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Gender-Just Language Pedagogies

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Abstract: Language education represents a site for identity (re)construction, mediated through language acquisition and use. Through acts such as speaking, reading, and writing, learners and educators must linguistically position themselves and be positioned by others. In this way, language education encourages reflections not only on the identities that we take up as learners and educators, but also on other aspects of who we are in relation to the broader social world. Although language learning allows students to (re)imagine, (re)invent, and explore new linguistic and cultural identities, there is often limited attention to queer and trans knowledges in the curriculum, textbooks, research, and pedagogy of language classrooms. This has left many educators to report feeling particularly un- or under-prepared to engage in gender-just language teaching and, thus, many students to find themselves in classrooms that do not always engage deeply with gender justice. In following, this talk invites participants to reflect on the ways that we might all remake, reimagine, and reinvent our language classrooms, materials, and pedagogical approaches to resist normativities and narratives of oppression and to recenter trans knowledges and possibilities of being. This entails considering ongoing processes of queer and trans remaking, reimagining, and reinventing can help us to better serve all of our students, particularly in terms of increasing classroom inclusiveness, fostering tolerance of ambiguity, and the development of linguistic, symbolic, and intercultural competencies. This talk will focus on situating the teaching and learning of English in a gender-just, trans-affirming pedagogical framework, although much of the discussion remains applicable to the teaching and learning of languages writ large.

Term Definitions

Cisnormativity: The erroneous assumption that (almost) all people are cisgender, presenting such identification with the sex one was forcibly assigned at birth as the only valued, valid, or possible gender modality

Cisgender: A descriptor for individuals who identify with the gender (or sex) assigned to them at birth.

(Gender) Binary: A system that assumes two, distinct gender categories, which are assumed to align with binary categories of physical sex: male and female.

Gendered language attitudes: See language attitudes. Stereotypes and perceptions of language related to gender. The connections individuals make between the non-linguistic traits of masculinity or femininity and individual linguistic features or entire language varieties (Knisely, 2016, 2017; Knisely & Wind, 2015)

Genderqueer: A term used by *some*, but not all individuals who identify as gender nonbinary, which has queer politics and queer theory of the 1990s as its origin. May connote a central affiliation with the broader queer community and a politics of subversion (See Nonbinary). There are generational trends in its use or lack of use in the US. (Similar to *être queer dans son genre* in French.)

Grammatical Gender: The classification of objects into grammatical categories, masculine or feminine in French, including the ways in which agreement is reflected in noun-dependent parts of speech. (See [Knisely, 2020](#) and [Knisely, 2020](#))

Heteronormativity: The presentation of cisgender, White, monogamous, reproductive, able-bodied, straightness as natural, normal, and desirable.

Inclusive language: Linguistic forms that are not gender-specific, but which do not necessarily refer specifically to nonbinary individuals.

Intercultural competence: The ability and desire to communicate (or negotiate symbolic meaning) effectively, appropriately, and ethically with diverse individuals and groups whose cultures are other than one's own. This deep engagement is based on one's critical knowledge, skills and attitudes (both of themselves and of others), wherein culture is dynamic, heterogeneous, and multi-layered. (Knisely & McGregor)

Language attitudes: Culturally-bound and individualized stereotypes and perceptions of language, which may be applied to social groups, to individual linguistic features, or to entire language varieties. These positive or negative attitudes are typically drawn from stereotypes and perceptions of real or imagined language users and the connections that all individuals readily make between linguistic traits and non-linguistic traits such as politeness and trustworthiness (see Tamasi & Antieau, 2014).

Non-binary/Nonbinary: A term used to describe individuals who neither identify as exclusively male nor exclusively female. The English term was introduced in the 21st century to call for the respect and for the dignity of trans people who do not identify as solely woman or man, as opposed to a politics of subversion (See Genderqueer) and may connote a primary affiliation with the trans community. May be considered an umbrella term under which genderqueer may be included, depending on the individual (*Non-binaire/Nonbinaire* is the French term for nonbinary and is the most frequently used identity term of its type.)

Non-binary language: Linguistic forms that are gender neutral and which are specifically used to refer to nonbinary individuals (also called *gender neutral linguistic forms*).

