



Widening Participation

# Gender equality in English language teaching practice: A resource book for teacher education

Edited by Vander Viana and Aisling O'Boyle



This is a  
**TeachingEnglish**  
resource

An outcome of



In collaboration with



ISBN 978-1-915280-23-7

Published by the **British Council**

British Council

1 Redman Place

Stratford

London

E20 1JQ

2023

[www.teachingenglish.org.uk/publications/resource-books](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/publications/resource-books)

Copyright remains with the authors.

Citation:

Viana, V., & O'Boyle, A. (Eds.) (2023). *Gender equality in English language teaching practice: A resource book for teacher education*. British Council. Available online: [doi.org/10.57884/YA01-7913](https://doi.org/10.57884/YA01-7913)

# **Gender equality in English language teaching practice: A resource book for teacher education**

---

**Edited by Vander Viana and Aisling O'Boyle**

# Contents

<b>List of abbreviations</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Foreword</b> Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction</b> Transforming English language teacher education with gender equality Vander Viana and Aisling O’Boyle	<b>8</b>
<b>‘Gender-ing ELT’ research team</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1 Country profile: Bangladesh</b>	<b>14</b>
1.1 Towards gender equality: Breaking stereotypes together Tasnim Rahman	15
1.2 The importance of English language teachers to establish gender equality Mazharul Islam	18
1.3 Maintaining gender equality when I become a teacher Md. Shahinul Islam	20
<b>2 Country profile: Botswana</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1 Gender equality in the classroom: An English language student teacher’s perspective Barati Peolwane	22
2.2 Gender equality in education Kabalano Pelelekae	24
2.3 English language teaching and gender equality Dipuo Gare	26
<b>3 Country profile: Brazil</b>	<b>28</b>
3.1 Gender equality in class: Why does it matter? Luiza Barroso	29
3.2 Gender issues: My past as a student, my future as a teacher Ana Caroline Fernandes	32
3.3 Not only talking about gender: The bottom-up way Abner Costantino da Silva	34
<b>4 Country profile: China</b>	<b>36</b>
4.1 Teach them: It is wrong Mengtian Zhang	37
4.2 As teachers, have we really achieved gender equality? Yudi Guo	39
4.3 What does gender education mean for English language teachers? Yuxuan Jiang	42
<b>5 Country profile: Colombia</b>	<b>45</b>
5.1 From language teachers to promoters of change Santiago Salazar Valencia	46

5.2	ELT and gender equality Elían Londoño	48
5.3	Engaging gender and identity: A must in ELT practice Juan Jiménez	50
<b>6</b>	<b>Country profile: Indonesia</b>	<b>53</b>
6.1	The unfortunate gender inequality for female students Cynthia Apriska	54
6.2	The utopia of women and girls Muhammad Bayu Heri Permana	56
6.3	Women in education: Learn that we are not objects R. A. Lefiana Isnaeni Fajrin	58
<b>7</b>	<b>Country profile: Morocco</b>	<b>60</b>
7.1	How should teachers contribute to gender equality? Farah Chkarka	61
7.2	Gender issues in teaching Doha Baladi	63
7.3	Gender equality Mehrar Meriem	65
<b>8</b>	<b>Country profile: Philippines</b>	<b>66</b>
8.1	Gender performativity in a school setting Marvi Krisly Reyes	67
8.2	For anyone and everyone: Teachers as pursuers of equality Andrea Cecilia de Jesus	69
8.3	Anyone can carry chairs Natalie Rose Nieves	71
<b>9</b>	<b>Country profile: Ukraine</b>	<b>74</b>
9.1	Fighting gender inequality when teaching English Denys Kniaziev	75
9.2	Teaching gender equality in Ukraine Daria Nesterova	78
9.3	Small steps we can take Veronika Koval	80
<b>10</b>	<b>Country profile: Vietnam</b>	<b>82</b>
10.1	Gender equality starts within the classroom Trang Hoang	83
10.2	The dive: Exploring the depths of gender equality in the classroom Vũ Trọng Hiếu	85
10.3	Let him be him, her be her, and we are equal Anh Nguyen	90
	<b>Afterword</b> Gabriel Díaz Maggioli	<b>92</b>

# List of abbreviations

<b>CofP</b>	Community of practice
<b>CPD</b>	Continuous professional development
<b>ELT</b>	English language teaching
<b>ELTE</b>	English language teacher education
<b>LGBTQIA+</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and others
<b>MMORPG</b>	Massively multiplayer online role-playing games
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>US</b>	United States

# Foreword

**Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka – she/her**

(Johannesburg, South Africa)

Teachers are located in the space that prepares future generations for the world of work and for life in general. If teachers are not sensitised, chances are that the students will all be insensitive. Our languages in general reflect the dominance of patriarchy, and the changes we have begun to see in the use of language is only work in progress.

It is important for all the teachers responsible for English language teaching to help with the adoption of language that does not undermine or discriminate against women or men, girls or boys and all other genders. It is important to give the students the language to build gender equality. Often we talk about the number of women who are experiencing gender-based violence and we do not speak about the number of men who are perpetrators of violence against women. This use of language fails to highlight those who must be held accountable – in this case, men. It also does not direct society to the culprits who need to be challenged and directed to change. The choices we make in our spoken and written language can direct us to equality.

Teachers are able to reach large numbers of students who can be directed to think about these issues. The English language, unlike other languages such as my own, which is IsiZulu, has the vocabulary that can help us express and nuance the gender dynamics. It is also a language that is spoken by a considerable number of people in the world. We welcome this book and the diversity of authors who have highlighted the opportunities that English language teachers have towards influencing the thinking and the use of expressions by the incoming generations. It is further appreciated that the book will be online and accessible to teachers and will also be useful even to those teachers who are not English teachers.

*Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka is former United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women. She was awarded a doctorate in Technology and Education from Warwick University. She has authored several scholarly articles and other opinion pieces. She is a Hauser Leader at the Harvard Kennedy School's Center for Public Leadership. She became a Member of Parliament, Deputy Minister of Department of Trade and Industry, Minister of Minerals and Energy, and finally, as Deputy President of South Africa in 2005 to 2008, Dr Mlambo-Ngcuka worked tirelessly on programmes and policies to reduce inequality. As the Head of the UN Women, she has been a global advocate for women and girls. She established initiatives such as the HeForShe for men and boys to address gender equality. She also successfully mobilized a historic \$40 billion USD for women and girls around the world. She is a founder and leader of Umlambo Foundation, which is dedicated to the improvement of education and digital literacy training for educators.*

# Introduction

## Transforming English language teacher education with gender equality

**Vander Viana – he/him**  
(Edinburgh, Scotland)

**Aisling O’Boyle – she/her**  
(Belfast, Northern Ireland)

Greater worldwide demand for speakers of English, an international language (e.g. Crystal, 2003), has translated into a need for a higher number of professionals who are qualified to teach this language. English language teacher education (ELTE) has responded to this need and expanded in various contexts across the world. In the United Kingdom (UK), a popular study destination internationally, there are more than 140 Master’s courses in English language teaching (ELT) or similar denominations (see Copland et al., 2017). The number of those seeking a professional qualification in ELT is not restricted to Master’s courses or to English-speaking countries. In Brazil, for example, there were more than 99,000 students enrolled in a Bachelor’s degree program with an English language component – either as a single or a joint degree – in 2021 (see Gimenez & Viana, 2021).

The present book contributes to a reconceptualization of ELTE by drawing teacher educators’ and student teachers’ attention to the importance of embedding gender equality in ELT from an early stage of professional development – namely, at the initial teacher education stage. It is true that ELTE has to fulfill several pressing requirements such as (i) developing future teachers’ English language proficiency, (ii) advancing future teachers’ knowledge of learning and teaching, (iii) enhancing future teachers’ classroom management skills and (iv) promoting future teachers’ context sensitivity. However, these requirements are fully compatible with work on gender equality. For example, the reading and listening texts used to support language proficiency development can focus on gender equality topics. In addition, work on gender equality cannot be disassociated from classroom practices, classroom management skills or teachers’ context sensitivity. ELT methods and approaches need to give due consideration to different genders, and teachers need to be able to address discrimination, inequalities and gender-related issues in the classroom (e.g. gender-based bullying).

*Gender equality in English language teaching practice: A resource book for teacher education* is one of the outcomes of the research project ‘Gender-ing ELT: International perspectives, practices, policies’ (see <https://www.uea.ac.uk/groups-and-centres/gender-ing-elt>), funded by the British Council through its Widening Participation Grant. The project focused on the socially relevant contribution that ELT can make towards United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of woman and girls. This was primarily achieved by investigating the perspectives and practices of six key stakeholder groups: school pupils and their parents, school leaders, teachers, teacher educators and student teachers in ten countries designated as in receipt of official development assistance – Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, China, Colombia, Indonesia, Morocco, the Philippines, Ukraine and Vietnam. The project additionally researched the local and national policy contexts of some of these countries in order to understand better how macro-level matters facilitate or stand in the way of promoting gender equality.

Since the early stages of the ‘Gender-ing ELT’ research conceptualization, it was clear that there would be strong stakeholder engagement in the project. This was an integral part of the team’s commitment to research: it was important to contribute to the communities who so generously agreed to help the project by answering questionnaires, participating in interviews, writing reflective essays, preparing pedagogical activities and/or providing access to relevant policy documents. Out of conversations with academic and non-academic colleagues, it became clear that the preparation of an open-access book that could be used in different ELTE



contexts would be a much-needed resource. This need was reinforced by the research project findings: participants identified the lack of resources as one of the barriers to including gender equality in their practice. The present book therefore contributes to an important shift in ELTE, which focuses on redressing inequalities and addresses a practical gap in the existing ELTE resources.

*Gender equality in English language teaching practice* stands as a clear example of a successful research-practice link. It draws on the databank of essays that were submitted to the 'Gender-ing ELT' research project by student teachers undertaking a university course in English language or English language education. These university student teachers were asked to write a reflective essay containing a minimum of 500 words in response to the following question: 'As a future (or current) English language teacher, should your practice contribute to gender equality?' Participants were provided with a short contextual note about United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5; however, they were entirely free to choose the focus of their essays, and reflections on any gender were welcomed. The reflective nature of the essay was highlighted in meetings with the project team overseeing the data collection in each of the ten participating countries and was emphasized in the written guidance provided to participants. Student teachers were encouraged to consider their own experiences as language students and/or as language teachers.

More than 550 essays were received from all the ten project countries, and three essays were selected from each country to be included in this book. Essay selection was guided by ten criteria, prioritizing aspects such as a focus on gender topics, a high level of personal reflection, the relevance of the essay content to teacher education – especially to ELTE – and the author's critical awareness of contextual matters. Those submitting essays were free to decide whether they wanted their essays to be considered for publication and whether they wanted to have their authorship identified. It should be noted that approximately 80 student teachers who submitted their essays for research purposes did not want their texts to be considered for potential inclusion in this book, probably due to the rather personal nature of their reflections.

The essays in this book are organized in country-specific sections, representing the ten countries in the 'Gender-ing ELT' research project. These countries exemplify a range of contexts in terms of geographical locations (i.e. Asia, Africa, America and Europe), levels of official development assistance (i.e. from a 'least developed country' like Bangladesh to an 'upper-middle income country' like China), official languages (e.g. Bengali in Bangladesh, Ukrainian in Ukraine), English language statuses and proficiency levels (e.g. Botswana where English is an official language vs. Colombia where English is an additional language), and gender gaps (e.g. Morocco where the gender gap still requires extensive effort to be addressed).

Each country-specific section follows the same structure. Readers are first provided with a country profile, which contains general information about the country (e.g. its type of government), some geographical information (e.g. continent and capital city), and a language overview (e.g. official language and status of English language). This country profile aims to help readers understand the context in which the essays were written. Detailed country profiles are available on the 'Gender-ing ELT' website for those who wish to learn more about the contexts of the ten project countries for the period in which the project took place (see <https://www.uea.ac.uk/groups-and-centres/gender-ing-elt>). Three essays per country follow each country profile.<sup>1</sup>

The country-specific sections give prominence to the context in which the student teachers wrote their essays. As is clear in the reflective essays, the notion of countries is just a point of departure for the authors. The reflections are certainly context-specific in some cases, but they all have the potential to resonate in several

---

1. The essays have been edited for clarity of expression for an international readership, but the authors have been consulted on the edits. The authors' views, perspectives and experiences have been prioritized in the editing process; and the authors have been explicitly asked to reference any ideas that are not originally theirs, thus following the usual academic conventions. The editors have endeavored to ensure compliance with academic integrity practices, and the authors have confirmed that the work submitted for publication is originally theirs.

other country contexts. This means that there is much to share, and it highlights the appeal of the present book in ELTE contexts worldwide. The essays also show us that there is still much to do to shift inequalities wherever we are on the globe.

Several of the essays discuss gender equality, especially with a focus on women and girls as in United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5 and the 'Gender-ing ELT' research project. However, as participants were free to interpret the question in different ways, other gender-related topics and gender identities are considered in the essays, thus adding to the diversity of the present book.

With a view to encouraging the use of this book in English language teacher education, the essays have been supplemented with three types of suggested activities: pre-reading reflection, post-reading discussion and practical tasks. These activities are wide in scope, and they may be undertaken by teacher educators and student teachers in all country contexts.

- **Pre-reading reflection:** The questions included in this section stimulate readers to consider relevant matters individually before they read each of the essays. These questions invite readers to activate their prior knowledge (e.g. their understanding of key concepts), to ponder existing practices in their countries (e.g. gender-based societal expectations), or to think about their own language learning/teaching experiences (e.g. their lived educational practices of gender-related matters).
- **Post-reading discussion:** This section contains questions that are open to consideration and debate. These are best set as group discussions amongst student teachers so that they can bring their different perspectives to the fore and learn from and with one another. The intention in these discussions is to consider solutions that are strengthened by a plurality of perspectives.
- **Practical tasks:** These tasks can be set as either individual work or as group work for student teachers to complete and, if possible, report back to the entire class. Different from the previous two sections, this one contains suggestions for projects where student teachers have to engage in active learning and conduct some small-scale research in their respective contexts.

As indicated earlier, the activities are merely *suggestions* for teacher educators and student teachers. They have been proposed because participants in the 'Gender-ing ELT' research project acknowledged their difficulty in preparing activities that could be used in their ELTE classes. These three types of suggested activities provide initial suggestions for the embedding of gender equality in ELTE. As with any pedagogical activity, it is up to practitioners to decide on the necessary adaptation needed for their specific pedagogical contexts and for their specific groups of students.

The book has been organized in such a way to allow for different types of reading. It may be read in one or several sittings; and it may be read in its entirety, by country-specific sections or by dipping in to read individual essays. These different types of reading help to increase the ways in which teacher educators and student teachers can use the book. Some of these ways are briefly listed below.

- **Adopting the book as core reading for one of their modules, teacher educators can:**
  - ask student teachers to write their own reflective essays before they are introduced to the book;
  - assign the reading of one essay per student teacher and ask each student teacher to report their learning to the class;
  - assign the reading of one essay as a homework task at the end of every class, and set some time in the following class for students to engage in the suggested post-reading discussion;
  - use each country-specific section to set up different stations in their classes so that student teachers learn about the reflections of writers from different countries;

- choose one or more of the practical tasks for students to undertake as a small-group project or as a class project;
  - assign one of the practical tasks as formative or summative assessment for student teachers to complete;
  - use one essay (or a few) as the springboard for discussion in a conversation class;
  - use the essays included in the book as input for language teaching (e.g. coherence, cohesion, reflective writing).
- **Using the book for self-study, student teachers can:**
    - read the entire book, completing the pre-reading reflection questions;
    - read the essays written by students from a single country, identifying the similarities/differences across the reflective essays;
    - read the essays written by students from a country other than theirs, noting how their experiences relate to those reported by the authors;
    - create a study group with some peers to read the essays and engage in the suggested discussion questions and practical tasks;
    - read some or all essays as a form of inspiration for the writing of their own reflective essays.

As one of the outcomes of the 'Gender-ing ELT' research project, *Gender equality in English language teaching practice: A resource book for teacher education* has only come to fruition due to the involvement of numerous colleagues. We are therefore grateful for the contribution of the following stakeholders:

- the university students who generously decided to dedicate some of their time to the writing of reflective essays and who decided to submit these essays for research and, in most cases, publication purposes;
- the authors of the selected essays who responded so positively and promptly to the editing queries and who revised their essays for an international readership;
- the research team in each of the ten project countries as well as the UK (see page 13);
- the numerous academic and non-academic in-country supporters who helped to publicize the essay collection amongst university students;
- the two colleagues – Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Dr Gabriel Díaz Maggioli – who kindly agreed to write the foreword and the afterword despite their busy agendas; and
- the British Council for the funding that made it possible to conduct the underpinning research which led to this book.

We would also like to thank you, the reader, for having downloaded this book. We would be most grateful if you could provide us with feedback on this publication. For example, we would very much like to find out what you particularly liked about the book, how you have used this book and how helpful it is in your specific context. You can share your feedback with us by e-mailing [gender-ing.ELT@ed.ac.uk](mailto:gender-ing.ELT@ed.ac.uk).

We hope that this book will be extensively used internationally as a way of bringing gender equality to the ELTE classroom and of raising student teachers' awareness of the need to embed gender equality in their future ELT practice. Echoing Liberali (2017, p. 190), '[o]ur roles as teachers and teacher educators are to contribute to the development of a multilingual education in a superdiverse perspective, which goes against the oppressive restrictions of our present reality'. We therefore also hope that the book will facilitate a grassroots change in

ELTE where socially relevant matters are brought to the fore and where ELTE makes a significant and meaningful impact on sustainable development and equality matters.

**Dr Vander Viana** is Senior Lecturer in Language Education at the Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh. He has extensive expertise in language education, having taught English language, educated future language teachers and supervised researchers in the field. Dr Viana has published widely on his areas of research expertise, which include English language (teacher) education, corpus linguistics, and academic/pedagogic discourse analysis. He has a track record of externally funded research projects aimed at social sustainability and is experienced in leading large international research teams.

**Dr Aisling O'Boyle** is Senior Lecturer and Director of the Centre for Language Education Research at Queen's University Belfast. Her research focuses on relationships between dialogue and education, with methodological interests in corpus linguistics and discourse analysis. Her applied research in English Language Education engages with the socially embedded nature of language teaching; including gender equality matters and community language education programs for adults, young people, and children from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds.

## References

Copland, F., Viana, V., Bowker, D., Moran, E., Papageorgiou, I., & Shapira, M. (2017). *ELT Master's courses in the UK: Students' expectations and experiences*. British Council. [https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/Pub\\_ELTRA\\_H093\\_ELT\\_UK\\_Masters\\_courses\\_student\\_expectationsED.pdf](https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/Pub_ELTRA_H093_ELT_UK_Masters_courses_student_expectationsED.pdf)

Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge.

Gimenez, T., & Viana, V. (2021). *Professoras e professores de inglês no Brasil: Retratos de uma profissão a partir do Censo Escolar e do Censo da Educação Superior [English language teachers in Brazil: Snapshots of a profession from the Brazilian School and Higher Education Censuses]*. British Council. <https://www.inglesnasescolas.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ResumoExecutivo-InglesNoBrasil-ObservatorioELT2021.pdf><sup>2</sup>

Liberali, F. C. (2017). Globalization, superdiversity, language learning and teacher education in Brazil. In D. L. Banegas (Ed.), *Initial English language teacher education: International perspectives on research, curriculum and practice* (pp. 177–191). Bloomsbury.

---

2. This publication has been translated to English, and the translation can be accessed at [https://www.inglesnasescolas.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Executivo\\_Summary\\_Observatory.pdf](https://www.inglesnasescolas.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Executivo_Summary_Observatory.pdf).

# 'Gender-ing ELT' research team

## Principal investigators

Dr Vander Viana (University of Edinburgh, Scotland)

Dr Aisling O'Boyle (Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland)

## Case-study investigators

Dr Danielle de Almeida Menezes (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

Dr Sibonile Edith Ellece (University of Botswana, Botswana)

Dr Udi Samanhudi (Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Indonesia)

## Researchers

Prof Anna Chesnokova (Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Ukraine)

Prof Fatima Sadiqi (ISIS Center for Women and Development, Morocco)

Dr Gina Lontoc (University of Santo Tomas, Philippines)

Ms Gulnazar Begum (Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland)

Dr Hang Nguyen (University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam)

Dr Teresita Sevilla (Pontifical Xavierian University – Cali, Colombia)

Ms Yan Wen (Shenzhen University, China)

## Senior advisor

Prof Anna Robinson-Pant (University of East Anglia, England)

## Research associate

Dr Gulsah Kutuk (University of Portsmouth, England)

## Research assistants

Mr Elmakki Amiri (Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Morocco)

Ms Florence Nwaefuna (University of Botswana, Botswana)

Mr Haiqin Wu (Shenzhen University, China)

Ms Hannah-Gazelle Gabrielle Ponce (University of Santo Tomas, Philippines)

Mr Hesam Sadeghian (Pontifical Xavierian University – Cali, Colombia)

Ms Mariana Nunes Monteiro (Pedro II School and Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

Ms Nika Marushchak (Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Ukraine)

Ms Pamela Joy Mercado (University of Santo Tomas, Philippines)

Ms Rahmi Amalia (Universitas Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa, Indonesia)

Dr Ranjit Podder (Government Teachers' Training College, Bangladesh)

Mr Tung Vu (University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam)

Ms Via Allison Del Rosario (University of Santo Tomas, Philippines)

## Section 1

# Country profile Bangladesh

### General profile

Official name	People's Republic of Bangladesh
Etymology	'The name – a compound of the Bengali words 'Bang-la' (Bengal) and 'desh' (country) – means "Country of Bengal"***
Independence	16 December 1971 from Pakistan
Government type	Parliamentary republic

### Geographical profile

Continent	Southern Asia
Capital city	Dhaka
Area	148,460 sq km*

### Linguistic profile

Official language(s)	Bengali**
Languages	42 (All living)**
English language status	Developing**3

### Sources

\**The World Factbook 2022*

\*\**Ethnologue*

3. 'The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.' (Ethnologue, 2022)

## Pre-reading reflection

- When did you first hear about the expression 'gender equality'? Do you remember the context in which it was used? What did it mean in that context?
- Thinking about the place where you live, what are the different expectations that society has for girls/women and boys/men?

