



Project carried out within the English Language Teaching Research Partnerships scheme (British Council) by Jane Sunderland (Lancaster University, UK) and Joanna Pawelczyk and Łukasz Pakuła (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland)

Investigating gender and sexuality in the ESL classroom: Raising publishers', teachers' and students' awareness

Poland, as a young conservative democracy, is witnessing an unprecedented amount of public debate where both 'gender' and 'sexuality' figure prominently. Yet, they are widely perceived as foreign imports and thus fiercely contested. Consequently, the role of English as a Second Language (ESL) materials as well as teachers as potential mediators of markedly different Anglophone socio-politics is unquestionable. While it is true that 'gender' has been researched in the context of the ESL classroom, this strand of academic enquiry seems to have been abandoned. 'Sexuality' in this context, in turn, is a novel idea only initially probed. Regrettably, neither of these categories is regarded as important in the context of Polish education in general.

The overall aim of the project is to detail how 'gender' and 'sexuality', as two salient social variables, are managed in the context of the ESL classroom in Poland, i.e. ESL materials, the process of reviewing learning materials by the Ministry of Education, and the situated practice of ESL learning (both students' and teachers' perspectives). Therefore, the project will investigate how 'gender' and 'sexuality' are portrayed in the ESL course book texts and images, negotiated in the teacher-student interactions and addressed by educational policy makers. To this end an interdisciplinary methodological framework drawing on the state-of-the-art approaches to linguistic analysis will be used (including Focus Groups for data collection, and Critical Discourse Analysis with Corpus Linguistics, and Multimodal Discourse Analysis).



Investigating gender and sexuality in the ESL classroom: Raising publishers', teachers' and students' awareness

The ESL classroom constitutes an example of social and discursive space in which (constant) construction of gender and related sexuality roles takes place. In today's world where many social categories (including one of the most salient ones, i.e. gender) are redefined and contested, it is imperative to look at how the educational context contributes (or not) to the students' understanding and making sense of these constantly changing social arrangements. It is also vital to examine whether, for instance, the social changes pertaining to women taking on more agentive roles and men increasingly often functioning in the communal ones, or LGBTQ people being recognised by most Anglophone states, are reflected in the current ESL course books.

The proposed study seeks to address the following **research questions**: (1) What is the portrayal of gender (relations) and sexuality in the current ESL practice? (2) What is students' and teachers' attitude towards these images? (3) How does students' and teachers' experience relate to the content of ESL materials? (4) How is gender and sexuality manifested in teacher-student and student-student interactions?

(5) What is course books reviewers' awareness level of gender- and sexuality-related issues?

Three studies will be conducted and will include class observations and recordings, Focus Groups with students and teachers as well as in-depth interviews with Ministry of Education course books reviewers. The research is interdisciplinary and will draw on Critical Discourse Analysis, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Corpus Linguistics, and Ethnomethodology.

The researchers will produce a report for the British Council. Apart from that, guidelines for publishers, teachers and instructors will be disseminated. Also, a number of workshops is planned.

What's it all about?

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