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(eds.)

Queer Beats –
Gender and Literature
in the EFL Classroom



in Australian history. Following the life of Glenyse Ward as an Aboriginal domestic in a private white household, the author elucidates how Aborigine life narratives offer many points of departure for discussing the traumatising experiences of the Stolen Generations especially from a gender perspective.

The ensuing contribution by **Franziska Pukowski** “Ghostly Parenting: Teaching Family Structures and Gender Roles with Neil Gaiman’s *The Graveyard Book* and *Coraline*” discusses the role of graphic adaptations of children’s and young adult literature, focusing on representations of traditional and modern family relationships and the gender roles they entail. The interplay between text and images is also the departure point for the following article by **Claudia Deetjen**. In her contribution “Teaching Gender Reflection through Marjane Satrapi’s Graphic Novel *Persepolis*”, the author explores the potential of graphic novels to foster gender awareness in the context of inter- and transcultural learning, putting particular emphasis on the visual-verbal character of graphic narratives and the opportunities they open for changes of perspective when dealing with the transcultural complexities of gender identities formed in experiences of flight and exile. In the following contribution “Creating Queer Text Ensembles for the EFL Literature Classroom: Conceptual Considerations and Practice-Oriented Perspectives” by **Thorsten Merse**, the potential of ‘queer text ensembles’ is explored. Using a variety of examples from different media and genres, the author argues that ‘queer text ensembles’ can encourage learners to critically scrutinise existing norms of gender dichotomy and heteronormativity. The article elaborates on the rationale behind ‘queering’ English language teaching and links this with questions revolving around the queer-informed selection and potential of multi-perspectival queer text ensembles. In the next article, “New Wine in Old Bottles: Gay-Themed Narratives within a Competence-Oriented Framework for Teaching English in German Secondary Schools”, **Sebastian Stuhlmann** also looks at the role of gay narratives in the classroom. By analysing Nina LaCour’s and David Levithan’s young adult novel *You Know Me Well* (2016), he argues that ‘gay texts’ have a great educational significance, especially with regard to developing students’ literary competence. The LGBTQ community is also in the focus in the ensuing article “‘Look at that baby with those cream-puffs.’ – Exploring LGBTQ Life Through American TV Series in the EFL Classroom” by **Nadja Heß** and **Christian Ludwig**, who present the results of a small-scale study which investigated the representation of LGBTQ characters in American TV shows from the 1990s to the 2000s. Taking the results of the study as a starting point, they explore the potential of TV shows for dealing with LGBTQ life in the classroom. Selected scenes from the well-known sitcom *Modern Family* serve as examples of how to discuss issues such as gender and sexuality, especially in connection to the queer

rights movement as well as the media representations of the LGBTQ community. A famous TV series also stands in the focus of **Katrin Thomson’s** article “‘There’s a war coming and war means change’: WWI and Its Effects on Gender Roles in the British Period Drama *Downton Abbey*”. The contribution looks at gender in the socio-historic context of Great Britain’s pre- and post-war years of WWI, focusing on illustrating the potential of screen narratives for developing gender competence.

In the penultimate contribution “Deconstructing Gender Stereotypes in EFL Classrooms Through Contemporary Movies”, **Viviane Lohe** and **Britta Viebrock** propose to promote learners’ gender awareness through a critical analysis of films that deal with gender topics such as Stephen Daldry’s *Billy Elliot* and Chris and Paul Weitz’ *About a Boy*, particularly encouraging learners to reflect on their own identities but also to question the assumptions that we and others make.

Last but not least, the final contribution “Judith Butler’s Critique of Binary Gender Opposition in *Gender Trouble*: A Task-based Lesson Sequence” by **Sasha S. Euler** proposes to read one of the ‘gender classics’ in the EFL classroom. The contribution provides practical suggestions for approaching Butler’s *Gender Trouble* in class in order to build students’ gender awareness and acceptance. The author shows how such a text can be used to both deconstruct the gender-sex continuum and provide insights into today’s gender issues.

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Sasha S. Euler

Judith Butler's Critique of Binary Gender Opposition in *Gender Trouble*: A Task-Based Lesson Sequence

Abstract: This chapter presents a task-based lesson sequence based on Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*. *Gender Trouble* is a great piece of philosophical literature. However, as philosophical literature is a genre rarely found in EFL teaching, this chapter first demonstrates in detail the merits of this genre for the teaching of English for Academic Purposes. After a brief analysis of the source text, which deconstructs the entire sex-gender link and presents both sex and gender as free-floating, this chapter presents task-based methodology and how it is utilized in a lesson aimed at building gender awareness and acceptance. In the target task students are asked to take the role of an ethics teacher at an Irish high school in which the discussion arose whether the school should introduce unisex toilets and changing rooms in order to not discriminate against transsexual students. The study of Butler's philosophy will provide students with both the knowledge and language to accomplish this task. Open follow-up discussions often lead to powerful ethical insights in the context of gender, homo- and transsexuality.