## Essay (1.1)

### Towards gender equality: Breaking stereotypes together

**Tasnim Rahman – she/her**

(Dhaka, Bangladesh)

'Gender equality' is a buzzword which we have been hearing about for a couple of decades. The government is working on it, the media is publishing supplements focusing on this matter, international organizations are constantly talking about it. However, have we been able to make it a reality?

Women and girls represent half of the world's population. But, everywhere, there is discrimination against them, which begins even before their birth. Parents, grandparents and many other relatives eagerly wait to meet a baby boy as a new family member. In the case of baby girls, after their birth, even though they are not buried alive in this modern world, they face disparity in almost every possible way – even from their own parents.

They cannot eat whatever they want as girls do not happen to have a choice of eating! They cannot wear their favourite dresses because, if they look beautiful or attractive, they may be victims of undesirable events like teasing, violence, etc., which can bring dishonour upon their family. But nothing will happen to the perpetrators!

These restrictions continue only to rise as girls grow older. The restrictions become more apparent after their adolescence when the time comes to make bigger decisions in their lives like a higher education degree, a job, and marriage. Whether girls will continue their studies or not, whether they will have jobs or not, which jobs they will do, at which age or whom they will marry – everything will be decided by their family members but not by themselves! However, the problems do not end here. After surpassing all the difficulties and having a job, women are paid less for doing the same work done by their male counterparts.

Many women in our society are not allowed to work outside the home after their marriage, and they are expected to quit their jobs owing to their husbands' veto. They spend their valuable time doing all the household chores, which eventually remains unpaid and unrecognized.

For how long will these situations be allowed to continue? Will it be possible for our society and our world to move forward any further despite the current gender inequality? Unfortunately, it will not. In that case, how can we improve this situation? Is it really possible to make the dream of a gender equal world become a reality only by a single person or organization? No! As it is not a discrete problem but a social one, the responsibility falls on all of us to bring it to an end. Everyone in the society should play their own role to uproot this anathema for our own wellbeing. And I am not an exception.

As a future English language teacher, I think I should do something from my end. Being a woman, I have some similar stories of my own. I cannot ever forget some of the events of my life – even today. It may seem very normal to many. But, to me, it is still so heart-breaking! So, I want my students to be prepared to face boldly this inhumane world and its hard rules towards women.

I can recall an incident in my life. Our college was co-ed. One day, a male classmate of mine took some photos of me with another boy sitting beside me in the class. The room was full that day, and we were all sitting around a round table. He uploaded those photos on a social media platform, and he, along with his friends, made fun of the photos. I complained to my teacher about it. But my teacher found no guilt there as he said he saw me talking to one of my male classmates (not that one sitting beside me) several times. Moreover, he questioned me on whether I was having a relationship with that boy. I answered with a 'no'.

However, my teacher went on supporting those boys saying that it is normal to behave like that with a girl if she talks to a guy that much. Furthermore, it caught me by bigger surprise when my parents completely agreed with my teacher and started continuously lashing out at me, asking whether I was sent to the class to learn or to meet boys. Afterwards, it became quite impossible for me to move freely on the college premises as they always laughed and whistled at me. I was the loser, and they were the winners. It was I who had to confine myself to the bench in the class for the whole time I was in college.

I heard another case from one of my closest friends. Some girls were walking past a senior class, and the boys in that class started whistling at them. They complained to the teachers, but the teachers asked them why they had gone there.

These examples show that teachers do not play a neutral role in dealing with their students. Rather, they have indirectly approved of the behaviour of their male students from a very early age, which only becomes more aggressive over time.

I have a plan to take a few steps to achieve a gender equal world.

1. I will always try to be gender neutral in my future class. This means to treat both male and female students equally and to give them equal opportunities to represent themselves in class.
2. Not only will I encourage girls to remain aware of their lives, wishes and careers, but I will also talk to boys about gender discrimination. Both men and women are created by the same God, and they cannot be treated differently only because of their physical difference.
3. I will ask my male students to put themselves in the girls' shoes and think how they want to be treated. Does it seem fair to be treated in the way girls are?
4. I will not ask boys to see all girls like their sisters. Because boys who do not treat girls other than their sisters fairly are not respectful to their female family members either. It's not a matter of behaving well only with sisters but with all human beings.
5. I will encourage my female students not to compromise their careers in any way. I believe that it is only the financial independence that can make women really empowered.
6. Girls should be more confident about what they do. Whatever they do, there will always be some people who find fault and blame them. But it is high time for girls to judge their own activities based on their education, religion, norms and ethics.
7. I can never forget the undesirable incidents in my life and the reactions I got from my near and dear ones, including my teachers. As a teacher, I will never allow my female students to be humiliated by my male students that way.

Finally, I would like to note that the gender bias we have been practicing is undermining our social fabric and is devaluing all of us. It is a tremendous waste of the world's human potential. We all have to keep in mind that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Political, economic and social equality for women will benefit not only women themselves but all people. And it is our duty to eradicate all the prejudices and work for equal rights and respect for all.



## Post-reading discussion

- Tasnim Rahman's essay reports an issue with pictures of her and a boy being uploaded to social media without due consent. What could you do in your English language classroom to help prevent this from happening?
- Which of the seven suggestions in Tasnim Rahman's plan do you consider the easiest to implement in your classes? Which is the most challenging one? Why?

## Practical tasks

- Which organizations in your country are working towards gender equality?
- Is any of their work linked to English language classrooms?
  - If so, what are they doing?
  - If not, what can be done?

## Pre-reading reflection

- What is your understanding of 'gender' and 'sex'?
- When you were at school, were you ever taught (directly or indirectly) about gender equality?

## Essay (1.2)

### The importance of English language teachers to establish gender equality

**Mazharul Islam – he/him**

(Dhaka, Bangladesh)

Gender is not something we are born with, and it is not something we possess. Basically, gender describes the socially-constructed roles and responsibilities that societies consider appropriate for men and women. According to the World Health Organization, gender refers to the characteristics of men, women, girls and boys that are socially constructed. Gender is the social elaboration of biological sex.

Females represent half of the population in the world. Globally, women have fewer opportunities than men to participate in the economy, to access basic and higher education and to be represented politically. The world will be better if we can ensure women's and men's equal participation in every sector.

To ensure gender equality, we must experience and practice it from the beginning of our education. Textbook stereotypes are an almost invisible barrier to equality in education and to the realization of girls' full potential. These stereotypes can affect girls' school performance, self-dignity and career choice. The curriculum must therefore include gender equality content. English teachers can also play a key role in the classroom to introduce the importance of gender equality to students so that the latter can realize that gender discrimination is a social disorder. In the classroom, students observe the teacher closely. If the teacher emphasizes the equal valuing of both men and women through classroom activities, it will have a positive effect on the students, propelling them to practice gender equality.

In my opinion, English language teachers can play an important role in implementing gender equality by providing gender education in the classroom. They should use gender-friendly teaching aids or instructional materials to establish a gender-friendly environment in the classroom. If English language teachers want to use role-plays to discuss any topic, they should ensure that both male and female students take part in the role-play. This kind of classroom activity can help students to have a gender-friendly attitude outside the classroom as well.

In my classroom, there are always two captains – one male and one female – to represent the class. And the teacher involves girls and boys equally while assigning class work. These practices create gender-friendly relationships between boys and girls. In my classroom, boys and girls have equal opportunities in different curricular activities. The girls in the classroom do not lag; they participate in various activities with eagerness.

I think gender equality should be practiced among children from the very beginning of their lives – maybe it can start from primary education. This will give the new generations a clear idea about gender, and, in the future, we will be able to develop a gender-friendly nation where there will be no risk for females to participate in social activities. They will be able to contribute to the development of society.

A child is like clay, and teachers can shape the child in any form. If we can start practicing gender equality in the English language classroom by including gender-related content in textbooks, it will help to establish gender equality in society.

## Post-reading discussion

- How do (will) you group students in your English language classes (e.g. by sex, by gender, by names, by ability)? Why do (will) you do so?
- Mazharul Islam argues that ‘gender equality should be practiced among children from the beginning of their lives – maybe it can start from primary education’. How can you do so in your current and/or future classes?

## Practical tasks

- In your teaching context, is the English language curriculum set at national, regional, local or school level?
- Does this curriculum make any references to gender equality?
  - If so, in what way is gender equality included in English language curriculum?
  - If not, how could gender equality be included in the curriculum?

## Pre-reading reflection

- Have you ever considered the inclusion of gender equality in your English language teaching practice? What exactly have you thought of doing?
- Have you ever seen teachers dealing with the topic of gender equality in the English language classroom? If so, what did they do?

## Essay (1.3)

### Maintaining gender equality when I become a teacher

**Md. Shahinul Islam – he/him**

(Dhaka, Bangladesh)

Combined efforts of men and women are essential to develop a country. It is not possible for only men to do all the work; equal participation of women is necessary. This requires a concerted effort – the main obstacle to which is gender discrimination in a developing country like Bangladesh.

If we want to build a happy, creative and beautiful world, we have to establish gender equality. This concept refers to the equality between men and women in society, including their needs, rights, privileges and responsibilities. Gender equality is very important for social and state development.

The best place to establish gender equality is in educational institutions, and teachers are the best craftspeople to do it. Students must be able to interact with both genders, and it is also important that they have a good relationship with all classmates and staff.

As I am an undergraduate student of Education, there is every possibility that I will be a teacher at secondary-level schools. As a teacher, I will have an ideal opportunity to ensure gender equality and good relationships in my classrooms through very simple but effective practice. I have the opportunity to deal with the students as human beings – not as boys or girls. Every person has the right to meet their expectations. In the classroom, first of all, I will always use gender-neutral language and will avoid stereotyping children. I will try to encourage the school staff to devise a gender-equality policy that promotes gender-neutral language. I will give both boys and girls the chance to choose their preferable pronouns. These should not be limited to individuals' biological identities. I will try to mix up the boys and girls in different activities like group and pair work. By creating a seating diagram, I will break up boys-only or girls-only groups and will encourage both boys and girls to engage with each other. I will also encourage the quietest students to answer questions. Both male and female students will be encouraged to participate in all types of sports.

Finally, as a teacher, I will have a great opportunity to establish gender equality in the school and thus in society. Not only I but also all of us should take better steps to establish gender equality. Without combined efforts, we cannot develop our society and the way we live. We have to prepare children for the changing world where traditional ways of thinking about male and female roles will no longer exist.

## Post-reading discussion

- Md. Shahinul Islam writes that '[t]he best place to establish gender equality is in educational institutions'. What arguments would you present to justify this point?
- How feasible would it be for you to allow your English language students to choose the pronouns they want others to use when referring to them?

## Practical tasks

- What policies does your educational institution have?
- Are any of these policies concerned with gender-related matters?
  - If so, which gender-related matters are considered in these policies?
  - If not, what points would you include in a newly devised or a revised policy aimed at ensuring gender equality?

## Section 2

# Country profile Botswana

### General profile

Official name	Republic of Botswana
Etymology	'The name Botswana means "Land of the Tswana" – referring to the country's major ethnic group'*
Independence	30 September 1966 from the United Kingdom
Government type	Parliamentary republic

### Geographical profile

Continent	Southern Africa
Capital city	Gaborone
Area	581,730 sq km*

### Linguistic profile

Official language(s)	English, Setswana**
Languages	32 (Living = 31 + Extinct = 1)**
English language status	National***4

### Sources

\**The World Factbook 2022*

\*\**Ethnologue*

4. 'The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at the national level.' (Ethnologue, 2022)

## Pre-reading reflection

- What do you understand by 'gender sensitivity'?
- Have you ever witnessed instances of gender discrimination? Who were the victims of such discrimination?

## Essay (2.1)

### Gender equality in the classroom: An English language student teacher's perspective<sup>5</sup>

**Barati Peolwane – she/her**  
(Mochudi, Botswana)

For far too long in African countries, including Botswana, males and females were labelled or suffered from discriminatory beliefs based on their gender. Though gender equality has been advocated for quite some time, it has not been established yet. Young people still use expressions like 'monna ga a lele' (i.e. 'a man cannot cry even if he is pained') and 'ga nke di etellwa pele ke manamagadi' (i.e. 'a herd is never led by a female,' which translates to the gendered understanding that women cannot be leaders). Hence teachers or facilitators should incorporate distinguished ways to address gender equality in their teaching. These ways can be teaching learners about gender sensitivity, using gender-neutral language when need be, grouping students during class activities and getting feedback from the students.

Since the beginning of my teaching practice, I prefer emphasizing gender sensitivity over gender equality. This is because gender equality speaks for both males and females; however, the sensitivity of males is often regarded as a weakness and does not thus fit with a stereotypical nature of being male. Gender sensitivity is the awareness, understanding and appreciation of what others believe and do without expecting them to act in certain ways because they are male or female. Botswana men usually get backlash if they express their emotions; they are thus deemed weak or not manly enough. This has affected many men emotionally and mentally: they never show their feelings when hurt or wronged. This is why I try to sensitise my students to mind what they say to one another and to avoid imposing their beliefs on others.

Using gender-neutral language can also work in order to incorporate gender equality in the English language class. Examples of words that one can avoid using are 'policeman' or 'chairman'. One can instead use words like 'police officer', 'chairperson', 'head' and 'executive'. The use of these words can prevent one from being viewed as sexist, and it also instils a sense of not being gender biased on students.

Teachers employ various methods to help learners understand what is taught. Grouping students can be part of the strategies that teachers use to help promote gender equality. Teachers can mix males and females in groups to avoid the same gender flocking to one group. This way, they will be able to adapt to how every individual works and develop their teamwork skills. This type of grouping avoids segregation amongst learners and promotes learners' sense of belonging.

Working with different people requires constant evaluation. This is why lately I have been pondering on ways to gather feedback from individual learners on how they feel about the way people within the school (students, teachers and non-teaching staff) treat them. I have been asking learners – more specifically male ones – their opinions of how they are treated compared to female students. Also, at times, I ask for feedback from all students in the classes I teach how I treated them, what I can do to improve, and what I

5. I have consulted the following websites in preparation for the present essay:  
<https://believe.earth/en/how-to-educate-children-for-gender-equality/>;  
<https://east.dpsbangalore.edu.in/teaching-your-child-gender-sensitivity/>; and  
<https://www.teachthought.com/education/promote-gender-equality/>.

should avoid doing when teaching. This way, I can provide better support to the students, reinforce gender sensitivity, and instil gender equality to everyone.

In order to address gender equality issues in the teaching of English as a second language or any other subject, it is ideal for teachers to impart knowledge on gender sensitivity. This way, students can become aware of these issues and change their expectations of others. Most importantly, they should be taught not to dispute other people's views on how things work.

### Post-reading discussion

- In your context, what can you do to increase your students' gender sensitivity?
- How comfortable would you be to implement Barati Peolwane's suggestion to gather your students' feedback on the way school staff members treat students from different genders? How would you gather this feedback? How would you communicate this feedback to relevant school stakeholders?

### Practical tasks

- Barati Peolwane provides some examples of gender-neutral language items in English.
  - Read the documents which guide English language teachers' practice in the context where you (will) work.
  - Identify what these documents state about the use of gender-neutral language in the classroom.
  - Evaluate the guidance provided.

## Pre-reading reflection

- At school, who did you use to sit beside? Was this person from the same gender as you or from a different gender? What did you see as the advantage(s) of sitting beside this person? In hindsight, can you think of any opportunities that you may have missed out on by sitting beside this person?
- Are you aware of any practices or policies in your country which have historically discriminated or currently discriminate against one gender (e.g. women not having the right to education)?

## Essay (2.2)

### Gender equality in education

**Kabalano Pelelekae – she/her**  
(Molopolole, Botswana)

Gender equality can be defined as a situation where every person has the same rights and equal opportunities to grow and prosper regardless of their gender. In most African societies, gender equality remains impossible because of different social values. One of the mandates for English language teachers should include a huge contribution to gender equality. Gender equality is important because it builds a nation, ensures education for all, removes gender stereotypes and ensures fairness in teaching.

English language teachers should work towards gender equality as it can build a nation. It is very important that teachers of English understand that, if both boys and girls hold the same positions in school, they become better people in the future who respect and treat each other equally. Language is a very powerful tool that is used to convey messages – hence using language to raise students' awareness of gender equality can help mould the behaviour of students so that they can grow into better adults that respect other people and their boundaries. The social stigma that exists amongst people continues to hinder countries from reaching their full potential. One example is the fact that women sometimes are not given a chance to carry leadership positions because there is an untruthful generalization that women are weak. In order to build a fair nation, gender equality education should begin in schools. Both men and women should be given the same opportunities and be allowed to work in all segments together.

Gender equality helps to ensure education for all. In the past, there were practices in Tswana traditions that denied girls the rights to education. Practices such as early marriages prohibited girls going to schools because they had to learn how to take care of their families and husbands while boys went to school. As an English language teacher, it is one's duty to sensitize students to the fact that such practices are a sign of the past. Times have changed. Now women can get the education that they deserve, pursue their passions, and work hard to support their families. This in turn helps the country's economy grow faster because, if both men and women are educated, it provides employers with a pool of successful and qualified candidates for employment.

Gender equality is also imperative in removing gender stereotypes. If one gender is believed to be superior to the other, it creates a negative generalization about the so-called inferior gender. The school is known to be a community that is built by people from different backgrounds and of different genders. In education, both teachers and students are users of gendered texts that represent gender identities, discourses and practices. Curriculum developers decide on what content students should consume. Hence it is teachers' responsibility to modify the texts used in schools if they are seen to promote any form of gender inequality. For instance, some textbooks may contain pictures that represent males as managers in organization and ladies as messengers or cleaners. This symbolizes to students that men hold better positions than women, thus creating negative stereotypes. Students that consume this kind of information grow up believing that a man will always be a woman's boss. Therefore, it is the responsibility of teachers, as implementers of the curriculum, to carefully select the content that English language learners are presented with so as to prevent them from becoming gender insensitive.



The last point is that teachers' understanding of gender equality contributes to fair forms of teaching. It is very common for boys and girls to be split when choosing their friends, deciding on seating arrangements in the classroom and grouping themselves in class activities. Boys often choose boys to be their friends or playmates, decide to sit next to other boys in class and prefer that their groups consist of boys only. This also applies to girls, that is, they prefer to stick to girls. If students are grouped according to their gender, it inhibits them from sharing ideas across all genders unlike when the groups are made up of both girls and boys. As an English language teacher, it is important to come up with classroom activities that encourage both boys and girls to work harmoniously to complete a given task. The teacher as the manager of the class should create a dynamic seating arrangement to break up single-gender groups as a way of encouraging all students to engage with one another despite their gender differences.

In conclusion, it is very important for English language teachers to promote gender equality in schools for effective and efficient teaching and learning. Gender equality is crucial as it helps with the building of a nation, ensures access to education by all, helps to reduce gender stereotypes among learners, and is a fair form of teaching. English language can be used as a key to achieve gender equality from individuals' early ages.

### Post-reading discussion

- Do you agree or disagree with Kabalano Pelelekae's suggestion that the work of 'English language teachers should include a huge contribution to gender equality'? Why?
- As a current or future English language teacher, what can you do to contribute to boys and girls 'becom[ing] better people in the future who respect and treat each other equally'?

### Practical tasks

- Focus on the educational institution where you work or study and identify answers to the questions below.
  - How many people hold leadership positions at it?
  - Were they appointed to these positions or elected to them?
  - Which gender is more represented at the leadership level?
  - Why is there such a(n) (im)balanced gender distribution at your institution?

## Pre-reading reflection

- Thinking about your time as a student, do you remember any occasion(s) when one of your teachers helped to build your self-esteem? What did this teacher do? Did this specific teacher also help to build the self-esteem of students of genders other than yours?
- Did you have a teacher who you considered to be a role model? What did they do to become your role model?

## Essay (2.3)

### English language teaching and gender equality

**Dipuo Gare – she/her**  
(Gabane, Botswana)

Gender equality is when people of different genders (males, females, etc.) are given equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities. The practice of future English language teachers should contribute to gender equality as it may lead to peace amongst learners, give every learner equal opportunities regardless of their gender, build confidence and self-esteem of learners of different genders and show learners that no gender is inferior to others.

Practicing gender equality in schools can lead to peace amongst learners as they may learn to live with one another and accept their gender differences. When they accept their differences, they share resources, rights and responsibilities peacefully. For example, in my English language class of 2022, there were only three males while there were nine females. Even though we know that English is mostly studied by girls, we accepted them equally. In presentations, all group members had to present regardless of whether they were males or females. Accepting our differences led to a peaceful co-existence in the classroom. There were no conflicts because everyone did the tasks assigned to him or her. Even when it came to resources (for example, textbooks, notes and pamphlets), they were shared equally. If the resources had not been shared equally, then conflicts may have arisen as there would have been divisions. But, where the resources are shared equally, there are no conflicts among learners.

Teachers' promotion of gender equality gives every learner equal opportunities regardless of their gender. In English language classes, opportunities may include giving learners an essay to write, a presentation to take part in, a speech to deliver, and so on. If the opportunities are equally distributed amongst learners, then gender equality is promoted. It is not fair for only certain people to be given opportunities to do something while others are not given the same opportunities just because of their gender. In the educational institution where I study, for instance, teacher trainers and learners have been trying hard to allocate opportunities equitably to all learners.

English language teachers' decision to accommodate and treat students fairly and equally regardless of gender contributes greatly to students' character and self-esteem. The elimination of stereotypes that ladies are inferior to men gets to uplift the morale of females as well as their confidence and character. It provides them with opportunities to express themselves and not to see themselves as inferior as most cultures may position them. Equality allows both genders to express themselves confidently with the understanding that they will have equal opportunities and rights. Hence, they will have more confidence in every action and decision they partake in.

Presumably, a teacher is mostly seen as a role model to the students. It is therefore expected that students may imitate the behaviour of the teachers they consider to be their role model. If a teacher shows favouritism to any gender or provides equal opportunities to both genders, it is assumed that the students will follow the same behaviour. A teacher's role is to show and send a message to the students that no gender is inferior to the other through both actions and words to ensure gender equality among students and to dissipate gender discrimination.

All in all, our teaching practice should contribute to gender equality regardless of whether our cultures and social upbringings have strengthened the belief of male superiority. Teaching should emphasize and strengthen gender equality to ensure diversity and confidence in all genders as well as peace amongst genders.

### Post-reading discussion

- What should English language teachers avoid doing so that their actions are not (mis)construed as their preference towards one gender over the others?
- How can your English language classes contribute to '[t]he elimination of stereotypes that ladies are inferior to men,' as suggested by Dipuo Gare?

