordReference.com, 2021). ‘Camaradas’ is a noun which always takes the ‘a’ or ‘as’ ending regardless of the gender of the individual or individuals to whom it is referring (see WordReference.com, 2021) and can be either masculine or feminine in gender depending on the referent. However, the gender of such nouns changes according to the gender of the determiner accompanying it. (WordReference.com, 2021). Therefore, in choosing between one of the two binary gender determiners, one assigns the noun a binary gender, and therefore it may be necessary to find an alternative to the traditionally used determiners in order to achieve a gender-neutral version of the noun.

4.3.3 Inclusive language devices in traditionally accepted Spanish

Curiously, the two nouns examined in the study which use the prototypically feminine ‘as’ ending when referring to people of any gender, including the masculine, in Perissinotto’s (1982) study appeared to be more ‘neutral’ regarding their specific interpretation according to gender. Feminine nouns deemed to be more ‘neutral’ in Perissinotto’s (1982) paper, such as ‘persona’ were also favoured as ‘neutral’ options in the Chilean Government’s 2016 guide on inclusive language. Perhaps the data suggests that collective nouns which possess a typically ‘feminine’ ending are better suited to being inclusive language devices as they are less likely to be specifically attributed to one specific gender, and therefore are less likely to result in a linguistic gender bias. Therefore, Juan’s preferred use of the noun ‘camaradas’ would sufficiently function as a gender inclusive device to similar masculine generic terms, particularly considering the evidence from Perissinotto’s study on the specific interpretation of similar nouns (Perissinotto, 1982). Francisco also testified that he felt included when the feminine gender was used to refer to the staff as a collective where he works, particularly as the majority of the workforce there are women. Furthermore, guidance from the Chilean government suggests similar devices for gender inclusivity, and therefore one could argue that nouns ending in what Tapia-Arizmendi and Romani (2012) describe as typically feminine endings suffice as inclusive, neutral terminology. This could present a device which does not require any change to the language currently accepted.

Despite the conservative attitudes towards language that he displays, it is important to recognise that David does not explicitly denounce the underlying theme of inclusivity. In

agreement with Juan, he expresses a preference to what he describes as Spanish's ability to modify itself to be able to refer to different groups. Similarly to Juan, he would prefer to use 'la comunidad científica' (the scientific community) in place of 'scientists' (which would typically take a masculine generic form) or forms such as 'profesorado' ('being a teacher' or 'faculty' referring to teachers as a group) (WordReference.com, 2021) to achieve language inclusivity. He does not however express that he uses these devices frequently, and indeed uses the masculine generic throughout his interview. Although David explains that he dislikes the use of 'e' as an inclusive language device, he does explain that he approves of the use of 'profesores' ('teachers') as an inclusive term, as this already exists in the Spanish language. Furthermore, he explains that 'estudiantes' (students) encompasses both 'alumnos y alumnas' ('male students and female students'), without using 'a' or 'o' in the noun itself, although this may not be the case for its determiners. Moreover, he describes how nouns ending in the suffix '-ente' can be used for both 'men and women', giving the example 'presidente' ('president'). A guide published by the Real Academia Española (RAE) explains how masculine nouns ending in '-ente' in Spanish do not change form in the feminine, for example 'adolescente' ('adolescent') and 'estudiante' ('student') (RAE, 2018: 24), although the guide does explain that 'presidenta' is an acceptable feminine form. It is therefore possible to recognise that whilst the individual may oppose the 'artificial' use of the 'e' to achieve gender inclusivity, 'e' may in fact already exist as a more 'neutral' noun ending in the minds of some Spanish speakers.

Participants often expressed how they felt that nouns with '-nte' suffixes were less expressive of a particular gender. As previously discussed, inclusive devices involving 'e' as the final vowel indicative of gender instead of 'o' or 'a' are seemingly popular not only in Chile, but also in other Latin American countries, as testified to by participants both in this study and also in Salinas' study (2020). The technique was also popular amongst participants in this study, particularly in an oral setting. Ana, a linguistics student, liked the use of the 'e' for inclusivity particularly as it is also a vowel, equal to the binary 'o' and 'a'. She further explained that people in Chile often change vowels in words and not just for inclusivity purposes. Whilst the switching of the 'o' or 'a' for the 'e' is not approved by the RAE (see RAE, 2018: 21) the device appears to be widely used and perceived as practical. Similarly, '-nte' suffixed nouns are approved, and in David's view, appropriate neutral noun forms. Despite David's rejection of the 'e' as a replacement for 'o' or 'a', (he thinks 'miembros' sounds absurd), perhaps his perception of 'presidente' and 'estudiante' as pre-existing neutral

alternatives suggests that ‘e’ could become widely accepted as an alternative to binary ‘o’ and ‘a’ ending gendered language.

4.3.4 Linguistic loyalty to the gender binary

David emphasised his belief in the importance of referring specifically to a subject’s gender in language, something traditionally unavoidable in the Spanish language (see García, 2019). He discloses that he believes in the importance of linguistically recognising himself as a ‘man’ and of recognising the interviewer’s feminine gender identity in his language choices. ‘If I were a woman’, he explained, ‘I would like to be referred to as ‘ella’ rather than ‘elle’’, the former pronoun specifically expressing a subject’s feminine gender and the latter posing an inclusive, neutral device. David was not alone in believing in the importance of expressing specific gender in this study. As previously mentioned, María would use the inclusive ‘x’ as shorthand in her written work but use both masculine and feminine binary nouns together when speaking. Moreover, Francisco would also prefer to make explicit reference to both binary genders in his inclusive language, explaining that he would typically use an inclusive technique using a slash, for example ‘todos/as’ (‘everyone’) to represent and include men and women present. However, Francisco also explained that at work, he feels included if someone uses the feminine generic to refer to the staff as a collective, especially as women significantly outnumber men in his workplace. Similarly, a number of participants, including Francisco, preferred to use ‘@’ at the end of a noun to represent both men and women simultaneously. None of these devices are particularly favoured by the RAE, with the slash and the ‘@’ being outright condemned by the language authority (RAE, 2018: 21). Juan and María explain how they believe that many people in Latin America are very conservative with their language use.

Section (4.3) has explored the varying attitudes towards the three inclusive language techniques that are the focus of this study. Notably, participants have consistently raised concerns about the formality and intelligibility of these techniques across wider Spanish speaking society. The next section shall therefore explore the privileges of accessing these linguistic devices and examine the attitudes towards inclusive language which participants testified to vary by generation.

4.4 Privilege and Attitudes Throughout Age Groups

Two important themes to consider when discussing the extent to which people relate to a variety of inclusive language techniques are those of privilege and the varying attitudes amongst certain demographics. Both of these topics were addressed to some extent in both

Salinas' (2020) study and this study which focuses on Chile, although there was considerable variation in why participants across the two studies regarded privilege and demographics as important topics for the conversation.

In this study, the youngest participant was 21 years old, and the oldest participant 50 years old, with the vast majority (six out of eight) of participants being in their 20s. Out of the eight eligible participants, four self-identified as men, three self-identified as women, and one self-identified as woman/non-binary. All participants spoke Spanish as their first language, had had access to higher education at some stage of their lives, were of Chilean nationality and had varying degrees of competency in English. Self-assessed levels of English competency ranged from a fairly basic understanding to an advanced level.

4.4.1 Educational privilege

A key topic which became apparent when discussing privilege was the topic of education. Participants in Salinas' (2020) study tended to regard the use of 'Latinx' as a 'privilege', with the term being perceived by one participant as only being used in 'elitist circles, like highly educated folks' (Salinas, 2020: 162). On the contrary, participants from the interviews conducted in Chile did not regard inclusive language usage a privilege in the sense that it is reserved for those with access to academic spaces. However, Ana did refer to education as a factor of privilege in her interview. Whilst it appears that in a US context, 'Latinx' is widely used in, and perhaps to an extent confined to, academic spaces, Chilean participants testified that this is not the case in Chilean universities, with Laura even testifying how academic staff forbid them to use inclusive language in their work.

Reflecting a sentiment shared by a participant in Salinas' (2020) study, Ana testified that education is an important factor in aiding one's ability to use certain inclusive language devices. From her personal experiences, Ana told of how she had witnessed the 'education gap' between the Chilean capital, Santiago, and Chiloé Island (*Isla Grande de Chiloé*) where she grew up. She explained that in Santiago, people tend to be more receptive to language change than people on the islands who tend to be more 'traditional' and less receptive towards the topic of inclusive language. She explained that people on Chiloé Island tend to have quite negative opinions of inclusive language and believe that other people are trying to 'impose' something upon them. Ana did not know whether understanding inclusive language ought to be considered a 'privilege' in the sense that was projected in Salinas' (2020) study. Although she believed that education, which several of Salinas' (2020) participants considered a privilege, does play

a significant role in facilitating the understanding of inclusive language techniques, Ana did express her belief that if one reflects upon the topic, one could reach the conclusion that maybe they could use inclusive language. Perhaps education itself could be considered the factor of privilege here. Whilst Ana explained that it is possible to understand inclusive language without attending university, Lucía believed that normalising inclusive language techniques such as the ‘e’ would require further education, perhaps in schools from a young age, but that an underlying conservative attitude towards language in Chile could impede the introductory process.

4.4.2 Education as a factor for accepting inclusive language

Whilst educational spaces, for example universities, in Chile are not regarded by the participants in the interviews as spaces where the use of inclusive language is strongly promoted by staff in the way that participants in Salinas’ (2020) study testified as occurring in US universities, it is possible that accessing educational spaces does play a role in whether or not an individual is open to language change in this manner. Despite not expressing specifically that he considered access to education a privilege, Juan believed that universities do present a space where easy access to information can facilitate coming to understand some of the inclusive language techniques discussed throughout this investigation. Furthermore, he explained that people at university are ‘more varied’ and that there is ‘very good conversation there [at university]’. Similarly to Lucía’s interview, where she suggested that there is a general underlying conservative attitude towards inclusive language change, and Ana’s testimony that people from the islands tend to be more conservative in their attitudes towards language change, Juan reflected upon how ‘the common person’ may find it more complicated to understand and accept the shift towards inclusive language, due to their tendency to have ‘quite conservative ideas’. He explained that often, people who tend to have more conservative views towards language use will outwardly object to people around them using inclusive language. For example, he described how if someone were to say ‘amigues’ in the presence of a person with a conservative attitude towards an inclusive language shift, they may correct them, saying ‘no, ¡amigos o amigas!’. In Juan’s opinion, the fact that there is ‘more conversation’ about these topics in university, even if this is outside of the classroom, results in the increased ability to understand inclusive language. From qualitative information gathered in the interviews with Chilean participants, coupled with information from Salinas’ (2020) study, it would appear that education and the university environment is key to the understanding and acceptance of

inclusive language, regardless of whether or not the participant sharing their views considered education or the understanding of inclusive language strategies to be privileges in themselves.

Participants in both studies describe how younger generations are more likely to use inclusive language than older generations. For example, in Chile, Daniel did not believe that people over the age of 50 or 60 would understand inclusive language, and that consequently, they would not use it. He did later contradict himself slightly in saying that it is not necessarily an issue of a lack of understanding of inclusive language that prevents the older generations from using it, although one could consider the possibility that there is a lack of understanding of the spectrum of gender identities to contend with here. Daniel believes that it is often the case that older generations have ‘everything formed’ in their minds and are therefore less receptive to change. Ana similarly affirmed that people over the age of 50 are not willing to use inclusive language, and that its usage is most common in people under 35 years of age. Likewise, Lucía explained how she believes understanding inclusive language to be easy for younger people, but more difficult for older people as they are less likely to be exposed to or accustomed to inclusive language. Perhaps the generation gap in the acceptance and usage of inclusive language in Chile could partially explain why teaching staff at Chilean universities are less open to the adoption of inclusive language in academic spaces, if one can assume that teaching staff are likely to be older than the student cohort. Furthermore, the website for the Universidad de Chile does not have a specific LGBTQ+ section, and searches for ‘LGTB’ (Spanish acronym for LGBT), only returned 230 results, most of which appeared to be papers and theses written out of individual interest rather than material which was published by the institution itself. This suggests that LGBTQ+ issues do not experience a great degree of visibility at an administrative level at the university which perhaps inhibits formalised discussion of such topics. Therefore, one could infer that whilst formalised learning about inclusive language, especially in Chile, is not essential to understand inclusive language techniques, the environment which is harboured amongst young people at university is an important factor in the understanding and acceptance of such changes in the language. For this reason, perhaps the university environment should be recognised as an important space for the sharing of information and the development of new ideas, even if one does not wish to consider it a privilege.

