THE GENDER-JUST

LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROJECT

AN OPEN RESOURCE PROJECT TO SUPPORT LANGUAGE EDUCATORS IN ENGAGING WITH TRANS KNOWLEDGES AND PROACTIVELY PLANNING FOR GENDER JUSTICE.

kriknisely.com/plan-for-justice

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This project was made possible by a CERCLL Faculty Research Fellowship. The Center for Educational Resources in Culture, Language, and Literacy (CERCLL) is a Title VI Language Resource Center: cercll.arizona.edu.
1. Professional context
2. What are gender-just pedagogies? (TAQIBPs)
3. Student linguistic development
4. Student development of contemporary literacy
   • Intersectional thinking
   • Intercultural competence
   • Symbolic competence
5. Available open educational resources (OERs)
6. Q&A

*See D. Spade (2015); S. Ahmed; and/or Z. Nicolazzo for more on normativity & whiteness in how we think about equity & justice.
*See Ashley (2021) Knisely (2021a; 2022b; forthcoming) and Knisely & Russell (forthcoming) on conceptualizations of gender modality.
The Gender-Just Language Education Project

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Professional Context:


- Our personhood includes, but is not limited to gender and sexuality

  - LGBTQ+ topics make up a non-trivial part of our students’ lives (Knisely & Paiz, 2021; Knisely, forthcoming; Moore, 2016; Nelson, 2009; Nguyen & Yang, 2015).

Professional Context:


- Calls for engagement with gender (e.g., ACTFL, 2019, 2021; DDFC, 2021; LSA, 2021; McGregor & Trentman, 2021)

  - Social, relational construct

  - Meanings are always contextualized and intersectional (Knisely, 2021a; Knisely, forthcoming; Paiz & Coda, 2021)

  - “knowing how to use language critically, thoughtfully, and fluently with regard to gender and sexuality is akin to contemporary literacy, given their omnipresence as organizers of social life,” (Knisely, 2022a, p.23; See also Alexander, 2008).
Gender-Just Language Education:

- Limited but growing research...
- Ethically necessary (Knisely & Paiz, 2021; Knisely & Russell, 2023; Knisely, 2021c, forthcoming; LSA, 2021; Zimman, 2021)
- Supports linguistic competence development (Knisely, 2022d)
- Supports intersectional thinking (Knisely, 2022c)
- Supports critical, contemporary literacy (Knisely, 2021c)
- Supports intercultural competence development (Knisely, 2022, forthcoming)
- Supports symbolic competence development (Knisely, forthcoming)

Note: Most of the forthcoming publications cited are expected 2022. A revised version of the white paper will be published at krisknisely.com/plan-for-justice as forthcoming publications appear in print.
**BENEFITS OF GENDER-JUST LANGUAGE EDUCATION**

1. **INCLUSIVE ETHICAL LITERACY**
2. **CONTEMPORARY LITERACY**
3. **UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE**
4. **LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE**
5. **INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE**
6. **SYMBOLIC COMPETENCE**
7. **INTERSECTIONAL THINKING**

**INCLUDING TRANS KNOWLEDGES AND LINGUISTIC PRACTICES VIA GENDER-JUST LANGUAGE PEDAGOGIES**

Responds to ethical imperatives to:
- include learners and educators of all genders,
- provide a foundation for contemporary literacy, which entails an ability to critically, fluidly, and intersectionally discuss gender and all other aspects of being and belonging,
- foster a more accurate and robust understanding of language as a complex adaptive system and contend with the ways that this inherent variation and change produces rich and complex relations among linguistic co-cultures.

**Supports holistic linguistic competence development.**
Students who learn about trans knowledges and linguistic practices make significantly fewer grammatical and lexical errors as compared to those who do not, without any differences in the complexity of the language they produce.

**Supports intercultural and symbolic competence development.**
Gender-just pedagogies can foster an ability and desire to communicate effectively, appropriately, and ethically with people whose cultures are other than one's own. Such pedagogies can also prepare students to position themselves and others as multilingual subjects, to advocate for themselves and others, and to otherwise understand, reframe, and manipulate relations of power.

