

2nd Annual International Gender-Inclusive Language Instruction Conference

From Theory to Practice: Advancing Gender-Inclusive Language Pedagogy

Center for Languages and Cultures
University of Southern California

April 5, 2024 (online)

[Link to Conference Website](#)

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Conference Schedule:

April 5, 2024

All times Pacific Standard Time (PST)

9:00—9:15	Opening remarks		
9:15—10:15	Keynote: Wes Chernin, SLP Elevating the Why: Unpacking the Imperative of Gender-Inclusive Language		
10:15—10:30	Break		
10:30—11:45	Session 1		
11:45—12:00	Break		
12:00—1:15	Session 2		
1:15—1:30	Break		
1:30—2:45	Session 3 Panel 1	Session 3 Panel 2	Session 3 Panel 3
2:45—3:00	Break		
3:00—4:00	Keynote: Kiki Kosnick (Augustana College) Gender-Just In(ter)ventions in the Language Classroom		
4:00—4:15	Closing remarks		

Schedule of Papers:

Session 1 — 10:30-11:45	
4 papers (15 min. each) followed by 15 min. for questions Moderator: Julie Vandam (University of Southern California)	
10:30AM	Gender-Inclusive Language in the FFL Classroom: A Tool for Building a Safe Space? Éleonore de Beaumont (University of Lorraine)
10:45AM	Transgender Storytelling Workshops: A Discourse Analysis of Students' Attitudes Toward Transgender Individuals Wei Yi Kimberly Tao (Hong Kong Polytechnic University)
11:00AM	A Narrative Inquiry into Teacher's Experience of Gender Norms' Impact in Physical EFL Classes in Comparison to Online Classes Pardis Amiridahaj (Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education)
11:15AM	The Gender-Fluid Student as a Second Language Learner Ilan Yona (Middlebury College and Pressman Academy)

Session 2 — 12:00-1:15	
4 papers (15 min. each) followed by 15 min. for questions Moderator: Jhonatan Henao-Muñoz (University of Arizona, Tucson)	
12:00PM	Achieving Gender Equity through the Language Curriculum Rana Raddawi, Franziska B Lys, Ragy H Ibrahim Mikhaeel (Northwestern University)
12:15PM	Personal Pronouns in School—A Question of Identity, Inclusion and Icebergs Karin Milles (Södertörn University)
12:30PM	Reimagined Stories: Creating Gender-Inclusive Student-Crafted Narratives Nooshan Ashtari (University of Southern California)
12:45PM	Gender-Inclusive Noun References and their Integration into Teaching German as a Foreign Language Sabrina Link (Università degli Studi di Urbino Carlo Bo)

Session 3 — 1:30-2:45	
3 rotating panels in breakout rooms, 3 or 4 papers (15 min. each) followed by 15 min. for questions	
Panel 1: Spanish and Catalan	
Moderator: Goretti Prieto Botana (University of Southern California)	
1:30PM	Presenting Gender-Inclusive Language in the Spanish Classroom Mercedes Fages Agudo (University of Southern California), Ben Papadopoulos (University of California, Berkeley), and Liana Stepanyan (University of Southern California)
1:45PM	Building from/for Diversity: A Repository for Inclusive Spanish Language Jhonatan Henao-Muñoz (University of Arizona, Tucson)
2:00PM	Marking Gender in Spanish: On Creating an Open Educational Resource for Spanish Learners Silvia Rivera Alfaro (CUNY Graduate Center)
2:15PM	Challenging Linguistic Conservatism: Advocating for the Inclusion of Non-Binary Language in Spanish and Catalan Language Classes Bel Olid (University of Chicago)
Panel 2: Portuguese, Italian, and English	
Moderator: Nooshan Ashtari (University of Southern California)	
1:30PM	Strategies for the Use of Gender-Inclusive Language in Portuguese Language Pedagogy Carlos Pio (University of Pennsylvania)
1:45PM	Advocating for and Implementing Gender-Just Pedagogy within and beyond the Italian Classroom: Case Studies from Australia Riccardo Amorati and Elena Pirovano (University of Melbourne)
2:00PM	Challenging Frameworks with Teaching Gender-Inclusive English in France Veronique Perry (Universite de Toulouse III)
Panel 3: Hebrew and Chinese	
Moderator: Jaclyn Cohen-Steinberg (University of Southern California)	
1:30PM	Multi-Gender Hebrew: Creating a New Space in the Hebrew Language Michal Shomer (Multi-Gender Hebrew)
1:45PM	Chinese Language and Gender: Exploring Gender-Inclusive Language Pedagogy Jun Lang (Pomona College)
2:00PM	Designing Gender-Inclusive Learning Materials for Chinese as a Foreign Language Classrooms Yanfei Li (University of Toronto)

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Book of Abstracts:*Keynote Speech***Elevating the Why: Unpacking the Imperative of Gender-Inclusive Language**

Wes Chernin, SLP

In an ever-evolving landscape of linguistic discourse and societal change, the importance of gender-inclusive language has become increasingly evident. In this talk, we will engage in a timely dialogue that not only addresses the use of gender-inclusive language instruction but explores its profound social and psychological implications. Setting the tone for the conference, this opening session seeks to bridge the principles of gender-inclusive language instruction with the heart of its application, advocating for a humanistic approach to language pedagogy. Throughout the session, we'll delve into the ethical, cultural, and social underpinnings of gender-inclusive language, guided by a seasoned speech-language pathologist, transgender educator, and LGBTQ+ inclusion and belonging consultant. Prepare for a transformative learning experience as we navigate the 'why' of gender-inclusive language in academia, the classroom, and the broader world. Together, we'll tap into the very core of crafting inclusive linguistic environments that value and cherish the diverse identities and experiences of individuals.

