

CHAPTER 1



Gender and English Language Learners: Challenges and Possibilities

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◆ INTRODUCTION

Since the mid-1990s, several scholars in the fields of language education, second language acquisition, and bilingualism have addressed the influence of gender on access to linguistic and interactional resources, on the dynamics of classroom interaction, and on language learning outcomes (Ehrlich, 1997; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko, 2001; Pavlenko, Blackledge, Piller, & Teutsch-Dwyer, 2001; Sunderland, 2000). The field of TESOL has also exhibited a growing interest in the impact of gender on ESL and EFL learning, seen in the increasing number of plenaries, panels, discussion groups, and papers on the topic. Yet the nature of the connection between gender and language learning remains elusive, or, rather, different scholars and educators approach it from diverse perspectives. Some studies continue to appeal to variationist and interactional sociolinguistics methodology, treating gender as a variable, whereas others, grounded in critical, poststructuralist, and feminist theory, approach gender as a system of social relations and discursive practices.

It is the latter approach that informs this chapter and most of the contributions to the volume. In what follows, we discuss the feminist poststructuralist view of gender, outline its role in the context of ESL and EFL learning, and show how the contributions to this volume enrich TESOL theory and praxis, illuminating the key features of critical feminist pedagogy in TESOL.

◆ DEFINING GENDER

Most if not all scholars who are interested in the role of gender in language education see themselves as feminist. We do not dispute this, yet we point out that there are multiple approaches to feminism that espouse distinct views of gender and its relationship to language (cf. Gibbon, 1999). Until recently, two approaches have been most influential in the study of language and gender (for a detailed discussion, see Ehrlich, 1997; Pavlenko & Piller, 2001). The view of the two genders, male and female, as different cultures, common for *cultural feminism*, has guided the search for gender differences in language learning and use. The emphasis on patriarchy, typical for *material feminism*, has informed research on male dominance in interaction.

We argue that neither approach can be assumed unproblematically in the field of TESOL because both frameworks see *men* and *women* as undifferentiated and unitary

groups, members of which have more in common with each other than with the members of the other group. What are the problems with such a view? To begin with, in its most radical form, such an approach, relying on outdated claims in the field of psychology, conflates *gender* with *sex* and *sex* with brain structure, leading to oversimplified generalizations along the lines of “females are superior in verbal skills, while males are superior in spatial skills . . . females are slightly more feeling oriented, while males are slightly more thinking oriented” (Oxford, 2002, p. 252). In reality, however, current work in neuroscience suggests that human brain functioning is a complex process that is influenced by both nature and nurture and is not easily reducible to female/male differences. Furthermore, as Jaeger (1998) has pointed out, even when such differences are found, “in the normal, intact brain, sex differences in functional cortical organization for language processing are not associated with significant behavioral differences in the everyday tasks of reading” (p. 230) or, for that matter, speaking (see also Bing & Bergvall, 1996).

Second, even in cases where the social nature of gender is acknowledged, the binary approach obliterates the fact that, in many cultures, gender as a system of social relations and as a way of interpreting human anatomy is not constrained to the female/male dichotomy, and humans may belong to three or four different genders (Bing & Bergvall, 1996; K. Hall, 2002; Lang, 1997). Consequently, an imposition of an ethnocentrically biased Western view distorts the understanding of group membership in the culture in question, making the findings about female/male differences nothing more than an epiphenomenon. Furthermore, even in cultures that view gender as a dichotomous system, the social meanings and ideologies of normative masculinity and femininity are highly diverse (Bonvillain, 1995) and cannot be superimposed.

Third and most important, the focus on a female/male dichotomy obscures oppression in terms of class, ethnicity, race, sexuality, or (dis)ability. Acknowledging this oppression forces one to recognize that, in some contexts, men and women within a particular group may be strongly united by the common ethnic, racial, religious, or class background and have more in common with each other than with members of other groups. For instance, White upper-middle-class men and women may both participate in oppressive practices targeting members of sexual, racial, or ethnic minorities. Furthermore, it is never purely men or women who are all-oppressed or all-powerful: It is immigrant women who do not always have access to educational resources, working-class boys and girls who are silenced in the classroom, or young Black men who do not have powerful role models in the school hierarchy (Jones, 1993).

