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BRINGING TRANS, NON-BINARY, AND QUEER UNDERSTANDINGS TO BEAR IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Abstract:

Language education represents a site for identity (re)construction, mediated through language acquisition and use (Atkinson, 2011). As students develop linguistic abilities, they also develop a multilingual sense of self. Pedagogies that engage with students as whole persons inherently encourage identity-focused reflection and may facilitate more ethical teaching (Moore, 2016; Norton, 2013). Increasingly, literature considers sexual diversity's role in language curricula, textbooks, research, and pedagogy (Nelson, 2009; Paiz, 2018; Saunston, 2017). However, herein, there is a marked focus on lesbian and gay considerations—perpetuating trans, non-binary, gender-non conforming (TGNC), bisexual, and queer invisibility (Knisely, 2020a, 2021a; Paiz, 2020). This article addresses how TGNC lives and concerns can interface with the process of language education, highlighting its importance for applied linguistics, language teachers, and learners. Ultimately, the authors present a toolkit for integrating TGNC understandings of the world into language learning contexts, outlining potential advantages and challenges as they relate to creating more critical and equitable pedagogies.

Keywords: Trans ♦ non-binary ♦ gender ♦ language learner ♦ LGBTQ+

Disciplinary Knowledge about LGBTQ+ Issues & Language Education

Language teaching and learning represents a site for identity (re)construction, mediated through the process of language acquisition and use (Norton, 2013). As students develop linguistic abilities, they also develop a multilingual sense of self. In keeping with this view, the field has begun to advance pedagogies that engage with students as whole persons, encouraging them to reflect on their own evolving identities (Moore, 2016). To scaffold educators, a limited, though growing, body of literature that particularly considers sexual diversity and its role in language curricula, textbooks, research, and pedagogy has emerged (Cahnmann-Taylor & Coda, 2017; Coda, 2019; Nelson, 2009; Paiz, 2019b).

While the approaches taken by queer pedagogues and applied linguists are varied, they share many core motivations. Chief among them is to critically address equity, access, and representation in language classrooms. For example, Nelson (1993) drew TESOL's attention to the fact that the sanitized, sexually neutered world presented to students and pre-service practitioners erased LGBTQ+ students and educators from the equation, risking these individuals feeling that they were not part of the space and could not be successful therein (see also Liddicoat, 2009). Moreover, this body of literature has been motivated by a push to resist heteronormativity¹ as it is reflected in the learner's social settings and in classroom materials and practices (Nelson, 2006; Paiz, 2018). Queer pedagogies argue that we must equip students to understand how heteronormative discourses are enacted and maintained through prescriptivist linguistic practices, to respectfully engage with LGBTQ+ communities, and to perform a linguistically authentic LGBTQ+ identity in the language being learned if the student so identifies (Coda, 2017; Moore, 2016; Paiz, 2020). These queer-inquiry based pedagogical approaches will be discussed in greater detail below.

Although diverse in source and scope, much work in queer applied linguistics (ALx) can trace its intellectual lineage to queer theory and the work of Butler (1993), Sedgwick (1990), and Halberstam (1998).² For example, many queer pedagogues in ALx are unwilling to articulate a single approach, choosing instead to develop frameworks and tools-for-thought that practitioners can deploy in contextually sensitive ways to address the lived experiences and needs of their students. Similarly, ALx pedagogy often seeks to lay bare and disrupt normative discourses in all their forms, not just as related to gender and sexuality. For their target, ALx

¹ The presentation of only certain forms of heterosexuality as valued and valid identity options in a particular social setting.

² In applied linguistics, scholarship on queer and trans pedagogies has not substantially engaged with Foucault. This may be taken up in future work by other scholars but is beyond the scope of the present article.

literature has examined various commercially available texts and textbooks (Gray, 2013; Paiz, 2015), student texts and interactions (Moita-Lopes, 2006; Nguyen & Yang, 2015), and grassroots materials (Appleby, 2018). Herein, researchers have sought to better understand the ways in which heteronormative discourses are reflected in learning materials and classroom behaviors and the potential effects of said normativity on language learners and learning.

ALx has also taken various pedagogical approaches, from O'Mochain's (2006) situated queering, which focused on incorporating local queer narratives, to Nelson's (2009) queer inquiry, which seeks to equip students with critical habits of mind to resist normative discourses. Most queer pedagogues have advocated for a big tent approach befitting mainline queer theory, which would argue that any monolithic, centralized approach would be overly reductive and recreate the very normativities that queer theory seeks to redress (Sullivan, 2001). This variegated approach has led to challenges in articulating meaningful advice to practitioners and has, perhaps, contributed to deletion of trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming (TGNC) considerations in applied linguistics, overly subsumed under and eclipsed by the more broad-reaching "queer".