Wes Chernin (he/him) is an award winning transgender speaker, consultant, educator, and speech-language pathologist (SLP). He partners with schools, healthcare clinics, businesses, and communities in order to support queer & trans belonging.

*Keynote Speech***Gender-Just In(ter)ventions in the Language Classroom**

Kiki Kosnick, Augustana College

Language educators are uniquely positioned to establish our classrooms as spaces of belonging, affirmation, and expansiveness for students of all genders. From staying tuned in to developments in the languages we teach (e.g., the proliferation of non-standard forms) to exercising our abilities to work within—and against—the constraints of conventional grammars and academic vocabularies, our work is ongoing, evolving, reflective, and collaborative. Certainly, we must support our students' gender journeys and right to creativity in their self-articulation, and yet we must also ensure that full engagement in our courses is not contingent on students disclosing their pronouns/gender identities. This talk addresses the shared responsibility of language educators to foster increasingly gender-just learning environments while, at the same time, preparing our students to encounter and adapt to the challenges of potentially less inclusive contexts. We will explore approaches to scaffolding, reorienting assignments, and incorporating queer cultural productions at various levels of the curriculum.

Kiki Kosnick (they/them or ki/ki's) is Associate Professor of French and women, gender, and sexuality studies at Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois. Ki's work centers queer and feminist linguistic in(ter)ventions with a focus on language pedagogy and literary studies.

A Narrative Inquiry into Teacher's Experience of Gender Norms' Impact in Physical EFL Classes in Comparison to Online Classes

Pardis Amiridahaj

Gender has been a prominent topic in EFL classes. Gender norms that can affect EFL classes are different from one country to another. Being a woman and a member of a minority in Iran provided me with the chance to see the impact of gender roles in EFL classes and made me aware of how the accepted gender norms can play a crucial role in different aspects of people's lives including learning another language. This narrative tries to find answers regarding the presence and nature of gender norms in the context of Iranian mixed-gendered EFL physical and online classrooms through the lived experiences of five Iranian EFL teachers. As Iran is under the rule of gender apartheid, the issue of gender can be a compelling one even in the English classrooms. This paper tries to answer the following questions:

1. What gender-related norms exist in a mixed-gender EFL class in Iran?
2. How do these gender norms impact student-student interaction in Iranian EFL classrooms?
3. Is the impact of these gender norms different in online classes compared to face-to-face classes?
4. What strategies could the teachers employ in order to prevent gender norms from negatively impacting the classroom?

For the purpose of this research a narrative was employed. Using Daiute's (2014) practical design for narrative, the lived experiences of 6 Iranian EFL teachers who have taught mixed-gender classes in physical settings and online classes was recorded. These teachers had between 5 to 12 years of experience teaching mixed-gender classes, and all of them have taught online classes. Three of these teachers were women, and two identified as men, and one as a queer. Due to severe punishment to the LGBTQ+ community in Iran, their identities will remain unknown. Data was collected through semi-structured online interviews with the participants; the interviews were then transcribed, coded, and sorted. Four different themes emerged, including gender norms presence in mixed-gender classes, gender norms in physical classes vs. online classes, teacher's role in preventing the impact of gender norm on learner-learner interaction, and gender minorities. For men, teachers believed that norms such as being domineering, controlling, bossy, assertive, bold, argumentative, having a high level of self-esteem, forming male groups, and mocking others were present in their EFL classes. For women, the teachers pointed to norms such as being less self-confident, being self-conscious, being studious, being persistent, and being organized. As for the second question, based on the narration, the aforementioned gender norms would render the learner-learner communications less effective. Four out of five of the participants confirmed that their women students are more relaxed and less-self-conscious in online classes, so they will participate in learner-learner

and class activities more. As for the fourth question, the narration provides solutions that include the use of gender-neutral language, controlling the group and pair work, educating the students regarding topics related to gender and gender-inclusive language, and providing equal time for each student to participate in learner-learner activities.

References:

Daiute, C. (2014). *Narrative inquiry: A dynamic approach*. Sage.

Advocating for and Implementing Gender-Just Pedagogy within and beyond the Italian Classroom: Case Studies from Australia

Riccardo Amorati & Elena Pirovano

Despite extensive discussion on gender-inclusive language, most recently referred to as *linguaggio ampio* in the Italian context (refer to works by Sulis & Gheno, 2022 for a recent overview), there is a scarcity of literature focusing on the adaptation of pedagogical practices by Italian language instructors to accommodate the evolving spectrum of students' identities. The main challenges relate to ensuring that Italian teachers acknowledge and make visible the multiple identities of their students and identify strategies to adapt the binary gender structure of the Italian language to a more inclusive use (e.g., neutralisation strategies).

