LANGUAGE LEARNING AS A GENDERED EXPERIENCE

ERIN BIDLAKE

Abstract

In the past 15 years, the field of applied linguistics has witnessed major changes in its understanding of the relationship between gender and Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Moving away from positivistic understandings of gender in isolation, which assume a direct relationship between language and gender, and turning toward constructivist and poststructuralist frameworks, gender is increasingly seen as only one of many intersecting factors contributing to an individual's ever-shifting identity. In the following literature review, I aim to demonstrate the complex ways in which gender identity is implicated in a language learner's access to the second language (L2) and language learning opportunities, thereby influencing the *amount*, as well as the *kind* of L2 exposure available to the learner. Consequently, I aim to suggest that gender may have an influence on a learner's overall success in language learning, albeit one that is not always predictable. I finish by highlighting implications for classroom practices.

Key words: *gender, ethnicity, identity, language learning*

Introduction

In the past 15 years, the field of applied linguistics has witnessed major changes in its understanding of the relationship between gender and SLA. Although interest in

the broader field of language and gender is in no way new, early sociolinguistic efforts (e.g., Lakoff 1975) arose from an essentialist understanding of gender as a static binary that assumed a direct relationship between language and gender. These early efforts often arrived at fixed notions about what women and men do and do not do in conversation, a framework that was known at different times as the deficit approach, the difference approach, and the dominance approach (Coates 2004). Identity theorists (e.g., Butler 1990; Cameron 2005; Gordon 2004; Lin *et al.* 2004; Mills 2006; Norton 2000; Norton & Pavlenko 2004; Pavlenko 2001; Schmenk 2004) now criticize this framework for ignoring the multiple and shifting identities "predicated on a number of factors, which include but are not limited to race, class, ethnicity, geographic region, culture, economic and social status, occupation, sexuality, religious affiliation, (dis)ability and age" (Pavlenko 2001, p. 125) *as well as* gender. By moving away from positivistic understandings of gender in isolation and turning toward constructivist and poststructuralist frameworks, the notion of gender in SLA has been reconceptualized. As Schmenk (2004) writes:

> Instead of looking at what males are like and what females are like and constructing generalized images of male and female language learners accordingly, critical voices note that language learners are themselves constantly constructing and reconstructing their identities in specific contexts and communities. To understand these processes and reflect on their possible implications for language learning and teaching, English language teachers, researchers, and teacher educators need to take into account individual learners and their respective positioning in particular social and cultural contexts. (p. 514)

Recent work examining gender from this perspective (e.g., Cameron 2005; Coates 2004; Davis & Skilton-Sylvester 2004; Ehrlich 1997; Kubota 2003; Norton 2000; Norton & Pavlenko 2004; Pavlenko 2001; Schmenk 2004; Sunderland 1992, 1998, 2000a,

2000b; Tannen 1996; Willett 1996) problematizes certain essentialist language learning and classroom myths, such as female superiority in language learning and male dominance in mixed-gender classrooms. While many studies (e.g., Baxter 2002; Cumming & Gill 1991; Goldstein 1995; Hruska 2004; Kline 1993; Losey 1995; Pica *et al.* 1991; Polanyi 1995) continue to find gender implicated in language learning success, it does not seem to be implicated in predictable ways based on gender in isolation. As a result, it is worth considering that "the way that gender identities get constructed in particular communities may have very concrete consequences for the kinds of second language proficiency developed by men and women" (Ehrlich 1997, p. 435). In the following discussion, I aim to demonstrate the complex ways in which gender identity is implicated in a language learner's access to the second language (L2) and language learning opportunities, thereby influencing the *amount*, as well as the *kind* of L2 exposure available to the learner. Consequently, I aim to suggest that gender may have an influence on a learner's overall success in language learning, albeit an influence that is not always predictable. With this in mind, I will finish by highlighting implications for language classroom practices and offer suggestions for language teachers.

Review

Examples of SLA research that demonstrate the many implications of gender in language learning are well-documented in the literature. In this section, I will outline the examples most pertinent to my discussion, organized into the following two themes: (1) classroom interaction, (2) factors outside the classroom affecting SLA.