As ALx experiences increasing growth and recognition as a subfield (Paiz, 2020; Sauntson, 2017), TGNC positionalities remain invisible and therefore marginalization has been allowed to persist unchecked (Knisely, 2020a, 2021a). It is this marked erasure that we attempt to delineate and remediate in this article. Sexual and gender minorities are socially and historically linked, owing in great deal to a certain corpus of shared experiences, yet they are also distinct groups (Knisely, 2021a). In this way, TGNC narratives are often felt by TGNC people to be limited by more dominant lesbian and gay discourses, which is frequently termed the silent T phenomenon (Zimman, 2009). This phenomenon is reified in the restricted set of narratives present in existing research: When TGNC positionalities are addressed, all intragroup diversity tends to be effaced by treating TGNC people as a monolith or by relying on a severely restricted number of participants (Besnier, 2017; Nguyen & Yang, 2015). This monolith tends to prioritize the concerns, lives, and experiences of trans individuals who can be read within binary categories of gender—particularly those that can be made to fit transnormativity³—and, in turn, obfuscates those unique to non-binary people.

Regardless of their relation to the binary, trans individuals remain significantly and substantially marginalized in broader society;⁴ this ranges from the problematic and perennial

³ The presentation of only certain trans embodiments as valid (i.e., The assumption that trans people should fit a cissexist idea of what is "normal").

⁴ Many in trans studies are beginning to critique the very concept of a non-binary/binary divide, often owing to a deeper questioning of how gender is conceived of and categorized.

practice of deadnaming to physical violence and murder, as in the recent case of Muhlaysia Booker (Strapageil, 2019). Though a poignant example, Booker's case is one of numerous unsolved homicides involving trans women of color in the US, especially Black trans women, and is a part of a larger epidemic of anti-trans violence (James et al., 2016), something that is inextricably linked to and mutually reinforced by racism and other forms of oppression.

Without minimizing these shared realities, trans positionalities that can be read within the binary (e.g., transwoman, transman) typically require acceptance into an existing man-woman paradigm and, thus, may have a certain readability by a cisgender majority. For non-binary people, existing paradigms must be completely deconstructed; gender must be described as a collection of potential identities that include manhood, womanhood, and infinite other possibilities that do not necessarily have any relation thereto. Non-binary is itself an umbrella term that encompasses myriad identity positions (see Knisely, 2020a, 2021a). In this way, trans people positioned within binary categories may experience gender in ways that differ from non-binary people. Consider, as one example, the relative visibility afforded to trans individuals in contemporary American popular culture such as Janet Mock, Laverne Cox, or Caitlyn Jenner. These subject positions, although not free from discrimination, marginalization, or violence, can be seen and read by a broader, primarily cisgender public (LeMaster & Johnson, 2018). *Transparent*, an Amazon series that ran 2014-2019, also provides evidence of the potential readability of transwoman as subject position. Its relative longevity in the world of streaming television relies heavily on both playing to and with a transwoman's efforts to construct and enact a gendered performance within a more normative framework of womanhood that is knowable and accessible to cisgender audiences, even though increased visibility has co-existed with increased threat and violence (Berberick, 2018). Much rarer are non-binary individuals who occupy a prominent place in US popular culture, with Asia Kate Dillon, Sam Smith, and Jonathan Van Ness serving as some of the few, though increasing, exceptions. While there are many non-binary individuals fighting for representation, few have such notoriety in non-queer spaces and discourses. As LeMaster and Johnson (2018) note, "while it is reductive to suggest media provides the primary means of acquiring knowledge about marginalized groups, recent evidence suggests the broader public continues to avoid genuine dialogic relationships with trans [people...and in] lacking dialogic encounters, cisgender and/or nontrans folk may rely on mediated representations of trans and gender non-conforming folk as pedagogical means. This may include students [...] instructors and senior faculty," (p. 189). In following, this article seeks not to reify such an artificial, cis-normative, and ideologically fraught distinction, but rather to argue for the collective need to consider TGNC positionalities in all of their complexity, diversity, and multiple marginalizations.

TGNC Erasure

The critical impetus to treat TGNC positionalities exists for learners, for practitioners, for ALx as a field, and for all those engaged in multilingual education regardless of one's specific disciplinary framework. Particularly given the recent increase in sensitivity towards socially relevant issues, ALx and related fields cannot in good conscience consider themselves responding hereto unless we also turn attention to TGNC considerations. Further, the use of the acronym LGBTQ+ by ALx scholars inherently requires that attention be paid to not only lesbian, gay, and bisexual identities but also to the full diversity of trans and queer identities. In parallel with arguments made in linguistics (Tawake, 2006; Zimman, 2009) and education (Henderson & Nicolazzo, 2018), the conceptualization of ALx—and of gender therein—must be expanded to include a more nuanced collection of diverse narratives that fully account for the experiences of *all* TGNC individuals.

