

Michele Sala (ed.)

**GENDER, LANGUAGE AND
TRANSLATION.
REPRESENTATIONS AND
TRANSCODIFICATIONS**

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Michele Sala (ed.)

Gender, Language and Translation:
Representations and Transcodifications

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JANE SUNDERLAND

When We Say ‘Language and Gender’, What Do We Mean by *Gender*?

Let me start by saying what I am not going to focus on here. Of late, the term *gender* has come to mean, in the public mind, questions of being cis or trans; of the rights and wrongs of self-identification as a woman or man, girl or boy; and whether people (especially children) can or cannot, should or should not, surgically or hormonally, change what is popularly seen as their biological sex – or, as trans activists and allies say, the sex they were assigned at birth. Feelings run high: the debate is often polarized, divisive, unnuanced and abusive.

Rather, in this paper, following Simone de Beauvoir’s claim that “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (1953/1949), I am largely considering what I am calling *social* (in contrast to *linguistic*) gender, i.e. the social constructedness of individuals in terms of expected, learned and enacted femininity and masculinity, construction which takes place through, *inter alia*, the family, friendship groups, workplaces, the media, institutional practices more generally; and through spoken and written language, images, and multimodality.

First, however, we will look briefly at one aspect of the *linguistic* understanding of gender. This is not a discussion of de Saussure’s ‘langue’ and the usual distinction of languages with *natural gender* (e.g. English) and *grammatical gender* (e.g. French) (see e.g. Corbett 1991), but much more specifically certain aspects of linguistic gender in English which have been considered sexist, and non-sexist alternatives to these (largely a question of ‘parole’). Four such features (but see also Mills 2008) are:

- masculine ‘generics’ (*he, man*); **instead**, e.g. *humanity, people; he or she, s/he*, singular *they* (see below)
- lexical/semantic asymmetry (*manager/manageress, stag party/hen party*), **instead**, e.g. *manager* for everyone, Dove Party¹
- male firstness (e.g. *Mr and Mrs, he or she*); **instead**, e.g. *she or he*
- derogatory terms (more for women than for men, especially in terms of appearance and sexual activity); **instead**, don’t use, call out others’ use of these

These items are not new, or ‘woke’: they have been the focus of concerns and campaigns since the early 1970s. Such linguistic sexism is of course characteristic of many languages. And while there is much *ostensible* confusion (“No-one knows what they can say and what they’re not allowed to say any more” – though do speakers who say this really believe it?), and much generalising, ridicule and closing down of arguments (‘political correctness gone mad’, ‘virtue signalling’, ‘woke’, ‘trivial’, ‘snowflakes’), for progressives, the actual reason for non-sexist language is not to ‘protect snowflakes from having their feelings hurt’, but because, following Foucault (e.g. 1981), language (use) is *constitutive*, meaning that it constructs as well as reflects, and that sexist language use is part of a bigger picture of sexism, and of patriarchal structures.

Taking the first of the four above-mentioned features of sexist language in English, masculine ‘generics’: a particular example of alternative, non-sexist language and indeed language change, with historical as well as new, contemporary resonances, is ‘singular *they*’ (and singular *them, themselves, their, theirs*), as in, e.g. “Everyone should bring their lunch”. While this form is evidenced in earlier writings, for example “A *person* can’t help *their* birth”, spoken by Rosalind in William Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* (1848), it was actively promoted during the second wave of Women’s Movement as a gender-neutral alternative to the ‘generic’ *he* (‘A person can’t help his birth’). The ‘generic’ *he* (and other masculine ‘generics’ *his, him, himself*, and

1 Not a widely used term but one recently employed by a young relative of mine to describe her own event

generic 'man') were found to promote the 'think male' phenomenon (Martyna 1980), i.e. not understood by readers and hearers *as* generic. Interestingly, since the 1990s, use of 'singular *their*' has been shown in corpus data² to be on the increase, at least in America, frequently replacing – and displacing – generic 'his'.