### Practical tasks

- With due permission, observe two different English language classes (ideally taught by the same teacher).
  - Note the number of girls and boys in each class.
  - Consider the potential impact of any gender differences in the classroom environment.
  - Elicit the teacher's views on this impact.
  - Contrast the teacher's views with your own.

## Section 3

# Country profile Brazil

### General profile

Official name	Federative Republic of Brazil
Etymology	'The country name derives from the brazilwood tree that used to grow plentifully along the coast of Brazil and that was used to produce a deep red dye'*
Independence	7 September 1822 from Portugal
Government type	Federal presidential republic

### Geographical profile

Continent	South America
Capital city	Brasília
Area	8,515,770 sq km*

### Linguistic profile

Official language(s)	Portuguese**
Languages	238 (Living = 217 + Extinct = 21)**
English language status	Educational**6

### Sources

\**The World Factbook 2022*

\*\**Ethnologue*

6. 'The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.' (Ethnologue, 2022)

## Pre-reading reflection

- Do you remember being treated differently from someone of a gender other than yours? What was done to you or what were you told to do?
- Who was your first teacher (or the earliest teacher that you recall)? Do you remember this professional's gender? What do you remember about this teacher? What impact did this person have in your life?

## Essay (3.1)

### Gender equality in class: Why does it matter?

**Luiza Barroso – she/her**  
(Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

Ever since I was a child, I have undergone situations where the issue of gender played a major role. Even when these situations have seemed trivial and have gone unnoticed by most people, as a woman, they have affected me more than they might have affected a man. These situations included (i) someone asking male children to lift something heavy because of the common misconception that boys are stronger than girls; (ii) girls receiving dolls or toy cookware, representing motherhood and domestic work while boys received more 'fun' toys, like a miniature car or a superhero action figure, or more 'intellectual' toys, supporting their intellectual development; (iii) an adult saying that a boy who teases a girl has a crush on her, teaching girls that it is acceptable and even praiseworthy to be disrespected. This list, which could go on with other examples, already shows how, from childhood, we are taught that boys are supposed to pursue their intellectual development as well as activities which are more adventurous and which involve physical labor; what is left for girls are household chores. Girls are also taught that being mistreated is a symbol of romantic attractiveness – not disrespect.

As I have been, both personally and as a group, at the receiving end of some prejudicial actions and prejudiced views, this has led me to reflect on issues of gender and to take a greater look at what was happening around me. What I have realized is that almost all domains of society – family, for instance – play a big role in reinforcing gender inequality, and educational institutions are no exception. This is easy to see why if we take into consideration that these institutions have an immense influence on the development of their students – not only their intellectual development but also mental, emotional and social development. This is especially the case in relation to children and teenagers, who are still forming their identities, their opinions and their own behavior patterns. Some of the situations that I mentioned in the previous paragraph happened to me in school when I was still a child. Such experiences stick with young people to their adulthood as they are part of what has formed them as individuals. It may be the case that they grow up to repeat some of the behavioral patterns that they were exposed to in school.

Taking into account the potency of educational institutions, it becomes clear that it is an utmost necessity to have them contribute to gender equality. However, this leads to another question: how can that be done? In my early school days, my first ever teacher was a man. In my context, a male teacher was uncommon. He was an artistic and caring man who treated all his students very kindly, which is not seen as traditional 'manly' behavior. He was a teacher who defied expectations of gender. He might be a great example to make children – especially boys – comfortable with expressing themselves in manners which are considered feminine or masculine instead of metaphorically placing them inside boxes of what they should and should not do or like. It is important to reinforce that gender stereotypes are not harmful only to women; they are prejudicial to men in the sense that they do not allow them to be sensitive, to show affection, to talk about their feelings, and so on. Teachers need to address this theme in a respectful way in order to create a safe environment for students to learn about it.

And what about higher education institutions such as universities? It is important to remember that we are always learning, so we should not limit our gender-inclusive teaching to young children and teenagers only. While adults already have their pre-established ideas, formed during their younger years, those ideas can be deconstructed to open space for something better and more accurate.

It is well known that teachers have limited power over their students' lives as these students are influenced by their families and by their surroundings. However, change has to start somewhere. Educational institutions have great power, which should thus be handled with great responsibility in order not to generate a negative impact on students' lives and, consequently, on our society as a whole.

And how is this gender discussion related to English language teaching? To answer this question, we must think about what happens in English language classes. As I see it, learning English as an additional language is supposed to give students knowledge that goes beyond a simple understanding of the linguistics of English. It should be a way to expand their world knowledge, their cultural notions and their expectations for life, which places on teachers a big responsibility. Discussing human issues, then, brings no harm to English language classes. When I first learned English at a language course, one of the things that we worked with were role-plays and we had to repeat the dialogues. This is a good example of what could be improved in an English language class for a more gender-equal environment: it is possible to create scenarios which allow discussions regarding gender inequality, making students question gender stereotypes, for instance. Although it might seem as if these changes are small, they can make a huge difference in students' lives.

If we understand that gender barriers are socially created and not something intrinsic to human beings, it becomes simpler to deal with them. The problem is that there are still a lot of people who do not perceive these barriers as made up by society; instead, they see it as a real separation between what a man or a woman can or cannot do. As someone who has worked — for a small period of time — as an English language teacher, I frequently tried to break these gender barriers with my students. This attempt started with sentence examples such as, 'The girl likes playing soccer' to illustrate a grammar explanation, but it did not stop there. I often brought discussions of gender into other themes not only to expand my students' understanding of this topic but also to make them realize how gender notions are present in numerous areas of our lives. For instance, when we were discussing the theme of cooking, I asked them, 'What do you think about people saying that only women should cook?' This led them to reflect about these ideas and share their thoughts in our class. I believe this is a good way to contribute to gender equality as an English language teacher – albeit not the only way. It is also important to perceive gender discussions not as something that teachers are obliged to have in their classes but as something essential to consider in the process of teaching. It does not benefit only the students but also the teachers as it gives everyone a chance to expand their knowledge and their perspectives.

As previously mentioned, in the world we live in, being male entitles you with power while being female makes you the recipient of inborn prejudices. Acknowledging this situation and stepping up are the only ways to try and change this issue. As education is arguably the best resource to encourage change in society, the potential of educators to contribute to gender equality is prominent. Moreover, any (ethical) attempt at making the world a fairer place is already making it better.

## Post-reading discussion

- According to Luiza Barroso, 'almost all domains of society [...] play a big role in reinforcing gender inequality, and educational institutions are no exception'. Would you agree or disagree with that evaluation in relation to the place where you (will) work? What examples can you provide to support your answer?
- In the essay, the author provides some examples of how she tried to break away from gender stereotypes in her English language teaching practice. What else could you do to break away from these stereotypes?

## Practical tasks

- Consider the English language materials you used in the last lesson you taught.
  - What topics did you focus on in class? This can be either directly (e.g. a discussion on eating habits) or indirectly (e.g. a news report on a soccer match to teach the simple past).
  - How did these topics add to your learners' understanding of the world around them?
  - What gender-related topics could you have engaged with in this lesson directly or indirectly?

## Pre-reading reflection

- Which activities are traditionally construed as 'feminine' or 'masculine' in your culture?
- Have you ever been forbidden from doing something because of your gender? What was it? What was the reason given (if any)?

## Essay (3.2)

### Gender issues: My past as a student, my future as a teacher

**Ana Caroline Fernandes – she/her**

(Nova Iguaçu, Brazil)

This essay brings together some experiences that I have lived throughout my elementary, secondary and tertiary education as well as a teacher in an English language course. These experiences were selected after a reflection that allowed me to realize the connection between these events and the issue of gender. Unfortunately, gender inequality and violence are so naturalized in our culture that it becomes difficult to notice when we are witnesses, victims, or practitioners of this structural evil, which highlights the importance of reflections such as this one for our future practice as teachers.

The notion that I should not do or be something because I am a girl was probably introduced to me at a very early age. However, it was only when I was 11 years old in the sixth grade that it became clear to me that girls are openly judged and disrespected if they dare to do something considered masculine by society. Back then, one of these masculine activities was to run in the school yard with other boys during the break while the feminine activity was to talk with or about boys. My days of running like a happy child ended after some students, teachers, and members of the school staff told me that I looked like a boy running that way and that I should then stop that nonsense. The expression of our corporeality has always been considered a practice that diminishes our femininity.

Still in elementary school, one of the many problems that could be listed is the complete absence of reflections and discussions related to gender. The jokes, which not rarely turned into bullying, were constantly based on comments that tried to diminish boys' morale by associating them with the excessive weakness and sensibility of women. I do not remember listening to one single comment from teachers denying or problematizing the female inferiority that such jokes suggested.

Already in high school, most of my peers, teachers and other employees were women. Considering the discussions that occurred inside my classroom or with the entire school, few were related to the acts of violence that we would suffer – inside and outside the school – simply because we were women. The constant sexualization of our uniform and professional choices as well as the sexual harassment from male teachers are just some examples. To recognize the existence of such problems, to discuss the root of them and to orient the teenagers on how to act in a situation of violence could have saved some of us from a lot of embarrassment and trauma.

At college, gender issues were approached more frequently. Literature classes, for instance, were a great space for the discussion of gender stereotypes, their maintenance throughout history, and the problems they caused. As the canon is composed mostly of works produced by white male writers, we tended to problematize their points of view about what is expected from women rather than read actual women telling what positions they have or aspire to have in the world.

As an English language teacher, I would like to problematize some existing materials. Textbooks used in the young learners' class are one of the most subtle ways to introduce which patterns (related to colors, clothes, professions, behaviors, etc.) are considered socially acceptable depending on the student's gender. Such social expectations are already being internalized by children at this age, and it is a



challenging task to inform them that, in order to be a girl, they do not need to have long hair or to wear pink clothes as the characters in the book do.

Regarding English language classes for adults, many students have daily tasks that make it difficult for them to complete some of the assigned activities such as homework and class preparation. However, women have greater levels of difficulty to dedicate themselves to their studies since they have responsibilities such as taking care of their children and of the house.

As a future English language teacher, I believe in a type of pedagogical practice that brings to light all of these points discussed in this essay (and others): women's right to express our corporeality; the expression of emotions as something human – not exclusively feminine; the necessity of not normalizing acts of male violence against our minds and bodies; the diverse female points of view of our place in the world; the problematization of the gender expectations; and the creation of new alternatives for women with multiple workloads.

### Post-reading discussion

- How do (will) you address any gender-related bullying issues that arise in your English language classroom?
- What support does the institution at which you (will) work offer for teachers to deal with bullies?

### Practical tasks

- Ana Caroline Fernandes discusses how her literature classes contributed to her gender awareness and notes how the literary canon is biased towards male writers. Analyze the reading list for one of your university modules dedicated to the topic of English language teaching.
  - Are the texts written by local or international authors?
  - Are these female or male authors?
  - What are these authors' ethnicities?
  - What suggestions would you give to diversify the authorship of the specific reading list you analyzed?

## Pre-reading reflection

- How feasible do you think it is to reach United Nations' goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls worldwide by 2030? Why do you think so?
- Would you say that the country where you live faces specific challenges in reaching the gender equality goal? Which one(s)?

## Essay (3.3)

### Not only talking about gender: The bottom-up way

**Abner Costantino da Silva – he/him**  
(São José do Rio Preto, Brazil)

When I first heard about the United Nations' (UN) 17 Sustainable Development Goals, they sounded a little utopian – instead of realistic – for an organization whose headquarters are in the most powerful country in the capitalist system, and, thus, the most powerful in the world: the United States (US). The fifth goal more specifically drew my attention by its curious proposal of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by 2030: a wonderful adventure in 'Alienationland' that can never occur until we are able to extinguish inequality itself, which is impossible under a symbolic power structure (in our case, owned by the US and represented by UN). Naturally, visceral social changes in the structure of prejudice should not be expected from the dominant pole(s) of power but from the dominated, side-lined and marginalized areas such as underdeveloped countries like Brazil.

On one hand, it is important to state that English language teaching (ELT) can – and must – introduce more gender discussions in everyday classes, and all stakeholders' practices should contribute to gender equality, which unfortunately does not occur yet. On the other hand, it is essential to understand the reason why ELT has to contribute to gender equality: it is a question of repairing current practice since pedagogical practice can be sexist – and it truly is. According to educational researchers, it is a fact that the education (independent of what type it assumes) conveys ideology – but from whom to whom? Obviously, from the stakeholders in charge of education to the people who learn.

We might like to take a look at some English language teaching materials and practices that focus on listening abilities. In general, the situations depicted in listening texts show us hetero-affective relationships developed (or suggested) between 'Anna' and 'Mark' or any other traditional female-male names that international publishers love to use. I just need to ask a simple question to be clearer: How many dialogues in ELT materials do you remember that include homo-affective relationships without stereotyping them? Possible solutions to this misrepresentation are that ELT materials must not exclude the different types of affection nor show them under stereotyped chapters named 'Gay Culture' or 'The LGBTQIA+ Community'. Therefore, we may think about LGBTQIA+ people in natural dialogue contexts.

Once we start discussing why gender should be included in ELT, we need to specify what we are going to embrace in our discussions of gender as English language teachers. As I stated previously, the UN's fifth goal intends to promote gender equality, but, in the description of the proposal, just one type of gender is mentioned to be equalized with the 'masculine gender': 'girls', 'women'. How about queer, non-binary and other people?

It is easy for world-dominant centres to talk about peace, equality and community in a common-sense speech. This supposed concern with absolute equality is called alienation. (Un)Fortunately, we live in an age that power is not declared openly but covered by a cloak, which naturalizes this power. The US, represented by the UN, expects all countries to talk about equality, peace and the 'real' possibility of eliminating poverty. However, the funniest thing is that the UN intends to achieve these aims without the slightest intention of changing the capitalist system which makes it possible. It all is comprehensible inside the alienation mechanism: those who have the power to extinguish inequality need to choose between

doing that and keeping their power. They end up shifting all the blame for poverty onto the heads of the oppressed, who did not mobilize enough.

In short, we may summarize the core of the discussion into simple words: ELT must contribute to gender equality mainly in peripheral countries. These countries are the true keys of the future: the change hardly ever comes from above.

### Post-reading discussion

- Can you recollect any instances of sexist pedagogical practice in your English language learning experience? Have you noticed any instances of such practice in the classes you have observed for your university degree?
- Abner Costantino da Silva holds that 'ELT must contribute to gender equality mainly in peripheral countries'. What have you done to date in your English language lessons to contribute to gender equality?

### Practical tasks

- Following Abner Costantino da Silva's challenge, examine the textbook that you use with your English language students.
  - Does it mention lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and other (LGBTQIA+) matters at all? If so, in which context? If not, why do you think such matters are not present in the textbook?
  - Do the pictures included in the textbook portray homo-affective relationships? If so, what do they illustrate and how are they explored in the textbook?
  - Do the texts make any reference to same-sex couples? If so, how are these couples described?

## Section 4

# Country profile China

### General profile

Official name	People's Republic of China
Etymology	'English name derives from the Qin (Chin) rulers of the 3rd century B.C., who comprised the first imperial dynasty of ancient China; the Chinese name Zhongguo translates as "Central Nation" or "Middle Kingdom"'
Independence	1 October 1949
Government type	Communist party-led state

### Geographical profile

Continent	Eastern Asia
Capital city	Beijing
Area	9,596,960 sq km*

### Linguistic profile

Official language(s)	Mandarin Chinese**
Languages	306 (Living = 305 + Extinct = 1)**
English language status	Educational**7

### Sources

\**The World Factbook 2022*

\*\**Ethnologue*

7. 'The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.' (Ethnologue, 2022)

## Pre-reading reflection

- How do you address people in English? What titles (if any) do you use? How does your use of these titles vary (e.g. by gender, by social role, by occupation)?
- How did you learn about the use of titles in English? Were you explicitly taught about it or did you pick it up by observing what others do?
- Does your use of titles in English differ from your use of titles in other languages you speak? How so?

## Essay (4.1)

### Teach them: It is wrong

**Mengtian Zhang – she/her**  
(Shenzhen, China)

Gender discrimination pervades the world even in the 21st century. It is in everyday dialogues, in advertisements, in books, in classes and so on. If teachers fail to spot sexism in class, it will gradually penetrate into students' minds, interfere with their learning process, and influence their thoughts and behaviors. That happened in the past and, unfortunately, is still happening now. As a future English language teacher and as a woman, I hold that it is the teachers' duty to contribute to gender equality by noticing sexism in the classroom and addressing it.

My most recent experience of gender discrimination in the classroom was two days ago. I signed up as a volunteer at an international youth exchange camp and needed to attend a training meeting. In the meeting, the teacher introduced how foreign guests should be addressed, explaining that, if a male guest is a general, prime minister or an official above the ministerial level, he can be addressed as his position or 'your excellency' while others would be called 'sir'. If a female guest is married, she will be called 'Mrs.'; and, if not, 'Miss'. If her marital status is not clear, 'Ms.' would be a good choice. This felt absurd to me. Male titles are distinguished by position, and female titles are distinguished by marital status. And this is taught to university students as etiquette.

It is more than common that people give too much attention to sex-related issues when it comes to women. The term 'Buddhist hetaera' (in Chinese: '佛媛', 'Foyuan') was mentioned in class some days ago as it had appeared in the news. It refers to those women who wear revealing clothes and pose for photos in temples to gain viewership on the Internet and make money. The behavior is no doubt disrespectful and outrageous. And yet there is this subtle inappropriateness that everyone – including the professor, the news reporter and the readership – is giving too much attention to sexual aspects like how women bare their breasts and thighs in a slip dress instead of focusing on the incident. When the protagonists of a news story are women, the focus always falls on their appearance, marriage and love story – everything related to sex, which will eventually turn into a crusade against these women's 'obscenity'. Even a new term has been created just to describe that specific type of woman. If we just come to think of it, how often is criticism towards men as precise?

In the past 12 years of my English language learning, sexism was everywhere, but most of it was ignored, partly because I was too little and lacked awareness and partly because it was too common to be noticed. I learned that the word 'men' can refer to men only and all mankind while 'women' only means women. I also learned that, when one's gender is not clear, it is right to use 'he/him' to refer to the person. These were all taught to me as unquestionable grammar knowledge in primary school. When I was growing up, the girls portrayed in my textbooks wore pink skirts and liked dolls while boys wore blue pants and played football outdoors. Adult women were housewives while adult men were winning bread. I have never seen male nurses or female doctors in textbooks. One question had never come to my mind – why? After acquiring female consciousness, when talking about female professionals, I would emphasize it by adding

the word 'female' or 'woman' in front of their position. But I did not realize that this is because these neutral professional terms have been habitually regarded as exclusive to men.

These stereotypes have been planted into my mind and into the minds of all kids from my generation. I cannot tell how much these stereotypes are still influencing my thoughts and my life. One thing is clear, teachers have the ability and, I argue, the obligation to avoid them. In the cases I described above, the teachers could have stopped the spread of sexism by simply saying, 'However this kind of distinction on male and female titles is inappropriate,' by pointing out that the media's focus on women's sexual aspects is wrong and by identifying stereotypes. We may not be able to eliminate sexism in all languages, teaching materials and textbooks, but, as teachers, we need to identify it and help students do the same. As teachers, we must also pay attention to our own language and keep an eye on newest changes in language use. By doing so, we will enhance students' gender awareness and sensitivity, enable them to communicate more appropriately in English and, most importantly, to break free from sexism.

### Post-reading discussion

- Mengtian Zhang writes about the way in which she has been taught to address females and males in English, describing it as 'absurd'. If you were hired as an English language expert to sort out that issue, how would you teach the volunteers at that international youth exchange camp to address foreign guests in a gender fairer way?
- How do school pupils address teachers in your country in their first language? What about in the additional language(s) that they study? How different is the form of address in these two languages? Is there any variation due to gender?

### Practical tasks

- Language can be used in sexist ways. Mengtian Zhang's essay discusses one term in Chinese that is used in such a way. The English language also has sexist words and terms: (i) different from 'master', 'mistress' is used to refer, among other meanings, to a woman who has extramarital sexual relationships; and (ii) 'spinster' has a more negative connotation than a 'bachelor' even though both relate to unmarried people.
  - Collect examples of sexist language words and expressions in your first language.
  - Write down brief explanations for each of these words and expressions.
  - Ask your household members or friends what they understand by these words and expressions and note down whether they realize the sexist meaning.
  - Try to find equivalent forms for these words and expressions in an additional language you know.

## Pre-reading reflection

- Were there more boys or more girls in your classes at school? Why do you think this was the case?
- Thinking about your time as a school pupil, do you remember any instances of fights? Who was involved in these fights? Why did they happen?

## Essay (4.2)

### As teachers, have we really achieved gender equality?

**Yudi Guo – she/her**

(Shenzhen, China)

I worked as an intern English language teacher at a public elementary school. During this experience, I witnessed many stories of teaching and learning related to gender issues – both as a ‘bystander’ and a ‘practitioner’.

For example, on my first day as an English language teacher, I noticed a relatively obvious imbalance in the gender ratio of the students. Every morning when I led the students out for exercise, I could see that the line of boys was much longer than that of girls in many classes. The lower the grade, the bigger the difference was. I was surprised by this observation because I remembered that, when I was in elementary school, the ratio of male to female students in each class was basically equal. Occasionally, there would be a situation where the number of boys exceeded the number of girls by one or two, but the difference was not as stark as what I saw on that day. I was curious about what impact such class composition would have on my teaching practice, and, with the question in mind, I began my internship as an English language teacher.

I soon realized that the impact of the difference on the number of male and female students was evident. Since teachers have more male students in their classes, they subconsciously focus on male students when managing classroom affairs, thus indirectly ignoring the demands of female students. For example, when asking students to answer a question, many teachers prefer to ask male students. It seemed to me to be because most boys are much more outgoing than girls. They are more willing to show and express themselves, initiate conversations with teachers, and share their opinions in class. Imagine being in a class where two-thirds of the students are keen to get your attention. It is hard for you not to be influenced by these students. Over time, you will find it hard to pay attention to the remaining quiet people because the energetic boys have long consumed your limited energy. In contrast, most girls choose a more introverted way of expression to maintain a ‘quiet’ or ‘elegant’ image. Although most of them listen carefully (most female students are more focused and disciplined than male students), they are less expressive in class, which may be related to social discipline.