For applied linguistics as a whole, engaging deeply with TGNC lives and concerns provides a new lens through which to question norms and assumptions, which is the basis of any social justice or critical approach to language education. To elaborate, both world Englishes (Kachru & Nelson, 2006) and critical applied linguistics (Pennycook, 2001) challenge the idea of monolithic presentations of language due to the ways that language spreading to new communities has resulted in its evolution to meet the needs of these new speakers. As such, these fields would argue that the job of language educators in a globalized world is to equip students with the tools and resources necessary to respectfully engage in ways that facilitate intercultural communication and understanding.

For practitioners, engaging with TGNC lives and concerns constitutes meeting students where they are and treating material that is relevant to students' lives, of which gender is a significant part (Norton, 2013). Further, the professional discourse of language educators regularly focuses on diversity, inclusion, and intercultural competence (ACTFL, 2019; TESOL, 2008), all of which require engagement with TGNC lives and concerns in order to be fully realized (Knisely, 2020a, 2021b, 2021c).

The omission of TGNC concerns equates to an erasure of these lives, simultaneously rendering true inclusivity impossible and failing to present learners with a complete picture of the culture(s) and language(s) being studied. This omission inherently limits cisgender students' perspectives by perpetuating a fallacy that TGNC lives and concerns are non-existent, and therefore, non-issues. Further, it allows transphobia to persist, making it appear to all students as though only binary, cisgender positionalities exist or that only this type of existence matters. For example, students from a more socially conservative context may voice concerns that

TGNC issues are of little personal relevance because such people “don’t exist in [their] country” (e.g., McKirdy, 2019). The reality, however, is that transphobia is a major issue in broader society and understanding TGNC positionalities is a critical part of being educated in contemporary society (Knisely, 2020a). Consider, for example, the relationship between practicing inclusivity and intercultural competence development or between understanding the linguistic and cultural power structures that underlie TGNC marginalization and the development of symbolic competence.

Although a disservice to all, it is TGNC learners who experience the most salient negative consequences of this exclusion and the transphobia it fails to upend. In the US, at least 1 million adults are trans, non-binary, and/or gender non-conforming (Meerwijk & Sevelius, 2017); with a marked percentage being younger adults, this represents a non-negligible number of potential learners in US language classrooms.⁵ Simultaneously, TGNC people are not solely constituted *of* oppression, but are *from* oppression (Nicolazzo, 2019): in the US, this includes unemployment at twice the national rate, health care access issues, an attempted suicide rate >40%, and countless murders worldwide (James et al., 2016, Puckett et al., 2018). In such a climate, where discrimination prevalence estimates are >60%, it is perhaps unsurprising that expecting rejection is one frequent and salient psychological stressor for TGNC people (Rood et al., 2017). There is, thus, both the potential and critical imperative to begin to mitigate these pervasive and persistent experiences of marginalization, in language classrooms, via TGNC-affirming practices. This impetus is not new: TGNC individuals have existed throughout time and across national contexts with varying levels of cultural readability (Monro, 2019). However, in the US, marked transphobia persists alongside the positive depictions of TGNC positionalities that have only more recently entered into mainstream discourse and media (Capuzza & Spencer, 2017; Feder, 2020).

Having treated the current state of the field vis-à-vis TGNC lives, it is possible to consider how TGNC positionalities can be made a visible component of language education. Although increased trans visibility allows the cisgender public access to (often problematic) narratives *about* trans individuals, and although many institutional gestures have begun to evoke inclusivity *broadly*, pedagogues and students alike tend to be “confronted with the limits of their/our embodied knowledge in a changing discursive landscape. In fact, most institutions [teachers and students alike] are ill-equipped to meet the unique needs of actual trans folk once they/we enter new institutional terrain under the purview of inclusionary gestures,” (LeMaster & Johnson, 2018, 191). Scholars in education have begun to address what trans-affirming

⁵ Similar results are seen for other western democracies and research suggests a worldwide tendency towards increased TGNC visibility (UNESCO, 2016).

pedagogies *could* look like (Agid & Rand, 2011; Nicolazzo, Marine, & Galarte, 2015; Spade, 2011), however, such research has extended to applied linguistics in scant ways (Knisely, 2020a, 2021a).

Towards TGNC-Inclusive Language Education

To begin redressing the persistent invisibility of TGNC lives in modern language education, we will now outline one viable toolkit for creating more inclusive pedagogies that directly engage with TGNC considerations. Our goal here is not to outline *the* pedagogical approach, but to draw attention to the range of possibilities that exist in creating locally relevant, culturally responsive pedagogies that can speak to students' and educators' lived experiences. We take this approach in keeping with advice from queer theory and lavender linguistics that posits that any attempt to pin down a single notion of "queer" or "queerness" necessarily replicates the normative social discourses that they seek to trouble (Duggan, 2002; Paiz, 2020).