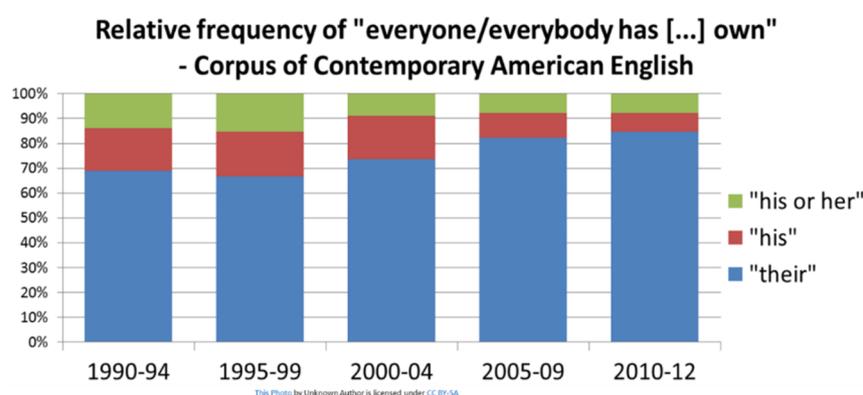


Figure 1: Increase in use of 'singular *they*'

Singular *they* has acquired a particular new relevance for those who identify as non-binary, i.e. who have "a gender or sexual identity that is not defined in terms of traditional binary oppositions such as male and female or homosexual and heterosexual" (see Zimman 2017). While some trans people and indeed some 'gender critical' people may see this as identity erasure, others also have *they* as their 'preferred pronoun', and here I would include anyone who sees gender marking (with *she* or *he*) as irrelevant or undesirable. Use of 'singular *they*' makes (and for several decades has made) the feminist point that

2 <https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/> "The corpus contains more than one billion words of text (25+ million words each year 1990-2019) from eight genres: spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, academic texts, and (with the update in March 2020): TV and Movies subtitles, blogs, and other web pages."

although biological sex is frequently not relevant, use of *he* and *she* makes it so³.



Figure 2: 'Preferred pronouns'/Pronouns in material practice

3 More basically, 'singular *they*' is also useful when no pronoun preference has been expressed or when biological sex is not known, e.g. of a taxi driver: "What time are they arriving?"

Non-sexist language is, however, importantly, not just a matter of individual words. In an article entitled 'Lost in translation: non-sexist language', Deborah Cameron points to the expression 'Women and children first', noting that the issue is neither the word *women*, nor the notion of discrimination against men, but rather the fact that "it belongs to a patriarchal discourse in which men are there to 'protect' women and children" (1998: 161). It makes sense, then, to consider sexist (and gendered) discourses articulated in language use as well as individual linguistic items (see e.g. Sunderland 2004).

In the rest of this paper I consider *social* gender, the main focus, in terms of (a) identity and ideology ('gender *as*'), and (b) behaviour and representation ('gender *in*').

Gender as *identity* means the sense humans have of themselves as women or as men (or as girls or boys). For *cis women/cis men*, i.e. most people, this identity will be related to the biological sex that they have been assigned at birth; for a minority, i.e. *transwomen/men*, and perhaps others, it will not. This sense of gender identity may change over time; further, its experienced or perceived relevance will vary with context, perhaps several times a day, and will perhaps be more strongly felt when one is in a minority socially. For example, a woman may not be conscious of being a woman in a group composed entirely of women, or a group with equal numbers of women and men. When she is the only woman in a group of men in a room, on the other hand, her experienced/perceived identity as a woman may be acute. Or it may not – until someone makes it relevant, for example by commenting on the gender imbalance in the room.

Identity can be related to associated, learned *behaviour*, including *inter alia* practices, actions, clothes, language use (*parole*) – all socially constructed, encouraged and shaped through a range of social agents including language (*langue*). These processes can, of course, also be recognized, resisted and indeed subverted. When women as a group and men as a group (or boys and girls as two groups) *do* something differently, then we can say that something to do with gender is going on. But care is needed here in terms of claims. Joan Swann, in a (2002) article entitled 'Yes, but is it gender?', warns against concluding that gender is relevant simply because, say, a speaker or even group of speakers are all women. Even large scale, quantitative

studies which rely on tests of statistical significance and which apparently show significant differences between groups of male and groups of females (e.g. 'variationist' studies) may not be valid if the two groups are not comparable in every other respect (Swann (p. 51) points to differences in employment, for example). Further, such 'differences' cannot be fully generalisable, given the importance of context and all that this entails. Swann similarly cautions about overuse of analysts' own intuitions or theoretical positions to make claims that gender is relevant in a given situation or context.