Keywords: gender, Judith Butler, deconstructivist feminism, task-based teaching

1 Introduction

Many transgender issues are based on the assumption that all gendered behavior is inherently based on sexist norms. The feminist philosopher Judith Butler, however, provides a theoretical basis on which biological male/female sex can be seen as independent of culture. In this way, her work is highly congenial to transgender theory and politics (cf. Bettcher 2014). The lesson sequence presented in this chapter aims at helping students realize how gender identity is, to a large extent, socially constructed, how the terms sex and gender imply a binary opposition, and how this opposition can be deconstructed in a philosophical manner in order to achieve a higher level of understanding and acceptance of 'unusual' gendered behavior. Judith Butler, the author this lesson sequence draws on, is a proponent of deconstructivist¹ or post-feminist thinking in that she not only

1 Deconstructive feminism, as opposed to the more inclusive reconstructive feminism, draws on the methodology of postmodernism and psychoanalysis to uncover the presumed sexism and homophobia underlying Western thought (Hansen 2016).

deconstructs *gender*, but the entire sex-gender link, which made her an often-cited author also for queer issues. Philosophically, she draws on philosophy of language and discourse ethics, according to which the terms sex and gender are performative, i.e. they are given ontological value, which makes them pseudo-natural cognitive categories that are drawn on for identify formation. Applying Butler's concept, biological markers should become as irrelevant for identity formation as eye color or shoe size. This realization is very powerful, and would also alleviate the pressure on homo- or transsexuals to have the 'correct' sex-gender-match.

The lesson presented here follows a task-based design, which is characterized by features such as the use of authentic materials, inductive learning, content-based instruction, working toward a target task, as well as, in its core, the priming → preparation → target task sequence. As such, task-based teaching (TBT) organically allows for discovery learning and learner autonomy, principles which should be of primary importance with such personal and complex topics as deconstructivist feminism. The target task in this lesson is a role-play simulation: at an Irish school² the issue was raised that male/female toilets may lead to transsexuals feeling uncomfortable having to choose the toilet corresponding to their biological sex (as established in the lesson's lead-in). In the simulation, students take the role of an ethics teacher at that school who, during a staff meeting with the administration and parents, is asked to shed light on the issue from a philosopher's perspective (drawing on Butler). In this framework students learn about Butler's concept explicitly in order to be able to do the task, which is the rationale behind task-based teaching. Priming happens through an online article on gender-neutral toilets, for preparation a text by Judith Butler is studied, and in the target-task students perform the role-play. After the TBT sequence the following lesson can be opened with a thought experiment: "Imagine we lived in a country where there were no words for *sex* and *gender* and there were just *people*, what would be different?" The ensuing discussion may take various directions but typically leads to powerful realizations regarding tolerance and understanding, as some student quotes in section 5 will show. Before going into a description of Butler's philosophy and the lesson sequence outlined, however, this chapter will first offer a discussion of the merits of philosophical literature for the teaching of academic English as this genre is rarely utilized in EFL.

2 <http://www.thejournal.ie/lgbt-students-school-guidelines-ireland-2573505-Jan2016/>, retrieved 03/23/2017

2 Significance of the Text for EFL and Teaching Gender

Philosophical literature is a genre rarely seen in EFL instruction, in which either general news articles or fictional literature seem to be preferred. The primary reason for this probably is that philosophical texts are challenging to read so that teachers may fear that students are easily overcharged, which would make philosophy an unsuitable text genre in order to maintain motivation. Indeed, much philosophical literature is characterized by highly technical words, long and complex sentences, as well as content that is challenging to process even in a learner's L1. However, philosophical literature also has some great potential especially for EAP (English for academic purposes), i.e. for the *gymnasiale Oberstufe* (senior high school) in the German secondary school system as it is a goal of senior high to prepare students for university entrance. Likewise, the following analysis will zoom out a little first to establish the merit of this text genre for EFL in general, before the text used in this unit, and its significance within the field of gender studies, will be discussed more specifically.

2.1 The Use of Philosophical Literature for Teaching Academic English

Some of the primary goals of foreign language teaching are to find authentic and motivating materials, to initiate genuine communication among students (owing to the meaningfulness of the materials used), as well as to foster learner autonomy in accomplishing given tasks. Philosophical materials, I propose, are especially suited to fulfill these goals owing to the universal relevance of typical topics such as happiness, social justice, self-determination and freedom, love and friendship, identity, political justice or sexuality and gender. As I stated elsewhere (Euler 2015: 14),

[m]any topics from philosophy and psychology are immediately relevant to students' lives purely for their human interest [...]. With the right priming, input and tasks, a variety of different opinions will emerge, engendering animated discussion, which, by the way, also creates an excellent cognitive environment for the intake of language form.

As Helene Decke-Cornill (cf. 2009: 16) notes, gender excellently fulfills these criteria because it is such an omnipresent, acute and controversial topic that authentic discussion will surely ensue. According to Decke-Cornill (cf. *ibid.*), negotiation of and discussion about gender may center on questions such as how you can stay true to yourself in light of social influence, how to handle pressure to conform or adapt, how being 'different' is socially constructed in the first place, or which social problems may result from this kind of social construction.