(1) Classroom interaction

In her ethnographic study of a kindergarten class in the United States, Hruska (2004) documents the interactions of 17 first language (L1) English speakers and 6 Spanish-English bilingual speakers at different stages of English proficiency. As well as a linguistic divide, the class had a gender divide of 9 girls and 14 boys. Hruska explains how "[g]ender ideologies, gender constructions, and related behaviors described in the study, sometimes interacted with bilingualism, ethnicity and friendships in ways that emphasized unequal power relations or shaped participation in classroom events" (p. 462). Hruska describes the process of how the children constructed the gender divide between the girls and the boys through discursive practices. For instance, the girls' conversations were characterized by their fascination with romantic liaisons, such as who was going to marry whom, whereas the boys' conversations were characterized by competitive discourse, such as who could kick the highest and who had the most racing cars. Hruska also explains the importance among the children of establishing public alliances through same-gender friendships. Although the 6 bilingual children formed cross-gender friendships during their pull-out ESL instruction, upon reentering the kindergarten class, they were faced with renegotiating these to form same-gender friendships, in fitting with the larger classroom practice. An exception to this rule was Francisco, a Mexican boy, who happened to be extremely small for his age. His small size seemed to inspire motherly attention from many of the girls, who enjoyed helping him with classroom tasks. Simultaneously, he was accepted by the boys, because he was able to participate in their discourse of boy-identified topics, such as racing cars. Hruska illustrates how this gender flexibility granted Francisco access to both the boys' and the

girls' discourses, ultimately affording him greater access to the English language. Hruska notes that "[a]t the beginning of the year, Francisco had the lowest English-language proficiency, but by the end he was the most socially and linguistically successful Spanish-bilingual child" (p. 471), suggesting that the gender *in*flexibility of the other 5 Spanish-bilingual children might have restricted their language learning opportunities and, as a result, their overall success.

Another example from a mixed classroom in the United States comes from Losey's (1995) study of an adult basic writing class comprised of both female and male L1 English speakers, and female and male Mexican American bilingual speakers. An analysis of data taken from participant observation, audiotaped classroom sessions, and interviews revealed somewhat surprising results. Losey found that although the bilingual speakers made up more than half of the class (55%), they spoke significantly less in whole class discussions than did the L1 English speakers. This, perhaps, is not so surprising. However, of the contributions offered by the bilingual speakers "Mexican-American men contributed four times the amount expected, whereas Mexican American women spoke half as much as expected" (p. 635). Because these women contributed much more readily in other contexts, Losey argues that the cause of this imbalance during whole class discussions was due to the Mexican American women's status as 'double minorities', twice distancing them from a position of power in the classroom. She suggests that the intersection of their female gender and their Mexican ethnicity restricted their access to participating fully in language learning opportunities.

A much examined aspect of classroom interaction is the amount of time teachers devote to their female and male students. A well-known study by Spender (1982 cited in

Sunderland 2000b) documents findings of a self-study she conducted by audiotaping her classes and analyzing the recordings for 'differential teacher treatment by gender', a phenomenon she was aware of and was "deeply disturbed about the possibility that it might happen in her (secondary school) classroom" (Sunderland 2000b, p. 159). Spender was dismayed to find that the maximum amount of classroom time she devoted to the girls was about 42%, whereas the minimum time devoted to the boys was 58%. Such findings have since been used to illustrate the belief that male students tend to dominate in the classroom, leaving female students to be portrayed as victims (Baxter 2002).

Subsequent studies (e.g., Baxter 2002; Hruska 2004) have found that, whereas girls wait to be called on, boys tend to call out more, which initiates interaction and results in increased male student and teacher talk-time. For example, a study by Baxter (2002) on a British high school L1 English class (with a mix of girls and boys, aged 14-15) documents the results of a comparative analysis of girls' and boys' speech. Baxter notes three major findings: (1) "both in their speech and their behaviour, the girls showed a greater conformity […] to the 'rules' of the classroom" (p. 837), (2) "girls appear to offer boys considerably more interactional support than they receive in return" (p. 837), (3) "boys don't just simply fail to support girls in classroom discourse; they actively seek to undermine girls' linguistic interactions and by doing so, manage, on occasion, to disempower them" (p. 838). Regardless of these findings, however, Baxter argues against the portrayal of these girls as victims. Despite evidence showing that, in whole class conversations, girls had a much harder time both securing themselves a speaking turn and holding onto that turn long enough to make their point, several of the girls were evaluated more favorably than the boys on account of their ability to effectively

overcome these obstacles during discussions. When asked why some girls are able to participate in class more than others, one girl replied that it is because "the boffy people" (p. 836) (i.e., the 'nerds') most often get chosen to speak by the teacher, thus the girls who succeeded were publicly constructed as academic students.