Symbolic competence: The ability to position oneself as a multilingual subject and to manipulate the three dimensions of language as a symbolic system: symbolic representation, symbolic action, symbolic power. This implies the ability to understand the cultural memories evoked by symbolic systems, to perform and create alternative realities, and to reframe and shape the multilingual game in which one invests (Kramsch, 2011; Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008).

TGNC: TGNC is used in the context of this talk to refer to the collectivity of individuals who are trans, nonbinary, and/or gender non-conforming. It is a broad, umbrella abbreviation used, here, in an effort to subvert any possibility of transnormative exclusion.

Trans/Transgender: An umbrella term to identify individuals who do not identify with the gender forcibly assigned to them/assumed at birth. [For a discussion of why this common definition is always incomplete and over-emphasizes acts of ascription, please see Knisely (2021). An expanded discussion is forthcoming Knisely (2023)] Alternatively, a term to describe people who flout cisnormative ways of thinking and being.

Transnormativity: The presentation of only certain trans embodiments as valid (i.e. The assumption that trans people should fit a cissexist idea of what is "normal").

Trans-Affirming Queer Inquiry-Based Pedagogies (TAQIBPs, see Knisely & Paiz, 2021 [here](#).)

What we knowⁱ

- "Learning how to talk critically and fluently about sex and sexuality [sic and gender diversity] composes a significant part of becoming literate in our society. Being able to address sexuality issues intelligently, critically, and comfortably is vital if we are to participate in some of the most important debates of our time," (Alexander, 2008, p.2)
- LGBTQ+ issues make up a non-trivial part of our students' lives (Moore, 2016; Nelson, 2009; Nguyen & Yang, 2015).
- L2 Instructors feel under-prepared to handle LGBTQ+-themed discussion (MacDonald, El Metoui, Baynham, & Gray, 2014; Saunston, 2018)
- Teacher education programs largely ignore LGBTQ+ considerations (Paiz, 2018)
- Mainstream SLA materials are predominantly heteronormative (Grey, 2013; Paiz, 2015) and cis-normative (Knisely, forthcoming).

Guiding Principles

- Restive problematizing of all identities and discourses (Nelson, 2009; Pennycook, 2001)
- Exposing & interrogating normativity in all its forms (Nelson, 2006)
- Creating space for marginalized voices and Identities (Vandrick, 2001)
- Fostering respectful engagement with disparate worldviews [i.e. intercultural competence] (Merse, 2017; Paiz, 2020).

Pedagogical aims

- Raise awareness of LGBTQ+ lives and concerns (Krause, 2017; Paiz, 2019)
- Introduce the linguistically situated ways that we index and perform identities (Nguyen & Huang, 2015; Paiz, 2020; Knisely, 2021)
- Foster critical thinking (Merse, 2017; Nelson, 2009)
- Equip students with the linguistic and rhetorical skills needed to advocate for self and others [i.e. symbolic competence] (Kramsch; Moore, 2016; Nelson, 2009; Paiz, 2020)

Strategies for Queering L2 Teaching and Learning

- Exploring with your students
 - Individualize learning;
 - Decenter the classroom;
 - Queer students' perception of expertise;
 - Uncover locally relevant, real-world LGBTQ+ experiences and language.
- Find space throughout the curriculum
 - Avoid “Gay Day” / “Trans Day” special topics
 - Create value around LGBTQ+ discussions as a part of critical literacy and acculturation
 - Underscore how LGBTQ+ issues are performed and parsed through different linguistic and rhetorical functions
- Critical close reading & discussion
 - Is where the “rubber meets the road”
 - Makes explicit how language and our assumptions work together to create our perception of reality
 - Draws attention to how normative discourses silence certain lives
- Tie LGBTQ content to language learning goals
 - Shows that sexuality & gender are important parts of acquiring an L2 and a sense of self in it
 - Contributes to de-sensationalizing LGBTQ+ content and discussions
 - Aids in gaining student & administrative buy in
- Focus on respectful engagement
 - Shows that sexuality & gender are important parts of acquiring an L2 and a sense of self in it
 - Contributes to desensationalizing LGBTQ+ content and discussions
 - Aids in gaining student & administrative buy in
- Remember that queer pedagogy requires that *all* engage in self-reflective practice
 - Respect that we are all at different starting points in our engagement with LGBTQ+ issues
 - Take time to critically reflect on your queer pedagogy
 - It is not only up to community insiders to build LGBTQ+-inclusive classroom spaces in the SLA/L2 context

Guiding Questions for Self-Reflection:ⁱⁱ

1. What do I know about LGBTQ+/TGNC individuals and communities in the sociocultural environment in which I teach? In my L2 contexts?
2. How can I construct teaching and learning moments that build upon what I *do* know and that lean into meaningful joint inquiry with students for what I *do not* yet know?
3. What dominant discourses come up in or underlie my course material? How can we collaboratively work towards a core philosophy of problematizing dominant discourses?