Tab. 1: EAP and Philosophy/Ethic Skills

EAP skills	Philosophy/ethics skills
Description & definition	<i>Wahrnehmungskompetenz</i> (perception skills)
Developing an argument	<i>Argumentationskompetenz</i> (argumentation skills)
Evaluation	<i>Urteilskompetenz</i> (judgement)
Comparison & contrast	<i>Moralische Urteilsfähigkeit: "Vergleich von Handlungen und Motiven"</i> (moral judgement: comparison of actions and motives)
Fact & opinion	<i>Sprachkompetenz: "Manipulation durch Sprache";</i> <i>Orientierungskompetenz</i> (linguistic competence: manipulation through language; life orientation)
Cause & effect, classification, describing processes	<i>Argumentationskompetenz (methodisch)</i> (methodical argumentation)

Philosophical material uniquely tackles such questions owing to its strong focus on challenging preconceived notions by rigorous argumentation.

In addition, with English increasingly becoming a universal language for international academic discourse, it is important to ground instruction in "an understanding of the cognitive, social and linguistic demands" of various academic fields (Hyland/Hamp-Lyons 2002: 2). Along such lines, the American 20th century philosopher Willard van Orman Quine (Quine 1969: 126) stated in the context of his philosophy of language: "I see philosophy not as an *a priori* propaedeutic to science, but as continuous with science". In other words, philosophy can be particularly useful not only in identifying authentic and motivating topics, but also in training essential EAP skills owing to its strong focus on cognitive, social and linguistic analysis. To illustrate, Table 1 contrasts EAP skills based on de Chazal and McCarter (2012) with philosophical skills as outlined in Rösch (2012), demonstrating how it is the specific goal of philosophy to systematically train such basic academic (language) skills. As a consequence, philosophical literature can be a highly valuable medium for English language instruction, as the text and unit discussed in this chapter will illustrate.

2.2 The Significance of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*

Judith Butler is a philosopher in the tradition of deconstructive feminism³. As such, Butler not only emphasizes the relativity of the gender concept as has been

the norm in feminist thinking, but she deconstructs the entire sex-gender-link, as both can be seen as mere constructs (cf. Butler 1990). In order to achieve this, Butler draws on the methodology of discourse ethics and philosophy of language, especially in the tradition of John Austin. According to the latter's terminology, the terms sex and gender are performative in nature. Performative linguistic acts give ontological value to an object (they create its being) by using a given term in a specific way and thus establishing it as a cognitive category to think in. This is highly significant because owing to society's use of the terms sex and gender in a certain way, i.e. as possessing certain semantic attributes, these categories are established as normal and thereby as normatively binding. Consequently, without linguistic-philosophical reflection, these linguistic categories are psychologically taken as natural categories and are socially accepted and enforced as such. In other words, using the terms sex and gender in a given way performatively validates their attributes, which are then taken for personal identity formation. In Butler's work this line of thinking is the foundation of socio-political criticism as the constructed sex/gender concept is seen to performatively establish power relations.

At the beginning of *Gender Trouble*, as the text of the lesson (Appendix 3) presented in this chapter shows, Butler demonstrates that there is no need to assume a causal relation between gender as identity and sex as a set of biological markers. This is based on Simone de Beauvoir's hypothesis that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (1949: 267), but expands on it in that also *sex* is thought to be created through discourse and thus used to justify power and dominance. Interpreting this philosophy it becomes clear that overt biological markers which distinguish the sexes on a basic level become as insignificant and random for identity formation as, as has been suggested, eye color or the size of one's feet. Clearly, one would not treat human beings differently, and justify relations of power and dominance, or even basic social roles, according to the size of people's feet. So why should primary or secondary sex characteristics serve such ends? Accordingly, the term *sex* simply condenses a set of biological features into a linguistic and thus cognitive category, which can then be (ab)used by society. If this is then connected to *gender* identity, a powerful sense of 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' is created, to the dismay of homo- and transsexuals, among others. In Butler's (1990: 6) own words, as found in the text of the lesson: "Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of 'men' will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that 'women' will interpret only female bodies". As a result, it would, for example, be perfectly legitimate for a biological man to feel like a woman in his gender identity – a circumstance that is currently pathologically labeled as

3 The meta information in this section is predominantly based on Bublit (2010).

“gender identity disorder”⁴ (the psychologically depressing feeling of being in the wrong body; cf. e.g. Zucker/Bradley 1995). Interestingly, the whole concept of transsexuality may be seen to exist only because currently there is one ‘correct’ gender identity for a given set of physical attributes like the presence of inner or outer reproductive organs.

Such linguistic-philosophical analysis demonstrates how philosophical literature can be highly conducive for training academic language skills by means of thorough analysis of terminology, unexamined assumptions and social conventions. Section 5 of this chapter will show how this can be achieved explicitly in EFL teaching.