Following the male gender advantage, in traditional teaching, we always expect boys to be masculine, be well qualified, achieve the best positions and become the future dominant members of this patriarchal society. However, we do not expect women to show their ‘strong’ side. They have to give up their opportunity to express their opinions and become more reserved to obey the rules imposed on them. As I was growing up, I heard countless times that teachers taught female students to be ‘a lady’, implying that girls needed to suppress their playful nature from a young age.

In such a social climate, some teachers consciously or unconsciously align their daily teaching to similar values, which accelerates the formation of some gender stereotypes and indirectly undermines the fundamental rights of female students. Female students’ desire to answer questions is often ignored. In the long run, this inevitably leads female students to be more introverted in expressing themselves and to lose their self-confidence to interact actively. On the other hand, boys tend to get ahead of themselves because their initiative always gets reactions from teachers. They naturally enjoy this gender advantage, displaying their masculinity more boldly and sometimes even disrupting the class.

Once, I encountered a ‘scramble’ while sitting in on a sixth-grade teacher’s English language class. A few boys fought over a chance to answer a question, scaring the students around them into running out of the classroom. The boys were criticized to varying degrees afterward. Still, the incident’s repercussions were far-reaching as two were given warnings and not allowed to take the upcoming junior high-school independent recruitment exam.

Through this incident, I became acutely aware of the importance of gender awareness in teaching practice. I suppose that our teachers paid a little more attention to the psychological needs of female students, consciously guided their students out of the socially prescribed gender stereotypes and alleviated the excess aggression of male students. Could such a conflict have been avoided? I think the answer is yes.

According to UNESCO (2003, p. 17), ‘[f]ull gender equality in education would imply that girls and boys are offered the same chances to go to school and enjoy teaching methods, curricula and academic orientation unaffected by gender bias’. In other words, gender equality refers to females and males having the same education opportunities. Teachers should promote gender equality in their day-to-day class management and hold equal academic and behavioral expectations for all students. For example, if male students raise their hands more often than female students do, teachers can encourage the latter to be more active, and they can create more interactive or collaborative classroom exercises to accommodate students with different learning styles.

The power of words is infinite. Therefore, I intend to provide equal praise to both male and female students. I also consciously plan to wait longer before calling on students to speak or call on students randomly to avoid the possibility of gender bias. Although these initiatives may seem somewhat cumbersome, I think we need to pay attention to these important details in education. It is challenging to fight patriarchal oppression on an individual basis, and, as women, we are often inevitably tainted with misogynistic ideas and unconsciously engage in gender oppressive behavior. But it is not a reason to give in to patriarchy. As teachers, we can only correct our own behavior as much as possible and try to create a gender-equal environment for our students by setting an example in education.

‘Gender equality is more than a goal itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development, and building good governance,’ said Kofi Annan (1998), former United Nations Secretary General. The concept of gender equality is much deeper and broader than we think. Although entirely accomplished in their profession, many teachers still overlook the importance of gender awareness in their teaching. Promoting gender equality is the same as having good classroom management. I believe gender equality will be on every teacher’s mind, and the incidents of gender inequality that we have experienced or are experiencing will become less and less frequent in our future teaching practices.

## References

Annan, K. (1998). *Secretary-General says women's wisdom, energies, creativity must be harnessed to build new Africa*. United Nations. <https://press.un.org/en/1998/19980430.SGSM6544.html>

UNESCO. (2003). *Gender and education for all: The leap to equality*. UNESCO Publishing. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000132513>



## Post-reading discussion

- Yudi Guo describes the impact of a gender-imbalanced student cohort in a specific class. Has the gender composition of your class impacted on your pedagogical practice?
  - If yes, how so?
  - If no, why not?
- What should English language student teachers do if they notice gender issues in the class that they are observing?

## Practical tasks

- Pair up with a peer and mutually agree on observing each other's class.
- Note down how many times:
  - boys and girls volunteer to answer questions.
  - the teacher agrees to give the floor to boys and to girls.
  - the teacher invites boys and girls to contribute to the class.
  - the teacher interrupts the class to call the attention of boys and girls for disruptive behavior.
- Consider whether your and your peer's attention is equally distributed between boys and girls and whether either of you systematically overlooked any student in class.
- Discuss ways in which you and your peer can ensure a gender-equal approach in your classrooms.

## Pre-reading reflection

- Did your schoolteachers expect pupils to perform better or worse in certain subjects because of their genders? If so, what association do you recall between subject achievement and your classmates' genders?
- Do you remember having any sex or gender education when you were at school? Which topics were discussed in such lessons?

## Essay (4.3)

### What does gender education mean for English language teachers?

**Yuxuan Jiang – he/him**  
(Shenzhen, China)

The revised edition of UNESCO's International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education, published in 2018, states that the Sustainable Development Goals call for action in all countries and regions to achieve human rights and gender equality for all. In recent years, discussing women's rights in all fields and calling for equal rights for men and women has become a hot topic in society.

As a third-year university student, I will be embarking on a semester-long internship in a primary school in Shenzhen next September, and gender equality is a topic I will have to think about and confront in my educational practice. Looking back on my own 15 years of schooling, I can still remember many things that happened at school regarding gender inequality: teachers not allowing girls to wear skirts at school (even though skirts were part of the school uniform); teachers not allowing boys to cross their legs and girls to sit with their legs splayed; math teachers often saying boys should do better in math than girls; and English language teachers saying that it was usual for girls to do better in English than boys. When I was a child, I deeply believed in the demands and orders of my teachers. But, nowadays, these seem to be a microcosm of the gender inequality in Chinese education at the beginning of the 21st century. It goes without saying that the teaching practices of teachers are of great significance to the development of a healthy gender perspective among students and even to the promotion of the concept of gender equality.

The past two decades have seen the rapid development of China's Internet industry, which allowed for the widespread dissemination of more open and liberal views on gender equality. More and more university students like me are beginning to speak out on the Internet and give voice to the social phenomenon of gender injustice. However, for a university student majoring in English language teaching, talking is far from enough. I also need to transform talk into action. Last July, with the support of my college, I led a team of 15 volunteer teachers to Jiangxi Province for a two-week teaching trip, aiming to help expose children in economically and educationally deprived areas to more advanced educational concepts.

What surprised me was that, thanks to China's policy of poverty eradication, this school had excellent educational facilities, including a variety of function rooms for music, art, science and dance as well as a wide range of sports equipment. What surprised me even more was that, when I looked at their usual class schedule, it was mostly filled with Chinese, math and English classes. There were hardly any music, art, science or dance classes – let alone psychology classes, leaving the students' perception of gender as if they were studying 20 years ago.

Fortunately, we had a female team member who taught sex and gender education and I watched a few of her classes. She introduced the topic through the question of how we are born. Then, through pictures and animations, she vividly imparted scientific knowledge about sex and gender such as the transformation of sperm to embryo and the physical differences between boys and girls. At first, the children in the class were very shy, the boys covered their mouths and giggled while the girls barely dared to look at the screen. Nevertheless, with the teacher's guidance, they slowly began to focus on the content. After the class, a bunch of children approached her, asking all sorts of questions, and she turned out to be one of the most popular teachers in the group. On the one hand, I suddenly realized that the

children were very eager to learn about sex and gender. On the other hand, I also marveled at the courage of this female teacher in delivering a sex and gender education program in a completely new place and at the wisdom of her interesting teaching design.

This made me start thinking about how to help students achieve self-awareness and self-identity and eliminate gender bias in the English language classroom. How can we integrate English language knowledge with gender education? How can we break the mindset that sex is a taboo subject? From a teacher's point of view, firstly, we need to eliminate our own gender biases such as the misconception that it is normal for girls to do better in English than for boys. Secondly, we need to respect students of all genders equally, and we need to help, encourage and praise them in the same way. In addition, when teaching English, we should allow the boys and girls in the class to learn through cooperation and games, which will not only improve their learning efficiency and motivation but also help them to understand the differences between the opposite sexes and thus break down the gender gap (while protecting the rights of the girls and paying attention to their emotional changes in the process). In my English language lessons, I tried to apply these strategies and found that my students' motivation increases. While the probability of classroom arguments increased at first (as the new cooperative learning between boys and girls could be a little awkward and uncomfortable for the students initially), they decreased later.

I have seen two articles related to gender education in schools: a school in the United States had changed all toilets on campus to gender-neutral toilets; and a school in Australia had banned teachers from calling students 'boys' and 'girls' and discouraged students from addressing their parents as 'father' and 'mother'. These changes, which deserve our respect, might have been made for the sake of better gender education for children and the protection of minority rights. However, I do not think that such changes can be widely replicated in cities around the world. Every part of the world is different in terms of social development. Therefore, gender education has to take into account local specificities in order to be meaningful.

What we do know is that teachers' pedagogical practices are important for gender equality. If, with the help of their teachers, students develop awareness of their gender from an early age, that will spare them much harm and suffering and it will benefit them for the rest of their lives. The fact that English language teachers have access to the world's most cutting-edge research on gender education through English means that this group may be a key factor in the progress of gender education in non-English-speaking countries. Of course, it is not enough to promote gender education through teachers alone but rather through the combined efforts of students, teachers, parents, schools and the community. From this perspective, there is still a long way to go for the popularization of gender education.

## Reference

UNESCO. (2018). *International technical guidance on sexuality education: An evidence-informed approach* (revised edition). <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ITGSE.pdf>

## Post-reading discussion

- Yuxuan Jiang notes how the Internet has contributed to the cause of gender equality in China. Which online projects could you ask your English language students to undertake in order to enhance their understanding and promotion of gender equality?
- How would you approach a text on sex education in your English language class?

## Practical tasks

- Yuxuan Jiang's essays points out that English language teachers are well positioned to learn about gender education.
  - If you were to prepare a short course on gender for English language teachers, which academic texts would you suggest that they should read?
  - How would you describe the relevance of each of these texts in a few sentences?
  - Would you prioritize academic texts which focus on international contexts or which examine your local context? Why?

## Section 5

# Country profile Colombia

### General profile

Official name	Republic of Colombia
Etymology	'The country is named after explorer Christopher Columbus'*
Independence	20 July 1810 from Spain
Government type	Presidential republic

### Geographical profile

Continent	South America
Capital city	Bogota
Area	1,138,910 sq km*

### Linguistic profile

Official language(s)	Spanish**
Languages	90 (Living = 88 + Extinct = 2)**
English language status	Dispersed** <sup>8</sup>

### Sources

\**The World Factbook 2022*

\*\**Ethnologue*

8. 'The language is fully developed in its home country, so that the community of language users in a different country has access to a standardized form and literature, but these are not promoted in the country in focus via institutionally supported education.' (Ethnologue, 2022)

## Pre-reading reflection

- Drawing on your experience with English language, can you think of examples to support the point that language cannot be dissociated from culture?
- Thinking about the context where you grew up, were there jobs that society considered to be more suitable for one particular gender? Did you ever discuss these societal expectations in your classes?

## Essay (5.1)

### From language teachers to promoters of change

**Santiago Salazar Valencia – he/him**  
(Pereira, Colombia)

‘Girls and boys see gender inequality in their homes and communities every day – in textbooks, in the media and among the adults who care for them’ (UNICEF, 2020). Gender inequality is one of today’s most common and persistent problems in society, which increases disadvantages, especially for women. Inequality is present in several fields such as education, health care and media, and it is vital that people start promoting an awareness of how to stop it. In my case, I am a pre-service English language teacher, and I truly believe that such a profession, as any other, should contribute to this purpose. The use of language can be a tool to understand the problem of gender inequality, and teachers’ practices can help students to be more critical about the situation.

Language has the power to shape people’s reality, which makes it an instrument to reduce or increase gender inequality. The use of this tool relies on teachers since, with their practice, they have the opportunity to make students aware of this social issue. As an example, my culture teacher dedicated a whole lesson to explain to the class how English has socially evolved to increase equality between men and women in a variety of cases. Most people do not say ‘fireman’ but ‘firefighter’ or ‘manpower’ but ‘work force’ as using the former term in each pair can bias children and make them think that certain jobs are restricted to men only. Embedding a non-gender-biased language in our practice is essential to teach students not to limit them in what they can or cannot do as well as what they expect from themselves.

English language educators’ practice is not limited to only teaching words and structures. These educators can draw on social issues to teach language content. Language teaching can employ numerous activities as in the practice of my intermediate English language teacher. She was able to provide us with information about the problems of gender equality with exercises as simple as a conversation forum, which changed my perception of this social issue. The use of different content and activities is valuable to promote a critical view of the world around us. English language educators have the opportunity to increase their students’ reflective thinking and make a difference for their students.

Making the difference by helping students to learn about social issues at an early age can increase their critical thinking, which is what our society needs to reduce gaps such as gender inequality. As an English language teacher in development, I consider that the responsibility of any educator is to promote students’ awareness of and critical thinking about gender equality and its relevance since education is the key to a more significant change. Common activities such as learning about occupations free from gender bias can make a considerable impact on students’ minds. By doing so, pupils, especially girls, will be able to aspire to whatever they want for their future with fewer obstacles, and this change must start now in ourselves, our classrooms and our communities so that we can ensure a fairer future for everyone.

### Reference

UNICEF. (2020). *Gender equality*. <https://www.unicef.org/gender-equality>

## Post-reading discussion

- Santiago Salazar Valencia notes that ‘[l]anguage has the power to shape people’s reality, which makes it an instrument to reduce or increase gender inequality’ and provides some examples. As a student or as a teacher, in what ways have you experienced language use which reduces gender inequality?
- Which social issues have you approached (or will you approach) in your English language classes? Why?

## Practical tasks

- Santiago Salazar Valencia reports on one of his English language teacher’s practice of using a conversation forum to discuss and transform students’ perception of social issues.
  - Choose one of the social issues that you have identified in the post-reading discussion for follow-up expansion.
  - Devise a set of probing questions for a conversation forum which would help you and your students to engage in a thoughtful consideration of the selected social issue.

## Pre-reading reflection

- What aspects of your identity(ies) do you make salient when introducing yourself? What identity features do others generally associate with you?
- Do you have any memories about the way in which different genders were portrayed in the English language teaching materials you used as a school pupil? What were their strengths and weaknesses?

## Essay (5.2)

### ELT and gender equality

**Elian Londoño – he/him**  
(Pereira, Colombia)

If there were a core feature to be included in English language teaching (ELT), eliminating gender disparity should be one. Among the many goals that educators have, gender egalitarianism should be a focus because of the opportunities it could bring to students. ELT should therefore be thought out from a perspective that creates equality bonds and lessens inequality.

Lessons based on egalitarianism require a careful selection of non-gendered-bias materials and activities that avoid students learning under unequal circumstances. It is of importance, then, that teachers avoid gender-differentiated teaching since that would cause a greater separation between students. What is expected is that both genders can have the freedom to express themselves in an equal way without one of them receiving special attention. A good starting point to change the aforementioned issue would be having reflective spaces in which students identify the features assigned to them by society due to their specific gender. In this way, teachers can let students know that beyond their birth sex, gender encompasses other aspects of their life which, according to Norton and Pavlenko (2004), are related to collective identities such as ethnicity, social rank, sexuality, (in)capacity, and age. Consequently, understanding such characteristics will make students aware of how many of them do not fit under the roles that are attributed to them and will also help solidify social bonds with fewer prejudices against one another.

It is necessary that educators achieve gender equality by making learners feel they are deservers of the same opportunities within and outside the classroom no matter their own circumstances. In this line of thought, students should be taught through pedagogical materials that do not promote markable features that frame each specific gender under a tag. For instance, in Sakita's (1995 apud Lee, 2018, p. 382) research on Japanese high-school coursebooks, it was found that 'men were associated with reputation, physical strength and body size, women were associated with emotion, weakness, attractiveness and domestic role'. Taking this information into account, under no circumstances should ELT prioritize or underestimate any gender in any given reading, writing, listening, or speaking activity. It is worth highlighting what Subrahmanian (2005, p. 403) asserts:

Educational institutions should function in ways that do not impose or perpetuate gender stereotypes that exert psychological influence and/or promote institutional barriers to the range of possibilities that boys and girls, men and women, can enjoy in relation to the education on offer.

What this means is that barriers between genders must be overcome, and so, opportunities should be given to everybody in an equal way.

In conclusion, ELT should foster an egalitarian approach toward teaching so that each student has the same chances to progress in all life dimensions. It is thus necessary that educators create spaces and plan lessons in which students reflect upon the features associated with each gender and become conscious of how the gender roles embedded within society can create dis/advantages for them. It is time for ELT lessons to allow learners to feel more encouraged to participate and break gender barriers.



## References

Lee, J. F. K. (2018). Gender representation in Japanese EFL textbooks: A corpus study. *Gender and Education*, 30(3), 379–395. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2016.1214690>

Norton, B. & Pavlenko, A. (2004). Addressing gender in the ESL/EFL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(3), 504–514. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3588351>

Subrahmanian, R. (2005). Gender equality in education: Definitions and measurements. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 25(4), 395–407. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2005.04.003>

## Post-reading discussion

- Elian Londoño suggests having ‘reflective spaces’ in the classroom, which can help students understand differences between notions of gender and sex. How would your current or future students benefit from these spaces? What challenges do you think your students would face?
- Thinking about your own practice, what would these reflective spaces consist of? How would you create such spaces?

## Practical tasks

- Elian Londoño raises the matter of different identities in relation to gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality and age, for example.
  - Ask five English language teachers how they get to know about their students and how they know what identities their students associate themselves with.
  - Make a list of these English language teachers’ practices and consider which one(s) you consider to be exemplary.
  - Design a poster with these exemplary practices and share them with your peers.

## Pre-reading reflection

- Considering your time as a school pupil, which socially relevant topics do you remember discussing in the classroom?
- In which educational level (e.g. primary, secondary) and in which subject (e.g. geography, history, languages) were these topics discussed?
- How appropriate do you think these discussions were?
- What would you do differently if you were the teacher back then?

## Essay (5.3)

### Engaging gender and identity: A must in ELT practice

**Juan Jiménez – he/him**

(Pereira, Colombia)

It is not a secret that the concepts of gender and identity have gained relevance in recent years. Historically, men are the ones who are predominantly portrayed as the makers of society and the instigators of change and progress; thus, the role and importance of women have been overlooked or hidden. Wassily Kandinsky, for instance, had been considered the pioneer of abstract painting for many years; however, it was recently discovered that Hilma af Klint, a Swedish female artist, had created abstract paintings around five to six years before Kandinsky (Forbes, 2021). As well as women, LGBTQIA+ people have also not been thoroughly recognized. As Camacho and Carrigan (n.d., p. 5) state, 'all sectors in social life have heroes, except homosexuals'.<sup>9</sup> Of course, many more people nowadays know who Alan Turing was, but, in previous centuries, it was more difficult to find people who recognized him and his achievements because of his sexuality.

In ELT practice, teachers have a duty to address socially relevant topics since all teachers – no matter the subject – have a duty to close social gaps and empower the systematically marginalized groups. Thus, my practice as an ELT teacher must contribute to gender equality. In that regard, in the following paragraphs, the importance of two strategies to close the aforementioned social gaps will be described: presenting new narratives to the students and not omitting people's identities.

Human beings are homo *narrans*: animals who like to tell and listen to tales. It is important, then, to state that 'the social construction of reality is [...] a symbolic construction of reality and, more concretely, a narrative construction of reality'<sup>10</sup> (Mélích, 2011, p. 38). In this sense, when we are talking about narratives, we are talking about power. People who create the prevailing narrative of a group, an event, a person, etc. are exerting power. In order to counter hegemonic narratives, critical pedagogy can be used. Lynch (2019) proposes five steps to apply critical pedagogy in the classroom. One of the steps is called 'challenge yourself', and it recommends that educators think critically, challenge social structures, and research alternative narratives. Another step called 'present alternative views' advises educators to present the narratives found in the previous step alongside the traditional ones in order to discuss them. The comparison and contrast of traditional and alternative narratives offer a wider view for students to think critically about the topic that is discussed during lessons; additionally, it permits the recognition of under-represented and marginalized groups and voices during the schooling process. To sum up, alternative narratives are mandatory in the classroom since they allow us to critically discuss topics and recognize and validate the voices of the historically unheard.

9. 'Todos los sectores de la vida social tienen sus héroes, excepto los homosexuales'. Translation by the author.

10. 'La construcción social de la realidad es [...] una construcción simbólica de la realidad y, más concretamente, una construcción narrativa de la realidad.' Translation by the author.

Narratives have a huge impact on identity and people's perception of self, which are key in understanding gender. The connection between identity and self has been widely discussed. According to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999), people belong to multiple communities of practice (CofP), which are groups of people who develop and share different aspects such as ways of talking, behaving, believing, doing, etc. People's identities are constantly being negotiated due to the different CofP to which they belong and due to the roles that each individual takes within such CofP. Language and gender are developed within the frameworks of the different CofP to which one belongs throughout their lives. Castañeda-Peña (2021) argues that ELT materials showcase heteronormative representations of masculinity and femininity, so what happens to those students whose CofP have not followed traditional patterns? Their identities are omitted from the discussion, which contributes to the invisibility and marginalization of these students. Therefore, the practice of ELT has a duty to make visible and address the different identities in order to break the myth that the only valid identities are the traditional ones.

In essence, ELT practice must contribute to gender equality since educators have a social and historical duty to close the social gaps created by the status quo. This can be done by presenting alternative narratives in order to discuss them and validate the identities that are different from ones that are considered traditional. Since teaching is a political act, educators must address the social and political topics that are relevant not only to the world but also to their students. I highlight the modal verb used in the previous clause: 'must address'. It is not enough to suggest those topics implicitly or mention them slightly; it is necessary to dive deeper into discussions around them. When something is not explicitly covered, it is at risk of being overlooked or not thoroughly explored. Sexual education in Colombia, for instance, according to the General Law of Education (Congreso de Colombia, 1994), is supposed to be taught in formal education, but the first paragraph of Article 14 states that it is not necessary to have a specific subject for it. Due to this, sexual education is either omitted or poorly mentioned in educational institutions. The topics of gender and identity have to be addressed in the classroom; otherwise, we are at risk of having students who can communicate in English but are illiterate in tolerance, respect, recognition, and validation of otherness. May I ask, ELT scholars and practitioners, would it be too ambitious and presumptuous to try to have both? I think it would not.