QIBPs

To better connect our efforts here to broader attempts at LGBTQ+-inclusive pedagogies, we begin with queer inquiry-based pedagogies (QIBPs). As Paiz (2018, 2019b, 2020) has articulated elsewhere, QIBPs seek to equip students to trouble all forms of normativity and to engage with LGBTQ+ individuals and topics in linguistically, culturally, and rhetorically appropriate ways. Beginning from a space of respectful engagement, QIBPs seek to raise students' awareness of LGBTQ+ lives and how they are mediated and constrained through language. A key goal of queer-inclusive pedagogies is to enable students to not only perform gender and sexual identities in locally relevant, linguistically fitting ways that render them understandable to socially significant others, but also to advocate for themselves and others.

To help achieve this, QIBPs encourage educators to find ways to draw students' attention to the queer world around them. That is, QIBPs rely on finding ways to bring local LGBTQ+ content into the classroom instead of relying on often problematic, mass produced representations (e.g., *Modern Family*, *the Fosters*, or *Gotham*). Curran (2006), for example, showed how Mardi Gras/Pride celebrations provided him an opportunity to engage with students about the symbols and language used by the LGBTQ+ community in Sydney, Australia. By using a large-scale, local event as the pedagogical starting point, Curran increased student buy-in and could speak back to students' normative assumptions about sexual minorities. Instead of appealing to some global, metropolitan queer identity, Curran's use of a local event enabled him to underscore the ways that queer life and language play out in the students' immediate environment (see also O'Mochain, 2006).

QIBPs also work towards equipping students to identify and resist all forms of normativity. Current work from critical and queer pedagogues in applied linguistics focuses on pushing back against heteronormative discourses (e.g., Nelson, 2009; Rhodes, 2019), arguing that *heteronormativity*, or the presentation of cisgender, White, monogamous, reproductive, able-bodied, straightness as natural, normal, and desirable, perpetuates marginalization and violence both in and out of the language classroom. More progressive forms of QIBPs, however, take a more expansive view of normativity and its negative effects. Paiz (2020), for example, argues that ALx, especially TESOL, runs the risk of advancing a colonialist form of *homonormativity* if it continues to uncritically consider how to incorporate LGBTQ+ perspectives into its practice. To illustrate, Paiz (2020) has repeatedly called attention to the fact that over reliance on “gay marriage/rights” debates in the speaking/listening classroom serves to reify normative social discourses that cast LGBTQ+ lives as taboo or scandalous unless they fit the narrative frames that we associate with acceptable heterosexuality—cisgender, monogamous, family-producing (through adoption or other means (see also Duggan, 2002)).

By creating space for students to become aware of and to engage with normative discourses, we can begin equipping them with the critical habits of mind necessary to call out and resist them. Paiz has recommended a set of critical questions to help students interrogate their social settings: why is it so?; who benefits?; who is marginalized?; what alternatives exist? And, while originally posited as a tool to interrogate heteronormativity, this approach can be applied to myriad forms of normativity that perpetuate linguistic and cultural marginalization. For example, students can use this approach to question linguistic normativity in academic writing. To illustrate this in world Englishes, why is the standard edited English of the White middle class held up as *the* academic gold standard? Because of who traditionally had access to education—White, middle/upper class men. Who benefits from this? Often, White children who came from families that had child rearing practices that prepared them to use this kind of English and to think in ways that the school system valued (Lareau, 2002). Who is marginalized? The working class, the poor, the non-White, the multilingual/multicultural. What alternatives exist? These are readily apparent when we engage with literature and scholarship from outside of the White, western canon (e.g., Jin, 2010). Preparing students to name and resist normative forces is an important feature of QIBPs as they attempt to equip students with the communicative tools needed to advocate for themselves and others.