4.4.3 Translating inclusive language: from the youth to their home communities

Participants across both studies tended to be of the younger generation, with Salinas’ (2020) participants being exclusively university students and the majority (six out of eight) of Chilean

participants being aged in their twenties, with only two participants falling outside of this age bracket. Both studies revealed a tendency amongst participants, to avoid translating inclusive language techniques back to their families and communities. This was particularly prevalent in Salinas' (2020) study, where a number of participants revealed that they had learned about the inclusive term 'Latinx' in what they considered to be 'privileged spaces' to which their families and communities did not have access. Salinas' view that 'Latinx' 'can be conceptualised as both *voces perdidas* and *voces de poder*' (Salinas, 2020: 162) recognises that whilst the term may be liberating for some, it can simultaneously be used to oppress members of the Latin American community. Latin American students in US universities who participated in Salinas' (2020) study explained how, due to the privileged position of US academia, they would not translate 'Latinx' back to their communities when they returned there. Salinas explains that this is in order to avoid being the *voces de poder* overshadowing the *voces perdidas* (Salinas, 2020). Lack of access to spaces where members of their communities can learn about emerging inclusive language techniques is frequently cited as a creator of the *voces perdidas/voces de poder* divide.

In a similar manner, participants from Chile also tended to avoid using inclusive language at home with their families because the older generations would not understand it. Lucía said that her grandparents would never use inclusive language. Daniel, the second oldest Chilean participant at 35 years old, explained that if he were to use inclusive language at home with his mother for example, she would be able to understand what he meant, but would not herself be willing to use it. The case was similar in Juan's family. His mother, he explained, would occasionally use an inclusive language feature, although he recognised that in general, young people tend to be the most likely to use inclusive language. Despite his mother's occasional use of inclusive language, Juan explained that his grandparents would not understand these terms very well and would even think that inclusive language is 'ridiculous'. Although at present many participants in Chile reveal that older generations in their families are less inclined to use inclusive language due to a lack of understanding of what inclusive language means and what it aims to do, some participants believe that this will change in the future. Laura believed that through dialogue, people may change their negative views of inclusive language and begin accepting it. Further, Daniel believed that acceptance from language authorities may result in people being more open to embracing change. Whilst education and conversation are cited as important factors for instigating a more widespread shift towards inclusive language, this perhaps is not the same amongst Latin American

communities in the US, as the *voces de poder* and *voces perdidas* divide seemingly creates a sense of conflict in the younger generations, where they acknowledge that whilst ‘Latinx’ is important for some, the term has potential to be harmful to their communities, as shall be explored in greater detail later in this investigation.

4.4.4 The privilege of worrying about inclusivity

The debate on the relevance of privilege for the understanding and use of inclusive language should not be confined solely to the privilege of education, although this has proven a starting point for conversation. Moreover, one must be careful not to believe that a lack of education or an opposition to inclusive language are the only barriers one may face in incorporating it into one’s idiolect. When asked about whether they considered using and understanding inclusive language to be a privilege, Laura, who identified as a woman/non-binary, expressed their belief that it is in fact a privilege, but in ways not mentioned by other participants. Even though they identified as a woman/non-binary and would therefore likely be greatly affected by inclusive language, Laura explains that ‘the fact that you can worry about not insulting another person because of their gender is because at best, you don’t have other things to worry about’. They explain that a number of socio-economic instabilities are reason enough for a person to need to focus their worries and attention on other, more immediate issues in their life. Laura gives the example that for some people, they are ‘not interested at all’ in your gender identity because what does interest them is ‘being able to study, look after their siblings and family, and being able to support and solve their own problems’. Laura states that this is the case for ‘some students’. Therefore, one could infer that even for those who have the relative privilege of accessing higher education, if one indeed considers education a privilege, other aspects of privilege may be relevant factors to whether or not one may come to use or understand certain inclusive terminology. Perhaps it would be too simplistic to simply identify access to education and age as the two factors affecting an individual’s relationship with inclusive language. One could even wonder whether ‘inclusive language’ is in fact inclusive in a broader sense if there are a significant number of barriers for individuals of many different situations and backgrounds to overcome in order to access this type of language. Affording greater attention to the multitude of privileges and barriers relevant to this discussion could be crucial to promoting and normalising inclusive language. However, Laura emphasises that the roll-out of inclusive language needs ‘a little less weight on top of it’, in other words, from the bottom up. Laura’s comments make it clear that if there were to be a wide-spread introduction of new inclusive language techniques, it would be necessary to do so gently and to consider

the multiple faces of privilege, and that any attempt to educate people on inclusive language should perhaps be done in a sensitive and considerate manner.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored the multitude of ways in which people within Chile understand and relate to inclusive language techniques and compared this data to that collected by Salinas (2020) in a similar US-focused study. In Chile, inclusive language was largely understood to be inclusive of different genders without linguistically favouring one specific gender. However, understandings of whether inclusive language should encompass ‘both’ (binary) genders or ‘all’ genders seemed to vary to some degree. Moreover, participants such as Francisco, who identified as male, preferred inclusive language which referenced the traditional gender binary, for example the use of the ‘@’ (to represent both binary ‘o’ and ‘a’ noun endings) or the use of the slash (for example, ‘todos/as’) to be inclusive of both binary genders. However, in doing so, one does not leave space to include other genders outside of the masculine/feminine binary, perhaps an indication of the cognitive impact of binary gendered language. Other participants from Chile *did* understand inclusive language as being inclusive of genders outside of the binary, with Juan and Laura particularly recognising the importance of the linguistic representation of genders which do not conform to the masculine/feminine binary. From the qualitative interviews, it was consistently highlighted that the ‘Latinx’ form is not the only commonly used inclusive language device in Chile, with devices consisting of replacing final vowels, which are typically ‘o’ or ‘a’ with either ‘e’ or ‘@’. It was further highlighted that these devices are most commonly used in the plural form in order to inclusively refer to a group of individuals. Therefore, for the collection of quantitative data from Twitter and academic sources, the decision was taken to largely search for data on terms in their plural form.

The reasons for which one may not use inclusive language were described throughout the interviews as being largely the result of varying attitudes and degrees of privilege. Whilst there was some dispute as to whether the role of and access to education ought to be considered a privilege in this instance, it did become apparent that higher educational spaces do foster an environment which encourages conversations around topics such as the use of inclusive language which may be more limited in other areas of society. Participants seemed to believe that the younger generations are most likely to be the most receptive to and accepting of inclusive language, which could perhaps be the result of this age group being the most likely to have current access to the educational spaces where conversations around the topic are most likely to take place. Moreover, whilst participants explained that further conversations and

education around the subject of inclusive language could help people to be more receptive towards it, an underlying conservative attitude towards language use appeared to impede this. Participants frequently preferred to use what they described as pre-existing inclusive language techniques which do not break away from ‘correct’ language as approved by institutions, such as a guide by the Chilean government on inclusive language use (2016). This sentiment was shared both amongst participants who agreed with new and emerging inclusive language and those who opposed it, thus illustrating the power and influence of language authorities. Whilst the degree to which participants relate to the use of inclusive language varied, with some outright opposing the use of ‘x’ and ‘e’ to achieve inclusive language, it was apparent that all participants understood that inclusive language as a whole provided a means of being linguistically inclusive of more than one gender.

This chapter has identified exactly which inclusive language devices are used in Chile. These are used to inform the methodology for the quantitative dataset as presented in the next chapter. Further, the attitudes towards the formality of certain devices informs the analysis of the quantitative dataset in chapter (5) when examining the data for the use of different inclusive language devices on social media, in blog posts, and in academic works.

5. To what extent is inclusive language used in a variety of situations in Chile compared to the US?

This chapter examines the quantitative dataset taken from social media, blogs, and academic articles from the Universidad de Chile’s website to respond to research question (2). This chapter aims to understand the extent to which inclusive language is used in Chile to establish whether or not it is ‘linguistic imperialism’ largely prominent in the Latin American communities of academic spaces in the United States, or to prove that it is used authentically in Chile, and if so, to what extent and in which spaces. This chapter also uses the qualitative dataset to help analyse why certain inclusive language devices may be used or specifically not used in certain circumstances, drawing upon attitudes towards inclusive devices from chapter (4). Section (5.1) (social media and blogs) and section (5.2.1) (academic) introduce the methodology for the quantitative dataset, before displaying the data gathered in clear table format for ease of comparison between Chile and the US in terms of the inclusive language features for each given noun stem. Section (5.3) uses qualitative data to shed light on the use of inclusive language devices in oral contexts, particularly aiming to establish how users navigate the difficult pronunciation of ‘x’.

5.1 Collecting Social Media Data: Procedure

Section (5.1) presents the methodology used to gather the quantitative dataset. The usage of the given terms on Twitter and blogs was tracked using Talk Walker across the latest seven-day period to give the most up-to-date set of data available, with data taken for the same nouns from Tweets and blogs originating in both Chile and the US. The researcher decided to target language use on Twitter as numerous interviewees highlighted that social media is the most common environment for inclusive language usage. Although WhatsApp messages were also cited as a very common area of social media to find such language usage, it was not possible to gather data for this due to the private nature of WhatsApp messaging. Similarly, Instagram and Facebook were ruled out due to the private nature of personal profiles on these sites. Twitter ultimately provided the ideal conditions for gathering social media data for this study due to largely unregulated, short-hand and frequent posting patterns and the fact that fewer Twitter profiles are private, thus allowing for greater access to a greater volume of content for analysis.

5.1.1 Search Terms

Eight nouns which ended with ‘o’ in the masculine were subject to three different pluralised inclusive endings as discovered during the qualitative interviews. The endings were ‘xs’, ‘es’ and ‘@s’ to demonstrate the plural form of the nouns in question, as several of those interviewed highlighted that inclusive devices are largely used in the plural and less so in the singular. The noun stems from the pluralised version of the nouns ‘amigos’, ‘Chilenos’, ‘Latinos’ ‘niños’, ‘algunos’, ‘compañeros’, ‘nosotros’ and ‘ellos’ were taken and their usage on the popular social media site, Twitter, and blogs, was mapped using the website Talk Walker. Tables 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 exhibit the data gathered on the extent to which each search term with each ending (‘x’, ‘e’, and ‘@’) were used during a seven-day period from 12/02/2021 to 18/02/2021 in both Chile and the US. These six noun stems with each of the three endings were searched in tweets and blogs originating from the US and Chile in order to compare the relative usage of each term across the two countries. Other noun stems were initially included however either these did not yield sufficient data for comparison, or they returned unusable data due to the term resembling another term in the Spanish language and were therefore discarded from the data.

The following sections of this chapter shall turn their focus towards the extent to which inclusive language devices are used in written contexts, with this section firstly examining spaces where written language is used in an informal manner. The previous chapter revealed

how certain inclusive language techniques are more likely to be used in a written context than others. 87.5% of participants in the interviews conducted in Chile testified that the inclusive language devices, particularly those which employ ‘x’, ‘e’ and ‘@’ in place of the binary gendered ‘o’ and ‘a’ at the end of nouns, were used on social media. Moreover, participants such as David explained that these devices are used in blog posts, which he also considers informal spaces. None of these three inclusive language techniques are approved by the RAE (see RAE, 2018: 21), which some participants testified as a reason for which these devices are often confined to ‘informal’ spaces such as social media in order to be inclusive of everyone. Amongst the situations in which participants testified seeing such language used were Instagram posts and stories, Facebook posts, WhatsApp chats, less formal email communications, and in blog posts, however such terminology was recognised to be widely used across social media platforms, even by participants who did not like to use such terms themselves. Similarly, 21 of the 34 participants in Salinas’ US based (2020) study first learned of the inclusive term ‘Latinx’ through social media, which further suggests that this is a space in which such language is widely circulated.