Feminist poststructuralism, a framework outlined by Cameron (1992, 1997b), Luke and Gore (1992a), and Weedon (1987), and espoused by us and by many of the contributors to this volume, emphasizes the intrinsic links between gender and other social identities. We see feminist poststructuralism as an approach to the study of language and education that strives to (a) understand the relationship between power and knowledge; (b) theorize the role of language in production and reproduction of power, difference, and symbolic domination (in particular, in educational contexts); and (c) deconstruct master narratives that oppress certain groups—be they immigrants, women, or minority members—and devalue their linguistic practices.

In agreement with this approach, we see gender not as a dichotomy or an individual property but as a complex system of social relations and discursive practices differentially constructed in local contexts. This poststructuralist view of gender foregrounds sociohistoric, cross-cultural, and cross-linguistic differences in gender construction. In doing so, this approach emphasizes the fact that beliefs and ideas about gender relations and normative masculinities, femininities, or representations of third or fourth gender vary across cultures—as well as over time within a culture—based on social, political, and economic changes. Consequently, we do not assume that all women—or all men—have a lot in common with each other just because of their biological makeup or elusive social roles, nor do we assume that gender is always relevant to understanding language learning outcomes. Instead, gender emerges as one of many important facets of social identity that interact with race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, (dis)ability, age, and social status. In accordance with this view, the contributors to this volume consistently consider gender relations—as well as particular student populations—in their local social, cultural, and ideological contexts.

◆ GENDER AND TESOL

The feminist poststructuralist view of gender outlined above does not allow for easy generalizations about men or women or boys or girls, forcing TESOL professionals to look for new research questions and directions. Below, we contend that there are at least three ways of considering gender and gendering in ESL and EFL contexts without looking for gender differences in language learning processes or outcomes: gendered agency, gendered access, and gendered interaction.

Gendered Agency, Resistance, and Imagined Communities

First, we argue that some gender discourses closely linked to English have great potential to influence learners' investments and decisions. These discourses shape learners' desires as well as their images of themselves; their futures; and their social, educational, and economic opportunities. In some cases, perceived opportunities could strengthen the learners' agency, and in others, they could fuel learners' resistance to English.

Several recent studies indicate that many young women around the world consider English to be intrinsically linked to feminism and are motivated to learn it as a language of empowerment. This trend is apparent in Japan, the EFL context highlighted in this volume. At present many more young Japanese women than men appear to be interested in learning English, training for English language-related professions, and traveling to English-speaking countries (Kobayashi, 2002). For these women, English offers an entry into the job market as well as a possible way of liberating themselves from the confines of gender patriarchy. The latter also holds for older Japanese women in McMahon's (1997, 2001) studies of a feminist adult education English class. These women state that English is much better suited to express their personal emotions, views, and newly acquired critical consciousness.

In turn, in other contexts, learners may find imagined gendered identity options unappealing and give up on learning English. From this perspective, TESOL

professionals need to examine gender identity options offered to students through textbooks, classroom materials, and classroom interactions as well as to consider students' investments—or lack thereof—in the light of gendered employment opportunities in the local and global marketplaces.

Gendered Access to Linguistic and Interactional Resources

Our second argument is that in some—albeit not all—contexts, access to linguistic and educational resources and interactional opportunities in English may be gendered. Several studies suggest that, in some English-speaking contexts, a number of gatekeeping practices may constrain immigrant and minority women's mobility and their access to ESL classes, education, and the workplace (Corson, 2001; Goldstein, 1995, 2001; Heller, 2001; Kouritzin, 2000; Norton, 2000). Some of these gatekeeping practices originate in the target language community, and some may stem from the minority community's social practices. For instance, in the English-speaking world, immigrant women may face sexual harassment, which inhibits their interactional opportunities and eventually decreases their chances to learn the language (Ehrlich, 2001). These opportunities may be further hampered by gendered and systemic inequalities, such as lack of governmentally funded day care. Recently, several programs have begun to address the particular needs of such populations. Case studies by Frye (1999) and Rivera (1999) offer descriptions of two such programs, in which low-income immigrant Latina women can increase their English proficiency, acquire literacy skills, and improve their basic education.

On the other hand, even in contexts where classes, professional training, and other linguistic resources are available, access problems may arise due to the minority community's gatekeeping practices. Kouritzin (2000) argues that even the best solutions, such as evening and weekend classes and externally funded day care, do not help women who are culturally required to be home with their children and prioritize their roles as housekeepers, mothers, wives, and caretakers. Moreover, being in the workplace does not guarantee access to English either: The first language may become the dominant language of the workplace (Goldstein, 1995, 2001), and English study may be seen as interfering with productivity or as threatening to less educated male partners (Norton Peirce, Harper, & Burnaby, 1993).

Even in the field of TESOL, access to and distribution of resources may be at times both racialized and gendered. White male scholars are commonly in positions of power, middle-class White women are often either in teaching positions or are building bridges between theory and practice, and racial and ethnic minority members are most often on the other side, namely, in the classroom. Thus, inequities in terms of race, gender, and native or nonnative speaker status need to be remedied not only in the classrooms but also in imagining the ESL cadre, and thus in the processes of hiring and promotion (for a discussion of the experiences of a minority woman teacher of ESL, see Amin, 1999).

Gendered Interaction

Our third argument is that in some—once again, not all—contexts, gender as a social and discursive practice affects interactional dynamics. Gender inequities may structure differential interactional opportunities for male and female learners of different ages, classes, or ethnic backgrounds. Consequently, in some contexts,

immigrant and minority girls and women may get significantly less classroom interaction time than either minority boys and men or majority men and women (Corson, 2001; Losey, 1995; see also Julé's chapter in this volume). At the same time, recent studies in language education point away from facile generalizations about permanent female disenfranchisement, showing that in some contexts dominant cultures of learning silence working-class and immigrant boys and men (Heller, 2001; Willett, 1995).

❖ ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

In this volume, our aim is to showcase diverse studies that examine gender in language learning from a sociocultural and cross-cultural perspective and offer practical suggestions for critical praxis. The 11 cases represent language learning and teaching communities in a number of regions of the world, including Canada, Japan, Malaysia, Uganda, and the United States. The chapters also include a wide range of contexts, from primary, secondary, and higher education to teacher education and English for specific purposes (ESP).

Given the diversity of the chapters in this volume, determining an organizing principle for the collection was a challenge. After much discussion and reflection, we decided on a four-part organization. The chapters in Part 1, "Teaching for Change," focus on the contribution that teachers can make in addressing gender inequities in language learning. Part 2, "Student Voices," presents research that explores ways in which gender inequities contribute to the silencing of particular students in the English language classroom. Part 3, "Innovations for All," describes a range of innovative programs that are centrally concerned with gender and educational change. Part 4, "Insights From Japan," examines three groundbreaking action research projects that promote critical reflection about gender and language in one EFL context, which is also the source of some of the most innovative work on feminist pedagogy in EFL (Casanave & Yamashiro, 1996; Fujimura-Fanselow & Vaughn, 1991; MacGregor, 1998; McMahon, 1997, 2001; Smith & Yamashiro, 1998; Yamashiro, 2000).

In what follows, we summarize some of the key issues raised by the contributions to each part of the book. We conclude with an examination of the common themes across the 11 chapters.