In this paper we investigate potential avenues for integrating inclusive language into the Italian curriculum at university level by relating how it has been incorporated in various courses on offer in the Italian studies program at our University and by drawing upon our first-hand experience in beginner and upper intermediate Italian classes. We first discuss what prompted us to update our pedagogical practices to empower students to better understand gender-just linguistic practices and contribute to diverse and inclusive environments. We then outline specific adjustments we made, both in the way we teach grammar, such as gendered pronouns, grammatical gender, and agreement forms, and in the structuring of our courses to allocate dedicated class time to discussions on issues of gender inclusivity and heteronormativity at various proficiency levels. We further elaborate on the tensions we encountered as educators, including navigating the fine balance between teaching more common but less-inclusive forms and providing less conventional yet more inclusive alternatives as viable options for those who may require them.

By developing and trying out strategies in our own teaching practice, we started reflecting on potential tools to support other teachers of Italian across different levels of education (i.e. primary, secondary and university). As a result, we started developing a Gender-Inclusive Teacher Toolkit and setting up a research program to disseminate it to teachers of Italian in Australia. Our goal is to test and gradually adjust the toolkit by creating a network of teachers committed to a more gender-just language use and opening a space where to engage in meaningful and collaborative discussions on gender-just language education.

References:

Sulis, G. & Gheno, V. (2022). The debate on language and gender in Italy, from the visibility of women to inclusive language (1980s–2020s). *The Italianist*, 42(1), 153-183.

Reimagined Stories: Creating Gender-Inclusive Student-Crafted Narratives

Nooshan Ashtari

Traditional narratives often perpetuate stereotypes, portraying characters in rigid gender roles that limit the representation of diverse human experiences. From damsels in distress to macho saviors, these portrayals can constrain the flexibility and freedom of expression for individuals outside these binary norms. This presentation explores the transformative power of reimagining familiar stories to include a spectrum of gender identities and roles, creating a more inclusive and representative narrative space. The session will outline a step-by-step method for engaging students in the process of story revision, highlighting practical strategies for educators to implement in their classrooms. By actively involving students in this creative process, educators can facilitate meaningful discussions about gender, identity, and representation, encouraging critical thinking and empathy among learners. Through collaborative exploration and reflection, students can develop a deeper appreciation for the complexity of gender and its intersections with other aspects of identity. Moreover, this presentation will underscore the untapped potential of storytelling as a powerful tool for fostering gender inclusivity in educational settings. By challenging traditional narratives and embracing diverse perspectives, educators can create opportunities for students to see themselves reflected in the stories they encounter. This not only validates the experiences of individuals whose identities may deviate from the norm but also fosters a sense of belonging and acceptance within the classroom community. Through real-life examples and case studies, we will illustrate the positive impact of incorporating gender-inclusive narratives into the curriculum. These examples will demonstrate how such initiatives can promote empathy, resilience, and self-expression among students, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and inclusive learning environment. Additionally, we will explore the role of educators as facilitators of these discussions, emphasizing the importance of creating a supportive and affirming space for students to explore complex themes related to gender and identity. In conclusion, this presentation advocates for the importance of reimagining stories to reflect the diversity of human experiences, particularly concerning gender. By empowering students to become active participants in this process, educators can foster a culture of inclusivity and empathy within educational institutions. Through collaborative storytelling, we can celebrate the richness of human experiences and create a more equitable and affirming world for all.

Gender-Inclusive Language in the FFL Classroom: A Tool for Building a Safe Space?

Éléonore de Beaumont

Research in linguistics has long shown that the hypergrammatical, asymmetrical and binary nature of the gender in French, as it relates to the naming of persons, creates both a 'linguistic invisibilisation of women' (Houdebine-Gravaud, 1999: 31), or rather of all linguistic referents that are not men, but also a "binary gender diktat" (Perry, 2017: 31), forcing speakers to situate themselves on the two normative poles of gender, male and female.

In the context of teaching French as a foreign language (FFL), grammatical gender becomes a didactic issue. This is particularly salient in my field of research, the teaching of FFL to a Turkish-speaking public, since the Turkish language does not have a grammatical gender. This major difference between French and Turkish creates a space that makes it possible to raise issues that are essential for feminist pedagogies in language-culture didactics: the teaching of rules perceived as sexist, the risk of misgendering trans people, or the impossibility (or at least difficulty) of expressing the identity of non-binary people.

Faced with these difficulties, what can the various inclusive language techniques (Rosier and Rabatel, 2019; Viennot, 2018) contribute to the teaching and learning of FFL? Can inclusive language help to construct the FFL classroom as a safe space (Toynton, 2006), or at least a safer one?

I will use two sets of data collected during my doctoral research in Istanbul between February 2021 and June 2022. Firstly, I will use my analysis of interviews and focus groups conducted with 39 learners at Galatasaray University at levels A2 to C1. I will also draw on a collaborative research conducted throughout the 2022-2023 academic year with 12 volunteer teachers at the same university: this project aimed to experiment with more inclusive teaching practices.

The aim of this paper will be to analyse inclusive language as a tool that raises questions about feminist approaches to FFL teaching. I will show that inclusive language is first and foremost a tool that was perceived by the learners and teachers in my research as helping to construct the FFL classroom as a safe space, touching on the issues of the representation of gender minorities in discourse, but also of the misgendering of trans and non-binary people. However, aware that the literature on feminist pedagogies has long shown the limits of the notion of safe space (Ludlow, 2004), particularly in the academic context (Barrett, 2010), I shall try to highlight the limits of this tool for constructing a safe space, particularly in a context of possible resistance to feminist pedagogies. To overcome this aporia, I will draw on the data from my research to show how inclusive language can also be a tool for raising awareness, for reflecting on linguistic and social norms, for becoming aware of our sexist biases, and even for experimenting with a less dominant teaching stance.