In the L2 classroom, where there is the "increasing importance of using the language and of speaking as a skill in its own right" (Sunderland 1998, p. 52), securing talk time and teacher interaction is arguably a bigger issue. In Sunderland's (1998) study, however, she stresses the importance of looking at the *kind*, rather than simply the *amount* of teacher interaction with students. Her observations of an L2 German class in Britain (with a mix of 13 girls and 14 boys, aged 11-12) led to findings that supported previous studies demonstrating that girls receive less teacher interaction than boys. However, when she looked at the *kinds* of interaction given to girls and boys she found that interaction directed at the boys was more often disciplinary in nature, less often required a response in the L2, and less often required more than a minimal response of one word. Interaction directed at the girls more often required a response in the L2 and more often required more than a minimal response. As a result, Sunderland contends that the girls were being constructed by the teacher as a more academic group than the boys, perhaps in accordance with the myth of female superiority in language learning, or perhaps because these girls simply were more academic. In either case, as a group, the girls received less interaction, but Sunderland suggests that the *kind* of interaction took on greater significance in this context than did the *amount*.

(2) Factors outside the classroom affecting SLA

There is little disagreement that a student's experience in the classroom will have an effect on her or his language learning success. However, there is also reason to believe that factors outside the classroom can contribute to the learning outcome. In two studies documenting the experiences of students on study-abroad programs (Kline 1993; Polanyi 1995), gender played a significant role in determining the success of the language learning experiences. As a consequence of being female, women in these studies found themselves targets of sexual harassment. Kline's (1993) ethnographic study documents a year-long French study-abroad program, during which 9 out of 19 female students were physically attacked by French men, and one woman was raped. Kline notes that the women in the program developed much more extensive reading practices than did the men that year, suggesting that these women sought to escape from the dangers of interaction with French men by spending more time alone reading. Not surprisingly, the end of the year assessment found lower speaking and listening proficiency levels for the female participants than for the male participants. Kline criticizes the proficiency assessment for ignoring the significant reading and writing advancements made by the women.

Polanyi (1995) documents a similar situation in her study of the journals kept by American students participating in a study-abroad program in Russia. The women in this study, like those in Kline's study, were routinely harassed by Russian men, in contrast to the experiences of the American men participating in the study, who, in many cases, entered willingly into positive relationships with Russian women. It is worth noting that these relationships were not degrading or humiliating at all. Instead, they provided

meaningful opportunities for linguistic and cultural exchange. A related study by Brecht *et al.* (1995) on the same group of students showed significantly greater language gains made by the men than the women, which Polanyi criticizes on the grounds that, although the experiences of these women and men were highly gender-specific, the proficiency measures were gender-blind (i.e., they measured all students by the same ruler), as was the case for the assessment carried out on the students in Kline's (1993) study.

An example taken from the adult ESL context in Canada comes from Goldstein's (1995) study of Portuguese immigrants in Toronto. Goldstein found that men in this immigrant community had greater access to English, both because previous military service in Portugal had afforded them opportunities to learn some English and because they were free to attend ESL classes in Canada. In contrast, she explains how the traditional family roles played by women in Portuguese society made it very difficult for the women in her study to attend ESL classes, either because husbands or fathers forbid them to attend classes with male strangers, or because the women felt unsafe traveling to and from class at night. As a result of their limited English skills, many of these women could only find work at a factory where Portuguese was spoken exclusively to promote solidarity and maintain high productivity. Therefore, restricted access to learning English on the basis of their gender and ethnicity *further* restricted their access to English on the basis of employment.

This study might serve to explain an alarming phenomenon recorded by Canadian census data. This data reports that, although fairly equal linguistic abilities are found among immigrants upon entering Canada, longitudinal monitoring shows that nearly

twice as many women as men fail to become proficient in either of Canada's two official languages, French and English (Cumming & Gill 1991).

It is also worth considering how marital status can intersect with gender and ethnicity in complex ways. For example, Moon (2000 cited in Pavlenko 2001) found that single Asian women moving to the United States had a distinct advantage over Asian men in terms of language learning, as the women in the study proved to be much more likely to find L1 English-speaking boyfriends, granting them significantly more meaningful language learning opportunities. In contrast, Ellis (1994 cited in Ehrlich 1997, p. 428) claims that:

> Asian men in Britain generally attain higher levels of proficiency in L2 English than do Asian women for the simple reason that their jobs bring them into contact with the majority English-speaking group, while women are often 'enclosed' in their home.