A final, particularly germane recommendation of QIBPs is that inclusivity is not a “one-and-done” proposition; it should not be relegated to a “gay day” or “trans day” in a class that appears suited to handling “controversial” issues, such as writing-intensive or advanced speaking classes (Paiz, 2019a, 2019b). Doing so maintains the idea that LGBTQ+ concerns are the

controversial, special interests of a small group. They are not. They are the lived concerns of a non-trivial part of the population that has/should have the same rights to exist as any other human being. Therefore, queer pedagogues advocate an “early and often” approach, infusing LGBTQ+ content throughout the curriculum, such as via using a grammar lesson to introduce the ways that we can play with and adapt gendered language to encode TGNC identities, altering our daily classroom speech about interpersonal relationships to account for bi- and asexual students, or setting up first-day activities that create space for and value around pronouns (Knisely, 2020a, 2021b, 2021c; Paiz, 2019a, 2020).⁶

TAPs

Although QIBPs have begun to be applied to language learning contexts, specifically trans-affirming pedagogies (TAPs) have remained chiefly isolated in parallel fields such as communication (LeMaster & Johnson, 2018) and education (Nicolazzo, Marine, & Galarte, 2015). LeMaster and Johnson (2018) outline how problematic mass-media discourses, institutionalized trans studies, and liberal inclusionary gestures create a nexus of challenges for discipline-specific TAPs that aim to unlearn, release, and ultimately “shift the hegemonic ways in which we [conceive of and] communicate, or are expected to communicate, gender” (192). In this way, TAPs echo the arguments of QIBPs that are more established in applied linguistics, applying them to the (de)construction of gender and *cisnormativity*.⁷ This article thus articulates how QIBPs, informed by TAPs, can be a framework for integrating TGNC understandings of the world into language learning contexts. To that end, the remainder of this article focuses on proving an actionable toolkit for language educators that can be used to help build locally relevant trans-affirming QIBPs with a focus on increasing awareness, representation, and educational equity for all.

A TAQIBPs Toolkit for ALx

If the over-arching goals of trans-affirming QIBPs (TAQIBPs) are to create learning environments where 1) LGBTQ+ content is woven into the fabric of the classroom, 2) LGBTQ+ people are represented, valued, and welcomed into the learning space, and 3) normative discourses are challenged through dialogic, contextually, and culturally responsive problematizing and resisted via critical habits of mind (Paiz, 2020), it is essential for this toolkit

⁶ Pronouns, rather than preferred pronouns, is used here to subvert any possible implication that such pronoun usage is optional. This follows the assertion that misgendering through incorrect pronoun use constitutes linguistic violence against trans people.

⁷ The erroneous assumption that (almost) all people are cisgender, presenting such identification with the sex one was forcibly assigned at birth as the only valued, valid, or possible gender modality.

to begin with a self-inventory for instructors to investigate their knowledge, practices, and positionality (see also Knisely, 2020b). We maintain, moreover, that educators should regularly return to this inventory to stay critically reflective, asking themselves:

- 1) What do you know about TGNC lives and concerns in your home context(s)?
- 2) In your target context(s)?
- 3) In what ways have you brought this knowledge into the classroom?
- 4) In what ways do normative language and teaching practices continue to squelch TGNC lives and concerns in your classroom?

Next, evaluate the extent to which your current pedagogical approach aligns with TAQIBPs:

- 1) How does your approach make room for unlearning/resisting normative conceptualizations of gender and sexuality?
- 2) How can your approach be used to help shift normative or exclusionary linguistic practices?
- 3) How can you work to make your approach one that addresses queer and trans issues through the curriculum?
- 4) What can you do to highlight the often contested, tentative, and emergent nature of identity, language, gender, and sexuality?
- 5) What moves will you need to make to tie a more inclusive approach to your current practices and language learning goals?
- 6) How can you modify your approach to facilitate learning *with* your students?

Thirdly, consider the assumptions and beliefs that you may bring into the classroom due to your own positionality and experiences:

- 1) How does your own positionality influence your answers to the above questions?
- 2) What normative discourses have you been exposed to/internalized?
- 3) What personal biases might you need to attend to while treating TGNC topics?

These questions are meant as guiding groundwork for developing the critical habits of mind that are central to TAQIBPs by helping you to identify your starting points and the gaps in understanding or biases to which you must attend as you work through the remainder of this toolkit. TAQIBPs require a continuous, deep, and critical engagement, but do not require that

the instructor become an expert in all things LGBTQ+. Establishing where you are beginning will allow you to consider how you might start to create structures that foster TGNC visibility and inclusion within the classroom and curriculum. It is important to also remain reflexive in how we carry out this work, connecting it to learning goals and institutional objectives to create value around the approach and to decrease resistance from certain stakeholders. This continuous, iterative process will require you to identify your personal strengths and areas of TGNC knowledge so that you may integrate those areas into your course and curricular structures while seeking to expand your knowledge alongside that of your students, colleagues, and administrators.

Any successful pedagogical queering requires not only self-reflection, but must also meet students where they are, be locally relevant, and be accomplished in and through dialogue. You may wish to reflect with students on their awareness of TGNC lives and concerns, using an adapted version of the self-inventory:

- 1) What do you (or students appear to) know about TGNC lives and concerns in your home context(s)?
- 2) In your target context(s)?
- 3) In what ways have students already brought TGNC topics into the classroom?
- 4) In what ways do student practices and normative language use continue to passively ignore or actively squelch TGNC lives and concerns in your classroom?