5.1.2 ‘E’ in informal written contexts

Participants were asked questions about which inclusive language techniques they would use in informal, written contexts, including social media. Participants were asked whether they recognised the inclusive ‘e’ ending, whether they would personally use it, and if so, whether they would use it on social media. Juan, Ana, and Laura particularly vocalised that they believed ‘e’ to be an inclusive device largely used in oral settings, although both did recognise that the device is used in informal written settings too, although to a lesser extent than other devices. Four participants expressed that they would personally use ‘e’ on written social media, with another three participants recognising that the device is often used by others in these spaces.

Table 2: Twitter Data from Chile

Noun Stem	'es' ending	'xs' ending	'@s' ending	Total examples
Amig(u)	1200	1500	2000	4700
Chilen	42	1000	500	1542
Latin	10	10	0	20
Niñ	655	693	799	2147
Algun	40	693	2000	2733
Compañer	508	690	535	1733
Nosotr	368	934	217	1519
Ell	70	456	419	945
Total endings	2893	5976	6470	15,339

Table 3: Twitter Data from the United States (Spanish Language)

Noun Stem	'es' ending	'xs' ending	'@s' ending	Total examples
Amig(u)	365	519	978	1862
Chilen	0	30	0	30
Latin	0	11	11	22
Niñ	124	164	193	481
Algun	10	30	30	70
Compañer	32	31	80	143
Nosotr	81	273	82	436
Ell	31	122	121	274
Total endings	643	1180	1495	3318

Data collected from Twitter illustrates that 'e' is the least widely used inclusive language technique used on the platform from tweets originating from Chile from within the sample of nouns taken for analysis for this study. From a sample of 15,339 words demonstrating an inclusive language technique, only 19% employed 'e' in place of the binary 'o' or 'a', therefore demonstrating that this is the least commonly used device in this context.

Similarly, in Spanish language tweets originating in the United States during the same seven-day period, ‘e’ devices proved the least favoured, with a similar percentage of tweets to those in Chile (19%) exhibiting the device. In both countries, the search term ‘amigues’ (‘friends’) was the most popular noun exhibiting the ‘e’ device, representing 42% of examples exhibiting the ‘e’ device in Chile and 57% of those in the US. Perhaps this corroborates the testimonies of seven participants in the Chilean interviews who expressed that inclusive language techniques such as the ‘e’ are often used on social media and to communicate (perhaps even indirectly) with friends.

However, data collected on the use of the ‘e’ device in blog posts originating in Chile appeared to show that it tends to be favoured among writers in this situation. In fact, the device was used in 52% of cases, demonstrating that it is significantly preferred to the ‘@’ and ‘x’ devices, used in 32% and 16% of cases respectively. In Spanish language blogs published in the US, ‘e’ was the second most used of the devices examined (33%) with ‘x’ experiencing the most frequent usage (44%). It is of course difficult to pinpoint the exact reason for this marked difference in usage across what interview participants highlighted as largely informal spaces. One possible explanation is that the blog data simply did not return enough examples for a meaningful analysis; indeed the eight identical search terms used for both blogs and Twitter only returned 50 examples from blogs, compared to 15,339 examples from Twitter across a seven-day period. However, it is likely that there are significantly more Tweets published per week in Chile than there are blog posts, as these tend to be a longer, more planned pieces by fewer authors, whereas tweets are largely shorthand thoughts and quick responses published by a large number of authors.

Table 4: Blog Post Data from Chile

Noun Stem	'es' ending	'xs' ending	'@s' ending	Total examples
Amig(u)	8	1	3	12
Chilen	0	0	1	1
Latin	1	0	0	1
Niñ	9	4	7	20
Algun	0	0	0	0
Compañer	3	2	3	8
Nosotr	4	1	0	5
Ell	1	0	2	3
Total	26	8	16	50

Table 5: Blog Post Data from the United States (Spanish Language)

Noun Stem	'es' ending	'xs' ending	'@s' ending	Total
Amig(u)	4	8	6	18
Chilen	0	0	0	0
Latin	0	9	0	9
Niñ	6	4	4	14
Algun	3	1	1	5
Compañer	4	5	3	12
Nosotr	6	6	1	13
Ell	5	4	4	13
Total	28	37	19	84

Perhaps blogs could be considered a slightly more formal written situation than shorthand tweets, at least by the bloggers who write the articles if not by the participants in this study. Although the RAE rejects the use of the ‘e’ ‘to make reference to both sexes’ (RAE, 2018: 21), Lucía and Ana explain that they feel that the ‘e’ flows better than other similar devices due to it being a vowel, like the traditionally accepted ‘o’ and ‘a’, and therefore it fits with the pre-existing letter patterns in the language. Moreover, as previously explored, nouns which can refer to more than one gender and use the ‘e’, such as ‘estudiantes’, already exist in traditional, standardised Spanish. These nouns were further highlighted by some participants as functioning as ‘neutral’ or ‘inclusive’ forms. This could possibly suggest that the ‘e’ is considered a form more accepted in slightly higher register situations, such as blogs, where language can be used in a more formal, coherent manner than in shorthand tweets, but still experience the same unregulated linguistic freedom, free from the confines of RAE guidance, experienced on other forms of social media.

5.1.3 ‘X’ and ‘@’ in informal written contexts

Participants were asked which of the devices that they had previously identified would be most likely to be used on social media in Chile. Participants in the Chilean interviews often testified that ‘x’ is most commonly used in informal, written contexts, with social media, online chats and emails cited as the most frequent situations in which such examples can be found. For tweets originating in Chile, 39% of the 15,339 examples exhibited the use of the ‘x’, whilst in the US, ‘x’ represented 36% of examples collected. Seven of the participants in the Chilean study expressed that they would at least occasionally use the ‘x’ in informal written communications, with all eight participants recognising the inclusive technique. The use of the ‘x’ in the term ‘Latinx’ was also widely recognised and often used by interviewees in Salinas’ (2020) US based study. Despite the fact that ‘x’ appeared to be the most frequently recognised and widely used technique identified by Chilean interviewees, it proved not to be the most widely used on social media and was in fact the least popular device for blog posts published in the country.

Four of the participants in the Chilean interviews identified that the ‘@’ is often used in written pieces, particularly on social media or in online chats, to refer (as David explained) to ‘both men and women and others’. Francisco explained that he would frequently use this device in his own social media posts to be ‘inclusive of all my friends’, particularly given that he has more female than male friends on social media. He explained his preference for the ‘@’ over the ‘x’, which he explained he used when he was at secondary school, but now tends to

avoid. He explained that he believes that such devices are acceptable in an informal situation but that he would not expect to see them in formal situations, such as government documents.

In both Chile and the US, Spanish language medium tweets were more likely to exhibit the use of the '@' than the 'x', despite all eight of the Chilean participants acknowledging the wide use of the 'x' on social media. Of the 15,339 examples of inclusive techniques returned by Talk Walker for tweets originating in Chile, 6470 (42%) used the '@' device compared to 5976 examples of the 'x' device (39%). In the US, '@' examples represented 1495 (45%) of the 3318 Spanish language Twitter examples discovered, whilst 1180 (36%) of the examples collected exhibited the 'x'.

Whilst tweets from both countries used the '@' device slightly more frequently than the 'x' device, this was not the case with blog data. 50 examples demonstrating the use of an inclusive device were collected using Talk Walker from blog posts published in Chile during a seven-day period. Of these 50 examples only eight (16%) exhibited the 'x' device. Whereas the percentage difference between the use of 'x' and '@' on Twitter was relatively small, in Chilean blog posts '@' was used twice as frequently as 'x', representing 16 (32%) of the 50 examples. In contrast, Spanish language blog posts originating in the US tended to significantly favour the use of the 'x', with 37 of the 84 examples (44%) exhibiting the device, almost double the figure of those using the '@' (19 examples, 23%).

The marked difference in usage between the two different devices in the two different countries is rather interesting. Salinas' (2020) study which aimed to explore how Latin American students at a US university related to the term 'Latinx' revealed that participants tended to believe that the focus term of the project was a very 'United States-centric term' and that 'Latinx is only used in the United States' (Salinas, 2020: 160). In a similar fashion, 50% of participants from the Chilean interviews expressed that they believed 'x' to be mostly used in the US, with Lucía even stating that the term 'Latinx' is not used in Chile. David explained that he could not be sure as to whether 'x' was used more frequently in the US as he was unfamiliar with the country, however he said he believes that the 'e' device is more used in Chile, as well as in other parts of Latin America. He explained that he has a friend in Argentina who uses the 'e', and another in Mexico who also favours this device, and therefore it is his understanding that this is the most used device amongst people from Latin American countries who live in Latin America. Despite David's (rather anecdotal) claims, 'e' did prove the least used device on Twitter in Chile compared to the '@' and 'x' devices, although perhaps, as a

number of other participants testified, this is because it is a device often used orally, whereas Twitter is a written medium. In written circumstances, as previously discussed, Chilean participants tended to favour the use of ‘x’ or ‘@’.

Nonetheless, it is interesting that ‘x’, which is described by participants in both studies as experiencing greater usage in the US, experiences significantly greater usage in Spanish language blog posts in the US, whilst the ‘@’ experiences significantly greater usage in Chile. Perhaps ‘@’ is, as participants such as Francisco explain, a popular device for social media posts within Chile. It is even possible, as raised by a participant in Salinas’ (2020) study, that the more popular usage of ‘@’, and even ‘e’ in some circumstances in Chile, is a ‘new way to eliminate “x”’ and ‘to reject another term imposed in Latin American people [sic]’ (Salinas, 2020: 160), particularly considering that half of Chilean participants considered the term to centre itself in the US. Therefore, whilst ‘x’ does experience often relatively significant usage in Chilean informal written media, perhaps the fact that, as both the Twitter and blog data illustrate, it is never the most popular inclusive language choice highlights that to some extent, people within Chile reject the device in favour of others, which are more detached from the identity politics of US academia.

5.2 Inclusive language devices in academia

Section (5.1) of this chapter explored participant testimonies alongside quantitative data regarding the use of inclusive devices in informal written media which were identified by interview participants as being spaces in which such devices could experience most frequent usage. Participants frequently explained that, whilst the ‘e’, ‘x’ and ‘@’ inclusive devices would often be used among friends or on social media, these devices were not accepted within Chile at an academic level. This section uses the quantitative dataset to establish the extent to which, if at all, the inclusive language devices analysed in section (5.1) are used in written academic works. Further, this section draws upon participant attitudes towards inclusive language from the qualitative data examined in section (4.3) to analyse why certain devices may be favoured over others in academic works, particularly focusing on their perceived level of formality.

5.2.1 Collecting Academic Data: Procedure

In order to gather data on the extent to which a variety of inclusive language techniques were used in academic contexts, eight nouns whose usage with an inclusive language technique had been evidenced in either the interview or research stage of the investigation were searched

using the search feature on the Universidad de Chile website. Some of these noun examples differed from those searched on Twitter as they were more appropriate to an academic context. Each noun stem was subject to different inclusive noun endings which participants in the interviews had evidenced as being used to some extent in Chile, particularly the pluralised versions of the endings '@', 'e' and 'x'. Each of these endings was applied to each of the noun stems used to harvest Twitter data. and searched for on the Universidad de Chile website. Occasionally, some noun endings returned data too inaccurate to decipher any real meaning from, due to the website's lack of search refining features, and therefore some terms had to be eliminated from the analysis. Similarly, any article not written in Spanish was discarded from the data. In cases where a large number of results (over 1000 results) were returned through the search engine, but it was obvious that many of these results did not contain the search term, the number of actual search terms returned in the first five pages of results was taken and used in the analysis to avoid large data inaccuracies.