4. (How) Do I represent gender and sexual diversity? Do my representations of TGNC-ness/queerness reproduce or challenge dominant discourses? Are they judgement-free representations that carefully distinguish between non-normative and abnormal?
5. (How) Do I model respectful engagement?
6. What course policies, procedures, and expectations do I have that could be modified to be more inclusive of LGBTQ+/TGNC people? And the materials I use?

Sample Syllabus Language (see Knisely, 2022, Teaching Trans Knowledges)ⁱⁱⁱ:

Classroom Behavior Policy: To foster a positive learning environment, students and instructors have a shared responsibility. We want a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment where all of us feel comfortable with each other and where we can challenge ourselves to succeed. Remember to be considerate to your classmates and instructors: address them politely using their personal pronouns (mine are *il* or *iel*), [...]. If you are unsure how to refer to someone, please ask them (e.g. *Quels pronoms utilisez-vous?*). For those of us who use non-binary pronouns (e.g. the singular *they*, *ze/zim/zir*, etc.) in English, there may be some linguistic hurdles to overcome in order to use affirming language. French has traditionally had binary grammatical gender (e.g. masculine and feminine forms) but there are solutions available to us that are being created by nonbinary Francophone communities for talking about nonbinary social gender. Although these forms have not always yet made it into mainstream media, including our textbook, they are a part of a valuable linguistic co-culture and they will be seen and used throughout the semester in supplementary materials and in class. We will work together on being able to both use these forms to show respect and on being able to explain where they are and are not traditionally used so as to be able to advocate for ourselves and others. If at any time you make a mistake, simply say *pardon* and correct yourself. With time and practice you will improve on using these forms in interculturally competent ways. If at any time you have questions or concerns, please reach out to your instructor.

Display name. Please make sure your first and last name are listed in your Zoom name display. Use the name you go by (i.e. How you would like us in this class to refer to you), whether or not it matches the legal name I might have been given by the university. Feel free to add your pronouns as well (i.e. *il*, *elle*, *iel*, *øl*, etc.), if you'd like to/feel comfortable doing so. Feel free to reach out to me over email if you have any concerns or if you'd like support in navigating how to best represent yourself in French.

Sample Twitter Web-Quest Activity: [*English gloss*] (see also Knisely, 2022, Starter Kit)

French, as a language, presents some linguistic challenges to nonbinary users (individuals who are neither exclusively men nor women) due to its traditional binary grammatical gender. However, we know that social gender and grammatical gender are distinct constructs – since experiences of gender can fall far outside of a traditional binary paradigm. Because the French language forms used by nonbinary people are often neologistic (new, rapidly evolving, and not always known outside of queer and trans communities), they tend not to find their way into traditional classroom materials. To attend to this missing information, you will, with a partner, complete a Twitter Web-Quest activity to observe the ways in which queer and trans people are manipulating and subverting the French language in order to create the necessary conditions for congruent self-expression. First, do a hashtag search for the following terms: #nonbinaire #transgenre. Next, identify a few users who clearly note being nonbinary or agender in their user profiles. Using this data, respond to the following questions:

1. What, if any, pronouns are being used by TGNC people? Are there patterns that you can observe (e.g. frequency, selection factors)? If so, what are these observable patterns?
2. How are trans and nonbinary people subverting traditional agreement structures (binary grammatical gender marking of verbs, adjectives, etc.)? Are there patterns that you can observe (e.g. frequency, selection factors)? If so, what are these observable patterns?
3. Can you notice other strategies to avoid misgendering? (Be mindful of individual words, sentence structure, and larger discourse-level patterns.)
4. Are connections between language and culture(s) apparent in any of the tweets you read? If so, how?