Ellis, in this statement, seems to be referring primarily to married women, since single women would doubtfully be enclosed in their homes for practical reasons, such as employment.

In the above examples looking both inside and outside the classroom, it is possible to see how gender was implicated in language learning outcomes in ways that were not always predictable. This was due to the intersection of gender with other factors involved in the construction of a learner's identity (e.g., gender flexibility, ethnicity, academicism, being targeted by sexual harassment, employment, marital status).

> What these studies demonstrate is the difficulty of drawing generalizations about the precise way that gender (more accurately, the social practices involved in the construction of gender in particular communities) will influence second language acquisition […]. Indeed, if any generalization emerges here, it is the persistence of social and cultural practices across various communities (within the native language or target language culture) that adversely affect women's access to

> interactions in a target language or the nature of such interactions. (Ehrlich 1997, p. 436)

While I would argue that the effect on women's access to language interaction is not *always* adverse (as in the case of Moon's (2000 cited in Pavlenko 2001) study), I do echo Ehrlich's sentiment here that generalizations are very difficult to make on the basis of gender alone, involving, as I have shown, a complex web of other factors.

Implications for classroom practice and suggestions for teachers

In the review section I presented a wide range of SLA research in which I found gender to be a common factor (although, significantly, not the *only* factor) influencing language learning outcomes. In this section, I will move on to a discussion of the implications of this research on language classroom practices and offer some suggestions I have gleaned from the literature (and some of my own devising) that might help language teachers accommodate a wider variety of learners and their multiple, shifting identities. I have organized my discussion into the following three themes: (1) proficiency assessment, (2) classroom interaction, and (3) working with factors outside the classroom.

(1) Proficiency assessment

In terms of proficiency assessment, both Kline (1993) and Polanyi's (1995) studies provide good examples of why language assessment should not be gender-blind. In cases such as these, rather than measuring every student by the same ruler, assessment should be informed by a closer examination of the students' experiences (i.e., looking at both the *amount* and the *kind*). Where this is not possible, assessment should be checked for other kinds of gender bias. Three prime areas of potential gender bias include "the

topic (or content), the task, and the tester (or interlocutor)" (Sunderland 2000a, p. 212). Researchers working in this area (e.g., Brown & McNamara 2004; Sunderland 2000a) suggest that these should be monitored closely to ensure there is as little bias as possible. A similar argument could easily be made for assessment that is biased in terms of other factors, such as age or ethnicity. Teachers should be sensitive to all these factors when developing assessment measures.

(2) Classroom interaction

The countless and varied interactions that take place during class time put many complex demands on teachers that might influence their ability to monitor for phenomena such as 'differential teacher treatment by gender', as shown in the studies by Baxter (2002), Losey (1995), and Sunderland (1998). However, Sunderland (2000b) notes that "practitioners can of course take active professional steps to ameliorate disadvantage (though these will always be dependent on the actual classroom and cannot be simply prescribed through a list of 'Do's and Don'ts')" (p. 169). She suggests, where possible, that teachers should try videotaping their own classes to get a realistic view of their own practices (looking at both the *amount,* as well as the *kind* of interaction made accessible to the students), or invite a colleague to observe one of their lessons. Teachers can also work together to share strategies for classroom inclusivity and, in many cases, invite students to take part in this dialogue.

Papatzikou Cochran (1996) makes three other suggestions for teachers working towards gender-aware classroom practices. These include: (1) increasing awareness of body language (although this is often a difficult task in many ESL classrooms, where a mixture of students from many ethnic and cultural backgrounds may display many

different body languages), (2) avoiding sexist and racist generalizations at all costs, and (3) becoming familiar with literature on sexism and language (e.g., in the ESL classroom, teachers should draw students' attention to the lack of an epicene third-person singular pronoun and introduce the various strategies for negotiating this issue). Many researchers (e.g., Davis & Skilton-Sylvester 2004; Hruska 2004; Norton & Pavlenko 2004; Schmenk 2004; Sunderland 2000b) take this last suggestion one step further, by suggesting that sexism and language, and other topics inviting critical perspectives, would be excellent topics for in-class discussions to raise students' awareness as well. Most central to gender-aware practices and classroom inclusivity is the notion that the effect of factors such as gender and ethnicity is not predictable. Therefore:

> [T]eachers must adopt a critical stance towards generalist statements about male and female learners and develop a heightened awareness of gender stereotyping. Doing so will enable them to focus on individual learners as persons rather than as group members. (Schmenk 2004, p. 522)

(3) Working with factors outside the classroom

Although there are many limitations existing for students outside the classroom that cannot be overcome even by teachers with the best of intentions, researchers working within critical and feminist pedagogic frameworks (e.g., Keddie 2006; Norton & Pavlenko 2004; Pennycook 1999; Schenke 1996) have demonstrated how creative thinking and innovative approaches to language teaching have helped in some cases. For example, offering day-time classes, women-only classes, subsidized classes, classes offered locally in immigrant communities, and classes with flexible curricula to best fit student needs are all attempts that have been made to increase access to language learning opportunities for people who have been denied such opportunities based on factors such as gender and ethnicity, as in the study by Goldstein (1995).

Norton and Pavlenko (2004) cite two examples of feminist pedagogy at work. Rivera (1999 cited in Norton & Pavlenko 2004) helped to create an ESL program to serve the needs of women in a Latino community in New York City. These classes were held during the day while children were in school, held locally in the community, and offered a Spanish-English bilingual program that integrated the women's previous knowledge and experiences. Frye (1999 cited in Norton & Pavlenko 2004) helped to expand a male-oriented ESL program in Washington, D.C. to better meet the needs of another group of immigrant Latina women. The women were involved in all aspects of planning and directing the ESL classes, from logistical to curricular decisions, and proposed topics for discussion that addressed their interests and challenges as women, as Latinas, as mothers, and so forth.

Clearly, only some teachers have this kind of freedom and flexibility in their classrooms. Nevertheless, my aim is to provide examples of situations where solutions to such problems have been successful.

Conclusion

My aims here were threefold: (1) to demonstrate the complex ways in which gender identity is implicated in a language learner's access to the L2 and language learning opportunities, thereby influencing the *amount*, as well as the *kind* of L2 exposure available to the learner, (2) to suggest that gender may have an influence on a learner's overall success in language learning, albeit an influence that is not always predictable, and (3) to highlight implications for the language classroom and offer suggestions for language teachers. To this end, I began by presenting a thorough review of the literature

demonstrating the implications of gender on language learning, both inside and outside the classroom, and, where possible, indicating situations where the gendered experience of language learning influenced the learning outcomes. In arguing that the influences of gender are not predictable, I problematized the view of gender operating in isolation (as in the myths of female superiority and male dominance) by highlighting contexts where a learner's gender intersected with other factors, such as ethnicity, academicism, employment, and marital status. The examples I reviewed here were chosen carefully to represent a wide range of contexts (e.g., students of various ages, language classes devoted to various languages, classes mixed for L1 and L2 speakers, classes taking place in various countries, and so forth). This choice was informed by my belief that the truly homogeneous class (in terms of age, sex, ethnicity, linguistic background and the many other complex factors in need of consideration) is virtually non-existent.

What I have not addressed here for reasons of scope includes (but is not limited to) more thorough discussions of at least three areas: (1) learner identity, (2) the myth of female superiority (with attention to learner styles, strategies, motivation, and unequal enrolment by gender), and (3) critical and feminist pedagogies. Thus the limitations to my discussion were these many truncated discussions, which are all deserving and in need of further and more thorough investigation.

References

BAXTER, J., 2002. Competing discourses in the classroom: a post-structuralist discourse analysis of girls' and boys' speech in public contexts. *Discourse & society,* 13 (6), 827-842.

BRECHT, R., DAVIDSON, D. AND GINSBERG, R., 1995. Predictors of foreign language gain during studying abroad. *In:* B. FREED, ed. *Second language acquisition in a study abroad context*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 37-66.

BROWN, A. AND MCNAMARA, T., 2004. "The devil is in the detail": researching gender issues in language assessment. *TESOL quarterly*, 38 (3), 524-536.

BUTLER, J., 1990. *Gender trouble.* New York: Routledge.

CAMERON, D., 2005. Language, gender, and sexuality: current issues and new directions. *Applied linguistics*, 26 (4), 482-502.

COATES, J., 2004. *Women, men and language.* 3rd ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

CUMMINGS, A. AND GILL, J., 1991. Motivation or accessibility? Factors permitting Indo-Canadian women to pursue ESL literacy instruction. *In:* B. BURNABY AND A. CUMMING, eds. *Socio-political aspects of ESL education in Canada*. Toronto: OISE Press, 241-252.