5.2.2 Issues with collecting academic data

Collecting quantitative data to evidence the extent to which inclusive language is used in academic articles proved rather more complicated, because there is no equivalent of Talk Walker for harvesting this data with the ability to refine search results by country, type, and language. Whilst databases for academic works, such as JSTOR, are able to filter by language, there is no way of filtering by country, which made these databases simply not a viable option for gathering data, as this study only sought to gather data on works published in Chile. Ultimately, the website for the Universidad de Chile proved to be the most accurate and useful means of gathering data in this case, as despite the website's lack of filter tools, most of the results were academic articles in Spanish originating from Chile. However, the search engine did not provide a number of results returned under a given search term, and therefore the researcher had to manually count the results.

50% of the time, certain terms, particularly those employing the 'e' noun ending as an inclusive device, would simply return results for the masculine or feminine equivalent of the given term rather than the specific letter combination input into the search bar. For example, 'nosotres' simply returned results for 'nosotras' (feminine), and therefore it was not possible to gather any reliable data for this search term. Further, the search term 'elles' ('ellos' with the neutral 'e') returned results for French language works on the website. Therefore, it was not possible to gather reliable data for these terms, and this was marked in the tables of results.

Table 6: Academic Data from the University of Chile's Website

Noun Stem	'es' endings	'xs' endings	'@s' endings	Total Examples
Niñ	10	111	8	129
Chilen	Data unobtainable	10	1	11
Amig(u)	321	94	6	421
Algun	Data unobtainable	38	Data unobtainable	38
Compañer	73	81	22	176
Nosotr	Data unobtainable	104	11	115
Entrevistad	9	5	2	16
Ell	Data unobtainable	76	8	84
Total examples	413	519	58	990

5.2.3 '@' in academic contexts

In section (4.3), participants testified that the use of inclusive language devices is limited in academic spaces. A number of reasons for this are given by participants, however they all seem to centre upon university staff objecting to its usage and the role of the RAE in limiting the usage of such language through the organisation's dominance over what is and is not 'acceptable' in the Spanish language. As previously mentioned, the RAE strongly disproves of all three of the inclusive language techniques that this study focuses on (See RAE, 2018: 21), arguing that 'these means go against the graphic and morphological rules of Spanish' (RAE, 2018: 21).

As opposed to 'e' and 'x', '@' is not a letter found in the Spanish alphabet (see RAE, 2018). David describes a situation in which a student wrote his entire report using inclusive language, but this was rejected by the professor because 'in reality, it was not language'. Although David did not disclose which technique he believed to be used here, he had

highlighted '@' as 'informal' language immediately before he moved to explain the inappropriate nature of using inclusive language in academia, all within the same sentence. Therefore, one would have reason to believe that he was in fact referring, at least to some extent, to the use of the '@' in this instance. David describing inclusive language as 'not language' is interesting, particularly if one assumes that he was referencing his disapproval of '@' as a language feature. Perhaps this was his way of signalling not only his disapproval of the technique, but also that in order to function in a formalised circumstance, such as in academia, the devices used must be 'language'. In other words, it is possible that using a feature which does not form part of the 27 letters found in the Spanish alphabet would not function in an academic context, and therefore perhaps one could expect not to see '@' used so extensively in this context compared to other inclusive devices. Moreover, Francisco specifically explains that he would not use '@' in an investigation or in a university assignment, which provides further evidence to support the idea that the device is excluded from academia. María explained that, particularly in an academic context, one had to consider the aesthetic aspect of including certain devices, which could therefore rule out the use of a non-alphabetical character as an alternative to 'o' or 'a'.

The quantitative data collected from the Universidad de Chile perhaps illustrates this; only 58 (6%) of the 990 search term examples returned through the search engine exhibited the use of the '@'. The device was the second most reliable in terms of data returned per search term, with only one search term providing information too poor to analyse (marked 'data unobtainable' in Table 5). Therefore, the number of search terms returning reliable, useable data was relatively high, so one could expect not to see detriment to the quantity of reliable data in this sense. In contrast, the two other devices on which this research has focused, 'e' and 'x', which are both letters in the Spanish alphabet, experienced significantly greater usage (413 and 519 examples respectively). It is therefore possible to decipher from the numerical data that the problem does not lie with inclusive language in general, as there is evidence to show that 'x' and 'e' are used to some extent, and indeed to a greater extent than '@'. For this reason, it is important to consider that the reason for which '@' is used to a lesser extent than similar inclusive devices is simply because '@' is not a letter which exists in the Spanish alphabet. This could result in the device facing additional discreditation in formal circumstances due to a culture of adhering to 'proper' language.

5.2.4 'E' in academic contexts

Listening to the interviews with the Chilean participants, there is a notable sense of a culture of adherence to language authorities and certain language guidelines even amongst those who do wish to break away from traditional, binary gender language. Ana, a 21-year-old linguistics student interviewed for this project explained that some inclusive devices may be favoured over others due to their adherence to traditional letter patterns in words they aim to make more inclusive. For example, she agreed that the 'e' functions very well as an inclusive alternative because it is a vowel like 'a' and 'o'. Lucía agreed with this notion and adds that the 'e' is a good replacement for the 'a' and 'o' because 'it follows the rules of the language even though it is more neutral'.

Certainly the 'e' proved a significantly more popular device to the '@' in content published on the Universidad de Chile's website, representing 413 (42%) of the search term data returned. Although the 'e' did not prove the most popular, falling behind the 'x' device which occupied 519 (52%) of the 990 examples, its proximity in letter pattern to traditionally accepted Spanish nouns resulted in data from half of the search terms employing the 'e' to have to be discarded, which may well have resulted in the term being recorded as less popular than it may have been in reality. To give an idea of a comparison from a more representative angle, the mean number of examples per search term returned (those which are not marked with 'data unobtainable' in Table 5) was calculated for all three of the inclusive devices. For the 'e', the total of 413 examples was divided by four, resulting in a mean average of 103.3 examples per search term. This was a significantly higher number than 'x' and '@', which returned mean averages of 64.9 and 8.3 per search term respectively. Whilst it is important to remember that there is a possibility that there was in fact little or no data available for the 'e' search terms, it is also interesting to view the data from this more representative angle.

Previously, this study has discussed the use of 'e' as an ideal inclusive substitute due to it being a vowel, and therefore an appropriate device particularly in formal contexts, such as in academia, as it follows the laws of the language. Laura explained how they felt that, if one inclusive language technique were approved by the RAE, 'e' would be the best as 'x' can cause issues with understanding for people with dyslexia as it is not an easy letter to pronounce in Spanish and due to it not following the usual letter pattern found at the end of Spanish nouns. Moreover, when viewed through a more representational lens, 'e' proves the most popular device to use in academia. This further backs the idea of a culture of adherence to language authority to some extent, even amongst those who do attempt to break away from the traditional

language constructions heavily defended by the RAE, such as binary gender. Ana also testified in her interview that language policing is prevalent in academia, citing that there is a ‘stigma in academic situations that using inclusive language is grammatically incorrect so generally the teachers do not permit it’. She explained that although some members of university staff do use and permit inclusive language use in certain, less formal situations, such as in emails, such devices are still not permissible in assessed tasks, and therefore ‘sadly, one feels like, more forced to use traditional language’.

Despite feeling ‘forced’ to use ‘traditional language’, perhaps the frequency of which the ‘e’ is used and the receptive attitudes of a number of participants to the use of inclusive language suggests that there is an undercurrent of resistance to traditional language, or at least an openness to change, in Chilean academia. Even if one discards the data showing the mean average results per number of search terms successfully returning data, ‘e’ still proves a relatively popular option in the examined Chilean academic sphere, with only slightly over 100 fewer search results returned despite nouns with the ‘e’ device returning reliable data on 50% fewer occasions than their ‘x’ counterparts. Although previously this study discussed how participants often cited ‘e’ as a more spoken method for linguistic inclusivity and ‘x’ as written method, perhaps the term’s proximity in structure to traditionally accepted binary gender language renders it a more appropriate device in the eyes of its users, who are so frequently held to the authority of the RAE, with a greater possibility of the term posing a realistic, inclusive device to gendered language usage in academia.

5.2.5 ‘X’ in academic contexts

Salinas’ (2020) study focuses on how students of Latin American descent in the US relate to the term ‘Latinx’, which includes the inclusive ‘x’. In the US, this term was understood to be ‘a term for people who do not identify along the European settler-colonial gender binary, and inclusive for all people of Latin American origin and descent’ (Salinas, 2020: 159). In Chile, the ‘x’ (as well as the ‘e’ and ‘@’) are used in a different sense, with participants seldom using the term ‘Latinx’, but instead understanding the individual inclusive characters as representing inclusivity for all. This is important to consider when discussing the use of ‘x’ in academic contexts between the US and Chile. In the US, the term ‘Latinx’ itself is a statement, whereas in Chile, the use of inclusive devices such as the ‘x’ are used more generally in a variety of written words to promote inclusivity. This means that their use in academic spaces between the two countries varies, particularly as US academia is English language dominated and therefore

it is rarer to find examples of written works in Spanish which may demonstrate an inclusive device in the same way that they may be used in Chile.

Salinas' (2020) study highlights US academic spaces as ones in which 'Latinx' experiences frequent usage, with three participants recounting how they first learned of the term through their professors. However, it seems that the term is used largely in oral situations. All of the participants in Salinas' (2020) study testified that 'their peers and some administrators used the term *Latinx*, yet their institutions and Chicano and Latino Studied programs have not institutionalised the term' (Salinas, 2020: 159). Further, 'only some of the student organizations have changed their organizational names' to reflect the term's aims (2020: 159) suggesting that perhaps the term has not become formalised in written academic language. Similarly in Chile, participants testified that it is harder to use inclusive devices such as the 'x' in academic writings due to a culture of RAE prejudice against such modifications to the language. Whereas Chilean participants testified that they were prevented from using inclusive language in their university work by academic staff, participants in Salinas' (2020) study explained how they felt 'policed' by the university staff and therefore they felt that they had to use the term (2020: 163).

Despite this apparent prejudice in a Chilean context, 'x' did still experience a notable amount of usage in papers and articles published on the Universidad de Chile's website, with 519 texts exhibiting the device, the highest figure across the three devices examined. This suggests that, whilst the RAE perhaps does still play a significant role in limiting the extent to which the device is used in academic spaces, there is some resistance and determination to reflect what interview participants described as a changing attitude towards inclusive language. Perhaps the 'x' was favoured on similar grounds to the 'e'; that it is already a letter contained in the 27 letters of the Spanish alphabet, and therefore adheres to the language in the sense that it is a letter, unlike '@' which was more popular on social media where language is largely uncontrolled. The inclusive 'x' was described by participants as primarily a written form, with María explaining that it functions well as a brief way of referring to both the masculine and the feminine simultaneously without spelling out both forms, another language feature which is opposed by the RAE (RAE: 2018, 21). Although the 'x' in itself is not a vowel like the 'a', 'o' and 'e', perhaps it is capable of representing multiple gendered vowels simultaneously, and therefore rendering it capable of adapting itself to fit with the identity of the reader or audience.

As part of some follow-up questions on the subject of inclusive language in academic spaces, participants were asked which of the three devices examined in this section they believed would be most acceptable in an academic context, if such language were to be approved by the RAE. Juan believed that all three of ‘x’, ‘e’ and ‘@’ ought to be included. He said that in academic texts, it would be a good idea to clarify in the introduction that one intended to use inclusive language, so that any misunderstandings could be avoided. Therefore, whilst perhaps certain devices could be considered as more appropriate in terms of their phonological status, perhaps one ought to value all of the devices examined and consider focusing on the idea of language being descriptive as opposed to the traditional prescriptive standard, in order to allow for inclusivity and expression in whichever way the individual author deems most appropriate. However, this could impede understanding and perhaps it would be simpler to agree upon one device for standardisation in order to avoid confusion.