**Supports the development of intersectional thinking.**
Research has demonstrated that gender-just pedagogies are a viable tool for increasing students' exposure to, awareness of, and ability to engage in intersectional thinking. In one study, students who learned about gender justice were more than seventeen times more likely to demonstrate intersectional awareness than those who did not.

For citations and to learn more about gender-just language pedagogy visit: kriskniedy.com/plan-for-justice

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The Studies:

- 112 US Undergraduates
- 6 matched, moderately scripted assignments
- 3 iterations of the same French course
  - Iteration 1: Control group
  - Iteration 2: Gender-just approach mid-semester forward (TAQIBPs)
  - Iteration 3: Gender-just approach from first day forward (TAQIBPs)
- Coding
  - Errors by type
  - Codes iteratively modified

For detailed explanations of the pedagogical approach taken in this project (Trans-affirming Queer Inquiry-Based Pedagogies), see Knisely & Paiz, 2021; Knisely, 2022a; Knisely, 2022b. For additional methodological information see Knisely, 2022c; 2022d. Detailed information about these publications can be found at: krisknisely.com/publications. Corresponding open educational resources can be found at: krisknisely.com/resources-for-educators
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*TAQIBPs introduced in Knisely & Paiz, Critical Multilingualism Studies, 2021 (Open Access);
see also Knisely, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b

**TAQIBPs: Guiding Principles**

- Restive problematizing of all identities and discourses
- Exposing & interrogating normativity in all its forms
- Creating space for marginalized perspectives and identities
- Fostering respectful engagement with disparate worldviews [i.e. intercultural competence]
**TAQIBPs: Guiding Principles**

- Restive problematizing of all identities and discourses
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- Fostering respectful engagement with disparate worldviews [i.e. intercultural competence]

**Pedagogical aims** (adapted from Knisely & Paiz, 2021):
- Raise awareness of LGBTQ+ lives and concerns
- Introduce the linguistically situated ways that we index and perform identities
- Foster critical thinking
- Equip students with the linguistic and rhetorical skills needed to advocate for self and others [i.e. symbolic competence]

**Guiding questions**
Why is it so?  
Who benefits?  
Who is marginalized?  
What alternatives exist?  
How is language involved?

**TAQIBPs: Strategies:**

1. **Exploring with your students**
2. Find space throughout the curriculum
3. Critical close reading & discussion
4. Tie LGBTQ+ content to language learning goals
5. Focus on respectful engagement

**Exploring with your students can help to** (Knisely & Paiz, 2021):
- Individualize learning;
- Decenter the classroom;
- Queer students’ perception of expertise;
- Uncover locally relevant, real-world LGBTQ+ experiences and language.

See Knisely (2021a, 2022b) for guiding questions for self-reflective practice.
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Find space throughout the curriculum (adapted from Knisely & Paiz, 2021):

• Avoid “Gay Day” / “Trans Day” special topics
• Create value around LGBTQ+ discussions as a part of critical literacy and acculturation
• Underscore how LGBTQ+ issues are performed and parsed through different linguistic and rhetorical functions

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• Underscore how LGBTQ+ issues are performed and parsed through different linguistic and rhetorical functions
• Draws attention to how normative discourses obfuscate certain lives
**TAQIBPs: Strategies:**

1. Exploring with your students  
2. Find space throughout the curriculum  
3. Critical close reading & discussion  
4. **Tie LGBTQ+ content to language-learning goals**  
5. Focus on respectful engagement

**Tie LGBTQ+ content to language-learning goals (Knisely & Paiz, 2021):**
- Shows that sexuality & gender are important parts of acquiring an L2 and a sense of self in it  
- Contributes to de-sensationalizing LGBTQ+ content and discussions  
- Aids in gaining student & administrative buy-in

**Remember:**
- to cultivate a desire and an ability to effectively and appropriately engage with individuals whose realities may differ from our own (intercultural competence)...  
- to respect that we are all at different starting points in our engagement with LGBTQ+ issues...  
- to take time to critically reflect on and adapt queer and trans-affirming pedagogies to be locally relevant...  
- that it is not only up to community insiders to build LGBTQ+-inclusive classroom spaces in the SLA/L2 context.

(See this project’s white paper, Paiz, 2020, and Knisely & Paiz, 2021 on planning for resistance; Nicolazzo 2019 on (in)visibility.)
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Note: Open Access.
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Coding

- All errors coded by type
- Mean error rate
- Mean length of utterance

ANOVA

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Results (Knisely, 2022d)

- Mean error rate:
  - Time
  - TimexGroup:
    - Highest error rates in Iteration 1: Control group
    - Lower error rates in Iteration 2: TAQIBPs mid-semester forward
    - Lowest error rates Iteration 3: TAQIBPs from first day forward

Focus on iteration:

- Bonferroni-adjusted paired t-tests indicated that overall mean differences between iteration 1 and iteration 3 of the course were significant (p<.001), wherein iteration 3 had a mean error rate that was .015 lower than iteration 1.
Results (Knisely, 2022d)

• Mean error rate: Students who learn about trans knowledges and linguistic practices make significantly fewer grammatical and lexical errors as compared to those who do not.

• Mean length of utterance:
  • Time
  • TimexGroup
Results (Knisely, 2022d)

- Mean error rate: Students who learn about trans knowledges and linguistic practices make significantly fewer grammatical and lexical errors as compared to those who do not.
- Mean length of utterance: without any differences in the complexity of the language they produce.
Responds to ethical imperatives to:
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Responding to resistance.

Everything about language poses challenges, but we don’t get to avoid linguistic realities that are too difficult for us on those grounds alone. We also have research that shows that this is going to help you in your language overall (Kirschy, 2022b). So as you struggle through the parts that are challenging remember to value these mistakes and challenges as they are an integral part of learning about language as a system. I’ll be happy to give you additional resources and to talk with you about your questions. Like with all things in language, this will take active practice! I encourage you to practice using these forms and strategies in exercises, talking to yourself, etc.) I’m here to support you in your learning and I’m confident you’ll be able to get this!

"It’s too hard!"
"This doesn't have anything to do with [language of study]!"

In keeping with TACIBPs, your course goals should have addressed this. In response we must lay bare the connections between your goals and gender just pedagogies and the relationships between who we are and how we language; your response will necessarily need to be closely tied to your own goals, practices, and context. Possible responses may include the following. See Kinley, 2020 for additional suggestions.

This has everything to do with language learning, communicating, and the goals of this course. If you look at the learning objectives and goals for this course, you’ll regularly see that we’re working to build our abilities in terms of language, intercultural competence, symbolic competence, and forms of critical thinking, including intersectional thinking. Define and explain concepts as needed. If the interlocutor could benefit from such an expansion. We have research that demonstrates that gender just language teaching—like what we’re doing in this class—can help support all of these forms of linguistic and intellectual development. We also know that the broader our linguistic repertoires are, the more we have to draw upon in our interactions with others. That’s a big part of what language and language learning are about. Language is inseparable from social identities and relationships. Our identities [... ] are inseparable from the language we use and from the affordances and constraints we experience in our interactions with others. Moreover, our success as language users is measured in and by our success in such interactions. Thus, if we are engaged in understanding how languages are taught and learned, we are engaged in teaching about who we are as individuals and groups.” (Kinley, 2020, pp. 155-156)
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*See Knisely (2022c)
TAQIBPs and Intersectionality *(Knisely, 2022c)*

- Informed by: culturally-relevant pedagogy *(Ladson-Billings)*; Intersectionality *(Crenshaw)*; other ways of knowing *(hooks, 2014, p.12)*
- Pushing back hard delimitations → remain responsive to ever-shifting and emerging needs *(Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays, & Tomlinson, 2013; Crenshaw, 2017; Knisely & Paiz, 2021; Paiz, 2021, p. 10)*
- **Intersectionality as buzzword** *(Carastathis, 2016; Collins, 2015; Davis, 2008; May, 2015; Nash, 2011)*
  - neoliberalization, gentrification, whitewashing, and misappropriation of critical, revolutionary constructs *(Compton-Lilly, Lewis, Perry, & Smagorinsky, 2021; Crenshaw, 2011)*
- Intersections: intersections of identity
- Intersectionality:
  - **intersecting structures of domination** *(Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013; Duran & Jones, 2020)*
  - overlaps and connections among axes of oppression *(Crenshaw, 2015)*
  - centering of people who have and continue to be marginalized *(Crenshaw, 2015)*
  - commitment to social justice and taking action/activism *(Crenshaw, 2015; Duran & Jones, 2020)*

**RQ1: Frequency of intersectional awareness *(Knisely, 2022c)*

- **Iteration 1 (control):** 1 of 36 (i.e., 2.78% of enrolled students); 1 code application across 1 student
- **Iteration 2 (mid semester):** 12 of 24 (i.e., 50% of enrolled students); 12 code applications across 12 students
- **Iteration 3 (first day forward):** 26 of 52 (i.e., 50% of enrolled students); 36 code applications across 26 students.
Facts-about-diversity  ➔ Toward intersectional thinking  ➔ Normativities

• “It’s always been very either structured towards typical grammatical you know curriculums, or when we learned about the culture it’s [...] just a very white cis het view of the French culture, which is I feel like what is presented frequently in these courses, it just happens. [...] I just [...] feel like I was missing out on so much before.” (Izzie, Iteration 3)

• “This class has exposed me to Francophone experiences outside of the typical classroom-taught Parisian lived experience [...] it’s really opened my eyes to how narrowly-focused all of my prior French language education has been.” (Kirby, Iteration 3)

Knisely (2022c) 41

Facts-about-diversity  ➔ Toward intersectional thinking

Toward intersectional thinking

• “Je pense aux subjectivités [...] les déterminations des voyelles dépendent sur les régions et des classes sociales, avec beaucoup de possibilités pour la prononciation.” (Fae, Iteration 2)

• “Je pense que la communauté aussi détermine [une partie de] l’identité d’une personne, mais je suis une personne et avec beaucoup de communautés [...] L’identité est complexe difficile parce que ce n’est pas singulier, mais je suis une personne. Ce n’est pas une équation facile.” (Stephen, Iteration 3)

Knisely (2022c) 42

Foundational Learning

• “Dans chaque région où française est parlé, il y a beaucoup de variété [...] Beaucoup de mots dans chaque région [...] Les voyelles sont prononcé différent [...] en France, au Québec, en Afrique. [...] Beaucoup de différences existent.” (Carrie, Iteration 1)
**Facts-about-diversity ➔ Toward intersectional thinking ➔**

**Normativities. Multiplicity.**

- “This class really helped me to realize the complexity of socio-linguistic interplay not only within our Anglophone culture but especially within the Francophone culture. I sort of had one of those "aha" moments when I realized that I've been assuming for a long time that issues of identity and gender are faced in a similar way around the world, despite cultural differences and each of our many identities. In other words, I think that through the mini culture-shock that this class delivered to me I have a new lens of looking at the world that is (hopefully) more culturally-adjusted or at least aware than before.” (Sky, Iteration 3)

- “I wrote like pages [of words to describe me] and they don't even make sense together [...] and I could write more but, [...] **nobody is just one thing or always the same** [...] how do you even explain that?”(Stephen, Iteration 3)

RQ2: Intersectional thinking & analysis

**Iteration 1**: Intersecting Identities ➔ Intersecting Oppressions

**Iterations 2 & 3**: Intersecting Identities (➔ Intersecting Oppressions)

Budding awareness of:

- context (in)dependence
- individual agency and its limits/constraints
- celebratory tokenization ➔ valuing diversity **while** engaging with oppressive forces
- contending with complexity: non-additive approaches to multiple positionalities (➔ intersectionality)
INCLUDING TRANS KNOWLEDGE AND LINGUISTIC PRACTICES VIA GENDER-JUST LANGUAGE PEDAGOGIES

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• Coding
  • Iterative

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**Intercultural Competence** is

"an ability and desire to communicate (or negotiate symbolic meaning) effectively, appropriately, and ethically with diverse individuals and groups whose cultural practices are other than one’s own.

This deep, ongoing engagement is based on one’s critical knowledge, skills and attitudinal stances (both towards themselves and of others), wherein culture is dynamic, heterogeneous, multi-layered, and iteratively performed. Intercultural competence is a never-achieved process, due to the ways in which culture is inherently socially co-constructed and negotiated in an ongoing way.

Intercultural competence requires an understanding of culture as not existing before interactions occur (culture does not exist a-priori), but rather is constantly (re)created through interaction and engagement among individuals;”

(Knisely & McGregor, 2020).

**Symbolic Competence** is

the ability to position oneself as a multilingual subject and to manipulate the three dimensions of language as a symbolic system: symbolic representation, symbolic action, symbolic power.

This implies the ability to understand the cultural memories evoked by symbolic systems, to perform and create alternative realities, and to reframe and shape the multilingual game in which one invests

(Kramsch, 2011; Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008).

It entails understanding the power game and involves having the knowledge, skills, and attitudinal stances necessary to be able to choose whether or not to act on or challenge power structures (especially as reflected in and re-inscribed by language).

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**Intercultural Competence**

- Frequency of code applications increases across course iterations (1<2<3)
  - Knowledges
  - Skills and Processes
  - Attitudinal Stances
Intercultural Competence

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  - Knowledges
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  - Attitudinal Stances
Intercultural Competence

Iteration 1

• In each region where French is spoken there are […] different words[…]. In France, in Quebec, in Africa, lots of differences exist.

Iteration 3

• As I get more and more advanced in a language, I think it’s a responsibility to be fully aware of how our predisposed stereotypes might be affecting how we learn and consider whatever language we’re learning or possibly how the language we’re learning can shape the way we see various cultures.

• I’m starting to question the media I consume and how it might be restricting my worldview. Consuming media that involves cultures and circumstances foreign to your own life makes you a better global citizen. I’m trying to be more connected to the world, to be a better member of worldwide communities.

• I’ve been really reflecting on the social aspect of it [language learning/languaging] and how much language goes into knowing or meeting people.

• You carry all of this baggage with you –things you think you know– into conversations.

Including trans knowledges and linguistic practices via gender-just language pedagogies

Responds to ethical imperatives to:

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Symbolic Competence

- Frequency of code applications increases across course iterations (1<3)
  - Normativities
  - Positioning relative to power structures
  - Challenging being positioned in a particular way or the positioning of others
Symbolic Competence

Iteration 1

• If you don’t use the right language you can offend someone.

• My perspectives haven’t changed because I’ve always been an informed and empathetic person.

Iteration 3

• I thought I understood identity and those who have different identities but I didn’t understand the impact and... I guess gravity of it. [Another student’s] podcast really opened my eyes to how it’s honestly kinda f*** how they can’t choose to be gender-neutral [...] we take for granted the fact that we can even have the opportunity to [be gendered correctly] I have started reading more about it and because of it (again a stupid little thing) I put my pronouns in my insta bio because although I’m a cis male it de-stigmatizes it and I really like the fact that it shouldn’t be a big deal, it’s just my pronouns, so what? Then it’s the same for them. We gotta stand up for each other.

• I’ve noticed an eagerness to reflect on my relationship with French [...] the world, my place in the world, and language’s place in the world. [...] I guess the real question this poses is who has control [...] does anyone [...] and what does that mean for the way I “do” French [...] for how I move through the world…. [through] interactions
"This doesn't have anything to do with [language of study]!"

[In keeping with TAQQEPL, your course goals should have addressed this. In response we must try to make the connections between your goals and gender just pedagogies and the relationships between who we are and how we language; your response will necessarily need to be closely tied to your own goals, practices, and context. Possible responses may include the following. See Kristje, 2020, for additional suggestions.]

This has everything to do with language learning, communicating, and the goals of this course. If you look at the learning objectives and goals for this course, you'll regularly see that we're working to build our abilities in terms of language, intercultural competence, symbolic competence, and forms of critical thinking, including intersectional thinking. [Define and explain concepts as needed. If the interlocutor could benefit from such an expansion.] We have research that demonstrates that gender just language teaching—in what we're doing in this class—can help support all of these forms of linguistic and intellectual development. We also know that the broader our linguistic repertoires are, the more we have to draw upon in our interactions with others. That's a big part of what language and language learning are about. Language is inseparable from social identities and relationships; our identities are inseparable from the language we use and from the affordances and constraints we experience in our interactions with others. Moreover, our success as language users is measured in and by our success in such interactions. Thus, if we are engaged in understanding how languages are taught and learned, we are engaged in teaching about who we are as individuals and groups." (Kristje, 2020, pp. 153-154)
The Gender-Just Language Education Project

krisknisely.com/plan-for-justice
krisknisely.com/resources-for-educators

1. Professional context
2. What are gender-just pedagogies? (TAQIBPs)
3. Student linguistic development
4. Student development of contemporary literacy
   - Intersectional thinking
   - Intercultural competence
   - Symbolic competence
5. Available open educational resources (OERs)
6. Q&A
INTRODUCTION

The Gender-Just Language Education Project.

Author: [Author Name]

Introduction: Research and practice in education designing for language and literacy development is a focus of the Gender-Just Language Education Project (GJLEP), which aims to address gender biases in language instruction and promote language justice for all students. The project's goals are to develop and disseminate pedagogical tools and resources that support the equitable education of all learners, especially those who have been historically marginalized.

Gender bias in education systems often results in unequal outcomes for students based on their gender, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. The project seeks to challenge these biases by providing educators with strategies and materials that support language learning for all students. By doing so, the project aims to contribute to a more just and equitable educational environment where all learners have the opportunity to thrive.

The GJLEP project is anchored in a commitment to social justice, recognizing the systemic nature of gender inequality and advocating for transformative pedagogies that address the root causes of gender bias. The project's work is guided by principles of intersectionality, which acknowledge the ways in which various forms of oppression intersect and compound to affect individuals and communities.

In conclusion, the GJLEP project is a critical initiative in the ongoing conversation about language and education. Through its resources and ongoing research, the project aims to inspire and empower educators to create more equitable and just learning environments for all students.
The Gender-Just Language Education Project.
“Why are we learning this if not all [linguistic group members] use or even know it?”

Language learning isn’t about teaching an engine; it’s about teaching people what’s relevant to their culture. It’s not about teaching the culture of your country, it’s about teaching the culture of your students’ home. It’s about understanding that students have their own way of expressing themselves, and we should respect that. They are not just here to learn from us, but we should also learn from them.

Students all over the world are using language and it’s amazing. If you don’t teach the students who already have a language, you will never be able to teach it. They’re the ones who will be telling me what language to use and how to use it.

This new perspective allows us to see language as more than a tool of communication, it’s a way of expressing identity and culture.

The Gender-Just Language Education Project.

“Doesn’t have anything to do with [language of study]!”

Understanding and appreciating language is a fundamental part of teaching. It’s not just about teaching grammar and vocabulary, it’s about understanding the culture and context in which the language is used. Teaching language without understanding the cultural context is like teaching a recipe without understanding the history and tradition behind it.

This new perspective allows us to see language as more than just a tool of communication, it’s a way of expressing identity and culture.

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