## References

- Camacho, J. & Carrigan, J. (n.d.). *El prócer [The national hero]*. <https://www.yumpu.com/es/document/read/14874115/el-procer-teatroenmiami.com>
- Castañeda-Peña, H. (2021). Local identity studies of gender diversity and sexual orientation in ELT. *HOW Journal*, 28(3), 154–172. <https://doi.org/10.19183/how.28.3.683>
- Congreso de Colombia. (1994, February 8). *Ley general de educación, Ley 115 de 1994 [General law of education, Law 115 of 1994]*. [https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1621/articles-85906\\_archivo\\_pdf.pdf](https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1621/articles-85906_archivo_pdf.pdf)
- Eckert, P. & McConnell-Ginet, S. (1999). New generalizations and explanations in language and gender research. *Language in Society*, 28(2), 185–201.
- Forbes. (2021, August 31). *Hilma af Klint, la artista sueca que se adelantó a Kandinsky [Hilma af Klint, the Swedish artist who anticipated Kandinsky]*. <https://www.forbes.com.mx/forbes-life/entretenimiento-arte-desconocido-espiritismo-hilma-af-klint/>
- Lynch, M. (2019, September 6). *How to implement critical pedagogy into your classroom*. The Edvocate. <https://www.theedadvocate.org/how-to-implement-critical-pedagogy-into-your-classroom/>
- Mélich, J.-C. (2011). *Filosofía de la finitud [Philosophy of the finitude]*. Herder.

## Post-reading discussion

- Do you agree or disagree that ‘teaching is a political act’? Why?
- Juan Jiménez discusses the relationship between narrative and power. Can you think of episodes from your own English language classroom that could substantiate this point?
- Which social structures do you consider important to challenge in your English language classes?

## Practical tasks

- Juan Jiménez argues that some famous people have not been thoroughly discussed in education because of their sexuality and holds that teachers need to focus on ‘the systematically marginalized groups’.
  - Who, among the LGBTQIA+ people, would you bring to your class?
  - How would you present the people you have selected to your students (i.e. which aspects of their identities would you foreground)?
  - What activities would you ask your students to undertake in order to raise their understanding of gender equality?

## Section 6

# Country profile Indonesia

### General profile

Official name	Republic of Indonesia
Etymology	'The name is an 18th-century construct of two Greek words, "In-dos" (India) and "nesoi" (islands), meaning "Indian islands"'*
Independence	17 August 1945 from the Netherlands
Government type	Presidential republic

### Geographical profile

Continent	Southeastern Asia
Capital city	Jakarta
Area	1,904,569 sq km*

### Linguistic profile

Official language(s)	Indonesian**
Languages	723 (Living = 711 + Extinct = 12)**
English language status	Unestablished**

### Sources

\**The World Factbook 2022*

\*\**Ethnologue*

## Pre-reading reflection

- Has any of your schoolteachers ever treated pupils differently due to their gender? How did it make you feel at the time?
- Have you ever reported any gender-related issues? Who have you reported these issues to? What has the person done as a result?

## Essay (6.1)

### The unfortunate gender inequality for female students

**Cyntia Apriska – she/her**  
(Pontianak, Indonesia)

As I sit down trying to think about my experiences regarding gender equality for almost 14 years as a student, I must say there are times when I find myself wishing I was a male student. I often think about all the privileges that male students have even though they should not have them since female students should have the same rights. For people who do not understand the situation, it may seem like it is not a big deal. Some might even say it is untrue because they have never experienced it. Still, everyone has a right to feel safe in a classroom without being harassed by fellow students or even some teachers. It is everyone's right to say their opinions without being described as someone who talks too much. It is everyone's right to deal with their struggles without being judged. Yet, unlike male students, female students often do not find that their rights are granted, and they experience inequality countless times.

I could write about many of my experiences of inequality in the classroom, but the one that sticks out to me the most is the time that I got harassed verbally and physically by male students. They would call me names, say things that would make me uncomfortable and express their filthy thoughts carelessly. At one point in my life, a teacher of mine has told my class that male students tease and harass female students because the latter are 'inviting' it. Somehow, for this teacher, the terrible things that males do to females, making them uncomfortable, uneasy and afraid, are supposedly 'benefitting' the victim. This situation made me unable to speak up against it because the teacher, who students should trust, is no longer protecting them. This leads to male students displaying immoral behavior towards female students without suffering any consequences while female students who become victims are forced to be silenced.

The one time I decided to speak up against sexual harassment was when a female classmate of mine was being verbally harassed by one of our male teachers. He said hurtful, disgusting things about a student, who had done nothing wrong. I confronted him about it, hoping he would realize what he had done was a bad thing. Instead, he called me 'tante',<sup>11</sup> which, in this context, was totally inappropriate, and told me that I talk too much. The school, which is supposed to be a safe place with teachers who should guide students, turned out to be the complete opposite and a nightmare for some students.

A girl who shares their thoughts is described as someone who talks too much while a boy who does the same is described as opinionated. A girl who does something wrong is called rebellious while it is normal for a boy to do so. A girl who is a victim of harassment is being accused of 'inviting' this aggressive behavior while a boy who harasses a girl suffers no consequences of their action. I think that there are only a few teachers that I encountered in my life who practice gender equality with their students.

In almost every class I ever attended, mostly in primary school, male students dominated the class and got their position as class coordinator. It comes down to the patriarchal culture that states female students are not suitable to be leaders because it is 'a man's job' or because the judgmental society states females are too 'emotional'. On the contrary, positions as class secretaries are mostly given to female students due

11. The literal translation of this word is 'auntie', but it can be used to refer to an older woman who likes to play around or a girl who talks too much because it is stereotypical for aunts to talk too much.

to the general view of women being secretaries. From these unfortunate events alone, gender inequality begins at school. This often leads to the work environment or the society itself where women are the victims of patriarchy.

As a future English language teacher, I think it is my duty to contribute to gender equality. From my experiences and hundreds of others, inequality for female students should not be experienced under any circumstance. It is necessary to implement the importance of gender equality in teaching. English language teachers could do so by teaching about pronouns: 'she' for females, 'he' for males, and 'they' for gender-neutral. English language teachers can also teach students vocabularies that are not male-dominated or gender-neutral such as 'police officer' instead of 'policeman' and 'chairperson' instead of 'chairman'. English language teachers should make their students understand that a society should not be dominated by one gender and that all genders are important and equal.

I also believe that teacher education should include a lesson on how to implement gender equality in their classes. I acknowledge that this inclusion does not close the possibility that many future teachers may not understand that gender equality is important, may be biased towards one gender and may be unfair to others. However, a lesson on gender equality for future teachers is vital in order to prevent future misfortune events that students might experience because of teacher's gender-unequal actions.

In sum, there are still too many female students who experience inequality in the classroom because of their gender. It is a sad and awful truth since all students should feel safe and have the right to an education without unnecessary intrusions due to their gender. Patriarchal cultures are present in the school environment where male students are given positions as the class coordinator or the class leader most of the time. Education on gender equality for future teachers is needed to make them understand the importance of gender equality not only in the classroom but also in society. As a future English language teacher and future educator, it is my duty to learn about and teach gender equality. It is important for me and every future teacher to provide a safe place for all students.

## Post-reading discussion

- To what extent do you think patriarchy influences English language classes in your country?
- As an English language teacher, what can you do to establish a friendly, safe and supportive environment where students feel comfortable reporting harassment episodes to you?

## Practical tasks

- Collect all the textbooks used in your workplace and analyze how they present subject pronouns in English ('I', 'you', 'he', 'she', 'it', 'we', 'they').
  - At what level are students taught these subject pronouns?
  - How does the textbook differentiate the use of third-person pronouns, ('he', 'she', 'it', 'they')?
  - Which pronoun(s) are the students introduced to if they want to refer to a third person whose gender is unknown? What about if they want to refer to a non-binary person?
  - Is there any acknowledgement of the use of 'they' as a gender-neutral option with singular reference (e.g. 'The student didn't know what to do, so they decided to ask for advice.')
- Collect all the textbooks used to teach other languages you know and undertake the same analysis described above.
  - How similar or different is the teaching of English to these other languages?

## Pre-reading reflection

- How important have female people been in your life? Why?
- Would you consider the country that you live in to be 'gender equal'? Why do you think so? How do you think this compares to other countries you know?

## Essay (6.2)

### The utopia of women and girls

**Muhammad Bayu Heri Permana – he/him**  
(Kabupaten Tangerang, Indonesia)

When I looked at myself in the mirror, I saw great women standing behind me. Growing up, I was the baby of the family. As time passes, I realize that, as a man, I want to live a meaningful life, and my little world serves as the main reason. I already have my mother and sister, and I hope to have a wonderful wife and daughter in the future. Now, I want to repay them for shaping me into the person I am today. This includes the utopia I want them to live in. A world with equitable rights and opportunities for women and girls. A world where there are no gender issues. A world in which humanity must consider and debate more pressing issues. Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go before we can reach the perfect world.

Though I am only a sophomore, I am aware that, in order to reach a world free of inequalities against women and girls, we must establish a better culture. Inequalities against women and girls is a global concern. It may go unnoticed and be irrelevant until it affects us and those around us. Gender inequality is not an issue of preceding cultures. It is, however, happening right now.

Inequalities against women and girls are so easily widespread that they can be found in almost every aspect of life, all over the world. Interventions aimed at preventing rather than eradicating gender inequalities are more likely to be effective in the long run. For that reason, developing a healthier culture through education is an ideal scenario to combat society's stigma against women and girls. As a future English language teacher, my contribution to fight against this stigma among the current and future generations will aid in the promotion and acceleration of gender equality.

Challenging the current stigma associated with inequalities against women and girls demands a closer look at our attitudes toward justice. It takes more than being active and critical to address the current stigma as we need to align our perceptions of what true justice entails. Furthermore, everyone in a culture must have prior knowledge of social issues as well as how to behave in their presence. Female students, in my experience as a student in Indonesia, are already more active and critical than male students. However, on several occasions, there are cases of men's forceful dominance over women. This leads to the conclusion that more effort is required to minimize gender inequalities.

Based on my experience, one aspect that could be enhanced is the role of teachers. I have not seen teachers making further efforts to contribute to gender equality in classes where female students are already outperforming male students. Women, in my opinion, need to make a strong statement and recognize that they have the same social status as men. Teachers could do a favor to students – both male and female – by making them aware of it. Understanding must come from both genders or it will be in vain. The best way to reach this understanding is to cultivate students' minds in class every day.

As a future English language teacher, I will benefit from knowing two languages and from learning about issues affecting both English-speaking countries and Indonesia, my native country. This knowledge of mine can be applied to contribute to a healthier culture in my living environment. To make the world a safer place for our beloved ones, we must begin with the people around us. Everyone has an obligation to support the gender movement. We never know when one person's action will have a profound,



sustainable, and long-term impact. A slight but steady process is better than one massive change at a time. There may be a long journey ahead of us, but the adventure will be well worth our time and effort for our little world.

### Post-reading discussion

- Muhammad Bayu Heri Permana holds that '[i]nterventions aimed at preventing rather than eradicating gender inequalities are more likely to be effective in the long run'. Considering your specific English language teaching context, would you agree or disagree with this point? Why?
- In which year of university education in English language teaching should students be made aware of how to embed gender equality in their pedagogical practice? Why?

### Practical tasks

- If you were going to organize a conference dedicated to English language teaching, who would you invite as keynote speakers from your country? What about those from other countries?
- Is your list of national guests balanced or imbalanced in terms of gender? What about your list of international guests?
- Do some online research to complement your lists and ensure you familiarize yourself with the work of the new researchers you have added to the lists.

## Pre-reading reflection

- As a child, what dreams did you have for yourself? To what extent did your schoolteachers support you to pursue these dreams? What did they do?
- What do you understand by 'misogyny'? Were you ever taught about it? In which context?

## Essay (6.3)

### Women in education: Learn that we are not objects

**R. A. Lefiana Isnaeni Fajrin – she/her**  
(Tangerang, Indonesia)

School classrooms can be dangerous places for women to grow up if the education system remains men-centered. Women might be exposed to indoctrination, which lowers their self-worth and even leads them to see themselves as sub-humans. This is a real issue based on my personal classroom experience in the past where one of my male teachers told the class, 'Why do women need to go to school? Women don't need to get a high level of education. Their nature is only to end up in the well, the kitchen, and on the bed.' The well and the kitchen implied that women were born to draw water from the well and cook in the kitchen; while the bed hinted to us that women were thought of as sexual slaves who had no other job but to satisfy men. Thus, that male teacher believes that we, women, do not deserve to be educated because we are created for the sole purpose of serving everyone but ourselves. According to him, there is no alternative to that: we cannot be lawyers, teachers, businesswomen – nothing except being of service to men. Because no matter how hard we try, how excellent we can possibly be in our study and how big our dreams are, women should not think of doing anything to make ourselves happy, fulfill our ambitions, benefit our lives, and achieve our dreams if it does not put men as the core of our aspiration. As if women were not even created for ... ourselves.

Victim-blaming towards women also exists in classroom. This culture exists everywhere, and an education system is no exception. From my personal experience, I recall another male teacher trying to justify sexual assaults by some men, which were reported on the news. He blamed it on the victims – women – by saying, 'No wonder women get raped. Look, they wear such clothes that display their breasts everywhere.' This comment was then followed by the sounds of male students laughing together with the teacher. This type of misogyny by educators creates nothing but a generation of entitled rapists and a world where we, women, have automatically lost our rights to safety the moment we wear something that men deem as inappropriate or 'inviting'. Neither men nor women deserve to be raped – even when they are bare naked. But, somehow, assault is normalized and produces a reaction that results in phrases such as 'no wonder' when the victims are women. Women are told to expect to get raped if they wear whatever they like that accidentally also crosses the 'appropriate' standard. But whose standard is that? Why should we accept standards that fit only one party's interest? Is it really the 'standard' when it is always changing depending on the person's interests or what they feel like? And who makes this standard? Men? Why?

Education systems are tragically not friendly for women even in this modern age. Schools still let unqualified teachers, with a very misogynistic ideology, spread their backward mindset in class. The classes include all genders, but teachers are unable to treat and see them as equally human. Schools may let female students register for classes and wear their uniform. But, somehow, schools do not seem to recognize that women have the right to education and a bright future as much as men do. Instead, they merely let female students register because of a formality which follows the rest of the world's laws and expectations. It makes them appear as progressive when they actually do not accept that women deserve any of these basic rights. An education system should create a safe environment for women to study and take action against gender inequality, which happens on a daily basis.

These are only small examples of a lot of anti-women experiences that I have gone through during my school days for being born with two X chromosomes. We, women, receive this type of treatment even from our teachers and are taught to expect it. Women deserve better.

## Post-reading discussion

- What were your initial reactions to R. A. Lefiana Isnaeni Fajrin's description of her classroom experiences? How similar or different was it from your peers' reactions? Why?
- The essay argues against 'men-centered educational systems'. Is this phrase applicable to the educational systems with which you are familiar? Why (not)? What can be done to change these educational systems into more democratic spaces?

## Practical tasks

- Some cases of misogyny were reported in the essay, highlighting the importance of English language teachers' preparation to deal with such cases and to provide students with appropriate support.
  - Which national or local organizations provide support to women and girls?
  - Do these organizations focus on a specific age range and/or type of misogyny? Which one(s)?
  - What are the contact details of these organizations?
  - What are their opening hours?

## Section 7

# Country profile Morocco

### General profile

Official name	Kingdom of Morocco
Etymology	'The English name "Morocco" derives from, respectively, the Spanish and Portuguese names "Marruecos" and "Marrocos", which stem from "Marrakesh" the Latin name for the former capital of ancient Morocco; the Arabic name "Al Maghrib" translates as "The West"'
Independence	2 March 1956 from France
Government type	Parliamentary constitutional monarchy

### Geographical profile

Continent	Northern Africa
Capital city	Rabat
Area	716,550 sq km*

### Linguistic profile

Official language(s)	Moroccan Spoken Arabic, Standard Arabic, Standard Moroccan Tamazight**
Languages	15 (All living)**
English language status	Educational**12

### Sources

\**The World Factbook 2022*

\*\**Ethnologue*

12. 'The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.' (Ethnologue, 2022)

## Pre-reading reflection

- What traits do you associate with the expression 'be a woman'? What about 'be a man'?
- Have you noticed any change in what it means to be a woman or a man in your lifetime?

## Essay (7.1)

### How should teachers contribute to gender equality?

**Farah Chkarka – she/her**

(Meknes, Morocco)

The economic, social, political and cultural characteristics and possibilities connected with being a woman or a man are referred to as gender. Cultures have different societal conceptions of what it means to be a woman or a man, and these meanings shift throughout time. Gender is a sociocultural manifestation of certain traits and roles associated with specific groups of individuals in relation to their sex and sexuality. Therefore, gender shapes one's life, relationships, life choices, career trajectories, and eventually, education.

Biological differences between genders tend to influence students' academic life in a myriad of ways. In Morocco, girls are expected to stay at home and receive limited knowledge. Boys, on the other hand, are seen as more intelligent, and it is believed that education should be restricted solely to them. So many prejudices have passed down from one generation to the other since the Middle Ages, and they have made everyone in our society, especially teachers, get stuck to that mindset.

Teachers, being somehow knowledge dispensers, should let go of these prejudices and contribute to gender equality for its impact on the individuals and the society as a whole.

First, teachers must avoid segregation between males and females. In Islamic education, teachers ensure that male and female students are not sitting next to each other or engaged in the same activity or sport. As a consequence, girls feel inferior; and boys feel that sense of superiority and authority, which will indeed affect their social relationships with girls. Teachers should instead encourage collaboration between the two genders by grouping them together instead of separating them.

Second, teachers should avoid gender-biased language in the classroom. With their sexist language, teachers may be a source of offense to students – girls in particular. This language lays a foundation that may limit students' understanding of gender roles. For example, 'be a man' is an expression that we associate with someone who is courageous and assertive whereas the expression 'be a woman' is usually associated with politeness and submissiveness.

Finally, great teachers are the ones who are aware of these gender biases and help students recognize them. Sometimes people will perceive certain actions as normal and unrelated to sexism because these actions have been normalized for centuries. Teachers should highlight these actions, educate their students and correct any stereotypes the students may have internalized since they were born.

To conclude, gender has a critical role in determining the power, privilege and opportunities that certain individuals have or do not have in a particular culture. Studying gender has an impact on progress toward equality and on the elimination of prejudice, which must start early on in education. As a result, it is teachers' responsibility to have a deep grasp of this issue and transmit the right messages to the new generations for them to be great citizens and to shape a greater society.

## Post-reading discussion

- What suggestion would you give to English language teachers who work in single-sex educational institutions and who wish to embed gender equality in their practice?
- Farah Chkarka believes that being a skilled teacher entails helping students to become aware of gender biases. How can you help your English language students in this regard?

## Practical tasks

- Identify a co-ed and a single-sex school in the same neighborhood.
- Read their publicity materials carefully to check whether they use gender-related matters to promote the school.
- Analyze their pedagogical plan and note whether and how they include sex or gender education in the curriculum.
- Compare the approaches of these two schools.
- Identify pros and cons in the stated approaches.

## Pre-reading reflection

- Can you recall an instance of teachers' and/or students' acceptance of gender differences? What was it about?
- What are some of the most difficult issues that you have had to address in your English language class? What did they relate to?

## Essay (7.2)

### Gender issues in teaching

**Doha Baladi – she/her**  
(Meknes, Morocco)

Teaching is a very demanding job that entails dealing with a lot of issues and cases in the classroom. Therefore, the teacher should be wise enough to handle them. One of the prominent issues confronted in this profession is gender.

A teacher's involvement in shaping social expectations of gender roles is critical. I believe that a strong teacher is the one who treats their students fairly, creating an environment where they can equally take part. Indeed, teachers should try their best not to create any sort of gender discrimination in their classrooms either explicitly or implicitly.

There are some teachers who try to project their personal beliefs as well as their bigoted thoughts on students, raising gender issues by differentiating between boys and girls. For instance, I still remember that, when I was a student in elementary school, the teacher used to hate boys because she thought that they were the source of disruptive behavior and they were not smart enough to be high achievers. I believe that students were influenced by that teacher, and her ideas, to a great extent, shaped their mindsets as well as their attitudes towards gender.

As a future teacher, my practice, which involves behavior management, relationship building, consistency and communication, should absolutely contribute to gender equality. This includes paying attention to the language I will use inside the classroom, which should be neutral and objective. It should also avoid stereotyping children because this will impact them negatively, will affect their relationships and will lead to discrimination among them. Another point that I will try to consider are materials: they should be chosen based on activities and elements that incorporate the presence of men and women. Moreover, the teacher is a role model, which means that students learn by imitation; therefore, behaving appropriately and being coherent with my discourse is a necessity.

Additionally, implementing project-based learning will be beneficial in order to encourage both boys and girls to sit together as well as to share their feelings equally. In fact, having students work collaboratively will 'AIR' the environment: it will create opportunities to be more *Autonomous*; it will create positive *Interdependence* among students, and they will be more *Responsible* over their learning.

All in all, teaching subsumes handling a lot of issues and dilemmas daily. Thus, teachers should be well-educated and be aware of these issues and dilemmas in order to raise a generation free from psychological and mental problems. Teachers have a pivotal role in shaping students' mindset and feelings. My future practice as an English language teacher will deal with gender issues in a very careful way to have a positive and inhibition-free classroom environment.

## Post-reading discussion

- How well equipped are you to address gender issues in the English language classroom? Which additional support (if any) would help you succeed in dealing with these issues?
- What are the key evaluation criteria you use when selecting materials for your English language class? Which gender aspects (if any) do you consider relevant? Why?

## Practical tasks

- Identify a gender topic that is relevant in your context.
- Together with teachers of other disciplines, design an interdisciplinary project aimed at raising your students' awareness of this topic. You might want to draw on Doha Baladi's suggestion to "AIR" the environment' with a focus on creating opportunities for student autonomy, classmates' interdependence and learning responsibility.
- Consider how your English language learning objectives will relate to the learning objectives of your fellow teachers.
- Implement this project in your educational context.
- Evaluate the project implementation and suggest improvements for its next iteration.



## Pre-reading reflection

- What first impression do you think your students generally have of you?
- Is there anything that English language teachers are not allowed to have and/or wear in your context (e.g. tattoos, piercings, short/long hair, skirts, make-up)? What explanation is given for that prohibition?