5.3 Inclusive language devices in spoken situations

Sections (5.1) and (5.1) explore the use of inclusive language in written situations of different formalities. Section (3.4) discusses the difficulty of pronouncing certain proposed inclusive language devices. This section explores the extent to which the three inclusive language devices at the centre of this study are used in oral contexts in relation to this. To investigate the use of inclusive language in spoken situations, participants were asked questions about which devices were mostly used in oral contexts in Chile, as well as questions over the pronunciation of devices, particularly the ‘x’, which proved a very important topic in the eyes of the participants. It became clear that ‘@’ is simply not used in an oral context, as evidenced explicitly by Juan, and therefore this section shall only focus on the ‘e’ and ‘x’ devices.

Seven of the eight participants interviewed raised concerns over the impossibility of pronouncing the letter ‘x’. Ana, a linguistics student, told of how she learned in a class at university that the ‘x’ is one of the hardest letters to pronounce in general. This sentiment was widely shared across the interviews, with it becoming clear that ‘x’ was not only a difficult letter to pronounce, but also that participants did not know how to pronounce it. Daniel described how he had seen words written with the ‘x’ but pronounced as if this were an ‘o’, giving the example ‘compañeros’, a view which was also reflected by Francisco. Similarly, David said that it was ‘impossible’ to use ‘x’ orally in Spanish, because his ‘intelligence is going to fill the gap left by the ‘x’ with a letter which is used in general’. David also tells me that ‘x’ could only ever be used in writing and seems to ponder for a while as to whether the hypothetical pronunciation of the word ‘Latinx’ would be ‘Latinex’ or ‘Latin-ks’.

Lucía was asked whether she believed ‘x’ to be harder to pronounce than the ‘e’, and she revealed that she does not know how to pronounce ‘Latinx’, and her attempts to do so resulted in her giggling. She explained that although the two devices have the same meaning, she believed the ‘x’ to be trickier to pronounce than the ‘e’ because it is a consonant. Juan similarly raised that ‘e’ is easier than ‘x’ to pronounce because ‘x’ is trying to use the sound ‘/ks/’ to replace a vowel. Ana explained that the ‘x’ is often replaced in pronunciation by ‘s’. Therefore, she explained, ‘Latin-ks’ can become ‘Latin-sss’, perhaps out of ease of pronunciation. This evidence all suggests that perhaps having a consonant replace a vowel, particularly one which is described as exceptionally tricky to pronounce, is ineffective at least in terms of spoken language, as it is, according to Juan, ‘not fluid to pronounce when one speaks so quickly’, as they apparently do in Chile, ‘because one has to change aspiration’.

In this case, it is reasonable to believe that perhaps it is more ‘user friendly’ for a vowel to replace a vowel. Therefore, the vowel, ‘e’, as suggested by some participants, could be better suited to the task of presenting an inclusive language device in an oral setting. Participants tended to agree with this, with ‘e’ being cited as the most commonly used inclusive device in spoken language. Interestingly, the device does seem to be used in a variety of spoken situations. Laura and Ana both used the ‘e’ device at points in their interviews. Further, when asked in which situations he believed inclusive language to be used, Juan described hearing ‘e’ devices including ‘compañeres’ used in meetings at university by both staff and students. Laura also explained that they would use such language ‘among friends, at university’. Other participants quoted other inclusive language as being used in some TV programmes and at street protests.

Although David thought that using the ‘e’ in spoken language would make it ‘complicated’ at first, Ana explained how switching out final vowels is not uncommon in Chile. ‘It is not in order to be inclusive,’ she explained. ‘Chileans speak in a manner where they change vowels to shorten words in general. These changes are not so complicated’. She gave the example of ‘amigo’ or ‘amiga’ (‘friend’) often being altered to ‘amigi’ in informal speech. Perhaps this, coupled with the fact that the ‘e’ is also a vowel, ‘follows the rules of the language’ and therefore presumably does not require the speaker to ‘change aspiration’, and could result in the device being considered the most appropriate, at least in a spoken context. Despite the historic dominance that the RAE has had over language change, the culture of adhering to this appears to be shifting to some extent. As Ana said, ‘I don’t care what the RAE says, I’m going to speak how I want, because my speech is fluid’.

5.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored the extent to which a variety of inclusive language techniques, primarily those employing one of ‘@’, ‘e’ or ‘x’, are used in a variety of media within Chile, with comparisons made with similar situations in the US where applicable. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, this chapter has unveiled the variation in how different inclusive devices are used in different situations, and how a device which is significantly favoured on social media may not experience the same extent of usage in other situations, such as in academic writing and vice versa. Discussion as to why this may happen has investigated the possibility of different devices, whilst having the same overall objective in terms of inclusivity, may vary in their specific function. For example, the ‘x’ and ‘@’ may represent the possibility of altering the language to suit the gender identity of the addressee in written language, whilst ‘e’ may function both aesthetically and practically as a more ‘neutral’ alternative to the binary ‘o’ and ‘a’ vowels, which may therefore explain why this device experiences greater usage in more regulated settings such as academia, and in spoken language. Similarly, this chapter has revealed synchronic variation in the usage of inclusive language devices between the US and Chile. Despite inclusive language being relatively limited in the extent to which it is used in Chile, it appears that there is, to some extent, a desire for greater inclusivity in language, which is reflected in both the numerical data and the anecdotal evidence shared by participants throughout this study.

Chapter (5) has used the qualitative dataset to inform more nuanced discussion of the quantitative dataset to reveal the extent to which the three inclusive suffixes, ‘x’, ‘e’, and ‘@’, are used on social media, in blog posts, and in academic articles published on the Universidad de Chile’s website. This section has also called upon qualitative data to provide insight into the use of inclusive language in spoken situations. Chapter (6) calls upon the analysis of the data presented in chapter (5) as well as discussion from sections (2.5) and (3.4) to respond to research question (3), i.e., ‘Reality or Linguistic Imperialism: To what extent is inclusive language *voces perdidas* or *voces de poder*?’

6. Reality or Linguistic Imperialism: To what extent is inclusive language *voces perdidas* or *voces de poder*?

Chapter (6) calls upon both the qualitative and quantitative datasets to analyse the extent to which inclusive language is *voces perdidas* or *voces de poder*, a theme raised in section (2.5). This chapter particularly aims to address Guerra and Orbea’s denunciation of inclusive

language as ‘linguistic imperialism’ as discussed in section (3.4) by considering both datasets alongside the social, cultural, and political movements which have been prominent in Chile since 2018, as set out in section (2.1). Section (6.1) of this chapter also examines the impact of the transition to democracy in 1990 on inclusive language thirty years later, and why it took this amount of time for discourse around the topic to become so prominent. Section (6.2) of this chapter further analyses the power dynamics associated with the shift towards inclusive language throughout this study. This section calls upon the conceptualisation of *voces perdidas* and *voces de poder* (Salinas, 2017) to examine the extent to which the RAE could be acting as an oppressor of some, and whether loyalty to the organisation could reinforce conservative attitudes towards inclusive language in some areas of society. This chapter ultimately aims to establish whether inclusive language really is linguistic imperialism, or whether it is simply a reflection of changing times, culture, and values.

6.1 Social movement in Latin America

6.1.1 The Feminist Wave (2018) and language change

This section uses contextual information from section (2.1) to inform the analysis of both datasets in relation to societal and cultural changes in Chile. It is firstly important to discuss the impact which social movements in Latin America in recent years may have had on an apparent increase in the extent to which inclusive language is being used across the continent, and particularly in Chile. Three participants in the interviews specifically expressed that the use of inclusive language has dramatically increased in the past two years, with Laura explaining that this was triggered by the feminist wave (*Ola Feminista*) which swept Latin America in 2018, starting in Chile with the *Mayo Feminista*. 21st century Latin American feminism has been described as a ‘response’ to the ‘neoliberal shifts of the 80s and 90s’, characterised by ‘anti-neoliberal discourse’ and ‘decolonial and anti-patriarchal stances’ (Rivera Berruz, 2018). The interviews revealed how recent social movements have resulted in increased support for inclusive Spanish language. María explained how she had often heard inclusive language used at rallies in the streets against political systems. Whilst the feminist movement was cited by six out of the eight participants as having a direct involvement in invoking language change, Ana emphasised how the feminist movement and LGBTQ+ movements are in some ways closely linked, with the feminist movement often supporting LGBTQ+ rights. She explained that inclusive language is beneficial for women too, as it ‘tries to make us not minimise women’, and that more women than men use inclusive language. Daniel seemingly recognised the issue of linguistically excluding women during his interview,

recounting that the masculine generic can make women feel excluded. He says that using ‘estimades’ or ‘estimadxs’ can instead act as a method for averting exclusion based upon gender, with these neutral alternatives capable of simultaneously indexing both ‘masculine and feminine’. Whilst the masculine generic has traditionally been regarded as the correct form for referencing both men and women simultaneously, perhaps testimonies from students within this study, coupled with data relating to the specific interpretation of masculine generic nouns from Perissinotto’s (1982) study and the sentiments of exclusion expressed by Tapia-Arizmendi and Romani (2012) could lead one to the conclusion that perhaps a ‘neutral’ manner of using the Spanish language could aid the promotion of the inclusivity of all genders, including those beyond the binary.

Language is not a static entity; it is a dynamic being which is constantly being shaped and influenced by the world with which it co-exists, and which it mirrors, reflects, and represents. María explained that ‘culture is alive, and it creates itself whilst we live, and the best expression of this living culture is language’. It was frequently commented that this change in language is occurring to reflect that, as participants frequently put it, times are changing, and therefore language needs to reflect the desires and the culture of a new generation. Ana agreed that there is social movement happening below the surface and that culture is changing and that consequently, this has an effect on language. Juan and Laura explained how changes have been happening below the surface for some time, however such changes have become visible more recently, perhaps thanks to the prominence of the 2018 feminist wave. Juan explained that language has always changed throughout history, and that we are living in a new era of information and of people with a different mindset to previous generations. Lucía further explained that a university lecturer once told her that language is always changing and evolving, and that in reality the people make the language, and therefore the state of the language depends on each generation. Francisco described this phenomenon as the ‘democratisation of language’ and believes that in the next five or ten years, the ‘e’ device will have been awarded formal status, despite his own reluctance to use it at present. Therefore, it would be reasonable to assume that the will of a new generation to support a more inclusive language is driving the shift towards a more inclusive language, as evidenced in the previous chapter, hereby acting as *voces perdidas* as the movement appears to be rising from below, at least in the case of Chile, rather than something being ‘imposed’ from an outside force.

Nonetheless, whereas participants in the interviews generally had at least a basic understanding of language change, it became apparent that this is not necessarily widespread,

and that the shift towards inclusive language has faced widespread opposition. Juan explained how people today are generally more informed on topics such as language change, but that not everyone understands that language change naturally occurs. María explained how there is a ‘big problem’ in Chile and Latin America where people tend to be ‘very conservative and obedient to written rules’. To María, ‘this is thanks to the historical discourse which has built our history as countries, and that this discourse is permeated by power, the academia [the RAE], and by men who have certainly built these foundations’. Similarly, Laura explained how Chilean society is quite ‘sexist’, which could also be a factor in the widespread opposition to a change in language which would put women, as well as non-binary and gender non-conforming identities, on an even footing with men in a linguistic sense, particularly given its strong affiliation with the feminist movement.

This section has explored how recent changes in society and culture have created space for inclusive language to evolve to a lesser or greater extent, albeit not going unopposed from conservative undercurrents. The next section discusses how this may have led to greater confidence amongst the LGBTQ+ community to be able to ask for these changes in language in relation to this.

6.1.2 The LGBTQ+ community’s diminishing fear: Laura’s testimony

Although participants frequently testified that inclusive language experiences relatively frequent usage in a modern context, three participants particularly emphasised that this has not always been the case. Laura and Daniel explained how inclusive language used to be seen as a ‘joke’ or ‘something ironic’. Laura explained that people would use it in an ironic sense because it sounded strange to them, but that now it has become something which many people use naturally. They explained that nowadays, all of their friends use inclusive language in day-to-day life. Daniel explained that in the past, people would ‘say things against some genders’ but that now, inclusive language is becoming accepted and these genders are included in this, something which he considers important. Whilst Daniel and Laura believed that the ‘ironic’, mocking use of inclusive language was in the past, María believed that the ‘e’ device was still used in this way, and for this reason, she preferred to avoid it in favour of the ‘x’. She explained that some people use it to ridicule inclusive language. It is quite likely that the ‘natural’ usage of inclusive language and the ridicule of inclusive language co-exist. Both the qualitative and quantitative data so far discussed in this study have revealed that inclusive language is used in Chile, including to some extent in academic works. However, participants frequently testified

to a conservative attitude towards inclusive language in their interviews, which could result in the mocking of this change in the language.