To see gender in behaviour in the past was usually to focus on *who* and often on *difference*. A range of studies in the 1970s and 1980s looked quantitatively at *talk*, the aim being to identify and reveal different forms of linguistic oppression of women by men. Coinciding with the second wave of the Western Women's Movement (see Cameron 1992), this included looking at gender variation in, for example, tag questions, overlapping speech and verbosity, initially in private and/or experimental contexts. While the finding concerning verbosity was invariably that men almost always talked more than women, no clear conclusions were reached with other linguistic features. Later work looked at public spaces and institutions, for example classrooms and parliament. The danger – and a trap which even feminist linguists for a while fell into – was that to see gender as difference was, ironically, in many ways reinforcing a 'Mars and Venus' understanding of women and men (e.g. Gray (1) 1992), i.e. that we are almost two different species, incapable of understanding each other (see also below in relation to gender representation in *Harry Potter*). Obsessing about and even trying to find 'gender differences' simply reinforces a gender binary that can be seen as sexist in itself.

One way out of this is threefold: to seek, acknowledge and, arguably, celebrate gender *similarities*; to refer to gender (or 'gender-differential') *tendencies* (if and when these exist) rather than absolute differences, tendencies which are likely very closely related to context; and to acknowledge huge variation/tendencies *among* women, *among* men, *among* boys, *among* girls – variation which is likely to be greater than cross-gender variation. It is also hugely important to acknowledge *performance* (Goffman, e.g. 1959): we don't just 'behave', we often act with awareness, if not intentionally – in particular contexts, in particular

ways, in relation to particular goals and topics (see also Butler 1990, 1999, on *performativity*). Because of their sense of gender identity, for example, a woman or man may (choose to) behave in a traditionally 'feminine' or 'masculine' way – related, of course, to context - for example, when women feel they have to behave in a 'ladylike' way, or when a teenage boy does what he does because he feels he has to act 'like a man'. In contrast, someone may wish to draw attention to their gender for progressive rather than traditional reasons.

As an illustration of just such a gender tendency, Federica Formato (2019) shows how on one occasion in the Italian parliament, when the subject of debate was violence against women, both women and men used the first personal plural form *noi* (and its equivalents) to construct 'discursive group' membership. The women politicians however constructed themselves as members of parliamentary *and* gender groups more so than did the male MPs, and thus made themselves visible (in particular in relation to this topic), by linguistically *marking* their visibility as woman through the construction of these two discursive groups 'women' and 'female MPs'. For example:

Sono queste discriminazioni, ormai sedimentate, che producono, in gran parte, i problemi con i quali ancora oggi **noi donne** siamo costrette a confrontarci.

It is this discrimination, established by now, that mainly produces the problems which **we women** are still forced to face.

This example nicely points to how meaning – gendered or otherwise - is what Cameron (1992) has described as "radically contextual", and that here there are gender similarities *and* variation, but also further confirms that spoken language does not come out of people's mouths 'just like that'; rather, at some level, it is planned, involving degrees of consciousness or even intentionality.

As a second, rather different example of a gender tendency, this time in spoken discourse more widely, let us look at this extract of classroom talk, from a mixed-sex German as a foreign language classroom in a UK secondary school. The children are in their first year, 11 and 12 years old. The teacher, who is careful to give equal attention to girls and to boys, is alternating between single-sex pairs, getting the

students to perform dialogues they have just written. The following extract of naturally-occurring data shows what ensues⁴:

Teacher: two more boys I think boys shh what about Simon and Neil no why not
 Lucy: we're boys
 Diana: we're boys
 Marie: we're boys miss
 Teacher: all right we'll have two more girls and then we'll see if the boys have got any courage