## Essay (7.3)

### Gender equality

#### Mehrar Meriem – they/them

(Fquih Ben Salah, Morocco)

I will start from my own experience: I have been a teacher for almost three years in private establishments. As a human being, the first impression that my students had of me was if I am a man or a woman since I currently have short hair and wear a different style of clothing. That was the first problem I faced: some families did not accept this style, thinking that I would impact their kids by changing their ideas or behaviors.

As a teacher, I saw kids having the same thoughts about gender stereotypes. So, I tried to change this by making things normal. I tried to place each boy next to a girl, explaining to them that this is normal. At the beginning, it was kind of difficult to convince them both to sit next to each other because boys laugh all the time, finding my grouping technique outlandish, while girls feel shy or afraid because they do not feel safe or comfortable. One day a mother of one of my students asked me if it was a punishment when her boy sat next to a girl. I had to clarify to her that I was the one who arranged the places like that because the students need to accept the fact that they are similar and that they are all humans after all.

Gender equality in education is not easy at all. I see that students respect male teachers more than they respect female teachers. The educational system does not include women's victories in geography and history lessons, for example. These lessons only deal with men's victories in wars and competitions, forgetting that there are lots of women who helped on these occasions. In Morocco, we have Kharboucha, an activist who used art to fight against oppression.

Our society is full of such gender gaps because of how kids get treated by parents. Numerous Moroccan families give more chances to boys than to girls. Some families also try to separate boys and girls because they think that, if boys and girls stay together, they will make trouble. Families should instead teach their children about acceptance and equality amongst men, women and others.

## Post-reading discussion

- What suggestions would you give to English language teachers whose students struggle to interact and collaborate with peers of different genders?
- How do parents in your specific teaching context react to the embedding of gender in English language classes?

## Practical tasks

- Mehrar Meriem is of the opinion that '[t]he educational system does not include women's victories in geography and history lessons'. If you were to design an English language lesson addressing this gap, whose achievements would you foreground?
- Would your students know these women and their achievements already, or would you need to introduce the content to them?

## Section 8

# Country profile Philippines

### General profile

Official name	Republic of the Philippines
Etymology	'Named in honor of King Phillip II of Spain by Spanish explorer Ruy Lopez de Villalobos, who visited some of the islands in 1543'*
Independence	4 July 1946 from the United States
Government type	Presidential republic

### Geographical profile

Continent	Southeastern Asia
Capital city	Manila
Area	300,000 sq km*

### Linguistic profile

Official language(s)	English, Filipino, Tagalog**
Languages	186 (Living = 184 + Extinct = 2)**
English language status	National** <sup>13</sup>

### Sources

\**The World Factbook 2022*

\*\**Ethnologue*

13. 'The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at the national level.' (Ethnologue, 2022)

## Pre-reading reflection

- How much have your teachers encouraged you to look after your mental health? What have they done in this regard?
- Have you ever read any academic publications on gender studies? What key ideas do you remember from them?

## Essay (8.1)

### Gender performativity in a school setting

**Marvi Krisly Reyes – she/her**  
(Manila, Philippines)

#### 1. The power disparity

Kirby (1990) writes that gender is an act that is both intentional and performative. Within the theory, it is recognized that gender is a set of repeating performances that can change over time. Consequently, performativity is essentially a decision process (Galanos, 2020). These are the premises that the present essay will discuss.

From a young age, I realized that men were in a place of power. I started wearing more masculine outfits to compensate for the power that I thought women lacked. I refused to wear skirts and make-up because they were feminine instead of refusing to do so because that was what I truly wanted. This disparity in power dynamics would continue in my head until I slowly figured out that women should do what they want. I then started to wear skirts and put on make-up. It was empowering to wear what I genuinely liked on me. However, people would always perceive women differently. When I wore a red lipstick and a red headband, someone came to me and asked if I were gay. It was a very weird experience, but I shrugged it off. Despite being a straight woman, I was left stunned at the inquiry this young man had asked. His tone and gesture also made it apparent that he was using this question as an insult. Through this confusion, I realized that perhaps gender is not only about who you are but how you present and fill that role.

#### 2. Gender and performativity

Gender comes with expectations of performativity. Within the classroom, women are expected to behave and be more mature. They are supposed not to succumb to physical force if any issue arises. However, it is heavily implied that, if men do it, it is alright and justified because of their gender. This severely impacts the psyche of women to feel as if they have to cater to these conventions at all times. Especially when they are still coming of age, it becomes very important to make both sides understand the complexities of human emotions without stripping them away of the nuance they deserve. Behaviors cannot only be explained by one's gender but also through dissecting issues that may lead to those behaviors.

#### 3. The impact of gender performativity

In my experience, gender performativity included hiding information about myself from my peers, since it did not conform to the expectations of the role I was supposed to fill. I love playing games such as indie games and massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG). However, I kept silent about it in class because society taught me that breaking my gender role would be a disservice to myself and others. This silence would start to crack when I was in Grade 9 because I found people who were willing to accept me for my interests.

For teachers, women are expected to do well in several aspects, but teachers' most harmful expectation is that women's physical appearance should be 'standard'. The halo effect of being pretty is more prevalent on women since society has a large incentive to prey on women's insecurities and impose an unrealistic

beauty standard. Although men also experience the same halo effect problem, women are more impacted because of the sheer amount of media reinforcement of this issue.

Students and teachers treat women differently because of their physical appearance. Some students would listen to a teacher they admittedly find more pleasing to the eye than others. Consequently, this perpetuates the idea that some women teachers are more highly valued than others because of their physicality. In a professional environment, this should not be a normal occurrence.

#### 4. Dismantling gender roles

My journey with gender roles has become a way for empowerment. Without taking into consideration my gender, I think about what it means to be a holistic role model for my students. I found that it was important to be aware of my physical health, mental health and work ethic. Through doing martial arts, I can continue to be physically and mentally healthy. Despite knowing that it is generally seen as taboo for women to engage in a physical activity, I do not mind. Gaming allows me to rest and have a mental reset, especially when I feel down. I also want my students to know when to take care of themselves in a healthy manner that allows for recreation. However, prioritizing one's health does not mean that a work ethic has to take a back seat. It is still important to work hard since it is an aspect of life that fulfills me.

Even if I was able to break some of the chains of gendered roles as an individual, it does not mean that we have addressed gender and power disparities. We cannot discount the amount of work one has to go through on a microscale to become an empowered woman.

#### References

Galanos, V. (2020). Tekken's Mokujiin and the disjunctive synthesis of gender performativity. *Press Start*, 6(1), 18–35. <https://press-start.gla.ac.uk/index.php/press-start/article/view/130/99>

Kirby, V. (1990). Gender, sexuality, performance – Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity. In V. Kirby, *Judith Butler: Live theory* (pp. 19–47). Bloomsbury. <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781472545688.ch-002>

### Post-reading discussion

- What can you do in your English language classroom to develop students' understanding and acceptance of those who do not conform to traditional gender roles?
- How important do you think it is to bring gender theories to English language education? What about to English language teacher education?

### Practical tasks

- Examine the handbook of all the courses you undertook during your university study in English language teacher education.
  - How many gender publications have been included in the reading lists? What do they discuss?
  - What gender topics have been included in these courses? How extensively were they covered?
  - What gender topics should have been included in your courses?

## Pre-reading reflection

- Have you experienced any difficulties with your gender identity? How did you overcome them?
- Have you ever noticed anyone struggling with their gender identity? What did you do to support them?

## Essay (8.2)

### For anyone and everyone: Teachers as pursuers of equality

**Andrea Cecilia de Jesus – she/her**  
(Manila, Philippines)

I am a woman. In the future, a woman in the academe. It should not be a question if I advocate and contribute to gender equality. As an educator, it is my job to share these inequalities with the students and let them understand how these inequalities affect the whole society.

Gender equality has been an issue fought for a long time by many advocates, including feminists. The talk on gender equality does not stop between men and women. The inclusion of LGBTQIA+ is an important matter to be discussed in the classroom. Its importance lies within the fact that these students are perhaps struggling with their own identity. I know it because I have been through it; I have seen others go through it. They may be part of a minority, but they are significantly impacting our everyday lives.

Education truly is the backbone of a nation. It helps build students' characters and behaviors. It helps students attain their aspirations. Education makes students think about their values in life. This includes how they view themselves and others. It is the educators' job to open the eyes of their students to how gender inequalities happen and how they can critically think about the possible ways to deal with these inequalities.

As a future English language educator, I should let my students know about gender inequalities by giving concrete examples of how these inequalities play a role in the lives of many people, especially women. Education can help students navigate their stance regarding this matter. Education raises students' awareness of their surroundings. It is not only impractical but also absurd to withhold such powerful knowledge from students if I am not going to teach them about gender equality. Today, the six Cs of education are applied inside the classroom. These are character, citizenship or culture, communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking (Anugerahwati, 2019). All of these are being valued and are now a part of 21st-century education. Not talking about gender equality and other issues in society will not assist them with honing the aforementioned skills, especially in the long run.

I would like to believe that language impacts how one presents and thinks about themselves. Calling students 'boys' and 'girls' is a way to put them into a certain kind of box that restricts them from exploring and expressing themselves. As I was growing up, I was told I was a good girl, I was a kind girl, and I was a smart girl. This placed me in a position where I should always cater to those descriptions. Sometimes, I do not even know if I consider myself a girl. Sometimes I wonder if I really am a girl. Is there even a right way to be a girl? Perhaps biologically, I am a female. My sex is female. However, sometimes, I do not feel like it. I grew up having to think a lot about my identity. Some of my classmates were addressed as 'the boys at the back', an expression which had a negative connotation: 'the boys at the back' were hard-headed and noisy, did not follow the rules, etc. As a future English language educator, I must know how words truly affect my students. It seems simple enough, but it gave me lasting effects on how I view myself and others. It took a lot of time to learn and unlearn these habits.

In the classroom, it is helpful to know the students to cater the lesson to their specific needs. One important factor is knowing students' preferred pronouns. I do believe that gender equality starts with

understanding and respect. Hence respecting learners' pronouns will not only let them know about that specific English topic but also uplift and empower them. Most writings that I have seen use the pronoun 'he' when talking about certain professionals while some use 'she' when talking about those doing household chores. Such language use is sexist and misogynistic in a sense as it assigns roles to specific genders and enforces that relationship in the students' minds. One important thing that I have learned in one of the professional courses that I am currently taking is that, when something is taught to a child, it is harder to make them unlearn these concepts. Thus, we need to be aware of this and correct it as early as possible if we want to push for a gender-equal classroom.

It is also significant to provide equal opportunities to all students inside and outside the classroom. For example, letting the students know that they are in a safe place and that anyone can be a leader regardless of their gender could be a start. Moreover, all students should be given enough opportunities to share and showcase their unique abilities. As current/future teachers, we should not reduce learners' capabilities based on their gender or on the stereotypical roles which were assigned to them by society. As educators of the English language – and humanities, we explore culture, history, arts, literature, etc. We should be able to teach students gender equality because it is us, humans, that we are talking about. It is our everyday experiences; it is our struggles put into words.

Sometimes, the question of when these talks should be brought up inside the classroom arises. If we want to fix the system, it has to start now. Educators, including me, must be able to unlearn their internal misogyny. A significant part of this includes assessing biases and perspectives. There is still much more to learn about this topic, and we must be able to translate this knowledge into our practice in the classroom. Students could learn from us as their role models and classroom facilitators. We are here to guide them and to aid them in absorbing these topics that are sometimes difficult for most to understand. As they will be the future generations and the next leaders, we are here to let them know of these gender inequalities so that, in the future, they will be able to navigate and view the world objectively with equity.

## Reference

Anugerahwati, M. (2019). Integrating the 6Cs of the 21st century education into the English lesson and the school literacy movement in secondary schools. *KnE Social Sciences*, 3(10), 165–171. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v3i10.3898>

## Post-reading discussion

- Do you use words like 'girl(s)' and 'boy(s)' to call or refer to your students? How gender inclusive are these words? What can you do differently to include students who do not identify with being a girl or a boy?
- Have you ever asked your students which pronouns they would want to be used to refer to them (e.g. 'he/his', 'she/her' or 'they/them')?
  - If so, what impact did it have in your English language class?
  - If not, what stops you from doing so?

## Practical tasks

- Examine the English language syllabus at your workplace or at an educational institutional with which you are familiarized.
- Consider whether/which matters relevant to the LGBTQIA+ community are included in it.
- Identify where LGBTQIA+ topics could be added the syllabus.
- Reflect on how this inclusion could take place.
- Seek feedback from fellow teachers on your proposal.

## Pre-reading reflection

- Who do you think has had the greatest influence in the way you perceive the world? Why?
- Have your teachers ever conveyed heteronormative relationship expectations to you (e.g. by asking whether you have a boyfriend if you are a girl)? Have you ever done so to your students?

## Essay (8.3)

### Anyone can carry chairs

**Natalie Rose Nieves – she/her**  
(Quezon City, Philippines)

I vividly remember my first taste of classroom gender inequality. I was around the fourth or fifth grade at the time, and our teacher asked for ‘strong boys to carry chairs’ from one room to another. I volunteered to help as well because I wanted to be useful and because I wanted to share in the complement of being called ‘strong’. To my confusion, the teacher stopped me because I was a girl and I should simply ‘let the boys do the tough work’. This situation is one I often found myself in: we, girls, were often assigned simply to sweep the floors, doing much lighter work, while the boys were the ones who did the literal heavy lifting, moving books and chairs at a moment’s notice. It certainly struck me as odd; however, I, the oblivious child that I was, did not even stop to think and question it. I perceived it as the norm. Gender inequality was practically foreign to me as no one had ever educated me on such a topic.

The discussion of gender equality should begin with the identification of what gender even is. Gender differs from sex. Sex is defined by the biological attributes that are assigned at birth. Gender, on the other hand, pertains to the social identity one would prefer to present themselves as. These differences are best observed in the LGBTQIA+ community or more simply known as the queer community. Society stereotypically ascribes couples to be composed of a pair of a ‘she’ and a ‘he’. However, in queer relationships, two people who both identify as males could choose to become partners. People could also choose to identify as a gender that is different from what they were born as. For example, a male assigned at birth could eventually self-identify as a female. In simple terms, gender is the identification with which a person feels the most comfortable regardless of social status.

Gender equality is providing people the freedom to choose what they identify as, without having to adhere to peer pressure at best nor societal discrimination at worst. It is giving the same amount of rights, opportunities and responsibilities to everyone, treating everyone at a level playing field regardless of what gender they identify as.

A counterargument I have heard in regard to teachers asking boys to do the literal heavy lifting instead of girls relates to the physical differences that these two sexes have and to boys being perceived as biologically stronger on average than girls. Firstly, these claims do not necessarily hold true. Ramos et al.’s (1998, p. 526) research indicates that ‘[t]here were no significant gender differences in strength for the two youngest age groups, but boys were stronger than girls in the oldest age group’. While there is some merit to these claims, they are not necessarily as drastic as we would have been made to believe.

Gender assumptions place awkward expectations on students in the classroom. Girls are to be soft and dainty while boys are to be playful and brute. When girls are rowdy in the playground, they are scolded and lectured to be more ‘ladylike’; however, when it is the boys’ turn to be rough and tumble in the playground, they are admired and excused as ‘boys being boys’. Even the idea of shoving heteronormative romantic expectations onto young students get roped up in this stereotyping. I have seen a couple of times some teachers accidentally pair up boys and girls who often played together, matching the students together in romantic implications that seemed inappropriate for their age level simply because they ‘look cute together’.

Such gender stereotypes would even get carried over to the books and materials that are used in education. Certain professions would be perceived as feminine or masculine. Nurses are often presented as women while doctors are presented as a nurse's male counterpart. In reality, both nurses and doctors can be male or female.

Research conducted by Tarrayo (2014) found that, out of a sample of six Philippine pre-school English language textbooks, the occupational roles in which females are depicted are less diverse, often being restricted to stereotypically indoor-related occupational roles. Males, however, are shown in a much wider range of professions with the insinuation being that women in particular professions are only 'optional'. This research also states the differences in the words used in dialogues involving males and females. Males are often attributed to 'tough' words ('hard', 'play') while women are attributed to 'dainty' words ('caring', 'teach').

Another research conducted by Villanueva & Obaob (2021) yielded similarly gender-discriminating results in primary education textbooks, with women being depicted in dependent and passive situations and men being much more assertive. This research also interviewed Filipino male and female teachers, each with differing responses. The male teacher participants adhered to the idea of a 'traditional Filipino culture' where women simply stay home and do chores. The female teacher participants objected to this mindset and viewpoint. They were more eager to throw away these 'traditional Filipino norms' and wished to give women the right to work and do as they please.

As a society, we should refrain from sorting certain characteristics into separate categories, branding a trait as belonging to a particular camp and this camp alone. We should comfortably be able to blur the lines of who gets what kind of traits, characteristics and responsibilities irrespective of what gender identity they hold. Gender equality is being able to hold everyone in a similar accord. The segregation of gender roles serves as another unnecessary societal boundary that we need to overcome, a harmful standard that limits an individual's own potential.

A step forward to improving gender equality in education is to keep the wording of textbook examples gender neutral. Allow 'Josh' to feel 'dainty' and 'Luisa' to be 'strong'. Create a male character who experiences soft emotions and a female character who saves the day. Provide literary examples where male characters are portrayed as more 'effeminate' and female characters that are 'butcher'. Depict a male character as 'gentle' and a female character as 'mischievous'. Textbook authors should keep in mind gender inclusivity even when it comes to providing examples as these examples help shape children's perception of the world around them.

Teachers, as educators, also need to be mindful of the way they speak, ensuring that their examples will not further fan the flames of these gendered stereotypes. Even simple things such as teasing a male student for crossing their legs and calling them 'gay' in a derogatory way could heavily impact not just that particular student's perception of their gender but the perception of all the other students as well. They could think that acting a certain way is wrong, and the unmerited degradation for such stereotypical expectations would impact them in a negative way. Children are not stupid. Even at a young age, they can pick up on these kinds of subtle distinctions easily. If children are presented with these recurring stereotypes, that is what they will assume as the truth. A truth that is harmful and exclusionary.

It is an unfortunate yet important note to take into consideration that the battle for gender equality is also often seen as a battle against misogyny. While the goal of gender equality is to give men and women the same rights, patriarchal society leads the fight to lean towards a particular way – that way being a fight for women's rights. It is important for us to keep in mind that there are those who choose not to identify as either male or female and that it is imperative that we keep their rights in mind as well. Adherence to gender roles is an attempt to further separate and neglect certain groups of people, an oversimplification of the vastly complex inner works of the human individual.

Children's perception of themselves and of the world around them is primarily molded by the atmosphere of their learning spaces. If the examples to which students are always exposed indicate that females should be weak and dependent and that males should be assertive and strong, that will eventually become their reality. As stated by Hein & Selden (2000), the education system, including textbooks, is one of the ways society has to indicate what it wants its future citizens to be. If children at a young age feel as if they



are being punished for acting a certain way that is not in accordance with 'gender norms', they will internalize this unaccounted anger and force it upon the world around them as well, perpetuating an endless cycle of anger. A society that is gender inclusive shows them that the world is their oyster regardless of their gender. Regardless of what is in their pants or what they identify as, they should be able to feel as if they, too, can carry chairs.

## References

Hein, L. & Selden, M. (2000). The lessons of war, global power, and social change. In L. Hein & M. Selden (Eds.), *Censoring history: Citizenship and memory in Japan, Germany, and the United States* (pp. 3–50). M. E. Sharpe.

Ramos, E., Frontera, W. R., Llopart, A. & Feliciano, D. (1998). Muscle strength and hormonal levels in adolescents: Gender related differences. *International Journal of Sports Medicine*, 19(8), 526–531.

Tarrayo, V. N. (2014). Gendered word (or world): Sexism in Philippine preschool English language textbooks. *Journal on English Language Teaching*, 4(2), 25–32.

Villanueva, L. A. A. & Obaob, G. (2021). Language and sexism: The use of English language as academic discourse in Balamban, Cebu primary education textbooks. *European Scientific Journal*, 17(24), 132–150.

## Post-reading discussion

- What would you do if a student were derogatorily called 'gay' or 'lesbian' in your English language class?
- What suggestions would you give to an English language teacher who is looking for story books that challenge gender expectations? What are the stories about?

## Practical tasks

- Natalie Rose Nieves warns about the existence of gender stereotypes in the way occupations are presented in textbooks.
- Analyze the textbook you use to teach English (or, if it is more feasible, one of its units).
  - Visual analysis
    - ◆ How many pictures show professionals?
    - ◆ How many of these professionals can be unambiguously identified as women or as men?
    - ◆ What are the professions of the women and the men in these pictures?
  - Textual analysis
    - ◆ How many professions are mentioned in the reading and listening texts?
    - ◆ Are the professionals named? If so, are these female or male names?
    - ◆ Which professions are undertaken by women and men?
    - ◆ What qualifications are presented for women and men who perform the same profession (e.g. female nurses holding a Bachelor's degree vs. male nurses holding a Master's degree)?
    - ◆ What titles are used to identify women and men who perform the same profession and hold the same educational qualifications (e.g. a female professor educated at PhD level being referred to as 'Ms.' vs. a male professor who also holds a PhD being referred to as 'Dr.')?
- Consider the extent to which your textbook analysis provides empirical evidence for Natalie Rose Nieves's point about gender stereotypical representation of occupations in textbooks.

## Section 9

# Country profile Ukraine

### General profile

Official name	Ukraine
Etymology	'The name derives from the Old East Slavic word "ukraina" meaning "borderland or march (militarized border region)" and began to be used extensively in the 19th century; originally Ukrainians referred to themselves as Rusyny (Rusyns, Ruthenians, or Ruthenes), an endonym derived from the medieval Rus state (Ky-ivan Rus)'*
Independence	24 August 1991 from the Soviet Union
Government type	Semi-presidential republic

### Geographical profile

Continent	Eastern Europe
Capital city	Kyiv
Area	603,550 sq km*

### Linguistic profile

Official language(s)	Ukrainian**
Languages	23 (All living)**
English language status	Educational** <sup>14</sup>

### Sources

\**The World Factbook 2022*

\*\**Ethnologue*

14. 'The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.' (Ethnologue, 2022)

## Pre-reading reflection

- Which country do you regard as exemplary when it comes to gender equality? What does it do well on this front?
- Which country do you believe still has a long way to go to reach the gender equality goal? Why?