It is important to question why feelings and social changes which have existed as an undercurrent in society for some time are only now having a notable effect on language. Laura, who self-identified as woman/non-binary gave testament to a change in attitude towards the LGBTQ+ community in recent years. Two participants further testified that inclusive language is very frequently used amongst the LGBTQ+ community.

Laura explained why this change in culture, attitudes and language is happening now:

‘Although many people reject it [inclusive language] because it is something new, it is something that has always existed, but now people have the platforms to discuss it. In the 70s, for example, in the news, they would use terms to talk about the LGBT community which we would not use now because they are offensive, so we note a change, we note that more space is given to these communities, and there are not so many prejudices’.

They then further explained this in relation to how the LGBTQ+ community was silenced and the victim of violence during a period in which Chile entered into a dictatorship (1973-1990), and how the culture of fear, particularly amongst the LGBTQ+ community has shifted:

‘Language is changing because there are more people who are not scared like they were before. In the 70s and 80s, people would not have spoken out because there were killings, people were taken prisoner, they disappeared, and this was all because they were members of the community [LGBTQ+] and they were expressing themselves. It could be the armed forces, it could be your neighbour, anyone was attacking the community. So, the reason why language is changing now is because fewer people are frightened. It is because more people want to feel represented, and like they are here. Now, there are organisations that help. There is an organisation in Chile with a suicide prevention helpline. Now, there is more support and less fear’.

Laura’s testimony reflects a tough reality faced by marginalised groups, the *voces perdidas*. Previously, this chapter has discussed how a shift in attitudes and desires in a ‘new’ generation is leading to language change. However, it is vitally important to consider that these attitudes and desires almost certainly are not new or unique to the current generation, rather they have existed in silence in previous generations out of fear and persecution. It is likely that the current young generation is not the first to need inclusive language, rather it is the first generation where marginalised LGBTQ+ voices have been able to bring this issue into mainstream discourse and begin invoking change. As Laura explained, nowadays conversations have opened up around the language used to discuss the LGBTQ+ community and this has resulted in the offensive language of the past becoming less used. As they

explained, this has resulted in the community being provided with more space in the conversation and more opportunities to have their voices heard, particularly given that there appears to be a reduced risk of extreme violence or death for doing so than in previous generations. It would appear that inclusive language is not *voces de poder*, imposed upon a population with which it does not fit, but *voces perdidas* rising up and reclaiming their identity and asking for linguistic representation. A more accepting attitude towards the LGBTQ+ community perhaps could explain why inclusive language has become considered less of a ‘joke’ and more of a reflection of the culture of contemporary people. However, perhaps this history of LGBTQ+ marginalisation has in part led to the culture of conservatism that numerous participants cited as an obstacle for a widespread acceptance of inclusive language.

6.1.3 Why linguistic representation matters

This section discusses Laura’s testimony from the previous section in relation to discussion from chapter (3). It would appear that using inclusive language can have a much more widespread, in-depth effect on many members of society, particularly those who do not feel represented in traditional language. Laura revealed how representation, on both a visual and linguistic level, is important and forms the base of finding one’s identity. ‘If everyone on TV is white, [gender] binary [adhering], heterosexual... where are you going to find yourself? Who is talking about you?’, they explained. The importance of representation is discussed by Hall (1997) in relation to his theory of ‘conceptual maps’. This is indeed interesting when discussing both visual and linguistic representations of different gender identities, as the increased representation of non-binary and gender non-conforming identities could increase awareness of such identity groups and consequently reduce the discrimination which such individuals face on the basis of their identities. ‘Inclusive language is getting into the media’, Laura recounts, ‘it is creating a space and it can help reduce many things, for example, discrimination, the suicide rate... at the same time it can help increase stability, self-love, emotionality. Therefore, inclusive language is very important’.

A simple analysis of why linguistic representation matters is put forward by two participants in particular. Juan recognised his ‘privilege’ in being represented in the traditionally used masculine generic because he identifies as a cisgender man. However, he explained that this is not the case for people of ‘other sexual identities’ (which he appears to frequently confuse with gender throughout his interview), who may not feel included in traditional language. He emphasises that he has no problem with inclusive language techniques such as ‘x’, and that they are ‘very valid’ and that they ‘make them [gender non-conforming

people] feel good' and therefore he completely supports the use of inclusive language. Similarly, Daniel explained that we are in 'times of feminism' and therefore it is important to use inclusive language so that 'everyone is included'. At a surface level, these are very important arguments for the use of inclusive language; indeed one could argue that language ought to be reflective of the society which it represents, and therefore it is important that all members of society can find their place in their native language, which may make them 'feel good'. However, being in 'times of feminism' is an interesting reason for why one should take particular care to use inclusive language. It is possible that Daniel simply felt that the feminist movement has made discussion around inclusivity in language more prevalent, and therefore he has become more aware of the issue and now recognises the importance of being inclusive himself. In particular, it is possible that prior to 'times of feminism', Daniel may not have been aware that inclusivity in language even was an issue, given that he identifies as a man and therefore would have traditionally found himself represented in Spanish, something which Juan recognised as a 'privilege'. This perhaps highlights that there has been, as Laura testified, a widespread shift in attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community, whose voice has been able to reach the ears of many people across Chile, and perhaps Latin America more broadly, resulting in the widespread recognition of the issues at hand.

Conceptual maps and psycholinguistic theories could be connected with regards to the representation and inclusion of genders in language, regardless of whether one considers inclusive language to represent 'both [binary] genders' or 'all genders' unanimously, or whether one understands it to represent genders which do not conform to the binary. Scholars such as Boroditsky (2001); Segel and Boroditsky (2011); Gentner and Goldin-Meadow (2003) and Boroditsky, Schmidt and Phillips (2003) discuss how one's native language can shape how one interprets and understands the world around them. Previous chapters have touched upon how the lack of a non-binary gender option in Spanish may make it harder for some native speakers to accept inclusive language, particularly as it is likely that grammatical gender has a strong impact on the speaker's conceptual map, as revealed by Segel and Boroditsky (2011). Including a non-binary gender option in a language where one traditionally has only the option of identifying as either a man or a woman could help to place non-binary people onto the conceptual map shared by the Spanish speaking speech community. In turn, this representation could help reduce the discrimination that the community faces, and therefore, as Laura said, improve the wellbeing of those who most identify with inclusive language.

6.1.4 Social media

This section considers the role of social media, a relatively new technology, in creating space for inclusive language devices to develop and become widespread. Participants consistently testified to the widespread use of inclusive language on social media, which was corroborated by quantitative data gathered during this study. 21 out of the 34 US-based participants (61.8%) in Salinas' (2020) study learned about the inclusive term 'Latinx' on social media. This could suggest that not only is social media a space in which inclusive language is used, but perhaps one in which education and discussion around the topic occurs. However, it is worth noting that 'most participants who first saw *Latinx* on social media' were confused as to what it meant and required peer interaction in higher education settings in order to understand the term (Salinas, 2020: 159). Nonetheless, it seemed relevant to question participants as to whether they believed social media played a role in facilitating the roll-out of inclusive language across Chile, or whether they believed that social media was driving change in other, related ways.

Three participants in particular expressed how social media may be relevant to the conversation around inclusive language as it is a place where people can express their different ideas and viewpoints. Juan told of how at the time of interview, which took place in January 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, social media was an easy place to interact with other people, particularly given that face-to-face interactions were limited, where they can express their ideas, which he said, are all valid. This could suggest that social media provides a space for conversation and interaction to happen which may facilitate the spread and understanding of inclusive language. He further described how using inclusive language, giving the example 'amigues', on social media can demonstrate one's 'perspective', which suggests that social media can be used as a tool for networking and sharing information around political topics such as inclusive language. Lucía reflected upon how she believes internet access to be a privilege, and that not having internet access makes it harder to learn about inclusive language, given that it is a place where people can go to understand and learn about inclusive language. Contrary to conclusions drawn in Salinas' (2020) study, Lucía did not believe it is absolutely necessary to have access to university in order to learn about inclusive language because 'it is not seen so much there, it is seen more online', suggesting that in Chile at least, social media is not simply a place where inclusive language is used due to a lack of official language regulation, but a place where conversation and education around inclusive language can happen in a manner which is widely accessible.

Laura was asked whether they believed that social media has helped LGBTQ+ people to connect with one another and to develop inclusive language. Whilst they acknowledged that social media plays a role in facilitating conversation around inclusive language, they were on the fence as to whether this is always necessarily in a positive way. ‘It depends what side of the coin you are on’, they explained, recounting that if one believes that talking about inclusive language can help one become educated on the topic then there is ‘no problem’. However, Laura testified that a downside to using social media as a space for educating people on inclusive language is that one may encounter homophobia or people who join the conversation simply to engage in a negative manner. Laura was the only participant in this study to express that they were a member of the LGBTQ+ community, although no direct questions were asked regarding this to any participants and it may be that the issue of homophobia was overlooked by other participants. Therefore, whilst social media can create a space in which many people can put forward viewpoints and share information and education to promote inclusive language, it is important to recognise that doing so may cause harm, particularly to members of the LGBTQ+ community as they may become vulnerable to hate speech.

This section has considered inclusive language as a means of the oppressed LGBTQ+ community rising up and reclaiming their *voces perdidas*. The following section considers themes of ‘linguistic imperialism’ and exclusion in relation to this, and takes into consideration how inclusive language could be perceived by some as *voces de poder*.

6.2 Linguistic imperialism

This section builds upon themes of oppression discussed in section (6.1) and aims to discuss power dynamics, particularly those set out in Salinas’ (2017) conceptualisation of *voces perdidas* and *voces de poder* in terms of the qualitative data from this study. In particular, this section aims to explore the extent to which inclusive language could be considered *voces perdidas* or *voces de poder* in the context of Chile, considering the impact of institutions such as higher educational institutions and language authorities on the use, or non-use, of inclusive language in the country.

6.2.1 Imposing language: US versus Chile

In 2015, Guerra and Orbea published the article *The Argument Against the Use of the Term “Latinx”* in the newspaper of a US higher education college which sparked much debate and controversy around the topic of inclusive Spanish in the US. The pair’s statement that the use of the inclusive ‘x’ in Spanish was a ‘blatant form of linguistic imperialism — the forcing of

U.S. ideals upon a language in a way that does not grammatically or orally correspond with it' (Guerra and Orbea, 2015) proved particularly provocative. Similarly, some participants in Salinas' (2020) study described how they 'only use the term Latinx because they felt they were being policed by the university staff' (2020: 163). Both of these examples suggest that there is to some extent a sentiment shared among US-based Latin Americans that inclusive language is somehow being imposed upon them: this would make those 'imposing' inclusive language upon a community who do not believe it fits with their culture and identity the *voces de poder*. However, was it the same case in Chile? It was decided that linguistic imperialism should be a line of investigation in the interviews with Chilean participants in order to understand whether, similarly to some of the attitudes from Latin Americans in the US which have been explored particularly in the literature review, inclusive language in Chile is something which people use out of a feeling of obligation, or whether it is a phenomenon naturally developing from a widespread desire for inclusivity.