While this may seem highly idiosyncratic, the point is that no-one laughed, and the lesson continued. Later, Lucy and Diana were interviewed about this episode:

J: what are you saying she wants to get Simon and Neil and Simon and Neil don't want to do anything
 Lucy/Diana: we want we wanted to do it
 J: so what were you saying [*Plays tape again*]
 Lucy: yeah cos she was saying it was just boys and we were
 Diana: we were wanting to do it
 J: so why did you say 'we're boys'
 Lucy: well we were wanting to do that ... I just said it cos I wanted a go at the thing

Clearly, for Lucy and Diana, 'being' a boy was no big deal – a case of 'male as norm'? - and saying they wanted to be one could be used instrumentally. Two boys from the class (not Simon and Neil) were then interviewed:

J: [*plays tape*]: so they're saying 'we're boys' why why
 Oliver: I think they want to have a go
 Harry: I think they want to have a go
 J: now if it was the other way round if Dr M.... had said 'two more girls' and if you wanted to have a go might you say 'we're girls'
 H/O: no [*both laugh*]
 J: no

4 These utterances are transcribed here without interpretive punctuation.

- H/O: no way
J: why why not
Harry: I don't think boys like to (xxx) soft or stuff like that so that they wouldn't say that they're girls but girls aren't really bothered boys they have a limit what they can do and if they pass that limit they won't say anything
J: so what would have happened if you'd said 'we're girls' or if some boys had said 'we're girls'
Oliver: the response would have been that everybody laughed their heads off
J: so it wouldn't have worked right
Oliver: it was like sort of normal for a girl to sort of like shout out and stuff but like for a boy it's just not normal to say that you're a girl
(Sunderland 1995)

Of course, this 'telling case' (Mitchell 1984) cannot be generalized from. Not only is this about a very few members of the class, it is also highly context-specific, and may be also age-related – the children are in their first year at secondary school, the girls perhaps showing a confidence that would be expected from not yet being particularly concerned about what their male peers think of them. Nevertheless, the difference between the girls and the boys here is striking: these girls are happy to 'play' freely with different gendered identities, these boys, not at all.

The second two extracts are elicited rather than naturally-occurring data. Notably, however, the third clearly illustrates how these boys – and perhaps others - are constructing masculinity as 'not femininity', pointing implicitly to a rigid boundary round masculinity. There are limits and restrictions, masculinity thus entailing disadvantages as well as advantages. Here, the interesting thing is not only variation in the *who* of talk (speaker gender), but also *what is said* (about gender), i.e. gendered discourse (see Sunderland 2004).

So far we have looked at gender in (linguistic) behaviour in terms of variation or differential tendencies in the behaviour of women and men, girls and boys, itself. Gendered behaviour can however also be seen rather differently in the differential treatment *of* women and men, and *of* girls and boys, whether this is a matter of policy (the Taliban in

Afghanistan providing an extreme and highly binary example), or unintended practice. An old but telling example of the latter is Alison Kelly's (1988) meta-analysis of 81 studies of differential teacher treatment by gender in the classroom. Her finding was that:

It is now beyond dispute that girls receive less of the teacher's attention in class [...]. It applies in all age groups [...] in several countries, in various socio-economic groupings, across all subjects in the curriculum, and with both male and female teachers [...].

This meta-analysis allows us to claim that, here, gender *is* relevant (rather than, say, age). The last part of the quote provides a useful reminder that women teachers will not necessarily pay more attention to female students than will men. Kelly continues:

Boys get more of all kinds of classroom interaction. The discrepancy is most marked for behavioural criticism, but [...] boys also get more instructional contacts, more high level questions, more academic criticism and slightly more praise than girls [...]. (Kelly 1988).

'Behavioural criticism' means that boys are told off more – something which is unlikely to facilitate their learning, and may well hinder it. However, getting "more instructional contacts, more high level questions, more academic criticism and [getting] slightly more praise than girls" *are* likely to facilitate boys' learning. I propose that all 'differential treatment by gender', whether a matter of policy or, as here, unintentional practice, needs interrogating – why does it happen? This is particularly important in light of Dale Spender's (1982) work on gender and classroom interaction in which she found that even teachers who were aware of the tendency to give boys more attention and resisted it, did so themselves.