Please submit your answers to the above questions (in French) to our D2L Assignments folder before our next session. We will be using everyone's anonymized responses as we discuss how language norms benefit some users and marginalize others. In the class sessions that follow, we will apply this same type of thinking to numerous types of linguistic variation across multiple Francophone contexts, returning to the broader guiding questions we have been using this semester to think about and deconstruct myriad normativities: why is it so?; who benefits?; who is marginalized?; what alternatives exist?

Resources:**Language-General:**

- [Knisely and Paiz \(2021\)](#) and Knisely (Forthcoming, 2022, Teaching trans) make excellent language-general points of departure. (Knisely and Paiz, 2021 includes English-specific examples.)
- LSA [Statement](#) on Misgendering (Includes English-specific examples and resources. Conceptually-focused.).
- LSA [Guidelines](#) on Misgendering (Includes English-specific examples and resources. Practical-focused.).
- The 2020 documentary [Disclosure](#)
- See krisknisely.com for additional available [publications](#) and [infographics](#).

English-Specific:

- Although focused on queer rather than trans knowledges, I highly recommend the following book for beginning to think about LGBTQ+ topics in English language teaching and learning in conversation with the language-general pieces listed above: Paiz, J. M. (2020). *Queering the English language classroom: A practical guide for teachers*. Equinox Publishing Limited.

French-Specific: See krisknisely.com for available publications and [infographics](#) (Note: Discursive strategies are widely applicable to English and to many other languages and thus are likely to be of broad interest). . Knisely (2022, Starter Kit) and Knisely (2020, [Le français non-binaire](#)) make excellent points of departure, focusing on French-language pedagogy and French-language forms/strategies respectively. Knisely (Forthcoming, 2022, Teaching trans knowledges) expands and concretizes these French-specific introductory pieces.

Additional Languages: Additional language-specific resources for Romance, Germanic, and Slavic will be available in a forthcoming edited volume, anticipated for 2022. Details TBA via krisknisely.com/publications and via social and professional media.

Select Publications Related to Today's Presentation^{iv}:

- Knisely, K. (Forthcoming 2022) Teaching trans knowledges: Situating expansive possibilities in an intermediate French course. In S. Bouamer & L Bourdeau (Eds.) *Diversity and Decolonization in French Studies*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Knisely, K. (Forthcoming 2022). Teaching trans: The Impetus for trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming inclusivity in L2 classrooms. In K. Davidson, S. Johnson, & L. Randolph (Eds.) *How We Take Action: Social Justice in K-16 Language Classrooms*. Information Age.
- Knisely, K. (2022). A Starter Kit for Rethinking Trans Representation and Inclusion in French L2 Classrooms. In E.N. Meyer & E. Hoft-March (Eds.) *Teaching Diversity and Inclusion: Examples from a French-Speaking Classroom*. Routledge. 22-33. <https://bit.ly/3oZRsbM>
- Knisely, K. and Paiz, J.M. (2021) Bringing Trans, Non-binary, and Queer Understandings to Bear in Language Education. *Critical Multilingualism Studies*. 9(1), 23-45. <https://cms.arizona.edu/index.php/multilingual/article/view/237>
- Knisely, K. (2021). L/G/B and T: Queer Excisions, Entailments, and Intersections. In J. M. Paiz & J. E. Coda (Eds.) *Intersectional Perspectives on LGBTQ+ Issues in Modern Language Teaching and Learning*. Palgrave Macmillan. 153-182. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76779-2_6
- Knisely, K. (2020). Le français non-binaire: linguistic forms used by non-binary speakers of French. *Foreign Language Annals*. 53(4), 850-876. doi: 10.1111/flan.12500
- Knisely, K. (2020). Subverting the culturally unreadable: Understanding the self-positioning of non-binary speakers of French. *The French Review*. 94(2), 149-168. doi: 10.1353/tfr.2020.0280
- Knisely, K. (2020). Read this realness: How non-binary people are taking up and subverting cultural and linguistic spaces in French. *OASIS Summary* of Knisely (2020). Subverting the culturally unreadable:

Understanding the self-positioning of non-binary speakers of French. *The French Review*. 94(2). 149-168. <https://oasis-database.org> <https://oasis-database.org/concern/summaries/2227mp912?locale=en>

