TESL Ontario Webinar: Language and Gender

Suggested Resources

Read (Scholarly Publications)

Mitchell, D. (1996). Teaching ideas: Approaching race and gender issues in the context of the

language arts classroom. *English Journal, 85*(8), 77-81. https://doi.org/10.2307/820049

Zavalkoff, A. (2002). Teaching the teachers: Confronting homophobia and heterosexism in

teacher education programs. *Journal of Lesbian Studies, 6*(3-4), 243–253.

https://doi.org/10.1300/J155v06n03_20

Listen (Podcasts)

Because Language (formerly Talk the Talk) Podcast episode 395: Outed or Misgendered (with

Cedar Brown). http://talkthetalkpodcast.com/395-outed-or-misgendered/

Lingthusiasm Podcast episode 43: The grammar of singular *they* - Interview with Kirby Conrod.

https://lingthusiasm.com/post/615600862742609920/lingthusiasm-episode-43-the-

grammar-of-singular

Slate: Lexicon Valley Podcast episode 142: The Rise of They

https://slate.com/human-interest/2018/08/singular-they-pronoun-john-mcwhorter-says-it-

s-time-to-embrace-it.html

Consult (Other Resources)

Beare, K. (2018, January 12). *Gender-inclusive language for language learners*. ThoughtCo.

https://www.thoughtco.com/gender-inclusive-language-for-english-learners-4048873

This site offers alternatives to vocabulary commonly used in the classroom.

Breaking News English. (2021, February 19). *Breaking News English lesson: Gender-neutral*

language. https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2102/210219-gender-neutral-language.html

This resource includes warm-up activities, vocabulary, and several core activities that might be
useful for beginner LINC levels as well as higher levels.

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Case, A. (n.d.). *Gender in the language classroom*. EnglishClub.

https://www.englishclub.com/efl/tefl-articles/gender/

This is a basic article, but it highlights how gender-inclusive language can be taught to all ages of students.

Green, E.R. & Maurer, L.M. (2015). *The teaching transgender toolkit*.

http://www.teachingtransgender.org/blog/

Resources for education and training about transgender people and issues. The Toolkit is not free, but there are many free lessons and resources on the website and in the Blog section, where this link will take you. You can see various topics that are used in workshops and awareness sessions and download a sample lesson.

Harbin, B. (2016). *Teaching beyond the gender binary in the university classroom*.

https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-beyond-the-gender-binary-in-the-university-

classroom/

A free online and downloadable guide for teaching about gender diversity in university-level classes. Important questions and templates for gender-sensitive introductory activities for the classroom are provided, as well as a useful glossary of current gender terminology.

The 519. (n.d.). *Creating authentic spaces: A gender identity and gender expression toolkit*.

https://www.the519.org/education-training/training-resources/our-resources/creating-

authentic-spaces

A downloadable set of resources for classrooms and workplaces with infographics about important transgender issues including pronoun use, being a supportive peer, and starting conversations.

Key Questions from Webinar Presentation

- What topics are we discussing or not discussing in class?

- What vocabulary are we teaching or not teaching?

- To whom are we directing our questions? (e.g. Do we tend to address questions about the household first or only to our female students? Are we conscious of alternatives when correcting errors [e.g. boyfriend/girlfriend]?)

- In our materials and in our classrooms, who speaks first? Last? Most?

- Is silence about gender and language strategic or defensive?

- Do we notice/hear/employ stereotypes based on a traditional gender binary or heteronormative framing?

Classroom Suggestions from Webinar Presentation

- Expose learners to non-normative language and experiences; model in teacher talk

- Teach pedagogically-sound neutral language (e.g. singular they) and a wider variety of vocabulary related to families and relationships

- Create a culture of conversation, shifting from "pedagogies of inclusion to pedagogies of inquiry" (Nelson, 2012, p. 84)

- Engage in critical analysis of materials by asking:

   o Is there a balance and variety of gender representation?

   o Is there bias?

   o Whose stories are shown? Who is absent?

Questions, Comments, and Suggestions from Webinar Chat

- In textbook dialogues, students often cannot identify male/female names from different cultures or languages
    - o Classroom strategies:
        - ▪ Engage the class in a discussion about common names in students' L1s and cultures that signify or indicate a particular gender. Sharing this information may help students identify names, or at least encourage a certain level of comfort when asking if the speaker is male, female, or non-binary
        - ▪ Discuss which names are associated with particular gender identities in the target culture so that students may be better equipped to interact in that culture's personal and professional contexts
        - ▪ Ask students if they can determine the gender from the language the characters use, and ask what made them decide on a particular gender
        - ▪ Assign Speaker "A", "B", "C", etc. instead of using names if they become a barrier to learning in a particular moment
- When teaching words for describing relationships, common collocations are "husband and wife", and "boyfriend or girlfriend"
    - o Classroom strategies:
        - ▪ Switch the order (e.g. "wife and husband")
        - ▪ Teach alternatives like "partner", "significant other", or "spouse"
- How can we be prepared to engage with students who have little previous experience with formal language education or who may have very different cultural norms and expectations around gender performance and reference?
    - o Educate ourselves about our students' sociocultural expectations, norms, and taboos when considering how to teach North American gender expectations. This could be done through various means (e.g. independent investigation, interactions with our students). This awareness will equip us with the knowledge and confidence when leading a potentially difficult discussion.

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