Part of the reason is that teachers were often *responding* to boys (either academically or behaviourally); equally importantly, this sort of behaviour is often because of the behaviour of a small *sub-set* of boys (see e.g. Sunderland 2000a). But this is not the whole story. Because we can pretty much dismiss biological and indeed social determinism,

i.e. that women just *are* this way, men that way, we need to explore how such tendencies come about through social construction. Social construction is a societal choice and, from a feminist perspective, is usually gratuitous and arguably harmful in that associating anything with boys rather than girls, women rather than men, restricts everyone's choices and opportunities.

First, in terms of behaviour, while it would be foolish to see the behaviour of (say) these young learners of German, or these Italian politicians, or the children in the classrooms investigated by Kelly and Spender, as autonomous, everyone always has a measure of agency, and accordingly, as we have seen, there is a sense in which people both actively perform gender (their own) as well as construct gender (their own and others; see Sunderland 2004) in talk and in their wider behaviour. But there also exists a whole set of ideological gendered structures and practices over- and underlying all these behaviours.

We can see gender itself ideologically, as *a systemic set of socially-shaped ideas* about desirable femininity and masculinity, ideas which are manifested in, *inter alia*, behaviour. Some of these ideas, which are often prescriptive and indeed restrictive, are clearly related to human biology – for example, that men tend to be better suited than women to heavy manual labour. But what about our classroom data? Small neurological differences may point to gender differential tendencies in first and subsequent language learning, but not to girls being willing to 'be' boys and not the reverse. Something else is going on. As Penny Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet persuasively argue: "Gender builds on biological sex, but it exaggerates biological difference, and it carries biological difference into domains in which it is completely irrelevant" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013: 2).

As an example, a certain sticky tape manufacturer at one time produced tape on the dispenser of which was written 'Just for girls'. The packaging and holder were, of course, Barbie pink. I have been forbidden by the company from reproducing the marketing image or even mentioning the company name, but the point is clear. This is to see gender in (rather than as) *representation*, with such representations, along with gendered behaviour, indexing the notion of gender as a set of socially-shaped ideas. Representation, of someone or something, is not just a reflection of a pre-existing reality, but also constructs, e.g. the

phrase *ladies and gentlemen* linguistically constructs two binary groups. The tape constructs girls as associated with pink – and, more seriously, as girls and boys as different. Construction may go beyond the linguistic to shaping ways of thinking in viewers, readers and listeners, and it may also construct behaviour (for example, a boy – or his parents - may reject out of hand any tape marketed as ‘Just for girls’). This set of socially-shaped ideas which finds realization in both gendered behaviour and gendered representations is not arbitrary but rather, arguably, operates to the benefit of some (most crudely, the patriarchy), to the detriment of (most) women and girls, but ultimately, to the detriment of all.

The representation of gendered practices, identities, differences and relations occurs in a wide range of arenas. One is everyday, naturally-occurring talk. For example, consider the constructions in the representation of the wife in these two (invented but possible) naturally-occurring responses of man B to the question asked by man A:

- A: What does your wife do?
 B1: She’s not working right now. We’ve got a toddler and a new baby.
 B2: She’s not working outside the home right now. We’ve got a
 toddler and a new baby. Next year we swap. Maria’s keen to get
 back to work.

B1 is representing his wife as a mother, and is also representing childcare as women’s work (the underlying premise of his response). B2, in contrast, is representing childcare as work (inside the home); his wife as an employee, with a job she is keen to return to; and childcare as something that can be shared between female and male parents.

Gender representation is also found in most scripted-to-be-spoken, written, visual, multimodal, TV, film and digital texts. Representation here is often to a large extent a matter of choice – from available and less available pools of choices. But in the above text types it is never random, given the planning needed. For example, the writer of a report about women’s football may choose to report on the players’ appearance or may choose not to do so. They may choose an accompanying image which focuses on the women’s skill, their lack of it – or indeed their appearance.

In particular, the idea of 'gender differences' can, as indicated above, construct women and men, boys and girls as very different beings. As an example, let us have a look at some lines from fiction: J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003), Book 5 in the series:

Hermione: "Quidditch! Is that all boys care about?"