Knisely, K. (2020). "How do you say the singular they in French?": How non-binary people are adapting the French language. *OASIS Summary* of Knisely (2020). Le français non-binaire: linguistic forms used by non-binary speakers of French. *Foreign Language Annals*. 53(4). 1-27. doi:

<https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12500>. <https://oasis-database.org/concern/summaries/np1939428?locale=en>

Knisely, K. (2017). Exploring the role of culture in the formation of French language ideologies among US post-secondary students. *Contemporary French Civilization* 42(2), 189-210. doi:

[10.3828/cfc.2017.11](https://doi.org/10.3828/cfc.2017.11)

Knisely, K. (2016). Language Learning and the Gendered Self: The Case of French and Masculinity in a US Context. *Gender and Language* 10(2), 216-239. doi: [10.1558/genl.v10i2.19810](https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.v10i2.19810)

ⁱ Adapted/Expanded from Paiz, 2020 and Knisely & Paiz, 2021.

ⁱⁱ Adapted from Knisely, 2022, Teaching Trans.

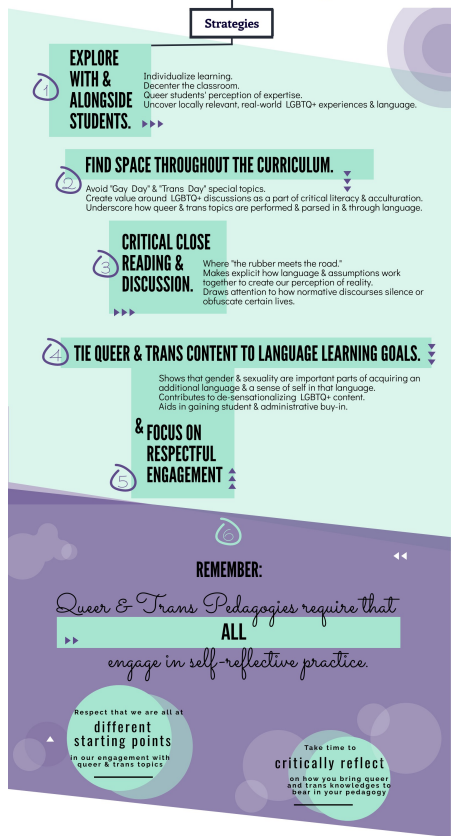
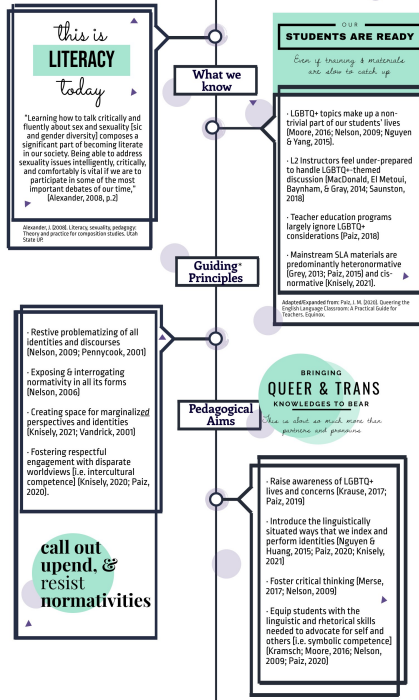
ⁱⁱⁱ I have a forthcoming (2022) book chapter that will present these and other aspects of syllabus language. This chapter will walk readers through a sample course and the myriad decisions to be made for gender-just teaching. Please see endnote XIV for ways to stay in touch about this and other forthcoming publications and/or you are welcome to join the DDFC list serv to be informed when the volume is published <https://ddfcollective.weebly.com/become-a-member.html>.

^{iv} If you lack institutional access for any of my publications, please do feel free to request a copy [my Research Gate profile](#), via [krisknisely.com/publications](https://www.krisknisely.com/publications), or via email. I will be happy to share whatever I am able. You are also more than welcome to follow me on Twitter for publication announcements and event invitations.

TAQIBPs

Trans-Affirming Queer Inquiry-Based Pedagogies

Kris Aric Knisely, Ph.D.
[krisknisely.com]



THE WORK OF BUILDING INCLUSIVE SPACES CANNOT BE LEFT TO COMMUNITY INSIDERS ALONE.