References:

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- Houdebine-Gravaud, A-M. (1999). Femmes/langue/féminisation: Une expérience de politique linguistique en France. *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, 20(1): 23-52.
- Ludlow, J. (2004). From safe space to contested space in the feminist classroom. *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy* 15(1), 40-56.
- Perry, V. (2017). Edward Sapir et l'épistémologie constructiviste «genre et langage» en France: un héritage passé sous silence. In *Genre et sciences du langage: enjeux et perspectives*, (pp. 21-39). Presses universitaires de la Méditerranée.
- Rabatel, A. & Rosier L. (Eds.) (2019). *Les défis de l'écriture inclusive*. EME éditions.
- Toynton, R. 2006. Invisible other: Understanding safe spaces for queer learners and teachers in adult education. *Studies in the Education of Adults* 38(2), 178-194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02660830.2006.11661532>
- Viennot, É. (2018). *Le langage inclusif: pourquoi, comment*. Éditions iXe.

Presenting Gender-Inclusive Language in the Spanish Classroom

Mercedes Fages Agudo, Ben Papadopoulos & Liana Stepanyan

The importance of teaching gender-inclusive forms in languages that have developed methods of expressing nonbinary gender identities is exemplified by the struggles that trans, nonbinary, and other gender-nonconforming students face in the language classroom, especially when learning languages with masculine-feminine grammatical gender. Yet despite the need to expose students to the reality of gender in language, language-specific materials, pedagogical guidelines, and best practices are still emerging. This presentation follows from the efforts of the faculty of the Department of Latin American and Iberian Cultures at the University of Southern California to include gender-inclusive language instruction in the Spanish classroom. Four years of perception studies at the same institution meant to gauge Spanish language learners' attitudes towards gender-inclusive forms have shown that exposure to nonbinary Spanish enhances students' awareness of and sensitivity towards nonbinary gender identities and that gender-inclusive forms may be fruitfully presented alongside prescriptive masculine and feminine forms much in the same way that *vos* and *vosotros* forms are presented alongside other second-person forms. This and other research have also shown that cognizance of LGBTQI+ communities can be achieved through gender-inclusive language instruction that is presented in real-world context and in ways that achieve the goals of communicative competence. But despite the linguistic and social benefits of gender-inclusive language study, there are still not many resources that Spanish-language instructors may access and utilize to undertake this task.

To this end, this presentation describes a series of best practices and other findings from years of classroom research at USC focusing on introducing and celebrating a diversity of gender identities. It also illustrates these principles by delivering and describing a series of activities based on the world of music which presents nonbinary gender forms and identities in context and asks students to attend to both grammatical and social gender in describing popular Spanish-speaking artists. Utilizing a series of texts profiling the genderfluid musical artist Maricuir alongside other lesser-known Spanish-speaking artists, students are asked to reflect on LGBTQI+ identities in a way that subtly blends this discussion with a broader conversation about the world of popular Spanish-language music. Designed with the guidelines of the ACTFL IPA in mind, this activity will be made available to participants with the goal of increasing the access to Spanish-language instructional resources focused on gender-inclusivity.

Building from/for Diversity: A Repository for Inclusive Spanish Language

Jhonatan Henao-Muñoz

In the last decade, inclusive use of Spanish language has been the focus of attention for exposing innovative and non-normative forms (-@, -e, -x) (Acosta Matos, 2016) to raise awareness of inclusive and non-binary gender identities (e.g. latino, latina > latin@, latine, latinx) particularly on Social Media (X, (former Twitter), Instagram, Youtube, among others) from users, who are native and heritage speakers of Spanish. Although Spanish is considered a (binary-)gendered language, that according to the linguistic norm and simplifying its Latin roots, its nouns are either masculine or feminine, and gender agreement occurs with adjectives, determiners, and some pronouns and quantifiers), the innovative and non-normative forms presents opportunities for the additional and heritage language classroom of Spanish; particularly for those learners - and practitioners - whose gender identify/ies are not necessarily binary, but instead, their identity/es fall/s under the non-binary umbrella. While Real Academia Español discourages this “alienated” use (RAE, 2020), from a sociolinguistic perspective, language use overpasses the linguistic norm, meaning that there may be language phenomena of variation and (on-going)change in this use that benefit not only additional language learners (Fernandez, 1994), but also the Heritage language experience (Leeman & Serafini, 2016).

For this project, we collect, analyze and build a repository focused on Inclusive Spanish Language, from linguistic and pedagogical perspectives, aiming to (1) identify patterns of use and form as well as speakers’ attitudes towards inclusive Spanish language in order to (2) draft an Inclusive Spanish Language grammar, which seeks to foster recognition and validation of practitioners’ and learners’ diverse identity/ies, particularly within Spanish as additional language learners and Heritage Learners of Spanish classroom; (3) develop multiliteracies/ multimodal-approached instructional materials, and broadly (4) design a best practices to implement inclusive Spanish language booklet to the Hispanic Serving Institutions nationwide in the U.S.

Chinese Language and Gender: Exploring Gender-Inclusive Language Pedagogy

Jun Lang

As gender studies have gained prominence, there is a growing enthusiasm among American college students to explore gender and feminism. Recent years have witnessed a rising trend in interdisciplinary courses within American Chinese programs that delve into gender-related research. These courses either adopt literature and films as learning materials for undergraduate studies (e.g. “Gender and Sexuality in China” at Penn State University, “Gender in Modern Chinese Literature” at Pomona College) or concentrate on linguistics geared towards graduate students (e.g. “Chinese Seminar: Language and Gender” at Ohio State University). There appears to be less attention given to offering college-level Chinese language or linguistic courses with a special focus on gender, despite the growing interest among Gen Z students who have grown up with heightened gender awareness.

How do we address the increasing learning interest in gender incorporate it in Chinese courses? This presentation unfolds two pedagogical explorations conducted at a liberal arts college, demonstrating how gender-related content and gender-inclusive pedagogy can be integrated into both Chinese language and linguistic courses.

In the first part, I elaborate on the incorporation of gender and social issues as thematic units in an intermediate-level Chinese language course. Drawing inspiration from established pedagogical frameworks (Jin 2016, 2017, 2018; Jing-Schmidt 2015; URI Chinese Flagship Program 2021), this approach integrates linguistic forms, functions, and real-life tasks in second language teaching and learning. I furthered these frameworks by emphasizing the individual and unique creative process for each student, which involves physical and artistic processes in their learning. I then showcase process-based projects exploring gender dynamics and interconnected social issues in the Chinese-speaking world.

The second part of the presentation focuses on the development of an undergraduate linguistic course titled “Chinese Language and Gender.” This course invites students, who have studied Chinese for three semesters, to explore the language at the intersection of gender and society from a fresh and nuanced perspective. This section focuses on students’ insights gained from coursework, involving readings on LGBTQI+ topics as well as the utilization of technological resources, such as Ngram, Chinese and English corpora, and sociolinguistic online surveys to analyze gender in language. The presentation also highlights how student-led discussion sessions contribute insightful, informative, and engaging dynamics to individual learning experiences.

The audience of this presentation will (1) reflect on gender-inclusive pedagogy in language education, (2) learn from the presented pedagogical practices that assists learners in developing language and research skills involving gender as topics, and (3) be encouraged to explore their own innovative pedagogy to cultivate learners’ interest in language learning with a special focus on gender.

Designing Gender-Inclusive Learning Materials for Chinese as a Foreign Language Classrooms

Yanfei Li

This project explores the principles and best practices in designing gender-inclusive materials for Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) learners at different proficiency levels. The inquiry originates from two common disconnections observed in today's CFL classrooms. Firstly, learning materials hardly reflect the linguistic and cultural changes stemming from three decades of gender studies and queer activism in the Sinophone world (Luo, Da Na, et al. 2011; Lee, 2017; Madson, 2020; Yu, 2022; Kong, 2023;), disconnecting from the ongoing dialogues of gender-justice and inclusivity. Secondly, popular textbooks fail to contextualize the dominance of binary lexicon and gendered narratives that they represent, disconnecting from the learners who growingly demand for non-binary and gender-inclusive alternatives (Li, 2021; Xu, 2021). To bridge the CFL classroom with equity and diversity, on one hand, and gender-inclusive language pedagogies (Banegas & Govender, 2022; Kinseley, 2023), on the other, this project case studies a typical four-year university CFL curriculum, examining what could be supplemented and transformed to open up the binary world in the existing learning materials and how to develop tasks and assessment that are non-binary and inclusive. For example, how to unpack the gendered lexicon in beginner-level classes, how to historicize women's rights in intermediate courses, and how to do scaffolding in advanced classes, discussing queer movements with language and cultural sensitivity.

The primary goal of the project is to construct meaningful teaching and learning resources that empower instructors to guide CFL learners in developing language proficiency, cultural understanding of gender diversity, and intercultural competency in articulating their own and others' gender identities. It can also contribute to the discussion on gender-inclusive language pedagogies, especially concerning similar Northeast Asian Languages that are typically categorized as grammatically genderless.

Gender-Inclusive Noun References and their Integration into Teaching German as a Foreign Language

Sabrina Link

In our globalised and modern world, our classrooms are becoming increasingly heterogeneous, and it is therefore important to create an inclusive teaching and learning environment.

Inclusive teaching implies that all students are given the possibility to express themselves as they wish. This should play an important role especially when it comes to language learning, since students should also be able to express their own identity in the foreign language they learn. Furthermore, when language learners, in this context German learners, are working with authentic texts, they will sooner or later encounter discussions on gendered language as well as gender-inclusive German itself (Link 2022). For a better understanding of the discussion and a successful reception, it is important that learners have a passive as well as an active knowledge of gender-inclusive German (cf. Eichhoff-Cyrus 2009; Kotthoff 2017; Stark 2021).

However, the integration of the topic into German as a foreign language lessons is complicated by various factors. First of all, teaching materials are still scarce (Moghaddam 2010: 281; Rösler 2012: 8; Stark 2021: 1). Secondly, while there is a tendency that more and more German as a foreign language teachers appreciate the fact that gender-inclusive language should be treated in class (Stark 2021: 74), quite a few students who want to become German as a foreign language teachers as well as many teachers themselves are rather indifferent or sceptical towards gender-sensitive German (Peuschel & Schmidt 2022: 59; Stark 2021: 70ff.) and perceive its integration into their teaching as time-consuming (Stark 2021: 75) or overwhelming (Peuschel & Schmidt 2022: 63).

All of this made me wonder how gender-inclusive German can be integrated and 'taught' successfully. Thus, I designed a teaching unit about gender-inclusive German noun references for Italian university students. In order to get a better understanding of how the students perceived being taught about gender-inclusive German and whether and how their language and intercultural competences improved by consciously 'studying' gender-inclusive German, two questionnaires were conducted, one prior and one after the teaching unit.

During the suggested paper the teaching unit will be presented in detail, followed by the presentation and discussion of the students' feedback.

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Personal Pronouns in School—A Question of Identity, Inclusion and Icebergs

Karin Milles

Young transgender individuals face numerous difficulties, one significant challenge being persuading those around them to use their preferred pronouns. In this research, I employed surveys and interviews to investigate how schools address the pronoun preferences of students. The findings suggest that many teachers view adopting a student's chosen pronoun as a fundamental aspect of inclusivity. Nevertheless, the research also uncovers that the prevailing school culture and administrative policies may pose barriers to transgender youths' ability to fully explore and affirm their identity alongside their peers.

Challenging Linguistic Conservatism: Advocating for the Inclusion of Non-Binary Language in Spanish and Catalan Language Classes

Bel Olid

This paper examines and refutes the prevailing attitudes of linguistic authorities towards the inclusion of non-binary language, particularly the neomorphemes (-e in Spanish, -i in Catalan), in linguistic practices in general and in language classes in particular.

The attempts made to express non-binary identities in heavily gendered languages such as Spanish and Catalan have sparked considerable debate, with self-appointed or official linguistic authorities often resisting the adoption of more inclusive language based on three primary claims: the neomorpheme's alleged threat to the so-called “essence” of the language, the traditional view of masculine as the unmarked grammatical gender, which can include people of “both sexes” (as expressed in all of the texts by “linguistic authorities” examined) and the perception of these forms as artificially imposed by feminist powers or queer academia rather than organically adopted by speakers (López, 2020; Santiago Alonso, 2023).

Language instructors and professors often find themselves at odds with program directors, department chairs, and colleagues who align with these conservative views. These internal conflicts within educational institutions reflect a broader struggle between traditional linguistic norms and the evolving needs of a diverse student body; beyond academia, the queer speakers and allies face the same challenges.

In addressing these challenges, the paper provides educators with a toolkit of arguments and strategies to advocate for the inclusion of non-binary language forms, the most important being academic integrity. In an honest, accurate teaching practice, non-binary language cannot be ignored if our students are to be prepared to face actual speakers in the target language context, where they are bound to find both the neomorpheme and resistance to it.

The paper emphasizes the importance of language education that gives students the linguistic competence needed for them to be responsible for their linguistic practices, whether they decide to use non-binary language or not.

Moreover, the paper discusses the role of educators as agents of change in the linguistic landscape, “with trans knowledges and linguacultures in mind” (Knisely, 2023). It suggests that educators, by adopting and promoting inclusive language practices, can influence broader linguistic and ideological shifts toward gender inclusivity.

Drawing from analysis of the Spanish case, and adding our own analysis of Catalan case, this paper adds linguistic arguments that complement those made by (Knisely, 2023)

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Challenging Frameworks with Teaching Gender-Inclusive English in France

Véronique Perry

Grounded on my experience as an instructor of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), my research started almost 30 years ago, and my first challenge was to articulate the concept of gender – defined, through Edward Sapir’s constructivist approach (1921) – as a “system of constraints”, to the teaching of English as a foreign language in France (Perry, 2003). My PhD conclusions were that dealing with gender awareness in language classrooms first implies to consider gender beyond binary thinking (Delphy, 1991; Bergval & Bing, 1998; Hall & Livia, 1997); it also triggers a new reflexivity on the part of both teachers and learners, and then induces a paradigm shift in communication, demanding to reconsider what is understood and felt as “correct” (Perry, 2011).

I have started designing a model to show language teachers – in EFL and also French as a Foreign Language – how to implement gender as a reflexive concept through its various aspects into the language classroom promoting (1) a contrastive approach through foreign language mediation (Houdebine, 2010) and consequently another epistemology of gender; (2) a hybrid blended-learning work-design to build critical knowledge about Web-based resources and practices (Perry 2013). This praxeology is based on the implementation of “community of practices” (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992) in order to overpass exclusive identities. First anticipating then following the values put forward by the latest edition of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2020), I have been developing a feminist (intersectional) pedagogical approach to teaching English to science and technology students at the Université de Toulouse 3 - Paul Sabatier : in other words, through the presentation a different projects conducted in class since 2011, I will try to show how promoting an empowering pedagogical work-design can circumvent learners' resistance and enable them to emancipate themselves from any type of stigma (Perry 2023).

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Strategies for the Use of Gender-Inclusive Language in Portuguese Language Pedagogy

Carlos Pio

Current Portuguese foreign language books do not offer a sufficient range of real language, despite the fact that they make an effort in taking the language outside the classroom and making it more real. There is the need to take a step further by presenting everyday language spoken by Portuguese speakers from several sociological backgrounds. The real use of language is a learning outcome that many instructors struggle to achieve in their classrooms. Realness and openness occur when listening to the language in use in a given community, considering all of its sociological variables such as economic standing, ethnicity, origins and citizenship, and the willingness to reproduce such language in the textbook and in the classroom. This presentation explores teaching practices related to the incorporation of inclusive language in the Portuguese language classroom in order to eliminate inequity and promote belongingness and other community values among L2 learners. Said practices respond to the need of the inclusive language pedagogy activities in the classroom. I will address recent social, cultural, and linguistic developments of gender-inclusive language in relation to Portuguese in today's university-level Portuguese language classroom. I will also discuss some challenges (lack of sufficient training workshops amongst faculty members and also very few of knowledge of vocabulary used by the LGBTQIA2S+ community) which show the reluctancy in using and teaching gender-inclusive language and which still hinder a full-fledged use and expression of gender-inclusive language amongst universities. As an example, in regards to technological tools, discussion boards, such as the ones on Blackboard, Canvas, and Moodle are a great tool for addressing complex concepts in a language class, like the definition of ethnicity, color, citizenship, gender, and sexuality. A queer student may encounter difficulties in a classroom whose vast majority is cis, so a blog functions as a safe stress-free environment for that student or any other to choose or express their gender. Also, the definition - and even the explanation - in the classroom of a group other than the majority may cause confrontation and anxiety, so an educational blog is a less heated environment for a larger discussion, rather than utilizing standard definitions given by a 'normal' or 'classic' discourse of a language and a culture which leaves out everyday important and real expressions of the self. Finally, I will propose some more strategies of inclusive language in Portuguese language materials which I have been using in class and also from research for a future article.

Achieving Gender Equity through the Language Curriculum

Rana Raddawi, Franziska B Lys & Ragy H Ibrahim Mikhaeel

The Northwestern Buffet Institute for Global Affairs team has been working over a year on a project entitled "Gender Equity in Language Curricula." Our group, comprised of experts in language and education, has been undertaking research to investigate the role of language and gender in language curricula, addressing the question of whether language curricula contribute to the reinforcement of stereotypes and the perpetuation of gender discrimination. In particular, our research examines three areas and their potentials for advancing diversity and gender equity: the curriculum, the classroom environment, and the pedagogical methods used in class. Our ultimate goal is to create valuable resources, such as tangible teaching materials, interactive classroom practices, and pedagogical approaches including community connections, which will empower language instructors to approach the ongoing social phenomena of language, social justice, and gender equity with critical thinking, cultural scope and systemic intervention.

This presentation provides insight into the project's objectives and highlights some of the accomplishments attained during the past year.

As part of the ongoing project, our team conducted two surveys targeted at both language instructors and students. These surveys aimed to gauge their awareness regarding the significance of gender equity in both the curriculum and the classroom environment. Additionally, the surveys sought to understand the attitudes of teachers and learners towards the textbooks utilized in their classrooms. The findings indicated that while teachers acknowledge the importance of equitable gender representation in the material they teach, a significant majority expressed frustration with the textbooks. These materials were found to perpetuate gender biases and discrimination rather than reflecting the aspiration for gender inclusivity.

This presentation will illuminate the survey results and subsequently offer recommendations on leveraging language pedagogy to advance gender equity in education and beyond. It aims to deepen our comprehension of how language curricula either reinforce, exacerbate, or challenge cultural assumptions and stereotypes about gender.

This initiative seeks to facilitate dynamic and inclusive teaching practices within the classroom environment and language curricula.

Marking Gender in Spanish: On Creating an Open Educational Resource for Spanish Learners

Silvia Rivera Alfaro

In this presentation, I talk about the work-in-progress *Marking Gender in Spanish: A Guide to Language Learners* (<https://pressbooks.cuny.edu/spanishgender/>), which is an open educational resource (OER) for independent learners and also for Spanish teachers and professors. I started to develop this digital book as a response not only to the scarcity of openly available materials on the topic but also to the small number of materials about gender and language for the Spanish classroom in general. In this presentation, I reflect upon questions and decisions I have been making while developing this OER, by taking into consideration a glottopolitical approach, which implies considering the political in language and the linguistic in politics. For example, some of the questions that have guided the process are: What do we teach when we teach gender-inclusive language? Who should be the main audience of a resource like this? In what levels of Spanish could the content of this resource be used? What are the possible difficulties our students could encounter when facing language instructors or language speakers against gender-inclusive language? What should they know to be prepared for those situations? Additionally, I will present information on the sections of the book and some of the guiding concepts. For creating this OER, I take into consideration my previous experiences teaching Spanish as an additional language; my research on gender-inclusive language (e.g. Rivera Alfaro & Cuba, 2021; Rivera Alfaro, 2019; Martínez Rocha & Rivera Alfaro, 2019); the collective discussions of *Indisciplinadx: Feminist Linguistics* (linguisticafeminista.com), a digital community of practice I co-founded and have been co-leading since 2020; and the literature review on OER for Spanish, new publications for language teaching, and other resources on gender-inclusive language. I think of this presentation as an opportunity for feedback from an audience interested in the subject, and to connect with language teachers and professors who can take advantage of this material in their practice.

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Multi-Gender Hebrew: Creating a New Space in the Hebrew Language

Michal Shomer

Hebrew is a very gendered language - its verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and almost all words, have a grammatical gender - masculine or feminine. The masculine form is considered the generic form. This poses a challenge for a progressive society that wishes to be inclusive, and that aims to promote equality for women and non-binary people. In the past few years, the role of Hebrew in the struggle for gender equality has become part of the discussion in Israeli society and media. Research has shown that using the generic masculine form has a negative impact on girls and women and their chance to succeed in modern society.