Much of the literature focused on inclusive Spanish, particularly regarding the term 'Latinx', comes from the US, particularly from US higher education institutions with authors sometimes regarding inclusive language as 'linguistic imperialism', or *voces de poder*. Interestingly, this was a view seldom reflected by Chilean interviewees, who frequently cited the RAE as an enforcer of language laws which perhaps are no longer compatible with the culture and values of the 'new generation'. In order to establish in which country participants considered 'Latinx' and similar devices employing 'x' as a marker of inclusivity were most prevalent, all Chilean participants were asked whether they believed 'Latinx' to experience most use in the US or in Chile. Five participants believed that 'Latinx' is more used in the US, however two participants expressed that they believed that the inclusive 'x' construction is more frequently used in Chile, and one participant was not sure. Participants also tended to go on to explain that other devices, such as the 'e', were used within Chile to a significant extent. Quantitative data from this study also showed that, whilst it is still a minority, inclusive language is used to a notable extent across multiple media types in Chile, particularly on social media sites where language is less regulated, although inclusive devices were also sometimes present in Chilean academia.

Academia proved a space in which differences in opinion as to who constituted *voces perdidas* and *voces de poder* were most notable between the two countries. Qualitative data from Chilean participants reveals how there is a desire amongst at least some university students to adopt inclusive devices in their work, particularly as universities were cited as a

space where many people use inclusive language in their daily life. However, participants expressed that, at least in written tasks, university staff do not accept inclusive language, and therefore university students in Chile often feel that they are being blocked from using inclusive language in formal settings. Laura explains that they were able to use inclusive language in their dissertation, but that the Scientific Committee at their university is against the use of inclusive language, and requests that students of those degrees do not use ‘gender neutral’ language, but instead use ‘either the masculine or the feminine, because right now it [inclusive language] is not accepted on an academic level’. This is reflected in the quantitative data; there are people writing academic papers at the Universidad de Chile who *do* employ inclusive language in their works. However, this investigation only uncovered 990 examples of academic papers from the University of Chile which employed one of the inclusive devices, ‘x’, ‘e’ or ‘@’: although it is unlikely to be an exhaustive list, it is likely that papers which use inclusive language remain a minority amongst those which favour traditional language. The fact that relatively few academic papers published in Chile actually exhibit an inclusive language technique does not necessarily mean that there is no desire amongst authors to do so, nor does it mean that inclusive language is not used in other areas of society, for example, as this study has revealed, on social media and amongst friends. Whilst US-based university students of Latin American descent (Salinas, 2020) often felt that they had become *voces perdidas* to a university system which acted as *voces de poder*, ‘imposing’ inclusive language upon them, accounts from Chilean participants appear to reveal a sense of those in favour of inclusive language feeling as though they are the *voces perdidas*, particularly given that they feel restricted in the situations in which they can use it.

6.2.2 The Real Academia Española as *voces de poder*

This section builds upon (6.2.1) to consider how the RAE may in fact be the imposer of one form of gender in language. Guerra and Orbea (2015) described the pan-ethnic term ‘Latinx’ as ‘linguistic imperialism’ in a US context. Despite the pair denouncing the term as ‘the forcing of U.S. ideals upon a language in a way that does not grammatically or orally correspond with it’, previous discussion in this study regarding Chilean participants’ has highlighted that that perhaps the opposite is true in Chile. That is to say, that the ‘new generation’ tend to believe that the RAE ‘forces’ upon them a language which does not fit with their generation’s beliefs and values, particularly on the topic of inclusivity. Ana explains how the RAE ‘negates the existence of new words’, thus acting as a ‘linguistic imperialist’ as the institution does not allow space for language change or growth. However, it is important to recognise that the

sentiment that the RAE is imposing a language which is out of touch with the culture, beliefs and values of Chilean society may not be shared on a wider scale. It is vital to note that six of the eight participants in this study were aged in their 20s and therefore represent the ‘new generation’. It is consequently possible that the opinions and viewpoints that they shared are simply reflective of those shared amongst their generation, whereas interview data regarding the use of inclusive language in the family suggests that opinions amongst the older generations may differ from this.

The theme of a culture of adherence to the RAE, particularly amongst older generations, was frequently raised by participants throughout the interviews, even without questions directly related to the institution being asked by the interviewer. The two main reasons for which participants believed that such adherence to the linguistic dictation of the RAE exists were that 1) If the RAE has not accepted a word, then people will not believe that it truly exists and will therefore not use it, and 2) that Spanish needs an authority to regulate the language in a ‘harmonic way’. Two participants in this study, both men aged in their 20s, particularly expressed pro-RAE views. David and Francisco argued for the importance of the RAE in deciding what is and is not language. David was strongly in favour of preserving the Spanish language as it is, and believed that without ‘harmonic’ regulation, one runs the risk of the language becoming unintelligible to the foreign learner or of the language becoming too varied between Spanish-speaking countries or regions for the language to become an effective means of communication. Francisco argued that it is up to the RAE to decide what is and is not language, and unless the RAE accepts inclusive language, he will avoid using it. However, he explains that he does not mind other people using inclusive language in informal contexts, such as on social media, but believes that it should not be used in formal settings, such as in academia or in government documents. Several participants had expressed that they believe those in favour of inclusive language to be the *voces perdidas*, with the RAE drowning out their desire for a more representative language, however it is also important to consider that those who favour a ‘traditional’ language may themselves come to feel that they are becoming the *voces perdidas*, particularly with movements closely linked to the favouring of inclusive language, such as the feminist movement, having gained momentum across Latin America since 2018.

David believes that ‘we should not force inclusive language, like the feminist and LGBT movements want’, suggesting that he feels that inclusive language is being imposed upon him against his will. However, Ana, who was in favour of a widespread use of inclusive language explained that ‘nobody is imposing anything on them [people who do not want to use

inclusive language]’. She also says that ‘people do not understand that accepting it [inclusive language] does not mean that you have to use it’ and expresses her belief that ‘we have to accept that people speak differently’. One ought to consider the angle that those in favour of inclusive language do not want to ‘impose’ it upon those who do not wish to use it, but that instead officially accepting inclusive language should act as a means of making space for linguistically representing and recognising the identities of those who have historically had their existence erased by binary gendered, male dominant language. It is perhaps likely that those who have felt as though their identities were not afforded space and representation in Spanish are women or people of gender non-conforming, non-binary, or other marginalised gender identities. One ought therefore to consider that people who identify as such have historically been the *voces perdidas* as they have experienced historic marginalisation and oppression and have not been afforded space for the recognition of their gender identities in language. Therefore, perhaps they are not coming to act as the *voces de poder*, but instead are simply reclaiming their voices and identities in language and simply calling for linguistic recognition.

This section has identified how the RAE may to some extent be acting as *voces de poder*. The following section explores ways in which those who do not believe it accurately represents their culture are resisting its linguistic authority.

6.2.3 Resistance and change

This section explores how people in Chile who no longer feel that the official language of the RAE is representational of their culture are resisting its authority, and how they believe that it is best to bring about widespread change. Although the call for inclusive language still occurs amongst a minority of the Chilean population, it is clear that to some degree, change concerning the use of and attitudes towards inclusive language is happening. However, both qualitative and quantitative data from this study have revealed that there is, albeit a minority, a culture of resistance to the RAE and its authority over what is and is not considered language. Three interview participants in this study mentioned how they believed that the increase in usage of inclusive language may well eventually lead to the RAE accepting it, with one expressing that she was uncertain, and that the RAE accepting inclusive language could further sway people towards using it. However, such participants also noted that RAE acceptance of inclusive language will likely take a long time, given the widespread attitude of language conservatism, reverence of the authority and a ‘stigma’ of not breaking with traditional language. Whilst she strongly upholds that she will use language however she wishes regardless of what the RAE

considers ‘good’ language, Ana is strongly in favour of the authority approving inclusive language, as this would likely promote its usage. Daniel appeared to agree with this statement, adding that the formalisation of inclusive language would make it much more accessible, and therefore more people would use it. However, Lucía appeared to believe that regardless of whether the RAE changes its stance on inclusive language, some people will never change their attitudes towards it, particularly the older generations, who may not be so receptive to changing how they have spoken their entire lives. This was reflected in David’s interview. David was asked at the end of his interview whether the RAE accepting inclusive language could persuade him to use it personally. He explained that he would not use it immediately if it were formalised, however he would have to have a good think and spend some time pondering the question, although he did raise issues regarding the unlearning of the structure of the language he has learned his entire life, and that this may be even harder for older people. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise the role which the RAE could play in facilitating widespread use of, understanding of and access to inclusive language through official acceptance and formalisation of new devices.

Whereas three particular participants believe that the RAE could be an important tool for promoting widespread use of inclusive language, María believes fundamentally that the authority is the problem. María believes that there is a ‘persistence of the linguistic patriarchy’ which does not see a problem with the ‘exclusion’ of inclusive ‘modifications’, and therefore ‘clearly, the RAE is part of the problem’, because it is the authority which does not, and has not, permitted these ‘modifications’, which she believes has led to ‘a strong element of social conservatism’. María also discussed the authority in terms of it being an authoritarian power, and perhaps even hints at its colonial legacy on Latin America, given that the Spanish language was imposed upon the indigenous people of Chile, and indeed other areas of Latin America, during the period of European colonisation of the Americas after 1492. María explains that ‘history tells us that to silence towns, erase history and to suppress towns and nations, the first thing to do is to strip them of their language or their freedom to speak’, which possibly hints at the role which the imposition of the Spanish language may have played in the colonisation of Latin America. In more recent Chilean history, the years of military dictatorship off the back of a US-backed military coup d’état between 1973 and 1990 saw the LGBTQ+ community silenced and subjected to violence, as previously described by Laura. María could have been referencing the impact of this period on the LGBTQ+ community’s ability and freedom to express itself through inclusive language.

Furthermore, María gives testament to the dwindling influence of the RAE. ‘The RAE needs to defend its linguistic structure’ because it is ‘destined to disappear as an institution and it would no longer be the linguistic and cultural matrix of Latin America’. In contrast to how other participants believed that the RAE could be a crucial ally in promoting inclusive language, María here appears to be arguing that the authority is becoming irrelevant, with its influence doomed to fail due to its insistence on defending a form of the Spanish language which this study has revealed may not necessarily be the one reflective of the culture of contemporary society, or at least the culture of the younger generations. Therefore, whereas one could argue for the endorsement of the RAE for facilitating a widespread shift towards formally adopting inclusive language in Chile, it is important not to rely solely on the authority, given that there is no guarantee that it would ever support efforts to achieve linguistic inclusivity through new modifications to the language. Moreover, it is important to recognise its historical role as a creator and enforcer of certain language standards, which a number of interview participants considered to be ‘conservative’ and perhaps outdated.

Ultimately, whilst arguments exist which cast both inclusive language and the RAE as the *voces de poder*, or forces of ‘linguistic imperialism’, across both Chile and the US, it is important to recognise that the data from this study shows that in Chile a culture of resistance to the RAE, particularly in terms of inclusivity in language, is emerging amongst the younger generations and marginalised groups who have historically had their existence obscured by masculine/feminine binary gendered language. Therefore, whilst it is important to consider arguments for inclusive language being *voces de poder*, it is vital that one recognises how the rise in inclusive language prevalence could be the historically marginalised *voces perdidas* rising up and reclaiming their lost voices.

6.2.4 Beyond the Binary

Previous sections of this study revealed that Chilean participants tended to understand inclusive language as either being representative of men and women simultaneously, or as inclusive of all genders, including those who exist outside of the binary. Whilst this study primarily focused on the transition towards using inclusive language in nouns relating to people, two participants, Lucía and Laura, who both self-described as having a high level of competency in English, discussed the wider consequences of using inclusive language in their interviews. Given the gendered grammatical rules of the Spanish language, Laura explains how they feel ‘lucky’ to have had the opportunity to learn English, a natural gender language, because knowing a combination of English and Spanish allows them to ‘not give things gender’. They explain that

when they were younger, they would wonder why objects had gender, such as ‘la mesa’ (the table, feminine), ‘el sol’ (the sun, masculine), ‘la luna’ (the moon, feminine). They add that learning English has helped them to ‘expand’ these ideas surrounding gender somewhat. In other words, the knowledge of a non-gendered language gives them the metalinguistic awareness of possibilities beyond the limits of Spanish grammatical gender.

However, perhaps this is not the case amongst the wider Chilean community. Lucía explained that ‘although it would be great if everyone used this type of [inclusive] language’, she believed that it would be harder to speak in a neutral manner for objects, given that ‘language is always like this [binary gendered] for all things’. She explained that using inclusive language structures for nouns relating to inanimate objects would be ‘more or less like restructuring the language’. Both Lucía and Laura agreed that the transition towards a wider use of inclusive language is a ‘process’ which will take time. ‘If we think in a binary manner,’ said Laura, ‘we must begin to think in a non-binary manner so that we can begin to include this [inclusive] language’. Perhaps the shift to a ‘non-binary’ manner of thinking would be facilitated by a non-binary linguistic knowledge, given that a number of scholars have proven a link between language and cognition. This could possibly pose an issue for the theoretical roll-out of language which does not adhere to either masculine or feminine gender, as perhaps in order to easily understand it, it would be helpful to have prior knowledge of a language which does not use heavily encoded binary gender. This could make gender inclusive language less accessible to some monolingual Spanish speakers, as they would have to not only learn a new language feature, but also adapt to a new ‘conceptual map’ (Hall, 1997) regarding their understandings of gender. As Guerra and Orbea (2015) argue, in removing grammatical gender from every noun, one is no longer speaking Spanish, and even, one is advocating for the erasure of the Spanish language. If there were to be a widespread, orchestrated roll-out of inclusive language, Lucía believed that this would be ‘something progressive, beginning with [nouns relating to] people, and maybe later objects’.

It is interesting that Lucía raised the possibility of inanimate object nouns taking on a gender-neutral form in the future, particularly given that the quantitative data gathered for this study only uncovered inclusive language techniques being used for animate nouns. Users even tended to not always agree the grammatical gender of an animate noun’s corresponding grammatical elements and would often leave these in the masculine generic when using an inclusive noun form. Indeed, the quantitative data in this study suggests that inclusive language may only be in the early days of being adopted by speakers of Spanish in Chile for animate

nouns, and there is little to suggest that individuals have started to employ such structures for inanimate nouns. Despite only two participants raising gendered inanimate nouns as a topic to consider in the shift towards inclusive language, it is important to remember the impact which gendered language has upon a speaker's cognition and perception of objects and concepts. As Lucía raised, perhaps the shift towards inclusive language ought to be a gradual process to allow time for education and understanding of the concept of inclusive language to occur across society so that inclusive language can be accessible to all Spanish speakers in Chile, and perhaps even across Latin America.

7. Conclusion

This study has primarily explored the extent to which three emerging inclusive language devices are used in Chile, all whilst investigating how the use of such devices may lead to increased visibility of genders which may not be represented by the masculine generic. This study has also aimed to document different understandings and perceptions of what these inclusive devices mean. This study has also given insight into the variety of inclusive language devices used in Chile in comparison to those used in the United States, as well as mapping the demographics of those most likely to use certain inclusive devices and recording some of the attitudes towards the range of inclusive language devices, particularly those employing the ‘x’, ‘@’ and ‘e’, studied for this study. In particular, this paper aimed to investigate Guerra and Orbea’s (2015) claim that certain inclusive language may be considered ‘linguistic imperialism’, and seldom used amongst the wider Latin American community, and whether this is true for the wider community in Chile.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative data collected demonstrated that, although perhaps inclusive language in Chile is largely confined to certain social groups, settings, and age ranges, such as amongst university students and younger people in online and informal communications, it is unlikely to be something which is being imposed by an outside force upon people who do not wish for it. However, whilst those interviewed for this paper, who were largely in their 20s, tended to demonstrate a positive attitude towards inclusive language, they did often highlight that this may not be the case across all age ranges, with older generations being cited as typically opposed to the change towards inclusive language, and one must therefore be cautious of becoming the *voces de poder* over other members of the same speech community.

It has become clear that the influence of US academia in relation to inclusive language, which Salinas (2020) conceptualised as *voces de poder*, is not felt to the same extent in Chile as it is by students of Latin American descent living in the US (Salinas, 2020). In fact, participants were often unaware of how inclusive language was used in the US. Not only did participants not explicitly feel that US inclusive language was influencing that used in Chile, or even acting as *voces de poder* as Guerra and Orbea (2015) feared, but understandings of what inclusive language meant and who it aimed to include often varied from the understandings documented of US students of Latin American descent by Salinas (2020). Whereas in the US, understandings of what the inclusive term ‘Latinx’ meant tended to be

more cohesive, Chilean interviewees tended to fluctuate between understanding inclusive language as a whole as meaning inclusivity for ‘both genders’, inclusivity of different sexualities (no sexuality is ever indexed in Spanish grammar), and inclusivity for all genders and non-binary inclusivity. Given that the understandings and perceptions of inclusive language devices in Chile vary, and that many participants had not seen the specific term ‘Latinx’ used in their country, one could presume that US academia does not act as *voces de poder* in this instance, and perhaps one could even go so far as to suggest that it is irrelevant, playing virtually no role at all in influencing Chile’s use of inclusive language. Whereas in the US, students of Latin American descent felt pressured into using inclusive language (Salinas, 2020), it would appear that within Chile, there is a will among the people to do so, however it is possible that there is some variation regarding individual aims and understandings of such terminology.

A combination of a prominent feminist wave across Latin America in 2018 characterised by anti-colonial discourse, social media, and a move away from a culture of fear amongst the LGBTQ+ community have resulted in the desire for inclusivity which has historically existed amongst marginalised groups coming into common discourse. This study has uncovered that inclusive language is even experiencing a noteworthy amount of usage in a variety of situations, including on Twitter, blog posts, and in academic writing, whilst participants also expressed that inclusive language devices are often used orally among friends. Despite understandings of what inclusive language specifically means and who it aims to be inclusive of varying to some degree, what is most important to remember is that there is a desire and a will particularly amongst the younger generation to be more inclusive in their language choices, even if individual understandings and interpretations are not consistent. One also ought to consider that language should reflect and represent the people to whom it belongs. Therefore, there are reasonable grounds to argue that language authorities ought to accept that the culture and desires of the people to whom the Spanish spoken in Chile belongs are changing, and therefore the language used in the region must change to allow them to represent themselves linguistically. Regardless of whether or not individuals wish to adopt inclusive language into their idiolect, it is important to recognise and validate the feelings of non-binary people, gender non-conforming people and women, who have historically had their existence erased and marginalised by the grammatical constructions of a language deeply rooted in patriarchal culture and uplift their *voces perdidas* so that they can be heard. Language should be a tool for describing the people to whom it belongs, rather than a shaper of the limits of a

speech community's world, and therefore one ought to embrace the inclusion of language which allows for the linguistic inclusion and representation of members of the community.

The qualitative and quantitative data collected during this study clearly indicate that 'bottom-up' change is occurring in Chile regarding inclusive language, particularly in informal situations, both orally and written. It is evident that relatively widespread change is happening, fuelled at least in part by social movements across the continent, however this raises the question as to how to go about the standardisation of such a change, if at all, and to what extent should this change be brought about. Whilst both the qualitative and quantitative data evidence the extensive use of inclusive language techniques for animate nouns, only two interview participants discussed the possibility of using inclusive language for inanimate nouns. Despite the evidence that grammatically gendering inanimate nouns has an effect on a speaker's perception of the world around them, it would simply be unethical to attempt to act as *voces de poder* and impose such a change upon a speech community if it is not naturally occurring at present. Therefore, at least for the time being, the author concludes that any attempt at standardising inclusive language practises ought to focus on animate nouns and their corresponding grammatical elements.

The question of how to approach the topic of standardisation is rather complicated, particularly considering the *voces perdidas* and *voces de poder* tensions previously discussed in this study. Lucía believed that education would be an effective way to increase the extent to which inclusive language is used in Chile, however, it is important to be mindful of becoming the *voces de poder* in this instance, particularly considering that education in the US was often viewed as such, obscuring the *voces perdidas* in terms of inclusive language (Salinas, 2020). Languages are dynamic entities and are forever changing as a representation of their speech community. The qualitative data evidence that whilst younger people in Chile tend to favour the use of inclusive language, older generations do not, and whilst it is important to recognise the importance of uplifting the voices of those who are in favour of inclusive language, it is equally important not to be the *voces de poder* for those who do not. The question therefore remains: should standardisation take a 'bottom-up' approach, allowing inclusive language to become naturally more widespread over a greater time period before officially accepting inclusive language in order to avoid becoming *voces de poder*? Alternatively, should inclusive language become standardised now to provide official recognition to those who identify with it, regardless of whether the majority of the speech community are able to understand it? Although it is beyond the scope of this research to provide an answer, the author hopes that

this study will spark conversation around the subject in the context of the Spanish-speaking world, considering the many intersections of identity which exist within the speech community.

8. Qualitative Dataset: Supporting Items

Section (8.1) includes a copy of the recruitment poster used to attract participants for the interviews conducted to create the qualitative dataset used in this study. Section (8.2) includes a copy of the original questions used in the semi-structured interviews with these participants.

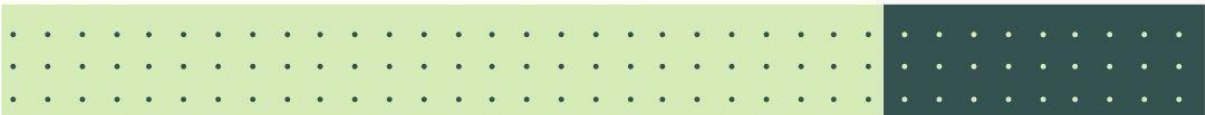
8.1. Participant Recruitment Poster

Busco participantes de Chile para hablar sobre el uso de la lengua género neutral

Estudiante de máster de la universidad de Swansea, Reino Unido busca participantes de Chile mayores de 18 años para un estudio. Hablaremos durante aproximadamente 30 minutos sobre el uso del género neutral en el idioma español en Chile y como lo relacionas e interpretas. Las entrevistas serán bastante informales y hablaremos un poco en general sobre el tema. Busco participantes de todos antecedentes, géneros, y culturas que existen en Chile.

Contactame por correo electrónico para participar o saber más!!

**Contacto:
Kate Sambrook**



8.2. Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews

Información personal:

¿Cuántos años tienes?

¿Cuál es tu género?

¿Te asignaron este género cuando naciste?

¿Cuál es tu nacionalidad?

¿El español es tu idioma maternal?

¿Hablas inglés? (explícame el nivel si lo hablas)

¿Has estudiado en la universidad? (hasta que nivel)

Preguntas

1. ¿Comprendes lo que quiero decir cuando hablo de la lengua de género neutral?
2. ¿Alguna vez has visto la palabra: ‘Latinx’? Háblame un poco sobre ella.
3. ¿Alguna vez has visto estas palabras o formas parecidas a ellas? Chilenxs/latinxs/ Chilenes/ amigues/ amigxs/ estimadx/ estimades
 - a. ¿Se usan en tu país?
 - b. ¿Cuándo/dónde se usan?
 - c. ¿Utilizas tu esas palabras o formas parecidas? ¿En cuáles situaciones? (redes sociales, con amigos, cuando hablas en general, en la universidad, con tu familia?)
 - d. ¿se usan al escrito o al oral?
 - e. ¿se usan más entre los jóvenes o entre las personas mayores?
 - f. ¿Usarías esas palabras con tu familia?
4. ¿Es difícil pronunciar la ‘x’ en tu idioma maternal? ¿Crees que ‘x’ va con el español?
5. ¿Latinx se usa más en Chile/ América Latina o en los EE UU?
6. ¿La ‘x’ va mejor en español o en inglés?
7. Hay algunos nombres/sustantivos en español que ya terminan con ‘e’, por ejemplo ‘los estudiantes’ cuando refiere a una mujer o a un hombre. ¿Crees que terminar todos los sustantivos con la ‘e’ en lugar de o/a pueda funcionar como una buena solución para los que no se identifican como hombre o mujer?

8. ¿crees que es un privilegio saber usar esas nuevas maneras de hablar con el género neutral? ¿Es más accesible para unos que para los otros?
9. ¿Crees que el idioma español está cambiando? (explícame como)

¡Dime otras cosas que quieres decir aquí! (espacio blanco)

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