Girls were very strange sometimes. (Harry's represented thought)

"She's [Tonks] gone a bit funny. Lost her nerve. Women," [Ron] said wisely to Harry. "They're easily upset."

In these examples, *boys*, *girls* and *women* are not mitigated (e.g. with *some*), representing gender as a binary. The idea of 'gender differences' as thus represented can construct women and men, boys and girls, almost as different species. By extension, in such a discourse, they have the potential not to understand each other, and this is evidenced in 'linguistic traces' of what I call the 'Mutual incomprehension of women and men' discourse (Sunderland 2004). Also in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Cho Chang and Harry, who are somewhat romantically involved, have met up on Valentine's Day. Harry asks Cho: "D'you want to come with me to the Three Broomsticks at lunchtime? I'm meeting Hermione Granger there." At which "Cho raised her eyebrows" and gets upset, which Harry doesn't understand. Later, Hermione tries to explain her behaviour to Harry and Ron:

"Look, you upset Cho when you said you were going to meet me, so she tried to make you jealous"

"Is that what she was doing?" said Harry....

"I'm not saying what she did was sensible," said Hermione. "I'm just trying to make you see how she was feeling at the time."

"You should write a book," Ron told Hermione as he cut up his potatoes, "translating mad things girls do so boys can understand them."

"Yeah," said Harry fervently. (p. 505)

(see Sunderland *et al.* 2016; see also Dempster *et al.*, 2014, 2015)

As a further example, a second set of potentially constitutive gender representations comes from foreign language textbooks. Through a large amount of research over the last five decades, these have been found to include more many male than female characters (visibility), with male characters carrying out a wider range of occupational roles than female characters (stereotyping) (see e.g. Mills and Mustapha 2015; Sunderland 2015). This is true of both images and written text. However, with a growing recognition (a) that gender is inseparable from sexuality (see Baker 2008) – not least because, given heteronormativity, women are in most contexts expected to be attracted to men, men to women, and (b) of the intersectionality of oppressions (Crenshaw 1989), e.g. the interaction of sexism and homophobia, analysis of gender representation in language textbooks has extended to sexuality.

This of course is not straightforward. While a broadly 50-50 balance might be expected for the representation of women and men, boys and girls, this cannot be applied to gay and straight characters, given their lesser distribution across populations, because the distinction is even less binary than women/men, and because, unlike sex/gender, sexuality is not evident from, say, an image of someone playing football.

What is evident is that language textbooks are *extremely*, if not gratuitously, heteronormative. As an old example, *Project English* (1985) includes an image of a rather young boy at the door of a house and asking, in a speech bubble, “Where’s Jane?”, but in a thought bubble sitting opposite Jane, saying “I love you Jane”. *Project English* also includes many overtly heterosexual two-parent families, along with traditional images, e.g. mum, dad and children eating dinner. Notably, there are more cases of *Mrs* than *Miss* and multiple cases of *Mr and Mrs*. *Mr and Mrs* is used even in a fantasy situation: ‘Mr and Mrs Fletcher’ book a holiday in space and send a postcard to ‘Mr and Mrs Kay’. Certainly there is no representation – and no suggestion - of anything other than heterosexuality. Old books are used way beyond their date of first publication, and change is slow. Fourteen years later, Scott Thornbury made the point that “[g]ayness is about as omitted

[from foreign language textbooks] as anything can be" (Thornbury 1999: 15; see also Nelson 2009, 2007, 1999).

Things have moved on in terms of a lessening of heteronormativity, but not much (see Gray (2) 2013a, 2013b; Paiz 2020). More recently (2015), a study of gender and sexuality representation in six Polish EFL textbook series - *New English Zone*, *Voices*, *English Explorer*, *Exam Explorer*, *New Matura Solutions* and *Evolution*, predictably also found many examples of heteronormativity, such as:

"we're on holiday on a barge in England! I'm with mum and dad and my sister. The barge is very small but it's fun! ..." (*Evolution 2*)

a listening exercise containing "I wouldn't know how to cheer up my friend if she broke up with her boyfriend." (*Exam Explorer*)

(Pawelczyk / Pakula 2015; see also Pawelczyk *et al.* 2014; Pakula *et al.* 2015)

Two key findings were that "All of the books were characterised by the omnipresence of a heteronormative lexicon regarding kinship terms, for example *husband*, *wife*, *girlfriend*, *boyfriend* – all in heterosexual partnerships" and that "None of the textbooks [...] featured any gay characters" (Pakula *et al.* 2015: 54).