Multi-Gender Hebrew is a new set of innovative all-inclusive Hebrew letters facilitating multi-gender reading and writing (HEB: עברית רב־מגדרית), created by designer Michal Shomer. Through typographic research, Shomer designed the new letters as a way to address the challenges in the Hebrew Language. “Standard” Hebrew forces you to choose between the feminine and masculine, not leaving much room for non-binary identities. With the new Multi-Gender Hebrew letters, a third option is introduced, adding a gender-neutral expression to the written language. Multi-Gender Hebrew makes women present in the Hebrew language and forms a linguistic space for non-binary identities.

Multi-Gender Hebrew consists of 12 new characters: 11 new letters and one Nikud sign. Each new letter is either composed of visual elements from two Hebrew letters in parallel, or is subtracting visual elements from a certain letter. In addition, a new digital keyboard was developed, which allows the user to type the new signs. A free version of Multi-Gender Hebrew was released in Feb 2021, accessible to all Hebrew speakers. Many institutions in Israel have already adopted the new letters, in signage, documents, educational materials, graphics, websites, media, and more. Many individuals are using the new letters, in poetry, prose, articles, personal use and so on.

Here's a link to Multi-Gender Hebrew's website (Hebrew), where users can explore the new letters and download the type & digital keyboard for free: multigenderhebrew.com.

Transgender Storytelling Workshops: A Discourse Analysis of Students' Attitudes Toward Transgender Individuals

Wei Yi Kimberly Tao

This paper examines the transformative potential of Transgender Storytelling (TGST) workshops, workshops that include transgender individuals to share their personal stories and Human Library that allows students to interact with transgender individuals, in changing Hong Kong college students' empathetic feelings toward transgender individuals. The paper focuses on understanding how the introduction of TGST workshops to college's gender and sexuality courses can influence students' empathetic feelings and attitudes about transgender individuals. By analyzing approximately 150 sets of pre- and post-workshop assignments, this paper employs discourse analysis approach to document and reflect the shifts in students' use of empathetic language, "prosocial" language resources, and the linguistic expression of their attitudes within pre- and post-workshop assignments related to (trans)gender-related topics. The study combines quantitative analysis based on linguistic dimensions related to attitude, emotions, and empathy from the LIWC-22 framework (Boyd et al., 2022) with qualitative discourse analysis informed by the Appraisal framework derived from Systemic Functional Linguistics (Martin & White, 2005). This multifaceted analysis aims to uncover the linguistic resources employed by students to express their changing attitudes and empathy before and after attending the workshops. The findings from this paper provide valuable insights into the role of the TGST workshop in eliciting empathetic change among students. They contribute to the design of sexuality education pedagogy and the development of an online corpus to systematically document the changing language uses when discussing (trans)gender topics over time. This paper highlights the need of fostering greater empathy and understanding of gender diversities in education while advocating for the promotion of inclusion and acceptance of transgender individuals. To achieve the outlined objectives, this paper argues for the significance of integrating storytelling elements into sexuality education (Plummer, 2015).

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The Gender-Fluid Student as a Second Language Learner

Ilan Yona

The difficulties faced by women and men, boys and girls who are on the gender spectrum, and their desire to escape from the social margins and integrate into mainstream society, arouse interest among different communities and professionals. Various artists also document the life and struggles of the gender fluid community (Zornitzer, 2022). This group wants to create a comprehensive discourse in which the body of reference to them will reflect the way they wish to identify. They want the language to be flexible in such a way that gender rules and vocabulary do not limit their imagination. My work examines how gender fluid graduate students experience and navigate university language classes. Do binary language learners create an identity in the target language that negates their fluid gender identity? Have these learners developed strategies to circumvent gender-biased language requirements, and are they able to create a coherent gender-free narrative? My work investigates whether changes in the language can happen in one direction, where the speakers of the language flex some of the rules of the language while obeying most others.

Researchers in various disciplines follow the struggle of transgender people to demonstrate their new identity (Norton, 2016, Knisely, 2020). This is sometimes a second identity, formed subsequent to an already formed first one (Breshtling, 2009), or one that is in a complex process of erasing the first identity to make room for a new one. Their desire to express their gender interpersonally in the target language occurs in isolation from the linguistic patterns they have heard or the intuitive language they have become accustomed to, and a culture that does not always manage to accommodate them.

Sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists follow the social processes of acceptance and rejection of members of the transgender and gender-fluid communities. Linguists in particular are divided into conservative and progressive groups. Both groups are interested in the new language created among this population in order to express itself. The conservative linguists are interested in protecting a language from the whims of fringe groups, including feminists who demand an egalitarian language (Duvnov, May 2022). The progressive linguists, by contrast, do not prescribe changes in the language but only seek to describe how it is changing, (Rosenthal, August 2022).

Hebrew, a Semitic language, is one of many that require its speakers to choose between male and female forms of pronouns, adjectives, and verbs, (Duvnov, May 2022). Hebrew does not allow grammatical structures that are ambiguous as to gender and forces speakers to define the gender of both speaker and addressee. This poses a problem for transgender speakers and gender-fluid people, and attempts by various bodies and individuals to create solutions have been unsuccessful. This question preoccupies researchers of gender, language, law and even the World Bank (Barashi, 2022). Many who teach binary languages also take an interest in this problem and its proposed solutions because of their relevance for the classroom. My work addresses these problems not just theoretically but also develops practical tools to solve them.

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