This infographic was adapted from the following publications and does not include all possible information about TAQIBPs. For complete citations and more, please see: Knisely, K. and Paiz, J.M. (2021) Bringing Trans, Non-binary, and Queer Understandings to Bear in Language Education. *Critical Multilingualism Studies*, 1(1), 27-45. <https://cms.arizona.edu/index.php/multilingual/article/view/237>

***Notes**

*TAQIBPs, by definition, entail a broad swath of approaches that are diverse in their principles, aims, and strategies. Those employed herein represent a starting list of possibilities. The work often discussed in length in Knisely & Paiz (2021).
 **For more on my approach to language education as well as additional recommended readings, please see my publications, presentations, and other resources at krisknisely.com

ideas for applying TAQIBPs

Trans-Affirming Queer Trajectory-Based Pedagogies
Kris Aric Knisely, Ph.D.
[knisely.com]

Starting Points

1 CREATE EXPECTATIONS OF RESPECT

SYLLABUS
FIRST DAY

2 SIGNAL INCLUSIVITY

SAFE ZONE CERTIFICATION
OFFICE/CLASSROOM SIGNS
SIGNATURE LINE OF EMAILS

3 INVITE PRONOUN SHARING

PRIVATE
VOLUNTARY

Display name:

Please make sure your first and last name are listed in your display name. Use the name you go by (i.e. How you would like us in this class to refer to you), whether or not it matches the legal name I might have been given by the university. Feel free to add your pronouns as well (i.e. it, elle, il, etc.). If you'd like to feel comfortable doing so, feel free to reach out to me over email if you have any concerns or if you'd like support in navigating how to best represent yourself in French.



Going Further

Breetings.

In a text you see:

- Bonjour, monsieur/ Bonjour, madame.
- Bonjour M. --, Bonjour, Mme --.

Invite reflection:

- Bonjour, (monsieur) Bonjour, (madame)
- Bonjour, M. --) Bonjour, (Mme --)

Add the missing information:

- Bonjour, madame.
- Bonjour, Mx. --.

les articles indéfinis et définis

In a text you see:

- un homme
- une femme

Invite reflection: Why is a window or a table "feminine" and a marker or a notebook "masculine"? A man and a keyboard are both members of a so-called "masculine" class. Yet, one of these memberships is considered arbitrary and the other is made to seem as though it is not.

Work with students to lay bare normativities and make clear that:

Grammatical & social gender are related but separate systems.

Carry that knowledge forward:

"UN" ou "UNE" ?

Regarde les suffixes!

une exception qu'on évite!

Avoid color coding & focus: their task: writing the combination of grammatical & social gender, category "un" and category "une" focus on use.

Assignment & Assessment Headers.

Name: _____

Course/Section: _____

Pronouns: _____

Agreement: _____

This is an invitation to [Zemke](#) pin down the grammatical structures you are using in this specific assignment/assessment so that I may provide relevant, assumption-free linguistic feedback.

4 call out, upend, & resist normativities

What is the status quo?
Why is it so?
What maintains it?
Who benefits?
Who is disadvantaged?
Who is marginalized?
What alternatives exist?
How is language involved?

5 engage in CRITICAL CLOSE READING & DISCUSSION.

Of the textbook...
Of multimedia...
Of all language encountered.

6 BRINGING QUEER & TRANS KNOWLEDGES TO BEAR

Open up ways of knowing ways of languaging ways of being

7 TIE QUEER & TRANS CONTENT TO LANGUAGE LEARNING GOALS.

Start with language data. Teach toward a plurality of possibilities.

Ultimately

The ways in which gender can be made relevant to language classrooms are as

LIMITLESS

as the ways in which gender affects the lives, cultures, and languages of those to whom and about whom we teach.

© Knisely, K. 2020. "October 4, 2020"

This infographic was adapted from the following publications and does not include all possible information about TAQIBPs and their applications. For complete citations and/or more information, see the above publications or visit www.krisely.com for more details.

Knisely, K. (2018). A Starter Kit for Rethinking TGNC Representation and Inclusion in French L2 Classrooms. In N. Meyer & E. Hoft-March (Eds.) *Teaching Diversity and Inclusion: Examples from a French-Speaking Classroom*. Routledge.

Knisely, K. (2020). Teaching Trans: Examples from an Intermediate French Course. In S. Bouamer & L. Bourdeau (Eds.) *Diversity and Decolonization in French Studies*. Palgrave.