Part 1: Teaching for Change

In chapter 2, Nelson examines how one teacher, Roxanne, used lesbian/gay themes to explore cultural meanings in her grammar-based ESL class in a community college in the United States. In a lesson on modal auxiliaries, the students, hailing from 13 different countries and ranging in age from early 20s to 70s, were asked to explain the scenario *These two women are walking arm in arm*. The scenario was one of a number of similarly ambiguous scenarios on a class worksheet. In the ensuing discussion, Roxanne coordinated a productive debate on lesbian/gay cultural practices by framing questions in a highly skilled manner. Instead of asking, for example, "Do you think lesbians should hold hands in public?" she asked, "How did you learn to interpret public displays of affection between two women in the United States?" This line of questioning enabled her to focus on the extent to which sexual

identities are culturally situated and to demonstrate that what counts as normal is not inherent but socially constructed. The discussion also provided students with great insight into the ways in which modal auxiliaries are used for acts of speculation. Blending grammar teaching with exploration of gay/lesbian issues, Nelson powerfully demonstrates that topics previously seen as taboo have great potential for the teaching of both linguistic and intercultural competence.

Although most research in the field of TESOL focuses on the experiences of English teachers, as in chapter 2, or on those of English language learners who are students, in chapter 3 Boxer and Tyler focus on the relatively powerful position of English language learners who are instructors in U.S. universities. These instructors, called international teaching assistants (ITAs), constitute about 20% of all graduate assistants on U.S. campuses and, according to Boxer and Tyler, are highly likely to confront issues of sexual harassment at some point in their tenure as teaching assistants. Because what is considered sexual harassment differs from one context to another and one culture to the next, Boxer and Tyler conducted quantitative and qualitative research on the perceptions of 12 scenarios by a mixed group of ITAs and U.S. undergraduates, focusing in particular on Chinese-speaking and Spanish-speaking ITAs. Their chapter represents the synthesis of previous research, focusing on cross-cultural pragmatics relevant to ITA training. Their central finding is that ITAs are aware that there are particular conventions for what is considered appropriate or inappropriate behavior with respect to students in the United States and that these conventions are frequently different from those in the ITAs' home countries. However, ITAs are sometimes mystified by subtle distinctions and can overgeneralize differences. In their ITA training program, Boxer and Tyler alert ITAs to relevant legal definitions, invite U.S. undergraduates to discussion groups, and ask ITAs to keep journals of their student-teacher interactions, all with the goal of helping ITAs achieve a successful and positive teaching experience and prevent cross-cultural miscommunication.

In chapter 4, Jordan explores the extent to which feminist composition pedagogy, which has tended to focus on native English speakers, can be applied to the ESL tutoring that takes place in college-based writing centers. In particular, he seeks to raise awareness about institutional and gender-related politics in and around writing centers, and show how these politics can be harnessed for the benefit of students in general and ESL students in particular. A writing center, Jordan argues, is an ideal place for the practice of feminist composition pedagogy in that it is an educational site that views students as a source of knowledge, focuses on both process and product in writing, and seeks to decenter authority, particularly with reference to gendered inequities. In following hooks' (1994) example of making theory out of practice in order to inform and transform practice, he surveyed ESL students and tutors involved in the writing center at the Pennsylvania State University, in the United States, investigating how students perceived the writing center, writing tutors, and the process of writing. Findings from both students and tutors suggest, among other things, that a writing center should be a safe place that does not look or feel like a classroom and that tutors should exercise flexibility in engaging students' native rhetorical abilities while addressing demands for standardized English expression.

Part 2: Student Voices

Drawing on their research in Malaysia, Govindasamy and David (chapter 5) describe a study that investigates gender dynamics in the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), where almost two thirds of the student population consists of women. Govindasamy and David discuss national concern over the dwindling male undergraduate population in the country. The purpose of their study was to determine whether the numerical superiority of the female population marginalized male students and whether the male voice needed to be given greater emphasis in academic decisions. The study was conducted in the English department, where males constituted about 10% of the student population and, in general, did not perform academically as well as females. In their analysis of interactive patterns in the ESL classrooms at IIUM, Govindasamy and David found that the numerical superiority of female students had not minimized the role played by the male students. Subsequent analysis revealed that what differed was the goal orientations of the male and female students, largely influenced by expectations of the society, in which men are expected to be involved in the business world and women in the teaching world. A large majority of the male students indicated in interviews that their motivation to pursue many of the English courses was low because they did not consider the courses to be of practical value. An ESP course, Language for Occupational Purposes, was introduced as a way of meeting the needs of male students at IIUM.