## Essay (9.1)

### Fighting gender inequality when teaching English

**Denys Kniaziev – he/him**  
(Kyiv, Ukraine)

Since the emergence of life, inequality has always been a major problem. Some people are just born in a better location and, after the appearance of countries, it has even become more crucial in determining your whole future. Many are born with a different color of skin, which, back in time, could doom them to a lifetime of being enslaved, and, unfortunately, now still often results in a lack of rights and in different forms of persecution. In the same way, being born a woman typically makes you experience inequality in many areas of life. As a man myself, I must admit that prevalence is commonly given to men when it comes to education and employment. There are numerous culturally derived and widely accepted stereotypes and expectations that women, under the pressure of the society, feel being obliged to comply with. In some countries, like Afghanistan, women and girls are not just underestimated, but they are deprived of basic human rights due to a misinterpretation of some particular religious principles. It is sad to admit that such kind of discrimination is a common practice even in some of world's richest countries such as Saudi Arabia. Therefore, there is no doubt that gender inequality does not only create additional challenges for women, but it also has a negative impact on the whole world and its progress. The fight against gender inequality is among society's goals in recent years, and it is definitely going to be a long-term project. This requires a lot of participation, especially from the most influential people, one category of whom is teachers. That is why I believe that English language teachers should contribute to gender equality, and there is a significant number of things we can do.

There is an exclusive feature of language learning that offers additional opportunities for language teachers to enhance the education of their students: language learning is content-based. There is no other way to master the target language but through interacting with content-rich materials. While texts, dialogues, audio, video recordings, etc. provide context for vocabulary and improve core language skills, teachers should not forget that these do also convey some particular information, and all the information students receive, regardless of the language it is in, affects them in one way or another. In most cases, teachers also have the freedom of choosing the content for their lessons. Hence, by providing students with particular content, related to or portraying a model of gender equality, teachers can raise the awareness among students and help them break gender stereotypes. It is a privilege and, at the same time, an obligation of language teachers to leverage this opportunity as it is not available to teachers of most of the school subjects. This approach can be illustrated by my own experience as a learner. While taking a Turkish class on an online language learning platform, I was once presented with a video about a female metro train driver within the topic of public transport. Also, I was shown several posters that are usually found in Istanbul metro, portraying women who have stereotypical 'men's jobs'. As a follow-up task, I was offered to have a conversation about gender inequalities in Ukraine and Turkey. Although it was slightly above my level, I managed to do all the tasks and took away some points about challenges women come across in Turkey. As we can see from this example, the approach was not only helpful in terms of language learning, but also turned out to be effective in educating me on the problem of gender inequality. Of course, as teachers, we should not take that to the extreme and include such information in all our lessons, nor do I think one particular lesson should be completely based on addressing the issue. It is always good to use common sense. I would suggest that the inclusion of content and tasks related to

gender inequality should be done with moderate frequency and only when you consider it to be appropriate.

However, it is important to note that some materials may do the opposite: add to gender inequality. For instance, I remember coming across an English language textbook that features pictures of men illustrating highly qualified jobs and pictures of women illustrating unskilled ones. In my teaching practice, I always look through the materials I am going to use and filter out the ones that have texts or images portraying any type of discrimination, also including racism. Sentences showing gender-based stereotypical behavior, like 'In the evening, the father watches television, and the mother cooks dinner' are extremely common in textbooks. I consider it unnecessary to change such sentences, but I would also provide the opposite sentence to show that women are not always cooking – nor do they have to – and to prevent such stereotypes from being written into students' memories. When creating our own content and tasks for the classes, it is better to make sure characters of both genders are equally represented in illustrations and names.

Apart from the context in which the language is taught, teachers have to be careful when choosing vocabulary to teach. Although English does not have grammatical gender, there are some gendered words. The list of such words includes 'policeman', 'salesman', 'fireman', 'businessman' and 'chairman'. It would be inappropriate to use these words when referring to a woman or to a person whose gender is unknown to us. I have seen many teachers offering some of these words to primary-school students, who are left with no option but to use them when referring to all genders. So, I consider it much better to provide students with gender-neutral alternatives from the beginning: 'police officer', 'salesperson', 'firefighter', 'businessperson' and 'chairperson'.

In order to promote gender equality, it is also vital to maintain it inside the English language classroom. You cannot talk about equality and then give a male student a higher grade than the one you give a girl when their work is equally good. Teachers are expected to set the example of correct behavior, so they should always try to provide equal opportunities and remain unbiased. Every act of discrimination committed by students of one gender against the students of another should be dealt with. Sometimes girls and women need us to encourage them to speak. When I was teaching a group of five students, four of whom were boys, the one girl was acting pretty shy and seemed to be reluctant to speak. It was later that I found out the only thing I had to do was to ask her if she wanted to answer a question or to address the question directly to her. It turned out she was willing to speak but just did not want to raise her hand probably because of being afraid of interrupting the boys.

Understanding that English language teachers should contribute to gender equality, I have provided some reasons for this contribution and some ways to do so. Society is a do-it-yourself project, meaning it is absolutely possible for us to fight gender inequality the same way we have created it. It just requires time, effort, and participation. I invite English language teachers to become a part of it.

## Post-reading discussion

- Denys Kniaziev holds that '[t]he fight against gender inequality [...] requires a lot of participation, especially from the most influential people, one category of whom is teachers'. Who are the other key stakeholders in English language teaching that should be involved in this fight? What role should they fulfill in it?
- Have you or your students ever brought up any gender stereotypes in your English language classes? Which ones? Why were they mentioned in your classes?

## Practical tasks

- You have been invited to deliver a workshop on the selection of gender-appropriate materials for the English language classroom.
- Identify texts with suitable gender content that teachers could use to explain a language point (e.g. simple past, cohesion, transition words).
- Look for images which could be used as examples that should be avoided due to their portrayal of gender stereotypes.
- Prepare a list of dos and don'ts to guide teachers' selection of texts and images.

## Pre-reading reflection

- Would you say you have been raised in a matriarchal or patriarchal family? What impact has this had on your gender awareness and sensitivity?
- How much input have you had on gender, race/ethnicity and special needs during your university education in English language teaching? Has one of these topics been more extensively explored than the others? Which one? Why?

## Essay (9.2)

### Teaching gender equality in Ukraine

**Daria Nesterova – she/her**

(Kyiv, Ukraine)

I grew up in a liberal family with a matriarch as a mother and free access to the Internet, thus I have considered myself a feminist since the tender age of 14.

As I started teaching English in my second year at university, I realised that I have the power and responsibility to shape not only my students' language skills but their ideas of the world as well. I was extremely grateful that the program I was teaching allowed me to discuss race, disability and, in general, people who are different from my students.

However, gender problems were not discussed much at school and university. In my opinion, we as a society are at a point where a great number of people say: 'But you have your rights already!' and do not consider the problems faced by the women of colour, disabled, queer, victims of domestic violence and sex trafficking, etc.

In my personal classroom experience, I have discussed these problems at university; however, it largely has to do with the fact that my profession is predominantly female. I do not think that people in male-dominated fields speak about these issues. I made a presentation about feminism and had a discussion with my group at university, having my female groupmates speak about their sexual assault stories as well as why feminism is needed. My male groupmates asked some questions they clearly ached to ask for a long time and received answers that, hopefully, changed their minds or gave them some insight. I definitely think that a class on gender studies should be mandatory in the first year of university regardless of one's major. It is a topic half the population deals with, and we should help people get rid of their preconceived notions about feminism and feminists by teaching them what schools do not.

As I recall my schooling experience, the most we spoke about women's struggles was in an English language class. In Ukraine, English language classes, which use British textbooks, are usually the only opportunity for students to talk about burning issues and world problems because we do not have a class that deals with those issues and problems. It would be a dream come true to have a sort of a humanitarian class where students are taught about different religions and cultures as well as issues and struggles of people different from them. However, problems could arise. Problem number one is angry parents, who would not agree with the curriculum and would demand it to be changed, which is an issue for many countries. Problem number two is the selection of the teacher, which is a tricky task. This profession is highly personal, and, no matter how professional you are, your beliefs will shine through. Unfortunately, many teachers in public schools in Ukraine are over 40 years old, and they remember the teaching practice in the Soviet Union very well, so most of them would not be a good pick for the position. On the other hand, young teachers such as my groupmates and I do not go to work in public schools as the paycheck is miserable. Therefore, the problem remains.

In conclusion, it is necessary to teach gender equality. This is entirely possible at universities, but schools need assistance from the government to make this dream a reality.

## Post-reading discussion

- Daria Nesterova draws readers' attention to the fact that gender should be considered alongside other relevant aspects such as race and disability. This is described in the academic literature as intersectionality, a term 'that aims to make visible the multiple positioning that constitutes everyday life and the power relations that are central to it' (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006, p. 187).<sup>15</sup> How important is it to raise your English language students' awareness and understanding of intersectionality?
- What challenges have you experienced when attempting to embed gender topics in your English language teaching practice? How did you overcome them?

## Practical tasks

- Schedule informal chats with English language teachers from different generations (e.g. those in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s).
- Ask them how relevant they think it is to include gender topics in their English language classes.
- Find out how their university degree(s) prepared them for the inclusion of gender topics in their English language teaching practice.
- Note whether there are any differences across the generations. If so, try to identify any relevant trends.

---

15. Phoenix, A. & Pattynama, P. (2006). Editorial: Intersectionality. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 13(3), 187–192.

## Pre-reading reflection

- Have you ever been taught about misogyny? What have you been taught about it?
- As a student, have you ever witnessed any cases of misogyny in your classes? What were they about? How did the teacher tackle these cases?

## Essay (9.3)

### Small steps we can take

**Veronika Koval – she/her**

(Kyiv, Ukraine)

There is no doubt that the world around us is constantly changing. Women are given the right to vote and study; we are discovering a number of genders and trying to embrace ourselves and everyone around us, understanding that we are normal human beings.

However, being in constant change does not mean that we are fully solving all our problems. The world is a product of patriarchy, and we have to deal with it every day. There are a lot of men who still consider women to be their property and believe they have the right to abuse them in any way, shape or form. Moreover, there are women who are trapped in the same misogynistic way of thinking. That is truly horrendous.

I identify myself as a cisgender woman, and it is no surprise that I face a great deal of problems. To my mind, we do not talk about gender that much in Ukraine. We do not teach our youth about gender and equality, and this educational gap just keeps contributing to the issues we face.

Since the dawn of time, being a woman (or different in any way) is shameful. Even though there are people who think that we are already in an equality era, this is a complete lie. It only seems that we have the same rights and opportunities. We need to talk about gender equality more, teach our children to be respectful to one another irrespective of one's gender, race or ethnicity. This will make this world a better place.

Being an ordinary Ukrainian schoolgirl, I did not have a single class devoted solely to gender. It is a big miss in my opinion. Even at college, we did not discuss that. I have come to the conclusions listed above by having examples of strong women in my life and by educating myself. I think that this is not enough: I cannot teach myself everything, and I still make mistakes.

I am not capable of changing the whole previous generation's mentality. I think that, as a society, we can make a difference in education. I would like gender classes to be offered in every school in the world – no matter in what language.

There are changes English language teachers can make. All teachers should accept and support every child in the class. They must not have any negative attitude towards girls, people of colour, etc. That is why I think it is important for teachers to have some psychological training on how to react to different class situations.

Moreover, I would like to devote some of my English language classes to the topic of gender each year for learners starting from the age of 11 or so. I would like older generations of teachers to have such classes as well because they are the people who are teaching the younger generations.

It may seem that I am describing a childish dream and that such steps are useless. Nonetheless, I wholeheartedly believe that these small steps will lead us to a brighter future when women will not face the same issues that we do right now. For instance, during my second year at the university, we had some classes connected to the topic of gender and there were still some boys who thought that we, girls, were exaggerating and over-reacting.



I, as a person who lives in this world, try to become a better version of myself every day. I hope that we all can change the situation that we are currently facing by taking small steps towards the well-being of our youth.

### Post-reading discussion

- Veronika Koval writes that '[e]ven though there are people who think that we are already in an equality era, this is a complete lie'. Do your experiences – as an English language student or teacher – support or challenge that view? Which experiences are these?
- What can you do in your English language teaching practice to 'accept and support every child in the class,' as suggested in the essay?

### Practical tasks

- In the essay, Veronika Koval argues for the teaching of gender topics to young learners (i.e. from 11 years old onwards).
  - Consider the age at which you would start discussing gender topics with your students.
  - Provide a justification for your choice to be presented to your students' parents.
  - Design a list of appropriate gender topics for students of different ages.
  - Present your list to peers of yours (e.g. fellow student teachers, fellow teachers) and seek their feedback on your proposal.

## Section 10

# Country profile Vietnam

### General profile

Official name	Socialist Republic of Vietnam
Etymology	“Viet nam” translates as “Viet south”, where “Viet” is an ethnic self identification dating to a second century B.C. kingdom and “nam” refers to its location in relation to other Viet kingdoms’
Independence	2 September 1945 from France
Government type	Communist state

### Geographical profile

Continent	Southeastern Asia
Capital city	Hanoi
Area	331,210 sq km*

### Linguistic profile

Official language(s)	Vietnamese**
Languages	111 (Living = 110 + Extinct = 1)**
English language status	Not provided**

### Sources

\**The World Factbook 2022*

\*\**Ethnologue*

## Pre-reading reflection

- What difference would you like to make in your students' lives?
- How much attention would you say English language teachers in your country have paid to gender equality?

## Essay (10.1)

### Gender equality starts within the classroom

**Trang Hoang – she/her**  
(Hanoi, Vietnam)

The issue of gender inequality has recently been mentioned on countless platforms and innumerable contexts – from households to the workplace. However, the topic is too often overlooked when it comes to teaching. In my opinion, teachers, regardless of their sex, should contribute to the notion of gender equality through their practice.

As a student, I observed discrimination against female students – whether inadvertent or not. In terms of appearance, teachers tended to place more expectations and restraints on girls. They were not allowed to wear make-up – sometimes even lipsticks, dye their hair, paint their nails or wear a certain piece of clothing to school. There were no equivalent rules, however, for their male counterparts. The school rules might seem impartial, but girls are usually told to behave a certain way. Especially here in Vietnam, the concept of '*công-dung-ngôn-hạnh*', the four attributes desirable in women (i.e. a woman must have a pretty face, good behaviour, appropriate speech and decent household skills), is often mentioned during lectures. In terms of competence, I have noticed that, when girls fail an exam, teachers would act more surprised than when boys do. Some might argue that not all teachers are like that, which I believe to be true. I myself have witnessed teachers who intentionally promote gender equality within classroom settings. However, there are not many who do it as, most of the time, delivering the lesson is such a challenging task that other factors have to be ignored. Therefore, the subtle discrimination finds its way into our mindset and affects our actions.

As a tutor, I can see how bringing even a little awareness to the matter can make a world of difference. I would not describe myself as someone who includes gender equality in every aspect of my teaching. Nevertheless, as a woman, I tend to omit details or content that is biased against women. When I teach controversial issues about genders, it is always a must for me to listen to my students' perspective first before I give my own view. This way, I receive much input about how teenagers view these issues nowadays. I am glad to say that teenagers are much more educated than they were in the past. Most of them believe in equal rights for men and women and have a basic background understanding to discuss it at length. Although not all are engaged in the matter, those who are present their points quite clearly. For example, when I was teaching about household chores, a male student of mine said that he would not mind splitting chores with his sister or his future partner as long as it is reasonable. When asked why, he said his parents worked the same number of hours, so it would be absurd if his mother had to do most of the chores on her own. In this way, I believe that, with proper guidance, students can adopt the view that men and women should be treated fairly.

Based on my experiences both as a student and as a tutor, I have reasons to believe that gender equality starts within the classroom. First, to answer the 'why' question, I hold the view that learning takes place mostly in classroom settings as students spend about eight hours a day at school. Therefore, constant exposure to the matter of gender equality will at least raise learners' awareness. The 'when' question depends on many factors, including students' cognitive level and learning context and content. The issue does not have to be explicitly mentioned, but it should instead be manifested in even the smallest things such as a teacher's conversation with both genders. The 'what' and 'where' questions can be answered by

looking at the syllabus and school principles. Fortunately, gender equality has been included in the national syllabus, which, in turn, allows students to be more informed. Needless to say, it is not enough just to follow the syllabus, but the teachers also have to be flexible with the learning content to draw students to the topic mindfully. Finally, as to 'how' teachers can contribute to the equal treatment of both genders, they have to educate themselves first before bringing the matter into the classroom. Once it is introduced, teachers should be consistent in their words and actions so that students can better follow them.

In conclusion, as learners are constantly exposed to classroom input, it is important that teachers themselves act on the basis of gender equality. This will allow students not only to learn from their teachers but also to reflect on their own behaviour. As I have stated, there are many ways in which gender equality can be achieved within classroom settings. Thus, it would be absurd not to make an effort in raising learners' awareness of such matters.

### Post-reading discussion

- Would you agree or disagree with Trang Hoang's point that 'gender equality starts within the classroom'? Why?
- At what age, level, grade and/or year do you believe it is appropriate to discuss gender-related topics with your students? Why?

### Practical tasks

- Design an English language lesson on household chores.
- Have students discuss who is and who should be responsible for such chores in their households.
- Consider how similar and/or different your students' views are to the one reported in Trang Hoang's essay.

## Pre-reading reflection

- How open is your country to LGBTQIA+ people?
- How welcoming are you to LGBTQIA+ students in your class?

## Essay (10.2)

### The dive: Exploring the depths of gender equality in the classroom

**Vũ Trọng Hiếu – he/him**

*(Hanoi, Vietnam)*

English language teaching is much like diving. Students and teachers can prepare all they want in a shallow pool, but, at the end of the day, in order to be good at it, both have no other choice but to dive straight into the mouth of the ocean. And, if language teaching is like diving, the integration of gender-equal principles to the class is the equivalent of world-class deep-sea exploration: it is a magical experience, everyone wants to do it, but you will most likely drown without specialized training. As such, this essay will attempt to chart my own experiences in wading in the deep-sea waters of gender-equal classroom practices – one that is equal parts magnificent and challenging.

#### My personal definition of gender-equal classrooms

Why is gender-equal practice such a complicated task? To illustrate the potential difficulty that this practice entails, I will now outline a number of features that a lesson/program needs to meet in order to be genuinely gender equal.<sup>16</sup> A gender-equal classroom must:

1. acknowledge, respect and elevate the voice of female-identifying students and students in the LGBTQIA+ community, though not at the expense of their male counterparts;
2. be driven mainly by the wants and needs of female-identifying and LGBTQIA+ students (again, not at the expense of their male counterparts);
3. include humanizing and respectful portrayals of peoples of different gender identities and sexual orientations;
4. provide students with the linguistic and paralinguistic tools needed to respectfully navigate an inclusive, non-binary and diverse world.

Please do note that I am not defining gender equality as the perceived equal status and equal distribution of power between only men and women. Such a view is, in my opinion, highly restrictive. It ignores a significant portion of the population whose gender identities lie outside the binary or those belonging to sexual minorities who have long been discriminated against (such as transgender or gay people). As such, this essay will attempt to place equal emphasis on both the traditional definition of gender equality and its expanded conception, which also includes LGBTQIA+ people.

16. I have consulted some articles written by women on this topic (including Norton & Pavlenko, 2004), but I have yet to find any that offers a stable set of criteria for what constitutes a gender-equal classroom environment, especially for students whose identity is outside the gender binary. Therefore, the following will be informed by my broad understanding of feminism and feminist theory, all of which I have applied in my observations and try to apply in my actual teaching practice.

## The importance of gender-equal practices

The principles I described above require significant time and mental effort to grasp, and possibly even more to integrate into lessons. The first two, in particular, may require extensive study and training to implement. However, despite the tremendous effort involved, I think their implementation is a must-do task for teachers of English. The reason is obvious: the views that men should dominate women, that men are superior to women, and that people of a certain gender must act in a certain way and do certain things must be completely erased. Such conceptions are fundamentally oppressive, unjust, and deserve no place in modern society. Thus, everyone should play a part in dismantling patriarchy, but teachers play an especially important role. The core of patriarchal thinking is the conception of the world that prevents around three billion people from developing and cultivating their human potential. Therefore, it is a world that spits in the face of the very principle of education – a noble profession that helps a person to be the best human they can possibly be. Teachers who do not support gender equality are, therefore, oppressors, complicit in the stifling of billions of human beings. They are betrayers not only of women but also of humanity. It is instrumental for us, therefore, as educators, to launch an all-out offensive against patriarchy and to reclaim our common humanity. And we cannot do this without gender-equal education.

Another dimension that is also worth exploring concerns LGBTQIA+ people. It is a welcomed development that heterosexuality is no longer the default lens in which the general public looks at a person's sexuality. There is now an increasing number of people coming out as being LGBTQIA+, and the progress made with regard to the representation of LGBTQIA+ people has correspondingly moved at a rapid pace. These are absolutely commendable and represent a major step forward in human rights. It also means many people are utterly confused about how to act, what to say, and how to navigate this radically new world. This is where English language education becomes a powerful tool. It allows students to learn, practice and eventually master inclusive communication practices that embrace diversity while also maintaining absolute respect towards their interlocutors. It is a goal worth embracing, for the benefit of both students and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Despite the widely acknowledged importance of gender equality, most teachers I have seen remain hesitant in applying the four principles I described earlier into their teaching practice. And I feel this is reflected in most lessons that I have observed throughout my two years of teaching. None of the teachers I have observed, apart from my classmates during their micro-teaching lessons, made any explicit attempt to acknowledge and privilege the voices of female-identifying and LGBTQIA+ people in the class, nor do these students' needs have any appreciable impact on teaching practices. Though I am aware that some teachers do feel extremely enthusiastic about addressing gender equality issues, doing so in practice has proved immensely difficult because of factors outside of their control (e.g. time constraints or the fear of negative feedback from parents and from the school administration). This, however, has not stopped teachers, including me, from attempting to integrate some gender-equal practices into our lessons – however minor this integration may seem.

In the sections below, I describe the gender-equal practices I have tried to implement in the classroom, and my attempts to dislodge patriarchal and harmful ways of thinking about gender. I am yet to teach students who are open about their LGBTQIA+ identity in the classroom. As such, this essay mainly deals with my experiences of teaching female-identifying and male-identifying students.