DAVIS, K. A. AND SKILTON-SYLVESTER, E., 2004. Looking back, taking stock, moving forward: investigating gender in TESOL. *TESOL quarterly*, 38 (3), 381-404.

EHRLICH, S., 1997. Gender as social practice: implications for second language acquisition. *Studies in second language acquisition*, 19, 421-446.

GOLDSTEIN, T., 1995. "Nobody is talking bad": creating community and claiming power on the production line. *In:* K. HALL AND M. BUCHOLTZ, eds. *Gender articulated: language and the socially constructed self*. New York: Routledge, 375-400.

GORDON, D., 2004. "I'm tired. You clean and cook." Shifting gender identities and second language socialization. *TESOL quarterly*, 38 (3), 437-457.

HRUSKA, B. L., 2004. Constructing gender in an English dominant kindergarten: implications for second language learners. *TESOL quarterly*, 38 (3), 459-485.

KEDDIE, A., 2006. Pedagogies and critical reflection: key understandings for transformative justice. *Gender and education*, 18 (1), 99-114.

KLINE, R., 1993. *The social practice of literacy in a program of study abroad*. Thesis (PhD). Pennsylvania State University, State College.

KUBOTA, R., 2003. New approaches to gender, class, and race in second language writing. *Journal of second language writing*, 12, 31-47.

LAKOFF, R., 1975. *Language and woman's place*. New York: Harper & Row.

LIN, A., GRANT, R., KUBOTA, R., MOTHA, S., TINKER SACHS, G., VANDRICK, S. AND WONG, S., 2004. Women faculty of color in TESOL: theorizing our lived experiences. *TESOL quarterly*, 38 (3), 487-504.

LOSEY, K. M., 1995. Gender and ethnicity as factors in the development of verbal skills in bilingual Mexican American women. *TESOL quarterly*, 29 (4), 635-661.

MILLS, J., 2006. Talking about silence: gender and the construction of multilingual identities. *International journal of bilingualism*, 10 (1), 1-16.

NORTON, B., 2000. *Identity and language learning: gender, ethnicity, and educational change.* London: Longman.

NORTON, B. AND PAVLENKO, A., 2004. Addressing gender in the ESL/EFL classroom. *TESOL quarterly*, 38 (3), 504-514.

PAPATZIKOU COCHRAN, E., 1996. Gender and the ESL classroom. *TESOL quarterly*, 31 (1), 159-162.

PAVLENKO, A., 2001. Bilingualism, gender, and ideology. *The international journal of bilingualism*, 5 (2), 117-151.

PENNYCOOK, A., 1999. Introduction: critical approaches to TESOL. *TESOL quarterly*, 33 (3), 329-348.

PICA, T., HOLLIDAY, N., LEWIS, D., BERDUCCI, D. AND NEWMAN, J., 1991. Language learning through interaction: what role does gender play? *Studies in second language acquisition*, 13, 343-376.

POLANYI, L., 1995. Language learning and living abroad: stories from the field. *In:* B. FREED, ed. *Second language acquisition in a study abroad context*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 271-291.

SCHENKE, A., 1996. Not just a "social issue": teaching feminist in ESL. *TESOL quarterly*, 31, (1), 155-159.

SCHMENK, B., 2004. Language learning: a feminine domain? The role of stereotyping in constructing gendered learner identities. *TESOL quarterly*, 38 (3), 514-538.

SUNDERLAND, J., 1992. Gender in the EFL classroom. *ELT journal*, 46 (1), 81-91.

SUNDERLAND, J., 1998. Girls being quiet: a problem for foreign language classrooms? *Language teaching research*, 2 (1), 48-82.

SUNDERLAND, J., 2000a. Issues of language and gender in second and foreign language education. *Language teaching,* 33, 203-223.

SUNDERLAND, J., 2000b. New understandings of gender and language classroom research: texts, teacher talk and student talk. *Language teaching research,* 4 (2), 149-173.

TANNEN, D., 1996. Researching gender-related patterns in classroom discourse. *TESOL quarterly,* 31 (2), 341-344.

WILLETT, J., 1996. Research as gendered practice. *TESOL quarterly,* 31 (2), 344-347.

About the author

Erin Bidlake is a second year student in the Integrated PhD programme in Education and Applied Linguistics in the School of Education, Communication, and Language Sciences at Newcastle University. Any questions or comments on this literature review can be sent to: e.e.bidlake@newcastle.ac.uk