Across the Pacific Ocean, Julé (chapter 6) analyzes interaction in a Grade 2 ESL classroom in Canada, in which all 20 students (11 boys and 9 girls) were of Punjabi descent. Julé focuses on a young girl, Amandeep, who was virtually silent over the 10-month period of data collection. Julé demonstrates that the linguistic space in the classroom was inequitably distributed, with the teacher speaking for about 89% of the time, and the students, for approximately 11%. Of the student talking time, boys spoke approximately 88% and girls about 12% of the time. In terms of student speech acts, boys were markedly more active than girls in responding to questions and offering uninitiated comments. Although most of the girls in the classroom exhibited silent behavior, Amandeep's was particularly noteworthy, and Julé describes three events in which Amandeep sat quietly at her desk while the teacher attended to other students. She suggests that the teacher, who described Amandeep as "a nice, quiet girl" (p. 73) may be implicated in Amandeep's silence. Julé concludes that teachers should pay more attention when girls talk, wait for girls to speak, and structure language lessons to encourage more interaction from girls.

Part 3: Innovations for All

In chapter 7, Parry describes an innovative community library project in a rural region of Uganda. The project, initiated by the headmaster of Kitengesa Comprehensive Secondary School (KCSS), provides both girls and boys with greater access to literacy—particularly in the English language. The goal of the project is to serve not only the children in the school, where the project is based, but also the wider rural community. Parry describes why and how girls, in particular, benefit from and contribute to this library project. Because KCSS is new, poor, and locally based, more girls than boys are students there; parents with resources prefer to send their sons to more established schools. Furthermore, girls are more likely than boys to remain in

the local area and will most likely become better caregivers because of their enhanced literacy skills. In addition, Parry found that the girls were more effective than the boys at disseminating library material—the girls were more likely than the boys to read their books aloud, thereby reaching young children and illiterate adults. She concludes that the girls were learning that literacy is not necessarily associated with an alien culture, even if it is in a foreign language, and that it has the potential to improve the quality of rural life.

In another part of the world, Taylor (chapter 8) draws on her research on an innovative antidiscrimination camp in Toronto, Canada, to explore the inextricable links between gender and race. With reference to the compelling stories of two English language learners, Hue and Khatra, she argues that the practice of theorizing ESL learning and teaching is incomplete without a perspective on what she calls *racialized gender*. Taylor describes the leadership camp in which public school students of 15 national origins collectively explored their personal experiences of social difference and discrimination. Through the lens of racialized gender, Taylor argues, Hue and Khatra were able to develop critical understandings of their relationship to their history, their educational experience in Canada, and the issues at stake in “coming to voice in English” (p. 105). Drawing on her research, Taylor offers a number of suggestions for TESOL practitioners who wish to investigate the underlying gendered dynamics of students’ language learning and identity negotiation. She notes that language learners need the opportunity to explore their experiences of difference; resources to help explore identity not as something one is but as something one does; and access to discussions that address body image, familial obligations, and personal security in which perspectives are framed by gender relations.

In the final case in Part 3, Rilling and Biles (chapter 9) examine the relationship between gender and technology from their respective positions as instructor and graduate student in a technology course in an MA TESL/TEFL program at a U.S. university. Their action research project was based on the premise that a technology course is an ideal site for developing teachers to learn how gender can affect teacher-student and student-student interactions and that insights from such a course would help developing teachers create safe learning environments for ESL students. They outline the technologies used in the course, such as SyllaBase (2001), e_Chat (Bagneski, 1999), and *Tapped In* (<http://www.tappedin.sri.org/>); describe the prompts Rilling used to promote discussion on gender and technology; and summarize Biles’ responses to each of these learning opportunities. Two central concerns for Rilling and Biles were the extent to which technology could either enhance or compromise the learning community’s safety, and how issues of gender and language learning and teaching could be productively examined. They found that the course helped students increase their computer skills while providing greater insight into gender and technology. One particularly interesting finding was the realization that the virtual world, while an imagined reality, is nevertheless a gendered space that evokes real emotions.