3 Methodological Potential in the Context of Gender Awareness

The methodological aim of this lesson is that students perform a role-play simulation (see Appendix 1) in which they draw on information from an excerpt of Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble*. As such, students specifically train their reading and speaking skills, as well as academic skills such as extracting information from a text, defining terms, developing an argument, evaluating complex ideas and discussing opinions, which are also key in the analysis of any serious philosophical literature. In order to achieve this, the methodology of task-based teaching is used (cf. Willis 1996; Nunan 2004; Müller-Hartmann/Schocker-v. Ditfurth 2006; Willis/Willis 2007; Nunan 2014). As English language instruction in the *gymnasiale Oberstufe* (senior high school) is essentially English for Academic Purposes (EAP)⁵, and as EAP is highly compatible with TBT (see below), this

4 In abnormal psychology, this condition is classified as a gender development problem in which the psychological perception of self as masculine or feminine is incongruent with one’s phenotype. GID originally replaced the term transsexualism in DSM-IV in 1994, which was again renamed gender dysphoria in DSM-V in 2013. In the ICD-10, section F64 is devoted to Gender Identity Disorders, with the “sense of inappropriateness of one’s anatomic sex and a wish to have surgery and hormonal treatment” being listed as F64.0: Transsexualism.

5 In the *gymnasiale Oberstufe*, examinations have to be comprised of three levels of task complexity (*Anforderungsbereiche*), going from reproduction to transfer to problem solving. There are certain task verbs (*Operatoren*) that help in designing respective tasks (summarize, describe, outline; analyze, contrast, explain; discuss, comment, evaluate). In order to achieve this, academic language skills, as shown in the above chart, are necessary. Likewise, in the first year of the *Oberstufe* students typically receive “method training” and they have an entire “seminar subject” that prepares them for university

lesson also draws on findings from the field of English for Academic Purposes research (cf. Hyland/Hamp-Lyons 2002). Specifically, EAP research has established a set of psychologically valid principles, or “global practices” (Watson Todd 2003) to maximize learning and motivation. This set encompasses a

- focus on **inductive learning** (vs. teacher-centered deductive approaches),
- using a process syllabus involving **task-based** and project-based learning,
- promoting **learner autonomy** (including **negotiated syllabuses** and peer feedback),
- using **authentic materials and tasks**, as well as
- using team teaching or **content-based teaching**.

Similar priorities to the above EAP chart and the global practices list have also been developed in the methodology for teaching literature. Likewise, König, Surkamp and Decke-Cornill (cf. 2015: 5) list discourse skills, language awareness, taking different perspectives and content-based teaching as essential components of lessons on gender. As will be shown in section five, taking different perspectives, supported by increased language awareness and discourse skills owing to Butler’s rigorous philosophical argumentation, can be a rather illuminating experience for many students.

The task-based design of the present lesson sequence allows to specifically draw on the principles printed in bold above, as well as the five guiding principles of teaching gender from König et al. As this lesson was originally part of a micro module on (trans)sexuality and gender, students had shown an interest in this topic and thus were looking forward to learning more about it (negotiated syllabus)⁶. By using an excerpt from a book by an eminent author in the field of gender studies, the text comprises authentic material, as does the online news article used in the introduction. In addition, the task “make a statement” (see Appendix 2) at a staff meeting comprises an authentic task as it could occur in the real world. Now instead of conducting a teacher-initiated detailed discussion of the text, in task-based teaching students work toward accomplishing a target task. In this case, students get the assignment to prepare for making an informed statement at a staff meeting (students are aged 16–18 and can easily identify with a teacher; the role is also necessary so that expert knowledge of philosophical ethics is expected). This procedure is significantly more inductive than a typical

and helps them develop respective academic skills. EAP tries to accomplish all this specifically from an EFL/ESL perspective.

6 Though I have also taught this lesson several times in year 11 (*Einführungsphase*) in the general context of values and tolerance.

text comprehension lesson in that students get the chance to discover and extract information (both content and language) specifically as it is important for the task at hand⁷.

In other words, in task-based methodology a given lesson or lesson sequence centers around a pedagogical task, a procedure which bears similarities with project methodology (cf. Bygate et al. 2001). What is important is that, instead of studying content simply because it is part of the school curriculum (somewhat mediated through a motivating lead-in), in TBT studying certain materials immediately serves to provide students with resources to complete a target task. Still, depending on the complexity of the materials, the teacher may provide guiding questions or mini tasks for scaffolding purposes in order to make authentic materials more accessible for students (as has been done here as well – cf. Appendix 3). The entire reading comprehension and speaking sequence, thus, immediately serves task completion.

In Jane and Dave Willis's TBT model, language analysis follows the priming → preparation → target task sequence. Language analysis, if necessary at all, comes after meaningful engagement in an activity during which a need for form should have arisen, and was perhaps naturally addressed by the students themselves as they were mining input. The post-task focus on form session can then address language encountered during the task cycle. However, another view is that post-task language work 'wastes' potential for language acquisition, which could be maximized if students already knew which forms (grammar, words or phrases) can be used, based on the assumption that not everything needed can or will be mined from the input⁸. David Nunan (Nunan 2004: 31–33), for example, inserts a focus on language phase after students studied the input, followed by freer practice and concluded with the target task as such. This is meant to maximize language acquisition and accuracy. In addition, students may feel safer working with 'teacher-approved' facts and language, instead of working fully autonomously. The present lesson suggests the latter approach to some extent in that students get the chance to present their understanding of the text and to do some specific focus on language tasks before going on to perform the simulation.

7 Though with less time at hand and motivated classes the lesson is also very effective without the role play, i.e. 'simply' discussing the content in small groups and in plenum. As an intermediate form, the teacher statement could also be simulated more informally ("what would you say?"). However, the full simulation is the most desirable option.

8 Some authors, however, refer to this as "structure trapping" (Skehan/Foster 2001). Cf. Euler (2014) for a detailed contrast between Nunan's and Willis' models.

At the end of this task sequence, students will have learned from studying the text that there is no 'real' binary opposition of sex and gender as the latter merely mimes the former, how both concepts are largely psychologically constructed by society, and how gender is, as a consequence, "free floating" (Butler 1990: 6). The ensuing discussion will show that transgender issues may be based on cognitive prejudices because we think in this strict binary opposition. Students will be put into the position to challenge their own unexamined prejudices or beliefs (owing to the ontological value given to the categories through word usage⁹) and they will need to practice taking and arguing with the more informed perspective they learned about. Opinion formation is then further supported by a free discussion of the lesson in plenum, as well as through follow-up activities (cf. section 5).

4 Teaching Gender in Senior High School

In the curriculum for the *gymnasiale Oberstufe* of Lower Saxony¹⁰ it says for the first year of senior high (*Einführungsphase*, typically year 11): "Die Fachkonferenz entwickelt ein schuleigenes Curriculum für die Einführungsphase", which in practice means that a certain course book is used, which can then be built on by the teacher. In this context, it is easy to find an anchor for the topic 'values' or 'tolerance' or 'prejudice' in general, or even gayness or transsexuality in particular. For example, once the topic of "values/tolerance" has been established (e.g. Context 21 Starter, lesson 1, part B; see Schwarz/Becker-Ross 2009), the topic of prejudice against homosexuals or transsexuals can fit quite organically. If the course book does not explicitly offer a connection, the topic can still be a beautiful highlight lesson e.g. before the Easter or summer break. For years 12/13 the curriculum in Lower Saxony includes the topic "Individual and society", defined as "individual identity, roles and role conflicts, outsiders and counter cultures" (ibid.: 29). This topic could easily serve as an anchor for a lesson on sex/gender and in some years "gender roles" is even specifically specified as a topic for the final examination. As regards senior high course books, the book *Pathway Advanced* (cf. Edelbrock 2015: 149–151), for example, includes a lesson on the role of women and rape issues in India. However, as curricula are centered

9 Many students are not fully aware of the sex/gender difference in English and think that Ger. *Geschlecht* translates as gender. As German only has one term for both sex and gender, for German L1 speakers the concept that there is no binary opposition is even more difficult to grasp and may require some teacher explanation (see section 5).

10 http://db2.nibis.de/1db/cuvo/datei/kc_englisch_go_i_2009.pdf

on language skills (and do not prescribe specific content beyond very general topics), teachers are typically at liberty to include gender either way. This is of high importance from a developmental perspective as especially during adolescence teenagers continuously stage gender in their peer groups as “collective patterns of acquisition and performance of gender identity” (Flaake 2006: 33).

Consequently, thinking in a binary system, which Butler challenges in the text used in the present lesson sequence, directly impedes possibilities for development. In addition, thinking in a binary system may also cause anxiety and discrimination owing to standards of heteronormativity. Especially at high school gender norms and differences are internalized, i.e. respective action becomes an end in itself (cf. Gavrilets/Richerson 2017), which may likely even influence job goals and life choices at large (cf. Rieske 2011). However, it can be argued that school has the specific mission of allowing students to explore and define their personal identity and personality. While literature in general can help to achieve this goal, philosophical analysis, by definition, has the goal of breaking out of unexamined notions, taken-for-granted thought patterns and prejudices in order to reach a higher level of understanding – what Socrates called the Examined Life or Gautama Buddha Insight/Clear-Seeing (*vipassanā*). As the following section will show, the lesson presented in this chapter can specifically serve to break out of fixed sex/gender roles and perceptions and thus educate students toward a unifying notion of being ‘human’, rather than being ‘male’ or ‘female’, with all its implications.

5 Guidelines on How to Teach the Individual Lessons

As mentioned above, the task-based teaching system follows the priming → preparation → target task → focus on form structure according to Dave and Jane Willis, which is also the model used in German scholarship (cf. Müller-Hartmann/Schocker-v. Ditfurth 2006). In the present lesson, **priming** (i.e. activation of cognitive concepts, establishing subjective meaning) is done in two steps. As a first lead-in, the teacher presents an excerpt from an online news article (cf. appendix 2) on the projector, interactive whiteboard or OHP. This news article contains some translations into the learners’ L1 so they can immediately access the meaning. Students are asked, in plenum, to describe the problem highlighted in the article excerpt. This will already lead to some discussion, which, however, should not go too far at this point. This kind of introduction is what Nunan refers to as “schema building”, which “serves to introduce the topic, set the context for the task, and introduce some of the key vocabulary and expressions that the students will need in order to complete the task” (2004: 31).

Some vocabulary that students can access from the article is *transgender, unisex, gender identity, inclusion, feel uncomfortable*. As this is already fairly direct, alternatively, the teacher could first of all ask students if they know the term *gender identity disorder* or have them speculate on what this could be. This serves as a useful warm up before the situation is presented.

After the lead in, the teacher describes how the rest of the lesson will be conducted. Students get the task (Appendix 2), which presents the role-play situation, the actual target task in Willis and Willis’ model, as well as the steps to prepare for the task (the second step in the model). To extend schema building and to prepare them for the task, students will first discuss a preparatory question on the worksheet with Butler’s text (appendix 3). This will allow for anticipation of some of the content of the text, which will ease comprehension and, thus, make the text more accessible. In other words, anticipating the content of the text will foster top-down reading by first activating previous knowledge and ideas that will, in one way or another, come up in the text.

Preparation requires intake of both specific knowledge and vocabulary in order to be able to accomplish the task, which comprises explaining and applying Butler’s theory, and doing so in English as we are located in Ireland. For scaffolding purposes (see above; compare Thürmann 2013) and in order to make feedback in plenum on students’ understanding more dynamic, groups of three students work on one out of three comprehension questions. As the text is relatively short and the key message is ‘not only is gender a relative concept in general, but also the entire sex-gender-link is relative’, students will arrive at similar answers. This should enhance text comprehension even more as all three questions require an understanding of the basic message and concept of the text. In other words, as the three questions are different and draw on different segments of the text, students will feel an intrinsic need to listen to the other groups carefully in order to get new information for task completion, but the other groups’ ideas will still be intrinsically related to students’ own task so that comprehension is immediately possible and enhances overall understanding of Butler’s theory. When the results are discussed it is useful to draw the following ‘images’ on the board. The one on the right shows that there is a gender spectrum, but that ‘problems’ in society occur if a biological man or woman is so feminine or masculine that he crosses the middle line, as it were, so that s/he might well get the feeling of being in the wrong body. Fig. 1 and 2 illustrate the (non-)mimetic relation of sex to gender.

It is important to mention at this point that while the basic message of the text can be summarized very briefly, the text is still very challenging on both a linguistic and philosophical level. In teaching philosophy, as the above chart

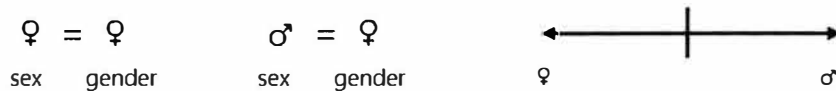


Fig. 1: Illustration of Concepts in the Text

Text comprehension
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The terms <i>sex</i> and <i>gender</i> imply a causal link, but this presumption is unfounded. The “logical limit” is that there is no link at all, i.e. there is a “radical discontinuity” between <i>sex</i> and <i>gender</i>. 2) It is evident that male and female bodies differ in various physical features, which constitutes a binary opposition. However, there is no reason to think that, as a consequence, the construct of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ should be binary as well. 3) A binary concept of <i>gender</i> is mimetically based on a binary concept of <i>sex</i>. This limits <i>gender</i> in that it is required to mime <i>sex</i>. This notion is unfounded, according to Butler, in that <i>gender</i> should rather be seen as “free floating”.
Language
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Sex</i> = biologisches/physiologisches Geschlecht [biological/physiological]; <i>Gender</i> = soziales Geschlecht/Geschlechtsidentität [social/personal identity] 2) culturally constructed, distinction between, binary, accrue to, presumption, independent of, feminine/masculine, male/female, free floating

Fig. 2: Possible Answers to Questions

shows, it is one of the primary goals to train methodical argumentation skills, which means that complex philosophical ideas – in this case deconstructivist feminism – are to be explained to ‘regular people’ in a clear and comprehensible manner. In this it is paramount to highlight the argumentative steps of the text or theory so that listeners or readers may be enabled to utilize this information in (understanding) everyday life (e.g. Rösch 2012). The target task immediately mimes this goal by requiring the ethics teacher to present Butler’s theory to a group of non-philosophers in a way that a real-life problem can be solved, or at least understood more in depth and analyzed with useful notions and terminology. Feedback could be organized in a way that students’ results are presented by respective groups on the document camera or an OHP transparency. Alternatively, feedback could be organized more informally by simply having students present their ideas orally. In both cases the other groups could extend on what was said. Answers to the questions could be as follows:

The **target task** is the role-play simulation. A possibility for scaffolding in this phase is to give students time to stage their statement and possible questions or discussion points. This would be especially helpful for weaker students in order

to develop fluency in using new words and phrases, but also generally for all students in order to feel less nervous/more prepared and ready. This, again, is highly compatible with Nunan’s system, in which he suggests both controlled and freer practice before the target task. In the case of the present lesson, controlled practice would comprise the text comprehension tasks (in which students have to practice using relevant information and language in a highly controlled manner), while the freer task is to practice giving the statement and responding to possible questions. As has been stressed above, in TBT focus on form normally follows the task cycle, during which students should have felt a need for language, which should have been filled by mining the input. In a post actum focus on form students can reflect on the language they used and needed and the teacher can fill in information on grammar, phonology and lexis that could or should have been used to improve accuracy or linguistic authenticity. Indeed, in the present lesson mining of the input happens quite organically as students read and learn to speak about the text. However, words and phrases like *presumption*, *accrue to* or *distinction between* may be less readily absorbed than highly necessary phrases like *constructed*, *free floating* or *gender identity* (compare Doughty/Williams 1998). Personally, I agree with the typical TBT rationale that a focus on language in the middle of the task cycle breaks the content-based, inductive flow of the lesson with students organically studying input in order to do a task and absorb relevant language on the way by necessity. However, the respective focus on language task on the text sheet provides a possibility for focus on language if readers should feel otherwise. A compromise could be to have students do that activity (extracting words) along with the other tasks but not present it in plenum in order to not break the flow of the lesson as much.

During the role play students will have the urge to discuss the issue openly and informally. Therefore, it could be useful to assign a number of roles, like parent representatives, the rector etc. and to do a formal role-play one or two times before moving on to an open discussion of the topic. An open discussion, however, is absolutely necessary and will be very fruitful as students may feel quite strongly about the issue personally. In my experience there are two types of students, the conservatives who do not want unisex toilets, let alone changing rooms because it ‘feels wrong’ (in the case of changing rooms especially to be seen by a person of the opposite sex, even should s/he not identify with his/her body) and that is reason enough, and the liberals who follow Butler’s deconstruction and take a very open-minded and empathic perspective (in the case of changing rooms they often draw comparisons to being seen in a bikini), in addition to a few students who do not really care either way. As a result, an ensuing discussion can be highly authentic as students have the chance to discuss a topic

they genuinely care about (at this stage). This can and should be guided a little by the teacher. In my experience this leads to a variety of issues. For example, if we feel uncomfortable changing in front of a person of the other sex, why is it ok to be fully naked in saunas? Is nudity automatically sexual? Why do we feel this way? This idea could be built on in the next lesson.

The following lesson serves to discuss the issue more freely. As it is important in teaching gender to take other perspectives and to articulate personal views and experiences, it is highly conducive to confront students with provocative cases (cf. Decke-Cornill 2015). In addition to the case of the Irish school, and the video (see below), a specifically philosophical method to achieve such goals is that of the thought experiment. A useful thought experiment could go as follows:

Imagine we lived in a 'utopic' country where there were no words for both *sex* and *gender* and there were just *people*. In biology classes at school we would learn about differences in reproductive systems, but this is simply biology and is of no significance in society. What would be different in such a country?

Students should first discuss this in small groups and then in plenum. This activity tends to be great fun and, now that students' minds have been opened by Butler's philosophy, can be extremely illuminating. In such a world there would probably be no separation of the sexes. As such, children would notice physical differences, for example, in changing rooms after PE or in the showers at the swimming pool. At school physiological differences would be discussed in biology lessons in the context of mammalian evolution and reproduction, and there would probably be biological terms for mammals that carry the child and mammals that offer the semen, but the big idea is that this would be purely biological and random, again just like hair color or foot size. This latter point is quite illuminating to students. The teacher might say something like "imagine there were social roles based on being a 'large footer' or a 'small footer', a 'brown eye' or a 'blue eye'" (which seems rather ridiculous). In such a country, probably no meaning would be given to sex differences, so that people are just people, with no specific roles or power relations or gender identities (!). Students typically state that differences in roles like the mother runs the household, imbalances at work, advantages of men over women and the like would probably disappear as there is no conceptual basis for such a binary split. In addition, the discussion on nudity which often arises shows that the kind of gender separation prevailing in our culture has a powerful psychological impact on us. There are naturist tribes like the Xingu in Brazil who live naked, so that being nude in front of members of the other sex is completely irrelevant. This perspective emphasizes that it is conceivable that we are all just 'humans', but that presently there is a strong sense of

separation based on sex. This also implies, as students often remark, that sexual assault could be significantly reduced as physiological sex differences are seen on a regular basis and are given little meaning.

Last time I taught this lesson a student said something beautiful as a conclusion. He spoke very slowly, trying to put this idea into words, and said "this would mean that... we are all different... but at the same time we are all the same". This statement could, indeed, be seen as the educational value and conclusion of this whole lesson sequence: we are all different, but this should have no impact on our behavior or society – so that, in the end, Butler's philosophy implies absolute tolerance. A homosexual student once said in this context: "It wouldn't even be called tolerance – because the differences don't matter in the first place – you know what I mean?" He had shiny eyes and a weak voice when he put this thought into words – this lesson can evoke powerful emotions.

This activity can be extended with a 2008 video¹¹ by a Brazilian photo artist, Daniel Toledo, in which he had four men and women stand next to each other (always one man, one woman), take off their clothes, step to the left, put on the clothes lying in front of them and so on till they are back to their own. If it is possible to show nudity in class this video is very interesting as one can see the whole process of a biological man, for example, putting on a woman's clothes. Students can be asked to simply phenomenologically describe their impression. This can lead to a very interesting discussion as a first impulse may be "this is so weird!" However, in the context of Butler's philosophy, our impulse of "weirdness" can be identified as a type of social indoctrination – who are we to judge who wears what, and why should it matter in the first place? One student once beautifully said that, as she watched the video, she stopped seeing men and women – it all just became one. Indeed, achieving this kind of insight might, again, be considered the ethical goal of the entire lesson sequence.

It should also be said, however, that there are also biopsychological findings (e.g. Bear et al. 2007; Herbert 2015) which show that, indeed, there are some differences that are not purely constructed, owing to subtle differences in brain structure and significant differences in the hormonal system, so that some understanding and acceptance may be required as well. There is, for example, the famous case of John/Joanne (e.g. Bear et al. 2007: 554), which can be told by the teacher, in which a biological boy whose penis was completely burned during an operation as a baby was transformed into a girl and raised as such. The performing doctor believed that biology had no significance, but the boy always

11 http://danieltoledo.com.br/05_trocatroca.html

felt he was in the wrong body and suffered from depression. When he was finally told as a teenager he promptly underwent sex reassignment surgery to become male again.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this lesson sequence tends to be very effective in using English as an L2 in an authentic discussion context, it trains academic language skills through thorough philosophical analysis, and it leads to powerful ethical insights in the context of gender, homo- and transsexuality. By the end of these two lessons, students will have taken various different perspectives, they will have challenged and possibly re-structured their notions of gender norms and heteronormativity and they may well see the world with its typical gender roles and power structures with quite different eyes. As such, philosophy would have fulfilled both its roles in achieving clarity of mind through rigorous argumentation, as well as in educating toward a more ethical life stance at large. As this topic is highly dependent on language and language-mediated cognition, a task-based EFL lessons sequence seems an ideal place for a content-based discussion of such a highly relevant topic.

Appendix 1: News Article For Lead-In



Appendix 2: Task

TASK

Situation:

You are an Ethics teacher at Saint Fintan's High School, Dublin. The school is holding a staff meeting with some parent representatives because there's been discord on the new unisex toilet policy. After some back and forth the conversation is going nowhere because no one can really say anything beyond feeling "uncomfortable" or "okay" with it. The principal turns to you as a professional philosopher to shed some light on the sex-gender-identity issue and how to think about it. You're thinking of Judith Butler's gender identity theory.

▲ Make a statement!

Preparation

- Step 1)** Speak for up to two minutes about the anticipation question on the worksheet.
- Step 2)** Read the text excerpt and do one out of three of the comprehension questions. Take notes.
- Step 3)** Do both focus on language tasks.
- Step 4)** After a discussion of the questions in plenum you have the information and the language to do the task. Prepare some arguments for your statement.

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The Compulsory Order of Sex/Gender

Anticipate:

In the following text Butler challenges the "biology-is-destiny" concept.

▲ What do you imagine this concept to be?

Although the unproblematic unity of "women" is often invoked to construct a solidarity of **identity**, a split is introduced in the feminist subject by the distinction¹ between **sex** and **gender**. Originally intended to dispute the biology-is-destiny formulation, the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability² sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex. The unity of the subject is thus already potentially contested³ by the distinction that permits of gender as a multiple interpretation of sex.

If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes⁴, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way. *Taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity⁵ between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders.* Assuming for the moment the stability of binary⁶ sex, it does not follow that the construction of "men" will accrue exclusively to⁷ the bodies of males or that "women" will interpret only female bodies. Further, even if the sexes appear to be unproblematically binary in their morphology⁸ and constitution (which will become a question), *there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two.* The presumption⁹ of a binary gender system implicitly retains *the belief in a mimetic¹⁰ relation of gender to sex* whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice¹¹, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one.

Source: Butler, Judith (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (p.6). New York: Routledge.

¹ Unterscheidung

² (f+) Hartnäckigkeit

³ bestritten

⁴ vermuten lässt

⁵ Bruch/Teilung

⁶ (f) zweiteilig

⁷ (f) zukommen

⁸ (f+) Erscheinungsbild

⁹ Annahme

¹⁰ (f) nachahmend

¹¹ (f+) Trick/List

Text Comprehension:

Group 1:

▲ Explain the “logical limit” mentioned in line 8.

Group 2:

▲ Why, do you figure, might there be “no reason to assume genders ought also to remain as two”? (l. 12f)

Group 3:

▲ Explain the notion that there is a “mimetic relation of gender to sex”. (l. 13f)

Focus on Language:

▲ How could the concepts of “sex” and “gender” be expressed in German?

▲ Extract up to 10 words from the text that will be useful or necessary for discussing gender identity. Note down words, if applicable, as full phrases (e.g. “~~distinction~~” vs. “a distinction *between* sth”).

Appendix 3: Text Input

The Compulsory Order of Sex/Gender

Anticipate:

In the following text Butler challenges the “biology-is-destiny” concept.

- ▲ What do you imagine this concept to be?

Although the unproblematic unity of “women” is often invoked to construct a solidarity of **identity**, a split is introduced in the feminist subject by the distinction¹ between **sex** and **gender**. Originally intended to dispute the biology-is-destiny formulation, the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability² sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex. The unity of the subject is thus already potentially contested³ by the distinction that permits of gender as a multiple interpretation of sex.

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Text Comprehension:

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- ▲ Explain the notion that there is a “mimetic relation of gender to sex”. (l. 13f)

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 ▲ Extract up to 10 words from the text that will be useful or necessary for discussing gender identity. Note down words, if applicable, as full phrases (e.g. “distinction” vs. “a distinction between sth”).

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