Having established the point of entry of all classroom stakeholders, we now move to explore the TGNC-inclusionary and -exclusionary effects of materials selection, curricular design, and institutional practices. As TAQIBPs are inherently adaptable to and informed by local needs and constraints, this beginning self-assessment provides contextualization that, paired with institutional affordances and limitations, will inform the materials used and the curricular choices in which they are embedded. Once again here, it is critical to take stock of where our materials, curricula, and institutions presently stand, asking:

- 1) To what extent are TGNC people made visible in the materials that I use? In the broader curriculum? In the overall institutional context?
- 2) In what ways are TGNC people positioned in the materials that I use? In the broader curriculum? In the overall institutional context?

These questions are posed separately because representation always implicates intersubjective relations of power (Besnier, 2017): Visibility does not always entail being positioned in accurate, positive ways that guard against stereotyping and marginalization.

In fact, given the prevalence of transphobia, most commercial materials will either fail to treat or problematically represent TGNC topics. For example, rarely, if ever, are TGNC people depicted in commercially available textbooks. It is thus critical to ask how to make such positionalities visible in language learning materials in respectful ways that do not reproduce the literal marginalization of TGNC people in footnotes and culture-focused call-outs, which create carefully delineated boxes that separate this information from the core text. To accomplish such representation, it is necessary to consider where TGNC people have created their own public visibility. Often, the source for such realia is online in the form of public-facing blogs, YouTube channels, Facebook groups, and on Twitter. Increasingly there are also opportunities to foreground activists, artists, scholars, and other public figures who are openly TGNC (Knisely, 2021c).

Many of the same strategies that are used for incorporating other historically marginalized groups (e.g., Anya & Randolph, 2019) can also be used here. Arguably, a dialogic approach between TAQIBs and other pedagogies that create space for marginalized groups can, and perhaps should, exist. At present, to the authors' knowledge, however, this is currently a somewhat one-sided "borrowing" due to the disciplinary invisibility around trans lives and issues. It must be kept in mind, however, that efforts must be taken to avoid the potential "just like" pitfalls in the construction of these intersectional and dialogic approaches (see also Harris & Nicolazzo, 2020; Kortegast, Jaekel, & Nicolazzo, 2020). For example, to assume that all strategies to attend to race in the classroom can be extended to treat gender is to conflate experiences, understandings, and identities articulated around race with those articulated around gender and, thereby, to unevenly attend to their dis/connections and intersections. In ALx, research studies with cisgender gay and lesbian participants have often used these "just like" constructions to put forth claims about trans people and language learning without data from trans participants (see Knisely, 2021a). (Re)creating TGNC-inclusive materials via specific representation or inclusive language that allows for TGNC possibilities of being may be one step. However, it cannot replace the need for inclusive textbooks. This ad hoc approach of reimagining materials maintains a certain degree of marginalization and the possibility of avoidance. For example, in an ad hoc approach, cisgender educators may say that they simply don't know enough to be able to meaningfully make inclusive moves. Granted, questioning this state of affairs with students while rectifying it is an opportunity for engaging in the restive problematizing inherent in QIBPs.

Marginalization, however, can be reinscribed not only through absence in materials, but also through their use if an infrequent/special topics approach to gender diversity is taken. It is thus critical to attend to the frequency of TGNC visibility within each course and across the curriculum. TGNC lives must not be relegated to a trans day, week, or a particular instructor's course, but rather should be infused throughout the curriculum. It is important when working towards greater inclusion and representation to remember that not all representation is created equally. Indeed, including sources that scandalize TGNC bodies and lives, or that take an almost obsessive approach on the embodied aspects of one's gender identity may actually reinforce negative stereotypes or worldviews (see also Moita-Lopes, 2006). Instructors should consistently ask themselves: How can I accurately and regularly create space for meaningful TGNC visibility in my materials and curriculum?

Through efforts to engage in self-reflective TGNC-affirming practice, an emphasis must be placed on respectful engagement. As Paiz has detailed elsewhere, queering language classrooms does not entail a mission of changing hearts and minds, but rather seeks to move “the needle of understanding and acceptance” (2019a, p. 7). We must show students how to ethically and appropriately engage with TGNC community members, including how to respectfully disagree. That is, while disagreement, misunderstanding, and uncertainty are parts of the learning process, willfully ignorant and harmful behaviors have no place in inclusive institutional spaces. Modeling respectful engagement, particularly in a language classroom, further entails performing inclusive language and communicative strategies as well as providing access to diverse speaker-models (Knisely, 2017, 2020a, 2021c). Materials and curricular choices can also model these forms, strategies, and behaviors. However, pedagogical moves must be taken up for students to specifically attend to linguistic inclusivity.

What inclusive and/or non-binary language looks like will vary across languages and communities, particularly where further complicated by binary grammatical gender (Knisely, 2020a). The same is true of the breadth and depth of published materials that accessibly and accurately present and use such forms. Where TGNC-affirming language remains nascent in terms of use, codification, or publications, instructors can model using circumlocution to avoid structures where gender is variably marked when referencing TGNC individuals (see Knisely, 2020a for examples in French). Moreover, instructors can engage students in learning to be linguistically inclusive by creating activities that engage with public-facing posts, websites, and documents that stem from TGNC communities, particularly as social media provides unprecedented opportunities to listen to, watch, read, and bear witness to the perspectives of (otherwise) marginalized language users. For example, students could be invited to engage in various types of sociolinguistic observation on Twitter by being given a list of hashtags to

search in the language of study (e.g., #nonbinary, #trans, #theythem) and guiding questions that help them navigate the data they collect. In this way, students can directly experience an array of linguistic co-cultures and rapidly evolving neologisms. This type of activity is not only accessible to all pedagogues regardless of their level of experience with TGNC-inclusive forms, it also invites reflection upon broader questions regarding language norms, structures and relations power, and ownership, among others. As students observe and engage with language in context, they can be guided through the aforementioned critical questions to interrogate language norms: why is it so?; who benefits?; who is marginalized?; what alternatives exist?

Beyond language forms, perhaps the most obvious and previously well-treated aspect of TGNC-inclusion involves name and pronoun policies. Names and pronouns are often sites of struggle over linguistic autonomy and the right to self-definition. Deadnaming—using a person’s birth name after they have adopted a new name—and misgendering—designating individuals as belonging to a gender category to which they do not belong (Faris, 2019)—, be it accidental or intentional, have profoundly negative impacts on the psychological and physical health of TGNC individuals (Rood et al., 2017). Instances of deadnaming and misgendering thus create barriers to wellbeing and equal access to resources and spaces (Ashley, 2019).

While there are numerous possible approaches to creating policies that honor TGNC people, all approaches must balance privacy with inclusivity (Knisely, 2020a, 2021b, 2021c). For example, instead of calling roll on the first day from an institutionally generated list, create moments that invite privately sharing names and pronouns. This can be accomplished via first day student information sheets that include a prompt to list the name and pronouns that should be used in reference to them in English and in the language being learned (if they are able and willing to articulate them) for this course. Such opportunities create an initial dialogue to be maintained between each student and the instructor. Their presence and context-specificity signal an understanding of the importance of using the names and pronouns that each person claims for themselves as well as the ways in which identities vary with social context. Students may not use and should not be expected to use the same names and pronouns across different courses or other social settings, as what a student deems safe and comfortable for one particular environment may not be so for another. It is for such reasons that qualifiers *private*, as opposed to public, and *invited*, as opposed to required, are foregrounded here. Equally important is what this invitation does not include; it does not request *preferred* names/pronouns, as such wording can erroneously imply that names/pronouns are a matter of choice for instructors and fellow students who have the option to ignore the agency and self-determination of TGNC people. It also does not provide a discrete list of pronoun options. Rather, its open-endedness signals a starting point for continued discussion. Follow-up conversations must make clear that supports

are available for exploring options and selecting pronouns if anyone is unsure how to best represent themselves in the language being learned. To the same degree, *he or she* should not be used as a catch-all, as this utterance reifies cissexism through TGNC erasure. It is preferable to use a singular neutral (e.g., *they*) or to otherwise re-work the sentence to avoid differentially marking gender. This careful attention to language and to the likely need for deep interpersonal dialogue to support students in finding suitable pronouns in the language they are studying—*neither* divorcing language from its impacts *nor* from the agentive people using and being referenced by it—ties into the dialogic, contextually responsive problematizing that is characteristic of QIBPs.

Although names and pronouns are unlikely to be the only policies that require revision, they provide a model for addressing such moments and for creating structures that are equitable, just, and inclusive of TGNC individuals. In TAQIBPs, classroom policies, require continuous, discursive problematizing that responds to increased depth and breadth of both student and instructor knowledge and to locally specific challenges as they arise. The entirety of this toolkit must be returned to regularly as myriad contextual factors evolve.

As TGNC lives and concerns are made increasingly visible, it is likely that individuals will present variable degrees of resistance, including normative or transphobic responses. Some of these responses will reflect linguistic conservatism, while others will reflect broader cissexist, transphobic discourses (Knisely, 2020a, 2020b). It is critical that educators proactively plan for such challenges and recognize that, alongside expectations management and focusing respectful engagement, resistance to LGBTQ+ inclusion can be turned into a teaching opportunity. Indeed, one of the benefits of QIBPs is that “they push students beyond their potential comfort zones when it comes to issues of social justice and equity [...], this may create the needed space for students to grapple with complex issues in a way that can affect greater understanding and the potential for change in long-standing beliefs or biases” (Paiz, 2020, p. 36). Staying the course with critical QIBPs has been shown to lead to students continuing past initial discomfort with LGBTQ+ topics to fully engage with and deepen their understandings of queer marginalization and, ultimately, to report feeling more prepared to respectfully engage with queer topics, individuals, and communities (Cahnmann & Coda, 2017; Miller & Endo, 2018; Moita-Lopes, 2006; Paiz, 2020). The dialogic nature of QIBPs provides initial guidance as to how to plan for resistance: Students can and should be asked to participate in regular dialogic reflections and feedback, including, at times, anonymous feedback sheets or online forms (Paiz, 2020). Pedagogical structures that promote self-reflection can help students apply the aforementioned guiding questions to their own opinions, including those that are phobic, in order to deconstruct normativity’s influence on their thinking. Applying this broader framework of deconstructing

normativity can help to temporarily shift focus away from queerness specifically so that students may avoid fully disengaging and ease their way past a host of phobic attitudes. As we continue to meet students where they are, we can slowly and steadily shift focus back to TGNC topics, always remaining mindful of our goal: We must seek to realistically “move the needle from disengagement/discomfort to fuller, respectful engagement with queer [and trans] issues and lives” (Paiz, 2020). Further, feedback structures allow instructors to take the pulse of their classrooms and to explicitly address resistance and phobia as they arise. To the same degree, QIBPs’ focus on bringing queer lives and concerns into clearly articulated learning objectives provides additional means of proactive planning. Articulating the importance of intercultural competence as it interfaces with LGBTQ+ topics can help to guard against stakeholders who may question the importance of queer inclusivity, as it is harder to resist educational topics and methods that have been clearly argued for than those whose importance remains fuzzy or entirely unarticulated.

Institutional Setting

So far, we have focused largely on the instructor as change-agent and facilitator. We must, however, also acknowledge the role of the institution both as a facilitator and natural constraint to building out TGNC-aware pedagogies and practices, even when institutions often embrace engaging with more pedestrian notions of diversity and inclusion of sexual minorities (read: cisgender gay and lesbian people with recognizable relationship configurations). Our institutional settings can offer both great support and considerable hindrance in our efforts to create TGNC-affirming spaces. Therefore, we recommend that you take the time to consider your efforts in the context of your own institutions; even in more restrictive environments, being familiar with how TGNC issues have been historically handled *and* proactively planning for resistance, for finding allies, and for building coalitions to aid in your efforts, can help you further to create value around this approach.

Proactive planning requires familiarity with your contextual constraints so that you can predict the potential responses of the stakeholders with whom you interact and pre-plan your own responses accordingly. Often, this will require you to have a plan in place for overcoming resistance to your use of TGNC-affirming practices. For example, familiarizing yourself with the language of your institution's strategic plan and mission statements can provide you with powerful tools in discussions with other teachers about your efforts. Or, aligning your TGNC pedagogies with the teaching values and objectives of your institution can be critical in overcoming administrative resistance to the idea. That being said, knowledge and foresight are only half the battle.

Finding allies and building coalitions, both internal and external can be very helpful. For example, having a sympathetic administrator and senior-teacher that can advocate for your efforts as being in line with institutional mission can go a long way in helping you buffet any rough waters as you navigate your institutional context. Occasionally, our compatriots may respond better to an external voice than an internal one. Here, connecting with organizations like GLSEN and the NCTE can be helpful. Likewise, reaching out to the small body of language teaching scholars and consultants that work on this topic can also be helpful in making institutional in-roads and overcoming active resistance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is critical that the field of applied linguistics and that we, as individual language educators, create space in our classrooms, materials, pedagogies, curricula, and research agendas for substantial, consistent, and affirming TGNC representation as well as for a more fully realized inclusion of TGNC students and colleagues. With regard to research, continued investigation is needed into the context- and language-specific ways that language classrooms and other sites of multilingual development can become increasingly TGNC-affirming as well as into target language and culture specific articulations of TGNC positionalities. To accurately respond to educators' needs and concerns, it will be necessary to deepen our collective understandings of both teacher and student perceptions of TGNC topics, their role in the language classroom, and the real or perceived barriers to realizing TGNC representation and inclusion. Despite these continued needs, this call-to-action can be immediately embodied by leveraging and consistently returning to TAQIBPs, such as articulated in this article, so that students may learn to critically see and to deconstruct all forms of normativity in their daily lives and so that they may come to have a greater understanding of and respect for the full diversity of LGBTQ+ lives and concerns.

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