Part 4: Insights From Japan

Drawing on her experiences in an all-women’s junior college in Japan, Simon-Maeda (chapter 9) describes a feminist course that she developed as part of the Gender and



Language Issues program offered by the English department. In this course, which meets once a week for 15 weeks, Simon-Maeda introduces topics that examine gender inequality from a linguistic perspective, including sexual harassment in the school and workplace, domestic violence, sexism in textbooks and the media, and sexuality. In addition to the lecture format, students complete worksheets and engage in journal writing. Simon-Maeda argues that when learners are given the opportunity to negotiate the meaning of gender and language issues that affect their lives, they can begin to imagine different life trajectories. She uses feminist pedagogical theories and practices to emphasize the importance of establishing dialogic relationships with students by drawing on student experience and carefully monitoring on-task activity. Significantly, she makes the point that she does not expect students to uncritically or passively accept the feminist notions that she espouses, arguing that Western feminists working in non-Western contexts need to be particularly vigilant and reflexive about their pedagogy. Rather, she encourages students to develop an awareness “on their own terms” (p. 137) of how women have come to be positioned in a given context and why they might hold certain views about a particular issue.

In chapter 11, Saft and Ohara describe a 4-day module on gender that they developed to encourage Japanese university students to consider the dynamic quality of gender and to think critically about the position of women in Japanese society. The module, taught by Saft, included an examination of the gendered use of language in English and Japanese, an assigned reading on the position of women in Japan, a discussion of the practice of *onna rashii hanashikata* (a womanly way of speaking in Japanese), and a questionnaire on the module as a whole. Saft and Ohara were encouraged by the module's success, finding that both male and female students engaged in discussion on the topic. They found, however, that some male students remained somewhat resistant to the idea that Japanese women experienced discrimination, whereas the women, more responsive, recognized that both men and women need to be committed to gender equality if women are to have greater options in life. Saft and Ohara conclude that discussions about gender are most successful when students have the opportunity to respond to very specific exercises that relate to their daily lives rather than discuss gender as an abstract topic.

The development of “an explicit critical feminist pedagogy” (p. 155) is the central theme of chapter 12, in which Cohen describes in detail how she incorporates feminist pedagogy in an advanced EFL undergraduate course in a private language university in Japan. This intensive, 6-hour-per-week, year-long course for sophomores offers multiple opportunities for students to investigate the relationship between language and gender. Cohen begins by inviting students to examine the evaluations she has received from the previous year's course. She asks students to summarize particular excerpts from the student evaluations and then consider why she has chosen the particular excerpt for analysis. In this way, Cohen anticipates the initial disorientation students may experience in the course, and prepares them for the challenges and rewards. Cohen describes two teaching sequences that illustrate the ways in which she seeks to engage dialogically with text. The first sequence is based on a Japanese TV news report delivered by a demure young woman and a confident older man; the second is a class exercise on neologisms. Cohen demonstrates convincingly that students can be encouraged to develop the oral, interpretive, and word-attack skills common to many EFL classrooms while gaining a greater insight into gendered dimensions of language learning and use.

❖ COMMON THEMES IN CRITICAL FEMINIST PRAXIS IN TESOL

As suggested above, all the contributors share a desire to promote a more equitable relationship between members of different groups in ESL and EFL contexts. Our own hopes lie with critical praxis, both in and outside the classroom. Although we recognize important differences between diverse critical and feminist pedagogies (and address them in other work; see Norton & Toohey, 2004; Pavlenko, 2004), in this volume we emphasize their common aims with regard to the relationship between language, gender, and education: (a) to demystify normative discourses of gender by clarifying the mechanisms of symbolic domination, (b) to engage students with cross-cultural differences in the meanings of gender and sexuality, and (c) to raise the level of critical and *multivoiced consciousness* (Kramsch & von Hoene, 2001, p. 288). Of particular interest and importance to us are recent attempts to devise critical and feminist pedagogies in ESL (Pennycook, 1999, 2001) and EFL contexts (Casanave & Yamashiro, 1996; Fujimura-Fanselow & Vaughn, 1991; MacGregor, 1998; McMahon, 1997, 2001; Smith & Yamashiro, 1998; Yamashiro, 2000), and we sincerely hope that this volume will contribute to these explorations.

Although the discussion of common themes could proceed in a number of ways, we focus on the distinctive features of critical feminist praxis in TESOL as described by the volume contributors. The features below are those most commonly shared across the studies and are ones that stem from the poststructuralist feminist framework outlined above.

- Instead of working with a fully predetermined and decontextualized curriculum, critical educators organize the curriculum around the needs and lived experiences of particular populations, such as young Japanese women or marginalized college students (chapters 4, 10, 11, and 12). Furthermore, critical feminist praxis in TESOL does not reduce teachers and students to just men and women. Rather, it engages with full individuals, who are positioned not only in terms of gender but also in terms of age, race, class, ethnicity, national origins, immigrant status, sexuality, or (dis)ability (chapters 2 and 8).
- While making instruction relevant to students' lives, critical pedagogies also recognize *hidden identities* (Vandrick, 1997b) and illuminate gender inequalities, incorporating such topics as gay/lesbian issues (chapter 2), dominant gender ideologies (chapter 11), domestic violence (chapter 10), sexual harassment in the workplace (chapters 3 and 10), gender inequalities in access to technology (chapter 9), or sexist language used to disenfranchise women (chapters 10, 11, and 12).
- Both EFL and ESL classrooms represent unique spaces where different linguistic and cultural worlds come into contact. They offer unparalleled opportunities for teachers to engage with cross-cultural differences and the social construction of gender and sexuality (chapters 2, 3, 7, and 8) and thus help students develop linguistic and intercultural competence, or *multivoiced consciousness* (Kramsch & von Hoene, 2001). This approach respectfully acknowledges students' and teachers' own diverse backgrounds while engaging them with alternative systems of knowledge,

values, beliefs, and modes of gender performance. In turn, familiarity with alternative discourses of gender and sexuality enhances students' ability to differentiate between compliments, joking, banter, and sexual harassment, and to respond in context-appropriate ways (chapters 3 and 10).

- Transformative classroom practices, such as teacher-led discussions, personal storytelling activities, or journal writing, incorporate students' lived experiences and then locate their experiences and beliefs within larger social contexts (chapters 4, 9, and 10). Such practices engage students' imagination and allow them to develop critical consciousness (chapters 3 and 11) and to imagine alternative ways of being in the world (chapters 7 and 10). In this regard, the development of voice and the ability to *impose reception* (Bourdieu, 1982/1991) are central to critical feminist praxis.
- Teachers need to be proactive and well prepared to handle controversial topics while maintaining a positive dynamic in the classroom (chapters 2, 4, 9, and 12). Furthermore, they need to pay particular attention to learners who may be silenced by the dominant culture (chapters 6 and 8) or the local educational context (chapter 5).
- Empowerment in the classroom takes place through the process of teachers and students sharing control and negotiating relationships. Teachers' positions become decentered while students gain greater control of the classroom and the choice and management of discussion topics (chapters 4, 9, and 10). Empowerment can also take place through grassroots local initiatives outside the classroom, such as community library projects (chapter 7) or antidiscrimination camps (chapter 8).

❖ CONCLUSION

We acknowledge our debt to the scholars and educators who have been among the first to express concerns about gender inequities and social justice and address the relationship between English education and gender: Chris Casanave, David Corson, Katherine Davies, Cheiron McMahon, Alastair Pennycook, Jane Sunderland, Stephanie Vandrick, and Amy Yamashiro. We are extremely proud to continue this tradition; we see this volume as a tribute to earlier work and a precursor of studies to come.

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