

## Webinar



Gender in Language  
Education



The two contributors  
to this infographic are:



### Tamires Gama

**Tamires Gama believes** that learning and teaching English has the power to emancipate teachers and students. She has been teaching English for **11 years** and is enthusiastic about the use of technology in the classroom, inclusive materials and issues of race and gender. She has been in the world of online classes since 2016 and also works as a speaker. Tamires is passionate about **training for teachers of English and other languages**. She obtained a bachelor's degree in Portuguese and English Literature from The University of São Paulo and has a TESOL Certificate from Anaheim University (California). Tamires is certified by Cambridge University (Train the Trainer, Celta and CPE/ Cambridge /C2).

### Dario Luis Banegas



Dario Luis Banegas is Lecturer in Language Education at Moray House School of Education and Sport, University of Edinburgh (UK), and an online teacher educator with Lenguas Vivas Bariloche, Argentina. He has carried out initiatives and research projects on **the topic of gender diversity and inclusion in ELT**. His most recent co-edited volume is “International Perspectives on Diversity in ELT” published by Palgrave in July 2021.

**Q1** What is your work and experience on gender equality in language education in your country?

**Q2** What were the challenges and achievements?



Tamires

Started to introduce **the topic of gender** to teachers when she was working introducing them to using technology in their classrooms. She wanted teachers to be more aware of the content of the materials that they used with their learners. There are **212 million people** in Brazil with approximately **2 million public school teachers**. Language teachers don't necessarily have a high level of English, so introducing the topic of gender can be challenging for them. However, Tamires wanted to do this.



**Q3** What is your experience for training teachers on gender in language teaching?



Dario



In teacher development sessions, when you start talking about gender, teachers will begin to reflect both on their **personal experiences**, about their own sexuality, as well as their profession beliefs. However, they don't see themselves as teachers of gender, they identify as teachers of language. Exploring gender in the classroom is not something they are used to doing. **Dario encourages the teachers to work together**, producing materials collaboratively. They plan and sometimes teach lessons together. One of the teachers may find a picture, or a video to base a lesson upon and **share it with the others**. This is a sustainable process, because the teachers can be in charge of the process themselves, they don't need an expert to produce the materials for them. Finally, Dario encourages a **CLIL** (Content and Language Integrated Learning) methodology where the topic of the lesson **might be a particular aspect of gender**, like gender inequality, or gender violence and the presentation of the ideas is through the medium of English.



Tamires



When teachers first start to think about teaching gender issues in the classroom, **they reflect on the materials they experienced as learners and the stereotypes that were embedded into them**. The teachers begin to see that they are not represented in the materials they use, in the pictures in the textbooks and they realise that the materials they use are **not representative of their learners**. This can be a difficult issue for the teachers to face. However, with access now to online materials and websites, it is much easier to find **diverse materials for use in class**. Where in the past representations didn't reflect ethnic diversity, it is possible to change materials to make representation more related to learners and their lives.



**Q4** Can you share some practical ways to address gender imbalance in ELT materials?

Dario



Coursebooks for language teaching are hetero-normative in their representation of gender and therefore LGBTQ+ people are not seen in materials. Different ethnic groups are also often not represented. You can make changes to the material by changing characters' names, or using materials that represent the context where you work.



You can also use materials that focus on ideas and topics **connected to gender** rather than focusing on aspects of language. You can ask students to bring in materials that reflect their lives.

**Q5** What are the challenges and constraints when trying to adapt materials/ activities?

Tamires



It is difficult to find materials that reflect the broad range of peoples in the world and their genders, in fact there are no one-size fits all solutions. It is more about questioning the materials **you use and looking for alternatives where possible**. It also about reflecting the students in the materials that you use.

If you look you can find websites with suitable pictures. Here are three recommendations:



Nappy



Young Gifted and Black (YGB)



All go

Teachers raise objections by saying doing this is very time-consuming, but Tamires suggests that doing this will have a pay off by creating a better connection with the students in general. You will develop a better relationship with them, and they will appreciate the lessons more because **they can see themselves represented**.

**Q6** How can tolerance be promoted in the classroom?

Dario



We should consider different topics in gender, like discrimination, equality and equity, but also think about cases that resonate beyond the classroom into the real world. Education should be part of the process of reforming society. We need to create a mindset in our students that questions how gender is reflected in society. A social justice perspective in teaching should be looking at our own contexts, should support teachers to rethink what topics they cover and if the topics are about gender, then the cases should start with the local, not just a topic like ‘Black Lives Matter’, or gender discrimination in the UK, but acknowledge that discrimination occurs in our own contexts.

A good place to start this discussion is with the **Sustainable Development Goal** (SDG) of Gender Equality. This SDG focuses on women, but can be broadened out to include **LGBTQ+**.

Dario refers to Tyson Seburn (2018) who argues that course books should reflect the real world and include members of the LGBTQ+ community and discussion of gender in the classroom should be ‘normalised’:

[http://contact.teslontario.org/?s=tyson+seburn.](http://contact.teslontario.org/?s=tyson+seburn)

He suggests that “LGBTQ+ characters, storylines, and imagery be included alongside the heteronormative narratives in classroom materials without attention drawn to them;” (p. 23).



**Q7** How can teachers raise awareness of gender issues beyond the classroom?



Tamires

Answering this question is partly about thinking who you ‘bring to your classes’. Which celebrities, YouTubers, Tik-Tokers, or Influencers? If the students can identify with the people you bring to class, they are going to feel **more included**. Another way is to look at what is happening in the world and challenging ideas about, for example, who plays games – many girls are gamers. In Brazil, for example, I usually challenge the idea that only men can be chefs. Showing pictures of successful and happy people who live in rural areas.



Dario



Encourage your community to engage with the issue of gender, either face-to-face, or online. Pick tasks with an authenticity of purpose, beyond language competence. Encourage students to start their own Twitter, or other social media account so they can raise the issues with a real audience.

**There is a new British Council MOOC on Gender in ELT. Sign up here:**



[www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/gender-language-education](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/gender-language-education)

For further information on all aspects of NWOT see:

<https://americas.britishcouncil.org/new-ways-of-teaching>

Or, click on the QR code