### Principle 1 in practice

In my classes, I frequently abide by Principle 1. I have made it my mission to acknowledge female-identifying students' opinions and responses whenever I can and to integrate these opinions fully into my lessons. For example, whenever female-identifying students brainstorm ideas that are directly relevant to a speaking lesson, I write them on the whiteboard for the whole class to see, consistently use and refer to them as frequently as possible. Even when the ideas are not entirely relevant, I ask the student to explain why they brought the ideas up, whether they thought the ideas are indeed appropriate to the topic, and if not, what can they do to improve these ideas. The improved ideas and students' line of thought will be noted and mentioned throughout the lesson whenever appropriate.

By doing so, I want to give center stage to the voices of female-identifying students and weave their voices into the very fabric of the class, thus signaling to these students that their answers and responses are valid and worthy of attention. I also try my best not to assert my authority over my students by always confirming whether students' answers are objectively wrong or right. While this direct method of feedback is indeed instrumental in grammar and vocabulary instruction, using it persistently and indiscriminately may risk creating authoritarian tendencies in the class where the teacher is the dictator, and the students their subjects. This is the opposite of what the gender equality principle aims to inculcate, and thus should be avoided whenever possible.

### **Principle 2 in practice**

Another adjustment I often make in my teaching relates to Principle 2. I operate from the reasonable assumption that most female-identifying and LGBTQIA+ students want to study in an accommodating environment that both accepts their humanity and encourages them to learn. Thus, I try to create a friendlier classroom for students by setting mixed-gender discussion groups, promoting interaction and mutual understanding among students, choosing appropriate topics, and criticizing any misogynistic/homophobic/transphobic views that may emerge during my lessons.

One example of this principle in action was when I was teaching a writing lesson. Students were required to produce a discursive essay on the topic of 'Some people do not think that women should be police officers. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?' I was well aware that this was a controversial topic but chose it nonetheless because I thought that it was interesting enough to keep students engaged and that it was a great essay topic. Knowing that this is a sensitive topic that requires a lot of consideration, I have opted to apply Principle 2 in this lesson. Before the brainstorming activity began, I stressed that this is an odious opinion and that it must be opposed. I then presented evidence from credible sources to prove that it is the case. I also strongly advised students not to play the devil's advocate as it may make female-identifying students feel deeply disrespected. The lesson went on quite swimmingly, and most students (both male- and female-identifying) noted in a post-lesson survey that they felt comfortable expressing their views.

### **Principles 3 & 4 in practice**

With regards to Principles 3 (include better LGBTQIA+ representation in lessons) and 4 (equipping students with the appropriate linguistic knowledge to navigate a gender-inclusive environment), I have yet to observe any teacher implementing them in any capacity. And my implementation of these principles remains limited. Because of my limited observation and experience with these two principles, I have decided to group them together in this section.

Principles 3 and 4 represent what I think are the best two avenues for not only promoting but also ingraining principles of gender equality. The reason is quite simple: they are significantly less demanding on teachers and may prove quite effective if used judiciously. They are also made easier as relevant materials and guides have been provided by Coleman (2022), Hiếu (2020a, 2020b) and Slee (2022) to help teachers better implement these principles in their teaching practice.

I have personally adopted Principles 3 and 4 in my lessons. I have implemented the former by including subtle, surface-level changes to the materials I use such as making references to same-sex couples in example sentences ('Nam and Khalid have been married for 10 years, and they love each other very much'), and using women and LGBTQIA+ people as examples of inspiring individuals. I have applied Principle 4 in my lessons by teaching how students can use 'they' as a gender-neutral pronoun and how they can be respectful towards non-binary people in their language use.

I think these changes are important for a number of reasons. The first is that they show LGBTQIA+ students that you are their ally, you acknowledge their existence, and you see them as human beings. This is an experience that they have frequently been denied, and seeing it being promoted by the teacher – a vaunted position in Vietnamese society – will go a long way in cultivating an atmosphere of acceptance and tolerance in the classroom. Such an atmosphere could also be developed by humanizing women and

LGBTQIA+ people in your ordinary teaching practice. This is done through the inclusion of female-identifying people and LGBTQIA+ people in example sentences or reading texts and through not making their gender identity and sexual orientation the defining feature of their personhood. Doing so helps instill in male students the sense that women and LGBTQIA+ people are as human as they are, and thus deserve the same respect as they do. Such changes are minor, but they can quickly add up to normalize the presence and importance of female-identifying people and the LGBTQIA+ community.

### Closing remarks

Challenging and dismantling society's patriarchal and heteronormative views is a crucial task for any English language teacher. Doing so is a matter of life and death for women and sexual minorities, both of whom are currently facing massive and sometimes institutional repression, which should disgust any teacher worth the title. Does this mean that teachers should ensure that every lesson, every moment in the classroom is dedicated to promoting gender equality? This is most likely not possible as demands are currently being heaped upon teachers to help students think critically, be international citizens, develop as good leaders, become employable workers, be excellent communicators and become proficient users of English. A diver, after all, can only take on so much weight; otherwise, they may never resurface. Therefore, placing gender equality at the forefront of teachers' priorities may be difficult to achieve. The way forward, in my opinion, should be the inclusion of gender-equal practices as a part of a sprawling network of processes that a teacher uses to assess and make decisions while planning and teaching. Just as a diver thinks about oxygen levels and underwater hazards while exploring the ocean, a teacher constantly makes decisions while teaching such as choosing texts that are appropriately complex, congruent with the lesson and culturally appropriate. And now, I argue that gender equality should be another node in this network. As such, when selecting materials, teachers should also consider whether the texts promote gender equality or whether they challenge harmful views on gender, alongside linguistic, cultural and other standard considerations that they may have previously made. I argue that, if this node is activated consistently, it may become reflexive, which helps alleviate the pressures on the teacher. It also allows students to enjoy a truly progressive and humane lesson – one that finally helps them to marvel at the humanity common in all of us just like a diver is mesmerized by the beauty of the ocean.

### References

- Coleman, E. S. (2022). *Why, and how, should one make classrooms less heteronormative?* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-euo2J6P9dk>
- Hiếu, V. T. (2020a). *Ngôn ngữ bình đẳng giới trong tiếng Anh – Phần 1*. <https://zim.vn/ngon-ngu-binh-dang-gioi-trong-tieng-anh-phan-1>
- Hiếu, V. T. (2020b). *Ngôn ngữ bình đẳng giới trong tiếng Anh – Phần 2*. <https://zim.vn/ngon-ngu-binh-dang-gioi-trong-tieng-anh-phan-2>
- Norton, B. & Pavlenko, A. (2004). Addressing gender in the ESL/EFL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(3), 504–514. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3588351>
- Slee, H. (2022). *Adapting materials for LGBTQI+ representation*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grE4giPC9Zs>



## Post-reading discussion

- The essay contains four suggestions for gender-equal classrooms. Have you ever implemented any of these suggestions in your teaching practice?
  - If so, how successful was this implementation?
  - If not, why haven't you done so?
- Can you think of reasons which would stop English language teachers from supporting gender equality? What arguments could you use to convince them otherwise?

## Practical tasks

- Pair up with a peer of yours.
- Agree to share all the materials that you and your peer have created for a specific English language class that you have taught.
- Identify changes you would make to your peer's materials so that they abide by the third principle in the essay – 'include humanizing and respectful portrayals of peoples of different gender identities and sexual orientations'.
- Ask your peer to do the same in relation to your materials.
- Hold a discussion session where you share your views on each other's materials.

## Pre-reading reflection

- At what age did you notice the existence of gender-based expectations? What/Who prompted that noticing? How did you feel about it?
- How is gender expressed in your first language (e.g. consider how women or agender people are referred to)?

## Essay (10.3)

### Let him be him, her be her, and we are equal

**Anh Nguyen – she/her**

*(Hanoi, Vietnam)*

To me, the link between gender equality and language has always been subtle but plausible. When I was younger, little did I acknowledge how impactful my language use was on my perception of gender. Fortunately, thanks to the wonderful education I acquired throughout my academic journey, I have had several chances to contemplate how language shapes speakers' thoughts and beliefs. As a future English language educator, I have visions and ambitions in bridging the gender gap and in making the school where I will work a place where boys and girls have equal chances to develop themselves.

Before discussing how I will realize my dreams, I would like to share my own story. I was born at the time when English was recognized as a means of opening the doors for a successful life. The rationale behind this recognition is understandable. As English appears in almost every sector (e.g. business, education, medicine, technology, tourism), it is accepted worldwide and it is an essential global language. For me, I was grateful that I studied English. By nurturing myself in this language, I developed my perceptions of the social world and my place in it as a woman. Indeed, as a young child, I began to notice the differences in social gender-based expectations. Women are often expected to be emotional and accommodating, and men are usually expected to be aggressive and self-confident. Women are supposed to take care of the children, cook and clean the house while men are supposed to take care of finances, repair the car and do home repairs. Women should be thin and graceful while men are supposed to be tall and muscular. I used to assume quickly that teachers and nurses are women and that pilots, doctors, engineers are men. These are some of the gender-specific expectations what I was taught – indirectly or directly – in my English language classes. Whether or not I believed in teachers' impact on students' mindset, I do admit that I conformed to some common stereotypes about gender.

Throughout my academic journey, I have fortunately encountered several studies concerning the influence of language on gender equality and the way language affects how children think. The findings were not so surprising to me as I had experienced some gender issues myself. Before this enlightening knowledge, never had I wondered why I should not choose engineering as my career. I then realized that language has power, a psychological power that can limit my professional choices without my even knowing it.

To be clear, I do not blame English for being sexist. English does not follow the grammatical gender system; it does not have masculine or feminine forms for nouns unless the speaker refers to biological sex. It is not the language itself that is sexist; it is the way we use it that is sexist. As an English language teacher, I believe that I play a pivotal role in promoting gender equality in school as people start portraying opinions and beliefs early on in their lives.

Girls can be noisy and loud, and boys can be calm and sweet. It is fine for both boys and girls to show their emotions if they want or need to do so. English language teachers should encourage all children to share feelings and emotions equally. I believe it is important for children to have chances to be heard as it motivates them to be confident. Instead of asking 'How do you think most boys would feel about this story?', the question should be 'How do you feel about the representation of men in this story?' By making

small changes in the way we speak and act, we provide young people with opportunities to weigh in about how gender is shaped in our culture as well as in others. By doing so, young people's awareness of gender equality is steadily raised.

English language teachers should adapt techniques to promote gender equality in their classrooms. I would like to encapsulate my reflection in two simple things, namely, letting children be themselves and treating children fairly. I believe that the best educational environments are those that are fair to all students despite their genders.

### Post-reading discussion

- Are boys and girls given the same learning opportunities in your context? Why do you think so?
- What can you do in your English language classes to support students who do not follow traditional gender stereotypes (e.g. non-binary students)?

### Practical tasks

- Anh Nguyen holds that 'English language teachers should adapt techniques to promote gender equality in their classrooms'.
  - Identify the opportunities for continuous professional development (CPD) available for current and/or future English language teachers in your country who wish to learn about gender-related matters.
  - Consider how accessible these gender-focused CPD opportunities are to teachers (e.g. Are they free of charge? Are they offered at convenient times and days?).
  - Summarize the content of these CPD opportunities.
  - Identify any recurrent and/or missing topics in these CPD opportunities.

# Afterword<sup>17</sup>

**Gabriel Díaz Maggioli – he/him**  
(Parque del Plata, Uruguay)

In Rodgers and Hammerstein's (1949) classical musical 'South Pacific,' there is a song entitled 'You've got to be carefully taught'. The lyrics claim that discrimination is a learned disposition and, although the song refers mostly to issues of race, it can very well be applied to all forms of discrimination.

As I read this marvelous collection of essays, together with its reading and classroom tasks on gender equality, I could not help but think of the lyrics in that song. Authors in this collection offer so much evidence for the need to embrace sensitivity about gender issues that it is really surprising to think that we are just breaching this gap in the literature and the praxis of the profession in the third decade of the 21st century! As Ana Caroline Fernandes rightly indicates in her essay, '[u]nfortunately, gender inequality and violence are so naturalized in our culture that it becomes difficult to notice when we are witnesses, victims, or practitioners of this structural evil'.

Evidence abounds as to the pervasive negative effects of gender discrimination. Tasmin Rahman's essay powerfully opens the collection and centers the discussion by making us aware that most women experience discrimination even before they are born. And Luiza Barroso observes that 'almost all domains of society – family, for instance – play a big role in reinforcing gender inequality'. Hence, we can begin to understand that gender issues are inherently social issues that get reproduced generation after generation. However, this is not only an identity issue. It goes beyond personal identity, and it becomes an issue of affordances. According to Farah Chkarka, gender actually refers to '[t]he economic, social, political and cultural characteristics and possibilities connected with being a woman or a man' and it plays a 'critical role in determining the power, privilege and opportunities that certain individuals have or do not have in a particular culture'.

Framing the issue of gender discrimination in the United Nations' fifth sustainable development goal does not seem to be enough to address the complexity of the present situation. There is a pervasiveness to this kind of injustice that seems to be resistant to many concerted actions. Perhaps it is because of the reductive nature of many arguments in the face of a kind of diversity which is not always acknowledged. To this end, Abner Constantino da Silva observed that 'the UN's fifth goal intends to promote gender equality, but, in the description of the proposal, just one type of gender is mentioned to be equalized with the 'masculine gender': 'girls', 'women'. How about queer, non-binary and other people?' These marginalized identities compound the complexity of gender issues and how the tension is negotiated at the social and institutional level. Yet, problems surface and situations perpetuate, as many of the essays in this collection attest.

As we read anecdote after anecdote of discrimination and disempowerment, we begin to realize how normalized discrimination has become and how little has been done to counteract it. For example, Mengtian Zhang describes her experience of 12 years of learning English where 'sexism was everywhere, but most of it was ignored partly because I [she] was too little and lacked awareness and partly because it was too common to be noticed'. To this sobering realization, Cynthia Apriska adds that 'there are still too many female students

---

17. Gender identity as lived experience and the embodiment of one's uniqueness is a crucial area of exploration that needs to be brought to the forefront of professional praxis and become an established curriculum through thread in any teacher education or development program. I consider that this collection of essays is a unique contribution to the professional literature and because of that, I have purposefully chosen to elaborate my reflections using the voices of the authors, opting to leave out the voices of researchers or theoreticians who have elaborated on the topic. The vibrant strength of voices that emerges from this collection should suffice to make us all aware that a change is needed, that it is needed now but, more importantly, that such a change is not a utopia but a reality. In honoring the voices and experiences of the writers of these essays, I am paying a humble homage to their bravery in disclosing their thinking and inspiring us to act.

who experience inequality in the classroom because of their gender. It is a sad and awful truth since all students should feel safe and have the right to an education without unnecessary intrusions due to their gender.'

Additionally, we are made aware that gender issues do not just refer to constructs such as maleness or femaleness. Andrea Cecilia de Jesus makes the very valid point that '[t]he talk on gender equality does not stop between men and women. The inclusion of LGBTQIA+ is an important matter to be discussed in the classroom. Its importance lies within the fact that these students are perhaps struggling with their own identity'.

Despite the dismal realities depicted in the essays, slowly, but steadily, a voice of hope emerges from the writing of these talented (future) educators. This voice claims that the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) has a lot to offer as a solution to the discussion given that, as Denys Kniaziev remarks, '[t]here is an exclusive feature of language learning that offers additional opportunities for language teachers to enhance the education of their students: language learning is content based'. The content can and should be whatever helps learners improve their life conditions and reaffirm their identity. And this is where the change can begin. Small steps, but important steps can be taken to eradicate discrimination progressively through education. Trang Hoang, for example, shows her efforts by saying 'it is always a must for me [her] to listen to my [her] students' perspective first before I [she] give [gives] my [her] own view. This way, I [she] receive [receives] much input about how teenagers view these issues nowadays'. She is joined by Veronika Korval who lays out her dream 'that these small steps will lead us to a brighter future when women will not have to face the same issues that we do right now'.

In turn, Mehrar Meriem makes the point that gender equality in education 'is not easy at all'. However, all essays show the need for gender sensitivity to be an integral part of the education of all humans because, as Marvi Krisly Reyes explains, '[g]ender comes with expectations of performativity'. This means that given the power and influence of culture and upbringing, learners perform in their expected roles. However, what happens when the expected roles are not representative of the learners' identity and feelings? How can they perform other selves that are not their true selves? Here is where teaching, and teachers, can make a significant difference. In fact, according to Juan Jiménez, there is a moral and ethical mandate that '[i]n ELT practice, teachers have a duty to address socially relevant topics'.

The multitude of voices in these essays are a testament to the fact that education is a hopeful endeavor, where teachers can heed the imperative for change and promote this change through principled action. In this sense, Vũ Trọng Hiếu's wonderful metaphor for ELT sets the tone for the call to action when he writes that 'English language teaching is much like diving. Students and teachers can prepare all they want in a shallow pool, but, at the end of the day, in order to be good at it, both have no other choice but to dive straight into the mouth of the ocean'.

The tone set by Vũ Trọng Hiếu resounds with determination and the provision of potential solutions that other authors in the collection make. Anh Nguyen has 'visions and ambitions in bridging the gender gap and in making the school where I [she] will work a place where boys and girls have equal chances to develop themselves'. Why should we tread this path? Because of the impact of gender equality in 'providing people the freedom to choose what they identify as, without having to adhere to peer pressure, at best, nor societal discrimination at worst,' as indicated by Natalie Rose Nieves. What is more, in a complex and globalized world, gender equality is an imperative because, as Kabalano Pelelekae articulately points out, 'it builds a nation'. In fact, healthy nations are built when diversity is acknowledged and where every member of society is allowed to thrive in their own particular and inherently rich way. Dipuo Gare emphasizes that gender equality can 'build confidence and self-esteem of learners of different genders and show learners that no gender is inferior to others'. After all, we cannot forget that, in the words of Md. Shahinul Islam, the 'combined efforts of men and women are essential to develop a country'.

The awareness raising nature of the essays in this collection does not end with a true depiction of the current state of affairs, nor does it limit itself to a call to action. All essays incorporate visions and commitments of educators to effect a change in their own and their students' lives. It starts by doing simple things, such as Yudi Guo's realization that '[a]s teachers, we can only correct our own behavior as much as possible and try to create a gender-equal environment for our students by setting an example in education,' to which Yuxuan Jiang adds the 'need to eliminate our own gender biases such as the misconception that it is normal for girls to do better in English than for boys. Secondly, we need to respect students of all genders equally, and we need to help, encourage, and praise them in the same way'.

The benefits of adopting a gender-sensitive stance are not limited to gender issues alone. Gender-sensitive education through ELT can provide students with added benefits. Among these, Santiago Salazar Valencia makes the point that such an approach can ‘increase their [learners’] critical thinking, which is what our society needs to reduce gaps such as gender inequality,’ but, more importantly, according to Dipuo Gare such an endeavor ‘may lead to peace amongst learners, give every learner equal opportunities regardless of their gender’.

In exploring the role of ELT in promoting socially just practices related to gender as well as its role in fulfilling a moral and ethical imperative of teachers around the world, we are building a world of hope from a situation of misery. Muhammad Bayu Heri Permana dreams of ‘[a] world where there are no gender issues. A world in which humanity must consider and debate more pressing issues,’ which he typifies as a utopia. After all, as R. A. Lefiana Isnaeni Fajrin reminds us, ‘[s]chool classrooms can be dangerous places for women to grow up if the education system remains men-centered’.

What is needed to begin to effect changes to the present situation are strong teachers, which Doha Baladi describes as ‘the one who treats their students fairly, creating an environment where they can equally take part. Indeed, teachers should try their best not to create any sort of gender discrimination in their classrooms either explicitly or implicitly.’ And, while Daria Nesterova’s assertion that ‘schools need assistance from the government to make this dream a reality,’ we should not forget that the power of one teacher, acting on their reality and promoting just one change, can provide enduring changes to the system as a whole. Hence, I agree with Elian Londoño that ‘ELT should therefore be thought out from a perspective that creates equality bonds and lessens inequality’.

As a teacher educator, I have often struggled to find sources of inspiration for the student teachers with whom I co-learn to become conscientized about gender discrimination beyond their own personal experiences and thoughts. Sometimes, I have even felt that addressing these issues from the perspective of the lived experience of my students could even be typified as symbolic violence, as my students may tend to comply with my request to share traumatic experiences as a result of the perceived power differences between us. Hence, I welcome this collection of brave and hopeful calls to action that make evident the complex weave of situations that are built around the concept of gender. The realistic experiential scenarios, the thoughtful questions and tasks in the collection all provide fertile turf to start building a more socially just world.

If discrimination is a learned disposition, then gender equality can become a reality by the action and inspiration of educators who are sensitive to the challenges their students and the societies they inhabit face. If one can be carefully taught to hate, then it stands to reason that one can also be carefully taught to love, and the essays in this collection are a first step towards realizing that dream.

*Gabriel Díaz Maggioli is a teacher who applies the lessons learned in the classroom to his roles as teacher educator, researcher and writer. He is Academic Advisor to the Institute of Education at Universidad ORT Uruguay, where he also teaches and coordinates graduate programs. He is the first Latinx president of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL).*

## Reference

Rodgers, R. & Hammerstein II, O. (1949). You’ve got to be carefully taught [Song recorded by William Tabbert]. *On South Pacific: Original Broadway Cast Recording* [Album]. Sony BMG Music Entertainment.

*Gender equality in English language teaching practice: A resource book for teacher education* contributes to a reconceptualisation of English language teacher education by drawing teacher educators' and student teachers' attention to the importance of gender equality from an early stage of professional development. It is one of the outcomes of the international research project '*Gender-ing ELT: International perspectives, practices, policies*', which investigated the socially relevant contribution that English language teaching (ELT) can make towards gender equality and the empowerment of woman and girls.

The book contains 30 reflective essays written by future/current English language teachers, who discuss whether their ELT practice should contribute to gender equality. These essays are organised in ten country-specific sections – Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, China, Colombia, Indonesia, Morocco, Philippines, Ukraine and Vietnam. Each of these sections opens with a country profile in order to help readers understand the context in which the essays were written. The profile is followed by three essays, which have been supplemented with additional activities (pre-reading reflection, post-reading discussion and practical tasks). These activities are wide in scope, and they may be undertaken by teacher educators and student teachers in all country contexts.

The context-specific personal reflections included in this book have the potential to resonate in several other contexts. They show that there is much to share across national/local contexts and that there is still much to do to challenge gender inequalities wherever we are on the globe.

ISBN 978-1-915280-23-7

© remains with the authors.

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities.