University staff asked not to say 'mother' and 'father'

19th February, 2021

Staff at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra have been requested to avoid the use of certain words related to gender. ANU's Gender Institute issued a list of replacement terms for everyday words like 'mother' and 'father'. The switch in vocabulary is part of an initiative to encourage more gender-neutral language. Staff are being asked to use the term 'gestational parent' instead of 'mother,' and 'non-birthing parent' in place of 'father'. The institute's gender handbook claims the words 'mother' and 'father' exclude non-binary people. These are people who identify as being neither male nor female. Non-binary people feel unrepresented in society because of words that refer to males and females.

The gender handbook explains the suggested nomenclature guidelines. It says: "While many students will identify as 'mothers' or 'fathers,' using these terms alone to describe parenthood excludes those who do not identify with gender-binaries." It added: "This non-gendered language is particularly important in...discussions of childbirth and parenthood." An ANU spokesperson said the handbook was just a guide. It said: "This document is not an official ANU policy....It is a guide developed by expert researchers to assist anyone committed to enhancing inclusiveness and diversity." Last week, a UK university asked its staff to substitute the word 'chestfeeding' for 'breastfeeding'.

Sources: *mirror.co.uk / yahoo.com / foxnews.co*

Writing

All language should be gender neutral. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

staff / gender / list / replacement / vocabulary / gender-neutral / language / society / handbook / guidelines / parenthood / important / document / policy / diversity / word

True / False

a) Staff at a university in Australia can no longer use gender-related words. T / F

b) A gender institute wants people to say 'mum' and not 'mother'. T / F

c) The institute wants staff to say 'non-birthing parent' instead of 'father'. T / F

d) The institute says gender words make non-binary people feel excluded. T / F

e) The institute said students do not identify as mothers or fathers. T / F

f) A spokesperson said gender-related language was now university policy. T / F

g) The institute's guide is to help people enhance diversity. T / F

h) A UK university wants to introduce a new word - 'chestfeeding'. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

1.	**avoid**	a.	illustrate
2.	**certain**	b.	word
3.	**switch**	c.	manual
4.	**term**	d.	change
5.	**claim**	e.	variety
6.	**handbook**	f.	shun
7.	**describe**	g.	help
8.	**particularly**	h.	assert
9.	**assist**	i.	particular
10.	**diversity**	j.	especially

Discussion – Student A

a) What do you know about gender-neutral language?

b) What do you think of the English language?

c) How does your language deal with gender?

d) What do you think of replacing words like 'mother' and 'father'?

e) What do you think of the term 'gestational parent'?

f) What do you think of the term 'non-birthing parent'?

g) What do you know about non-binary people?

h) What three adjectives best describe this story?

Phrase Match

1. avoid the use of	a. handbook
2. replacement terms	b. to substitute the word
3. part of an initiative to	c. certain words
4. Non-binary people feel unrepresented	d. and diversity
5. words that refer	e. in society
6. The gender	f. encourage more
7. particularly important in discussions	g. by expert researchers
8. It is a guide developed	h. to males and females
9. enhancing inclusiveness	i. of childbirth
10. a UK university asked its staff	j. for everyday words

Discussion – Student B

a) What do you think about what you read?

b) Should language change to make all people feel included?

c) Should the word 'human' be changed because 'man' is in it?

d) What do you think of titles like 'Mr' and 'Mrs'?

e) Should we say 'actor' and 'lion' for males and females?

f) What advice do you have for ANU's Gender Institute?

g) What do you think of the term 'chestfeeding' instead of 'breastfeeding'?

h) What questions would you like to ask the university?

Spelling

1. eudqrtees to avoid the use

2. certain words aerdtel to gender

3. part of an taiienvtii

4. use the term 'tganeisoatl parent'

5. non-nariyb people

6. people feel eedneutrrnesp

7. moucenlanetr guidelines

8. an official ANU cplyoi

9. developed by erpext researchers

10. to assist anyone etmciomtd

11. enainhgnc inclusiveness

12. tbsisutteu the word

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. i	3. d	4. b	5. h
6. c	7. a	8. j	9. g	10. e

Role Play

Role A – Gender-neutrality
You think gender-neutrality is the most important aspect of a language to learn. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): slang, polite language or bad language.

Role B – Slang
You think slang is the most important aspect of a language to learn. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): gender-neutrality, polite language or bad language.

Role C – Polite Language
You think polite language is the most important aspect of a language to learn. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): slang, gender-neutrality or bad language.

Role D – Bad Language
You think bad language is the most important aspect of a language to learn. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): slang, polite language or gender-neutrality.

Speaking – English

Rank these with your partner. Put the most useful things to learn about English at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Spelling
- Text messaging
- Polite language
- Hip-hop
- Gender-neutrality
- Slang
- Bad language
- Poetry

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	T	e	F	f	F	g	T	h	T

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.