Notes

¹The transposable quality of this work should be noted. The pronouns and some individual uses are the only available way to refer to them and not a matter of preference. Please also note the use of [Allié.e](#) here. Private evaluations, rather than public, already should be used. See the above publications or visit www.krisely.com for more details.

²TAQIBPs, by definition, entail a broad swath of approaches that are diverse in their principles, aims, strategies, and applications. They must necessarily be adapted to local realities. These principles herein represent a starting point of possibilities. This variation is discussed at length in Knisely & Park (2021). The following may also support the elaboration and adaptation to specific contexts.

³Knisely, K. (2020). *La français non-binaire & transgenre* forms used by non-binary speakers of French. *Foreign Language Annual*, 33(4), 800-816. doi:10.1111/flan.12300.

⁴Knisely, K. & Park, J. (2021). *Bringing Trans, Non-Binary, and Queer Understandings to Bear in Language Education*. *Critical Multilingual Studies*, 4.

⁵For more on my approach to language education as well as additional recommended readings, please see my publications, presentations, and other resources at www.krisely.com.

A starting list of principles for
ETHICAL ENGAGEMENT

with communities to which you do not belong

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1. LISTEN

Attend to what others are communicating, through any number of ways of communicating.

Minoritized people may have their perspectives suppressed, ignored, or afforded less space and power, but are **not** without perspectives and experiences to share. Minoritized people are not *voiceless*.*

BE ACCOUNTABLE.

We all make mistakes and need to be called in/called out by others. Accepting and valuing critique is essential to equitable and just coalition building.

SELF-REFLECT.

When you don't understand or are surprised by something, turn inwards for a moment. When you make a mistake, be still for a moment. Take time to truly receive and reflect upon what you are being told. Self-reflection should also be a habit, something you return to regularly with or without anything happening that makes you reflect.

COMMIT TO DOING BETTER.

When you make a mistake, apologize sincerely and succinctly (e.g., I'm sorry. Thanks for correcting me.) and move forward (e.g., use the correct pronouns, avoid the transphobic phrase). Do not make an excuse or ask others to take on your resulting feelings (i.e., put aside whatever you may have intended to accept and respond to the impact your words and actions have had.)

**Existing in solidarity means:
listening, being accountable, owning the need to engage in self-reflection, and committing to doing better as you learn.**



This infographic was adapted from the following publication and does not include all possible ethical considerations or strategies. For more details on the points contained herein, please see:

Knisely, K. (2021). A Starter Kit for Rethinking TGNC Representation and Inclusion in French L2 Classrooms. In N. Meyer & E. Hof-March (Eds.) *Teaching Diversity and Inclusion: Examples from a French-Speaking Classroom*. Routledge.

***Notes**

**Voiceless, here, refers not to aural/oral language, but rather to having a perspective that can be expressed in any language modality.*

Listening is also multi-modal: it entails attending to what others are expressing, through any and all ways of communicating.

**Under no circumstances should you ask minoritized people to educate you if they themselves have not chosen to be activist-educators in the context in which you are interacting with them. Further, take care not to insert yourself into conversations and spaces that are intended only for members of a community to which you do not belong.*

**Being accomplices in equity and justice also requires taking action at the direction of those who are being minoritized in and by our spaces and systems, without putting the onus of this work on those who are being minoritized.*

For more on my approach to trans-affirming queer inquiry-based pedagogies in relationship to the development of linguistic, intercultural, symbolic, and other competencies, please see my publications, presentations, and other resources at krisknisely.com

The following texts also have important connections with the above information and are recommended reading for those interested in additional information and applications of the above principles:

Knisely, K. (2021). LG/B and T: Queer Excisions, Entailments, and Intersections. In J. Paiz & J. Coda (Eds.) *Intersectional Perspectives on LGBTQ+ Issues in Language Teaching and Learning*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Knisely, K. (2021). Teaching trans: The Impetus for trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming inclusivity in L2 classrooms. In K. Davidson, S. Johnson, & L. Randolph (Eds.) *How We Take Action: Social Justice in K-16 Language Classrooms*. Information Age.



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Non-Binary and Inclusive French

Oral Communication Strategies

Kris Aric Knisely, Ph.D.
(krisknisely.com)

Les noms

#1: Périphrase:

Paraphrase to avoid nouns that mark gender differentially.