Why? The reason has been identified and characterised as the 'PARSNIPS' principle, i.e. the avoidance in EFL textbooks of Politics, Alcohol, Religion, Sex, Narcotics, Isms and Pork. Including gay characters would imply *sex* and would point to *heterosexism*. Kathryn Aldridge-Morris (2016) writes that PARSNIPS is "a shorthand for things writers are told to avoid in their materials [...]. It's essentially self-censorship, but if you want your book to sell, you'll probably need to adhere to it" (2016: 66).

Of course, the representation of heterosexuality can be relatively covert, to the point of ambiguity. However, to return to the study of Polish EFL textbooks, it was found not only that "None of the textbooks [even] featured [...] *characters that could be characterised by an overtly ambiguous identity with respect to their sexuality*" (Pakula *et al.* 2015: 54, my emphasis). What happens when we test this? *Exam Explorer* (Tkacz *et al.*, 2012) includes the following opinions (in an

exercise involving gap filling with appropriate vocabulary, but also available for discussion):

I don't mind and hugging passionately in public.

I wouldn't know how to cheer up my friend if she her boyfriend.

I think young people too early - it distracts them from school.

My parents don't approve of the person who's their teenage child.

All four examples are ambiguous as regards sexuality, and accordingly non-heteronormative readings of all are possible. That is, until we consider the associated image from *Exam Explorer* (below), and *multimodality* (the interaction of written text and image).

5 CD1/15 Posłuchaj nagrania i wpisz brakujące słowa.
Z którymi zdaniem się zgadzasz?



- 1 I don't mind _____ and **hugging** passionately in public.
- 2 I wouldn't know how to **cheer up** my friend if she _____ her boyfriend.
- 3 I think young people _____ too early – it distracts them from school.
- 4 I _____ but I can't **confide in** them.
- 5 Most parents don't **approve of** the person who's _____ their teenage child.
- 6 It's very easy to _____ when you're a teenager.

Figure 3. Multimodal disambiguation of sexuality ambiguity (*Exam Explorer*, p. 15)

The image removes that ambiguity (in particular, I propose, of examples 2 and 3), assigning the text a clear heterosexual meaning: "The possibility of a non-heteronormative reading has been 'multimodally disambiguated'" (Pakula *et al.* 2015).

But while this is true in principle, and likely to be so in practice for the text analyst, is it true of the real-life user(s)? It is necessary to consider how a given text is 'consumed' (Fairclough 1993), in the individual sense and more widely. Students are not passive 'receivers' of textbook texts, and some language learner 'consumers' of such representations are analytical, with a critical awareness, multimodally literate, resistant to surface readings and/or very aware in particular of representations of gender and sexuality. Others, however will more unquestioningly accept what they see and hear, and may well 'recycle' it uncritically in their subsequent interactions. So although representations of gender potentially construct gender, they do not do so in a straightforward or predictable way. 'Treatment', for want of a better word, is also an aspect of text consumption, in particular 'teacher treatment of textbook texts'. As regards gender representation in foreign language textbooks, it cannot be assumed that the teacher will uncritically recycle cases of gender bias – rather, they may comment on it and encourage the students to recognize and critique it. Of course, a teacher and their students can by the same token undermine a progressive text (see Sunderland 2000a, Thornbury 2013). Going beyond the text itself, there is also the matter of text production (who is a given text aimed at, how is it 'distributed' and to whom, and, in particular, how is it marketed? (Fairclough 1993)).

Conclusion

In the above I have shown how gender can be manifested (performed, constructed) *in* behaviour and *in* representation. These are of course related, in that gendered representation will bear some relation to gendered behaviour (the 'text producer' of the representation reflecting

what gender 'is', and by extrapolation and interpretation 'should be' or 'should not be'), and gendered thinking and behaviour may be shaped by gendered representations – although unpredictably so. Both representation and behaviour are however always in a state of flux: social and individual practices and behaviours change, and representations are removed, reformed, revised and replaced, though rarely radically.

Crucially, gender is in part identity, a sense of who one is: girl, boy, woman, man, cis or trans, gay or straight, or non-binary as regards gender and/or sexuality. This list is not comprehensive, and the complicated relationship between gender identity and biological sex is not one I am able to discuss here. Manifested, shaped by and in turn influencing gender in behaviour and in representation, this sense of gender identity is also in flux, as shown in Figure 4 (below), a 2-D 'working model' of gender which is open to further development. Gender identity is likely to change over time (each day, month, year, decade), and not necessarily in a linear way, with one's experience of gender varying in detail and intensity, depending on context. It also interacts with other aspects of one's identity, including ethnicity and social class, sometimes intersectionally if the experience is of, say, the oppressions of sexism and racism (Crenshaw 1989).

It would be a mistake to see gender as primarily individual. Sets of ideas surrounding biologically-sexed humans (or humans who have been assigned a particular sex at birth), i.e. about gender, are global, diverse, often intensely felt and often prescriptive. Being ideological, they are also systemic and institutionalised in terms of practices. In particular, gender as ideology is often based on essentialist thinking, with patriarchal practices operating against the interests of women and girls, but arguably men and boys too, through the creation of boundaries and restricting of opportunities. The relationship between gender identity and gender as ideology is organic and mutually-influencing: global understandings of gender, gender relations and accordingly demands for women's and human rights (e.g. recognition, protection) are always changing, influenced by individuals' own gender identities and their membership of social groups with comparable identities.

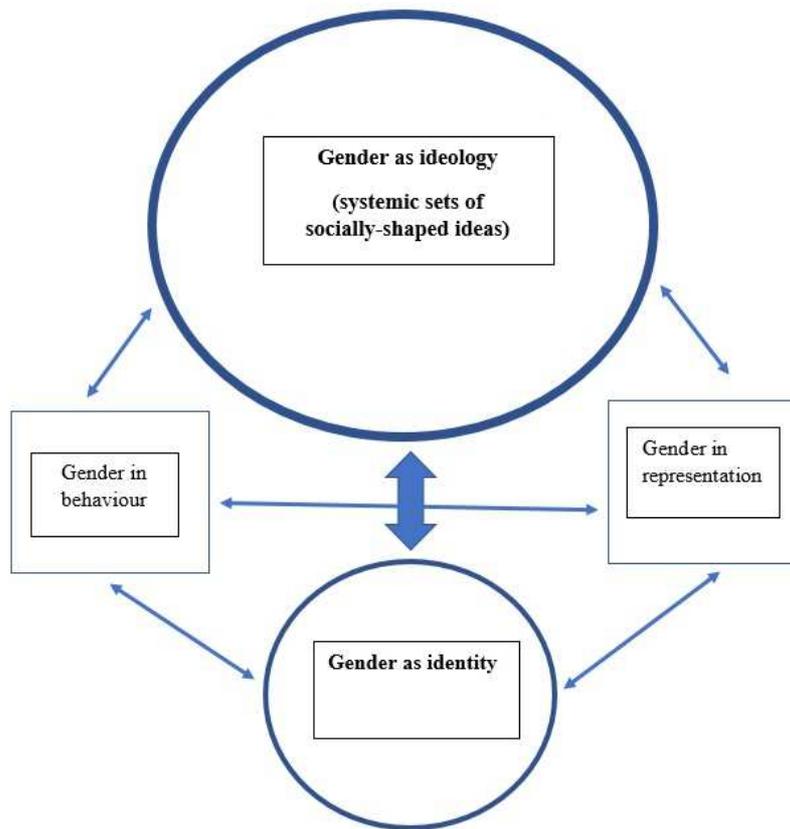


Figure 4. A working model of gender-in-flux

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