Exemple: Je suis étudiant.e.

J'étudie à l'université.
Je me concentre sur mes études.

Exemple: Iel est soignant.e.

Iel soigne les personnes âgées.
Iel figure parmi les soignants à l'hôpital.

"Je n'aurais qu'un ou..."
"On n'a pas un ou..."

Les adjectifs

#1: Périphrase:

Paraphrase to avoid adjectives that mark gender differentially.

Exemple: Øl est gentil.le.

Øl est sympa.
Øl est agréable.
Øl est aimable.

Exemple: Je suis amusant.e.

Je suis drôle.
Je suis comique.

Circumlocution or paraphrasing is a useful tool any time you aren't sure of a word. We can also use this strategy to purposefully avoid particularly gendered words when speaking about non-binary people.

There are times when it might be particularly challenging or awkward to paraphrase. When you can't quite circumlocute your way around gendering someone, try the other strategies in this list.

*Magnifique!
*Agréable!

#2: ensuite

#2: Noms neutres à l'oreille:

Use nouns that are invariable or phonetically equivalent in their various gendered forms.

Exemple: Cet.te ami.e est sympa.
Cet.te ami.e
Cet.te amie
Cet ami

Exemple: Quel.le bon.ne élève!
Quel.le bon.ne élève
Quelle bonne élève
**Quel bon_ élève

#2: adjectifs neutres à l'oreille:

Use adjectives that are invariable or phonetically equivalent in their various gendered forms.

Exemple: Iel est aimé.e.
aimé.e
aimée
aimé

Exemple: **Iel est gentil.le.
gentil.le
gentille
gentil

#3: puis

#3: "Quelqu'un" ou "Une personne":

For adjectives and nouns alike, it can sometimes be easiest to use *quelqu'un* or *une personne* as the subject of the sentence and then follow traditional agreements, since these expressions always take the same grammatical agreements no matter the gender of the person to whom we are referring! We can also use other terms à emploi générique to avoid grammatical gender.

Exemples:

Iel est quelqu'un de très patient.
Øl est quelqu'un de très patient.
Elle est quelqu'un de très patient.
Il est quelqu'un de très patient.
C'est quelqu'un de très patient.

C'est une personne adorable.

Une connaissance

#3: Néologismes

If you've tried #1, #2, & #3 to no avail, it might be time to see what new words you can find in use or to get to creating your own!

⚠ Careful, though! There is often little consensus as to what forms these new words should take. Some examples include:

[Sœur/Frère →] ***
adolphe / frère / broeuro
[heureux/heureuse →]
heureuxe

**** Sometimes, with oral communication, you'll have to get creative and you might feel like your phrasing is a bit awkward (even if it usually isn't noticeable!). This creativity is actually good for the development of your linguistic skills in French and can help you work around any number of possible challenges in expressing yourself!

A starting list of written forms can be found at krisknisely.com

This infographic was adapted from the following publications and does not include all possible language forms. For more details on both written and oral/aural language, please see:
Knisely, Kris. (2020). Le français non-binaire: linguistic forms used by non-binary speakers of French. *Foreign Language Annals*, 53(4), 850-876. doi: 10.1111/flan.12590
Knisely, K. (2020). Subverting the culturally unreadable: Understanding the self-positioning of non-binary speakers of French. *The French Review*, 94(2), 149-168.

*Notes

*Ce sont des adjectifs épithètes! In addition to these neutral forms, you can try using truncations (where the end of a word is proverbially clipped off) for nouns and adjectives alike (e.g., *infinis*, *prof*) or play with formality to find neutral forms (e.g., *forliche*, *feigrasse*).
**This may not be phonetically equivalent for all speakers, in all varieties of French. Where speakers do not find these forms to be phonetically equivalent, they are likely to be close enough to go unnoticed in the vast majority of spoken interactions.
***Adolphe has appeared with more frequency than *frere* or *frouer* in my data as of January 2021.
****Although the language used by non-binary speakers of French varies widely, there is a consistent focus on respecting individual agency and self-determination. See the above and/or krisknisely.com to learn more.

For more on my approach to teaching linguistic variation, please see my publications, presentations, and other resources at krisknisely.com
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